Section two. Multiple Enlightenments: the heritage of Enlightenment in modern national movements.

1.1 The Ottoman Turkish experience of Enlightenment

Introduction

We find a persistent and long term intellectual and political movement in what was first the Ottoman Empire and then, later, the Turkish Republic, centred on the concept of Enlightenment, which had a powerful and lasting effect on the course of the nation’s history. As early as 1731 we find Ibrahim Muteferrika presenting Mahmud I with his *Rational Basis for the Politics of Nations* in which he distinguishes between “Divine Prescriptions” and “laws and rules invented by reason”, and introduces concepts of sovereignty based on the people as one political option.436 In 1788 a French consul noted that the *Encyclopedie* had been translated into Turkish.437 In 1847, at the height of the Tanzimat era, students at the School of Medicine in Istanbul were reading Baron D’Holbach’s manual of atheism *System of Nature* and quoting Diderot’s *Jacques the Fatalist*.438 In 1876 with the new Constitutional government discussions of constitutionalism “penetrated the walls of the consultative chambers and were disseminated among the common people for the first time”.439


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This was far from a simple one-directional influence from the West. As a diverse and changing movement, the Ottoman-Turkish Enlightenment both selectively adopted Enlightenment discourses from Western Europe at different times and made considerable use of domestic Ottoman-Turkish-Islamic traditions in its articulation of the road to a modern nation. The circumstantial fore structure of the tradition of Enlightenment as it found expression in Ottoman Turkey has highly complex spatial-global and temporal-historical dimensions, and it is by means of this passage that the Ottoman Empire became – through terrible experiences of violence - the modern nation-state of Turkey. The model of Turkish national modernisation proved to be influential and important in the Muslim world and generally, as well as unforgettably tragic in some of its key dimensions. In the present context the major focus will be placed on the problem of the concept of citizenship as traced through the passage from the Ottomanism of the Young Ottoman movement to the final achievement of the secular Turkish Republic under the political leadership of the Young Turks and finally the Ataturk period.

At the end of the fourteenth century the Ottoman dynasty and empire grew out of some dozen Turkish warrior-princes who had overwhelmed most of the provinces of the Byzantine Empire. These new rulers combined a “passionate and simple faith with a chivalrous and tolerant attitude towards the mainly Christian inhabitants of the lands they conquered” so that many “welcomed the firm justice of Ottoman rule in contrast to the anarchic misgovernment of the decadent Byzantine Empire”. Murad I, the first great Ottoman sultan, extended the new empire into the Christian Balkan states, applying “the principle of toleration to allow non-Muslims to become full citizens and rise to the highest offices of state, so at this very early stage establishing the character of the vast multilingual and multiethnic Ottoman empire”. 440

The importance of the Turkish presence in the Middle East forms the long term background. The appearance of the Turkish-speaking nomads in the Middle East in the eleventh century

introduced changes so profound that their appearance “ranks in importance in the history of the Islamic Middle East only after the emergence of Islam itself in the seventh century and the challenge of the West in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries”. These pastoralists “formed a new military class that would also supply most of the rulers of the Middle East in general and Iran in particular until such non-Turks as Reza Shah and King Saud appeared at the head of Iranian and Arab states in the twentieth century”.441 These issues too would inevitably contribute to the ethnic tensions of the modern period in unforeseen ways.

The Ottoman Empire was also a key figure in the constellation of events creating the conditions for the early rise of modernity. In 1453, after a generation of struggle with the Tartars, the Ottomans under Mohammed II captured Constantinople. They subsequently seized most of North Africa, Mesopotamia, and Arabia, including the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. It has been argued that the fall of Constantinople symbolically marked the beginning of the modern world.442 By bringing the Roman Empire in the East to an end, it instigated the search for alternative European trade routes to the Far East. In the second half of the century the Portuguese explored the African coastline, and reached India in 1498. In 1492 the West Indies were reached and within a short time the continents of North and South America had been discovered. This is only one, though an important, link in “the multi-centred origin of the shift toward this common, yet fiercely contested, modernity”.443

To the east, in Persia, the Safavid dynasty was established when Ismail, the ‘Great Sufi’, proclaimed himself shah in 1502 after subduing all of Azerbaijan. This was the first unification of Iran into a single state since the Arab conquest in the 740s. He declared Shiite Islam to be the official religion of the empire, and more than two centuries of struggle and intermittent warfare between the Safavid Shiites and the Ottoman Sunnis ensued. When the Ottoman Sultan invaded

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Iran in 1514 with a view to crushing the heretic, the victory proved to be hollow when the population held out after military defeat with a scorched earth policy which finally forced the Ottomans to give up their conquest.444

In fact, the history of the Middle East is quite rich with episodes of such popular uprising, another factor that would play itself out dramatically in the context of modern politics of nationalism and Enlightenment. In nineteenth century Istanbul, for example, the Ottoman popular classes were so permeated by the Janissary “pioneer spirit” (gaza) – indeed some time after the massacre of the Janissary corps - that a popular rebellion nearly took place in the capital in 1853 because the official attitude to Russia was considered to be cowardly.445 This was the period following the Gulham Rescript of 1839 which launched the Tanzimat period (1839-1878), when the gates of the Ottoman empire were flung wide open to permit the winds of change to take their full effect with the unlimited intervention of European economic interests, in what was the most unfortunate period in Ottoman relations with Europe.446

In 1750 most of the world’s people still lived in such large agrarian empires which, unlike the new nation-states very soon to come, often had various practical and cultural reasons for creating and sometimes glorying in complexity and difference without equality. From this point of view there is a basis for comparing the Ottomans (c.1326-1922), Safavids (c.1501-1736), and Mughals (1526-1858), all of whom had “transformed themselves from the status of ‘great khans’, nomadic lords of herdsmen, horse-archers, and Cossack-type soldiers, into dispassionate and enlightened emperors of broad agrarian domains”.447

The starting point for the political and social ferment to come, the particular ground upon which the “universal” politics of Enlightenment would play themselves out in the Tanzimat-Young Ottoman conflict, was the traditional millet system within the growing network of the global

market. The Young Ottomans "embodied the main organized opposition to the Tanzimat regime".\textsuperscript{448} The place for non-Muslim communities within the Ottoman structure had been maintained by according the right of jurisdiction to the ecclesiastical authority of the respective religious community, each with particular "traditions as to titles, grades, recruitment, ceremonies, discipline, but (with) absolute loyalty to the supreme ruler".\textsuperscript{449} This privilege of autonomy based on religious difference and the premise of Muslim superiority was in practice incompatible with a uniform secular law guaranteeing universal legal equality. The autonomy of multiple laws and customs enshrined in a pyramid of inequality would necessarily conflict with the smooth uniform legal surface of a concept of universal Ottoman citizenship.

The problems to arise at this juncture went to the core of the project of the Ottoman state as a centripetal node of shared nationality. For example, new demands by non-Muslim communities that the entire multi-religious population of the empire be legally entitled to both services and employment opportunities provided by the Ottoman state – when traditional privileges had been granted to permit these services to be performed within autonomous communities – were met with the demand by the Ottoman state that these privileges therefore be relinquished to make way for a universal Ottoman nationality. In this juncture Britain and France intervened to apply pressure in demanding both equal legal rights of citizenship and continued community privileges, creating a very tense deadlock between two possible worlds of secular natural law and the legacy of the millet system.\textsuperscript{450} In fact, Britain sought "to aggravate such differences in an ethnically divisive direction".\textsuperscript{451} At the same time the influence of the Great Powers resulted in reforms being lopsided, favouring Christian communities, and thereby bringing the deepening grievances of Muslim peasant communities - who were at near starvation level - into ever greater relief.

\textsuperscript{450} Mardin. \textit{The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought}. Page 15.
\textsuperscript{451} Kayali. Page 101.
For these reasons and others the famous Ottoman policy of “tolerance” proved to have a deeply contradictory character in the context of events following the institution of 1839 semi-constitutional charter. The Tanzimat strategy aimed to unite the multiple communities of the empire through the policy of broad Ottoman nationality based on equality before the law. Politically, it aimed to establish local representative bodies while shunning national representation.

This dangerous crossroad had two basic aspects: (1) a policy aspect linked to the conflicting intersection of European imperial dominance, the Russian military threat, rising local movements for national independence, and Ottoman initiatives for reform, or the problem of political autonomy and domination from several opposed points of view. With the late nineteenth century “war fever swept England as the mob demanded war to save India as well as the Middle East from Russian imperialism”.452 There were three problems of autonomy: (a) The empire’s independence from European domination, a reality that Turkish elites only gradually awakened to; this was a largely pragmatic effort on the part of the Sultan to preserve the existence of the empire until the more ideologically charged Tanzimat turning point, itself largely the result of unforeseen consequences of the state’s line of action. (b) The independence of non-Muslim “nationalities” from the empire, a problem sometimes driven by ideological commitments linked to violence and often tangled up in foreign intervention; these national movements were in a particular strain of the intellectual tradition of Enlightenment. (c) The independence of Ottoman citizens from the domination of the coercive modernizing state, a problem of political liberty represented in the politics of the Young Ottoman movement. This movement, which posed the modern individual against the state, also partook of aspects of the intellectual tradition of Enlightenment.

We might identify a third problem of autonomy in the concept of Enlightenment itself as applied to this complex and mobile historical terrain. The social movement of Enlightenment is based on the endogenous principle, meaning that legitimately the society can only produce its own

transformation from within. This is where the problem of modernization from above comes in, and where we find the basic conflict between the Young Ottomans and the Tanzimat state.

(2) The second and certainly interlinked aspect — also concerned with autonomy — we might call the cultural politics of the problem. These have a theological, philosophical, political and sometimes romantic character, and concern the complex ideological clash between the traditional religious principle of providence with both the new secular concept of equality and with the concept of history as an independent range of possible human agency. Berkes has suggested that the “entire history of the first constitutional experiment in Turkey was nothing but a complicated battle over these questions”.454

Background of the Reform Movement

For the rulers of the Ottoman Empire the early eighteenth century constituted an important and finally fatal turning point. A wave of doubt resulting from undeniable military and economic decline forced the realization that reform was necessary to save the future of the Empire. As “railroad building the Crimean war fell almost entirely to foreign financiers”, foreign investors were granted monopolies.455 We might say that the Ottoman Empire was becoming caught in a hostile triangle, locked into a state of decline by three conjoined aspects. The first aspect was all but invisible to Ottoman intellectuals until some time well into the nineteenth century with Namik Kemal, and by that time the damage was all but done.456 As early as the beginning of the seventeenth century the destabilizing effects of changes in the West European economy were felt in the Ottoman Empire and this through the mechanism of capitulations involving grants accorded to

454 Berkes. The Development of Secularism in Turkey. Page 211.
455 Shaw/Shaw. Page 120.
European mercantile powers covering commercial, legal, and religious extraterritorial privileges. This penetration, though gradual and almost imperceptible, had serious long term effect in undermining the traditional political and economic system of the Empire. Militarily, on the other hand, there was no confrontation with Western Europe until Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt to cut off Britain’s ‘lifeline’ to India in 1797.

The directly visible and shocking second aspect was the series of military defeats at the hands of the newly arisen military power in Eastern Europe of modern Russia, which had been created under the authoritarian hand of enlightened despot Peter the Great. The most costly and damaging war was the loss of the Crimea to Russia in 1768-74, where a significant Muslim population was lost for the first time. This not only deprived the Empire of military manpower but also severely eroded its traditional status as protector of the faithful. The Tulip Era (1757-63), following the Treaty of Passarowitz (1718) with Austria, introduced technical and military reform based on the recognized failure of the traditional military institution. The reformers of the Tulip Era, limited to a small group, looked to France as the leading nation of Europe at the time under Louis XV. They were also loyal to Ottoman heritage and institutions. They entirely failed to appreciate the imperialist implications of European development.457

The Tulip Era has been described in terms of a mood of decline, with a growingly materialist outlook among the upper classes, the frequentation of coffee houses and pleasure houses, and break with traditional modes of life.458 The modernizing impetus came from the Grand Vizier as part of a broad tendency in the eighteenth century which placed the Grand Viziers and the higher bureaucrats of the empire in the role of reformists. Resistance to the new wave of reform came from the Janissaries, whose pay became less regular, and the poorer classes, both of whom felt the effects of economic decline and saw the opulence of Ottoman officials and their new

Western forms of luxury with disgust. A Janissary revolt forced Ahmed III to abdicate and the body of his Westernizing Vizier was paraded through the streets.\footnote{Serif Mardin. \textit{The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought. A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas}. Syracuse University Press, 2000. Page 139.}

The Ottoman Empire faced these dangers like a man walking into the dark; seeing the problem of decline as merely technical and Russia as the principle enemy, the Empire sought help from Western Europe in commercial relations that ultimately inflicted crippling economic damage through one-sided competition with a radically more developed economic power. The rulers, we might say, perceived the visible aspects of the looming threat but remained for a long time all but blind to the larger process. As the Ottoman rulers faced the need for change in somewhat of a fog, Western Europe was plunging its hooks in. Meanwhile, as the nation-states of Western Europe made quiet inroads into the empire, so the Sultan suppressed any developments of an emerging national economy out of fear of any rivalry for power.\footnote{Berkes. \textit{The Development of Secularism in Turkey}. Page 140.} At the same time, the global economic processes increasingly centred the importance and power of the new Ottoman bureaucratic elite. The new bureaucracy, though initially intended to function as the Sultan’s ‘big hands’ in averting financial disaster and preserving the status quo, gradually expanded to become the empire’s grey and amorphous master without a face.

It follows that the third aspect contributing to decline, in tandem with the first two, was internal to the Empire in a “lack of homogeneity, a persistence of medieval status groups, the unmercantilistic policies of government, and the monetary and fiscal measures necessitated by economic decline in the commercially industrial and rural sectors”. Taxation and customs systems within the empire continued to stifle trade. The long term effect of the three factors was economic decline which “pushed the fiscal-administrative-military institutions basic to Ottoman rule out of gear” in a “vicious spiral of decline”, putting the system “in its last coils by the end of the seventeenth century”.\footnote{Berkes. \textit{The Development of Secularism in Turkey}. Page 24.}
The Ottoman reaction was the long eighteenth century struggle over reform that saw the new bureaucratic elite climb steadily to power and pit itself against other influence groups in the empire, from the Janissaries to the ulema and finally the Sultan himself. The modernization process from above which aimed at strengthening the army and increasing the centralized control of the state for taxation purposes quickly became too complex for the sultan to control and so the modernist/reformist drive was transferred to the bureaucracy. In trying to concentrate political power more securely in his personal grasp, the Sultan unwittingly gave it away to what might have been for all the control he could maintain an expanding swarm of locusts. The successors to Mahmud II (1808-39) were essentially reduced to political bystanders before the multiplying rollercoaster of the new Ottoman bureaucracy which was designed to move and transform the empire in contrast to the previous guiding ideal of administration in ‘heaven sent’ stasis.

If Mahmud II substituted the “people” as the new principle of sovereignty following the massacre of the Janissary order, he saw them as the object rather than the subjective agents of reform. While he had used modern power to implement change in the empire he certainly did not share it, even with the bureaucratic elite who were required to make such power possible. Seizing the opportunity presented with Mahmud’s death, the new bureaucratic elite immediately set up the semi-constitutional Gulhane Rescript of 1839 and thereby established formal rule of law while tipping the power balance in their favour.

With the Ghulhane Rescript the bureaucratic elite took the helm in quickening national parade where the strings were already being pulled from the outside. The reality of foreign domination became more visible with the new Imperial Rescript of 1856, as it was the direct product of foreign influence. The event was viewed by many as a loss of “sacred national rights” and was a “day of tears and mourning”. Efforts by the government to smooth this over were dissolved in a puff of smoke when France directly invaded the empire in 1860 to assist the

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Christians of Lebanon. It was these spectacles that that betrayed what was largely a theatre of sovereignty and motivated the Young Ottomans to directly challenge the ruling state using a discourse of national independence.

The economic effects on the general population during these periods were of overall impoverishment, above all for the peasantry. Ultimately, the "traditional village economy sank and the village communities remained inaccessible to any development" with the result that peasants "swarmed into the new towns where there were no modern industries to absorb or transform them". These individuals became the disenfranchised urban mass prepared to participate in religious rebellions against foreign domination. As the government faced increasing financial difficulty, strong local lords rose to challenge the central authority of what had been a relatively highly centralized and far from feudal state organization. Finally, there was a dramatic increase in uprisings by movements for independence among non-Muslim communities, themselves responding to conditions of crisis and inspired by Enlightenment discourses of national autonomy.

One effect of this changing economic condition, declining military organization, and transformation in administrative practices, was that Europe gained in importance not only from the point of view of the government, but also in the eyes of the mass of people, who identified it now with their misery and the corruption of their rulers. The first major conservative revolt took place in 1730 followed by numerous others leading to the mass Kuleli Revolt in 1859 organized by ulema and military elements against subservience to Western power.

The first steps in military reform reverberated through all of the delicate interconnections of the body politic. The reforms were initiated from above by the will of the Sultan and lacked a class basis. Similarly, the reformists - who themselves came from the new bureaucratic elite - represented no group or class interest. Conservative agitators tended to gain more mass appeal. The bureaucrats of the Sublime Porte increasingly gained preponderance over other social bodies.

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Developments resulting from the Tanzimat pushed the bureaucratic elite upward while pressing downward on “the lower ranking bureaucrats, the majority of the ulema, and the army as a whole”. These were the losers in the modernization process who came to hate the closed circle with increasing wealth, power and opportunities for social advancement. By the 1850’s and 1860’s the lower echelons of the Ottoman state service were expressing their frustrated expectations through a “natural progression from anger to alcoholism to loss of health to death”. This was the social background of the Young Ottomans who, on the other hand, remained cut off from the broad mass of the peasant population.

Three Modern Ruptures: the “activist” principle

The generally violent modes of thought that constitute modern ideologies entered the expanding sphere of political activity of the empire in abrupt and half-unconscious but quickening snatches. By the time that Selim III (1789-1807) came to the throne in 1789, following another disastrous war against Russia, it had started to be realized that effective reforms could not leave the traditional system intact. For the first time, strangely co-terminus with the French Revolution, tradition was perceived openly as an obstacle to modernization. Selim III initiated his New Order (Nazim-i Cedid) inspired by a France that was at the time entering a phase of violent revolutionary meltdown that would eventually transform the political shape of the emerging modern world.

