



KHATAMI AND GORBACHEV

POLITICS OF CHANGE IN
THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC
OF IRAN AND THE USSR

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the Islamic Republic of Iran
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*To my grandparents,
Fazollah and Rokieh Shakibi
and
Thomas and Kathryn DeJoseph*

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PREFACE

This book explores in a comparative framework the dynamics of the governmental and ideological systems of the USSR and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The focus is on the politics of change of Mikhail Gorbachev, the last general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Sayyed Mohammad Khatami, unexpectedly elected to the post of president of the IRI in 1997. Both men attempted to breathe new life into the ideological polities that emerged from two of the greatest events of the twentieth century, the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917 and the Islamic Revolution of 1979 which proclaimed new forms of universalist utopian modernities superior to that of the West. The institutional arrangements, ideological dynamics, and ultimate historical goals of these polities share much in common whilst also differing from each other in fundamental ways.

The major goal of this book is determination through a comparative analysis of the Gorbachev and Khatami periods of the extent to which these men hold responsibility for outcomes diametrically opposed to the essence and ultimate goals of their politics of change. The phrase 'politics of change' is used instead of 'democratisation' or 'democratic transition' because these latter terms more often than not suggest that Western-style liberal democracy and travelling along the path of the West were at the heart of Gorbachev's and Khatami's programme. Both men hoped to introduce changes but within a Soviet and IRI framework whose achievement, they hoped, would result in a modernity superior to that of the West.

The balance of similarities and differences between these two polities examined here makes a comparison of the dynamics of change between the USSR of Gorbachev and the IRI under Khatami worthwhile and

also useful for obtaining further insights in regard to modern Russian and Iranian history. After all, these two men were the latest in a long line of Russian and Iranian leaders who attempted to reconcile aspects of attempt political, social, and economic change from above.

An understanding of the role of Gorbachev and Khatami and of the political, social, and economic challenges they faced provides us with greater insight into the trajectory of politics in the IRI and Russia today for many of the issues both men faced continue to exercise an impact. At the same time, the form, evolution, and consequences of their respective politics of change, which were to a significant degree reflections of Gorbachev's and Khatami's political character and behaviour, still exercise an influence on Russian and Iranian politics.

Many people have aided me in one way or another in writing this book. In Russia, I owe a special thanks to Larissa Nikolaevna, Irina Shulyakovskaia, Boris Shiraev, the late Urii Vorontsov, Natasha Chapykova and Pavel Konnenko. In Iran, I thank the good number of people who took the time to share with me their personal experiences and opinions in regard to the mercurial politics of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In addition I thank Mohammad Reza Saleh-Nejad, Faride Modaressi, Makan Shamloo-Gorajee, Ali Tahami, Farshad Shakibi, Karim Arghandepour, Gordon and Angela Hamme, Sergei Spiridonov and Mahmoud Raskeh. Special thanks to my colleagues, Professors Sumantra Bose and Dominic Lieven at the London School of Economics and Political Science for reading parts of the manuscript. I thank the British Academy for generous funding for research in Iran.

INTRODUCTION

2005 marked the twentieth anniversary of Mikhail Gorbachev's appointment to the post of general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). That same year in the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) Hojjatoleslam Sayyed Mohammad Khatami, having served his second and constitutionally last term as president, left government service. These men attempted to breathe new life into the ideological politics that emerged from two of the greatest events of the twentieth century, the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917 and the Islamic Revolution of 1979. These revolutions proclaimed new forms of universalist utopian modernities.

In spring 1985 Gorbachev became general secretary. Believing the Soviet system had suffered political, economic, and social stagnation under the leadership of Leonid I. Brezhnev (1964-1982), Gorbachev launched and then became a victim of his politics of change, known as *glasnost* and *perestroika*. He became the latest in a long line of Russian and Soviet leaders pursuing change from above. Claiming loyalty to the ideas of Marxism-Leninism, he determined to return the USSR to the 'correct' path chosen by Lenin. Six years later, on 25 December 1991, a sombre Gorbachev appeared on television to announce his resignation from the post of president of the USSR; he had already abandoned his position as general secretary in the wake of the failed coup of August 1991. The world watched as the red Soviet flag with the gold hammer and sickle flying over the Kremlin was lowered. The flag of the new Russian Federation, the tsarist tri-colour, took its place. Gorbachev oversaw the dissolution of a superpower and the world's first socialist state into fifteen independent republics and the end of an empire, 'put

together over hundreds of years by Great Russia', as the Soviet anthem emphasised. His legacy continues to play a significant role in the dynamics of post-Soviet Russia.

By the beginning of the 1990s popular discontent with the IRI and attempts by conservative factions to dominate the political scene began to worry certain elite groups. The material and human losses of the eight-year war with Saddam Hussein's Iraq, declining living standards, growing unemployment, unfulfilled promises of political freedom seemingly made by the revolution, and growing anger at governmental intervention in peoples' private lives were tarnishing the IRI's legitimacy. In 1997 Khatami won the IRI presidential elections. His platform asserted that the parliament (*Majles*) was the highest form of national sovereignty, that political, economic, and social issues must be freely debated, that the rule of law must prevail, and that civil society must play a pivotal role in the IRI. He was implicitly challenging the belief held by some groups that the powers granted to the Leader (*rahbar-e moẓam-e enqelab*) by Ayatollah Khomeini's concept of rule of Islamic jurisconsult (*velayat-e faġih*), are absolute. Before the end of his second term most of his supporters had become disappointed and politically apathetic.¹

Already by the close of his first term many accused Khatami of being a safety-valve for the conservatives, weak and timid, or incompetent to lead a reformist movement. Calls for his resignation were increasingly heard. The results of the 2005 presidential elections provided a telling commentary on the Khatami years. Reformist and moderate candidates in the elections' first and second rounds lost to a former Revolutionary Guard, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The pained look on Khatami's face during the parliamentary swearing in of Ahmadinejad conveyed his dissatisfaction with the immediate consequences of his eight years as president--the election of a hardliner to the presidency and, for the first time in the history of the IRI, the capture of all governmental branches by one broad political block consisting of conservatives of various shades. One of the reasons for Khatami's candidacy in 1997 was to prevent such a political takeover.

At first glance the USSR and the IRI share little in common. The USSR was a superpower, the world's largest country, and a multi-ethnic empire. Ruled by the CPSU, the USSR with its centrally controlled economic system claimed to be the world leader in progressive revolution. Soviet ideology asserted that communism was the inevitable

endpoint of history and was a form of modernity superior to that of the West. The IRI occupies a different geo-political position. It is economically developing and demographically and geographically smaller than the USSR. Yet, the IRI is the region's largest and most populous country. That a theocracy could emerge at the end of the twentieth century, especially in a country undergoing 'modernisation', questioned Western conceptions of progress, historical time, and modernity. The expectation was that societies would follow the inexorable path travelled by the West and in the process lose their traditions and identity and join its narrative.

Gorbachev obtained the most powerful position in the USSR, that of general secretary of the CPSU. He struggled, in his own words, 'to activate the human factor' in his struggle against 'conservative forces'. Khatami never wielded the institutional power inherited by Gorbachev. But he enjoyed the widespread and active popular support garnered in direct elections of which Gorbachev was for the most part deprived. Gorbachev's period of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, viewed by most of the IRI's elite as a failure given the collapse of the USSR and the dramatic impoverishment of the post-Soviet peoples, exercised an influence on Khatami and supporters and opponents of his programme. Khatami himself stressed that he was not going to be Iran's Gorbachev.

Yet, the similarities are telling. In place of the overthrown monarchies emerged theoretically democratic states subservient to revolutionary institutions established to protect the legacy of the revolutions and the interests of the revolutionary ruling classes, the CPSU and the IRI clerical establishment. The revolutionary ideologies, proclaiming new forms of universalist modernity superior to that on offer from the West, placed these polities in ideological and geo-political confrontation with the West and specifically the USA, an ideological polity convinced of the superiority of its universalist modernity. Thus messianism and its by-product, a struggle of competing modernities, played key roles in the ideological cohesiveness of the USSR and the IRI and the justification for limiting the political space. Internal politics of change and geo-politics in these polities were more closely intertwined and interdependent than in most other countries.

This unique balance of differences and similarities makes a comparison of the process of change in the USSR of Gorbachev with that of the IRI under Khatami worthwhile and useful for obtaining

additional insights in regard to modern Russian and Iranian history. After all, these two men were the latest in a long line of Russian and Iranian leaders who attempted to change domestic Russian and Iranian realities in the face of the geo-political and political challenges posed by Western modernity.

This book is structured around three key points. The first point focuses on the use of comparative analysis in regard to the Soviet and IRI polities and the monarchical periods. The second point is that revolutionary ideologies based on new forms of universalist utopian modernities and the division between state and revolutionary institutions make the Soviet and IRI experiences in the politics of change fundamentally different from the process of change in other liberalising regimes. The third point, into which the first two points flow, is a determination of the primary causes that led to the emergence of political realities diametrically opposed to the essence of Gorbachev's and Khatami's programmes.

Comparative Method

The use of comparative method serves three functions. First, it enables a greater understanding of the dynamics of the Soviet and IRI systems. Second, its use in examining the Gorbachev and Khatami periods plays an important role in determining the sufficient causes of the emergence of political realities at odds with the spirit and essence of their programmes. At the same time, any differences between these two cases help eliminate possible explanations.

The literature on the Gorbachev period is immense and rich. Existing comparisons of the USSR with countries of Central and Eastern Europe or China have produced useful conclusions. Yet, they cannot provide sufficient insight into Gorbachev's role. The USSR, because of its revolutionary heritage as the first revolutionary socialist state and the geo-political circumstances of the Cold War, provided Gorbachev with options different from those available to the leaders of these countries. In regard to leadership, Gorbachev has been compared to his Soviet predecessors and post-Soviet successors, Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin. A comparison of Gorbachev with a reformist leader in a relatively similar situation, such as Khatami, provides the framework in which new commentaries (supporting or denying existing ones) on his leadership and role in the collapse of the USSR can be made. By examining Khatami in a comparative context we can remove him to a

certain extent from the polemical Iranian context. Only then can a more reasoned judgment on his role and leadership be achieved. Lastly, comparative method strengthens the argument that the USSR and the IRI are polities requiring a specific analytical category when examining politics of change.

Comparative historical method places these revolutionary polities in the context of history. It draws attention to issues common to the monarchical periods, such as the dynamics of identity, Revolutionary Westernisation from Above (RWA), political, intellectual, and ideological reactions to it, geo-political challenges, and the tension between, on the one hand, institution building and modernisation and, on the other, political change and revolution. These issues influenced and flowed into the Soviet and IRI periods. Gorbachev's and Khatami's politics of change targeted the Soviet and IRI systems and societies. But, the political, economic, and social dynamics of the Gorbachev and Khatami periods had roots pre-dating the establishment of the USSR and the IRI. Failing to include these issues in an examination of Gorbachev's and Khatami's politics of change would result in a faulty understanding of the environment, in which they grew up and operated, and of the challenges facing these men.

This method also tests the validity of approaches rooted in 'exceptionalism' and cultural relativism influential in Russian and Iranian Islamic studies, not to mention in popular perceptions and mass media. Such approaches have been frequently used to explain not only the trajectory of Russian and Iranian history leading up to the Revolutions of 1917 and 1979 but also the revolutionary ideologies and systems that emerged after the demise of the Romanov and Pahlavi monarchies. Comparison of Christian and communist, peripheral European Russia with Islamic, near-eastern Iran permits a determination of the extent to which the Russian and Iranian experiences with modernisation, institution building, and political change have been shaped by exogenous issues. The commonality of the Russian and Iranian ideological, geo-political, and political experiences with 'the West' suggests that the trajectory of Russian and Iranian history and specifically the revolution and emergence of Leninism and Khomeinism cannot be solely or predominately attributable to individually unique Russian or Iranian cultural essences.

During the Cold War Russian 'exceptionalism' and stress on the inability of the land of the tsar and commissar to follow a path of

political liberalism dominated approaches to the USSR. In the dying days of the Brezhnev period Stephen White, a well-known British Russianist, held that Russians viewed citizenship not as a legal expression of independent spheres but as submission to a patrimonial authority. In his view, the principle of autocratic rule become identified with legitimate government and Russian identity, unlike that of Western Europe, became firmly fixed in authoritarian moorings which constituted a distinct, deeply-rooted, and unchanging 'traditional Russian political culture.'² Before the Gorbachev era, Richard Pipes stressed that Russia has a 'very peculiar history distinct from the rest of the world'³ which made the Russians throughout their history culturally unable to adapt constitutional and republican forms of government. Thus, according to him, the Soviet regime was stable.

A seventeenth-century Russian resuscitated today in Moscow...would not find the system all that different or hard to understand. There is a tsar, only he is called the general secretary, there are his boyars—the Politburo, indeed the whole nomenklatura—and there is no private property, naturally; law is what the authorities state they want you to do, and if they can enforce it, you can do it. Moreover, you can no more think of changing the government than you can of changing the climate.⁴

Cultural determinism, based on 'unique' factors such as Orthodoxy, Russian patrimonial and arbitrary rule, amongst others, needs to be avoided for it fails to take into account not only the changes in Russian political culture during the tsarist period but also factors, such as geopolitics, modernisation, and human agency, exercising influence, at times decisive, on Russian political evolution.

Pipes's approach could not explain adequately the transformational events of the Gorbachev and early Yeltsin years. Nonetheless, Pipes, examining events in Russia during the presidency of Vladimir Putin, found evidence supporting the ultimate validity of his approach. 'Russia, it seems, for reasons rooted in either her social structure or her culture or both, is committed to authoritarian government.' That 'the Russian people, having gotten rid of the most extreme form of autocratic rule ever known and seemingly ready to embrace democracy, have once again, as in 1917, sought safety in submission to a "strong

hand” reflects the Russian people’s unbroken faith in authoritarianism.⁵

Since the events of 11 September 2001 paradigms of Middle Eastern and Islamic ‘exceptionalism’ increasingly dominate approaches to the region. According to one specialist, ‘Whether or not Islam and Middle Eastern “culture” are separable phenomena, the two work in ways that do not augur well for democracy. I believe that basic tendencies in regional culture and in religious practice must be overcome rather than utilised in any efforts to promote pluralism and democracy.’⁶ One of the leading protagonists of this approach, Bernard Lewis, sees Muslims as irrational, bound to the ancient past, fanatically religious, and gullible. Therefore, they are culturally unable to accept democratic forms of governance. Regarding Islam as ‘backward’ he wrote that any Muslim leader will obtain ‘complete and unwavering obedience (from the people) as a religious duty inspired by Holy Law.’ Implicitly linking Russians and Muslims he argued, ‘A community brought up on such doctrines will not be shocked by Communist disregard of political liberties and human rights; it may even be attracted by a regime which offers ruthless strength and efficiency in the service of a cause...’⁷ Thus Lewis spoke of an ‘Islamic Mind’ unable to stay the course followed by the West in the same tones as Pipes who implicitly spoke of a ‘Russian Mind.’⁸

One of the aims of this book is not to argue that Russia and Iran, contrary to the views mentioned above, should be placed into the Western historical paradigm that ends with the emergence of Western modernity and membership in the Western community of nations. Rather, this book aims to show that comparing Russia and Iran to the West in order to explain their political, economic, and social evolution should not be an analytical priority and that a comparative study of these two countries will provide more insight into their historical processes and their contemporary politics. Given Russian and Iranian geographical closeness to Europe, the West, from an early period, had geo-political and economic contact with Russia and Iran which has exercised a strong influence not only on the West’s political and intellectual and political approach to them, but also on Russian and Iranian conceptions of identity and politics to this day.

Conceptions of a ‘Russian Mind’ have existed since the West ‘discovered’ Russia in the Middle Ages. The early essentialisation of Russia by the West strengthened in the post-Enlightenment period. In

the mid-nineteenth century, Marquis de Custine, the French aristocratic traveller to Nicholas I's Russia, remarked: 'I have felt that it (Russia) is isolated from the rest of the civilised world by a powerful political interest, supported by religious fanaticism.'⁹ This view stuck. The Russian-Orthodox mind, similar to the Iranian-Islamic mind, is 'indifferent about the physical sufferings of others...(Thus) no techniques are yet available for eradicating the all-pervasive suspicion which Great Russians, leaders and led alike, feel towards the rest of the world. This suspicion springs from the unconscious and therefore irrational sources and will not be calmed, more than momentarily, by rational actions.'¹⁰

When Gorbachev embarked on his reforms these paradigms were put under stress. In the week after the failed coup of August 1991, a US pundit writing in *Newsweek*, spoke of the US perception of the Russian mind: 'This was the week the Russian became real. I mean: real for *Americans*...We were liberated from the tyranny—pretty much self-imposed, but a tyranny all the same—of our caricatures and abstractions. For more than half a century we have been surpassingly interested in the behaviour of these people and yet resolutely committed to viewing them not as people but rather as some kind of undifferentiated, morally improbable blob.'¹¹

The orientalist approach of the West and Marxism regarded the East, and Islam in particular, as unchanging, lacking progressive history, despotic, mentally rigid, and bound to superstition and tradition. The East had to be conquered and civilised by the more progressive countries of the West. Modernisation theory, which established dominance in US political science in the 1950s, sees Islam as the leading obstacle to development¹² along the path already travelled by the West. This opinion mirrors the belief that Russian Orthodoxy was a barrier to political and social development. As one specialist put it:

The thesis that Middle Eastern societies are resistant to democratisation had been a standard tenet of Orientalism thought for decades, but in the 1980s a new generation of Orientalists inverted some of the old assumptions and employed a new vocabulary which allowed them to link their world to a wider international debate about the relationship between 'civil society' and democratisation. These updated arguments sought to prove not only as neo-Orientalist Daniel Pipes put it 'that Muslim

countries have the most terrorists and the fewest democracies in the world,' but that they always would.¹³

In both cases the conviction is that Western modernity is the end of history and any judgements made in regard to Russian and Iranian 'civilisational progress' are measured against it. Yet, as we shall see, Leninism and Khomeinism were attempts to provide a modernity cleansed of the defects perceived in that of the West. These societies were not dormant or stagnant. They were searching for a society and system superior to those of the West. These approaches, by relying excessively on cultural relativism and exceptionalism, have failed to explain the rise of figures such as Gorbachev and Khatami and their great popularity and to provide adequate explanations to issues related to the politics of political and economic change in these two countries. At the same time, the dynamics of the Yeltsin and Putin eras in Russia and that of Ahmadinejad in the IRI, including the dynamic of the 2009 presidential elections, cannot be fully understood without examining Gorbachev's and Khatami's leadership and conceptions and handling of the politics of change.

By focusing on both the revolutionary heritage and the role of Gorbachev and Khatami, comparative method helps bridge the gap between the study of culture and political ideas, on the one hand, and historical institutionalist analysis and politics, on the other. This method helps show that the images of authority that political actors such as Gorbachev and Khatami used and in which they believed are not mere rationalisations of material gain or reflections of some Russian-Orthodox or Iranian-Islamic cultural exceptionalism. Viewed as integral elements of a state, its ideological legacies, and strivings for a utopia, these institutionalised images constitute decisive forces that can broaden or limit quickly the extent to which Gorbachev and Khatami could bring about political and ideological change in Russian/Soviet and Iranian/Islamic contexts.

Institutions and Universalist Ideologies

Soviet and IRI institutions and revolutionary universalist ideologies create certain difficulties and advantages absent to a great extent in non-revolutionary regimes attempting to handle pressure from below for change and/or initiate change from above. It has been shown that the nature of antecedent authoritarian regimes shapes the strategies of

actors during democratic transitions and the prospects for successful transition; the institutions and ideology of authoritarian regimes provide obstacles and opportunities for regime incumbents and pro-democratic challengers.¹⁴ However, a semi or non-democratic regime based on a revolutionary universalist ideology that contains theoretical and constitutional republican characteristics has fundamental differences with other forms of non-democratic polities. In Latin America and in many countries of Europe the goal was either the restoration of pre-authoritarian/dictatorship republicanism as in many Latin American countries, or the destruction of an authoritarian system and the establishment of a new republican form of government. For example, in Spain of the 1970s to use existing institutions with an added democratic character was not possible. The USSR had and the IRI has republican state institutions in law that had succumbed to revolutionary institutions whilst they were both successor states to monarchical regimes. These differences are addressed here. Arguing that the IRI and Soviet universalistic revolutionary heritages constitute an additional dimension in the process of change, I seek new insights into the dynamics of political and ideological transformation in these systems.

Subsequent chapters show how the Soviet and IRI systems had the ideological capacity for political change. Forms of popular sovereignty constituted vital parts of Soviet and IRI revolutionary ideology and heritage. The 1917 slogan 'All Power to the Soviets' symbolised the Bolsheviks' intention that political power would be taken from the autocracy and the elite capitalist classes and placed in the hands of 'the people', the peasants and proletariat with the party playing a vanguard role. These elected soviets operating on local and republican levels sent elected representatives to the Supreme Soviet in Moscow which, given its 'republican' character, was the highest governmental organ according to the Soviet constitution. Ayatollah Khomeini, whilst in exile in the 1960s and 1970s, conceived of Islamic government (*bokumat-e eslami*) as an alternative to the Pahlavi monarchy. The slogan of the Iranian Revolution of 1978-79 was 'Independence, Freedom and Islamic Republic.' The IRI Constitution provides for a popularly elected parliament, president, and local government. These 'republican' elements in the revolutionary heritages could allow a Gorbachev or a Khatami to push for liberalisation from within the regime while

claiming a return to the true goals and ideals of the movements that led to the establishment of the USSR and IRI.

These two systems emphasised charismatic leadership. Lenin can be considered the twentieth-century's first charismatic revolutionary leader, whilst Khomeini was its last. Although their charismatic leaderships represented a utopian logic that could not be reduced to a vulgar struggle for wealth and power, their respective struggles to forge a new and universal identity and to create a new world order and modernity were based on a *realpolitik* approach to governing. Khomeini considered Islam a complete ideology that provided the means to attain collective political, social, and spiritual ends which Islam itself determined. Yet, he also stressed that the elected parliament acting in accordance with the will of the people was vital and pivotal. Lenin saw in Marxism a total ideology and blueprint for attaining communist political and social ends. Although he banned factions within the Bolshevik Party, he left the idea of soviets in place. After the death of the fathers of these two revolutions political factions and groups of all shades invoked one aspect or another of Lenin's and Khomeini's legacy to justify their competing political and economic agendas. They attempted to recast Lenin's and Khomeini's visions in innovative ways whilst proclaiming loyalty to their legacies. The tension between attaining revolutionary domestic and universalist goals and adapting a realistic approach to politics and maintenance of power through constant references and reinterpretations of Leninism and Khomeinism constituted a vital aspect of the Soviet and IRI political framework. This tension also distinguishes these polities from traditional authoritarian systems.

The universalism at the heart of Soviet and IRI ideologies was based on alternatives to Western and specifically US-style modernity.¹⁵ Marx, building on Hegel's (and others') conception of linear history, held that communism, not Hegel's bourgeois democracy, represented the endpoint of history. Marx stressed that capitalism, given the exploitation of the toiling masses by the bourgeois middle and upper classes, could not create the conditions for the true liberation and freedom of the majority of the population; a true democratic state went against the interests of the capitalist political and economic elites.

The ideology of the IRI too claimed to offer an alternative to the modernity of the West. Long before Hegel and Marx, Islam held that religious history is linear and progressive. Islam, referring to the

previous 'religious modes' of linear development, namely Judaism and Christianity, stressed it was the endpoint of history, the most perfect of religions. This approach to history provided an ideological cohesiveness to political Islam of the twentieth century. The IRI slogan, 'Neither East nor West, but Islam' succinctly describes Khomeinism. At home, an Islamisation process and cultural revolution designed to create a truly Islamic society and distinct form of modernity took place. In this regard Soviet ideology was similar to the IRI one. The October Revolution's slogan in essence was, 'Neither (capitalist, bourgeois) West nor (backward, oriental) East, but communism.' The USSR and IRI saw themselves as avant-garde polities providing an alternative form of utopia to a world increasingly sceptical of Western modernity.

The USA played a fundamental role in the universalist ideologies of the USSR and the IRI and in the Gorbachev and Khatami programmes. The USSR and IRI, both ideological polities, need a particular 'other' to give cohesion to the ruling ideology and practices. The USA, itself a very ideological polity, fulfilled this function. One of the main issues was that the USA, the USSR, and the IRI each claim to have discovered a utopia in, and for, this world. These competing universalist modernities played a key role in the worldviews and foreign policy making in Moscow, Tehran, and Washington. The IRI labelled the US 'The Great Satan' whilst Washington gave the clerical regime membership in its 'Axis of Evil' club. Ronald Reagan famously described the USSR as an 'Empire of Evil.' This Manichean worldview that existed between Washington, on the one hand, and Moscow and Tehran, on the other, placed any Iranian or Soviet reformist in a difficult position dissimilar to that of most other leaders pursuing change. Groups and figures already suspicious of change could use the hostile relationship with the US and the threat it represented to the regime to block more effectively the potentially destabilising Khatami and Gorbachev programmes that threatened their political and/or economic power. At the same time, normalisation of relations with the US could exercise a negative influence on the ruling system's ideology by depriving it of its vital 'other.' The USA and the threat it posed provided the means to sustain a siege mentality and to justify opposition to politics of change.

State identity is a manifestation of domestic political needs. The need to improve relations with the US, which required a modification of Soviet and IRI state identity, brought up sensitive issues linked to the

ideological coherency of universalist modernity and to the domestic legitimacy of these systems. Yet, without a cooling of the international situation any leader in Moscow or Tehran would find pushing for political change difficult. The US response to the domestic and foreign policies of Gorbachev and Khatami played a decisive role in the course of the politics of change. The politics of change in the IRI and the USSR, on the one hand, and the international arena, on the other, were interconnected to an extent unknown in other polities undergoing a similar process.

These ideologies, rooted in forms of universalist utopian modernities, presented serious ideological, institutional, and geo-political challenges to any leader pursuing change. In addition to the traditional political obstacles associated with democratisation examined by existing literature, Gorbachev and Khatami believed they were in a struggle against revolutionary institutions designed to protect the interests of the revolution, its domestic and universalistic goals, and its elites. These institutions sat above and subordinated the potentially republican institutions allowed by the Soviet and IRI Constitutions. Thus change had to be presented as strengthening the cause of the revolution and Leninist and Khomeinist universalisms. In other words, in both polities a zealous quest existed, at least in rhetoric but not limited to it, for utopia alongside the pragmatic struggle for political order and power. The danger existed that any serious change in the pillars of the ideology could result in the collapse of the system's political and ideological cohesiveness, whose elements Gorbachev and Khatami were attempting to modify.

Reformability and Human Agency

The third point of this work focuses on the causes for the emergence of realities in opposition to the spirit of the Gorbachev and Khatami programmes. This point raises two essential questions: (a) the reformability of the Soviet and IRI systems; and (b) the role of Gorbachev and Khatami. Agreement on the extent of the reformability of the Soviet and IRI systems will probably never be adequately answered. The complex mixture of geo-politics, structure, contingency, and human agency playing into the equation ensures continued debate. In regard to the collapse of the USSR, the debate is mostly academic despite its possible influence on politics of change in polities such as the IRI. In the IRI, the issue of its reformability and the dynamics of

the politics of change are in the centre political discourse and debate. A comparative analysis of the Gorbachev and Khatami periods enables us to make some conclusions in this regard. Many Western scholars and intellectuals in hindsight stress that the Soviet system was unreformable given its inner contradictions, totalitarian/authoritarian record, dynamics of political power, and/or ideology. In a similar vein, the opinion that the IRI is unreformable is increasingly heard, especially after the events surrounding the 2009 presidential elections.

Analysis of these two systems and conclusions in regard to their reformability pull one into polemics. Scholarly work done on the politics of the USSR, especially until its collapse, and of the IRI is frequently judged to be political. The modernities promised by these polities were seen in their own time as the main enemy of Western civilisation, as the principal threats to the stability of countries allied with the US, and to basic human values the West claims to represent. At the same time, the USSR and the IRI promised a different form of modernity based on social justice that strengthened spirituality and morality, offered redemption from exploitative capitalism and gave due material, moral and cultural attention to colonised and down-trodden people. Revolutionary institutions with supreme power would achieve these goals. It is frequently assumed that one's approach to these systems is a reflection of one's sympathy with their attempts at constructing a new modernity and/or opposition to the US worldview and modernity or belief in the superiority of US modernity and its universalism. It is necessary to strive to separate personal political views and support or dislike of these regimes from the question of reformability.

The question of reformability should be separated from the question of whether these polities could be transformed in a relatively short period of time into liberal democracies. It is necessary to judge the capacity of these polities for change during the Gorbachev and Khatami periods on their own terms without reference to the Western liberal model as an end-point. Yet, Gorbachev's and Khatami's programmes struggled with liberalism which was both an inspiration and antithesis.

This study stresses that the politics of change and its outcome depend to a large extent on leading political actors. The answer to the question of the reformability of these systems is equally or perhaps more dependent on the character, philosophy and political skill of

political actors. The inclusion of an unstable casual factor such as human agency can only throw a great level of indeterminacy into theoretical approaches to processes of change and democratisation. Even those scholars supportive of the role of elites in democratic transitions and breakdowns hold that 'the elite concept is fraught with problems, and the contingent nature of elite choices may be a barrier to theoretical progress.'¹⁶ While this is true, only by including this contingent factor are we able to understand fully the dynamics and outcomes of these processes. The urge for theoretical rigour should not be a justification for not analysing seriously the role of leadership in the politics of change and its outcomes. Whilst avoiding an underestimation of the role of the elites in these processes, I stress that the perspectives, plans, and policies Gorbachev and Khatami adopted played deciding roles in the outcomes of their politics of change. As one specialist put it:

Equally important is the issue of whether or not the pressure of civil society, once mobilised, is capable of pushing to the end a process of transition to democratic politics. It seems obvious that an evolutionary strategy involves important negotiating and bargaining processes with those authoritarian rulers who are able and willing to moderate their rule, while at a later stage any transition to democracy must involve organisation for elections. It is not obvious in either of these contexts, however, how civic associations, social movements, grass roots organisations, or even media of communication can substitute for the differentiation of a political element of strategic considerations. In fact a strategy from below on its own has nowhere succeeded.¹⁷

The issue is relatively simple in its formulation. To what extent did Khatami and Gorbachev influence, and were influenced by, the political environment? Clearly, the perennial debate concerning the roles of structure and agency in producing historical events is an important element of this book's approach. Structure basically means context and refers to the setting within which social, political, and economic events occur and acquire meaning. Adherents of this approach stress that this setting, the context, is made up of factors beyond the immediate control of political actors. 'At the core of structuralism is the concern with analysing objective relationships

between groups and societies. Structuralism holds that configurations of social relations shape, constrain, and empower actors in predictable ways.¹⁸ This study denies that structure alone is a sufficient explanation for historical events. The assertion that structure determines an actor's behaviour 'in predictable ways' cannot be supported. The structuralist approach fails to provide adequate explanations of institutional and political change and cannot explain the emergence, let alone many of the policy choices, of Gorbachev and Khatami. Hence, the greater focus (at least in some academic fields) on agency and leadership when the object of analysis is a period during which dramatic change takes place, such as a revolution, the rise and fall of empires and governments and the emergence of reformist movements. At such moments in history the impression emerges that structure, those domestic and/or international constraints on a political actor's room for manoeuvre, assumes a secondary causal position to agency, to an 'event-making' leader.

Agency refers to action, individual decision-making processes, psychological states, or any other individual-level characteristics.¹⁹ The notion of agency implies more than mere political action or conduct. In particular, it implies a sense of free will, choice, and autonomy. The actor could have behaved differently and this choice between potential courses of action was, or at least could have been, subject to the actor's conscious deliberation (or lack of it). Focus needs to be on how leaders, such as Gorbachev and Khatami, approached issues such as pacting, political crafting, and management of elites and rent-seekers.

The structure-human agency debate, in one form or another, has attracted attention over time and space. The reason for its continued presence within the social sciences and history is the practical impossibility to arrive at some form of definite solution. Inclusion of human agency as a casual factor makes necessary situational analysis, which makes the attainment of general theory difficult.

Many theories of democratisation and transition though offering invaluable frameworks in which to evaluate factors vital to these processes provide precious little room for the important roles of contingency and human agency. The reformist periods under Gorbachev and Khatami can rightly be considered challenges to these theories for, if anything, they emerged to positions of power in polities in which according to common logic serious reform from above would not take place and the elites would ensure the maintenance of the status

quo. The general theories of authoritarianism, totalitarianism and democratisation failed to take into account not only the role of human agency, but also the particular characteristics of the Soviet and IRI revolutionary polities. The intention here is not to present a universalising theory on democratisation in terms of human agency. The aim is to present an analysis of the reformist periods in the USSR and the IRI that incorporates and integrates the idiosyncrasies and modus operandi of Khatami and Gorbachev with structural variables in order to evaluate their leadership in a comparative framework and determine their role in the outcomes of their politics of change. It is an attempt to explain the relationship between a set of variables of which human agency is one of the more important.

Criteria for the Evaluation of Reformist Leadership

In order to determine the role of Gorbachev and Khatami in the outcomes of their politics of change focus must be on the character of the individual political actor. Several factors need to be taken into account in this regard: (1) values, (2) views regarding himself and his ability to have an impact on the socio-political environment in which he finds himself, (3) aspirations (4) interests (5) ideology (6) motivations (7) conception of reality (8) experience (9) education, knowledge and skill (10) brain power and (11) milieu. Other factors are exhibited in political behaviour, such as physical and medical factors. Temporary personal determinants of political behaviour also play a role, such as a fragmented understanding or misconception of the situation, particular moods and feelings, and by whom a political actor is surrounded at any specific point in time. Therefore, in any political situation behaviour is determined by a person's character and by momentary states within a situational and environmental context. In other words, political behaviour is a consequence of the actor's environment and his psychological dispositions. Moreover, the sources of a person's behaviour and his subjective experience (such as feelings, desires and thoughts) are twofold: the external stimuli exercising an impact on him and the internal dynamics resulting from the interaction between psychological characteristics and experience with the world.

Determination of the criteria for the evaluation of the leadership of Gorbachev and Khatami poses some methodological problems. These men started out as leaders intent on politics of change. They left office having attained outcomes in contradiction to the essence of their

programmes. Breslauer in *Gorbachev and Yeltsin as Leaders* lists what he considers to be the requisites of effective *transformational* (italics added) leadership:

- (1) highlight publicly the incompatibility between emerging environmental demands, on the one hand, and current ordering principles and cultural assumptions, on the other;
- (2) outline an alternative vision of political organization and culture that will restore a harmonious relationship between the transformed unit and its environment;
- (3) mobilise constituencies in support of that vision;
- (4) prevent defenders of the existing order from sabotaging transformations;
- (5) implement specific programs that will result in the replacement of the existing order with one that is better suited to the environmental demands of tomorrow;
- (6) create and legitimise autonomous public arenas;
- (7) disperse social, economic, political, and informational resources into those areas;
- (8) construct new institutions for coordination of decentralised social exchange and integration of the new social order; and
- (9) plant the seeds of a new political-economic culture that is consonant with the new social order.²⁰

He confesses that this list represents the accomplishments of the ideal leader. Rare is the reformist able to be successful in both system destruction and construction. This ideal could provide a theoretical framework in which to examine many of the issues facing a reformist leader; it however cannot establish a realistic set of criteria for evaluating his actions. Politics is rarely as ordered as these criteria suggest. Contingency, human agency, institutions, bureaucratic struggles, and the international situation exercise to varying degrees influence on the environment in which a reformist leader acts. The extent to which Gorbachev and Khatami had in mind the goals outlined by Breslauer is also debatable. In his book, Breslauer examined the effectiveness of the leadership of Gorbachev and Yeltsin on the basis of the goals they set for themselves. He argued, 'Since effectiveness can only be determined relative to a set of goals, the leader's goals and values must be part of the evaluation.' Thus, he asks, 'How well did Gorbachev and Yeltsin perform as leaders in pursuit of the goals they embraced?' This approach too has problems.

One issue with this goal-oriented approach is the determination of Gorbachev's and Khatami's specific goals. Periodization here is important. For example, when Gorbachev became general secretary he was not flirting with the idea of a market economy, let alone supporting a plan for its introduction into the USSR, as he was doing in 1990. His ideas on democratisation also clearly evolved. Determination of Khatami's goals is just as fraught with difficulties. Moreover, that people supporting Khatami had expectations and goals differing from those he was articulating only complicates this issue. We also must give consideration to the extent to which Gorbachev and Khatami, realising actual and potential opposition, could discuss publicly the full breadth of their programmes. Determination of their goals cannot provide the criteria for evaluating their leadership.

Basing the evaluation on what their goals were *not* is more useful. Gorbachev certainly did not have as a goal the collapse of the USSR. Khatami certainly did not have as goals the election of a hard-line president as his successor, the establishment of conservative control of all major branches of the republican and non-republican governmental institutions for the first time in the history of the IRI, not to mention the events surrounding the presidential elections of 2009. Therefore, one question at the centre of the evaluation of reformist leadership in the USSR and IRI is: "To what extent were Gorbachev and Khatami responsible for the attainment of these *non-goals*?"

Nonetheless, the extent to which the goals of Gorbachev and Khatami can be determined aids in the overall evaluation of their leadership. One cannot simply accept the effectiveness of a political actor in obtaining his or her goals or non-goals as the criteria for judging leadership. One must question the goals themselves, not on a normative level, but on a strategic and/or tactical one. Do the goals a leader sets for himself, however vague and changing, correspond to the institutional and political environment in which he finds himself? To what extent do these goals and the expectations for their realisation the leader attaches to them correspond to this environment? The answers to these questions play a vital role in evaluating leadership. A sign of effective leadership is keen perception of constraints and of the link between means and stated ends, in addition to the holding of relatively realistic expectations in regard to the pace of change and the reaction and action of political institutions to that change.

One also needs to examine the modus operandi of a political actor. How does he choose and manage the people closest to him? Is he fearful of strong personalities and appoint weak people? Does he utilise divide and rule to protect his power? If so, does he manage it well? Is he able to create unity amongst the highest servants of the state, a necessary prerequisite for any government to be effective? The answers to these questions contribute greatly to our understanding of the causes of the attainment of the *non-goals*. A leader whose modus operandi is ineffective and allows for disunity at the top and chaos in the decision-making process sets failure into motion.

The goal of this work is not to provide an analytic narrative that examines all aspects of the Khatami and Gorbachev periods. Rather, the focus is on several factors that are sufficient to explain the non-goals. Within the analysis of each factor a determination is made on the extent to which human agency, in other words the role of Khatami and Gorbachev, made that factor causal in relation to the attainment of the non-goals. This determination can only be made by taking into account their particular characters, knowledge, intents, and circumstances that prevailed at the time decisions were made.

To judge any political actor's governing style and response to events, we must compare them with normal expectations for reaction by other actors to the same stimuli. In other words, were the political actor's goal and/or reaction and/or decision rational given normal expectations by other actors to the same stimuli? Answering this to any degree requires a determination of whether genuine alternatives were available to the political actor. In a seminal work on the history of reforms under Boris Yeltsin, Schleifer and Treisman focus on the 'how' of reform. They stress that success in the reform process depends on 'concrete choices which are situation specific. Any successful reform in a complicated political situation requires improvisation and cannot be planned entirely in advance.'²¹ Therefore, the personality of a political actor is decisive at certain times. Several key questions guide this part of the work: Were there other paths? Why were certain paths chosen over others? What factors played into the decision-making process?

An obvious point needs to be stated. The likelihood of personal impact increases as the flexibility of the situation increases. The more options open to the political actor in regard to a particular problem or situation, the greater the role personality will play in the choice of action. An inflexible situation is one in which a mixture of personal and

non-personal factors are pushing events toward a specific outcome. In other words, a chain of events is decisively under way and almost certain to arrive at a particular outcome. For example, given political and economic dynamics, Gorbachev had clearly lost control of events by early 1991. The USSR was heading for collapse. Soviet opinion polls taken during the first six months of that year show that a majority of Soviet citizens believed the USSR would soon break-up.

There is no single answer to the problem of structure and agency. In some contexts, the influence of human agency was fairly limited. In many others, it was not. At such junctures several paths were open to Gorbachev and Khatami and the path taken was a reflection of their characters. In sum, in order to comprehend more fully the reasons for the attainment of the non-goals, we are examining with the use of comparison: (a) the extent to which the political actor could have and actually influenced the environment in which he was located; (b) what alternatives were available to the political actor and what costs were attached to these alternatives; and (c) the nature and consequences of the political actor's decisions.

Looking Ahead

Chapters 2 and 3 compare aspects of Russian and Iranian history, including the causes of the revolutions, in order to place the emergence of Leninism and Khomeinism in context. They set into place the historical justifications for a comparison of reform, revolution, and political change in Russia and Iran. These chapters draw out the long-term trends that influenced the environment in which Khatami and Gorbachev operated. Chapter 4 examines the ideological dynamics of Leninism and Khomeinism and the ideological parameters of the political field in which Gorbachev and Khatami obtained political experience. It looks at the project of construction of a new universalist modernity and presents the essence and spirit of the Soviet and IRI systems in order to understand the political and ideological challenges faced by Gorbachev and Khatami. Chapter 5 shows how Leninism and Khomeinism manifested themselves in institutions. It argues that an understanding of the politics of change in these two politics requires a specific analytical category not fully appreciated in theoretical studies of democratisation. Chapter 6 looks at the character, worldview, and beliefs of Gorbachev and Khatami and their respective paths to power. It also pays attention to how Gorbachev and Khatami interpreted

Lenin and Khomeini. This chapter therefore makes a judgment on one aspect of their leadership. Chapter 7 examines the geo-politics of change and pays attention to the role of the US in Gorbachev's and Khatami's politics.

Chapters 8-10 focus on the politics of change of Khatami and Gorbachev and the interaction between structure and human agency. It also analyses the socio-economic changes that contributed to the groundwork for the potential of change. The factors examined in these three chapters were sufficient to produce the non-goals, namely the collapse of the USSR and the conservative take-over of the parliament and executive branch in the IRI. They make a determination of the extent to which Gorbachev and Khatami influenced and made these particular factors a cause for the attainment of the non-goals. The examination in these chapters is not made solely on secondary sources. The research here consists to a large extent on memoirs, speeches, and talks of leading political figures, the most important of whom were Gorbachev and Khatami.

Chapter 11 summarises and discusses in a comparative manner the conclusions on the roles of Gorbachev and Khatami in the politics of change and in the attainment of the non-goals. It also provides some insights into contemporary Russian and Iranian history. Lastly, it makes some comments on the link between, on the one hand, the politics of changes of Gorbachev and Khatami, and, on the other hand, the dynamics of the Putin presidency and the IRI's controversial 2009 elections.

2

EMPIRE, RELIGION AND HOMO ROMANOVICUS/PAHLAVICUS

Empire, Religion and Identity

As Mongol-Turkic power weakened and the extent of its rule was reduced in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries all-Russian and all-Iranian polities emerged approximately within fifty years of each other. The re-emergence of Iranian Empire under the Shi'ia Safavids is usually dated from 1501 when Shah Ismail captured Tabriz, in north-western Iran. Several more years were required to conquer the various Iranian territories. Moscow during the reigns of Ivan III (1462-1505) and his son Vasili (1505-33) took control of the northern and eastern parts of Russia.¹ These two empires faced the challenges of creating and strengthening central monarchical authority in the face of centrifugal forces, revitalisation of economic life, and survival in a hostile international environment. Russia faced threats from Europe and the Ottoman Empire while Safavid Iran faced the Ottoman Empire and, in the east, the Uzbeks and the Mughul Empire.

Mongol-Turkic rule contributed to the conditions in which Orthodoxy and Shi'ia Islam emerged as ideological pillars of the Russian and Iranian Empires. The 'nationalisation' of these religions exercised a strong influence on subsequent events. The Arabs, having defeated the Iranian Sassanian Empire, brought Islam to the Iranian lands in the seventh century. Grand Duke Vladimir of Kievan Rus' chose for his people Orthodox Christianity in 988.

Orthodoxy played the leading ideological role in uniting Eastern Slavs against Mongol-Tatar rule; its clergy became one of the leaders in the struggle against the occupation after the Mongol conversion to

Islam in 1340.² At the same time, Orthodoxy provided Muscovy with the means to define itself in relation to Latin and, after the Reformation, the Protestant West. Orthodoxy's role as unifier of the Russian and Eastern Slavic peoples was first present in the struggles against Western Catholicism; only later it played this role in regard to Muslims. By the thirteenth/fourteenth centuries Russian Orthodoxy and its defence against corruptive Western Latin influences became essential parts of Russian identity. Prince Aleksandr Nevskii's defeat in 1242 of Teutonic Knights and Estonians was seen as a victory against Western aggression supported by the papacy.³ Alexander achieved two other great victories over Western invaders. These struggles were used in Tsarist and Soviet times to claim the existence of 'a wide-ranging papal plan against the clerical and political independence of the Russians.'⁴

After the fall of the Eastern Roman Empire to the Ottomans in 1453 Moscow assumed the responsibility of head of the Orthodox world and became the defender and propagator of Christian authenticity and universalism. From that point on, Muscovy, with a sense of divine mission, could easily give religious colouring to its geo-political aspirations; at the same time this Orthodox identity played a role in determining those aspirations. The theory proclaiming Moscow the Third Rome was first floated by Metropolitan Zosima in 1492. Subsequent proclamations, such *The Letter about the Sign of the Cross* to Grand Prince Vasilii III of 1521, underlined Moscow's status.⁵ In 1561 a Church Council proclaimed Ivan IV 'tsar and emperor of all Orthodox Christians in the Universe.' In 1589 the Eastern Patriarchs under pressure from Muscovy created a patriarchy in Moscow; it was the first one to be established in one thousand years.

The designation since the sixteenth century of *Holy Rus'* symbolised the link between the land of Russia, Orthodox identity, and Orthodox Russian mission and distinguished Russia from the Latin West and the Muslim East. The meaning behind *Holy Rus'* reflected the Russian view that their country was 'Holy', 'chosen by God', to protect Christian authenticity. By the time the Tatar-Mongol yoke was overthrown, religion and the state come had together and to be Orthodox was to be Russian; to be Russian was to be Orthodox. The tsar's non-Orthodox subjects were classified as *inovertsy*, people of other faiths.

During the Mongol-Turkic period in Iran Islam did not play a role similar to that played by Orthodoxy during the Golden Horde. The

Ilkhanids, who, unlike the Golden Horde, directly ruled their conquests, converted to Islam. They adapted and patronised Perso-Islamic culture and utilised Imperial Iranian motifs. Their successors, the Turkic Timurids, were also Muslim. The ideology of the new Safavid Iranian Empire consisted of a fluctuating but effective mixture of Shi'ism, Perso-Islamic culture, and Imperial Iranian motifs, such as Ferdowsi's *Shahname*. Islam played a determinative role in distinguishing Safavid Iran from the Christian West and from the majority Sunni polities, the most important of which was the Ottoman Empire.

One of the key developments of Safavid rule was the transformation of a predominately Arab branch of Islam with the vast majority of its learning centres in the Arab world into a religion associated with, and propagated by, Iran where many of the major Shi'ia institutions of learning would be located. In Russia, Orthodoxy went from a predominately Greek-Byzantine inspired religion to one associated with Russia which assumed the position of defender of Orthodox universalism and Christian authenticity. Iran and Russia became imperial polities based on a minority branch of a major religion. Russia, the sole Orthodox state at the time, faced Muslims in the south and east and Catholics and Protestants in the West. Iran was surrounded by Sunni Empires and Christian Russia.

Iran's return to empire after a nine-hundred-year interruption occurred as Russia began to construct its imperial heritage. As Muscovy expanded its holdings across Siberia towards the Far East, the Pacific, westwards, and then southwards, it took into its domains various ethnic and religious groups. A Russian tradition of empire was born that existed until the collapse of the USSR in 1991. The Iranian empire, having experienced a resurgence in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially during the reign of Shah Abbas I (1587-1629), in the late eighteenth century went into decline and in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries began its transformation into a civic nation state. The symbol of Iranian Empire, the monarchy, collapsed in 1979. The concept of empire and specifically the belief that Russia and Iran should be great powers, a role given them by history and geography, exercised a strong influence on the political and ideological trajectory of the monarchical states until the 1917 and 1979 Revolutions and on the dynamics of the regimes that replaced them.

Iran and Russia: The View from the West

One issue in this study is the relationship between 'the West', on the one hand, and Russia and Iran, on the other. The dynamics of this relationship played a key role in the construction/emergence of identities on all sides. It reached new heights after the revolutions of 1917 and 1979. The West became an enemy construct whose modernity would be surpassed by those of the USSR and the IRI. The alternative modernities and political systems of the USSR and IRI played an important role in confirming cultural relativist and essentialist views of Orthodox Russians and Muslim Iranians.

The Western view of Russians and Iranians (Persians) predates the (re)emergence of the Russian and Iranian Empires. The basis for the Western conception of the 'Iranian-Islamic Mind' emerged during the Persian-Greek Wars. The Greeks, convinced of their racial superiority, 'barbarised' the Persians who were portrayed as servile, irrational, incapable of progressive change, hierarchical, culturally and morally corrupt, vulgar, and sexually perverse. With the emergence of Islam the Greek-inspired caricature of Persians, of Easterners, strengthened and eventually manifested itself in one of the forms of Orientalism.⁶

The West did not spare the Russians a similar view, despite their Christian and Eastern Roman inheritance. The Eastern Roman Empire survived longer than the Western one. Yet, Rome in the Western mind came to mean the 'Western Empire' and its Latin culture which was considered the basis for European culture. The West viewed the Eastern Roman Empire as morally and theologically corrupt,⁷ part of the Orient and thus alien and a threat to civilisation. The Eastern Roman Empire and the Russian Empire were everything the West was not.

With the emergence of the new Iranian and Russian Empires came greater interaction with the West. Orthodox Russia and the Muslim world of which Safavid Iran was a leading member, occupied a place in the Western mind and construction of early identity that differed from that occupied by countries further afar, such as China and India. Islam and Orthodoxy usually generated hostility, fear, and revulsion because of their close proximity to Europe. Western Europeans essentialised Orthodoxy and Islam to distinguish themselves, projecting on the Russians and Iranians that which the 'civilised' West believed it was not. This process played an important role in creating and/or sustaining collective West European and then US senses of racial

and/or cultural superiority. It also played a role in the dynamics of identity in Russia and Iran and in establishing an ideological and political dynamic between 'the West,' on the one hand, and Russia and Iran, on the other. This dynamic exercised a strong influence on the ideologies and politics of the Russian and Iranian monarchical and revolutionary regimes.

Early Western travellers' notes on Russia, some of the more famous of which are Gerbenstein's *Notes about Muscovy* (1517), Kamenize's *Letter to Pope Clement VII* (1528), Baroness de Stael's *Notes on Russia* (1812), and the Marquis de Custine's *Empire of the Czar* (1849), helped create an image of Russia in the Western mind that has changed little and played a leading role in constructing the basic framework for Western approaches to the country. Custine summed up the West's essentialised view of Russia: 'Separated from the West by its adherence to the Great Schism it returns, after many centuries, with the inconsistency of a blind self-love, to demand from nations formed by Catholicism the civilisation of which a religion entirely political has deprived it. This Byzantine religion, which was issued from a palace to maintain order in a camp, does not respond to the most sublime wants of the human soul; it helps the police to deceive the nation, but that is the extent of its power.' Moreover, the present Russians are '...nothing better than well-dressed barbarians.'⁸ Malia Martin more than a century after Custine noted that these feelings of superiority and arrogance led to a Western tradition in regard to Russia according to which 'under both the tsars and the USSR' Russian culture was rooted in a duality of 'despotism and chauvinism at home that led to expansion and imperialism abroad.' Implicitly it was believed that 'these characteristics are eternal and unchangeable.'⁹

During the nineteenth century Russia's links with the West strengthened and her elite considered Russia and itself part of Europe. Yet, 'Russia was increasingly portrayed as its own universe, in many ways mysterious and unintelligible, exclusively unique and diverse and characterised by its own way of life and thought, culture and traditions.'¹⁰ In 1868 French senator A. Martin summed up the general opinion of educated Europeans in *La Russie et l'Europe*: 'Russia is not a part of Europe. Her place is in Asia. Russians are not Slavs or Indo-Europeans. They belong to Turkic tribes. They are far from European civilisation. They are superstitious. They are not adaptable to enlightenment, and prefer servitude. Their Christianity does not touch

the internal world and therefore it is not possible to expect from them spiritual growth.¹¹ One late twentieth-century commentator of Custine's work seemingly attracted to the 'Eastern, Asiatic character' of Russia remarked, 'Custine had the insights of an outsider...we can enjoy the variety, the colour and the semi-Asiatic strangeness of Russia a century and a half ago...We are dazzled by the oriental splendour of the Kremlin, day and night.'¹² R. Kipling was more direct: 'Let it be clearly understood that the Russian is a delightful person till he tucks in his shirt. As an Oriental he is charming. It is only when he insists upon being treated as the most easterly of the Western peoples instead of the most westerly of the easterners that he becomes a racial anomaly extremely difficult to handle.'¹³ He had equally condescending words for Muslims, 'You'll never plumb the Oriental mind. And even if you do, it won't be worth the toil.'¹⁴

Iran became an example of the decadent, weak, decaying yet exotic and sensual Muslim Oriental world unable to change and act to save its empire. The works of the brothers Shirley, Jean Chardin, Tavine, James Morier, Edward Browne, and Count de Gubinou, amongst others, played an important role in the essentialisation of Iran.¹⁵ The preface to Morier's book, *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Isfahan*, confidently states: 'The unchanging East reproduces today the manners and customs of long-past ages...To visit the East is to step back into the vanished centuries...'¹⁶ De Gubinou, a French diplomat in mid-nineteenth century Iran, stressed, 'Iranians...are very ready to accept European domination' since their race was destined 'to succumb to the power of superior European races.'¹⁷ The fear of irrational, fanatical Muslim hordes living in a world of superstition in Iran had its equivalent in the Western fear of Russian power and its 'inherent aggressiveness.' Popular rebellions in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Iran and the dethroning of a 'modernising' and pro-Western monarch in a revolution led by a cleric reinforced these Western fears and beliefs.

Edward Said in *Orientalism* stressed the role of the orientalist in creating the Orient. The orientalist participates in the creation of a series of stereotypical images, according to which Europe (the West, the self) is seen as 'being essentially rational, developed, humane, superior, authentic, active, creative, and masculine, while the Orient (the East, the other) is seen as being irrational, aberrant, backward, crude, despotic, inferior, inauthentic, passive, feminine, and sexually corrupt.'¹⁸ Russians too were 'constructed as people fundamentally

different from Westerners with deep, largely immutable national characteristics.’ Ideas of a ‘Russian soul or an essentially spiritual or collectivist nature guided the interpretations and policy prescriptions of foreign observers.’¹⁹

Said’s critique of the Western ‘construction’ of the Orient is a critique of the West’s approach to peoples and civilisations not accepting the Western concept of ‘End of History’. The Russian thinker and political activist, Alexander Herzen (1812-1870), arrived at similar thoughts. Herzen, initially a Westerniser, after living in Paris and London came to the conclusion that Western liberalism bred arrogance and contempt for the so-called primitive peoples and a refusal to take seriously the value of any non-western culture. ‘To be fair,’ he remarked, ‘I don’t know how it came about that China and Persia may be insulted with such impunity.’²⁰ Importantly, Romanov and Pahlavi elites accepted the Western essentialised view of their countries and its concepts of progressive history. They came to disdain to the same extent as Westerners the ‘backward’ cultures epitomised in the ‘uncivilised’ Orthodox peasants and ‘superstitious’ Islamic masses

Yet, Russia and Iran, while being subjected to this essentialisation, rather uniquely found cause to project themselves as members, albeit junior ones, of the ‘civilised world.’ In the Russian case, geography, religion, and Russian physical appearance made a strong case for Russia’s inclusion in the Western world as ‘the most eastern of the Western peoples.’ Already in the sixteenth century Russia’s elite tried to prove a racial link between its monarchs and Europe. *The Tale of the Princes of Vladimir* claimed that Russian monarchs were descendants of Prus, the brother of the Roman Emperor, Augustus, and that the coronation regalia used by them had been given by Emperor Constantine to his descendent, Grand Prince Vladimir.²¹ Russia, as her economic and geo-political links with Europe increased in the sixteenth century, felt the need to prove ancient imperial European racial links in order to obtain a respected place amongst the pantheon of great powers beginning to take shape in Europe. Russian thinkers of the late imperial period turned to Christianity and/or Aryanism.²² Being a Christian country, Russia was projected as part of the universal Christian world that had given birth to the power of Western Europe. Russian Aryanism simultaneously satisfied a need for Russian authenticity vis-à-vis both Western Europe and the Tatars and included

Russia in the club of the world's most civilised nations of Western Europe. Iran too found refuge in the Aryan theory.

The Aryan or Indo-European hypothesis emerging in the West focused on the Indo-European language family, in which the Persian language was included. The goal was to trace European origins to the great civilisations of the Ancient East and distinguish the Europeans from Semitic peoples. Consequently, the Persian language, now designated as Indo-European, provided the basis for separating Iranian civilisation from antiquity onward from Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Arab, and other regional civilisations. The premise was that the Aryan race, to which Iranians belonged, was superior to the Semitic peoples. Thus Iranians were capable of obtaining once again civilisation.²³ Ernest Renan (1823-92) who played an important role in this regard argued that 'the Arabs enjoyed civilisational success because they absorbed Persian culture,' whose Sassanian Empire where 'art and industry flourished', was 'one of the most brilliant civilisations the Orient had ever known.'²⁴ Anyone who has a little idea of our times sees clearly the real inferiority of Muslim countries, the decadence of the states governed by Islam and the intellectual vacuum of the races who take from it their culture and education.' Moreover, 'the Berber, Sudanese, Circassian, the Malaysian, (and) the Egyptian...having become Muslims are no longer Berbers, Sudanese, etc....' But, 'the only exception here is Persia. It was able to protect its genius.'²⁵ Although being Muslim and chaffing under elements of Arab 'culture', the Persians retained their intellectualism and thus the right to return at one point to the pantheon of civilisations, in other words to the West. Gubinou argued that Iranians of the pre-Islamic imperial periods benefitted from pure Aryan blood and, therefore, were the example of a superior race and civilisation with the right to rule over their racial inferiors. The Iranians of this ancient period were examples of 'morality, honesty, and perfection.'²⁶ The problem was that the Iranians had mixed their Aryan blood with that of inferior peoples, such as the Arabs and Turks.²⁷ The nineteenth-century Russian thinker Krimskii stressed that 'the Persians will become our brothers' since unlike other Muslim peoples 'they have Aryan blood.'²⁸

Hegel's proclamation that the history of Western Europe was the history of freedom, progress, and civilisation made Russian and Iranian redemption, from the Western point of view, more difficult. In the eyes of Westerners Russia and Iran, lacking the Western historical trajectory

remained barbaric and Asiatic, although not to the same extent to which other less fortunate countries were, such as India and China. Hegel in clear terms condemned these polities, claiming they were 'unhistorical' and would remain at the lowest level of self-consciousness, despotism, and morality. Having cut the East from history, Hegel was ambiguous in relation to both Russia and Iran. He argued that although Iran was in the East, it could make the first step toward history, namely Western European civilisation, since it belonged to the 'Caucasian, meaning European, race.' He nonetheless bemoaned that this branch of the European race in the East had sunk into 'effeminacy' and its Aryan men had become 'the slaves of a weak sensuality.'²⁹In regard to Russia he claimed at one point that although 'some of the Slavs have been conquered by Western reason...this entire mass of people remains excluded from our consideration, because to this point they have not played' a positive role in the world of reason and progress. Yet, he claimed that whilst some nations, having achieved development, entered 'a condition of stasis. Russia possibly...carries within its depths great possibilities for the development of its intensive nature.'³⁰

Revolutionary Westernisation from Above (RWA)

This duality in the conceptions of Russian and Iranian identity played a key role in the emergence of conditions for the consideration and implementation of RWA. On the one hand, RWA's goal was to match Western economic, administrative, and military power. These forms of power would be achieved once Russia and Iran rejoined their racial and cultural relation, Europe, from which they had temporarily fallen behind, through the creation of a *homo Romanovicus* and *homo Pahlavicus*. This unique Romanov and Pahlavi path to a modernity based on Western norms made significant contributions to the political, social, and cultural framework that produced the revolutionary ideologies that emerged in these countries. The Soviet and IRI ideologies were a political and ideological reaction to monarchical RWA and a protest at the seeming inability of the Romanov and Pahlavi states to modernise effectively without consideration of social justice and make Russia and Iran strong independent neighbours of the West. That which binds together the monarchical and revolutionary regimes in Russia and Iran is the attempt to impose within the framework of a state policy a form of modernisation from above that had as its centrepiece a *new person*

whose identity and characteristics were to be determined by political elites and reflect the current state ideology. Gorbachev and Khatami struggled against this mentality.

Peter the Great (r.1689-1721) and Reza Shah Pahlavi (r.1924-1941) are considered the founders of the modern Russian and Iranian states. Using the West as the pattern, from which to give new shape to their respective empires, they launched RWA. RWA represented the attempts of the Romanov and Pahlavi monarchies to obtain power to repel geo-political threats, to maintain empire, and to create a utopia based on Western norms in their empires; it also symbolised their desire to be accepted into the Western Club, to which, according to RWA, Russia and Iran were racially linked. In the Romanov case, the intensity and extent of this policy fluctuated depending on international and domestic concerns as well as the character of the monarch. The Pahlavis did not rule Iran nearly as long as the Romanovs ruled Russia. Reza Shah began RWA. His son, Mohammad Reza Shah, the last shah, expanded and deepened it.

An important catalyst for RWA was geo-politics. Before the Mongol invasions, the European part of Russia and Ukraine faced hostile Germans, Lithuanians, Poles, and Swedes. The Soviets effectively used this geo-political situation to prove the historical, even primordial, hostility of the West in regard to Russian lands.³¹ During the Golden Horde Russian princes, such as Aleksandr Nevskii, fearful of Western invasions, cooperated with Mongol-Tatar overlords to defend Orthodox Russian lands from Catholic Westerners. As Mongol rule weakened, fears of Western invasions increased. In 1492 Ivan III constructed in Ivangorod a stone fortress that served as a check on Teutonic Knights who maintained a fortress on the opposite side. 1502 was a turning point. In that year the Teutonic Knights defeated Russian forces south of Pskov. The closeness of Russia to the West was now regarded as a direct threat.

The Livonian War (1557-82) during the reign of Ivan IV was Moscow's first major military confrontation with the West in the post-Mongol period. Russia faced the Livonian Order, Sweden, Poland, and the Grand Duchy of Latvia. Its causes were ideological and geo-political. Catholic Poland and Russia had competing claims to the Dnieper basin and Ukraine and competing interests in regard to trade routes leading to the West. But, according to a recent university history textbook recommended by the Education Ministry of the Russian

Federation, the ultimate aim of this coalition was ‘to destroy Russia and Orthodoxy’.³² To the Battle of Reval Ivan brought a large armed force exceeding that of the enemy, consisting of Danes, Swedes, and Germans. Muscovy suffered a major defeat that shook the confidence of the Russian elite. Organisation, planning, and technology could make up for a smaller armed force; no longer could Russian armed forces larger than that of the enemy be assured of success. Reform needed to be undertaken. But, as the Russian thinker and writer Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900) noted, Muscovy faced a serious problem: ‘But study under whom? Under foreigners, under aliens and most importantly under people of *other faiths*?’³³

In 1592 fear in Moscow of a Western invasion grew when the Polish king, Sigismund III, became king of Sweden. These fears were realised in 1610. The war was not just a struggle for land and booty. Writing to Pope Paul V, Sigismund III stated that the goal of his war against Russia was the ‘spread of the Catholic faith.’ The pope declared Sigismund’s war a Crusade. This was not the first time a pope had proclaimed a Western invasion of Russian lands a crusade. In 1238 Pope Gregory VII gave his blessing to a Swedish invasion. In 1610, as in 1298, geo-political interests also played an important role. The political figure who rallied Muscovy against Polish attempts to make Russia Catholic and subject it to Polish hegemony was a leading cleric, Patriarch Hergomen.

By 1612 Moscow was again in Russian hands. In 1613 a zemskii sobor made up of aristocratic representatives from districts of the Muscovite polity elected Mikhail Romanov tsar. In the middle of the seventeenth century Russia fought a series of wars against the regional hegemon, Sweden. Despite limited success Moscow continued to face threats from its more powerful Western neighbours. In 1670 Leibnitz, voicing the opinion of many West Europeans, predicted that given Russian cultural and economic backwardness, Orthodox Russia would become a colony of Sweden.³⁴ Feofan Prokopovich (1681-1736), a high-ranking Petrine-era cleric, noted:

Not for the sake of self-abasement, but rather for the sake of truth we recall what kind of impression we make on foreigners. In politics they consider us barbarians, the proud and strong disparage us, scholars believe us to be ignoramuses, and the greedy consider us an easy catch (*dobichez*).³⁵

In sum, the decades before the reign of Peter the Great saw an increasing Russian awareness of weakness, the threat from the West and Western condescension.

Peter, having travelled extensively in north-western Europe, returned to Russia determined to westernise her. The immediate catalyst for the decision to implement RWA was Peter's defeat at Narva in 1700 at the hands of the Swedes. As in the Battle of Revel, a larger Russian force was defeated by a smaller but better trained and armed enemy. Peter came to the conclusion that if Russia was to survive as an independent state, become a great power, and avoid conquest and colonisation at the hands of more powerful European kingdoms, she would have to launch a military revolution, a vital element of RWA.

Iran's situation after the end of Mongol-Turkic rule differed to a significant extent from that of Russia. Safavid Iran by the end of the sixteenth century was already a great imperial power. After the reign of Shah Abbas I the government's control over the empire began to wane. As Peter the Great established new central governing institutions and initiated centralisation, the Safavid state was increasingly unable to handle the centrifugal forces in its empire.³⁶ This was particularly dangerous given that power was still predominately tribal based, despite the centralisation tendencies of the Safavids. That an Afghan tribe was able to overthrow the Safavids in the mid-eighteenth century reflected the extent of the tribal and nomadic character of the Iranian polity after Mongol-Turkic rule and the Safavid inability to create strong central governing organs similar to those in Russia.

The Safavid Iranian Empire was not seriously threatened by Western powers. Shah Abbas defeated the most serious threat, that of Portugal, in the first half of the seventeenth century. This changed in the first quarter of the nineteenth century when the ruling Qajar dynasty (1796-1924) lost two wars to Alexander I's Russia. According to the conditions of the Treaties of Golestan (1813) and Turkomanchi (1828) Iran lost her holdings in the Caucasus. The issues of backwardness and reform became debated issues. As the nineteenth century progressed the Qajar state became more susceptible to Russian and British political and economic imperialism. Societal discontent with the dynasty's inability to protect the country's political and economic independence coalesced into a coalition that brought about the Constitutional Revolution of 1906. The hope was that with a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary control over the country's affairs, Iran would be able

to modernise and obtain the power necessary to defend the country's sovereignty.

Russia, having endured some two hundred years of RWA, played a decisive role in the weakening of the new constitutional system in Iran. For example, Russian forces shelled the parliament building, killing many deputies. In 1907 London and St.Petersburg signed a treaty effectively dividing Iran between them. The north became a Russian sphere of influence whilst the south fell under British indirect control. The Iranian government was left with Tehran. During the First World War Iran, despite its proclamation of neutrality, became a theatre of war as Ottoman and Russian troops fought on her territory.

The Russian Revolution removed Britain's main rival in Iran. With great prompting by Lord Curzon, London, hoping to take advantage of this situation, attempted to make the country a virtual protectorate. This open attack on Iranian independence provoked a nationalist backlash amongst educated Iranians and created momentum for modernisation/Westernisation from above. The result was the coup d'état that brought Reza Khan to power who in 1925 established the Pahlavi dynasty. He implicitly told Iranians that the 1906 Constitution was a luxury they could not afford. He offered them that which it had seemingly promised but had not yet produced- stability, a strong central government, and modernisation along with a reduction of foreign influence. Many supported him. RWA was set to take off.

Westernisation defined as adoption of certain Western educational or institutional practices and technology and use of foreign specialists certainly did take place before the reigns of Peter I and Reza Shah. For example, during the reign of Tsar Boris Gudonov (r.1598-1605) and that of Nasr al-Din Shah (r.1848-96) institutions of higher learning staffed by foreigners were established. Permission for their establishment was the first official recognition of Western superiority in technology and military matters. However, this Westernisation was not an official state policy or project. By following RWA, the Romanov and Pahlavi monarchies placed themselves in opposition to society which they were determined to transform along Western lines; the goal was the creation of a *homo Romanovicus* and *homo Pahlavicus* who would simultaneously be the builder and result of the project of creating new societies. Kluchevskii, the great pre-revolutionary Russian historian, succinctly described the effect of Peter's reforms on Russia and

implicitly made a comment on the role of Pahlavi RWA that began some eight years after the collapse of Imperial Russia:

The question of the meaning of Peter's reforms to a great extent is a question about the movement of our historical consciousness. From the point of view of a simplified systemisation, all of our history is divided into two periods, one ancient, pre-Petrine Rus' and new, Petrine, and post-Petrine Rus'³⁷

Kluchevskii in effect described a transformation that was a cultural and political revolution. After 1917 and 1979, Russian and Iranian history obtained a new, major division in their historical narratives, the revolutionary/post-revolutionary period. Gorbachev's and Khatami's programmes symbolised another period of transformation. RWA can be divided into four trajectories: (1) a monarchical led attack on religion and clerical institutions; (2) a 'cultural revolution' whose aim was to create a *homo Romanovicus* and *homo Pahlavicus*; (3) centralisation and institution building coupled with expanding military power; and, in its last phase, (4) industrialisation along Western lines.

State vs. Clergy

The cultural revolution at the heart of RWA claimed that old cultural and societal norms were backward and unsuited to the creation of a strong state needed to protect Russian and Iranian independence and empire. Russian Orthodoxy and Iranian Shi'ism, the cultures they had produced, and their clerical institutions inevitably became the first targets of RWA. This move against religion, a part of the cultural identity of both countries, had three consequences: (1) issues of identity and its loss became serious intellectual and political questions for identity was seen as representative of the future path of development; (2) the Romanov and Pahlavi states found themselves in opposition to society and its cultural source, religion; and (3) the elite of both countries became isolated and alienated in their own society as they embraced Western culture and mores. These consequences played an important role in the emergence of Soviet and IRI ideologies. Khomeini and Lenin determined to overcome this fragmentation of identity with the creation of new identities rooted in a modernity that gave self-confidence and self-respect to the masses. These issues of identity, elite attempts to construct a new person, and consequent

increasing political and cultural distance between state and society Gorbachev and Khatami faced. The survival of their programmes depended on managing them.

Tension in the relationship between state and clergy pre-dated the debate on Westernisation. In both countries struggles over power and property between the crown and religious leaderships often emerged. For example, in the mid-sixteenth century at the Stoglav Church Council Ivan IV wanted to push through state control of church lands. Land possession meant power. He failed to achieve this goal, but the Church was now forbidden to enlarge its land holdings without the tsar's permission. Secularisation of Church lands was not the issue, although state confiscation certainly took place when the tsar deemed it necessary. During this period, the state began to enlarge its army which required increasing amounts of land. This land, in the form of service tenure, was given by the state to the military service nobility. In 1649 a Zemskii Sobor limited the church's influence in judicial matters. According to the decree, judicial norms were the same for all and the jurisdiction of civil courts in criminal and civil matters was supreme. Few practical steps, however, were taken in this regard until Peter's reign.

During the late Safavid and Qajar periods the clergy became increasingly powerful at the expense of the weakening state. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, if not before, the clergy had become financially independent of the state and began to increase its land holdings and political power. The Romanov and Pahlavi monarchies' attack on Orthodoxy and Shi'ism and their clerical institutions was certainly rooted in the framework of 'Westernisation/modernisation.' At the same time, this framework gave greater justification for a monarchical power grab at the expense of religion and clerics.

Metropolitan Phillip in 1471 explained that the Ottoman conquest of the Eastern Roman Empire took place because 'the Greeks ruled, the Greeks found glory in submissiveness, they united with Rome and now they serve the Turks.'³⁸ Phillip, amongst others, argued that when Constantinople, in the hope of obtaining Western help in its struggle with the Ottoman threat, signed the Act of Union with the Papacy in 1439 and thus accepted the superiority of Rome in ecclesiastical matters, it had betrayed the principles of true Christianity.³⁹ God punished it by allowing its defeat at the hands of Muslim invaders.

Russia, having rejected the union, was rewarded for its adherence to Orthodox principles by God who made Moscow the Third Rome. The supporters of Orthodoxy argued that the Eastern Roman Empire had relied on the West and thus collapsed. Russia had to avoid such a fate.⁴⁰ The concept of Moscow as the Third Rome was an effective ideological and political defence against Westernisation. Yet, at the same time, the situation seemingly demanded Western knowledge and technology. Before Peter, Tsar Boris Godunov, having decided to send students abroad understood that 'the state required such academic knowledge and arts (*isskustvo*) which could not be studied in monasteries.'⁴¹ Peter saw danger to the welfare of the empire in Byzantine-style theocracy, which allegedly placed too much emphasis on spiritual matters and the afterlife and too little on armies. The result, he argued, was the fall of Constantinople in 1453.⁴² In Peter's opinion if an Orthodox state failed to take on Westernisation it would face defeat and ruin.

By the end of the seventeenth century the church's position in the Russian polity was ambiguous. Patriarch Nikon (1605-81) attempted to assert the sovereignty of the church over the state. He stressed that while the tsar did not enjoy the right to interfere in matters affecting the church, the patriarch was entitled to interfere in secular affairs whenever he felt that the tsar was deviating from the precepts of the Christian religion.

In spiritual things belonging to the glory of God the bishop is superior to the tsar...in those things belonging to the province of this world, the tsar is higher. If the tsar does not act properly in regard to God's laws, then the bishop has the power to issue a censure or excommunication against him; not against him as the tsar, but as against one who has apostatised from the law...The tsar must be less than the bishop and must owe him obedience.⁴³

The subsequent humiliation of Nikon at the hands of Tsar Alexis, Peter's father, showed where real power resided. Yet, the old notion of parallelism between the state and the church remained.

Peter succinctly articulated his feelings in regard to Orthodox clerics and faith: 'The bearded ones, monks and priests, are the root of much evil. My father had to deal with just one of them, but I with thousands.'⁴⁴ The high clergy and conservative elements in society were equally appalled by Peter. His carousing with Westerners and their

increasing numbers living in Moscow provoked a clerical response. In 1689-90 Patriarch Joachim expanded the restrictions on foreigners which included forcing them to live by themselves in enclosed areas known as *nemetskaiia sloboda*. In the face of Peter's policies, Patriarch Adrian reiterated the Byzantine concept of symphony of spiritual and temporal power, 'True pastors do not subordinate themselves to strong men nor do they show shame before rich men, but must denounce, beseech, and censure those who live badly.' Although acknowledging monarchical power on earth, Adrian stressed the clergy had power in this and the other world, 'All Orthodox Christians are my sheep and know me and obey my voice.'⁴⁵ Yet, the Church proved unable to resist its emasculation by, and institutionalisation in, the Romanov state.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century Peter began an offensive against the church's political and financial position.⁴⁶ In January 1701 he abolished the patriarchal courts and established a monastery department headed by a secular figure to run church courts and lands; the goal of this move was to siphon church income from its lands to the state's coffers.⁴⁷ Peter needed increasing amounts of money to continue the Northern War with Sweden. Having won this war, Peter moved against the administrative structure of the church. On 25 January 1721 he issued a new directive, *Dukhovnyi Reglament ili Ustav* according to which the church became a department of the government, the Holy Synod, headed by a secular figures appointed by the emperor. Peter had emasculated the power of the church. Long gone were the days when a patriarch could assert that 'the tsar must be lower than the prelate and obedient to him, for I also say that the clergy are chosen people and are anointed by the Holy Ghost.'⁴⁸ The monarchy was now able to take advantage of religious sanction without the problem of potential clerical opposition. This absence of any effective clerical opposition to the Russian monarchy greatly increased the crown's room for manoeuvre in regard to RWA but also destroyed a spiritual alternative to the regime. The absence of this alternative goes a long way in explaining the dynamic of the revolutionary ideologies challenging the tsarist state and the victory of Leninism.⁴⁹

Mohammad Reza Shah too grumbled about clerics: 'I know full well that as long as the mullahs are around there will be no possibility of (lasting) reform. My father and I have both suffered at the hands of these religious fanatics...The first step to reform is the elimination of the mullahs.'⁵⁰ This view attracted a small, but growing number of

adherents in the nineteenth century. After defeat at the hands of Russia in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Crown Prince Abbas Mirza, recognising the danger for Iran of her military and technological weakness, attempted to initiate a cycle of military reforms. He soon realised that they could not be carried out in isolation; other aspects of society would need to change. Condemning attempts to 'westernise' army and society, leading clerics defeated these plans. The issue of Westernisation became a political weapon used by opponents of the crown prince. Abbas Mirza complained in 1812 that his brother and rival for the throne, Mohammad Ali, had rendered him and his reform odious by arguing that 'in adopting the customs of the infidels he was subverting Islam.'⁵¹ It was only with the founding of the Pahlavi dynasty that the state launched a full attack on clerics and clerical institutions.

Launching RWA Reza Shah stressed:

Many people erroneously believe that the acquisition of modern civilisation is identical with pushing aside religious principles and the shar'ia. They believe, in other words, that civilisation is in contradiction with religion. Quite the contrary, even if the great Law-Giver of Islam himself were present today, he would emphasise the compatibility of his religion with the civilisation of today. Unfortunately, his enlightened thoughts have been abused in the course of time by some people (i.e. the clergy). Consequently, we are facing at this time a stagnant situation. We should work hard to change this situation and backwardness.⁵²

Actions backed up his words. The Conscription Law of May 1925 gave the state the power to decide who would be exempt from military service and thus the right to throw religious students into the army. The 1928 Judicial Law secularised law. A 1931 law gave the state the right to decide if and when to send a case to religious *shar'* courts while a 1936 law made it impossible for the ulama to sit as judges in courts of law. Beginning in 1928, religious students were required to take state exams and obtain state licensing to become religious teachers. In 1935 the University of Tehran established a Faculty of Theology. The state was intervening in religious education. Clerical livelihood was also attacked. The government divested the *shar'* courts of the fee-generating function of registration of documents, such as affidavits,

power of attorney, and property titles. In 1939 the state declared that it would take control of all religious lands and foundations. The goal was to put church property and wealth in service of the state and at the same time weaken church independence; this was also a goal of Peter's attack on Orthodoxy. Pahlavi attacks on the clergy and the backwardness it supposedly represented seeped into the popular consciousness. Ayatollah Khomeini bitterly noted: 'During the time of Reza Shah taxi drivers would not even offer clerics a ride. The late Hajj Abbas Tehrani Rahmeollah said that "once when I was in Arak I found a taxi. The driver said that there are two types of fares I do not take—one is clerics, the other prostitutes."'”⁵³

Mohammad Reza Shah's 'White Revolution' provoked clerical opposition under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini who remarked that the shah had declared war on Islam. Khomeini and others took issue with the enfranchisement of women, land reform, and the state's growing involvement in education. The shah saw only black reaction (black being the colour of clerical clothing) to westernising and thus enlightened policies that aimed to make Iran a member of the European club.⁵⁴

They were always a stupid and reactionary bunch whose brains have not moved...Black reaction (clerics) understands nothing...its brain has not moved forward for a thousand years. They (clerics) think life is about getting something for nothing, eating and sleeping...(and) sponging on others and a parasitic existence...In the six points of the White Revolution there is an idea suitable for everyone. What we are doing today is not behind other nations. If anything it is more advanced...But who is opposing it? Black reaction (consists of) stupid men who don't understand and are ill-intentioned...This black reaction is a small and ludicrous gathering of a handful of bearded, stupid people. They don't want to see our country develop and oppose reform because they will then not be able to deceive anyone.... (They are like) a numb and dispirited snake and lice who float in their own dirt. If these sordid and vile elements with their reactionary friends do not wake from their sleep of ignorance, the fist of justice, like thunder, will strike their heads in whatever cloth they are, perhaps to terminate their filthy and shameful lives.⁵⁵

Unlike the Romanovs, the Pahlavis neither attempted nor were able to place the Shi'ia clerical structure under state control. Thus whilst Mohammad Reza Shah effectively excluded the clergy from the political scene, he could not use Islam and the clergy as a bastion of the regime. A spiritual alternative to the Pahlavi monarchy remained. The financial and political independence of the Shi'ia clergy allowed for the evolution of Islamic thought in opposition to RWA. The result was a multi-faceted political Islam capable of mobilising the masses against the Pahlavis and RWA. Orthodoxy, placed in service of the Romanov state, ossified, leaving an ideological and spiritual vacuum filled by other ideologies. The states' centralising tendencies and moves against clerical power do not make the Romanov and Pahlavi approach unique amongst monarchies, although the severity and openness of the attacks on clerical institutions and religion, the core of the mass identity, certainly were. These attacks combined with the dynamics underpinning and justifying the creation of the *homo Romanovicus* and *homo Pablavicus* provide the criteria for labelling their approaches RWA.

Homo Romanovicus/Homo Pablavicus

A cultural revolution accompanied Romanov and Pahlavi attacks on clerical institutions. The goal was to destroy those spiritual/cultural and symbolic elements of Orthodoxy and Islam deemed backward and quickly return culturally Russians and Iranians to their racial relations, West Europeans. *Homo Romanovicus* and *homo Pablavicus* would represent the final product. The rays of the Romanov and Pahlavi crowns would bring light into the dark world of Orthodox and Islamic superstition and irrationality and impose welfare and order, and most importantly, a new identity rooted in Romanov and Pahlavi conceptions of Russian and Iranian authenticity on a perhaps unwilling people unable to understand the inherent goodness of RWA. This intellectual and state tradition of creation of a new human and identity continued in the Soviet and IRI periods. The goal then would be the creation of a *homo Sovieticus* and *homo Islamicus* as part of the construction of a universalist utopian modernity and not just a Western-inspired *homo Romanovicus* and *homo Pablavicus* on a national level.

One of the first RWA goals of Peter I and Reza Shah was to make the educated classes of their empires look European. Seemingly, the hope was that through imposition of European dress they would become 'European', be accepted by the West as 'civilised', and eventually

obtain European behaviour and habits. At the same time, dressing in this style was to convince Iranians and Russians that they too were culturally and racially European. In 1698 Peter, who considered beards a symbol of Orthodox influence and backwardness, ordered the elites to shave their beards. He took scissors to those slow to shave. Foreign observers, such as Voltaire, usually dismissive of Orthodoxy, regarded Peter's willingness to take from the West as enlightened.⁵⁶ Custine had another opinion.

It was Peter the Great, who, with all the impudence of an untaught genius, all the temerity of a man the more impatient because deemed omnipotent, with all the perseverance of an iron character, sought to snatch from Europe the plants of an already ripened solution, instead of resigning himself to the slow progress of sowing the seeds in his own soil. That too highly lauded man produced a merely artificial work: it may be astonishing, but the good done by his barbarous genius was transient, the evil is irreparable.⁵⁷

Reza Shah forced men to wear European suits and the Western-inspired Pahlavi cap whilst ordering officials to shave their beards. The traditional Islamic clothing for women, the chador or hejab, was declared illegal; Peter too had attacked the dress and position of women in Orthodoxy. Women were to wear Western fashion. An official history of the Pahlavi period explained why the dress issue was so important to Romanov and Pahlavi RWA: 'Reza Shah understood very well that Iranian clothes...belonged to past eras and that similar to advanced countries the people must wear new clothes. (These new clothes) would destroy the traces of backwardness and decline'⁵⁸

These early stages of the Romanov and Pahlavi cultural revolutions sparked a backlash amongst the religious and clergy. Patriarch Adrian condemned the shaving of beards, citing the word and example of God and tradition. Echoing his predecessor, Jochaim, Adrian warned Orthodox Christian Russians to reject all 'newly introduced foreign customs' and urged them to protect Orthodoxy from 'Latin and Lutheran heretics.'⁵⁹ Khomeini too decried these moves: 'This horrific (Pahlavi) cap was a source of shame for an Islamic country and blackened our independence.' He denounced the Pahlavi imposition of European clothing that was 'based on the idea that...everyone must be the same in order to be part of the civilised world?' and rejected the

idea that Iranians had to dress as Europeans ‘in order to enjoy greatness in this world.’⁶⁰ Islamic and Orthodox clerics were rejecting Romanov and Pahlavi interpretations of Russian and Iranian authenticity and stressed that such authenticity was rooted in a religious and non-Western framework.

In the wake of the 1905 Revolution, the government moved to extend RWA from the urban areas to the countryside and the creation of a *homo Romanovicus* amongst the last seeming bastion of old Orthodox Russia, the peasant class. The reasons were political as well as economic. Peasant participation in this revolution had shown the government that this class was not as reliable in its support of the regime as previously imagined. Thus one goal of Stolypin’s reforms was to create a bulwark of the autocracy in the countryside. The other aim was to transform peasants into a Western-inspired farmer class.

The commune more than anything else holds back our political as well as economic development. It deprives the peasantry of the benefits and opportunities of individualism and hinders the formation of a middle class of small landed proprietors who, in the most advanced Western countries, comprise their might and main. What propelled so quickly America into the front rank if not individualism and small landed property? Our landed commune is a rotten anachronism, which prospers only thanks to the artificial, baseless sentimentalism of the past half century which is contrary to common sense and the most important needs of the state.⁶¹

The land reforms of the shah’s White Revolution had similar political and economic goals.

