

Going back to 1979: The Left, anti-imperialism and the Iranian revolution

Monday 8 January 2018, by [ZAHEDI Arya](#) (Date first published: 23 August 2011).

Arya Zahedi looks at the problems associated with anti-imperialist ideology during the Iranian revolution to cast light on struggles against the Islamic regime today.

The question of anti-imperialism has been much debated on the revolutionary left—particularly during most of the twentieth century. More recently, the question of imperialism has emerged once again—in regard to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but more particularly in how the left should approach a popular struggle within a nation whose state perceives itself as a bastion against imperialism, or more precisely against US domination.

As students demonstrated in the streets in cities in Iran after the June 2009 elections, some of the left, particularly in the United States, was split, or at least confused, about how it should relate to this uprising. Should it support a movement challenging a regime that has been considered a bastion of anti-imperialist resistance?

The left in Iran already faced this question, with serious consequences, in the events around the revolution of 1979. In order to better assess our situation today, we should perhaps go back to the Iranian Revolution of 1979 to better understand the limitations set at that time. This question is not only pertinent to the left in Iran, but to the US left as well, in its relations to both the movement within Iran as well as to the uprisings sweeping the Middle East and North Africa.

Going back to the revolution of 1979 is important for many reasons. The revolution presents many questions and lessons in strategy and tactics for a revolutionary left, as well as many questions for theory. The presentation given here will in no way pretend to exhaust all the reasons for the left's inability to maintain a foothold politically after the revolution, or to mount a significant resistance to the new regime. Indeed, many did resist and any claim to the contrary is a great affront to the memory of those who perished under the regime's repression, as well as those who lingered and continue to linger in the dungeons of the Islamic Republic. When discussing a revolution, avoiding an analysis implying "I told you so" is difficult, suggesting that if the correct line had been followed, history would perhaps have been different. Perhaps it would have, perhaps not. An equal mistake, on the other hand, is thinking that there is nothing to be learned from history. Understanding may best be gained in the tension between the two poles.

In the dialectical irony so characteristic of history, one of the results of the ideology of the Islamic Republic is the exhaustion of the former analysis of imperialism. This hardly means that an analysis should take no account of imperialism, or take the position that imperialism no longer exists, nor does it mean that there could not be a resurgence of the old outlook. Some sort of military attack, for example, could strengthen nationalistic feelings. Every bit of external pressure helps to better support this type of world-view, putting ruling classes and those who wish to overthrow them in the same camp.

This article attempts to discuss how, in the years leading up to the Iranian Revolution, objective and subjective factors contributed to the development of an ideology that was an amalgam of socialism, nationalism, and religious imagery which can broadly be described as a form of third-world populism. The contention here is that the struggle against imperialism so dominated political discourse in the two decades leading up to the revolution that it, in many ways, became a fetter on the struggle for socialism. The struggle against imperialism became so much the dominant hegemonic discourse in the years before the revolution that, when the revolution did come, the left found itself faced with new problems in the face of which it was impotent. The intent here is not to give the impression that this is the whole story; it was merely one, albeit a very significant, part of the story. To quote Val Moghadam, "...it became clear that two strategic mistakes had been committed: namely, neglect of the question of democracy, and underestimation of the power of the Islamic clergy. It is now widely accepted that this blind spot was due to an inordinate emphasis on the anti-imperialist struggle and an almost mechanical application of the dependency paradigm." [1] This is the starting point.

A number of significant factors can be identified in the demise of the left during the revolution; the extreme repression unleashed by the new regime almost immediately after it gained some foothold was certainly one of them. But repression alone doesn't explain much. And the establishment of the Islamic Republic was not a unitary affair that happened over night, but a process, one which included the incorporation as well as the repression of elements of the left opposition to the shah's dictatorship.