Selim III was deposed in 1807 by a group claiming he was under foreign control and later murdered by the Janissaries. A twenty year period ensued in which a government dominated by conservative elements in the ulema, Janissaries, and certain ministers sought to undo as many of the eighteenth century reforms as possible in an effort to restore their slipping grip on political power.

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In so far as the power structure of the old order had reached a point of irreversible disintegration, the efforts of this period may be likened to men using their backs to in an attempt to stem an avalanche. Fortune turned violently against them with Mahmud II (1808-39) at the time of the Greek War of Independence (1821-32).

When France invaded Syria in 1799, a proclamation of the Porte to the Syrian inhabitants described the new French Republic as guided by an idea that “all men are equal in humanity and equal in being men, none has superiority or merit over the other, and everyone disposes of his life and own livelihood in this life”. Here there was a reckoning that something new had arrived. It was not until the 1840’s and the onset of the Tanzimat that we find enthusiastic public commentary regarding the French Revolution in the Ottoman Empire. Yet the modernizing reign of Mahmud II established the respectability of change and the idea that that “something must be done” was given theoretical articulation and official recognition. The first major application of this “activist” principle - i.e.; that radical forms of politically organized violence could be wielded to effect desired social change and ‘progress’ – was with the extermination of the Janissary corps in 1826, surely the major turning point in the nineteenth century that paved the way for the onset of the Tanzimat in 1839. The firman abolishing the Janissary order was the first state document worded according to the “activist” principle as an appeal to “all subjects”.

The massacre of the Janissary corps in 1826 constituted so violent and radical an uprooting – in some respects, despite deepening corruption and loss of status, they remained the ‘heart and soul’ of the Ottoman ‘people’ – that a comparative docility settled over the population in the aftermath of viewing “thousands of Janissary corpses rotting in the Golden Horn”. The extermination of the Janissary corps and the creation of the new conscript army, as it were, cleared

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the field, and made possible the reforms that Mahmud II had long wanted and which laid the basis for the further reforms to come throughout the nineteenth century. Central control intensified as a system of local chiefs were abolished in 1831 and the ulema was marginalized as the state brought traditionally religious law courts and schools (medresse) under the full control of new state ministries. New state schools were set up to train new elite army officers and civil servants. The unforeseen consequence of massacring the Janissary corps was the subsequent disintegration of the hitherto indispensable alliance between the sultan and the bureaucracy in what was the second, if far less immediately spectacular, modern rupture.

This new principle of “action” has to be appreciated in contrast to a system for which stasis was the normative foundation grounded in a strict religious worldview. It is probably hard to imagine, for contemporary Turks no less than anybody else, the serenity of a system for which the dominant principle was changelessness on the grounds that God created every particle of the social universe and each individual position within a hierarchy of values for specific purposes. Within this framework every instance of deviation from established tradition was in principle contrary to the Ancient Law sanctified by the Seriat. In reality the system contained considerable practical elasticity for any given situation through the nizam, and even some permissiveness on the level of doctrine so long as there was no direct threat to order, but the idea of imposing destructive and radical change by force of human will was certainly unthinkable. Violence in the form of exploitation, domination and expansion were doubtlessly the norm, but not violence applied to ‘creative’ socio-politics ends.

Power in the Ottoman Empire was traditionally structured as a pyramid. At the apex of the pyramid stood the Sultan, who was bound in principle only by the Seriat. Where the Seriat did not provide the relevant guidance he was permitted to use his will. In reality his every move occurred in negotiation with the officials of the Porte and the Janissaries. The level immediately below the apex contained the Grand Vizier or chief of administrative, military and judicial staffs. Next was
the tri-partate structure of the Porte, or administrative officials, the Janissaries, or military corps, and the ulema, or religious scholars, constituted of several divisions and charged with verifying that all legislative action conformed to the Seriat. At the base of the pyramid were the common people, primary producers in the peasantry and the artisans and traders, as well as the multiple millet communities which made up the fairly autonomous religious and linguistic diversity of the empire. This entire edifice was conceived in the likeness of a body, which could hardly be equal in its constituent parts. It was a body composed not of individuals but positions, and these positions were grounded not in utility but value in terms of their proximity to God.474

The traditional Ottoman political system was like an island surrounded by a lake which separated it from the world of the common people. While all social orders possessed roots in either group, religion, family or occupation, the members of the military and administrative orders should possess no roots in society in order to guarantee their loyalty to the ruler. The ruling orders were thus strictly separated from the ruled and any recruits to the ruling order were deliberately detached from their original social classes. We see this in one of the “strangest and most distinctive” institutions of the Ottoman Empire, the Janissaries, who were Christian boys “handpicked for their good physique and ready intelligence” from the fourteenth century to “form a highly disciplined and superbly trained militia which became the core of the Ottoman army”. They were forbidden to marry and lived “monastic lives which were devoted to the sultan” and were used to “put down ruthlessly any signs of disorder or insurrection” among the huge population as the empire expanded.475

The concept of rupture and deracination was therefore already very explicit in the traditional Ottoman state structure. This is the image we have in reading the novels of Bosnian writer Ivo Andric, of Balkan mothers weeping over the forced abduction of their never to be seen again first born sons. The Janissary corps was annihilated in 1826 and as a new and modern conscript army

was created out of the void left in the wake of their extermination, the island of the political power structure was also demolished as the mass of people were permitted to pour in. In very short order with radical structural changes the common people were also allowed to enter the administrative and clerical orders, inadvertently creating a new national political culture.

The resulting tension between the sultan and the ulema led to the third rupture. It came as the result of a growing conflict between the official ulema and a new wave of fundamentalists. This problem is particularly difficult in the context of an empire where the ulema and the state had never been divided and a sudden objective sociological process of secularization was imposing itself on the situation. The Young Ottoman-Tanzimat debates and the conflicting doctrines they produced were in large part responses to this secularisation process.

Since the seventeenth century, the official ulema had, where necessary, fought an ongoing battle on two fronts: against the fundamentalists with their radical eschatological dreams and the independent Sufi orders which were much closer to the popular religion of the Muslim masses. The Ottoman structure upheld by the dominant ulema was based on nizam or the ‘law of nature’, a temporal and pragmatically developed system of proportional distribution by which privileges granted to the multiple religious communities were considered part of God’s fixed and measured plan for the order and happiness of the world. The system as a whole, including the millet, had been developed from historically derived interpretations of the Seriat. The system had in fact more or less functioned in autonomy from the Seriat since about the sixteenth century.476

The modern fundamentalist tendency, by contrast, had emerged as part of a late seventeenth and early eighteenth century wave in “movements of sociability and modes of critical thought” providing people with “spiritual and social resources with which to confront the rapid changes which they saw around them”.477 This too, however backward looking in a fanciful way, was an

early modern ideology. Such individuals reacted to the visible decline in the strength of the empire with a call for a kind of *tabla raza* to restore the basics.

These were generally movements of purification seeking to return to the sources of pure faith and rejected the entire accumulation of temporal historical traditions as corrupt. They levelled criticisms at the social order expressed in religious idiom, and violently rejected both the official ulema as impostors and the temporal and pragmatic accumulation of the *nizam* as unsanctioned heresy.

The most spectacular and historically seminal example of such movements was the eighteenth century Wahhabi movement at the root of today’s Saudi Arabia, which challenged the ‘corruption’ of the Ottoman empire from Arabia in the name of restoring the original perfection of Allah’s message as transmitted by Mohammed. Similar movements, derived in ever growing numbers from a lower ulema whose status particularly suffered under the new social developments, contributed to the progressive rupture of religion and the state with eventually fatal consequences for the traditional Ottoman order.

Although the more serious effects of this split began to be experienced in the nineteenth century - with the Gulhan Rescript of 1839 signalling the first formal breach between temporal and religious domains of power - the wedge had already been driven between the state and religion. This happened as soon as the eighteenth century Ottoman state registered crisis and undertook a conscious programme of large scale social change which clashed with the previous ideal of stasis which had organically linked the ulema to the larger state organization. It was also, then, at this time that the ulema became identified with opposition to change. Yet there were certainly also large numbers of ulema who actively participated and were influential in the democratizing project of the Young Ottomans and similar resistance movements. Ali Suavi, who is often hailed as the first modern Turk to die for democratic ideals, was a member of the ulema with training in religious sciences.
With the violence of the three modern ruptures we start to identify a profound change in many people's attitude to the problem of change and political violence during the nineteenth century. This was co-terminus with the “activist” principle coming into play and the widening basis of the organized political community through the participation of broader sections of the population in official institutions. These tendencies reach their strongest expression during the Tanzimat era, beginning with the Gulhane Rescript of 1839 and finishing with Abdulhamid II’s (1876-1909) abolition of the Constitution in 1878. It is during this period that the Young Ottomans gained prominence (1867-1878), and engage the Porte in debate over the means to modernizing the Ottoman Empire.

In effect, we see a contest between two competing elements in the new bureaucratic elite over the problem of means: modernization from above is opposed to the involvement of the broad public in the process of transformation. These are two distinct and opposed visions of nation-making.

The Young Ottomans and the Tanzimat: two visions of modernization

The Young Ottomans founded the Patriotic Alliance during a picnic in 1865, and vowed in a conspiracy to transform the government from “absolute into constitutional rule”. Anything but organic intellectuals, the Young Ottomans were the product of the machinery of the new modernizing state. They were educated in new Western schools and all worked in the new administrative machinery – nearly all of them went through the Translation Bureau, “a seedbed of the most progressive minds of the Tanzimat.”

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At this time the empire had yielded to several national uprisings in conjunction with European diplomatic intervention: in Lebanon in 1861, in the Serbian provinces within the same decade, and finally Crete. The empire was sinking further into debt because of the extravagance of Sultan Abdul Aziz (1861-1876). Yet the Young Ottomans were not necessarily enemies of monarchical rule. Rather, their target was the tyranny they saw in the new bureaucratic elite.

Their early battle was waged through publishing newspapers where they voiced their radical ideas, calling for electoral politics and a National Assembly. When they could not publish these inside the empire they smuggled them in from abroad. On one occasion they came into conflict with the law and were exiled over staging a nationalist theatre production which met with wild enthusiasm from the public.

Their contribution to Ottoman-Turkish modernity was a revolution in communications which opened the terrain of public opinion as a battlefield. Considering literature the “primary vehicle for progress”, they introduced elements of the vocabulary of the Western Enlightenment into national political struggle among the Turks. Many, most notably Namik Kemal, would also offer radical new interpretations of traditional Islamic culture intended to reconcile it with modern realities and ideas, including the Western Enlightenment. He drew upon such traditions as the political theology of Qu’ranic exegetes, Islamic political philosophers, the “mirrors for Princes”, and Turko-Iranian-Mongolian theories of secular legislation. In addition, he introduced a “new historical narrative” by way of the “proliferation of textbooks prepared or the new secular institutions of learning” intended to “legitimize the idea of a continuous and progressive Ottoman nationhood in history”.

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484 Trencsényi/ Kopacek. Page 95.
While exiled in Paris some of them served with the Republican forces during the battle of the Paris Commune in 1871. Some shunned violence and others published newspapers urging violent revolution without any clear consensus on the question.

When the Young Ottomans eventually had their victory with the proclamation of the Constitution of 1876 and the first constitutional experiment, they found themselves returned from exile and in brief positions of power. Sultan Abdul Aziz had been deposed by the liberal governor Midhat Pasa (1822-84) – a grand vizier dismissed by the emperor - and certain military leaders. Midhat Pasha argued in 1873 that “the only way to avoid the imminent destruction of the empire lay in making the sultan’s ministers responsible, especially in matters of finances, to a national popular assembly”. The sultan was forced to recall Midhat to office by a mass demonstration of theological students before the seat of government in Istanbul. Upon returning to office, with the backing of troops and naval vessels, Midhat forced the emperor’s deposition.

Namik Kemal played an important role in the making of the Constitution, the first of its kind in any Muslim state. Parliament was opened in 1877 and represented Christians, Jews, Turks, and Arabs, not according to religion or nationality but in terms of their proportion within a constituency. Being based on the principle that men of all creeds should be treated as equals, the Parliament passed a resolution annulling the concession to Russia in protecting the Christians of the empire.

The Russian reaction was to declare war, leading to the Russo-Turkish War (1877-8) and the Treaty of San Stefano (1878) which dismembered considerable parts of the empire. In the same year, Abdulhamid (1876-1909), worried by the independence showed by the Parliament – it was calling certain of his ministers to answer charges - dissolved it and suspended the Constitution.

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489 Mansfield. A History of the Middle East. Page 76.
A conspiracy in 1876 sought to take control of the army away from the sultan, anticipating his suspension of the Parliament and the Constitution. Under the leadership of Midhat and Namik Kemal a secret society sought to create an “organizational centre for the establishment of a national guard” or a “militia made up of volunteers”. This had started out as a Military Donation Society, seeking to win over soldiers with an appeal to “fighting for national independence and political freedom”.490 Citizen’s battalions based on the French National Guard patrolled the streets of the capital. However, the conspiracy was exposed and the leaders were sent into exile.

A foreign observer at the time noted that “Midhat’s ideal of reconciling Turks and Christians was to a certain extent realized. The cleavage in Parliament was not on religious or racial lines. Indeed, it was the success of the parliamentary experiment which caused its failure”.491 The first Constitutional experiment was ended and Abdulhamid dominated Ottoman politics for thirty years.

The time of the Young Ottomans was short lived, but they introduced a lasting alternative discourse of modernization into the politics of the empire and later the Turkish Republic. The Young Ottomans produced a critique of the Porte’s ideal of modernization from above without freedom as a means to creating a new and stronger society, and argued that freedom and progress are inextricably bound.

The founder of the Young Ottomans, Mustafa Fazil Pasa, gave theoretical articulation to the movement with his highly influential “letter” to Sultan Abdulaziz in 1867. This letter introduced a lay ethic, arguing that religion is a contributing but not the principle factor in social change. He also argued that moral decay is the consequence of injustice, and that greater state control could never create efficiency in the society because only the liberty of the citizen could ensure this.492 This is a very striking argument because it explicitly links progress and freedom, or means and ends, in direct opposition to the official ideology of the regime.

490 Mardin. The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought. Pages 75-76.
491 Harold Temperly, quoted in Berkes. The Development of Secularism in Turkey. Page 249.
In addition, the “letter” contained an unprecedented redefinition of religious experience in secular terms and suited to a modern multi-religious society. Mustafa Fazil Pasa wrote that religion “opens for us the perspectives of the future life, but it does not regulate the rights of people”. Its place, he continued, is in “the sublime domain of eternal verities”. However, “there are no Christian politics nor Moslem politics, for there is only one justice and politics is justice incarnate”. His is a strong secular call for a universal Ottoman citizenship based on constitutional liberty. He articulated a “concept of the equality of all Ottomans as citizens” and developed “this concept to its secular conclusion”, arguing that “all Ottomans ought to share feelings of devotion to this territorial entity above all loyalties they might feel to their religious community”.

Namik Kemal was the most influential thinker of the Young Ottomans and one of the most important Turkish writers of the nineteenth century, in fact simplifying the Turkish language in a revolutionary way in his writings and poems. He presented an influential nationalist discourse and introduced the concept of “fatherland” into Turkish politics. The ideas he expressed were similar on one level to Mustafa Fazil Pasa, his not always harmonious collaborator, in writing that man “always requires freedom. To deprive humanity of it is as if it were to deprive him of food”. This is certainly to say that the material aims of development in terms of stability and order do not outweigh considerations of social justice. He moreover added that “freedom derives from the fact that (man) is endowed with reason”. In the context of the Tanzimat these utterances have a very precise meaning, which is why Namik Kemal spent much of his life writing in political exile.

Namik Kemal went further in his views on autonomy, arguing that the individual can never justifiably be sacrificed to larger political ends. He wrote that “sovereignty is present in every man” and even that “everyone is the ruler of his own world”. In line with this argument he wrote that “the government must choose the road that will least limit the freedom of the individual”. He

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called for an "absolute normative force for the protection of freedom". These are identifiable as Enlightenment ideas, and Namik Kemal had read and critically engaged the works of Voltaire, Rousseau and Montesquieu. Interestingly, although an admirer of Rousseau, he strongly rejected his idea of the General Will as a threat to liberty and spent a lot of energy criticising it. Although admiring Voltaire for the depth of his insight, he was disturbed by his anti-religious attitude. His most important influence from these French writers was Montesquieu, whose concept of the balance of powers as the institutionalisation of a framework for justice he approved and wrote about at great length.

Yet underlying Namik Kemal's strong individualism was an Islamic source in the Qu'ranic concept of man as "sovereign over things". While the bulk of Namik Kemal's lasting contribution to Turkish political culture was a practical defence of liberal ideas, he - though not trained as a religious scholar - approached these problems as well as his engagement with European Enlightenment from the background of a strong Islamic religious and philosophical awareness. He certainly saw in Islam a source of values, though without adequately thinking through the implications of proposing the Seriat as a fountainhead of the modern legal system.

This is doubtlessly the unresolved tension in his ideas. For at the same time, Namik Kemal articulated a secular concept of society. He argued that the function of government is protecting justice and should not be concerned with the "meaning of life". He also argued at one time that the "mechanics of discussion and the exchange of ideas" lead "to truth", obviously implying this to be the case for the public sphere. His work in these ways unquestionably attempted to conceive a framework for co-habiting and co-operating with those of different religious and cultural backgrounds. His writing makes clear that he conceived politics as an independent, autonomous and neutral space outside of the particularisms of religious identity. His attitude to the Seriat, then, seems to reveal the attempt to introduce a critical and deconstructive approach to religious

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495 Mardin. The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought. See chapter 10.
phenomenon over the dogmatic and self-promoting attitude of the middle ages. Again, however, he does not carry this through in adequate depth.

While these broadly liberal arguments in favour of constitutionalism, rule of law, electoral procedure, basic liberty of expression and above all national independence were the common ideological ground for the Young Ottomans, the unresolved dilemma of Namik Kemal points to the second aspect.

