

CHAPTER 9 THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION (1906-09)

During the Constitutional revolution a coalition of *bazaaris*, religious elite (*oloma*), and Iranian intelligentsia mobilized supporters during a series of symbolic protests (*bast*) throughout 1905-1906 that led to the establishment of the first Iranian constitution. Following the establishment of the constitution, counter-movements groups—the conservative *olama* and supporters of the Qajar monarchy—mobilized people who were opposed to the constitution. This chapter reviews movement messages employed during the *basts* that led to the establishment of the constitution and the first Iranian national parliament (*Majles-e shoora-yi milli*). The debate that took place concerning the *Fundamental Laws*, which outlined the authority of the Iranian National Assembly, is also reviewed.

Whether this event was a “movement,” or a “revolution,” or perhaps even a failed revolution, is debatable (see chapter 2). Most refer to the event as a revolution in that it did introduce the first Iranian constitution and involved a change in the governing ideal of the state. At the same time, in terms of broad based societal change, many “revolutionary” goals were unrealized. For the sake of consistency, and because the movement did introduce a dramatically new framework of governance, I refer to the event as the Constitutional revolution throughout this work. Importantly, the “Constitutional revolution” should be regarded as an extension of the Tobacco protest. Moreover, the processes involved in making the tobacco movement, and later the revolution, are intimately linked together (see McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 1997). As such, it is hard to imagine the Constitutional revolution occurring without having been preceded by the Tobacco movement.

The dominant discourse following the establishment of the Iranian legislative assembly concerned exactly where the governing authority the National Assembly was derived from. Was authority derived from the will of individual Iranians who exercised rights

as citizens, or was it an extension of God's divine will? This is often referred to as the *mashruta* vs. *mashru'a* debate (constitutionalism vs. religious law) (see Bayat 1991). Supporters of constitutionalism believed Iranian "citizens"—with rights afforded to them under a constitution—exercised free-will and could make national law. Conservative religious thinkers opposed to constitutionalism believed that only God was sovereign, and that being a Moslem was primarily based on submission to God's will. As such, humanity should follow God's laws, and could not "make" new law. Many liberal religious thinkers refuted this line of reasoning, and generally argued that humanity, as God's vice-regency on earth, had the obligation to make law that governed a nation.

This chapter does not discuss, in depth, the period of Iranian civil war (1908-9). In general, dominant movement ideas that were fought over during the civil war were established early in the movement. Indeed, some movement leaders felt they had been "given" the assembly early in the movement (1906-07), and that they then had to "earn" it in the subsequent civil conflict (1908-09) (Bayat 1991:215). In this respect, many of the movement frames used to mobilize people both for, and against, the constitutional authority of the National Assembly were established early in the movement before widespread violence erupted. Once the movement frames of competing groups became irreconcilably opposed to one another, a period of civil conflict (1908-9) occurred.

While the constitutionalist forces ultimately prevailed in the civil war, after the period of civil conflict they lacked the resources to implement the bulk of their program. Tribal rivalries contributed to widespread unrest after 1909. By 1911, when British and Russian forces entered the country under the auspices of the 1907 Anglo-Russian Agreement, the authority of the National Assembly outside of Tehran was negligible. Nonetheless, the frames debated during the Constitutional revolution would anchor subsequent movements undertaken by future nationalist and religious forces.

Several excellent studies¹ provide a history of the Constitutional revolution. I depended on these studies, and the primary documents available in translation, to provide an accounting of the dominant movement frames developed during the revolution. In general, the Constitutional revolution can be characterized as an attempt by reformers—usually inspired by Western ideas related to representative governance—to fashion a “modern” system of Iranian governance that accommodated the traditional authority of the landowning class and the religious elites. How sincere different reformers were in this accommodation varied considerably. Some groups regarded the reformist *mojtaheds* as allies. Other groups regarded clerical authority as an obstruction to the constitutional ideal. While some members of the traditional groups believed in Iranian constitutionalism, others used the conflict as an opportunity to re-assert lost tribal or religious authority.

The Negotiation of Movement Frames

The mobilizing frame of the Tobacco movement—that the Qajar Shah should never allow non-believers (*kafirs*) and foreigners (*infidels*) to dominate Muslims—changed during the Constitutional revolution. The Tobacco movement was a success insofar as the tobacco concession was abrogated, but it did not end British or Russian influence in the region. In particular, Muzaffar al-Din Shah—the Qajar ruler following Nasser al-Din’s assassination in 1896—continued to secure loans from abroad and negotiated new concession arrangements with the British. For instance, he brokered a concession that granted a monopoly on the exploration of oil in Iran to a British interest headed by William Knox D’arcy. But the Tobacco movement did demonstrate that movement factions could challenge the authority of the Qajar Shah. Later, these groups broadened their demands to include establishing a “consultative” assembly of prominent Iranian citizens. This idea became the dominant frame of mobilization during the Constitutional revolution.

Dominant movement frames can transcend individual authority and cause leaders to change their rhetorical speech in order to maintain—or increase—support among a population. In most movements some leaders are driven by the goal of enhancing (or maintaining) their own authority as opposed to fulfilling the movement ideal. Nonetheless, resonant movement messages ultimately constrain the actions of leaders. Moreover, resonant frames force opposition leaders to directly refute the “new” ideas that are being used to mobilize support for a movement. For example, Fazlollah Nuri, a prominent *mojtahed* in Tehran, reluctantly supported the establishment of a National Assembly because he realized the reform movement had considerable popular support and he would have lost prestige if he did not join the movement. As movement goals expanded to include establishing a legislative assembly, one that could make national law, he became the primary clerical opponent of the Constitutional revolution. One reason for this shift was that he realized that the assembly was going to pass laws in areas that he regarded as the domain of the clerical elite. Seeing that his authority—and the authority of the Islamic elite in general—was likely to be diluted in some social spheres, he declared that the constitution and the legislative assembly did not conform to Islamic tradition.

The machinations of the religious elite, tribal leaders and intelligentsia during the Constitutional revolution demonstrate that new ideas, constitutionalism and a representative government, developed enough resonance among many Iranians that they could be used to mobilize people. At the same time, traditional leaders were still invested with extraordinary authority by virtue of their position in the religious, monarchal, and tribal hierarchy. This traditional authority was also used to mobilize people. It is impossible to discern the extent to which movement activists were influenced by the idea of constitutionalism, as opposed to those who were being mobilized in support of an individual with traditional authority. Many were likely influenced by a combination of both these factors.

Symbolic action undertaken by supporters of constitutionalism was quixotic and complex. While the anti-imperialist frame of mobilization used in the Tobacco movement still had resonance, movement activists eventually used the British embassy, and implicit British support for the movement, to counter-balance a threat of Russian intervention on behalf of the Qajar Shah. In particular, the most remarkable symbolic event during this movement was a *bast*—undertaken by as many as 12,000-14,000 people—in the British embassy. At the same time, the grievance that precipitated the initial movement was *bazaari* discontent over customhouse taxes administered by a Belgian, Joseph Naus. In this respect, Naus became a symbol for continued European influence in Iranian domestic affairs. Anti-imperial frames became more resonant among Iranians after the publication of the Anglo-Russian Treaty of 1907 that divided Iran into British and Russian spheres of influence.

Social Structure: The Clerical Elite in Tehran

At the time of the Constitutional revolution there were four prominent *mujtaheds* in Teheran. They were, to varying degrees, rivals of one another. The Imam Jom'eh, the leader of the Friday prayers, was related to the Qajar Shah through marriage and received esteem from his association with the Qajar court. Abdollah Behbahani and Shaikh Fazlollah Nuri had considerable popular support among rank and file Iranians. Fazlollah Nuri also had a good relationship with the Qajar court. Mohammad Tabataba'i had less popular support than the other preeminent religious leaders, but a strong following among religious intellectuals and the intelligentsia. In general, the *bazaari* merchants in opposition to the Qajar Shah received their primary support from Behbahani and Tabataba'i. These men, often for personal reasons, were in opposition to the Prime Minister (*sadr-i a'zam*) Ain al-Daula, who was the primary court administrator in charge of fashioning, and enforcing, Qajar state policy.

Behbahani and Tabataba'i were the two primary religious authorities who supported the Constitutional revolution. Their primary rival, Shaikh Fazlollah Nuri, at first supported the Constitutional revolution, but then became a strong supporter of the Qajar Shah. He wrote several anti-constitutional tracts that were widely distributed during the conflict. Following the civil war—wherein a coalition of tribal and constitutional forces defeated supporters of the Qajar Shah—Fazlollah Nuri was arrested, convicted of treason, and killed by hanging. Ayatollah Khomeini, leader of the 1979 Revolution, regarded Fazlollah Nuri as a heroic figure. Indeed, the outline of Fazlollah Nuri's opposition to the 1907 constitution forms much of the basis for Khomeini's own objections to constitutionalism and secular governance (Moin 2000).

Tabataba'i was a sincere constitutionalist, although he clearly grafted the meaning of European constitutionalism into his own cultural framework. He also attempted to protect the authority of the religious elite (*olama*) during legislative debates. In particular, Nazem al-Islam Kermani (1967), a movement activist and founder of the Secret Society, regarded reformist clerics like Tabataba'i as important partners in the Constitutional revolution (see Bayat 1991; Browne [1910] 1966; Martin 1989).

The Development of the Movement Frame of Constitutionalism

The Protest of 1905-06

Delineating the “Constitutional revolution” into a discrete time frame is a difficult proposition. But, the popular protests that took place in 1905 are directly connected to the eventual call for a constitutional form of governance in early 1906. At the same time, the movement goal of “constitutionalism” was not articulated in early 1905, but evolved during three protests (*basts*) that took place between the *Moharam* ceremonies in early 1905, and the summer of 1906 (see Browne [1910] 1966).

Following the Tobacco movement the Qajar state continued to have trouble making payments on loans previously obtained from the British and Russians. This led to a series of custom reforms, eventually managed by a Belgian, Joseph Naus, to generate state income. The reforms did generate more state income, but not all of this income went into state projects, or to pay the existing debt to the British and Russians. For instance, the Qajar royal court took extravagant trips to Russia and Great Britain and this placed a financial burden on the royal treasury. Many Iranians objected to these trips and their cost (Browne [1910] 1966).

The *bazaaris* continually objected to the customs taxes from the time the custom house reforms were introduced in 1897, but 1905 was a particularly difficult year economically due to a poor harvest and ongoing instability in Russia (Abrahamian 1982:81). These events led to a postponement of payments from the Qajar government to local money-changers (*sarrafs*) and put pressure on merchants not to increase prices during a time of high inflation. The *sarrafs* were soon engaging in periodic *basts* to protest the nonpayment of money they were owed by the Qajar state (Martin 1989:53-54). Likewise, some Tehran *mojtaheds* closely connected with the *bazaaris* were sometimes involved in financial enterprises of their own and were also discontented. (Martin 1989:55-60).