Institutional and Military Power

The cultural revolution and the creation of *homo Romanovicus* and *homo Pahlavicus* was the means to achieve the ultimate goal of RWA which was the creation of power in three forms—institutional, military, and economic. The Russian and Iranian states would aim not only to govern and extract resources from society, but also change the behaviour and social and cultural attitudes of the masses through positive bureaucratic law.⁶² Peter I and Reza Shah, whilst paying attention to economic matters, primarily occupied themselves with

acquisition of military power. Peter not only wanted to protect Russian independence in the face of threats from the west and from the Ottoman Empire, but also transform Russia into an empire and major player in the European state system. Reza Shah worked to create a military force able to impose central control over the entire Iranian Empire and defend the country's independence. Peter and Reza Shah were in this respect relatively successful. In 1709 Peter defeated Charles XII at Poltava; by 1721 Sweden in face of Peter's naval and military campaign capitulated. Russia, now the dominant power in this region, began to expand its empire. Reza Shah destroyed the power of the tribes and nomads and established central control over the entire empire for the first time since the Safavid period.

Peter's nineteenth-century successors and Reza Shah's heir faced the challenge of economic modernisation. Russia's leading role in the defeat of Napoleon proved the success of Peter's RWA. During the period 1815-1853 Russia stood as a colossus; it was the most powerful country in continental Europe. Defeat in the Crimean War (1853-1856) showed that it had become a giant with feet of clay. Clearly, Russia had once again fallen behind the West. During the reign of Alexander II (r.1855-1881) Russia entered a new phase of RWA that laid the groundwork for the industrialisation of the empire.⁶³ During the reigns of Alexander III (r.1881-1894) and Nicholas II (r.1894-1917) state-led industrialisation along Western lines took off. Sergei Witte, echoing Peter I, stressed that if the government did not build up its infrastructure and take the leading role in industrialisation, Russia would lose its great power status and become an exporter of raw materials to the more advanced countries of the West. Time, he underlined, was of the essence.

Industrialisation created a large working class concentrated in several large cities and an industrialist class strongly linked to, and dependent on, the state. Antagonism between these two classes was strong. Having initiated industrialisation at a time when socialist thought was spreading and working conditions were particularly horrific, the autocracy found itself in an unenviable position. It justified its absolute power by claiming to be an above-class force providing social justice. Thus the workers looked to the tsar to address their poor working conditions and their exploitation at the hands of industrialists. For a myriad of reasons the autocracy failed to act. At the same time socialist thought became more popular amongst the workers searching for an

answer to their daily travails. After defeat in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05), Russia's geo-political situation became more dangerous. St. Petersburg now faced the Empire of the Rising Sun in the east, unified Germany and increasingly hostile Austria-Hungary in the west, and British imperial pretensions in the middle.

In 1963 Mohammad Reza Shah launched his 'White Revolution of Shah and People', which symbolised the second phase of Pahlavi RWA. The shah's goal was to westernise Iran in the course of his reign. This phase of RWA was similar in scope to that experienced by Russia between 1854 and 1914. Echoing Witte, the shah wrote:

In order for us to be part of the advanced countries of the world it was necessary that we in one strike destroy the causes of our backwardness, points of weakness, and social, moral and spiritual decline. The reality of today does not allow us to take one step toward reform. It does not allow the country to absorb little by little that step and, after one or two years, take another step. In that case, in perhaps twenty or thirty years our country, to an extent, would resemble other (great) powers. It was necessary (because of geo-politics) that in one go we overcome all our points of weakness and decline (*entebat*) and to do everything necessary for placing our country in the ranks of the advanced countries of the world. This action has a complete revolutionary character.⁶⁴

The land reforms combined with the push for industrialisation created an influx of people into the cities. The urban malaise and growing disparities in income hurt the Pahlavi project.

RWA provided a new rationalisation for monarchical absolute power. The legitimacy and justification of the power of Iranian shahs and Russian tsars before Reza Shah and Peter the Great were based on preservation of religion, maintenance of order, defence of the borders, and providing of justice. In other words, the responsibilities of these monarchs were static in practice and liturgical in theory. RWA and its open attack on religion removed the liturgical aspect of monarchical ideology. The legitimacy and justification of the growing power of Romanov and Pahlavi monarchs were based on the idea of constant reform that would push the Russian and Iranian Empires along the 'progressive path' followed by the West to civilisation, great power

status and economic and social development that would benefit all classes. In other words, these monarchies became secular in practice and westernising in theory. Kluchevskii's judgement in regard to Peter's RWA could be equally applicable to that of Reza Shah:

... (t)he rapprochement (*sblizhenie*) with Europe was in Peter's eyes only a means to an end, and not the end in itself. What did he achieve with these means? In answer to this question it is necessary to remember why Peter sent dozens of Russian students abroad and what kind of foreigners he recruited from abroad. Those students studied mathematics, the natural sciences, shipbuilding, and navigation; they returned as officers, shipbuilders, navigators, vocational professionals, mining engineers, and then lawyers and bureaucrats (*kameralisti*) with knowledge of finance and the science of governing. With the help of them and others, Peter brought to Russia what he regarded as useful in the West and what was not already in Russia.⁶⁵

But, the expectations of constant reform to accommodate perceived social, political, and economic needs at the heart of Pahlavi and Romanov RWA engendered expectations of political reform, in other words constitutional monarchy, amongst the growing educated and professional classes. Moreover, RWA created a crisis of identity that influenced political and intellectual discourse. The following chapter shows how the Romanovs and Pahlavis failed to handle these two issues which greatly contributed to the dynamics of Leninism and Khomeinism.

WESTERNISATION, AUTHENTICITY AND REVOLUTION

Westernisation and Authenticity

Competing conceptions of identity amongst mass and elite play a crucial role in the modernisation process emerging from geo-political and cultural encounters with the West. These conceptions contribute to the conceptualisation of modernity, defined here as the course for social, economic, and cultural change. This imaging of identity and thereby modernity constitutes an evaluation, however haphazard, of possible paths to change from which to choose.¹ This choice broadly determines which existing cultural and religious traditions, concepts of identity, and frameworks are to be abandoned or preserved.

RWA in Russia and Iran shared certain characteristics which taken together distinguish their experiences with modernisation and Westernisation from those of other countries. First, RWA was driven by the Romanov and Pahlavi belief that Russians and Iranians were racial cousins of Western Europeans from whom they had culturally fallen behind. RWA had the goal, common to other polities, of capturing Western economic, institutional, and military power. However, that which distinguishes RWA from other attempts to achieve Western power was the cultural and ideological project that aimed to return culturally the Islamic and Orthodox populations to their racial cousins, West Europeans, through the creation of a *homo Romanovicus* and *homo Pahlavicus*. Similar modernisation processes, such as those in India, China, Japan, Egypt, and the Ottoman Empire, did not symbolise an attempt to prove membership in, and become a cultural *and* racial member of, Western European civilisation. RWA

stressed that contingent events, such as the Mongol invasion of Russia and Arab and subsequent Mongol occupations of Iran, had ripped Russians and Iranians away from their racial counterparts and thus from the 'civilised world.' This interpretation of Russian and Iranian authenticity justified RWA by arguing that Westernisation represented not the imposition of an alien culture and identity, but rather a process aiming to return culturally Russians and Iranians to both their racial cousins and authenticity. The Romanov and Pahlavi stress on the racial link, however distant, with West Europeans was an attempt by both monarchies to create a synthesis between the political and cultural need for authenticity and the geo-political need, as understood by these monarchies, for Westernisation. Thus RWA simultaneously symbolised the return to Russian and Iranian authenticity as it existed before these contingent events and the march forward to modernisation and modernity. Given the beliefs and methods underpinning RWA, Westernisation and the search for authenticity became constant themes in Iranian and Russian intellectual and educated public discourse and politics.

Second, Russia and Iran, imperial polities in close proximity to Europe, faced geo-political threats to their independence sooner than most established polities, such as China and Japan. Unlike Egypt or India, which did face early threats to their independence, Russia and Iran never found themselves part of a European empire; they were empires in their own right and their borders were organic. These elements played an important role in concepts of identity. This closer proximity meant that by the time of the initiation of RWA, Russia and Iran already possessed a long and sordid history with the West; a history that could portray the West as a direct and long-standing threat to political, economic, and/or cultural independence. Such an interpretation of history could very well provide the justification to reject Westernisation. At the same time, opposition to the westernising but autocratic monarchical regimes could easily take on an anti-Western political character.

Lastly, RWA was initiated by dynasties which, despite their differences, strove to implement it within the framework of traditional monarchy. In this regard, Russia and Iran differed greatly from other monarchical, imperial states, such as the later Ottoman Empire, another polity close to Europe facing geo-political threats from the West and the challenge to be 'modern.' The attempts at reform and

modernisation during the reign of Abdul Hamid (r.1879-1908) were certainly inspired by the example of Western Europe but Islam as the empire's ideological pillar was emphasised and strengthened.² Only after the Ottoman fall and the emergence of Kemalist Turkey did the state openly attack religion in the name of modernisation understood as Westernisation from above.

The economic, political, and social changes of eighteenth and nineteenth-century Western Europe—the development of capitalist factory industry, industrialisation, urbanisation, political change, the emergence of the nation-state, and the decline of old social hierarchies—were generated within these societies themselves and were not planned from above. Although this development was not smooth and even, the issues of identity loss and importation of foreign cultural systems did not exacerbate this process. Transplanting Western institutions, narratives and ideas into societies and cultures that had not produced them and encouraging imitation of the West remains fraught with difficulties. RWA made achievement of a political and cultural synthesis more difficult.

One issue facing these polities was that RWA took place at a time when many competing political ideologies existed. Debates and ideologies developed in Europe at different periods could find expression simultaneously in countries attempting to obtain Western power. Russia and Iran not only faced this challenge but also intense, extreme clashes over identity given predominant concepts of empire and RWA. Leninism and Khomeinism sought to end such debates through new identities that would provide the basis for social change, development, and a unique modernity.

At first glance, implementation of RWA was going to be more fraught with difficulties in Iran than in Russia given the mixture of a long history of conflict and violence between Islam and Christianity and Western imperialism in Iran. But this difference should not be taken too far. The initial hostility between Russia and the West was over religion and, therefore, cultural identity as well as geo-politics; these elements constituted a mutually reinforcing dynamic. In the pre-Romanov and early Romanov periods the Latin West wished to bring proper Christianity to the Russians whilst Moscow's defence of Orthodoxy from the Catholic Church and then Protestantism became an integral part of Russian self-conception. Despite the seeming Westernisation of Russia's elite in the nineteenth century in the capital

and to a lesser extent in the countryside, Russia remained outside the European historical narrative whilst the West generally considered Russia barbaric and backward. Peasants, constituting the majority of the population, continued to live and act within an Orthodox cultural framework with which they identified.³ To jump ahead, the Russian Revolution was anti-Western in as much as it rejected Western modernity defined as capitalism and bourgeois society while Stalin played well the strong anti-West feelings in Russian society that had accumulated over time. The Romanov and Pahlavi ideologies were based on a synthesis of concepts of past empire from which flowed ideas of present and future international and great regional power status, and RWA which the imperial preconceptions seemingly made necessary for the achievement of great power.

The dynamic of empire, however, differed in the Russian and Iranian cases. In Iran, the greatness of Iran's pre-Islamic empires added greatly to the melancholy and anger over Iran's deteriorating international and domestic situation in the nineteenth century. Mohammad Reza Shah bemoaned, 'A gifted and individualistic people, we had disintegrated into lethargy and political and social anarchy.'⁴ Mirza Reza Khan Kermani (1853-1896), an influential thinker and publicist of the Qajar period, compared Iran's past imperial glory with its decadent state under the Qajars: 'What a pity and regret for you, oh Iran. Where is the grand government (*dowlat-e azim*)? Where is that enormous glory (*shukat-e jasim*)? What happened to that famous might (*godrat-e kazar*)? Where did that divine kingdom go (*saltanat-e kbodai*)? Where is the honour? Where is the prosperity?'⁵ Ali Akbar Dehkhoda (1879-1956), scholar and one-time Majles deputy, through his research and widely read works played an important role in giving popular imagery to the greatness of Iranian Empire, linking it to modern conceptions of Iranian identity and propagating the idea that this previous grandeur had to be recovered. This sense of empire rooted in the distant past gave reason to the belief in the need for RWA in order to recover that which alone constituted Iran's future—imperial grandeur and power. Unlike the Habsburg Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, or Mughul Empires, the concept of Iranian Empire seemed timeless given its survival over some 2,500 years and its lack of identification with one particular dynasty.

Russia lacked Iran's ancient imperial heritage and thus did not have a sense of nostalgia for lost imperial grandeur and civilisation, at least

before 1991. In Iran, conceptions of identity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries centring on pre-Islamic Iranian empires were a reaction to decline.⁶ In Russia this same period was one of great imperial expansion into Central Asia, the Caucasus, and hope for a glorious Russian future. The Russian Empire emerged because of and alongside RWA; this process created complications in the Russian empire-building project.⁷

Russia, lacking a heritage of ancient empire that could place it within the world historical narrative of empires, emphasised supposed links between it and the ancient empires of Rome and Greece. Already noted in the previous chapter, the first attempt in this regard was *The Tale of the Princes of Vladimir* and the supposed familial link between Prus, Augustus' brother, and Russian monarchs. Beginning in the middle of the eighteenth century parallels were drawn between Russia's wars with the Ottoman Empire and the Greek-Persian Wars. By the time of the Napoleonic Wars a gradual change in the ideology of empire took place.⁸ Societal stress now fell on love for the Russian imperial fatherland and the divine importance of the Orthodox Church. The learning of foreign mores was decried whilst pride in things Russian was propagated by many, despite continued RWA and the continued Westernisation of the elite. Russia's enormous size could not but give the Romanov elite self-confidence and strengthen the belief in Russian great power and independence from Europe. Already in the eighteenth century this was evident. Princess Ekaterina Romanova Dashkova, head of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences and a prominent Russian cultural figure who participated in the coup that brought Catherine II to power, remarked to Kauntiz, Empress Maria Therese's chancellor: 'A great empire, Prince, having such inexhaustible sources of richness and power, such as Russia, has no need for rapprochement with anyone. A huge mass, such as Russia, correctly governed attracts to it whom it wants. If Russia remained unknown to that point (the reign of Peter I) and to the extent about which you speak, Your Highness, shows, excuse me Prince, only rudeness or thoughtlessness of European countries to ignore such a strong state.'⁹

A seemingly irresolvable contradiction was at the heart of RWA. The emphasis on empire in state ideology and identity implicitly propagated the idea of cultural superiority and a high culture. Yet, this emphasis seemed to contradict the essence of RWA which admitted Russian and Iranian economic, social, and thus cultural backwardness vis-à-vis the

Western narrative. At the same time, the concept 'empire' in the Romanov and Pahlavi ideologies required, or at least justified, RWA by which Russia and Iran would overcome military and economic weakness and counter geo-political threats from the West.

Consequently, the Romanovs and Pahlavis adapted an approach to identity that had, broadly speaking, three basic elements. First, they recognised that emphasis on empire necessitated symbols and propaganda underlining the superiority of Russian and Iranian high culture and civilisation to those of the West. Second, in order to manage the contradiction between claims to high culture and empire, on the one hand, and RWA, which implicitly recognised the superiority of Western culture, on the other, they propagated Iranian and Russian primordial racial and cultural links with Western Europe and its 'progressive civilisation.' Third, in order to strengthen the belief in Russian and Iranian high culture, they juxtapositioned Russia and Iran, as members of the Western world, with their neighbours of the East, who were portrayed as backward in the same language the West used to essentialise Russia and Iran.

Leaning on Iran's pre-Islamic imperial heritage and Aryan roots, the last shah confidently remarked:

Certainly no one can doubt that our culture is more akin to that of the West than is either the Chinese or that of our neighbours the Arabs. Iran was an early home of the Aryans from whom most Americans and Europeans are descended, and we are racially quite separate from the Semitic stock of the Arabs. Our language belongs to the Indo-European family which includes English, French, German and other major Western tongues.¹⁰

An official history textbook of the Reza Shah period shows how this theme became a major element of construction of identity: 'History now practically belongs to the narrative of the people of the white race. The white race has several branches and the most important of these branches is the Aryan one.'¹¹ Iran thus was an outpost of Western civilisation in the Middle/Near East. Catherine the Great saw Russia in a similar light, 'Russia is a European state and evidence of that is the changes in Russia undertaken by Peter the Great which were successful despite the harsh climate and mixtures of nationalities...Peter I introduced mores and clothing of European style with an easiness he

himself did not expect.¹² Seemingly, both monarchs were trying to convince themselves and others of the primordial racial and cultural European dynamic in Russian and Iranian identity. Yet, Russian and Iranian elites felt they were junior partners in this European family. Dostoevsky succinctly summed up the Iranian and Russian situation: 'In Europe we are hangers-on and slaves, but in Asia we are masters. In Europe we are Tatars, but in Asia we too are Europeans.'¹³

Westernism vs. Authenticity

Broadly speaking the reactions of the educated and upper classes in Russia and Iran to RWA took the following forms: (1) initial and mid-term strong support given the perceived 'enlightenment' RWA brought; (2) subsequent reactions centred on a return to authenticity based variously on concepts of empire, Iranianess and Russianess, and religion that also called for social and political change; (3) various forms of socialist modernity; and/or (4) a return to a religious universalism that constituted the base of a new modernity not only for Russia and Iran but also for the world.

In both polities Western liberal nationalism had adherents who failed to establish a societal and intellectual base in the monarchical and revolutionary periods. The rest of this chapter in the course of its examination of the debate over RWA and authenticity addresses this failure. What is important is that Western liberal nationalist groups in Russia and Iran faced challenges from the monarchies which feared the constitutionalism of their ideologies and from lay and religious intellectuals searching for a new form of modernity superior to that of the West. Vitaly, this rejection of the Western political model by the state and revolutionaries in the monarchical period became a pillar of Leninism and Khomeinism. Thus Gorbachev and Khatami faced not only the challenge of refashioning the USSR's and the IRI's relationship with the West but also a long-standing power dynamic between Russia and Iran, and the West. Their broad political and economic approaches were considered by certain elite and societal groups as manifestations of Western liberalism and thus a threat to the identities and modernities of Leninism and Khomeinism and to Iranian and Russian identity.

Vissarion Belinskii (1811-48) a well-known Russian thinker and publicist succinctly articulated the position of those supporting RWA.

Russia did not belong and could not belong to Asia on the basis of the basic elements of its life. She is in some form of seclusion, a separate phenomena (*otdel'noe yavleiniia*); the Tatars seemingly should have attached her to Asia. They did succeed to tie her to Asia with mechanical external binds for some time. But for the long term they could not do this since Russia is a Christian (and thus European) country. Thus Peter acted completely correctly and in the spirit of the people when he brought Russia closer to Europe by destroying that Asian aspect which the Tatars had brought to Russia....In pre-Petrine Russia no trade, no industry, no police, no civil security, no diverse needs and demands, no military structure existed. Everything was weak and destroyed because there were no laws, but customs. And mores?—what a sad picture. So much of it was Asian, barbarian, Tatar!¹⁴

In Iran figures such as Malcolm Khan, Mirza Abd al-Rahim Talebof (1834-1911), Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzadeh (1812-78) and Mirza Agha Khan Kermani became early strong advocates of Westernisation. Striving to save the Iranian Empire from ignorance, superstition, backwardness and Western imperialism and condemning an ossified, undynamic Islam they turned to Westernisation. Akundzadeh stressed with clear exaggeration: “Iranians thousands of years ago lived in a golden paradise (*behesht-e talai*). Their shahs were just and the people in the shadow of their reigns enjoyed divine riches (*ne'mat-e elahi*). They lived in glory (*ezzat*) and tranquillity. They did not know poverty or begging. Within the empire they were free and abroad they were respected. The greatness and reputation of the monarchs of Iran reached the four corners of the world.¹⁵ ‘Hungry and naked Arabs destroyed this empire of Iran and made its population ignorant and detached it from world civilisation and deprived it of the blessings of freedom. The tyranny of the shah and fanatical influence of the clerics’ resulted in Iranian weakness and brought ‘baseness, meanness, suffering (*zellat*), submission ...’¹⁶ ‘No people in the world are less human and more wretched than the Arabs. Why did Islam not lead to their unhappiness as well? Arabs are responsible for this wretchedness in Iran.’¹⁷ This theme picked up momentum in the early twentieth-century. Backwardness was the fault of ‘...the Islamic clergy’ who ‘poisoned the fertile plantation of the Iranian brain and thus for centuries the egg of free, new thought was not hatched.’¹⁸

The Travel Diary of Ibrahim Beg is one of the best examples of popular literature on this theme. In the early days of the Constitutional Revolution people passed it from hand to hand; its themes played an important role in mobilising the educated classes during this period. The story revolves around the son of a Tabrizi merchant who was born and brought up in Egypt far from the land of his father. He inherited from his father a strong sense of patriotism and deep love for Iran and its old civilisation. One day he finally sets off for Iran. Arriving in this ancient land, to his horror and shock he finds not the great civilisation of antiquity, but misery, poverty, and wretchedness. The book then chronicles Ibrahim Beg's outrage at the corruption at the highest levels of the state, the problems and ills facing Iran and the incompetence of the autocracy and the elite in defending the country and in establishing some form of education and medical care for the people. Ibrahim Beg considers clerical hypocrisy, backwardness, and superstition the biggest obstacles to saving Iran's empire from ruin. Throughout the book this disastrous situation is compared to the glories of the ancient Iranian Empires.¹⁹

Sayyid Hasan Taqizadeh (1878-1970), a well-known politician and thinker, articulated the Westernisers' position:

The only path open to Iran and Iranians for their salvation is the unconditional acceptance and promotion of European civilisation, complete submission to Europe and adoption of its customs, habits, mores, form of upbringing, science, industry, life and of the complete framework of Europe (*farangestan*) without exception—except language—and the putting aside of any form of egoism (*kbodpasandi*) and meaningless protest that emerges from a misplaced sense of patriotism.²⁰

Belinskii agreed:

Russia sees that her salvation lies neither in mysticism, nor in ascetism, nor in pietism, but in the progress of civilisation and humanitarian values. What she needs are not sermons, she has heard enough of them, or prayers, she has babbled enough of them, but the awakening of human dignity that for centuries has been dragged through the mud and dirt.²¹

Thus in the early period of RWA members of the educated and intellectual classes believed as one prominent Iranian thinker wrote: 'Iran must spiritually, in body, in appearance, internally, become Westernised...Iran must re-construct its way of life from scratch. Everything must be new: new Iran, new thinking, new man (*mard-e non*).'²² The Russian and Iranian intelligentsia's support of RWA also had a practical personal dimension. Through propagation of RWA and projecting themselves as the agent of this process, members of the intelligentsia could avoid becoming Pushkin's *Evgenii Onegin* or Griboedov's *Aleksandr Chatskii*, the superfluous man. 'Enlightened' RWA gave the members of Russia's and Iran's intelligentsia and educated class a calling in life.

Nicholas Karamazin, court historian to Alexander I (r.1801-1825), sought to justify RWA in practical, rather than in racial, terms in an attempt to deflect growing concerns about authenticity.

The path of education and enlightenment is the same for all peoples; everyone follows it, one after another. Foreigners were cleverer than Russians and therefore it is necessary to borrow from them, study from them and use their experience. Is it really clever to search for what has been discovered already? Would it truly be better that Russia not construct ships, not form regular military units, and establish academies just because Russians did not think them up? What people have not borrowed from another? Is it not necessary to compare in order to go forward?²³

Malcolm Khan in his work *The Sheikh and the Minister* spelled out the dangers associated with the refusal to westernise and unwittingly echoed Peter I's interpretation of the causes of the collapse of the Eastern Roman Empire. The shaykh wonders, 'How is adopting the principles of these infidels possible?' The vazir replies, 'That they are infidels I do not deny. My only claim is that the power of Europe comes from their unique mechanisms. If we wish to obtain the same power, we must adopt in full their mechanisms and instruments. If we do not take this step, we must not deceive ourselves--we will never equal them....The clergy must allow us to imitate the bases of European strength. If not, the clerics must bring squadrons of angels down from Heaven to deliver us from European rule.'²⁴ But the question remained of whether the cultural and racial programme

surrounding the creation of *bomo Romanovicus* and *bomo Pahlavicus* was needed in order to borrow from the Europeans. In comparison, Ottoman modernity strove to achieve Western institutional and technological power and temporally co-exist with the West, but it was to be based on Islam and thus culturally distinct from the West.²⁵

However accurate and true might be the opinions of those supporting RWA, a fear of the loss of identity and doubts in regard to the viability of Western modernity and the benefits of RWA emerged. Two literary works, Peter Chaadaev's *Philosophical Letters* and Jalal Al-e Ahmad's *Westoxification (Gharbzadegi)* sparked an open debate within Russia's and Iran's educated and upper classes over RWA, its consequences for identity, and the future course of development. These two literary pieces built on issues associated with identity that had already emerged. Already in 1788 the aristocrat I.Boltin noted:

When we started to send our youth abroad and assigned to them the business of being educated by foreigners, our morale changed: along with the anticipated enlightenment in our hearts arrived new biases, new fears, new weaknesses, wishes unknown to our ancestors. This weakened our love for the motherland. We forgot the old whilst failing to take on board the new.²⁶

In Iran during the reign of Reza Shah intellectual and popular discontent with RWA emerged. Seyyed Fakhr Fakhreddin Shadman (1907-67) and Ahmad Fardid (1912-94) set the stage for the debate regarding the return to and/or search for Iranian authenticity.²⁷ They argued that Pahlavi modernisation had made society vulnerable to the temptations of an alien and morally decadent West.

Peter Chaadaev (1794-1856) in his *Philosophical Letters* (1836) claimed:

We Russians, like illegitimate children, come to this world without patrimony, without any links with people who lived in the earth before us; we have in our hearts none of those lessons which have preceded our own existence...This is a natural result of a culture based wholly on borrowing and imitation. There is among us no inward development, no natural progress; new ideas throw out old ones because they do not arise from the latter, but come among us from Heaven knows where. Since we accept only ready-made ideas, the incredible traces which a progressive

movement of ideas engraves on the mind and which give ideas their forcefulness make no furrow on our intellect.²⁸

Although revising parts of his argument in subsequent years, Chaadaev questioned the existence of a Russian cultural identity and civilisation independent of other great cultures and civilisations. The gauntlet was thrown. Both the autocracy and the educated public reacted furiously to his view. Nicholas I (r.1825-1853) called Chaadaev mad and sent him to a lunatic asylum for a period of time.

Slavophilism was a reaction to Chaadaev and RWA. The purpose in looking at the Slavophiles is to identify the body of thought from which many other thinkers and ideologies chose various themes without actually being part of this school. The point here is to make a contribution to the understanding of the dynamic between Russia and the West that was a focal point of the monarchical and post-monarchical regimes; a dynamic with which Gorbachev had to deal. Despite the variety in the thought of Slavophile thinkers, such as Konstantin Aksakov (1817-60), Ivan Kireevsky (1806-56), Aleksei Khomyakov (1804-1860), Ivan Aksakov (1823-86), Yurii Samarin (1819-1876), broad agreement on major issues existed. They argued that Western modernity and liberalism did not represent the end point of history and a utopian future for Russia. Slavophiles saw in Europe an atomised and selfish people devoid of traditions on which to lean and engaged in an eternal struggle of mutually antagonistic commercial and personal interests that lie at the base of Western development. Slavophiles equally condemned those Russians who rejected their own history and culture and blindly imitated Western behaviour and mores. Such Russians were the products of RWA whose goal was to separate them from their own culture, religion, and heritage. The Romanov elite lived within Russia, but outside of Russian society. The Slavophiles called on this 'westoxified' class to reconnect with the people who had not lost the elements of true Russianness, the peasants.

RWA held that the peasants were a backward, irrational, superstitious, Orthodox group that needed to be made into a Western-inspired *homo Romanovicus*. The Slavophiles argued that in the pre-Petrine period a form of social, political, and economic evolution distinct and superior to that of the West existed. This social order was based on those vital elements lost by the West: morality, nobleness of character, true Christianity, and collective feelings. The common good

and the rejection of the individual in favour of humankind were the pillars of their modernity and answer to the excessively individualistic West. The peasants were the bearers of true Russian identity and maintained a culture and institutions, namely the commune, the symbol of the spiritual content of Orthodoxy. They argued that this culture and institutions not only belonged to the past, but also to the present and the future. Stolypin hoped to destroy them in the name of political and economic development.

The Slavophiles attacked the Westernisers for taking spiritual and intellectual inspiration from the West and the autocracy for its RWA that strove to destroy Orthodox identity and thus the Russian 'soul.' Belinskii retorted that, '...the spirit of the Russian nation is not in peasant barbarism, but in the social (elite) groups that emerged after the reforms of Peter the Great, and adapted civilised life.'²⁹ He condemned jingoism (*kevasnoi patriotizm*), which he believed was at the heart of Slavophile thought, and the attempts to recreate a Slavophile path for Russian development in the name of the preservation of Russian identity.³⁰ He wrote: 'Now only weak, limited minds can think that the success of humankind is harmful to the success of nationality and that a Chinese wall is necessary for the preservation of nationality.'³¹ 'The struggle of the overall human with the national is nothing more than a rhetorical form...Even when the progress of one people is completed through the borrowing from another, it is completed by the nation. Otherwise there is no progress.'³² At the same time, D.V. Valuev, a leading statesman during the reign of Alexander II, wondered that if enlightenment meant spirituality and the ability to implement in life true Christian principles, 'it remains under doubt whom one can consider more enlightened in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Orthodox Russia or Catholic and Protestant Europe.' This from someone who supported many of Peter's reforms seeing in them the only way for Russia to become a state capable of defending itself from the West. Yet he felt something had been lost in the process.³³ This loss was at the centre of Slavophile thought.

Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1923-69) was representative of a generation of Iranian intellectuals who initially sought in some form of universalistic ideologies solutions to the 'backwardness' of their country and subsequently rejected universal modernity based on Western models (socialist or capitalist) in favour of national solutions and a search for authenticity. His work *Westoxification* became the rallying call for those

fearing the loss of Iranian authenticity in the face of RWA. The book encountered many difficulties with censors. In 1962 it was widely circulated in *samizdat* form. In 1963 the government closed down the publisher who had agreed to print it. It was eventually published.

Gharbzadegi is surrender and enslavement to the West. *Gharbzadegi* is like cholera. If this seems distasteful I could say it is like heatstroke or frostbite. But no. It is at least as bad as sawflies in the wheat fields. Have you ever seen how they infest wheat? From within...We're talking about a disease. A disease that comes from without fostered in an environment made for breeding diseases. Let's look for the characteristics of this disease, its cause or causes, and if possible, a cure. This *Gharbzadegi* has two heads. One is the West, the other is ourselves who are taken with the West. By us, I mean a part of the East.³⁴

Yet, Al-e Ahmad was against preserving those cultural and religious characteristics he regarded a brake on development.

We need to take certain things from the West. But not everything... Technology we are forced to import. We must also learn the science that comes with it. That (the technology) is not Western; it is universal. But not the social sciences and the humanities...At the moment do we have anything other than these as symbols of our Iranian identity?³⁵

Al-e Ahmad attacked what he considered to be a Western infatuation with pre-Islamic Iranian Empire which in turn guided Pahlavi RWA. The imperialist West 'awakened only one passion, that for ancient Iran. Passion for,...(and) belief in, the pre-Islamic history of Iran...' Iranian identity and history had been created as if 'from the Sassanian Empire until the government of (Reza Pahlavi's) coup d'état only two and a half days had elapsed, and even then only in a sleep.'³⁶ He stressed that the Pahlavi fashioning of Iranian identity was based on Western interpretations of Iranian history and Western beliefs. The aim was 'to create confusion in the nation's historical consciousness' by linking 'directly the power of the coup d'état' to pre-Islamic Iranian Empires 'as if there were no distance of some 1,300 years in between.' He was convinced that only through reconstruction of Iranian identity 'by

loosening the religio-cultural background of the contemporary man, would the onslaught of Westernisation be possible...³⁷ Al-e Ahmad was not fond of the clerical class, but he increasingly turned to an Islamic cultural identity as a defence against RWA. But he did not determine what that Islamic Iranian identity was. Similar to the Slavophile movement his return to Islam was a quest to realise an Iranian-Islamic form of modernity and authenticity. His works were not an anti-Western rant. 'His relative return to religion...was toward deliverance from the evil of imperialism and toward the preservation of national identity, a way toward human dignity, compassion, justice, reason, and virtue.'³⁸

The growing reaction to RWA was accompanied by essentialisation and criticism of the West. Iranian intellectuals argued: 'The West is not the promised paradise; their system of education, standards, and social values are not ideal...I don't want to say that the West (*farang*) is a hell and that our country is heaven. All I say is that those places are not like what they say they are.'³⁹ In the mid-nineteenth century Aleksandr Odoevskii (1804-69) stressed, 'The West has lost its balance, and the internal illness of the West is reflected in the seditions of crowds and in the dark, limitless dissatisfaction of its elites. The feeling of self-preservation has resulted in an egoism and hazardous imprudence (*neomsotritilnost*) against the near; the necessity of truth has been deformed into rude demands of touch and petty details...the feeling of love, the feeling of unity, even the feeling of strength have been lost because the feeling of hope for the future has disappeared...'⁴⁰

Mikhail Pogodin (1800-1875), historian, writer, and publicist, condemned Peter for having 'instilled in Russians a passion for things foreign... (which) still predominates in Russia and causes much harm...an English, German, and French person, or whoever else, but a Russian means in our society courtesy, civility (*uchtivost*), trustworthiness, respect and, on the other hand, one word—Russian—brings to mind untrustworthiness and suspiciousness. I dare to curse Peter the Great for creating this passion, for this insult to the motherland (*otechestvo*)... Peter by bringing in Westernisation destroyed the native and blocked its natural development...'⁴¹ Pogodin also attacked the Romanov elite in terms that Iranian critics used against that of the Pahlavis. 'They hate Russia because they do not have the slightest understanding (of Russia). They base their opinion on the writings of de Custine and two or three Russian immigrants who know

their country less than he does. The Church, in whose name we draw our sword, they call a heresy; our institutions they consider wild, our character indefensible, our literature a waste, and our entire history to be yesterday's news.⁴² Dostoevsky, as Khomeini in the twentieth century, called for national self-respect and decried the elite's imitation of the West: 'To become Russian means to stop holding in contempt our own people. And as soon as a European sees that we have started to respect our own people and nationality then they will respect us.'⁴³

The tension between the urge to preserve authenticity, however defined, and the need for economic and social development remained. Two pre-revolutionary thinkers, Alexander Herzen (1812-1870) and Dr. Ali Shariati (1933-77), building on the debate over authenticity and RWA, made decisive contributions to the popular appeal of Leninism and Khomeinism and to the issue of loss of identity. They created new ideologies that mixed universal aspects of Westernism, in both cases variants of socialism, with local Russian and Iranian conditions in order to create a modernity better than that of the West and protect Iranian and Russian authenticity.

Herzen initially belonged to the camp of the Westernisers. His experience in Britain and France convinced him that Western modernity was not appropriate for all societies and was not superior. He was in Paris in June 1848, during the days leading to the collapse of Louis-Philippe's July Monarchy. That the people's elected officials in the French National Assembly applauded General Cavaignac's killing of the rebellious poor shocked him. Here was evidence that Western liberalism was only a mechanism for the elite and bourgeois class to protect their property and means to exploit. This society did not promise emancipation from unjust authority and exploitation: 'Who in the world would dare say that a form of order exists that could satisfy in an identical manner' the different peoples of the world? Herzen also questioned the implications of the liberal worldview that dismissed non-Western peoples of the world as insignificant and unworthy.⁴⁴

Herzen, having abandoned pure Westernism, made a philosophical and political return to Russia: 'When my last hope disappeared...as a result of the consequences of the horrific events (in Europe), instead of despair, in my chest returned a new belief ...belief in Russia saved me at the edge of moral death.'⁴⁵ He recognised the usefulness of the Western experience for Russia, 'The past of Western Europe serves only as a lesson and only that. We do not consider ourselves the

executors of your historical testament (*zaveshchanié*)...your faith does not inspire us. We also do not think that the fate of humankind belongs to Western Europe.⁴⁶ His Russian Socialism was an attempt to formulate a philosophy of Russian history that combined elements of Slavophilism and socialism. The result would be a modernity superior to that of the West and applicable to Europe and beyond. He argued that he recognised *the* form of socialist development in the Russian Orthodox-inspired peasant *obshchina*. In other words, Russia, the only bearer of true Christian ideals, remained to save humankind by travelling its own evolutionary path. He had established a vision of the future that incorporated Russian and Western elements within a Russian skin. Herzen came to the telling conclusion, 'The Western Liberal group will obtain strength and popular support... only when they have Slavophile themes.'⁴⁷

Shariati, seeing in RWA and its by-product, a westoxicated elite, deadly threats to Iranian Islamic identity, called for a return to, and defence of, that identity. Decrying Western cultural imperialism, he warned Iranians of the dire consequences for a people who had lost their own identity, 'This cultural imperialism that appeared in the last (nineteenth) century is the first step towards political and economic imperialism.'⁴⁸ This imperialism and Christianity were working together 'to save' other people and 'push them into the direction of a specific Western civilisation type.'⁴⁹ Yet, Western civilisation did not bring equality. 'Western nationalism is based on racism and on (the idea) of superiority of the European races over all other peoples.'⁵⁰ The concern over cultural imperialism is a pillar of Khomeinism.⁵¹

Shariati condemned westoxicated Iranians: 'Many times I have seen that particular group of educated Iranians and intellectuals, especially those who have lived or are living abroad, sit together and criticise (our culture) and tell tales by citing humiliating examples of the weakness, baseness (*pasti*), corruption, and ignorance and stupidity (of our people and culture). They compare us with others and from the bottom of their being laugh at us... They then bring in proper examples of Westerners...This is a form of recreation and fun-making (for them)....' Here he was urging that which Dostoevsky did—Iranians needed to respect Iranians if society was to move forward. Herzen too condemned these groups:

Since the time of Peter I much has been said about the ability of Russians to imitate to ridiculous lengths. Is it not necessary to search for an exit from this sad situation by getting closer to the people whom we despise because we do not know them? Is it not necessary to return to a societal structure which is more appropriate to the Slavonic character and abandon the path of imposed foreign (*chuzbezemni*) civilisation? Our sickness is imitation, a feeling of borrowing which is not justified or true.⁵²

Shariati's criticism of westoxification and calls for authenticity found great support amongst students and educated society.

The Islam and Islamic identity of Shariati was a new ideological framework that could be summed up as Islamic Iranian Socialism. His Islam was dynamic, political, and able to evolve with the changing times and mobilise the masses in a struggle for a utopian modernity. Shi'ism has 'all the characteristics and dimensions of an ideal and complete party; it is the party whose objective realisation is the Party of God of which the Quran speaks, and is also responsive to the needs of this...generation. It gives (political) consciousness, mobilises the masses of the society, leads them in their class struggle, eliminates the difficulties and obstacles in the way of this struggle, and realises the hopes of the disinherited classes.'⁵³ Similar to Herzen, he could not accept that the capitalist system as it had developed in Europe and as a result of RWA could provide the universalist modernity he sought: 'The Islamic economic system must be such that he (the capitalist) is not permitted to accumulate wealth... To our mind, the bourgeoisie is loathsome. It must be eliminated. This (capitalism) is to be condemned not only because it is incompatible with collective production in modern industrial systems but also because it is antihuman. It corrupts human nature. It transforms all values into interests.'⁵⁴ He also rejected Leninism: 'It is clear in what sense we are not Marxists and in what sense we are socialists. As a universal and scientific principal, Marx makes economics the infrastructure of man; but we are of the precisely opposite view. That is why we are the enemy of capitalism and the bourgeoisie. Our greatest hope in socialism is that in it man, his faith, ideas, and ethical values are not superstructural...'⁵⁵

Herzen and Shariati advocated a dynamic interpretation of Russianness and Iranianess that was able to adapt to new circumstances whilst preserving authenticity. This hybrid dynamism would provide

answers to the everyday problems and difficulties faced by the people and infuse them with a sense of hope for the future and self-confidence in their own identity while Islam and Orthodoxy and the commune would ensure stability in rapidly changing times. Similar to nationalist reactions to RWA, they sought social change. The extent of the popularity of Shariati's thought is reflected in Khomeini's adaptation of many of its elements. Herzen's idea that Marxism had to be reworked to fit local Russian conditions was a base of Leninism. At the same time, both men argued that the utopian modernity they found was proper not only for Russia and Iran but for all those attempting to obtain power and maintain authenticity. This argument was also at the heart of Leninism and Khomeinism.

Given their ideological synthesis, Herzen and Shariati found themselves under attack from groups united only by opposition to such hybridity. Herzen bemoaned, 'In the eyes of them (Slavophiles) I am a Westerniser, and in the eyes of their enemies I am a man of the East.'⁵⁶ The anti-clerical message of Shariati prompted a backlash. Leading clerics, such as Falsafi and Motahari, turned on him, though Khomeini never succumbed to pressure to speak against the lay intellectual. After Shariati's death in 1977 leading clerics issued *fatwas* forbidding the sale, purchase, and reading of his works.⁵⁷ Leftists attacked him for his emphasis on Islam and accused him of siding with conservative clerics and government forces that opposed change. The monarchical regimes considered both men subversives.

The Russian concern with identity increased towards the end of the nineteenth century along a trajectory similar to a great extent to that of the last fifteen years of Pahlavi rule. Populism (*narodnichestvo*) was an ideology and social political movement of the democratic-oriented intelligentsia in the second half of the nineteenth century. It was a protest against RWA, capitalism, and the consequent destruction of the existing social system. Picking up from Herzen, Populism expressed the need for preservation of Russian identity as symbolised by the peasantry and commune and democratic systems.

The 'Return to the Soil' group (*pochvennichestvo*), whose supporters were not as great in number as those adhering to Populism, exercised a powerful influence on Russian national consciousness, its spiritual life and reactions to RWA given its impact on the thought of Dostoevsky. The leading nineteenth-century thinkers behind this movement were Alexander A. Grigorev (1822-64) and Nikolai N. Strakhov (1828-96).

Protesting against RWA, the 'Return to the Soil' group called for a rejection of the mass aping of the West. It decried the elite's self-imposed alienation from the people through adoption of Western ways and mores. Russia's coherent and natural way forward was rooted in the spirit of Orthodox Christian Universalism which provided ultimately the conditions for the unity of humankind. This universalism required that the elite 'return to the soil'; it was hoped this would serve as a powerful counterbalance to RWA. Yet, they differed from the Slavophiles in their belief in the need for a Russian form of industrialisation. Their intellectual and cultural impact is clearly seen in the widely read works of N.S. Leskov and A.N. Ostrovskii, in the philosophy and literature of the Silver Age and then in the philosophy of Russia in exile after the Revolution of 1917. The influence of this movement extended into the late Soviet period, providing the ideological base for Russian nationalism as expressed in literature (the famous village prose), cinema and theatre of figures such as V. Shushkin, V. Rasputin, and V. Soloukhin.

One of the most well-known supporters of Russian identity and rejection of Westernisation was Dostoevsky (1821-81), whose works encapsulated Slavophilism and *pochivennchestvo* and assured their influence on Russian politics, literature, and philosophy from the late Imperial period, into the Soviet era, and to post-1991 Russia. Vitaly, he gave momentum to the Orthodox Christian Renaissance that took place during the reign of Nicholas II (see below). Decrying bourgeois individualism and rampant Western materialism, Dostoevsky, through his works, provided an alternative rooted in an Orthodox-Slavophile utopia. Dostoevsky's conversation between Shatov and Stavrogin in *The Possessed* symbolised the growing movement against RWA and the autocracy at the end of the nineteenth century: 'You are godless because you're the son of the idle rich,...You've lost the ability to distinguish between good and evil because you've lost touch with the people of your own country...Find God or you'll vanish without a trace like a rotten fungus.' Dostoevsky attacked *home Romanovius*: 'These cosmopolitan and Europeanised elite should return to the soil and submit to the people's truth. They would then be able to find true peace and heal their split personality.'⁵⁸ They then could help Russia take on the challenges confronting her. He had little doubt about Russia's position in the world: 'The entire meaning of Russia is

encompassed in Orthodoxy, in this light from the East, which will flow to blind humankind in the West which has lost Christ.⁵⁹

Religious modernists are not unique to Russia or Iran; it is a reactive movement attempting to develop a synthesis between religion and societal changes. Yet, in the Iranian and Russian case religious modernism was a reaction not only to external challenges to faith and religion but also to a state policy, RWA. By the mid-nineteenth century low and middle-level Russian clerics were increasingly touching on temporal issues such as social justice and the condition of the peasants. To the horror of the autocracy an increasing number of clerics had sympathy for the emerging reformist and radical movements. The Orthodox Church by the end of the nineteenth century was facing a crisis given societal changes brought about by RWA and an internal crisis within its own institutions over its relationship with society and the autocracy.

In the wake of the 1905 Revolution, Orthodox clerics began to clamour for independence from the autocracy. They pressed for a convocation of Church Councils, the abolition of the Holy Synod, the mechanism by which the autocracy controlled the Orthodox Church, elections for bishops and parish priests, the establishment and strengthening of ecclesiastical courts, and reform of clerical training; they were pushing for a dynamic Orthodoxy independent of the state and able to defend Russian authenticity and to provide answers to peoples' everyday spiritual and social needs.⁶⁰ This movement within the Church and its increasing attempts to identify with the people frightened opposition radicals who saw in these moves the greatest threat to their visions and plans for Russia. However, unlike the Iranian case, the Orthodox Church given its institutional and financial dependence on the state could not provide a narrative separate from that of RWA. At the time it was concluded that 'existing Orthodoxy is too closely tied to the ruling political despotism for it to become active in the establishment in Russia of a just (political) structure.'⁶¹

At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries an increasing number of lay intellectuals such as N. Berdyaev, V. Rozanov (1850-1919), and I. Ilin (1883-1954) began to turn to Orthodoxy as a spiritual and ideological foundation for a Russian modernity. V.S. Soloviev (1853-1900) gave momentum to this movement with his thesis of the 'Russian Idea' which was published in 1886 (in French).⁶² In St. Petersburg from 1901 to 1903 Religio-Philosophical Assemblies

were set up where lay intellectuals and Orthodox clergy discussed and debated Russia's pressing issues, including the threats posed by RWA. Although agreement on remedies was not always found, the holding and success of such assemblies reflected the gathering momentum of a societal and intellectual turn toward a dynamic Orthodoxy. The growing links between the two groups and their common criticism of the autocracy seriously worried Pobedonostsev, the head of the Holy Synod, who closed the assemblies down in 1903. Within the same period, well-known Marxists such as P. Struve (1870-44), S. Bulgakov (1874-1944) and N. Berdyaev abandoned the material universalism of Marx for the spirituality of Orthodoxy that, in their view, was to be the starting point for Russian modernity. Bulgakov argued that the salvation of Russia would come with 'the emergence of a new *Church* intelligentsia which will unite true Christianity (Orthodoxy) with enlightenment and a clear understanding of cultural and historical challenges.'⁶³ Berdyaev stressed that a middle path between the 'rosy utopia of the old Westernism' and 'the naïve, rather starry-eyed Slavophile faith' had to be found.⁶⁴ Constituting the *Vekh* group they continued the debates of the closed assemblies. Their goals were to strengthen Russian society, heal the wounds caused by industrialisation, class warfare and the autocracy, through a return to religion and authenticity.

Islamic reformism and a push for a dynamic Islam in Iran gained momentum in the wake of the death of Grand Ayatollah Hossein Borujerdi in 1961. Ayatollah Morteza Motahari, a prominent figure in the revolution, argued that the clergy must undertake institutional and ideological changes in order 'to fulfil historical obligations and remain relevant in the face of socialism and Westernisation.'⁶⁵ He also attacked Iranian secular nationalists and Westernisers who denounced Islam as backward and its contributions to Iranian culture. Motahari stressed that Iranian culture could not be separated from Islam and that Islam provided the framework for Iran's future. An increasing number of people accepted this viewpoint. Ayatollah Mahmud Taleghani (1912-1979) played a leading role in the conceptualisation of Islamic economics while Medhi Bazargan (1907-1992), a leading religious modernist politician, who became prime minister of the provisional government after the implosion of the monarchy, argued for a religious modernism which mirrored that of the *Vekh* group in Russia. As a party it existed for nineteenth months between 1961 and 1963, by

which time most of its leaders were in prison. The shah, by shutting down this religious modernist party, severed links between himself and a bastion against the theocracy of Khomeini.⁶⁶

The clerics participating in this refashioning of Islam did not reject technological and economic modernisation.

If we only consider the intellectual and scientific aspects of Europe, no matter how close we get to them there is no danger for us, because science is science and European science is the continuation of Islamic science. European culture in terms of European science is the continuation of Islamic culture.⁶⁷ If we only criticise European culture and civilisation, and honour Islamic culture and stress that the peoples of the world should come and follow us, nothing will be achieved...they will become half-dead like us.⁶⁸

Abdolhassan Bani-Sadr, a leading lay religious intellectual and the first IRI president, in his pre-revolutionary writings strongly criticised RWA and expressed his anger with Iran's present state in light of her previous imperial glory. These feelings gave great momentum to the search for an Iranian Islamic utopia and to the struggle against Westernisation whose beginning he attributed to Alexander the Great's defeat of the first Iranian Empire. He considered RWA an attempt to deny the Iranian people not only their own historical identity but also the opportunity to formulate a modernity on their own terms. Westernisation in Iran would result in 'sub humans lacking a human dimension and having a confused identity.'⁶⁹ A re-Islamisation process would put an end to this identity crisis created by RWA and provide the framework for the march forward. A utopia would emerge as the result of an Islamic Republic in Iran in which a Supreme Monotheistic Society (*jame'e-ye barine towhidi*) would emerge. Under the leadership of Islam, Iran would move towards this society. Similar to Russian thinkers, he stressed that this local Iranian modernity was appropriate for others, 'There is no reason why we should not become a role model for the freedom of humanity on a universal level.'⁷⁰

The Islamic clergy in Pahlavi Iran enjoyed benefits their Orthodox counterparts did not: financial and institutional independence from the state; strong networks of communication and mobilisation; and financial and moral aid from the powerful bazaar class.⁷¹ Thus Iranian

clerics were able to develop a dynamic political Islam as the Pahlavis implemented RWA. This independence enjoyed by Iranian clerics allowed for the development of 'a religious rebirth which was more innovative, enduring and popular than its secular counterpart.'⁷² In Russia the ossification of Orthodox thought led to an ideological vacuum which socialism, Marxism and, ultimately, Lenin filled. These ideologies found popularity for they granted identity and self-confidence, proved able to mobilise the masses and integrate them in the new circumstances emerging as a result of RWA.

The Romanov and Pahlavi monarchies to differing degrees felt and reacted to the ideological and political consequences of RWA and of loss of identity. On one level, Romanov and Pahlavi monarchs and elite showed a personal reaction to the possible loss of identity. On a different level, the fear emerged that the issue of identity and its possible loss as a result of RWA would have political consequences for the monarchies. Nicholas II, even more than his father Alexander III, felt affinity for the Orthodox peasant culture so disdained by the Romanov and intellectual elite. He sympathised with Slavophilism. During a discussion about Peter the Great with General A.A. Mosolov Nicholas remarked, 'Of course I recognise the many services of my notable ancestor but I would be untruthful if I said I shared your enthusiasm (*vostorg*) for him. I love this ancestor less than the others because of his fascination with Western culture and his trampling of pure Russian custom.'⁷³ Mohammad Reza Shah never expressed such feelings in regard to Western culture and Iranian Islamic custom. For many Iranians the shah was the most 'westoxicated' figure amongst the elite. Nonetheless, whilst emphasising Iran's racial and cultural link to the West, he stressed Iranian superiority, 'If you Europeans think yourselves superior, we have no complexes. Don't ever forget that whatever you have, we taught you three thousand years ago (in other words pre-Islamic, 'Aryan' Iran).'⁷⁴ Empress Farah became active in the issue of Iranian authenticity by the beginning in the 1970s, filling the gap left between the shah's remarks about the superiority of Iranian culture and his actions based on RWA: 'The more we become familiar with the old cultural roots of our country, the more we will rely on ourselves and the less we will be influenced by the different cultures that attack us from all parts of the world through quick and ready means.'⁷⁵ She led efforts to strengthen pride in Iranian culture as the

Pahlavi dynasty came under increasing criticism for its fascination with Western culture and trampling of 'pure Iranian custom.'

RWA and specifically the attempt to create a Western-inspired *homo Romanovicus* and *homo Pahlavicus*, did obtain notable achievements. The Russian and Iranian states and the capacity of their military and economies of the periods of the founders of RWA, Peter the Great and Reza Shah, differed greatly from those of the last Romanov and Pahlavi monarchs. However, the attempt to rip Russians and Iranians from their cultural, religious, and historical foundations and turn them into westerners created deep divisions between elite and masses and a serious crisis of identity that led to a cultural and political backlash against Westernisation and the West. The Westernisation-nativism debate was not and could not be resolved as long as the political system remained closed and the state continued on its policy of RWA.

The symbolism of the Westernisation-nativism conflict and its consequences was captured by Modest Mussorgsky's opera *Khovanshchina* which was written in the period 1872-80 and ultimately finished by Rimsky-Korsakov. Set in the closing years of the seventeenth century, *Khovanshchina* focuses on the dynamic between supporters and opponents of Peter the Great's RWA. In the final scene, Old Believers, set on preserving Russian culture as they inherited it, sing traditional, liturgical chants as they set fire to themselves in protest against Peter's forced RWA. At the very end, the sound of the Western-style military band of Peter's victorious army rises as the curtain falls. Leninism and Khomeinism promised a new act in this opera in which these societal divisions would be overcome by new identities providing self-confidence and self-respect to the masses and by democratic systems providing social justice whilst promising the development sought by Peter I, Reza Shah and their successors.

Constitutional Revolutions

The other political issue the Romanov and Pahlavi governments failed to handle was institutionalisation of their constitutions which would have provided the means to incorporate societal groups emerging as a result of RWA into the political life of these two empires. In 1905-1906 Russia and Iran endured constitutional revolutions whose aim was to limit the autocratic power of the monarchs. This goal emerged as a result of growing dissatisfaction with existing state institutions and concern about their management from above and their effectiveness in

governing society. Yet, these revolutions occurred at different points in Russian and Iranian history. The Russian one of 1905 had most of its roots in the consequences of RWA; in the Iranian case the state's inability to be a prime moving force brought revolution.

The socio-economic consequences of RWA initiated by Peter I created the potential for societal rebellion. During the initial and middle periods of this process many in the elite and educated classes considered the autocracy an enlightened force that was pushing Russia forward. The court historian to Alexander I, Karamazin, wrote, 'Autocracy has founded and resuscitated Russia. Any change in her political constitution has led in the past and must lead in the future to her perdition.'⁷⁶ Sergei Witte, the architect of Russia's industrialisation from above during the reigns of Alexander III and Nicholas II, echoed this viewpoint: 'The autocratic power first created Russia, then saved her from dismemberment and political annihilation, and ultimately secured for her a place among the European powers by introducing Western civilisation.'⁷⁷ Boris Chicherin, another strong supporter of autocratic power stressed that '...the obvious and universal fact of our history...demonstrates clearer than day that the autocracy can lead the nation with giant steps toward citizenship and enlightenment.'⁷⁸ In the opinion of many the autocracy had been successful in making Russia strong and transforming it into the world's largest land-based empire.

Defeat in the Crimean War spurred another cycle of RWA which focused on economic modernisation and industrialisation. During this phase of RWA the autocracy faced increasing societal dissatisfaction. The growing working class looked to the autocracy for aid in alleviating its socio-economic situation. By the end of the nineteenth century workers' strikes became increasingly common placing the stability of the Empire under question. The Ministry of Internal Affairs considered them a direct threat to tsardom. In those provincial areas where land hunger remained the state's authority was under the shadow of a large peasant revolt. At the same time, the rapid economic modernisation from above had produced an enlarging professional middle and upper class which, along with the liberal part of the aristocracy, argued for an opening of the political space. They sought political Westernisation.

Already during the time of Alexander II the discontented amongst the middle and upper classes believed that the next logical step in Russia's RWA was the opening of the political space. Yet, the autocracy since the French Revolution was increasingly unwilling to follow RWA

in the political sphere. Catherine II was horrified by the beheading of Louis XVI; Alexander I, despite his liberal leanings, did not believe the political culture of the common populace was mature enough for the expansion of political space; and Nicholas I, faced with open revolt on the day he became tsar, was determined to immunise Russia from corruptive Western political influences. Alexander II's establishment of local government, the *zemstvos*, and an independent judiciary, and emancipation of the serfs seemed to indicate a return to RWA in the political sense. The day of his assassination he signed a decree establishing consultative bodies whose representatives would be elected by the *zemstvos* and city councils, and officials appointed by the government. His reaction to a proposal that brought society a more active participation in political affairs was telling:

Gentlemen, that which is proposed to Us is the Estates-General of Louis XVI. One must not forget what followed. But, if you judge this to be of benefit to the country, I will not oppose it.⁷⁹

The autocracy showed a willingness to concede a place to society in the political field. Alexander III, in the wake of his father's killing, rescinded this decree. Nicholas II wished to rule as an autocrat, but did not have the stamina, initiative, and will of his father to fulfil such a role.⁸⁰ His inability to rule as an effective autocrat, managing the bureaucracy at its highest levels and dealing with the growing socio-economic problems facing the Empire dissatisfied the autocracy's conservative supporters. At the same time, his unwillingness to make some political concessions created dissatisfaction amongst the liberal aristocracy and many of the urban classes. The autocracy was becoming politically vulnerable. Moreover, the second phase of RWA not only weakened the traditional supporters of the autocracy, the nobility, but also created and/or enlarged other classes whose incorporation into the political system became a major challenge. The autocracy seemed increasingly unable to handle the consequences of RWA. Its role and legitimacy as the prime mover in Russian history came under question.

The catalyst for the 1905 Revolution was the defeat of Russia at the hands of the Japanese in 1904-05. Nicholas's *modus operandi* and economic and foreign policies had led to a catastrophe. In addition to worker, peasant, and urban discontent, conservatives were enraged over Russia's defeat at the hands of an Asiatic power. They and many

in the bureaucratic elite, decrying an inefficient, incompetent autocratic power, initially abandoned the emperor whom they held responsible for this debacle. A good number of them came to the conclusion that only a Council of Ministers and a powerful chairman could manage state institutions, govern the empire, and limit the damage an ineffective monarch could make. In October 1905, faced with defeat in war, state collapse, and the spread of revolution, Nicholas, under pressure of those around him, signed the October Manifesto and established a constitutional monarchy. Although the emperor retained key prerogatives, the Duma enjoyed significant powers. Imperial Russia seemed to be on the political path travelled by Western monarchies.

The Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906 was a rebellion rooted in institutional failure and ineffective monarchical governing, as in Russia. However, the discontent with the Qajar autocracy was not the result of the societal and economic consequences RWA. Unlike the Russian autocracy that created a great power and empire, the Qajars had lost an empire and failed to stem Iran's decline and prevent the spread of foreign influence in the country. In a sense, the Iranian Constitutional Revolution was the first step toward RWA, whilst the Russian Constitutional Revolution was a consequence of it.

The Constitutional Revolution is usually dated from December 1905 when the governor of Tehran beat the feet of several sugar merchants for not lowering the price of sugar. They argued that the price was high due to high import duties. Merchants and tradesmen suffering from the state's inability to manage the country's economy and finances then revolted.⁸¹ The clergy, who had condemned the shah for his failure to carry out his primary responsibility, the protection of Islam, joined the educated class and intelligentsia in the revolt. It was the clergy which mobilised the masses in the urban areas. In protest against the beating of merchants, a large group of clerics and bazaar merchants took sanctuary in the royal mosque of Tehran. The groups making up middle and upper society, including the clergy, eventually demanded an end to the shah's autocracy and the establishment of a House of Justice. They believed that the limitation of the monarch's power by a European-style constitution would lead to a strong Iranian state able to deflect foreign influence and modernise. In mid-1906 in the face of growing demonstrations and discontent Mozzafar al-Din Shah accepted the idea of a Majles. The constitution was then written; it was based almost entirely on the Belgian constitution. The parliament opened in

October 1906 as soon as Tehran deputies were elected. He signed the Fundamental Laws before dying in December 1906. A Supplementary Fundamental Law was drafted which the new shah, Mohammad Ali, signed. According to the constitution, the Majles had to give approval on all important matters, including foreign loans and treaties. Unlike the Russian constitutional system, ministers were responsible to the parliament, not the monarch. Equality before the law and personal rights and freedoms were protected and subject to few limits.

Russian and Iranian monarchs, however, began to work against these new systems. Mohammad Ali Shah with Russian help launched a coup d'état against the new system which failed. He fled the country and left the throne to his child, now Ahmad Shah. Mohammad Ali's attempt with the help of some leading clerics to overturn the new system symbolised the breakdown in the coalition that had forced the constitution on the monarchy. Large landowners in particular did not like the idea of a representative government. In the Russian case the key question was the theoretical and actual power of the tsar. In the Iranian case the role of the clergy in the life of the country took centre stage. A cleric, Sheykh Fazlollah Nuri, who came to symbolise clerical opposition to the constitution, argued that there was no doubt 'that constitutionalism is against the religion of Islam. It is not possible to place this Islamic country under a constitutional regime except by abolishing Islam. Thus, any attempts to impose constitutionalism upon us Muslims will be understood as destructive to religion...You God worshippers! This parliament, liberty (*hurriyat*) and freedom, equality and parity, and the principles of the present constitutional law are a dress designed for the body of Europe (*Farangistan*)...and violate divine law and the holy book.'⁸² The Iranian intelligentsia and a small number of clerics sought Iran's salvation in a constitutional monarchy with sovereignty coming from the people; now some powerful clerics had come out against this. However, the new system succeeded in crushing Nuri's opposition to the constitution.

Nicholas II by utilising or abusing the powers given to him by the constitution weakened both the Duma and the Council of Ministers which he considered a direct threat to his autocratic power. Thus, while RWA in the economic and social fields continued and its consequences continued to add pressure to the political system in the period 1907-1914, the state was divided as a result of the struggle between Nicholas II and the institutions brought into existence by the 1905 Revolution.

By 1914, the year the First World War began, the post-1905 constitutional set-up was paralysed. Nicholas's consistent undermining of the constitution, inability to govern relatively effectively, disastrous defeats in war mixed with deteriorating economic conditions behind the lines led to the crash of the Romanov Dynasty in February 1917.

Iran's constitutional experiment also failed soon after the Revolution of 1906. The state remained dangerously weak, unable to defend its authority in the face of domestic and international challenges. On 31 August 1907 the Anglo-Russian Entente divided Iran into spheres of influence. The geo-political threat to the country split Iran's educated classes. A growing number in the political and cultural elite of the country began to push for radical cultural, political, and economic change in order to save the country from imperialism: 'Iran belongs to Iranians and the hegemonic hand of the foreigners placed on this realm must be completely cut off. Iranians in their own house without transgressions and molestations from its neighbours must implement reforms.'⁸³ The Majles began to lose popularity given its inability to address land and peasant issues. By 1910 it was dominated by conservatives not inclined to reforms; in any case, no state institutions capable of carrying out reforms existed. Moreover, conservatives could use the Majles and the illiteracy of the masses to block moves threatening their interests. A major problem was that ultimately modernisation and constitutionalism were incompatible with a majority illiterate peasant population tied to the landowners' land.

Societal dissatisfaction with the new system's inability to carry out reforms and establish central control over the entire empire was matched by concerns over its geo-political weakness. London's attempt in the aftermath of the First World War and Russian Revolution to make Iran a virtual protectorate of the British Empire convinced most educated Iranians that only a strong central power and not the 1906 Constitutional system could save the Iranian Empire from complete dissolution at the hands of centrifugal forces and British imperialism. The Iranian lay intelligentsia and educated classes abandoned the constitutional framework for an autocratic government led by Reza Shah who would implement RWA in which they saw Iran's salvation.

Another element in the weakening of these constitutional systems was the contradiction between their republican elements and the perceived need for RWA. In Russia requirements of RWA contradicted the demands of peasants for land, the demands of workers for greater

social welfare and trade unions, and demands of the middle and liberal part of the upper classes for parliamentary supremacy over the autocracy which the political elite, including leading bureaucrats, viewed as the only mechanism able to carry out RWA. The closings of the First and Second Dumas which had majorities of groups putting forth these demands reflected this contradiction. Only the election of the Third Duma on a very restricted franchise produced a majority not putting forth such demands and willing to work with the government. This alignment of political forces led to the emasculation of the new system.

The tension between, on the one hand, the desire for stability and RWA, deemed essential given the geo-political environment in which Iran and Russia found themselves, and elite perceptions of mass culture, and, on the other, the desire for constitutional forms of governance and rule of law, played an important role in the trajectory of modern Russian and Iranian history. These failed constitutional systems symbolised this dilemma. Leninism and Khomeinism promised to resolve this tension, as did Gorbachev and Khatami.

LENINISM AND KHOMEINISM

On 12 July 1989 IRI mass media cut regular programming and broadcast only Quranic renditions. This was the first sign that Ayatollah Khomeini had passed away. As one drives through the outskirts of south Tehran a gold dome of a mosque adorned with four large gold minarets greets the eye. This imanzade is his final resting place. On 21 January 1924 Lenin suffered his fourth and last stroke. His body was embalmed and placed on display in a mausoleum on Red Square next to the Kremlin, the political and ideological centre of the USSR and the worldwide communist movement. These edifices ensured the spiritual presence of these men, reminded the people of the glory of the revolutions and their goals, and bestowed legitimacy on the Soviet and IRI elites as they ventured into new waters without their founding leaders. The Soviet poet, Vladimir Mayakovskii succinctly but unwittingly characterised the symbolism of these edifices: 'Lenin lived, Lenin lives, Lenin will live'. Subsequent Soviet and IRI leaders claimed legitimacy on the basis of their personal and/or ideological closeness to these revolutionary leaders, while political discourse had to take place within the framework of their legacies, Leninism and Khomeinism.

Providing a single definition of Leninism and Khomeinism encounters two major difficulties. First, we are faced with the evolution of Leninist and Khomeinist thought that occurred during the revolutionary struggle and Lenin's and Khomeini's periods of rule when they encountered the challenges of governing. In principle, the writings and speeches of these men provide ample material to construct the Leninist and Khomeinist frameworks. However, these men showed a great deal of political pragmatism, shifting, when necessary, the signposts of their ideologies. They had a sense of political timing, knowing when to use strategically radicalism and moderation. This goes

a long way in explaining their success as revolutionary leaders. This pragmatism created ideological and political conditions in which various Soviet and IRI leaders and/or factions could articulate seemingly contradictory opinions and policies whilst quite rightfully claiming defence and continuation of true Leninist and Khomeinist values. That Stalin and Gorbachev could claim to be true Leninists while both Khatami and Ahmadinejad could claim to represent true Khomeinism shows the ambiguities in Leninism and Khomeinism and their capacity for both change and ideological and political resistance to it. Second, an additional dimension is the transformation of Leninism and Khomeinism as a result of factional fighting and everyday politics after the passing away of the fathers of these revolutions. Thus this chapter examines: (a) the themes and contradictions in the thought and politics of Lenin and Khomeini that laid the foundations of Soviet and IRI ideology; (b) the contours of *homo Sovieticus* and *homo Islamicus*, the pillars of the Leninist and Khomeinist programmes; and (c) evolution of Leninism and Khomeinism as they attempted to become total utopian modernities.

A Brave New World: The Universalist Modernities of Leninism and Khomeinism

The essence of Leninism and Khomeinism was the construction of a universalist utopian modernity superior in morality, politics, social justice, and, especially in the Soviet case, economics, to that offered by the West. RWA made significant contributions to Leninism and Khomeinism. The monarchies' inability to incorporate into the political system groups emerging from RWA led to growing cries for political change and the strengthening of the belief that the monarchy had to be overthrown. At the same time, Nicholas II and Mohammad Reza Shah weakened political parties and groups not advocating the overthrow of the monarchies. They could have played a mediating role between the crown and the masses.

A relatively stagnant agricultural sector in certain areas of the Russian and Iranian Empires combined with industrialisation and economic growth in major cities, particularly in the capitals, St. Petersburg and Tehran, led to massive urbanisation. Peasants flowed into these cities in search of work, overwhelming the capitals' ability to absorb them. In south Tehran and on Vasilievskii Island and in the Warsaw and Aleksander Nevsky regions of St. Petersburg the unskilled and semi-skilled classes lived in squalor. The urbane and seemingly corrupt life of

the capitals and the glaring differences in living conditions between classes disoriented and frustrated those arriving from the countryside. Simultaneously, the established urban lower classes were increasingly dissatisfied with their social conditions, especially in light of the growing gap between their economic position and those of other classes. This social and political malaise combined with the crisis of identity created by RWA to give birth to the imagery of, and desire for, a universalist utopian modernity.

The Bolsheviks under Lenin and Islamists under Khomeini satisfied this desire for stability and utopia. They mobilised disoriented and disgruntled middle and lower urban classes in a comfortable and clear Manichean struggle against domestic and foreign enemies with promises of a utopia in, and for, this world. Leninism and Khomeinism provided dignity and a framework to those recently arrived in the cities who had exchanged the security and familiarity of country life with the instability, unpredictability, and decadence of urban life, and to those in the lower urban classes. Lenin emphasised that these lower classes were the driving force of history that would create a paradise on this earth. Khomeini assured them that they would inherit the earth, create an Islamic utopia in this life, and achieve rewards in the afterlife.

Leninism and Khomeinism located humankind and society in a historical and futuristic narrative. Lenin accomplished this through the God of Science whilst Khomeini used 'traditional' religion and God. The Leninist goal was to replace the Orthodox God with communist Gods whilst Marx's and Lenin's writings took the place of scripture.¹ Khomeini's goal was the religionisation of society: 'It is the duty of the *velayat-e faqih* to promulgate religion and instruct the people in the creed, ordinances, and institutions of Islam...'² in order to pave the way to an Islamic modernity. Leninism and Khomeinism were historical time frames providing both normative and predicative indicators for the anticipated universalistic utopian modernity, a specific end-point in time, the march towards which was irreversible. At the centre of these utopian projects was the creation of a *homo Sovieticus* and *homo Islamicus*, who replaced the disgraced *homo Romanovicus* and *homo Pablavicus*.

Leninism, unlike Khomeinism, claimed for itself unlimited scientific authority. The Leninist utopia rooted in dialectical materialism and Marxian scientific determinism provided a framework for understanding the meaning of today in the larger schema of the

progressive laws of history leading to a specific end-point in time, the communist utopia.

Communist society will be a comradesly society based on solidarity and unity of interests of all members of society. In it there will be no economic struggle between individual people and groups or their parts; class warfare will disappear...In communism humankind, for the first time, will lead all spheres of societal life, guide consciously and actively its development and all internal relations and establish the highest freedom. The absence of exploitation and oppression and the general satisfaction of all the needs of each person will give full freedom to each and every member of the communist society.³

This scientifically concrete character of Marxism-Leninism appealed to members of the intelligentsia. Moreover, the Leninist accent on an elite-led revolutionary party guiding and moulding society attracted them to the project for it provided them with a role which they believed they deserved.

Whereas the Leninist utopian modernity was wrapped in a futurist skin of a system that had not yet existed, the Khomeinist one was packaged in a narrative of past, the time of the Prophet Mohammad. In Khomeinism, the Marxist-Leninist historical inevitability had its equivalent in God's and the Hidden Imam's providence that encompassed utopias in this world and the other. Before the revolution Khomeini stressed: 'The one thing that is good for you, good for all of us is Islam and the rights of Islam. Islam is complete for many reasons, it will fix the world, it will fix your end and make all of us happy and prosperous (*saadatmand*).'⁴ Shi'ia religious narratives, symbolism and revolutionary action drove the struggle to 'fix the world' and create a utopia on this earth for the Hidden Imam, whose re-appearance would symbolise the 'end of history.'

The Leninist slogan *Proletarians of the World Unite* and the Khomeinist intention that *Muslims of the World Unite* underlined the universalist characters of Leninism and Khomeinism which targeted anyone chaffing under Western cultural, economic, and political imperialism. Muslim identity was open to anyone who accepted the principles of Islam and the concept of Islamic government. Anyone accepting the principles of Leninism was a proletarian. A true proletarian and a true

Muslim had no real sense of national feelings but keenly felt the injustice imposed on him by the West. The universalisms of Leninism and Khomeinism and proclamation of their superiority to Western modernity initially ended the identity crisis exacerbated by RWA. The USSR and the IRI were now the world's vanguard polities.

Leninism and Khomeinism stressed the worldwide struggle against exploitation of the lower classes, regardless of religion and race. The IRI Constitution proclaimed:

With necessary attention to the Islamic dynamic of the Iranian Revolution which has been a movement aimed at the victory of all the dispossessed over the privileged, the Constitution provides the necessary basis for ensuring the continuation of the revolution at home and abroad. In particular, in the development of international relations, the Constitution will strive with other Islamic and popular movements to prepare the way for the formation of a single world community.⁵

Khomeini himself gave much attention to this:

It is clear to the whole world and to those who bear official responsibility that the survival and the consolidation of the Islamic Republic of Iran depends on a policy which rejects both the East and the West...God grant that the brave people of Iran gather their revolutionary hate and anger and direct the flames of their wrath—which will annihilate all forms of oppression—against the criminal USSR and the world-devouring USA, as well as against the henchmen of these two powers, so that, through the grace of God, the flag of the true Islam of Mohammad will be raised over the whole world, and those deprived of their rights, alone with the barefoot and the virtuous, will become lords over the earth.⁶

The antithesis of Leninism and Khomeinism was nationalism. The French Revolution although proclaiming a universalist ideology revolving around *liberté, fraternité, égalité*, created a French national identity. Lenin regarded nationalism as an enemy force designed to maintain the supremacy of exploiting Western elites by dividing the loyalties and energies of the workers. Khomeini regarded the nation-

state as the invention of 'weak minds' which could not comprehend the universalist mission and providence of God.⁷ He stressed, 'We must set aside the thought that we do not export revolution as Islam does not consider countries as different.'⁸ Initially Soviet and IRI state identities were based on a universalist ideology and project that required submersion of the Iranian or Russian national dynamic.

The proletariat of Russia is faced with a two-sided task: to combat nationalism of every kind, above all, Great Russian nationalism; to recognise fully the equal rights for all nations...to struggle against every kind of nationalism...(and) to create a close-knit international association (of proletarians) despite the strivings for national exclusiveness.⁹

Khomeini argued:

We have set as our goal the world-wide spread of the influence of Islam and the suppression of the rule of the world conquerors...We wish to cause the corrupt roots of Zionism, capitalism, and Communism to wither throughout the world. We wish, as does God almighty, to destroy the systems which are based on these three foundations and to promote the Islamic order of the Prophet...in the world of (Western) arrogance.¹⁰

The ideological hostility of Leninism and Khomeinism to nationalism was matched by their condemnation of cosmopolitanism which was seen as a product and mechanism of Western economic, political and cultural imperialism. The goal of cosmopolitanism was the weakening of Khomeinism and Leninism. From the Stalinist period and from the beginning of Iran's cultural revolution in 1980, the Soviet and IRI states fought an ideological and political war against its spread. At the same time, *homo Sovieticus* and *homo Islamicus* symbolised Leninist and Khomeinist internationalism which claimed to be superior to 'Western hegemonic' cosmopolitanism.

Whilst Leninism and Khomeinism worked to universalise the revolutions at home, they faced a different challenge in the international arena. They struggled to show that national events in Russia and Iran opened new chapters not so much in Russian and Iranian history, but in the development of humankind leading to a

utopian universalist modernity. Mikhail Suslov, the head of the ideological department of the Central Committee and Politburo member from 1966 until his death in 1981, stressed:

Leninism is neither exclusively a Russian nor a European phenomena...Leninism is the objective necessity of world socialist development.¹¹ Given the Russian position on the edges of developed capitalist countries of the West and colonialist, neo-colonialist and dependent countries of the East, the Russian workers' movement, on the one hand, led to the West European revolutionary workers' movement and, on the other hand, to national liberation movements amongst colonised peoples. Leninism emerged and developed as a generalisation not only of the Russian but also of the worldwide workers' and national liberation anti-colonial movements. Leninism is Marxism for a new historical epoch. It is the ideal ideological theoretical base for the contemporary international communist movement.¹²

Paraphrasing Suslov, Khomeinism is Islam for a new historical epoch. It is the ideal ideological base for a new form of universalist modernity and movement in the contemporary international system, despite having started in Iran. Khomeini stressed, 'Islam is a sacred trust from God to us. The Iranian nation must grow in power and resolution until it has given Islam to the entire world.'¹³ Khomeinism's goal, as stipulated by the Constitution, was to create an ideal society based on 'universal Islamic values' not only for all Muslims but also for those who have had their rights taken away or exploited. They would claim the world. The Revolutionary Guards have 'the responsibility and the ideological mission to spread the rule of God's law throughout the world.' (Article 90). The goal is 'paving the way for the establishment of a single world-wide religious community' (Article 78).

Attempts to internationalise the revolutions on the world stage were complimented by domestic political realities which forced the IRI and USSR to accommodate Russian and Iranian national feelings. Thus the IRI and USSR strove to prove that 'internationalism and genuine patriotism are always together, complementing each other and mutually enriching.'¹⁴ Whilst proclaiming universalism Lenin admitted, 'Is a sense of national pride alien to us, Great Russian class-conscious proletarians? Certainly not! We love our language and our country....

We are full of a sense of national pride. For that reason we hate our slavish past...and our slavish present.¹⁵ Ayatollah Motahari stressed, 'We hold dear both Islamic and national (*mihani*) Iranian feelings.'¹⁶

In the late 1920s and early 1930s Moscow's approach to state identity changed. A Sovietised form of Russian culture was increasingly propagated whilst the national identities of minority groups were de-emphasised. This shift represented Stalin's belief in the progressive character of Russian culture which would guide the other Soviet peoples toward communism. It also reflected worry amongst the elite over the extent to which the new Soviet identity based on dry Marxist-Leninist teaching and promises for some future glory could generate loyalty and social mobilisation amongst the largest group in the USSR, the Russians. For example, during the Second World War A.S.Shcherbakov, the head of the Political Division of the Red Army is said to have remarked, 'Borodino is closer to those on the front than the Paris Commune.'¹⁷ Thus, Soviet patriotism came to be based on a Marxism-Leninism that used Russian nationalism.¹⁸

In a famous incident at the time of the revolution a cleric attempted to bulldoze the ruins of Iran's first pre-Islamic Empire at Persepolis, a symbol of Iranian nationalism under the Pahlavis. Iran's pre-Islamic identity was to be destroyed. However, the war with Iraq and Arab support for Saddam Hussein led to the IRI's increasing use of Iranian nationalist motifs within Islamism. By the late 1980s the original IRI concept of religious universal identity (*hoviāt-e dīni*) began to give way to a national-religious identity (*hoviāt-e melli-dīni*). The early Islamic universalist tendency echoed in themes such as the export of revolution and denunciation of Iranian nationalism had begun to die out. The IRI's change in this respect was an implicit acceptance that the campaign to strengthen the universalist Islamic identity at the expense of Iranian, national identity had failed.

In both cases one decade after the revolution the universalist ideologies were increasingly adapted to a national context. The later Soviet and IRI elites, facing increasing popular dissatisfaction and political and ideological threats, tried to utilise within the official ideology Russian and Iranian national themes in order to bolster legitimacy. By the Gorbachev and Khatami periods a tension between the revolutionary Soviet and IRI identities and the national Russian and Iranian identities remained.

International dynamics played an important role in the 'nationalisation' of Soviet and IRI identity and in the recognition of the supremacy of Soviet and IRI state interests over those of the universalist utopian modernity. The Bolsheviks initially believed that the survival of the revolution and the modernisation of Russia/USSR were dependent on the success of communist revolutions in the economically developed countries of Western Europe. Yet, after the First World War, the world socialist revolutionary movement endured a series of setbacks. The final defeat of German revolutionaries in 1923 and the massacre of Chinese communists by the nationalist Guomindang in 1927 resulted in a re-think over the relationship between the Soviet state and Marxist-Leninist universalism. The Soviet leadership's great hope and dream of world revolution now seemed to be further in the future than it had anticipated. The international aid, technical as well as monetary, and a relatively favourable geo-political environment which the Soviet regime sought in order to modernise backward Russia would not be coming.

Stalin, arguing for 'socialism in one country', stressed that the USSR should pay less attention to worldwide revolution and not wait for the occurrences of such revolutions before beginning its own modernisation. This theory of socialism in one country constituted a major revision in Marxist-Leninist thought.¹⁹ Leon Trotsky, although agreeing that the USSR could begin to build socialism at home, argued that its successful completion depended on the spread of socialist revolutions supported by Moscow. He implied that no differences could exist between the goals of worldwide revolution and the geo-political interests of the vanguard revolutionary state, the USSR. Although the official line continued to stress, 'The CPSU is the vanguard of the international communist movement; all of its activities are informed with the principle of Proletarian Internationalism and connected with the indestructible brotherly binds with all communist and workers parties', Soviet state interests predominated.²⁰

Khomeini too believed that the success and durability of the Islamic Revolution was dependent on its spread: 'All the superpowers have risen to destroy us. If we remain in an enclosed environment, we shall definitely be annihilated.'²¹ Saddam Hussein invaded Iran on 21 September 1980. Despite early defeats, Iran by 1982 had pushed his forces out of its territory and began to penetrate into Iraq. Khomeini spoke increasingly of world Islamic revolution which would bring an

end to US 'lackey monarchies' of Saudi Arabia and Persian Gulf sheikdoms and US 'puppet governments' in countries such as Egypt. The IRI would capture Baghdad and free Iraq's oppressed Muslims and then make its way to Israel where the green flag of Islam would be placed. Khomeini believed that the war was not only against Saddam but also 'against all unbelief'. The war was 'an essential element in the Islamic revolution.'²² During the revolutionary days and especially during the war, Khomeini came to regard himself as an acclaimed world leader who from Iran would liberate oppressed Muslims and disinherited people across the globe.

The West could not allow the IRI, whose ideology threatened the stability of authoritarian but Western-friendly governments in the region, to spread its influence and obtain control over Iraq's oil resources. It provided Baghdad with military and economic aid and intelligence. Facing international isolation, increasing economic problems at home, domestic discontent, and huge human losses on the front, a certain faction in the elite, at the head of which was Hojjatoleslam Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the speaker of the Parliament and close confidant of Khomeini, came to the conclusion that a ceasefire had to be signed with Iraq.

February 1988 was a turning point. Khomeini solidified and institutionalised the concept of state interest (*maslahat*) that subordinated the interests of religious and universalist Islam to those of the Islamic Iranian state.

Islamic government takes precedence over all subsidiary precepts, even praying, fasting, and performing the Hajj. The ruler is able to demolish a mosque or a house that is in the path of a road...The ruler can close down a mosque if need be, or even demolish a mosque that is a source of harm if its harm cannot be remedied without demolition. The government may even unilaterally annul the legally binding sharia' agreements it has made with the people when these agreements contradict the interests of the Islamic state.²³

This paved the way for Khomeini's decision to sign a ceasefire with Iraq despite the failure to achieve an Islamic victory in Iraq and to raise the flag of Islam in Jerusalem. It was a far cry from Khomeini's proclamation at the beginning of that same year: 'The establishment of

the Islamic state worldwide is one of the great goals of the revolution.²⁴ Similar to the USSR, some ten years after the victory of the revolution, ideology and the universalist mission were subordinated to state interest. By the time Gorbachev and Khatami came to power state interest as a basis for decision and policy making hovered alongside, and above, Soviet and IRI universalisms.

Revolutionary Institutions and Revolutionary Democracy

Democratic slogans were at the forefront of revolutionary Khomeinism and Leninism. In the late nineteenth century Lenin stressed that the primary goal of a revolution in Russia was the establishment of a democratic republic and political liberties. Writing on the occasion of Engel's death, he argued that Marx and Engels were first democrats and then socialists. In an 1898 article he stressed that full political freedom was the essential prerequisite for any civilisational progress which came to an end with the achievement of communism. He repeated this view in 1900.²⁵ In his pre-1917 piece, *The State and Revolution*, Lenin argued that after the smashing of the state machine a system of soviets manned by directly elected, recallable officials, and a nationwide militia would emerge and enjoy absolute power obtained through democratic elections.

By 1917 Lenin had grown to support more strongly the soviets which he characterised as 'an organisation of the workers, the embryo of a workers' government, the representative of the entire mass of the poor section of the population. In other words, it is the organisation of nine-tenths of the population who are striving for peace, bread, and freedom.'²⁶ Having recognised the usefulness of the peasant role in the revolution he stressed that, 'the proletariat (along with the peasants)...can and will proceed to the achievement of a democratic republic....'²⁷ Democracy was not a goal in itself. Democracy, namely the soviets, would provide the mechanism with which the workers would fight for the construction of the Leninist utopia. Lenin used the slogan 'All Power to the Soviets' to justify his seizure of power in October 1917. He argued: 'Bourgeois parliament suffocates the independent political life of the masses (and) their direct role in the democratic construction of all aspects of state life from the bottom to the top. The Soviets of worker, peasant, and soldier deputies are the exact opposite.' The Soviet institutional make-up 'gives the possibility to unite the benefits of parliamentarism with the advantages of direct

democracy; that is to say it unites in the form of the people's elected officials, the legislative and executive functions.²⁸

During the struggle against the Iranian monarchy Khomeini consistently stressed, 'To the present time the Iranian people have been under the yoke (*feshar*) of the shah and our country has not enjoyed independence. We want to make our country independent (of US control) and our people free. Islamic government (*hokumat-e eslami*) is a republic similar to other republics, yet its law is Islamic.'²⁹ In his book *Hokumat-e Eslami* he wrote: 'Islam is the religion of militant individuals who are committed to truth and justice. It is the religion of those who desire freedom and independence.'³⁰ In late 1978 he began to speak of Islamic *republic* instead of Islamic government. With this move he united under his leadership all the groups participating in the growing revolt and sidelined groups and individuals, including leading clerics inside Iran, who limited themselves to demands for the shah to rule within the 1906 Constitution. Khomeini, in exile in Paris, in late 1978 announced: 'We have declared an Islamic Republic. The people through their many demonstrations have voted for it. It is a government based on the will of the people and Islamic principles.'³¹ How these two elements would co-exist within the same political and institutional framework was unclear.