The ideology of anti-imperialism, and the particular variant of Third Worldist populism as developed in Iran, is part of what can generally be referred to as the anti-imperialist paradigm. This developed into the dominant hegemonic discourse in the years preceding and during the Iranian Revolution. Regardless of its place on the political spectrum, almost every political group participating in the struggle against the dictatorship saw that struggle primarily through this lens. Thus, however they interpreted the struggle, by making anti-imperialism the primary contradiction to be resolved, the political groups provided a unifying factor, a true hegemonic ideology that could bring all the forces of opposition under an umbrella and revolt against the shah's dictatorship. Thus the anti-imperialist paradigm was at once a great strength and a weakness of the revolution. Taking this into account helps to provide a better understanding of the course of the revolution; instead of seeing it as a revolutionary push, followed by a counter-revolutionary repression, as two successive moments, we can instead see it as a more mixed dialectical process. In other words, elements of the counter-revolution were contained within the revolution itself.

The debate over the understanding of imperialism and the struggle against it is nothing new, and indeed it found its clearest classical expression in the debates between Rosa Luxemburg and V.I. Lenin over the so-called "National Question." These debates are still with us, and in many ways the current confusion in relating to contemporary struggles in many countries reflects this. A return to the classical theoretical debates is not our purpose here, but they should be mentioned. In the early 20th century, an ideology of anti-imperialism had not yet developed. It is important to distinguish between anti-imperialism, meaning just any conception of imperialism and the expression of the struggle against it, and what has developed into an ideology. By ideology, I mean its classical negative conception; a theoretical understanding, which blurs or masks the real conflicts lying beneath the world we live in (particularly the conflict between classes). Like any ideology, it mystifies the world and obscures the "hidden" reality. The ideology of anti-imperialism, as it developed for the greater part of the 20th century and found its expression in what has been called "Third World populism," plays exactly this role and serves this function. The clearest definition of this ideology is perhaps best explained by Asef Bayat:

"By 'Third Worldist populism', here, I mean an analytical and ideological framework which

represents a blend of nationalism, radicalism, anti-“dependencia”, anti-industrialism, and somehow anti-capitalism. This perspective blames the general “underdevelopment” of the Third World nations wholly on the fact of their (economic, political and especially cultural) dependence on the Western countries. The radical intellectuals of the Third World in the post-war period seemed to cling to this ideological perspective, although they perhaps differed from each other in terms of the degree of their adherence to the defining elements, i.e. anti-industrialism, anti-capitalism, etc. [2]”

He goes on to say:

“The implication of this paradigm for the struggle against domination of the center is a strategy of national unity, i.e., the unity of all classes in a given Third World country including the workers, the peasants, the poor, the students, the old and new middle classes and the “national bourgeoisie”. This strategy implies that the “national” classes, with different and often contradictory interests, should be united to form a national alliance against imperialism. However, within such an alliance, the political and economic interests of the subordinated classes are often compromised and sacrificed to the benefit of the dominant ones (e.g. workers are not to go on strike against their capitalist “allies”, or intellectuals are not to criticize their national ruling parties, etc.). The influential dependency paradigm is partly responsible for the nationalism and Third Worldist populism of the radical intellectuals and the political leaders of the developing countries. [3]”

If, in the middle of the last century, anti-imperialism had some reality and some validity as a step towards socialism (and I say this only hypothetically) today it most fully serves an ideological function. This ideology has been shown to have reactionary consequences. The experience of the Iranian Revolution proves to be the greatest historical example of this. In our contemporary situation, we see this in the support that some factions of the Left have shown towards petit-bourgeois dictators and authoritarian regimes purely on the basis of the latter’s stance against the imperialist west. [4] This has become clearest in the support of some elements, not only for the Islamic Republic, or Hugo Chavez, but also for Muammar Qaddafi! Marx once said that history repeats itself “first as tragedy, then as farce.” If the experience of the Iranian Revolution is a tragedy, as indeed it is, the current support for populist regimes under the banner of anti-imperialism is a great farce.

We digress for a moment to briefly explain why the Iranian Revolution is such an important case for understanding Third World populism and the ideology of anti-imperialism in general. The Iranian Revolution is exemplary because it reflects many of the great paradoxes of capitalist modernity. Its very occurrence posed a challenge to many paradigms held at the time about revolution in general. Many of these challenges were not the ones people imagined or expected, and this is often still the case.