During the *Moharam* ceremonies of 1905 merchant opposition to the Qajar Shah coalesced around the demand for the dismissal of Joseph Naus and Prime Minister Ain al-Daula who were both closely associated with customhouse policy. During *Moharam* a picture of Naus, dressed as a *mollah*, began to circulate among religious groups. Soon the offensive picture and discontent with Naus were integrated into the *Moharam* sermons. Most prominent among these was an *Ashura* speech given by Behbahani who commented that Naus, and his authority, was an affront to the faithful (Martin 1989). These sermons used the themes established in the Tobacco movement. In particular, the call for the dismissal of Naus, a foreigner who exercised authority over believers, followed much of the same line of

reasoning as the Tobacco movement. During the a *bast* at the shrine of *Hazrat Abdol-Azim*, the merchants' spokesman stated:

The government must reverse its present policy of helping the Russians at the expense of Iranian merchants, creditors, and manufacturers. It must protect our businessmen, even if their products are not yet as good as those of foreign companies. If the present policy continues, our whole economy will be ruined. (*Habl al-Matin*, June 19, 1905. Translated by Abrahamian 1982:81).

During this protest, the Qajar monarch, Mozaffar al-Din Shah, was preparing to depart for Russia and England. He agreed that he would establish a council of merchants, repay the debt owed to the *sarrafs* and consider firing Naus when he returned from his trip. These promises were not kept.

The specific event that precipitated the next *bast* occurred when a group of merchants were *bastinadoed*—a traditional form of public punishment—because they had, in response to unrest in Russia,² raised the price of sugar. As a result, the merchants asked the preeminent *mojtaheds* of Tehran to intervene on their behalf and condemn this treatment. Later, a regional governor *bastinadoed* a *mollah* in Kerman. This act gave the clerical elite an event that they used to craft a rhetorical challenge to the authority of the Qajar Shah that drew upon their traditional role as the guardians of Islam (Bayat 1991). In fact, some think that the punishment of the local *mollah* may have been manufactured, or exaggerated, just for this purpose (see Bayat 1991).

At a subsequent meeting of prominent religious authorities and their supporters the clerical divisions concerning support for the oppositional *bazaaris* was readily apparent. First, during a speech by Jamal al-Din Vaez, he stated that the clerical representatives at the meeting were the deputies of the hidden Imam, obligated to fight against oppression, and then

stated: “If the Shah were a true muslim, he would cooperate with the olama.” (Martin 1989:156). Martin (1989) states that some clerical factions had been discussing the excommunication of the Shah throughout the year. But, in this meeting attended by all the clerical elite, the speech was interrupted by Imam Jo‘meh—related to the Qajar Shah through marriage—who denounced Jamal al’Din Vaez as an irreligious *Babi* and declared his speech treasonous. The *luti* and *tollab* supporters of Imam Jo‘meh then beat and evicted Jamal al-Din Vaez from the mosque. He sought refuge in the house of Tabataba’i (Bayat 1991; Martin 1989).

These events precipitated the decision by supporters of Tabataba’i and Behbahani to seek *bast*, like the merchants in the preceding protest, in the shrine of *Hazrat Abdol-Azim*. This *bast* lasted from mid-December until January 12, 1906. There were as many as 2,000 *bastis* and a range of groups financially supported them. During the *bast*, members of the *anjomans* consistently expanded the frame of protest to advocate for new government institutions (Bayat 1991).

Nazim al-Islam Kermani (1967), a reformist *tollab* who later left the clerical class, helped found an activist *anjoman*, the Secret Society. He has been a primary source for accounts of the negotiations that took place between the *bastis* and representatives of the Qajar state. According to him, Tabatabai’i and Behbahani quickly became the spokesmen for the *bastis*. At first, their primary demands focused on the dismissal of Joseph Naus and Ain al-Daula, but the Qajar authorities refused to accede to these demands. Over the course of the negotiations the demand for the dismissal of these individuals was dropped and other demands were negotiated (see Bayat 1991; Browne [1910] 1966; Martin 1989).

Of particular importance was the demand that a “House of Justice” (*adalat-khana*) be established in all the regional provinces that would hear grievances of citizens. This demand was common in the literature that had been produced by the Society for Humanity (*Adamiyat*

anjoman) (Abrahamian 1982). The proposed function of this institution was ambiguous and this aided in its acceptance by the negotiating parties. Martin (1988:74-89) has an excellent summary of the historical meaning of the *adalat-khana*, its specific meaning to different factions, and how the demand was added to the list being negotiated. In general, reformist elements in the clergy and *anjomans* pressed for the inclusion of a consultative assembly of prominent Iranians. The Qajar authorities, in response, stated they were willing to establish a “House of Justice” in each province (see also Browne [1910] 1966: 113-122).

Ultimately, it was the demand that the House of Justice be established--or as Tabataba’i interpreted the concession, an Assembly of Justice (*majles-adalat*)--that became a mobilizing frame of the broader Constitutional revolution. The difference in the interpretation of this negotiated demand is significant. The Qajar governance associated the House of Justice with previous administrative reforms, largely unsuccessful, that attempted to standardize law and centralize the authority of the Iranian state. The reformers clearly wanted a legislative assembly, and although Tabataba’i did not elaborate on his interpretation of the *majles-adalat* (Assembly of Justice) it was generally understood to be an assembly (*majles*) of prominent citizens, not a Qajar institution designed to hear disputes. The final arrangement stated:

The establishment of a state house of justice (*adalat-khana-yi daulati*) to execute the laws of the sharia and ensure the security of the subjects is our foremost objective. To carry out this sacred objective, the law of Islam, which consists of the establishment of the boundaries and the execution of the precepts of the sharia, must be enforced immediately throughout the land. There shall be no difference in the treatment of subjects, regardless of their status; nor shall considerations of personal interest play any part in the execution of the law. Clarification of the law will be given in a code shortly to

be issued, which will be in conformity with the sharia. Its provisions will be enforced in all provinces. (Nazem al-Islam Kermani (1978-79) *Tarikh-e bidari*:358. Translated by Martin 1989:75)

The specific functions and composition of the “House of Justice” was left purposefully vague. This allowed for the *bastis* to claim victory and for the government to conclude its negotiations with the *bastis* without dismissing Naus (see Abrahamian 1982:82 and Martin 1989). Furthermore, some prominent *mojtaheds* were not enthusiastic about the House of Justice because it would, as a practical matter, also limit their authority. Indeed, this was likely a reason why Ain al-Daula initiated the inclusion of an House of Justice into the negotiations. Also, the most radical factions among the *bastis* regarded the resolution as a “trap” (Bayat 1991). Still, the *bast* ended on January 12, 1906 with the triumphant return of the *olama* to Tehran in royal carriages.

Introduction of the Frame of “Nationalism”

Nazem al-Islam Kermani (1967), upon the *bastis* return to Tehran, reported that the crowd chanted, “Long Live the Nation of Iran,” and that this was the first time he had heard reference to the concept of the Iranian nationhood (*Mellat-e Iran*) during crowd activity in Iran (Abrahamian 1982:82; see also Bayat 1991). Later, whether the legitimacy of the legislative assembly represented the “national” interest, as opposed to maintaining “religious” faith, was a primary debate among movement factions. In this respect, even if Kermani’s reporting is hyperbole, it demonstrates that the most radical reformist were inclined to frame ongoing events in the 1905-06 conflict as a triumph of Iranian *nationalism*, as opposed to a triumph for a specific individual or the traditional religious clergy. In general, the frame of Iranian “nationalism,”—largely mediated through the concept of “constitutionalism”—was

introduced during this movement. Still, the meaning of “nationalism” was debated using traditional Iranian institutions, and primarily by individuals who had traditional authority in Iranian society.

The Third Bast and the Great Exodus

Despite the *bastis* return, opposition to the government by the prominent *mojtaheds* and secret societies continued. Their demands now centered on the implementation of the agreement negotiated during the previous *bast*. In particular, Tabataba’i began referring to the concept of consultative legislature with some independent authority, rather than the implementation of the more narrowly defined “House of Justice” (see Martin 1989). Street level preachers associated with the *anjomans* appear to have driven events by rhetorically insisting on the establishment of a consultative assembly, and stating that this had been promised during the previous *bast* (Bayat 1991; Martin 1989).

The specific incident that ignited the “great exodus” was when Shaikh Mohammad Soltan al-Va’ez, a fiery preacher and supporter of the reformers, was arrested following a sermon denouncing the Qajar monarchy (Bayat 1991). The following excerpt offers an example of how the narrative frame that blamed foreigners for Iranian malaise (those in the North and South who “believe we are their property”) was symbolically linked to the incompetence of the Qajar monarchy. There is also a reference to the “backwardness” of the orthodox clerics who support the Qajar monarchy. This excerpt uses a common narrative strategy—still employed in modern Iran—wherein Iranians are asked to “awaken” and see the injustice around them. Likewise, activism is often characterized as a demonstration that the people, in some cases “the nation,” has “awakened” from a deep slumber.

O Iranians! O brethren of my beloved country! [How long] will this treacherous intoxication keep you slumbering? Enough of this intoxication.

Lift up your heads. Open your eyes. Cast a glance around you, and behold how the world has become civilized. All the savages of Africa and Negroes of Zanzibar are marching towards civilization, knowledge, labor, and riches. Behold your neighbors (the Russians), who 200 years ago were in much worse condition than we. Behold them now how they possess everything. In the past, others looked on us as a great nation. *Now, we are reduced to such a condition that our neighbors in the north and south already believe us to be their property and divide our country between themselves when they choose...* We have no guns, no army, no secure finances, no proper government, no commercial laws. *In the whole of Iran we have not one factory of our own, because our government is a parasite...* *All this backwardness is due to the autocracy and to injustice and to the want of laws. Also your clergy are at fault, for they preach that life is short and earthly honors are only human vanities.* These sermons lead you away from this world into submission, slavery and ignorance. The Monarchs, at the same time, despoil you with their power over your property, your freedom, and your rights. *And with this comes the strangers who receive from you all your money, and instead furnish you with green, blue, and red cloth, gaudy glassware, and luxury furniture. These are the cause of your misery, and the great luxury of the Monarchs, some clerics, and the foreigners.* (British Foreign Office 371/Persia “Translation of the Controversial Speech.” In Abrahamian 1982:83).

In response to the arrest of the preacher, Behbahani dispatched his *tollabs* and *lutis* to free Mohammad Soltan al-Va’ez from jail. During this action a young *seyyed* was shot and killed by a government soldier. The next morning a crowd carried his body to the central

mosque in Tehran where Behbahani joined them and they began to engage in the traditional Shi'i lamentation rituals. The *bazaar* closed, a large crowd joined the mourning processional, and soon government troops attempted to disperse the crowd and force the *bazaar* to reopen. These confrontations with state security forces resulted in more fatalities. Estimates vary, but between fifteen to twenty two people were likely killed with hundreds injured (see Browne [1910] 1966; Abrahamian 1982). Nazem al-Islam Kermani (1967), in his diary of events, reported that over one hundred were murdered. Among the casualties was another *seyyed*, Abdol Majid. Browne ([1910] 1966) indicates that the following verse was composed following this event:

Once more Hossein hath died to please Yazid;
 Abdu'l-Hamid hath slain 'Abdul'l-Majid
 May God accept anew, O prophet mine,
 A thousand-fold this sacrifice of thine! (118)

Abrahamian (1982) states: "From that point on, some members of the *ulama* openly compared the Qajars to the notorious Yazid, the Sunni leader who had killed the Shi'i martyr Imam Hussein" (83).