Unlike Lenin, Khomeini indicated that after the overthrow of the monarchy he would not engage in power politics: 'In the future, I shall play the same role that I play now. I will guide and direct. If the need arises, I will intervene. If treachery emerges, I shall struggle against it. But I shall not have any role in the government.'³² Such statements created a degree of ambiguity about the political and institutional relationship between the position of the religious leader and the state. This issue would become paramount once the father of the revolution passed away. Such statements strengthened his support and popularity amongst certain forces in the coalition driving the revolution, namely leftists, religious lay intellectuals, and nationalists who believed that Khomeini would play the role of revolutionary leader uniting traditionally disjointed opposition groups and that after the overthrow of the monarchy they would rule.

The Soviet national anthem proclaimed, 'Glory to our free homeland.' The largest square in Tehran, known during the monarchical period as *Shahyad* (shah's memory), was re-named Freedom Square. It is there that every year official celebrations marking

the victory of the Islamic Revolution are held. These stresses on freedom were to symbolise the centrality of democratic credentials in Leninism and Khomeinism that in turn were to grant legitimacy to these revolutionary ruling systems. Whatever the trajectory of political development in the post-revolutionary period, Leninism and Khomeinism could not escape their own initial democratic slogans. Leninist and Khomeinist democracy, however, was not goalless but directed by the party and clerical institutions in the name of construction of new utopian, universalist modernities.

Lenin stressed that only the Bolshevik Party was able 'to lead all the people, to direct and organise the new system, to be the teacher, the guide, the leader of all the working and exploited people...' ³³ Only the CPSU, in particular its highest organs, had the necessary knowledge and insight for leading the society forward. 'The Party of Lenin is a popular force that leads us to the victory of communism' proclaimed the Soviet national anthem. Brezhnev underlined:

Leninism is an eternally living and developing doctrine that was, is, and will be in the centre of the Party's ideological life and at the basis of all its revolutionary transformational activity. Turning to the ideological heritage of Lenin, the party considers finding solutions to current problems of the construction of communism on the basis of Leninist ideas and Leninist methodology its most important task. ³⁴

Khomeini argued: '*Fegh* (Islamic jurisprudence) is a real and complete theory for the governing (*edare*) of people and society from cradle to grave.' ³⁵ Thus, clerics had to take up political positions since only they had the proper knowledge to discover and interpret *fegh*. 'The clergy not only must guide the nation but also be involved in ruling because in the Islamic Republic it is the clergy that is entrusted with the duty of ensuring that the regime remains Islamic at all times.' ³⁶

These ideologies underpinned systems that did not hold that aspects of the private sphere exist outside the concern of the state. The construction of utopian modernities and the making of *homo Sovieticus* and *homo Islamicus* justified the absolute power of the revolutionary institutions and their intervention in the private realms of the people.

Social Justice

Leninism and Khomeinism, condemning Western modernity for class exploitation and poverty, made social justice a pillar of their utopian universalist modernities. Often the dynamic between the West and Khomeinism/Leninism is portrayed as a Manichean struggle between a democratic West and its 'civil society' and an undemocratic USSR and IRI. Certainly this is true, but it does not capture fully the essence of Leninism and Khomeinism. Similar to the Romanov and Pahlavi monarchies, Leninism and Khomeinism placed great importance on development. Yet, they were also manifestations of societal demands for social justice that had emerged in late RWA. Leninism and Khomeinism sought a framework for economic modernisation that addressed social justice and ameliorated the drama and malaise this process brought with it. These ideologies can be considered paths of a particular form of modernisation and 'catching up' developmentally with the West.

Although Leninism and Khomeinism differed in the place and blueprint they gave to economic development, they both rejected Western capitalist forms of development. Lenin stressed: 'The old society was based on the principle either you rob or another robs you, either you work for another or another works for you, either you are a slave or you have a slave.'³⁷ He promised to put an end to this situation.

In Leninism social justice was to be achieved by several methods. First, since ownership of property was seen as the most powerful symbol of class inequality, the state appropriated all property which it would distribute in accordance with the demands of social justice. One of the much trumpeted achievements of the CPSU was the creation and state distribution of communal and then private living accommodation to all citizens. Second, 'the soviet regime tried to move toward the Marxist ideal of "each according to his needs" by providing basic needs free or at steeply subsidised prices. Medical care and education, including higher education, was essentially free' which entailed 'a massive expansion of the medical and educational systems.' Third, economic development would be obtained by the centrally-controlled economy that through its plans and directives would lead the country 'to abundance.' This economic model 'created a large number of workers' jobs...and at the same time protected the newcomers to the cities from the frightening unemployment, great disparities of income and degrading conditions of the shanty towns typical of third

world cities. Because the state paid wages, it could and did control the extremes of income found in a market economy.³⁸

Khomeinism shared with Leninism major themes and concerns in regard to social justice but very little in regard to the form of economic modernisation.³⁹ Khomeini criticised the shah for exacerbating the income gap, paying no attention to the fate of the poor, allowing the spread of alcoholism and prostitution (seen as consequences of poverty), and failing to provide any real social services for the lower classes. 'Every day the people's poverty and destitution increase. You (the shah) keep people in a state of poverty and backwardness in the name of progress.⁴⁰ He proclaimed that the Pahlavi bourgeois elite and their exploitative grip on the economic life of the county would be overthrown and the disinherited would benefit:

Ignore the northern sections of Tehran where they have put things in order; go take a look at the south of the city—go look at those pits, those holes in the ground where people live...homes people have built out of rush matting or clay so their poor children can have somewhere to live. They don't have any drinking water...That is the state of our country, our advanced and progressive country!⁴¹ ...how are the people living? In every one hundred, two hundred villages there is not even one clinic, for the unfortunates and hungry not one thought was made...Islam can solve the problem of poverty...Islam understands that first the problems of the poor must be dealt with...⁴²

He stressed before and after the revolution that it is 'your Islamic duty to take from the rich and give to the poor.'⁴³ He proclaimed that the revolution was to serve the interests of the under privileged.

Lenin placed the Soviet economic developmental model at the centre of his thinking, Khomeini, whilst talking of the need for social justice, remarked that the field of economics was the purview of fools (*mal-e khar ast*). Thus leftist Islamists and rightist clerics continuously clashed over the IRI's economic character, forming one of the chief fault lines in factional politics of the IRI's first fifteen years. The leftists favoured state intervention in the economy, including state ownership of major industries, and redistribution of national wealth through taxation. Rightist clerics claimed that class differences were divinely

ordained and sanctioned by Islam. They opposed taxes, state redistribution of wealth and ownership of major industries. Khomeini more often than not sided with the leftist Islamicists. The first ten years of Soviet power too was marked by deep political and ideological battles over economic policy during the NEP period. They ended with Stalin's rapid collectivisation and industrialisation which set the basic Soviet economic structure until the end of the USSR. The IRI has many policies addressing issues of social justice. Basic food stuffs are heavily subsidised, jobs are created in state-run industries in order to alleviate the issue of unemployment and the fear of loss of work, cheap loans are available to underprivileged groups, and the educational and medical systems were greatly expanded. But, given the existence of a large private sector and private property, differences in class, incomes and neighbourhoods remained, posing a potential threat to the IRI's legitimacy.

Despite the stress on social justice and criticism of the Western capitalist and Soviet economic model, Khomeini maintained a strong emphasis on spiritual issues, seeing in them the true goals of the revolution. He remarked that the revolution was fought not over the price of watermelons. He condemned those groups and people who thought otherwise:

Does it seem reasonable for a person to shout for his stomach and then give up his life, is this reasonable? Could anyone wish his child to be martyred to obtain a good house? This is not the issue. The issue is another world. Martyrdom is meant for another world. This martyrdom sought by all of God's saints and prophets...The people want this meaning.⁴⁴

Yet, popular legitimacy of Khomeinism was to a significant degree dependent on the IRI's ability to provide the conditions for economic growth, social justice, and a decent standard of living. Certainly, Leninism had a more direct link with, and emphasis on, economics; after all the heart of its modernity was its claim to a superior economic system.

Anti-Westernism and Anti-Americanism

The anti-Westernism of Leninism and Khomeinism broadly speaking had four basic themes. First, Leninism rejected the West in the sense

that the West and specifically the USA were associated with exploitative capitalism which could not serve as a utopia for the future for the exploited classes. Khomeinism rejected the Western modernity of the Enlightenment which encompassed liberalism, 'exploitative' capitalism, and communism. These essentially Western philosophical and political manifestations had destroyed religion and spirituality. Second, they proclaimed a struggle against Western cultural, political, and economic imperialism on behalf of the down-trodden and exploited peoples of Russia, Iran, and the world. Lenin and Khomeini succeeded to a great degree in presenting themselves and their states as the bulwark against Western imperialism and as a refuge for the exploited masses. Third, the construction of the Leninist and Khomeinist identities and the search for authenticity took place in the mirror of the West.

Leninism and Khomeinism did not reject the use of Western technology in the process of modernisation or in people's everyday lives; this technology would be harnessed to these projects of construction of new modernities. Khomeini stressed, 'We Muslims are unfortunately in need of Western science and technology...'⁴⁵

We are not opposed to the cinema, to radio, or to television; what we oppose is the vice and the use of the media to keep our young people in a state of backwardness and dissipate their energies. We have never opposed these features of modernity in themselves, but...unfortunately (in Iran) they were used not in order to advance civilisation, but in order to drag us into barbarism...⁴⁶

In the USSR, the question facing Lenin and Stalin was not so much the use of Western technology, but rather the use of bourgeois specialists steeped in Western 'exploitative capitalist culture' who had the technical know-how needed to build quickly socialism. Stalin put an end to this issue when he launched a cultural revolution that purged such specialists and created a new Soviet professional class. At the XVII Party Congress in 1934, the CPSU announced the goal of transforming the USSR 'into a technologically and economically independent country.'⁴⁷

Without the adoption of Western technology and indigenous technological advances, Soviet and IRI modernities would fail to live up to ideological and political expectations of a utopian universal modernity and prove unable to resist Western and specifically US geo-

political pressure. Leninism and Khomeinism had attacked the monarchical regimes for their economic and political dependence on the West and for allowing Western exploitation of Russia and Iran. In 1926 Stalin made the link between Russian development and foreign exploitation:

Tsarist Russia was an immense reserve of Western imperialism, not only in the sense that it gave free entry to foreign capital, which controlled such basic branches of Russia's economy as the fuel and metal industries, but also in the sense that it could supply the Western imperialists with millions of soldiers. Remember the Russian army, fourteen million strong, which shed its blood on imperialist fronts, safeguarding the staggering profits of British and French capitalists. Tsarism...was the agent of Western imperialism for squeezing out of the population hundreds of millions by way of interest on loans in Paris, London, Berlin and Brussels.⁴⁸

Khomeini proclaimed in 1962:

...The point is that we are fighting against America. All the world's freedom fighters will support us on this issue. This Shah is an American agent and this is an American plot...They have sold us, they have sold our independence... What use to you are the American soldiers and military advisers? If this country is occupied by America, then what is all this noise you make about progress? If these advisers are to be your servants, then why do you treat them like something superior to the masters?...If they are your employees, then why not treat them as any other government treats its employees? If our country is now occupied by the United States, then tell us outright and throw us out of the country!⁴⁹

The Russian masses of the tsar were the servants of Western capital and politicians. In IRI jargon 'world arrogance' (*estekbar-e jahani*) or 'world hegemony' (*solte-ye jahani*) replaced 'world capitalism.' This world arrogance and hegemony, leading 'imperialist penetrations of Muslim countries', could not tolerate the existence of other powerful countries given its desire to rule the world and its capital. In the early 1960s

Khomeini exhorted, 'Come now, awaken! Let us not live under the banner of others! Let us not be subject to the impositions of Britain and America'⁵⁰ At the beginning of the struggle against the Pahlavi regime in early 1978 he noted, 'As for America, a signatory of the Declaration of Human Rights, it has imposed this Shah upon us...During his period of rule, this creature has transformed Iran into an official colony of the US. What crimes he has committed in service to his masters!'⁵¹ These statements resonated with most sectors of society.

Stalin similarly had argued:

The history of Russia contains among other things a number of losses arising from backwardness. She was beaten by Mongol khans, by Turkish beys, by Swedish feudal lords, by Polish and Lithuanian nobles, by English and French capitalists, by Japanese barons. Everybody beat her because of her backwardness...We are 50 to 100 years behind the developed countries. We must catch up with them in ten years. Either we accomplish this, or else we will be destroyed.⁵²

Ayatollah Khomeini viewed the world in a similar vein, 'Are we to be trampled underfoot by the boots of America simply because we are a weak nation and have no dollars?'⁵³ Recognising the need to modernise, Khomeini, in response to conservative reaction to his decision to lessen social restrictions, attacked reactionism: 'I must express my regret at your interpretation of holy decrees. Based on your views, modern civilisation must be annihilated and we must all go and live forever in caves and the desert. I advise you to take God into account and not be influenced by 'pseudo-religious' and 'uneducated clerics (*akbunds*).'⁵⁴

In sum, Leninist and Khomeinist hostility to the West is a predictable reaction to a power relationship in which one finds oneself the much weaker party. Continued Soviet and IRI dependence on Western technology presented Gorbachev and Khatami with the popular sense that Leninism and Khomeinism had failed to live up to expectations and promises. The 'undemocratic' elements of Leninism and Khomeinism were just one dynamic in a complex framework that emerged in response to sensed vulnerability to external threats.

Khomeinism and Leninism

That Khomeinism is based on Islam which enjoys deep cultural and historical roots in Iran and is an essential part of Iranian identity distinguishes it from Leninism. Khomeini effectively used Islamic symbols, belief system, cultural framework, and writings familiar to many people in his articulation and propagation of Khomeinism. He successfully transformed a deep-rooted religion into a political ideology. The USSR, unlike the IRI, needed from the beginning to create a body of cadres able to propagate and inculcate Leninism amongst the masses. Given the task of creating a new modernity, the goal was to transform a political ideology into a religion that regulated all aspects of peoples' lives. The task, according to a 1921 Central Committee resolution, was to replace a 'religious understanding of the world with a rigorous communist scientific system.'⁵⁵

The challenge facing Leninism was two sided. Old culture and specifically religion had to be uprooted in order to create the new utopian modernity and make the Bolshevik Party the sole legitimate source of political and ideological power. The replacement of a heavenly God with Marxist-Leninist Gods required a huge and enduring propaganda effort. One small, but telling example of this, was the Union of Militant Godless, which existed from 1925 until 1942 and propagated amongst the masses that religion was harmful and that science can explain all phenomenon. Yet, there was increasing doubt amongst the new elite that Leninism devoid of any rituals and holidays associated with the everyday life of the people could succeed in finding deep-rooted and lasting mass support. Thus, the Bolsheviks replaced religious festivals and holidays with those of Leninism; private rituals usually associated with religion, such as birth, marriage, divorce, and death were to lose their religious colouring and obtain a red Leninist one. In the first decade of Soviet power these efforts had limited success. Thus Stalin, implementing rapid industrialisation from above and forced collectivisation in order to make the USSR a great world power, transformed Leninism into a religious cult and created a cult of personality around himself. In the mid-1930s he remarked that 'the people need a tsar, in other words someone to revere and in whose name to live and work.'⁵⁶ The cult of personality was a consequence of the party's recognition that Marxism-Leninism could not alone rally popular support and mobilise the masses.⁵⁷

Khomeinism did not face this problem. However, it needed to show the applicability of Islam to what Leninism seemed to epitomise, namely modernisation and politics in a changing international situation. Khomeini argued: 'Islam has provided government for some 1,500 years. Islam has a political agenda and provides for the administration of the country. (It) is a religious-political faith (*din-e ebadi-siasi*). Its worship contains politics and its political affairs contain worship. Islam has everything. The Koran has everything. It has politics, it has *fegh*, it has philosophy, it has everything.'⁵⁸ Ayatollah Montazeri, Khomeini's heir apparent until 1988 stressed:

The kind of Islam we recognise determines the duty of humankind. Islam takes into account the ideological and spiritual nature of humans as well as economic and political ones because life encompasses economic, political and family issues. Islam is complete. It thus deals with the time a person is born into this world until he/she leaves it.⁵⁹

Unlike the Soviets who had to create an infrastructure and body of cadres, the vital instruments of spreading and deepening Leninism across the USSR, the IRI had a ready-made network of mosques and religious schools, as well as a clerical class able to challenge the Pahlavi state and institutionalise Khomeinism across the country.

Leninists and Khomeinists differed in the basic dynamics of their modernities. Leninism of the 1920s was first and foremost concerned with raising worker literacy and productivity, rapid economic modernisation and social justice in the march towards the communist utopia.⁶⁰ Khomeinism in the initial stages gave primary attention to defence of Islamic identity, moral purification of society, and the establishment of social justice. However, Leninism too came to be very much concerned with the moral and cultural issues that were paramount in Khomeinism. The 1958 edition of *The Basics of Marxism-Leninism*, the official CPSU textbook, stressed that Leninists 'do not believe that there can be any talk of the happiness of people whilst they live in poverty and suffer from hunger and deprivation.... But that does not mean that they consider the single goal of societal progress to be the clothing and feeding of people and deliverance of all parts of society from their needs.' The Leninist ideals 'of societal progress...involve all aspects of societal life, not only economic, but

also political, cultural, and moral. Their realisation is communist society.⁶¹

In 1989, after the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, his successor, Ayatollah Khamenei underlined a shift in Khomeinism to greater emphasis on economic development and raising living standards which were at the centre of Leninism.

Islam has plans for both this world and the afterlife...If we imagine that a utopian society does not deal with material problems and the well-being of the people, it is the same as saying that religion, sanctity, and spiritualism do not concern themselves with the lives of the people. This is against the explicit calling of Islam and the constitution. Moves toward the resolution of people's problems and the paving of the way to a healthy and prosperous life in which the population enjoys abundance, access to goods at cheap prices, and (social) facilities, is an Islamic duty on the shoulders of all the country's responsible officials; it is possible and without doubt a part of the ideals of Islam and our dear Imam (Khomeini).⁶²

Leninist and Khomeinist claims of universal utopian modernity combined with the realities of maintaining power and legitimacy forced both of these modernities to expand from their initial ideological dynamics and address both material and spiritual/cultural issues.

Perhaps the greatest dissimilarity between the Leninist and Khomeinist modernities was rooted in conceptions of social class from which flowed differences in world view and form of society. The creation of *homo Sovieticus* was a homogenizing process in cultural, political, and class terms; the making of *homo Islamicus* entailed homogenisation only in political and cultural spheres. In the IRI class differences were said to be 'divinely ordained' despite Khomeinism's concern with social justice. In the USSR the goal was the elimination of class difference. To justify class inequalities a leading cleric compared society to a garden: 'A garden with just one type of flower would have no beauty in it; a garden with a large variety of flowers is attractive and thus God ensured that the world would be similar to this (latter) garden.'⁶³ The IRI's acceptance of differences in social class resulted in a heterogeneity in most parts of societal life, such as architecture, city

planning, neighbourhood design, and private and public schools, amongst other elements of daily life that was absent in the USSR.

Homo Sovieticus-Homo Islamicus

Homo Sovieticus and *homo Islamicus* symbolise three themes in modern Russian and Iranian history which both Gorbachev and Khatami had to face. First, the new Soviet and Islamic person continued the trend from the monarchist period according to which the state elite would declare war on aspects mass culture not in line with state conceptions of identity and create a 'new person' from above. Second, this grand project of *homo Sovieticus* and *homo Islamicus* from above epitomised the Russian and Iranian response to the seeming imposition of Western culture and power and the threat they represented to these countries.

Third, the USSR and the IRI found themselves in situations similar to that of the deposed monarchies. RWA had placed the Russian and Iranian imperial states in direct conflict with mass society by using the bureaucracy to destroy elements of old culture and create Westernised peoples. The Soviet and IRI regimes through similar methods were determined to create quickly a Soviet and IRI person. This clashed with the democratic elements of Leninism and Khomeinism. An examination of this project makes a comment on the modern history of these two countries and provides insight into the totality of Leninism and Khomeinism as they entered the social and private spheres in order to mould the required new person.

From the beginning of Soviet and IRI power the creation of this new person was at the forefront of politics and ideological thinking given its importance for the victory of Leninist and Khomeinist modernity on a national and universalist level. Lenin stressed that the party 'must with a clear conscience strive to control that entire (cultural) process in order to give form and definition to its results'⁶⁴ namely the creation of *homo Sovieticus*.⁶⁵ Sixty-five years after the October Revolution the CPSU proclaimed: 'Having created a new, socialist world...the *homo Sovieticus* (*sovetskii chelovek*) has risen to the summit of knowledge and culture, which permits our society to be first in traversing the path to the communist tomorrow.'⁶⁶ Khomeini stressed: 'People are deficient. They need to be perfected and the Islamic government will lead the people towards this perfection'⁶⁷ and create the conditions for the emergence of the *homo Islamicus* whom he called '*ensan-e kamel*' (the perfect, complete person), '*ensanha-ye nemune*' (the exemplary humans)

who were constitutive parts of '*jame'e ideal-e eslami*', (the ideal Islamic society). One of the most popular revolutionary songs was called *Din-e ensaansaaḡ* (religion that constructs humans). This *din-e ensaansaaḡ* had 'to create a new Islamic person' without which there would be 'no hope that an Islamic Republic shall ever take shape in this country.' Lenin, who announced 'we are carrying a campaign against barbarity', would not have disagreed with Khomeini's proclamation that 'our revolution is a revolution in values.'⁶⁸ But the source of those values differed. Leninism saw in God a symbol that had to be thrown from its pedestal and replaced with the God of Science. Khomeinism was devoted to making un-believers into pious believers in God.

The revolutionary institutions sitting on top and commanding the state would lead the way towards the creation of these new beings. Lenin wrote:

Only the political party of the working class, that is the communist party, is in the position to unite, bring up and organise the avant-garde of the proletariat and all the toiling masses...⁶⁹ (Only it is able) to take power and lead the people to the victory of socialism, to direct and organise the new (political) structure, to be the teacher, guide, and leader of all the toilers and exploited in the task of the construction of the societal life without the bourgeoisie and against the bourgeoisie.⁷⁰

From the beginning of the revolutions state and/or revolutionary institutions were established to make and implement cultural and 'enlightened' policies directed at the creation of the *homo Sovieticus* and *homo Islamicus*. Cultural work was:

(T)he unyielding concern of the party, the state, societal organisations, and the collective. Important roles in this process belong to newspapers, radio, cinema, television, literature, theatre, and art. The judicious use of all these methods will markedly speed-up the inevitable process of the formation of communist consciousness and morality and thus the transition to communism.⁷¹

In the IRI the Council of the Cultural Revolution and the Ministry of Enlightenment and Islamic Guidance are responsible for the creation

and co-ordination of the policies aimed at the creation of the *homo Islamicus*. The goal is 'the expansion and promotion of the influence of Islamic culture and consolidation of the cultural revolution...the purification of scientific and cultural establishments from materialistic ideas and the country's cultural environment from manifestations of Western influence.'⁷² According to the IRI Constitution the revolutionary and religiously inspired government must work towards creating an 'exemplary society' based on 'lofty and universal Islamic values.' In the USSR, 'The main goals of the CPSU are construction of a communist society by constant transition from socialism to communism, the unbroken heightening of the material and cultural level of society, to bring up members of society in the spirit of internationalism...'⁷³ The battle with 'imperialism', 'bourgeois elements' in the USSR and 'cultural invasion' in the IRI, namely with ideological, literary, and historical paradigms outside the official ideology, and with the spread of Western immorality were consistent elements of these cultural projects. According to Soviet and IRI ideology, the power of the new institutions was used not to bolster the position of exploiting elites, as in the monarchical periods, but rather to construct a utopian modernity that benefitted the masses.

The cultural revolutions unleashed by the USSR and IRI reflected the qualities that were to be inculcated into the *homo Sovieticus* and *homo Islamicus* who would have three dimensions--moral, political, and cultural. Lenin's initial conception of cultural revolution touched on issues directly related to worker productivity, such as literacy, personal hygiene, technical know-how, punctuality, and civility in the work place. But, already at the XI Party Congress in 1919 the momentum for a cultural revolution and purification of culture emerged. The Congress warned of 'the attempts by the bourgeoisie to influence the toiling masses through literature and cultural work.'⁷⁴ Commemorating the 100th anniversary of Lenin's birth, the CPSU stressed: 'Lenin viewed the construction of communism as a communist challenge in which the decision of economic and social-political problems would be organically linked with the formation of the new person (*novii chelovek*).'⁷⁵ In the later years of Lenin's life and during the Stalinist period the cultural revolution expanded to include art, literature, music, and stricter regulation of personal behaviour and morality; these issues were from the beginning at the forefront of the Khomeinist cultural revolution. The IRI according to Khomeini, 'should transform our

educational and judicial systems, as well as the ministries and government offices that are now run on Western lines or in a slavish imitation of Western models and make them compatible to Islam. Thus demonstrating to the world true social justice and true cultural, economic and political independence.⁷⁶

The morals of the new Soviet and Islamic person would be superior to *homo Romanovicus* and *homo Pablavicus* who, according to Leninism and Khomeinism, were inculcated with Western characteristics, such as egoism, materialism, selfishness, rampant individualism, philistinism and hypocrisy. Lenin's early conceptions of communist morality were rooted in opposition to religious-bourgeois ones.

Do communist morals exist? Do communist ethics exist? Of course...It is often presented that we do not have our own ethics and morality and often the bourgeoisie accuse us of denying all forms of ethics. This is a way to throw sand in the eyes of the workers and the peasants...In what way do we deny ethics, deny morality? (We deny) them when propagated by the bourgeoisie which obtained them from God...Any morality, any ethics from outside the class framework we deny. Our morality is subordinate to the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat...We say: morality is that which serves the destruction of the old exploitative society and the unification of all the workers around the proletariat which is creating the new society of communists.⁷⁷

By the mid-late 1920s the official conceptions of morality changed as a result of pressure from below and the victory of elite groups supporting Orthodox morals and ethics in personal behaviour. The CPSU once more in 1961 laid out the basic characteristics of *homo Sovieticus* which included both Orthodox morality and Leninist ethics:

(a) loyalty to the idea of communism, love for the socialist homeland and for socialist countries; (b) conscientious labour for the benefit of society; (c) care and concern for the preservation and increasing of societal achievements; (d) high consciousness of societal duty and intolerance of violations of societal interests; (e) collectivism and comradesly mutual aid; (f) humanistic relations and mutual respect between people...;(g) honesty and honour, moral purity, simplicity (*prostota*) and modesty in societal and

personal life; (h) mutual respect in family, and care for the upbringing of children; (i) intolerance of injustice, parasitism (*tyneiadstvo*), dishonesty, careerism and money-grubbing (*stiazhatel'stvo*)....(j) brotherly solidarity with the workers of all countries and with all peoples.⁷⁸

A similar approach existed in the IRI. 'The moral goals of the Islamic Revolution include the creation of an appropriate environment for the development of moral virtues on the basis of belief and piety; the struggle with manifestations of corruption and moral perversion; and the creation of brotherly morality and conscience.'⁷⁹ The moral norms stipulated by the Quran and religious traditions provided the base for this cultural revolution. During the revolution Khomeini attacked the shah for allowing the corruption of Islamic moral virtues by insidious Western influences; this criticism rang true for many Iranians. Khomeini stressed that 'Islam and divine governments' had a direct interest in the personal behaviour of people. 'These governments have commandments for everybody, at any place, in any condition. If a person commits an immoral act next to his house, Islamic governments have issue with him.'⁸⁰ Orthodox morality and ethics were at the heart of the new persons despite cultural differences between Iran and Russia and some of the basic tenets of their revolutionary ideologies.

A vital element of the creation of the new beings was a communist-Leninist and Islam-Khomeinist framework for sexual behaviour. During the Gorbachev and Khatami periods attacks were made on both men for the lessening of morality. *Homo Sovieticus* and *homo Islamicus* were to be on a level above the cabarets of Berlin and Paris and the strip clubs of London and New York. The early years of the revolution in both countries witnessed a war against immorality. Lenin had little time for discussions of free love which he considered a topic of bourgeois intellectuals. Stalin set the standard approach to sex.⁸¹ 'Free-love' not only would corrupt the youth but also distract it from the goals of the revolution.⁸² Communist morality stressed sex after marriage and then only in moderation; the IRI criminalized premarital sex. Sexual perversion was condemned. In 1933 homosexuality was once again criminalized; it is a capital offensive in the IRI. Moreover, the party had the right to interfere in the private sexual life of members since ideological and political corruption would emerge from sexual immorality.⁸³ The regulation against the checking-in of unmarried

couples to the same room in a hotel in the USSR and IRI is one example of the campaign against licentiousness. The family, family values, and motherhood were propagated in both polities as the answer to social problems and an important element in the creation of the new person and modernity. Thus state interference in private matters was justified.⁸⁴

Attacks were made on other forms of Western corrupting influence capable of distracting the youth from the construction of a utopian universalist modernity. The IRI banned card playing, chess, billiards, female singing, dancing and alcohol, claiming they were not permitted by Islam and symbolised Western decadence. In the 1920s Soviet officials condemned card playing, billiards and dancing as uncultured and decadent pastimes; just after the revolution the government tried to ban card playing all together. It also launched a campaign against alcohol. Drinking 'is a violation of our class, proletarian, communal morality. Vodka poisons and destroys the organism; it tears one out of the world of reality into a world of illusion; it deprives us of judgement.' During the 1920s and 1930s the Komsomol fought against dancing, warning of its decadent influence on the youth: 'The enemy knows that often we poorly organise young people's leisure and he takes advantages of this.'⁸⁵ Soviet officials therefore organised excursions to libraries and museums, workers' clubs, palaces of culture (*dvorets kul'tury*) and sports clubs. There were instances where bans were imposed on the tango, foxtrot, and blues dances in clubs, parks, and factories.⁸⁶ By the middle of the 1930s these efforts were relaxed, but nonetheless campaigns against such pastimes continued.⁸⁷ The IRI closed dancing clubs, cabarets, and casinos. Local mosques, parks and religious libraries and sports clubs were portrayed as the best areas for youth activity.

Similar to the early periods of RWA the Soviet and IRI regimes attacked the way people dressed, believing that *homo Sovieticus* and *homo Islamicus* had a dress code rooted in anti-Western fashion trends. In the USSR, followers of US fashion, *stilyagi*, were portrayed as a minority of bourgeois sympathizers and deviationists. Komsomol patrols of young men were designated by local enterprises and police to walk the streets and look-out for young people who had a 'provocative look' (*vyzyvaiushchii vid*).⁸⁸ The IRI, in accordance with a particular interpretation of the Quran, forces women to wear forms of head covering as well as specific types of modest Islamic dress; this was the

female version of the *homo Islamicus*.⁸⁹ Men were harassed if they wore short-sleeve shirts whilst wearing a tie became a symbol of Western influence and thus was shunned. Moral police made up of young men, named *basiji*, patrolled the streets to ensure proper dress and moral behaviour of the people. During the presidency of Ahmadinejad an 'Enlightenment Patrol' defended 'moral security' by harassing and arresting young men for Western hair styles, using hair gel, and wearing short, tight shirts and young women for unIslamic dress.

During the Brezhnev period at the forefront of the cultural battle was rock music, seen by many as an ideological capitalist tool to corrupt the youth and lure them from communist morality. Lists of particularly insidious Western rock groups were issued to local party organisations. Even into the early 1980s the CC was sending to local party officials directives according to which they were required to strengthen their control over dancing clubs. In the IRI, the playing of Western rock music or unacceptable forms of Iranian music, such as female vocalists, politically incorrect singers, and Iranian pop from abroad, could bring the wrath of the moral police down on one's head.

These campaigns against immorality began to lessen by the mid-point of the second decade after the revolutions. As long as such behaviour was not openly flaunted and did not threaten social and political stability, the regime more often than not turned a blind eye. This does not mean that deviant behaviour was accepted. Moreover, the fear that a new 'crack-down' must take place existed, especially in the IRI where attempts to control moral behaviour were more consistently present than in the USSR. On this point however the difference between Leninism and Khomeinism is probably at its greatest. Islamic morality was seen as a pillar of IRI modernity. It was to be preserved for it distinguished Khomeinism from the decadent West. In the Soviet case, certainly communist morality was important but the major characteristic distinguishing Leninism from the West was the concept of the Soviet worker and his productivity. *Homo Islamicus* would be above all else known for strict morality; *homo Sovieticus* would defeat the 'Western person' in terms of freedom and productivity. But when immorality seemed to be exercising a pernicious influence on issues dear to the Soviet elite, such as worker productivity, similar methods were used. The rounding up of youth in the IRI for various 'moral lapses' mirrors the rounding up of drunks during the Brezhnev and Andropov periods in an attempt to impose 'workers' discipline.' In the

USSR the periodic checks of documents of people on the street, in the cinema, park, or shops during the day to determine if they should be at work mirrored the checks by IRI moral police of couples' documents to see if they were married and thus whether they had the right to be together on the streets. In both cases, violations brought fines and possible incarceration; in the IRI they could also bring physical punishment.

The political side of the cultural project entailed the creation of new people who reflected the professed ideals of the new utopian modernity and of the revolutionary groups directing society in the direction of that goal. The *homo Sovieticus*, 'bought up by the Leninist Party...is a person who harmoniously unites in himself communist conviction, an interminable energy of life, a high level of culture and knowledge, and the skills to apply them in practice.' *Homo Sovieticus* shows 'selfless devotion to the ideas of communism and confidence in the triumph of these ideas to which the future of the socialist Motherland is inseparably linked.' This new being 'makes up the basis of the politico-ideological and moral image and character of the Soviet people.'⁹⁰ Some sixty years after Great October, Brezhnev reiterated: 'The great victory of socialism is the new person who does not consider himself separate from the state, considers the societal interests of the state something that touches him directly and closely.'⁹¹ The *homo Islamicus* could not see himself separate from Islam and the Islamic state in the march towards the utopian goal. The *homo Islamicus* could not but feel that the greater good did not touch him directly and personally. He would feel 'brotherly commitment with all Muslims and unremitting support for all disinherited of the world.'⁹² Unlike *homo Sovieticus*, the *homo Islamicus* having fulfilled the 'requirements' of this new person was also promised entrance to the ultimate paradise, that of God. One requirement for acceptance to this paradise was to prevent others from engaging in sin and vice. Thus, for example, the moral militia was zealous in implementing the moral requirements of the *homo Islamicus* not only in the name of creating a modernist utopia in this world, but also because their own acceptance into God's one was dependent on it.

Another element was the attempt to harness literature and all major forms of art to the Soviet and IRI projects. Deviations could represent a threat to the legitimacy and power of the revolutions and their institutions. In the 1920s in the USSR a political struggle emerged over

the basis for Soviet culture and *homo Sovieticus*. One group emerged seeking to destroy all remnants of culture inherited by the new Soviet state and create a 'proletarian' culture from scratch. Lenin and after him, Stalin, were not prepared to allow this group to determine independently cultural policy. Lenin attacked those who attempted to ditch all previous culture and establish a new communist culture. 'Proletarian culture is not ...the invention (*vidumki*) of people who call themselves specialists of proletarian culture. Proletarian culture must be the inevitable development of the reserves of knowledge of humankind worked out under the yoke of capitalist society, feudal society, and bourgeois society.'⁹³ This issue did not arise in the IRI. Islam had a rich cultural heritage that could provide the basis of the cultural character of IRI modernity; one of the goals of the revolution was to protect this heritage from the threat of 'Western cultural imperialism.' Defence of Soviet culture against corrupting Western capitalist cultural influences did become a vital element of Leninism to the same extent to which it was for Khomeinism. In 1925 the CPSU declared that class warfare had not ended on the cultural front and announced that neutral art was not possible. It declared: 'The method of Soviet literature is Socialist Realism, the true historically concrete depiction of reality in its revolutionary development' whose goal is 'the upbringing of workers (*homo Sovieticus*) in the spirit of communism, Soviet patriotism, and proletarian internationalism.' Theatre, art, music and cinema were to be produced in the same ideological framework.⁹⁴

Stalin's announcement at the XVII Party Congress of the achievement of socialism in agriculture gave greater momentum to the return to traditional values and culture. The cultural revolution took a final step when the party issued a decree on 23 April 1932 according to which all artistic and cultural groups would be disbanded and all 'creative workers' would be classified into 'creative unions' of writers, artists, architects, composers amongst others. These professional unions ensured adherence to CPSU ideology and cultural norms. They provided salaries, access to housing, publishing, exhibitions and other essentials for private and professional life.

While classical literature with its emphasis on traditional values replaced avant garde literature, new works had to adhere to Socialist realism. The greatest examples of this genre include M.Gorky's *Mother*, N. Ostrovsky's *How Steel was Tempered*, D.Furmanov's *Chapaev*, and M.Sholokov's *All Quiet on the Don*.⁹⁵ Works not acceptable included E.

Zamyatin's anti-utopian novel *We*, M. Zoshchenko's biting satire on everyday life, B.Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago*, A. Platanov's *Chevengur*, and M. Bulgakov's *Master and Magartia*. In the IRI religious pieces, such as the Quran and treatises on or interpretations of Quranic verses, *hadiths*,⁹⁶ and works on correct Islamic behaviour such as *Heyabht Al-motaqin*,⁹⁷ as well as voluminous works on the life of various important religious figures were heavily subsidised and distributed and included in the curriculum of primary, secondary, and higher education. Literature was confined to themes stressing a good Islamic life, collective values, social justice, the perfidy of foreign influence and imperialism, self-sacrifice and the (re)discovery of Islamic consciousness. The IRI censored works such as M. Dolatabadi's novels with their heavy socialist undertones, S. Hedayat's works, such as *Hajji Agha* and *The Pearl Canon* for their negative and mocking portrayal of clerics and religious people, and I. Pezeshkzad's *Dear Uncle Napoleon*.⁹⁸

Education curriculum, in particular history, was re-written to reflect the characteristics of the 'new person' in the USSR and IRI and the historically positive role played by the Bolsheviks and clerics. The Russian past was analysed in the context of class relations and the ineluctable movement towards 1917 under the leadership of Lenin. In the IRI, history came to show that Islam brought Iran civilisation and enlightenment. According to Khomeini, 'The Empire of Iran from the beginning until the present day has darkened the pages of our history. The crimes of the shahs of Iran have blackened our history.'⁹⁹ The clergy were portrayed as vigilant defenders of the rights of the people in the face of monarchical despotism since at least the Safavids.

During the Stalinist period there were attempts to sovietise law, education, and academic fields. Thus, 'Soviet genetics', 'Soviet linguistics', 'Soviet ethnography', 'Soviet music' amongst others, emerged. This was a necessary pre-condition for the creation of *homo Sovieticus*. Similarly, Khomeini stressed, 'We will uproot all Western cultural influence and will set up a just Islamic government. Western laws must be uprooted and replaced by Islamic ones.'¹⁰⁰

The only acceptable form of art is that of pure Mohammadian Islam, the Islam of the poor and the disinherited, the Islam of people who have suffered...Art is beautiful when it hammers modern capitalism and blood-sucking communism and annihilates the Islam of comfort, luxury and the painless

wealthy...in one word, the US form of Islam...The only kind of art (that is permissible) is the one that inculcates confrontation with the blood-sucking world-eaters headed by the USA and the USSR.¹⁰¹

In regard to universities he was more direct: 'They are imperialist universities; and those they educate and train are infatuated with the West... (They) lack Islamic morality and fail to impart an Islamic education.' The universities are 'propaganda arenas' that 'serve to impede the progress of Iranians' and 'are now effectively serving the West by brainwashing and miseducating our youth...They want us to remain in a state of perpetual dependence on the West.'¹⁰² A complete cultural revolution was needed so that 'education reflects the independent nature of Islamic thought' by 'cleansing itself of all Western values and influences.'¹⁰³

Cinema was considered one of the key mechanisms to propagate ideological correctness and the characteristics of *homo Sovieticus* and *homo Islamicus*. Film could deliver the revolution and its goals to a broader public than literature and art could. It was also the most powerful threat from abroad to Soviet and IRI cultural revolutions. The IRI had a more difficult time than the USSR in closing the population off from foreign cinematic and music influences. Technologies, such as videos, then DVDs, CDs, satellite television, and the internet, combined with their decreasing cost, made filtering 'corrupting' influences difficult for the IRI. The USSR, however, by the 1970s had an increasingly hard time combating the Western 'cultural invasion' in the form of videos and cassettes.

In conclusion, Leninism and Khomeinism were processes that articulated and rearticulated themselves not only in response to the assumed reality but also in face of the effects of its own dissemination of the real. Leninism and Khomeinism expanded from their initial emphasis to become total ideologies and modernities that touched on political, economic, social, and moral issues. Both were structures whose despotic side drew legitimacy from reference to a transcendent order and left little or no room for the notion of a history or a nature separate from them. The following chapter examines the institutional manifestation of Leninism and Khomeinism.

INSTITUTIONALISED LENINISM AND KHOMEINISM

Institutionalised Leninism revolved around three power dynamics. First, a new modernity had to be created. Second, Marxism provided the initial ideological base for the discourse for this project. Third, a revolutionary party, the core of Leninism, implementing the changes needed for the construction of this modernity and *homo Sovieticus*, constituted the main pillar of the political system. The power features of Khomeinism were similar. First, the bi-polar world of Western and Soviet modernities was rejected; a superior modernity would be created. Second, the bases of this modernity came from Islam, namely the Quran, sharia' law, and *hadiths*. Third, *velayat-e faqih*, the core of Khomeinism, would implement and defend this project. Bolsheviks and clerics had a right to power since they had the knowledge, training, and ideological and/or religious expertise to unlock and interpret the absolute truths of Marxism-Leninism and Islamism-Khomeinism.

Khomeinists and Bolsheviks took power in the name of a new modernity they claimed to symbolise. It was assumed that the people, guided by logic and protected from external and internal pernicious influences, would embrace this vision. Leninism and Khomeinism took a page out of the work of Saint-Simon who in 1825 stressed that the project of changing society into a utopia required an elite group enjoying 'a positive power over society, a true priestly function' that would be dominant in 'all the intellectual faculties.' Politics, power, and art must unite in 'a common drive and a general idea.'¹ This power dynamic in, and utopian project of, Leninism and Khomeinism led to the weakening of republican state institutions and established the

supremacy of revolutionary institutions, the CPSU and clerical controlled bodies.

Revolutionary Institutions

Soon after the October Revolution Lenin announced that the Bolsheviks would build a new socialist state while permitting space for the creative freedom of the masses. However, reality very soon showed that in a growing number of instances the masses desired something different from that dictated by Lenin. The results to the 1918 elections to the Constituent Assembly were the first signs of this. Realising the potential threat to the Bolshevik project this represented, Lenin emphasised ‘proletarian discipline’ to deal with those who had not reached the state of Leninist enlightenment.

We must learn to combine the ‘public meeting’ democracy of the working people—turbulent, surging, overflowing its banks like a spring flood—with iron discipline and unquestioning obedience to the will of a single person, the Soviet leader, while at work.²

Once in power Lenin argued that a democratic republic is ‘in practice the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.’³ ‘We laugh at those who don’t accept the dictatorship of the proletariat and say these are stupid (*glupii*) people who can’t comprehend that it is either the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or the dictatorship of the proletariat. Whoever says otherwise is either an idiot or is so politically illiterate that it is shameful to allow such a person to reach the podium and even attend (political) meetings.’⁴ For the sake of this new modernity ‘we are not against violence. Suppression is still necessary, but it is now the suppression of the exploiting minority by the exploited majority.’⁵ Those who failed to respond enthusiastically to the utopia opened up by the Bolshevik revolution were evidently not only deluded and still clinging consciously or unconsciously to bourgeois thought but also criminal, and had to be swept away. The utopian goals justified the suppression of the previously ‘exploiting minority’ increasingly broadly defined by the former exploited majority now holding absolute power. Lenin’s approach resembled that of Khomeini’s Islam in that it envisaged humanity unifying around the absolute truth it possessed.

One year after the April 1979 referendum in which the people voted for an Islamic Republic over the monarchy the IRI constitution was

approved after months of rancorous debate and political battles. Khomeini made his opinion clear to the Assembly of Experts drafting it: 'Make sure that our constitution is within the framework of the law of the *sharia*. If any one or all the members negate the *sharia* they are not our representatives.' He stressed, 'Those who are ignorant must be guided to the correct understanding. We must say to them: You who imagine that something can be achieved in Iran by some means other than Islam...study carefully the matter...All the gravestones of those fallen in the revolution belong to Muslims from the lower sections of society: peasants, workers, tradesmen, committed religious scholars.'⁶ Thus despite the existence of state republican institutions, the revolutionary clerical-run institutions held real power. The force limiting the power of all institutions was Khomeini's charismatic authority and unique position above them.

Khomeini's initial conception of Islamic government worked out whilst he was in exile differed from the Islamic Republic based on this new constitution. In *Hokumat-e Eslami* Khomeini argued for an Islamic government in which 'legislative power and authority to make laws belongs exclusively to God. (A) simple planning institution takes the place of a legislative assembly.'⁷ After the victory of the revolution, Khomeini attempted to combine republicanism with an elected parliament with Islamic government and his own charismatic authority. Despite support for republicanism, he ensured that various political groups, in actual or potential opposition to the concept of *velayat-e faqih*, were removed from the political scene. By the early 1980s not one political group was critical of the pillar of the system, *velayat-e faqih*. By the early 1920s the Bolsheviks were the only political organisation.

The structure of state and revolutionary institutions reflects the tension between the republicanism and utopian universal modernity of Leninism and Khomeinism. This institutional set-up played a key role in distinguishing the Soviet and IRI polities from others by providing constitutional and institutional power to groups opposing and supporting politics of change.

According to the official Soviet Encyclopaedia: 'The CPSU is the voluntary militant union of communists of identical views, made up of people from the working class, peasant labourers, and working intelligentsia. It is the determining and leading strength of Soviet society in the Soviet state...The CPSU is the leading power of all workers' organisations, both Soviet and state.'⁸ The Bolsheviks since

1918 were the linchpin of the political system dominating state institutions and making all important policy decisions. Yet, until 1977 its monopolistic hold on power was not enshrined in law. In the 1924 constitution the Bolsheviks were not mentioned. The 1936 'Stalin' constitution only spoke of 'the leading role of the working class'. Article Six of the 1977 'Brezhnev' constitution finally gave legal backing to the CPSU's hold on power

The leading and guiding force (*rukovodiashchaia i napravlaushchaia sila*) of Soviet society and the nucleus of its political system, of all state organisations and public organisations, is the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The CPSU exists for the people and serves the people. The Communist Party, armed with Marxism-Leninism, determines the general perspectives of the development of society and domestic and foreign policies of the USSR, directs the great constructive work of the Soviet people, and imparts a planned, systematic, and theoretically substantiated character to their struggle for the victory of communism. All party organisations shall function within the framework of the Constitution of the USSR.⁹

The base of the party and the mechanism for its reach into society was the network of primary party organisations (PPO) which numbered some 440, 363 in January 1986. All party members had to belong to a local PPO. They were present in places of employment and institutions of higher learning and rarely organised on a territorial basis. Officials of the PPO were formally elected by the members, but the initial candidature before the Gorbachev period was usually proposed by a higher party committee and then merely ratified by the membership. The next level consisted of *raion* (urban borough or rural district) committees followed by *raikons* which had between eighty and one hundred members elected by a conference of delegates from local PPOs. Above the *raikons* were city committees (*gorkoms*), area committees (*okrug*), regional committees (*obkoms*), *krai* committees, and republican party committees. This was the party structure that ensured the presence and effectiveness of the revolutionary institutions across the USSR. They stood aside and above state institutions.

'The supreme organ of the CPSU is the Party Congress which listens and approves the reports of the Central Committee (CC)..., reviews

and changes the programme and regulations of the party; determines the tactical line of the party in regard to the basic questions of current policies and...elects the CC...'¹⁰ The Party Congress approved the Party Programme which articulated the CPSU's most current ideological interpretation of Marxism-Leninism and the general party course in the march to the Leninist utopia. The first Party Programme was adapted at the Second Party Congress in 1903. The third was accepted in 1961 at the XXI Party Congress at which Khrushchev promised that the present generation of Soviet people would live under communism by 1980. Until 1961 Party Congresses met every two-three years; after 1961 every five years. They usually lasted one week. The CPSU presented this as the strengthening of the links between the party elite and society. Before Stalin the Party Congress was characterised by debate and ideological and political struggles. By the 1934 Party Congress all criticism of Stalin had been effectively banned. Under Brezhnev it was an orchestrated spectacle designed to propagate the achievements of the leadership and underline the unity of the CPSU and its 'unbreakable' link with society. Discussion and debate were absent; all major speeches had to be approved beforehand by the CC Secretariat. Nonetheless, the exercise was seen as important for it was supposed to symbolise the democratic character of the party and the overall political system. Membership to this body was more often than not linked to one's position in state and party institutions. As society evolved, the CC was increasingly composed of distinct constituencies and groups; it was to an extent representative of the elite.

'The Central Committee (CC) of the CPSU in the period between Congresses leads all work in the party (and) directs all its activities.'¹¹ The CC, although the source of official legitimacy for policies between congresses and theoretically a powerful institution, was not an autonomous policy-making body. The extent and effectiveness of its power depended on context and politics at the highest level and institutional prerogatives. For example, the dynamic of one of its key functions, approval of changes in the membership of the Politburo and the Secretariat depended on these three elements. Under Stalin it played practically no role in this regard. In 1957 it prevented the Politburo from removing Khrushchev whilst in 1964 it played a determining role in his ouster. These episodes show that if a general secretary failed to maintain support in both bodies he could be overthrown. Under

Brezhnev the CC became increasingly marginalized, becoming a forum for the announcement of policies. The successors to Brezhnev were chosen by the Politburo but approved by the CC. This approval was a formality considered necessary for legitimacy at least within the party.

Above the CC stood the Politburo which had a dozen voting members and up to six candidate members. It was the elite of the elite. Lenin established it in 1919 in order to reach quickly decisions during the Civil War. By the time of Stalin the Politburo came to dominate Party Congresses and the CC which were in theory superior to it. Then Stalin subordinated all of them to himself. After his death in 1953, the Politburo slowly acquired power over all institutions. It became the forum where policies were decided which were then presented to the CC and Party Congresses for rubber stamping. During the Brezhnev period the Politburo began to take on the features of a cabinet in which the major interests of state, such as the security apparatus, heavy industry, intelligence and some key geographical areas, such as Ukraine and Central Asia, were represented.

In the post-Stalin period collectivist leadership was the norm; no leader would be allowed to obtain the power to repeat what Stalin did. Although the Politburo's power was greater than that of all other party and state institutions it too had to maintain support within the CC. The latter's rejection of the Politburo's attempt to remove Khrushchev reflected the limitations of its power. At the same time, CC membership was theoretically and formally at the discretion of the CC but was in effect controlled by the Politburo and the general secretary.

The CC Secretariat, headed by the general secretary, was the nerve centre of the CPSU apparatus. The body usually had ten full members and six candidate members elected by the CC, some of whom were also members of the Politburo. Membership in this body was seen as a stepping stone to the Politburo. The Secretariat and its bureaucracy were responsible for several key areas of policy and drafted proposals for the Politburo. The Secretariat was also responsible for supervision of the economy and fulfilment of plan objectives. The general secretary through the Secretariat controlled appointments and promotion within the party bureaucracy, the most important in which was the position of regional first secretary. This enabled him to establish a strong regional patronage network and strengthened his power in the Politburo.

The Secretariat interfered in the affairs of lower party officials. It was particularly concerned with the first secretaries who 'were responsible

not just for the effective functioning of the party apparatus under their control, but also for the peace and good government of their region, the successful economic performance of the production units under their oversight, high levels of morale of the people, and generally the smooth performance of all aspects of life in the regions for which they were responsible.¹² The first secretaries were the backbone of the CPSU's management of regional, political, and economic issues.

The party power structure was characterised by a 'circular form of power' in which officials at various high levels of the party hierarchy through the prerogative of candidate nomination (in fact appointment) of lower party officials strengthened their power and influence; such power-patronage networks made the system. At the same time, party officials on the lower end of the power pyramid by constituting a significant part of the power base of higher officials had the opportunity to become patronage wielders in their own areas and have a voice in all-union politicking.

Lenin established the fundamental *modus operandi* of the CPSU in which the general secretary and members of the CC and the Politburo were elected by Party Congresses whose delegates were controlled by the provincial secretaries who were supervised and appointed by the general secretary himself. Lenin's logic was rational. Having founded the Politburo, he sought to limit its ability to encroach on his power. After all, since the Politburo could name the leader it could also remove him. Therefore, the CC came to be the larger institution to which the Politburo was subordinate; it was a forum to which the general secretary appointed members who needed to be confirmed by the Party Congress. Lenin also realised that in order to maximise the power of the party leader the Party Congresses had to be under his control. He then established the practice that provincial party secretaries although elected by their party organisations were in reality appointed from above by the general secretary.¹³ Lenin then outlawed factions within the CPSU to prevent Politburo members from presenting rival candidates to compete in the elections to the Party Congress. In other words, a circular flow of power emerged in which in place of elections from the bottom up, the party's electoral system was merged with the party apparatus which proceeded to select suitable candidates from the top down, who were then elected by the body concerned.

The general secretary, given this circular flow of power, was theoretically the most powerful man in the USSR. However, the extent and effectiveness of his power depended on his political and leadership skills and his relationship with the CC and Politburo. Although the circular flow of power allowed the general secretary to use the CC against the Politburo and its possible 'ganging up' on him, the CC could also represent a threat to his power. Once the general secretary appointed someone to the CC no guarantee existed that under certain conditions that appointee would vote in favour of his or her 'benefactor.' Thus, politics was the key factor.

Khrushchev's relationship with the CC and Politburo illustrates well this situation. In 1953, amidst the internal struggle for power in the wake of Stalin's death, Khrushchev became party boss while Georgii Malenkov became head of the Soviet state. In the period 1953-57 personality clashes, conflicts over policy and position led to a stand-off between Khrushchev and the Politburo. On 10 June 1957 a majority in the Politburo consisting of Malenkov and Viacheslav Molotov, Stalin's infamous foreign minister, amongst others, moved to oust Khrushchev. This attempt failed when Khrushchev and Anastas Mikoyan, along with several Politburo candidate members, took the issue to the CC. They claimed that since that body had appointed Khrushchev to his post only it had the right to deprive him of it. The CC with a majority of Khrushchev supporters blocked the Politburo's moves. From this time forward Khrushchev faced no real opposition in the party.¹⁴ Lenin's logic was correct.

Free of serious opposition within the top party leadership, Khrushchev pushed through most of his policies. The increasing amount of his policy failures undermined his position. By 1964 frustration within the top elite with his increasingly erratic and overbearing leadership style, the failure of his economic schemes, serious mistakes in foreign policy, and anger with his cadre policies that threatened interests of the state and party bureaucracy reached a peak. On 13 October 1964 the Politburo under the leadership of Brezhnev and Nikolai Podgorni met with Khrushchev. His resignation was demanded. The beleaguered Khrushchev put up some defence, but resigned saving the Politburo the need of going to the CC. Unlike the 1957 scenario, the Politburo had scheduled a meeting of the CC plenum which would have voted against Khrushchev in case he proved recalcitrant.¹⁵

These two episodes provide insight into the power dynamic at the highest levels; it also exercised an important influence on Gorbachev's thinking. One issue is the reason for the CC's backing of Khrushchev against the Politburo in 1957 and its tacit approval of the Politburo's actions in 1964. Prior to 1957 Khrushchev, in control of the Secretariat, had the power of appointment to the CC. At the 1956 XX Party Congress his appointees became members of the CC which blocked the Politburo's moves against him. In 1964, despite some seven years of Khrushchev patronage, a vast majority of CC members were not prepared to back him even though many of them owed their positions to him. Thus, the patronage network established by a general secretary cannot be considered a force without taking into account other factors such as: (1) the leadership style of the general secretary; (2) the rise of corporate and institutional interests that had to be delicately handled; (3) common opinion and concern over policies; and (4) institutionalisation of the bureaucracy to an extent unknown in the Stalinist and early Khrushchev periods. In Gorbachev's opinion the key was ensuring that during the politics of change, which threatened elite economic and/or political interests, he did not meet Khrushchev's fate.

In the IRI the supremacy of the revolutionary institutions was enshrined from the beginning in the 1979 Constitution. *Velayat-e faqih* is the pillar of the system; its holder, the Leader of the Revolution, personifies the junction of the state and revolutionary institutions. Article 5, written by Ayatollah Beheshti, stressed that 'governance and leadership of the nation rests upon the just and pious *faqih* (grand ayatollah, *marja' e taqlid*) who is acquainted with the circumstances of his age; is courageous, resourceful, and possessed of administrative ability; and recognised and accepted by the majority of the people.' Having prime responsibility for the creation of *homo Islamicus* and the Islamic universalist modernity requires and justifies his wide-ranging powers.

The Assembly of Experts, a council of eighty-six clerics based in Qom popularly elected to eight-year terms after a strict vetting process¹⁶ (see below), elects the *rabbar* in accordance with Article 107. The basic requirements to become a candidate for this body are: (1) be faithful, trustworthy, and possess moral integrity; (2) have sufficient knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence to recognise a suitable candidate for the post of *rabbar*; (3) enjoy social and political skills; (4) have a deep understanding of current political and social challenges; (5) be loyal to the IRI; and (6) not have been in opposition to the order at any

time. The leading clerics in the Assembly have power bases and personal networks of influence outside this body. Similar to the CC, its members are the elite of the revolutionary elite.

Although not enjoying law or policy making powers, the Assembly of Experts is the equivalent of the CC in as much as in accordance with Article 111 it can remove the *rabbar* if he becomes unable to fulfil his duties, if he loses one or more of the qualifications needed for the post, or if it is understood he never really had them. Thus the *rabbar* needs to ensure directly or indirectly that the vetting and election of clerics produces a body that is not potentially hostile to him. This body became a target of factions supporting or opposing Khatami's programmes; the politics of change led to a (re)discovery of the potentially great power this body can hold in relation to the *rabbar*. Khatami pointed to this body to underline the democratic credentials of the IRI system and ultimately the post of the Leader.

Article 110 gives the Leader wide-ranging powers. They include: (1) delineation of IRI general policies; (2) supervision of the execution of the general policies of the system; (3) issuance of decrees for national referenda; (4) appointment of clerics to the Guardians Council; (5) appointment of the head of the Judiciary; (6) supreme command of the armed forces; (7) appointment and dismissal of the chief of the general staff and of the heads of the three branches of the armed forces; (8) appointment and dismissal of the commander-in-chief of the Revolutionary Guards; (9) the declaration of war and peace and mobilization of the armed forces, based on recommendations of the Supreme National Defence Council; (10) signing the decree formalizing election results of the winner in presidential elections; (11) dismissal of the president citing national security concerns, after the issue of a judgment by the Supreme Court convicting him of failure to fulfil his legal duties, or a vote of no-confidence by the Parliament; (12) control over the intelligence services as well as internal security forces; and (13) appointment and dismissal of the head of radio and television. This list of prerogatives shows that the Leader is the pillar of the system.

The functions of the Leader in the first IRI constitution (1980-1989) were tailor made for Khomeini. Initially, the Leader was to be a *marja'e taqlid*. Khomeini in his book on Islamic government stressed that 'Islamic society must be governed by a *feqh* who is a role model (*marja'e taqlid*) and rules according to the precept of the Quran.¹⁷ In addition, he must be a capable administrator. In other words, the *rabbar* was first

a respected and high-ranking religious figure and spiritual guide and then a political figure, who sitting above the political factions and infighting, would guide the nation to the utopia. Khomeini fulfilled this dual function given the respect given to him because of his roles in the revolution and the establishment of the IRI in addition to his clerical ranking and charismatic authority. Khomeini, as Leader, sat above all other institutions and factions, leaning primarily on no one and playing one against another. At the same time, all these groups, despite their political and institutional struggles, all agreed on Khomeini's role as the supreme arbitrator. Nonetheless, Khomeini did not participate in daily politicking or in all aspects of policy making and outcomes.

The position of the Leader underwent constitutional and practical changes after the passing away of Khomeini. Ayatollah Montazeri, who enjoyed the highest religious credentials, was the supposed heir to Khomeini. However, before the death of the father of the revolution, he resigned over political differences. This left unanswered the question of the succession. Although there were a number of candidates with one of the requirements listed above, there was no one with both whom Khomeini could accept as his successor. Thus, the constitution was changed. Any cleric enjoying the 'scholarly qualifications for the issuance of religious decrees' could be leader. The requirement that the Leader be a respected grand ayatollah was removed whilst emphasis was placed on deep knowledge of 'political and social issues' of the day. In other words, religious popular qualifications decreased in importance whilst political experience gained in significance in determining the Leader. The revolution was becoming pragmatic. When Khomeini died the Assembly of Experts chose Hojjatoleslam Ali Khamenei, who had been president in the period 1981-1989. He was neither an ayatollah nor a *marja'e taqlid*; he had not submitted his religious thesis (*resaleh*) required to acquire this high clerical rank. The choice was considered by many to be a politically expedient move, reflecting power dynamics between factions.

The position of the Friday Prayer Leader fulfils a role similar to that of first secretaries. Appointed directly by the Leader, the Friday Prayer Leader exercises authority greater than that of the state's representatives on a local level, such as governors and mayors. Whilst supervising religious activity, the Friday Prayer Leader, symbolising IRI ideological power on the local level, concentrates on propagation and defence of the concept of *velayat-e faqih* and the expression of the

political viewpoints of the regime's top political clerics in the revolutionary institutions. The Friday Prayer Leader of Tehran, the most important position in the prayer leader system, is the Leader himself who chooses substitutes. The members of the Central Council of Friday Prayer Leaders which meets annually are appointed by the Leader himself. However, some of the present prayer leaders were selected by Khomeini and thus the current Leader cannot replace them without political and ideological damage. There are also guest speakers. A ten-member executive board, the Secretariat of the Central Council of Friday Prayer Leaders, determines the general tone of sermons. There is some latitude for local variations but there are no major departures from central directives, though leaders such as Taheri in Isfahan had latitude before his resignation in 2003. The major prayer leaders in Tehran are: Ayatollahs Rafsanjani, Abdul-Karim Mousavi-Ardebeli, Mohammad Emami-Kashani, Mohammad Yazdi, and Ahmad Jannati.

The Guardians Council (GC) the upper house of parliament, is the check on the state republican lower house, the Majles, and constitutes the first line of defence of the revolutionary institutions. It consists of twelve jurists. Six of them, Islamic jurisprudents (*faqaha*), are appointed to six-year terms by the Leader. The remaining six members are non-clerical jurists chosen by the Majles from a list supplied to it by this revolutionary institution. The power of the GC emerges from Article 6: 'All civil, penal, financial, economic, administrative, cultural, military, political and other laws must be based on Islamic criteria. This principle applies absolutely and generally to all articles of the constitution as well as to all law and regulations and the *faqaha* of the GC have the duty of supervising its implementation.' The GC, having determined that a bill contradicts Islamic law, sends it back to the Majles. From the beginning the tension between the popularly elected Majles and the GC was clear. During the First Majles (1980-1984) the GC sent back 102 out of 370 bills, during the Second Majles 118 out of 316, and during the Third 96 out of 245.

Article 99 provides the GC with one of its most important prerogatives: 'The GC has the responsibility of supervising (*nazarat*) the elections to the Presidency, Majles, and the direct consultation of popular opinion and referenda.' Since the writing of the constitution, the legal meaning of the term 'supervision' has been the subject of political debate. Initially the criteria on which candidates were vetted

was designed to prevent those in opposition to the concept of *velayat-e faqih* from running for office. The potential candidate had to have no record reflecting a 'lack of honesty and immorality' and to have shown 'faithfulness to the IRI system.' These resolutions were tightened in 1984. Potential candidates now had to have shown a 'practical commitment' to Islam or be engaged in a 'genuine religious profession.' The GC expanded the definition of supervision in 1991 when it obtained the power to vet all candidates wishing to participate in national elections, including those to the Assembly of Experts. The criteria for such decisions was tightened but also more broadly defined. The GC now based its approval of a potential candidate on his or her 'Islamic convictions and loyalty to the regime'. The Majles fought against this move, but when the Leader voiced his support for it, the initially recalcitrant deputies became silent.

This 1991 change was accompanied by two developments which played significant roles in the emergence of the reformist movement. First, the GC began to define Islamic convictions and loyalty to the IRI in terms that reflected the GC's politicised interpretation of Khomeinism. It was a natural consequence of the GC's institutional responsibilities for ensuring that legislation in contradiction to Islamic law was not passed and for protecting the IRI from 'undesirable' elements entering political life. Second, the members of the GC, involved in intense factional infighting over political and economic power, began to use this revolutionary institution to remove from the political scene potential candidates who, despite being supporters of the IRI, entertained political stances within the IRI political spectrum that were in opposition to the political views of the conservative-run GC.¹⁸

The power and privileges of the Soviet and IRI revolutionary institutions protected the interests of the ruling revolutionary elite and ensured ultimate loyalty of the republican state institutions to them. The revolutionary institutions role consisted of policy and decision making, verification, and implementation and staffing. In this way, the republican elements of the revolutionary heritage were made subordinate to the revolutionary institutions in the name of achieving the Leninist and Khomeinist universalist modernities.

Legislatures

The republican character of these two systems was symbolised by the network of soviets in the USSR and the Majles and local councils in the IRI. These institutions enshrined in the constitutions were symbols of adherence to the revolutionary slogans of freedom and thus were regarded essential to the maintenance of political legitimacy.

In the early period of Bolshevik power the role of the soviets was seriously debated. Some supported the idea, approved by the VIII Party Congress, that the party should only guide the soviets but not exercise power over them. Others believed that the soviets should be subordinated to the Bolshevik Party for the sake of the communist universalist modernity. After the formation of the USSR in 1922 the soviets continued to be touted as the Bolshevik realisation of the democratic goals of October 1917. The 1936 'Stalin' Constitution, propagated as the 'most democratic in the world' proclaimed: 'All power in the USSR belongs to the people. The people exercise state power through the Soviets of Peoples' deputies which make up the political foundation of the USSR...The highest state organ in the USSR is the Supreme Soviet...elected on the basis of general equal and direct voting in a secret ballot every four years.' The 1977 'Brezhnev' constitution confirmed this: 'The Supreme Soviet is in reality the representative organ of the Soviet people. It expresses not only the general interests of the Soviet people but also the interests of all nationalities of the USSR.'¹⁹

Two chambers made up the Supreme Soviet: The Soviet of the Union looked after 'the interests of the workers' and the Soviet of Nationalities protected the 'rights of the nationalities.'²⁰ Representatives came from electoral districts, one deputy for every 300,000 people; deputies of the Soviet of Nationalities came from national units, such as republics. Deputies were selected to represent key sectors of society such as workers, peasants, women, minorities, and various professions. The party chose the candidates running in elections to this body; one candidate ran in each constituency. The Supreme Soviet allowed the projection of an image of mass involvement in, and the smooth operation of, socialist democracy. The two chambers had equal rights and usually met together. The Supreme Soviet, convening only twice a year, elected a presidium of 39 members to conduct business during the long periods of its recess. The Supreme Soviet elected a chairman of

presidium who was head of state. The system of soviets was replicated on the republican levels and further down to town and village levels.

The Supreme Soviet appointed the government of the USSR, the Council of Ministers, many of whom were also members of the Supreme Soviet. Soviet government therefore had the appearance of a classic parliamentary system with the principle of ministerial responsibility to the legislative branch. The Supreme Soviet also elected the Supreme Court and appointed the Procurator-General who supervised the legal system. It was anticipated by many, at least theoretically, that the actual role of the Supreme Soviet would grow as the Leninist utopia approached.

The Majles symbolises a vital element of the republicanism of Khomeinism whose role Khatami continually stresses. It drafts and passes legislation, ratifies international treaties, approves state-of-emergency declarations and international loans, examines and approves the state budget and can remove ministers from office. According to Article 63 the Majles cannot be dissolved. Ayatollah Khomeini stressed that the Majles is 'the sole centre which all must obey. It is the starting point for everything that happens in the state. Submission to the Majles means submission to Islam and stands above all other institutions.'²¹ Khatami and the supporters of the politics of change consistently quoted such statements to prove that their agenda was in fact a return to the principle of Khomeinism. Yet, Khomeini's position and that of the Constitution are ambiguous. The 1979 Constitution emphasises that sovereignty is in the hands of God. In 1988 Khomeini increased the powers of the Leader, effectively calling them absolute. But Article 56 declares that the Majles is the trustee of that sovereignty. This constitutional contradiction reflects the tension between revolutionary and republican state institutions; it also gives sufficient constitutional and theoretical justification to supporters and opponents of Khatami's politics of change.

During the Khomeini period the Majles had a particular political agenda and fought over policies with the GC. However, its ability to struggle successfully against the GC and to pursue its legislative agenda was dependent on the position of Khomeini, not on the 'people power' which brought the deputies to power. The Majles adhered to Khomeini's calls and wishes when requested. Since his death the authority of the Majles has increased, but it still adheres to the rare requests of the Leadership Office in regard to controversial legislation.

Khomeini, striving to put an end to the legislative gridlock between the GC and the Majles, gave the lower house the right to override the upper house by mustering a two-thirds 'veto-busting' block and labelling the bill vital to the national interest. This move made the Majles potentially a powerful institution. In reality, this institution remained weak vis-à-vis the revolutionary institutions given the GC's control over vetting of candidates and the consequent difficulty for one block to obtain such a majority of votes in the Majles. At the same time, this decree confirmed Khomeini's dominance of all institutions and the reliance of the Majles on him for its ability to struggle with the GC; it had not evolved into an independent and strong source of power up to the Khatami period. Rather, it was an elite forum where the various groups making up the IRI elite struggled with each other with limited popular participation. Yet, its existence and the holding of elections ensured that the extent of republicanism would remain a debated topic. Khatami would make it the centrepiece of his politics of change.

The USSR Supreme Soviet until the Gorbachev period never enjoyed the extent of plurality characteristic of the Majles. Dominated by the CPSU which allowed for no factions and whose representatives were chosen from above, both the Supreme Soviet and its presidium were rubber-stamping bodies. The Majles, in contrast, is characterised by multiple-candidate elections, serious factional struggles, and lively debates and sessions unseen in most countries of the Middle East and Central Asia. Thus the actual role of the Majles as a democratic institution was much greater than that of the Supreme Soviet. However, the Majles has the potential to be as impotent as the Supreme Soviet given two conditions: (1) all candidates for elections are vetted by the GC. Whilst the CPSU had banned all factions, the IRI allows them but within a framework delineated by the revolutionary institutions; and (2) the position of the Leader on sensitive issues determines their ultimate fate. For example, the Sixth reformist-dominated Majles elected in 2000 was reviewing a press law that proposed greater flexibility for the media. Khamenei sent a letter to the Majles, read to the body by its speaker, Hojjatoleslam Mehdi Karrubi, instructing the house not to review this legislation. The Majles, despite grumbling, adhered to this instruction.

Khomeini's granting of 'veto-busting' powers to the Majles did not stop the struggles between it and the GC. During this period, the

political confrontation between these two bodies was rooted in a traditional institutional struggle for power and in serious ideological differences. The leftist deputies, who had a majority in the Majles, believed that the state must control most of the large industries, redistribute wealth, and play a larger role in establishing social justice. In the opinion of these political groups, the revolution was Islamic, but it was an Islam based on social justice as well as *velayat-e faqih*. The conservative clerics sitting on the GC believed in the sanctity of private property which would be violated by policies of wealth redistribution, nationalisation of industries, and state taxation.

Khomeini remade the political landscape in 1988 when he announced that the IRI state can override religious doctrines and ordinances if it is 'in the interests (*maslahat*) of preserving the system.'²² This led to the establishment of a new body, the Expediency Council. It is a revolutionary institution mediating between the Majles and the GC. In 1989 this body was written into the constitution (Article 112). Legislation on which the Majles and the GC cannot agree is sent to the Expediency Council. Enjoying the final say in the bill's fate, it reviews controversial legislation in light of the state's interest. Some hoped that this body would serve as a check on the GC's attempts to limit the power of the Majles in lawmaking and to expand its power base. However, the thirty or so members of the Expediency Council, made up of leading clerics and lay political figures, are chosen by the Leader himself. In addition, the president, the head of the Judiciary, the speaker of the Majles, and, depending on the issue being discussed, a representative of the Majles and cabinet minister are also members. Six clerics of the GC join this body when it debates legislation that has caused deadlock between the Majles and the GC. This body confirms the supremacy of the clerical elite and revolutionary institutions over the republican institutions. However, this institutionalisation of state interests weakened the power of the GC since it divided law making from that of the *sharia*'. Under certain conditions, such as serious factional fighting, the Expediency Council can be viewed as a mechanism for limiting the GC's power and for the implementation of reforms since it determines the interests of the state and not those of ideology.

A lack of strong political parties is another characteristic of the IRI. According to Article 26: 'The formation of political and professional parties, associations, and societies, as well as religious societies, whether

they be Islamic or pertain to one of the recognized religious minorities, is freely permitted on condition that they do not violate the principles of independence, freedom, national unity, the criteria of Islam, or the basis of the Islamic Republic.' The establishment of parties is dependent on acquisition of a permit from the Ministry of the Interior. A commission made up of two representatives from the Majles, one from the National Security Council, Ministry of the Interior, and Judiciary, decides on the issuance of such a permit. It also supervises the activities of parties, organisations, and fronts and can withdraw the licence if it finds that a political organisation has infringed or damaged Islamic principles or stirred up ethnic tensions. A court then makes the final decision.

Party development in the IRI was slow during the fifteen years after the revolution. By the early 1980s only one political party existed, the clerical-run Islamic Republic Party (IRP). However, the IRP never succeeded in banning factions as Lenin ordered and Stalin ensured. In 1986 the leaders of the IRP asked Khomeini to allow its dissolution; factional struggles between rightist and leftist clerics had become so endemic that it had become politically paralysed and unable to provide the political cover for the clerical elite and their lay supporters. At the time of its dissolution, the backbone of the clerical elite remained the Society of Qom Seminary Teachers and more importantly, the Society of Combatant Clergy. However, the latter organisation split in two, when the more 'leftist' members, one of whom was Khatami, established the Assembly of Combatant Clergy. These political organisations play direct and indirect roles in the elections to, and proceedings of, the Majles.

A serious change took place in the run-up to the 1996 Majles elections when supporters of the increasingly embattled president, Rafsanjani, established a political organisation called Servants of Iran's Construction (*Kargozaran*). Made up of technocrats and the professional intelligentsia, this organisation was dedicated to continuing the reconstruction of Iran, especially under the leadership of Rafsanjani. Whilst they proclaimed their allegiance to Khomeini and the present Leader, the group represented the split between the traditional clerical right and urban lay class resulting from serious ideological differences in regard to economic and social issues. The goal of this group, according to one of its founders, Gholamreza Karbaschi, is the continued existence of the IRI which he and this group believe can be

guaranteed only by an industrialised economy and strong well-developed state institutions. This group, which came to be known as the *modern right*, also came to emphasise more strongly the republican aspects of the constitution. It, similar to Khatami and his supporters, stresses Article 56 of the constitution which talks of 'the God-granted right of self-government for (and of) the people.' Similar to a political party, *Kargozaran* seemed intent on serious electoral politics in contestations for power.

With the emergence of this political organisation in 1995, political discourse and space expanded to include the people to a greater extent than before in the political life of the country. Until this point, parliamentary politics symbolised to a significant extent elite struggles rooted in ideology, worldview, and acquisition and expansion of political and economic privileges. The population as a whole had little interest in politics; in the period after Khomeini's death the percentage of the population participating in elections dropped prompting worries that the IRI's legitimacy was perhaps in danger.

Executive Power

The executive branches in the Soviet and IRI systems had the responsibility to implement policies and programmes enacted by the Majles and the soviets to which they were constitutionally responsible. Similar to the legislative branches, the executive branches symbolised both the state, as opposed to revolutionary institutions, and the republican character of Leninism and Khomeinism.

The command economy established by Stalin required a large bureaucratic structure able to collect, analyse, and process data in order to make economic plans, manage the economy, and determine prices, product matrix, and quantity for some 20 million products. Responsibilities were divided (and sometimes overlapped) between bureaucratic ministries which numbered 61 by 1987. Within each ministry were summary departments, *glavki*, which handled specific smaller responsibilities within the overall purview of that particular ministry. Ministries dealing with other areas of governance, such as culture, education, and health, amongst others, augmented the overall total of bureaucratic institutions. The ministerial system came to a head in the USSR Council of Ministers. 'The entire system of organs of the state governing the USSR is headed by the Council of Ministers of the USSR. The government is the highest executive...organ of state power

of the USSR. The government is responsible to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and is subordinated to it. When the Supreme Soviet is not in session it is subordinate to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet.²³ It was made up of a chair, eight deputy chairs, over fifty ministers, the heads of state committees, and the chairs of the councils of ministers of the union republics. The CPSU, namely the Politburo and its *nomenklatura* system, along with the Secretariat, determined who would occupy these posts. The Council of Ministers and its executive bodies were primarily responsible for policy implementation.

According to Article 113 of the IRI Constitution the president 'occupies the highest official post in the country after that of the Leader,...bear(ing) responsibility for putting the constitution into practice and directing the executive branch of government, aside from those matters which directly concern the Leader.' He is elected to four-year terms and can serve a maximum of two consecutive terms. The GC vets all candidates wishing to run for the presidency. The president appoints ministers with parliamentary confirmation. He controlled the Planning and Budget Organisation (until its dissolution by Ahmadinejad in 2007) and is the chair of the National Security Council which co-ordinates all government activities related to issues involving defence, intelligence, and foreign policy.²⁴ The president also has great influence over social, cultural and educational policies. Despite chairing the National Security Council, he has limited power over foreign policy if his views and policies clash with those of the elite of the revolutionary institutions, and especially with the Leadership Office and the Revolutionary Guards.

Once a candidate for the presidency has gone through the GC's vetting process and wins by popular vote he can have a power base separate from the revolutionary institutions. On the contrary, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR was appointed by the elite of the CPSU. Thus he was dependent solely on the revolutionary institution for his position and influence in the state institution. But this difference should not be taken too far. Though the president is elected and enjoys a degree of popular legitimacy, the revolutionary institutions can limit the president's political space whilst the GC's vetting process demarcates the political spectrum and determines who is ideologically reliable to be president. The following example draws out this similarity. Kosygin, the head of the Council of Ministers for most of the Brezhnev period, wanted to undertake

economic reforms, many aspects of which the Brezhnev leadership in the revolutionary institutions found to be deviant from their interpretation of Leninism and politically dangerous. They snuffed them out which in the opinion of Gorbachev led to the 'years of stagnation' in the 1970s. Rafsanjani elected with a popular mandate found himself and his programme of economic reform and industrialisation stifled directly or indirectly by his political opponents in the revolutionary institutions.

One of the greatest differences between the Soviet and IRI systems is the role of the military. The top CPSU leadership, wary of military commanders, kept the armed forces under strict party control. Stalin, in the wake of the victory over Nazi Germany and the consequent great popularity enjoyed by the military, was worried by the possibility of growing military power and influence in the state and CPSU. The symbol of that military victory was Marshal Zhukov, a status underlined by his role as the head of the military parade on Red Square marking the end of the Great Patriotic War. Thus Stalin moved against top military commanders, demoting some and imprisoning others. Zhukov was sent to Odessa far from the public eye. Another example of this was Khrushchev's sacking of Zhukov as Minister of Defence in 1957. During the Politburo's attempt to overthrow Khrushchev, Zhukov played a determinative role. He warned the Politburo that if it sacked Khrushchev he would turn to the army and the people. Khrushchev survived the attempt to overthrow him but remembered Zhukov's words in which he saw a threat to his and the party's power; Khrushchev also could not forget Zhukov's brief mentioning of his mistakes and shortcomings.²⁵ Four months after he had helped save Khrushchev from being overthrown, Zhukov was removed from power, charged with voluntarism. During the Brezhnev period the military and the military-industrial complex seemed to be increasing in influence especially in regard to resource allocation. Yet the military was close to the party, reared on the belief that it could not interfere in domestic politics or elite factional disputes.

The IRI replicated the Soviet practice of having representatives of the revolutionary institutions being attached to units of the armed forces to ensure their ideological and political purity. Similar to the shah, the IRI feared, especially in its early years, a military coup or at least excessive military influence. In order to protect the revolution Khomeini established in May 1979 a 'revolutionary' armed force, the

Islamic Republic Revolutionary Guards (IPRG). Article 150 of the constitution stipulates that its primary function is to protect the revolution and its achievements. This gives the IPRG potentially great power to interfere in politics and factional struggles. Whilst Khomeini was alive, the IPRG could not offer an alternative interpretation of Khomeinism and thus could not be independently active. But after his passing away, the IPRG could determine that it has the correct interpretation of Khomeinism and therefore act, most likely behind the scenes, against a politician following a politics of change similar to that of Khatami. The IPRG several times threatened Khatami. Lastly, since the passing of Khomeini and the end of the Iran-Iraq War, the IPRG has greatly increased its economic activities which have generated great real power, especially during the presidency of Ahmadinejad.

The elite of the IPRG regards itself as a revolutionary political and professional military force. Given its constitutional mission to spread the Islamic Revolution, the IPRG's international wing, the Qods force, has engaged in providing military, logistical and/or financial support to diverse Shi'ia and/or Sunni groups, such as Lebanese Hezbollah and Hamas. The extent to which state institutions know of or control these movements is unknown. Certainly, the executive branch has exercised little or no real authority over the IPRG, despite attempts by both Rafsanjani and Khatami to bring it under some degree of control. The new Leader, Khamenei, deprived of Khomeini's charismatic and religious authority and revolutionary heritage, found himself reliant on the IPRG in order to bolster his position. This provided it with another opportunity to be politically active and strong.

Soviet revolutionary institutions given their ownership of property and of all means of production and role as sole distributor of material means exercised power greater than that enjoyed by the IRI. Moreover, state control of property prevented the emergence of non-CPSU sources of political and economic power; no division between the sphere of private property and that of the state emerged which could have represented a threat to the power of the party. The IRI never attempted to create a Soviet-style command economy. Nonetheless, to an extent greater than the shah, the clerical caste has created a political economic system designed to protect its political and economic interests. Economic foundations (*bonyads*) are the most important pillar of that system. Engaged in a myriad of economic activities, combined with political action in many cases, they are tax-exempt and answer

only to the Leadership Office. Although determining the exact degree of *bonyad* autonomy from the Leader is difficult, the foundations are clearly dependent on him for protection of their special status as tax-exempt non-governmental organisations in the face of attempts of republican institutions to reform them. For example, the foundations together obtain up to 30% of the state budget, but are not subject to executive oversight. The foundations play a vital economic role by serving as employers of large chunks of the work force and a political role by providing a degree of social welfare to workers and their families. The largest foundations are: Foundation for the Disabled and Oppressed, Martyrs Foundation, Imam Reza Foundation, Fifteenth of Khordad Foundation, Islamic Economic Foundation, Divine Missions Foundation, Foundation for the Construction of Housing, Welfare Foundation, and Organisation of Islamic Propaganda. In addition, the IRI's huge oil and natural gas income provides the state with the means to be a dominant force in the overall economy and sustain a large system of economic patronage that tightens its control over society. The IRI since the beginning of the presidency of Ahmadinejad has practically halted privatisation.

Responsibility for security and protection of the revolutionary institutions ultimately belongs to the Leadership Office. The Ministry of Security and Intelligence, law enforcement organisations, including the armed *Basiji*, and *Ansar-e Hezbollah*, and other armed forces/militia are subject to the control of the revolutionary institutions. The *Harasat*, bearing chief responsibility for matters of security, is present in all state administrative and educational institutions. Groups concerned with enforcing proper morality, such as *Khabaran-e Zeinab* (the sisters of Zeinab), *Nasebin* (Admonishers) and Purgings Committees are active in government organisations. Control over society is also achieved through Islamic associations located within industries and educational and state administrative establishments. Above them are the representatives of the Leader, responsible for propaganda and supervision. They are present in all chief educational, administrative, and security organisations. In low and middle-ranking state institutions a Political-Ideological Bureau exists charged with providing ideological instruction to state employees and overall supervision. *Jehad* in the universities, a student organisation tied to the Leadership Office, which emerged as a result of the cultural revolution, is entrusted with the task of Islamisation in the universities and combating 'westernising' and

'liberal' forces. It is under the direct supervision of the Supreme Council for the Cultural Revolution.