Fred Halliday, in a talk in February 2009, described the Iranian revolution as “the first truly modern revolution.” [5] Now this formulation may indeed raise some eyebrows, but there is some truth to it. For many, various 20th century revolutions had presented a challenge to Marx’s theories of revolution. And for those who choose to take this view, the Iranian Revolution is often the case they invoke. Most revolutions of the 20th century were not spearheaded or carried out by the industrial proletariat, but had their social base in the peasantry. Quite the contrary, in the Iranian Revolution what remained of the peasantry played almost no role. [6] The death knell of the dictatorship was sung by the general strike of 1978, particularly the involvement of oil workers that bought the regime to its knees.

This presents us with a paradox. A revolution, very modern in one respect, brings into power a theocracy. It is this paradox, which I believe is what perplexes analysts and which obscures both the real nature of the revolution and the nature of the state it produced. It poses a much-debated

question about social revolutions, namely: why do revolutions produce authoritarian regimes? I believe, however, that the question is more complicated than that and the question itself obscures the picture. The Orientalist veil still affects us when looking at this revolution. The “Islamic” character continues to veil (no pun intended) and obscure the character of events. The ideology that developed was not powerful because of its particularly religious character so much as for its militant, populist, and anti-imperialist character. [7]

The nature of the situation before the revolution and of the balance of forces, as well as the theoretical imperatives of the oppositional forces, contributed to the development of an ideology that gained hegemony in the Iranian Revolution. This ideology was picked up and run with by the founders of the Islamic Republic. The point is not that the development of this ideology was purely the conscious decision of certain actors, but that the historical conditions on the one hand, and the theoretical explanations of this situation on the other, worked together in a dialectical relationship to produce an ideology that served as both the great mobilizing strength of the revolution as well as a great fetter upon its development in a more emancipatory direction.

This ideological hegemony did not develop out of thin air; it grew out of a real situation. A history of imperialist domination contributed to this development. The most dramatic event that affected the consciousness of most Iranians was the 1953 coup against nationalist Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh. Something of a myth developed around Mossadegh that partially obscured the real nature of that time. But suffice it to say that he was a nationalist liberal who supported parliamentary democracy. The struggle at that time was over the nationalization of oil. Mossadegh himself was no great friend of the working class. And tension between him, the trade unions, and the Tudeh party, which dominated the trade unions, grew. Strikes were banned, and anti-union legislation was enacted. The coup set the tone for the popular imaginary. Mossadegh became a symbol in more ways than one. Most importantly, Mossadegh symbolized the overthrow of a popular leader perceived as struggling for Iran’s independence and replaced by the establishment of the shah. The “coup government”, as it was called, carried out a wave of repression against the opposition in general, but against the workers movement and above all the Tudeh Party.

This traumatic event really was imprinted into the popular consciousness. It shaped the political discourse of a whole generation. As Hamid Dabashi writes, “28-Mordadism is the central traumatic trope of modern Iranian historiography.” [8]

“On the political stage, not just everything that occurred after 28 Mordad but even things that have happened before it suddenly came together to posit the phenomenon of 28-Mordadism: foreign intervention, colonial domination, imperial arrogance, domestic tyranny, an ‘enemy’ always lurking behind a corner to come and rob us of our liberties, of the mere possibility of democratic institutions. [9]”

The three political and thus ideological forces, if we are to abstract for the sake of clarity, were socialism, nationalism, and political Islam; all contributed to the development of this ideological hegemony, which found its clearest and most resonating expression in an Iranian form of what can best be described as Third World populism. This Third World populism, in turn, found its strongest voice in that developed by the partisans of the Islamic Republican Party. The clerical militants, for a number of reasons, won the battle for hegemony over the course of the revolution. “The traumatic memory of the 1953 coup was very much rekindled and put to effective political use in the most crucial episodes of the nascent Islamic Republic in order to consolidate its fragile foundations.” [10]

The Shah’s White Revolution, a series of reforms begun in the early 1960s, had dramatically altered traditional social relationships, particularly in the countryside.