The second and more complex critique advanced by certain Young Ottomans was in asserting that the Tanzimat regime failed to integrate the existing Ottoman traditional and cultural resources into the modernization programme, following instead an excessively Western model, and therefore alienating the population for whom the measures were intended. This point of view is expressed most strongly, again, and perhaps paradoxically, by Namik Kemal.

On one level, this problem concerned the empire's political autonomy. From the point of view of the Young Ottomans, the Tanzimat administrative apparatus was guilty not only of inflicting the violence of authoritarian politics but also of functioning as an agent in the empire's progressive loss of national independence. One Western commentator in 1876 published a study describing the empire as "virtually a colony after the old colonial fashion". The basic tension therefore existed between the Tanzimat state as the prime mover of modernization and the state having become a "political machine whose function (was) that of maintaining order for the promotion of (European) interests which eventually became definitely non-Turkish". At a deeper level, however, there was a call for a traditional basis for modern political developments.

The call for a traditionally grounded modernization process was linked, in one sense, to a metaphysical critique of violence. While the Young Ottomans often criticized the state in terms of specific instances of violence in police brutality, the effects of the tax burden on peasants, and the violent nature of the modernization process itself, there was also a more fundamental critique at

Namik Kemal argued that one primary effect of the nineteenth century separation of religious criteria from practices of government, the multiplying of bureaucratic offices without grounding in tradition, was that it left no guiding ideology or ethical code beyond the sheer physical strength of the state.

This second aspect of the Young Ottoman critique in its broader implications is more troubling because it runs up against the volatile issue of secularism. What is most striking and paradoxical in the story is that those activists urging the role of the Seriat in the modernization programme were also among those most passionately dedicated to the constitutional road and individual rights.

The point of view of the Tanzimat administrative apparatus also reflected a certain discourse of Enlightenment, one which gave primacy to control of the general population, or a form of 'enlightened despotism'. Suppression of freedom to achieve the intended end was, from this point of view, a simple matter of course. The state was the prime mover and the Young Ottomans were essentially upstarts who introduced difficulties onto the path of the reform project.

The Tanzimat rulers did not bother much to write down their ideas and plans in theoretical form. However, there is a correspondence between Mustafa Reshid Pasha, the statesmen instrumental in introducing the Tanzimat reform era, and Sadik Rifat Pasa, a clerk stationed in Vienna. In a series of reports sent from Vienna in 1837 there is a striking resemblance to the actual reforms carried out in the empire during the opening years of the Tanzimat. Sadik Rifat Pasa both corresponded with and met Prince Metternich (1773-1859) during his time in Austria, and received considerable advice on the means to salvaging the empire. The advice stressed the importance of "efficiency" over "liberty", and warned of the danger of "excessive freedom". The aim should be, Metternich had advised, to create a nation of quiet economic pursuits, with peace and prosperity achieved through channelling disruptive human energies into productive behaviour to make

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controlled citizens. In this programme we can identify an authoritarian concept of modernization in which the population is to remain the mere object of the state’s modernizing designs. Certain among the ruling elite envisioned these means leading to the end of a freer society.

The problem of violence between Providence and history

Violence came into question as the dynamic and autonomous realm of modern civil society increasingly broke from the fixed pyramidal arrangement of the traditional Ottoman order. This was expressed not only in the movements for national independence but in the political activism of the Young Ottomans, the press, the new schools, the cafes, and the various opposing efforts to mobilise public opinion in a struggle over the nation’s future where the limits of political action remained undefined and violence an increasing occurrence. The Ottoman state itself, in its slipping power, demonstrated an increasing excessiveness in its use of violence against the population — witness the brutal suppression of the Bulgarians in 1876. This is not unlike the manner in which the European monarchies abandoned the gentlemanly rules of eighteenth century war in the summer of 1792 and treated the French as rabid dogs to be shot, instigating the popular crusade of a ‘nation in arms’. Even as such an atmosphere accentuated religious enmity, we see never the less a growing secularisation of politics reflected in multiplying modes of resistance and competing political doctrines.

Underlying the usually policy-specific debates of the Tanzimat period were broader intellectual changes in the Ottoman political outlook around the problem of violence. The traditional Ottoman political discourses had transcendentalized violence in what we might call the worldview of Providence. The outlook was expressed, for example, on the eve of the Battle of Lepanto in 1571, when the Ottoman sultan Selim II wrote to an advisor that “War is uncertain in its

results ... Judgement belongs to God ... We hope that Almighty God will soon make possible all sorts of humiliations and the crushing of the enemies of Religion and the Empire”.\textsuperscript{504} In sum, the “ideology of conquest was part of a religious belief – the belief in war as a means of propagating Islam”.\textsuperscript{505}

This outlook saw a significant decline and met with severe criticism in the nineteenth century Ottoman empire among both administrative and military elites accompanied by fierce debates. The reflected a breaking away of civil society as an autonomous force and the resulting splintering of a dogmatic orthodox framework in religion, and the unintended growth of a freedom of interpretation among intellectuals.

At this stage, it seems that the worldview of Providence continued to dominate the popular outlook as “popular opinion consisted of the superficial conviction that divine intervention would come in time to save the empire”.\textsuperscript{506} Mahmud II himself persisted in what were becoming highly contested ideas about war as Providence. His view partook in diluted form of the previously dominant myth of the Red Apple (\textit{Kizil Elma}) , which stated that the Turks as the “true Believers” were fated to conquer Christendom irrespective of armaments, military preparations, or any particular circumstances, on account of “divine destiny”.\textsuperscript{507}

In a debate in 1828 with his official Kececiçade Izzet Molla on the eve of war with Russia and soon after the Janissary extermination, Mahmud argued that although the reorganized troops were still not fully ready for battle, it was necessary in some measure to rely on divine support to win a war. In an act that almost led to his execution, Izzet Molla rather courageously rejoined by posing the question as to “whether this was a state of the Seriat or a state of reason?”, and proceeded to argue that “military reforms having been undertaken on rational grounds, reason also had to be used in weighing the possibilities of success in warfare”. The alternative, he insisted, was


\textsuperscript{505} Mardin. \textit{The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought}. Page 135.

\textsuperscript{506} Mardin. \textit{The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought}. Page 40.

\textsuperscript{507} Berkes. \textit{The Development of Secularism in Turkey}. Page 57.
to make “a travesty of religion”\textsuperscript{508}. Again, we see here the suggestion of an autonomous political sphere outside of religious domination, or secularism.

As with similar cases at the time, Izzet Molla’s subsequent dismissal caused a scandal among the bureaucratic circles of the capital and showed the ascending power of the bureaucratic apparatus as a shaper of public opinion\textsuperscript{509}. Such reactions would have been unthinkable not long before. Izzet Molla was obviously expressing a secular political outlook in this debate, but he was also contributing to a broader debate on the very nature and definition of Islam and religion as such within the context of modernity. The myth of the Red Apple had already been criticized by the reformist Ahmed Resmi (1708-83). He implicitly argues that “reason and experience” teach us that the outcome of violent conflict is determined by circumstance and not Providence, and therefore urges peaceful reconciliation when victory remains an unrealistic aim\textsuperscript{510}.

This shift from Providence to a more historical outlook – based on human agency - was therefore in many ways rooted in the effort to come to terms with the crisis of visible decline. Ibrahim Muteferrika’s “Rational Basis for the Politics of Nations” (1731) divided the contemporary world into old and new, and argued that the success of the “Christian” world in conquering cities in China, India, and America, in short becoming rich and powerful, was the result of navigation and other analytical-empirical methods\textsuperscript{511}. We might call this a sort of Machiavellian awakening among Turkish intellectuals at the time, evaluating ends and means in terms of observable material circumstance and forces in play. This was also the cause of concern for Namik Kemal in his urging of the Seriat as a resource of values in shaping the modern nation. Yet the problem raised inevitable questions from the novel point of view of those on the receiving end of state repression: violence is, after all, perhaps not holy. It is perhaps not even a necessity of politics but a reality to be overcome.

\textsuperscript{508} Mardin. The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought. Page 172.
\textsuperscript{509} Mardin. The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought. Page 161.
\textsuperscript{510} Berkes. The Development of Secularism in Turkey. Page 57.
\textsuperscript{511} Berkes. The Development of Secularism in Turkey. Page 43.
This rising tendency to make political evaluations in terms of sheer material contingency therefore reflected a crisis on the level of values and meaning that came with the gradual undoing of the whole 'universe of meaning' around Janissary military order. Although becoming structurally outmoded as part of the larger economic crisis and being driven to nepotism and corruption, the Janissary order continued to represent the cultural ghost of a specific world view or spiritual order that was now disintegrating.

If the framework of Providence had a long unquestioned history it came into critical self consciousness through engaging with the Western Enlightenment concept of Deism. The debate that resulted from this encounter had a cosmological and an ethical aspect ... or, again, the problem of political violence.

In the early period of the debate, we find the historiographer Vasif Efendi (d.1806) summing up the conservative point of view in his comments on the offer by a French officer in 1783-84 to train the Ottomans in modern methods of warfare. He began with the conventional assertion that “success or failure depend upon the conduct of Almighty God”. Then, he contrasts this with the new “doctrine of a school of philosophers according to whom the Creator has no role in particular matters” and as “war is one of such particular matters, they believe that the side superior in material means of warfare becomes victorious over the other”.

The doctrine that Vasif found so objectionable on a cosmological level was clearly the whole worldview of Deism, exemplified in European Enlightenment thinkers such as Kant and Voltaire but tracing its roots implicitly back to St. Thomas Aquinas’ distinction between *natura naturata* and *natura naturans* and Aristotle’s concept of efficient cause. Vasif’s rejection of a basic premise of the mechanistic strain in European Enlightenment is grounded in the traditional denial in Islamic philosophy of an order of nature functioning independently of the will of God, following independent and fixed rules, as in mechanistic cosmologies.

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Orthodox Islamic thinkers who confronted the problem in Aristotelian cosmology rejected
the idea of any secular metaphysics as compromising the synthetic unity of the universe. Ibn
Rushd's concept of a self moving nature met with a great outcry while the opposed point of view as
expressed by al-Ghazali found wide acceptance as affirming the unity of God. The result was a
convention of comprehending the universe as "a current of being emanating from an inexhaustible
source, God, which spread out over everything outside God". It follows that Islamic natural law
could only be conceived as the "revealed law of God and as the immanence of God in
nature", and hence cannot easily be distinguished from the Seriat. The same would apply to a view of politics
as a "self contained process with its own inner dynamic".

Vasif's objection also expresses the ethical aspect of the problem which pits the ideal of
Providence against sheer violence as the deciding factor in the outcome of human conflict. If there
is no Providence, it is merely the stronger of the two contending sides which determines the
outcome - itself subject to the random exigencies of time, timing, detail, luck, etc. At the bottom
of Vasif's anxieties we find a fear of the essentially Machiavellian outlook where violence is
neither strictly right nor wrong in itself, but merely one aspect of the already existing situation and
to be used in the most effective way possible. In this anxiety that nothing fundamental is at stake
beyond the sheer clash of violent forces themselves, we might see the flipside of Vasif's
affirmation of Providence in a critique of pure violence.

Despite the significant weight of this intellectual background, it is precisely the opposite
argument that increasingly gained ground in nineteenth century debates and writings among
Turkish ideologues in the Ottoman empire. The view that singular occurrences, or the area of
human action where freedom exists to make decisions on the course of action, included not only
military planning but also government measures aimed at national reform. This places an increased
burden of responsibility upon the deeds and decisions of statesmen. It also brings into visibility an

514 Mardin. The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought. Page 89.
515 Mardin. The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought. Page 84.
empire whose future was increasingly uncharted, and whose ethical-legal framework for action as
inherited from the past was fundamentally contested. Perhaps an empire which was really a nation,
or many nations? It was in these debates that the link to violence becomes explicit.

The new view of violence as a force to be controlled by institutional democracy was
expressed most forcefully by the dominant intellectuals of the Young Ottoman movement, who also
paradoxically presented the strongest case for an Islamic modernization process. In their work we
find the argument that divine assistance cannot be depended upon, that reasoned consideration of
alternatives is the necessary prerequisite for any line of political action at both the individual and
the state level. There is also a critique of using religious ideology to cloak secular interests and
intentions and to transcendentalize acts of violence. What we see for the first time with the Young
Ottomans is the ideal of the modernization process involving the broad public, or the creative
awakening to autonomy.

To identify each moment with the Eternal, i.e.; with God's will, is to endorse each item of
legislation, each outcome of a given event or configuration, as conforming to this Will and
investing it with a Transcendental essence. The secularization of the law or political experience is
to acknowledge the autonomy of particular events as distinct from God's will, i.e.; subject to the
judgment of finite human reason. It is at bottom the secularization of time in immanence, or the
temporalization of political decision making and activity to bring them inside the realm of chance,
experimentation, debate, error and subjectivity. We see this struggle taking place in the shift from
Providence to history in the Young Ottoman context, and we might cite it as one example the
temporality of democracy.
The Young Turks and attempt at the Final Rupture under Kemal Ataturk

In contrast to the diversity of ideas among the Young Ottomans, the Young Turks (founded 1889) shared a more unified ideological outlook. The "army officers who had taken over the leadership of the Young Turks were no liberal democrats" and "detested Abdul Hamid’s rule for its corruption and inefficiency rather than its despotism". Having "no interest in political theories", their "overriding aim was to strengthen the empire’s defences". Their fascination with the French Revolution was largely in that it had "welded the people of France into the potent force which overwhelmed the Revolution’s enemies", and they hoped to use the citizens of the Ottoman empire to similar effect. In this way, they showed an ideological continuity with the Tanzimat ideology with efficiency rather than liberty as the aim of a modernizing process; and while they saw themselves as the heirs of the Young Ottoman tradition, they dispensed with both the element of liberal institutions and a basis in Islamic religious values. They kept merely the element of mass political mobilisation.

Having grown up under the Abdul Hamid II period in an oppressive social atmosphere where political discussion was prohibited and a crudely monolithic religious ideology prevailed, this was a generation of hardcore materialists who could see no future in any political horizon where religious ideas or values were permitted a role. During this time there was "increased literacy" with "thousands of books, journals, newspapers and pamphlets", yet this "cultural explosion (...) was accompanied by a tendency toward censorship". The writings of some 'seditious' authors were banned including Namik Kemal and European authors such as Rousseau and Voltaire. Most of the leaders of the Young Turks were army officers, doctors and teachers. The Young Turk movement was divided between those favouring decentralization and centralization, and the supporters of the latter formed the Committee of Union and Progress in

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517 Shaw/Shaw. *Page 251.*

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1906. In 1909, just following the Young Turk revolution, the CUP still contained a diversity of ethnic groups. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation had also helped the revolution to come to power. The 1908 revolution also coincided with the first working class movement, as a new class of industrial workers had appeared in most of the towns.\footnote{Berkes. \textit{The Development of Secularism in Turkey}. Page 273.} The second Constitutional Period began as the 1876 Constitution was restored, a parliament set up, censorship abolished and Abdul Hamid's 30,000 spies disbanded.\footnote{Duncan Townson. \textit{Dictionary of Modern History. 1789-1945}. Penguin Books, 1994. Page 931.} When Abdul Hamid attempted a counter-revolution a year later he was deposed.

The oppressive political atmosphere of the Hamidean period had seen a radical rise in the idealization of the West. A total opposition between West and East increasingly framed the writings of dissidents throughout this period. A mood of disgust towards tradition became widespread as Europe became glorified as the "land of the Enlightenment", and European literature was secretly consumed in as great a quantity as possible. This generation of intellectuals who were largely state officials had one "common thread running through them all -- the denial of tradition". Their beliefs were an assortment of "rationalism, materialism, evolutionism and naturalism" which rejected traditional beliefs as absurd, superstitious and contrary to reason.\footnote{Berkes. \textit{The Development of Secularism in Turkey}. Page 293.}

Under the Hamidean regime "all literary and quasi-philosophical developments toward understanding European thought were stopped"; still, emblematic intellectuals such as Besir Fuad (1852-87) managed never the less to take inspiration from the anti-religious messages of Diderot, D'Holbach, and D'Alembert "as the founders of modern realism and naturalism based in science".\footnote{Berkes. \textit{The Development of Secularism in Turkey}. Page 294.} The new Westernist point of view also found its intellectual articulation in Tevkit Fikret (1867-1915) who wrote that "Reason" is "the Light" while the traditional religious past "was nothing but a lie".\footnote{Berkes. \textit{The Development of Secularism in Turkey}. Page 301.}
The CUP still saw itself as the heir of Namik Kemal's call for union and progress as the "co-operation of all nationalities within the Ottoman unity" and "social revolution through educational and economic measures".\textsuperscript{524} Although the 1908 revolution was essentially a coup staged by military officers, it was the sheer scale of the organization that permitted the leaders to inform the Sultan that the dynasty would be in danger if the Constitution was not brought back. In this instance the Turkish masses reacted politically rather than religiously and with a sense of national community, an achievement the revolutionaries in exile from the Young Ottomans to the Young Turks had hitherto failed to achieve for more than a quarter of a century. From having been underground cells hidden during the Hamidean era, hundreds of branches of the Society Union of Progress were set up in every town, with the result that the group set itself up spontaneously as a national organization. Slogans from Fikret's verses appeared in the period leading up to 1908 as the expression of the ideals of the generation, implying the gap in outlook between the leadership and the masses.\textsuperscript{525}

In the period leading up to the 1908 revolution the controversy over the millets continued to plague the Young Turks in their plans to restore the system of constitutional rule suspended since 1878. It was Yusuf Akcura (1876-1933), a journalist hailing originally from Russia and born in the same town as Lenin – who saw though the maze of disagreements to a clear and uncluttered solution in stating that the "trouble lay in the morbid nature of the Ottoman empire as a conglomeration of nationalities. The Young Turks were under an illusion. What was imminent was not a union of nationalities, but a fierce struggle among them". He published the following injunction from exile in Cairo: "Forget about being Ottomans – be Turks!"\textsuperscript{526} With his influence – against the background of the Balkan Wars (1912-13) - the tide turned increasingly against the older Ottoman conception of multi-religious nationality.