Although Fazlollah Nuri and Imam Jom'eh were rivals of Behbahani, it appears they were compelled to join both Behbahani and Tabataba'i at the mosque where the crowd had gathered. In the case of Fazlollah Nuri a crowd went to his house, informed him of the events, and sensing the popular sentiment, he lent his considerable authority to the protest against the government (Bayat 1991; Martin 1989). Government forces surrounded the mosque, whereupon the *mojtaheds* asked for permission to retire to the holy city of Qom. This request was granted and, according to an eyewitness, the road between Qom and Tehran became so busy that it "was like the street of a town" (Browne [1910] 1966:118). Between 2-3,000

people accompanied Tabataba'i and Behbahani to Qom. Fazlollah Nuri remained in Tehran for three days before he also emigrated to Qom. He was apparently being pressured by Prime Minister Ain al-Daula, his benefactor in the Qajar court, to remain in Tehran (Bayat 1991; Browne [1910] 1966; Martin 1989).

The Bast in the British Embassy

On July 19, 1906, roughly fifty minor merchants—after first sending two representatives to the embassy to see if their *bast* would be respected—sought sanctuary at the British embassy. The merchants were worried because they had never interacted with officials at the embassy, and also because this particular *bast* was clearly an innovation (see Bayat 1991 and Martin 1989). There are conflicting accounts as to who first planned the *bast* in the British embassy. The most compelling evidence indicates that Behbahani, who was in contact with officials at the embassy, informed some of his followers among the minor merchants and guild laborers that they should seek *bast* in the British embassy after the *mojtaheds* left for Qom (see Bayat 1991; Martin 1989). Behbahani received support from the British and regarded them as an ally in his attempt to have Ain al-Daula dismissed. As a practical matter, the embassy was one of the few places where a *bast*, undertaken by minor figures without an authoritative representative, would not be forcefully disrupted by the supporters of the Qajar monarchy.

The merchants were later joined, at their request, by students from the *Madrassa-yi Sadr* and *Dar al-Shafa* (Martin 1989:91). Supporters of Behbahani arranged for payments to maintain the *bast*. Rapidly, the number of *bastis* in the embassy increased. By early August there were between 12,000-14,000 individuals on the British compound. They were extremely well organized, with as many as 80 craft guilds represented, many with their own tents that were traditionally used during the *Moharam* ceremonies. There was a common

kitchen in one tent that prepared meals and some *bastis*—particularly the seminary students—were subsidized through an organized payment system (Browne [1910] 1966:120-123).

Points of Tension Among the Merchants During the Bast.

In general, the minor merchants and guild workers who participated in the *bast* were not members of the prominent *bazaari* families. At first, when the prominent merchants—not represented in the initial *bast*—sought to interject themselves into the conflict as “representatives” of the *bastis* they were rejected as intermediaries. Nonetheless, as the *bast* continued, the prominent merchants did occasionally act as liaisons between the merchants who had sought *bast* and the Qajar representatives. The *bastis* formed a committee soon after the *bast* began and it also negotiated with the Qajar court. Radical reformers, active in the *anjomans*, were well represented on this committee (Bayat 1991; Martin 1989).

Although the establishment of a consultative assembly (*majles-e adalat*) was among the demands, many of the *bastis* did not have a clear picture of what this institution was, or even if its establishment was their primary goal. All accounts indicate that when Prime Minister Ain al-Daula was dismissed (among the initial demands of the *bastis*) that many guild workers were inclined to end their protest (see Browne [1910] 1966:122). To maintain unity, and extend the demands of the *bastis*, Nazem al-Islam Kermani (1967) indicates that speakers from the *Dar al-Fanoun*—a university that taught a largely European curriculum—were brought in to lecture on constitutionalism, law and government. Also, an observer at the embassy noted that there were traditional story tellers (*rawza-khwan*) relating the stories of the martyrdom of Hossein in many of the guild tents.

Nearly every tent used to have a *rawza-khwan*, and it is really an admirable tableau, these tents with their circles of listeners and the *rawza-khwan* at one end, relating the old, old stories of Hasan and Husayn. At the tragic parts, the

audience would weep in that extraordinary Persian manner, and beat their heads in sign of grief (Correspondence to Browne [1910] 1966:120).

The *bast* brought together a remarkable milieu of Iranian society. On the one hand, the *bast* employed the traditional narratives of struggle against oppression that were embedded in the stories of Hossein, but leaders were actively introducing new ideas, and were working to educate the *bastis* to maintain movement solidarity and extend the movement frame to include a legislative assembly.

A “National” Assembly or an “Islamic” Assembly? Points of Tension Among the Bastis and the Islamic Elite

One of the strategies of the Qajar state was to negotiate directly with the religious elite in Qom in an attempt to ensure their return to Tehran. The Qajar officials assumed that if the *mojtaheds* returned to Tehran that popular support for the *bast* in the embassy would decrease. To this end, there was an attempt to circumnavigate the demands of the *bastis* in the British embassy by opening a separate line of negotiation with the religious elite in Qom. The *bastis* were aware of this tactic and sent a telegram to the *mojtaheds* in Qom telling them not to return to Tehran until the demands being negotiated from the British embassy were met. Tabataba’i and Behbahani, who had ties with many of the *bastis* in the embassy, appear to have cajoled Fazlollah Nuri into remaining in Qom (Martin 1989).

In communications between Qom and Tehran a primary demand became the establishment of Islamic Consultative Council (*Majles-e shoora-yi islami*). This was not necessarily an elected legislature, but a consultative assembly of ranking clerics and prominent individuals. At the same time, Tabataba’i, among the clerics, also supported “constitutionalism” (*mashruta*), but in the face of opposition by Fazlollah Nuri—who objected to the idea that man could “make” law, which was only God’s domain—Tabataba’i backtracked on this demand. To this end, communications between Qom and the Qajar court

refer to the establishment of an *Islamic Council*, a body that would interpret the laws of Islam that the Shah would then be obligated to enforce (see Martin 1989 and Bayat 1991).

The leaders of the *bastis* pushed for a *National Assembly* (*Majles-e shoora-yi milli*). Furthermore, the inclusion of representatives of the guilds (craft workers, lower merchants), well represented in the *bast*, was added to their demands during the negotiations (Martin 1989: 97-100). Apparently, during negotiations with the *bastis* in which the Shah stated that he would only ratify laws he regarded as suitable, the *basti* negotiators responded that neither the Shah, nor the *olama*, was to have the authority to override law instituted by new National Assembly. Furthermore, they indicated that even if the Qajar court managed to negotiate the return of the *mojtaheds* from Qom that they would continue their *bast* until their demands for a National Assembly were met. Qajar princess Malika Iran gave the following account of the *bastis* demands:

The law must be what the *majlis* decides. We will not accept the shah's order and signature on this matter, nor that of the *sadr-i a'zam* [Prime Minister] nor that of the *ulama* either. Nobody is to interfere with the laws of the *majlis*. We have no business with the *sadr-i a'zam* nor the *ulama*... we do not want any orders except those of a just assembly. If the *ulama* want to come back, let them; they are just as bad as you are. Whatever we save each year from thieves slips into the sands. Whatever we preserve from the depredations of the governors, the *sadr-i a'zam* and the shah, has to be given to the house of the *shari'a*. When the *ulama* return we are not going to accept any more orders from them either. (Malika Iran. Translation by Martin 1989:99)

Likewise, non-Moslems who supported the *bast* agitated for an assembly that would recognize religious minorities as full citizens, rather than an assembly designed to maintain religious law (Bayat 1991; Martin 1989).

Counter Movement Frames: The Paradox of the Bast in the British Embassy

The *bast* in the British Embassy was a strategic decision enacted by those who feared a widespread government crackdown would be instituted after the leading *mojtaheds* had been exiled to Qom. *Bast* has always been a practical technique designed to use one person's esteem and influence to counterbalance another's. In this respect, the act has always been both symbolic and practical. When the most esteemed religious leaders were banished, movement leaders searched for an ally with comparable power who could insure the sanctity of a *bast* would be protected.³ Most of the constitutionalists, if forced to choose, generally regarded the British more favorably than the Russians. Many *bastis* also had a grudging admiration for the British with respect to their technical and economic power. Furthermore, given the recent defeat of the Russians by the Japanese in 1905, and the ongoing social strife in Russia, the British were generally considered the stronger of the two empires. Historically, and throughout the constitutional period, the fear of direct Russian intervention in Iranian affairs was greater than the threat of British intervention. In all these respects, the *bast* in the British legion was undertaken for practical reasons rather than driven by an ideological affinity with, or closeness to, the British empire.

Among constitutionalist it was also assumed that Iranian political and social institutions would have to use European examples as a template for their own "regeneration." In popular sermons a common analogy was that the people of Iran had been in a deep slumber that was sometimes induced by foreigners, sometimes perpetuated by the Qajar elite, and sometimes perpetuated by the traditionalist *olama*. Inevitably, the nation is asked to

“awaken” from this trance, look at the examples around them, and pursue a more modern worldview. In this regard, it was assumed that in order to free themselves from the influence of the British and Russians, Iranians would have to emulate their examples in order to fashion a strong Iranian nation.

The radical members of the *anjomans* were, from the beginning, concerned about the perception that the *bast* in the British embassy would have on their movement. In particular, it allowed opponents to charge that the movement was inspired by the British (Bayat 1991). Suddenly, the Qajar court, and their conservative supporters, had at their disposal a counter-frame with proven resonance from the Tobacco movement that they used against the reformers. They accused the *bastis* of being British rabble. They stated that the *bastis*, having been granted protection by the British, felt that they no longer had to conform to the traditional laws of the Persian state (Abrahamian 1982; Bayat 1991). Bayat (1991) has chronicled the letters sent by Sho’*a* al-Saltana—a Qajar prince and aspirant to the Qajar throne—to the *olama* who had immigrated to Qom. He summarizes:

The prince accused the *olama* of collectively falling prey to a dangerous, Babi inspired seditious movement, thus handing over the nation, religion, and Muslim’s life and property to the British and Russians. “The ship of faith,” he declared pompously, “has fallen into the whirlpool of heresy... Thousands of people are standing in line, praying at the Embassy! By God, if the *olama* of Najaf hear of this, they would declare you heretics!” He warned that “these very people,” who were the *olama*’s “instruments,” once “awakened from their sleep of ignorance” and realizing their state of bondage, would turn against them; “they would burn you.” (132)

“Do not shame the Prophet of God any more... The foreigners used to fear the *tollab*; now the *tollab*... go to the house of the foreigner.” (132)

Likewise, those inclined to support the *bastis* were often disconcerted by the role of the British in the movement. Again, Bayat (1991), using an account by a minor government bureaucrat, Ahmad Tafreshi-Hosaini (1972), states:

The British connection greatly worried many observers. The *bastis* were hailed by the author of *Ruznama-ye Akhbar*, a self defined humble, uneducated, minor government employee, who called their accomplishment a “great wonder.” Yet he openly expressed his reservations and fear of the possible repercussions of the British role in the affair, making oblique references to a signed document the leaders of the *bast* had allegedly submitted to the charge d’affaires, upon the latter’s request, promising to support the *bast* until the completion of their task. Stating his ignorance as to the content of the document, he worried over the significance of the “seeds that were planted,” the potential power it would grant the British to interfere in national affairs, and the possible loss of independence for the country. (140)

Furthermore, events that took place following the establishment of the National Assembly—particularly the Anglo-Russian Treaty of 1907 (see discussion below) that carved Iran into Russian and British spheres of economic influence—put individuals who were inclined to see the British as allies, or who had sought the British as allies for practical purposes, into an increasingly difficult position as it relates to maintaining movement support.