The Shah's reforms in many ways set the stage for the revolution. "The Pahlavi White Revolution essentially advanced the simultaneous goals of primitive accumulation and capitalist accumulation proper." [11] The most dramatic policy was that of land reform. Indeed, this was a form of bourgeois revolution from above, intended to prepare Iran for capitalist development. It opened the way for modern agribusiness, mostly US, to move in, thus further incorporating Iran into the imperialist fold. The great landowning estates were divided and distributed among the peasants with little or no technical assistance. This turned the countryside into mainly "small-scale and petty-bourgeois" [12] rural production. The state then worked to promote large-scale capitalist agricultural production. Many of the former peasants sold their lands and moved to the cities. Masses of former peasants flooded the cities looking for work in the state's many construction and industrial projects, while those that stayed worked for agribusinesses as wage earners, making them agricultural proletarians. It is important to keep in mind that all of this took place in essentially a decade. The ranks of the working class swelled.

Other reforms had their effects as well. New education initiatives, while authoritarian, helped create a modern bureaucracy. The expansion of scholarships and opportunities to study abroad helped in the creation of a modern educated middle class, many of whom, as a result, had become politicized. The enfranchisement of women, including further employment and educational opportunities, also helped in this modernizing development. The regime did not understand, or underestimated the fact that all these policies were creating the material basis for a social revolution. Like all development under capitalism, the results were uneven. As the country as a whole became more developed, the class differences also became greater. Most of the new proletarians that flooded the cities lived a world away from the image of modern Tehran promoted by the state in its tourism brochures.

Simultaneously the regime used the tremendous oil revenues at its disposal to finance industrialization, and a policy of import-substitution resulted in rapid expansion of the manufacturing sector and the growth of and urban industrial labour. State policy came to favor large-scale, capital-intensive industry, at the same time that its urban bias and neglect of the countryside were displacing large numbers of peasants. Both 'push' and 'pull' factors—as well as a veritable population explosion—thus contributed to the massive rural-urban migration of the 1960s and 1970s, and to the creation of a pool of immiserated semi-proletarians in major cities, notably Tehran. [13]

Capitalist development was indeed state-centered. And, alongside the development of this entire modern infrastructure, went the development of the repressive apparatus of the state. The military, but more importantly the domestic security apparatus, became more developed technically and in its ability to gather intelligence. A society was developing with modern class forces coming to the fore in an environment that was becoming more repressive.

Most important to keep in mind is that the main modes of the revolution were what are generally attributed to modern forms of mass political struggle. Street demonstrations, some of the largest in history, strikes and factory occupations were the main modes of struggle during the course of the revolution. The players in the Iranian Revolution, then, were from what are considered modern classes: students, industrial workers, civil servants, writers/journalists, etc. Elements of the traditional society participated, but their role at first glance can be quite deceptive at first glance. These elements included the clergy and the bazaaris, or traditional merchant class. They may, on a more superficial level, be seen as a residue of the past, but they were very early on incorporated into the capitalist fold. This is evident by their modes of political struggle, which took a very modern form. A proper discussion of the role of the bazaar in the economic and political life of modern Iran is too lengthy to be taken up here, but it nonetheless needs to be touched upon. The bazaaris resemble what may be called the national bourgeois class. They, like the clergy, historically enjoy some autonomy vis-à-vis the state, and have risen to political action when this autonomy has been

threatened. But this class is by no means homogeneous economically or politically. This is the case both before and after the Revolution. [14]

The Pahlavi state's growth and increasing strength saw it begin to exert its control over this sector, as well as that of the clergy. The state began to impose regulations on the bazaar such as foreign exchange regulations. It also provided competition to the bazaar commercially by building modern retail stores and shopping centers. Like all other dominant social classes, including landowners and clergy (these three elements often overlap) the state had a policy of attempting to incorporate as well as dominate. Those that it could get to go along with the project were included and often benefited from this relationship, but the state was always keen to show its greater hand. In the mid-1970s, growing inflation, largely a result of the pumping of petro-dollars into the economy, was blamed on the bazaar. These were just some factors that helped develop the opposition of the bazaar. This added to the dissent, where the state was seen as benefiting 'western' business interests at the expense of the national marketplace. The opposition of the national bourgeoisie only added to the anti-imperialist dimension of the opposition.