\textsuperscript{524} Berkes. The Development of Secularism in Turkey. Page 325.
\textsuperscript{525} Berkes. The Development of Secularism in Turkey. Page 301.
\textsuperscript{526} Berkes. The Development of Secularism in Turkey. Pages 321-22.
The most influential and important Young Turk intellectual, and the most esteemed modern Turkish thinker after Namik Kemal, was Ziya Gokalp (1876-1924). He became well known through his participation in the 1908 Revolution and involvement with the Party of Union and Progress. His work produced a new approach to the "fundamental problems which had become acute in Turkey following the restoration of the Constitutional regime in 1908". The ideas he articulated were "behind the main trends in Ataturk's drastic reforms", and he assisted in preparing the new constitution in 1924.527

Seeking to address the troubled legacy of the Tanzimat era, Gokalp saw a society divided by religious/secular dichotomies in every field of life and riven by divided loyalties between tradition and the new European models. The solution he introduced was a discourse of radical nationalism in which Reason transcends the individual and must be identified with the nation. The creation of democratic institutions is of secondary importance to the revolutionizing of the social and cultural levels through a process of modernization. Deeply influenced by positivism, the nation for Gokalp represented a sociologically verifiable "independent social unity" – i.e., of a foundational or essential nature. The "pathological" hangovers from the "irrational" past needed to be driven out to restore the original "ethnic basis" of the Turkish people.

This essentialist outlook made him suspicious of cosmopolitan ideals, to say nothing of minorities – only the "nation" was "real". Gokalp believed that in his work he had created a normative discipline or positive science, and the practical side of his ideas was to be brought to fruition by the deeds of "great" and not "average" men.

His writings speak of "social revolution" as the "creation of a New Life by discarding an older one".528 This "New Life" is "not a cosmopolitan but a national life".529 This "New Life" will succeed because "Turkish blood has remained rejuvenated and hardened like steel with the glories

528 Gokalp. _Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization_. Page 56.
529 Gokalp. _Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization_. Page 58.
of the battlefield”, obviously revealing the violent means intended to realize this “social revolution”. The nation, moreover, only comes into its true being as an “ideal” in moments of crisis and violence: “When a nation experiences a great disaster ... individual personality disappears and becomes immersed in society (and only then does) the national personality live in the soul of the individual.” In these “ideal” moments “a general will becomes the only I in every consciousness”. Those who do not experience such “ideals” are “lost souls”.

This outlook, certainly inspired by romantic nationalism, steers the Turkish national movement away from the cosmopolitan or multi-religious universalism that defined the Young Ottomans into an ideology of identity politics. Gokalp indeed celebrates the movement he is promoting as an “awakening to identity”. This ideal of “identity” is in turn linked to vitalist metaphors of the body. The nation is evoked in terms of life and vitality and determined foremost by language, an “ethnic unity” with the “same consciousness” and “faith”. For this reason, in contemporary Europe “only those states which are based on a single-language group are believed to have a future” and “all of us realize that the idea of a state or homeland supposedly common to diverse nationalities, is nothing but a mere concept, devoid of any zeal, enthusiasm, and devotion”.

It need hardly be said that such an outlook is dismissive of constitutional structures as merely cerebral while celebrating the visceral organically bound national community. Yet unquestionably Gokalp’s writings are a ringing affirmation of the need for modernization and the primacy of science. He ultimately influenced the emergence of the pan-Turanian movement, a call for the “union of all Turkish-speaking peoples; including those of central Asia”. Kemal Ataturk rejected this pan-Turanian perspective, preferring to look within the borders of the Turkish nation

530 Gokalp. Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization. Page 67.
531 Gokalp. Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization. Page 68.
532 Gokalp. Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization. Page 82.
533 Gokalp. Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization. Page 70.
534 Gokalp. Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization. Pages 80-81.
that he spent much of his early life fighting desperately to create. He was eager to be done with the bloody politics of empire, declaring that "We must put an end from now on to the delusion of imagining ourselves the masters of the world". At the same time the politics he created within the new Turkish Republic harboured much from Gokalp's vision of the nation.

Very often, regarding Ataturk, we hear the argument for "necessity" — the same argument that is used to exonerate the violence of the French Revolution, the Russian and Chinese revolutions, or the foreign policy of the USA. The argument is at bottom that a revolution cannot be made with silken gloves, or without breaking a few eggs, in sum that it could not be otherwise. The violence of these events is thereby lent an aura of fatality and discussion stops there for the "believer" in the ends. It was the famous biography of Ataturk written by Andrew Mango that dismissed criticisms of Ataturk's regime of political violence on the grounds that "between the two wars, democracy could not be sustained". Loving Ataturk as the father of the Turkish nation, such writers want a clean epic story. But we should not mute our critical powers because we love someone.

This argument erases from consideration the strong element of choice among alternative lines of action that is contained in a self consciously held ideology. It is to undervalue Ataturk as a man and make him the puppet of exonerating and inevitable circumstances, when he so clearly articulated the ideological logic driving his actions and political choices. It is also to deprive us of the possibility of identifying the ideological option with which he functioned and the social ethic implicit in that ideology, so that we may fruitfully compare it among others.

The flaw in Ataturk's ideological outlook is the same as that of the French Revolution and Enlightenment from which he drew inspiration: that there can be a total rupture in the history of the nation or the world, dividing it from its past and introducing an entirely new and "modern" future;

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and the linear vision of emancipation this entails, with the state as the causal instrument in a
transformation of the people. In his manner of using the state as an agent of revolution from above
- a representative of the “people” which does not consult them - that Ataturk partakes of the deeper
tradition of Ottoman statesmanship going back into the eighteenth century and the Tanzimat
reforms; it was not Ataturk’s invention. It also breaks with the tradition of the Young Ottomans as
endeavouring to involve the public in the process of modernization.537

The point is not to judge Ataturk as a man; he was doubtlessly a courageous individual with
admirable ends on behalf of the Turkish people. What is interesting is to consider the means he
employed. What we can say is that he forms part of several traditions – the French Enlightenment /
Revolution, Positivism, and the Ottoman Tanzimat statism – which as an ideological framework of
modernity does not see any potential value in the traditional past, and seeks to simply destroy it to
make way for the modern. There is a binary between the modern and the traditional with the state
as the agent of the modern. Because of inevitable popular resistance of the “ignorant” masses,
dictatorship is necessary over democracy until the “people” has been “remade”. Even worse,
certain cultures – such as the Kurds – were identified as belonging to this unwanted past and were
presented with an option between assimilation and erasure. The predictable end of presenting
sections of the population with such options was open violence.

This is certainly one way of doing things, and Ataturk was not the only one to undertake
such a project. What we can say at the very least is that this is a politics of violence based on a
higher claim to a single truth. Ataturk himself described it as such, and we can find the same ideas
described in such illustrious treatise of the Enlightenment as Rousseau’s The Social Contract.
Rousseau’s theoretical work, in effect, was a single minded attempt to overcome the problem of
political violence; yet in the process he also lent himself to it a great deal. The military officers of
Ataturk’s generation enthusiastically read Rousseau, Montesquieu, and Hugo, and studied the

Ataturk did not simply use Rousseau's theory of the General Will as the unique representative of the nation as a theoretical inspiration; he also drew off vitalist tendencies and Bolshevik techniques that were current in the interwar period, among other elements, in pursuit of a national vision very much shaped by the political climate of the time.

That is why we cannot simply talk of a dominant one-party state imposing itself upon the population in the first decades of the Turkish Republic. The Turkish state also formed part of a web of state structures to emerge after the collapse of the old empires with the First World War. To be sure, the new Turkish state defined itself ideologically in terms of specific traditions: the French Revolutionary tradition and Enlightenment traditions, the tradition of Positivism and particularly its Turkish theorisation in the works of Ziya Gokalp, the tradition of the Young Turk movement which embodied the sum of these tendencies as applied in a practical situation of struggle.

Institutions are not driven merely by force of pure internal ideological impulse, nor even their history of practical struggle on the level of the old master/slave dialectic, but also and more broadly by fragmentary and mobile parts of macro-institutional/discursive change distributed across an interconnected regional and historical plane: the terrible paranoia of the minority crisis, the particularly violent contemporary discourse on the nation, the plethora of rapidly constructed new nation-states, within the larger framework structured around West European economic dominance cum crisis of capitalism linked to a desperate policy to control far flung colonial interests, and the whole juridical machinery that emerged to address these issues in the short lived League of Nations. This tangle of circumstances is the immediate cradle of the Turkish nation, and the underlying if very modern intellectual heritage of the new nation only existed in reckoning with this highly unpredictable complex of events. It was a time, as Ataturk himself continuously pointed out, when "existence" itself was at stake. It is therefore within this wider international context

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that we can attempt to reflect on the practical struggle that took place within the Turkish Republic in the interwar period.

We may thereby dispense at the outset with such questions as: was Ataturk helpful or hurtful to Turkish democracy based on a balance sheet concerning the number of atrocities committed by the state against minority populations, the regularity of press censorship and suppression of parliamentary institutions or opposition parties, or alternatively a list of the ‘progressive’ reforms intended to civilise and integrate the population toward preparing it for self-government, the numerous economic reforms aimed at creating the foundations for a modern capitalist society along Western lines – the type of discussions that hunt deliriously in a race to find and stack the largest number of ‘facts’, to invalidate the ‘facts’ of the opponent, and invariably finish in screaming matches because the underlying and basic framework of the question has never been brought to light in the obsessive focus on ‘one period’ almost theologically conceived as a set historical narrative without the obvious benefit that a wider comparative framework of material-intellectual interconnections must bring.

The Turkish national revolution under Ataturk was a movement of final ends. In the period leading to the seizure of state power, this final end was kept quiet and the ideology remained shapeless. This was not because the nation-making was conceived by Ataturk and his colleagues as an open ended development; it was rather so the movement could absorb as many sections of the population as possible in the struggle, and then later when the battle was won, turn around and murder them. Among the ‘friends’ in struggle he later turned on as retrograde elements and enemies were the ulema and the Kurds. Violence was a fundamental tool in the Turkish national revolution, and this strategy of gaining power was only one expression of it.

It was certainly not the case that Ataturk was a rogue. At the battle of Gallipoli (1915-16), where he gained fame as a military commander, the defeated enemy was impressed by Ataturk’s

chivalry. He was a man of high intelligence and high personal standards. It was merely a matter of his having adopted a political ideology in which violence was the core means to effect social transformation. In a now famous speech to the National Assembly in 1922, Ataturk silenced opposing voices by declaring the irrelevance of “academic debate” to the functioning of politics. Sovereignty, he insisted, “is acquired only by force, by power, and by violence”. It was now the time, he continued, for the “nation to revolt against the usurpers, to put them in their place, and to exercise the facts of sovereignty”. He concluded with the threat that “heads should roll” in the event of further disagreement.540

This ideology is derived from the French Revolution. All of Ataturk’s public discourses employed this vocabulary. The National Assembly was the single and only possible representative of the nation. It represented a single will and sovereignty cannot be divided. As an organic unity, it was considered to be above classes and social difference. The seizure of state power was the road to the new nation. The nation’s adversary was an endless resource of conspiracies and enemies driven by “fanaticism” and who needed to be “crushed”, “destroyed” and “eliminated”.543

In the long line of conspiracies we find, for example, the assertion in 1925 by Ankara that the Kurdish nation does not exist. It is an invention of our enemies, particularly the British, who seek to carve up the country. In the same year, a gigantic political operation was put in motion by the Independence Tribunal in Ankara to try many of Ataturk’s ex-colleagues from the CUP for a “conspiracy” during the War of Independence. In effect this operation served as a cover for crushing all shades of political opposition.

The Ottoman past, which Ataturk identified with the Oriental side of the national culture, was a source of shame and needed to be gotten rid of. He once said that the Turkish people “need a

modern education" and to "get rid of the oriental influences which weigh upon them".546 That is why the seat of power was moved from Istanbul to Ankara: to show a nation turning its back upon the past. This was also the logic for abolishing the Caliphate.547 Future 'symbolic' reforms or rapid drives to 'modernize' the 'public mentality' through enforcing public dress codes, forbidding 'oriental music', changing names and banning orders of monks and dervishes resulted in great anger and resistance.548 Ataturk announced that these people are "not connected to the country or the Turkish Republic". He further added that "the objective of the reforms is the transformation of the people ... into a modern society, both in appearance as well as inside... The mentalities which do not accept this reality will be destroyed".549 There was certainly no room, then, for negotiation about the meaning of modernity; the state had decided this in advance. The nature of this decision was made explicit by a reference in the civil code to the "family of modern civilisation" in which "there are no fundamental differences" and which was by implication Western.550

Ataturk also spoke often of History as if it were an all-seeing judge.551 He was influenced by a concept of universal history as articulated in the writings of Auguste Comte in which religion belongs to a primitive phase and science promises a new world in the Religion of Humanity and a positive politics based on the physical sciences. These politics are to be implemented by a technocratic elite. What is central in Comte's metaphysical account of 'science' is that it does not advance by accident, but constitutes a necessary movement toward an ideal world based on 'Order and Progress'.552

There is an inherent hostility to liberalism in a worldview based on 'positive politics', for the premise of liberalism is that we do not know the answers and must either agree to disagree or depend on public debate. The outcome of such debate depends upon a myriad of ever-changing

and specific factors and is regulated by a system of checks and balances. Science cannot answer certain questions of an ideological and religious nature on a public level to everyone’s satisfaction. Ataturk held a different view of knowledge. Posted in Sofia, Bulgaria, in 1913, he wrote that “what counts in an idea is its capacity to be accepted as an absolute without being the object of criticism ... no other logic or judgement can unbalance it”.\textsuperscript{553} This youthful jotting reflects an almost romantic notion of epistemology that Ataturk seemed to harbour throughout his life.

If the National Assembly acted upon the principles of science, translated into the pure service of the national will, then it need have “nothing to do with the vile interests of political parties”.\textsuperscript{554} The scientific basis of this political power was “according to the dominant principles of the age”, or the “modern mentality” grounded in “the principles of knowledge, general science and progress” in their “march toward the future”.\textsuperscript{555} This march was violent: “The revolution changes existing institutions by violence”.\textsuperscript{556} This march, moreover, had to be conducted at high speed. It was deemed necessary in the modernization programme to “act with the greatest promptness possible, burning up the steps and making jumps across time”.\textsuperscript{557} This principle of “speed” was later very much admired and imitated by the Shah of Iran in his own efforts to transform his people in revolution from above.\textsuperscript{558}

The counterpart to this accelerated power based in ‘scientific’ knowledge is the conviction of “the ignorance of the population”, cited as the reason for the government designation of members to the electoral college at the time of the 1919 elections.\textsuperscript{559} In 1923 the Republic of Turkey was announced and by 1925 a single party regime had been established under the Republican People’s Party. Kemal announced in 1926 that “our people are not ready for a constitutional and democratic regime. We, the founders of the Republic, have to prepare them for

\textsuperscript{553} Jevakhoff. \textit{Kemal Ataturk}. Page 28. 
\textsuperscript{554} Jevakhoff. \textit{Kemal Ataturk}. Page 140. 
\textsuperscript{555} Jevakhoff. \textit{Kemal Ataturk}. Page 163. 
\textsuperscript{556} Jevakhoff. \textit{Kemal Ataturk}. Page 418. 
\textsuperscript{557} Dumont. \textit{Mustafa Kemal Invente la Turquie Moderne}. Page 164. 
\textsuperscript{558} Jevakhoff. \textit{Kemal Ataturk}. Page 380. 
\textsuperscript{559} Jevakhoff. \textit{Kemal Ataturk}. Page 156.
this. For ten to fifteen years, it is us and us alone who must assume the affairs of state. After, the Turkish people will be authorised to form political parties to freely discuss political questions.\textsuperscript{560}

It was along these lines that in 1935 Celal Bayer, one of the principle architects of the regime's political economy, announced that “the new Turkey is in the process of applying a policy of statism”.\textsuperscript{561} The state is a causal instrument in the creation of the nation as a new world. Following the 1930 second attempt at a multiparty system, and seeing his designs rejected by the public, Ataturk quickly suppressed the elections arguing that “we must not sacrifice the authority of the state in the name of liberty”.\textsuperscript{562}

In 1923 it was announced that the nation would be defended against its enemies by any means necessary.\textsuperscript{563} In this the Turkish Republic evoked the ethical paradigm of the French Revolution. The nation had been born in bloodshed. Earlier, when fighting the War of Independence, Ataturk had insisted that “the Assembly is not a theory, but a truth, and the greatest of truths. First, the Assembly, and then the army ... It is the nation that will make up the army and the Assembly will be its representative.”\textsuperscript{564} The mass mobilisation necessary for the creation of the new Turkish nation was a massive act of violence under the banner of the highest truth in the nation. Yet while the population may have been indispensable in the quick seizure of power, they were have no role in it in the aftermath.

What Kemalism amounted to in the aftermath of independence as a politics applied to ideologically ordering the nation at large from above was the repression of all opposition and the crushing of the autonomy of civil society. The very realm of autonomy that had gradually broken free from the rigid eternal design of the old Ottoman order throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had now been suppressed once more into an absolute and all-encompassing order, and this time by a nation-state with a rigid secularising mission. Yet the nation-state with its

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{560} Jevakhoff. Kemal Ataturk. Page 349.
\bibitem{561} Dumont. Mustafa Kemal Inventa la Turquie Moderne. Page 165.
\bibitem{562} Jevakhoff. Kemal Ataturk. Page 404.
\bibitem{563} Jevakhoff. Kemal Ataturk. Page 328.
\end{thebibliography}
modernizing drive inevitably produced the very middle class who would come, in time, to challenge its complete hold on power.

The contradiction is clear: a fixed and absolute idea - conceived in advance and therefore closed - as the basis for a national programme cannot be democratic; for democracy is by nature temporal, responding to change and multiple changing points of view.

