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MODERNIZATION AND REFORM FROM ABOVE: THE CASE OF IRAN*

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Social scientists have recently become deeply involved in the study of modernization, and theoreticians from a wide variety of disciplines are now seeking to formulate meaningful theoretical statements about this issue. Several points have already become clear. First, it is more fruitful to examine the challenge of modernization in terms of social forces such as groups, classes, and elites than to concentrate on formal-legal structures and institutions. Second, the varying intensities and levels of change indicate a need for comparative analysis. Third, development must be defined not only in economic and physical terms but in political, social, and human terms as well. Fourth, development is best viewed as a continuing process and not as an end point or fixed goal. No society, including the United States and the Soviet Union, ever finally achieves this goal.

Modernization requires that a society possess the enduring capacity to generate and absorb persistent transformation. Modernization implies transformation, i.e., a deep, fundamental, and continuing change in all systems by which man organizes his life.¹ For the purposes of this paper, it concerns particularly the transformation of the socio-power structure so that genuine social and political

*An earlier version of this paper was delivered at the 1968 Annual Meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. I am grateful to Manfred Halpern, T. Cuyler Young, Paul W. English, Carl Leiden, M. Donald Hancock, and Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., for perceptive criticisms of the earlier version. The research resulting in this study was carried out in Iran in 1965-1967 under a fellowship granted by the Foreign Area Fellowship Program. The conclusions are, of course, those of the author alone.

¹The definition of modernization used in this study is drawn from Manfred Halpern, whose work can be examined more fully in the following: "The Revolution of Modernization in National and International Society," in *Revolution*, ed. by Carl J. Friedrich (New York: Atherton Press, 1966), 178-214; "The Rate and Costs of Political Development," *The Annals*, 308 (March 1965), 20-28; and *The Dialectics of Modernization* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).

participation is accorded to all groups and classes as they appear in society. Traditional power relations are torn and new patterns are introduced in a manner that builds a will and capacity to confront the challenge of change.

One of the most dramatic efforts to modernize among the less-developed societies of the world has taken place in Iran, a twentieth-century monarchy that shares a 1,200 mile boundary with the Soviet Union. It exemplifies the society dramatically confronted by the revolution of modernization. The present paper, in attempting to analyze this challenge, will focus on the following three areas: (1) the traditional Iranian system, (2) the new class that now threatens this system, and (3) the policy of the Iranian elite vis-à-vis this threat.

THE TRADITIONAL IRANIAN SYSTEM

The traditional socio-political system in Iran was marked by an extraordinary flexibility and resiliency. Power relations were reciprocal, informal and very personal. All groups and classes possessed a checking influence that could be brought to bear upon other groups and classes, which facilitated social mobility and lessened dangerous confrontations. Personalities from the lower and lower-middle classes constantly moved into the political elite, becoming Prime Ministers and even Shahs. Gardeners, water-carriers, stable-boys, and cobblers moved into positions of great power. Religious, military, and bureaucratic mobility channels built into this system helped to provide an integral elasticity.

Despite this built-in dynamism, the traditional Irano-Islamic system rested upon profound inequalities and divisions. Channels for upward mobility were limited and were scattered sparsely throughout the social structure. They served to drain off pressures for fundamental transformation and thus helped maintain the system by permitting moderate alterations in it. Upon closer examination, it becomes evident that not only were mobility channels very specific but also that mobility itself was controlled to an extraordinary degree by the political elites. Entry into the ruling class, for example, was primarily a process of co-optation and conquest. Successful take-overs by force via internal and external elements changed elites and personalities, but the class structure remained

basically unaltered. Controlled mobility in which ruling elites sponsored the rise of picked individuals also served to reinforce the existing structure.

The social and political forms of tension management in Iran have remained fundamentally unchanged since the sixteenth century. Relations are deeply personal, as the socio-political system is built upon institutionalized personalism. Organizations, associations, and formal institutions are usually lacking and when they do exist they are poorly organized and technically inefficient. This kind of situation places a premium upon connections, contacts, cronyism, nepotism, and other highly ascriptive considerations. Such a traditional system is also intensively informal in the sense that business is transacted almost entirely in highly fluid noninstitutional settings. In circumstances of unremitting rivalry and personal tensions, secrecy and ambiguity become very important. Thus, there is informality, great indistinctness, and a blurring of the lines of authority. The two interrelated characteristics of personalism and informality exist in a setting of ubiquitous insecurity. At all levels of the system there is chronic doubt and apprehension as individuals interact in a climate of uncertainty. Historically, Islamic societies have witnessed just as many dramatic cases of *downward* social mobility as of upward social mobility.