The clergy had a somewhat similar relationship with the new state. It is by no means a homogeneous element. Some of the clergy benefited from a relationship with the Pahlavi state. These benefits included financial and political influence. But this was not the case for all, and much of the clergy began to resent their receding autonomy as well as what was seen as the "anti-national" aspect of the regime.

The cries of opposition from various elements of Iranian society developed more and more a similar 'national' or 'popular' voice, one that stood for national independence against the 'west.' Although the state was becoming more alienated from any social base and the opposition was finding more and more unity, it was not always understood that the interests of these various forces were not identical. The anti-imperialist nature of the opposition obscured this reality.

"In terms of an individual, the common enemy was Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi. In terms of class, the enemy was the "comprador bourgeoisie," that is, a bourgeoisie reliant on capital and power emanating from the centers of world capitalism, and serving as their extension in the peripheral country. [15]"

The left was essentially disarmed theoretically by the fact that it confronted a new state formation that was both anti-imperialist and reactionary. It was placed in a position of forcing the issue by attempting to prove that the Islamic Republic was indeed still tied to imperialism, and not truly revolutionary. On the other side of the coin, the left was stuck either fully supporting the regime, as in the case of the Tudeh party, or offering "critical support" pending socialist revolution, as some of the Trotskyist organizations did. I do not mean to insinuate that there were absolutely no left organizations that offered a different analysis, as there indeed were. But the more significant point is what had the influence on the street. The ideology of anti-imperialism was indeed the hegemonic discourse on the street, and this is much more significant in the final analysis than a proper analysis by a small number of left sects. The majority of left organizations were stuck banging their fist against a wall, attempting (if they were critical), to prove that the Islamic regime was still a puppet of imperialism; the uncritical supporters were attempting to prove that the regime was revolutionary and progressive because of its anti-imperialist credentials. This specter of 1953, or the flag of its anti-imperialist credentials, emerged most spectacularly in the taking of the American embassy in 1979. This was a great propaganda victory for the new regime.

Let us fast forward to our current period. The latest outburst of resistance since the June 2009 elections is a manifestation of many developments since the revolution. After the war with Iraq ended in 1988, a period of post-war reconstruction began. This centered on a policy of economic

liberalization. The radical-populist rhetoric was momentarily toned down for a more pragmatic approach that favored privatization as a development strategy. This again created a social base that would later develop into an antagonistic force within the republic. There was an economic boom that created many millionaires, but also a generation of educated youth that were coming of age and becoming politicized once again. This also meant not only a whole generation of young workers entering the industrial workforce, whose job prospects were becoming more uncertain, but also a new modern and technical workforce. During the period of the liberal-reformist president Muhammad Khatami, the three social movements that have shown to be a force came on the scene; the student movement, the women's movement, and the labor movement. [16]

The period of (very) relative political liberalization offered an opportunity for greater open organizing. The limits of the new liberalization were tested, and the state showed its hand during the student riots of 1999. Labor as an organized force has emerged since 2004, when striking copper workers in Khatoonabad were attacked by the local gendarmerie. [17] Since then, there have been a series of militant strike actions as well as coordination and organization among different sectors of workers coming together as a class. The most publicized of these was perhaps the struggle of city transit workers, in particular bus drivers, whose strike actions and organizing efforts were met with severe repression. [18] But militant activity has also taken place, and still continues, among automobile workers at the Iran Khodro plant, the largest automobile plant in the region. Another important sector has been public school teachers. They succeeded in shutting down a large number of schools during a strike over lack of pay in 2004. [19]

Industrial proletarians make up about 7.5 [20] out of about 70 million people in Iran. This does not include much of the technical and service, or "white collar" forms of employment that make up a large part of the Iranian workforce. This needs to be factored with a 20% unemployment rate (the conservative estimate.) Taking into account a changing proletariat, we can see that there is a force much greater than 10% of the populace. We are faced, much like here in the US, with a young, highly skilled, technically advanced workforce. But when this force leaves the university and enters the ranks of the proletariat, there is no prospect waiting. There are more workers than positions. This is true not just of the "white collar" sector, but also for industrial workers, but for different reasons. Regardless, a precarious position awaits much of the population. The situation affecting a nineteen year old in Tehran is quite similar in many ways to that of her contemporary in Athens, Cairo or Paris. And we see the explosions taking place. The alienation, so commonplace, is not one that can be quelled by the emotional rhetoric of national independence.