Where did the fixed idea come from? Nearly all of Ataturk’s ideological resources were drawn from the discourses of the Western Enlightenment. He had abandoned the subtle efforts of the Young Ottomans to reconcile the differences between traditional Turkish-Islamic political tradition and that of the Western Enlightenment to construct a context specific modernity in favour of a categorical ideology of Westism. The set of values he affirmed were of the Western Enlightenment as were the ends he pursued through a life of intense and dangerous political struggle: “the principles regarded as sacred by humanity and the twentieth century (are) liberty, nationality and country, the principles of conscience and modern society ... our rights and our independence ... science ... civilisation”. And nor he present a great aberration in the means to achieve those ends. In his explicit endorsement of unrestrained violence by the state as a legitimate means on behalf of the nation Ataturk may break from the eighteenth century French philosophers of Enlightenment that he admired, but hardly from the ideology or practice of the French Jacobin Revolution which he took as his lifelong model.

The Ottoman-Turkish Enlightenment was long, diverse and complex, and certainly Ataturk represented one aspect of this tradition. Unfortunately, he represented the most authoritarian aspect. To understand why this is so, we need to look at the problematic nature of democracy as an experiment in the interwar years. After 1918 the 120 year movement of the Ottoman-Turkish Enlightenment met with the violent intersection of empires, nations and minorities in the interwar period.

With the Treaty of Versailles (1919) Europe went from three to thirteen republics as the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, Hohenzollern, and Ottoman empires collapsed. Like the Ottomans, these empires had faced the challenge of a "tangled mass of regional legal codes and conventions" in their attempt to create a national body of law, or to rationalize power.⁵⁶⁶ These empires had based their legitimacy on the principle of dynastic loyalty, and so a German could rise to a high position in the Tzarist administration. The populations were mixed and the dockworkers of Ottoman Saloniki routinely spoke six or seven languages.⁵⁶⁷

The Paris peace treatises extended the principle of national self determination to the ethnic patchwork of central and eastern Europe. As this concept of sovereignty was based on the "people" defined as a specific nation, the presence of other ethnicities within the borders was inherently problematic. This gave rise to the minority problem, and in representing the "people" the new democracies were often exclusionary and antagonistic in ethnic relations. Minorities in the interwar period were often seen as a danger and a kind of fifth column. In this context, where twenty five million people had suddenly become minorities, the dream of the pure nation was born. Minority rights policy was designed to address this problem.

The Greek scholar Kambouroglou wrote that "on Greek soil there should be nothing that is not Greek".⁵⁶⁸ The politics of the period followed such logic in the form of massive population exchanges between nations, notably Greece and Turkey, where "thousands of Turkish-speaking Orthodox villagers from Asia Minor were expelled to Greece ... while Greek Muslims ... embarked for Turkey" with "homes and property abandoned, friends left behind".⁵⁶⁹

At the heart of these politics was a doctrine of assimilation going back to the model of the French Revolution and the history of the French Republic. The formation of the French Republic had been a long process of destroying difference and gradual assimilation of the population from

⁵⁶⁷ Mazower. Dark Continent. Page 44.
⁵⁶⁸ Mazower. Dark Continent. Page 42.
above. As late as 1863 an official tally in France indicated that one fifth of the population did not speak the language, and the figure was probably higher. The paradigm of assimilation had found its way into nineteenth century liberal thought in the claim of John Stuart Mill that “free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities”.

This view on assimilation existed virtually across the political spectrum in the interwar period. The New States Committee in Paris, prompted by US President Wilson, “dismissed Jewish demands for national autonomy for the Jewish minority in Poland” on the grounds that it was undesirable “to forestall the process of assimilation which was still believed to be the desirable long-term outcome”. The British Foreign Office issued a statement that minority treatises were hindering the process of assimilation. Carl Schmitt, a leader in Germany’s conservative revolutionary movement of the 1920’s, argued that modern mass democracy presupposed “first homogeneity and second – if the need arises – elimination or eradication of heterogeneity”.

Curiously, Lenin changed his views on the question during the First World War as he embraced the principle of self determination. He had previously argued that to oppose assimilation is to “turn back the wheel of history” because the “process of assimilation of nations by capitalism means the greatest historical progress”. His changed outlook resulted in the Bolshevik nationalities policy which exerted a powerful attraction over the minorities of central and eastern Europe – Macedonians, Belorussians, Jews and Ukrainians - in the interwar period as they faced the dangerous consequences of the Versailles nation-state policy. In this way we can understand the celebration among minorities that met the downfall of the Polish Republic and the arrival of the Red Army into the Western Ukraine in 1939. Yet whatever its federal appeals, the practice of suppressing political liberty in the Soviet Union as a matter of ideological policy quickly instilled in these minority groups a sense of brutal disillusionment.

It is within this broader context that we must view the criterion of nationality in the Turkish Republic as defined in terms of the Turkish language, and the refusal to recognize even the very existence of other ethnicities. The natural next step was the forcible assimilation by the state.

The violence inherent in such politics were derived from the broader interwar European crucible of nationhood and democracy as a form of exclusion or assimilation of the alien, itself rooted in the French Republican principle of assimilation. In fact, it reverses the temporality of democracy by insisting upon the eternity of Reason.

The problem of state efforts to suppress minority difference in the Turkish Republic continues to this day. But the nationalism that emerged with the birth of the Turkish Republic is not the ineluctable logic of nationalism as such; it was the product of a specific historical and discursive formation, and other forms of nationalism are also possible, have existed and do exist. Some of these alternative nationalisms were given expression, however much finally unrealized, by important Turkish intellectuals of the modern period that have been discussed in this study.
2.2. Secular democracy and the heritage of non-violence in the Indian National Movement

a. Non-violence: Satyagraha in the context of two lines of nationalist tradition and the problem of "means"

It was in South Africa, not in India, that Gandhi first evolved his vision of Indian nationalism. His idea of "nationalism does not start with locality and then gradually extend itself to province and finally to nation". Gandhi evolved his conception of Indian nationalism from the point of view of an outsider, an exile, of being not at home. He did it in terms of multiple flows and not fixed singular stasis. This experience of seeing oneself as an outsider is in a way at the heart of Enlightenment as a dizzying moment of glimpsing the full hidden network of international linkages with globalisation, and the newly complex problems this raises for universal justice. It is also behind the temptation to restore safely fixed boundaries of identity that drives counter-Enlightenment or nativism – the white hot fire of revivalism seeking fantasies of an unbroken past.

Gandhi, in a courageous and highly original way, confronted both of these problems and offered unfamiliar and practical answers with an unwavering commitment to democratic principle. That he did so through the framework of a nationalist political discourse and mass political practice raises many important questions. In his lifelong struggle with these issues he physically and psychologically reinvented his religious and national identity along with that of his nation, and helped considerably to make India the modern democracy that it is today. This accomplishment puts him within the tradition of Enlightenment. Finally, like many others courageous enough to challenge and recreate their own traditions inspired by Enlightenment ideals, Gandhi was killed by

an assassin’s bullet in the name of the ideology of hindutva or the pure and uncorrupted Hindu nation.

There is no single Enlightenment doctrine that Gandhi might or might not have embraced. Every political experience of the Enlightenment is invariably based on appropriations and interpretations which are selective, a question of difference and not sameness. Gandhi, who defied categorisation generally, did not fit the popular stereotype of the Enlightenment that comes to us largely from the French experience. However ambiguous Gandhi may have been as a thinker, what can be asserted with full confidence is that throughout his political career he consistently embraced the core values of Enlightenment – those of political liberty, social equality, and reason, or a reformist attitude to tradition which seeks to dismantle inherited hierarchic systems of social injustice and exploitation.

Reconstructing dominant Hindu tradition, Gandhi made “the struggle for justice and equality” into “the only path to moksha in the modern politics dominated age”, “declared war on untouchability” and “brought a large number of (women) into public life”.574 He certainly rejected fatalism, prejudice and superstition while championing the autonomy of the individual or the principle of agency. He preferred to retain his ancestral religion of Hinduism “so long as it does not cramp my growth and does not debar me from assimilating all that is good anywhere else”.575 Deploring cultural isolationism, he asserted that “No nation can find its salvation by breaking away from others”.576 He also rejected romanticism and nostalgia around the traditional past, denouncing those who consider “evil to be good if it has the sanction of antiquity”.577 The instant that we “slavishly copy the past”, he insisted, we “cease to grow”.578 He called for speech over coercion, wherever possible, as means to resolving conflict and ordering society. He saw political legitimacy

576 Tendulkar Volume 2. Page 44.
in reason or conscience rather than received authority, or that legitimate power resides in the people, speaking enthusiastically of the "spirit of democracy which is fast spreading throughout India and the rest of the world". As a believer in democracy he saw struggle and resistance as the means to democracy under a political regime of hierarchy, indignity and violence.

Yet Gandhi's legacy is more universal than merely these facts would suggest, for he also radically challenged, expanded and transformed the received Enlightenment heritage itself. The central concept governing his ideal of Enlightenment, which partook of many Western and other elements, was not Western, and yet responded to the major shortcomings haunting the dominant Enlightenment paradigm based in the West and the French Revolution: forcible assimilation of minorities, a war of modern ideas on the traditional past, and a dogmatic epistemic ideal striving for absolute dimensions as a social project. All of these universal issues are aspects of the problem of violence that haunted Western political experience from the time of the early natural rights discourses and originally inspired the democratic notion of the secular private sphere – which, with the nation making model of the French Revolution, once more sunk under the waves in the name of a higher public truth. The consequence of Gandhi's challenge was his embrace of Enlightenment values and rejection of the two notions typical of the dominant paradigm centring absolute reason and political struggle based on violence – two notions which are surely fundamentally interconnected.

At the centre of the challenge Gandhi mounted was therefore the principle of non-violence or ahimsa, a code of anti-dogma by which the Indian national movement remained open-ended, broadly inclusive and in continuous ideological transformation throughout decades of hard struggle for national independence. The principle of non-violence was a "'broadening' of (Hindu tradition) to meet the 'needs of the age'". Yet by centring the issue of political violence, it was also the de facto culmination and realisation of the searching efforts of an entire secular intellectual tradition.

from natural rights theory through Locke to Kant, and the extension of its core principle in civil society to the realm of political practice.

The Gandhian intervention disclosed a third alternative between social change imagined either in total time as a swift and violent lightning assault upon the state, a supreme moment of revolution, or as within the limits of reformism, in the form of a long term mass based transformative project centring civil society - or “the ensemble of organisms commonly called ‘private’ - in a struggle over not merely power but meanings and values largely within the temporal space of everyday life.\textsuperscript{581} In 1924 Gandhi said of the Bolsheviks that while he may admire the “motives” he was an “uncompromising opponent of violent methods” and did not “believe in short-violent-cuts to success”.\textsuperscript{582} It was within the context of a longer term transformative project that his “struggle to establish dharma appropriate to India in the modern age” took place.\textsuperscript{583} Antonio Gramsci – whose writings pose the problem of the pure instant of ‘insurrection’ versus the longer mediated process of ‘transformation’ - named this longer and deeper form of struggle a “war of position”, and identified it particularly with “India’s political struggle against the English”.\textsuperscript{584}

Gandhi also expanded the received Enlightenment heritage because his experience both illuminated lesser noticed religious thinkers in the Western Enlightenment tradition who were at odds with the dominant ‘materialist’ paradigm, such as Tolstoy and Thoreau, and also the regularly overlooked but vast and complex indigenous heritage of Indian rational Enlightenment going back to the Emperors Akbar and Ashoka, and also more popular democratic moments in Indian history such as “the great democratic Bhakti Movement which swept all over India during the pre-British period and which attacked the caste system and elevated the position of women”.\textsuperscript{585}

\textsuperscript{582} Quoted in Dalton. Page 10.
\textsuperscript{583} Parek. Page 11.
\textsuperscript{584} Gramsci. Page 229.
Above all, Gandhi’s political intervention upholds the modern principle of secularism. His concept of secularism “has its basis in the theory of the purusharthas”, and therefore is “philosophically different from the laic, anti-religious secularism that arose in Europe”.

In practice, it performs the same function in providing a space for multi-religious co-habitation in the modern context yet without seeking to generally and aggressively supersede older forms of traditional belief. Gandhi insisted that he was ready to “die for (his religion), but that is my personal affair. The state has nothing to do with it. The state would look after your secular welfare, health, communication, foreign relations, currency and so on, but not your, or my, religion. That is everybody’s personal concern”. Gandhi also “refused to admit that any book, however sacred, could be limited to a single interpretation irrespective of time and place; the meanings of great writings were subject to a process of evolution”.

The transformation is in the very principle of open-ness Gandhi’s thought and activity introduced into the Enlightenment tradition in response to the ‘crisis of modernity’ and its authoritarian and colonial dimensions, seeking neither closure nor retreat while upholding secular democratic transformation as a core value.

Gandhi had experienced life in Britain as a legal student and barrister mixing with Indian exiles and members of the London Vegetarian Society. Behind him was the experience of being excommunicated by the Modh Bania caste for having sailed for England against sanctioned religious tradition. During his time in London he both became closer to his own culture through reading translations of Hindu holy texts such as The Song Celestial (Bhagavad-Gita) by Sir Edwin Arnold, and struggled to remain true to vows he had taken to his mother in India prior to his departure. At the request of a Christian friend he read the Bible, and attempted to unify the Sermon on the Mount with the teachings of the Gita. His struggle was at this time predominantly

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587 Gandhi. CW.85:328.
588 Nanda. Page 70.
personal or of an inner nature. It seems that in this period he was deeply concerned with religion, though his knowledge of Hinduism remained quite elementary.\textsuperscript{590} What is certain is that even at this time he was profoundly concerned with establishing a secure personal understanding of the meaning of truth. He observed, in this connection, that for some atheists “truth held the same place as God for others”.\textsuperscript{591}

Gandhi had been shy and lacking in self confidence throughout much of his early life. In 1892 as a young barrister he once lost his nerve on a small case and told the client to engage another lawyer.\textsuperscript{592} It was his experience of brutal racial oppression in South Africa, where he arrived in 1893 at twenty four, which awoke in him a passionate lifelong drive to fight social and political injustice. This drive too formed part of his religious struggle, as a “question of redeeming his own self-respect as that of his community, his country, even of humanity”.\textsuperscript{593} His calling as a lawyer took on new meaning as he “learnt to find out the better side of human nature and to enter men’s hearts” and “realized that the true function of a lawyer was to unite parties riven asunder”.\textsuperscript{594}

This comment suggests some of the features that defined his mature political technique and, in its non-violence, set it profoundly apart from those of other twentieth century figures – influenced by the French Revolutionary paradigm – who also set upon life paths of fighting oppressive political regimes in the name of radical democratic ends: the tendency to ‘conflict resolution’ rather than ‘destruction of the enemy’, a view to particular situations rather than the uniform political line, open dialogue rather than doctrinal dogma as a basis for social reconstruction, and in sum an ethic of pardon rather than revenge. A member of Hebert’s faction, Alexandre Rousselin, had claimed that: “Vengeance is the only source of liberty, the only goddess we ought to bring sacrifices to”.\textsuperscript{595} The Indian revolutionary Bhagat Singh (1907-31) argued that

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\item[Tendulkar.] Volume 1. Page 32.
\item[Tendulkar.] Volume 2. Page 35.
\item[Nanda.] Page 39.
\item[Nanda.] Page 41.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
“the sacrifice of individuals at the altar of Revolution (…) will bring freedom to all” as a matter of historical “inevitability”. On all of these points Gandhi’s vision, as embodied in Satyagraha and the Indian National Movement, diverges from the dominant paradigm of modern political action as defined by the ideological experience of the French Revolution and its radical legacy in presenting an alternative paradigm grounded in prolonged non-violent transformation rather than the instant of violent insurrection. Yet he shared in common with the French Revolutionary tradition the conviction that “political emancipation means the rise of mass consciousness”.

Gandhi’s non-violent stance – the particular over the uniform, dialogue over dogma, broad prolonged mass action over the heroic instant of the “Revolution” – might be characterised in terms of the temporality of democracy, or the recognition of the significance of time invested in projects for democratic transformation and their incompatibility with absolute (i.e.; trans-temporal) claims by any party acting politically within the public sphere. The temporality of democracy is in turn an extension of a broader “passage from transcendentental thought to immanentism”, as a mode of thinking within the temporal framework of the world itself rather than derived from a “metaphysical” or “dogmatic” form of thought “valid at all times and in all countries”.

Secondly, we might identify Gandhi’s thought with a context specific universalism. The most prominent example of this frequent tendency is in his view of violence. While arguing that violence must always be condemned in the abstract, he conceded defensive violence to be superior to offensive, that the violence of long suppressed groups was more understandable than that of politically empowered, and finally that violence, though inferior to non-violence, was ‘infinitely’ better than cowardice. Similarly, although moral ideals were to remain absolute, obvious human limitations in “capacity, circumstances and accustomed lifestyles” would prevent their full realisation but

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599 Parekh. Pages 134-35.
encourage "creative experiments" in efforts to live up to them.\textsuperscript{600} Truth for Gandhi was a "goal rather than (...) an archetype or a revelation" with a many faceted, contextual and experimental form.\textsuperscript{601}

It was in South Africa that the political technique, \textit{Satyagraha}, was born. It proved to be the equal in power, as a modern political force, to any organised political party. As a technique unattached to any particular doctrine or community, it is available to all and has been adapted successfully in widely differing situations of political and social conflict. Gandhi remarked that "the doctrine (is) so simple that it can be preached even to children".\textsuperscript{602} It was meant not merely for saints but "for the common people as well".\textsuperscript{603} This technique grew from a diversity of sources in both Indian and Western traditions. In fact, Gandhi's entire political career unfolded across an enormously complex set of intersections: between the promises and ideals of European Enlightened modernity and the repressively exploitative nature of the colonial regime, between the frustrating and disillusioning ineffectiveness of the Parliamentary system and the rising alternative of underground revolutionary movements committed to political violence on the French Revolutionary model, between secular nationalism and religious communalism, and between local and global forces. \textit{Satyagraha} as a technique was the attempt at a middle way through this mine field of contradictions, while retaining a commitment to non-violence and secular democracy. Through all of this Gandhi denied any basic difference between "East" and "West", arguing that there "is no impassable barrier" between them.\textsuperscript{604}

Since an early age Gandhi had been a strong believer in the liberal ideal of justice that he believed England represented, with only exceptional lapses. He was "deeply influenced by ideas embedded within British law, administration, and political values, including respect for correct

\textsuperscript{600} Parekh. Page 129.
\textsuperscript{602} Gandhi. CW. 19:29. Page 207.
\textsuperscript{603} Quoted Parekh. Page 114.
\textsuperscript{604} M.K.Gandhi. \textit{Hind Swaraj and other writings}. Page 130.
procedure, evidence, and rights, and for the distinctions and conflicts between private and public obligations".  