Rivalry and conflict have marked all levels and systems in Iranian society—in individual, group, and class relations and among both private and public institutions. It has been constantly present ever since Safavi days among members of the Royal Family and also among villagers, tribesmen, servants, and bazaris.² This tension has been system-preserving since it acts as an integrating and amalgamating force. The key to this unusual function of conflict has been a shifting and fluctuating balance that tilts back and forth, making the weaker stronger and the stronger weaker. Those

²See Hasan Rumlu, *Ahsan al-Tavarikh* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1931); Paul Vieille, "Un groupement féodal en Iran," *Revue Française de Sociologie*, 6 (April-June 1965), 175-190; and Princess Soraya, *The Autobiography of H.I.H. Princess Soraya*, trans. from the German by Constantine Fitzgibbon (London: Arthur Barker, 1963). The Rumlu chronicle documents the pattern of intra-tribal and inter-tribal rivalry in Safavi Iran; Vieille analyzes the balanced web of peasant tensions; Soraya writes about the omnipresent conflict within the Pahlavi ruling family.

who are at a disadvantage view their position as temporary and constantly maneuver to shift the balance in their favor. They are usually guaranteed at least their own positions, for there are few Iranians without some levers of power. The shifting balance is maintained and protected by the extraordinary complexity of the system, which is composed of crisscrossing, overlapping, and interlocking lines of tension.

Qajar history provides several examples of the conflict and tension that have animated the personal relations of Iranian politics. One of the more important and reform-minded Qajar statesmen was Mirza Husayn Khan Mushir al-Dawlah who was also titled Sipahsalar-i A'zam (1826-1881).³ Mirza Husayn Khan, who boasted a French education, held the posts of Ambassador, Minister of War, Prime Minister, and Minister of Foreign Affairs. As Prime Minister, he reorganized the civil and military administration and he accompanied Nasir al-Din Shah on the latter's first trip to Europe in 1873. While Mushir al-Dawlah was abroad his enemies united and brought about his fall, and eventually his death in 1881.

With his schemes of reform and his immense power as Prime Minister and confidant to the Shah, Mushir al-Dawlah loomed as an unusually large threat to the traditional system of balanced tension. His attempts to reorganize the Cabinet in 1872 were correctly viewed in part as a move to strengthen his own personal position. A wide range of enemies, from the Shah's favorite wife, Anis al-Dawlah, to Russophile Mirza Sa'id Khan, to the Shah's uncle, Mu'tamid al-Dawlah, to a competing Prime Ministerial aspirant, Mirza Yusif Mustawfi al-Mamalik—all joined hands and plotted his demise. After changing his mind twice while testing the strength

³The analysis concerning Mushir al-Dawlah and the patterned relations that surrounded him has been based on information gathered from a dozen Persian and English sources. See, for example, I'timad al-Saltanah, *Ruznamah-yi Khatirat-i I'timad al-Saltanah—Daily Memoirs of I'timad al-Saltanah* (Tehran: 1345/1966), 5-15, 140-149, 166-169; Mirza 'Ali Khan Amin al-Dawlah, *Khatirat-i Siyasi—Political Memoirs*, ed. by Hafez Farman Farmayan (Tehran: 1341/1962), 33-43, 51-58, 73-89; and Hafez Farman Farmayan, "The Forces of Modernization in Nineteenth Century Iran: A Historical Survey," in *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. by W. L. Polk and R. L. Chambers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 119-151.

of this opposition, Nasir al-Din Shah dismissed Mushir al-Dawlah in September 1873.

Following this confrontation, the Shah decided to do without a Prime Minister and to appoint instead six equally powerful ministers. Into this cabinet he incorporated a newly balanced conflict centering upon the original Mushir al-Dawlah-Mustawfi al-Mamalik rivalry. Mushir al-Dawlah who had feared for his life a few weeks before now became Minister of Foreign Affairs, while Mustawfi al-Mamalik took charge as Minister of Interior. Of the remaining four ministers, one was a partisan of Mushir al-Dawlah while the other three supported Mustawfi al-Mamalik. The balance shifted back and forth and after three months 'Imad al-Dawlah, who leaned to the Mustawfi's side, left the scene to become Governor of Kirmanshah. The Mustawfi's power increased, however, as he also became Minister of Finance. But the Mushir kept pace by becoming Minister of War as well as Foreign Minister.

When the Shah returned from his second trip to Europe in 1878, the Mushir al-Dawlah found himself gradually being expelled from his position in the network of balanced rivalry. Nasir al-Din Shah's third son, Nayib al-Saltanah (Kamran Mirza), became Governor of Tehran, and then in 1880 he took Mushir al-Dawlah's place as Minister of War. Kamran Mirza and the Mustawfi now joined forces and with the assistance of others such as Amin al-Mulk, they forced Mushir al-Dawlah out of the system. This time the expulsion was permanent, for the latter died under mysterious circumstances while Governor of Khurasan in 1881. Although Mushir al-Dawlah's power was no longer to be reckoned with, the old patterns of tension remained intact. Mirza Sa'id Khan Mu'tamid al-Mulk took charge of the Foreign Ministry, and older powers like Mustawfi al-Mamalik entered into new rivalries with rising personalities like Mirza 'Ali Asghar Khan.