The ruling clerical elite, although giving more room for expression and disagreement than the CPSU after the banning of factions by Lenin, through its system of revolutionary courts and special courts for the clergy ensures ideological and political correctness. The revolutionary courts handle cases dealing with those charged with threatening or insulting the system, its goals, and the Leader. The special clerical court handles similar cases when the accused is a cleric. In regard to the clergy, a majority of clerics in Iran are 'quietest', solely engaged in religious matters and not holding state positions. Such 'non-regime' clerics are known to the populace who make a distinction between them and 'regime clerics' who are actively involved in politics and the revolutionary institutions. Despite these courts and other mechanisms, the intensity of control over the elite in the USSR was not replicated in the IRI. For example, most speeches and texts given at, and published by, the CC were reviewed and edited in CC departments before becoming public. Individual styles, personal accountability, and factional groups emerging and disbanding based on ideological and personal interests clearly evident in the IRI, which were the catalyst for political changes and struggles, were absent in the USSR since the Stalinist period.

The Brezhnev and Rafsanjani Years: Dogmatic Utopianism

The Brezhnev period (1964-1982) and that of the presidency of Rafsanjani (1989-97) are key to understanding not only the evolution of Leninism and Khomeinism but also the environment in which Khatami and Gorbachev found themselves and the thinking behind their politics of change. Two major themes marked these periods. First, a bureaucratisation and routinisation of the revolution and a rationalisation of decision-making replaced to a significant extent revolutionary thinking and methods in the construction of the Leninist and Khomeinist utopian modernities. Corporate interests and technocratic rule seemed to overshadow revolutionary ideals. Second, the Brezhnev and Rafsanjani periods were characterised by weakening societal morale and motivation, an increase in political apathy and cynicism whilst beliefs in the utopian modernity lost a significant degree of credibility.

Lefort stressed that ideological systems of modernity promising utopia on this earth must have a figure that stands above the discourse of the polity. This figure, a 'master', stands above the ideological and power discourse and enjoys 'external' or absolute knowledge of the objective truths of the system. This figure covers over contradictions within the ideological discourse emerging as a result of governing.²⁶ Through the 'master' the ideology obtains legitimacy. If that figure is politically questioned and undermined, the legitimacy of the ideology suffers accordingly. Lenin, Stalin, and Khomeini were 'masters' of the discourse of ideology and power. When they disappeared from the political scene, the role of the master transferred to the elite which resulted in an institutionalisation and routinisation of the symbols and discourse of the ideologies and collective decision making. No single figure enjoyed the revolutionary and ideological legitimacy to play the role of the 'master' and legitimately claim exclusive access to the ultimate truths of Leninism and Khomeinism. All political struggles and factional fighting, even over political and economic interests, had to have a Leninist and/or Khomeinist skin.

Revolutionary utopianism, the rapid construction of *homo Sovieticus* and *homo Islamicus* and demonization of the bureaucracy as an enemy of the revolution were major themes in Khomeini's 'Khomeinism' and the Leninism of Stalin and Khrushchev. Institution building was certainly undertaken during these periods. However, the revolutionary yearnings of the top elite in the Khomeini and Stalin/Khrushchev period led to attacks on, and undermining of, these institutions. A charismatic revolutionary authority would set the goals of the revolution and use the burgeoning bureaucracy to achieve them whilst attacking that same bureaucracy, fearing its potential capacity to constrain his authority and block the realisation of the rapid construction of the utopian universalist modernity. The revolutionary yearnings of the elite of these periods clashed with the routinisation and technocratic character of a bureaucracy seen as an enemy of the revolution's goals.

Sporadic factional struggles marked the period 1953-1985 in the USSR in which different groups battled over ideological and political power. Importantly, it was generally agreed that the terror periods of the Stalinist years were not to be repeated and the personal safety of the CPSU elite and collective decision-making would serve as the CPSU *modus operandi*. Khrushchev emerged as the victor in the factional conflicts of the early-post Stalin period. Whilst introducing economic

reforms and creating an image of a 'thaw' that gave some greater room for public space, Khrushchev, marked by utopian thinking, was as revolutionary as Lenin and Stalin. Attempting to be the sole source of the interpretations of Leninism, he tackled problems with the ardour of a Stalin, but without the terror. At the same time his forms of mass mobilisation were rooted in the rhetoric of a revolutionary promising a utopia in this world. Khrushchev convened an extraordinary 'Congress of the Builders of Communism' at which he proudly announced: 'The victory of communism has always been the cherished ultimate aim of the Party of Lenin. This dream of communism is now becoming a reality. Not only shall our descendants, comrades, but we as well, our generation of Soviet people, live under communism.'²⁷ His raw method and ill-thought out policies combined with constant attacks on the bureaucracy reflected a revolutionary leader who expected quick positive results. This led to his overthrow.

Brezhnev Leninism replaced that of Stalin and Khrushchev. The rapid construction of the communist utopia and revolutionary ideological fervour were replaced by the core of Brezhnev Leninism, developed socialism (*razvitoi sotsializm*). This slogan conferred the achievements already obtained on the road to the creation of Soviet communist society, but shunned Khrushchev's utopian promises of communism by 1980 and Stalinist terror methods for the sake of utopianism. Brezhnev's Leninism put an end to the mandatory rotation of party members, called for 'stability of cadres', did not encourage open criticism from below, and undid the division between economic and agricultural branches in the party initiated by Khrushchev. The Brezhnev elite approached policymaking and problem solving in a way that differed greatly from that of the Stalin and Khrushchev periods. Grand campaigns and policies of the Stalin and Khrushchev periods based on the belief in the possibility to solve quickly economic and social problems and to create rapidly communist society were shunned as were expectations for quick results. Khrushchev's slogan 'the full-scale construction of communism' was dropped while his policies were called 'hare-brained.' He was accused of 'voluntarism', an epilate that became a political curse word. Problems were to be broken up into manageable bits by technocrats in the bureaucracy and specialists in think-tanks working with the party leadership. Development was still the priority, but it would be led by those who know, not by those charged with a revolutionary mentality and expectations of rapid

revolutionary change. The following anecdote of the time poked fun at both Khrushchev's promises of communism in the near future and Brezhnev's announcement that the USSR was on its way there but the estimated time of arrival was unclear.

Teacher: Communism is on the horizon!

Student: Where is this horizon?

Teacher: It is an imaginary line where the sun meets the earth and which moves further away as you approach it.

The political and ideological changes of the Brezhnev period reflected not only a realisation that 'cure-alls' and quick results were not possible but also a societal and elite desire for political and economic stability after the tumultuous years of revolutionary utopianism of the Stalin and Khrushchev periods.

Rafsanjani, confidant of Ayatollah Khomeini and speaker of the Majles, became president of the IRI in 1989 in the wake of Khomeini's death and the end of the war with Iraq. The death of Khomeini, the grand master of the political scene, brought about a situation similar to that after the death of Stalin. A collective decision-making process and increased factional fighting between different groups filled the vacuum he left behind. One of Rafsanjani's ways of replacing the loss of Khomeini's charismatic authority was the creation of a mercantile bourgeoisie which would be to varying degrees economically dependent on the government and, in turn, would support it, even if culturally both sides were different.²⁸

In the eleven years before Rafsanjani's presidency Iranian society had undergone a revolution, the dethroning of a monarch, bloody internal conflicts, a war that cost hundreds of thousands of lives, bombings, a serious drop in living standards, and a struggle for the construction of revolutionary utopianism. The population now sought stability and steady improvement in their daily lives. Responding to this situation, Rafsanjani announced an era of re-construction. The poor state of the economy was compared to the high growth rate of the late Pahlavi years still fresh in people's memories. Pressure was on the regime to satisfy both the promises of social justice made by Khomeini during and after the revolution and the economic expectations of the middle and upper classes. Not only had economic dissatisfaction spread

amongst the lower classes, but also amongst the bazaar merchants, the bulwarks of the revolution. Rafsanjani stressed:

(Revolutionary-religious) slogans are indeed holy, but we must not deceive the people with them or create obstacles to the rebuilding of the country...The Imam's guidance was to regulate the project of reconstruction to knowledgeable specialists without fear of the religiously narrow-minded and pseudo-revolutionaries...²⁹

His programmes promised rising living standards on which the legitimacy of the IRI would be increasingly dependent; the same dynamic characterised the Brezhnev period. Rafsanjani, like Brezhnev, attempted to lessen the influence of utopian revolutionary thinking and approaches to decision-making. Technocrats, specialists, and managers became key players. They were of course ideologically loyal, but were professionals. The days of the revolution during which ideological commitment determined one for governmental positions were seemingly coming to an end. In the process of this multi-dimensional economic restructuring the issue of social justice rose to the forefront of politics as differences between the classes began to increase dramatically. At the same time growth in corruption, of which Rafsanjani began a symbol, became increasingly noticeable.

During the Brezhnev and Rafsanjani periods attempts were made to create a synthesis of bureaucratic rationality, technocracy, and smooth economic development, whilst quietly regulating and limiting the radical revolutionary methods and ideology of previous periods. The goal was the transformation of revolutionary ideologies promising utopian modernities in this world to an ideology of governing and management. By the time Brezhnev died and Rafsanjani left office after his two terms as president, economic promises remained unfilled, prompting a sense that the economic system and even the ruling ideology had stagnated and was unable to answer many of the pressing social, economic, and political issues facing the IRI and the USSR. In particular, increasing numbers of the Soviet and IRI elite felt this. Poor quality of goods, scarcity of consumer durables and food shortages hurt Leninism whilst inflation, the increasing cost of living, the growing gap between the classes and the seeming increase in poverty hurt Khomeinism. Moreover, the reduction in revolutionary fervour seemed

to be replaced by corruption in the high and middle levels of the bureaucracy and amongst the elite of the revolutionary institutions.

In the closing years of the Brezhnev period and after Andropov became second secretary, replacing the deceased Suslov, the struggle for power and over the future course of the USSR began. Andropov launched a campaign against corruption, tried to raise the discipline of workers and party cadres through punitive measures, and inject a form of revolutionary struggle as the first steps in addressing the USSR's problems. Upon becoming general secretary in 1982 he began to implement a pragmatic plan for the economic and social revival of the country.

Rafsanjani came under attack from conservative clerical and lay forces who opposed his strengthening of the state, including its tax and regulating bodies, and privatisation, and from those who condemned his seeming lax approach to revolutionary fervour and to the creation of *homo Islamicus*. The Leader remarked:

If I find out that officials have abandoned the Propagation of Virtue and Prohibition of Vice I shall personally defend it. The responsible officials and the administrators must provide an atmosphere for the actions of the PVPV...The enemy claims that during that period of reconstruction, revolutionary spirit and morality must be put aside. The enemy is propagating that the post-war period and the reconstruction phase is the time for the demise of revolutionary fervour and that it is time to return (to)... the meaningless life of some countries. Is this the meaning of reconstruction? Surely it is not.³⁰

In a different speech he stressed that '...if we spend billions on development projects and ignore moral issues in the country, all the achievements will amount to nothing.'³¹ Rafsanjani tried to link strong government with religious duty:

States have been an indispensable endeavour in Islamic societies and human societies in general. Some people and currents argued that there is no need for a state. Subsequent experience and events have proven them wrong. The Quran has said that even if the leaders are corrupt, their existence is more beneficial to society than the chaos its absence would create...The existence

of government and administration along with the project of management of society is a necessity and holy precept.³²

Bureaucratisation and routinisation of the revolution came to overshadow the revolutionary hero and the revolutionary mentality of the 'new person.' At the same time, the role and rituals of the revolutionary ideology in daily life became smaller. This tension between the drive for rationality in policymaking and societal stability and the demands of the revolutionary ideology was reflected in the propagation of *homo Sovieticus* and *homo Islamicus* which became less coherent and the states' consistency and extent of its emphasis on its construction were less. The conceptions of the revolutionary hero and the new person as they had evolved in the time of revolution, war, and great societal change, seemed to be out of place in the new bureaucratisation of politics. Despite the continued official emphasis on the creation of the new person, Soviet and IRI interference in the private lives of the people and control over the polities' cultural life lessened to an extent. In the USSR jazz and disco came to be accepted in a new atmosphere that allowed for greater cultural plurality within certain ideological and political limits. Even 'Soviet' rock music was allowed some space, however grudgingly. In this somewhat less restrictive atmosphere, counter-cultures emerged which competed with the official conceptions of *homo Sovieticus*. The youth turned to pirated copies of Western music, sought Western goods, such as jeans, and counter-culture icons, such as Viktor Vitsotskii.

In the IRI already in 1987 some social restrictions were somewhat lessened. Khomeini in response to the issue of showing foreign films that contained material possibly detrimental to *homo Islamicus*, such as actresses without hair covering, stated: 'Such films are not only acceptable religiously but also often educational.' As long as 'viewers did not watch with lustful eyes' such films were permissible. Some eight months later he issued a decree legalising chess and the buying and selling of musical instruments as long as they were used for 'religiously sanctioned purposes.'³³ During the Rafsanjani period this trend gained momentum. In May 1991 Hassan Habibi, deputy to Rafsanjani underlined 'the need to handle cultural issues in a calm and rational way as we live in an open society where various ideas and preferences exist.'³⁴ An important gauge of this change was the publication during the Rafsanjani presidency of 'The Cultural Principles of the Islamic

Republic of Iran.’ In this document the well-known phrases surrounding the characteristics of the *homo Islamicus* were certainly present, but there were notable additions and changes in emphasis. The document implicitly called for a pragmatic approach to cultural issues and that it be rooted in ‘the capacity of the country and the realities (of the time).’ It stressed that the achievement of the ‘cultural height’ namely the creation of *homo Islamicus*, was dependent on a synthesis of ‘fundamentalist and realistic’ leadership and methods. This document emphasised a technocratic approach in dealing with cultural and governance issues, arguing that the working out of solutions to them should be left to ‘experts’. The word ‘clergy’ was not once mentioned in this seventeen-page document.³⁵

By the late Brezhnev and late Rafsanjani periods, Russian and Iranian nationalism had made a serious comeback as a result of the increasing disappointment with the Soviet and IRI regimes’ performance. The threat emerged that increasing numbers of people began to believe that revolutionary elites had seized power and were using (or exploiting) Russia and Iran for their own ideological and material ends which contradicted the fundamental interests of the Russian and Iranian nations. Yet, amongst many sections of society loyalty to the idea of communism and Islam did not significantly weaken. That which did weaken was loyalty and admiration of their manifestation within the later Soviet and IRI states. The support given to Khatami and Gorbachev showed that people wanted a Soviet and Islamic state that worked. Thus in one way the Soviet and IRI projects of creation of the new person did succeed.

KHATAMI-GORBACHEV: THE HUMAN FACTOR

*The history of what man has accomplished in this world is at bottom
the History of the Great Men who have worked here.*

Thomas Carlyle

Gorbachev and Khatami differ in regard to family background, education, and political biographies. These differences explain to a significant degree the divergences in their understandings of the causes for, and overall approaches to, the politics of change and in their political skills. This chapter examines these issues and presents the basic argument in regard to the role these men played in the achievement of the non-goals. Subsequent chapters flush it out.

Gorbachev was born on 2 March 1931 in Privolnoye, a village in Stravropol oblast in the Caucasus. The Leningrad and Moscow intelligentsia privately chided him for his country accent of which he never ridded himself (purposely or not). They also found fault with his grammar and syntax. His parents were peasants. His maternal grandfather, Pantelei Gopkalo, became a CPSU member and was one of the early farmers to participate in the collectivisation programme. He eventually became head of his collective farm. His paternal grandfather, Andrei Gorbachev, fought against collectivisation; he refused to share his grain not only with the authorities but also with his son (Gorbachev's father), Sergei, who had joined a collective farm. In 1934 Andrei was arrested on the charge of being a saboteur given his failure to deliver grain as demanded by the government. In 1937 Pantelei was

arrested on the charge of 'being an active member of a counter-revolutionary, Trotskyite-rightist organisation.' Both grandfathers escaped death, long-term imprisonment, and hard labour. They returned to their old lives. Gorbachev's father received the Order of Lenin in 1949 for over fulfilling the annual harvest plan for Privolnoye.

Seyyed Mohammad Khatami was born in 1942 in Ardakan, in the province of Yazd. His father, Ruhollah Khatami, was an Ayatollah who in the early period of the revolution became the Friday Prayer Leader of Yazd. His father was known for his piety, open mind, and philanthropy. Khatami grew up in an educated and solidly middle-class household in which religious and philosophical learning and various elements of high culture, in particular poetry, were emphasised. Importantly, Khatami is a Seyyed; his family is descended from that of the prophet Mohammad. In this family environment Khatami acquired his cultured yet warm public style which had great appeal.

Having seen the end of the Nazi invasion, Gorbachev focused on education. Inquisitive and capable of fulfilling well assignments given him, he proved to be a strong student. Upon completion of his secondary education he received a silver medal. Gorbachev remarked: 'After the war which had killed millions of young people, there was a severe shortage of qualified cadres. Thus anyone wishing to attend an institution of higher education could. In our school there were those whose studies were weaker than mine, but almost all of them entered university.'¹ In 1950 at the age of nineteen Gorbachev, thanks to his superior marks and peasant-worker background, was accepted by the Law Faculty of Moscow State University, considered the best in the USSR. At the same age he became a candidate member of the CPSU. In 1952 at the age of 21 he became a full member. The following year he married Raisa Titorenko, a sociology student and specialist on Marxism-Leninism. She became his closest partner in private and public life. In 1955 he graduated with a degree in law. Unable to obtain a party position in the capital, Gorbachev, along with Raisa, went to Stavropol.

Khatami was nineteen in 1961 when he left home for Qom to begin his theological training. There he had as teachers many leading religious figures some of whom became active in the struggle against the monarchy. These included Ayatollahs Abdollah Javadi-Amoli, Hossein Ali Montazeri, Reza Sadr, Mohammad Reza Golpayegani, and Hojjatoleslam Morteza Motahari. His time in Qom coincided with the

first political battle between the shah and Khomeini. The shah's growing authoritarianism, these rebellions, their suppression by the government, and Khomeini's eventual exile could not but exercise an influence on Khatami's views in regard to both the monarchy and its backer, the USA. In 1965 he went to the University of Isfahan to study Western philosophy. Having received his undergraduate degree there, he went to Tehran to study education. Having received this qualification he returned to Qom in 1971 to continue with his religious training with a focus on Islamic philosophy, jurisprudence, and law. In 1975 he obtained the clerical rank of *hojjatoleslam*.

The first important difference between Khatami and Gorbachev is their respective periods in higher education. Khatami spent some fourteen years in it. Gorbachev finished his law degree in five years and became a correspondent student in agriculture after he had returned to Stavropol. Khatami's educational background was rooted in fields that did not provide or encourage concrete frameworks and technological and scientific answers in regard to issues. It was a world of reflection, discussion, and debate. This form of education strengthened Khatami's tendency to self-reflection and even self-doubt in regard to his own thoughts. He noted: 'A society that lacks self-questioning and contemplation and a person devoid of such contemplation become caught up in waves and elements they bring into existence and do not have the power and competence to guide life in the desired direction among those waves and elements.'² However, this contemplation and self-questioning could result in self-induced paralysis. Gorbachev's education certainly shared the debate and discussion of Khatami's education. Yet, law provided a clearer concrete framework in which to find answers. This strengthened within Gorbachev the Bolshevik mentality of law-driven history and social engineering which provided the framework to find *the* answer to issues or at least the theoretical backing for one. This could give great self-confidence to a personality already leaning in that direction.

The early years of Gorbachev's party career were somewhat typical. Upon his return to Stavropol, he was occupied with full-time work in the CPSU's youth movement, Komsomol. In 1958 he became a first secretary in it. During the Khrushchev period he voted for the removal of Stalin's body from the Lenin mausoleum. By 1962 he was working in party organs in Stavropol and his career began to take off. In 1966 he became the first secretary of Stavropol party city committee. In 1968 he

obtained the post of second secretary of the provincial party committee and in 1970, at the age of thirty-nine, that of first secretary. In 1971 at the XXIV Party Congress he became the youngest official to be elected a full member of the CC.

Existence and promotion in the Soviet system required an effective mixture of coalition building and networking, the ability to be submissive in front of superiors whilst proving capable of fulfilling assignments. Gorbachev proved to be competent in all of these areas and in not going against the political wind. For example, during the Chernenko period the party secretary of Armenia, K. Demirchian, approached the CC Secretariat, which Gorbachev headed, with a request to make 24 April a day of mourning in that republic to mark the beginning of the 1915 mass deportations of Armenians by the Ottoman Empire and to invite to a ceremony marking its seventieth anniversary delegations from the Georgian, Azerbaijanian and Russian Soviet Republics. Gorbachev and the Secretariat approved these requests which were then sent to the Politburo for final approval. At the February Politburo meeting, Gromyko and Tikhonov spoke against them. Gorbachev remained silent and approval was not given.³ Gorbachev after the collapse of the USSR admitted that in the course of his way up, 'There was no small amount of instances which I remember and of which I could be ashamed (of my participation or acquiescence) had it not been for the lack of other paths available.'⁴

Although the Brezhnev period was known for stability of cadres, coalition politics and faction were still important aspects of political life; this period's stability was built around such struggles that rarely touched on the position of the general secretary himself. During this period Gorbachev showed himself to be a keen politician and networker; he knew how and with whom to establish good relations at the regional and central level and when to distance himself from those whose star was seemingly falling. His courting of the head of the KGB, Yuri Andropov, who in 1973 became a member of the Politburo, played a decisive role in his future.

Andropov frequently travelled to Gorbachev's province for relaxation whose spring waters were often visited by the elite. In 1978 Brezhnev decided to award personally the Order of Lenin to the city of Baku in Soviet Azerbaijan. Travelling by train from Moscow, Brezhnev and his close aide, Konstantin Chernenko, made a stop at *Miniralnie Vodi* station in Stavropol. At the station Andropov and Gorbachev

greeted the travelling Brezhnev and Chernenko; here a fateful meeting of the last four general secretaries of the CPSU took place. This gathering was briefly covered in the Soviet press. Whilst it would prove important to Gorbachev's career, its more immediate meaning was Andropov's rising power at a time when people increasingly thought of the succession to the clearly ailing Brezhnev.

Gorbachev presented himself as an agricultural expert. He had a reputation as a hard-worker who paid serious attention to the issue of agriculture. Yet, one would be hard-pressed to find serious innovations in his policies or style, although the extent to which Brezhnev's system allowed this to happen was not very great. In 1978 only two months after the fateful meeting in *Miniralnie Vodi*, Gorbachev was brought to Moscow where he took up the post of CC secretary for agriculture. Soon afterwards, Brezhnev awarded him the Order of Lenin, the honour for those on their way up the CPSU ladder. In 1979 he became a candidate member of the Politburo; in 1980 he acquired full membership.

In Moscow links between Gorbachev and Andropov greatly increased. They spoke almost every day by telephone. One interesting episode reflecting Gorbachev's approach to politics came when Suslov, the party's leading ideologue, died in spring 1982. His death provoked struggles over who would succeed him as second secretary and focused attention on the succession to Brezhnev. Brezhnev's invitation to Andropov to speak at the CC meeting dedicated to Lenin's birthday was a sign of his possible promotion to the post of second secretary. Gorbachev, excited upon hearing of the invitation, remarked, 'I thus understand that the question of who will become second secretary has been decided, Yuriï Vladimirovich?' Andropov, a more cautious and skilled politician than Gorbachev was, replied, *Misha don't rush events.*²⁵ In May 1982 Andropov, in order to become second secretary, resigned his position as head of the KGB although he maintained great influence over it. With the backing of Brezhnev, Andropov moved to restore order and discipline in the upper ranks of the party and state. His right hand man was Gorbachev.

In the wake of Brezhnev's death in November 1982, Andropov became general secretary. Gorbachev became his second secretary providing supervision of personnel selection and economic coordination. He, along with well-known figures from the *perestroika* era, such as Nikolai Ryzhkov and Yegor Ligachev, played important

roles in Andropov's reforms. Andropov, in his long-time capacity as KGB head, knew better than most the reality of the economic situation, the extent of corruption at the highest levels, and the growing gap between the USSR and its greatest enemy, the USA. Andropov and Gorbachev, representing an approach that differed greatly from that of Brezhnev, increasingly spoke in ways that seemed to threaten certain vested interests at the top of the hierarchy and old ways of doing business. The sense of malaise that was overtaking an increasing number in the elite exacerbated already existing factional battles over power and economic privileges. Factions were increasingly turning their attention to, and struggling over, the future direction of the USSR.

Khatami was part of the generation that revolted against the monarchy and established the IRI. Gorbachev did not experience the revolution. He belonged to the 1960s generation that supported Khrushchev's thaw and attempt to overcome the Stalinist legacy.⁶ Khatami, however, was not in Iran during the revolutionary struggle. In 1978 he went to Hamburg to head its Islamic Centre. With the establishment of the IRI, Khatami entered the political arena as a leftist. He became a Majles deputy representing his home town of Ardakan. He also was Khomeini's special representative to the *Keyhan* newspaper group. In November 1982 the leftist prime minister, Mir-Hossein Mousavi, appointed him Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance. During the Iran-Iraq War he held several positions, including head of war propaganda. From this position Khatami came to be known as relatively fair and an intellectual. His leftist tendencies put him at odds with the pragmatists led by the speaker of the Majles, Rafsanjani, and rightist clerics. Khatami, given Khomeini's consistent backing of him, did not gain the experience in political networking and politicking and enduring pressure that Gorbachev did.

After Khomeini's passing, Khatami revealed a side of Khomeinism various elite groups opposed. For example, he increased the number of licences for periodicals from 102 in 1988-89 to 369 in 1992-1993.⁷ During this period 'several new and rather popular monthlies published authors with a known aversion to the hierocracy.'⁸ Many of these articles were critical of aspects of the path the IRI had taken. The conservative newspaper, *Keyhan*, noted in 1991 that 'a new danger of liberalism and Westernisation was evident in the press.'⁹ Ali Larijani, head of IRI Radio and Television during the early 1990s and the head negotiator over the IRI's nuclear programme during the presidency of

Ahamdinejad until 2007, attacked Khatami's policies as minister. '...(F)ree thinking has been equated with neglect of religious values and has permitted pseudo-intellectuals who believe that casting doubt on the righteousness of the Islamic character of the government is progressive and on the belief that following religious decrees and the clergy is a form of petrification (of thought).'¹⁰

One of the key moments in Khatami's political career was his decision to be a founding member of the Association of Combatant Clergy established in April 1988. Until that point the Society of Combatant Clergy was the backbone clerical organisation. The struggles that ripped this body apart were indicative of the varying interpretations of the priorities and goals of the revolution within the clerical establishment. Khatami, along with other leading left-wing clerics, such as Mehdi Karrubi, Mohammad Musavi-Khoeiniha, Mahmud Doai, Mohammad Tavassoli and Mohammad Jamarani, and Ayatollahs Hassan San'ei and Sadegh Khalkhali split from the conservatives. The breach between the right and left was now in the open and in a sense battle lines were drawn. However, as long as Khomeini was alive, boundaries for these factional battles existed and none could dominate.

Gorbachev and Khatami before assuming top leadership positions obtained a reputation for being relatively open-minded and intelligent political figures. Their opponents counter-attacked. The movement against Gorbachev started while Andropov was still general secretary, but tied to a kidney machine in an elite Moscow hospital. From his hospital bed Andropov dictated to his aide, Arkady Volsky, what would be his last speech to the bi-annual meeting of the entire CC. Too ill to deliver the speech himself, he wanted it entered into the CC's records. Having returned home, Volsky received a summons from Andropov to return to the hospital. There Andropov gave him a hand-written addition. In it, he mentioned his inability to attend Secretariat and Politburo meetings and announced that he wished that Gorbachev conduct these meetings in his place. Such a step would have made Gorbachev the clear heir. Volsky handed in the speech for it to be published. When the proceedings were published, Volsky picked up a copy. To his great horror he saw that the addition was left out. Inquiring about this, he was told that if he knew what was good for him he would mind his own business. The bed-ridden Andropov was exercising increasingly less influence over the old Brezhnev guard. With

his death this old guard secured a victory. Konstantin Chernenko, Brezhnev's long-time friend from his time in Moldova as first secretary (1950-1953), was elected general secretary. Gorbachev and those brought to Moscow by Andropov were sidelined.¹¹

When Khomeini died Khatami retained his ministerial portfolio in the Rafsanjani presidency. He soon became a target of conservative elements increasingly dissatisfied with the essence of his cultural and Rafsanjani's economic policies. Khatami buckled under pressure and resigned his post in 1992. In his resignation letter he severely criticised within a Khomeinist framework the conservative restrictions on freedom of speech and the press and the punishments imposed on those not supporting them. He warned that by using methods that 'are completely outside the bounds of logic and law the state was creating a disturbed atmosphere...the most immediate effect of which is disappointment and lack of confidence on the part of sound thinkers and artists, even in those who believe in, and love, the Islamic Revolution and Islam.'¹² Khatami became head of the Iranian National Library and devoted himself to research and writing on religious and socio-political issues. He also became a lecturer in political theory and philosophy at Tarbiat Modarres University. His resignation showed that without the protection of Khomeini he was susceptible to political pressure and, at this point in time, did not have the political skill or stamina to struggle with forces aligned against him. At the same time, one needs to take into account that Rafsanjani's political struggles with various groups weakened him, which in turn exercised a negative influence on Khatami's position. However, Khatami also made a political miscalculation with his resignation threat. If Rafsanjani had not accepted his resignation and had fulfilled Khatami's conditions, Khatami would have enjoyed a strong political position in relation to the president in any possible future disagreement between the two of them.¹³

Khatami's first book written after his resignation, *Fear of the Wave*, gives a clear and still relevant look at his philosophy and worldview as does his later book, *From the world of the city to the city of the world* (1994). Khatami had two main concerns: (1) the loss of identity in the face of the 'Western cultural onslaught'; and (2) mixing of the best elements of the West with those of Islam. He argues that there is a fundamental contradiction between the Western notion of liberty and the Islamic concept of salvation. On the one hand, he sees a positive side of

Western culture in its emphasis on the people's power over their own future and on the idea that government must serve the people to whom it is responsible. However, he regards Islam and Islamic Iranian identity as the best antidote to the limitless materialism, atomisation, and hedonism (*bibandobari*) he sees in Western modernity. In institutional terms, this approach meant striking a new balance between republican and revolutionary institutions.

Gorbachev did not have to wait long for his comeback. Chernenko, in a surprise move, suggested making Gorbachev de-facto second secretary, though he did not offer him the full powers of that position. He took this step probably in order to protect his own position and limit the tension between the old guard and the new blood. Members of the old guard led by Prime Minister Tikhonov objected. The debate in the Politburo went on for some time and took an acrimonious character. Chernenko, not known for having a strong will, held his ground, to the surprise of some of those present. Gorbachev assumed a somewhat modified position of second secretary. He would chair meetings of the CC plenum and Politburo if and when Chernenko, having realised he would not be able to attend, telephoned Gorbachev and requested he take over a session. This was done to alleviate conservative opposition to the appointment. It was also a form of humiliation as Gorbachev was forced before meetings to wait for a phone call to see if he would be chairing them.

Chernenko died after some thirteen months in office. Gorbachev, determined not be deprived of the succession, some two hours after the death, convened the Politburo to discuss the funeral arrangements as his position as second secretary required him to do. Whoever would be elected chairman of the funeral committee would, according to tradition, become general secretary. The speed with which the meeting was called did not allow for two influential Politburo members, First Secretary Kunayev of Kazakhstan and First Secretary Shcherbitsky of Ukraine, to get to Moscow in time. These two figures could have tilted the balance against Gorbachev. Gorbachev, with the help of some senior politicians, in particular Andrei Gromyko, the long-standing foreign minister, was elected head of the funeral commission. The night of Chernenko's death Gorbachev, anticipating election to the new post, told Raisa: 'It is no longer possible to live like this.' For him and those supporting him, his election would be perhaps the last chance to return the USSR to the goals of October as they interpreted them.

At the Politburo meeting dedicated to the succession Gromyko stressed that Gorbachev had:

unlimited intellectual (*tvorcheskaya*) energy, the striving to do more and do it better....He always has the interests of the party, society, and the people. He has great experience in party work. He has experience of work in the provinces and in the centre. He has worked as CC secretary and in the end as a Politburo member. He has presided over the meetings of the Secretariat, and the Politburo in the absence of Konstantin Ustinovich.¹⁴

The CC, having received Gorbachev's name from the Politburo, duly elected him. Nikolai Prizhkov, First Secretary of Stavropol, remarked:

...there was no real danger...the victory of Gorbachev was not spontaneous. No, it was a prepared act which had two powerful impulses. First, there was the strong influence of new party cadres in the *krais* and *oblasts*. It is enough to say that from the beginning of 1983 in the course of several years around 90% of *obkom* secretaries and the CC comparty of the union republics were changed. And this was the fresh blood of the Brezhnev period. Second, there was a belief in the expected economic reforms and in the need of a transition to contemporary economic thinking...¹⁵

Valery Boldin, Gorbachev's chief of staff, supports this view: 'When the members of the CC gathered...the mood of a majority of the members of the CC was the same—it was not possible to elect another old leader. In the party organisations this would not be understood. It was impossible to elect a general secretary who would not be able to work—tough, decisive leaders were needed.'¹⁶ The Brezhnev period had convinced many members of the elite in the centre and in periphery that the system needed some form of politics of change. However, the extent and the form of change remained debatable.

Khatami's opportunity to re-enter the political arena came in 1997 when Rafsanjani's second term as president was coming to an end. As previously mentioned, during his presidency the GC expanded its control over the vetting of candidates in order to clear from the political scene those figures it considered hostile to its political and

economic interests. In the run-up to the elections to the Fourth Majles, the leftists in the Third Majles passed two bills that aimed to take away from the GC the responsibility for examining potential candidates and give it to the Ministry of Interior, a republican institution. The GC would have the right to reject those who won in the elections. The GC rejected this bill aimed at the heart of its power. Without Khomeini's support which the leftists had enjoyed during the previous decade, they prepared themselves for political defeat. The GC, with the support of Rafsanjani, who too considered the leftist groups an enemy, excluded most leftist deputies from participation in the elections to the Fourth Majles (1992-1996). Of 3,150 potential candidates, 1,100 were found unfit to run. Leading figures from the left, most of whom were in the Third Majles and/or had served in the government, such as Hojjatoleslam Mohtashami and Behzad Nabavi found themselves barred from running.

Conservative groups dominated the Fourth Majles. However, during the term of this Majles what became known as 'the traditional conservatives' with the help of the Leader fought an increasingly successful campaign against Rafsanjani which resulted in a split in the right. The modern right and the traditional right became political enemies. The traditional right, if successful against the modern right, would dominate the republican institutions and bring the entire political system under its control. In the 1996 elections to the Fifth Majles, these two groups struggled against each other, resulting in a victory for the traditional right. The aggregation of additional powers by the GC, its attempts to eliminate politically groups outside of its political camp, and the subsequent split amongst the conservatives between the traditional right and the modern right created momentum in the camps of the modern right and left for a Khatami candidacy. According to Karbashchi, a modern-right supporter of Khatami: 'We were worried that one group (*niru-ye yekbandi*) would capture all the major power positions (after their victory in the elections to the Fifth Majles elections). We were worried that a coalition wanted to have all the power in the country. This worry was very real for many people and brought everyone around Mr.Khatami and the Second Khordad movement was born.'¹⁷

The leftists and the modern right, once enemies, sought a candidate able to pass vetting by the GC and prove attractive to the electorate. The goal was to launch a counter-attack through the republican

institutions against the broad coalition of traditional conservatives. Politics was evolving from primarily an elite affair to a more public one as the result of one elite group obtaining enough power to eliminate politically its opponents. Khatami's brother, Mohammad Reza, who was the head of the reformist coalition, the Islamic Iranian Participation Front noted:

We need to take two currents into account when discussing Khatami's move toward the presidential elections. The first one is political. Some of our friends at the time were in the government of Hashemi Rafsanjani. They had a straight political motivation. This group believed that the continuity of opposition (i.e. conservative-political) advance would destroy the possibility of political life in the country. The second group believed that if Khatami does not enter (the presidential race) the achievements of that (Rafsanjani) period would be destroyed....This first group believed that Islam and the Revolution were in danger and thus it was necessary to bring someone to a leadership position who could do something about this.¹⁸

This state of affairs had much to do with the position and character of Ayatollah Khamenei who upon becoming Leader skilfully worked the political scene to weaken those he considered his rivals and to establish his supremacy. Initially, he and Rafsanjani found common cause against the leftists who did not strongly support the Islamism of the traditional right or the pragmatism of the Rafsanjani group. Once the leftists were politically eliminated, the Leader found common cause with the broad traditional conservative group against the modern right. Khatami was driven by a belief that certain groups and individuals since the death of Khomeini were attempting to eliminate from the political scene their political opponents, namely leftists, and close the political space. He and those supporting his politics of change felt, 'The Islamic Republic had deviated from its ideals and goals.'¹⁹ Khatami, announcing his intention to run for a second term in 2001, stressed that he was running again for the presidency because of his 'fear and worries concerning the fate of Islam, the Revolution, and Iran.'²⁰

That Khatami would win the presidential election was not taken seriously by people.

Mr.Khatami did not really enter the election to be a winner; rather he wanted to open new topics of discussion in regard to society. Therefore, from the beginning he did not have a plan for the administration of the country and the formulation of a government....he did not have a specific plan corresponding with the slogans he articulated and he had no planning process for the next couple of years. He had no planning, no research, (and) no specific goals. And it is for this reason he could not in many cases stand up to pressure.²¹

His brother remarked: 'To such an extent we did not believe he would win that on election day I left for Australia to participate in a conference. That Friday morning at eight o'clock in the airport I voted and then left...'²² That Khatami's opponent, Nategh Nouri, who at the time was the speaker of the Majles, was the clear favourite of the conservative clerical establishment made Khatami's chances of winning seem very slim; the assumption that the Leader too supported Nateq Nouri made Khatami's defeat seem extremely probable. But his unorthodox electoral campaign which included travelling in a coach across the country and emphasis on republicanism and rule of law gave momentum to his campaign. By also focusing on the deteriorating economic situation and the need to re-establish social justice Khatami appealed to diverse sections of society.

Only late in the electoral campaign did the conservatives realise that their candidate would most probably loose. Rumours abounded that in order to prevent Khatami from winning the election, plans for electoral fraud were in place. That the Leader himself would publicly announce his preference for Nateq Nouri also worried Khatami's supporters. This prompted Rafsanjani to pre-empt the possible rigging of votes and the announcement of leading clerics of their preference for president:

Those overseeing the electoral process must act in such a way that the people's mind will be at ease...Election results are a sign of the people's will even though some people wish to change votes in order to obtain a victory. Such an action will undermine faith in the system...Any action that changes the votes of the people constitutes the biggest crime and treachery against the system which relies on the people for solving its problems. I have not announced my choice and I hope neither will others.²³

On 23 May 1997 the election was held. Khatami won a landslide victory. He captured 69% of the vote compared to 24.9% for Nateq Nouri. A second round was not needed. Not only did a record number of people vote, but also no other candidate had ever received such a large percentage of votes cast. Khatami swept every one of the twenty-six provinces, save two, Nateq Nouri's home province of Mazandaran and Lurestan. Even conservative bastions, such as Qom, voted for Khatami. These statistics reflect the magnitude of the Khatami victory and societal dissatisfaction with the track on which the IRI was at this point in time. At the same time, they reflect the broadness of the political coalition that brought Khatami to power.

Khatami won the election despite serious conservative opposition. He took the decision to run for the presidency in the context of serious factional fighting. Gorbachev certainly encountered opposition over the succession to Andropov and during the Chernenko years. However, by 1985 the Soviet elite at all-union and local levels had come to the conclusion that some form of politics of change, and specifically economic change, was needed. Gorbachev achieved the highest position in the revolutionary institution whilst Khatami became the head of the most powerful state republican institution and faced an increasingly fractured elite.

Khatami and Gorbachev brought to their posts a new approach to the relationship between the people and their leaders. Both men became known for walkabouts and discussions with people on the streets. After decades of leaderships that seemed aloof and unwilling to talk with the people, the Gorbachev and Khatami approaches were a breath of fresh air. Their forms of dress and overall appearance also signified they were a new breed of leaders. Gorbachev's well-tailored and nicely coloured suits and non-Soviet style eyeglasses were geared to show the new face of Soviet modernity. Boldin, having noticed this change of clothing style, was surprised by Gorbachev's ability to find time to change suits during the day despite a busy schedule. After many years of geriatric leadership, that a general secretary without pre-prepared texts could speak clearly and discuss rather openly the problems faced by society generated hope that something might change. Young, energetic, and seeming to brim with ideas, he appealed to a society that had not only seen three general secretaries die in the previous three years, but also endured the latter years of the Brezhnev

leadership during which jokes abounded about his poor health, senility, and inability to speak and make decisions.

Khatami symbolised a new IRI 'clerical' fashion. His traditional clerical clothes were neat, crisp, and of brilliant colours placing him in sharp contrast to the fashion sense of the rest of the clerical establishment. He was the first cleric to wear white. His neatly trimmed beard compared favourably with both the seemingly unkempt beards of many other clerics and the inability of some, such as Rafsanjani, to grow a full beard. He wore gold rimless glasses that gave him an air of intellectualism. Telling was his preference for polished leather shoes over slippers, the traditional and still popular footwear with clerics. Styles of dress underlined that a new era had started.

Return to Revolution

Politics of change in the USSR and the IRI entailed challenges familiar to other polities, such as struggling against entrenched political and economic interests, the changing of rent-seeking patterns, and creation and maintenance of coalitions with varying elite groups. That which distinguishes the USSR and IRI from other polities is the ideological dynamic of Leninism and Khomeinism and the relationship between state and revolutionary institutions. The pillar of Khatami's and Gorbachev's programmes was the packaging of the politics of change in a Khomeinist and Leninist skin, namely '*Return to Lenin*' and '*Return to Bahman*' (the name of the Iranian month of Khomeini's return from exile). The emphasis on 'Return to Revolution' underscored both men's belief that the USSR and IRI had deviated from the goals of the revolution and determination to achieve them. This section examines the dynamics of *Return to Lenin* and *Return to Bahman*, their thoughts in regard to the causes for the need for politics of change and expectations of the extent of possible change. Thus it examines the first element in the determination of the role these men played in the attainment of the non-goals.

In a speech on Lenin's birthday in 1983 Gorbachev amongst the traditional references to heavy industry, discipline, and Soviet economic achievements, remarked that the essence of Leninism was encapsulated by Lenin's works written toward the end of his life.²⁴ Gorbachev refers to this speech in his memoirs to show that his thoughts on politics of change pre-dated his election to the post of general secretary. This later Lenin was of the post-civil war period, by which time the population,

economy, and state institutions were devastated. In 1920 alone industrial production, the economic motor of the urban areas, collapsed sevenfold in relation to pre-World War I levels. The flight of some 80% of the population of Petrograd in search of food and work underscored the crisis facing the Bolsheviks. The Kronstadt Rebellion of 1921 led by sailors, once the bedrock of Bolshevik support, Lenin understood as a sign of the danger in which the young Soviet system found itself. At the same time, the forced agricultural requisitioning by the state of basic food stuffs from the peasants had created a wave of discontent in rural areas.

Reacting to this, Lenin made a major revision in Leninism: ‘We went too far along the path of nationalisation of trade and industry, along the path of the closing of local economic activity...We went further than was theoretically or politically possible...Thus we must once again begin anew the construction (of the new society) in all areas, correcting that which was not done before and choosing different paths and approaches to problems.’²⁵ Rejecting the utopianism of War Communism and the belief in a jump to communism, he announced a ‘New Economic Policy’ (NEP), which was approved at the X Party Congress in 1921. Lenin denationalised all industries save the largest and most important ones, abrogated the state monopoly on grain and bread, and gave peasants the right to sell their produce on the open market once they had fulfilled less than onerous state orders. That which Lenin was pursuing was the return of small and mid-scale capitalism. Many Bolsheviks complained that they had not made a revolution in order to bring back capitalism. Lenin shot back: ‘We are situated in conditions of such impoverishment, destruction, ruin, and exhaustion of productive forces of the peasants and workers that it is necessary for some time to subordinate everything to this basic reality.’²⁶ Lenin was pursuing the mixing of the quest for utopia with practical politics for the timely achievement of goals.

This Lenin appealed to Gorbachev who stressed that he ‘was struck that a person whom it was impossible to move from a position four years after the revolution said, “We started off on the wrong path of straight inculcation of Communism.” This is the key to all of my thoughts at the beginning of *Perestroika*....*Perestroika* begun under the rubric of the later Lenin.’²⁷ In his memoirs Gorbachev noted: ‘The last works of Lenin attracted my attention, especially his articles and speeches in which he evaluates that period of Soviet power. He openly

announces that the Bolsheviks “made mistakes”.’ Lenin’s public confession Gorbachev considered politically important ‘since past mistakes had to be corrected by new politics. Without analysis of the mistaken character of the old course the new politics would not produce any new effect.’²⁸ The use of this ‘later’ Lenin who admitted mistakes and spoke of the need to fit theory to reality was politic for it underscored a dynamic Leninism that had the capacity for politics of change. Gorbachev stressed: ‘All life, the entire course of history convincingly shows the great truth of Leninist teachings. They were and remain for us the leadership of action, the course of inspiration, and the faithful compass in the determination of strategy and tactics in the movement forward.’²⁹

Gorbachev’s conception of the later Lenin permitted him to prove to himself and many others that he was in fact a true Leninist. He was the only general secretary to make a pilgrimage to the village of Shushenskoe, where Lenin spent his internal exile. Gorbachev also devoted great attention to the establishment of a Lenin museum in Geneva. ‘Do whatever you want with me, even shoot, but I will not so easily let go of Lenin.’³⁰ Fifteen years after the collapse of the USSR, Gorbachev remarked, ‘We turned to the re-thinking and analysis of Lenin after the revolution. I trusted Lenin and trust him now.’³¹

Gorbachev made constant references to Lenin and quoted him extensively. Boldin noted that from early on Gorbachev maintained the complete works of Lenin on his large desk. At critical moments in any discussion he grabbed for a volume and sought the quote needed to prove the validity of his argument.³² At the same time, one gathers from a reading of Gorbachev’s speeches and remarks that he also considered himself a powerful theoretician making the greatest contribution to Leninism since Lenin. ‘Gorbachevism’ would produce quickly the desired utopian universalist modernity promised by the October Revolution. At a Politburo meeting he noted: ‘You know I very much would like to link history and the contemporary times. We do not wish to do this in a superficial way. In reality we want to cross the bridge from Lenin, to link Leninist ideas and Leninist approaches and the events of those years with the issues of today. That is the dialectic with which Lenin decided problems.’³³ One example of this was the placing by Gorbachev of the slogan *Perestroika-the continuation of October* at the centre of his political platform. This slogan was seen everywhere, on the sides of buildings, on signs marking state

celebrations, on postage stamps, and other official paraphernalia. Looking back, Gorbachev confessed:

...that declaration contained in itself a share of truth and a degree of delusion. Truth in as much as we strove to attain the original ideas of October that had not yet been realised, to overcome the alienation of people from power, to give power to the people, to give root to democracy, and to establish real social justice. The illusion was that I and the majority of us thought this could be done by perfecting the existing system.³⁴

Yet, Gorbachev's form of Leninism and overall approach to change implicitly and at times explicitly cast doubt on the correctness of CPSU leadership since the Stalinist period. Stalin, having put an end to NEP and implemented collectivisation and industrialisation, declared that socialism as a whole, and especially in agriculture, had been constructed. Thus one great step towards the communist utopia had been taken. Khrushchev predicted with great confidence that by 1980 communism itself would be built in the USSR. Brezhnev, whilst quietly abandoning his predecessor's grandiose predictions, developed a new phase in the march towards the Leninist modernity, namely 'developed socialism' first elaborated at the XXIII Party Congress in 1969 and underlined in the 1977 Brezhnev constitution. Now Gorbachev spoke of economic changes, the essence of which indicated that not only was communist society further in the future than previously admitted but also had some market characteristics. According to Gorbachev such economic changes did not mean that the ultimate goal of a utopian Leninist modernity was not obtainable; they were inevitable parts of the overall historical process and construction of the earthly utopia.

Lenin never said the path to socialism was straight...He did not fear, for example, the widening of private labour activity when the state sector was weak... We consider the unifying of personal interest with socialism to be our main problem...We do not need pure, doctrinaire, thought-up (*vidumanii*) socialism, but a real, Leninist socialism.³⁵

Undynamic, dogmatic Leninism of the opponents of the politics of change could only cause the weakening and perhaps disintegration of

the world's first and most important socialist state. According to Gorbachev, Brezhnev Leninism had produced warning signs: 'Societal mores weakened. The great feeling of solidarity between people forged in the heroic periods of the revolution, the first five-year plans, the Great Patriotic War and the post-war reconstruction has weakened. The rate of alcoholism, drug-taking, and crime has grown and the penetration into Soviet society of influences foreign to us, influences of mass society, inculcating primitive tastes, vulgarity (*poshnost'*), and lack of spirituality increased.'³⁶ Gorbachev's interpretation of a dynamic Leninism seemed to have no set definition or limits to the amount of change it could accommodate.

The stage through which we are going is that of mastering Lenin's methodology, dialectics, and first political steps in the early years of Soviet power. We must free our ideas from the perversions and deformations of the (Stalinist) past. At the same time, we have to understand the Leninist conception as only a launching point for interpreting the potential development of socialism in our country.³⁷

In the IRI concepts of traditional (*sonnat*) and dynamic (*pyya*) religious jurisprudence (*fegh*) played vital roles in political discourse. Traditional *fegh*, similar to dogmatic Leninism, rejected any major changes in the basic tenets of the system's ideology. It claimed that the two philosophical and judicial bases of Shi'ia Islam, the Quran and Sunna, provide all that is necessary for governing society. In other words, the IRI must advance towards a political and social system that existed during the time of the Prophet Mohammad in order to construct the paradise in this world. This paradise would facilitate entrance to the paradise of the other world and the coming of the Hidden Imam.

Dynamic *fegh*, the pillar of Khatami's politics of change, acknowledges that Islamic doctrines provide a solid base for the IRI. But Khatami argued that the *sharia* and Islamic ordinances are not 'a collection of prepared prescriptions and action plans' applicable to the contemporary period. The time of the Prophet had a set of political, economic, and social problems and issues that differ greatly from today's world... The bases of religion must...take on new forms based on (conditions of) time and place in order to preserve their dynamism

and durability.³⁸ Khomeini frequently addressed this issue. Despite the ambiguity in the extent to which Khomeini accepted a dynamic *feqh*, he provided enough material for Khatami to claim that he was representing true Khomeinism. Khomeini argued:

In religious institutes (*homas*) there are those who destroy religion, the revolution, and the system by pretending to be very religious... On many occasions I have warned of the threats these religiously small-minded, mentally ossified reactionaries pose.... I believe in traditional *feqh*.... This does not mean, however, that *feqh* is not dynamic (*dyna*). Time and place are two decisive elements of *ejtehad*... Islamic government should have room for revision. Our revolutionary system demands that various, even opposing viewpoints be allowed to surface. No one has the right to restrict this. It is crucial to understand the demands of society and governance so that Islamic government can make policies that benefit Muslims. Unity in method and practice is essential. In regard to this the traditional religious leadership prevalent in our seminaries will not suffice.³⁹

Yet, in his last will and testament written for the clerical revolutionary elite he stressed that 'in regard to traditional *feqh* which is the manifestation of prophethood and the imamate, as well as the guarantee of the development and greatness of the community (in the march towards the utopia of this world), one must not yield even one millimetre and succumb to the temptation of the devil and the enemies of truth and religion.'⁴⁰

Khatami railed against the threat of dogmatic Khomeinism to his programme and the survival and utopian goals of the IRI.

If we ask dogmatic believers, who may see themselves as thinkers and intellectuals, what they expect from the revolution, they claim that they want a return to Islamic civilisation. We must let them know that their wishes are anachronistic. The specific thoughts that underpinned Islamic civilisation (of that time) ended with the passing of that civilisation. If it had maintained its dynamism, relevance, and ability to provide answers to people's problems, that civilisation would have endured.⁴¹

Such criticism of Islamic civilisation convinced conservatives of Khatami's 'liberal' and 'Western' belief system. But for Khatami dynamic *feqb* was the key to creating the utopian universalist modernity that Khomeini had promised. Accomplishment of this would not only benefit the Iranian people but also the world which would have a form of modernity superior to that of the West.

Dogma presents the most formidable obstacle for institutionalising a system wishing to provide a model for the present and future of human life... The effect of dogma on our society which has a religious identity is vast. Its negative effect is greater than secularism, especially because dogmatists usually project that aura of religious legitimacy. Religious duties compel them to act but they have no connection with authentic Islam, the Islamic Revolution, and the present and the future.⁴²

Khatami was echoing Gorbachev who rejected any 'dogmatic, bureaucratic, and voluntaristic inheritance since it has nothing in common with Marxism-Leninism and or real socialism.'⁴³ Gorbachev argued that Lenin, 'despite all his revolutionary urges' showed that one had to 'recognise mistakes, to re-think what was already done and from scratch evaluate what was going in the country.'⁴⁴ Dogmatism was the epitome of anti-Leninism. Khatami too referred to the anti-dogmatism of the father of the revolution: 'Imam Khomeini, especially in the last two years of his life, was deeply concerned with the danger that dogma and backward vision posed to the revolution's path and the progress and welfare of Islamic society. In line with all of Imam Khomeini's warnings, vigilance about this phenomenon is crucial to us and the future of the Islamic revolution.'⁴⁵ From this point Khatami conceived of dynamic leadership:

One of the greatest problems of religious leadership is the role of time and place in decision making. Government specifies a practical philosophy for dealing with sacrilege and internal and external difficulties. But these problems cannot be solved by a purely theoretical view of religion which will lead us to dead ends... Whilst you must ensure that religious infractions do not happen...you must focus all your effort on ensuring that when

encountering military, social, and political issues, Islam does not seem to lack practical utility.⁴⁶

Khatami has not specified his meaning of 'religious infractions'. The use of this term indicates that he believes there are limits to the extent to which Islam could accept change. But who would determine these limits? Khatami? If so, why he, and not more conservative or more liberal clerics? What is the role of the people in determining these limits? What if there is disagreement between clerics and the people over these limits? These questions remained essentially unaddressed.

Khatami's conservative rivals understood the political and ideological consequences of Khatami's rhetoric. Thus they were not prepared to give it any real space to expand. They rejected his interpretation of a dynamic Islam. Ayatollah Mohammad Mesbah Yazdi, one of the most powerful clerics supporting the idea of Islamic government, stresses:

The Islam in which we believe is that which has been laid down by the Twelve Imams and, alongside them, by fourteen centuries of judicial work by the clergy. That is the interpretation that is the basis of our understanding of Islam. If new interpretations of Islam emerge that call for changes in the teaching of Islam and the creation of a new Islam, we want nothing to do with it. I do not think the average Muslim wants anything to do with a new Islam, or with so-called Muslim 'babs' or 'Martin Luthers.'⁴⁷

Justifying his politics of change, Gorbachev stressed that Lenin understood the importance of practical politics. Those who remained in the quagmire of dogmatism and conservatism 'have not read Lenin deeply enough. In his last works there is a powerful reformist potential.'⁴⁸ Gorbachev's and Khatami's claims that this dynamism was inherent to Leninism and Khomeinism, whilst certainly a politic move given the character of the Soviet and IRI systems, reflected not cynical use of ideology in the pursuit of power, but rather these men's strong belief in the revolutions and their goals.

Despite the use of Leninist and Khomeinist rhetoric to propagate their programmes Gorbachev and Khatami faced several challenges. First, charges of betraying the revolution and its utopian goals were frequently made. Second, the implicit message of their politics of change that in the period between the deaths of the fathers of the

revolution and their own assumption of power the Soviet and IRI systems had been travelling along the wrong path seemed to indicate that the sacrifices made by past and present generations had been in vain. Such an emotionally charged issue could easily become a serious political threat. Third, the general contours of Khatami's and Gorbachev's politics of change created the sense amongst certain groups that these men had accepted the superiority of the West and believed that the Soviet and IRI attempts to produce a utopian modernity superior to that of the West had failed. Thus these systems had no other choice but to borrow from the West. Recognising this, both men used terms such as 'Socialist democracy', 'Islamic democracy', amongst others, in order to fend off charges of propagation of 'Western liberalism'. Gorbachev's and Khatami's opponents could easily use these three issues to mobilise popular and elite opinion against the politics of change.

Gorbachev's situation in this regard differed from that of Khatami. Unlike the IRI elite, the Soviet elite were relatively united on the need for change, although its particulars remained under debate. Gorbachev also enjoyed greater power than Khatami in dealing with actual and seeming opposition figures. At the same time, the revolution and the 'Great Patriotic War', core elements of Soviet identity and examples of national sacrifice, were in the relatively distant past. Those generations participating in these events no longer had a politically powerful presence. Whilst the younger generations certainly took pride in the Soviet role in World War II and had varying degrees of affinity with Great October, these events were historical. In the IRI similar defining events, the revolution and the war against Iraq, were recent events in which the vast majority of the IRI elite had participated. Most of the IRI's population either remembered these events or participated in them; if they had not participated they had lost family members in them. The emotional capacity of the revolutions, their utopian ideals, and the sacrifices made to defend and build the Soviet and IRI modernities added a potentially powerful political force rooted in sentimentality against Khatami's and Gorbachev's politics of change. Gorbachev recognised and entertained similar feelings.

How can we agree with the proposition that 1917 was a mistake and the previous 70 years of our life, labour, struggle, and battles are only a massive mistake which led us to the wrong place?⁴⁹

Our debt and debt of those who will come after us is to remember the achievements of our fathers and grandfathers. Each must know that their labour and selfless self-sacrifice were not in vain...Glory to them and great is their memory.⁵⁰

As did Khatami:

In our society a certain reality exists....In this country a revolution took place and a number of people sacrificed much for it. Some went to the front, some became martyrs, some were wounded, abandoned their education, closed up their businesses, put their lives at risk etc. Such people feel that their love for this revolution is greater and, as a result, have a greater feeling for it. In other words, when they feel that the values and standards of the revolution are weakened they become sensitive....They might even express in a radical way their feelings. Such a reaction in my opinion is understandable and if we do not understand this there will be problems. But I have a problem with this. Is it just you who are followers of the revolution? ...Why do you give yourself the right to state that your beliefs are those of the revolution? And thus you try at any price to impose on society your beliefs?⁵¹

The need for reconciliation between the universalism of Leninism and Khomeinism with Russian and Iranian nationalism distinguishes the Soviet and IRI case from other polities attempting politics of change. The lack of some form of reconciliation between nationalism and the revolutionary ideologies could pose a serious political threat to the ideological and political hegemony of Leninism and Khomeinism in an opened political space. Reconciliation was also required in order to bridge the gap between state and society that emerged as a result of attempts to destroy and/or minimise national feelings and create *homo Sovieticus* and *homo Islamicus*.

Gorbachev concentrated his first efforts in this direction on reconciliation between Soviet identity and the most powerful remaining symbol of Russian identity, the Orthodox Church. He remarked to Chernyaiev:

The Stalinist form of relations with the Church is clearly not viable...It is obvious to us that we need to find a new

approach...This (problem) will be with us for a long time and has consequences for the future. I have yet to find some concrete suggestions. But probably there is some sense in giving some form of message. Perhaps it is worth saying something at the Party Conference about the coincidence of its convening with the 1,000 year anniversary of the Christianisation of Rus'.

He went beyond this, changing fundamentally the relationship between Leninism and Orthodoxy.⁵² In 1987 he officially received high-ranking members of the Orthodox hierarchy whilst for the first time under Soviet rule the Bible was printed in mass quantities. He proclaimed the 1,000th year anniversary a state holiday and made it known that no obstacles existed to the practice and propagation of religion. He even hoped to invite Pope John Paul II to the USSR to participate in the celebrations marking this anniversary. The pope's insistence that he be allowed to visit Catholic Lithuania, a trip Moscow considered dangerous, forced Gorbachev to abandon this idea. Gorbachev returned to the church hierarchy many of its cathedrals and other properties and allowed for open displays of Orthodoxy. Clerics were once again in the upper levels of the social and political sphere; some clerics became deputies in the Soviet parliament, the Congress of Peoples' Deputies. Leading party members, sensing the changing political environment, spoke of the mixing of proletarian 'Leninist' culture with Orthodoxy. In 1990 a clerical deputy of the Congress of Peoples' Deputies became Patriarch Alexis II. He died in late 2008. For the first time in Soviet history, the state did not choose the head of the church. Vitaly, the Church obtained independence from the state which it had not enjoyed since the time of Peter the Great. Alexis clearly voiced his opinion on the Leninist approach to religion. 'Atheism,' he proclaimed, 'is a spiritual Chernobyl' echoing in effect the letter Ayatollah Khomeini had written to Gorbachev in 1988 in which he urged him to return religion to Soviet society.

For some, such as Solzhenitsyn, the return to Orthodoxy symbolised a return to Russian authenticity cleansed of Westernisation. Gorbachev, however, utilising the language of Alexander II and Catherine II, used it to prove Russian membership to Europe.

We are Europeans. Christianity united Rus' with Europe. The thousand-year anniversary of the arrival of Christianity on our

land will be marked in 1988. The history of Russia is an organic part of great European history. Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Moldavians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians, Karelians, and other peoples of our country made no small contribution to European civilisation.⁵³

Gorbachev's view by the Putin presidency was increasingly unpopular. Russia once again began to see herself separate from Western Europe which at the same time returned to the view of Russia it entertained during the Muscovite and Romanov periods. Putin in an interview with TIME noted that US conceptions of Russians are rooted in the belief that they 'are a little bit savage still, or they just climbed down from the trees and probably need to have their hair brushed and their beards trimmed.'⁵⁴ A further example of this is the unwillingness of the Russian Government, usually under pressure from the Orthodox hierarchy, to allow a papal visit to Russia. At the same time, Pope Benedict XVI, John Paul II's successor, still considers Orthodoxy a 'deformity' that should return to the guidance of Rome.⁵⁵

In 2000, some twenty years after the revolution, Khatami visited Persepolis, site of the ancient ruins of Iran's first pre-Islamic empire. In a photograph taken there, Khatami, wearing his clerical clothing, is standing in what remains of the huge royal dining room of the imperial palace of some 2,500 years ago. He is smiling with his index finger on his lip as he stares at the remnants of Iran's imperial pre-Islamic past. The symbolism was powerful. His clerical clothing and the pillars of this ancient palace represented the most important elements in Iranian identity. Khatami hoped to find a stable and lasting fusion between these two identities, seemingly in conflict with each other since the late Qajar period: 'We are a great people and have a great past. In history we were the source of great and amazing influences. Iran itself has an ancient and stable identity and then Islam arrived which made that identity more powerful and rich. In reality Iranians had an important and powerful role in Islamic civilisation.'⁵⁶

Khatami was the first leading IRI cleric to acknowledge openly Iran's pre-Islamic heritage and its role in present-day identity: 'Our people (*mellat*) are a people of civilisation builders (*tammadonsaz*). Iranians before Islam were the possessors of civilisation and after the arrival of Islam they played a vital role in the shape and expansion of Islam.'⁵⁷ He believed that this pre-Islamic element could not be destroyed. He also

tried to remind those inside and outside of Iran who consider Islam an alien force imposed by Arabs that separation of Islam from the Iranian identity was impossible given the one-thousand year contribution made to Islam by Iranian thinkers, political figures, and artisans. 'Being Iranian in the course of history has given us an identity and being Islamic strengthened that identity and made it clearer. Elimination of the Islamic element and religion from the cultural context of our identity is impossible and wrong.'⁵⁸

Gorbachev and Khatami in their attempts to reconcile nationalist sentiment with IRI and Soviet state identities clearly could not avoid the crisis of identity RWA had created. This crisis of identity dealt with fundamental questions of Russia's and Iran's place in the world and had played a significant role in both countries' political evolution. Gorbachev supported the position of the Westernisers. Khatami sought to provide equal space for the Iranian and Islamic elements in Iranian identity.

A comparison of Gorbachev and Khatami in regard to the following points shows the essence of their approaches to the politics of change and makes a determination of the extent to which they are responsible for the achievement of the non-goals. They are their: (a) understanding of the causes for the need for politics of change; (b) reference points and conceptions of politics of change; and (c) expectations in regard to changes resulting from their policies and the speed with which these changes would emerge and take root.

The belief in rapid, radical cultural, social, and/or economic change from above is an important theme binding the monarchical and revolutionary regimes in Russia and Iran. The pre-revolutionary political elite and the intelligentsia adhered to it for it appealed to their own utopian dreams and gave them a calling in life. Condemnation of RWA by a broad stratum of the intelligentsia did not result in a break in its method after the revolutions. Soviet and IRI elites pursued radical and rapid change from above with a zeal and effectiveness absent in the imperial periods. At the centre of this approach was the creation of *homo Romanovicus/homo Sovieticus* and *homo Pablavicus/homo Islamicus*. Gorbachev and Khatami fundamentally differed from each other on the issues of the effectiveness of radical change from above and expectations for the speed and range of positive change.

Soviet ideology held that the CPSU through social engineering and economic modernisation would create the *homo Sovieticus* and construct

the utopian modernity of Leninism. The factors seen as vital to their achievement were effective and purposeful party leadership, efficient cadres simultaneously obedient to central directives and driven by initiative on the local level, and strong, dynamic institutions. Certainly, such factors play decisive roles in generation and implementation of policies and overall governance. Yet, social, cultural, and economic realities place limits on the speed and effectiveness with which these factors achieve goals. The 'later' Lenin understood this when he abandoned War Communism and implemented NEP.

As already noted, Gorbachev saw in NEP dynamic Leninism according to which theories and approaches needed to evolve in the face of changing realities. He, however, failed to comprehend the other side of this 'later' Lenin who came to the realisation that the speed and scope of cultural and social change initiated from above were to a significant extent determined by forces beyond the state and party. The later Lenin stressed: 'That which is new for our revolution at the present time is the need for a reformist, gradual, cautious, and round-about approach to the solutions of the fundamental problem of development.' Lenin, whilst confessing that such an approach might result in a delay in the construction of the communist utopia argued that the 'process will be a million times more certain and sure.'⁵⁹ That Gorbachev did not reflect on this side of the later Lenin played a decisive role in the achievement of the non-goals. Gorbachev had unrealistically high expectations in regard to the rate and scope of positive change that could be achieved through a revolution from above with limited participation from below. He was obsessed with speed. In early 1986 he stated: 'In order to underline the scale of the changes which are linked to the fulfilment of the decisions of the XXVI Party Congress, I want to say once more that in the next fifteen years it is necessary for us to accomplish that which has been done by Soviet power in the last seventy years.'⁶⁰

The political challenge of the five-year plan is to restructure our economy, construct a contemporary material-technical base capable of creating the conditions for the acceleration of the development of Soviet society, the solving of big social problems, and dependable defence of the country. Time will not wait for us. All the above we must finish in this time frame because the issue at stake is the power and flowering of our great power status and

the position of socialism in the international arena. It is impossible to be slow, to wait around, because time is short. We must move forward with gathering speed.⁶¹

Linked to these expectations for unrealistically high rates of positive change was his strong personal desire to accomplish something great in his lifetime, namely the construction of a utopia. Gorbachev's character, rather than external factors, played a decisive role in the push for quick results. Raisa Gorbachev wrote that on the night of his appointment to Chernenko's funeral committee Gorbachev remarked, 'I worked for many years in Stavropol. This is the seventh year I am working in Moscow. But to realise something grand, something of vital importance, has not been possible, as if there is some wall. But life demands it and already for some time.'⁶² This desire for greatness and expectations for rapid positive results in the march towards a utopia placed Gorbachev closer to the two revolutionary Soviet leaders, Stalin and Khrushchev. The former pushed for rapid industrialisation from above in order to overcome quickly five-hundred-year-old Russian 'backwardness' whilst the latter promised communism in twenty years.

Complementing Gorbachev's belief in revolutionary change was his conviction that institutions and cadres are the sole factors determining the speed and success of social engineering and change from above. Certainly, such an approach was a predominant theme in Soviet thinking in certain periods. However, the later Lenin, Brezhnev, and Andropov held alternative views in this regard. Gorbachev believed that the ills afflicting the system were a consequence of weak CPSU leadership during the Brezhnev period, cadres not adhering to central directives and failing to show initiative in their local affairs and, by 1987, the dynamic of institutions themselves. In his opening speech at the XXVII Congress held in February 1986 Gorbachev stressed:

First and foremost because of subjective issues, such as practical activity of the party and the state the falling behind the demands of time and even life, problems in the development of the country accumulated faster than they were decided. Inertia and stiffness (*zastilnost'*) in governing, the lowering of dynamism in the work of the bureaucracy have rendered great damage to affairs. Stagnation penetrated society. The situation has required changes but in the central and local organs a unique psychology won over:

improve things without changing anything...It is impossible to avoid decisions of pressing problems. Avoidance of such issues will cost the country, the state, and the party dear.⁶³

He was more direct at the 1988 XIX Party Conference: 'We must today recognise that the political system that was created as a result of the victory of the October Revolution underwent serious distortions. As a result of the absolute power of Stalin and his group a wave of repressions and lawlessness became possible. The command administrative method of governing exercised a pernicious influence on the development of our society. The many difficulties we are experiencing today are a result of the developments of that period.'⁶⁴ He stressed: 'Many miscalculations could have been avoided if top party organs always and consistently carried out principled and effective policies in regard to cadres, ensuring a high level of capability of all cells of the party leadership and economic governing.'⁶⁵

Gorbachev did not limit his attacks on the party and state leadership. Bureaucrats and party members were also held accountable. At the January 1987 CC Plenum Gorbachev remarked, 'Beginning with the April (1986) CC Plenum we have constantly underlined that the accumulation of problems in society is to a significant degree connected with the activities of the party itself and with its personnel policies.'⁶⁶ At this plenum it was agreed after months of wrangling that 'the sorry state' the country had reached by the 1980s was 'the fault of party leadership and of party-state cadres at all levels.'⁶⁷

Gorbachev's strategy consisted of his providing new dynamic leadership at the top whilst using trips across the country, the mass media, and party speeches to outline his interpretation of the difficulties in the Soviet system, to galvanise the bureaucracy, and to include the people to an extent in *perestroika*. At the same January 1987 CC Plenum Gorbachev stated: 'Comrades! I think that we very well understand that the success of *perestroika* to a decisive degree is dependent on how quickly and deeply our cadres comprehend the necessity of changes and how creatively and selflessly they implement the line of the party.'⁶⁸

As his unrealistic expectations for the rate of positive change were increasingly frustrated, Gorbachev set his sights on institutional reform which in many instances ended with destruction of institutions. 'In a Leninist way we must carry on with unbroken movement forward to

the understanding and solving of new problems (and) the destruction of all obstacles to development. We must follow this Leninist tradition without bending and enrich and develop our party politics (and) our general line for the perfection...of developed society.⁶⁹ Gorbachev's understanding of the process of change rested on the belief that his policies were well thought-out, judicious, and appropriate to reality and that any result other than rapid and positive change was the consequence of sabotage or inertia of cadres and institutions. The extent of the capacity of society, culture, and patterns established by existing institutions to change did not seem to play any role in Gorbachev's calculations. Neither did he consider in his calculation the lag-time between the taking of decisions and seeing their results. This mindset played a key role in the chain of events leading to the collapse of the USSR. On this point Gorbachev and Khatami strongly differed from each other.

Khatami did not entertain expectations of rapid, positive, and sweeping change or of creation of a utopia. The reasons for this difference are rooted in Khatami's conception of the causes that led to Iran's present economic and political situation. He recognised that some IRI institutions needed perfecting in order to realise the goals of freedom and republicanism of the revolution. But he did not consider the distortions and shortcomings in the IRI as sole consequences of bureaucratic and institutional flaws. Rather, he believed that they were a symptom of a particular historical and cultural dynamic. Having examined and pondered over Iranian history since the Safavid period, Khatami constructed a historical paradigm that aimed to explain the cultural and societal obstacles to the attainment of the revolution's goals, namely civil society and republicanism. He used this paradigm to ponder present and future paths of development. Referring to it, he stressed the historical necessity of cultural and social evolution that required time. Institutions certainly could play a positive role in this process, but there were limits to their ability to transform culture and society quickly since they too were a reflection of society.

Khatami regarded the founding of the IRI as the beginning of a new and hopeful era, 'I am convinced that with the Islamic Revolution of Iran and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran the conditions for this historical desire for democracy have been laid.'⁷⁰ They were the starting points of the Iranian people's 'historical desire for democracy.'⁷¹ Yet, his historical purview was not limited to the IRI

period which he placed in the context of Iranian history. Gorbachev's speeches, remarks, and approach to change do not indicate that he seriously thought about the causes of the problems facing the USSR outside of the Soviet period. He believed that the October Revolution represented a new era and therefore had little, if any, sociological, political, or economic links with the tsarist system: 'We must know our history, especially that after the October Revolution.'⁷² Gorbachev concluded that the trajectory of the Soviet period and the challenges facing the USSR were rooted in the distortions of the Stalin and Brezhnev periods and were not reflections of some deep socio-cultural and political themes: 'We could not fully realise Leninist principles (because of)...Stalin's cult of personality of the 30s, which emerged with the administrative command system, bureaucratic dogmatic and voluntaristic distortions, capriciousness, and, in the 70s and early 80s lack of initiative and a braking phenomena leading to stagnation.'⁷³ His conclusion was that radical change of institutions and cadres would play the decisive role in achievement of rapid and far-reaching positive change independent of cultural, societal and sociological factors.

The starting point of Khatami's programme in the political and economic spheres was the entrenchment and strengthening of the rule of law in society and amongst the elites. Without it deep and lasting political and economic change would not take place.

The goal of a law-abiding society faces a mentality rooted in a specific historical context. This historical context consisted of despotism and dictatorship that imposed from above laws and regulations. Of course the Islamic Revolution put an end to this historical cycle... Regrettably, thirty, forty, fifty years after the advent of Islam, a form of dictatorship and despotic rule was established in the Islamic world and in the name of Islam. This went on until 150 years ago when the expansion of Western colonialism and the propagation of modern thought brought about a great change...During those 1200 years one feels a type of tyrannical and despotic state ruled supreme over the Muslim world under the guise of Islam, presenting people with various types of religious justifications for its rule.⁷⁴

He did not expect his presidency to overcome completely the obstacles to the achievement of rule of law and republicanism; it could

only make modest steps in that direction. In contrast, Alexander Yakovlev, a figure at the heart of Gorbachev's politics of change, in 1991, when the USSR was in a state of collapse and the optimism of 1985-87 had disappeared, remarked:

I must confess that in the beginning of *perestroika* I was rather a romantic. It really seemed to me that all that was needed was to tell the people that they are free, they can do what they want and what they are able to do, speak what they think and write as they are able and that would become one of the most powerful factors and stimuli of regeneration. (In this way we sought) to awaken activity and the initiative of the people...to turn on new spiritual reserves and strengths...I say frankly that I continue to feel bitterness that it did not happen this way. There is no longer a place for naïve enthusiasm, emerging from the mixture of belief, hope, and inexperience.⁷⁵

Khatami did not share this 'naïve enthusiasm.'

A country's problems should be viewed in the context of its reality. To assume that a country just learning democracy should have a similar political culture to that in the West which has had 200-300 years of experience with democracy, along with the expectations and attitudes that come with it, is not right. (Iran) has just begun to practice democracy. Unfortunately these democratic efforts have repeatedly failed in the course of history due to two factors. Namely, a mentality influenced by despotism. As a result we face intolerance, impatience, and transformation of differences to violent opposition and hostility. These have been the factors that often blocked the people's movement towards the establishment of a popular government and a democratic regime. Of course, external factors have also played a role.

He stressed that Iranians suffer from 'the chronic sickness of despotism (*estebdadzadegi*) and as a result there is disregard for the law (*ghanungorizi* and *ghanunsetizi*). All of us are struck with despotism and this is seen in our individual, group, social, and family behaviour.'⁷⁶ Time was needed to change these social and cultural dynamics. 'The nature of the human mind does not allow it to dispense suddenly and

completely with the experiences and knowledge of previous times. The secret of the evolution of human life on earth is that every person and generation starts its movement where others have left off.⁷⁷⁷ He and his closest advisors no longer believed 'in the social engineering that had taken place at the beginning of the revolution....'⁷⁷⁸

Khatami also implicitly attacked the mentality that formed Gorbachev's approach to politics of change: 'Economic reforms are dragging. Reforms are dragging. Reforms are a process. It is not such that I can send off directives and the following day everything will be put right. Therefore, this expectation that overnight everything will be put right is a mistake.'⁷⁷⁹ The reason for these unrealistically high expectations in society for rapid change he found in history: 'One consequence of the mentality of dictatorship (*diktaturzadegi*) is desire for rapid and hurried change (*shetabzadegi*). We want overnight to have everything, economic, cultural, political etc problems to be solved and no more problems to exist.'⁷⁸⁰ Khatami, having outlined a mentality that transcended the Pahlavi and IRI periods, rather than mobilising people for rapid change and excessively raising expectations, Khatami tried to show that change would take time.

Some expectations are without doubt unrealistic. No government can work miracles overnight and eradicate all bottlenecks. Nor have all of people's expectations been based on a realistic appraisal of available resources. It is conceivable that unrealistic visions as well as impractical and unattainable ideologies have spurred these already exaggerated expectations...If it is not possible to meet all expectations...people have to be convinced that our orientation is on achieving for them a better life (and) on fulfilling their spiritual and material needs.⁸¹

Gorbachev's and Khatami's differing approaches to institutional change and expectations for the rate of change were also rooted in their understandings of human nature. Gorbachev, unlike his immediate predecessors, seemingly believed not only that human nature could be transformed quickly through institutional change but also that humankind was fundamentally good. The problem was that bad institutions and economic systems prevent this goodness from flourishing. Thus he believed that once institutions were changed or dismantled the inherently good side of human nature in a political and

economic sense would emerge. This was an early Bolshevik belief that Stalin and his successors (with the possible exception of Khrushchev) did not share. Echoing Yakovlev, Gorbachev confessed after the collapse of the USSR that he was very disappointed with the populace's over-all reaction to his policies. Khatami, although adhering to the belief of the divine nature of humankind, did not see a strict division between human nature and institutions. Institutions could and needed to change with the times, but their structure and effectiveness were also a reflection of the weaknesses and strengths of those who staffed it and society as a whole. Khatami did not see institutional change as his primary and major goal. His first aim was 'to institutionalise freedom in society, and then to institutionalise it within state structures.' Once society as a whole had accepted concepts such as civil society, rule of law, and the rights and responsibilities of the government, institutional change would be meaningful and create a stable and enduring republican system.⁸²

Even if it is agreed that Soviet institutions were indeed the main cause for the problems plaguing the USSR and the main obstacle to Gorbachev's plans, whatever these plans may have been, changing or destroying institutions would not immediately change political and social culture. Andropov, with whom Gorbachev closely worked and from whom he took a degree of inspiration, noted, 'Individual mentality is hard to change; the transformation of conceptions... is no simple matter.'⁸³ In 1989 the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, met with Gorbachev in Moscow where he laid out his plans touching on 'democratisation and decentralisation' which he called 'the most important problems...'. Having listened to this Thatcher remarked, 'As far as I understand, you have to break the psychology that's been formed, and that is very difficult.' Gorbachev paid little attention to her words, maintaining the belief that the most important issue was institutional: 'The problem is not really psychology. The core of reform is democratisation and decentralisation, which will yield results only if we develop mechanisms of ensuring an integrating role for new organs of power and management with a new role for the party.'⁸⁴ Rapid social and cultural change could be generated from above. Chernyaev believes that Gorbachev's thinking 'was based on the conviction...that "there is no fortress the Bolsheviks cannot storm.'⁸⁵ Fifteen years after the collapse of the USSR, whilst still holding others and especially Boris Yeltsin responsible for the disintegration of the

socialist empire, Gorbachev admitted learning a lesson from his period in office: 'The most important lesson of *perestroika* and our time is that to rely on racing speed (*skachki*) and revolution (from above) is impossible. Of course, such an approach was beat into our mentality. All the time we had to be mobilised, to defend and force one's way through.'⁸⁶ Yet, many in the Soviet elite, such as the Brezhnev and Andropov leaderships and a large number in the Gorbachev command, did not adhere to the belief in the effectiveness and viability of radical and rapid change from above to solve major problems. The obsession with rapid radical and positive change from above was a manifestation of Gorbachev's character.

The monarchical and revolutionary regimes with their penetration into the private sphere had placed the people out of the process of change in order to create new people. They were objects, not the subjects, of change. These regimes imposed concepts of identity within a closed political system. In the process they created the conditions for societal expectations and need for a 'hero' and for direction from above. Reinforcing this phenomenon were the pre-revolutionary concepts of the monarch, rooted in *tsar-batushka* (the tsar as little father) in Russia and *far'* of the shah (shah's defence of justice and the weak) and the expectations of a leader-hero associated with the Great October and Islamic Revolutions. Consequently, since the time of RWA a gap existed between an elite affected by, and leading, the various cycles of change and other parts of society which passively or actively resisted radical change from above and remained largely untouched by them.

Khatami stressed:

If we really want to implement reforms then people need not look to a leader (*ghabramanbazi*), but undertake changes themselves. If it is agreed that changes must take place in society, the people must carry them out. It is not possible to expect that all problems will be solved from above. Usually societies that don't hold belief in themselves search for a hero who will come and solve all the problems. In an advanced society everyone is a hero and everyone thinks and everyone struggles for the solving of problems.⁸⁷

Khatami's references to this issue became more common and firm as his faced accusations of not being an effective leader of the politics of change. His statements were a response partly rooted in truth and partly in Khatami's defensive reaction to charges of weak and failing leadership.

Why in societies such as ours are people always waiting for a hero? Why do the people have the expectation that when they wake up in the morning one person will appear on the scene, take on to his shoulders the problems of the country and with a miracle overnight, or in a day or in ten days complete fundamental change in the society? Then when they see that such change has not taken place...they become discouraged, disappointed, and once again hope for the appearance of a hero. This is a big historical problem of ours. As long as we continue to await a hero, this society will not progress.⁸⁸

Gorbachev voiced similar views. He however did not speak about this issue as frequently or seriously as Khatami did, reflecting the IRI's president's long historical analysis of Iran.

We should not lead the people to believe in miracles. It is necessary to detach societal consciousness from the harmful complex, such as faith in the "good tsar", the all-powerful centre, and the belief that someone from above will establish order and organise *perestroika*. This is the worst form of societal dependence (*ižhdivenčistvo*). Many have lost the ability to act independently; they don't know how they must act. That is a fact. And it is necessary to talk about it frankly.⁸⁹

Khatami's stress on the ultimately historical roots of this issue is not entirely fair. Societies facing deep social, political, and/or economic problems tend to search for a 'hero' capable of rescuing and/or showing the country forward. Gorbachev understood this whilst sporadically talking about the need to destroy this mentality. He nonetheless believed that he was the hero saving the USSR. The difference here is rooted in their respective approaches to the role of individual leadership in the politics of change.

A vital element in one's success or failure in politics and government is leadership. A leader maintains unity within the coalition of forces making up a movement, determines its direction, and provides overall strategy and tactics in pursuit of goals which he himself determines. In this regard Khatami differed from Gorbachev. Whereas the argument here is that Gorbachev's achievement of the non-goals was rooted in his attempts to achieve rapid, radical, and positive change and in his lack of understanding of institutions, Khatami's achievement of the non-goals was due to his understanding of his role in the politics of change.

From the beginning Gorbachev regarded himself as the ideological/theoretical and political leader of *glasnost*' and *perestroika*. He managed for the first three to four years of his six-year rule to determine the broad theoretical underpinnings and dimensions of the politics of change. On a political level, he assumed the role of leader of the opposition to what he regarded were conservative and inertial forces in the state and party. Gorbachev worked for unity and direction in his struggle to neutralise and politically eliminate them. Khatami refused active and practical leadership of any movement geared to politics of change. He considered his position to be above politicking or he simply did not want to be involved in it. He stated several times that he was president and not the leader of the 'opposition.' Hajjarian, a leading theoretician of the reformist movement and one-time close Khatami aide, noted: 'He abandoned the leadership of the movement. And thus (he) separated himself from it (the reformist camp).'⁹⁰ 'When pressure from below is not co-ordinated, strong bargaining (*chanezani*) at the top has no effect. When Mr.Khatami became president the movement (Second Khordad) was gradually abandoned (by him). Pressure from below became weak and thus bargaining on top had no real effect.'⁹¹

Gorbachev was to a certain extent a reflection of Lenin, providing for his politics a theoretical framework, however flexible, whilst playing the role of a political leader. Khatami preferred to be a preacher drawing attention to issues such as civil society, rule of law, and republicanism, while failing to act as Khomeini who was a theoretician and skilful political leader. This was Khatami's most serious lapse which set into motion the achievement of the non-goals.

The rejection of political leadership is most probably related to Khatami's character which according to most people around him made

taking risky decisions and forcing them on people a serious problem for him. Mohammad Abtahi, Khatami's friend, advisor and chief of staff in his first administration and vice-president for legal and parliamentary affairs in the second administration, remarked, 'For Khatami giving orders to others, forcing his decisions was difficult... His attempts to convince others of his own opinions mixed with his own lack of confidence often resulted in a lack of decisiveness.'⁹² His brother and political ally stressed that whilst Khatami had many qualities unique for a politician such as honesty, he lacked certain characteristics necessary for a leader. First and foremost he had 'difficulty in making a final decision (and) doubt in decision-making.'⁹³ The criticism that Gorbachev lacked decisiveness is applicable from late 1989 when the consequences of his previous decisiveness and determination to forge ahead began to result in the collapse of the state and economy and in rising public frustration. To criticise Gorbachev for lack of decisiveness in the initial years of *perestroika* misses the point. He moved with decisiveness and energy in the period 1985-1987, driven by an enthusiasm for his programme and plans. Decisiveness by itself is not a virtue and if policies undertaken with decisiveness are not relatively considered and thought-out they can bring disaster. This is applicable to Gorbachev.