It was not until 1920 and the Rowlatt Satyagraha that Gandhi decided definitively that the entire colonial system was an inherent force of systemic ill for India, and needed to be abolished.

In taking this decision, he never once entertained the unthought assumption of predominant Western political thought grounded in the French Revolutionary tradition, that the process of attaining this glorious end would unavoidably if regrettably entail the violent mass murder of countless ‘enemies’. Declaring the “futility” of “revenge”, he argued that what “requires mending is not men but the system”.  

He taught his followers, rather, to face death and everything short of it fearlessly in the belief that there is no enemy but the one inside which is fear itself. In 1915 he called upon Indian students not to respond to revolutionary terrorist ideology but to “Terrorize yourself; search within; by all means resist tyranny wherever you find it; (...) but not by shedding the blood of the tyrant. (...) if we are to practise truth, to practise ahimsa, we must immediately see that we also practise fearlessness”.  

Conversely, he identified the “school of violence” with a kind of romanticism or tendency to “applaud as heroic anything adventurous irrespective of the motives or contemplated results behind such deeds”.

Gandhi’s initial plunge into politics came in 1894, when he extended his projected stay in South Africa in order to fight a bill to disenfranchise Indian settlers and over time transformed the Natal Indian Congress into a political force mobilized to combat injustice non-violently. The period from 1894 to 1906 “may be classified as the ‘Moderate’ phase of the struggle of South African Indians” based on petitioning and sending memorials to the South African legislatures, the

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606 Gandhi. CW. 43. Page 446.
607 Tendulkar Volume 1. Page 165.
608 Gandhi. CW. 43. Page 446.
Colonial Secretary in London and the British Parliament.\textsuperscript{609} The newspaper \textit{Indian Opinion} contributed to the creation of Indian public opinion as a growing political force.

It was in this same year, in 1894, that Gandhi underwent a major intellectual crisis and wrote a letter to a Gujarati Jain thinker, Rajchandra Ravjibhai Mehta (1868-1901). Gandhi had met Rajchandra in 1891 in Bombay. In his reply Rajchandra expounded the Jaina doctrine of the "many-sidedness" of religious truth (\textit{anekantavada}), arguing that it is "presumption for any human group to claim to have possession of absolute truth". He also explained dharma as not meaning "any particular creed or dogma", and nor "learning by rote books known as \textit{shastras} (sacred texts) or even believing all that they say". Rajchandra presented a humanistic and pluralistic view of dharma as "the means (\textit{sadhana}) by which we can know ourselves", and we "may accept this means (\textit{sadhana}) from wherever we get it, whether from India or Europe or Arabia".\textsuperscript{610} His view of dharma had a permanent influence on Gandhi's political and religious thought.

This is an essentially modern conception of dharma which legitimises a multi-religious point of view similar to that found in writings on religion and modernity by Leo Tolstoy. Tolstoy's vision of religion was essentially evolutionary and hermeneutical, arguing that the essence underlying all historically accumulated religious doctrines was a vision of universal human equality.\textsuperscript{611} It was the task of all religions, he argued, to adapt this 'timeless' message to the specific character of the age regardless of any inherited dogma. Gandhi later made the same argument, claiming that "Hindusim, not to speak of other religions, is ever evolving", and thereby put religion within a temporal and political framework. Expressing a highly secularised view, he argued that "all religions are more or less true. All proceed from the same God but all are imperfect because they have come down to us through imperfect human instrumentality".\textsuperscript{612}

\textsuperscript{609} Chandra, et.al.. \textit{India's Struggle for Independence}. Page 172.
\textsuperscript{610} M.K.Gandhi. \textit{Hind Swaraj and other writings}. Page xlviii.
\textsuperscript{612} Tendulkar Volume 2. Page 132.
Gandhi compared the two men, saying “Rajchandra and Tolstoy have lived as they have preached”.613

This remark reflects what was essential to Gandhi: practice, or finding a way to live ethically that concretely confronts and resolves the ghosts of modern violence – political or state violence, terrorist violence, inter-communal violence, intra-cultural ‘traditional’ violence against women and ‘untouchables’, or the blind global violence enmeshed invisibly in the machinery of international capitalism and inflicted on people, animals and environment alike – that haunted his mind in his struggle to achieve inner peace or liberation from the ‘inner violence’ that he saw as the real source of the modern climate of violence worldwide. In consequence he focused on the creation of a concrete and practical political technique rather than an ideology, and derived his thinking from his experiences and experiments making corrections and adjustments as necessary. Viewing means as the basis of swaraj, Gandhi’s work was a series of “experiments with means”.614

All of this suggests an imminently modern if highly unconventional thinker and political activist who transformed his own religious thought to meet the realities and challenges of modern experience. The focus on “inner” experience for Gandhi too was of a pragmatic character, based on techniques of mental discipline grounded in regular exercises carried out with long term perseverance. Although such techniques are common in the Indian philosophical tradition and hold an equal importance with the traditions of rational argument and intellectual debate, Gandhi redefined them in a modern manner as a critique of the predominant discourse on ‘development’ as a purely material, structural or ‘external’ process.615 The dominant discourse of development tended to conceive the process of nation-making in teleological terms as a mere matter of cause and effect with an indifference to those undergoing the process. As in a Kantian ethical framework, Gandhi insisted that individuals are ends in themselves and not means to some higher end, saying

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613 Tendulkar. Volume 2. Page 34.
615 See, for example, the works of Sue Hamilton on Indian philosophy and the tradition of rationality.
that “Swaraj of a people means the sum total of the swaraj (self rule) of individuals”.616 In this way Gandhi anticipated later critiques of development discourse as being flawed because of the basically undemocratic assumptions of its basic tenets.617 It is also why he “did not see the nation as a transcendent entity, possessed of a soul and a form of freedom of its own, apart from its private individual components” (i.e.; secular rather than romantic).618

Satyagraha substitutes an “end serving with an end creating function” in a shift from the cause/effect historicist paradigm of nation making centred on ends to the means/consequence paradigm of ongoing growth.619 This has important political implications in pointing clearly to the irrelevance and futility of the ‘mechanical’ seizure of state power as a final end in itself, as if to transform the nation from above according to an already fixed design, without the prolonged popular struggle on a moral, political and ideological level, and grounded in everyday life, which was the most effective way “of involving the whole spectrum of Indian society” and creating deep democratic roots in the process of nation making.620 Gandhi argued that “the spirit of democracy is not a mechanical thing to be adjusted by the abolition of forms”.621 This is the meaning of the temporality of democracy, or the intermediary role of civil society as a site of transition amidst the many systems and currents of thought which exist re-diffused “in a critical form” as “a basis for vital action”.622

It was for this reason that Gandhi made it “his practice to take over terms familiar to his audience and to define them in the way he thought proper without much worrying about their conventional meanings”.623 Rejecting the ideal of modernity as the abolition of traditional beliefs, he refused to subscribe to the view that the millions of “Hindus, Musalmans and Christians” were

617 See, for example, the works of Arturo Escobar on twentieth century development.
620 Dalton. Page 32.
621 Quoted Dalton. Page 50.
"liars or deluded people". Believing that religious beliefs were at the root of "peace", he was yet "indifferent to the form" as each individual "is a law unto himself in that respect". Yet Gandhi then employed this popular religious and hermeneutic terrain to effect the "transformation of relationships" based on the conviction of "the capacity of man to change". He saw himself involved in a struggle to create a "new valuation of such terms as heroism, patriotism, religiousness and the like".

Satyagraha began in 1906 where the "moderate" methods of struggle broke down. Until then the Indian community had adhered to a "resolution to exhaust all appropriate constitutional remedies". The "moderate" phase of 1894 to 1906 had been based on the belief that "if all the facts of the case were presented to the Imperial Government, the British sense of justice and fair play would be aroused and the Imperial Government would intervene on behalf of Indians who were, after all, British subjects". Following the disappointing diplomatic mission to London of 1906, Gandhi became convinced that "moderate" methods would lead nowhere.

At the Empire Theatre, Johannesburg, on September 11 1906, a huge meeting was held in which a resolution was drafted by Gandhi stating the refusal of the Indian community to the proposed measure for the registration of Asiatics. When a speaker at the meeting declared in the name of God that he would never submit to the Asiatic Registration Ordinance, Gandhi was "startled and put on his guard". Until that moment, since his disillusionment with "moderate" methods, he had encountered an "impenetrable wall" before him in his struggle to conceive an effective practical alternative. Now, the idea of a solemn oath inspired him to perceive "the possible consequences in a single moment" and his "perplexity gave way to enthusiasm". The power of the vow, taken in resistance to an unjust law, with God as witness, and with no fear of

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624 Tendulkar, Volume 3, Pages 110-11.
625 Quoted Dalton, Page 42.
626 Gandhi, CW, 43, Page 446.
627 Tendulkar, Volume 1, Page 80.
628 Chandra, India’s Struggle for Independence, Page 172.
629 Nanda, Page 95.
consequences, was to become the basis for a non-violent principle of fighting political and social oppression. When *Indian Opinion* invited suggestions for a name Gandhi finally decided on an amended version of "sandagraha" (firmness in good conduct) in Satyagraha (firmness in truth). The principles and technique of Satyagraha evolved over the following years of political struggle and it was in 1913 with the poll tax Satyagraha that indentured and ex-indentured labourers were drawn into the political struggle, and for the first time "Satyagraha could now take on a truly mass character".630

Satyagraha as a political technique stands in line with the heritage of Enlightenment in terms of political aims and ideals and within the tradition of mass political movements stemming from the French Revolution. Yet Gandhi’s rejection of the violence at the core of this experience indicates important points of departure from the tradition. First, though, there are distinctive elements which are preserved from the core of the French Revolutionary inheritance: (1) a new concept of legitimacy based on the provisional nature of political institutions, and rejecting the transcendental value linked to the sanction of antiquity; (2) the logical consequence of this is the recognition of the immanent values in political action. A population has the right to take a course of action “to compel justice from” the ruler.631 Thus Gandhi regularly reiterated the right “of the subject to refuse to assist a ruler who misrules”.632 He argued that “no state however despotic has the right to enact laws which are repugnant to the whole body of the people”.633

(3) The third consequence of this line of thought is the legitimisation of conscience as a force of political judgment and eventual action. Gandhi, in the tradition of Enlightenment and the French Revolution, identified conscience with “standing up for truth and reason” and opposing “bigotry, lethargy, intolerance, ignorance (and) inertia”.634 He considered “blind adherence” to any

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630 Chandra, et.al. *India’s Struggle for Independence*. Page 174.
system "undesirable".\textsuperscript{635} In 1919 he insisted that 40,000 uncultured and illiterate Indians in South Africa had followed his lead in doing Satyagraha only after each having examined the position individually.\textsuperscript{636} Moreover, he claimed to "have arrived at (his) own views independently of any authority, though originally they may have been drawn from various sources".\textsuperscript{637} These three points are fairly straightforward, and really concern the 'ends' of traditional Enlightenment thought not merely in terms of moral values but also a political and cognitive framework for perceiving the evolving complexity and instability of modern social reality.

Where Gandhi's thought departs radically from the tradition, and the problem becomes considerably more complex, is on the level of "means". This departure transforms the paradigm of both knowledge and conscience. At the broadest level this departure concerns the "means" to be employed in the process of nation making, an issue invariably linked to a given stance on the problem of modern "universalism". At the outset, Gandhi was contending with two integrated yet distinctive lines of national tradition coming out of modern Western experience and Enlightenment: (1) the first is the Liberal and essentially reformist tradition coming out of British political experience which espouses the principle of representative government, or the British Enlightenment with its inclusive emphasis on a public 'moral sense'. This is a tradition of Enlightenment discourse which lacks the absolutist attitude to custom and the past and was therefore more "latitudinarian, compatible with a large spectrum of belief and disbelief".\textsuperscript{638} On the one hand Gandhi was a strong believer in the "inherent superiority of the British constitution".\textsuperscript{639} This conviction, however, was complicated by the modern political reality produced by the Industrial Revolution and above all its colonial aspect.

\textsuperscript{635} Gandhi. CW.19. Page 280.
\textsuperscript{636} Gandhi. CW.19. Page 250.
\textsuperscript{637} Quoted Parekh. Page 123.
\textsuperscript{639} Tendulkar. Volume 1. Page 296.
The Industrial Revolution introduced a “new mode of life” embracing “people’s outlook on nature and human nature, religion, ethics, science, knowledge, technology, politics and economics”. This “epistemological revolution” reinterpreted “nature” as an “autonomous entity operating according to its own laws, something to be mastered and possessed for the satisfaction of human needs, desires and political ambitions”. The upshot of this was that “the satisfaction of the desire for economic prosperity came to be identified as the main object of politics”. It was out of this context that “two types of political theory emerged, one for the industrialised societies and the other for the rest of the world” as “liberal institutions were thought appropriate for the industrialised societies” and “imperialism and colonialism” were thought appropriate “for the non-industrialised societies like India”.640

This civilisational partition was affirmed by such influential liberal thinkers as J.S. Mill, who “used the doctrine of liberty to justify imperial rule over India”. These arguments for conquest rather than consent in governing the “non-civilised” ranged from rationalising absolute government as a “temporary expedient for the purpose of superseding itself” to arguments for the “permanent existence” of absolute government to impose peace and order upon those deemed incapable of ever governing themselves.641 Both employ organised violence as a means to an ideal end, or coercion over consent in a division of means and ends. The more liberal variant is grounded in a division between means and ends by which eventual political liberty at an unspecified date in the future is to be the flower of authoritarian subjugation today. Manfred Steger has described this as the “provisionality of other peoples’ experiences (...) linked to a higher teleology”.642

The double standard and betrayal of liberal values evidenced by this political theory, and the moral dualism of means and ends it involves, became increasingly conspicuous and problematic to

Gandhi as he struggled against the injustices of the British government in India. From this point of view, Gandhi's critique of "modern civilisation" is really a critique of both the politics of global capitalism in its colonial dimension and the accompanying ideology of "development" which conceives the world in terms of the potential for the maximisation of profit. He had already encountered a critique of political economy conceived along these lines in John Ruskin's *Unto This Last*.

Yet Gandhi, as a champion of democracy, was very far from an opponent of modernity, let alone the Enlightenment tradition within it. He rather struggled to bring into being an alternative paradigm of universal modernity within the political tradition of liberal Enlightenment in the broader sense of that tradition which seeks to reconcile religious belief and modernity as an ethical project. Gandhi did not question the epistemic status of scientific knowledge, conceiving it only as a "limited thing" in being knowledge of the physical universe confined to time and space; meanwhile, he conceived religious knowledge in secular fashion as "beyond the power of man to grasp". Gandhi went beyond the limits of the liberal tradition - in common with the Marxist and socialist traditions of Enlightenment - in seeking to extend via a concept of social rights the full material benefits of modernity to the wider world of humanity - workers, peasants, and the poor - beyond the narrow social strata of a dominant class.

(2) This brings us to the second line of national tradition coming out of modern Western experience and Enlightenment: the French Revolution, and what Hannah Arendt has called the "social question", i.e.; the political task of alleviating mass poverty, which is linked to the phenomenon of modern mass revolution and the problem of political violence, and finally a vision of Enlightenment dominated by a doctrine of militant atheism.

Gandhi encountered this second line of national tradition through what he called the Indian school of violence, with whom he was engaged in continuous discussion and debate from about

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643 Quoted in Pare! Page 203.
644 See Arendt. *On Revolution.*
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1904 on. As early as 1904 V.D. Sarvarkar had organised a secret society of revolutionaries and after 1905 a number of newspapers began to advocate revolutionary terrorism. In 1907 an attempt was made on the life of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, and in April 1908 a bomb attack on a carriage believed to be transporting an unpopular judge instead killed two English women. One of the assassins shot himself and the other was tried and hung, both of them becoming popular nationalist heroes.645 This political activity follows in the tradition of radical European ideas going back to the Jacobins and the concept of the vanguard. Such activity in the Indian context surfaced against the background of the broader political struggle to give shape and definition to what was an emerging mass movement, one that took on secular character in unifying the broad mass of the Indian population in opposition to colonialism in the process of nation making.646


The Indian terrorist movement, within the context of India's largely non-violent struggle for independence, was "relatively small but vocal" and at times "highly effective", emerging in the "1870's as a reaction against the way in which the colonial government set about responding to the political trauma of 1857". Captain Hodson aimed at the "total extinction of a dynasty", murdering Bahadur Shah's sons, and the English public was seized with "one terrible cry for revenge". The English liberal Macauley described "forty men blown at once from the mouths of cannon" with "heads, legs, arms flying in all directions". By the late seventies many young Indians, particularly of the urban, middle class, educated and unemployed strata, finding a lack of legitimate channels of protest, and raised on the stories of 1857, began to believe in "violence as the only available mode

645 Chandra et.al. India's Struggle for Independence. Page 144.
of action". The ideas of revolutionary terrorists began to appear in printed and widely communicable form after 1857, well before the establishment of all-India nationalism in the 1880's.

Revolutionary terrorism as a means to social change in colonial India seemed to emerge particularly where the open movement of the National Congress went into periods of decline and faith in the efficacy of parliamentary methods under the existing regime came into serious doubt. The split in the Indian National Congress in 1907 was simultaneous with the appearance of a radical rise in the new trend of revolutionary terrorism in Bengal. Literature was widely circulated and read, and some landlords permitted the use of their land for weapons storage and training camps. The terrorists insisted that “their violence energised and regenerated their countrymen and developed their courage, pride and capacity for organised action”. Many travelled to France and the Soviet Union, and they believed in the ‘Russian method’ symbolised by the bomb. A popular manifesto, the Philosophy of the Bomb, was widely read in their political circles. There were overseas support systems in Canada, the U.S.A., South East Asia and Britain. The terrorist movement saw itself modelled on the “new scientific discipline of sociology” founded by Auguste Comte and popularised by Herbert Spencer. The central leitmotif was a vision of reality as “struggle, violence, national solidarity and subordination of the individual to the needs of the ‘national organism’”. By the end of the nineteenth century nearly forty government officials had lost their lives to the movement.