The Establishment of the National Assembly

The *bast* at the British embassy, combined with support from the banished *mojtaheds* in Qom, and increasing support from prominent groups outside of Tehran, all brought

pressure on Muzaffer al-Din Shah to accept the demand for a National Assembly. Also, Muzaffer al-Din Shah was in poor health and the jockeying among the Qajar princes as it relates to succession weakened the ability of the Qajar court to act in a cohesive manner. On August 5, 1906, three weeks after the first *bastis* entered the British embassy, the Shah dismissed Ain al-Daula as Prime Minister and accepted the *bastis* primary demands. Remarkably, the money-changers (*sarrafs*), who had been the focal point of the 1905 protests, remained in the embassy as their primary concern—that they receive the money due to them from the Qajar state—had yet to be resolved (Martin 1989). In this regard it seems clear that the *anjoman* leaders had used disturbances against the Qajar Shah to press demands that were unrelated to the initial impetus for protest (Bayat 1991). Now, a coalition of interests, each with different conceptions as to what the National Assembly should look like, had the task of establishing the governing institution they had demanded. From August 1906 to June 1908, an ongoing battle to establish the National Assembly's authority was fought for among movement factions that differed, sometimes radically, in their conceptions of how modern Iranian governance should be organized.

The primary debate concerning the establishment of the assembly was the degree to which it was to be “national,” implying a more equal representation of regions within Iran as well as representatives who were non-Moslem; and the degree to which the assembly was a “religious” institution whose main charge would be to uphold, and interpret, traditional *sharia* law. In the latter case, the authority of the *mojtaheds*, the traditional interpreters of the *Qoran*, would be substantially greater.

The draft of the electoral law⁴ that was eventually accepted was based on the Belgian Constitution, but also incorporated Iranian cultural conceptions of class and authority. Basically, the electorate was divided into six social classes, 1) The Qajar royal family (*tabaqat*), 2) the religious elite and religious students, 3) prominent merchants, 4) traditional

nobles (*a'yan*) and notables (*ashraf*), 5) landowners with substantial property, and 6) craftsmen from the guilds (Abrahamian 1982:86). Each of these groups was given representation in the assembly. Moreover, regions were then designated a certain number of seats, with each of the above groups receiving an allotment of representatives. The geographic representation heavily favored Tehran. Also, local politics affected who represented the region. For example, the prominent *mojtahed* of Isfahan used his traditional esteem to choose representatives from for both the *olama* and the merchants (Martin 1989: 102-3). Many of the traditionalist clergy regarded the assembly with suspicion.

Factions elected to the assembly generally consisted of three groups. These were: 1) Qajar nobles and their supporters, 2) moderates who were generally represented by prominent Tehran merchants and supported by Tabataba'i and Behbahani, and 3) the liberals (sometimes referred to as "radicals") who were intellectuals and generally the most informed concerning constitutional forms of governance. This last group was the most active in the *anjomans* and the reform press. The moderates represented the largest faction in the assembly. The liberals, while small in number, consistently expanded the parameters of assembly debate. In particular, like liberals in modern Iran, they dominated the discourse in the reformist press (see Abrahamian 1982; Browne [1910] 1966; Bayat 1991; Keddie 1981; Martin 1989).

Throughout 1907 different factions, in different regions of the country, divided into groups that favored, or opposed, the new National Assembly. Many traditional groups—the clergy, noblemen and notables who exercised considerable authority outside of Tehran—resisted the authority of the new assembly. There were ongoing battles between the *anjomans* that supported the new constitution and traditional leaders and their supporters who were beginning to lose prestige in the new governing system. For example, in Tabriz, which had an activist local *anjoman* that was staunchly pro-constitution, the *anjoman* expelled the regional *mojtahed* who had sided with a local landlord attempting to collect his traditional share of the

crops produced by local peasants. Likewise, a *mojtahed* in Rasht was forced by a local *anjoman* to flee to Tehran (Martin 1989:114-15; see also Bayat 1991). But opposition to the constitution, generally led by Shaikh Fazlollah Nuri, was also becoming more widespread.

Counter Movements and the Debate Over Constitutionalism (Mashruta)⁵

Constitutionalism (*mashruta*) was a foreign concept to most Iranians, and likely had little meaning among most of them before the ongoing attempts by the intelligentsia—through the press and street level preaching—to educate Iranians concerning constitutional governance. Shortly after the assembly had been elected, the new Prime Minister (*sadr-i a'zam*), Mushir al-Daula, stated that the Qajar monarch had agreed to an assembly, but not a constitutional system of governance. The Shah stated that he would accept a system that implemented *mushru'a*, generally a system that is in congruence with the laws of the *shari'a*, but not constitutionalism (*mashruta*) (Martin 1989:113-114).

The debate over constitutionalism, sometimes referred to as the *mashruta* (constitutionalism)—*mashru'a* (religious law) battle, established the first frames of *individual sovereignty* in Iran. The debate concerned whether the National Assembly was organized on the basis of a constitutional ideal that accepted a principle of *equality* under a *national* code of laws for *Iranian citizens*; or whether the assembly was charged with assuring that all law conformed with the *shari'a*. In the case of the latter, the maintenance and expansion of the *Islamic ideal*, particularly protecting the authority of the *Moslem faithful* (as opposed to national “citizens”) would be the primary goal. A governing ideal based on Islamic principle, *mashru'a*, afforded a special status to Moslems over non-Moslems, and the Islamic clergy over rank and file believers. The most radical constitutionalist—organized in the *anjomans*—wanted to establish a predominately secular form of governance, but recognized that they needed the support of the clerical reformers to institutionalize the constitution. Bayat (1991)

asserts that when prominent radical leaders were challenged by conservatives regarding the sincerity of their faith—which happened repeatedly during this debate—that many practiced *taqiye*. This allowed them to claim they were devout Moslems working for a religious system when they were in fact trying to establish a secular governing ideal.

The initial debate between movement and counter-movement factions centered on the adoption of article 8 of the new supplemental law. This article stated that Iranian citizens, irrespective of ethnicity and religious belief, would be equal under national law. This is directly counter to religious law (*sharia*), which affords an elevated status to “people of the book” (Christian and Jews), but does not treat them as equal to Moslems. Other points of contention were more longstanding, such as article 19 which established a national curriculum and compulsory education through state schools. Many traditionalist *olama* had long regarded the establishment of “modern” schools as an invasion of their traditional sphere of influence (Lambton 1988). Likewise, article 21, which ensured freedom of the press—an important means by which the *anjomans* gained support and attacked the “backwardness” of the anti-constitutionalist clergy—was also objected to by many of the religious elite (see Martin 1989:118-19).

In response to the ongoing debate concerning the supplemental laws, Fazlollah Nuri-- increasingly disenchanted with the National Assembly--proposed the following article in an attempt to assert the authority of the *olama* in the new National Assembly. The italics designate aspects of the governing ideology proposed by Nuri that unequivocally ties the authority of the Assembly to enforcing the will of the God and his representative on earth, the Hidden Imam. In the Imam’s absence, the traditional clergy are charged with maintaining the faith.

The Sacred National Consultative Assembly, which has been *established through the care of the Imam of the Age, may God hasten his coming*, and

favor of His Majesty that Shahanshah of Islam, may God prolong his reign, and the diligence of the Proofs of Islam, and the whole community of Iran, *may at no time pass a law that is not in accordance with the sacred precepts of Islam and the laws of His Excellency*, the best of men, may prayers and peace be upon him. *It is specified that it is the responsibility of the exalted ulama, may blessings of God be upon them, to distinguish whether laws proposed by the National Consultative Assembly, have been and are in accordance with the sharia.* Therefore it is laid down that at all times a council of mujtahads and jurists of the first rank should be in session, so that before laws are passed they may be first examined and discussed in that learned council. *If the proposal is contrary to the sharia, it shall not be accorded the title of law.* The judgment of the learned council in this matter is final and must be obeyed. This article can never be altered, 7 Rabia 20 April 1907. (Kasravi 1977-78:316-17. In Martin 1989:118)

Fazlollah Nuri's proposal was widely read and debated. Most of the traditional *olama*—with the exception of Tabataba'i—supported the draft. This proposal is also noteworthy because, in its general form, it represents the system that was established following the 1979 revolution, wherein the twelve members of the Guardian Council (*Shoora-ye Naghban-e Qanun Assas*) have veto power over any law enacted by the National Assembly.

Representatives of the National Assembly opposed to the law engaged in two tactics. First, they attempted to keep the article from coming to a vote. Second, they countered with arguments that the entire Moslem community—not the leading *mujtaheds*—were charged with maintaining the *sharia*. At this time, Fazlollah Nuri began to speak in open opposition to

the National Assembly and to mobilize his supporters with aid from the Qajar Shah. Soon there were periodic battles between Fazlollah Nuri's supporters and the supporters of the National Assembly being mobilized through the radical *anjomans*. Eventually, a compromise version of Fazlollah Nuri's proposal was put forward which recognized his points in principle, but maintained the authority of the assembly by specifying how the religious leaders were to be elected.

There shall be at all times a council of not less than five persons who are mujtahads or jurists, well versed in religious law, and aware of the exigencies of the age. They shall be chosen in the following manner: the leading olama and those who are marja-i taqlid of the Shia shall submit the names of twenty persons having the aforementioned qualities to the Majles. Five or more of those, according to the exigencies of the time, shall be appointed by agreement or ballot of the National Consultative Assembly (Kasravi 1977-78:372. In Martin 1989:120).

Most of the leading *mojtaheds*, despite the fact that they were not representatives of the National Assembly, symbolically signed a *fatwa* that stated their acceptance of this compromise bill. Fazlollah Nuri remained in opposition. Concurrently, his followers began to erect a large a tent that was used during the *Moharam* ceremonies and stated that they were going have prominent story-tellers (*rawza- khan*) engage in the traditional narrative concerning the martyrdom of Hossein. It is clear that this was to be an assembly, in a traditional religious setting, which was going to assail the National Assembly as irreligious. Supporters of the constitution, organized through the *anjomans*, attacked Nuri's supporters and dismantled the tent (Browne [1910] 1966). At a gathering of the *anjomans* the following day the crowd was in a violent mood, and mollified only after Tabataba'i stated he would

sanction Nuri's expulsion from Tehran if he continued to oppose the assembly. A document, signed by Tabataba'i stated:

I guarantee that if his Reverence Hajji Shaykh Fazlullah should act contrary to the undertaking which he has given, I will in person expel him from Tihran. Mulla Muhammad of Amul and Hajji Mirza Lutufu llah must also go. He shall not perform any action contrary or opposed to the Sacred National Consultative Assembly; he shall not form anjumans or pitch tents; he shall everywhere support the Assembly (Translation by Browne [1910] 1966:149; see also Martin 1989:121).