The relations of balanced tension that marked Qajar politics have also dominated contemporary Pahlavi politics. There is within the present Royal Family, for example, a fundamental rivalry between Muhammad Riza Shah's twin sister, Ashraf, and his eldest sister, Shams. Each of the Shah's three Queens has become entangled in this tension and each as a result developed an antagonistic relationship with *both* sisters. Soraya, the Shah's second wife, wrote that "a society of private individuals lives in quite a

different way from a family at Court who are always in a state of rivalry.”⁴ These particular relationships are only one part of a constantly changing network of conflicting tensions that encompass the Queen Mother, the Shah’s brothers, courtiers, personal adjutants, military generals, and economic and political confidants. Soraya noted a lack of warmth in all these relationships which she felt “was not so much due to coldness as to something inherent in those very relationships themselves.”⁵

The traditional Irano-Islamic system has presented a formidable barrier to the processes of modernization. Survival and advancement in this system have demanded a profound skill in personal maneuver and manipulation.⁶ Competence in a profession or occupational talent have seldom been the primary determinants for social, economic, or political success. Though the system itself puts a premium on skillful use of the techniques of power, it does little to produce the creativity and imagination that are needed to confront the challenge of modernization.

Traditionally, this system was able to absorb and digest new challenges and forces whenever and wherever they appeared. The pervasive flexibility of the system was such that the fundamental patterns survived the changes of dynasty, elite, monarch, and invader. For centuries, threats to this system appeared in the form of individuals and groups who sought only to modify in order to rule. In fact, they buttressed the prevalent patterns. Occasionally, a person like Amir Kabir or Ahmad Kasravi would appear and shake the system to the core by his drive to uproot the old relations and to establish new ones, i.e., to transform. Because of their

⁴Princess Soraya, *Autobiography*, 65.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶The Persian language is rich in terms and expressions that refer to this kind of skill. Such expressions as *parti*, *partibazi*, *dastah bandi*, *bandbazi*, *kaqazbazi*, *rushvah*, *haqq-i hisab*, *avurdan-i tawsiyah*, *nan qarz dadan*, *rafiqbazi*, and *zad-u-band* refer to levels and means of maneuvering and manipulating in order to improve one’s own position in the system. These are everyday expressions that explain how goals are achieved and work gets done. Such terms cannot be properly translated into English for their closest equivalents carry a pejorative connotation that is not always present in the Persian usage. The closest translations would be such expressions as “influence-wielding,” “pulling strings,” “ganging up,” “bribery,” “opportunism,” and “exchanging favors.”

great rarity, persons who thus threatened the system were exposed and vulnerable and could be easily disposed of.⁷

The persistence of certain traditional systems such as Iran's was contingent upon their remaining constantly in motion. Iran was able to structure conflict and balance tension. The personal web of patterned rivalry was spun so complexly that threatening individuals or groups could be sensed on many fronts and easily choked off. Such a system could absorb invasion and violence and yet maintain the fundamental patterns. It could also absorb economic growth and accelerating wealth. It possessed extraordinary flexibility. The mid-twentieth century, however, has witnessed the appearance of profoundly new forces that now challenge the traditional system. These forces increasingly demand nothing less than the transformation of that system, and they include not merely new men but new social classes as well.

THE PROFESSIONAL-BUREAUCRATIC INTELLIGENTSIA: THE NEW CLASS

The professional-bureaucratic intelligentsia is a new class that is distinguished by five major characteristics: (1) increasingly they refuse to accept the traditional socio-political patterns that have dominated Iranian society; (2) they possess, or are acquiring, a higher education (i.e., a modern or "new" education as opposed to the traditional religious-based education); (3) their power position derives primarily from the skills or talents they have acquired from their modern formal education; (4) they have been exposed in varying degrees to outside philosophies, thoughts, and ideas; and (5) they are free of rigid religious dogmatism and of blind worship of past history.⁸

⁷Amir Kabir was a famous Iranian Prime Minister who between 1848 and 1851 attempted to introduce several fundamental reforms into the traditional system. Kasravi lived a century later and was a prodigious writer and a sharp social critic. Both of these men were assassinated, Amir Kabir in 1851 and Kasravi in 1946.

⁸Marxist class analysis has failed to account for the revolutionary character of new social classes such as the professional middle class and this may be one reason the Soviets have had little success in the less-developed areas of the world. For an analysis of the social science renaissance of non-Marxian class analysis, see James A. Bill, "Class Analysis and the Challenge of Change," *Comparative Political Studies*, 2 (October 1969), 389-400.

The professional-bureaucratic intelligentsia⁹ is for many reasons steadily surpassing the entrepreneurial middle class in growth and importance. First, in a large number of the less-developed societies, the bourgeoisie is dominated by foreigners and minority groups. This discourages and deflects the entry of the indigenous majority who seek mobility and advancement through other channels. Second, ruling classes (whether landlord-oriented or industrial-oriented) create demands and require services that are more the preserve of professionals and technicians than of businessmen. This has become especially true in a world of increasing industrialization and specialization. Third, a rapidly growing demand for literacy and education has produced both a relative and an absolute

The most prescient analysis of the important Iranian middle class was introduced by T. Cuyler Young in "Social Support of Current Iranian Policy," *Middle East Journal*, 6 (Spring 1952), 128-143. For an excellent analysis of the role of the middle class in a provincial setting, see Paul Ward English, *City and Village in Iran: Settlement and Economy in the Kirman Basin* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), 74-76, 80-81, 98-99. In 1963, we called special attention to the significance of the professional intelligentsia in Iran. See James A. Bill, "The Social and Economic Foundations of Power in Contemporary Iran," *Middle East Journal*, 17 (Autumn 1963), 400-418. For a more extensive study of this new middle class and its role in Middle Eastern politics, see Manfred Halpern, *The Politics of Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 51-78. Several interesting analyses of the professional middle class by Iranian scholars have been printed in recent issues of the Persian journals, *Jahan-i Naw* and *Masa'il-i Iran*.