Gorbachev differed from Khatami in his self-confidence and strong desire to be a leader. According to one of his close advisors, Georgii Shakhnazarov, 'The Gensek believed that only he had the right to determine the character, scale, and framework of the changes. This was the cause of their limited character, harmfulness, inconsistency, and contradictions. The reforms reflected the level of his political thought, but not the requirements of the country's development.'⁹⁴ Gorbachev's Czech friend from university days, Zdenek Mlinarzh, in an interview with the Italian newspaper, *Unita*, soon after Gorbachev's election, stressed, 'Misha is a person with many qualities of a unique personality. But he is very self-confident and that could cost him dear.'⁹⁵ Whereas Andropov confessed, 'We know poorly the society we have constructed,' Gorbachev was convinced he knew very well that society and its dynamics. This viewpoint enabled him to attack the system without considering the possibility of its collapse. Despite his strong criticism of the Brezhnev years and, unlike many in the elite who had more practical experience working in the system, Gorbachev was 'ambitious and optimistic' about the system's capabilities for rapid, positive change.

Whereas Gorbachev failed to appreciate the later Lenin's comments about gradual change, he interpreted Lenin in such a way as to rationalise and justify the storming approach for radical and rapid change from above even at the expense of the state's interests:

Lenin was a supporter of free discussion in the party, yet at the XI Party Congress he banned all factions in the party and in reality carried a relentless struggle against any form of deviant thinking. He was against bureaucratisation of party work (and the replacement of democratic centralism with bureaucratic centralism. But, he dealt with his opponents by throwing them out of the party and even threatening...schism. Can these contradictions be explained? To a certain extent it can. One issue is the party as an underground organisation determining its strategy, the another issue is having come to power, the party needed unity in order to preserve itself....But, I suggest, what played a decisive role were the qualities of character and the absolute confidence in one's rightness (*pravota*). Lenin loved an argument to that point where he could overwhelm (*srazhit'*) his opponent with his arguments and undefeatable logic. But when it seemed that he was getting nowhere he did shy from extreme measures. Such were my attempts to comprehend the Leninist approach to *glasnost*' and democracy. They stimulated my own position in regard to these vital questions.⁹⁶

Gorbachev's and Khatami's levels of self-confidence, expectations for the rate of change, and understanding of the causes of the ills plaguing their systems determined the extent to which each would struggle against political opponents. Gorbachev frequently repeated in public and in meetings Napoleon's quote, 'Let's begin the battle and then see what happens.'⁹⁷ He also frequently used Lenin's phrase, 'Comrades, one must not fear chaos.' Gorbachev's use of this phrase is intriguing and gives us a glimpse into his thinking as *perestroika* gained momentum. Lenin used this phrase to prevent panic amongst the Bolsheviks when faced with economic and political chaos during the Civil War. Gorbachev through this statement was either trying to stiffen the resolve of his comrades as the system began to collapse by showing that the system had once been in chaos and yet survived or stressing implicitly his belief that a period of chaos cleansing the system

was needed in order to implement politics of change. In both cases the analysis was seriously flawed, reflecting Gorbachev's political and historical blind spots.

The chaos engulfing the system was the result of Gorbachev's policies; he was attempting to change institutional and political practices in place for at least fifty-five years. Lenin was faced with building from scratch new institutions in the midst of chaos generated by objective factors. Importantly, Lenin accomplished this with undemocratic methods. One of the first steps he took was to ban factions in the Bolshevik Party. He had already violated democratic procedures with his closing of the Constituent Assembly in 1918. He then centralised power in his hands and in the Politburo. Gorbachev, purposely or not, initiated chaos and then convinced himself that it was needed for implementation of politics of change, and then hoped to bring that chaos to an end within a semi-democratic system. At the same time, Gorbachev seemed unaware of, or unconcerned with, the danger to Soviet international and domestic security posed by his full-scale attack on state and party institutions. This brings us back to his Napoleon quote. He preferred the battle to relatively detailed preparations for it.

Khatami was the opposite, stressing the need to preserve order and stability which he seemingly hoped would generate the institutional and social change he sought. He was not prepared to take any radical steps that might threaten the IRI's domestic and international security and the interests of the state in his confrontation with political opponents.

We have two forms of anxiety which may not be those of you in the West. For a person such as myself, one anxiety is about democracy and the sovereignty and rights of the people. The other is over security. Both are important and among the clearest of constitutional principles one cannot undermine. One cannot undermine security in the name of freedom or restrict the freedom of the people with the pretext of (maintaining) security. In my opinion, this juncture must be crossed with utmost care....There are two trends amongst those caring for the country. One is security-oriented and the other is freedom-oriented. That these two groups with their differences of view may at times give rise to extremism is possible.⁹⁸

Related to this issue is the extent to which Gorbachev and Khatami had conceptions of the type of resistance they would encounter and of plans to counter it. One advantage Gorbachev had over Khatami was the forethought he gave to the directions from which possible opposition to his politics of change might come and to plans to confront it. Gorbachev moved relatively quickly to remove and/or neutralise potential and actual opponents of his power and policies. Khatami did neither, with only minor exceptions. According to his brother since the belief existed that ‘they would not allow Khatami to win and we did not have any confidence in victory (in the presidential election), we did not have a conception of the extent of opposition after it.’⁹⁹ This absence of planning in regard to confronting possible opposition reflected Khatami’s lack of an overall conception and action plan for his politics of change. Khatami himself did not even use the word ‘reforms’ during the campaign and initial period in office.

It is important to note that even in the election period and in the first couple of years of the Khatami administration the word ‘reforms’ was not used. In the period leading up to, and including, the elections the debate at that time did not include reforms. Everyone was stressing rule of law, civil society...The word ‘reforms’ (*eslahat*) at least six months to one year later was used. Newspapers, such as *Jame’e* first used the term. The word ‘reforms’ was not in the vocabulary of Mr. Khatami and the forces that were with him. It was not at all discussed. That which was expounded was a return to the constitution and its implementation and rule of law.¹⁰⁰

Since Khatami did not believe that he would win the election, he had, ‘no preparations and no thought had been given to the formation of a cabinet and its politics. It was only after the elections that thought was given to policies, economic policies etc.’¹⁰¹ Khatami himself confessed as much ‘...there is my own understanding of reform which I put forth, even though I did not enter the arena with the proposal for reforms. I had put forth a series of slogans and proposals which I think were accepted by the people and as I have said on many occasions and repeat here I never will betray the people’s hopes.’¹⁰²

The following chapters deal in greater detail with the themes brought out in this chapter, showing when and how Gorbachev and Khatami

played key roles in the achievement of the non-goals. Particular attention is paid to the role of Gorbachev's unrealisable expectations for the rate and depth of change and to the role of Khatami's unwillingness and/or inability to play the role of leader of the politics of change.

THE GEO-POLITICS OF REFORM

The foreign policies and worldview of the USSR and the IRI were similar to a significant degree. First, the concepts of empire at the heart of the Romanov and Pahlavi ideologies re-emerged in a different form in Leninism and Khomeinism which placed on Russia and Iran the responsibility of leadership of a worldwide movement of combating Western modernity and imperialism and of propagation of universalist utopian modernities. The US, an ideological polity propagating its own universalist utopian modernity, emerged as the USSR's and IRI's main geo-political and ideological enemy. Second, the history of Western invasions and/or imperialism during the monarchical eras ensured that the issue of independence and resistance to Western and especially US pressure would be pillars of Leninism and Khomeinism.

Third, as a result of the first two issues the concept of 'the West' and primarily the US came to play a role in Soviet and IRI domestic politics to a greater extent than in most other polities. The US with its claims to be the propagator of a rival utopian universalist modernity played the enemy figure needed for the strengthening of Soviet and IRI state identities and feeling of mission in the world. At the same time, the universalist aspirations of Leninism and Khomeinism combined with the Manichean world view inherent in all three polities played a powerful role in the confirmation of US identity and of the role Washington had assumed for itself in the world. Such a geo-political and ideological situation made more difficult than otherwise any seeming borrowing in a political, economic, and/or social context from the West. At the same time, groups inside the USSR and the IRI seeking political liberalisation believed that only some form of rapprochement with the US could lead to political change at home. This conclusion was based on the revolutionary elites' use of the US threat to justify their grip on power and the supremacy of the

revolutionary institutions. The ideological and geo-political struggle between competing modernities created a domestic situation in which figures and groups championing politics of change to remedy distortions in Leninism and Khomeinism, which they believed had emerged since the passing away of the fathers of these revolutions, were tried and imprisoned, having been labelled agents working for the USA. The newest example of this *modus operandi* appeared in the aftermath of the announcement to the results of the IRI presidential elections of 2009. In response to perceptions and allegations that the government had cheated in order to ensure Ahmadinejad's re-election, people in Tehran and other cities across Iran poured into the streets to protest. One of the largest was the march to Freedom Square in Tehran, in which approximately 1.5 million people participated. With the emergence of unrest, the state run media portrayed the people involved in the mainly peaceful protests as agents of the US and/or the UK and implicitly accused these countries of being behind the unrest. The repeated attempts to link the followers of Mousavi with foreign powers brought a swift response from Mousavi: "The government along with the state-run media is attempting to portray the Green popular wave as being linked to foreigners' despite its obvious popular reaction to lies and cheating."¹

Lastly, despite the strong anti-US rhetoric and the ideological and geo-political struggle described above, the USSR and IRI sought recognition of their status, one as a superpower, the other as a regional power, and respect from the one polity they despised on an ideological plateau, the USA.

This chapter examines Gorbachev's and Khatami's geo-politics of change. It looks at their attempts to remake certain aspects of the ideological framework of Soviet and IRI foreign policy and to implement a new approach to the USA. Gorbachev and Khatami felt that without a reduction in tension in the relationship with the USA the politics of change at home would suffer. Any possible reduction in this tension was naturally dependent on Washington's response to the signals coming out of Moscow and Tehran. Thus this chapter looks at US foreign-policy making and the roles of Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush and to a lesser extent Bill Clinton.

The Empire of Evil and the Empire of Liberty

In the US the approaches for dealing with the USSR can be divided into three basic frameworks. The first, the essentialist school, held that the USSR was inherently evil and bent on expansion and world domination. The US essentialists believed that they had found in the Soviet leadership that which they themselves had—a strong belief in a Manichean worldview according to which negotiation had little, if any, value and accommodation was an extremely dangerous approach that had to be avoided. From this school emerged the ‘neo-conservatives’ who opposed détente with the Soviets and drove the foreign policy of George W. Bush’s administration.

The second approach, the mechanistic school, stressed analysis of Soviet geo-political behaviour and national security interests and their evolution. The mechanists did not consider ideology as the sole deciding factor in Soviet foreign policy. Certainly, this school considered the USSR as a geo-political and ideological threat. Yet, it strove to avoid basing policy on concepts of ‘absolute evil’. This school argued that talking and dealing with the USSR had to be a priority despite a degree of scepticism concerning the fruits such moves would bring.

The third and last approach, the interactionist framework, found common ground with the mechanists in that Soviet-US interaction in the international system was rooted more in geo-politics than in ideology. But it went further. This approach argued that the dynamics of US-Soviet interaction, rooted in perceptions, misperceptions, and predictions of behaviour and responses, had created over the decades an additional layer to this geo-political and ideological conflict. In order to prevent serious and dangerous deterioration in their relationship, Moscow and Washington had to strive toward negotiation and accommodation whilst disavowing the Manichean worldview of the essentialists. This school stressed that Soviet foreign policy was continually evolving with a consequent consistent reduction of ideological influence on geo-political behaviour and that Soviet internal politics was much more diverse than recognised by the other two schools. It argued for serious efforts to be made for continual negotiation and accommodation, the result of which not only would be the lessening of Cold War tension but also an indirect contribution to the gentle pushing of Soviet domestic politics in a general direction desired by the US.

Richard Nixon, Zbigniew Brzezinski, George Schultz and James Baker can be called mechanistics. In the Reagan administration the leading essentialists were William P. Clark, National Security Advisor, Richard Pipes, Soviet specialist on the National Security Council, William Casey, CIA director, Donald Regan, Chief of Staff and Secretary of the Treasury, Caspar Weinberger, Secretary of Defence, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, UN ambassador and Richard Perle. Not surprisingly, a strong tension existed between the mechanist Schultz and these essentialists. But in the end that which mattered was Reagan, who moved from being an essentialist in 1981-1983 to becoming a mechanist after 1985 and 'ultimately even an interactionist.'²

Soviet foreign policy debates in the 1970s and early 1980s differed somewhat from those in the US. The essentialist school had no real following in the Soviet elite which could possibly be a reflection of the recognition of US power, confidence in Soviet power once nuclear parity was achieved in the 1960s, or the gradual decline of the role of ideology in Soviet foreign policy. There were essentially two schools. The first school, although suspicious of US intentions and motives, supported détente based on the limiting and reduction of conventional and nuclear weapons and implementation of a foreign policy geared toward establishment and maintenance of cordial relations between the two superpowers. One goal of this group was the continued US recognition of the USSR as a superpower. Brezhnev proudly proclaimed this status at the XXV Party Congress held in 1976. Political figures such as Brezhnev, Andropov, Dimitrii Ustinov, minister of defence and Andrei Gromyko, foreign minister, favoured continued détente with the US. The other group argued for taking steps toward a strong 'friendship' with Western Europe and then the US. It was against this school that 'conservatives' debated and struggled in the Brezhnev-Andropov-Chernenko period. As a whole, the US misinterpreted Soviet foreign policy debates in black-and-white terms, assuming that the battle was between those favouring détente and those favouring an aggressive and hostile position in regard to the United States.³

The Brezhnev leadership supported détente begun during the Nixon administration for it reflected US recognition of the USSR as a superpower and provided a framework for US-Soviet accommodation and co-existence. One of the key roles in the success of détente was the personal chemistry between Nixon and Brezhnev; it was lacking in

Brezhnev's relationships with Ford and Carter. Brezhnev, once he received in August 1971 Nixon's personal letter asking him to be his partner in discussing 'big issues' facing the international system, situated Soviet foreign policy around détente. Nixon, having taken the first dramatic and imaginative step in reducing tension in the US-Soviet relationship, obtained the positive sign he sought. Some years after the Yom Kippur War (1973) Kissinger confessed to a small group of his advisers that Moscow has 'tried to be fairly reasonable all across the board. Even in the Middle East where our political strategy put them in an awful bind, they haven't really tried to screw us.'²⁴ Ford's visit to the USSR in 1975 seemed to underline the basic tenets of détente. However, during the Ford administration domestic support for détente waned as a result of domestic factors. By 1976, an election year, Ford was no longer using the word 'détente'.

During the Carter administration (1977-1981) and the first Reagan administration (1981-1985) US-Soviet relations had deteriorated to their lowest point since right after the Cuban Missile Crisis. The Soviets believed that Carter had shifted decisively Washington's line against détente when he accepted the arms control proposal put forth by neoconservatives Richard Pearle and Paul Nitze. It called for Soviet elimination of half of its most powerful missiles already housed in silos and a US promise not to deploy in the future comparable missiles whilst postponing resolution on the issue of limitations on US cruise missiles and Soviet 'Blackfires' which Moscow had believed was close to resolution given negotiations during the Nixon and Ford administrations. Brezhnev in reaction announced that any future meetings between the leaders of the two superpowers had to be accompanied by the signing of a major agreement. Finally in June 1979 Carter and Brezhnev met in Vienna and signed SALT II.

By the end of that year the USSR invaded Afghanistan. Carter's shelving of SALT II in 1980, a move Reagan approved in 1981, seemed to confirm the Soviet belief of Washington's abandonment of mutual deterrence based on parity for a push for superiority in war-waging capabilities. At the same time Moscow was determined not to accept unequal limitations, above all not under pressure from a US it believed was intent on gaining and using military advantage 'precisely to compel Soviet acceptance of inferiority.'²⁵

During his first administration Reagan took an essentialist line. Moscow believed that Washington, determined to crush the USSR, had

betrayed the spirit of détente. Radomir Bogdanov, the deputy director of the Institute of the USA and Canada remarked at the time, 'People wonder why we can't live with the Americans. You are trying to destroy our economy, to interfere with our trade; to overwhelm and make us inferior in the strategic field...All the trust and confidence has been destroyed.'⁶ But as Secretary of State Schultz told Gorbachev the US had good reasons to be disappointed with Moscow's reaction to détente: 'I would prefer not to remain on this topic for too long. However, I can bring one example. Poor President Carter, he only wanted good. But exactly during his administration you invaded Afghanistan which was an unbelievable surprise for him. He found out more about the USSR in those 24 hours than in all his life. It was for him a heavy lesson. The other problem was the Korean aeroplane' (which the Soviets had shot down over their airspace. At the time Moscow believed that it was a spy plane).⁷ The ongoing crisis in Poland also played a significant role. Reagan took the announcement of martial law as a personal insult.⁸ His essentialism strengthened.

On 8 March 1983 at the annual convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida, Reagan threw his most (in)famous epilate at the USSR, calling it 'an evil empire' and 'the focus of evil in the modern world.' Some two weeks later he unveiled the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) whose goal he stressed was the rendering of all nuclear weapons 'impotent and obsolete.' The Andropov leadership regarded SDI as a US attempt to render Soviet defence 'impotent and obsolete' and ensure US world hegemony. There was no sense of panic in Moscow that its military and geo-political position would be fatally undermined anytime soon. However, these two moves confirmed the impression that Reagan was an essentialist with whom Moscow could not work. According to Dobrynin, 'the impact of Reagan's hard-line policy on the internal debates in the Kremlin and on the evolution of the Soviet leadership was exactly the opposite from the one intended by Washington. It strengthened those in the Politburo, the Central Committee, and the security apparatus who had been pressing for a mirror image of Reagan's own policy.'⁹

Yet, Reagan envisioned eventual talks with Moscow and the possible elimination of nuclear weapons. He was seemingly shocked to learn in late 1983 on the basis of reports obtained from the double-agent Oleg Gordievsky¹⁰ that Moscow was indeed fearful of a first-US nuclear

strike. Reagan wrote in his memoirs that at this point, 'I was even more anxious to get a top Soviet leader in a room alone and try to convince him we had no designs on the Soviet Union and the Russians had nothing to fear from us.'¹¹ In the same year, Reagan wondered about the possibility of a trip to the USSR. Schultz explained that a visit to Moscow required gradual improvements in Washington's relationship with the Kremlin. Reagan remarked that figures within his own administration, namely Clark and Weinberger, opposed such moves. Washington thus continued with essentialist rhetoric and politics which 'led Soviet leaders to dig in on confrontational lines and raised serious doubts in Moscow about whether any other kind of relationship with the United States was possible.'¹² At the same time, the Soviet nuclear capability ensured that both sides would have to talk. Reagan stressed in January 1984, 'The fact that neither of us likes the other system is no reason to refuse to talk. Living in this nuclear age makes it imperative that we do talk.'¹³ Moreover, Reagan became aware through intelligence reports about the sense of uneasiness in US and Western European opinion that his essentialist rhetoric and policies had needlessly raised geo-political and political tensions. Therefore, 1984-1985 saw a small and limited reduction in tension in Soviet-US relations as both sides returned to preliminary arms negotiations.

Schultz's position was certainly out of sync with the 'essentialist' tone of the rest of the administration which was primarily occupied with the military build-up and confronting any possible sign of Soviet influence in the world. He, along with Robert McFarlane, National Security Advisor, amongst others, opposed Casey's and Weinberger's plans to use the war in Afghanistan to undermine the Soviet system itself. At the same time, Schultz realised through his private talks with Reagan that the president was not inherently against furthering talks with Moscow. But, the Reagan administration's somewhat fragmented Soviet policy wrapped in an essentialist skin provided no framework or incentives to Moscow for dialogue and negotiation. The Reagan administration lacked diplomatic imagination. Its 'policy was primarily a unilateral approach focused on American self-doubts and on building American power to redress a perceived but largely nonexistent weakness.'¹⁴ Despite musings about a visit to Moscow and proving US goodwill, Reagan's essentialist rhetoric made Soviet movement towards accommodation more difficult by giving ammunition to hardliners. The

key here was Gorbachev's role. He was determined to press on despite the lack of imagination in US policy.

Gorbachev remarked in a 1985 interview with *Time* magazine that if is correct that 'foreign policy is a continuation of domestic policy...if we have a great plan in the domestic sphere, then what are the external issues in which we hold interest?'¹⁵ The external issues that formed the base of Gorbachev's foreign policy were the creation of a new international order, which required lessening the tension in US-Soviet relations, and remaking the Russian/Soviet geo-political, cultural, and historical relationship with Europe.

Soon after becoming general secretary, Gorbachev replaced Gromyko, foreign minister since 1957 and known in the West as *Mr.Nyet*, with Eduard Shevardnadze, the First Secretary of the Georgian SSR, who lacked international experience or travel.¹⁶ By choosing a successor from outside the diplomatic elite Gorbachev showed that he intended to change and control the course of Soviet foreign policy. Other close figures advising Gorbachev also reflected the emphasis on new thinking in foreign policy. They included Alexander Yakovlev, who was appointed head of the Propaganda Department in July 1985 and then CC secretary in early 1986. He had been Soviet ambassador to Canada from 1973 until 1983 when two months after Gorbachev's visit to the country Andropov brought him back to Moscow to head the prestigious Institute of World Economy and International Relations. According to Vadim Medvedev, one of his colleagues who too was in the Gorbachev circle, Yakovlev was a 'radical liberal.'¹⁷ Anatoly Chernyaev, who had worked in various ideological departments dealing with foreign policy, became one of Gorbachev's closest advisors on foreign as well as domestic issues.

The most important theoretical change in Soviet foreign policy implemented by Gorbachev was the removal of its guiding principle according to which international relations and politics revolved around class and revolutionary class struggle. Rising above the ideological conflict between two competing modernities, Gorbachev spoke in new universalist tones of 'the idea of the survival of civilisations'¹⁸ that stressed the need for the world to unite and cooperate to solve global problems and that countries had the right to decide their own future. He was rejecting the bi-polar world whilst proclaiming that the USSR would lead the struggle for the establishment of a new world war in which violence and war would be replaced not only by dialogue but

also a common universal concern to address the world's most pressing problems. In 1989, after the collapse of the Eastern European communist regimes, Gorbachev, riding a wave of popularity in the West, stressed: 'It is time to recognise that the contemporary world does not consist of two mutually exclusive civilisations, but rather of one general world in which human values and freedom of choice are paramount.'¹⁹ The USSR would not occupy an inherently aggressive position, especially in regard to developing countries, and would not engage in warfare in order to ensure peace and freedom of choice.

Gorbachev in his speech to the UK Parliament in December 1984 indicated that he had new conceptions of the Russian/Soviet position in Europe: 'Whatever side of the development of human civilisation we take, the European contribution is great. We live in the same home, though some use one entrance and the others a different one. We must cooperate and develop communication within that home...Our common European home.'²⁰ Since its establishment, the USSR had seen itself in geo-political, economic, and cultural conflict with Europe, whilst the implicit and explicit tones of Soviet identity stressed the West's inherent opposition to first Russia, then the USSR. Gorbachev worked to change this historical dynamic, using the language of the Romanovs and the Westernisers of the tsarist period to convince the Soviets as well as Western Europeans that Russia was also Europe. He did not share the hostility to Western culture and the West that characterised to varying degrees the thought and politics of the Slavophiles, Russian nationalists and conservatives, and the official Soviet ideology. These groups broadly agreed that Western European culture was aggressive, morally corrupt, exploitative, imperialistic in regard to Russia, and rooted in atomisation of humans and loss of human values. Gorbachev even liked Western politicians. They began to play an important psychological and political role for Gorbachev as his popularity at home decreased and the USSR seemed to be collapsing. He also came to regard many of these politicians as his friends who would help him as the financial and economic situation at home deteriorated.

Nonetheless, Gorbachev still understood the history of the West's hostility to the USSR whilst not paying much attention to the dynamic of Russia's geo-politics with the West before the revolution, as did Lenin, Stalin, and official Soviet historiography. 'Since the October Revolution we have been under the threat of attack. Judge yourself, put

yourself in our place.' Backing up his point he listed fourteen states that had participated in the Civil War against the Bolsheviks.²¹

Gorbachev's foreign policy, especially in the early periods of *perestroika*, also reflected the belief that Western modernity, if taken to be the US model, was not universally applicable given its imperialist and hegemonic tendencies. The USSR of *perestroika* would counteract these negative tendencies.

The historical achievement of socialism is the establishment of military strategic parity between the USSR and the US, the Warsaw Pact and NATO' whilst 'the anti-humanitarian ideology of contemporary capitalism renders much damage to the spiritual world of people. The cult of individualism, violence, and permissiveness, the malicious anti-communism, exploitation of culture as a source of profit lead to propagation of lack of spirituality and moral degradation. Imperialism creates mass crime and terrorism. Following a policy of neo-colonialism, imperialism strives to suffocate the sovereignty of new states and preserve and even strengthen its control over them....To achieve these goals imperialists use military and economic pressure and support internal reactionaries.²²

That which Gorbachev had in sight was a new Soviet modernity addressing local issues facing individual countries and global problems facing the world community. According to this, US modernity was conservative, chauvinistic, exploitative, and bogged down in the Manichean world view that in Gorbachev's mind was a cause of the troubles plaguing the world: 'The success of *perestroika* will reveal the class limitations and egoism of the commanding forces in the West based on militarism, the arms race, and the search for enemies across the globe.'²³ This new world order he hoped to construct was a goal in itself and a mechanism to advance his domestic agenda.

Gorbachev introduced another key change in foreign policy that argued for the 'recognition.... (that) security is indivisible. It can only be equal for all otherwise it will not exist. Security's only solid base is the recognition of the interests of all peoples and states (and) their equality in the international arena. It is necessary that one's security converge with that of all members of the international community.'²⁴ He stressed, 'As head of my country, I obviously protect the interests

of the USSR. Yet, I also have concern and respect for the legitimate interests of the US. I try to understand what worries the Americans. If both sides take this approach, we will be able to accomplish a great deal and make steady and continuous progress in our relations.²⁵ He had another message for Washington: 'Under no circumstances shall we compromise with aggressive bullies. Our independence is a principle to us. We have paid a high price for it and we will not give it up. Under no circumstances will we allow any power to interfere in our domestic affairs.'²⁶

Gorbachev believed that the starting point for his geo-politics and politics of change was the US-Soviet relationship: 'I myself and my circle concluded that in regard to international relations we must begin with the United States. It is a superpower and the recognised leader of the Western world without whose consent any attempt to achieve a breakthrough in east-west relations would fail...'²⁷ Several months after becoming general secretary, Gorbachev was corresponding with Reagan on how the threat of nuclear war and the intensity of the nuclear arms race could be reduced. In an attempt to show his willingness to talk to the US, he abandoned the conditions for meetings between the leaders of the two superpowers set in place by Brezhnev in 1977. He also announced a unilateral moratorium on nuclear tests. Washington responded by announcing a series of big nuclear tests. Most of Reagan's advisors were against a summit with him. In response Gorbachev urged the US to rid itself of the constant need to have an enemy figure: 'Some political actors are thinking in the longer term. They consider that the West would make a mistake of historical ramifications if it did not act on the positive signals coming from Moscow, if it did not dare free itself from the false assumptions (*predstavlenii*) and myths about the Soviet Union they themselves created.'²⁸

Gorbachev found both the rhetoric and the essence of the US approach disappointing and discouraging. He told Schultz during his visit to Moscow in early November 1985, 'Does the US think its present policies of exercising strength and pressure have brought the Soviet Union back to the negotiating table? If that is the kind of thinking that motivates those around the president then no success is possible...I hope the United States will consider it in its national interest to improve relations with the Soviet Union'²⁹ Whereas Brezhnev had waited for US initiatives during the Nixon

administration, Moscow was now taking the offensive in reducing tensions between the two superpowers.

Reagan went against the advice of the essentialists in his administration and agreed to meet the Soviet leader. The first Gorbachev-Reagan summit, held in Geneva in late November 1985, although not accomplishing much in concrete terms, allowed for the emergence of a base of trust and personal warmth between the two leaders. This personal chemistry was of utmost importance in laying the groundwork for breaking the wall of mistrust and suspicion that would lead to reductions in tension in Soviet-US relations. According to Shevardnadze, Gorbachev remarked: 'We saw that Reagan was a person one could deal with, although winning him over or persuading him of the other point of view was difficult. But we had the impression that this is a man who keeps his word and that he's someone with whom one can deal, negotiate, and reach accord.'³⁰ Yet, this meeting had shown Gorbachev that 'a huge degree of confrontation, mutual distrust, and political deafness' existed between the US and the USSR.³¹ Reagan too was pleased with the Geneva summit, seeing in it the first step towards expanding dialogue and relations with the USSR for he was convinced that Gorbachev differed fundamentally from previous Soviet leaders. Weinberger and other essentialists remained wary of Gorbachev, urging continued economic, geo-political, and rhetorical pressure against the USSR. They believed that Gorbachev's rhetoric was a ploy to gain time to strengthen the ailing Soviet economy and to reduce US power through arms talks. Schultz felt vindicated in his course for gradual improvement in US-Soviet relations. That which implicitly brought Schultz and the essentialists together was the belief that Washington need not make dramatic concessions in the military and geo-political fields.

Despite the relative success of Geneva, the reduction in tension was not proceeding as fast as Gorbachev wanted. In fact as a result of spy scandals in 1986 the relationship seemed to be returning to the tension of the Andropov period. In Gorbachev's mind the problem was a Reagan administration unable to respond positively to the new signals coming out of Moscow and make a contribution to the momentum needed to change the international situation.

They demanded from us a reduction of 40% in our diplomatic staff in New York. Along the coast of the Crimea appeared US

naval squadrons. On the eve of the ending of a moratorium on nuclear testing the US undertook testing in Nevada. The Soviet leadership did not succumb to such provocations and continued to drag the West into dialogue, achieving positive results.³²

Determined to push on, Gorbachev suggested a new summit between the two superpowers. He proposed London, Paris, or Reykjavik. Reagan chose the capital of Iceland given its equidistance from Washington and Moscow. It took place in early October 1986. Given Reagan's insistence on Star Wars, the summit failed to achieve any dramatic breakthrough in nuclear talks. Nonetheless, the personal chemistry between the two men strengthened whilst Gorbachev used this summit as a point of analysis in determining future moves.

Gorbachev was convinced that in the early years of his new thinking:

They wanted to provoke us into giving sharp slogans in the hope that it would be possible to return to a policy of "sharpness" and take the USSR off of the path of its new foreign policy as outlined in April 1985. The rightist circles of the West feared a new, dynamic Soviet Union, more democratic and offering peace and cooperation with different peoples. Such an approach was not to the liking of hegemonic strategic thinking.³³

Gorbachev came to the conclusion that only through unilateral moves on his part would he be able to create momentum in the international system that would force the US to change its approach to the USSR. In April 1985 he froze the deployment of SS-20 missiles in Eastern Europe. On 6 August 1985 he initiated a moratorium on nuclear testing and extended it to February 1987. In January 1986 he called for the elimination of all nuclear weapons by the year 2000. Gorbachev was not forced into making these concessions. He made them based on his understanding of the international system and the needs of the politics of change and his desire to create a new world order. He also sought to maintain in Moscow's hands the initiative in the relationship between the two superpowers and to strengthen Soviet 'soft' power.

Gorbachev's policy of making sacrifices in the hope of generating an appropriate response from Washington did succeed in changing Reagan's approach to the USSR. By 1987 Reagan was between the

interactionist and mechanist schools, having abandoned his essentialist rhetoric. The symbol of this change was Reagan's visit to the USSR in 1988. When Reagan was asked whether he still believed the USSR to be an 'empire of evil' he replied that those words belonged to 'a different era.' Former US president Nixon told Gorbachev during a 1986 visit to Moscow:

You are right there are people in the administration who do not want agreements with the Soviet Union. It seems to them that if they can isolate the Soviet Union diplomatically, apply economic pressure on it, achieve military superiority then the Soviet order would collapse. Of course, this is not going to happen. During many years Reagan, as you know, was considered a part of the grouping that shared these views. However, today he is not one of them. I learned from conversations with him that the meeting with you had a slow, but undeniable impact on the evolution of his thoughts.³⁴

Gorbachev through his unilateral moves had brought about a revolution in Soviet-US relations and created an appropriate international environment for his domestic politics of change. However, despite the changes that had taken place during the Reagan years, Washington had still not come up with a coherent policy response and framework reflecting the signals coming out of Moscow. In regard to the great number of unilateral Soviet concessions Schultz, rejecting the idea that the US should reciprocate, remarked, 'Fine, let them keep making them. His (Gorbachev's) proposals are the result of five years' of pressure from us.'³⁵ Gorbachev, determined to build his new world order and to follow his domestic agenda, proved more than willing to oblige.

Gorbachev was convinced that the sacrifices made by the USSR would in the long term pay off for Moscow, domestically as well as internationally. This gradual reduction in tension by 1988 gave Gorbachev cause and opportunity to follow with increasing speed his domestic politics of change. It is doubtful that Gorbachev could or would have been allowed by the Soviet elite to launch liberalisation and then democratisation in the USSR if Reagan in the period 1985-early 1989 had remained an essentialist.

In 1989 George Bush took the presidential oath of office. Gorbachev feared that a shift in the US approach to Moscow would accompany the change in leadership in the White House. Indeed, the Bush team took several months to review the Reagan administration's Soviet policy. Sensing this delay signalled the new administration's possible doubts, Gorbachev stressed to the newly elected president, 'You'll see soon enough that I'm not doing this for show and I'm not doing this to undermine you or to surprise you or to take advantage of you. I'm playing real politics. I'm doing this because I need to. I started it. And they all applauded me when I started in 1986 and now they don't like it so much, but it's going to be a revolution, nonetheless.'³⁶

The Bush administration continued the approach of its predecessor. It refrained from any essentialist rhetoric, gave Gorbachev a place within the Western community of nations, but did not make any concessions to the Soviet leader. The reductions in Cold War tensions continued to emerge as a result of Gorbachev's determination to achieve this through one-sided concessions. As during the Reagan administration, Gorbachev had convinced himself that the Bush administration, recognising his one-sided concessions, would eventually make concessions and even provide the USSR with economic aid. After his meeting with Bush on Malta, Gorbachev at the 21 January 1990 Politburo meeting underlined Washington's and Moscow's mutual understanding of the 'stabilising role of US-Soviet co-operation at this critical time in the development of world history' and greeted warmly the supposed readiness of the Bush administration to provide economic aid to the USSR. He was to be sorely disappointed. The administration not only opened avenues to other Soviet political actors, including Yeltsin, in the belief that Gorbachev might soon fall, but also rejected his requests for economic aid, including vetoing the granting of loans by the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development to Moscow. Gorbachev complained to Mitterrand that in the letters he received from Bush it was stated: 'If the Soviet Union will act in this and that way, the USA will review the possibility of providing help and development of their co-operation. Otherwise these questions will be more difficult to decide.'³⁷ In July 1990 Gorbachev was a guest at a meeting of the G7 in London. He hoped to obtain financial and economic aid. He returned to Moscow empty-handed. It was only in October and November 1991, when the USSR had exhausted food

stocks and was in a state of collapse, that the Bush administration offered credit to purchase US grain.

In the opinion of many in Moscow the USSR had paid an excessively high price for attainment of changes in US behaviour which were essentially rhetorical. Gorbachev not only made numerous unilateral moves in regard to Soviet nuclear and conventional military capacity, but also 'lost' the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe without obtaining significant concessions from the US. Yulii Voronstov, a top Soviet official involved in US-Soviet negotiations of this period, stressed that Gorbachev made these concessions without pressing for reciprocity from the US side in order to prove his reliability as a partner of the West.³⁸ He certainly believed he had done this and thus was convinced that the West would not let him down financially in 1990-91 when as a result of his economic policies, the USSR was facing bankruptcy and serious food shortages. The financial aid he sought he did not get, to his great surprise. Nonetheless, he had sufficiently lowered the tensions in US-Soviet relations so that he could execute his domestic politics of change. Khatami was neither able nor willing to make such dramatic concessions to the US as Gorbachev had, without similar and, in some instances, initial moves by the US. Khatami's position mixed with Washington's lack of imagination in responding to the signals coming out of Tehran ensured the failure of Khatami's geo-politics of reform.

The Great Satan and the Axis of Evil

Iranian-US relations before the revolution of 1979 were based on the following dynamics: (a) the Cold War; (b) Pahlavi desire to become the region's hegemon; (c) the last shah's desire to be the sole political actor in Iran; and (d) oil and its free supply from the Persian Gulf. The shah's domestic and foreign policies coincided with US geo-political interests in the Persian Gulf area and in relation to the Cold War which led to strong US support of the authoritarian Pahlavi regime. The Cold War and US geo-political ambitions brought a 'distortion of America's understanding of values' which led to 'overt and covert involvements... (that) were often subversive of real liberalism and democracy.'³⁹ US policymakers rationalised working and dealing with unsavoury groups and dictators in the name of fighting Soviet influence; to many it seemed that in many cases such actions were rooted in a drive to spread

US power and influence. Washington's relationship with Pahlavi Iran serves as one of the best examples of this Cold War behaviour.

The US orchestrated coup executed with the help of Iranian elements, specifically the military, against the democratically elected government of Mossadegh remains a defining moment in the dynamics between Iran and the US. After the fall of Mossadegh, Mohammad Reza Shah, who had fled the country when it seemed that the coup d'état had failed, returned to Iran. He proclaimed to his people that he was now 'an elected monarch'. Washington provided him with much military aid and played a leading role in the establishment and training of the shah's infamous intelligence service, known as SAVAK. Richard Helms, a former head of the CIA, justified this aid. Washington 'having gone through all this trouble' in overthrowing Mossadegh 'needed to make sure that the shah remained in power.'⁴⁰ With direct US support the shah succeeded in becoming an authoritarian monarch in whose hands resided all power. The shah was regarded by many of his subjects as a US puppet governing Iran in the interests of his ultimate masters in Washington while the US lost its reputation as an anti-imperialistic power. The conditions for the emergence of anti-US rhetoric in the revolution and in IRI ideology were set in place.

A defining moment came some nine months after the collapse of the Pahlavi dynasty. On 4 November 1979 students stormed the US embassy in Tehran and took its personnel hostage. This fateful event had several causes, two of which concern us here. First, many revolutionaries believed that the US might attempt a coup d'état against the revolutionary government in order to prevent the loss of a strategic ally in a vital region of the world. Looking at US actions in the past, including the overthrow of Mossadegh and Allende in Chile, this fear was not irrational. Whilst many Iranians at the time had not forgotten the 1953 coup and viewed negatively US support for the Pahlavis, the US remained oblivious to the damage its own actions had done to its image in the country. After the taking of the embassy Ayatollah Khomeini remarked, 'Underground plots are being hatched today in those embassies, mostly by the Great Satan.'⁴¹ Second, the admittance of the dying shah to the US for medical care was the spark that enflamed these suspicions. The shah's extradition and the return to Iran of his wealth were key demands for the release of the hostages. The taking of the hostages came to symbolise independence from US hegemony achieved by the Islamic Revolution.

US hatred of Iran increased as the crisis went from weeks to months. The failure of the ill-conceived Operation Eagle Claw to rescue the hostages from Tehran only added to these feelings. The ignominious end to this poorly thought out plan convinced many supporters of Khomeini that God indeed was on their side. For many only God's protection and intervention could explain the overthrow of an armed regime enjoying the active support of one of the world's superpowers, the USA, and passive support from the other, the USSR. It was during this hostage crisis that anti-US rhetoric became a pillar of IRI ideology and a mechanism with which to mobilise the masses. The hostage crisis 'traumatised the US public and darkened the lens through which the United States would view the Islamic Republic of Iran and all of its politics and actions during the decades that followed.'⁴²

In the 1980s two major issues played an important role in Tehran's view of the US. First was US support of Saddam Hussein's war against revolutionary Iran. Tehran considered it further evidence of Washington's inherent and permanent hostility to the Islamic Republic and of US hypocrisy in regard to Iran dating from the 1953 coup d'état. Tehran argued that Saddam Hussein was the aggressor, had launched attacks on civilian targets, and used chemical weapons against the IRI to which the US had turned a blind eye. 'Blinded by its suspicion of Iran, Washington essentially ignored its own rhetoric, principles, and self-interest in cultivating the genocidal Saddam Hussein.'⁴³ This belief in US double standards was underlined further by George Bush's reaction to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait which brought immediate US condemnation and eventual military action. Second, the US shooting down of an Iranian passenger plane on 3 July 1988 that was ascending in a commercial air corridor in Iranian air space near the Persian Gulf came as further evidence of what was regarded as US brutality. About one year before, Schultz was stressing to Gorbachev the negative role played by the Soviet shooting of the Korean passenger aeroplane, which was in Soviet airspace, in US-Soviet relations and in hardening Washington's position vis-à-vis Moscow. Not unexpectedly, the Reagan administration denied any parallel between these shootings. Reagan's awarding of medals to the crew that took out a passenger jet only added insult to injury. Hajjarian, one of the leading reformists, asked, 'Why did the US oppose the overthrow of the Pahlavis? Why did the US shoot down the Iranian air bus on 3 July 1988 killing 290 innocent

men, women, and children? Then it gave awards to the people who committed it.²⁴⁴

US grievances with Tehran in the 1980s were numerous. First, the revolutionary rhetoric of Khomeini threatened US-friendly but non-democratic allies in the Middle East. The Islamisation of these countries would have ended US hegemony in the region. Second, Iranian support for Hezbollah in Lebanon was regarded as an attempt to further IRI geo-political goals and destabilise Lebanon and the region. Hezbollah's kidnappings of foreigners, not to mention attacks on foreign targets in the country, the most famous of which was the bombing of the Marines' barracks in 1982, underlined for Washington the 'terrorist' character of the IRI. Third, IRI support for the PLO and calls for the destruction of Israel were particularly worrying for Washington's interests in the region. Fourth, Tehran's unwillingness to accept the ceasefire offered by Iraq in 1982, by which time Iran had thrown Iraqi forces out of its territory and was crossing into Iraq, convinced Washington that the IRI was irrational and aimed to spread its revolutionary ideology across the Middle East whilst obtaining control over more land and vital oil resources. As any revolutionary regime in history, the IRI was seen as a major destabilising force threatening established geo-political, economic, and political interests in areas deemed vital to the interests of status-quo powers.

Last was the Iran contra affair that broke out in the closing years of the second term of the Reagan administration. Iran-Contra succeeded in 'discrediting of the concept of moderate Iranians. Even after Khomeini's death, successive US administrations mired in the so-called lessons of the Iran-Contra Affair would dismiss the notion of Iranian pragmatism...As a result of the Iran-Contra Affair, the paradigm of hostility and recrimination that initially guided the Reagan administration remained intact. It was too politically costly and bureaucratically hazardous to reconsider alternative approaches to Iran.²⁴⁵ This was a dangerous development that would become common logic in US policy making in regard to the IRI. The absence of a US embassy and the connections with political players and intelligence gathering that comes with it made changes in Washington's views of the IRI as it evolved very difficult.

Some sixteen years after the rupture in US-Russian relations that came with the establishment of the USSR in the wake of the 1917 revolution, Washington formally recognised the USSR. After the taking

of US embassy personnel hostage Carter broke off relations with Tehran. Seventeen years after this rupture, Khatami became president of the IRI. Already during the Rafsanjani period some talk of limited rapprochement between the US and the IRI existed. The IRI's help in the release of foreign hostages held by Lebanese Hezbollah and passive position in the first Persian Gulf War created additional momentum. The Clinton administration, however, demanded that any future talks between the two countries were dependent on Iran changing its behaviour in regard to the issues mentioned above. To underline this, Clinton signed into law a new sanctions regime against the IRI.

Several factors distinguish the Iran-US situation from that of the Soviet-US one which made rapprochement more challenging, but not impossible. First, the lack of diplomatic relations between the two countries ensured mutual misconceptions, distrust, and suspicions would not go away soon. Both sides suffered from a dearth of intelligence on, and lack of sense about, the political environment of the opposing side. This made more difficult the overcoming of ideological essentialist rhetoric that had existed between the two countries since the revolution; this rhetoric had become for many a basis for policy making. Gorbachev was right on the mark when he discussed the role of embassies and intelligence gathering with Schultz who was complaining of the KGB's attempts to bug the US embassy and consulate in Moscow.

I think that when political actors meet and talk it is not necessary to pretend that we are pure virgins (*krasnie devitsi*). We know why the CIA was created and what it does. You spy against us, we against you. I will say something more: That you know much about us creates an element of stability. It is better that we know more not less about each other. If little is known, then the necessary stability, the necessary trust will not emerge and an element of risk will rear its ugly face. Espionage in a way plays a concrete role, helping prevent rash military or political acts.⁴⁶

One interesting example of this occurred during the Clinton administration when, in 1998, it was announced that Khatami's foreign minister, Kamal Kharazi, would attend a meeting at the UN on Afghanistan which US Secretary of State Madeline Albright would also attend. It would be the first such encounter between US and IRI

officials since the overthrow of the shah. Albright, similar to Kharazi, had been UN ambassador before obtaining the highest post dealing with foreign affairs. Having arrived at the meeting, Albright tried to break the ice with a small joke about this mutual experience. Having told it, she noticed her Iranian counterpart did not laugh. She repeated it. There still was no response. She and the US side then realised that the person sitting across from them was not the foreign minister, but rather his deputy. Albright, having gone to an adjoining room, flew into a rage, asking her advisors how this could happen. It is hard to imagine a US secretary of state failing to recognise a Soviet minister of foreign affairs.⁴⁷

Second, Iran's lack of nuclear weapons meant that the US could adhere to a hard stance in regard to Tehran, which included threats backed by funding to overthrow the theocracy. Such threats made suggestion in Tehran of talks with Washington very difficult and gave adequate ammunition to hardliners opposed to the 'Great Satan.' The essentialist Reagan admitted he had to talk to Moscow given its nuclear arsenal. Nuclear weapons ensured that the two sides would keep talking and that they would respect each other. The US of the Clinton and especially the Bush administrations faced a non-nuclear Iran.

Third, Khatami stressed the need for the reduction in the tensions between Iran and other countries, but upon unexpectedly winning the election, he and those around him had no plan in regard to achieving this, apart from the slogans he had used in the campaign. His brother confessed, 'When Khatami came to power he had a conception of reducing tension in foreign policy (*siasat-e taneshzodai*), but did not have any plan concerning its implementation. The government and even the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under Khatami's leadership had not worked out some form of programme in this direction. Even the interview with CNN was rather accidental.'⁴⁸ This contrasts sharply with Gorbachev who made immediate moves to change aspects of Soviet foreign policy.

Fourth, Khatami had greater mistrust of the US than did Gorbachev. He held the US responsible for the shah's authoritarianism which 'had been one of the worst in Iranian history' and been 'imposed on the Iranian people', including himself.⁴⁹ He keenly felt US threats to the IRI dating from the period of the revolution and the IRI's geo-political weaknesses vis-à-vis the US.

Our opponent does not tolerate societies that differ from it, seeking to nip all independent movements in the bud. The West thinks of nothing but its own interests, and if a people turn away from its values or refuse to serve its interests, it focuses all of its vast capabilities to force them to surrender or risk annihilation. And this is precisely why our revolution has encountered waves of conspiracies and pressures from the moment it was born.

Khatami could not afford to entertain the relatively naive notions that guided Gorbachev's approach to the US.

Khatami stressed during his presidential campaign and after that 'any country that recognises our independence and does not have an aggressive policy toward us can be our friend.' He repeated that the IRI is 'in favour of relations with all countries and nations that respect our independence, dignity, and interests.'⁵⁰ This became one of the key principles of Khatami's foreign policy and a key requirement for his government to talk to Washington.⁵¹ This, however, clashed with US demands that the IRI make a series of geo-political concessions before any talks. In his CNN interview he underlined that 'a bulky wall of mistrust exists between us and US administrations, a mistrust rooted in improper behaviour, I should refer to admitted involvement of the American government in the 1953 coup d'état which toppled Mossadegh's government, immediately followed by a forty-five-million dollar loan to strengthen the coup government. I should also refer to the capitulation law imposed by the US government on Iran.' Yet, in the same interview he tried to draw parallels between the US and Iran, stressing their mutual desire to be 'modern' and preserve religion.⁵²

Fifth, powerful domestic groups in both polities lobbied against talks until pre-conditions, usually geo-political concessions, were made by the other side. Such groups exercised a great influence on foreign policy making in Tehran given the decentralised and semi-democratic character of the structure of power and in Washington given certain democratic and political dynamics. In the Soviet case, such lobbies never exercised decisive power over foreign policy making whilst talking and negotiations were recognised by the nuclear-armed US and Soviet sides as the first steps toward mutual concessions. In the US-IRI case both sides demanded concessions before talks.

The basic contours of Khatami's foreign policy were clear.

We demand the unconditional withdrawal of foreign navies and forces from the region. We believe that the security and advancement of the region be achieved by the people, nations, and governments of the region... In regard to the so-called Middle East peace process, we believe that there will be no possibility for peace except through the restoration of the legal rights of the Palestinian people...Of course, we are not going to intervene in this matter. We are going to leave it to the people of Palestine and the governments and people of the region. But we maintain the right to express our views regarding the matter...and we do not think the current process will come to any satisfactory conclusion.

Kamal Kharazi, who was Iran's representative to the UN, replaced Ali Akbar Velayati, Iran's longest serving foreign minister (1981-1997). He noted, 'We hope with the international reaction to the large turnout in the elections, we will see a major change in Iran's relations with nations of the region and the entire world.'⁵³ Khatami stressed that the IRI could not leave society and the state 'vulnerable before threats' and that in them 'there is (an) aggressive culture and aggressive determination in attacking us politically and economically.' Yet, he asked, 'What are we supposed to do? We cannot close the door completely. We might be able to close the doors to a certain extent and in some areas. But, given the way the world is progressing, tomorrow it would be impossible to close the doors.'⁵⁴ Khatami expected changes in the approaches of countries to the IRI as a result of his election which would create momentum for further improvements. At the same time he would at home stress that the IRI needed to be a part of the international community.

The CNN interview symbolised the possibility for a change in IRI-US relations. However, Khatami was neither in a position, nor was he willing, to make the large-scale unilateral concessions to the US that Gorbachev did. This was a reflection of Khatami's and the overall IRI elite's suspicion and mistrust in regard to the US and the lack of nuclear weapons that could provide the maximum security and defence in light of US threats and moves to overthrow the IRI. If a limited breakthrough was to be made, the US would have to make the first real and imaginative policy initiatives in order to generate the needed momentum both at home and in the IRI. The structure of power in the

IRI was known in Washington and thus it was clear that Khatami would need crafty and judicious US moves in order to counter hard-line opponents of rapprochement. Moreover, only through changes in rhetoric backed up with some real confidence-making moves could the US convince Khatami of its willingness to talk to, rather than threaten, Tehran. However, the Soviet case showed that post-Nixon US foreign policy making lacked the imagination and flexibility to respond to the 'Gorbachev' and 'Khatami' factors.

Khatami's relatively soft rhetoric that shunned demonization of the US and emphasised a 'dialogue of civilisations' as a way of ending international conflicts and solving global issues and his shifted position in regard to the Palestinian-Israeli issue prompted a response from the opponents of the geo-politics of change whilst not generating a strong, positive response from the US. Ayatollah Mohammad Mesbah Yazdi, an influential conservative cleric retorted, 'That one cannot establish links with America is natural. Its sole aim is merely to exert its hegemony and whose policies and actions we have seen in history.'⁵⁵ Whilst the words of conservative clerics could be possibly disregarded by Washington, the pronouncements of the Leader could not. The first example of seemingly contradictory signals coming out of Tehran emerged as early as December 1997 when the IRI hosted the eighth summit of the Islamic Conference Organisation. Khatami's speech that emphasised the points discussed above contrasted sharply with that of the Leader who stressed the traditional points of IRI foreign policy and world view. For example, he underlined the familiar accusation that the West targets 'our Islamic faith and character.' In November 1999 in his speech on the anniversary of taking the embassy Khamenei stressed that 'simpletons' and 'traitors' favoured restoration of ties with the US. 'The US is still arrogant and oppressive.'⁵⁶ Khatami's rivals understood that IRI ideology, similar to Soviet ideology, needed enemy figures. At the same time, their core supporters could not accept relations with the US or Israel (and the UK to a less degree), considering them the IRI's eternal enemies

Domestic IRI politics also played a role in the intransigence of the opponents of Khatami's geo-politics of reform. The issue of the relationship with the US had become a hot domestic political issue whose resolution could determine the direction in which the IRI's political winds were blowing. If Khatami succeeded in rapprochement with the US, he would reap a large domestic political dividend,

especially amongst the large young and urban population. Vitaly, even if the hardliners agreed with moves toward the US, any form of détente and warming in relations would be seen as an impressive Khatami victory over his opponents. It would have given greater momentum to the domestic politics of change. Such a domestic dynamic was an additional argument for Washington to create momentum for a change in US-IRI relations for it would have reaped domestic and international dividends. Khatami complained that during the Clinton administration, 'The Americans just did not understand what we were against.'⁵⁷

One of the leading obstacles to such a scenario was the duality in the messages coming out of the IRI elite which gave opponents of reconciliation with Tehran ammunition to argue against any possible US moves in that direction. They could argue that any serious US concessions to the IRI did not guarantee that Tehran would change its behaviour, a point backed up by the 'essentialist' rhetoric of the Leader and other powerful clerics. But, careful reading of the Leader's speeches did not indicate an eternal unwillingness to talk and negotiate with the US. They signalled the need for Washington to take some serious confidence building steps before talks could be held. This was not an unreasonable stance to occupy given the IRI's vulnerability in regard to the US and previous US policies in regard to Iran. Yet, this key demand for changes in Tehran's behaviour before talks was at the heart of the Clinton administration's approach. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who worked in the Carter administration and was the chief negotiator in the final phase of the hostage crisis, had a strong personal dislike of the IRI, calling it an 'international outlaw' and a 'dangerous country.' Anthony Lake, Clinton's national security advisor, labelled it a 'reactionary backlash state utilising terror and coercion to pursue its agenda.' UN ambassador Richard Holbrooke underlined: 'If the Iranian government responds positively to the American position on issues of state sponsorship of terrorism and cooperating in solving regional problems and sources of instability in which Iran plays a big role, then the road will be open for a major development in the relationship.'⁵⁸ This traditional US position in regard to the IRI was doomed to diplomatic failure for it demanded that Tehran make concessions to Washington in the hope of talks whilst IRI concerns were left unaddressed. Gorbachev's stress on the indivisibility of security was still not accepted by the world's remaining superpower. In other words, IRI capitulation was the prerequisite for talks with the US.

In the Persian Gulf the Clinton administration followed a policy of dual containment whose goals were the isolation of both Saddam Hussein's Iraq in order to obtain its overthrow and the IRI in order to force changes in Tehran's geo-political behaviour. However, already by the mid-1990s it was clear that this policy was not achieving the desired security in the region. Iran and Iraq are the largest and potentially most powerful Muslim countries in the Middle East. Security and stability could not be established without their inclusion and participation.

Some three years after Khatami's election, when the beleaguered president was facing increasing conservative counter-attacks against his politics of *glasnost*, some figures in Washington began to think that perhaps the US should send some positive signals to Tehran. In March 1998 Secretary of State Madeleine Albright apologised in so many words for the US role in the overthrow of the Mossadegh government, a major bone of contention between the two countries. She confessed that the coup d'état against the nationalist prime minister 'was clearly a setback for Iran's political development.' She also noted that 'US policy toward Iraq during its conflict with Iran now appeared to have been regrettably short-sighted.' She lifted sanctions on some Iranian goods, such as carpets, pistachios, and caviar. However, the speech ended up having little effect. Having apologised for previous US interference in Iran's domestic affairs, she then made critical remarks about the Iranian military, judiciary, courts, and police stressing that they 'remain in unelected hands.'⁵⁹ Whilst her remarks about these institutions rang true to an extent, their inclusion in a speech supposedly designed to pave a way for dialogue between the two countries was impolitic. Tehran regarded these remarks as another US attempt to interfere in its domestic politics. Approximately a month later on April 12 Clinton at a White House ceremony remarked: 'I think it is important to recognise, however, that Iran, because of its enormous geopolitical importance over time, has been the subject of quite a lot of abuse from Western nations. And I think sometimes it is quite important to tell people, look, you have a right to be angry at something my country or my culture or others that are generally allied with us today did to you 50 or 60 or 100 or 150 years ago.'⁶⁰

Khatami reacted to Clinton's remarks. In an interview with *Al-Jazeera* he stressed that the issue is that the US had not changed its 'traditional policy of imposing its views on others.' At the same time, whilst the remarks and apology about Mossadegh were solid signs of a possible

change in the rhetoric coming out of Washington, they needed to be backed up by some concrete confidence-building measures. On 28 April the White House did lift some sanctions so that US companies could sell food and medicine to Iran. Kharrazi noted 'This is a unilateral lifting of sanctions and it serves US companies...There has been no change in the fundamentals of US policy towards Iran.' Khatami did not see major changes in US foreign policy that could convince him of Washington's willingness to engage Tehran and of the end of US hostility in regard to the IRI. 'As long as they do not amend their conduct and behaviour, we will not see changes in the way we view and perceive the US.'

When we say that there exists a high wall of mistrust between us and the US, it is not a mere slogan. The Iranian people feel that Americans have dominated our destiny, at least, from 28th Mordad 1332 (9 August 1953) until now. Doesn't this nation have the right to blame all the losses, the lives lost, the damages endured, and humiliation and insults the nation has been subjected to, on this incorrect US policy? ...Since the coup, US policies have weighed heavily on the life of the Iranian people. The Iranian nation has been inflicted with heavy human, financial and social costs. A lot of people suffered as a result of that unpopular (Pahlavi) regime. We were left behind by the rest of the world. It is not just that something was done and an apology is now made.... An apology must be accompanied by a series of practical measures showing a change of manner and behaviour.⁶¹

Among the confidence-building steps he mentioned were the ending of US opposition to oil and gas pipeline routes from Central Asia through Iran and of US economic sanctions against the IRI. By the end of the Clinton administration Tehran and Washington remained far apart although the issue of rapprochement was hotly debated in both capitals. Khatami, having endured four years of a Bush administration and witnessing the deterioration in the situation between the US and the IRI under his successor, Ahmadinejad, in hindsight voiced that perhaps he should have shown a different, more positive reaction to the remarks made by Clinton and Albright which might have given momentum to a warming between the two countries.⁶² But, he still

blames Washington for not taking the needed confidence-making steps to create momentum. 'They ruined it,' Khatami bitterly complained.⁶³

The election in 2000 of George W. Bush to the presidency gave hope in Tehran that talks leading to some form of reconciliation would be in the coming. It was assumed that a Republican administration thinking more about geo-politics and business and relying less on certain domestic lobbying groups working against a rapprochement between Washington and Tehran would provide the groundwork for reduction in tension. However, early on it was clear that the Bush administration had no new ideas or approaches in regard to the IRI. Condolezza Rice, Bush's national security advisor who had been a Sovietologist, argued, 'All in all changes in US policy toward Iran would require changes in Iranian behaviour.' This was not surprising given the overall US establishment's approach to the IRI and Rice's Soviet studies background. She misdiagnosed the causes of the collapse of the USSR, seeing a successful US policy of containment of the USSR as the prime cause for Gorbachev's reforms and Soviet concessions to the US. The 'Gorbachev Factor' in her view was of secondary importance. Therefore, no need to work with the 'Khatami factor' existed.

The events of 11 September 2001 and the US attack on Afghanistan seemed to offer the opportunity for limited US-IRI cooperation that could serve as a spring board for creation of a dialogue between the two countries. Khatami and his foreign policy team convinced the IRI policy-making elite of the efficacy of cooperation with the US in Afghanistan. One reason was the convergence of geo-political interests. The IRI and Russia had been supporting the Northern Alliance against the Taliban which had been directly or indirectly backed by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the US for a period. Khatami had another reason for pushing for co-operation with the US in Afghanistan. The IRI elite sought to show its reliability and positive role in the region; in other words to prove that the US could do business with the IRI once a dialogue began. Khatami noted, 'Afghanistan provides the two regimes with a perfect opportunity to improve relations.'⁶⁴ The IRI not only provided intelligence but also provided detailed maps of bombing targets whose destruction would help the Northern Alliance defeat the Taliban.

Positive signals were being sent and positive IRI behaviour was evident. At the Bonn conference, held in December 2001 to discuss the political future of a post-Taliban Afghanistan the US and the IRI co-

operated. Tehran made several important contributions. First, the draft of the Bonn agreement did not include references to democracy or cooperation in the war against terrorism. 'It was the Iranian representative who spotted these omissions and successfully argued that the newly emerging Afghan government be required to commit to both,' the US special envoy to Afghanistan, Jim Dobbins noted.⁶⁵ Second, the Northern Alliance which Moscow and Tehran had supported against the Pakistani and Saudi backed Taliban, was insisting on holding a monopoly of seats in the Afghan interim government. Again, it was the Iranian delegation that convinced the Northern Alliance to backdown. Third, Iran was instrumental in crafting the interim Afghan government, pressing its ally and long-time leader of the Northern Alliance, Borhanuddin Rabbani, to allow the US candidate, Hamid Karzai, to become president. 'The underreported story of the first episode of America's war on terrorism is that it could not have succeeded as easily as it did without Iranian support.'⁶⁶ Iran also promised in January 2002 \$530 million for Afghan reconstruction, a huge sum given the state of Iran's economy and budget.

Bush's response to these IRI overtures was inclusion of Iran in his exclusive 'Axis of Evil', which had three members-Iraq, Iran, and North Korea,-in his State of the Union Address of 29 January 2002. 'Some of these regimes have been pretty quiet since September 11th. But we know their true nature...Iran aggressively pursues these weapons and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people's hope for freedom...States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the people of the world.' This speech underscored the inflexibility, dogmatism, and lack of imagination and strategic thinking at the base of US foreign policy in dealing with the IRI. The Leader gave his response two days later, 'The Islamic Republic of Iran is proud to be the target of the rage of the world's greatest Satan.' Khatami himself lashed back at the essentialist US rhetoric which gave no room for talk and negotiation and spoke of regime change. 'Such a (black and white) mentality is what brought terrorism into existence in the first place and is now the policy ruling in today's world.'⁶⁷

Despite these remarks Tehran continued with its low-level monthly meetings in regard to Afghanistan until Washington cut them off in spring 2003 when the newspaper, *USA Today*, revealed the Bush administration's contact with 'evil.' Bush's remarks in his State of the

Union speech and afterwards strengthened the groups in Tehran that argued that accommodation and negotiation with the US was impossible for its only goal was the overthrow of the IRI and the conversion of Iran into a client state. Khatami took the inclusion of Iran in the Axis of Evil as a rebuff to his attempts to create dialogue between Tehran and Washington and as a personal insult. He and those in the reformist camp, the same camp to which Washington needed to reach out a hand, hardened their positions in regard to the US. With the Axis of Evil speech and refusal to act on the conditions brought by IRI co-operation in Afghanistan, Bush proved to be an essentialist, similar to Reagan of the early 1980s. However, unlike Reagan, Bush had no particular vision or the political or intellectual stamina to evolve as Reagan did by 1988. The key is that whereas Reagan did not allow neo-conservatives to hijack US foreign policy, neo-conservatives were able to co-opt Bush. It needs to be remembered that the neo-conservatives, who followed the essentialist school, first appeared in the 1970s in opposition to Nixon's *détente*. In the 1980s they propagated the view of the USSR as an evil empire. During the Khatami period they adhered to this essentialist view which called for no compromises and accommodation with regimes they found ideologically 'evil.' The US was to rely only on military force.

By October 2002 the Bush administration articulated a new and potentially destabilising foreign policy doctrine. According to it, the US had the right of pre-emptive strike against any country which in Washington's view was 'terrorist' or harbouring 'terrorists'. The definition of what constituted a 'terrorist' was left to Washington. International law and the UN had been swept aside by an administration overtaken by a crusading zeal—at least that is how it was viewed in Tehran amongst other places. This policy of 'pre-emptive' strike increased IRI demands for security guarantees from the US as a pre-requisite for talks and negotiation over its nuclear programme. The US not only did not provide such assurances when the EU was working to reach a deal with Tehran over its nuclear and uranium enrichment programme, but also during these negotiations in the period 2003-2005 stressed that 'all options were on the table' (a phrase known to mean the use of force) in dealing with Iran. The EU package designed to exchange economic incentives for tighter supervision of Iran's nuclear programme and permanent suspension of uranium enrichment gave security guarantees. However, Tehran was

not worried about the EU attacking it and thus rejected the package. It still sought such guarantees and talks and with the US. In fact, one can call the EU-IRI talks of this period an exercise to get the Bush administration to the negotiating table with the IRI. But the Bush administration was fixated on 'regime change.' It rejected the IRI's offer of help in Iraq, 'Let's repeat the Afghan experience (of co-operation) in Iraq' Jack Straw, the UK foreign minister was told by the IRI side, and European efforts to obtain some concessions in regard to the sanctions regime against Tehran, such as allowing the sale of civilian aircraft and spare part, as a reward for Iran's co-operation on the nuclear issue.

When in 2006 the US worked with the EU in putting together another economic incentive package to be presented to Tehran the clause about security guarantees was absent. Washington was still not prepared to remove the threat of use of force against the IRI even whilst seemingly attempting to resolve diplomatically the nuclear issue. Tehran rejected this package as well since none of its key concerns over security were addressed. Gorbachev's argument that security could be achieved only when the security needs of all were taken into account was not accepted by the ideologically charged Bush administration.

The rapid US military victory in Iraq and the fall of Saddam Hussein followed by the installation of a US occupation government in Baghdad worried the IRI elite. The fear was that Washington would go after the next country on the 'Axis of Evil' list. At the same time, well placed former and present officials in the US and the IRI, building on the links created during IRI-US co-operation in Afghanistan, sought to explore paths for a reduction in tension and for the establishment of dialogue and negotiation between the two sides. On the US side well-connected former U.S. ambassadors, including Thomas Pickering, Frank Wisner and Nicholas Platt, worked with the IRI ambassador to the U.N., Javad Zarif, with the backing of the Khatami government and foreign ministry and support of the Leadership Office.

In September 2003 a dinner party was held at Zarif's residence. There Foreign Minister Kharazi told Pickering and Wisner, 'Yes, we are ready to normalize relations provided the U.S. made the first move.' This statement reflects the point made earlier that the Khatami government need to get a sign from Washington about its seriousness to talk in order to overcome its own doubts about the character of US

policy in regard to the IRI and to challenge those political figures in Tehran arguing against any moves towards the US.

The State Department and the National Security Council were fully briefed on these movements. As a result in 2003 Zarif met with two U.S. officials, Zalmay Khalilzad, the US ambassador to Afghanistan after the defeat of the Taliban and then the first US ambassador to post-Saddam Iraq and Ryan Crocker, Khalilzad's successor in Baghdad, in a series of meetings in Paris and Geneva during which the groundwork for possible official talks was discussed. Tehran, encouraged by these moves, sent a master text of a proposal outlining the items that would be discussed between the two sides. The document called for mutual respect between the US and the IRI. The IRI placed the following issues on the agenda: (1) US non-interference in IRI domestic politics; (2) IRI access to peaceful nuclear technology, bio-technology, and chemical technology; (3) clamping down on the MKO (an armed group in opposition to the IRI which is on both the US State Department and EU list of terrorist organisations. It was based in Iraq during the Hussein era), respect of IRI national interests in Iraq, including religious links to Najaf and Karbala; and (4) eventual abolishment of commercial sanctions, unfreezing of Iranian assets in the US and co-operation towards Iranian acceptance to the WTO. The IRI in exchange would be prepared to discuss the following: (1) establishment of full transparency over its nuclear programme; (2) promises that the IRI would not seek nuclear weapons and IRI acceptance of all relevant mechanisms to assure this; (3) decisive action against any terrorists and especially Al-Qaida members that might end up within the borders of the IRI; (4) intelligence sharing in the war against terrorism; (5) use of IRI influence in order to bring about stabilisation and establishment of democratic, non-theocratic government in Iraq; (6) ceasing of material support to Palestinian groups, such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, and use of IRI influence to bring an end to violent action against Israeli civilians within the borders of 1967; (7) work towards transforming Lebanese Hezbollah into a solely political organisation; and (8) acceptance of the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian crisis. This IRI document also outlined a negotiation structure and blue print for achieving these aims. Some of the steps included statements issued simultaneously by Tehran and Washington asking for, and supporting, direct talks on these issues. The proposed text ran: 'We have always been ready for direct and

authoritative talks with the US/with the Islamic Republic of Iran with the aim of discussing—in mutual respect—our common interests and our mutual concerns, but we have always made clear that such talks can only be held if genuine progress for a solution of our own concerns be achieved.’ The IRI proposal called for the establishment of several working negotiating groups—one on economic issues, another dealing with disarmament, and the last on regional security. These documents were transmitted to the US State Department and through an intermediary to the Bush White House.

Another round of talks was then scheduled to be held in Geneva. The IRI side, including Zarif, showed up. The US group did not. Secretary of State Colin Powell stressed that ‘my position in the remaining year and a half was that we ought to find ways to restart talks with Iran...but there was reluctance on the part of the president to do that.’⁶⁸ John Bolton, Powell’s neo-conservative undersecretary of state, confessed in his memoirs that he did everything to sabotage any moves by the State Department to begin talks and negotiation with the IRI.⁶⁹ *New York Times* columnist, Nicolas Kristof wrote in the wake of the leaking of these documents

Hard-liners in the Bush administration killed discussions of a deal, and interviews with key players suggest that was an appalling mistake. There was a real hope for peace; now there is a real danger of war...what the hard-liners killed wasn’t just one faxed Iranian proposal but an entire peace process. The record indicates that officials from the repressive, duplicitous government of Iran pursued peace more energetically and diplomatically than senior Bush administration officials — which makes me ache for my country.⁷⁰

The IRI elite, including moderates and reformists, were more convinced than before that talks with the Bush administration were not possible and that Washington was only after regime change and transformation of Iran into a client state. The Bush administration in 2003 after its ‘victory’ in Iraq, believed that within several months a functioning democracy would be in place with a government friendly to the US. Thus, it was only a matter of time for the IRI to collapse. The Bush administration’s expectations for Iraq proved unrealised as the country slipped into increasing violence amongst Iraq’s groups and

against US and coalition troops. Whilst the rapid US victory of 2003 had fanned the flames of worry and perhaps fear in Tehran of possible US actions against the IRI, the rapid deterioration of the situation in Iraq beginning in late 2003 emboldened it. With the removal of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the ouster of Saddam Hussein, and the subsequent chaos that took over Iraq, Iran easily filled the power vacuum. The situation created by the Bush administration's policies in the Middle East had made the IRI the dominant power in the region. Sensing that perhaps Tehran's time had come, Khatami's opponents dug in their heels on the nuclear issue and used the situations in Iraq and Afghanistan to further their goals. Domestically they more boldly attacked Khatami, using the revolutionary institutions to block his politics of change and geo-politics of change, as is shown in greater detail in future chapters. When he left office, very little was left of his geo-politics of change.

The failure of the Clinton administration to devise a flexible and effective response to Khatami's 'winds of change' played an important role in weakening his politics of change. A dramatic move by the US would have increased Khatami's momentum in his struggle with conservative forces and weakened his suspicions in regard to Washington. The threatening essentialist rhetoric of the Bush administration backed up by the rejection of IRI overtures in 2001-2003 convinced Khatami and the IRI political elite of the impossibility to enter dialogue and negotiation with the Bush administration, especially from a position of relative weakness. Gholamhossein Elham, a close advisor of Ahmadinejad and holder of several other official positions, including government spokesman, criticised Khatami's foreign policy: (The essence of dialogue with the West was) 'shame and prostration at the feet of the world hegemony (the US)...That approach in relation to the world hegemony was prostration. We had said that we are backward and that we must learn democracy from you...The result of this approach was inclusion in the Axis of Evil and more threats against the Islamic Republic.'⁷¹ In Tehran's view the essentialist rhetoric mixed with US geo-political moves showed that Washington's only goal was the overthrow of the IRI. Unlike the USSR, the IRI did not have nuclear weapons to protect itself.

US policy exercised a negative influence on the cause of Khatami's politics of change. First, US hostility and implicit threats ensured that the already timid Khatami would not risk political chaos emerging from

internal struggles over politics of change. Second, the US position ensured that Khatami in his second term would not resign in protest to conservative counterattacks. Similar to most leaders, Khatami, having responsibility for national security and the protection of the system, felt that his resignation might spark political struggles and possible chaos, which would only benefit the US and its plans for the isolation and overthrow of the IRI. Khatami could have used US threats as a way to convince conservatives of the need for change, but that would have proven difficult. Rarely are elites prepared to buckle under such open and aggressive pressure, especially those with an ideology focusing on independence. Moreover, Khatami himself had doubts about the US's short and long-term intentions.

The US proved unable to respond relatively quickly, boldly, and imaginatively to Gorbachev's and Khatami's politics of change. Inertia and an essentialist mindset meant that during the Reagan administration and the post-Cold War periods Moscow and Tehran needed to create the conditions for reducing tension in relations between the Empire of Liberty, on the one hand, and the Evil Empire and Axis of Evil, on the other. It was Gorbachev who, given his institutional power, particular view of the international system, and understanding of the Soviet domestic scene, ensured tension between the two superpowers would be reduced. Through his rhetoric and series of unilateral moves he consistently backfooted the US which found itself having to react to Soviet initiatives in the international system. However, Reagan needs to be credited for the evolution in his approach. If he had remained an 'essentialist', even rhetorically, Gorbachev would not have continued with his unilateral measures. If he had tried the Soviet elite would not have allowed him to make concessions to a US mired in essentialist rhetoric and actions. Khatami was fated to deal with George W. Bush, who, lacking Reagan's overall vision, found comfort in the black-and-white world of essentialism. Gorbachev's prediction that 'when one country regards the other as an absolute evil and itself as absolute good then relations will meet a dead end' came true. This mentality put an end to any chances of success of Khatami's geo-politics of change which, in turn, played a decisive role in the achievement of the non-goals.

THE POLITICS OF GLASNOST'

Gorbachev, having made the Russian word '*glasnost*' world renowned remarked, 'This old Russian word carries within it many meanings. Thus it is no accident that not one foreign interpreter could fully reflect its essence. But, democratic West caught the basic meaning of *glasnost*'-a condition and function of freedom.'¹ One of the vital elements in the politics of change is how Gorbachev and Khatami handled the politics of *glasnost*'. One issue is the gradual lessening of censorship and restrictions on freedom of speech, the mass media, and publication of books. Gorbachev and Khatami believed such liberalisation was essential for the (re)establishment of a relatively strong link between society and state and incorporation of society to a greater degree than before into the political field. They considered it an essential condition of the return to the original goals of the revolution. *Glasnost*' was also an integral part of the practical side of the politics of change. Gorbachev and Khatami understood that through *glasnost*' they could strengthen the link between themselves and the people and rally popular support behind the politics of change. *Glasnost*' was simultaneously a goal and vital tool of the politics of change.

Gorbachev's and Khatami's respective approaches to the politics of *glasnost*' determined the overall contours of the politics of change and played a determining role in the dynamics leading to the achievement of the non-goals. Thus the judiciousness and effectiveness of these men's policy and strategy for the politics of *glasnost*' needs to be examined. If in the first instance these strategies were flawed, resulting in failure to achieve a significant degree of *glasnost*' or in poor management of the press and mass media in the struggle, the chances for the achievement of the non-goals greatly increased. This chapter shows how Gorbachev achieved success in the gradual promotion of

glasnost' culminating in the abolishment of censorship in 1990. It also focuses on his relatively effective management of the press and mass media during approximately the first four years of his six-year rule. Khatami failed on both these counts. Lacking a viable strategy, he proved unable to secure a relative stable environment for *glasnost*' and institutionalise to any significant degree liberalisation of the press and mass media and less stringent limits on freedom of speech. He also did not have a coherent and realistic strategy for the management of the press when he was making steps towards *glasnost*'. The structure of state power certainly played a role in the politics of *glasnost*' but did not determine outcomes. The characters of Khatami and Gorbachev were equally and at times more important than structural realities.

Gorbachev in his memoirs, in which devoted a chapter to *glasnost*', entitled *More Light: Glasnost*', noted, "More light" Lenin often said when the Bolshevik Party was underground. When I read this line back in my student days it entered my memory.² Not unexpectedly, Gorbachev through references to Lenin stressed that *glasnost*' was an integral part of Leninism. At the XXVII Party Congress held in February 1986, he argued:

the issue of the widening of *glasnost*' is a principle for us...without *glasnost*' there can be no democratisation (or) political creativity of the masses...we need *glasnost*' in order to speak about our inefficiencies, mistakes (and) difficulties which are inevitable in any job...The answer can only be of one kind, Leninist. Communists always and in all circumstances need the truth...therefore, we need to make *glasnost*' a real system.³

Initially, *glasnost*' would provide the space for discussion of the problems facing society, propagation of the politics of change, and for limited mass mobilisation. Gorbachev noted:

...many of our previous conservative trends, mistakes, and miscalculations that caused our stagnation in thought, actions, in the party, and in the state are linked with the absence of opposition and of alternative opinions and perceptions. At the present level of our societal development, such a unique opposition can become the press.⁴

The Chernobyl disaster of 26 April 1986 gave great momentum to Gorbachev's push for *glasnost*'. Ivan Laptev, at the time the editor of *Izvestiia*, the newspaper of the USSR Supreme Soviet, remarked in 1991 that the handling by the government and mass media of the Chernobyl accident 'was the first test of *glasnost*'. Looking back we all failed.⁵⁵ Haidar Aliev, Politburo member and deputy prime minister, was at work on 26 April, a Saturday: 'At the end of the day I accidentally heard about some type of explosion at a nuclear power plant. But there were no details. So I telephoned the chancery of the Council of Ministers. I said that despite being a member of the Politburo and a deputy prime minister, I had heard nothing about this explosion. I know nothing. I asked "What happened?"'⁵⁶ He was not given any answers.

The fire at the reactor raged Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. Nothing was mentioned in the Soviet press, radio, and television. On the third day of the disaster, Gorbachev called a special Politburo meeting. Its discussion centred on what information to release to the Soviet people and abroad. Whilst the USSR had an effective internal news block on Chernobyl, Europeans through their news agencies knew what had happened. The winds had blown the leaked radioactivity towards Europe. The Politburo was split. Aliev and Yakovlev strongly supported a full release of information, especially in light of the dangers the air posed for the people and the spread of the news throughout the Western world. Ligachev spoke against this, stressing that panic must not be created. Gorbachev ultimately sided with Ligachev. The CC spokesman at the time, Leonid Dobrokhotov, described the instructions given to him as 'traditional. The goal was to play down the seriousness of the accident, to prevent panic, and to fight against "bourgeois propaganda, lies and plots..."'⁵⁷ The news programme, *Vremia*, briefly reported that an accident had occurred at the Chernobyl nuclear plant, that there were casualties, and that all measures had been taken to deal with its consequences. It ended by stressing that a government commission had been formed to investigate its causes. At the same time a small announcement, similar to that made on *Vremia*, was passed by the Soviet news agency, *TACC*, to all newspapers. It was ordered that only this information be published.

On 14 May 1986, some three weeks after the explosion, Gorbachev appeared on Soviet television. He attempted to justify the government's actions and minimise the growing damage done to the government and himself by the lack of information, the growing wave of rumours over

the accident, and the scent of a cover-up. The effectiveness of this political damage control was limited. Gorbachev heard from several leading journalists that the official reaction to this disaster was 'criminal', 'a disgrace', and 'inhumane'.⁸ Sensing the political danger a lack of liberalisation of the mass media could bring him and his politics of change, Gorbachev now moved with speed and decisiveness.

Gorbachev's strategy in the period 1985-1988 had several angles. First, he was not prepared to give full and unrestricted freedom to the mass media. The fear was that a press and television outside of Gorbachev's management could become a weapon in the hands of his political opponents on the right and/or in the hands of radical reformists who could unnecessarily and prematurely antagonise and mobilise the former group at a time when the politics of change was still in its infancy. *Glasnost* was to strengthen Gorbachev and his politics of change, not damage it in its early stages. In this spirit, Gorbachev and the Politburo agreed that the restrictions on the press needed to be lessened. Yegor Ligachev from the 'right' of the *perestroika* political spectrum and Aleksandr Yakovlev from the 'left' had joint responsibility for supervision of the press. In June 1986 the Kremlin announced that *Glavlit*, the state organisation handling publishing, and the Union of Writers, would to a degree relax censorship. Although the Politburo retained influence over the general thrust of the press, Gorbachev and Yakovlev, through meetings with the management of major newspapers, worked to manage and guide it. Gorbachev told Yakovlev, 'Act as we agreed Sasha. Make sure they don't write rubbish (*gluposti*). Speak with the editors, but also hold our line.'⁹ This meant that conservative and radical reformist views must not appear in the press. Gorbachev stressed, 'The press must be more active, not give any peace to loafers, selfish people, demagogues, and help those who struggle on the behalf of *perestroika*....The press must unite and mobilise people and not divide them...'¹⁰

Second, the central press and television were to be used to propagate Gorbachev's interpretation of Lenin and his policies: 'The main duty of the press is to aid the nation in understanding the ideas of *perestroika*, to mobilise the masses in the struggle for the successful implementation of party plans. We need *glasnost*, criticism, and self-criticism in order to implement major changes in all spheres of social life...'¹¹ He defined *glasnost* as 'an essential part of the normal spiritual and moral atmosphere in society that allows a person to understand deeper our

past, what is happening today, and to what we are striving and what kind of plans we have and thus consciously participate in *perestroika*.¹² Already in 1986 newspaper articles attacking corruption in the bureaucracy began to appear with increasingly frequency. In that same year three publications, *Ogonek*, a glossy weekly periodical, *Moscow News*, and *Argumenti i Fakti* were publishing increasingly radical pieces that were in line with Gorbachev's new political course.

Gorbachev used the mass media to weaken political opponents and launch campaigns against conservatism and dogmatism. For example, during his days as second secretary under Chernenko he considered Victor Grishin, head of the Moscow party organisation, to be a contender for the post of general secretary. Rumours of kickbacks and bribes within the Moscow party machine had been swirling around the capital for some time. *Izvestiia* had gathered information showing the extent of corruption involving management and party members in one of Moscow's most prestigious shops. Such a story would seriously damage Grishin's position as a possible successor to Chernenko and as head of the Moscow party machine. Given the dynamics of censorship in the USSR, the newspaper's editorial board understood that without some form of permission from above, this story could not be published. The paper's editor, Laptev, spoke with Gorbachev about the possibility of publishing it. Gorbachev asked about its veracity. Laptev replied that he could vouch for the people who conducted the research and that the information was accurate (*tochno*). Gorbachev answered, 'Go ahead and publish it.' He, however, added, 'But on your own responsibility.' The articles were published, creating a sensation. The outing of such corruption was a novelty. It was also a reflection of factional fighting within the upper echelons of the CPSU. Grishin and others of the old Brezhnev elite understood that informal permission from above had been given for its publication. *Izvestiia* would not have taken such a step on its own. On the day of its publication senior party officials telephoned Laptev asking him who had given him the green light to publish such a 'scandalous' piece. He responded that he printed it on his own authority. No one believed him.¹³

Third, Gorbachev hoped that with politics of *glasnost* he could galvanise the educated class and the intelligentsia around his programme. A politically friendly intelligentsia would aid in recognising and overcoming the political and social obstacles to the politics of change and in mobilising society behind him. One of the first steps in

attracting this class was, in the words of Gorbachev 'the taking from the shelf forbidden films, publications of a very critical nature, and republication in the country of all 'dissident' works and immigration literature' all of which were politically and culturally dear to this class.¹⁴ Towards this end the limitations on cinema and literature were gradually relaxed. Already in 1985 films such as *Agoniya*, banned because of its relatively sympathetic view of Nicholas II and his family, and *My Friend Ivan Lapshin*, banned given its seemingly negative portrayal of life during the Stalin era, were released after sitting for years on the censor's shelf. In May 1986 at a meeting of the Union of Cinematographers the old conservative guard was pushed into retirement whilst younger, more liberal figures took over the leadership. The new head of the union became the well-known director, Elem Klimov.¹⁵ He, along with Yakovlev, conspired to get the film, *Repentance* (*Pakayanië*), released in the teeth of conservative opposition (see below). Perestroika-era films such as *Little Vera* and *Interdevochka* not only shook society with their critical look at aspects and even the basis of the Soviet system, but also underlined the method Gorbachev was using in order to bring state and society together.

Literature had suffered greatly at the hands of Soviet power. Whilst many works and authors were banned given their seeming and actual deviation from Soviet literary demands, the works of those authors deemed proper by the authorities were rarely published in quantities large enough to satisfy popular demand. Gorbachev addressed both these issues, having understood the political capital he would reap. This is not to say that only political calculations were behind his moves. He believed that Soviet policy in regard to literature had been flawed. In 1986 complete works of popular writers such as Pushkin, Lermontov, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky, amongst others, were printed in quantities to satisfy demand. Previously unacceptable works and/or authors were published, such as Bulgakov's *Master and Magerita*, Zamyatin's anti-utopian novel, *We*, Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago*, Grossman's *Life and Fate*, A. Platonov, and B. Pilnyak, amongst others. New works, such as A. Rybalkov's *Children of the Arbat* with its critical look at everyday life under Stalinism, also began to appear. Gorbachev through these measures not only showed that a new chapter had opened in Soviet history, but also succeeded in attracting the intelligentsia and educated class to the politics of change.