Following this edict, Fazlollah Nuri and 500 supporters, like the supporters of the reformist clergy earlier, sought *bast* in the shrine of *Azrat Abdol Azim*.

Fazlollah Nuri's Bast and Counter Frames of the anti-Constitutionalists

Expanding on the tactics of the previous *bastis*, and also adopting the tactics of the radical *anjomans*, Nuri's group actively publicized their positions in a series of leaflets that were widely distributed (Browne [1910] 1966). The *bast* was supported by the Qajar Shah, as well as by the notables who were having their pensions cut by the National Assembly (Martin 1989:122). At first, local printers refused to publish these pamphlets, so the *bastis* obtained a lithograph and produced their own pamphlets from the shrine (Martin 1989; Browne [1910] 1966). Browne refers to this publication as "Fazlollah's newspaper." Martin (1989) points out that most of the lithographs were signed collectively by the *bastis*, and only two bore Fazlollah's direct signature. One rhetorical device in these pamphlets is, again, that the masses should "awaken" from their slumber. The arguments in each are consistent, stating that there is only one law, God's law, and that the laws of the Assembly are that of man and

therefore illegitimate. “Now the people have thrown out the law of the Prophet and set up their own law instead” (Martin 1989:125). And further:

To our prophet, he revealed the law in the Koran, which is the perfection and completion of all previous laws, and will remain until the day of reckoning. Therefore there is no need to follow the example of the law of Europe and Germany. If the Law of the Seal of the Prophet were defective it would be necessary for God to send another Prophet and another law, so that is his proof to the people be not defective (Translation by Martin 1989:125).

The idea of “equality” is also often commented on. The following is from Fazlollah Nuri’s refutation of constitutionalism and states that “equality” is the “pillar” of constitutionalism, and this is in direct contradiction with the laws of Islam.

One of the articles [No. 8] of that book of errors [the constitution] rules that all of the individuals in this country have *equal rights*. In its latest edition this phrase is given as: The inhabitants of the country will have *equal rights* before the state law. The word “equality” spread and was circulated until it perforated [all] ears. *Equality is one of the pillars of constitutionalism, [the latter] would vanish without equality.* I remember when this article was under discussion, one of the few distinguished members of the assembly said to me that this article was extremely important. [He added]: If this article is included in the constitution, foreign states will recognize it even if we change all other articles. If this article disappears [from the constitution] the rest remains our constitutional system will not be recognized. I answered immediately: then it is all over with Islam and stood up and said: Oh! People who are sitting, you

should know that an Islamic country [of Iran] will not accept constitutional government because it is impossible to have equality in Islam.

Oh! My religious brothers, now think attentively over the Islamic provisions and see the differences they have established among subjects concerning the persons obligated to observe the precepts of Islam...

Oh heretics! If this state law is in conformity with Islam, it is not possible to include equality in it and if it is at variance with Islam, it would be against what is written in the previous part [of the constitution] that is: whatever is against Islam cannot be lawful.

Oh Knavish and [individuals] devoid of zeal! See how the master of the *Sharia* has granted you honors because you have embellished with Islam. He granted you privileges, but you deny them by saying that you must be equal brothers with Zoroastrians, Armenians and Jews: God's curse may be upon those who approve of this [equality]. (Fazlollah Nuri n.d. Translation by Ha'iri [1977] in Donohue and Esposito [eds]1982:293)

Fazlollah Nuri, and his supporters, also expropriated the word “*mashruta*” (constitutionalism)—first introduced by Tabataba'i—which was at that time a very popular, but ill-defined concept (see Martin 1989). Nuri essentially inverted its previous usage, claiming the constitution had to be derived from the *sharia*. He specifically demanded a *mashruta-ye mashru'a*, which was “a convenient slogan to win support for what was, in effect, a constitution framed from the *sharia*” (127). Following this logic, he claimed that the current constitution was more of a European concept than an Islamic one, and was therefore illegitimate. In effect, for “law” to be legitimate, it had to be derived from the Qoran, and the *Qoran* made no mention of Constitutionalism.

Islam, the most complete, the most perfect, took the world by justice and consultation. What has happened that we must bring our regulation of justice from Paris, and our plan of consultation from England? (In Martin 1989:128)

A Fazlollah Nuri (1988) anti-constitutional tract published roughly a year after his *bast* was titled *The Book of Admonition to the Heedless and Guidance to the Ignorant*. This tract states that *sharia* law is binding for all Moslems and regulates both “this and the other world”. Furthermore:

Anyone who thinks it is possible and feasible for a group of wise and judicious men and a number of politicians to come together and, through consultation, make a law that meets these two objectives and is also acceptable to God, is obviously not a Muslim. There cannot be Islam without the acceptance of Prophethood and the acceptance of Prophethood is not conceivable without rational proof. The rational proof of Prophethood is no other than our need for Divine Law, and our ignorance and incapacity to determine it ourselves (Translation by Hamid Dabashi in Arjomand [ed] 1988:354-55).

With respect to freedom and equality of men (*italics added*):

The foundation of Islam is obedience, not freedom; and the basis of its commandments is the differentiation of collectivities and the assemblage of different elements, and not of equality (357).

And later (*italics added*):

My dear brother! *Do you not know that for many reasons freedom of the press and freedom of speech are opposed by Divine Law?* Do you not know that its result is that the infidels and heretics can propagate their blasphemies in their

speeches and papers, insult the believers and denounce them, and implant doubts in the pure hearts of the wretched masses? (357-58)

And related to the constitutional supporters relationship with Great Britain:

My dear! If the purpose [of Constitutionalists] were to enforce Islam, England would not have supported it. And if they wanted to act according to the Qoran, they would not have deceived the masses, taking refuge in unbelief and considered the English their friends, supporters, and confidants; while there are a number of verses in the Qoran that command us not to consider the infidels our supporters, friends, or confidants. (359)

Fazlollah Nuri enjoyed considerable popular support, and reform papers were forced to respond to his charges. They crafted modernist arguments that stated constitutionalism, governance by the people, was supported by the *Qoran*. This had appeal among the small middle class in Iran, but likely had little resonance with the majority of Iranians who continued to tie national legitimacy with the implementation of an Islamic ideal, a longstanding cultural norm.

The most well known response to Fazlollah Nuri was a treatise written by *mojtahed*⁶ Mohammad Hossein Na'ini (1982). In the 1960s this tract was later revived by Ayatollah Taleqani, co-founder of the *Freedom Movement* with Mehdi Bazargan, as an argument for limiting the authority of the Pahlavi Shahs. Na'ini's arguments are more nuanced than Nuri's, but clearly innovations regarding traditional Shi'i doctrine. Na'ini (1982) states that preserving individual honor, freedom and equality are Islamic principles, and this imperative runs counter to giving excessive influence to a few individuals (the *mojtaheds*).

The law of equality is among the most noble of the blessed derived laws of Islamic polity. It is the basis and foundation of justice and the spirit of all the laws... The essence of holy laws consists in this (Translation by Darrow in Donohue and Esposito [eds] 1982:291).

Furthermore, he outlines two principles of governance that attempt to link the Islamic ideal with the concept of nationalism (“the fatherland”). He states that governance based on constitutionalism has two principles:

Preservation of the internal order of the country, the education of the people, the respecting of each other’s rights, the prevention of tyranny and the oppression of any portion of the country by another and such duties as are related to the internal interests of the country and the people.

Preventing the interference of foreigners and stopping their typical cunning and preparing defensive forces and other military needs and the like. This principle in the language of the keepers of the holy law is called preserving the core of Islam and in the language of other nations, preserving the fatherland.

(291)

In another clerical tract by Abd’ al-Azim Khalkhali (1988) that supported constitutionalism, *The Treatise on the Meaning of Constitutional Government*, the following argument supports the principle of equality and representative governance. Like previous examples, the author used the analogy of an “awakening” of the Iranian people (italics added):

There was a time when sovereignty in this world was based on tyranny, cruelty, transgression, violence, the massacre of relatives, plundering of the enemy’s wealth, destruction of civilization, the plucking of eyes, and cutting of

hands. In those times these were necessary. But those ages are gone now. *In this age, especially in our time, sovereignty is founded on justice, fairness, and the principle of equality*, as is obvious from the Europeans. As a result of contacts with foreign countries and of association with civilized nations, and of studying political books and articles, reading foreign and domestic journals, acquiring knowledge of the relationship between civilized rulers and their respective subjects, and being informed of the desirability and benefits of Constitutional government, *the eyes of the Iranians have been opened, their ears alerted, and their tongues unleashed*. They do not tolerate tyrannical actions or unruly behavior. They now have their opinions about internal and external affairs, have become a “people of loosening and binding”⁷ supervising their mutual affairs, and capable of acceptance or rejection (Translated by Hamid Dabashi in Arjomand [eds] 1988:340-41).

Constitutionalist papers devoted considerable space to directly refuting Fazlollah Nuri’s arguments, but once debate shifted from introducing concepts of constitutionalism toward a discussion of *sharia* law it was hard to assail the integrity of Fazlollah Nuri who was the preeminent religious jurist in the country. Below, Figures 9.1 and 9.2 are representations of the interplay between the culture, ideology and movement frames used by different factions during the Constitutional debate.

Figure 9.1 The Interaction of Culture, Ideology and Frames of Among Iranian Revolutionary Leaders