⁹The term "professional-bureaucratic intelligentsia" has been borrowed from the vocabulary of V. V. Aspaturian. Each term describes and explains this class and each emphasizes certain characteristics that are a part of it. The concept "professional" stresses the important characteristic of being highly skilled in a particular area or field. The fact that the members of this class rest their power on skill and talent rather than on ownership, for example, distinguishes them from the bourgeois middle class. The term "bureaucratic" also carries with it the idea that the members of this class are basically a non-entrepreneurial middle class. Although not members of the professions, bureaucrats are, indeed, an important part of this new middle class. Holding modern educations, they possess a certain amount of technical skill and dominate an important section of the governmental apparatus. "Intelligentsia" refers to all those who have obtained or are in the process of obtaining a modern higher education. In this sense, students, although not yet professionals, are part of the intelligentsia. The term "intelligentsia" has been used rather than "intellectual" because this is not a class of intellectuals. Although the intellectuals are an important part of the intelligentsia, other vital groups are involved. There is a "non-intellectual" intelligentsia that is more concerned with acting and doing, and this includes technocrats, administrators, managers, and clerks.

increase in graduates at all levels. Finally, traditional education has tended to be oriented primarily toward the production of religious clerics and bureaucratic clerks. Young people are continually being deflected from these traditional occupations and are moving increasingly into professions such as law and teaching.

In terms of the growth of this professional middle class, the Iranian case is especially instructive. The first comprehensive statistical surveys of Iranian society were begun in the mid-1950s. In a detailed study of the 1956 official census, attention was called to the expanding size of the "bureaucratic-intelligentsia."¹⁰ With the appearance of the 1966 census results, it is now possible to analyze the growth of this new class during a crucial ten-year period. Table 1 reveals that in the ten years between 1956 and 1966, the new class increased in size by more than 60 percent. By the mid-1960s, more than half a million employed Iranians were part of the professional middle class. With the acceleration of reform programs and the continued growth of the educational system, there is every indication that this class will continue to burgeon and develop rapidly. Although it still represents a relatively small percentage of the total Iranian population, its relative increase has been great. In 1956, approximately one out of every seventeen Iranians belonged to the intelligentsia. Ten years later the proportion had become one in twelve.

The professional middle class is by and large an alienated class, and it is from within this class that the cry for system-transformation emanates. Although the members of this class are often divided against themselves, they are generally agreed that the traditional system must be abandoned and new relations constructed. The signs of deep dissatisfaction and profound alienation have been many.

The two great opposition movements, namely, the Communist Tudah Party and the National Front, have been organized, led, and for the most part manned, by key segments of the professional middle class. Teachers and professors dominated the leadership ranks of these movements, while students were the catalyst and moving force in the important mass element vital to low-level organization and street activity. When these two organizations fin-

¹⁰Bill, "Social and Economic Foundations," 400-418.

TABLE 1

GROWTH OF THE IRANIAN PROFESSIONAL-BUREAUCRATIC INTELLIGENTSIA, 1956-1966, EMPLOYED MEMBERS AGE TEN AND OVER^a

	1956	1966
Professional-Bureaucratic Intelligentsia Total	332,000	513,400
Professional, Technical, and Cultural Total	93,200	212,200
Government Employees	54,800	143,200
Self-Employed	22,800	18,500
Private Employees	15,600	50,500
Administrative, Managerial, and Clerical Total	175,900	197,900
Government Employees	146,500	134,900
Self-Employed	17,000	10,700
Private Employees	12,400	52,300
Commerce and Retail Total	62,900	103,300
Government Employees	2,100	2,700
Private Employees	60,800	100,600

^aThe figures in this table include members of the bureaucracy who lack a higher education but who are employed in administrative, technical, and managerial positions. The teaboy, doorman, and errand boys in the government apparatus are not included in these figures since they are listed under the census category "Service Occupations." The statistics in this table also include private employees who represent the white-collar and sales personnel in commerce and industry. Any overestimation that may occur here, however, is compensated for by the statistical absence of the intelligentsia employed in military and security organizations. All figures in this table have been rounded off to the nearest hundred.

Sources: Ministry of Interior, *National and Province Statistics of the First Census of Iran: November 1956*, II, 309-310.

Plan Organization, *National Census of Population and Housing: November 1966, Advance Sample*, Bulletin No. 3, 35.

ally were crushed in the mid-1950s, the middle-class opposition continued although most of it has been forced underground. Nonetheless, strong evidences of this attitude have continued to bubble ominously to the surface. It threatened to explode and destroy the system in the early 1960s during the Amini Period when the intelligentsia responded to a slight release of government pressure by full-scale organization and demonstration.