The earlier attempts at the organisation of mass action thus yielded at turns to an ethic of individual heroism reflecting a growing impatience and hunger for results among the youth. Here we meet with an aspect of what Gandhi was to consider the problem of “speed”, linked to both the ‘instant’ of violent insurrection and the developmental paradigm in its preoccupation with results.

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647 Parekh. Page 139-40.
649 Parekh. Page 159.
650 Parekh. Page 142.
Such a preoccupation with speed and immediacy of results would represent the contrary in principle of the temporality of democracy. The revolutionary terrorist movement did not gain a popular mass base of support through their spectacular actions.

The background to this can be understood in part within the context of the National Movement itself as it had evolved up to this point. There was considerable confusion on the subject of modes of organisation, tottering between an early tendency to non-violence and the embrace of violent action inspired by variations on the French revolutionary model. The Moderate nationalists, who, lacking faith in the common people, had based their politics on attempts to persuade the British rulers to introduce economic and political reforms, reached the climax of their energies without having undertaken the necessary work to build foundations for political action among the Indian masses. Even in the late nineteenth century many Indian nationalists were “expressing their own primary loyalties to their linguistically and culturally defined regions”.\footnote{Heimsath. Page 142.}

The main legacy of the Moderates to the national movement was a powerful economic critique of colonialism conceived along entirely secular lines. Dadabhai Naoroji argued that Britain was extracting wealth from India “as the price of her rule in India” and short of “self government the Indians can never get rid of their present drain”.\footnote{Bipan Chandra. The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India. Economic Policies of Indian National Leadership. People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1969. Pages 636-7} This ultimately contributed to a full awareness of the stakes of national sovereignty and an unyielding commitment to achieving it, in contrast to the other national cases in this study which – lacking such an analysis - sought at intervals to achieve national modernity through a compromise solution with imperial power with diminishing returns.

The Extremists, having introduced methods of mass mobilisation that were to endure throughout the lifetime of the independence movement, were never the less unsuccessful in defining the movement in a way that adequately united it or indicated what overall form it should take. The two groups finally split the Congress over the questions of the appropriate technique of
struggle and the proper pace of the movement: the Moderates had employed petitions, memoranda, speeches, public meetings and press campaigns with a view to gradual reform, while the Extremists had introduced boycott and public burning of foreign cloth, boycott of government schools, courts, titles and services, and strikes, in a bid to extend the scale of the movement to nationwide proportions with quicker results in terms of democratic reform. All of these techniques point to a tendency to non-violent means from the outset.

Yet there were exceptions, such as the Extremist Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950), who had links to revolutionary terrorists and whole heartedly embraced violence as a means. Aurobindo, in particular, represented an overlap between commitment to revolutionary violence and Hindu revivalist claims to authenticity in the early national movement. After a childhood abroad immersed in English culture and deliberately isolated from Indian influences, Aurobindo returned to Bengal in 1883 and set about building a revolutionary network. During this time he argued that “authentic national destiny was possible (...) only through the revival of the Vedic institution of the fourfold order”. He later wrote that “nationalism is not politics but a religion (and) it is the Sanatan Dharna which for us is nationalism.”

Adopting a romantic line in favour of the exception or the spiritual elite, he insisted that only “heroes, martyrs, criminals, enthusiasts, degenerates, geniuses, men of exaggerated virtue, exaggerated ability and exaggerated ideas were capable of revolutionizing society and making a nation great and free”. This was hardly an outlook suitable for inspiring the common people. He went on to characterise existence romantically as “a constant self-feeding and devouring of other life”. As far as means, he promoted an idealised violence based on spiritual values which he contrasted with ordinary “violence stripped of its ideal and constructive aspects”. He castigated modern Indians as inauthentic (asuric) in the name of an ideal of Hindu nationalism. This ideal

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654 Sharma. Pages 46-55

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held that "nationalism is immortal" and "comes from God". With such interventions, identifying the nation with a particular religion, there was the ideological onset of communalism. Communalism was "a modern ideology that incorporated some elements or aspects of the past ideologies and institutions (...) to form a new ideological and political base". It could emerge only after the modern onset of "politics based on the people, politics of popular sovereignty, (...) politics based on the creation and mobilization of public opinion".

The early reform movement therefore contained some striking ambiguities along the line dividing a secular politics based on principle and a religious politics based on identity. There were really two bases for reform: firstly, the doctrine of equal rights of individuals, or natural rights, and secondly concordance with the true interpretation of Hindu law. The nineteenth century reform movement, driven to a state of cultural and social introspection by British rule, had sought to "create a social climate for modernization", fighting initially on an individual basis against degrading mistreatment of women (child marriage, Sati, non-widow remarriage) and the segregating and hierarchically ordained caste system with its stifling of social mobility and maintenance of social divisions.

That this early national struggle was undertaken in part on hermeneutical grounds – even Raja Rammohan Roy (1774-1833) sought to demonstrate that Sati had no religious sanction and Vidyasagar (1820-1891) defended widow marriage on the basis of scriptural support – contributed to a political leaning toward divisive issues of identity in the context of a multi-religious country coming into growing political self awareness. Reformist religious discourses often took, on the other hand, the form of appeals for tolerance – the Brahmo Samaj of Rammohan Roy was initially conceived as a universalist church, Keshub Chandra Sen (1838-1884) argued that "truths are to be found in all religions", and Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898) in his early secular phase claimed that.

655 Heimsath. Page 313.
the world’s religious prophets all share the same faith. Later, in the 1880’s, he turned to a communalist politics and counter-posed it to the national movement and the Congress.

There was a strong element of rationalism in the early reform movements which paved the way to Indian nationalism. Rammohan Roy rejected all supernatural explanations and “affirmed the principle of causality linking the whole phenomenal universe”. The infallibility of the Vedas was rejected in the Brahma Samaj. Akshay Kumar Datta (1820-1856) viewed all “natural and social phenomena” in terms of “purely mechanical processes”. He altogether rejected the concern over religious sanction based on hermeneutics in his argument. This rationalist element, with its strong individualist orientation, tended to view English education as a portal to equality and a reformed society. Rammohan Roy deplored the “degraded status of (Indian) society and acknowledged without embarrassment the virtues of Western learning, liberal legal and social institutions, and the Western social ethic”. In an 1828 letter he expressed a highly condescending attitude to the Indian masses, writing that “with few exceptions, (they are) immersed in gross idolatry, and in belief of the most extravagant description respecting futurity, antiquity, and the miracles of their deities and saints”.

There was a link between this extreme Enlightenment rationalism, in its dismissal of the value of Indian traditions, and the complicity of these self appointed national representatives with imperial power; and accordingly hopes for India’s future reform were often viewed in terms of the benevolence of the British Empire. The whole of Indian society seemed rotten to many reformer’s perspective as there was “a rush for everything English, and English ideals dominated our lives and thoughts ... Irreligion was fearfully rampant”. One Bombay Parsi claimed to want “English language, English manners, and English behaviour”.

This outlook manifested itself in forms of behaviour sometimes highly offensive to the ordinary Indian population, as when the students of the Hindu college at Calcutta “adopted an

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657 Chandra et.al. *India’s Struggle for Independence*. Pages 84-86.
658 Chandra et.al. *India’s Struggle for Independence*. Page 86.
aggressive attitude to everything Hindu and openly defied the canons of their inherited religion(...) such as drinking to excess, flinging beef-bones into the houses of the orthodox, and parading the streets shouting ‘we have eaten Mussalman bread’”. Intellectual expressions of these tendencies were voiced by the one-time Moderate president of the National Congress Narayan Ganesh Chandavarkar (1855-1923) who spoke of the “narcotic influence of custom”, declared that the “whole existence must be renovated”, and considered the Indian past a “death in life that we have been living for two thousand years”.660

Religious particularism, on the other hand, gained ground in the second half of the nineteenth century. It flowered out of what were two contending factions for the leadership of the nationalist movement, between revivalist and rationalist appeals. If among thinkers such as Rammohan Roy the centre of political reflection had been principle rather than identity, a growing wave in reformism grounded in revivalist ideology expressed the failure of integration between the movement for social reform and the movement for political reform at the national level throughout the nineteenth century.

The controversial split between political and social reform effort was grounded in the fact that caste and religious practices were enormously varied throughout India. This reality engendered the fear that the task of “working out a national social philosophy acceptable to all those who agreed on a national political philosophy” was infeasible, making a solid line of consensus among national leaders impossible unless religious/social reform was excluded from the purview of the national reform movement. Naoroji’s Presidential address at the second Congress in Calcutta asked, “What do any of us know of the internal home life, of the traditions, customs, feelings, prejudices of any class but his own?... Only the members of that class can effectively deal with the reform there-in needed”. Thus, a “National Congress must confine itself to questions in which the entire nation has a direct participation”.661 The public management of a wide pluralism of existing

660 Quoted Heimsath. Page 17.
661 Quoted in Heimsath. Page 188.
social values and beliefs thus threatened a crisis as the creation of a national movement came underway and the response was to slide back into an innocuous stance of relativism.

Meanwhile others, notably Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842-1901), pushed for social reform as part of a national agenda based on an elevation of individual conscience and humanistic ideals. In response, the reformist Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920), the first popular leader and proponent of Swaraj, countered by framing the question in terms of national autonomy versus alien domination. He maintained that he was quite ready to see reform of abusive Hindu customs, but not by way of an alien bureaucracy imposed from above. Thus Ranade in his reforming efforts was cast in the role of a lackey of the British imperial state.

The debate around this issue concerning child marriage culminated the Age of Consent crisis of 1891, at which time threats to riot and burn down the Congress pavilion by a club of militant Poona youths “trained in physical fitness and the use of arms for the ultimate purpose of undermining British rule” finally forced the option of social reform altogether off the national agenda. Tilak, inserting religious passion into this debate and evoking a foreign conspiracy to destroy Hindu culture, met with the approval of these anti-reformist youths led by Damodar Hari Chapekar, who praised him for adopting “his manners to the opinions of the community”.662 Yielding to these pressures, Naoroji explained the position by posing the question: “Should the House of Commons discuss metaphysics?”663 Issues of ethics – previously deemed secular by the elitist advocates of English education - thus reverted theoretically to the essentially religious sphere of boundless metaphysical reflection, and practically to the dictates of local predilection and custom. The defence of traditional practices of social oppression was constructed as a stance in favour of Indian national dignity under foreign coercion.

The juncture saw a rising religious atmosphere in politics, as Tilak used events like the Ganapati festival, celebrating the popular elephant-headed god, “to build a national spirit beyond

662 Quoted Heimsath. Page 213.
663 Heimsath. Pages 213/188.
the circles of the educated elites and to demonstrate to the British the unity of Hindu society". To the end of the Age of Consent Bill the "secular approaches to the problem were forgotten, and the controversy raged (over) shastric passages on the characteristic signs of puberty". To the extent that the national movement was pulled into the orbit of such discourses it was plunged back into a discursive universe from the rationalist if elitist notions of earlier efforts. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee argued for a common heritage as a single religious community, while Tilak stated that "the common factor in Indian society is the feeling of hindutva".

The ground for the shift to this "strand of nationalist philosophy" had been laid in advance by individuals such as Dayananda Saraswati (1824-83), founder of the socio-religious reform movement Arya Samaj (1875) whose teachings had deeply influenced the United Provinces and the Punjab. He found support from upwardly mobile trading and professional castes who "found in the reformist Arya Samaj a basis for community as well as a way to be both hindu and 'modern' in an age of rapid change". A reformist, Saraswati opposed child marriage, supported widow remarriage, and was committed to girls' education, while calling for minimisation of ascriptive status based on birth and freedom to travel. In sum, he advanced the rudiments of a modern national agenda. Yet he was aggressively Hindu and imagined that "Hindus would disappear in the face of Muslim and Christian conversion", and "created new rituals to convert, or purify (...) non-Hindus and members of lower castes". This is to say, like Aurobindo who treasured his ideological influence, he was anti-secular and promoted authenticity as the basic category of modern nation making.

Proclaiming his goal to reveal "the true meaning of truth", he constructed a national religious narrative in which the causes of foreign rule in India were the existence of "differences of religion". He announced the need to be rid of debilitating difference, with the Vedic religion as the only authentic religion: "It is extremely difficult to do away with differences in language, religion,

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666 Heimsath. Page 139-41.
667 Metcalf / Metcalf. Pages 141-42.
education, customs and manners, but without doing that the people can never effect mutual good and accomplish their object”. This is because it is “extremely difficult to make any progress as long as their religion and their interests are not the same”. The distinction between secular public interest and religious affiliation thereby collapsed. In his historical scheme not only Buddhism and Jainism were signs of decline but even the Bhakti movements which compromised Vedantic unity, while Muslims were simply invaders. Opposing the plurality of popular forms of religion, he promoted a new and unified Shastric knowledge with a fixed basis in rationality intended to supersede the entire plethora of existing superstition. On the basis of this ‘scientifically’ conceived unifying national-religious narrative, the one true model, Saraswati even called for “shastric based” forms of corporal punishment in which with “whatever limb a man commits an offense, even that limb shall the king remove”. Thus the realm of sacred discourse burst into that of public law. There was no question, for him, of different interpretations of the Vedas. What is rather clear in this early articulation of Hindutva ideology is its considerable grounding in hyper-rationalist discourse derived from the nationalist ideal of the French Revolutionary experience, infused with romantic overtones centring hermeneutic realms of sacred meaning.

When the Swadeshi Movement (1903-1908) - triggered by the imperial partitioning of Bengal to neutralise the growing centre of Indian nationalism - saw the rise of a popular mass movement and the beginning of peasant participation in national politics, the leadership of the Congress even then failed to create an effective link between itself and the mass in this new climate of militant nationalism. The 1907 split in the Congress, which severely weakened its role in national politics, served as a lesson for future political leaders regarding the need to preserve national unity to engage in effective political struggle. It was to be in the manner of unifying the movement that Gandhi would show a radical departure from the French Revolutionary tradition, on the premise of pluralism rather than a single discourse of origin and identity. It was on this plane

668 Sharma. Pages 14-45.

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that Gandhi revealed his extraordinary powers of political organisation on a mass scale in a highly effective break with what had proven a largely ineffective model of ‘war of manoeuvre’.

The Swadeshi Movement had certain unintended negative consequences in fostering the rise of a communalist politics based on narrow religious identities through the use of traditional popular customs and festivals to mobilise the mass movement. It failed to reach the Muslim masses or the Muslim peasantry. This was a tendency in turn exploited and encouraged by the colonial state to sow division. There were consequently communal riots in Bengal at the height of the Swadeshi Movement.\(^{670}\) These events signalled a potential looming breakdown in the efforts of the national movement to achieve consolidation.

When the ‘constitutional’ reforms of 1909 failed to introduce significant elements of democracy or self rule it proved a further disappointment of any hopes for change through the parliamentary political process. The introduction with this reform of a system of separate electorates based on religious identity further intensified the rising communalist political problem. In this context of impotence and thwarted objectives the new political trend of revolutionary terrorism, inspired by the methods of Irish nationalists and Russian nihilists and populists, embarked upon the organised assassination of unpopular British officials. In 1906 the *Yugantar* newspaper expressed the thinking behind the attacks by arguing, in reaction to the police assault on the peaceful Barisal Conference, that the “thirty crores of people inhabiting India must raise their sixty crores of hands to stop this curse of oppression. Force must be stopped by force”.\(^{671}\) As the discourse of political violence began to spread, it remained in question what form a mass movement based on force might take. Lajput Rai proposed a “Nationalist Movement entirely derived from Vedantic thought”.\(^{672}\) That is, many variations of nationalist discourse, multiple competing definitions of the nation, some of them grounded in anti-secular claims, were fighting based on the cumulative political experiences of the previous years.

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\(^{670}\) Chandra. *India’s Struggle for Independence*. Page 132.

\(^{671}\) Chandra. *India’s Struggle for Independence*. Page 143.

\(^{672}\) Heimsath, Page 315.
The Extremist wing, by praising the self-sacrifice and courage of these acts of "propaganda by deed", encouraged the notion that to be a revolutionary is to be a believer in violent means who is ready to give their life. Aurobindo outspokenly advanced this point of view. Among the numerous attacks, the Viceroy Lord Harding was bombed while riding an elephant in a state procession, and in London in 1909 the sensational assassination of Curzon-Wylie during Gandhi's visit on a diplomatic mission from South Africa inspired his writing *Hind Swaraj* on the return boat voyage home, which is essentially a dialogue between Gandhi's early thought and the spokesmen for the Indian school of modern violence. This was the Indian school of violence in its first wave. Between 1908 and 1919, 186 terrorists were killed or convicted before the movement gradually faded from view, owing to the lack of a mass base. In its international dimension, the Indian violent revolutionary movement in exile, the Ghadar, took inspiration from Irish, Mexican and Russian revolutionaries during the period of the First World War.

Gandhi returned to India in 1915 with the success of the Satyagraha experiment in South Africa to his credit, but as something of an outsider to Indian national politics. He felt an affinity with neither the Moderates nor the Extremists. At the suggestion of Tilak he spent a year in the study of Indian conditions before becoming directly involved in national politics. From 1917-1918 he led small scale Satyagraha activities on specific local issues, for peasant grievances in Champaran and Kheda and industrial workers in Ahmedabad. Through these experiences and the those in South Africa, Gandhi had gained an empirical understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the masses.