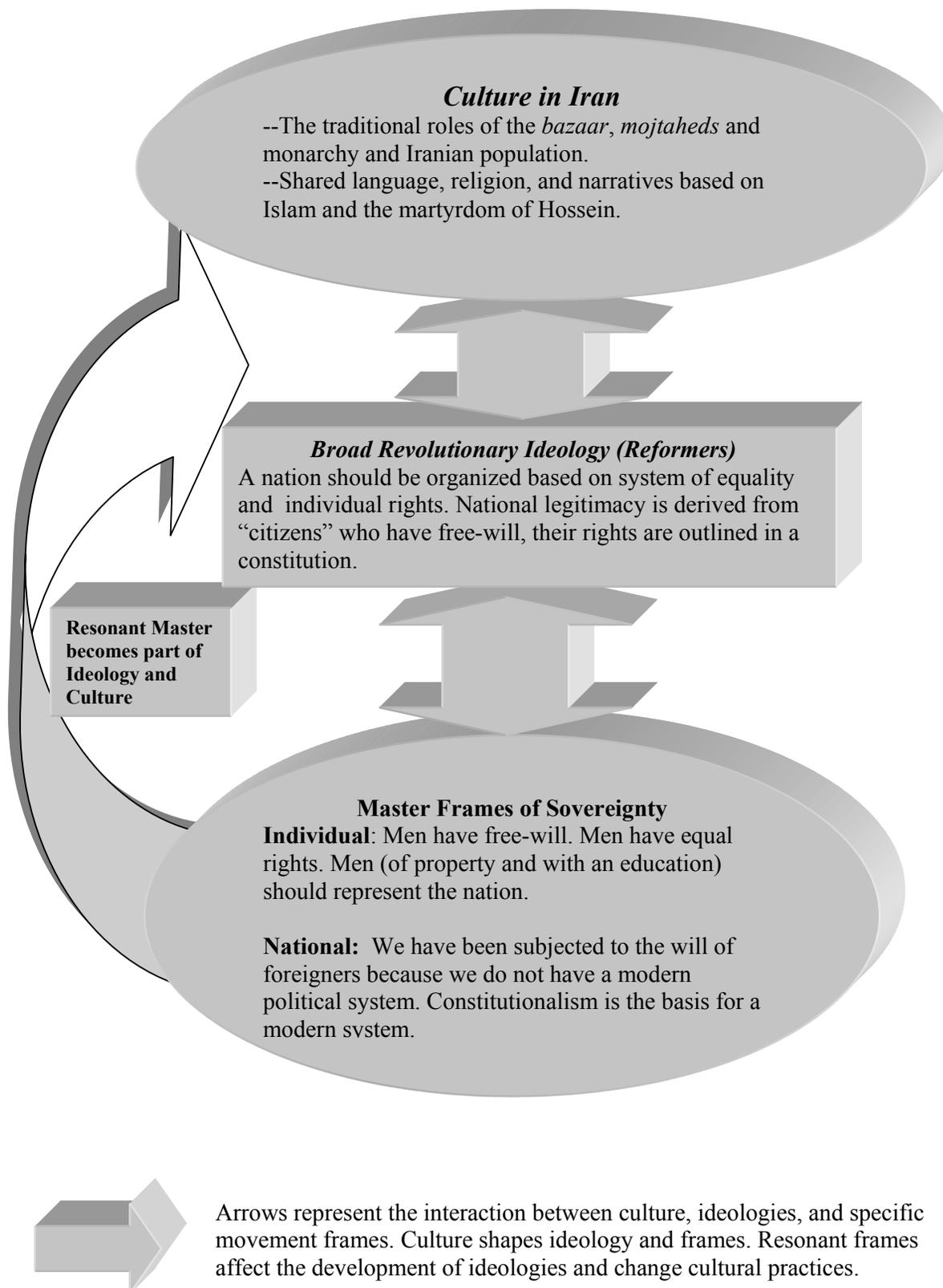
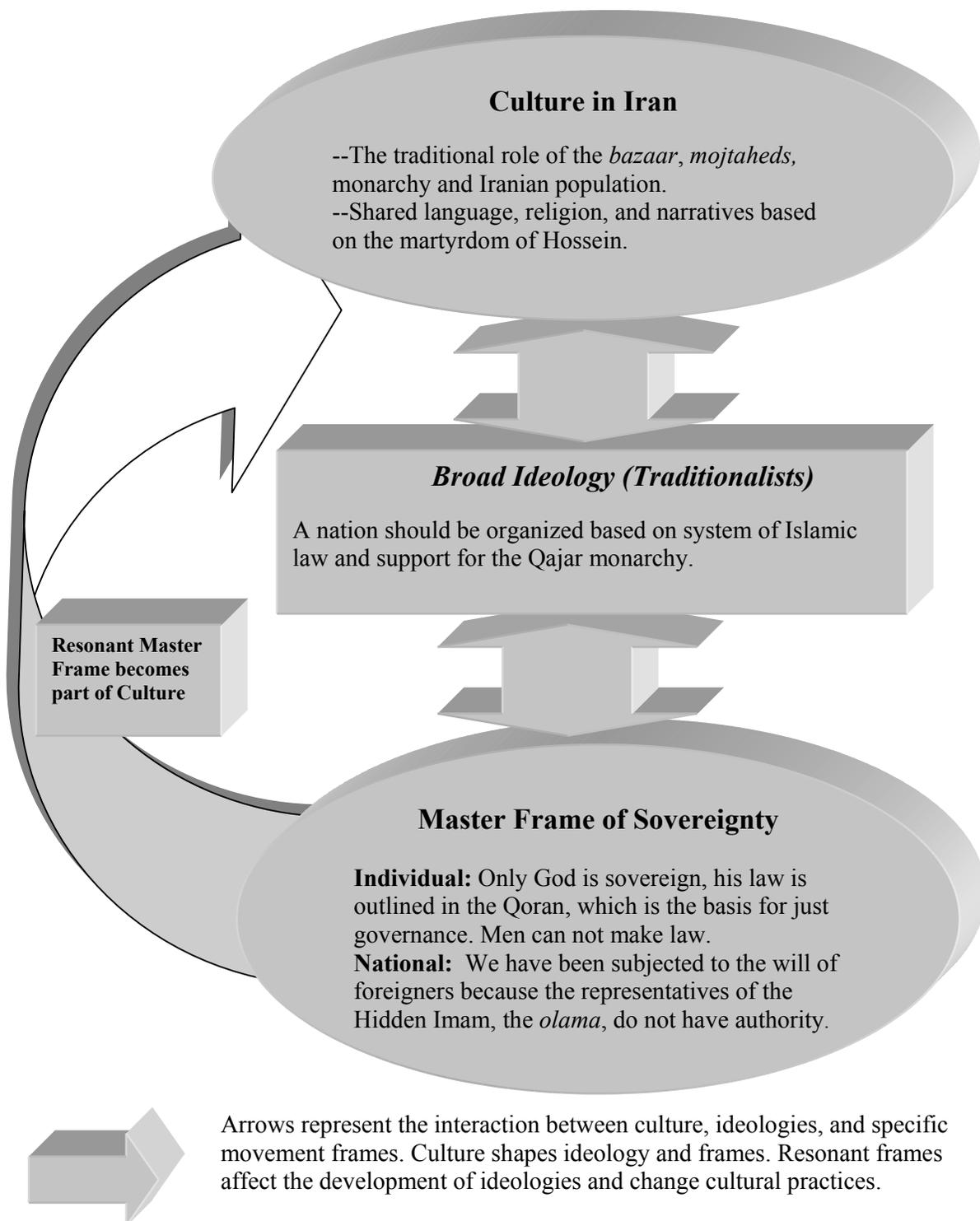


Figure 9.2 The Interaction of Culture, Ideology and Frames of Among Iranian Counter-Revolutionary Leaders



Political Assassination and Threats of Violence During the Constitutional Revolution

By the summer of 1907 there was widespread fighting in many of the Iranian provinces between constitutionalist and anti-constitutionalist forces. Of particular importance was the assassination of Amin al-Sultan,⁸ the new prime minister in the Shah's court, who was shot while leaving the Assembly with Behbahani. His assailant was Abbas Aqa, an Azerbaijani *sarrafi* and member of a radical *anjoman*. Shortly after this assassination Fazlollah Nuri ended his *bast*. A short time after the assassination, the fundamental laws were accepted by the Qajar Shah.

Framing the Assassination: The Press and Anjomans

The political assassination of Amin as-Sultan offers a good example of how the *anjomans* were operating and how they framed political events. Abrahamian (1982) states that the number of presses in Iran increased from six to over 100 during the first 10 months that the National Assembly was in session. Almost all were dedicated to following debate that was taking place in the assembly. The largest of these, the *Society of Azerbaijanis*, was connected with the liberal-reformist faction in the assembly, but was also regional in character. Members of this *anjoman* were opposed to the traditional landowners aligned with the traditional clergy in the Azerbaijan. They were also suspicious of the clerical elite in Tehran.

As the *anjomans* increased in number, many with overlapping memberships and also continuing to act secretly, it became harder to unite the disparate interests that each represented. Likewise, many were militant and were associated with a series of political assassinations as the factions both for, and against, the National Assembly began to rely on violence, or threats of violence, to further their political goals. During an outbreak of regional

violence in *Rasht*, Tabataba'i—cast increasingly in the role of a moderate leader attempting to unite the various factions—stated:

We went to much trouble to establish this Majles and make it fruitful, but these numerous anjumans and certain deputies, the soundness of whose credit is not known, are creating so much disorder that the country is nearly lost. There are seventy anjumans in Tehran alone. These should unite and work for the country, not interfere in its political affairs. We must work against sedition and anarchy being caused by the anjumans (In Martin 1989:136)

Likewise, the Qajar Shah and other traditional interests had mobilized their *lutis* and clerical supporters to provoke events that could act as an excuse to close the National Assembly. Increasingly, the discourse became militant and menacing. On occasion, thinly veiled threats directed toward the Shah and notables appeared in the press.

Prime Minister Amin as-Sultan was inclined to favor the Russians and was distrusted by the Azerbaijani members of the parliament. He was in a difficult political environment. Remarkably, he managed to get most of the Assembly to endorse a measure that would have approved a new loan from the Russians. On August 31, 1907, during debate over this legislation, he was shot by Abbas Aqa as he was leaving the Assembly accompanied by Behbahani. Abbas Aqa, when it appeared he would be captured, shot and killed himself. On his body was found papers identifying himself as member “41” of an *anjoman* of *fida'i* (those self-devoted) (Browne [1910] 1966:151). There has been speculation as to who was ultimately responsible for the assassination of Amin as Sultan (see Bayat 192-94) as several groups were opposed to him. This work only discusses how the assassination was framed by various press groups and the radical *anjomans*. In particular, the Azerbaijan *anjoman* openly praised and celebrated the assassination.

The assassination shocked many members of the National Assembly who quickly expressed their condolences to the Shah, but others—particularly the radical anjomans—always regarded the assassination as a positive event. Browne ([1910] 1966) indicates that popular opinion, and opinion in the press, turned from condemnation of the event to “veneration” of the assassin as a “patriot” once the contents of the Anglo-Russian agreement were publicized (see discussion below). The treaty was not the cause of the assassination, but because Amin as-Sultan was associated with securing a loan from the Russians once the Anglo-Russian treaty was publicized he was charged, like previous Qajar government officials, with selling the country to foreign powers. Browne ([1912] 1966) chronicles an account from *Hablu al-Matin* (October 8, 1907 pp 5-6) which describes the traditional lamentation ritual—accorded to martyrs on the fortieth day following their death—in honor of Abbas Aqa. The following fuses traditional religious narrative with the narrative of rapid political “progress.” There is also a reference to the *bast* headed by Fazlollah Nuri (“hypocrites who have occupied the shrine”), as well as the oath of “fidelity” that the notables swore to the Constitution following the passing of the fundamental laws. The tenor of this article is similar to others that appeared which stated that the assassination had a positive effect because it indicated to the Qajar Shah that the “people” who supported the Constitutional revolution were not going to allow it to be hijacked by traditional forces or foreigners (italics added).

The denizens of the world are filled with astonishment as to whence and by what teaching this nation has in so short a space of time traveled such a distance as other peoples have not been able to accomplish in a whole generation. *We can only assume that spiritual help and divine inspiration continually support and aid them, and that they are the object of a special regard to His Holiness the Imam of the Age.*

The proof of this statement is what happened on Sunday the 27th of Sha‘ban [Oct. 6, 1907], which indicates their sentiments *and their alertness*, *proves their perfect patriotism and devotion to their country*, and makes it clear to all that this nation appreciates its *fida’is* [those who sacrifice themselves for it], and assigns to each his proper rank and station. On that day the spirit of the late Abbas Aqa was gazing down with all joy and love upon his people, gladly accepting the handfuls of flowers which they strewed upon his grave, contemplating with joyful gaze the vast multitude which hastened headlong towards him, and uttering his thanks with words inaudible.