Lastly, Gorbachev ensured that the mass media comprehensively covered his speeches, interviews, and visits around the USSR. The first sign of this change came with his trip to Leningrad soon after becoming general secretary. In his speech to Leningrad party members he criticised party performance and openly addressed economic and political problems in terms never heard from a general secretary. He focused his attack on the lack of a competent service sector for domestic and apartment repairs and acknowledgement of a 'black service economy'. This admission shocked people. No general secretary before him openly acknowledged this problem and its undesired consequences. He met and talked with people on the streets, a method he made famous. During this trip Gorbachev showed that he was gregarious, energetic, competent, and aware of the problems facing the country. The mass media covered the trip in great detail. The official news programme, *Vremia*, contrary to usual practice showed the entire trip, including Gorbachev's speech to party members. It became common practice to show a Gorbachev speech, interview, or talk after this news programme. More often than not these went on longer than scheduled which threw off the entire Channel One programming. This use of the mass media greatly contributed to Gorbachev's personal popularity and his ability to confront his political opponents.

Initially *glasnost'* was primarily used to strengthen the link between state and society and include the people in the new political course. By mid-late 1987 its focus and tone changed. Gorbachev began to face a decline in popularity given his failure to deliver the rapid and positive economic change he promised and the worsening economic situation. He acted to safeguard his popularity and legitimacy. From late 1988/early 1989 the mass media was used to deflect criticism for this situation from Gorbachev to the bureaucracy.

As *glasnost'* gained momentum, consensus in the Politburo over the limits of freedom of speech and expression in the mass media began to break down. That which caused the initial struggle in the Politburo was Soviet history and specifically Stalin. The first warning shots were fired in 1986 as a result of the release of the film, *Repentance*, in which a Stalinesque leader is the main character. The film characterises the dangers and dynamics of a system based on cult of personality. It also stressed the need for the past to be exhumed in order to move forward. Whilst only an allegory, the links that could be possibly made to the Stalinist period had proven too much to the censors in 1982 who

shelved the film. Under Gorbachev its release became a test case of the extent to which the Soviet elite was prepared to allow the re-examination of the Soviet past. The issue was debated several times in the Politburo. Ligachev was against its release, although he claims his voice was decisive in its eventual release. Yakovlev pushed for its release. According to him once it became clear that the issue was bogged down in the Politburo, he and Klimov agreed to produce copies for showing in a small number of selected places. This was done behind the back of the Politburo but with the tacit support of Gorbachev. This led to its eventual full release, to popular acclaim. The path to the critical examination of the entire Stalin period and its role in Soviet history was opened.

The role of Stalin in Soviet history touched on the foundations and legitimacy of the entire Soviet experiment. Khrushchev, having recognised this, attempted in his secret speech at the XX Party Congress to distance the CPSU and the Soviet system from Stalin's cult of personality and terror. Khrushchev and Gorbachev, as others in the political and intellectual elite, strove to show that the 'deformations' of the Stalinist period were due to the personality of Stalin and not inevitable consequences of the fundamentals of the Soviet system. Gorbachev went further than Khrushchev in his criticism of Stalin. In his speech marking the seventieth anniversary of the October Revolution Gorbachev breached the topic of some revision of Soviet history.¹⁶ This speech, along with his slogan of 'Return to Lenin' and the essence of his political and economic policies were an implicit rejection of the Stalinist model. However, vital elements of Soviet legitimacy and identity emerged during the Stalinist period. Generations had been taught that Stalin through his programmes of collectivisation and industrialisation had made the USSR a superpower which was a key pillar of CPSU legitimacy. It was under Stalin that the USSR played the leading role in the defeat of Fascist Germany and its allies. Victory in the 'Great Patriotic War' and the common suffering of this period contributed to a sense of the Soviet people. Putting the Stalinist leadership under question could throw a shadow on these cohesive elements of Soviet/CPSU ideology and legitimacy.

The Stalinist issue had two sides. We have already seen in Chapter Six how criticism of the course and achievements of the revolution could give rise to emotions arising from the sense that present and previous generations had struggled and suffered in vain. The other side

of the issue was the extent to which the criticism could and should go in its re-evaluation of the Soviet past. As part of the growing tide of criticism of Stalin and his methods, by 1987 controversial and previously officially condemned political figures such as Leon Trotsky and Nikolai Bukharin, began to be discussed. Vitaly, given the anti-Stalinist essence of Gorbachev's politics of change, discussions revolved around whether the Bukharin path for Soviet evolution had not been the better choice and that the path taken since the 1930s had led to a dead end. As the attacks on Stalinism continued the focus began to fall on yet another issue which could have serious repercussions for Soviet legitimacy. As we have seen, Lenin and Leninism, however defined by the holders of power in the Kremlin, were the bedrock of the entire Soviet system. The paradigm of 'Good Lenin-Bad Stalin' had for the most part held up until the late 1980s. By this time, questions began to arise as to the extent to which it was the Soviet system and Leninism, and not so much the personality of Stalin, that had set the course for the terror and the cult of personality. If Lenin was ripped from his pedestal, the Soviet ideological system would collapse. This issue of handling Stalin and ultimately the interpretation of Soviet history led to the first serious political and public challenge to Gorbachev's politics of change.

Nina Andreeva, a Leningrad chemistry teacher, in early 1988 wrote a one-page letter to *Sovetskaiia Rossiia*, a RFSFR newspaper under the control of the CC, in which she condemned the blackening of Soviet history, the degradation of Soviet morals, and delegitimizing of Soviet power and heritage through the constant attacks on Stalin that had begun under Gorbachev. On 13 March 1988 Gorbachev left for a five-day trip to Yugoslavia, leaving Ligachev in charge. The letter, in an expanded form, was then published in the newspaper as an article with the title 'I cannot betray my principles'. According to Andreeva, she took this phrase from one of Gorbachev's speeches. Soon after, the article was sent via *TASS* to local newspapers for publication. Those in the Gorbachev camp took this as a political and open counterattack under the leadership of Ligachev against the politics of change. However, with the general secretary out of the country, they felt there was little, if anything, they could do. They remained scared and silent.

Gorbachev initially was not too worried by the piece but relatively quickly took the article as a personal attack on him by Ligachev. Once back in Moscow at the end of a Politburo meeting held on 24-25

March he addressed its publication. He called it 'anti-perestroika' in character and an attack on the general line of the CPSU and in particular the Politburo: '...it is not clear how this article appeared in the paper. Who looked at it in the CC? Did someone look at it? And as far as I have been informed after its publication it was recommended that the article be discussed in party organisations. What is this?'¹⁷ Ligachev responded that the editor of *Sovetskaia Rossiia* had approached the CC for advice. In the spirit of lessened censorship, he was told 'decide yourself.' Thus the newspaper itself had taken the decision to publish the piece. Ligachev stressed that the CC had not ordered the piece to be debated in party organisations, although many indeed did so. In the course of these discussions, criticism of the ideological thrust of Gorbachev's politics of change and specifically the attacks on Soviet history were severe and many. Vitaly Vorotnikov in the course of Gorbachev's criticism of the article and its publication, stressed: 'We sometime ago decided to give freedom of publication to the editors.'¹⁸ To his mind the condemnation of the publication of this piece contradicted *glasnost*'. Gorbachev retorted that the piece was directed against *perestroika*. Those Politburo members initially supporting the piece retreated and Politburo unity was preserved. After an interlude of a couple of weeks Ligachev was effectively demoted from the post of second secretary and was removed from matters dealing with the press. On 5 April 1988 an article written by some members of Gorbachev's inner circle, Yakovlev, Medvedev, and Boldin, was published in *Pravda*. It attacked the Andreeva piece and those people sympathetic to the piece's ideological and political tone.

This episode explains much of Gorbachev's politics of *glasnost*'. First, *glasnost*' was a tool and goal of Gorbachev's politics of change. The additional press and mass media freedoms were not to be enjoyed by Gorbachev's political and ideological opponents. *Glasnost*' had its limits. Second, the centralised character of Soviet mass media meant that the overall tone coming from Moscow could be changed overnight, depending on the dynamics of factional political fighting at the apex of power. The absence of retaliation on the part of the supporters of the politics of change whilst Gorbachev was out of the country underlined the delicacy of the politics of *glasnost*' at this time and the vital importance of the Gorbachev factor in it. Third, in the name of unity, a tradition from the early period of Soviet power, potential and actual opponents of Gorbachev in the Politburo were willing to back down.

They were not prepared to take their disagreements outside the Politburo.

After the XIX Party Conference held in May 1988, at which Gorbachev's programme for democratisation was approved and delegates spoke in frank and critical tones previously unheard in the USSR, the press became more radical and increasingly unmanageable. By the beginning of 1989 the mass media and *glasnost*' began to work against Gorbachev. It criticised him over the deteriorating economic situation and the increasing political and social chaos. At the same time the Politburo was pressuring him to strengthen control over the mass media. Ligachev complained, 'As for the mass media, along with the great creative work that they are doing, some...trample upon our past and present, inciting tensions in society, (and) hushing up the positive processes of *perestroika*...' Many within the elite looked to Gorbachev to re-impose some order on the mass media since, 'Under the flag of democracy and *glasnost*', the ideological and moral pillars of society are being washed away. The destructive work of the opposition forces coincides with the hostile forces from outside. They have set as their goal the break-up of socialism in the USSR...and switch our country to the tracks of capitalist development.'¹⁹

Gorbachev too was increasingly frustrated and angry with the mass media by this last phase of his period in office. One of the greatest sources of the drop in Gorbachev's popularity was the spreading food shortages. Seeing conservative hands behind this development, he criticised the intelligentsia and the educated classes who 'through the press were making panic mongering analysis claiming that in 1927, 1950, and 1968 there were food stuffs everywhere and that anything you wanted was available.'²⁰ As criticism increased, Gorbachev's patience for this function of *glasnost*' decreased.

M.S. Gorbachev reacted very strongly (*bolezhenno*) to criticism. In reality, at no time (up this point) was he ever criticised... Thus the first sociological polls showing that his popularity was beginning to fall sent him into a fury. I remember how badly he reacted to a poll taken conducted by Moscow News on passenger trains. Gorbachev cast thunder and lightning and rebuked A.H. Yakovlev for the lack of discipline (*rashchibennost*) in the press and the mistaken conclusion concerning Gorbachev's falling rating. Yakovlev took measures to fix the situation. The rating increased.

But after some time the newspaper *Argumenti i Fakti* published a poll with similar results. Once again there was an ugly scene, which ended when at a meeting with the creative intelligentsia Gorbachev in front of people could not hold back and attacked the newspaper and promised to remove its editorship all together. But an answer was not long in coming. Other mass media outlets stood up for the newspaper. Of course, Gorbachev because of his indecisiveness did not do anything with the editorship.²¹

Gorbachev in 1991, facing the possible collapse of the USSR and severe criticism from the left and right, tried to re-impose some of the restrictions on the mass media that he had eliminated in August 1990, but to no avail. Under his leadership the state had become too weak and the momentum in society too strong for any restrictions to be reinstated. Gorbachev had indeed lost control over the politics of *glasnost*. What is important is his use and relatively effective management of the press and mass media in the initial and middle years of his period in office when his overall politics of change were still vulnerable. *Glasnost* was more a tool for implementation and achievement of the goals of the politics of change and for the successful struggle against its opponents than a goal in itself. He understood that the press and mass media freedoms were a double-edged sword. In the hands of his opponents on the right and of radical reformists, it could just as easily damage the politics of reform if left unmanaged, as it could aid it.

IRI mass media and especially the press were not as centralised as they were in the USSR. Nonetheless, laws, regulations, and procedures strove for ideological purity whilst allowing for limited space for debate to an extent unknown in the USSR before Gorbachev. According to the IRI constitution press and mass media must 'propagate Islamic culture...refrain from propagating destructive and anti-Islamic opinions....(and) pave the way for the development and perfection of the Islamic person (*homo Islamicus*).' According to Article 24 the mass media and press 'enjoy freedom of expression to the point where they violate the pillars of Islam or the rights of the public.'²² The press is controlled by two laws, one passed in 1979, and the other in 1986, in addition to other ordinances. According to the first law any potential publication has to obtain a license issued by a government commission under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Islamic Guidance and

Enlightenment. The second law tightened government control of the press and gave this responsibility to this commission. The official framework, in which the mass media was to operate, was also more clearly outlined. Journalists and writers must pay attention to Islamic principles and avoid insulting or sabotaging IRI ideological pillars and institutions. Publications are forbidden to contradict Islamic principles, defame the revolution, propagate excessive material consumption and extravagance, and to stir up conflict amongst the people.²³

Khatami not unexpectedly regarded *glasnost*' (naturally he did not use the word) as a key element in his conception of civil society and in the propagation of his platform.

We need organised political parties, social associations, and an independent free press to provide channels to convey to the state the people's needs. The government must eliminate obstacles to the expansion of these channels...We have no other path except moderation and dialogue...and to people intending to use violence and harshness, even if they have good intentions, we say that violence and harshness will not work.²⁴ The more independent and free the press, the greater their representation of public opinion. The press has two main roles: proper transfer of the demands and happenings of the society to the authorities and the true transfer of the issues that the establishment have to the people.²⁵

He argued that 'freedom of which we speak strengthens the society and is not to be used to create chaos'²⁶ and that contrary to claims by conservatives that freedom would create chaos 'the limiting of freedom will destroy the security of society. If our mass media does not tell the truth the people will turn to foreign sources for their information.'²⁷

Khatami's government announced that censorship or ordered changes in printed material would not take place before publication. Attolah Mohajerani, the Minister for Enlightenment and Islamic Guidance, stressed that the ministry would not attack and harass writers and the press. He also established an Association Guild for Writers and Journalists of the Press. Khatami's government was lenient in the issuing of licenses for publications by manipulating the commission that issued them. This commission is made up of representatives from the following bodies: (a) the Ministry of Islamic

Guidance and Enlightenment; (b) the Mass Media Association; (c) the Judiciary; (d) the Ministry of Higher Education; (e) the Council of the Cultural Revolution; (f) the Qom Seminary; and (e) the Majles. This commission also supervises the activities of the media in order to ensure compliance with press and mass media laws. Since the president exercises control over the two ministries, the Council of the Cultural Revolution and the Mass Media Association, Khatami was able to expand press and publication freedoms.

The number of new newspapers and journals jumped. Publications such as *Tous*, *Neshat*, *Jame'eb*, *Khordad*, *Sobe Emruz*, and *Iran-e Farda*, amongst others, joined already reformist leaning publications such as *Hamsabari* and *Salaam*. Their conservative opponents, increasingly unified, used their own long-standing publications, such as *Kayhan*, *Jomburi-ye Eslami*, *Ettela'at*, and *Resalat* to attack both the politics of change and the economic performance of the Khatami government. The government had another mechanism to influence the press. The Ministry of Islamic Guidance and Culture could refuse to sell state-subsidised paper to recalcitrant newspapers diverging from the line coming from the government, a practice used by Ahmadinejad. However, this prerogative had limits. The Khatami government could not cut-off the subsidies given to newspapers and periodicals with a conservative character; in any case much of their funding came from sources outside the control of the executive branch.

In regard to *glasnost*' as tool and goal of the politics of change, Khatami faced three main challenges. First, unlike Gorbachev, Khatami did not control IRI radio and television whose head was appointed by, and reported to, the Leadership Office. Thus the ability of Khatami and his supporters in the media to propagate his views of the politics of change had definite limits whilst his opponents enjoyed a powerful outlet for their views. By the end of the first Khatami administration conservatives with increasing frequency used IRI radio and television to attack the politics of change through a powerful mixture of criticism of the economic situation and warnings about the threat to the revolution and Islam posed by Khatami's programme. The *Nina Andreeva* episode, the most significant conservative media attack on Gorbachev's politics of change, was mild in comparison with what Khatami endured. As the struggle between Khatami and his opponents increased in intensity, coverage of Khatami and his rhetorical and practical response to the accusations and attacks of his opponents was

never as great as that of Gorbachev. This campaign against the politics of change in the television and radio was orchestrated by his political opponents at the very top levels of the revolutionary institutions.²⁸

Second, unlike the USSR, where the major newspapers, *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, amongst others, were available across the country either for sale or pasted on newspaper reading boards, the IRI does not have a centralised system of widely-read countrywide papers. The pro-Khatami papers although enjoying popularity in most of the major urban areas did not have the readership of a Gorbachev-influenced *Pravda*, *Izvestiia*, or *Ogonek*. Country-wide coverage was ensured through television and radio run by the revolutionary institutions. Moreover, during the first Khatami administration the internet was not yet significantly widespread and easily accessible, even amongst Tehran's population.

Third, Khatami's power and influence over the press was not similar to that of Gorbachev. One reason was rooted in the structure of power. The Khatami administration was lenient in the issuing of permits for publications which led to an explosion of periodicals and newspapers supporting politics of change. However, the courts for newspapers and mass media that dealt with alleged violations of press and mass media laws came under the jurisdiction of the Judiciary. These courts were beyond Khatami's influence. They were used to check the politics of *glasnost*' through closings of publications and the arrest and imprisonment of reformist-minded editors.

An additional element that played a decisive role in the ultimate defeat of the politics of *glasnost*' was the lack of guidance and leadership by Khatami to that part of the press sympathetic and supportive of his politics of change. In this regard he differed greatly from Gorbachev. Such a position reflected Khatami's overall unwillingness to accept the political and ideological leadership of the politics of change. Thus newspapers, enjoying newly found freedoms and lacking political strategic and tactical leadership from above, joined the battle for politics of change. Many of the newspapers and writers succeeded in mobilising an urban population already sympathetic to the politics of change. At the same time, the radical interpretation of the politics of change that also appeared resulted in the premature and needless antagonism of actual and potential political opponents, especially in the early periods. Its implicit harsh criticism of the Leader, suggestions of the need to limit the power of the Leadership Office, and personal

attacks on leading IRI figures served to unite against Khatami political figures and groups fearful of losing their political and economic interests.²⁹ Gorbachev through his management of, and informal meetings with, the press sought to avoid such a scenario, in which *glasnost*' could become the pretext for a pre-emptive strike against the politics of change.

Radical elements in the IRI press, by attacking and attempting to humiliate leading powerful political figures, turned them into active opponents of Khatami. This radicalisation of the press also gave cause to close newspapers and attack the concept of greater freedoms for the mass media. Khatami did not share the radical tone of some of these writings. He was angered by the additional challenges placed in his path by these radical writers who through their writings mobilised powerful elements in the political establishment and society against him. This was the beginning of Khatami's alienation from a part of the reformist movement. As result of these issues Khatami faced in 1999 his biggest political crisis.

By 1999 the conservatives and political opponents of Khatami began to regroup after the surprising loss in the presidential elections and to work against the 'Khatami factor.' They were increasingly frustrated with, and hostile to, the politics of *glasnost*' given the increasingly radical tone of some publicists. Already in 1998 Rahim Safavi, the head of the Revolutionary Guards, threatened journalists and the mass media: 'Nowadays newspapers are being published that endanger national security and use the words of the...United States. I have told Mr. Mohajerani that your method (of permitting press freedom) threatens national security; do you know where you are heading?...I uproot anti-revolutionaries everywhere. We have to cut the heads of some and cut off the tongues of others. Our language is that of the sword and seekers of martyrdom.'³⁰ The head of the Judiciary, Ayatollah Yazdi, in one of his Tehran Friday prayers warned, 'Some of the mass media imagine that they can do whatever they want...Our youth will not tolerate aggression against Islam.'³¹ The next day there was an attack on the offices of the leading reformist paper, *Tous*. Its editor, Shams Alva'zin, was beaten along with a foreign journalist. The Leader himself warned that 'the enemy is striking Islam from home...' 'freedom is not an absolute. It is limited by rules set by Islam. I warn against the abuse of freedom by certain quarters of the press. Prevention of their devious acts is not difficult. I, however, am waiting to see what the responsible

organisations will do (in the matter). This is another warning from me. Officials must find and punish newspapers that are crossing the line.³²

The politics of *glasnost*' played two decisive roles in the overall politics of change. First, the politics of *glasnost*', including the institutionalisation of *glasnost*', were vital goals and tools of the politics of change. Second, the battle over *glasnost*' was the first test of Khatami's leadership. How he performed would show his opponents what kind of tactician and political opponent they faced in Khatami and thus help them devise strategies to neutralise him.

The battle over *glasnost*' began as a struggle between institutions. The Khatami administration generously issued licences and permits to newspapers and periodicals. The court for newspapers and mass media subsequently shut down many of them for transgressing the boundaries of the press and mass media law. For example, a leading reformist paper, *Jame'e* was closed on 2 August 1998. Its successor, *Nesbat*, was closed on 27 August 1999 on charges of insulting the Leader. Its successor, *Kbordad*, was closed on 12 December 1999. This constant parade of newspaper openings and closures, the lack of institutionalisation of freedom of the press and mass media, and Khatami's seemingly unwillingness to fight seriously on this issue increasingly frustrated key groups of his supporters, especially students. By the beginning of the academic year 1998-99 Khatami, in response to criticism of his handling of the politics of *glasnost*', stressed that this issue could be resolved only within the boundaries of the law.³³ At a political meeting Khatami was asked, 'Mr. President....Do you think that with the passing of one-third of your presidency you have achieved one-third of your electoral promises? Right now we face the closings of newspapers such as *Jame'e* and *Tous* by conservatives and everyday all kinds of excuses are found for threatening the mass media and writers and nothing happens to these people'. This situation was causing a decline in Khatami's popularity. The president's response consisted of his oft-repeated insistence on the need to work within the framework of the constitution.³⁴ Yet, for an increasing number of people the problem was the structure of power and the press and mass media laws that gave Khatami's opponents the right to close down newspapers and periodicals. This issue Khatami did not address directly.

The newspaper, *Salaam*, had been a thorn in the side of conservatives for some time. A leading cleric, Hojjatoleslam Mosavi Khoeiniha, who had been the intermediary between Khomeini and the students

involved in the taking of the US embassy, founded the paper. Its editor, Abbas Abdi, was a leader in this group of students.

The closing of this newspaper in early 1999, which sparked massive riots in that summer, was linked to another event that rocked the IRI, the so-called 'chain murders' of leading but tolerated dissident writers and political figures that took place in late November 1998. On 24 May 1998 Pirouz Davani, the head of the United Organisation for Democracy disappeared. On 19 November 1998 there was the suspicious death of Majid Sharif, a figure from the Religious National Group. The following month the murder of Dariush Faruher, Employment Minister in the Provisional Government and head of the Iranian National Party, and his wife, Parvane Eskandari, in their home shocked society. He was stabbed twenty-six times, she twenty-five. In the same period Mohammad Mokhtari, poet, writer, and active member of the Writers' Association of Iran, was killed. Several days later the body of Mohammad Jafar, a member of this same organisation and Human Rights Activist, was discovered.

The apparent goal of these killings was the intimidation of the intellectual and politically articulate part of society. The result was a political crisis that revealed the extent of the divisions within the IRI elite and its institutions. It also played a leading role in the alienation of Khatami from certain figures writing for reformist papers. Many leading conservatives, some genuinely surprised by the murders and others fearful of the public reaction, tried to distance themselves from them. Khatami and his supporters were convinced that the killings were the beginning of a conservative counterattack against the politics of change. Saeed Emami, imprisoned and charged with masterminding the murders, had been appointed deputy minister for security in the Ministry of Intelligence by Hojjatoleslam Ali Fallahian. It was revealed that Emami was connected to a number of hard-line conservative groups and had spoken at length to clerics about the 'evils' of the Khatami presidency.³⁵

With the backing of the Leader, Khatami pushed for a serious investigation into these murders. The supporters of Khatami's politics of change used the press to launch attacks on the seemingly slow investigation into the murders and to press for full transparency of who did what and when. The main source of news to the reformist press was Hajjarian, who was a former deputy minister of intelligence and now regarded as one of the key theorists and strategists in the reformist

movement. Certain people considered the chain murders the issue to launch an attack on the revolutionary institutions and specific elite political figures. The leading target became Rafsanjani who was accused of being behind these murders and others.

The conservatives, fearing the increasing momentum behind the Khatami politics of change and political attacks on them resulting from the chain murders, began to link themselves closer to the Leadership Office. At the same time, elements in the unmanaged reformist press with increasing openness made claims of authoritarian tendencies in the Leadership Office, hinting that the constitution needed to be changed in order to limit its powers. A line frequently seen in these writings was that the IRI had failed to live up to its revolutionary democratic promise. Some even went as far to say that in certain respects there was little difference between the Pahlavi monarchy and the IRI.³⁶ Many political figures and their supporters believed that Khatami's policy of *glasnost*' had gone too far.

As these political fights and press scrutiny on the chain murders and their investigation continued, *Salaam* reported in detail the Majles' attempts to tighten the press laws. At one point the newspaper printed a purportedly secret memo from the Intelligence Ministry written by Emami, in which he urged more strict press laws. The memo caused a stir for it seemed to confirm suspicions of a secret conservative plan to suffocate Khatami's programme.³⁷ Knowing that the court for press and mass media would shut the paper down over the memo's leaking, Khomeiniha suspended publication of *Salaam*. He was brought before the special court for the clergy and found guilty of damaging the revolution and the system and received a three-year suspended sentence. *Salaam* was closed for five years. It seemed to an increasing number of people that Khatami was unable to execute politics of *glasnost*'.

Students living in the halls of residence of the University of Tehran organised a small, peaceful demonstration in protest against the closing of *Salaam* and the proposed media law put forth by the conservative controlled Majles. The students returned to the halls of residence after talks with the police on the ground. Later that night the halls of residence were attacked by the police and para-military groups. Having entered the halls of residence illegally they beat students with batons and rocks. Tear gas and knives were also used against them. University facilities endured much damage. Dr. Kuhi, the head of the dormitory, reported that some 2,400 beds were destroyed or damaged. Two days

later the Minister of the Interior announced that one officer and two students were killed in the attack. The Minister of Higher Education, Mostafa Moin, and the heads of the University of Tehran resigned in protest. Leading clerics, such as Sanai, Musavi Ardebili, Montazeri, and Taheri condemned the attacks.

Violence against students added fuel to the flame of resentment and dissatisfaction over the lack of success of Khatami's politics of change. Demonstrations begin to spread across the country. Many people supported them, providing participants with water and food. By the third day the Leader expressed regret over what happened and urged calm. The next day the disturbances increased in number, with many non-student elements joining and radicalising the movement. Slogans against the Leader were even chanted. From Tehran and other areas came reports of violent clashes between demonstrators and the Basiji and police. The scenes of young people and students facing authorities brought back memories of the movement against the Pahlavi monarchy. Khatami too appeared on television. He condemned the attacks on the student halls of residence, expressed regret, and urged a return to peace and stability in order to continue with reforms. Arguing that demonstrations and violence would ultimately hurt his politics of change and Iran, he asked for more time. The student movement split. Some of its leaders accepted Khatami's arguments and urged calm. This, combined with the threat of use of force, brought the situation back under control. As a result of the investigation into the attack, Sartip Nazari and nineteen other officials of the Law Enforcement Forces were found guilty of illegal entry to the halls of residence, destruction, and attacks on students. However, the sense remained that justice had not been achieved.

The issues of press and mass media freedoms and the role of the GC in the overall IRI set-up remained. That which changed was Khatami who had been frightened by the violence in the streets and the attacks on the IRI system. He increasingly distanced himself from those reformist figures in the press who followed a line Khatami believed to be too radical. Yet, he still did not see the need to provide leadership and management to the reformist press despite sensing that its more radical elements held much blame not only for creating an atmosphere leading to July 1999, but also attacking needlessly and at times without just cause various IRI political actors which resulted in unified attacks against the politics of change. The conservatives, frightened by the

public outbursts and cognizant of Khatami's unwillingness to fight, went on the offensive. Khatami, failing to use the issue of the demonstrations as a weapon against his opponents in both the public and elite forums, provided the opportunity to them to place the blame for the chaos of July 1999 on him and his politics of change. Khatami was now attacked for throwing the system into danger.

In February 2000 parliamentary elections were held. Khatami and the reformist groups actively used the press and whatever space in the mass media allowed to them to mobilise support and get out the vote. If Khatami's popular vote could be replicated in these elections, the Majles would fall into reformist hands. As explained in greater detail in Chapter Ten, the reformists won a large majority, capturing 189 out of 290 seats. In the immediate aftermath of this stunning victory, radical elements in the reformist press renewed their campaign. They spoke more openly and confidently of the need to change the constitution; this was presented as the only way forward for Khatami's politics of change. It was implicitly argued that the republican institutions, now in the hands of the broad reformist camp, needed to confront the vast power of the revolutionary institutions and to investigate the links between the state and certain elite economic groups. This, combined with the continuing reformist press attacks on specific IRI political figures, raised the political temperature and people's expectations. Those advocating these positions were overconfident. They lost contact with the reality of politics and politicking and were therefore unprepared to work with other groups within the elite. They were advocating a revolutionary position during Khatami's third year in power that threatened the political and economic interests of many powerful figures in the elite. Gorbachev, after two years in office, was not contemplating the emasculation of the CPSU's power. Had he attempted this in 1987 he would have been either forced to retract or more probably removed from power. In any case, Gorbachev was too much of a politician to have taken such a premature step. Five years after the beginning of his politics of change, Gorbachev, in the midst of political, economic, and institutional chaos, removed Article Six.

Khatami became concerned over the course events were taking. He knew that such talk in the radical reformist press after the parliamentary elections would provoke a backlash and the closings of newspapers, including those not publishing radical pieces, and force the Leader's hand. Khatami also opposed the more radical personal attacks launched

on leading IRI officials and the charges of murder and corruption thrown at them. Specifically, Khatami believed that the attempts by Akbar Ganji to link Rafsanjani to the chain murders and other murders were not based on evidence but on a personal vendetta. 'These accusations are not backed by any evidence. They are not true', he remarked privately at the time.³⁸ The attacks on Rafsanjani were not the only issue. They also gave a sense to opponents of the politics of change that Khatami's success could lead to their exclusion from the political arena and persecution in the press. Moreover, Khatami did not support politically or ideologically the radical views in regard to the Leadership Office. Nonetheless, since he had started the politics of change and provided the space for these views and attacks to be aired he found himself on the defensive in the face of conservatives' accusations that his people were bent on destroying the IRI. Abbas Abbasi, a Majles representative from Bandar Abbas summed up the feelings of a growing number of those in the IRI elite, 'Mr.Khatami! Your supporters do not accept the Revolution and Islam.'³⁹

In the midst of this increasingly tense political situation around the press that emerged during and right after the Majles elections, Khatami held his first meeting since becoming president with the editors of the leading reformist newspapers. At this meeting he tried to impress on them the need for refraining from publishing needlessly provocative pieces. He also stressed that he was not frustrated with the press as a whole. The root cause of this situation, in which Khatami found himself, was his own mismanagement or lack of management of the press. He had never held such meetings when he began the politics of *glasnost*'. By not attempting to manage the press and not providing guidance for what should and should not be published at particular points in time as the politics of *glasnost*' and change evolved, he allowed the press to exercise a strongly negative influence on his overall programme. He failed to manage the press as a direct instrument of his politics of change as Gorbachev did. Despite the less centralised system of the press in the IRI, if Khatami had played this leadership and management role and established the theoretical and political limits of his politics of change, the editors of the leading reformist newspapers would have adhered to his advice. Khatami, after the end of his presidency, admitted, 'One of our problems of today and yesterday was that we did not properly define and give shape to the meaning of reform. Thus each person had his own conception of it.'⁴⁰

That which Khatami felt was coming soon took place. In spring 2000 the Leader gave a speech in which he seriously criticised the press for whipping up public opinion against the revolutionary institutions. Soon after, twelve publications, a mixture of weeklies, dailies, and monthlies were closed by the Tehran judiciary. By the end of May 2000 some twenty newspapers and journals had been closed down, constituting the entire reformist press. A leading conservative, Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, announced, 'You cannot save Islam with liberalism and tolerance. I announce clearly and openly that the closing down of these newspapers was the best thing the Judiciary has done since the Revolution.'⁴¹ The use of legal methods to battle the politics of change was chosen. After all, one of Khatami's key slogans was the rule of law.

One of the first issues the reformist-dominated Sixth Majles addressed was the introduction of a new law that would institutionalise greater freedoms for the press and mass media. The bill was headed for easy passage. Having seen a radical side of the press and in the wake of the culling of the reformist press, the Leader intervened. He sent a letter to the Majles in which he urged deputies not to discuss 'for the present time' this new law. The Majles acquiesced. This was the end of the politics of *glasnost*'.

Gorbachev and Khatami understood the importance of the role of the press and mass media in bridging the gap between state and society, in propagating their programmes, and in mobilizing people in support of 'Return to Revolution.' In this regard Gorbachev had the institutional power to propagate his programme and discredit those institutions, forces, and figures he considered to be acting as a 'braking mechanism' on *perestroika*. But this institutional power did not determine actions. Gorbachev's personality and interpretation of the needs of *perestroika* and the obstacles facing it were paramount in determining his approach to the politics of *glasnost*'. Although he railed against many of the criticisms aimed at him and his policies and found accepting polls reflecting declines in his popularity difficult, he never took any serious steps to contain the press and mass media until 1991, when he tried to re-impose some form of censorship.

Gorbachev, having recognised himself as the leader of the reformist movement, relatively skilfully managed the mass media until 1989. During this period, Gorbachev effectively used it to promote his programme and himself and to attack opponents. Gorbachev or Yakovlev met informally with the press in order to ensure that a

common line was held and that particularly sensitive topics were broached in a relatively timely manner. This last element was important for if at the beginning of *glasnost*' the press had in a relatively short period of time broken all taboos and attacked figures such as Lenin, Stalin, and present political figures, a strong negative reaction to *glasnost*' and to the politics of change at an early stage would have emerged and Gorbachev himself would have found pursuing his policy of political liberalisation difficult. Gorbachev given his personality and institutional power achieved the first and vital goal, *glasnost*'. This victory made difficult the rolling back of his politics of change, however defined, and provided the needed conditions its continuation.

Khatami did not enjoy the same institutional power in this regard as did Gorbachev. IRI radio and television remained in the hands of the Leadership Office which proved to be an obstacle to getting Khatami's message out to the entire country. He faced opposition in the GC and the Leadership Office over liberalisation of the press and mass media. The Leader's direct intervention in 2000 put an end to any politics of *glasnost*.' When examining the opposition of the Leadership Office to this bill and the overall conservative opposition to a policy of *glasnost*' we see to an extent the natural fear of vested interests to liberalisation. At the same time we see confirmation of these fears in the way certain individuals and/or newspapers in the first Khatami presidency used the limited liberalisation of the press. They attacked powerful political figures as well as questioned many of the fundamentals of the IRI system. They not only alienated Khatami, but also played an important role in the mobilisation and unification of vested interests and moderate conservatives against the politics of change. A large part of the blame belongs to Khatami. By not attempting to manage the press he liberalised, he ensured that the already difficult challenge of institutionalisation of *glasnost*' would not be overcome. This defeat played a decisive role in the achievement of the non-goals. By the end of his presidency political discourse was once again placed in a restricted framework which continued to constrict under his successor, Ahmadinejad.

GORBACHEV AND THE POLITICS OF CHANGE

These two chapters are not complete narratives of the Khatami and Gorbachev periods. The focus is on particular issues that help determine the extent to which Gorbachev is responsible for the collapse of the USSR and Khatami for the capture by a broad conservative block of all major IRI institutions. These two chapters examine the roles of Gorbachev and Khatami in the overall politics of change, including institutional transformation, liberalisation and democratisation. In the Soviet case, it gives attention to the issue of nationalities. It shows how in many cases the issue of human agency was paramount whilst in others various forms of structure were.

‘Glory to the revolutionary teachings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, ura!’ beamed from the loudspeakers on Red Square. It was May Day 1990, a holiday whose importance was equal to that of the anniversary of the Revolution. According to tradition, the CPSU elite stood atop Lenin’s mausoleum watching the organised parade that expressed the Soviet people’s enthusiasm for the world’s labour day. Gorbachev stood in the centre. Next to him was the prime minister, Ryzhkov. After sometime the crowd turned ugly. Shouts of ‘resign’ and

'criminals' hurled at Gorbachev replaced the official slogans glorifying the communist gods played through loudspeakers.¹ The tsarist tricolour, religious symbols drawn on banners, and placards mocking Gorbachev easily overshadowed the ornate official propaganda of the day. Gorbachev, clearly shocked and angered by this spectacle, marched off the mausoleum along with the rest of the elite.

The symbolism was powerful. The man, who only five years previously warmly interacted with people on the street enthused by his election to the top party post, had become a target of great societal anger. The people's growing dissatisfaction with Gorbachev emerged partly as a result of frustration of perhaps excessively high popular expectations which Gorbachev in many cases raised. The more important role was played by Gorbachev's economic and political mistakes which had resulted in a serious deterioration of the economy, growing institutional chaos, and fragmentation of the USSR itself. In 1990, 1985 seemed to be in the distant past.

Politics of Power Consolidation

As a rule, general secretaries in the initial period of their rule carried out personnel changes at the all-union and republican levels. They worked to change the balance of power on these levels in their favour by placing their own people in important posts. Gorbachev, in addition to this power play, had two other considerations. First, the ghost of Khrushchev haunted him. By all accounts he had a strong, even excessive fear, that he would endure Khrushchev's fate: 'We must begin with the head. Reduce the *apparat*; let them drown in their paperwork. If we don't do this the same thing that happened to Khrushchev will happen again. The *apparat* broke him.'² In his interpretation of the causes of Khrushchev's overthrow, little attention was given to the role of Khrushchev's modus operandi and many policy failures. His political demise convinced Gorbachev that the most dangerous obstacle to the politics of change was the bureaucracy. He believed that the bureaucratic elite in the Politburo and the CC faced with his politics of change would break him as well. He thus had to weaken it. But the *apparat* was the only mechanism through which he could implement his politics of change and maintain the unity of the USSR; it was the backbone of the Soviet system.

Second, Gorbachev, who believed that poor cadres and leadership were the main causes of the stagnation of the Brezhnev years, sought to

bring new blood into the system that would place the USSR on the correct path to the goals of the Revolution. Remarking on the removal of Prime Minister Tikhonov, Gorbachev made a commentary on a driving force behind his cadres' policy, "Tikhonov was not so much yesterday's man, as the day before yesterday's man."³

One month after assuming office Gorbachev at the April CC Plenum brought in Yegor Ligachev, Nikolai Ryzhkov, and Viktor Chebrikov. At the following Plenum held in June he removed from the Politburo Grigory Romanov, in whom many saw his most serious opponent. Shevardnadze entered the Politburo while Boris Yeltsin and Lev Zaikov became CC secretaries. Yeltsin in December of the same year replaced Grishin as head of the Moscow party committee. Grishin during the Chernenko period had seemingly tried to position himself as the next general secretary. In autumn 1985 Gorbachev replaced Tikhonov, who back in 1983 opposed Chernenko's appointment of Gorbachev as second secretary in the Politburo, with Nikolai Ryzhkov. By the end of 1985, Gorbachev in record time had changed the balance of power in the Politburo. Through these changes he had effectively destroyed the post-Stalin collective leadership.

In March 1986 he brought in five new CC secretaries, the most prominent of whom were Anatoly Dobrynin, the long-standing Soviet ambassador to the USA, and two close advisors, Alexander Yakovlev and Vadim Medvedev. By the end of that month, one-half of the members of the Politburo and CC were Gorbachev appointees, whilst 70% of ministers and 50% of the leadership cadres in the republics were replaced. By the end of 1986 40% of first secretaries and 60% of the composition of the CC lost their positions. He also made massive personnel changes at the republican and regional levels. Between 1986 and 1989 he replaced fourteen republican first secretaries, sometimes more than once.⁴ By late 1988, some 70% of district and city level cadres had been replaced.⁵ At the XXVII Party Congress held in February 1986 he gave the reasons for such changes:

Over the past years...the practical activities of party and state organs fell behind the requirements of the times and life itself. Problems in the development of the country accumulated faster than they were being solved. Inertia, the petrification of forms and methods of governing, the lowering of dynamism in work, the growth of bureaucratism—all of this inflicted great damage to

government. In the life of society emerged forms of stagnation....⁶

This type of purge of party and state ranks had not been seen since the Stalinist period. The difference, of course, was the absence of terror.

Gorbachev through his appointments, dismissals, and the playing of personalities against one another, maintained significant power and authority within the bureaucracy and ensured that no one to the right or left of him would be able to challenge his position and popularity, especially in the period 1985-1989. Yet, he made two fatal mistakes in regard to bureaucratic politics that played decisive roles in the achievement of the non-goal and cast doubt on the judgement that he was an extremely effective player in bureaucratic politics. First, Gorbachev seriously miscalculated his political skill in handling Yeltsin whose political skill and savvy he underestimated. Second, his later appointments to the cabinet, specifically the choice of Gennady Yanaev as vice-president, Dmitrii Yazov as minister of defence, Valentin Pavlov as prime minister, and Viktor Kruchkov as KGB head,⁷ proved to be disastrous. They headed the attempted coup d'état in August 1991. It hastened the oncoming collapse of the USSR.

The role of Yeltsin in the collapse of the USSR is controversial. Gorbachev over the years has argued that Yeltsin, along with the key figures in the attempted coup, holds the greatest blame for it. One of the most prominent Sovietologists convincingly argues that Yeltsin's constant weakening of the centre to the benefit of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) in the period 1990-1991, fanning of anti-centre and pro-nationalist feelings across the USSR, and consistent political and rhetorical attacks on all-union structures played a vital role in provoking the attempted coup d'état of August 1991, whose leaders genuinely feared that Yeltsin's actions would lead to the collapse of the socialist superpower.⁸

Ligachev, the figure who came to symbolise 'conservative' opposition to Gorbachev, pushed for Yeltsin's transfer to Moscow from Sverdlovsk where he had been *obkom* secretary since 1976. Ligachev had a direct, no-nonsense style that had little time or patience for niceties that got in the way of achieving results. He believed he spotted this approach in Yeltsin; in Ligachev's opinion the politics of change needed such people. It is also probable that Ligachev considered the transfer of Yeltsin one of the first steps in the creation of his own

political base in Moscow. After all, he too had come to Moscow from the periphery and needed to consolidate his own position.⁹ Even at this point, doubts were expressed to Gorbachev about Yeltsin's personality. Ryzhkov, who had a degree of personal experience with Yeltsin from his days as director of the Ural Machinery Works, cautioned him: 'He will only cause you grief. I would not recommend him.'¹⁰ Gorbachev did not heed this advice, confident of his ability to judge and handle those around him. Yeltsin's outright and straight-forward manner also appealed to Gorbachev.¹¹ Some of his advisors saw in Yeltsin an effective mouthpiece against forces opposing the politics of change. Yeltsin's speech at the Party Congress of 1986 made an impression on Shakhnazarov:

In the first break (of the proceedings) I mentioned my opinion to colleagues that Gorbachev had now obtained a strong ally who could be used as a kind of battering ram for democratic reforms. With his combative spirit... Yeltsin could attack conservative figures and also urge for more radical reforms. Then Gorbachev could look at the reaction (of others) and either support the hothead or criticise him for excessive speed.¹²

As head of the Moscow party machine, Yeltsin became known for populist attacks on bureaucratic corruption and continual cycles of purging of officials. This constant turnover of cadres, which did not allow one to master the duties and responsibilities of one's particular post, created chaos in the city's administrative structures. This spreading disorder increasingly worried Gorbachev. In addition, Yeltsin's personal and public attacks on Ligachev were creating tension in the Gorbachev command and projecting to the public a sense of disunity at the top.

Ligachev was an active hands-on second secretary. Yeltsin, not comfortable with close supervision, rebelled. That Yeltsin had a propensity to engage in fights and could not get along with those below or above him became clear to an increasing number of people. His record as president of the Russian Federation also supports this opinion.

By the end of 1986 the Gorbachev-Yeltsin relationship was turning sour. It broke down in 1987 during the preparations for the seventieth anniversary of the October Revolution. At the 28 September Politburo

meeting Gorbachev's speech to mark this occasion was discussed. Yeltsin launched an attack on it but from a traditional and not revisionist point of view.

Yeltsin, similar to other speakers, objected to the change in emphasis from the October Revolution to the February one. He went on about the necessity of having a 'whole block' on the role of Lenin...He criticised the report for the exclusion of the entire period of the Civil War. He proposed to reduce the number of (positive) references to party opposition (of the time)...¹³

With bitterness Gorbachev subsequently noted, 'Such was Yeltsin then.'¹⁴ He believed he now understood Yeltsin's character. 'Now he is accusing us of going too fast, now of going too slow. Whatever is convenient for him, depending on his mood.'¹⁵ Importantly, Gorbachev, who considered himself the only possible leader of the politics of change, initially did not take seriously Yeltsin's attempts to determine the content and speed of *perestroika*.

At the 21 October 1987 CC Plenum, at which the final draft of this speech was to be discussed, Yeltsin attacked Gorbachev and Ligachev. Specifically he criticised his fellow Politburo members for being 'yes men'. This criticism implicitly accused Gorbachev of creating a cult of personality around himself and the top CPSU leadership of complacency in it. Behind these remarks were the shadow of Stalin and his cult of personality, which Gorbachev in that same speech criticised and condemned to an extent greater than previous general secretaries. Gorbachev responded harshly, accusing Yeltsin of political illiteracy and immorality. He ended by telling Yeltsin, 'What now we must organise a study group for you to understand politics?'¹⁶

After these remarks, Yeltsin announced that since he did not have the support of Ligachev he was unable to fulfil his duties. He asked to be relieved of his position as candidate member of the Politburo. By the beginning of November Yeltsin was relieved of this post and had been stripped of his responsibility for Moscow. Gorbachev and his allies stress that Yeltsin's behaviour was rooted in his personal problems with people with whom he worked. Ryzhkov insists that pure political ambition and desire for attention were at the root of Yeltsin's behaviour, an opinion which Gorbachev supported at the time.¹⁷ The conclusion had been reached that working and cooperation with the

man would not be possible. At the time Gorbachev reportedly told him that he would not allow him back into politics. Yeltsin found himself in the political wilderness. Yet, Gorbachev retained him in Moscow and gave him a ministerial post, albeit a minor one. Yeltsin gave his opinion of this move:

People have often asked me—and later I asked myself the same question—why didn't Gorbachev decide to get me out of the way once and for all. I could have been easily pensioned off or sent as ambassador to some faraway country. Yet Gorbachev let me stay in Moscow, gave me a relatively high-placed job, and, in effect, kept a determined opponent close by him. It is my belief that if Gorbachev didn't have a Yeltsin, he would have had to invent one...There is the conservative Ligachev, who plays the villain; there is Yeltsin, the bully-boy, the madcap radical; and the wise omniscient hero is Gorbachev himself. That, evidently, is how he sees it.¹⁸

Perhaps Gorbachev did have this tactic in mind or he felt a degree of sympathy for the man. Nonetheless, by retaining Yeltsin close to the corridors of power despite all the reservations about his character, Gorbachev made a serious mistake. He underestimated Yeltsin's political skill and overestimated his own. It was not as if Gorbachev did not know of methods to deal with figures causing trouble. At the April 1989 Plenum of the CC Gorbachev endured heavy criticism. Afterwards in his conversation with Chernyaev he 'cursed many of those at that plenum, but still refused to act decisively. On the contrary he said: "Should I act as in Brezhnev's times? Remember, in 1967, when Moscow First Secretary (Nikolai) Yegorychev criticised the city's anti-aircraft system and found himself an ambassador the very next day?"'¹⁹ Gorbachev could have very easily acted in this way in regard to Yeltsin. Most people expected him to do. But his political and personal character determined otherwise.

Experience showed that Yeltsin could not find a minor post to his liking. He also wanted revenge on those figures he blamed for his fall from grace. He became politically active, giving interviews to foreign correspondents and becoming a delegate to the Nineteenth Party Congress in 1988. Unlike Gorbachev, he participated in the popular 1989 elections to the Congress of Peoples' Deputies, running for a seat

in a Moscow constituency. Despite no official party backing, he won some 90% of the votes cast. His populist style, constant attacks on the privileges of the party hierarchy, and the image making undertaken by his allies that made him into the 'reformist' David facing the 'CPSU' Goliath proved an unbeatable combination. Having won this election, Yeltsin now had an official platform to continue with his political attacks on figures in the all-union leadership and on the 'slow pace' of the politics of change. His performance at the Congress showed that he could become a leading figure in the criticism of Gorbachev and his team. Yet, Gorbachev, still the most popular political figure at the height of his powers, did not act against him. Hough believes:

The scale of Yeltsin's victory in the 1989 election was probably the decisive event in the revolution of 1990-1991, for it apparently undermined Gorbachev's self-confidence. The general secretary no longer seemed to believe he represented the country's desire for change. He often acted as if he accepted that Yeltsin spoke for public and intellectual opinion. Essentially recognising Yeltsin's legitimacy, he found himself unable to deal effectively with him.²⁰

Soviet officials, such as Ryzhkov, were not the only ones who saw dangers in Yeltsin's character for Gorbachev's politics of change. Foreign observers too found him unnerving:

Boris Yeltsin's biography inspires fear. You end it fearful that the Soviet Union is incapable of producing a political class. By his own account, the main opponent to Mikhail Gorbachev has no programme, no critique beyond a demagogic condemnation of privilege...and no useful insights into his country's plight...Cunning, vainglorious, and with a huge thirst for power, and a shrewd nose for finding it, the Soviet Union—or at least Russia—may one day come to this man. The biography does not convince that it would be better that it did.²¹

Having been elected chairman of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet in May 1990, Yeltsin obtained an official and powerful position. By declaring Russian sovereignty in June 1990, Yeltsin led the way in attacking the power of the centre and specifically Gorbachev. Consequently,

preservation of the USSR became the dominant challenge facing the increasingly embattled general secretary. Following Russia's lead, Ukraine, Belorussia, Armenia, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan declared their sovereignty.

A key moment came on 16 October 1990. In his chronology of *perestroika* Gorbachev notes 'confrontational speech made by Yeltsin in the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR' in which he 'in reality announces the refusal of the RSFSR to deal with the all-union centre.'²² On 24 October the Supreme Soviet of the USSR passed a law confirming the supremacy of all-union laws to republican ones. On that same day the RSFSR Supreme Soviet passed a law confirming the supremacy of its laws to those of the all-union centre. With this speech and new law Yeltsin had revolted against the all-union constitution and had once again thrown down the gauntlet to Gorbachev. Other constituent republics waited to see how the general secretary would react. They would base their future moves on Gorbachev's reaction to Yeltsin. The Politburo meeting, at which these new developments were discussed, shows once again Gorbachev's weak analysis of the overall situation facing the country, himself, and of Yeltsin. Yeltsin took advantage of Gorbachev's failings.

Kruchkov: This was a declaration of war on the centre. If we do not answer it, we will suffer defeat. We must use the press to explain and layout the president's plans for action.

Lukyanov: That he (Yeltsin) spoke in this manner was good. His cards are on the table...Is there room for compromise with him in general? No. We must give an answer whilst there is no wave of meetings...For what should we criticise Yeltsin? First, he is making calls for unconstitutional actions. Second, having not seen (our) programme, he is already attacking it, compromising it...Fourth, he is adhering to a course for the collapse of the Union. He in reality gave us an ultimatum.

Boldin (in remarks primarily aimed at Gorbachev): We must abandon our illusions about Yeltsin. He will never work with us. He is not completely healthy and only behaves in a confrontational manner...What is needed is toughness and most importantly the strengthening of power (*vlast*).

Rasputin: Yeltsin has thrown the gauntlet. Yeltsin's popularity is exaggerated by the mass media. We are not taking any measures!

Bakatin: Yeltsin's speech was a call for revolt, an anti-Soviet position...But it is not necessary to react overly to this. It is necessary to break Yeltsin through the mass media.

Ryzhkov: Yeltsin has one thing on his mind...he wants that place (he points to Gorbachev). There can be no agreement with Yeltsin. Yeltsin is a destroyer. Your (Gorbachev's) compromise with him achieved nothing...The country is becoming ungovernable. It is on the edge of collapse. We can remain in power within the confines of the Kremlin...but only. The state system is destroyed. It is necessary to show power and remove those who are undermining it and those who are not fulfilling the centre's decisions.

Gorbachev: The issue is not Yeltsin. He himself as a personality is nothing. But he does express the opinion of a certain part of society. People are feeling the oncoming of chaos, collapse. They are worried. But they are against extremism and are for order...²³

The Politburo was not alone in finding Yeltsin's speech and actions a threat to the USSR. Nursultan Nazarbaev, head of the Kazakh SSR, the third largest Soviet republic, announced, 'In this turning point, when we are experiencing an economic crisis, Yeltsin is in reality organising still another one—this time a political crisis.'²⁴ Yet, Gorbachev continued to argue for not acting against Yeltsin. After the collapse of the USSR Gorbachev admitted his mistake:

...it soon became clear that Yeltsin was (using) a populist mannerIt turned out that he was simply an opportunist. He could say one thing in the morning, during the day another, and in the evening, another. In general he has an unbalanced character. "Why did you allow Yeltsin to power?" I still hear. Yes, for this mistake that cost the country dear I hold direct responsibility.²⁵

That Gorbachev failed to deal with Yeltsin in this period is intriguing given his sensitivity to opposition and politic moves to remove people whom he considered threats to his position and politics of change or unable and/or unwilling to adhere to his overall line. The decisiveness he had shown in regard to cadre issues had disappeared, perhaps as a result of his declining popularity stemming from the worsening political and economic situation. But, when faced with Yeltsin's political attacks on the centre and calls for unconstitutional actions, Gorbachev should

have acted. State security and the upholding of law and order required it. The keys to democratic forms of governance are strong, effective institutions and rule of law. Khatami understood this. Gorbachev seemingly did not. By permitting Yeltsin to defy all-union laws and the constitution, Gorbachev unwittingly strengthened the forces of nationalism and separatism in other republics which saw an indecisive and weak centre unable or unwilling to act to protect itself. He laid a condition for the attempted coup d'état and the consequent collapse of the USSR.

One possible reason for Gorbachev's reluctance to move against Yeltsin was his fear of Russian nationalism and the consequences it would have for the USSR. 'If Russia rises, things will really break loose!', he told one of his close advisors. At the September 1989 Politburo meeting he openly warned, 'That (the creation of a communist party of the RSFSR) would be the end of the empire.'²⁶ The place of Russians within the USSR posed unique challenges since its founding. Gorbachev hoped to integrate Russian nationalism into his politics of change. However, once the economic situation began to deteriorate along with his popularity and self-confidence, anti-all-union sentiment increasingly manifested itself in Russian nationalism.

Any politician, including Yeltsin, faced with the challenge of running for office in the new elections established by Gorbachev would need to play to an extent the nationalist card. The CPSU, increasingly seen as responsible for the worsening economic situation and unable to deal with the crises facing individual republics, could no longer guarantee victory in elections to political actors. However, using a nationalist platform based on sovereignty within the USSR and advocating anti-constitutional measures differ greatly from each other. Once Yeltsin proposed the latter Gorbachev should have acted against him. Yeltsin, although popular amongst a certain part of the RSFSR urban population, was not widely supported. For example, those who founded the RSFSR Communist Party found themselves in opposition to Gorbachev given his creation of chaos in the USSR and Yeltsin for his constant attacks on the unity of the Soviet Union. Tellingly, during the attempted coup d'état of August 1991 most people ignored Yeltsin's call for mass strikes and demonstrations. Gorbachev could have moved against him in autumn 1990.

Gorbachev's other mistake in regard to cadres was his appointments of Yanaev, Kruchkov, Pavlov, and Yazov, the main figures of the

attempted coup d'état of August 1991. These appointments symbolised Gorbachev's wish to have compliant and even colourless people around him. He did not like having popular political figures within his circle. The causes of the coup d'état are not to be found in these people; it is to be found in the economic and political chaos brought about by Gorbachev that seemed by the beginning of 1991 to be bringing the collapse of the USSR. The coup d'état was not a conservative reaction to all aspects of the politics of change; it was a reaction to the myriad of mistakes in policies implemented by Gorbachev in attempts to obtain rapid and positive change. In one way, Gorbachev was a success for he weakened the state to such an extent that it could not do with him what it had done with Khrushchev. But such a threat did not exist. Yet, in doing so, Gorbachev set in motion events leading to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The Politics of Economic Change

The modernity and legitimacy of Leninism were based in the first instance on delivering specific economic promises to the people and possession of a more efficient and humane economic system which also supported a superpower. Thus the politics of change in the USSR was first and foremost concerned with the economy. Gorbachev's politics of economic change failed; it did not meet his unrealistic expectations in regard to the pace and breadth of positive change and created a serious economic crisis that played a decisive role in the spread of calls for sovereignty and secession and thus in the collapse of the USSR. It is in the politics of economic change that we find Gorbachev's political character rooted in a revolutionary mentality that expected rapid positive change.

Gorbachev's politics of economic change was characterised by the following: (a) his relative ignorance of economic issues and unwillingness to delegate decision making to specialists; (b) his unrealisable high expectations of rapid and positive changes as a result of his economic initiatives; (c) his ignoring the many warnings concerning the dangers of deficit spending and the history of relatively prudent financial policies followed by previous Soviet leaders; and (d) his lack of political courage to address price reform.

One overarching theme touching on the above issues is Gorbachev's failure to contemplate to any significant degree the potential consequences of his economic policies for politics on the all-union and

republican levels as the political space opened, for nationality policy, and for the relationship between the centre and the fifteen constituent republics. An effective leader, especially one implementing changes, needs to conceptualise the possible political, economic, and social consequences of policies before and during their implementation even though he cannot determine outcomes. In sum, 'Gorbachev did not understand the basic economic principles of the reforms he sought to introduce'²⁷ which brought about the collapse of the USSR.

Gorbachev's economic policies can be classified into three time periods: (1) 1985-86 during which emphasis was placed on worker and cadre discipline, great investment in the economic infrastructure, especially in machine building, and some talk of greater autonomy for enterprises; (2) 1987-1989 during which Gorbachev implemented several reforms, including the Law on State Enterprises, the Law on Cooperatives, and Law on Foreign Investment and Export. They aimed to give enterprises greater autonomy in regard to product matrix, purchasing, and planning; and (3) 1989-1991 during which the consequences of Gorbachev's politics of economic change resulted in the paralysis and then collapse of the economic system.

In 1985 the Soviet economic system was clearly inefficient. The elite since Khrushchev recognised this. The various reform programmes since the 1950s had produced some positive results, but industrial and agricultural productivity, the raising of which was one of the main goals of Leninism, was stagnant or falling in the late Brezhnev period. The economy had not produced the necessary conditions to move from the industrial to technological age or the capacity to switch from heavy industry to a light industry based on consumer goods. It also was increasingly reliant on imports of basic foodstuffs whilst suffering from periodic shortages of certain food products. Nonetheless, the economic system was stable and was not facing a serious crisis that could generate political and social unrest on a scale Moscow could not handle. The type of radical, rapid, and eventually chaos-making economic change promoted by Gorbachev as needed given historical geo-political and security conditions was not necessary since the Soviet nuclear capability easily deflected serious and direct challenges to national security. This arsenal provided the cover for judicious and slower economic reform.

Gorbachev stressed he obtained inspiration from Lenin's NEP of the early 1920s, although he gave very little details of what he meant.²⁸ At the April 1985 Plenum he laid out his economic plans. Given the

slogan *uskorenie* (acceleration), they centred on simultaneous and rapid acceleration of scientific-technical progress, modernisation and expansion of machine building, the development and use of new high technology, and the raising of worker productivity and living standards. These goals were as ambitious and grandiose as those of Stalin and Khrushchev; Gorbachev also shared their expectations for rapid positive change.²⁹ One has to question such goals. Even in the best of political and economic circumstances the simultaneous achievement of these multiple goals would be difficult. Moreover, the results of policy innovations would only be seen several years later, not in the following two or three economic quarterly cycles as Gorbachev expected.

The grandiose goals of *uskorenie* were common to periods of Russian history since the time of Peter the Great when attempts were made to modernise quickly from above in order to catch up with the West. The key difference was that the modernisation from above during the reigns of Alexander II, Alexander III, and Nicholas II and the later Lenin, Brezhnev, and Andropov periods were not characterised by excessively high expectations for the rate of positive change and thus did not end up in institutional destruction. In his memoirs Gorbachev stressed, 'We all hoped to open up the potential of the system and liquidate the industrial and technological backwardness which separated the Soviet Union not only from the West...but also from our close allies of Eastern Europe...To achieve this several programmes of catching-up development existed.'³⁰

The specific targets set by *uskorenie* reflected Gorbachev's excessively high expectations for rapid positive change. For example, whilst the output of crude oil had fallen at an average rate of 0.3% a year in the period 1981-85, it was expected to grow at an annual rate of 1.3%. Coal production was supposed to grow from 0.3% to 1.8%, grain production from 0.3% to 5.6-6.1% and meat from 2.5 to 4.2%.³¹ In regard to the growth rate of total factory productivity 'an almost miraculous transformation was expected.'³²

Despite making many speeches in the period 1985-1986 devoted to *uskorenie* and its goals, Gorbachev did not have a clear conception of what to do with the economy. He acted haphazardly on several fronts in the hope his goals would be met. In addition, Gorbachev's understanding of the goals of *uskorenie* and *perestroika* was so broad that these rubrics lost any practical meaning or relevance to the actual

capacity of any system. His 1985 interview with TIME magazine reflected this.

The imperative of our time is to decisively improve the state of things. Hence the concept of accelerated social and economic development. Today it is our most important priority. We are planning to make better use of capital investments, to give priority to the development of such major industries such as engineering, electronics...Attention remains focused on the agro-industrial complex, especially in regard to processing and storage of agricultural produce. We will do all that is necessary to better meet demand in high-quality food products. It is necessary to further strengthen centralisation of strategic areas of the economy through making individual branches, regions, and elements of the economy more responsive to the needs of economic development. But at the same time we are seeking to strengthen democratic principles in management, to broaden the autonomy of production associations, enterprises, collective and state farms, to develop local economic self-management and to encourage initiative and a spirit of enterprise.³³

At the February 1986 Party Congress Gorbachev stressed that *uskorenie* was 'movement in economic, social, political, and spiritual aspects of Soviet society' and 'the implementation of new technological reconstruction of the national economy, regeneration of the production apparatus along with the wide introduction of advanced technology...raising of worker productivity...greater investment (and) growth in the production of consumer and agricultural goods.'³⁴ These phrases sounded attractive. But Dobrynin noted:

I never once heard Gorbachev present any broad and detailed plan for reforming the economy (in the short or long-term)...At the start of reforms in 1986, Gorbachev explained his economic credo to the Politburo: the Soviet economy certainly needed reforms, and although we did not know precisely how to achieve them, we must begin. He told the Politburo that they must all be guided by the words of Lenin: "The most important thing in any endeavour was to get involved in the fight and in that way learn what to do next." We got into a fight, all right, but for the years

afterward even the new leaders of Russia did not know exactly what to do next.³⁵

In this initial period the Gorbachev leadership did pass some important laws. Agricultural enterprises were given a relatively large degree of independence to sell products once plan targets had been met. Leaning on Lenin's emphasis on the positive role that could be played by co-operatives, small agricultural co-operatives independent of government control were legalised and the breadth of their legal activity increased. In the USSR finding someone to make repairs in your flat and fix your appliances was difficult. He soon legalised some forms of this part-time private economic activity, which represented a significant ideological and economic shift.

These practical and ideological shifts worried members of the Politburo, such as K. Solomentsev and V. Chebrikov, head of the KGB. They stressed that these moves could cast a shadow on the collectivisation of the Stalinist period and undermine its and socialism's legitimacy. Gorbachev shot back to Solomentsev, 'What are you saying? Look, almost everywhere they report that there is nothing in the stores. We all fear that personal farming will undermine socialism. But we don't fear that empty shelves will undermine it?'³⁶ The question, however, was how to improve the situation to which Gorbachev had unrealistic answers.

Uskorenie, in addition to unrealistic expectations for growth, had three major faults. First, Gorbachev spoke of giving enterprises more autonomy whilst calling for strong centralisation in order to achieve economic goals. These moves were contradictory. The nice-sounding remarks Gorbachev made at a June 1986 CC Plenum meeting contained little substance and reflected this contradiction:

The essence of *perestroika* is the raising of the effectiveness of the centre, beginning in the governing and planning of the economy, a significant broadening of economic independence and responsibility of enterprises and cooperatives, the active use of more flexible forms and methods of leadership, self-accounting and money trade relations, and of the entire arsenal of economic levers and stimuli.³⁷

Second, he had no programme for addressing the large subsidies to the agricultural sector which had increased dramatically since the Khrushchev period. For example, whilst grain prices had increased over the years, the retail cost of bread remained frozen. The state's purchase price for meat from farmers had increased eleven times since the Brezhnev period whilst the retail cost remained the same. By 1986 production of meat cost the state five roubles per kilo whilst the retail price was two. Agricultural retail subsidies had risen from 2 billion roubles in 1965 to 37 billion in 1980, whilst procurement subsidies were over 60 billion by 1986.³⁸ This was a huge drain on the budget that limited the financial flexibility of the all-union centre. In addition, since the Khrushchev period incomes consistently grew, despite stagnant and falling productivity, and prices remained essentially constant which gave consumers ever increasing purchasing power. Thus shortages became a fact of life as Soviet production, although increasing, could not keep up with increased consumption.³⁹

Third, a contradiction existed between the desire to make some fundamental transformations in the economy that required changes in the allocation of resources and vast amounts of capital investment, the fruits of which would appear after some time, and the demand and expectation to raise immediately economic growth. Gorbachev stated: 'How do we understand *uskorenie*? First of all, it is the raising of the rate of economic growth. But it is not only that. Its essence is a new quality of growth: all forms of intensification of production on the basis of scientific-technical progress, structural reforms (*perestroika*), and the search for effective forms of governing, organisation and stimulation of labour.'⁴⁰ The transferral of capital into investment in new technologies and machine building, in other words a modernisation of industry, would inevitably exercise a negative influence on immediate growth rates whilst (possibly) delivering positive results only in the near future. To entertain expectations of achieving simultaneously both goals in a short period of time was naïve.

Uskorenie ended quickly having failed to satisfy Gorbachev's expectations of rapid positive results. Already by spring 1986 Gorbachev was complaining in the Politburo and publicly about the slow rate of change. At the April Plenum, just two months after the announcement of new economic policies, he grumbled, 'It seems that once again everything is just talk. All policies and work remain on paper. The most dangerous thing in the present moment is inertia.'⁴¹ In

July 1986 he visited the Soviet Far East to find out how his new economic policy was progressing. Gorbachev recounted: 'I encountered indifference to the people, a pitiless attitude in regard to their lives. Answering my questions, people with bitterness told me: Hopes for changes do not find any response in the governing structures, in the bureaucratic 'aristocracy' (*znat'*), which by not wishing to decide the smallest questions, sabotages *perestroika*.²⁴² In an off-the-record speech to the Union of Writers in June 1986, Gorbachev once again revealed his suspicions in regard to the bureaucracy, 'Take Gosplan. For Gosplan we have no central authorities, no general secretaries, no Central Committee. They do whatever they want to.'²⁴³

Inertia is a natural challenge facing large institutions and bureaucracies, state or corporate. The USSR was not unique in this respect. But this was lost on Gorbachev; it was a reflection of his character which demanded positive results in two to six months. Suspicions in regard to the bureaucracy are common to sections of Russian society throughout history. Nicholas II ran away from the bureaucracy. Alexander III drank to its destruction, whilst Andropov recognised the corruption that sapped it of its strength and vigour. The latter two understood its vital function in maintaining the unity and stability of the empire and implementation of the centre's will. Therefore, they did not attempt to weaken and break it, but rather tried to manage it effectively.

Another weakness of Gorbachev's approach was that his rhetoric had little, if any, practical provisions or directives for bureaucratic economic activity. What were Gorbachev's expectations of the party functionaries given the present institutional set-up? What was the meaning of *uskorenie* in relation to them? During this same trip to the Far East Gorbachev gave his answer. He asked local residents, 'Is there milk?' They responded, 'Yes.' 'Are there dairy products?' 'No' was the answer. At this point Gorbachev, in front of a group of locals in an impromptu speech beamed across the USSR, stressed, 'Each bureaucrat in his place must work efficiently, conscientiously, and honestly. This is *perestroika*. They keep asking, "What is this *perestroika*? What is this *perestroika*?" Do your work honestly. That is the main point of *perestroika*.²⁴⁴ People warmly greeted these words.

All the blame for shortages and dysfunctions of the system were laid at the feet of the bureaucrats. At the September 1986 Politburo meeting Gorbachev repeated his concerns over the slow pace of

perestroika, 'People say that the party's line in relation to *perestroika* is correct, it is supported and that taken decisions are correct, but that they (such decisions) are not being felt on the ground.'⁴⁵ That same month Gorbachev for the first time openly attacked the bureaucracy for failing to implement the slogans of *uskorenie*. It was accused of sabotage.

In early 1987 Gorbachev sought and found confirmation of his suspicions that bureaucrats were sabotaging his economic policies. V. Medvedev, one of his close advisors, noted in his memoirs:

In 1986 the economic situation in the country improved which was naturally linked to the positive influence of *perestroika* and it was really so. Then suddenly in January (1987) there was a downturn...There was a drop in production...This was the first sign of a serious sickness, the sound of a deep economic crisis, which would develop fully in the following two to three years...The January downturn brought about a return to radical economic reform whose work before this period crawled along, suffering from lack of attention and energy.⁴⁶

These comments say much about the outlook of the Gorbachev leadership and Gorbachev. The economic upswing of 1986 is attributed to Gorbachev's limited economic changes that began in late 1985 and early 1986. No consideration is given to lag time, the period between the adoption of a policy and its results. That Gorbachev's recent economic changes were the cause for this upswing is more than questionable. When a downturn occurred in January 1987, Gorbachev contradictorily blamed both the bureaucracy and lack of radicalism of his approach. But, *uskorenie*, based on investment alone, adopted in 1986, 'could not have been expected to bring results for a few years.'⁴⁷ Moreover, one has to wonder why it was believed that one month of weak economic growth could make judgement on an entire economic policy. Guided by the belief that the broad goals of *uskorenie*, including increasing and unbroken economic growth, could be simultaneously and quickly achieved, Gorbachev was not prepared to accept that either parts of the policy itself were mistaken or that more time was needed to judge the effectiveness of the current economic approach.

Gorbachev's outlook was dominated by rather idealistic and naïve expectations in regard to the behaviour of bureaucrats and the

dynamics between institutions and those who fill them. With shock and surprise he noted, 'It was difficult to comprehend, for example, why the managers of defence enterprises in Komsomol'ska-na-Amure...who were sending almost daily carrier aeroplanes to Tashkent on production business, did not care to bring back from there vegetables and fruit. Why in the dead heat of summer did they not organise for kids a shipment of ice cream? Why were the residents of the town forced to go to the other side of the moon for furniture?' In another example he notes with bitterness, 'By the way, the Ministry of Defence, despite knowing well how heavily the arms race weighed on the country, never put forward a suggestion for a decline in the armed forces and the production of arms during all the years I was in Moscow.'⁴⁸ That he entertained the idea that a bureaucratic entity would voluntarily offer cuts in its funding and staff reflects a degree of naivety fatal for any leader. This also explains his declaration of war on the 'bureaucratic enemy' in order to realise his unrealistic and idealistic expectations in regard to bureaucratic behaviour. He moved on two fronts. First, he initiated a series of changes in the economic structure that would bring the deep economic crisis mentioned by Medvedev who believed it already existed. Second, he paid less attention than before to economic issues and more on political change and institutional reform and destruction, seeing in them mechanisms to break the wide-spread bureaucratic resistance and opposition to economic *perestroika* which he believed existed. But 'no evidence of resistance to reforms existed.'⁴⁹

At the March 1987 Politburo Gorbachev called for radical economic reform. Under his personal leadership his closest aides produced a package of economic changes. Importantly, Gorbachev undertook the main conceptual part whilst also being '...the centre of this process, coordinating the three teams working on this (economic) reform.' Here is a good example of Gorbachev's unwillingness to delegate this matter to specialists. In a significant ideological change, primary units of the economy were to be commercialised whilst semi-market relations were to exist between them. The team headed by Prime Minister Ryzhkov prepared a package of specific decrees concerning issues of planning, the financial system, banking, and price formation.⁵⁰ Gorbachev summed up his goals:

a sharp widening of the independence of cooperatives (*ob'edinenii*) and enterprises, transferring them into full economic accounts

(*kehozraschet*) and self-financing...the transfer to enterprises of full self-accounting, It is the radical restructuring of the centralised leadership of the economy. It is the radical change of the planning system, reform of price structuring, financial credit mechanism, and the restructuring of external economic links.⁵¹

The reality fell short of this description. There was little, if any, reform of prices which deprived these changes of any positive results. Vitaly, Gorbachev did not conceive of an overall vision or conception of the direction in which the reforms were to take the country. Close supporters and opponents of Gorbachev noted this.⁵² Consequently, the approaches and programmes put together by these teams were not related or linked to each other in substance and goals. Boldin believes, "The choice of priorities in the development of the economy was accidental (*sluchaien*). The Gensek was told that having not created a complete conception of development and not deciding general questions, it was not possible to obtain positive results in particular. A serious theoretical basis was needed for changes...and thought for the consequences (was also needed)."⁵³

Gorbachev responded, stressing at a meeting with leading figures of Soviet mass media, "The goal is clear whilst the means will emerge on the path."⁵⁴ Yet, even if the goal was clear, means needed to be devised before setting out on that path. Khatami, on the contrary, gave much deliberation to means. Some even criticise Khatami for allowing discussion of means to prevent action. The result of Gorbachev's approach was a series of reforms over the next two years that seriously weakened the old central command economic structures without putting anything in their place. Importantly, little, if any thought, was given to the sequencing of economic and political changes. Gorbachev decided to implement them simultaneously. Little, if any, consideration was given to how political reforms would influence the politics of economic change and how economic changes would influence the politics of change. Thus when Gorbachev was faced with the political and economic consequences of his flawed politics of economic change he lost his self-confidence and ability to react to events. In all probability Gorbachev believed that once the economic reforms fulfilled his unrealistically high expectations, he would reap a positive political dividend in the opened political space.

The details of Gorbachev's economic reforms have been covered extensively elsewhere and thus they are not reviewed here in great detail. The focus here is on the Law on State Enterprises (June 1987) and the Law on Cooperatives (June 1988).⁵⁵ These two measures played no small part in the collapse of the Soviet economy.

The goals of Gorbachev's Law on State Enterprises were to raise quickly lagging productivity and low product quality and improve product mix by placing enterprises and factories on complete self-financing and by introducing profit margins. State control was also weakened as factory managers were now elected by the workers. Consequently, candidate managers raised wages without corresponding increases in worker productivity in order to be elected, to the surprise of Gorbachev. Moreover, enterprises could now do what they saw fit with funds received from the centre. Gorbachev hoped these reforms would increase the links between enterprises. However, the law suffered from a lack of overall theoretical conception that resulted in many aspects of the old system remaining in place. Price controls, official central distribution of primary goods to enterprises and all-union determination of supplies to each enterprise ensured that this law would fail to satisfy Gorbachev's expectations and begin a serious economic crisis.

The shift from central control over sales, purchases, and financing to relative enterprise autonomy required dramatic changes in management and managerial behaviour that had emerged in the conditions of a command economy. Much time, including a period of economic uncertainty, was needed to see positive change provided the economic reforms in the first instance were coherent and thought-out. The Law on State Enterprises did not fit such a category. Gorbachev also gave little thought to the consequences of his moves. Granting enterprises more freedom to determine the allocation of enterprise income could potentially produce imbalances in the economy. He did not give any consideration to the effect this move would have on the taxation system. Under the old system the centre, given its control over all major aspects of an enterprise's financial operations, had little problem collecting taxes. Gorbachev failed to understand that 'the new enterprise autonomy meant that now the state would have to shift to a system of taxing semi-autonomous entities to obtain revenue, and no new tax system had been introduced that could effectively collect needed revenues under the new conditions.'⁵⁶ Under the conditions of

this new law the centre was still funding enterprises, subsidising the resources they purchased, and buying a significant part of their production, but was not collecting taxes from the enterprises' economic activities. Consequently, the centre found itself increasingly short of cash. In order to address this Gorbachev printed money. In 1987 Gorbachev complained to the former chancellor of West Germany, Willy Brandt: 'Having given enterprises independence we did not think up mechanisms which could have contained them in specific frameworks...Money income (of enterprises) is rising but the amount of goods is not increasing.'⁵⁷

Gorbachev, disappointed with the lack of positive change and worried by the economic problems brought about by the Law on State Enterprises, in 1988 introduced the Law on Cooperatives. Despite his own evaluation of the deficiencies in the Law on State Enterprises, he made similar mistakes in this new law. Unveiling it, Gorbachev emphasised the Leninist term 'co-operative' and re-introduced aspects of NEP. He also went beyond this Leninist programme of the 1920s by allowing state enterprises and co-operatives to form partnerships. This step had a deleterious effect on the economy. Co-operatives, whose products were not subject to state price controls, more often than not lacked the access to primary resources enjoyed by the state enterprises. The co-ops therefore logically formed partnerships with state enterprises in order to utilise their access to needed resources for production still distributed by the state. State enterprises found it much more profitable to sell primary resources to co-ops than to engage in production, a good part of which was sold to the state at controlled prices. The result was shortages in the state run economy. Moreover, employees and managers in enterprises sought positions in the co-op sector where wages were significantly higher. Predictably, 'The cooperatives were like parasitic fungi preying upon the state economy and decomposing it.'⁵⁸ Gorbachev had not contemplated the possible consequences of this law whilst the mechanisms, whose absence in the Law on State Enterprises he noted, were also lacking in this new law. For example, mechanisms for collecting taxes were still not introduced.

The result of these two laws was a quickly deteriorating economic situation. Nonetheless, Gorbachev still believed that the dynamics and provisions of his economic policies were sound. Despite his confession to Brandt, he blamed cadres for sabotaging them. Having come to the conclusion that the bureaucracy was not reformable and responsible for

the economic crisis threatening the unity of the USSR, Gorbachev made moves in the direction of institutional destruction. At the September 1988 Plenum Gorbachev removed the party from economic management, having decided that it should concern itself only with ideology. One of the key functions of the CPSU was management and administration of the economy on a micro level. Local party officials maintained links between enterprises, ensured implementation of economic plans and central directives, and dealt with bottlenecks as they emerged. He set out to destroy this system. In a sign of Gorbachev's dominance of the highest levels of the Soviet hierarchy, at this Plenum within a thirty-minute meeting he was able to disband all economic subdivisions of the CPSU, put a stop to the Secretariat's administrative activities both at the centre and at the local level, and undertake a massive reshuffle of the Politburo and the Plenum, removing Gromyko, Solomentsev, Dolgikh, Demichev, and Dobrynin. Having failed to understand the role played by his policies in creating the economic crisis and the practical role played by the CPSU in the economy, he did not replace these party economic structures with anything else which 'appears...to be the single most important blow to the economy. The party's withdrawal from the economy...caused an institutional vacuum which resulted in serious economic disorganisation of the economy.'⁵⁹ Gorbachev had 'not anticipated the full consequences' of these reforms.

Judging from his statements, he counted on democratic changes to boost the lower echelons of the Party and thus overcome the resistance of the apparatus, which was hampering the economic changes. ...Party organs were dislodged from the reins of economic control at a time when the reform was making its first steps and economic levers of coordination were lacking. Without the support of the Party organs and strong Party discipline, the state apparatus was unable to successfully manage the economy.⁶⁰

Surely, removing the party from the economy was a necessary act given the tone of Gorbachev's politics of economic change, but it needed to be implemented in a timely manner and when other institutions and forces had emerged which could fulfil the functions once played by the party.

The Communist party had been skilfully organised to perform vital functions in the existing political and economic system. Movement towards market reform would end the need for many of those functions and change the character of the party, but the party organs were dismantled before new institutions were created to perform their functions. As in the case of economic reform, Gorbachev seemed to give very little thought to the problems of the transition. The consequences were disastrous; the absence of an administrative organ that could provide economic coordination in the provinces was one of the main unrecognised factors in the increasing economic disintegration in 1990 and 1991.⁶¹

Gorbachev seemed to think the 'hand of the market' would automatically emerge and take over. Only in May 1991 with the economy in a shambles, the centre facing bankruptcy, and the collapse of the USSR seemingly imminent, did Gorbachev consider that perhaps his economic policies had been flawed: 'Our greatest mistakes in the course of our economic reform are that we (*sic*) liquidated the old system and did not create a new one. People found themselves between two systems.'⁶² The economic crisis exercised a negative influence on the political situation in the country, playing a key role in the rise of nationalist politics as republican leaders participating in local elections sought a platform that would disassociate them from the economic crisis and make them electable.

To this structural crisis in the economy Gorbachev added a financial one. Soviet leaderships had consistently followed prudent financial policies. 'From the end of the Second World War until the beginning of the 1980s the Soviet budgetary system was characterised by a high level of stability (and) the absence of any significant budget deficit....'⁶³ The Soviet elite understood that one of the most effective means of maintaining stability in the economic system was financial policy and that a cash-rich centre distributing financial resources was one of the key mechanisms of generating loyalty to the centre and of maintaining all-union control over the republics. Judging by his financial policy, Gorbachev did not understand this. Throughout his tenure in office he did not take financial policy seriously, disregarding and subordinating concerns about monetary imbalances, budget deficits, and their political

consequences to his desire to achieve rapid results in the economic, social, and political spheres.

A key pillar of Gorbachev's *uskorenie* was an all-encompassing policy of 'acceleration of socio-economic development' in the social, economic, and military fields. Gorbachev hoped to solve the majority of problems in these fields with a huge influx of cash, regardless of the consequences for the budget. This massive increase in spending was accompanied by his 'anti-alcohol' campaign. According to Gorbachev, 'The decision (for the anti-alcohol campaign) was taken in May 1985. The decision was taken in the spirit of "inert" administrative thinking. There is no other way to understand how it was possible for a good thing in itself to bring no small amount of damage to society.'⁶⁴

No doubt alcoholism posed societal as well as economic problems. Khrushchev and Brezhnev addressed this problem by raising the price on alcohol and stiffening the penalties for drunkenness in public places. Gorbachev hoped to eradicate this problem with more radical administrative means which, it was hoped, would quickly produce positive results. The anti-alcohol campaign consisted of destruction of vineyards and the banning of alcohol in planes, hotels, and canteens. Alcohol was sold only from two in the afternoon at a limited number of establishments; in Moscow and Leningrad thousands of locations selling alcohol were closed. Tolerating long queues to obtain alcohol became an element of daily life. The Komsomol propagated 'non-alcoholic' weddings and other such holidays whilst '*mastori*', handymen working on the side doing repairs in peoples' homes, demanded payment in vodka. Drinking, however, did not decline; it was pushed underground as people began to produce vodka, *samagon*, at home. Sugar, one of its essential ingredients, disappeared from stores.

This three-year campaign did not achieve its goals. One of its consequences was the damage done to Gorbachev's image. One joke of the time went: There is a long queue of people waiting to buy some wine and vodka. One hour, two hours, three hours go by and the queue has hardly moved. One man, having lost his patience, announces that he is sick and tired of such queues and is off to kill Gorbachev. After fifteen minutes he comes back. Someone in the queue surprised by his rapid return asks, 'So have you really killed Gorbachev?' The man responds, 'No I came back to this queue because the queue of people wishing to kill Gorbachev is longer.' The other consequence was the great damage done to the budget.

The tax Tsarist and Soviet authorities placed on vodka and other forms of alcohol made a large and vital contribution to their state budgets. In 1984 it accounted for 14% of state revenue. Clearly, any attack on vodka and alcohol sales would exercise an influence on the budget. A significant part of the blame for the course the anti-alcohol campaign took has been placed on Ligachev who ran it. Gorbachev, however, cannot escape responsibility for supporting such an administrative method for dealing with this problem and, more importantly, for ignoring warnings before its launch about the damage it would render to state finances. It certainly cannot be claimed that he did not know of the financial consequences of this move.

Deputy Minister of Finance V.V.Dementsev whilst supporting the tone of the Politburo meeting, at which the anti-alcohol measures were being discussed, warned that the cut in production and sale of spirits would seriously hit the state budget. Gorbachev snapped back, 'That which you say is nothing new. Each one of us knows that there is nothing with which to cover this hole. But you are offering nothing else than making the people drunk (*spainat' narod*). So report your ideas shorter, you are not in the ministry but at a meeting of the Politburo.'⁶⁵

This statement makes several comments. Gorbachev understood that no paths existed to replace the revenue lost as a result of the anti-alcohol campaign. Yet, he was not concerned with this fall in revenue at a time when he was increasing dramatically state spending. No thought was given to the consequences of such a financial policy on the economic and political situation of the country. We also see that he had little patience for specialist advice that questioned his grandiose administrative plans. Lastly, this is another example of Gorbachev's belief in the need to start the fight and then see what happens.