Under Minister of Education Darakhshish, teachers throughout

Iran formed perhaps the most closely knit grass-roots organization since the days of the Tudah Party. The University of Tehran became the scene of political demonstration and agitation as students massed and met. That period came to an abrupt halt with the commando attack on Tehran University in January 1962 and the tank and machine gun fire of June 1963, and since then the intelligentsia has been relatively quiet. This does not, however, signify any sudden commitment to the system.

On April 10, 1965, an attempt was made on the Shah's life. Fourteen young men were subsequently brought to trial for complicity in what has come to be called the Marble Palace Plot. The point here is not whether these men were guilty, but that they were considered to be an active opposition and threat to the existing system. What cannot be overlooked is that these young men, who averaged 27 years of age, were all members of the professional middle class and half of them were either teachers or students.

In the Spring of 1967 and again in 1968, students at Pahlavi, Tabriz, and Tehran Universities massed and demonstrated against their administrations over issues of grading, tuition, and rational education. But politico-ideological considerations were the key irritants, and indications of this were voiced throughout the demonstrations.¹¹

This alienation arises from many demands. The members of this class whose lives are oriented toward ideas ask for justice, freedom, a quality educational system, a rational civil service, and genuine political participation. The technocrats, physicians, and new bureaucrats demand less favoritism, nepotism, bribery, and special influence—qualities that have long marked the traditional Iranian administrative system.

The professional middle class now confronts the traditional system. Its members hold formidable weapons of knowledge, competence, and educational training—weapons that are sorely needed in all societies embarking upon developmental programs. The elasticity that preserved traditional patterns for centuries is now stretched to the breaking point. The tensions built into this old

¹¹For an analysis documenting student alienation in Iran, see James A. Bill, "The Politics of Student Alienation: The Case of Iran," *Iranian Studies*, 2 (Winter 1969), 8-26.

web-system have indeed begun to snap as vital segments of the professional intelligentsia demand transforming change.

REFORM FROM ABOVE: THE WHITE REVOLUTION

Riza Shah Pahlavi, the father of the present King and founder of the dynasty, ruled Iran from 1925 to 1941. During this time, he subdued the tribes, built a strong central government, and introduced reforms in numerous phases of Iranian life.¹² The changes that had a continuing, accelerating, and largely unintended effect, however, took place in the field of education. Riza Shah determined that Iran should break away from its traditional system of education which centered upon the cleric-controlled *maktabs* and *madrasahs*. A system of public education was established and in 1923 the Majlis passed a law providing that 100 top secondary school students be sent abroad annually to acquire a university education. These returnees, who totaled more than 600, helped staff the newly established Tehran University. They were the core of a new middle class.

Riza Shah was a non-revolutionary reformer who strove to introduce enough change to make Iran a more respectable society in the world community. It would at the same time become a society worth ruling. He never intended that there be socio-political transformation, for the traditional class structure had to remain. The only major modification here was that the Pahlavi family was to be at the center of the new ruling class.¹³ But Riza Shah's reforms from above had unintended consequences that forced his son to adopt quite different policies. Riza Shah planted the seeds that were to grow and blossom into a new social class, and the character of that new class has required a more fundamental set of reforms. Muhammad Riza Shah, therefore, has developed the following two-pronged program to meet this threat: (1) key members of the new class must be drawn into the tradi-

¹²For a detailed discussion of the reforms of Riza Shah, see Amin Banani, *The Modernization of Iran, 1921-1941* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961).

¹³Professor Banani refers to Riza Shah's reforms as "quasi-revolutionary." See, *ibid.*, 120.

tional web-system; and (2) those classes that accept and support traditional patterns must be reinforced.

In attempting to persuade the members of the professional-bureaucratic intelligentsia to adopt the traditional patterns, the political elite has offered numerous incentives, particularly of an economic nature. These have been supplemented by occasional political offers centering upon the Iran-i Nuvin Party and the various security organizations. This policy has served to splinter the new class as certain members have rushed to benefit from these concessions. In so doing, of course, they have covertly or overtly joined the system by utilizing and fortifying the old processes.

Yet, with the violent upheavals of the early 1960s, it became eminently clear that growing sections of the professional middle class were refusing to accept the Shah's program. Thus, it was decided that those classes whose members supported traditional patterns had to be strengthened and brought into closer contact with the political elite. The peasant class was believed to be such a force. In January 1963, therefore, the Shah of Iran inaugurated his "White Revolution," about which he writes:

The realization came to me that Iran needed a deep and fundamental revolution that could, at the same time, put an end to all the social inequalities and all the factors which caused injustice, tyranny and exploitation, and all aspects of reaction which impeded progress and kept our society backward.¹⁴

On January 9, 1963, the Shah outlined the principles of a six-point reform program. On January 26, this program was approved by a referendum, and the White Revolution came into existence. The original six points, supplemented later by six others, have come to form the heart of this new program. The 12 points are:

- (1) Land reform
- (2) Nationalization of forests and pastures
- (3) Public sale of state-owned factories to finance land reform
- (4) Profit-sharing in industry
- (5) Reform of electoral law to include women
- (6) Literacy Corps

¹⁴Muhammad Riza Shah, *The White Revolution* (Tehran: Imperial Pahlavi Library, 1967), 15.