Yea, every one who lays down his life for the salvation of his people and his Country’s cause, and spends the coin of his existence for the ransom of the Nation and the Constitution, ought to be respected by his countrymen with respect exceeding that due to their own spirits and bodies, and to be regarded as evident Proof of God’s Mercy....

All the *anjumans* and most of the students and school-children came in groups. Tents were erected and tea, coffee and other refreshments were freely offered by generous patriots. Companies of men beating their breasts recited the soul-stirring verses. Eloquent orators and sweet voiced poets made speeches or recited solemn elegies; while the trays of sweet-meats exceeding computation were distributed gratuitously. In short, such zeal and enthusiasm were displayed by the people as were calculated to serve as an example to all nations (*Hablu al-Matin* [October 8, 1907 pp 5-6] Browne’s translation [1912] 1966: 152-3).

Browne ([1910] 1966) also chronicled the increasingly violent sermons preached against the Shah in some Tehran mosques and published an excerpt from “Holy Spirit” (*Ruhu’l-Qudus*) that threatened the Shah’s life. The editor of this paper, after the article appeared, was arrested and its publication suspended. The article was titled, “A Word from the Unseen, or an Unambiguous Hint.” It is an interesting exemplar for several reasons. First, while a Western reader may find it cryptic, it was, in Persian styled rhetoric, a blatant series of open threats. For example: “Does he (the Shah) not know for certain that from the blood of *Fida’i* No. 41 (a reference to Abbas Aqa) there hath arisen a greater *Fida’i* for a greater task, who waits to complete the proof?” This question is essentially a statement that other *Fida’i* (people willing to self-sacrifice) are going to complete the task (proof) initiated by Abbas Aqa by assassinating the Shah. In another example from the same article, the author speaks of a garden (Constitutionalism) that has not been watered (with blood) for two months, which is the time period that had elapsed since Amin as-Sultan’s assassination. This theme concerning the growth of a movement—usually an allegorical garden—that grows due to spilled blood, is common in all Iranian movements surveyed in this work. When the blood is that of a martyr this becomes a direct allegorical reference to the martyrdom of Hossein. Of course, it was his blood, and martyrdom, that created the righteous spirit of the Shi’i community (*italics added*).

*If His majesty the King and his family consider it a pride and honour to become attendants and servants of foreigners, we the people, deem subjection to such dominion a shame and disgrace. Patriotic zeal alone has caused the scepter to continue in this [the people’s] family; else the garden of the Constitution, which has not been watered for to months, is athirst, and time is come for it to be refreshed and regaled by means of that unknown and unseen *Fida’i* who is its guardian, so that flowers and sweet herbs may blossom therein; or, in other words, the wise unknown surgeon will remove a*

gangrenous limb, so that the remaining members may be saved from the disease. (*Ruhul-Qudus* “A Word from the Unseen, or an Unambiguous Hint.” Translated by Browne [1910] 1966:159)

Browne, a sympathetic reporter of events in Persia, was concerned how the British public would respond to the rhetoric he chronicled. He made the point that while such rhetoric was obviously incendiary, designed as a threat, and harsh when judged by the standards of modern political discourse, it would be a mistake to characterize Persian, or Islamic, culture as more apt to produce these types of threats than some other cultural tradition. This type of threat is unique in that it is framed using cultural narratives that are grounded in the context of Iranian history. This likely makes these narratives, clearly meant to be menacing, more so when read by Westerners. At the same time, particularly as it relates to European movements directed against monarchy, these words were not exceptionally violent. Indeed, this was how Browne characterized them, stating that movements against monarchy in Europe were also occasioned by threats of violence.

Frames of Foreign Domination: The 1907 Anglo-Russian Partition Agreement

The 1907 Anglo-Russian partition treaty divided Iran into three zones of economic influence with north Iran considered in the Russian sphere of influence, central Iran designated as a “neutral zone,” and south Iran considered in the British sphere. Many British politicians, such as Lord Curzon, objected to the treaty on the grounds that the British were considered “losers” in the arrangement given the declining strength of the Russians. Some, such as E.G. Browne, did object to the treaty on “moral” grounds.

During the Constitutional revolution the Russians and the British became increasingly wary of the instability occurring throughout Iran. Throughout the conflict supporters of the

Shah and supporters of the constitution sometimes made appeals to the British and Russian representatives in Tehran. The Russians were inclined to support the Shah, the British inclined to support the constitutionalist.

Despite the fact that the Anglo-Russian treaty was largely a recognition of the reality that had long existed in Iran, the impression, among many people in both Iran and England, was that the country had now been officially partitioned into either the British or Russian empire (Browne [1910] 1966:174). For example *Habl al-Matin* reported:

All discriminating and well-informed persons suspect that, in view of our negligence and ignorance, the signing of this agreement will be shortly followed by the end of Persia's independence and autonomy. For as soon as the Agreement is signed, the contracting powers will at once begin to give it practical effect, and to pursue their respective ambitions. (*Habl al-Matin* No. 113 Translated by Browne [1910] 1966:179)

The treaty had provisions for economic cooperation between the British and Russians in their respective spheres of influence. In subsequent articles in the Iranian press the treaty was considered illegitimate because it violated Persia's sovereign right to negotiate financial arrangements with both Britain and Russia. Therefore, it was argued, it was impossible to negotiate the economic policies of Iran without a representative of Iran being involved in the negotiations. Many made comparisons to the British dominance of Egypt, a country that had also been subjected to creeping British imperialism. "It is precisely under cover of such words that they will interfere in a thousand ways in our country, as they have already done in Egypt and other lands" (Browne [1910] 1966:181).

While most Iranians remained suspicious of the British before the partition, many British correspondents, and moderates such as E.G Browne, did think that the publication of the arrangement was a turning point in the relationship between Iran and Great Britain. In

effect, any good-will had been engendered after the *bast* in the British legion was now lost.

For example, Kazemzadeh (1968) states:

Justifiably or not, most Persians would, from then on, be prepared to believe only the worst of England. Perfidy, greed, the blackest crimes against humanity, would be attributed to her. The image of a cynical people totally indifferent to the sufferings of the rest of mankind, buying and selling entire nations, trading in opium, purposefully starving millions of its colonial subjects, and secretly controlling destinies of the world, would survive the departure of British power from the Middle East, Indian independence, and the decline of Britain to the rank of secondary power. (503)

Another common discourse at this time that remains common in modern Iranian politics concerns the degree to which the great powers worked their will on societies in the Middle East. For instance, internal chaos was often attributed to the great powers as a means of weakening the states of the Middle East so that these powers could extract material wealth.

Every one knows that England's favorite policy in other countries is to produce some extraordinary excitement and preoccupation which shall fully occupy those countries with their own affairs and prevent them from pursuing more ambitious schemes. (*Habal al-Matin* September, 1907, No. 112 Translated by Browne 1966:175)

Western popular opinion, when it turns to an examination of the Middle East—particularly during periods of conflict—is often perplexed by what are characterized as elaborate “conspiracy” theories that are concocted as explanations for an indigenous Middle Eastern social phenomenon. And it is common, often despite evidence to the contrary, for Middle Eastern citizens to produce convoluted accounts that assign blame for an event on the

West even when the explanation presses the bounds of logic.⁹ As it relates to Iran, many have long believed that the West has been behind a number of nefarious, ingenuous, and elaborate plots designed to de-legitimize their leadership and keep the Iranian nation underdeveloped. Much of this narrative is, of course, grounded in Iran's very real historical relationship with the Russians and the British, and its later relationship with the United States.

This often confronts sympathetic observers of Iran with a dilemma. For example, there is ample evidence to demonstrate that policymakers in the West have often pursued strategies that are designed, *in an overt manner*, to punish Iranian citizens economically and to also de-legitimize their leadership. Likewise, there is ample evidence that the United States later intervened, repeatedly, *in covert* operations that were designed to destabilize Iranian movement factions. The most widely known event, discussed in chapter 10, was operation AGAX, the covert action undertaken by the American Central Intelligence Agency on behalf of Mohammad Reza Shah in 1953. In this respect, the characterization that countries in the West have harmed the Iranian nation, and acted to undermine the political stability of the country, are absolutely correct. At the same time, the degree of power attributed to Western interests—in what are sometimes extremely localized events—often stretches the bounds of logic. Of course, conspiracy theories regarding the nefarious designs of a cabal of narrow interests who impose their will on the world are not particular to Iran. Nonetheless, these conspiracy theories likely have more resonance in Iran because the West has intervened, repeatedly, both overtly and covertly, into the domestic affairs of Iran. Likewise, social movement frames that incorporated elements of these conspiracy theories had demonstrated resonance in both the Tobacco movement and the Constitutional revolution. Therefore, it is not surprising that this tactic would become adopted, and elaborated upon, as a means of gaining social movement support in the future.

The Anjoman Defense of the Majles

The Shah acted against the National Assembly on Dec. 15, 1907 when he arrested prominent members of the assembly. Tents were pitched in the central Tehran square and conservative clerics preached against the National Assembly. It appeared that the assembly would be forcefully closed the following day. Clashes resulted in the deaths of two or three constitutionalists (Bayat 1991; Martin 1989). Fazlollah Nuri, and other prominent anti-constitutionalists, supported these demonstrations. Some participants marched to the assembly chanting, “We want the Koran; We do not want the Constitution.” (Bayat 1991:212).

The following day the *anjomans* gathered their supporters, distributed rifles among their members, and surrounded both the National Assembly and the mosque that stood next to it, determined to prevent it from being closed. This, in effect, became a standoff between the supporters of the Shah and the supporters of the assembly. On the Shah’s side was the Russian Cossack brigade, whose loyalty to the Shah was suspect; and supporters who were often in the pay of the Shah. Most were not inclined toward continuing their demonstration in the face of people who were armed and willing to defend the National Assembly. There were also more spontaneous crowds, often following religious lay leaders, who opposed the Assembly. For instance, Jamal al-Din, an initial clerical supporter of the constitution, now stated, “This is not the mushruta we wanted—it has been perverted by the Babis and materialist” (Martin 1989:144). Likewise, Fazlollah Nuri’s supporters appear to have been among the poorest Tehrani laborers. Martin (1989) indicates that they demonstrated by chanting “We want rice, not a constitution” (148). Indeed, it is apparent that the poorest in Iran, as a result of the ongoing social strife, suffered increasing deprivation throughout the revolutionary period as a result of continual instability.

In the subsequent negotiations following this defense the Shah's withdrew his demand for the dismissal of the most radical deputies from the Assembly. At first, when the constitutionalist realized they could defend the Assembly they attempted to have the Cossack Brigade—long the Shah's personal troops—brought under the authority of the Assembly's War Department. This demand was dropped during the course of stand-off and both sides retired following the Shah's public avowal that he was a supporter of the Constitution. This avowal was, obviously, disingenuous and designed to buy time.