The use of administrative methods to control alcoholism was not new in Russia and neither was the role of personality in determining their content. For example, in 1652, the government of Tsar Aleksei, worried about the spread of drunkenness amongst the masses, created a special commission to take steps against alcoholism. According to the imperial decree of 11 August 1652, steps were taken to liquidate taverns in large and middle-sized populated areas. In place of the closed taverns *kryzhechnie dvori* were constructed but only in large urban areas. The sale

of liquor for consumption on the premises was forbidden; alcohol was sold only for 'to go.' Its sale was forbidden on Sundays and during fasting periods. At the same time, Tsar Aleksei and his government understood the financial and budgetary consequences of the predicted drop in the sale of alcohol. Therefore, they doubled the tax on alcohol, and even trebled it in certain areas.⁶⁶

In 1985 sales of vodka fell 24%. In 1986 it fell 45% and in 1987 57%. Sales of wine fell 20%, in 1985, 60% in 1986, and 67% in 1987 from 1984 levels.⁶⁷ Production of vodka in 1985 alone dropped 35%. The state lost some 10-15 billion roubles each year in the period 1985-1988. The decline in revenue was equal to some 60% of the entire health budget. The spending for *uskorenie* and the loss of income caused by the anti-alcohol campaign resulted in a budget deficit in 1986 that was three times that of 1985. It is true that at the same time the price of gas and oil fell, hurting the budget. The price of oil exported and sold for convertible currency fell some 44% and natural gas 42% in the period 1986-1988. In July 1986 Gorbachev remarked that due to this drop the budget had already lost nine billion roubles whilst a trade deficit was expected. In October of the same year he complained that the growing financial crisis 'has grabbed us by the throat.'⁶⁸ However, he did not re-adjust his spending plans. Khatami faced a similar situation in regard to oil prices and adjusted accordingly his spending plans. Gorbachev printed money. During the period 1960-1986 the issue of new money averaged 2.2 billion roubles a year. In 1987 alone it was 5.9 billion, in 1988, 12 billion, in 1989 18 billion, and in 1990 it reached 27 billion. In 1981-1985 the budget deficit averaged only 18 billion roubles a year. In the period 1986-89 it averaged 67 billion roubles a year. At the same time incomes rose 9.2% in 1988, 13.1% in 1989, and 16.9% in 1990 as a result of Gorbachev's Laws on State Enterprises and Cooperatives.⁶⁹

The CIA analysis of Gorbachev's financial policy for the period 1985-1987 listed the reasons for the serious deterioration in finances and increasing budget deficits: (a) the huge increase in state social and capital expenditures; (b) loss of revenue resulting from the anti-alcohol campaign; (c) reduction in revenues from retail mark-ups on imported consumer goods as imports were cut back; and (d) reduction in revenues from taxes on enterprise production as economic reforms allowed enterprises greater independence in regard to self-financed investment.⁷⁰ Every one of Gorbachev's moves created this financial crisis. Medvedev stresses that Gorbachev was warned already in early

1987 and 1988 about the rapidly deteriorating fiscal situation, but failed to act.⁷¹ Surprisingly, Gorbachev despite extensive experience failed to comprehend that which his early predecessors did. The 'Bolsheviks understood that printing money to finance the budget deficit would drive prices up or, when prices were fixed, would intensify shortages.⁷² The result was massive shortages in the state sector of the economy where prices were fixed. In the small economic sector centred on the co-ops and their pricing structure, prices consistently rose in response to the amount of currency Gorbachev was printing.

Gorbachev compounded these mistakes with another disastrous decision. Since Stalin the government maintained the difference between *nalichie*, cash enterprises could get their hands on and was used for expenditures such as wages, and *ne naliche* 'money' placed into enterprises' account by the state that was to be used to make purchases, more often than not determined by the central planning authorities, from other enterprises. This *ne nalichie* 'money' designated for a specific purchase or payment for services rendered would be withdrawn from the payer's account and put into the 'payee's account'. This was essentially an accounting exercise as neither side could obtain *ne nalichie* money in cash from the bank, though the transaction was recorded in the enterprises' account. This system was designed to control the amount of cash in the system; it was one of the most important mechanisms for maintaining financial discipline in a closed economic system.

Gorbachev's reforms of 1987 and 1988 by allowing enterprises to withdraw *ne nalichie* money led to a huge infusion of cash into the system that the state could not control. Unlike his predecessors, Gorbachev ignored the importance and function of *nalichie* and *ne nalichie* in the economic system. The result was additional momentum for the printing of banknotes, inflationary pressures, and shortages. Already by late 1988 some items, such as meat and butter, were being rationed in some 30% of the RSFSR. 'There were shortages, not because output or output per head had fallen but because personal money incomes (and cash infusions into the system) were allowed to expand faster than consumer supplies at (mostly) fixed prices.⁷³ Not only was the centre politically and financially weakened as a result, but also Gorbachev's popularity, his only non-institutional source of political support, dropped as the population became increasingly frustrated with his policies that made everyday life more difficult.

Gorbachev's other major economic failure, about which he speaks very little, is price reform. Without it any restructuring of the economy could not prove effective. Gorbachev, despite his decisiveness and sense of purpose in liberalisation of the political system, lost nerve in regard to the issue of price reform. At the end of the Brezhnev and early part of the Andropov periods Gorbachev argued against price increases, stressing its political ramifications. Those supporting it argued that the subsidies to the agricultural sector and to retail prices had placed an ultimately unbearable strain on state finances. The rises discussed were not great and could have been implemented.

As general secretary Gorbachev consistently opposed price reform. When it was brought up in 1985-86 he voted against it. In 1986 he stated clearly his opinion: 'Some are demanding the raising of prices. But we will not go down that road. The people have yet to gain anything from *perestroika*. Materially they have not yet felt it. If we raise prices we can imagine the political consequences. We discredit *perestroika*.⁷⁴ Yet, this was the time to do it. Gorbachev enjoyed great popularity and could have blamed Brezhnev for financial irresponsibility. He was already blaming the Brezhnev leadership for economic and political mismanagement that led to the 'era of stagnation.' When in 1988-1989, in the midst of a growing financial and economic crisis, the Ryzhkov government tried to impress on him the need for price reform not only as a prerequisite for any serious structural economic reform but also for financial and thus political stability, Gorbachev postponed any decisions. He even went as far to state publicly that economic reforms would not lead to price increases.

By 1991 the financial situation forced him to implement limited price reform. It was too little too late. In 1991 Yakovlev confessed, 'We were late in putting together an agrarian policy. Changes in this area should have been done as soon as the idea of *perestroika* was born. It was clear that the agricultural sector was in crisis, but decisions of these problems were put off day after day...Also it was needed to undertake price reform earlier.⁷⁵ To foreign observers the need for price reform was clear. James Baker, US Secretary of State in the Bush administration, commented to Gorbachev and Chernyaev that he believed that price reform was needed and that Gorbachev should have done it earlier 'while *perestroika* still had a large credit of confidence.' Gorbachev objected: 'I think if we'd done that people would have quickly lost trust in a policy that starts out by getting into their pocket. All the same,

we're about twenty years late with price reform. Two or three more years won't make any difference.⁷⁶ This rather whimsical approach to price reform played a decisive role in the financial crisis that greatly contributed to the collapse of the USSR.

The centre in a federal system, especially one undergoing the type of changes discussed by Gorbachev, continually faces centrifugal and nationalist forces. The centre must show not only that it is capable of resolving economic issues and challenges but also that it is solvent and able to provide the funds and political incentives to the constituent parts of the country. The centre's financial policy and control over financial resources are some of the most important methods for the centre to maintain control over the periphery. If the centre handles poorly the economy and becomes bankrupt and is unable to flush the system with capital and cash, nationalist and centrifugal forces are going to increase to dangerous levels as they did by 1989.

Politics of Political Change

Gorbachev's politics of political change, if judged on its own and without consideration of its timing and sequencing with economic changes, was relatively successful. Since the collapse of the USSR Gorbachev has stressed that he was from the start a liberal democrat. Yet, when Gorbachev launched '*uskorenie*' and '*perestroika*' democratisation was not at the centre of his approach. In a speech to the Polish Seim in 1988 he admitted: 'I say frankly: we did not immediately understand the necessity, even inevitability, of it (democratisation). We were carried to this conclusion by lessons of the past, life itself, and the experience of the first stages of *perestroika*.'⁷⁷

After the first stages of *perestroika*, during which Gorbachev's high expectations for rapid and positive changes in the economy remained unrealised, he decided to move on two fronts: '*Perestroika* is a revolution from above since it is taking place by the initiative of the party. It is not a spontaneous uncontrolled process, but a directed one...The uniqueness and strength of *perestroika* is that it is simultaneously a revolution from above and below.'⁷⁸ He and the top CPSU elite would bring pressure from above whilst the people through elections would bring pressure from below on the bureaucracy and the assumed saboteurs of Gorbachev's policies. To one of his closest aides Gorbachev grumbled, 'The whole problem is cadres—they don't know how to do anything, they don't want to, they're too old, too tired, they

can't...Meanwhile party activists are resisting, trying to keep things on the old track, and their leader and protector is Yegor (Ligachev).⁷⁹ According to Boldin, Gorbachev, realizing the slowness (or failure) of his economic plans 'decided to find those guilty of this lack of success.... The greatest blow fell on staff and the entire *apparatus*. ... He spoke greatly of the sins committed by bureaucrats to developed socialism.'⁸⁰ In the period 1986-1989 Gorbachev changed 82% of the secretaries on the level of *gorkom* and *raikom* and 91% of *obkom* and *kraikom* secretaries. This was in addition to his constant changes at the highest levels of the CPSU hierarchy discussed earlier.

Gorbachev's understanding of democratisation changed during his six-year rule. Until 1990 democratisation meant the party fielding several candidates in popular elections to posts in the republican institutions. Legalisation of other political parties and removal of Article Six of the Brezhnev constitution were not on Gorbachev's agenda. He never democratised the highest levels of the CPSU, namely the Politburo, Secretariat, and the CC. Control of these bodies and of membership to them remained in the hands of Gorbachev himself.

At the end of 1988 Gorbachev's talk of democratisation of the republican institutions took a practical form. The Supreme Soviet on 1 December 1988 approved his new electoral law according to which voters' meetings of five hundred or more people could nominate candidates to state positions and voting would be by secret ballot. It also allowed an unlimited number of candidates to run. The days of elections, in which a single candidate approved from above ran, were coming to a close.⁸¹ This law governed the national elections to the USSR Congress of Peoples' Deputies held in March 1989.

The USSR Congress of Peoples' Deputies was intended to be the supreme republican institution staffed by freely elected deputies representing the political spectrum within the CPSU. The Congress had 2,250 deputies; 1,500 of them were elected directly by the people in national and territorial units. The remaining 750 came from lists drawn up by specific social and public organisations allocated a certain number of seats. For example, the CPSU had one hundred seats which it could fill with whomever it wanted. Other organisations included labour and trade unions, the Academy of Sciences, and the Komsomol. These 750 deputies did not participate in elections; placement on the list by a specific organisation guaranteed them a seat in the Congress. It would meet annually for two three-month sessions.

The Congress elected a Supreme Soviet that would make and implement policy whilst the Congress was not in session. The Congress, when in session, would debate and give or hold back approval of policies and deal with big issues, such as changes to the constitution. The Supreme Soviet consisted of two bodies, the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities; each had 271 deputies. The state institutions were headed by the Chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet who would make and implement policy, report on all major foreign and domestic issues, make nominations to state positions, head the Defence Council of the USSR, and exercise the leading supervisory role over state institutions. The chairman nominated the prime minister and government. All would be accountable to the people through their deputies in the Congress and Supreme Soviet. The Congress of Peoples' Deputies met for the first time on 25 May 1989. Gorbachev obtained his post in this body not through election in a constituency, but through the list supplied by the CPSU. He was unprepared at this point to run in an election. He was duly elected Chairman of the Supreme Soviet.

Gorbachev's democratisation at this point has several dynamics. First, he hoped that the elected republican institutions would bring sufficient pressure on the bureaucrats, whom Gorbachev considered the main obstacles to achieving his return to revolution. Second, he was taking the first steps in separating the republican state institutions from the revolutionary ones, making the latter superior to the former. Already in 1987, at the January CC Plenum, it was announced, 'The party is decisively against the mixing of party committees with the function of state and societal organs.'⁸² However, the republican state institutions would be staffed by CPSU members. He wrote in his memoirs, 'If one wishes to characterise briefly the essence of the political reforms, how it was thought up and carried out, then it is possible to say that it was a transfer of power from the hands of the party that had a monopolistic hold on it to that, which the constitution gave it, the Soviets composed of freely elected people's deputies.'⁸³ But since the CPSU was still the only legal political organisation able to field candidates, the revolutionary institutions, albeit democratised in the form of multi-CPSU candidate elections for state positions, still maintained its overall grip on power. Nonetheless, all power to the soviets had taken on a real meaning and role in political life. Third, Gorbachev, although maintaining the top leadership position in the

CPSU and the Supreme Soviet, was attempting to shift his power base to the state republican institutions. By doing so, he was trying to immunise himself from any attempts by the CPSU to do with him as it did with Khrushchev. At the same time, this move was an attempt by Gorbachev to strengthen his personal power which still was not directly based on victory in a popular election. Yet, he forced others to run in elections, whilst making an exception for himself.

At the heart of the debate over the politics of change were two issues: (1) how to implement politics of change within the revolutionary institution, the CPSU, and make it electorally viable in the opening political space; and (2) determination of the role of the CPSU in the overall political set-up. Gorbachev and his close advisors, keeping in mind the Khrushchev experience, believed that the politics of change would surely encounter resistance amongst the CPSU elite and rank and file who would use their positions to constitute a 'braking mechanism' on the pace and type of changes initiated by Gorbachev. His not unjustified fear was that such moves would succeed in distorting the politics of change, perhaps even defeating it, and damaging his popularity.

Yakovlev, amongst other figures, early on advised Gorbachev to divide the CPSU into two wings or essentially two parties. One would be open to those who supported Gorbachev's concept of politics of change whilst the other would be open to those not adhering to it. The goal was to ensure that any future political and economic failures resulting from inter-party fighting over the politics of change would not taint Gorbachev. In this way, Gorbachev, his supporters, and the overall politics of change, having separated itself politically from 'old guard' mentality, could represent a new era in the people's eyes and in the electoral arena. There was a strong logic behind this thinking. The CPSU and Leninism were the elements holding the Soviet political and ideological system together. If damaged by a strong popular sense that it could not reform itself as a result of internal factional fighting, the people would look to other ideologies and political actors.

Gorbachev rejected these arguments, convinced that through rhetoric, cadres' policy, and institutional power he would be able, if not to turn most of the bureaucracy and elite into supporters of his politics of change, at least neutralise them. Gorbachev was pressured several other times in the late 1980s to make this split, but he refused. His feelings are understandable. To have divided the CPSU into two wings

at such an early period would have perhaps reduced his real power within the party and given an official platform and organisation to opponents of the politics of change who would not be under the control of Gorbachev. However, by the late 1980s when Gorbachev felt that the CPSU, faced with serious internal fighting, was proving unable to provide clear leadership to society in the direction he wanted, he perhaps should have divided the party. Such a move would have protected and sustained the legitimacy of the CPSU for it would have offered a camp supporting a 'dynamic Leninism.' Such a camp would have given hope that the USSR was reformable from within. In this case, the people would then be able to make their choice by voting for either supporters of Gorbachev's policies or his opponents.

In this respect the IRI provides an interesting comparison. As outlined earlier, the leading clerical political organisation, the Society of Combatant Clergy, split with the left-moderate clerics setting up their own organisation. Together they, along with other organisations, such as the Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution and the party, United Principalist Front, provided two platforms within Khomeinism for political groups and the electorate. One gave hope of the dynamism of Khomeinism and another of its orthodoxy; both represent current trends within the electorate. Collectively, they provide a relatively broad political spectrum that protects the legitimacy of Khomeinism among orthodox supporters as well as those looking in the direction of dynamic *feghb*. It is unclear to what extent these two groups will continue to be successful in this regard after the 2009 presidential elections, but it is evident that this split does provide Khomeinism with electoral viability.

The downside of splitting the party is that it would have provided an official platform and political opening to opponents of the politics of change. As we shall see below, conservative organisations worked effectively against Khatami. Gorbachev feared this scenario. However, his popularity, the societal desire for change, and his institutional power would have enabled him to divide the CPSU but remain the most powerful and popular politician in the USSR. Unlike Khatami, who joined the breakaway organisation, the Association of Combatant Clergy, Gorbachev feared a split.

The question of the constitutional role of the CPSU in any future reformed system played an important role in the political debates from 1989. Sovereignty could emerge either from the people or from an

interpretation of Leninism that placed it in the hands of the revolutionary institution. Gorbachev initially believed that a CPSU reformed under his leadership could maintain a monopoly on power. Despite the emergence of multi-candidate elections in 1989 Gorbachev continued to stress, 'We will decisively struggle against any attempts to reduce the authority of the party. The demand to change Article Six has as its goal the demoralisation of communists.'⁸⁴ After the collapse of the USSR Gorbachev claims that as early as 1988 he was insisting that the CPSU had to give up its monopoly on power.⁸⁵ Yet, all of his moves until early 1990 indicate that the CPSU's relinquishment of power was not his goal.

On 22 January 1990 he presented to the Politburo his programme of a new wave of political reforms, the most important of which was abolishment of Article Six. On 13 March the Congress of People's Deputies approved this constitutional change. The legal conditions for a transition to a complete form of republicanism were now in place. The CPSU, the revolutionary institution, no longer had a theoretical monopolistic hold on power; Ryzhkov noted that sometime before the CPSU had already lost its practical hold on power.

Several elements seem to have played a role in Gorbachev's decision. First, he believed the CPSU was reforming slowly and thus responsible for the economic crisis gripping the USSR and his decline in popularity. Second, mired in an economic crisis he did not know how to handle, Gorbachev took this move in order to maintain some momentum and hope in his politics of change. Third, with the first two elements exercising a strong influence on the political environment, he eventually understood that his politics of change would ultimately lead to the destruction of the absolute power of the revolutionary institutions. As detailed in the next chapter, Khatami had less success in grappling with the theoretical and practical side of this issue.

At the XXVIII Party Congress held in 1990 Gorbachev, who was re-elected party head despite strong opposition, made the CPSU's practical role even smaller. The new Politburo was made up of party officials not holding state positions; the division between republican and revolutionary institutions had become greater. Gorbachev, despite his anger over the CPSU's slow rate of change envisioned a new party:

We profess the Leninist conception of the political party...it is a new type of party carrying out the role of political avant-garde of

society...Today's life increasingly shows us that without a political avant-garde gathering ideologically and organisationally the strength of the country and thinking through the processes taking place in society... that is without the Communist Party, no kind of changes will take place.⁸⁶

Gorbachev believed either that a reformed CPSU could prove to be a viable political party contesting elections or that it would occupy some yet undefined position of moral leadership in society. But, he destroyed the CPSU's structure and grip on power and irreparably damaged its societal and political legitimacy with his economic policies. These moves made playing of either of these roles by the CPSU very difficult, if not impossible. He compounded this by transferring his power base from the revolutionary institutions to those of the state.

In this same year, Gorbachev, arguing that power needed to be exercised effectively, created the post of President of the USSR and a Presidential Council which was supposed to be the supreme policy-making body. Gorbachev, however, established these two bodies quickly and without adequate planning. The Presidential Council did not have a bureaucracy for information gathering, policymaking, and policy implementation. It also did not have a sense of its function since the government headed by the prime minister responsible to the Supreme Soviet remained. This lack of a relatively clear demarcation between the responsibilities and functions of this Presidential Council and the government created even more administrative chaos at a time when relatively effective governance and policymaking were needed to manage the economic crisis and the tension in the relationship between the centre and the republics. Gorbachev himself, whilst claiming the need to centralise power in the hands of a president with executive power, failed to put into place the institutions needed to make that power relatively effective. Soon after, he dissolved the Presidential Council having recognised its relative institutional impotence.

On one level Gorbachev's politics of change in this regard is considered a success, especially in Western historiography. He separated the revolutionary and republican institutions from each other, established the supremacy of the latter, organised relatively free elections, and removed the CPSU's monopoly on power. If we examine these achievements whilst excluding the overall dynamic of the politics of change, context, and the attainment of the non-goal, we can

consider Gorbachev a success. However, his approach to the politics of change, his expectations in regard to it, and the lack of sequencing of economic and political changes cast a long shadow on this 'success.'

Gorbachev shifted to democratisation as a result of his belief that his essentially sound economic plans had failed to produce the rapid positive change he sought because of purposeful sabotage of the bureaucracy. Gorbachev initially regarded democratisation as a means to an end, namely the successful implementation of his economic plans. As the economic crisis, emerging as a result of his economic policies, deepened, Gorbachev, devoid of his previous self-confidence and at a loss on how to proceed in regard to economic change, found political reform easier. More importantly, he came to believe that the process of democratisation would automatically provide the paths for economic reform. At the XIX Party Conference held in summer 1988 Gorbachev stressed that democratisation was the key to all the problems facing the USSR.⁸⁷ Some ten years after the collapse of the USSR Gorbachev reiterated, 'I wanted to create the conditions so that the people could say what they wanted.'⁸⁸ Yet, the course of economic reforms and policies was not debated. In the first Congress of Peoples' Deputies, only one speaker, the economist Abalkin, discussed economic policy. Gorbachev found even this one speech irritating. Despite saying he wanted the people to say what they wanted he never opened or encouraged debate over economic policy in his new republican institutions. He continued to implement economic and financial policies that not only exacerbated the economic crisis, but also created an opened political atmosphere in which the taking of tough decisions in regard to the economy was extremely difficult.

The sense is that Gorbachev, failing to find answers to the deteriorating economic situation and having destroyed the CPSU's managing role in the economy, launched political reform with the hope that this newly opened political system would somehow handle successfully the economic situation. In doing so Gorbachev had once again launched a battle without a clear idea of where he wanted to go politically and economically and was waiting to see what would happen.

The timing of the political reforms shows that Gorbachev had given little thought to the sequencing of reforms and to how political and economic reforms would exercise an influence on each other. In 1989 at the Congress of Peoples' Deputies U.V. Bondarev asked Gorbachev, 'Is it possible to compare *perestroika* with a plane which has taken off

not knowing where its landing strip is?⁷⁸⁹ As if in response to Bondarev Gorbachev stressed, 'The most important issue is to begin and the process will take off.' In 1990 when the system was in slow disintegration Gorbachev, in response to a note which stated that the Bolsheviks had a plan and criticised him for not having one, shot back, 'They knew, you say? They had a plan? Just look what they brought the country to...No, we're going to do what life demands, not break life by forcing it to conform to some model.'⁹⁰ Yet, after the collapse of the USSR Gorbachev stressed he did have a plan. At a conference at the Gorbachev Foundation in 2001, V. Medvedev remarked, 'When all of this began, no one knew what was needed to be done and what would emerge from it.' Gorbachev shot back, 'Nonsense. We all knew.'⁹¹ His actions in the period 1988-1991 indicate otherwise. Two issues need to be separated from each other. On the one hand, Gorbachev was correct that one cannot change 'life' and place it into some model. Yet, on the other hand, Gorbachev's acceptance of this became a justification not to attempt to manage and change reality through judicious policies and governance as his self-created chaos gained momentum. By 1989 Gorbachev surrendered to events most likely because he did not have any answers to the crises he had created in his rush to achieve positive, rapid results.

Another major weakness and mistake of Gorbachev's democratisation was his decision not to run in any general election. Despite his talk of the need for democracy and that CPSU leaders had to adapt to, and struggle within, the new electoral conditions, he never took that step himself. When elections were being held to the Congress of Peoples' Deputies in 1989, the deputies were either chosen by certain organisations, such as the CPSU, various unions, the Academy of Sciences, or ran in real elections in constituencies across the USSR. Gorbachev chose the safe route. He had his name placed on the CPSU list that made him an automatic member of the Congress. In 1990 he introduced the popularly elected post of USSR president. However, citing the sensitive times in which the Soviet Union found itself, Gorbachev made an exception for himself. He had the Congress of Peoples' Deputies elect him; he had refused once again to run in a popular election. There were realistic concerns within the elite that a popular election to the presidency would be boycotted by certain republics, in particular the Baltic States and Georgia.

The arguments for Gorbachev's participating in a popular election were more powerful. Despite great popular discontent over the economic crisis and the seeming political and social chaos, Gorbachev was the only political figure with all-union exposure, recognition, and popularity. Yeltsin was not greatly popular outside of major urban areas in the RSFSR; in the other Soviet republics his talk of Russian nationalism and sovereignty was not popular. If Gorbachev had been a popularly-elected Soviet president, he could have claimed popular legitimacy for the preservation of the USSR in a reformed shape. By not running he weakened his position vis-à-vis Yeltsin and other republican leaders who were popularly elected. Thus in the 1990-1991 negotiations over the delineation of powers between the all-union centre and those republics willing to participate in it, Gorbachev found himself at a strong disadvantage, especially in regard to the RSFSR.

'Indivisible Union of Free Republics'-The National Question

The multi-ethnic character of the USSR ensured that nationality policy remained at the centre of policymaking. A unique characteristic of the USSR was the emphasis on, and institutionalisation of, nationality. In theory, the union republics had a great degree of autonomy. According to the 1936 'Stalin' constitution and the 1977 'Brezhnev' constitution they even enjoyed the right to secede. The reality was different; the dynamics between the centre and the union republics was multi-dimensional. Each union republic was founded on a particular ethnic group(s) and enjoyed its own state structures that were similar to those at the all-union centre. For the most part the Sovietised ethnic/national elite of each republic filled top leadership and minor state and party positions although Great Russians ran the intelligence services and other sensitive posts.

The unitary CPSU, free of nationalist feelings, provided the unifying structure for these national units. Re-distribution of financial and economic resources to the republics and the threat of the possible use of force played important roles in the centre's maintenance of the stability and unity of the USSR. However, as time passed, Soviet nationality policy became more nuanced as society evolved and Soviet symbols and legitimacy became rooted.

After the Second World War the CPSU leadership utilised various methods to manage the nationalities issue. During the Khrushchev period there was a brief interlude of decentralisation and emphasis on

national identities. The Brezhnev leadership effectively mixed the implicit threat of repression with accommodation; it ceded considerable autonomy to the republican elites who enjoyed long-term tenure in power impossible during the Stalin and Khrushchev periods. This assured stability in centre-periphery relations. It also allowed for the emergence of strong networks of patronage and corruption that checked to an extent Moscow's power in the republics. Whilst allowing such republican autonomy, Brezhnev spoke frequently of the 'new Soviet person', whose identity was based on loyalty to the territory of the USSR, Soviet symbols and goals, the defeat of Nazi Germany, the space programme, and superpower status. Already in the Khrushchev period these elements along with a collective historical memory combined to make a Soviet identity that blended the national with the Leninist Soviet; radical nationalists had a small following. That the collapse of the USSR in 1991 was the inevitable outcome of a failed experiment in the construction of a Soviet identity cannot be assumed.

Gorbachev's predecessors, although believing that a Soviet identity had emerged, understood its potential weaknesses and limits and the dynamics of the relationship between the all-union centre and the republics. They recognised the dangers that could emerge if nationalities and economic policy were severely mishandled. The only issues that provoked protests and large demonstrations in the period between the end of World War II and the beginning of the Gorbachev period were food shortages and discontent with a particular element of nationality policy, such as the language of instruction in universities.

The vast amount of literature covering the nationality question makes a vital contribution to our understanding of the events leading to Gorbachev's resignation from the Soviet presidency. Some works purport the view that the multi-ethnic character of the USSR combined with suppressed yet institutionalised national identities made maintenance of the unity of the USSR during a period of liberalisation and democratisation almost impossible. Gorbachev could only try to guide this structure to a peaceful dissolution which he did and thus fulfilled the only function open to him. However, even some of Gorbachev's admirers find not criticising him for his handling of the nationality issue difficult. Gorbachev, having spent much time in southern Russia where many different ethnic groups lived, was expected to offer new insight to nationality policy and comprehend the dangers in mishandling it. He failed on both accounts.

The argument presented here is that with the exception of the Baltic states Gorbachev's approach played a decisive role in the enflaming of nationalist feelings that ended with the dissolution of the USSR. His approach was characterised by: (a) a naïve view of the strength of Soviet identity; (b) failure to understand the dynamics of the power relationship between the all-union centre and the republics; (c) an unwillingness to uphold the authority of the Soviet state, its laws and constitution, especially in the face of Yeltsin's attacks on, and unconstitutional moves against, the all-union centre; (d) failure to contemplate the possible consequences of political and economic policies for the relationship of the all-union centre with the republics and nationality policy; and (e) failure to see a strong distinction between the territories of the USSR in 1939 and those added by Stalin, namely the Baltic States, Moldova, and Western Ukraine.⁹²

Western Ukraine, before its annexation by Stalin, had not been part of the Tsarist or Soviet states, having belonged to the Habsburg Empire, where it enjoyed a significant degree of national and religious autonomy. Stalin, by annexing it, incorporated into the USSR a hotbed of Ukrainian nationalism. Although in all parts of Ukraine discontent grew as a result of Gorbachev's economic policies, Western Ukraine played a large role in the articulation of Ukrainian nationalism and separatism. In 1940 Stalin annexed from Romania Bessarabia, the Hertza area, and North Bukovina, which he joined to the Autonomous SSR of Moldova and then called it the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova. This added possible Romanian irredentism to an already ethnically mixed territorial unit that contained a large Ukrainian and Moldovan population.

The most problematic areas for the all-union centre from the beginning of the politics of change were the Baltic states. Having tasted independence in the inter-war period they (as well as foreign countries such as the US) never recognised the Molotov-Ribbentrop Treaty that allowed for their annexation to the USSR. Unlike Ukraine, which was divided between its more nationalist western regions and its orthodox relatively Russian eastern areas and unlike the ethnically divided Moldovan SSR, the Baltic states had a relatively clear conception of their aims—rejection of this 1939 Treaty and eventual re-establishment of their pre-war independence. The more insightful of Gorbachev's advisors early on understood the great extent to which the Baltic states differed from the other twelve republics and the danger they could

present to the unity of the USSR. Some even suggested that Moscow negotiate a rapid exit of these republics from the USSR before their aspirations of independence exercised a negative influence on the issue of nationalities in the country as a whole. Until mid-1990 Gorbachev consistently rejected any such suggestions, convinced that the Baltic states would not and could not separate themselves from the USSR given economic and historical links.

The first serious alarm bell rang on 23 August 1987, the forty-eighth anniversary of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, when in all three Baltic republics the first large countrywide demonstrations were held, protesting against the collusion of Hitler and Stalin in their annexation. The following year the three republics became initiators in the creation of popular national fronts supporting *perestroika*. These fronts realised that only through *perestroika* could they achieve their ultimate goal of independence. Gorbachev preferred not to see the Baltic states' real motives in supporting *perestroika*, preferring to believe that they, similar to all-union politicians, were warmly embracing his politics of change as a means to strengthen and make more prosperous the USSR. He did not regard the rise of secessionist-nationalist feelings and the emergence of nationalist front movements as excessively threatening or worrying.

In 1988 Estonia established Estonian as the state language and, more importantly, declared that its laws took precedence over all-union ones. The other Baltic states soon followed. Gorbachev, whilst making angry comments, did not take any practical countermeasures against these infringements of the Soviet constitution. By early 1990, a time of increasing economic chaos, the Supreme Soviets of the three Baltic states passed motions in favour of finishing the steps towards independence. Gorbachev remained passive, believing that the Baltic states, let alone the other constituent republics, could not or would not break away. During one discussion about the rapidly deteriorating situation in the Baltic states, Gorbachev convinced his close advisors that he was far from the reality of events. One of them after hearing Gorbachev's assessment of the causes and present state of the nationalities situation in the Baltics remarked, 'Any comments here are unnecessary; it was wishful thinking, reality obscured by the comfortable old "internationalist" view.'⁹³ The steps taken by the Baltic states in the period 1988-1990 and Gorbachev's passive reaction to them encouraged similar steps in other parts of the USSR, especially in

Yeltsin's RSFSR which soon took the lead in this regard as the economic situation deteriorated. Gorbachev allowed the all-union centre to find itself on the defensive as republics declared their sovereignty and the precedence of their laws over all-union ones. By not acting to protect the Soviet constitution, Gorbachev showed that the all-union centre was weak; an air of the inevitability of the implosion of the USSR began to rise.

The trajectory of the nationality issue and the debates over the reform of the relationship between the all-union centre and the constituent republics seemed to catch Gorbachev by surprise. As a result of intense criticism and pressure he addressed it for the first time in the Politburo and CC in 1989. There Gorbachev used traditional rhetoric but did not take any practical measures. By the end of 1990 Gorbachev faced elected heads of the republics who, as a result of the economic and political dynamics created by *perestroika*, had platforms that included secession and/or demands for ever increasing amounts of power at the expense of the all-union centre. He now and belatedly understood that the unity of the USSR was in danger.

In March 1991 he held a referendum that asked the Soviet people whether they supported the concept of a reformed but unitary USSR. Six republics refused to hold the referendum. The 'big four' of the USSR, the Russian, Ukrainian, Kazakh and Belorussian SSRs held it. A majority of the people in the republics participating in it favoured preservation of the USSR in some form. However, the question and its results gave no indication of the type of relationship that would exist between the all-union centre and the constituent republics. Gorbachev, lacking the legitimacy and power emerging from popular electoral victory, could not determine this when faced by popularly elected heads of the constituent republics. In the early and mid points of his rule he failed to understand that his politics of change necessitated a renegotiation of the relationship between the all-union centre and the fifteen union republics. This was rather naive. If he did foresee this, through his economic policies and weakening of institutions he ensured that the all-union centre would not be in a position of relative strength in this process.

Managing the nationality issue with the goal of maintaining most of the republics within the USSR, especially during a period of political change, was a complex and difficult challenge. Any chance of successful management would in the first instance be greatly dependent

on the economic situation, the financial standing of the centre, and the state of all-union institutions. Effective all-union governance, the attraction of a relatively strong single economic unit and a wealthy centre distributing funds throughout the system were the best incentives to be offered to the republics to remain in the USSR. These elements increased greatly in importance once Gorbachev had ruled out the use of force as a way for maintaining the union. It is here that Gorbachev played the decisive role in the Soviet collapse. His flawed economic policies created an economic crisis, for which the CPSU and the all-union centre were held responsible. At the same time, Gorbachev's disastrous financial policies bankrupted the centre and deprived the centre of the ability to distribute resources to the republics.

In 1988 Gorbachev asked Shakhnazarov, Yakovlev, and Chernyaev if the Baltic states really wanted to secede. The overwhelming answer was 'Yes.' Gorbachev, rejecting this assessment, retorted, 'They will (economically) perish having cut themselves off from the union.'⁹⁴ He repeated this to Soviet and non-Soviet political figures. Gorbachev, in late 1989 facing a worsening economic and financial situation he had created, realised its consequences for the unity of the USSR. 'Given the worsening economic situation in the country the Baltic states have a new motive "we don't want to die in this general chaos."⁹⁵ The first statement shows that Gorbachev understood that one of the key incentives for constituent republics to remain in the USSR, especially the smaller ones, was the large single and relatively strong economic unit it represented which, he argued, could offer economic growth and potential they could not obtain individually. This was another argument for handling with great care the economy and finances. The second statement reflects Gorbachev's belated recognition that the economic chaos his policies had created was now playing the leading role in fanning separatist and secessionist feelings not only in the Baltic states but across the USSR. Yet, he did little to address the worsening economic situation, either by attempting to correct the deficiencies in his economic policies or speed up the transition to a primarily market economy. The result was a continually worsening economic situation that strengthened nationalism and the push for sovereignty and/or independence across the USSR.

Gorbachev and others charge that Yeltsin holds a great deal of responsibility for the collapse of the USSR. Yet, Gorbachev himself is

responsible for the Yeltsin factor. First, Yeltsin's re-emergence on the political scene was a result of Gorbachev's overestimation of his own political skills and underestimation of Yeltsin's. He ignored the warnings he received about Yeltsin's political character and his own experience in dealing with the man in the period 1985-1988.

Second, Yeltsin's policies and success, whilst certainly a reflection of his political character, were primarily consequences of Gorbachev's mistakes in his approach to the politics of change. Popular discontent resulting from the rapidly declining economic situation deprived Gorbachev of his self-confidence in dealing with Yeltsin and provided Yeltsin with a socio-political situation ripe for his political ambitions. Yeltsin, similar to other republican-level politicians, was thrown into the arena of electoral politics by Gorbachev's politics of change. In 1990 elections were held to republican-level posts. By this time, the worsening economic and financial situation had seriously delegitimized and made unpopular the CPSU and the all-union centre. A politician seeking to win elections had to distance himself from both and utilise other slogans, such as grabbing sovereignty from the centre and rapid and painless economic reforms, and ideologies, such as national identity. Yet, the Yeltsin factor should not be discounted. His personal animosity in regard to, and dislike of, Gorbachev came across clearly in his behaviour, remarks, and memoirs. Yeltsin skilfully channelled popular discontent with Gorbachev's handling of the economy into his personal struggle with Gorbachev and his own attempts to achieve more power at the expense of the all-union centre.

Third, Gorbachev passively re-acted to Yeltsin's unconstitutional calls for all republics to seize as much sovereignty as they could handle and his unconstitutional actions. Other republics, sensing this passivity, too joined in the attack on the all-union centre.

Gorbachev has consistently argued that the union could have been saved if the August 1991 coup d'état attempt had not taken place. But the coup d'état was in fact a reaction to the chaos brought about by Gorbachev's overall politics of change that was now threatening to cause the collapse of the country itself and by the Gorbachev-Yeltsin political struggle. By refusing to act against Yeltsin and to hold up the Soviet constitution and the state's interests, Gorbachev had created the conditions for this attempted coup d'état. Kruchkov, along with the other leading members of the organisers of the coup d'état, argued that as a result of his economic and political policies Gorbachev 'had

become a hostage in the hands of extremists and in particular of the head extremist, Yeltsin....⁹⁶ In April 1991 Kruchkov hinted to Nixon, who was visiting Moscow, that the Supreme Soviet, having grown 'tired' of the political battle between Gorbachev and Yeltsin, might take power into its own hands. He suggested that the Americans take a closer look at Lukyanov, who had become head of the Supreme Soviet when Gorbachev became president. The coup d'état, whilst certainly hastening the collapse of the USSR, was not against a form of politics of change, but rather against the breakup of the world's first socialist state that faced institutional, economic, and political crises brought about by Gorbachev's pursuit of realisation of unrealistically high expectations in regard to the speed and breadth of change. On the ashes of Gorbachev's politics of change emerged fifteen newly independent republics which faced the chaos created rendered over the previous six years.

KHATAMI AND THE POLITICS OF CHANGE

On 6 December 2003 Students' Day and nine months before the expiry of his last presidential term Khatami arrived at the University of Tehran. Students, once energised and made hopeful by Khatami's talk of civil society, democracy, and rule of law, had been the backbone of his support. On a stage in front of an overcrowded auditorium, sitting alone at a small desk, on which were a microphone and red roses, Khatami gave a small speech to his main constituency. Students then posed questions. The session turned into a forum for disenchanted youth to express their anger and severe disappointment to a Khatami visibly taken aback by the verbal attacks. They severely criticised him for consistently backing down even in those confrontations when conservative opposition seemed relatively weak, for running for president a second term despite the timidity of his character in standing up to his opponents, and for chanting certain slogans and then refusing to act on them. Khatami tried to defend his record, stressing that thanks to his presidency the students had the right to criticise severely the president to his face. He did not succeed in convincing people that he was not a failure in regard to the politics of change.¹

Politics of Power Consolidation

Khatami, although enjoying popular electoral legitimacy, did not enjoy the institutional power that Gorbachev did. This limited his ability to reshape through bureaucratic means the dynamic between the revolutionary and republican institutions. Therefore, Khatami's politics of change was greatly dependent on his skill and leadership in handling and managing the various elite factions in various IRI institutions. The

goal was to obtain active or passive support, or at least neutrality, of a number of powerful elite groups and actors. The overall strategy, as conceived by many of Khatami's closest advisors, was to use popular pressure from below in factional struggles behind the scenes at the top levels of the republican and revolutionary institutions in order to advance the politics of change. This active use of popular pressure from below was needed since Khatami was attempting to re-define the power and prerogatives of revolutionary institutions whose real power was greater than that of the republican presidency. Khatami found institutional change more politically challenging than did Gorbachev who headed the revolutionary institution which enjoyed theoretically absolute power. Gorbachev encountered little, if any, constitutional limitations on his desire to re-make republican and revolutionary institutions.

During his first administration Khatami consolidated his power in the institutions allowed by the constitution. The first challenge was obtaining approval from the conservative-dominated Fifth Majles for his cabinet. To underscore his intention to continue with a technocratic approach to the economy and social problems, Khatami nominated many figures who had been active in the Rafsanjani government. Two proposed ministers were controversial. Hojjatoleslam Abdullah Nuri, nominated to the post of Minister of the Interior, and Ataollah Mohajerani, nominated to the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

Conservatives disapproved of Mohajerani's 'liberal' views, past political activities, and his soft approach to social issues. Khatami, aware of the growing opposition to this candidacy, gave a strong speech in its defence. In this period Khatami believed that through arguments rooted in Islamic history, logical reasoning, and references to Khomeini he could neutralise enough of his potential rivals: 'Certainly, one can have a critical viewpoint. However, what is without doubt is that one can't state that a person cannot occupy an important cultural position simply because he/she supports a certain thought...I must say that his (Mohajerani's) opinions are very close to the views expressed during the election. It is these viewpoints that garnered the votes of the majority of people.' He then provided a similar and poignant historical example. Molla Sadra was an unorthodox cleric severely persecuted by high-ranking orthodox clerics during the Safavid period. His thought played a role in the thinking of Khomeini. That a

major avenue in Tehran is named for him is a reflection of the high-esteem the IRI has for him.² 'If the adherents of dogmatism at that time had succeeded through use of force or other means in silencing Molla Sadra, he would not have been revered today and, instead, the thoughts of those who condemned him would have predominated in Islamic culture.'³ Having won the historical argument that included implicit references to Khomeini, Khatami responded to the personal attacks on his proposed minister.

Mr. Mohajerani who is an expert in the field (of political theory), should write several articles defining the concept of liberalism for the benefit of those who do not comprehend the meaning of this term and are only seeking to use it to slander someone else. Perhaps Mr. Mohajerani should write why a religious person who believes that religion effectively runs one's life can never be a liberal. Licentiousness? How can one attach such a label to a person who has accompanied me on journeys and other events? How can one accuse him of propagating licentiousness? How easy it is to utter these words...Mr. Mohajerani is one of our assets...It is exactly this kind of Muslim thinker we need today.

Khatami's speech seemingly had the desired effect. Another element was the fear of some of his rivals of striking out against Khatami so soon after his stunning and unexpected victory. The Majles approved all of his nominees; Mohajerani received the lowest amount of any of them. Majles approval of Nuri and Mohajerani gave hope to optimists that Khatami, backed by a powerful popular mandate and through effective oratory that blended talk of the politics of change with Islamic history and Khomeinism, would prove to be a skilful agent of change. The key was to know when to use that popular power and to stop relying solely on words to extract concessions from rivals. In this regard, Khatami was weak.

The wrath of the conservatives was soon turned on Nuri. One of the prerogatives enjoyed by the president is the appointment and dismissal of all provincial governors. To their fury, Khatami and Nuri replaced most of the governors and replaced them with 'Khatami people.' The new president was sending a signal to society that a different era was beginning and to his actual and potential opponents that he intended to consolidate his power to the extent allowed by the constitution. Nuri

came under attack for his enthusiasm for decentralisation and democratisation on a local level, defence of freedom of speech and support for students. That which also enraged the conservatives was Nuri's outspokenness and ability to utilise Khomeini's thought and words to support his view of Khomeinism which they found excessively unorthodox and dangerous. Consequently, the Leader did not delegate responsibility for the law enforcement forces to Nuri, a move which struck at the base of Khatami's power. By June 1998 Majles deputies impeached Nuri on the grounds of his 'liberalism' and the threats it posed to IRI security. The deputies stressed that he had failed the president and thus the Majles was acting for his benefit. Khatami then appointed him vice-president, a post not subject to Majles approval, to the fury of the conservatives.

In 1999 the Majles increased its pressure on Mohajerani. The relative generous issuance of licenses to publications, his announcement that censorship would not be imposed before publication and the change in the official attitude towards social issues led to attempts to impeach him. Khatami spent much time and effort to ensure Mohajerani would not meet Nuri's fate. Mohajerani, due to a combination of intense conservative attacks and other issues, resigned his post in 1999. The departure of these two powerful figures weakened the cabinet.

Nuri continued to be a thorn in the side of the conservatives. His newspaper, *Khordad*, in late 1999 published an interview with a hitherto minor and relatively apolitical Hojjatoleslam, Mohsen Kadivar. In this interview and in some speaking engagements Kadivar attacked interpretations of Khomeinism that emphasised the absolute *velayat-e faqih*, stressed Khomeini's belief in republicanism, condemned infringements on freedom and secretive *fatwas* issued against suspected opponents of the IRI, and made uncomfortable comparisons between the Pahlavi monarchy and the IRI.⁴ Nuri's newspaper was closed.

Nuri was eventually arrested and summoned to a clerical court charged with damaging the legitimacy of the IRI, propagating support for relations with the US and Israel, and supporting the disgraced Ayatollah Montazeri and the National Front Movement of Mossadegh. During the trial, Nuri, defending himself, showed once again his skill in defeating orthodox views by using Khomeini's thought. For example, the court challenged Nuri's support for Mossadegh by referring to Khomeini's characterisation of the supporters of the National Front as apostates and irreligious. Nuri, in turn, cited Khomeini's praise of

Mossadegh as a great servant of the nation. He condemned conservative cherry-picking of Khomeini's thought and speeches in order to build cases against those they considered enemies; the conservatives also could hurl the same accusation at Khatami and the supporters of the politics of change. This example shows the rhetorical and even philosophical challenges in this type of political system.

By the end of the trial he had thrown the judges on the rhetorical defensive and began to compete with Khatami in terms of popularity. He was found guilty and sentenced to five years in prison. The impeachment and eventual imprisonment of Nuri and the resignation of Mohajerani, two of the most articulate and popular of Khatami's reformist team, show that the more centralised, and authoritarian character of the Soviet political system worked to the advantage of the politics of change. Gorbachev had to politick with institutions under his control, namely the Politburo, CC and then the Congress of Peoples' Deputies. He encountered few limitations on his choice of advisors and political appointments. Since Gorbachev was not forced to expend much political capital defending them in the face of opposition in republican and/or revolutionary institutions, he enjoyed more opportunity to follow his politics of change. The semi-democratic part of the IRI system along with the powers of the various revolutionary institutions can, but not inevitably, limit effectively the extent to which any political figure in either the republican or revolutionary institutions can consolidate and exercise power and achieve ends.

Despite their differing institutional powers, Gorbachev and Khatami came to the conclusion that a vital tool in the struggle against their opponents was elected local governments. Hajjarian continually stressed that success of Khatami's project could come only through this use of pressure from below in the struggles at the top between different factional and institutional groups, "The (local) councils are a stage in the process of the Republic's consolidation...Councils are essential to the process of democratisation; the authoritarian faction will pay a very high price for destroying these institutions."⁵ Khatami saw in the councils a vital element in the deepening of civil society in the provinces and a mechanism for counteracting the myriad of structures representing the revolutionary institutions on a local level. He also believed that these elected local councils in the hands of his supporters would strengthen him at the centre.

The 1979 Constitution has provisions for popularly elected local councils, but successive governments had not implemented them. In 1994 the Majles took away from local councils the constitutional right to monitor the centrally appointed governors and district heads.⁶ On 10 August 1998 Khatami's Interior Ministry announced the holding of elections for local councils. There would be 115,000 representatives across the country with approximately 75,000 alternatives elected from all villages, towns, and cities. These councils would select a mayor who until then had been appointed by the Interior Ministry. These elected mayors would levy certain taxes, supervise the local budget, and handle local issues. On the twentieth anniversary of the revolution Khatami called the establishment of these elections:

a good gift to the people ...With these local elections the government is in reality giving some of its prerogatives to the people... The establishment of local councils has several positive consequences. One of them is the spread and deepening of the participation of the people which has been one of the key planks of this government...councils (by virtue of their local knowledge and electoral base) can also complete what the (central) government is doing now, but better...Another consequence is the creation of the understanding of co-operation between the government and the people.⁷

The assumption was that supporters of the politics of change, building on Khatami's popular mandate, would capture most of the local councils and the politics of change would spread across the country on a local level. Khatami's move, as was Gorbachev's, was a key development in the country's institutional and political evolution. In Russia Alexander II in the last quarter of the nineteenth century had established local governments, the *zemstvo*, which were elected on a limited franchise. His two successors, Alexander III and especially Nicholas II, severely limited their power and prerogatives, seeing in them catalysts for democratisation of the centre. This was the same logic used by the Pahlavi, Soviet and IRI elites. During the Pahlavi period local councils were only appendages of the central government whose orders and directives it implemented; they were not involved in local policy making or primarily dependent on popular mandates for

their power. Under Khatami for the first time in Iranian history local councils would be elected and exercise real power over local issues.

The vetting process of candidates was another possible advantage of local elections for the politics of change. The Parliamentary Committee for Internal Affairs and Councils vetted the potential candidates, not the GC. Although at the time the conservatives held a majority in the Majles and the head of the committee, Hojjatoleslam Movahadi Savji, was a traditionalist and enemy of Nuri, the criteria for the candidates was low. Potential candidates had to be at least fifteen years old, not be in the employment of a large governmental institution, be literate and live in the district in which he or she was running. Sensing conservative opposition Khatami tried to alleviate fears.

The local councils and the presence of the people in them will not be the cause of schisms and weakening of the system but will strengthen it. Our revolution has no other backing other than the people...Our revolution is Islamic. We are committed to the rights and the security of the people and with our encounters with difficulties and external and internal enemies we have no pillar other than that of the people...The more people are included in the system and decision-making the pillars of the system are strengthened. But if decisions are made in contradiction of the wishes of the people they won't accept them and thus it is unclear what will happen in the long term...⁸

Conservatives concerned about the possible loss of political and economic power this decentralisation and democratisation could bring, fought this policy. In the Majles it was argued that given fiscal problems, elections should be delayed for at least one year, if not more.⁹ This moved failed. They then worked to disqualify reformist candidates from running. The formation in October 1998 of a reformist block, the Iranian Islamic Participation Front (*Hez̄b-e Mosharekat-e Iran-e Eslami*), which would participate in these local elections, triggered fears of a possible country-wide system of local power in the hands of Khatami's supporters that would have repercussions for politicking in the centre. This move was followed by the formation in December 1998 of a large electoral coalition of sixteen pro-Khatami groups which would act as one in the local elections. In response the parliamentary committee in January 1999 found fifty-one

prominent Khatami supporters unfit to run for office claiming they had shown insufficient signs of loyalty to *velayat-e faqih*. Among those rejected were 'Abdollah Nuri, Sa'id Hajjarian, Jamileh Kadivar, and Mohammad Salamati. The conservatives were mobilising.

Hojjatoleslam Abdolvahed Musavi-Lari, Nuri's successor at the Interior Ministry, who had constitutional responsibility for running the election, rejected the parliamentary committee's findings. He announced that he would allow these candidates to run. Savji fired back that he would annul the election results of any locality in which any of these banned figures had participated. Conservative MPs denounced Musavi-Lari, threatening to impeach him for breaking the law if he allowed these people to participate in the elections. The political jockeying continued until Khatami reached a deal with Nateq Nuri, the parliamentary speaker and his former rival for the presidency, according to which an independent court of arbitration with an equal number of representatives from the competing camps would sit. After some ten days of behind-the-scenes struggles, the court allowed all candidates to run as long as the provincial governor approved their candidacy. Since Khatami had replaced most of the provincial governors this move was a victory for the reformists.

The elections were held on 26 February 1999. Pro-Khatami groups won a resounding victory. Just as leading CPSU conservative figures lost to well-known reformists in local Soviet elections, Iranian reformists enjoyed impressive victories in major urban areas such as Tehran, Shiraz, Tabriz, and Isfahan which became reformist bastions. For example in the capital reformists secured thirteen of the fifteen council seats. The election of Nuri, Hajjarian, and Kadivar horrified Khatami's opponents who regarded them as subversive elements. Khatami's supporters also won in smaller urban and rural areas. This victory gave great confidence to reformists that they would enjoy a major win in the upcoming elections to the Sixth Majles. It was sensed that the conservatives were on the defensive.

Local government elections, however, were a double-edged sword. The victory of Khatami's supporters in this first local election gave momentum to the overall politics of change at the centre. But, local elections were an additional electoral arena in which Khatami could be challenged. The following local council elections in 2003 marked the beginning of a comeback in the electoral field by Khatami's opponents. Local elections had become a weathervane of public opinion in regard

to politics in the centre. In 1999 Khatami and his supporters were popular and people very hopeful of positive economic and political change. By 2003 people were frustrated with the lack of progress of Khatami's politics of change. Many became apathetic or supported other groups. Ahmadinejad began his political electoral career in these 2003 local council elections, winning a seat on the Tehran city council. The following year the reformists lost their majority in the Majles. These events show that whilst in principle democratisation and the opening of political space at a local level could help reformists, opponents of politics of change could easily use the electoral process to their benefit, especially if the overall reformist movement was failing to produce economic or political results.

The main pillar of the ideological heritages of Great October and the Islamic Revolution differed from each other. Gorbachev, although not doubting the supreme moral and political leadership of the CPSU, did not believe that Leninism was inherently anti-democratic. He believed that the dysfunctions in the political system arose as a consequence of contingency, the exigencies of war and rebellion, and human agency, namely Stalin. The Soviet economic model was the base of Leninism. This economic system is what distinguished Soviet modernity from that of the capitalist West. With discussion of economic change inevitably came the issue of adapting various methods from capitalism; this represented a clear threat to the cohesion of Soviet ideology and to claims of a superior form of modernity.

The opposite was true in the IRI. Certainly, issues of social justice were at the centre of IRI ideology, but a specific economic system was not the pillar of its modernity. The main legacy of the Islamic Revolution was *velayat-e faghib* which Khomeini characterised as a 'divine gift'; it was this system that would create the utopia on earth in preparation for the Hidden Imam. Thus the type of ideological and political battles associated with economic change in the USSR, Khatami faced in regard to political change. Khatami's emphasis on republicanism and civil society was regarded and portrayed as surrender to Western modernity and rejection of that for which the revolution was fought, *velayat-e faghib*. Gholamhossein Elham, close advisor to Ahmadinejad, stressed that that the essence of Khatami's programme condemned the IRI 'to bow to the world hegemony (the US) and to say that we are (politically) backward. (And) we (thus) have to learn

democracy from you (the US).¹⁰ Gorbachev's programme indicated that the USSR had to learn economics from the West.

Khatami was optimistic in regard to the compatibility of his slogans of republicanism, civil society, and rule of law with the revolutionary institutions and the creation of an Islamic person. Yet, any programme that contained them would have to touch on two issues, namely the character of the power of *velayat-e faqih* and the extent of the power of revolutionary institutions, specifically the GC.

Inside the IRI, broadly speaking, the public debate surrounding *velayat-e faqih* has two sides. One argues that *velayat-e faqih* enjoys absolute divine power bestowed on him by God. The role of the Assembly of Experts is not one of election and supervision of the Leader, but of designating God's deputy in this world. This group rejects the idea that the people elect the Leader, even indirectly through this Assembly. Many within this group use the term 'Islamic Government' rather than 'Islamic Republic'. After the victory of Ahmadinejad, conservative figures, including the new president, spoke of 'Islamic government.' The day after the results of the 2009 presidential elections were announced posters proclaiming 'Islamic government' (*bokumat-e Eslami*) appeared in various places of Tehran.

Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, a powerful conservative cleric close to Ahmadinejad, argues that elections play no role in legitimating the Leader and other posts in the revolutionary institutions. Moreover, he stresses that the traditional branches of the state republican government and the judiciary cannot propose, approve, and/or enact any laws without consultation with the higher authorities of the revolutionary institutions, and especially with the Leader. Whereas Khatami stressed the popular role of the Majles, Yazdi argues that Majles deputies are in reality only advisors to the Leader.¹¹ Khatami asserted that elections were a pillar of the IRI and provided legitimacy to both the republican and revolutionary institutions. Yazdi flatly rejected this. 'All legitimacy emanates from God and all the sources of power and authority in the end come from him. To our mind the vote of the people can never create legitimacy. If it were so, with the nullification of an election, the basis of legitimacy would also be nullified and with an electoral victory legitimacy would be granted.'¹²

The second approach accepts that the Leader is the pivot of the system who enjoys great, but not absolute and autocratic, power. One school within this approach believes that the role of *velayat-e faqih* is

limited to a supervisory function. Ayatollah Montazeri argues, 'The Majles makes the law, and the president whom the people elect, executes it. *Velayat-e faqih* supervises this process in order to prevent misconduct.'¹³ The Leader is to prevent coups and the undermining of institutions by factions but should not participate in daily politicking and policymaking. The role proposed here is similar to a significant extent to the one played by the Spanish king who prevented a military coup d'état in 1981. Montazeri also stresses that the Leader obtains his legitimacy by being elected by the people's representatives in the Assembly of Experts.¹⁴ During the controversy over the results to the 2009 presidential elections, Montazeri repeated his argument that the Leader should be elected to five or seven-year terms. On the other hand, many reformists, Khatami included, seemed to hold that the role of *velayat-e faqih* is one of a referee between political groups competing with each other within the framework of the constitution without structural impediments. The Leader would have the final word in any major disagreement between these groups that might result in a paralysis of political life. The assumption at the basis of this approach is that the Leader would side with the group enjoying electoral support. For example, in a political conflict between a reformist dominated Majles or popular Khatami with the GC, the Leader should, if necessary, come down on the side of the republican institutions. In addition, the Leader should prevent any group from cheating in elections. Thus they believe in a role for the Leader that is, at least theoretically, greater than that proposed by Montazeri.

Khatami without naming the Leadership Office or any revolutionary institution in particular consistently argued, 'We have always expected that problems will be solved from above but if the elite are not under the supervision from below the possibility exists that the elite will become corrupt. Therefore, I insist that civil institutions, such as councils, parties, organisations and guilds come into existence and thus the people will recognise their rights and defend them.'¹⁵ That which remained unclear in the Khatami programme was the extent of the actual powers of the Leadership Office and what institutions should effectively supervise it and whether a hybrid system that includes the powers of the Leader as articulated by them and Khatami's idea of republicanism could create the civil society, democracy, and rule of law Khatami hoped would emerge in the IRI.

Khatami's position in regard to the question of the role and power of the Leader remains ambiguous. His public stance indicated support for the broad supervisory role that permits intervention on decisive and politically paralysing issues in the hope that the Leader would support those positions to which Khatami and the proponents of politics of change were attached given their electoral success. Yet, the practical consequences of his rhetoric and programme would result in a Leadership position similar to that propagated by Montazeri. Khatami's opponents clearly recognised this. The first signs of Khatami's struggle with this question emerged during his first presidential campaign. Hajjarian recalled:

I told Khatami to express before the elections his interpretation of the constitutional law....Article 57 stipulates the principle of the Leader's supervisory role on the three branches of government. I told him: "Start your interpretation with this article. Does this supervisory role provide advice (*e'ellaie*) or approval (*estesvabi*)? In regard to the Judiciary it is *estesvabi* since its head is appointed by the Leadership Office. In regard to the legislative branch it is *estesvabi* since it is controlled by the GC. But in regard to the executive branch what is its role? I told Mr.Khatami go and say that the (Leader's) supervisory role is consultative, not commanding. They want it so that with all of your policies you go to these (revolutionary) institutions. And there they will say "yes this policy of yours is in accordance with the framework of the system; but that other policy of yours is not good for the system." I told him, go and express your opinion. He responded, "Agha, it is dangerous right now and in the conditions of the election difficulties will arise and they will thus ban me." I told him that if he is banned it would end up benefiting us.

That Khatami failed to express his opinion in regard to this article of the constitution despite being dogged by journalists Hajjarian considers the beginning of the ultimate break between Khatami and him.¹⁶ But Khatami's position was probably more politic. An announcement that the Leader's role in regard to the presidency was advisory would give the impression in the early stages of the politics of change that Khatami

was a direct threat to the Leader. Khatami always focused his remarks and politics on other revolutionary institutions, such as the GC.

Yet, Khatami spoke in terms that indicated he believed sovereignty came from the people.

This system came to power with the vote of the people. The vote of the people approved the constitution and established the institutions of the system. When we speak of the Islamic Republic, Islamic it means that people have decided that the country is to be governed on the basis of Islam.¹⁷ According to the constitution the people are the possessors of rights and the privileges of the government are limited. If in today's world we are thinking of the defence of the Islamic Revolution we must lean on the issue that the people are the possessors of rights and the government has limits. We should be proud that such a system came from Islam.¹⁸

During the 1997 elections to the Assembly of Experts Khatami addressed the issue of the relationship between the republican and revolutionary institutions.

The basic question is whether these two (Islam and republicanism) are compatible. In other words is it possible for a government whilst attributed (*motnaseb*) to God can also be based on the vote of the people. I am convinced that we have started a new experience, in other words a holy government (*hokumat-e elahi*) which is the people's and is named Islamic Republic. I remember that during the time when the Imam was in Paris a number of Muslim Arab groups which were very revolutionary had suggestions that along with the Imam they create a Muslim Caliphate. The Imam did not accept this. He laid out his plans for an Islamic Republic. For many religious people the mixture of republicanism and Islamism were beyond comprehension. But we began that experience....Some are in opposition to Islamism whilst a number are in opposition to republicanism.¹⁹

After the elections Khatami once again explained his position. '...The Assembly of Experts demonstrates another facet of our state, namely the republicanism of the Islamic system. The Leadership which

is the most sublime pillar and the most vital part of the Islamic system should satisfy certain qualifications set by Islamic criteria while discernment of these qualities rests with the Experts who are elected by the people.²⁰ According to Khatami the Leader was an elected figure whose mandate was subject to some form of public control. Yet, Khatami consistently stressed that the Leader 'is the main pillar and pivot of our system and from whom the remaining institutions take shape. (He) must be a just and prudent *fajih* when dealing with the population... The Leader determines all the policies of the system.'²¹ To Khatami's mind such determination on the part of the Leader would be based on the preferences of the electorate expressed in free and fair elections. At the same time, he strove to establish a link between the politics of change and the Leader. 'The Second Khordad Movement brought into the political scene some thirty million men and women whose presence makes our people proud, the heart of the dear Leader happy and disappoints our enemies.'²²

Khatami never advocated constitutional changes in regard to the Leadership Office. According to a leading reformist, 'We were not after the limitation of the power of *velayat-e fajih*. We were after that which the constitution says. Our position was that *velayat-e fajih* must not act beyond the constitution.' The essence of Khatami's position was that the constitution is fine and 'that constitutional law is to be correctly implemented.'²³ The issue, of course, was the debate over the powers granted to the Leadership Office and the republican institutions. Although he did not have the institutional power to emasculate the Leadership Office, it is doubtful that he believed that at this point moves in that direction were needed. For him, the Leadership Office acting according to the constitution was not an impediment to republicanism.

But, any politics of change in the USSR and the IRI would eventually have to come down one way or another on the role of the supreme revolutionary institutions in the political set-up. This question was particularly sensitive as Khatami's rivals understood the ultimate consequence of Gorbachev's programme, the end of the CPSU's power. The Soviet case showed that once the process of liberalisation and democratisation began, sooner or later its momentum would touch on the supreme power of the revolutionary institutions. In sum, Khatami's approach in regard to the Leadership Office was politic and also reflected perhaps a degree of wishful thinking and vain hopes in

regard to how the power of the revolutionary institutions would be used and how they would react to the politics of change. In private and in public Khatami as president and afterwards has stressed that 'only democracy' represents the future.

Khatami was not calling for 'liberal democracy', insisting that democracy and republicanism could exist without Western liberalism. In his concept of democracy, civil rights, civil society, and the people's power over the state and their own fate did not necessarily require a liberalism in which the fundamentals of Islam, its morals and traditions would have no room. The Leader would exercise the role of defending this Islamic morality and cultural identity in the face of Western liberal influences. But, theoretically, either a democratic system in which sovereignty comes from the people exists or not; talk of democracy could not sit alongside revolutionary institutions that continued to have constitutionally the last word on major issues such as press freedoms, civil liberties, and strict regulations on the private sphere.

This issue is separate from the one of a dysfunctional or 'façade' democracy in which sovereignty is constitutionally recognised as coming from the people, but political, ethnic, and/or economic oligarchic groups dominate the political scene and limit the electoral influence of the masses. In countries such as Mubarak's Egypt, Lukashenko's Belarus, and Putin's Russia, according to the constitution republicanism is the form of government. However, the electoral scene is manipulated and/or distorted in order to compromise the influence and power of electoral politics to the benefit of the elites whilst civil society is given, little, if any room to develop and freedom of expression and media is strictly controlled. Thus a gap has emerged between state and society that can eventually transform into antagonism. In these examples elements of civil society attempt to penetrate the state in order to implement political changes. In the IRI of the Khatami period such a struggle was at the heart of the state, as the revolutionary and republican institutions fought over the role of republicanism.

Khatami did not initially envision institutional change during his first administration. Whereas Gorbachev saw in the changing and weakening of institutions the solution to the issues facing the USSR, Khatami emphasised institutional strength within the rule of law as prerequisites for politics of change. He believed that if political groups in the revolutionary and republican institutions acted according to his

interpretation of the constitution the deviations from republicanism that had emerged would eventually disappear. However, as Khatami's politics of change gained momentum, the GC, the first line of defence of the revolutionary institutions, came under increasing criticism. In response, the GC began to propagate the view that criticism directed at it and talk of weakening its institutional power were in reality moves against the Leadership Office. Khatami worked to keep these two institutions separate in his politics of change. Yet, the opponents of the politics of change understood that the ultimate consequence, perhaps unintended on Khatami's part, of the politics of change was the open and recognised subordination of the Leadership Office to popular control and supervision in practical terms. In order to prevent this, the GC was determined to prevent the reformist movement from expanding its electoral influence.

One of the events that pushed Khatami in the direction of institutional change was the elections to the Sixth Majles, held in early 2000. Already in May 1999 the GC issued an open letter that stressed that it 'deems itself duty-bound to stop short of nothing in its efforts to supervise the Majles bills, monitor the elections, and protect the Majles from infiltration by individuals who are against Islam, the system, and the Imam.'²⁴ The opponents of Khatami's politics of change, fearing that reformists would gain a majority in the Majles, seemed determined to use the revolutionary institutions to protect their political and economic interests. Khatami criticised the electoral regulations: 'Rulers control all the instruments of power without the people's consent and without being answerable to anyone... (and the belief of such groups is that) people are duty-bound to surrender to the wishes of the state.' According to Imam Ali 'people have rights over the government' and that the ruler has a duty 'to act responsibly towards the people.'²⁵

The hope was that victory in the elections to the Sixth Majles would give the politics of change needed momentum and means 'to institutionalise freedom' and grant Khatami the institutional power to seize the legislative agenda from the conservatives. The reformist camp flooded the electoral lists sent to the GC in order to ensure a more than sufficient number of its candidates passed vetting. Once the GC issued the lists of acceptable candidates, Khatami urged the people and especially the youth to vote.

In the world today there are some individuals wishing to suggest that the people of Iran are not deserving of democracy, not deserving of taking charge of their own destiny and not deserving the right to enjoy the shari'a and legal freedoms...You, the religious free and proud men and women of this country. Your participation is a necessity and prerequisite to realising the great aims of the revolution and the nation's historical and magnificent goals...²⁶

Khatami's and the reformists' electoral campaign reflected a new way of electoral politics. Khatami frequently spoke of Khomeini's support for republicanism and the need for people to vote in order to strengthen the politics of change. Victory of the politics of change, of which these Majles elections were a vital element, was portrayed as a victory for Khomeini and the utopian ideals of the Revolution. At the same time Khatami recognised the power of Iranian nationalism and its strong appeal amongst certain sections of the population, especially the youth. In one major survey taken in 2001-2002 in which some ten thousand youth of various educational and ethnic/religious backgrounds in various parts of the country took part, 86% saw themselves first as Iranians, not as Muslims or belonging to a particular ethnic group.²⁷ The parliamentary campaign tapped into this nationalism. The broad reformist block, the Islamic Iran Participation Front, had as one of its anthems the strongly nationalist, *Ey Iran*, which lacked references to Islam whilst establishing as one of its slogans, *Iran for all Iranians* that also became a motto for Khatami's re-election campaign in 2001.²⁸ The slogan was significant for it implicitly rejected the concept of a *homo Islamicus* and accepted diversity in cultural, ethnic, and religious identity in the IRI. The inclusive message of *Iran for all Iranians* helped mobilise large sections of society. Khatami and the reformist camp combined such themes in the huge rallies they held across the country whose energy, slogans, banners, pamphlets, and even songs made the conservative political gatherings seem a relic of the past rather than an attempt to rally people behind the opponents of Khatami's politics of change.

Once the election results began to be announced Khatami's opponents understood that their nightmare scenario was being realised. The reformist camp had captured 189 of the 290 seats in the Majles, winning in almost all large and mid-sized cities and extending its reach

into the countryside, which had been considered electorally safe terrain for the conservatives. If the reformist camp obtained a three-fourths majority the Majles could utilise its veto-busting prerogative given it by Khomeini. The supporters of the politics of change would be able to overrule the GC. Fearful of such an outcome the GC annulled reformist victories in constituencies where it was assumed the potential for political unrest was low. Riots and demonstrations indeed took place in the areas concerned. However, the revolutionary institutions easily crushed them. In the end the reformists were denied a three-fourths majority.

The victory of the Khatami camp in these elections raised the political temperature in the country. Several IPRG commanders went to the Leader expressing serious concerns about threats to the system posed by these election results and threatened action against the reformists. Some conservative religious scholars and some members of the Assembly of Experts urged the Leader to annul the election results and extend the life of the conservative-dominated Fifth Majles.²⁹ The Leader, sensing the political environment and realising that such an open manoeuvre would only raise tension in society, rebuffed these suggestions. Judging by his future actions, he understood that the constitutional prerogatives of the revolutionary institutions combined with Khatami's approach ensured that the more radical elements in the leaderless politics of change would be contained.

The Leader's first move in this direction was to give his implicit support to the closing of the reformist press. Then Rafsanjani, the head of the Expediency Council, announced that according to the constitution the republican institutions had no right to examine and supervise the activities of the revolutionary institutions and those political and economic organisations linked to them. This was an understandable reaction to the claims of the radical reformist figures, over whom Khatami did not attempt to exercise influence, and a natural fear of popular and institutional oversight. They had not only attacked Rafsanjani personally, but also with zeal announced plans to investigate alleged political and economic corruption and impose supervision of the republican institutions over the revolutionary ones.

One of the key elements of successful transition and consolidation of democracy is the understanding that the 'winners' in a democratic contest during the course of liberalisation and democratisation must exercise policy restraint; they must act so that the 'losers' feel they still

have a stake in the emerging democratic system despite electoral defeat. The 'winners' must not 'pursue highly contentious policies too far or too fast, especially when these policies seriously threaten other major interests.'³⁰ However, after the victory in the elections to the Sixth Majles, there was the sense that Khatami's supporters would attempt to accomplish that which helped bring about the politics of change in the first place—the struggle by one political group to push out completely its opponents from the political scene. The open and possible targets of this seeming reformist onslaught mobilised.

Reformists have seized the state. The executive branch and the Majles have become arrogant. They are propagating slogans similar to those of a revolution, even a coup d'état. The so-called reforms and re-organisation require a long time. If instead of this we are forced to accept that reform of society should take place in a short time, (we cannot understand this process) as reformism, but rather a coup d'état or revolution.³¹

Khatami, enjoying a large majority in the Majles and a mobilised population, was expected to go on the legislative offensive. However, not only did Khatami not steer this majority and the popular support behind it into a plan, he also did not provide effective leadership to the diverse groups in this body. They therefore did not enjoy unity. It seemed that Khatami and most of the reformist deputies were going in different directions. Not unexpectedly the GC and the Majles soon found themselves locked in legislative battles. The amount of legislation sent back to the Majles by the GC significantly rose, bringing gridlock to the legislative branch and to Khatami's politics of change. Only the Expediency Council, headed by Rafsanjani, could break this gridlock. But Rafsanjani, the target of radical reformist attacks, was now aligning with the conservative camp, which had been his political enemy when he was president. Although Khatami considered the political offensive against Rafsanjani impolitic and unjust, he did little to rein in its leaders. Many reformist figures not participating in the attacks were not prepared to countenance a tactical political partnership with Rafsanjani, seeing in him either a political charlatan on whom it was not possible to rely or an unfit and controversial figure out of place in the new era of the politics of change.³²

A counterargument could be made that the institutional weakness of the republican institutions and the diffuse character of IRI institutions required Khatami and his political allies to align or establish a form of political cooperation with some factional groups and not to antagonise needlessly and prematurely powerful figures. The issue here touches on 'pacting', a political tool by which supporters of politics of change establish political alliances with 'regime moderates' in order to sideline hardliners and radicals on both sides of the political spectrum. Given the multiplicity of factions and institutions in the IRI, pacting was a viable option in any attempt to execute the politics of change.

Rafsanjani was in many ways a regime moderate. Since the mid-point of the Khomeini period he had been a pragmatic politician; he was the leading figure to convince Khomeini of the need of a ceasefire in the Iran-Iraq War which ultimately ended the radical ideological phase of the revolution. As president, his economic and political policies led to a break between him and what became known as the traditional right. He, as the symbolic head of the modern right, had little in common with this group which had paralysed the second-term of his presidency. His support for Khatami in the presidential elections reflected the hostility between him and the traditional right. Khatami, as president, had as direct or indirect political enemies members of this conservative right and the radical elements in the reformist movement; elements that led the attack on Rafsanjani. In other words, both men had common enemies. Rafsanjani, although not as powerful as he had been during his presidency, remained an autonomous political force, being not only the chairmanship of the Expediency Council, but also a formidable influence behind the scenes. Khatami needed his passive or active support, or at least neutrality, in order to pursue the politics of change.

Victory in local and parliamentary elections and the great popularity of Khatami had convinced the reformists that they could do away with the usual coalition building and accommodation with other factional groups; victory was theirs for the taking. One leading reformist in the wake of the parliamentary elections remarked privately with great enthusiasm, 'They (the conservatives) are finished.'³³ As the legislative gridlock took hold, leading reformists eventually understood that their dominance of the Majles was not enough and that coalition building with other groups and figures, in other words pacting, was needed; Khatami from the beginning had understood the need for this and for moderate political language. But it was too late. The lack of leadership

on Khatami's part had resulted in impolitic and premature attacks on revolutionary institutions and figures and lost opportunities to create a tactical relationship with moderates. Consequently, 'negative' pacting between the regime moderates, such as Rafsanjani, and the conservative right took place. The euphoria of the victory in the parliamentary elections soon gave way to pessimism arising from the legislative war between the Majles and the GC.

In 2001 Khatami was re-elected president receiving 77% of the vote. He received more absolute votes than in the previous election although the percentage of the electorate casting ballots had fallen.³⁴ Already in 1999 there was growing public disenchantment with the reformist camp and with Khatami in particular. The failure to obtain victory in the battle for *glasnost*' and lack of real political change had begun to place doubt in people's minds about Khatami as a leader. It was also recognised that the conservatives were proving to be more competent in political battles and in taking full advantage of Khatami's political mistakes and timidity.

Khatami, by his second administration, came to the conclusion that his preferred method of pursuing the politics of change, namely the use of sermons, speeches, and invocation of Khomeini in favour of the politics of change, had not influenced to any significant degree the thinking and policies of those supporting traditional *feqh*. In fact the opposite had happened. Whilst in the period 1997-2000 he tried to achieve the goals of the politics of change through this method, the conservatives, initially disorganised as a result of the surprising loss in the 1997 presidential elections, unified and learned how to counteract Khatami.

Khatami, frustrated with the lack of success and increasingly worried about his mobilising rivals, in the early period of his second administration decided to push for institutional change that would redo the practical relationship between the revolutionary and republican institutions. The proposed bills aimed to strip the GC of the right to vet candidates, limit the additional powers it had given itself back in 1994 and give the president more power to implement the constitution. This legislation reflected Khatami's desire to make republicanism, according to his interpretation of the constitution, more powerful than revolutionary institutions as represented by the GC and the Expediency Council, though not the Leadership Office; this issue he left on the side. Although he stated: 'Directly or indirectly all institutions of the

Islamic Republic are dependent on the vote of the people.³⁵ Khatami's move holds much in common with Gorbachev's attempts to separate the revolutionary institutions from republican ones. Having abandoned the idea of democratising party structures, he moved to democratise the republican institutions with the establishment of multi-candidate elections and the Congress of Peoples' Deputies. At the same time he made the republican institutions superior to the revolutionary ones.

Before sending these bills to the Majles Khatami met with the Leader who gave his blessing to their introduction. Khatami took this to be tacit support for the bills themselves. He thus publicly argued that they were essential to the carrying out of his duties and to the institutionalisation of freedom. The opponents of the politics of change attacked Khatami for introducing the bills which they characterised as attempts to import Western liberal values and a rejection of the pillar of the IRI system and modernity, the revolutionary institutions. In response Khatami repeatedly stated '(I) cannot carry out (presidential) constitutional functions without these changes...I believe that a president of the republic should have the possibilities and opportunities to carry out his duties and if he cannot remain faithful to his promise, he is no longer fit for the job (*digar be dard-e kear nemikhorad*).'³⁶ On state radio he described the legislation as a 'minimum requirement' that might, 'to some extent, change the climate and make it more favourable for ensuring the rights of the people and the state.' Facing attacks for wishing to change the constitution Khatami argued that 'the constitution is not the same as divine revelation' although 'it does serve as the basis of the system we have approved.' Strengthening the 'democratic essence' of the state on the basis of the constitution is a prerequisite to 'saving the Islamic republican state.'³⁷ To his opponents who cried that he was violating not only Khomeini's intentions but Islam as well Khatami responded, 'Today, the disaster is to use religion and the revolution according to the concepts of fascism, in order to eliminate rivals accused of liberalism.'³⁸ Khatami indirectly was warning his opponents that he believed that if these two bills were not passed by the GC, he would resign and the future of the IRI would be in doubt.

The Majles quickly approved these bills which were then sent to the GC. Khatami initially publicly insisted that he saw no real reason why the GC should not pass these bills: 'You see what I am doing now (the drafting of these two laws) is not against the *sharia* or the constitution.

Therefore, I do not expect the respected GC, whose primary responsibility is to determine if a law is in contradiction with the *sharia* or the constitution' to block these bills.³⁹ This belief in the absence of a contradiction between Islam and constitutional law and these bills might be true, depending on one's interpretation of IRI constitutional law. But, his expectations contradicted human nature. Khatami was asking one of the most powerful revolutionary institutions, the GC, to give up power to republican institutions without facing serious pressure from below and from within the IRI system.

Some commentators believe that the hope was that the GC's rejection of these bills would provoke an outcry and the public 'would pour into the streets in protest' which in turn would force the Leader to break the deadlock between the GC and the Majles (i.e. Khatami) by siding with the latter.⁴⁰ If this was the strategy, it had some major flaws. First, Khatami had shown in his first administration and especially in the events of July 1999 that he was not prepared to use pressure from the street. If Khatami himself did not call people into the street to demonstrate peacefully in support of such moves, there was little chance people would put themselves at risk. Moreover, there was no guarantee that such a situation would not get out of hand. Second, the conservatives knew Khatami well. His consistent backing down in the face of newspaper closures, unrealised hints at resignation and rather limited and sporadic intervention in cases brought against his allies assured them that Khatami would not enter the battle, even if he was using tough rhetoric.

Based on the opinions of those close to Khatami at the time, he was not contemplating having people come into the streets. He at times hoped that his veiled threats of resignation mixed with fears of a popular uprising resulting from the veto of the bills would be sufficient in pushing his opponents in the GC and perhaps even the Leader to act on behalf of these bills. One of his close advisors, Hojjatoleslam Mohammad Ali Abtahi was surprised by Khatami's genuine expectations that the GC would pass bills limiting their power. It was impressed on Khatami that the GC would not pass these bills without strong pressure from the Leader who let it be known that he would not interfere in this legislative battle.⁴¹ This assured their defeat in the GC.

The Leader played his hand well. By giving his blessing to the introduction of these bills he played a supervisory, and not directly interventionist, role. He also knew that the revolutionary institutions

and the GC in particular working within the constitution would succeed in snuffing out these bills that ultimately could threaten *velayat-e faqih*. Khatami, once he understood that the Leader's approval of the introduction of the bills to the Majles did not mean he would work for their passage by the GC, seemed to distance himself from them.

The geo-political situation at the time also played a vital role in Khatami's unwillingness to fight seriously for these bills. The confrontation between the Majles and the GC over this legislation came after the 'Axis of Evil' speech and the subsequent frequent US threats of regime change. It also overlapped with the announcement of the Bush doctrine that gave the US the right to pre-emptive military strikes against countries it deemed terrorist. This geo-political dynamic ensured that opponents of the politics of change would not contemplate any concessions leading to a weakening of their power. Moreover, Khatami, even if inclined to use people power, would be hard pressed to engage battle over this and threaten political chaos whilst the IRI faced such external threats. The end of these bills was the end of Khatami's limited attempts to institutionalise political change and to make the republican institutions more powerful than the revolutionary ones. He turned once again to the geo-politics of reform. Only once the US and the IRI had reduced tensions in their relationship could Khatami return to politics of change at home, though his timidity would remain. His movement in this direction too failed given the foreign policy of the Bush administration.

The growing number of Khatami's critics within the supporters of the politics of change began to take him to task for mishandling the politics around this legislation. They argued that Khatami should have let the powerful figures in the revolutionary institutions know that if the bills were not passed he would resign, citing obstructionism. The opponents of the politics of change, fearful that Khatami's resignation would spark some form of public unrest or at least strike a serious blow at the IRI's legitimacy and aware of the tough geo-political position in which the IRI found itself, might have backed down. If they had not, the argument went, at least Khatami's resignation would have preserved the political integrity of his politics of change, unified his supporters, and given them time without the burden of responsibility of government to regroup and develop possible future strategies to deal with their opponents. But in their opinion Khatami chose the worst path when he hinted at resignation if the bills were not passed only to

stay on afterwards. A leading member of the reformist camp, Abbas Abdi, remarked, 'When Khatami said if these two bills are not approved I am no longer the president was this just (our) illusion (*tobam*) or reality? Then why when the two bills were not approved...he remained and said I am president of the republic?'⁴² Many reformists felt that Khatami had left the political battlefield without a real fight.

Certainly one can blame the geo-political situation, but the reasons for Khatami's relatively passive opposition to conservative steps were rooted in his political outlook and character. The scenario which called for serious threats of resignation if the bills were not passed required a 'gutsy' and tough political actor prepared to face domestic and possible international consequences for such a move. Khatami was not such a person at this time. After his presidency had ended Khatami indicated that he believed the failure of these bills to be a major cause of the achievement of the non-goals: 'In the entire world for governing it is necessary to present programmes and slogans and if one attracts enough votes all the institutions are in the service of those slogans. But in Iran one of the difficulties is that the president is elected on certain programmes and slogans but a thousand bureaucratic, governing and political (*siasatgozari*) difficulties (*eshkeal*) and social alignments are in the way of implementation.' Whilst commenting that changes must come from the bottom to the top he remarked, 'Such changes must be implemented by someone who has the power to do so but many of the possibilities (to rule) were not in the hands of those who found responsibility with the vote of the people.'⁴³ Timing too played an important role in Khatami's inability to accomplish these institutional changes. Given the IRI structure of power, the best time for their possible passage was at the beginning of Khatami's first administration when popular support for the new president was great and mobilised behind him and his rivals were in relative disarray after their defeat and, vitally, did not know what kind of opponent they faced in Khatami. This scenario is possible provided Khatami would have been prepared to use street pressure. But, given Khatami's lack of planning in the first administration and preference for words as the best way to bring about change, this scenario was unrealistic.

By the end of 2002 the period of Khatami's politics of change was effectively over. Indirectly, Khatami confessed that the revolutionary institutions continued to be superior to the republican institutions and this had been the cause of the 'defeat of his politics' of change. In

private it was unsurprisingly difficult for him to admit that he had been ultimately defeated.⁴⁴ Having failed at the politics of *glasnost*' and the politics of institutional change with an increasingly hostile Bush administration issuing threats to the IRI, the only challenge facing Khatami at this point was to maintain as much as possible a political space within the republican institutions for the reformists. In other words, he needed to prevent that which prompted the elite fragmentation in the 1990s—the taking over of the republican institutions by one broad conservative group.

Khatami's unwillingness to be a tough political player was shown again in 2004, the year of elections to the Seventh Majles. Popular discontent with the reformists and Khatami had reached new heights and was manifested in growing political apathy amongst their constituent groups. Just as the reformists had lost in the previous year's local elections, it was predicted, even by some pessimistic reformists, that they might lose their parliamentary majority in these elections. In any case, Khatami's conservative opponents were not prepared to leave anything to chance. Knowing that Khatami was mostly talk and very little action when faced with moves by his opponents, they struck once more through the GC. The GC banned some 3,000 reformists from the Majles elections. Many of them were already sitting members of the Majles whose term was about to expire.

The reformists and their supporters looked to Khatami. This culling of candidates was a potentially fatal threat to the cause of the politics of change and to Khatami's political reputation and power. If the GC succeeded once again in proving the institutionalisation of its power to ban candidates with beliefs different from their own within the IRI political spectrum, Khatami would have very little to show for this politics of change by the end of his presidency the following year.

The Iranian press, although operating under tight conditions, reported on societal dissatisfaction with this move and popular expectations that Khatami take a stand on this issue. Governors threatened to resign, the main reformist block spoke of boycotting the elections, and some 100 parliamentary deputies staged a sit-in at the Majles in protest which lasted about a month. Khatami's loss in the battle for *glasnost*' once again hurt him. Iranian National Radio and Television gave no attention to the sit-in and gave next to no information on the disgruntlement caused by the GC's decision. Thus

the discontent remained limited and disjointed and posed no real threat to Khatami's opponents.