- (7) Health Corps
- (8) Reconstruction and Development Corps
- (9) Rural Courts of Justice
- (10) Nationalization of the waterways
- (11) National reconstruction
- (12) Educational and administrative revolution¹⁵

With the inauguration of this program, the Iranian political elite began speaking a revolutionary language that stressed the need for change. The Shah wrote that the era of rigid ideologies was over, for "they cannot answer the needs of a society that is in a permanent state of revolution."¹⁶ Prime Minister Huvayda stated that "the old structure must be completely destroyed. Only then can a new system be built. You cannot build the new on the foundation of the old."¹⁷ This language indicates that the developments under the White Revolution represent an important step from the past. Iranian leaders are introducing significant new programs and policies. Yet, there are numerous indications that these programs are in fact preserving rather than uprooting the patterns of traditionalism.

The administration of the White Revolution has been established according to traditional power relations. The overall literacy program, for example, has been directly guided by the most powerful members of the political elite, including the Shah's sister and his Minister of Court. The Ministry of Education has also been involved with the various Under-Secretaries in charge of competing programs. The land-reform program has operated in much the same way with the Ministries of Agriculture, Interior, and Finance competing for control on one level while a separate land-reform department was established by the Shah on another level.¹⁸ The

¹⁵In October 1967, the Shah announced the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth points. The nationalization of waterways and the reconstruction of the countryside are of peripheral importance. The educational and administrative point, however, is of great significance, since if implemented it would represent a fundamental effort to confront the demands of the new middle class. All indications are, however, that this revolution is to exist on paper only. The Tehran daily, *Ayandigan*, already refers to it as "The Forgotten Revolution."

¹⁶Shah, *White Revolution*, 19.

¹⁷Personal interview, May 27, 1967.

¹⁸The Department of Land Reform has since become an autonomous Ministry.

picture is further complicated by the existence of numerous other power points including agricultural and credit banks, cooperative organizations, the provincial bureaucracy, and the gendarmerie. All have interacted with one another in interlocking competition. The major event that forced the land-reform program deep within the administrative web-system occurred in March 1963 when Hasan Arsanjani, who spoke a revolutionary language and pursued revolutionary programs, resigned as Minister of Agriculture. He was replaced by a military general who represented the ideal guide for a program organized according to traditional relations.

Muhammad Riza Shah's reform program has been especially designed to build and strengthen those classes that support the traditional system. The bulk of the program of the White Revolution is directly aimed at the peasant, and the essence of the program is the land reform. The early threat of a new, educated middle class had produced a token attempt at distribution of the crown lands in the 1950s. By 1963, however, the threat had magnified to such an extent that the Shah and political elite sought a class ally.¹⁹

The White Revolution in Iran represents a new attempt to introduce reform from above which, it is hoped, will preserve traditional power patterns. Through land reform, the Shah has concentrated the aristocracy in the city by severing their connection with the countryside. He has then moved to ally himself with the peasantry against the professional middle class. The first step is designed to buttress the Monarch's position in the system by weakening the opportunity for upper-class challengers. Much of the Shah's time and energy has been expended in warding off challenges by individuals carrying the names of Qavam, Qashqa'i, Bakhtiyar, and Amini. The greatest growing threat and one that is systemic and not merely personal, however, is posed by the new middle class. The Shah who feels a genuine concern and attachment for the

¹⁹European history is replete with examples of monarchs who have sought allies against the aristocracy. At the same time, they were threatened by the rise of the bourgeois middle class. In nineteenth-century Germany, for example, it was the bourgeoisie that blossomed and gained great economic power. Not only was this class a developing political threat, but it also represented a force that was vital to the industrial growth and security of the nation. In Europe, the few successful examples of "revolution from above" occurred when the ruling monarch or elite formed an alliance with the middle class by making basic concessions to the expanding new class.

peasants has turned to them for support against this new class, and it is in this spirit that the land-reform program and the entire White Revolution has been proclaimed. The instructive example for this policy was set on January 24, 1963, when the Iranian government released the story that 15,000 peasants had marched on Tehran to support the Shah's reform program.²⁰

Some very real steps have been taken to implement land distribution throughout the Iranian countryside, but serious difficulties have plagued the program, and some of these relate directly to the problem of modernization. One vital development, for example, concerns the hesitancy of the peasants to turn to government officials against the old landlord. After centuries of landlord protection against government agents, the peasant refuses to trust those who now say they have come to help him.²¹ In the traditional pattern, the peasant realized he could relate to the landlord through personal bargaining. The civil and military agents of government, however, constantly sought the villager's subjection. The land reform, which has substituted government agent for landlord, has thrown the villager into the uncomfortable situation of not knowing where he stands with the new group. With the old landlord, the peasant always knew when he could push and how he could get what he needed. He had become an expert in dealing with the landlord and in living according to the traditional patterns.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty that the land-reform program (as well as the entire White Revolution) has encountered is the serious shortage of technical, managerial, and organizational manpower. Large groups within the professional middle class refuse to dedicate themselves to programs that the political elite has planned and sponsored. In many cases it is not so much that these groups refuse to work as it is that they lack commitment. By mid-1967, 7,600 agricultural cooperatives had been established, yet there were only 1,200 managers and assistant managers to direct them. These officials were hastily trained in three- and six-month courses. The shortage of trained manpower to direct the land reform became so severe that the Reconstruction and Development Corps personnel were converted to land-reform officials.