The 1908-09 Civil War

In June 1908, the Qajar Shah—following an attempt on his life—mustered the Cossack brigade, under the command of Colonel V. Liakhoff, and forcefully closed the National Assembly. Several leading constitutionalist took *bast* in the National Assembly, and were later arrested. Some were executed shortly thereafter, many others died in prison. Behbahani and Tabataba'i were arrested and then confined to their homes. Martial law was declared in Tehran. The constitutionalist stronghold of Tabriz was surrounded and slowly starved by supporters of the Shah. Eventually, Russian troops entered the city—ostensibly to protect foreign nationals and the foreign consulates—and ended the siege. Concurrently, various tribal and constitutional factions in the provinces waged a steady war of attrition against the Shah. These areas, always somewhat independent from the authority of the central government in Tehran, now moved into open rebellion. As a practical matter, although the Shah had managed to forcefully close the National Assembly, his authority was negligible outside of Tehran. In particular, the Bakhtiyari tribal leadership in Isfahan—combined with a constitutionalist coalition from Gilan—eventually mustered together a force that was large enough to reclaim control of Tehran.

The Constitution was nominally re-established on July 16, 1909, but the country had become increasingly difficult to govern. For example, the re-established assembly later attempted to reform the taxation system and hired an American, Morgan Shuster, to head the custom reforms. Shuster, largely oblivious to the traditional influence of the Russians in Iran, increasingly agitated both the Russians and the British in his attempt to collect Iranian national taxes in their zones of influence. This also further incited traditional groups who were opposed to the constitution. Ultimately, the British and Russians reinserted themselves, forcefully, into domestic Iranian affairs. In the case of Shuster, the Russians insisted that he be fired, a course of action that the Assembly representatives initially rejected, but was then forcefully prescribed by the Russians and the Cossack Brigade. This event, for many, ended the illusion that that constitutionalism alone could establish an independent Iranian state and governance (see Shuster 1912).

Summary of Frames Negotiated During the Constitutional Revolution

Previously, the master frame of sovereignty was defined at two levels, *individual sovereignty* and *national sovereignty*. The definitions were as follows:

National Sovereignty Frame: The frame articulated by movement leaders related to the Iranian government's relationship with the East and West.

Individual Sovereignty Frame: The requirements, as articulated by leaders, that an individual should fulfill in order to participate in governance

The resonant frames of sovereignty introduced in the Constitutional revolution resurface in the subsequent movements. Therefore, it is important to clearly establish, using the definitions above, the frames that were negotiated in the Constitutional revolution.

Frames of Individual Sovereignty in the Constitutional Revolution: Equality, Free-Will and Religious Faith

Most religious faiths are founded on principles that codify inequality. Believers are, generally, afforded greater rights than non-believers. At the same time, religious faiths also enact standards of conduct, and often have narratives extolling the virtues of egalitarianism among individuals in the religious community. In the Islamic tradition there are some doctrines that establish a relative equality among the community of believers. Likewise, Shi'i historical traditions, particularly the use of independent reasoning (*ejtehad*), tended to reinforce elements of individual choice and of relative equality among believers. At the same time, the development of a Shi'i hierarchy endowed some religious leaders (*mojtaheds*) with greater esteem than common believers. So, there was a doctrinal tradition that extolled the virtues of decision making undertaken by the community of believers (*omma*), but also a tradition that extolled the virtue of seeking guidance (*taqlid*) from those members (*marja-e taqlid*) of the community who were particularly learned in the doctrines of religious law. Moreover, despite the fact that Christians and Jews are not given equal rights under Qoranic law, they were afforded protection under Moslem law regarding their property.

During the Constitutional revolution, individual rights and a doctrine of equality, ideas largely introduced by European sources, were nonetheless debated using traditional Iranian Islamic cultural systems. The most resonant argument made against the doctrine of individual equality was outlined by Fazlollah Nuri who stated that Moslems had been granted special standing by God. Likewise, he outlined a position that denied individual "free-will" by stating that national laws, made by men, were illegitimate. Furthermore, he consistently argued that the *mojtaheds*, as those best placed to interpret the will of the 12th Imam, should be afforded special rights in any governing system. To this end, Fazlollah Nuri's argument

was that only Moslems could participate in Iranian governance, and the religious elite should be afforded special status in the governing system.

The most direct refutation of Nuri's principles appeared in the work of Shaykh Mohammad Hossein Na'ini, a supporter of equality, but not as prominent a *mojtahed* as Fazlollah Nuri. He stated, "The law of equality is among the most noble of the blessed derived laws of Islamic polity. It is the basis and foundation of justice and the spirit of all the laws... The essence of holy laws consists in this" (1982:291). Others argued that two separate kinds of laws existed. There were laws of the nation, where equality should be a norm, and the laws of religion, which governed the conduct of the faithful. This separation between the laws of church and state was largely a norm of Western governance, but there were also examples of similar divisions in laws between the faithful and the nation (*millet*) in the history of Middle Eastern empire. Importantly, supporters of constitutionalism and equality always made the argument, at times strained, that there were Islamic precedents that justified both the constitution and the concept of equality.

The new press in Iran, largely supported by the *anjomans*, also reinforced narratives that extolled the virtues of community (the "people") by stating that their collective will was a manifestation of God's principles. At the same time, the constitutionalist press introduced new ideas, framed from an Iranian cultural perspective, as to how a Moslem nation should be governed. An important note is that even among those who were advocating *equality* as an ideal for *individual sovereignty*, the system that they wanted to establish did not enfranchise women and also continued to reinforce economic and social divisions that existed in Iran. The craft guilds received representation to the National Assembly at the last moment, likely because they were well represented in the *bast* at the British embassy. Requirements concerning property, for guild workers and merchants were adopted in the constitution. In this respect, despite rhetoric supporting equality, Iranian constitutionalists were not much

different than their Western counterparts in that they still institutionalized a system that had several inequalities. Furthermore, like constitutional systems in Europe and the United States at that time, women were denied the right to vote.

Frames of National Sovereignty

A resonant frame, employed by both sides during the Constitutional revolution, was that there was a need to be independent from the influence of Great Britain and Russia. As a practical matter, movement groups were often forced to choose between the patronages of one of these regional powers, but all groups consistently used movement frames that extolled the virtue of national independence. It seems clear that all sides in the Constitutional revolution had, as a primary goal, the preservation of an independent Iranian nation. For Fazlollah Nuri, this included remaining independent from Western inspired systems of governance. In contrast, the constitutionalists were more concerned with establishing a “modern” political system that would insure Iranian sovereignty through economic development. This placed the constitutional supporters in the awkward position of arguing that Iranians needed to emulate aspects of Western governance and reasoning in order to free themselves from the authority of the great powers. In effect, the *bast* in the British embassy, the use of European constitutional models and the publication of the 1907 Anglo-Russian agreement tended to associate many supporters of the constitution—despite the fact that they consistently returned to anti-imperial frames—with the British. Constitutional supporters responded by linking the opposition, particularly Fazlollah Nuri, to financial support that was being provided by the Russians.

Both religious and secular nationalist agreed that national sovereignty was vital to the establishment of a strong Iranian nation, but they disagreed, in a fundamental way, as to how national sovereignty should be achieved. In the aftermath of the Constitutional revolution,

nationalist and religious factions became increasingly alienated from one another. On the one hand, nationalists used a narrative frame of economic and social development that adopted concepts of citizenship, equal rights and modernization. They began to regard the traditional clergy as obstructionist, or as a political and social entity that should exercise less authority in Iran. Religious groups, although they wanted to establish national sovereignty from the West, emphasized a narrative that reinforced a return to traditional Islamic values, and regarded the nationalist factions as imitators of the West who were willing to abandon the Islamic faith for an ideology that was, in their conception, based on Godless materialism. While both factions regarded foreign influence in the region as a problem, they grew increasingly disenchanted with each other's program for addressing this situation.

¹ Algar 1969, 1972; Arjomand 1981, 1984, 1988a, 1988b; Abrahamian 1982; Bayat 1991; Browne [1910] 1966; Keddie 1966; 1972a; 1972b; 1983; Lambton 1965, 1987; Martin 1989. Of these, Bayat (1991) and Martin (1989) tend to offer the most detailed accounts in terms of the specific individuals, and groups, that were involved in the Constitutional revolution. Bayat (1991) argues that the nascent intellectual movement—through their participation the *anjomans* (secret societies)—was the driving force behind the Constitutional revolution. Browne's [1910] 1966 account is interesting in that he was a well-known British orientalist who was sympathetic to the movement who had contacts in Iran during the revolutionary period. In some respects, his account is very detailed, but because he is produced this work shortly after the actual event, there are gaps in his account. Keddie's work on Iran—on the Constitutional revolution, the Iranian revolution, and the lives of prominent Iranian intellectuals—is remarkable in terms of both its breadth and depth. In many respects she established the benchmarks for several questions debated by historians, and other social scientist, interested in Iran. All of her work—and the many edited volumes she has produced—are thought provoking. Arjomand's (1984a; 1988a) work exceptional. In particular, he tends to apply a Weberian analysis concerning the bureaucratization of Shi'ism—combined with a rich, detailed historical accounting that uses primary documents—in his treatments of Iran. The texts that he edited (1984b; 1988b) are excellent. They often provide excellent translations of important primary documents. Algar's (1969) assertion that the clerical elite has a long history of activism against the state has widely been debated. Importantly, Algar has provided excellent translations of the most important revolutionary ideologues—Ali Shariati and Ayatollah Khomeini—of the Iranian revolution. Lambton (1987), a member of the British foreign service who traveled extensively throughout Iran in the post World War II period, was one of the first to concentrate on the important role that the secret societies (*anjomans*) played in the Constitutional revolution. Like Algar, she regards the clerical class as having a long-time oppositional role to the Iranian state. Abrahamian (1982) a good narrative account of Iranian politics “between revolutions.” Martin's (1987) work has been largely overlooked, but I find it to be one of the most thorough accounts of the Constitutional revolution, and I relied heavily on her account in my own work.

² The 1905 revolutionary movement in Russia are generally considered to be a precursor to the 1917 revolution.

³ Individuals had sought bast in the foreign legions before. For example, Iranians in the Russian sphere had made appeals to the Russian embassy in conflicts with the state, and the Russians often extended them protection, even claimed these individuals as citizens.

⁴ Browne (1966: 354-400) has a good translation of the electoral law in an appendix to the *Persian Revolution*.

⁵ There is a considerable literature, from Iranian sources, concerning the term *mashruta*, or *mashrutiya*, how it was introduced, and its origins. It may have come from Ottoman sources that were introduced to French Constitutionalism. Gheisari (1998) has a nice review of this literature.

⁶ This designation is questioned by some (e.g. Bayat) who believe that it overstates Na'ini's influence in the traditional elite. It is undeniable that he was considerable less prominent than Nuri.

⁷ In the translator's (Dabashi) footnote: "a juridical term meaning those who are familiar with the Qoran and the hadith, and are of sound mind" (368).

⁸ Some have speculated the Qajar Shah, despite the fact that Amin al-Sultan was nominally his representative to the Assembly, may have sanctioned this act. In effect, the Shah used the assassination as a provocation to close the new institution (Keddie 1981).

⁹ Most recently, the common denial by Middle Easterners that Arabs and Moslems were involved in the September 11th attack on the World Trade Center offers a good example of this phenomenon.