Khatami and Karrubi, the head of the Sixth Majles, went to the Leader and presented a list of conditions they believed were needed for a free and fair election. Khatami hoped that the Leader would support his position and criticise the culling of so many reformist candidates. Khatami also made oblique hints about resigning, stressing that he could not support elections that were not free and fair. The reformists, deprived of leadership, split over the issue of boycotting the elections.

The note was given to the GC which did not budge in regard to its banning of candidates. The Leader then ordered the elections to be held. True to his leadership style and character Khatami acquiesced. He did not question this ruling and did not use people power to apply pressure. He even became a strong and vocal advocate of participation in the elections, making speech after speech urging people to cast ballots and implicitly asking them to close their eyes on what the GC had done. There was little surprise that Khatami neither fought vigorously to ensure free elections before the Leader's decision and against conservative attempts to dominate the political scene nor resigned in protest at the banning of such a great number of reformist candidates. He had unwillingly become complicit in the emasculation of the republican part of the IRI.

Khatami tried to defend his actions and unwillingness to resign in protest or to use popular pressure to force his rivals to back down. Khatami, hinting that he had obtained concessions in regard to the banned candidates during his meeting with the Leader, argued after the publication of the final list of approved candidates that the GC 'kept neither the Leader's word nor its own.' For many believing that the GC, whose clerical members are appointed by the Leader, would not keep the Leader's word was very difficult. He stressed, 'We were faced with a situation in which we had to choose between holding the election or risking huge unrest ... and thus damaging the regime.'⁴⁵ This statement reflects two themes of the entire period of Khatami's politics of reform. First, despite the experience of the previous seven years Khatami still expected the revolutionary institutions to act in a way that corresponded to his interpretation of Khomeinism. Second, he was not prepared to struggle seriously with his opponents of reform, fearful of possible instability and bloodshed. His opponents knew and used this to their favour. Despite six years of political struggles with these

groups, he still did not have a plan or tactic to counteract them. Certainly, Khatami's unwillingness to stand up to the opponents at this time was a reflection of his character. But his fear of instability and threats to the regime resulting from a serious political conflict between the republican institutions and the GC was not misplaced. By early 2004 Khatami understood that his geo-politics of reform had failed. The latest attempts had shown Tehran that the Bush administration's hostility to and unwillingness to talk with the IRI remained. Clearly, Washington would use any possible internal IRI political struggles to its advantage. Any political leader facing the type of essentialist rhetoric and geo-political hostility to which Washington subjected Khatami and the IRI, would have found difficult launching an intra-elite struggle. The criticism of some is that Khatami could have used this deteriorating geo-political situation to his advantage. By threatening to launch a serious struggle for free and fair Majles elections or to resign if such elections were not held, Khatami could have forced his opponents to choose between concessions or possible instability. But a move with such high-risk tactics and unpredictable consequences required a tough political fighter which Khatami was not.

The contrast here with Gorbachev is stark. In 1989 political, economic, and nationalistic problems were accumulating with increasing rapidity. Before a Politburo meeting in that year a large argument broke out. It focused on the rising nationalist tensions in the Baltic states and the Caucasus and the use of force. Ligachev remarked: 'I was saying back in February that it was time to use force, restore order, show all those scoundrels...How long can we put up with this? People have got out of control, the state is falling apart.' Gorbachev at one point 'blew up: "Why are you always trying to frighten me, Yegor? You are always throwing in my face: See what *perestroika* has led us to? Where are we going? What is happening to us? But I have supported and will continue to support *perestroika*. And I'm not afraid of what's begun. And if you (turning to everyone at the table) think this is wrong, that I am making a mistake, let's go to the other room (the Politburo conference hall) and I will resign. And immediately! Without a word of disappoint or anything else. Elect whomever you want and let him run everything as he chooses...But as long as I am in this seat, I will continue on this course and I won't back down for anything!'⁴⁶ He never allowed his rivals to believe that he would back down in face of their opposition. He showed himself to be a tough politician willing to

take risks in order to push his politics of change. On at least two occasions he threatened to resign over criticism thrown at him, once in the CC and once in the Politburo. But, Gorbachev did not face the geo-political situation that confronted Khatami. Any rhetorical US threats had little, if any, direct influence on Soviet national security given the Soviet nuclear capacity. In both cases, his rivals, fearful of popular reaction to his abrupt departure, backed down.

Given the banning of most of the reformist candidates and consequent widespread apathy or discontent amongst those of the electorate supporting the politics of change, the coalition of conservative groups won a resounding victory. The victory, however, was hollow. Voter turnout was low, some 49% according to the first information released by the Ministry of the Interior.⁴⁷ In some constituencies conservative political candidates had no competitors whilst in the big cities the vote collapsed. For example, the man who became the new speaker of the Majles, Gholamali Haddadadel, ran in Tehran where he topped the poll amongst the city's candidates. He won 200,000 votes; the capital has a population of some 10-12 million. Mohammad Reza Khatami, the president's brother, only four years before topped that list having garnered two million votes. Khatami, forced into 'cohabitation' with a parliament in the hands of his political opponents, continued in his self-appointed role as preacher on the issues of civil society, the republican character of Khomeinism, and rule of law. But he was forced to put to an end the practical side of his politics of change, to the extent it existed during his second administration.

Lost Opportunities and Institutionalised Violence

Previously we saw how Khatami's lack of leadership hurt the politics of *glasnost*. This lack of leadership also hurt the practical side of the overall politics of change. The issue of Khatami's leadership not only touches on co-ordinating political forces and pressure from the street in order to bargain with forces on top, as Hajjarian mentioned, but also on the dynamics and durability of the reformist movement itself. He did not seriously attempt to unite and co-ordinate the various reformist and moderate groups supportive of his overall programme, especially in the Majles. At the same time, it seemed that more often than not he did not have a concrete plan of offense or defence.

The absence of active leadership by Khatami of a united reformist movement made it unclear who spoke and acted for the politics of change. By allowing too many figures and groups to speak and act under the rubric of 'reformist' and failing to impose an ideological and political framework for his politics of change, Khatami's message of gradual change and more cautious approach to the revolutionary institutions and major IRI figures began to be overshadowed. This situation provoked and unified conservatives and many moderates who feared that the radical discourse coming out of certain quarters reflected the reality of the goals of the politics of change.

One of the most effective ways of imposing relative political and ideological order on those supporting the idea of Khatami's politics of change and ensuring its continuation after the Khatami presidency was the establishment of some form of political organisation. However, Khatami did not use his great personal popularity and charisma to institutionalise his political principles and goals in his own political party which could have been the umbrella organisation for a social coalition supporting the concept of the politics of change. A clearly defined Khatami party with Khatami at its head would not only have strengthened him as president, but also would have ensured the institutionalised political existence of the politics of change after the end of the Khatami presidency. Moreover, a Khatami's party profiting from Khatami's popular appeal could have broadened the social base of the reformist movement which was seen by many people as an elitist, intellectual movement that seemed to be more interested in expanding its own political and economic interests rather than in connecting with the people.

A vital difference between the Soviet and IRI cases is the issue of institutionalised violence. This is violence used by state institutions and political actors against opponents in government. During the late Gorbachev period the fear that the military and intelligence services might act against the politics of change was real. Chernayev wrote:

A month before the meeting of the Congress of People's Deputies, the Party, or more specifically its "generals and senior officer corps," made it clear to Gorbachev that they had a different agenda. At the Central Committee plenum in April 1989, the policies of *perestroika* were rudely raked over the coals and the General Secretary was spoken to in a sharp, insulting

manner for the first time in history. It was something that would have been unimaginable even in the very recent past.⁴⁸

But rivals of Gorbachev's politics of change did not use violent intimidation and assassination attempts against leading reformists and radicals. In the USSR the military and civil elite by the late Khrushchev period no longer believed that force and violence should be used against opponents within the ruling class. In addition, the top Soviet elite, despite periodic calls to use force to restore state control over society and prevent the breakup of the USSR in the chaotic period 1989-1991, had little stomach for giving orders for a massive crackdown on society. The individual incidents of the use of force in Tbilisi, Baku, and the Baltic states were the exceptions that proved the rule. One important reason for the lack of institutionalised violence was the lack of an armed organisation whose sole responsibility was defence of the revolution and its elite class. Moreover, the security services and the armed forces were under strong party control; at the same time, the heads of these organisations were not prepared to act independently against the reformed revolutionary and republican institutions. The figures participating in the failed August 1991 coup d'état did not use violence against Gorbachev. There was a show of force around Yeltsin's White House, but a full scale attack on society and the radical reformists who to the mind of the organisers of the coup were leading the USSR to disaster, did not take place.

In the IRI the Revolutionary Guards and special enforcement organisations, such as the *basiji*, enjoyed both the institutional prerogative and practical ability to use violence against societal and elite elements holding views on Khomeinism that differed from theirs. Even if this violence was sporadically used during the Khatami period, the general knowledge that it was possible at any moment played an effective role in maintaining control and limiting that which reformists and Khatami considered politically possible. Moreover, the IRI top elite had not come to a general understanding on the use of violence against society and between the various political factional groups and their supporters. Khatami understood this and frequently spoke of the need to replace violence with the rule of law, political dialogue, and compromise. His approach, however, provoked the opponents of the politics of change who saw in Khatami's words an attack on them.

Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, summarising their views, used language that differed greatly from that of Gorbachev and Khatami.

They (the enemies of Islam) have presented principles such as tolerance and compromise as absolute values whilst violence is regarded as a non-value...the taboo that every act of violence is bad and every act of tolerance is good must be broken...⁴⁹

The language used was harsh in the opinion of many, but it also reflected a reality of governance and security. A state, deprived of its ability to threaten use force and violence, would prove unable to maintain order in society, enforce the laws of the land and protect itself. It would collapse. In this regard Hough poses a valid question:

Why did liberalisation give way to Gorbachev's transformation of the system and lead to its destruction in such a short time? The immediate reason was that Gorbachev refused to use enough force to ensure obedience of Soviet laws and to suppress separatism....After all, the Soviet population was thoroughly cowed in 1988...Intellectuals responded to the Nina Andreeva letter of March 1989 with retreat until the letter was attacked in *Pravda*...If any leader in any country indicates that he will not enforce laws or central authority, events will surely spin out of control....Until rioters...are stopped, they will be joined by others.⁵⁰

Gorbachev underlined that the one thing he without doubt achieved was the rejection 'of the use of force as a basic method for the implementation of state politics.' He confessed however that 'this turned out to be enough to bring down the state.'⁵¹ Any state needs to be backed by force. Khatami, whilst sharing Gorbachev's abhorrence of violence, unlike him recognised the need to protect the state and enforce laws; he also believed that only strong, effective state institutions could provide the framework for a successful transition to a stable republicanism within the IRI system. However, Yazdi had in mind not only the relationship between state and society, but also the factional groups supporting Khatami's politics of change who were enjoying great popular support. He was sending a message that unlike the opponents of politics of change in the USSR, he and others like

him would not simply leave the political battlefield. This debate over the state use of violence is another example of how the factions in the IRI political elite struggled to determine the true meaning of Khomeinism without Lefort's 'master'.

Leading lay and religious figures attacked Yazdi's condoning of violence and some, including Abdolkarim Soroush, the respected and popular philosopher, invited him to an open debate on this topic. Ayatollah Taheri, the Friday Prayer Leader of Isfahan, bluntly stated, 'Violence is condemned by Islam.' Khatami in July 1999 gave his answer: 'We will try not to confront violence with violence but with special and legal means...the issues raised, the slogans chanted...are all meant to induce division and engender violence in society.'⁵² The Leader too stepped into this debate. 'Is violence good or bad? It is not good and it is not bad. At times, it is both good and bad. Legal violence is good. It is necessary. Unlawful violence is bad, it is ugly and it is a crime.'⁵³ In this speech, violence used by the state is legal and is good; it essentially underlined that which Yazdi had stressed. His words could also be seen as support for actions taken by the Revolutionary Guards and semi-governmental groups against those they deemed to be enemies of the revolution.

His speech underlined the theme that the state and its elite must be the directors of this violence. Violence used by renegades within the state, such as the seeming rogue elements in the Intelligence Ministry who were implicated in the chain murders or by society to force political change, was to be crushed by the legal authorities. But Khatami faced a personal and political challenge. On a personal level, he was unprepared and fearful of using peacefully people power on the streets in order to obtain concessions from his rivals. Yet, he felt the possible dangers to the IRI's long-term domestic and international security if the IRI failed to prove dynamic in the face of changing times. The Pahlavi state fell behind the changes in society and was overthrown by mass movements.

Without doubt Khatami's goal to eradicate violence in politics was and remains a necessary step in the political and social evolution of the country. Yet, the threat of organised popular pressure from the streets was needed in order to obtain concessions from the opponents of the politics of change who enjoyed great constitutional and political power and the ability and legal right, in some cases, to use force against those whom they considered a threat to their political and economic interests.

Khatami shunned the use of peaceful public gatherings and demonstrations given his overall timidity, determination not be seen as the leader of the opposition, and fear that they could become targets of institutional violence.

Mousavi in the aftermath of the 2009 presidential elections provides an interesting comparison. The biggest difference here is that unlike Khatami, Mousavi was not in power, which can change one's views in the regard to the use of peaceful street protests in political battles. At the same time, Khatami controlled the Interior Ministry which issues licences for such public gatherings. Mousavi, a man devoted to the goals of the Islamic Revolution and Khomeinism, showed no qualms in repeatedly calling the people to the streets and civil action in protest against the alleged rigging of the 2009 elections. He was able to get millions of people to pour into the streets despite not having permission for holding peaceful public gatherings. In principle, Khatami could have used this method to maintain political momentum amongst his supporters and to apply pressure at sensitive points, such as newspaper closings, the 2004 banning of candidates for parliamentary elections, and debate over his proposed constitutional changes. By not strategically using this method, he robbed himself of one of the most effective tools in the politics of change. He had cause to worry about its use whilst allowing himself to be intimidated into not resorting to it.

During his electoral campaign and presidency, Khatami endured many verbal attacks at speeches and other types of public gatherings whilst his more well-known supporters, including clerics, faced violent attacks. These attacks, numerous, common and organised by elements within IRI institutions, placed great pressure on Khatami through their establishment of a link between the continuation of his politics of change and the physical injury and possible assassination of those close to his politics. The attack by para-military groups on Nuri and Mohajerani on 29 January 1999 after Tehran Friday Prayers despite a police presence was one of the most serious, outraging Khatami and his camp who clearly understood the messages being sent to him.⁵⁴

In this regard Khatami feared meeting the fate of Abolhassan Bani-Sadr, the IRI's equivalent of the ghost of Khrushchev that haunted Gorbachev. Bani-Sadr, the first elected president of the IRI who, in the midst of a political battle that revolved to a significant extent over the respective power of the revolutionary and republican institutions, was

declared incompetent by the Majles. Khomeini, who already had many disagreements with the president, used his constitutional prerogative and immediately removed him from office. Even before this, the Revolutionary Guards had already seized the presidential residence and offices and imprisoned editors and writers of newspapers sympathetic to him; eventually a good number of his advisors were executed. Bani-Sadr, six weeks after his removal from office, fled the country.

This ghost, which haunted Khatami and his closest advisors behind the scenes, came out into the open in 1999 when Khatami's popularity was at a high point. At celebrations marking the first anniversary of the Second Khordad Movement, Khatami made a speech outlining the goals of his politics of change. His speech mobilised and excited the large crowd which in response clapped, whistled, and made other expressions of great support for him and his programme. Ayatollah Abu Al-Ghasem Hozali led the response of Khatami's opponents: 'In this meeting Islam was slapped in the face...A Bani-Sadr process has begun. Chicken pox has infected the Revolution. I want the president to admit quickly this mistake. Bani-Sadr is repeating itself but the people are awake. The president must admit he made a mistake.'⁵⁵ The mention of Bani-Sadr was an indirect threat that suggested Khatami's removal if he did not change course. These remarks 'shook and even frightened Khatami.'⁵⁶

The mention of Bani-Sadr was followed by the publication in *Salaam* of a leaked private letter signed by IPRG commanders to Khatami in mid-1999. They criticised the attacks on the culture and ideology of the Revolution that had started under Khatami and warned that their patience was wearing thin. Many considered this an implicit threat of a coup against the president who again was deeply rattled by this development. Such words did exercise the desired effect. Khatami became more timid and did not show a strong and immediate response to such threats. Although Khomeini in his last testament had told the military elite to stay out of politics, the constitution still held the Revolutionary Guards responsible for the preservation of the revolution and its spread abroad.⁵⁷ This is another example of where the law favours the approach of Khatami's rivals.

The problem is who determines the meaning of the Revolution. Mesbah Yazdi was clear in this regard: '(T)hose who go on about reformism are in fact trying to revive the traditions of apostates of 2,500 years ago in Iran's Islamic society'.⁵⁸ In order to defend the

revolution, 'Our brothers in the basiji and the police...must increase their moral, social, and cultural enforcement and carry out Islamic punishments so that the middle class gets fed up and comes to the conclusion that the reformists are incompetent.'⁵⁹ This was indeed a clever short and mid-term policy. Khatami's supporters, enduring these attacks and punishments, vented their anger at Khatami and his political allies for not advancing the politics of change and not protecting them from the revolutionary institutions. The prediction came true. The belief that the reformists were incompetent played a role in the victory of the opponents of the politics of change in the local elections of 2003 and parliamentary elections of 2004.

That which exercised a strong and decisive influence on Khatami and his immediate circle was the attempted assassination of Hajjarian who had been a target of conservative wrath for some time. A young revolutionary at the time of the collapse of the monarchy, he went on to play important roles in the establishment of the IRI intelligence services. Throughout the 1980s he served in the intelligence ministry, occupying various high positions. After the death of Khomeini he left the ministry and established a think tank attached to the Rafsanjani administration. In March 2000 after the decisive reformist victory in the Majles elections, for which Hajjarian was held responsible given his theoretical and organisational contributions, he was shot in the face as he left Tehran City Hall. He was not killed, but endured serious brain damage. He was paralysed for a significant period. Suspicions that this was another example of institutional violence immediately emerged. The two assailants rode a special powerful motorbike that is banned in urban areas. Only security forces have access to, and the right of use of, such motorbikes. Khatami, who was in Yazd at the time of the attempted assassination, upon his return to Tehran immediately went to the hospital where Hajjarian was fighting for his life. Sa'id Ashgan, a basiji, was caught and convicted of attempted murder. He was sentenced to fifteen years in prison. He served only a fraction of this sentence. This event shook Khatami who muttered in private that the cost of his politics of change was now too high.⁶⁰ His closest advisors, including his brother, have confessed that the attempted assassination exercised a powerful influence on their politics.

The demonstrations of July 1999 constituted a defining moment in the Khatami period. After this event Khatami's rivals, having recovered from the shock of the widespread demonstrations and open anti-

establishment slogans, began a new offensive against Khatami whom they blamed for whipping up popular discontent and allowing 'anti-revolutionary' forces to challenge the regime on the streets. Khatami too had been taken aback by the demonstrations; he became more fearful of the risk associated with the use of popular pressure from below to pursue his politics of change. This event also led to a division within the reformist camp. Abtahi stated that in the aftermath of the demonstrations '...in the reformist movement two analysis clashed with each other. One stressed that we must carry on in a similar way and therefore obtain greater possibilities. The other stressed that we must be more confrontational in order to obtain results sooner.'

Naturally Khatami supported the first approach. He believed that 'we must negotiate and have dialogue with them (the opponents of the politics of change) as no other way was open to us. The more radical ones, such as Mr. Nuri and Mr. Ganji, told Mr. Khatami that after what happened we must go forward (in a more radical way)'. When Khatami was asked why he did not do more to defend those whom he might have considered too radical when they found themselves in legal trouble over their remarks about the IRI system and some of its leading political figures, he answered, 'They should not have any grievances in regard to me, in fact I have cause of complaint (*gelemand*) in regard to them.' Khatami believed that their radicalism had sparked a strong and premature reaction from the conservatives which in turn had a deleterious effect on his approach, before and after the demonstrations of July 1999.

Khatami was reproached for not taking advantage of the 1999 demonstrations to push the conservatives to the wall. Abtahi believed that 'they had the idea that Mr. Khatami should go to the university, rally the students and effect a change in the structure of government.' They regarded the demonstrations of July 1999 as a positive opportunity for Khatami. These demonstrations showed how easily Khatami and his supporters could mobilise people and bring them into the street in the form of peaceful protests in order to put pressure on their rival. No legal impediments existed since it is the Ministry of the Interior which gives permission for peaceful demonstrations. One of the major problems facing Mousavi in 2009 was his inability to get permission from Ahmadinejad's Ministry of the Interior for peaceful street gatherings protesting the results of the 2009 presidential election. Abtahi argues that the main problem by 1999 was that 'they (a certain

number of reformists) believed that the structure of power had to be changed whilst Khatami believed in its reform.⁶¹ Khatami, angered by, and disagreeing with, this approach of the more radical elements, began to distance himself politically from the reformist movement. He increasingly wrote speeches and made decisions by himself as his political links and consultation with many of the advisors with whom he began the politics of change weakened.⁶² His reaction was not to assume active leadership of the politics of change and, to the extent possible, impose discipline on the movement. At the same time his rivals were increasingly united.

The economy and social justice were as vital to Khatami's politics of change as they were to Gorbachev's. As president, Rafsanjani recognised that economic dissatisfaction within the population was hurting the legitimacy of the IRI and could pose a serious political threat. Demonstrations and riots emerging as a result of economic grievances in the early 1990s in parts of the country underlined this. Despite 'the era of reconstruction' that took place during his presidency, the economic situation remained worrying, inflation and unemployment remained high, reliance on oil income remained excessive and the rate of industrialisation as well as productivity remained low. In addition, social justice became a major political issue as the differences between the classes seemed to be greater than before.

Khatami, having paid much attention to economic issues during the presidential campaign, early in his presidency laid out his views on the state of the economy:

I have said that...our economy is diseased, and that it is a chronic disease. It has existed for some decades in this country. Naturally, such a disease cannot be cured easily, unless we carry out a proper spring cleaning and a fundamental change and uproot the disease...And fundamental work, that is bringing about a fundamental change in the economic structure of society, in terms of economic changes and management, requires initiative, patience, tolerance and time. One cannot bring about such an upheaval overnight and society could not tolerate it either; however, it is a fundamental duty to strive for that change... The aim of humanity and Islam is to establish social justice. The aim of the Islamic Revolution was to establish social justice (which) is more important than economic growth.⁶³

Khatami followed the overall thrust of the economic policies of the Rafsanjani period whilst increasingly speaking of the need to establish social justice and fight corruption. In the early years of his first administration he paid significant rhetorical and policy attention to economic issues. However, certain structural realities limited his room for manoeuvre. First, similar to Gorbachev, Khatami upon obtaining power was faced with low oil prices which were hovering around thirteen dollars a barrel. This low oil income did not enable Khatami to create a 'feel-good' factor in regard to the economy or to limit the possible temporary negative effects of structural economic reform on the people's standard of living. His successor, Ahmadinejad, enjoyed high oil prices anywhere from \$65 to \$140 a barrel until late 2008. Second, Khatami believed that the first vital step in curing the diseases of the economy was the politics of change. The supremacy of the rule of law, oversight of the republican institutions in regard to the large parts of the economy in the hands of the state or organisations linked to it, and transparency in the economic relationship between the state and 'rent-seeking' groups would play key roles in economic development. Khatami was convinced that the politics of change would eventually deliver a dividend for the economy. He certainly had specific economic policies, such as increasing the rate of privatisation of state-run industries which was also seen as a vital step in the emergence of civil society and the establishment of a department of social security. However, by the latter part of his first term there was a sense that economic policy lost its importance as Khatami became more involved in the battle over the politics of change.

One of the key challenges facing the politics of change is establishing and propagating a strong link between it and the improvement of the economy. It must be shown to certain socio-economic classes that republicanism and the slogans such as 'civil society', 'rule of law' and 'democracy' are not only worthy goals in themselves, but also have a practical value for them, namely gradual improvement of the economic situation. This Khatami did not do. He gave more rhetorical attention to slogans associated with the politics of change than with economic challenges. This language of the politics of change proved popular with vast sways of society. But, for those segments of the population under economic pressure and near or below the poverty line, which constitute a significant part of the electorate, this talk and intellectual discourse, whilst certainly important for the overall politics of change, had little

relevance to the trials and tribulations of their everyday lives. In short, Khatami did not directly, openly, and often enough speak about the link between improvement of the economic situation and the successful implementation of his political slogans.

As the economic situation failed to turn around as quickly as some expected, Khatami found himself on the defensive. Yet, he could not throw responsibility for the economic situation as he inherited it on the shoulders of his predecessors, as all Soviet leaders and Ahmadinejad did. Criticism of economic policy in the period 1980-1989 could lead to charges that Khatami was ultimately questioning the policies of the father of the revolution. Placing blame on his immediate predecessor was politically very difficult since many political figures associated with Rafsanjani were either now in the Khatami administration or were still politically active and supporting the politics of change. In contrast, Ahmadinejad during his presidency and campaign for re-election had no qualms in openly charging that all previous governments, namely the premiership of Mousavi and the presidencies of Rafsanjani and Khatami, not only had failed in the battle against corruption but also in economic development and in establishing social justice.

The economic situation during the Khatami period, whilst far from satisfactory and continuing to face challenges typical of a developing economy dependent on the export of natural resources for its income, did show substantial signs of improvement. However, the high expectations of certain societal groups in regard to improvement of their living standards provided the opponents of the politics of change with an issue with which to weaken Khatami and regain the electoral advantage. Khatami's opponents began to criticise constantly the economic situation during the period of the politics of change and to present themselves as competent managers of the economy, able to deliver on both social justice and economic growth. With control over radio and television, they succeeded in convincing certain segments of society, especially amongst the lower classes, that Khatami's platform of politics of change was a programme of talk that had little relevance to the economic situation and needs of the ordinary people. This was taking place as many of those people sympathetic to Khatami's politics of change became disillusioned and apathetic due to their belief that he had failed.

This approach of Khatami's rivals in the short-term was relatively successful. Economic issues were of vital importance in the Majles

elections of 2004 and the presidential elections of 2005. One of the major reasons for Ahmadinejad's surprising victory in these presidential elections was his repeated promises to share the nation's oil income amongst the lower classes combined with attacks on the handling of the economy and corruption.⁶⁴ By not establishing a link between the politics of change and the possibility of economic improvement and a successful battle against corruption, Khatami played a role in allowing the populist rhetoric of his opponents and Ahmadinejad to weaken the attractiveness of the politics of change amongst parts of the population. But, the overall results of the first round of the 2005 presidential elections showed that a majority of the population still supported Khatami's idea and concept of the politics of change. The key to Ahmadinejad's victory in 2005 is Khatami in the period leading up to these elections.

By 2004-2005 it was clear that Khatami, whilst dramatically changing the political landscape and discourse of the IRI, had not institutionalised his programme and had failed to provide effective leadership in combating the counterattacks by his rivals. For example, he had failed to oppose strongly the banning of candidates for the elections to the Seventh Majles in 2004 which resulted in both a dramatic decline in voter participation and a conservative-dominated parliament. Despite some calls by reformists that the supporters of the politics of change needed to relieve themselves temporarily of the responsibility for running the country in order to re-think their programme, tactics, and strategy, the majority believed that a candidate supporting the politics of change needed to win the 2005 presidential election in order to ensure the continued political presence of this political block. Khatami agreed with this latter position. If a conservative candidate won this presidential election, that which the Khatami presidency was supposed to prevent, namely the takeover of the republican institutions by a broad conservative bloc that already predominated in the revolutionary institutions, would occur despite eight years of the politics of change.

Khatami's unwillingness to establish his own party, which could have proposed a single reformist candidate presented to the people as the successor to Khatami and his programme, left the possibility for the emergence of a multitude of candidates claiming to be reformist. Khatami, despite recognising the importance of a reformist victory in this election, failed to make up for the lack of a party structure by

playing an active and effective leadership role in uniting the groups with reformist tendencies and their supporters behind a single candidate. As the popular face of the politics of change, Khatami faced no serious structural realities that could prevent him from working behind the scenes to ensure a great degree of unity amongst those groups supporting the politics of change so that just one politically effective and electorally viable reformist candidate emerged. However, he limited himself to speaking of the danger of splitting the vote amongst several reformist candidates.

Some six months before the elections Mohsen Mehralizadeh, one of Khatami's vice-presidents and once head of the country's national sport organisation, announced he would run for the presidency, stressing he was the candidate of the youth. Then Mehdi Karrubi announced his candidacy. Khatami remained silent and inactive. Soon after, Mostafa Moin, his former minister of education, announced his candidacy. After some time, Khatami announced his support for Moin, but did not fully throw his personal weight or that of his government behind him. The reformists were now divided between three candidates.

Although Moin seemed relatively popular in some urban areas amongst the professional classes and students, there was the growing sense that he was not attractive to enough of the electorate to bring victory and would not prove to be an effective political fighter. Rafsanjani, sensing this division amongst the reformists and their electoral weakness and increasingly worried by the growing power of the neo-conservatives, decided to run for the office he once held; he was hoping to be the power broker between two main wings of the IRI's political spectrum, the reformists and their opponents, both of whom at one time or another had attacked him. Rafsanjani hoped that as the power broker between these two groups he would be able to protect his own political and economic interests. However, by entering the field, he set himself up for attacks from both sides. As campaigning for the election began, the coalition of voters that had produced huge majorities for Khatami would now have to choose between four candidates.

The results of the first round of the elections reflected the damage of not having just one or even two reformist candidates. Some 57% of the votes cast were for one of these four candidates. In other words, 57% of the electorate either did not know of Ahmadinejad or rejected his policies and worldview. But, because of the division of votes between

these four candidates, Ahmadinejad was able to come in second with 19.43% of the vote in the midst of allegations that electoral fraud and other unlawful activities had taken place in order to ensure that he made it to the second round. Rafsanjani came in first with 21%. The controversial former president faced a run-off with Ahmadinejad. In the second round Ahmadinejad won a decisive victory, obtaining some 62% of the vote to Rafsanjani's 36%.

The election of Ahmadinejad was not a rejection of Khatami's politics of change. First, many people boycotted these elections in protest to the actions of the GC and the success of Khatami's rivals in blocking the politics of change. Second, participation in the second round dropped greatly, especially in the urban areas. In the first round 63% of the electorate cast ballots; in the second round only 48% did so. Many people were not prepared to vote for Rafsanjani, seeing in him either a corrupt, cynical politician representing the past or one of the main reasons for Khatami's failure to implement the politics of change. One needs to remember that both the reformists and Ahmadinejad's neo-conservatives had targeted Rafsanjani over the previous eight years which took a serious toll on his reputation and popularity. In the campaign of the second round, the reformists rallied around Rafsanjani out of fear of a possible Ahmadinejad presidency.

The short-term cause for Ahmadinejad's surprising and unexpected victory was Khatami's failure to play an effective leadership role in organising and uniting the groups with reformist tendencies behind a single candidate and then actively backing that particular candidate with his own popularity, charisma, and government. Khatami's behaviour in this regard, however, reflects his overall approach to the politics of change in which he was not ready or willing to assume a decisive and pro-active leadership role. For example, his approach to the politics of the elections of 2005 mirrors the way in which he handled the politics of *glasnost* and specifically the lack of management of the press sympathetic to his programme. In both cases, he was more an observer, making comments and suggestions, which were at times belated, and maintaining a hands-off approach, than a pro-active and politically cunning leader, striving to push groups supportive of his politics of change and events in a direction favourable to his goals and power.

At the meeting with students at the University of Tehran described at the beginning of this chapter, Khatami attempted to explain his actions when faced with the counterattacks by his rivals. 'If I retreated, I

retreated against the system in which I believed. I considered necessary the saving of the system.' The slogans, 'Khatami, Khatami, Shame on you!' and 'Incompetent Khatami' filled auditorium.

In the last months of his presidency Khatami publicly stated his understanding of the causes of the defeat of his politics of change and his vision for the future. 'I reproach those reformers who limited their demands to certain political demands and thus provoked hardliners. I reproach those ill-intentioned thinkers who refused to see the people's demands for reform and instead of respecting the vote of the people, they worked against it.' He concluded, 'The only way to save the country is through the establishment of democracy. The path to democracy is through and within the Islamic Republic.' Understandably, he said little about the role of his leadership, or lack thereof, in the events leading up to the 2005 election of Ahmadinejad when the politics of change had given way to a different interpretation of Khomeinism that rejected the entire basis of Khatami's understanding of it.

CONCLUSION

In my life I have come across literary men who write histories without taking part in public affairs, and politicians whose only concern was to control events without a thought of describing them. And I have invariably noticed that the former see general causes everywhere. Whereas the latter, spending their lives amid the disconnected events of each day, freely attribute everything to particular incidents and think that all the little strings their hands are busy pulling daily are those that control the world's destiny. Probably both of them are mistaken.

*Alexis de Tocqueville
Recollections of the 1848 Revolution*

Gorbachev's and Khatami's politics of change were the latest endeavour by a Russian and Iranian leader to bring about political, economic, and social change from above. It could be said that they were the latest in a long line of Russian and Iranian leaders who, feeling the pressure of Western economic, military, and political power, along with domestic pressures, attempted to reconcile aspects of Western modernity with domestic Russian and Iranian realities. The challenges these men faced in implementing politics of change fall into four broad categories: (1) historical preconditions that existed since the monarchical periods; (2) the ideological, political, and institutional dynamics of Leninism and Khomeinism; (3) their own personalities and worldviews; and (4) geo-politics.

Chapters 2 and 3 have shown that the monarchical periods in Russia and Iran not only shared much in common with each other but also with the revolutionary regimes that emerged on the ashes of the Romanov and Pahlavi dynasties. In addition, certain geo-political,

intellectual, and political trends that emerged in the monarchical periods found new life in the USSR and the IRI.

The geo-politics of Iran and Russia played a decisive role in the emergence and contours of Pahlavi and Romanov RWA. The goals of RWA were to generate Western economic, institutional, and military power so that Russia and Iran could defend their independence in the face of geo-political challenges and to make Russia an empire and great European power and to strengthen a much weakened Iranian Empire that faced the complete breakdown of central authority. In addition, the imperial Russian and Iranian elites, given their countries' geographical position and size, heritage of empire, and status as defenders of minority branches of Christianity and Islam, namely Orthodoxy and Shi'ism, believed that only great power status and empire could be the fate of Russia and Iran. Leninism and Khomeinism picked up this theme by placing responsibility on Russia and Iran of leadership of a worldwide movement to spread and establish a utopian universalist modernity superior to that of the West. In other words, Red Russia and Islamic Iran, pioneers in offering new modernities to the world, became avant garde states with a universalist mission.

The monarchical systems through the construction from above of a *homo Romanovicus* and *homo Pahlavicus* sought to achieve the goals of RWA. Leninism and Khomeinism did not reject the idea of an international role for Russians and Iranians or the acquisition of great economic, military, and technological power. They rejected the Romanov and Pahlavi belief that Russians and Iranians had to be Western in order to achieve this power.

Major elements of Romanov and Pahlavi RWA were common to other programmes of modernisation initiated by other polities faced with geo-political threats from the West resulting from its economic, technological, and military power. However, Romanov and Pahlavi RWA was not only a programme of economic, military, and institutional reform. It was also a cultural project driven by the Romanov and Pahlavi belief that Russians and Iranians were racial cousins of Western Europeans from whom they had fallen behind culturally due to contingent historical events. RWA would re-introduce and impose the culture of their racial relations and create a *homo Romanovicus* and *homo Pahlavicus* who would simultaneously symbolise Russian and Iranian return to authenticity and the march forward to Westernisation and thus modernity. RWA was in both Russia and Iran

the violent imposition of state identity on the people. Leninism and Khomeinism continued this tradition by attempting to create from above through education and force a new person, *homo Sovieticus* and *homo Islamicus*. The political elite and intelligentsia of the monarchical and revolutionary regimes believed they had a mission to form from the masses a new person who would be a reflection of the current state ideology and identity.

One theme shared by Russia and Iran is a tortured relationship with the West as a geo-political reality and as a concept. On the one hand, before and after the reigns of Peter I and Reza Shah, the leading geo-political threat to the Russian and Iranian Empires came from the West. The West also 'orientalised' Russians and Iranians, a process which placed these peoples only at the doors of Europe. On the other hand, Orthodoxy, Russia's geo-political position, Russian features, and Aryan race theory made a strong case for the inclusion of Russia into Europe. The case for Iran's membership to Europe was made by the greatness of pre-Islamic Empires, the determination of Persian as an Indo-European language, and Aryan race theory. The imperial Russian and Iranian elites used these elements to distinguish themselves from their immediate 'Eastern' neighbours who, unable to claim a racial and primordial cultural link with Western Europe, were considered backward and lacking in culture. Even if Russia and Iran were junior partners vis-à-vis their neighbours in the West, in the Eastern world they believed they symbolised the Western world. RWA was in fact an implicit acknowledgement of the superiority of Western culture. The USSR and the IRI, by creating new identities that gave self-confidence to the masses and claimed to be universally avant-garde, attempted to end the pro-Westernism of the monarchical periods and give the people a sense of self-worth without resorting to, or negatively comparing oneself with, the West.

Leninism and Khomeinism, proclaiming a new world order rooted in a universalist utopian modernity, mobilised disoriented and disgruntled middle and lower urban classes in a comfortable and clear Manichean struggle against domestic and foreign enemies with promises of a utopia in, and for, this world whilst promising republican forms of governance. The centre piece of these new universalist modernities was the creation of a *homo Islamicus* and *homo Sovieticus*, whose identities

would overcome the crisis of identity brought about by RWA, put an end to the search for authenticity, and provide a sense of validation to these classes. The dynamics and parameters of these identities would also provide the framework for the modernisation and development of Russia and Iran so that both would be able to defend themselves in the face of geo-political, cultural, and ideological threats from the West and to propagate their universalist utopian modernities.

The creation from above of these new persons, simultaneously the instrument and goal of the construction of the utopian universalist modernities, and the state-led attack on elements of mass culture that did not correspond to Leninist and Khomeinist conceptions, contradicted the democratic slogans of the revolutions. Leninism and Khomeinism claimed to represent absolute historical truths which only the revolutionary elites, namely the Bolsheviks and clerics, could discover and interpret. On this basis they had the right to power since the utopian universalist modernities would be based on these absolute truths. The creation of these 'new persons' justified the power of the revolutionary institutions; the goal of creating *homo Romanovicus* and *homo Pahlavicus* played a vital role in the justification of the autocratic power of the tsar and shah. The republican institutions of the USSR and the IRI, which would theoretically be dependent on the vote and approval of the people, were ultimately subordinated to the revolutionary institutions, although the degree of subordination and its form differed between the two polities. Soviet control over politics and society was much greater than that of the IRI. Alongside and above the republican institutions sat revolutionary ones, charged with the entire Khomeinist and Leninist project and with defence of the interests of the revolutionary elites. The ultimate essence of Khatami's and Gorbachev's politics of change was subordinating the revolutionary institutions to the rule of law, which dictated their responsibilities and duties, and ultimately to the republican institutions.

In the period before Gorbachev and Khatami assumed power, IRI and Soviet society continued to undergo many of the same processes that started during the monarchical period as a result of RWA. Industrialisation, urbanisation, growth of the state and its institutions, expansion of infrastructure, expansion of the working and professional middle classes, increasing rates of literacy, and growing numbers of people with university education changed deeply the social structure of the USSR and the IRI as well as popular aspirations and expectations.

Despite the achievements of both politics, by the time Gorbachev and Khatami appeared on the political scene as leaders, a sense of malaise had overtaken elements of society and elite alike whilst the ideology did not have the same appeal it once had given perceptions that it had deviated from the true goals of the revolutions and was increasingly out of sync with changes in society.

The attractiveness of the ultimate goals of Leninism and Khomeinism, the division of power between republican and revolutionary institutions, and the ideological character of the Soviet and IRI systems required that all discussion and discourse take place within the framework of, and refer to, Leninism and Khomeinism. Therefore, 'Return to Revolution' was the slogan of Gorbachev's and Khatami's politics of change. Believing their revolutions had swayed from the path set by Lenin and Khomeini, both men interpreted the thought of the fathers of the revolutions with the goal of showing how it supported the politics of change and of proving that through such change the attractiveness of the universalism of Leninism and Khomeinism would be strengthened. Gorbachev and Khatami engaged in a rhetorical and political battle to undertake forms of liberalisation and democratisation within, and for, the benefit of the revolutionary system. This rhetorical and political battle was a challenge not present in the politics of change of other politics.

Even if the Lenin articulated by Gorbachev was no longer that which many considered to be the true essence of Leninism, that he was able to incorporate within Leninism his programme reflects the great extent to which Lenin could be used by a leader to facilitate politics of change. Khatami's success differed. Given Khatami's institutional position, the political character of the IRI, and his tactical and strategic mistakes, his interpretation of Khomeinism, although certainly forcefully challenging conservative viewpoints, did not become dominant in official discourse. Nonetheless, Khatami with his charisma and propagation of popular themes that also reflected societal changes fundamentally and irreversibly changed the political scene and discourse of the IRI. During Ahmadinejad's first term the political spectrum was dominated by those broadly supporting Khatami's position and by those seeing in it the end of the IRI. This political and ideological battle reached a peak in the 2009 presidential elections.

The dynamics of RWA intensified and radicalised debates over the link between concepts of identity and forms of modernisation. Universalist Leninism and Khomeinism created new state identities that de-emphasised Russian and Iranian nationalism and rejected Westernism. In the USSR the attack on 'bourgeois' national identity focused on the peasantry and the Orthodox Church. In the IRI, the attack fell on Iran's pre-Islamic heritage. In the immediate periods before Gorbachev and Khatami came to power, disgruntlement with aspects of the Soviet and IRI systems was increasingly expressed in nationalist rhetoric. A nationalist discourse serving as an outlet for this disgruntlement that placed Leninism and Khomeinism in opposition to Russian and Iranian nationalisms could become a powerful ideological and political threat. This was not a possible threat to Islam or socialist values, but rather to their political manifestations in the late Soviet and IRI periods.

Gorbachev and Khatami understood that if Leninism and Khomeinism did not find adequate space within their frameworks for Russian and Iranian nationalisms, this form of nationalist discourse could become a potent political force in the opening political space by attracting to it those societal groups and forces dissatisfied with the present state of the USSR and the IRI. But, if Leninism and Khomeinism integrated to a further degree than before Russian and Iranian nationalisms, the revolutionary ideologies could be seen as an addition to, and strengthening force for, them.

Gorbachev fundamentally changed the Soviet state's relationship with the Orthodox Church, one of the last remaining symbols and institutions of pre-1917 Russian identity, which during the Soviet period was considered an obstacle to the Leninist project. Yet, an RSFSR reclaiming its Russian identity could represent one of the biggest threats to the unity of the USSR and the power of the all-union centre. Gorbachev's attempt to reconcile Russian nationalism with Leninism failed, although this failure cannot be attributed solely to a tension between Soviet and Russian identity. Gorbachev's creation of a severe economic crisis, unwillingness to run in popular elections to the Congress of Peoples' Deputies and the Soviet presidency, and mishandling and underestimation of Yeltsin in the early period set in place the conditions for Russia's leadership in the attacks on the Soviet centre.

Khatami faced a similar challenge. From the early nineteenth century the belief that Islam was an obstacle to progress and the primary cause of Iran's decline gained in strength amongst the educated classes. Pahlavi RWA blamed Islam for the lethargic state in which the Iranian Empire found itself and propagated that it was the leading obstacle to modernisation. The IRI, on the other hand, presented pre-Islamic Iran as a dark age ended only by the arrival of Islam. Khatami stressed the greatness and contributions of both eras to overall Iranian identity. Since the politicisation of Iranian identity that accompanied RWA no Iranian political leader before Khatami had so openly and thoughtfully addressed this issue in the hope of creating a synthesis between these two elements. Khatami's endeavours in this regard had limited influence on the IRI's official line which, whilst giving due attention to Iranian national identity, continued to emphasise a universalist Islam as its major element.

The challenge of reworking the dynamic between Soviet and IRI identity and the West also faced Gorbachev and Khatami. Gorbachev, whilst recognising the unique geo-political position of the USSR, regarded it as a part of Europe and ultimately historically and politically in harmony with it. He spoke of 'the common European home' with Spain in the west and the USSR in the east. Gorbachev was not hostile to Western culture. He did not speak of the threat of Western 'cultural invasion' as did his predecessors and Khatami. Gorbachev's Westernism shared much with that of the Westernisers of the tsarist period. Khatami, despite his emphasis on 'cultural invasion', which is a rejection of the idea that Iran is a racial and cultural part of the West, spoke of the elements in Western culture he believed to be positive. Gorbachev attempted not only to resolve tensions between Moscow and Europe, but also to put an end to Russia's perennial debates over whether she belonged to Europe or not. These debates exercised a strong influence on political discourse and politics since the tsarist period. During the Soviet period Europe was portrayed as an enemy of Russia and the Russian people since at least the time of Alexander Nevskii.

Gorbachev's success in this regard was limited. During his time in office and most of the Yeltsin presidency there was much talk of Russia and the West coming together now that the ideological aspect of the

Cold War had come to an end. However, by the beginning of the Putin period Russia began to see itself once again as being in Europe, but not culturally and politically part of it. The West was increasingly viewed as a threat. By the closing years of the Putin presidency, Europe and the US had returned for the most part to their traditional view of Russia as the dangerous 'other.' Continued US expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe and former Soviet republics as well as its reaction to the conflict between Georgia and Russia in 2008 convinced Moscow that despite its geo-political concessions during the Gorbachev and Yeltsin years, the US and the West were not prepared to accept Russia as an equal partner and to escape from their centuries' old stereotypes in regard to her.¹

Gorbachev's politics of change were primarily characterised by his utopianism from which flowed his unrealisable expectations for the rate and breadth of positive economic and social change. Fixated on this utopianism, Gorbachev showed little interest in the dynamics of effective governance and in the important details required for effective planning. Thus the nature and practical details of his economic and institutional reforms were flawed and uncoordinated and became the catalyst for crises that played a determinative role in the collapse of the USSR.

In this respect he differed greatly from the later Lenin and later Soviet leaders who did not entertain thoughts of rapid construction of the Leninist earthly utopia. Gorbachev, despite placing the later Lenin at the centre of his politics of change, ignored his warnings about rapid change that aimed for the achievement of utopian goals within a very short period of time. The later Lenin argued for slow reform and thoughtful politics of change whose results would be more reliable and lasting. Gorbachev also ignored the warnings of his mentor, Andropov, who stressed that the Soviet elite poorly understood the society over which it governed and that changing political culture and behaviour required time and effective state policies. The last general secretary also paid no attention to the same comments made by visiting foreign leaders. Gorbachev confessed in retrospect that his political behaviour and actions were based on 'a lot of naiveté and utopianism.'² His utopianism and consequent unrealisable high expectations for the rate of positive change were the results of his unhistorical understanding of the reasons for the politics of change. Failing to put the Soviet era into the larger framework of Russian history and to think historically about

change, Gorbachev came to the conclusion that the social, economic, and political issues facing the USSR emerged primarily as a result of mismanaged institutions and inefficient and corrupt party and state bureaucrats.

Gorbachev's first phase of his politics of change reflected this belief. Along with the programme of *uskorenie*, he initiated personnel and limited institutional changes with the hope of achieving rapid positive results. When this approach did not quickly satisfy his high expectations, he came to the conclusion that institutions and those staffing them were the main impediment to the realisation of his utopia. He thus weakened and in some cases destroyed institutions and sped up turnover within state and party institutions. These moves brought institutional chaos and paralysis. Gorbachev believed that once these institutional impediments were gone, the people would act as they should and democracy, stability, and then capitalist markets would emerge by themselves. The real result was societal breakdown, state collapse, and bankruptcy of the Soviet centre. Moreover, failing to understand the dynamics of federalism and Soviet federalism in particular, he fatally weakened the two essential instruments available to the centre to influence the periphery, strong state structures and financial resources.

In contrast, Khatami, by taking a long historical understanding of the challenges facing the IRI and Iranian society, did not entertain great ideas associated with utopianism and the type of expectations the last Soviet leader did. Unlike Gorbachev, he believed that institutions were a reflection of societal and political culture. Changes in it were evolutionary and thus required time. Simply weakening and destroying institutions certainly did not assure consolidation of IRI republicanism. Having studied the historical causes for the emergence and evolution of despotic tendencies in Iranian society since at least the Safavid period, Khatami argued that first freedom had to be 'institutionalised within society', in other words civil society had to begin to emerge, the rule of law had to become commonly accepted, and initial changes had to take place in people's political and social culture before secure institutionalisation of freedom within the state could be achieved. In addition, Khatami believed that a strong state within the rule of law protecting the rule of law and its own security interests was a vital

prerequisite for the transition to, and consolidation of, the republican side of the IRI. Gorbachev, on the other hand, subordinated Soviet state and geo-political interests to the pursuit of rapid and positive change that would lead to the emergence of his utopia. In the process he destroyed the state.

Khatami's historical approach had its limits as well. It could be used to justify lack of decisive and even risky action in combating his rivals whilst seemingly assuming that institutions and the people running and serving in them would place aside their own power and economic interests in the existing system in the face of societal changes and consequent demands for political change. Therefore, Khatami's approach was also unhistorical. History shows that rarely do elites and entrenched interests understand and/or accept these societal changes and consequent demands for political change. In instances other than revolution, pacting and behind-the-scenes politicking combined with effective use of popular pressure are needed to pursue politics of change.

Gorbachev's utopianism and high expectations for the rate and breadth of positive change and Khatami's emphasis on slow evolutionary change and low expectations for the rate of change and their overall character determined their style of leadership in the politics of change. Gorbachev considered himself the political and ideological leader of the politics of change. He ensured that he and his closest advisors dominated its discourse and determined its course and limits, at least in the first four years of his six-year period in power. *Glasnost'* and *perestroika* were his slogans, whose meaning at any particular point in time he defined. Moreover, by 1987 he was determined to use pressure from below to defeat his opponents in the CPSU elite and to counteract perceived resistance to his programmes in the bureaucracy as a whole. He understood that the absence of such a leadership role would inevitably lead to the demise of the politics of change in its infancy. For example, whilst liberalising the press, he managed it so that it would not become a tool in the hands of his opponents, either on the right or left. On the one hand, the centralised character of the Soviet state and the position Gorbachev held facilitated the playing of this role. On the other hand, his decision to play this vital role and success in managing the politics of change in the important initial and middle periods were reflections of his character.

Khatami shunned the responsibility of practical and pro-active leadership of the politics of change, preferring to speak widely and frequently about civil society, the rule of law, and the dynamics of democracy. Politicking, political planning, pacting, and taking potentially risky steps he did not consider part of his remit as the initiator of the politics of change. Khatami's refusal or inability to be a pro-active and determined leader had several consequences for his politics of change. For example, by not attempting to manage effectively the press he was liberalising, Khatami played a decisive role in the creation of conditions in which radical elements in the liberalised press came to define for many the real goals of the politics of change. Through their attacks on IRI political actors and talk of constitutional assaults on the Leadership Office, they raised societal expectations and consolidated the conservative camp. They simultaneously pushed regime moderates, fearful of damage to their political and/or economic interests, into the conservative camp; this was the very group with which Khatami had to pact. Moreover, these radical elements alienated Khatami himself who nonetheless did not act to manage them and limit the damage they were wracking on his politics of change. By not attempting to manage and guide the liberalising press in the way Gorbachev did, Khatami played a decisive role in the defeat of the politics of *glasnost* which made the defeat of his entire programme more probable.

Gorbachev was more of a politician and a political fighter than Khatami who was uncomfortable with confrontations and seemed to lack the nerves and will needed for a successful political fighter. Whilst we can criticise Gorbachev's unrealisable high expectations and his individual policies that brought the collapse of the USSR, it is hard to deny his determination in guiding and managing the politics of change in the period 1985-early 1990 and in individual political fights. For example, Gorbachev upon becoming general secretary consolidated his power within the all-union and republican institutions faster and to a greater extent than any Soviet leader, save Stalin. Khatami was not a political fighter. Not only did he fail to struggle openly and firmly with his opponents, but also to act on his veiled threats of resignation. Once his opponents understood that Khatami would back down in the face of pressure and not act on these threats, they realised that could oppose

him without fear of a counterattack. Gorbachev kept his opponents guessing at what he might or might not do if counterattacks and pressure on him became too great. By not allowing his opponents to predict his reactions and policies, Gorbachev maintained the upper hand in behind-the-scenes struggles.

Yet, Gorbachev proved unable to transform himself from the top party functionary engaging in behind-the-scenes battles to a national democratically elected leader. As he democratised the Soviet system, he failed to democratise himself, refusing to run in any popular election. Thus when he faced increasing demands from the democratically elected leaders of Soviet republics for greater degrees of political and economic autonomy from the centre, he was at a political disadvantage. If he had been popularly elected to the Soviet presidency he would have profited not only from national popular electoral legitimacy but also from the symbolism associated with a popularly elected head of state. Denied this, he was left bargaining with the elected presidents of the republics in the hope of salvaging some powers for the Soviet centre. Khatami played the role of a democratic leader well, but failed to play the role of a political fighter using both people power and effective behind-the-scenes politicking.

Gorbachev enjoyed two structural privileges of which Khatami was deprived. First, Gorbachev obtained the highest post in the revolutionary institution which meant in the USSR. Through his changes in cadres he broke the mechanism of collective leadership that had been in place since the death of Stalin which gave him the opportunity to destroy the system he claimed he was attempting to reform. The relatively weak position of the IRI presidency vis-à-vis the revolutionary institutions did not make the attainment of the non-goal inevitable; that would be dependent on the character and approach of the president just as much as it would be on his institutional power. The Gorbachev-Khatami comparison shows that given the structure of republican and revolutionary institutions combined with a project of universalist utopian modernity, politics of change could only be accomplished with power and pressure from below and from above on opponents of the Gorbachev and Khatami interpretations of Leninism and Khomeinism.

The institutional power enjoyed by the post of general secretary did not determine the type and speed of change desired by Gorbachev nor did it fully protect him from possible threats from within the elite.

Gorbachev needed societal support not only in protecting him from the possible wrath of the revolutionary elite, but also in applying pressure to all levels of the state and party apparatus to accept and act on his programme. He had launched liberalisation to 'wake up' the Soviet people in order to avoid the fate of Khrushchev at the hands of the *apparatus*. Gorbachev also blamed it for the failure of his economic initiatives to achieve the rapid and positive change he expected. Khatami enjoyed this type of popular support which could have been used to wring concessions out of his opponents in the revolutionary institutions. Khatami, however, failed to utilise fully this great popular political support in struggles behind the scenes with his opponents. Certainly, the active use of this popular support had dangers. Worried about the possible consequences of using this people power, the already politically timid Khatami did not act. The example of Bani Sadr loomed large in his thinking. In sum, Khatami, unlike Gorbachev, was not prepared to take political risks which effectively neutralised the political use of the huge popular appeal he enjoyed. Khatami could not subscribe to Gorbachev's remarks 'Comrades, don't fear chaos' or 'Let's begin the battle and then see what happens.'

Second, the Soviet elite had come to the conclusion that some form of politics of change was needed in order to revive the USSR, although the limits and form the politics of change would take were certainly debated. Conversely, the IRI elite had not come to a conclusion that a form of politics of change was needed in the first place. Specifically, no elite agreement existed over the extent of the power of the revolutionary institutions and over the meaning of republicanism in the IRI. Given the existence of factions within the IRI, Khatami would need to engage in pacting or at least to ensure that certain groups and political figures would remain neutral so that the non-goal would not be achieved.

Gorbachev and Khatami both understood that their politics of change at home was significantly dependent on the geo-politics of change, namely a reduction in the tension between their respective countries and their common ideological and geo-political enemy, the USA. In this regard Khatami had the least amount of room for manoeuvre. Unlike Gorbachev, he could not exercise complete control over decision making in regard to foreign policy. Khatami could and

did exercise influence on this process, but he could not determine outcomes since major decisions in this regard had to be approved by the Leadership Office. Thus Khatami could not take a series of unilateral and grand concessions in order to create momentum for a dramatic reduction in tension between Tehran and Washington. Gorbachev could and did do this. Gorbachev, in his eagerness to lessen quickly the tension between the two superpowers and to achieve his utopian goals at home, made one geo-political concession after another to the US. He also hoped that through these series of concessions, the US would react positively in the geo-political sphere. The US certainly used different rhetoric in regard to the USSR, but did not respond in the way Gorbachev expected. In the end, many believed that Gorbachev had sacrificed Soviet national and geo-political interests but ended up with little to show from the West.

Khatami, unlike Gorbachev, had a jaded and suspicious view of the US given his interpretation of Washington's approach to Iran since the Mossadegh period. This was another reason for the US to take the first real substantial steps in easing the tension between the two countries. However, as the Gorbachev period showed, the US lacked the flexibility and imagination to respond adequately and in a timely manner to new signals. The US-Iran issue was further complicated by the lack of diplomatic relations between Washington and Tehran and the deep recriminations on both sides.

The position of the USSR as a nuclear superpower meant that the US could not afford not to have relations with Moscow and could not threaten to overthrow the Soviet government or to use force against it. Moreover, the nuclear arsenal provided Moscow with the confidence to talk to the US as an equal and Gorbachev with the possibility to implement politics of change, which could bring social and political chaos, without the fear of US intervention. Khatami and the IRI did not enjoy such protection. Without nuclear weapons in the hands of Tehran, the US could afford not to hold negotiations with the IRI and could issue threats of regime change or use of force. The IRI elite, cognisant of its geo-political vulnerability, were thus reluctant to talk to Washington until concrete and positive steps were taken by the US. By 2002 Tehran demanded, as a prerequisite for talks, security guarantees that cancelled out the essentialist rhetoric of the Bush administration. At the same time, the US during the Clinton and Bush administrations demanded changes in IRI behaviour before agreeing to any form of

talks. Tehran and Washington both considered substantial changes in the geo-political behaviour of the other as prerequisites for talks and negotiations. In the Soviet case, talks and negotiations were regarded as the method for obtaining substantial changes.

IRI co-operation in Afghanistan and offer at talks in 2002-2003 did not bring a positive US response. The Bush administration by not responding favourably to these moves strengthened not only the opponents of the politics of change but geo-political hardliners determined not to show any more signs of weakness until the US made concessions. The IRI thus assumed the position articulated privately to Gorbachev by Boris Ponomarev, the long-standing head of the CC's International Department 'What is this 'new thinking' all about? Let the Americans change their thinking instead...Are you against force, which is the only language that imperialism understands?'³

Another major difference in the geo-political dynamic between the Gorbachev and Khatami periods was the personality of the occupants of the White House. Reagan, despite his essentialism of his first term, ignored the advice of other essentialists in his administration and responded positively, albeit limitedly, to Gorbachev and abandoned most of the harsh rhetoric. These moves played an important role in the reduction of geo-political tensions. Bush, lacking the vision and political savvy of Reagan, failed to put together any effective IRI policy whilst continuing to use harsh rhetoric.

Let History Judge

When Gorbachev resigned his position as president of the USSR he left for Yeltsin, the president of the Russian Federation, economic chaos and institutional breakdown. Gorbachev himself stresses that the trajectory of politics in Russia under Putin, and specifically his approach to the Duma elections of December 2007 and choice of his successor, was a natural reaction to the political and economic chaos of the Yeltsin years.

Following the chaos of the 1990s it was vitally important to consolidate the powers of the state, to prevent its disintegration. In a situation like this, a responsible leader had to take certain steps of an authoritarian nature, though some of them were, in

my view, avoidable...Yet Putin has not crossed the line that would turn Russia's system into an authoritarian regime. The objective is still to build a free, democratic Russia. I commend Putin's decision to comply with the Constitution and not run for a third presidential term...Russia will need his experience in addressing the challenges of modernization and continued democratization.⁴

Gorbachev failed to mention that this chaos and the need to prevent the disintegration of the state were the consequences of his own hurried economic and political policies at the heart of his politics of change which had ignored the requirements of governance and the state's interests. These remarks show that Gorbachev is now using the language of Khatami who understood that excessive speed in initiating policies and weakening of the state could not provide the conditions for lasting positive change. Khatami comprehended that the politics of change had to be concerned with both the transition and consolidation of republican forms of governance. Although it can be said that Khatami failed to achieve the successful transition he sought, he nonetheless changed fundamentally the political debate in the IRI. During his administration and that of his successor political groups and parties and newspapers openly discussed and argued for and against Khatami's interpretation of Khomeinism. This debate encompassed an increasing amount of the electorate which is reflected in the large turnout for the 2009 presidential elections. This process benefits possible future democratic transition and consolidation.

Putin's popularity as president was based on his success in putting an end to the political, economic, and institutional chaos of the Yeltsin years which began under Gorbachev. Putin, in regard to the last general secretary's politics of change, remarked '*Perestroika* was the years of imprudent (*neprodumannii*) attempts to re-do and accelerate everything as fast as possible.'⁵ The Russian people, preferring the stability he established to the type of politics of seeming chaos brought about by Gorbachev and then Yeltsin, have made Putin Russia's most popular post-Soviet politician. This is not to say that the Russian people are culturally and/or genetically against change and democratisation. Rather, the instability and unpredictability of the chaos emerging during the Gorbachev and Yeltsin years left a strong impression on a society

which, as it entered the new millennium, sought stability in its overall and daily life.

Ahmadinejad's approach argues that the IRI does not need Khatami's politics of change to achieve social justice, economic growth, stability and strength and that Khatami's interpretation of Khomeinism would bring the end of the true IRI. Similar to Putin, Khatami's successor is striving to lessen the actual role of competitive elections through the weakening of political groups and factions in actual and potential opposition to him.

The Ahmadinejad administration, claiming a return to true Khomeinism, rolled back the few remaining legacies of the Khatami period. Press freedoms were further restricted, the government condemned and worked against the emergence of political parties, claiming that the network of mosques is the basis for political action, privatisation was virtually halted as the government increased its presence in the major sectors of the economy, the criteria for those wishing to run for public office was raised in order to correspond with the policies and Khomeinism of Ahmadinejad's government, NGOs and civil organisations found themselves either closed or facing strict government surveillance, and the main thrust of Tehran's international economic and political relations shifted from the West to the East.

The political consequence of these moves and Ahmadinejad's economic policies was increased elite and societal polarisation between those supporting Ahmadinejad's interpretation of Khomeinism and those supporting Khatami's interpretation of it. Stuck between these two groups were increasing numbers of traditional conservatives and neo-conservatives, such as Ali Larijani and Nateq Nuri, dissatisfied with aspects of Ahmadinejad's domestic, foreign, and/or economic policies. By 2007 the broad conservative coalition made up of traditional conservatives and neo-conservatives began to turn on itself over Ahmadinejad's policies. In 2008 elections to the Eighth Majles were held. This conservative coalition maintained its majority; once again thousands of reformist and moderate candidates had been banned by the GC. However, Larijani, a leading critic of the president, became speaker, replacing Haddadadel, who many accused of being excessively soft in regard to Ahmadinejad. The Majles became a platform for criticism of the president.

Khatami and the 2009 presidential elections

The main worry for the reformists and other political opponents of Ahmadinejad with reformist tendencies was finding a candidate for the 2009 presidential elections who could guarantee a large voter turnout amongst their core constituency, the urban and youth vote, which constitutes a majority of the electorate. The logic was that if the participation rate of these two groups was above 65%, the provincial and conservative vote would be neutralised, as would the threat of vote-rigging. In other words, it was assumed that a larger participation rate would benefit the reformists and dilute the influence of expected cheating. In this vein, already one year before the presidential campaign, many strategists came to the conclusion that Khatami had to run again. They believed that not only was he still the country's most popular politician, who could attract voters to the ballot box, but also he would be able to pass the GC's vetting process despite being a reformist. By late 2008 Khatami was under increasing pressure from reformists and moderates to run again. Rafsanjani strongly favoured another Khatami presidency.⁶

The direction the country had taken under Ahmadinejad seriously worried Khatami. He believed that if the IRI continued on the path chosen by his successor it would find itself in danger. By the end of 2008 Khatami, having had talks with Mir Hossein Mousavi, announced that if Mousavi decided not to run for president as the reformist candidate, he would. They both agreed that both of them should not run in order not to split the vote as had happened in 2005.⁷ Khatami did not consider, Mehdi Karrubi, the first politician to announce his candidacy for the presidency who had his own party, National Confidence, a serious reformist candidate.

Khatami, frustrated by Mousavi's delay in making a decision, announced his candidacy for the presidency in early February. Three motivations were behind this decision. First, there was increasing doubt that Mousavi, who had been absent from active political life for twenty years, would be able to attract enough of the urban and youth vote to the ballot box. Second, there was the belief that any further delay in presenting a reformist candidate for the presidency would deprive the movement of time to work out strategies, to raise money, to set-up campaign offices across the country, and to begin unofficial campaigning. Third, there was the conviction that Mousavi would

eventually decide not to run, as he had done over the previous twenty years when the possibility of his candidacy was aired.

Khatami's candidacy was greeted as a whole enthusiastically by large sections of society, including the rural areas and especially the youth who associated Khatami with political change and reform. The huge crowds that greeted him on his campaign trips to Shiraz and surrounding areas were the first signs of public mobilisation behind his candidacy. The threat a Khatami candidacy posed to Ahmadinejad's attempt at re-election was clearly reflected in the conservatives' response to his announcement. Implicit threats on his life, threats to use the courts to ban him from running if the GC allowed him to run and personal slanders characterised the initial weeks of his campaign.⁸

Mousavi on 9 March announced that he would run for president, surprising most observers. Explaining his decision to return to active political life, Mousavi stressed that he now felt a danger for the IRI which he had not sensed over the past twenty years. Khatami, caught off guard and somewhat angered by this development, to the surprise and anger of many of his supporters, on 16 March left the race.

Several factors were at play. First, Khatami had not been very keen about re-entering the political field. He announced his candidacy over fears of a second Ahmadinejad presidency. He preferred the role of intellectual and spiritual leader of the reformist movement to that of political leader. Second, Khatami believed that in a race, in which three candidates from the left were opposing Ahmadinejad, the splitting of the reformist-leftist vote could be so great that Ahmadinejad could possibly win in the first round. Third, he feared that if he were forced into a run-off with Ahmadinejad as a result of vote split between himself, Mousavi, and Karrubi, the possibility existed that he would face defeat as a result of vote rigging. Defeat of Khatami in such circumstances would be claimed to symbolise the defeat of his interpretation of Khomeinism and his politics of change. Therefore, he believed that the only way to victory was in the first round. But, with the presence of Karrubi and Mousavi, this was impossible. Fourth, Khatami understood the sensitivities his candidacy and his politics of change had created amongst certain elite groups. Even before his decision to run, it was feared that his candidacy would unite the various conservative groups that were increasingly fighting with each other.

Lastly, Khatami recognised Mousavi's ability to attract votes from the left and the right, something he himself could not do. Mousavi at the end of his televised debate with presidential hopeful, Karrubi, stressed that he was both a reformist and a principalist (a name used by the broad conservative coalition).

Khatami threw his support behind Mousavi and campaigned extensively for him. His personal popularity amongst the youth, who had little knowledge of Mousavi given his twenty-year absence from active political life, ensured that a majority of this large electoral group would vote for Mousavi. Many of the issues at the heart of Khatami's politics of change were debated during the electoral campaign: civil society, privatisation, social justice, greater personal and civil freedoms, and strengthening of IRI republicanism. In the weeks before polling day, it seemed to many that Mousavi was succeeding in mobilising the vote across the country. During the last week of campaigning, in which live televised debates between the candidates mesmerised the country, it seemed to some that Mousavi might even win in the first round.

June 12, polling day, was marked by a record turnout. Some 83% of the electorate turned out. The announced election results showed Ahmadinejad obtaining 63% of the vote and Mousavi getting 34%. As soon as they were announced Karrubi and Mousavi, along with leading political organisations, such as the Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution and the Islamic Iranian Participation Front, charged the Ahmadinejad government with massive vote rigging.

Discussion concerning the issue of electoral cheating is beyond the scope of this work. That which touches directly on this book is Khatami's role in the events leading up to election day and in the new circumstances after it. Two of the main issues characterising and determining the course of the politics of change in the period 1997-2005 were: (a) the extent of the power of the revolutionary institutions which increasingly linked themselves to the Leadership Office, claiming any criticism of them was criticism of the Leader; and (b) Khatami's approach to this issue. He strove to separate the issue of the revolutionary institutions, specifically the GC, from that of the Leadership Office. At the same time, Khatami was never prepared to confront and dispute decisions made by the Leader. Two examples of this were his acquiescence in the face of the Leader's intervention in regard to the 2000 press law and decision concerning the culling of candidates in the 2004 Majles elections.

In the week after the announcement of Ahmadinejad's victory, the IRI was rocked by widespread and mainly peaceful demonstrations against the announced results as Mousavi and Karrubi accused the Ahmadinejad government of cheating. The size of the protests had not been seen since the 1978-79 revolution; those of Tehran numbered into the millions. At the same time, IRI security forces arrested hundreds of journalists and well-known political figures. In a bid to put this issue to rest, the Leader gave the Friday Prayer at the University of Tehran on 19 June, one week after the people went to the polls. In his speech, he stressed that the massive vote-rigging claimed by Karrubi, Mousavi, and their supporters did not take place. He then confirmed Ahmadinejad's victory and stressed that Ahmadinejad's views were the closest to his from amongst the elite. The Leader then warned that demonstrations against the election results would no longer be tolerated by the authorities.

The following day Tehran and other cities witnessed the worst violence between state and society since the revolution. This expression of societal anger intensified fragmentation of the elite over the elections. The elite severely polarised between those supporting Ahmadinejad and the official results and those claiming that electoral cheating and a coup d'état had taken place.

On 1 July, eleven days after the Leader gave this speech, Khatami took a step that was difficult for him. In remarks to family members of those arrested by the Ahmadinejad government he announced: 'Given what has been done and declared unilaterally we have to state that a velvet coup d'état against the people and democracy has taken place...The people's protests were crushed and those who hold responsibility to protect the rights of the people, humiliated them.'⁹ Khatami, who had always been careful not to contradict publicly the Leader, now directly challenged his decision. An election the Leader had confirmed, Khatami was calling a coup against the republicanism of the IRI. His remarks caught people by surprise whilst providing them with greater momentum to protest the results. Khatami's break with the official line was considered significant given his previous willingness to back down. On 20 July Khatami followed these remarks with a public demand that a referendum be held in which the people would vote on whether the Ahmadinejad government was legitimate or

not. He stressed that supervision should be handled by a neutral body, such as the Expediency Council headed by Rafsanjani, and not the GC.

With these pronouncements Khatami showed that he now believed that society had reached a state of political maturity; institutionalisation in society of the idea, procedures, and responsibilities of democracy and specifically voting had taken place. As president he considered this institutionalisation as one of the first and vital steps in the politics of change. The problem in 2009 was the unwillingness of certain forces in the revolutionary institutions to accept this changed reality. Khatami's remarks addressed the issue of the power of the revolutionary institutions and specifically targeted the Leadership Office. He implicitly said that word from the Leadership Office could not bestow legitimacy on a government if that government does not enjoy the support of the people. He now publicly stated that the power of *velayat-e faqih* was not absolute.

Rafsanjani focused on this theme in his Friday Prayer speech of 17 July. He returned to the podium after an absence of more than one month. The crowds, made up primarily of Mousavi supporters, that showed up for this speech were the largest since the time of the revolution. In his speech he criticised the performance of the GC and placed stress on the importance of republicanism in the IRI. He argued that no IRI government could exist if the people did not approve of it and that the people through their vote bestowed legitimacy on the system. Rafsanjani came out against the concept of absolute *velayat-e faqih*.¹⁰ The following day, Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi, who is close to the Leader, responded to Rafsanjani: "The government obtains its legitimacy from God and thus people do not provide it with legitimacy."¹¹ The crisis emerging over charges of vote-rigging had transformed into one over a crucial issue that had faced Khatami's politics of change, namely the relationship between republicanism and the revolutionary institutions, and specifically the Leadership Office.

One of the causes of the emergence of Khatami's politics of change was intensification of factional fighting that was leading to the dominance of the political field by a broad traditional conservative bloc. Those groups and figures on the losing side of this struggle, by pushing for liberalisation of the political system and for greater popular participation in politics, hoped to strengthen their hand. The political interests of a part of the elite coincided with the growing societal demands for political change. The 2009 post-election situation saw a

dramatic intensification of this process. A synergetic relationship emerged between those elite groups challenging Ahmadinejad's announced victory and sections of society.

Using Khatami's assessment of the 2009 elections and looking back at the period of Khatami's politics of change, one can pose two questions. First, to what extent did Khatami's consistent backing down in the face of his rivals' counterattacks, such as the banning of reformist candidates in 2004, create the conditions for vote rigging and the belief in its success in 2009? Second, to what extent was his understanding and expectations of the relationship between the revolutionary and republican institutions realistic?

Any judgements in regard to Gorbachev's and Khatami's historical legacy and their influence on the course of Russian and Iranian history are provisional. The passage of time and the increasing distance between those evaluating these periods and the Gorbachev and Khatami periods themselves will inevitably influence judgements and commentaries. Future political events and the trajectory of these two polities will play an important and eventually decisive role in determining the character and influence of Gorbachev and Khatami on Iranian and Russian history.

If Putin's and Medvedev's policies result in a long-term corruption of popular politics and effective emasculation of elected bodies, such as the Duma, history's judgement of Gorbachev will become harsher given the economic and political situation he bequeathed to Yeltsin. The dynamics of this situation played a leading role in the creation of the conditions for the emergence of Putinism. If, however, they lead to renewed momentum for an expansion of the role of democracy in Russia combined with the establishment of a strong and effective state, the Gorbachev years might obtain a more positive evaluation.

As of July 2009, Khatami's popular reputation was mixed. On the one hand, whilst still widely respected, he was increasingly blamed, sometimes justifiably, for creating the conditions during his presidency for the 2005 election of Ahmadinejad and for the situation that emerged before and after the 2009 presidential elections. On the other hand, in the post-2009 election period, Khatami transformed into a political fighter, the type of which many had wished he had been when president. However, by not backing down and openly confronting the

official line in regard to the results of the 2009 elections, Khatami was establishing himself as a formidable pro-active politician. However, lacking a power base inside the IRI, Khatami and Mousavi found themselves relying on Rafsanjani, who is head of both the Expediency Council and the Assembly of Experts, in their political battle over the allegations of cheating.

Gorbachev and Khatami have gone down as major figures in Russian and Iranian history who attempted to place not only their revolutionary regimes but also Iran and Russia on a new historical trajectory. This book has raised one general issue. Given the unique conditions of revolutionary and republican institutions based on a revolutionary universalist ideology, is there a middle road between Gorbachev's politics of change ending in institutional destruction and end of the revolutionary state and Khatami's politics of change which led to a 'velvet coup against the people and democracy' from within the system itself? The hope is that this book has shown how and where Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev and Sayyid Hojjatoleslam Mohammad Khatami helped push events in the direction of these non-goals.

NOTES

Chapter 1

- 1 The youth's disenchantment with Khatami was vividly shown during his visit to the University of Tehran on December 2004. Khatami speech: www.president.ir/khatami/speeches/ 1383.09.16.
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Chapter 2

- 1 Some disagreement exists over the date of Muscovy's independence from Mongol-Turkic suzerainty. Some consider the crucial date to be 1480 when Muscovy achieved a great victory over the Golden Horde and its Polish allies. Others consider 1502 to be the key date when the Crimean Khan conquered the remains of the Qipchaq Khanate.
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- 4 Shenk, pp.42-44.
- 5 Ostrowski, p.226.
- 6 See: E. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1977).
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- 22 See: M.Laruelle *Mythe aryen et reve imperial dans la Russie de XIXe siecle* (Paris, 2005).
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- 26 Gubinou, p.39.
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- 37 V.O.Kluchevskii, *Russkaia Istoriiia* Vol.13 (Moscow, 1993), pp.50-51.
- 38 N.N. Kostomarov, *Russkaia istoriia v zbirzheopisaniakh ee glavneisbikh deiutelei* (Kaluga, 1995), p. 216.
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- 40 See also the story of 'The White Monk's Cap'.
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- 42 Hughes, p.334.
- 43 A.Lul'nin 'Sotsial'no-ekologicheskii krizis XV veka i stanovlenie rossisskoi tsivilizatsii,' *Obshchestvennie nauki i sovremennost'* 1994 (1) p.97.
- 44A.K. Nartov, L.N.Maikov (ed.), *Razkazzi Nartova o Petr* (St. Petersburg, 1891), p. 154.
- 45 Ibid., p.77.
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- 50 A.Taheri, *The Unknown Life of the Shah* (London, 1991), p.193.
- 51 Morier, p. 213.
- 52 *Ettela'at, Havades-e yek rub-e qarn* (Tehran, 1329{1950}), p.156.
- 53 Khomeini, *Tarikh-e moaser-e Iran az nazar-e Imam Khomeini* (Tehran, 1368{1989}), p. 111.
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- 55 H. Seyyed Ruhani, *Baressi va Tablili az Nebzat-e Imam Khomeini* (Tehran, 1361{1982}) pp.262-263, 265. Many clerics and leading lay figures opposed the shah's growing autocratic manner. At the same time many educated Iranians supported him and his westernising zeal hoping this process would lead to an opening of the political space.

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- 57 Custine, p. 602.
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- 61 P.A. Stolypin, *Rechi Stolpina* (Moscow, 1993), p.173.
- 62 See: Z.Shakibi, 'Central Governing Organs of the Russian Empire', in *Cambridge History of Russia, Vol.II* (Cambridge, 2006) and H. Tankabani, *Dar Amadi-ye Divansalari dar Iran* (Tehran: Ents. Elmi va Farhangi, 1383{2004}) for an overview of the evolution of bureaucracies in Iran and Russia.
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- 64 M.R. Pahlavi, *Engelab-e Sefid* (Tehran, 1346{1968}), p.139.
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- 19 See: Z. Maragaie, *Siabatname-ye Ebrahim Bek* (Tehran, 1338 {1959}).
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- 93 Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenie*, Vol.41, p.304.
- 94 Vvedenskii, pp.578, 580, 620.
- 95 Many of the famous works of socialist realism were written in the decades before Stalin decided to impose it as the framework for all literature. This attests to socialist realism's emergence as a popular expression of a political consciousness before it was theorised by the Stalinist state.
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Chapter 5

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 13 The entire Politburo approved such appointments but an unwritten rule existed according to which members of the Politburo did not interfere in the personnel decisions made by the general secretary. See: Hough, pp.80-82.
 14 After the CC plenum Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich, and Shepilov lost their positions.
 15 During the Khrushchev period 'First Secretary' was used instead of 'General Secretary'.
 16 Each province elects one cleric. For every additional five hundred thousand inhabitants over one million the province obtains another cleric representative.
 17 Algar, p.56.
 18 The GC also has a judicial function. According to Article 98 the GC has the right to interpret the constitution. If three-fourths of the GC support a particular interpretation it holds the same legal weight as that of the Constitutional Court.
 19 Vvedenskii p.222.
 20 Ibid., p.234.
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22 *Kayhan*, 7.1.1988.

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- 26 Ibid., p.389-90.
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- 45 www.president.ir/khatami/speeches/22.04.1378
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- 48 Grachev, p.118.
- 49 Gorbachev, *Perestroika*, p.39.
- 50 Gorbachev, *Izbrannie...* Vol.4, p.399.
- 51 www.president.ir/khatami/speeches/1377.9.12.
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experimental site for 'the revolutionary cause' as Germany might have been...' Chernyaev believes that reading of Solzhenitsyn's *Lenin in Switzerland* pushed Gorbachev into this direction.

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85 For example see: *Newsweek*, 08.11. 1999.

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95 Politburo Meeting, 26 November 1988, Archive Gorbachev Foundation, F.10, O.2.

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3 *Salaam*, 31.04. 1376 (22.08. 1997).

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- 14 Montazeri, *Mabani-ye feqi-ye bokumat-e eslami* (Qom, 2002), pp.284-288. Montazeri also played a key role in denouncing the announced results of the 2009 presidential elections and the use of force by the government, with the support of the Leader, against people peacefully protesting these results.
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- 16 Salimi, pp.64-65.
- 17 www.president.ir/khatami/speeches/11.22.1376.
- 18 www.president.ir/khatami/speeches/9.9.1377 .
- 19 www.president.ir/khatami/speeches/30.08.1377.
- 20 www.president.ir/khatami/speeches/13.01.1377.
- 21 www.president.ir/khatami/speeches/6.7.1377;
www.president.ir/khatami/speeches/7.7.1377.
- 22 www.president.ir/khatami/speeches/ 3.2.1377 .
- 23 Salimi, pp.61-62.
- 24 *Salaam*, 01.02. 1378 (22 May 1999).
- 25 www.president.ir/khatami/speeches/27.02. 1378.
- 26 www.president.ir/khatami/speeches/22.11.1378.
- 27 Surveys administered and data collected by the author. The full results will be published in a future book on Iranian identity.
- 28 This slogan reappeared in the 2009 election campaign of Mousavi.
- 29 *Asr-e Azadegan* , 29.01. 1379 (17.05. 2000).
- 30 D.Potter ,et als., eds., *Democratization* (London, 1997) p.528.
- 31 Quoted in M.Zakrayi, *Terror-e Hajjarian be ravayet-e jenaba-ye siyasi* (Tehran, 1379) p.267.
- 32 Interviews, 21.7.2006, 18.8.2006, 09.3.2007.
- 33 Interview, 01.06.2000.
- 34 *Hamshabri*, 20 Khordad 1380/10 June 2001.
- 35 www.president.ir/khatami/speeches/9.12.1377.
- 36 www.president.ir/khatami/speeches/01.05.1380.
- 37 www.president.ir/khatami/speeches/13.05.1380.
- 38 www.president.ir/khatami/speeches/28.05.1380.
- 39 www.president.ir/khatami/speeches/13.05.1380 .
- 40 Ansari, p.243.
- 41 Salimi, p.247, Interview, 09.04.2006.
- 42 Salimi, p.253.

- 43 *Etemad-e melli*, 22.04. 1385 (13.08.2006).
- 44 Interview, 25.04. 2006.
- 45 *Shargh*, 20.06.2006.
- 46 Chernyaev, pp.210-211.
- 47 The Interior Ministry subsequently released new information indicating that voter turnout was 50.5 percent, a crucial mark if the parliament were to be considered legitimate.
- 48 Chernyaev, p.223.
- 49 *Keyhan*, 14.04. 1378 (05.08. 1999).
- 50 Hough, p.498.
- 51 Quoted in Grachev, p.301.
- 52 www.president.ir/khatami/speeches/22.04.1378.
- 53 Iranian television, 20.04. 2000, reported IRNA, 21.04. 2000.
- 54 Such violence included attacks on Friday prayers and on the offices of newspapers known to be favourable to the Khatami cause by *Ansar-e Velayat*, on student meetings held in either their own offices or in public places, and on political figures close to Khatami.
- 55 *Hamshabri*, 15.01. 1379 (04.04.2000).
- 56 Interview, 21.08.2004.
- 57 R. Khomeini, *Sahife-ye Engelab-e Eslami i Vasiyatname-ye elabi-ye siasi-ye Rabbari* (Tehran, 1378).
- 58 *Sobb-e Emruz* 31.01. 1379 (19.04. 2000).
- 59 *Jebbeh*, 7.11. 1378 (26.02. 2000).
- 60 Interview, 15.03.2006.
- 61 Salimi, p.248.
- 62 Interview, 28.04.2006.
- 63 www.president.ir/khatami/speeches/20.09.1378.
- 64 As president he has been relatively successful in convincing a part of the Iranian population that the economic difficulties faced by the IRI and his administration in particular are the result of economic mismanagement of the Rafsanjani and Khatami presidencies.

Conclusion

1 In this regard see in particular Condolezza Rice's remarks in reaction to the South Ossetian crisis about Russia returning to its traditional habit of using

force to solve problems and to expand its geo-political influence. *New York Times*, 17.10. 08.

2 *Perestroika desiat' let spustiya*, p.102.

3 Chernyaev, p.152.

4 Gorbachev, *International Herald Tribune*, 30.11.07.

5 *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 15.10.1999.

6 Rafsanjani's support for Khatami had three basic causes. First, he found himself under political attack by Ahmadinejad and his supporters since the 2005 presidential election. Second, Rafsanjani had his eye on the ongoing behind-the-scenes tension between him and the Leader. Rafsanjani, knowing the popular belief that Ahmadinejad was the Leader's president and sensing a severe drop in Ahmadinejad's popularity, believed that a Khatami candidacy would force the Leader to back Ahmadinejad in the election. A Khatami victory, which he, Khatami, and other analysts believed was very possible, would be seen as a defeat for the Leader. It was believed that consequently the Leader's influence would be significantly damaged. Lastly, Rafsanjani had serious misgivings about Ahmadinejad's economic and foreign policies.

7 There seems to have been a misunderstanding between Khatami and Mousavi about this arrangement. Khatami seems to have believed that they had agreed that if one of them decided to run, the other would not become a candidate. Mousavi felt that a possible Khatami candidacy was linked to his own decision to run or not. In other words, he would first make a decision about his own candidacy, then Khatami.

8 See: *Keyban*, 12.2. 09, *Etemad* 16.2.09, 22.02.09, 05.03.09.

9 *Ghalammens*, 2.7.09.

10 *Etemad*, 27.03.88 (18.07.09).

11 *Etemad-e melli*, 28.03.88 (19.07.09).

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