²⁰See *Washington Post*, January 25, 1963, B8.

²¹In February 1966, the Director of Land Reform in Fars Province named this as one of the biggest obstacles to implementation of land reform.

The political elite made an early and obvious attempt to gain the loyalty and commitment of the land-reform officials. This occurred with the formation of the 21st Majlis in 1963. A block of nearly 50 representatives were government officials involved in the land-reform program. Many were graduates of Karaj Agricultural College, and all were selected for the Majlis despite the fact that they were political unknowns. Although this policy may have persuaded a few persons to pursue careers in land reform, it failed to produce dedication and commitment in many who were actually in charge of land reform at the provincial level. Between 1964 and 1968, the Iranian news channels carried numerous stories about on-the-job failures of land reform officials. Several dozen officials in the districts of Khumayn, Kirman, Gilan, Kurdistan, Tavalish, Darab, and Qum were removed from their positions and charged with misconduct, corruption, and incompetence.²² In a situation of great manpower shortage, it is doubly debilitating to have indifference and incompetence prevail among the existing personnel. Much of this, however, was built into the program when it was organized according to the traditional patterns.

Article XIV of the Majlis Election Law of 1907 states that six classes (*tabaqat*) will be represented in supervising national electoral procedures. These are the clerics, nobles, landlords, businessmen, tradesmen, and farmers. The absence of any professional class is not surprising since such a class hardly existed at the time. With the inauguration of the six-point reform program in 1963, however, the nobles and landlords were struck from the list and were replaced by the workers and peasants. No reference was made to any professional middle class. The omission signified the elite's stance concerning the intelligentsia and indicated the direction that the White Revolution would take. In general, the members of the new middle class believe that they have been deliberately bypassed in the reform program. They point to the list of reforms and argue that their interests have been considered only as an afterthought.²³

²²There were, of course, many dedicated land-reform officials. This was especially true at the beginning of the program when Arsanjani surrounded himself with young men who worked in the provinces at great risk to themselves.

²³In December 1966, a series of articles appeared in the Iranian press deploring the fact that the professional middle class had been bypassed in the

The Shah's reform policies have promoted tremendous economic growth and industrial development. The various five-year plans and regional development projects stand as indicators of the effort and achievement involved. Iran is now receiving approximately one billion dollars a year in oil revenues and has taken important strides in constructing a gigantic petrochemical industry. Economic and industrial growth has never been more spectacular. This progress has served to cushion the challenge of the new class since its members derive great economic benefit from such trends. The political elite clearly recognizes this and uses economic development as a means of gaining the participation of the professional middle class.²⁴

Although the White Revolution has ignored political reforms such as building effective political parties and encouraging mass participation, it has sharply accelerated an already visible trend in the composition of the political elite. While approximately 50 percent of the members of the first 20 Majlises (1906-1963) were the offspring of the landlords, the figure dropped to less than 25 percent in the 21st and 22nd Majlises. In the 21st Majlis (1963-1967) landlord representation dropped to its lowest point since 1909.²⁵ Cabinet and other high bureaucratic positions also reflect a general trend toward young, better-educated, and more middle-class representation. The difference between the Mahmud Jams and the Asadullah Alams is obviously less than that between the latter and the Amir Abbas Huvaydas. The Shah of Iran has been deliberately and selectively co-opting members of the intelligentsia ever since the

reform program. The article that ignited this written explosion was Dr. Yahya Marvasti, "Maqz-ha-yi Mutafakkir-ra Dar Yabid"—"Rescue the Thinking Minds," *Nigin*, reprinted under the title "Bi-Mardum Haqq-i Izhar-i Vujud Bidahid"—"Give the People the Right to Show They Exist," in *Khvandaniha*, 12 Azar 1345/3 December 1966, 3.

²⁴An excellent example of this occurred in April 1967 when some 5,000 secondary school teachers marched in the streets of Tehran in honor of the Shah's miraculous escape from the assassination attempt of April 1965. A few days later, the government announced that the secondary school teachers were to receive 210 million rials. This was to be supplied from the military budget and was to go toward paying back wages owed the teachers for years.

²⁵This information on Majlis representation has been drawn from Zuhrah Shaji'i, *Nimayandigan-i Majlis-i Shawra-yi Milli dar Bistuyik Dawrah-yi Qan-unguzari—The Representatives of the National Consultative Assembly During the Twenty-One Legislative Periods* (Tehran: 1344/1965), 230, 276.

commencement of the White Revolution. In so doing, he has been attempting to increase the political system's absorptive capacity.