One of the dramatic outcomes is that the paradigm of anti-imperialism, particularly what Dabashi calls the paradigm of "28-mordadism", has indeed exhausted itself. An entire generation born during or after the 1979 Revolution has developed within an Islamic Republic preaching self-sufficiency, independence, and an "anti-west" discourse from every channel. The issue of national independence, which plagued their parents' or even more so their grandparents' generation, seems like a relic of the past, and its only ideological function today is to cover up the real contradictions affecting people's lives on a daily basis. This is true not only for young educated students and intellectual workers, but also for the industrial working class, which is vital to any social revolution. The experience, especially of those who were active worker-militants during the revolution, has taught them valuable lessons. Their inability to accept what is farcical today and which proved tragic to them yesterday does not only undermine the populism of Ahmadinejad. It is also a vaccine against the appeals by the liberal reform candidates of the opposition. The working class in Iran today, especially since 2004, has been increasingly active and militant, with strikes, sit-ins, demonstrations, and occupations a regular occurrence. [21]

But some worker-militants still keep a certain distance from the liberal-reform elements of the opposition. Is this because they are leaning towards the populism of Ahmadinejad? Not in the least.

As we have seen in many of the communiqués from the militant worker syndicates before and after the election, they don't support any candidate, but at the same time do support the struggle for democracy. This is an important distinction.

If the working class is not rushing into either camp, this is not in spite of their class-consciousness, but exactly because of their class-consciousness. The working class, in particular those workers that were active during the revolution, have learned the lessons of the past. They lived through the tragedy of the revolution, as well as the reformists' attempts to appeal to the people. "The June 2009 presidential election marks an epistemic exhaustion of 28-Mordadism, when the paradigm has finally conjugated ad nauseam." [22] As was mentioned early in this essay, it is important to distinguish between an analysis of imperialism and the struggle against it, and the ideology of anti-imperialism, which is a particular historical manifestation. This critique should not imply that there is no such thing as imperialism, or that it is of a bygone era of capitalism. Nor is it out of the question that this ideology could be resurrected. But it does influence our understanding of imperialism, or more precisely global capitalism (a redundant term because capital has always been global, yet it is important always to emphasize its global character) as well as of the character of the struggle against it. So what is the outcome of the death of this ideology? The most important outcome of the negation of the ideological fetter of anti-imperialism is its positive supersession. But, as usual, this supersession is only a potential. The end of anti-imperialist ideology, in this particular case the "end of 28-mordadism", offers a potential space, an opening, through a new understanding of the situation, as well as a new understanding of revolutionary subjectivity becomes possible. The recent uprisings are the clearest historical example of the potential overcoming of the binary between east and west, us and our other (whether this "other" is the Islamic world, or Iran, or Cuba, or whether it is the "west," however we may interpret the term). It is this negative space through which a new positive may be created but not finished, always in a process of formation and creation. In this space, new conceptions of revolutionary subjectivity offer us something new, through which a new universal can be created—one which is the product of collective human struggle, the antithesis to the universalism of capitalist modernity. "The end of 28-mordadism does not of course mean the end of imperial interventions in the historical destiny of nations. It simply means that now there is a renewed and level playing field on which to think and act in postcolonial terms." [23]

The Iranian Revolution, and the anti-imperialist ideology that corresponded to its rise and demise, was indeed a tragedy from the perspective of proletarian revolution; to hold such an ideology today is indeed farcical. It no longer revolutionary, as we have tried to show (and it is doubtful that it ever was); it today serves nothing but reaction. It does nothing but bring workers, students, and women's organizations into an illusory harmony with those who maintain their oppression and exploitation. If this ideological position once served an emancipatory potential, it is today nothing less than utopian and reactionary.