Nonetheless, large numbers of the intelligentsia continue to view the reform program as a measure directed against them. They see few major programs as designed for their benefit and argue that the politicians nonetheless demand that the educated middle class participate and sacrifice. Sporadic economic and political concessions are viewed as temporary bribes to obtain their support for an antagonistic opponent's program. Certain circles of Iranian scholars describe the entire program as bribery of the intellectuals. These professionals argue that not only do policies of personal political co-optation provide only the most minimal and fragile absorptive capacity but also that the co-optation is based on personal loyalty and connections rather than on skill and achievement. The White Revolution is generally viewed as an attempt to turn the peasants against the professional middle class and in the long run to preserve the traditional system.²⁶

By soliciting the commitment of the professional middle class to the White Revolution, the political elite has in fact intensified the intra-class conflict that marks the new class. Just as the intelligentsia has introduced a situation of incoherence on the class level, so it too is split internally. The intra-class struggle revolves around those who wish to alter the traditional patterns and those who wish to preserve them. By initiating the White Revolution, the political elite has stiffened the resistance of those members of the intelligentsia who lean toward system preservation. First, the revolutionary language and the social need for land reform have led certain members of the middle class to decide that the present system should be supported. Second, the political elite's need for professional participation has in turn caused them to redouble their efforts to convince the members of the intelligentsia to cooperate. Thus, the economic enticements, for example, have become more numerous and appealing.

The Iranian political elite has recognized a severe challenge to the traditional system on both the intra-class and inter-class levels. This challenge, which expresses itself in terms of sharp division

²⁶These conclusions are based on two years of discussions and interviews with members of the professional middle class in Iran.

at both levels, is being addressed by an attempt to present both an intra-class and inter-class solution. Old relations are promoted and buttressed with the new class by offering rewards to those who cooperate. On the inter-class level, a concerted attempt is made to fashion an alliance with a class that generally supports the traditional system. Such efforts are all bound together within the program of the White Revolution.

This White Revolution, however, carries with it far-reaching though unintended consequences. Many of these have already begun to appear while others are important possibilities that demand critical analysis. With the actual commencement of many of the reform programs, the Iranian political elite began traversing a path from which there is no retreat. Daily publicity has been accorded the reforms and Iran Radio has continually publicized the benefits that were to accrue to the peasant population. The landlords were violently criticized and castigated, and the evils and sufferings of the past were credited to them. This campaign has increasingly alerted the peasant to the possibilities that are his, and he has come to expect a new life through land reform and literacy. One of the last things that Minister of Agriculture Arsanjani did before he left office was to call a national congress of peasants in Tehran in January 1963. This meeting stressed to the peasants their new rights and position and showed them how to organize. Since its inception, the rural reform program has been steadily gathering momentum, and it has become very difficult to control and direct. Unforeseen divisions occurred within the peasant class, for example, as certain peasants benefited while others suffered from the changes.²⁷ The administration of the reform has been weak and inadequate, and the lack of managers, agronomists, agricultural engineers, and administrators has allowed the program to veer out of control. The vital cooperative network has existed largely on paper, and cooperative supervisors and managers have been too few and too inexperienced. By 1968, the Shah and the political elite were seriously considering scrapping the entire cooperative system and instituting a system of collective farms.

²⁷See, for example, James A. Bill, "Thorny Success: Iran's Progress in Land Reform Uncovers Problems in Technique," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 12, 1968, 4.

In the meantime, the villagers have been increasing their demands and voicing new expectations. The literacy program has led the newly literate to demand further formal education and the right to attend secondary and vocational schools. The scattered but nationwide presence of the Health Corps has led many villagers to appeal for doctors, clinics, and hospitals. Thus, not only are many of the programs beginning to take unpredictable turns but also the very people who were intended to benefit from the reform are beginning to make increasing demands. In such a situation, the Iranian political elite needs the skilled manpower to direct and control the forces that have been unleashed. This can only be provided by a participating and committed professional-bureaucratic intelligentsia.

The intelligentsia, however, is not committed since many of its members refuse to help preserve relations that work against them. The White Revolution, which is itself organized and operated according to traditional patterns, is a sharp reminder of the persistence of the past throughout society. Many members of the new class are clearly hesitant to join such a program. Perhaps the most significant feature of the White Revolution is that it is attempting reform through the traditional patterns of personalism and pervasive tension. The lack of institutions and rationalized processes results in the insecurity and inefficiency that are already evident in many areas of rural Iran. This has begun to alienate many of the villagers who are told that they are to begin new lives but who in fact see themselves victimized by government agents.

But even where the reform programs have met with success, new problems are generated. By virtue of literacy and land reform, the offspring of villagers are beginning to acquire the tools that will enable them to penetrate the middle class in larger and larger numbers. One of the most profound unintended consequences of the White Revolution is the accelerating growth of the professional middle class. Yet this is the very class that is needed to control and guide the explosive reform program. Thus, the dilemma facing the Iranian decision makers inheres in the very reform program that they dramatically chose to reinforce the traditional patterns. First, to implement and control the reforms, the elite needs the participation and commitment of the very class that threatens them. Second, many of those peasants who benefit from the reforms will

move into the already expanding professional middle class, and here they will join in a new level of criticism and demand. Whether this new class will forge new relations or will construct its own version of the traditional network remains to be seen.

For the future of Iranian politics it may well be that the most important unintended consequence of the reform policy will be produced by the special effort now being made to absorb the new class into the old system. The effect of the fissures this has caused within the professional middle class is likely to be felt long after this class has come to political power. It will clearly complicate the struggle that certain members of the new class must wage in order to fashion a system capable of confronting the continuing challenge of social transformation.