Arya Zahedi

P.S.

* "Anti-imperialism and the Iranian revolution". Posted Aug 23 2011 09:21:
<https://libcom.org/library/anti-imperialism-iranian-revolution>

Footnotes

[1] Val Moghadam, "Socialism or Anti-imperialism? The Left and Revolution in Iran" *New Left Review* (1987).

[2] Assef Bayat, "Shariati and Marx: A Critique of an 'Islamic' Critique of Marxism" *Alif*. Issue 10 , Pg. 16 (1990)

[3] *Ibid.*, Pg. 17

[4] The clearest expression of this farce lately was the last time President Ahmadinejad came to New York to attend the United Nations he met with a number of "leftists" so they could express their solidarity. See "US Progressives Meet with Ahmadinejad." <http://www.fightbacknews.org/2010/9/23/us-progressives-meet-iranian-president-mahmoud-ahmadinejad>. Since then there have been other expressions of this farce such as their support for the Qaddafi regime.

[5] See "The Islamic Republic of Iran After 30 Years", a lecture at the London School of Economics, February 23, 2009.

[6] The great exception to this was the land occupation and formation of a peasant council in the Turkoman Sahra region, which was swiftly dismantled during the establishment of the Islamic Republic. This was indeed was one of the early important conflicts between the left and the new regime, as well as within the left itself. See Maziar Behrooz, *Rebels With a Cause: The Failure of the Left in Iran*. I.B. Tauris, 2000. Pg. 109

[7] For the best analysis of the ideological dimension of the Islamic Republic see Ervand Abrahamian *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic*.

[8] Hamid Dabashi, *Iran, the Green Movement and the USA: The Fox and the Paradox*, Pg. 92

[9] *Ibid.*, Pg. 93

[10] *Ibid.*, Pg. 94

[11] Moghadam, Pg. 10

[12] *Ibid.*, Pg. 11.

[13] *Ibid.*, Pg. 11

[14] "If the assembly line, or the coal mine, is the historically ideal space for the fostering of proletarian class consciousness - workers being densely packed together, in perpetual communication with each other and forced by material necessity to develop a dense of fellowship - then the bazaar is the equivalent for the petty bourgeoisie...But the bazaar stretches beyond the confines of this class category." Shora Esmailian and Andreas Malm, *Iran on the Brink: Rising Workers & Threats of War*. 2007, Pluto Press. Pg. 28.

[15] *Ibid.*, Pg. 26

[16] It should be stated that these three movements overlap and are not so easily abstracted from each other, particularly in the post-June 2009 election period.

[17] Iran in the Brink, Pg. 71

[18] Their union leader, Mansoor Ossanolou, is currently in Evin prison.

[19] A third of all teachers participated in the strike. See Esmailian, Malm, Pg. 74-77. The Iran Khodro actions began in 2004 as well and have continued. This plant has been referred to as the "Detroit of the Middle East," and its workers are known for their militancy and class-consciousness but this is counteracted by tactics such as temporary contracts and threat of sack as well as blatant repression. During the protests of June 2009 the workers staged a work slowdown in protest of the repression and in solidarity with the popular movement.
<http://narcosphere.narconews.com/thefield/iran-khodro-auto-workers-begin-work-slowdown-protest-regime>

[20] International Labour Organization. Statistic from 2008
<http://amar.sci.org.ir/Detail.aspx?Ln=E&no=98515&S=TP>

[21] For the most comprehensive report of worker activity in Iran under the Islamic Republic, in particular since post-war reconstruction see Shora Esmailian and Andreas Malm, Iran on the Brink: Rising Workers & Threats of War. 2007, Pluto Press. Since its publication much has happened, including the June 2009 elections, but this does not invalidate the book as a good source of information on the labor movement.

[22] Dabashi., Pg. 94

[23] Ibid., Pg. 98