As scepticism reigned concerning the possibility of achieving a national consensus on specific social reform issues and the national social reform movement lost its public following, widespread local social reform movements never the less continued to flourish.\(^{673}\) It was on this grassroots level basis that Gandhi, by way of Constructive Programmes, would launch the national

\(^{673}\) Heimsath, Page 230.
movement afresh from the ground up, employing transformed religious meanings accessible to the
popular masses but anchored firmly in a secular and civil rights basis which placed among its main
priorities the achievement of Hindu-Muslim unity at the national level. Where the Indian National
Congress had sought to resolve the reform issue by assigning political reform to the national arena
for public discussion, and social reform to the local arena for private action, Gandhi created a
national network of Constructive Programmes by which social reforms could be undertaken at the
plural, popular and consensual levels. The fundamental importance of Constructive Work was
clearly articulated when Gandhi wrote that "civil disobedience in terms of independence without
the co-operation of the millions by way of constructive effort is mere bravado and worse than
useless".\textsuperscript{674} Gandhi's experiments from the 1920's created a secular-oriented programme of
national reform in which the burden of social reform was placed directly upon the population who
stood to benefit from it, rather than imposed from above through the intellectual designs of elites.

This novel line of action was grounded in Gandhi's radical democratic belief that "A moral
act must be our own act", and indeed, "We must have the liberty to do evil before we can learn to
do good".\textsuperscript{675} Emphasising learning, growth, or the democratic value and political significance of
everyday temporality, he sought to empower citizens rather than the state. On this novel basis the
Constructive Programme of 1922 called for national unity between Hindus and Muslims, an end to
untouchability, and sought to "foster local industries, improve sanitation, educate all children as
well as adults, promote provincial languages as well as Hindi, and emancipate women".\textsuperscript{676} Gandhi
sought the resources for political transformation within the people themselves as they existed in
their everyday temporality; he was fixated neither upon a superior rationality standing above
ordinary time and space nor upon a notion of some lost ideal and fixed cultural identity as the road
to nation making. In this way he took a radical step beyond the old paradigms of nation making.

Placing central emphasis on temporality, Gandhi urged that "as a farmer after tilling the land

\textsuperscript{674} Gandhi. \textit{Constructive Programme: It's Meaning and Place. In Hind Swaraj and other writings.} Page 180.
\textsuperscript{675} Terchek. Pages 24-25.
\textsuperscript{676} Terchek. Page 164.
devotes his entire attention to the growing of crops, so should the Congress workers, after a year of
destructive work in the form of civil disobedience, take seriously to constructive side of the
Congress programme".677

The year 1919 saw the beginnings of the Indian experiment at a nationwide level. The
expectation of constitutional concessions was disappointed at the end of World War I. When the
purportedly anti-terrorist Rowlatt Act was passed in March with its severe curtailment of civil
liberties, despite a unanimous vote against the bill by elected Indian leaders, a strong mood of
disillusionment with the promise of parliamentary politics began to prevail in the country.
Satyagraha begins where constitutional protest fails, and the Congress had by now grown sceptical
of advance through constitutional means. Gandhi called for a nationwide hortal or general strike of
fasting and prayer. When the events culminated in the Jillianwala Bagh massacre, on 18 April,
Gandhi withdrew the movement. The year 1919, despite this tragic turn of events, thereby saw the
new degree of his power over the Indian masses.

A year later, Gandhi launched a second nationwide struggle. In 1920 he became convinced
that the political system he had until now sought to reform needed to be ended. The Non-
Cooperation Movement, conceived out of the Khalifat Movement which had served to cement
Hindu-Muslim unity, sought reparation for the wrongs committed in Punjab and the defence of the
Khalifat in the World War I aftermath. Throughout 1920 and intense debates around means to
Swaraj Gandhi became the acknowledged leader of the Congress, and for the first time the
organisation became committed to an extra-constitutional mode of agitation at the Calcutta
Congress. The hitherto prevalent basis for the national movement in continuous obstruction of the
government based on the Irish model yielded to the Satyagraha principle of non-violence that seeks
to convert rather than thwart.678

677 Tendulkar Volume 3. Pages 64-65.
In the favourable religious climate from 1920-21, Gandhi undertook the transformation of the Congress into a mass organisation and movement. At the Nagpur session of the Congress the constitution of the Indian National Congress was revised to transform the institution from “an annual pageant and feast of oratory” into “a militant organization in touch with the masses”.679 The smallest unit of the Congress organisation became the village Congress committee, a number of which were grouped into a Union Congress Committee, with the All India Congress Committee consisting of about 350 members representing the Provinces. The annual fee for membership was radically reduced, and it “ceased to be the preserve of the upper and middle classes” with its doors open to “the masses in the smaller towns and villages whose political consciousness Gandhi was quickening”.680 The creation of a small Working Committee under the direction of the Congress President permitted the organisation to function uninterruptedly all year round instead of merely at annual sessions. The objectives involved fostering Hindu-Muslim unity, the abolition of “untouchability”, and the promotion of Khadi or local cloth production.

The Non-Cooperation programme thus paralysed the electoral system and involved pulling out of the system at every level, including the legal, tax, educational, industrial and military apparatus, and reconstituting an alternative productive and governing force to the state established as a complex and broadly accessible network throughout the nation. The Congress Volunteer Corps emerged as a parallel police force.681 The Home Rule Movement under Tilak and Annie Besant, begun in 1916 following the reintegration of the Congress the previous year, had forged organisational links between town and country, and created a generation of committed nationalists, in this way setting the conditions for Gandhi’s mass movement. By 1918, however, the Home Rule League found itself unable to show the way forward.682

681 Chandra. India’s Struggle for Independence. Page 189.
682 Chandra. India’s Struggle for Independence. Page 169.
Gandhi entered Indian national politics as an outsider, disliked by Moderates for his extra-constitutional tactics and Extremists for his unwillingness to embarrass the government during the war. In entering Indian politics, Gandhi "lacked a party" but "he possessed a technique of which he was the author and the sole practitioner". His rise to the summit of the Indian National Movement was the consequence of his having caught the imagination of the people in what was a fast growing popular mass movement. He said that the purpose of Satyagraha was to "strike the imagination of the people" and the "government" and a campaign "designed to rid the country of the school of violence". The year 1921 was a period of awakening for the Indian masses on the basis of the new secular and pluralistic techniques of non-violent organisation introduced by Gandhi. Gandhi compared it to the experience of an earthquake, as a "sort of general upheaval on the political plane (in which) the Government ceases to function ... the police stations, the courts, offices etc. all cease to be Government property and shall be taken charge of by the people". By mid-1921, thirty thousand people had been put in prison for civil disobedience from all over the country.

Most of the revolutionary terrorists, who had been severely repressed during World War I, had joined the Non-Cooperation Movement and suspended their activities. With the sudden suspension of the Movement in 1922 by Gandhi following the violence at Chauri Chaura in which several policemen were burned and hacked to death, the high hopes of many were dashed and a number of young people became drawn to the conviction that only violent methods could free India. As a result, the year 1922 saw the rise of a new wave of revolutionary terrorism. The period of political impasse and political stagnation from 1922-28 also saw the rise of communalist politics in the absence of a mass movement with its grounding in the earlier revivalist ideological options.

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684 Nanda. Page 212.
687 Quoted Nanda. Page 229.
Two strands of revolutionary terrorism evolved, in Punjab, UP and Bihar, and the other in Bengal, both under the influence of the upsurge of working class trade unionism after the War, and the Russian Revolution of 1917 seeing the success of the Bolshevik Party in consolidating the new state. The Hindustan Republican Army was founded in 1924 to organise armed revolution, 1925 saw the Kakori Conspiracy Case, in 1928 Bhagat Singh assassinated a policeman to avenge the death of Lala Lajput Rai, in 1929 there was the Assembly Bomb Case, and in the year 1931 when Bhagat Singh was hung two school girls shot dead the District Magistrate. Several weeks before his death, Bhagat Singh wrote his “Why I am an Atheist”, in which he argued that “Any man who stands for progress has to criticise, disbelieve and challenge every item of the old faith”, expressing a line of total revolutionary thought very much along the lines of French Revolutionary ideology. At the final stage of revolutionary terrorism from 1930-31, the movement - despite having contributed to the national movement in terms of an example of courage and determination - was still “not the politics of a mass movement” and had “failed to activate the masses or move them into political actions”.

Gandhi rejected the terrorist line of political action as based on an imaginary of “the magician’s mango”, able to “spring up from nowhere merely by engaging in heroic deeds”, or the imaginary of ‘speed’ or the ‘pure moment’. In contrast, he emphasised the value of time, arguing that the “pilgrimage to swaraj is a painful climb” requiring a “patient, intelligent and constructive effort of tens of thousands of men and women, young and old”. c. Satyagraha as an alternative paradigm of political action and modern nationalism: between “non-beginning” and “rupture”

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689 Chandra. India’s Struggle for Independence. Pages 247,248.
690 Chandra. India’s Struggle for Independence. Pages 249-253.
692 Chandra. India’s Struggle for Independence. Page 258.
The transformation of modern India into a democratic mass society by the Indian National Movement has been variously described as perhaps "the most colossal experiment in world history" and within the broader historical context as "the third moment in the great democratic experiment launched at the end of eighteenth century by the American and French revolutions". The Indian National Movement under Gandhi's leadership extended these heritages in notable ways, as well as embracing deeper social egalitarian assumptions identifiable with the socialist tradition, while remaining far away from the Soviet regime's "tone of dogmatic omniscience towards the outside world (while) in fact everything about its colossal new venture remained to be defined, not least in the minds of the leaders". The important additional steps taken by India were anchored largely in the legacy of Satyagraha and non-violence as an alternative political and epistemic paradigm of social action.

Gandhi praised these other Enlightenment experiences for their historical agency. He praised the Western Enlightenment tradition on many occasions in terms of free speech, liberty of the citizen, toleration, and constitutionalism, and also praised the role of these traditions in "English and French histories" in inspiring the "pursuit of right irrespective of the amount of suffering involved". Yet, he lamented the violence in these traditions and, in the name of "the rate of progress", implored that India "avoid, if we can, violence from our side". Thus, Gandhi sought by means of non-violence to improve the heritage of Enlightenment, identifying himself with certain aspects while rejecting others. He argued that "Disorderliness comes from anger, orderliness out of intelligent resistance". Gandhi's ideal of progress and political aim was the creation of a self disciplined national movement from the bottom up, and such progress, he argued, could only be achieved through non-violence.

697 Tendulkar. Volume 1. Page 293.
698 Tendulkar. Volume 1. Page 293.
At the core of Gandhi’s critique of revolutionary violence was a critique of “speed” and an elitist politics of seizing power, or the pure moment of insurrection. He argued in 1916 that the “India of today in her impatience has produced an army of anarchists”. While endorsing the basic goals of anarchism and the anarchist philosophy itself in principle, he identified the “impatience” at the core of violent anarchism “as a sign of fear”. He similarly criticised Bolshevism in 1919, while admiring some of its principles, for its obsession with “materialistic advancement as a goal” at the expense of “liberty”. Gandhi thus linked violence, fear and speed in a negative triangle as a form of impatience fit only to “replace one evil by another and a worse”. This was really a critique of the political logic or means of the French Revolutionary paradigm as it reproduced itself across historical time in different efforts to confront the issues of political and economic domination. Gandhi also critiqued the ontological premises of this tradition in connection with political violence, arguing that violence lacked any ontological or sacred sanction and signified only the “ascendancy of that party which makes the most effective use of violence”.

Satyagraha became the guiding political force for the Indian National Movement in 1920 when the Congress had grown sceptical of advance through constitutional means. It is apparent that the rise of revolutionary terrorism had also grown in inverse proportion to the declining level of confidence in the constitutional method under the colonial regime, and that Satyagraha provided an alternative and highly effective extra-constitutional form of political struggle. Revolutionary terrorism therefore also grew during intervals where Satyagraha was in temporary suspension.

Communalism as an idea constellation was not necessarily integrated or clearly understood — its precepts were often absorbed unconsciously in dangerous if fragmentary form by many shades of political opinion. If the most extreme forms were a discourse of fear, hate, paranoia and war, reducing the real historical complexity to a one-dimensional or ontological figure, a form of

704 Chandra. India’s Struggle for Independence. Page 185.
counter-Enlightenment and romanticism rejecting the very principle of multi-cultural democracy in favour of a single religious-cultural identity, communalism also in respects reproduced the ideological tendencies of the French Revolutionary paradigm to subjugate minority identity to a transcendent "general will". Gandhi's political campaign became increasingly aware of these multiple dangers and tried, over time, to construct secular safeguards against them. His concept of nationalism involved the fomenting of a highly increased sense of secular "public obligation", or "commitment to public as against family obligation".705

This sense of public obligation was significantly linked to civil liberties, as Gandhi saw "civil liberty consistent with the observance of non-violence as the first step toward swaraj".706 Gandhi accordingly insists that the practice of Satyagraha "demands respect for the opposite views" and "unless we are able to evolve a spirit of mutual toleration for diametrically opposite views, non-co-operation is an impossibility".707 The Congress itself he conceived as "not a party organization" but intended to "provide a platform for all shades of opinion", and hence as based not on dogma or doctrine but constant ongoing dialogue or the transformation of consciousness.708

The evolution of the Indian Left in new and original directions that departed considerably from the prevailing Left paradigm of the period as dictated by the Soviet model was reflected in the election of Jawaharlal Nehru as President in 1936-37 and of Subhas Bose for 1938-9. This evolution itself reflected a profound and sustained political and intellectual interaction between Indian Left activists and thinkers and the National Movement under the guiding influence of Gandhian Satyagraha technique and philosophy. Each time that Nehru faced a choice "between giving up his Gandhian political practice as the Indian left had done and giving up Stalin-Marxism, he gave up the latter".709 Among all of the competing and interacting threads giving shape to the National Movement, it was the predominance of Satyagraha technique under Gandhi's leadership

706 Quoted in Dalton. Page 5.

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that pushed it in a unique direction in comparison to other national experiences which followed more faithfully on the path of the French Revolutionary model.

In his confrontation with the two waves of revolutionary terrorism Gandhi essentially confronted a distinctive ideological paradigm of political action and modern nationalism going back to the experience of the French Revolution in its totalising aspect. In having articulated an alternative paradigm of political action and modern nationalism, distinguished at the most elementary level by the transformation to non-violent means, Gandhi presents us with a legacy which may be illustrated in comparative perspective with the French Revolutionary one based on two points:

1. The problem of means-ends. The problem of “truth” conceived in a manner other than purely scientific or technical since the French Revolution addresses what is regularly called the ‘crisis of modernity’, a conceptually murky and politically dangerous realm of discourse in the context of modern nation making. According to the secular principle, this problem of the ‘meaning of life and the universe’ should be left open and undecided in the public sphere. A comparative analysis of the manner in which the problem is broached in Gandhi’s conception of Satyagraha and the French Revolutionary paradigm, often taken to exhaust the definition of modernity as such, throws a light on different patterns of nation making.

The problem of an Absolutist conception of truth lingered in the ideology that came to dominate the French Revolution and this had an impact on the rather overlooked issue of means and ends. In sum, a conception of a Final End came to dominate which influenced a general tendency in “Western political theory” whereby “means have been eclipsed by ends” and become mere “abstract method” or “social and political machinery”. This is linked in revolutionary discourse to an ideal of conscience as moral passion. In contrast, Gandhi’s thought introduces a principle of non-violence into nation-making in which process or means (i.e.; temporality) prevails

710 Bondurant. Page 12.

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in significance over Final Ends. It is closer to the thought of John Dewey, himself a figure representing an alternative tendency in Enlightenment thought, when he argued against "final achievement" in favour of "growth (as) a higher value and ideal than is sheer attainment".\(^{711}\)

This also entails, for Gandhi, an alternative paradigm of conscience. We may characterise the overall opposition as that of "pledge", or communicative rationality, and "violence", or naked force which derives from an alleged ontological source of legitimacy. This opposition concerns two modern temporal frameworks: abstract reason as indicating a higher order of understanding above everyday time based on prior knowledge of the whole, and experimentation grounded within the limits of the everyday world of multiple perspectives against the backdrop of an eternally unfinished universe. Basing his political activities on the second outlook, Gandhi argued that "human society is a ceaseless growth", and that "there is no such thing as perfect rest or repose in this visible universe of ours".\(^{712}\)

The main consequence of the Absolutist conception of Truth in the context of nation-making is hostility to social pluralism. The Rousseau-ian "general will" translated into political practice tends to become a single definition of the nation. Just as Gandhi was an individual whose entire adult life was spent in a search for truth which moved from the private to the political sphere of mass revolution in a struggle for national freedom, so the lead actors and ideologues of the French Revolution saw their work in terms of an affirmation of the fixed identity of truth and liberty defined by contrast with its enemies. The "pledge" in its essence as a limit entails an evolving and widening public sphere, multiple consciousnesses, and the absence of the notion of objective enemies. In practical politics for Gandhi this translated into building multiple "political organizations" based on "permanent structures and full-time personnel" geared to "public effectiveness." In this way he was able to "rationalize and extend the organizational bases of

\(^{712}\) Tendulkar Volume 2. Page 225.
Indian political life" across the span of everyday time.\textsuperscript{713} These institutional constructs constitute part of a 'war of position' during the revolutionary phase of nation making.

Gandhi was powerfully influenced, particularly through his mother, by Jain ideas and practices, and particularly by the doctrine of syadvad.\textsuperscript{714} This doctrine teaches that "reality, whatever it is, expresses itself in multiple forms, with the result that no absolute predication is possible", and is opposed to the "doctrine that reality has but one true nature".\textsuperscript{715} Gandhi adopted the view that "all knowledge was partial or corrigible", that different "men saw the world differently", and that "violence denied these fundamental facts".\textsuperscript{716} He insisted that "the claim to infallibility would always be a most dangerous claim to make". As a result, he argued, "no one has a right to coerce others to act according to his own view of truth".\textsuperscript{717}

These concepts were translated into a political principle of secular autonomy by Gandhi, who consequently gave "a larger space to civil society than found in most Western theories".\textsuperscript{718} At this level Gandhi was concerned with "the role of institutions or the way resources or vulnerabilities affect the choices available to individuals".\textsuperscript{719} He sought to "design institutional arrangements that lessen the costs to ordinary people of meeting their moral responsibilities".\textsuperscript{720} Therefore he not only promoted secularism, but emphasised the key role of civil society in minimising violence based on the insight that "if the state was to become less violent it had to act in tandem with the organs of civil society".\textsuperscript{721} While Gandhi mistrusted state power, he held that "there are certain things which cannot be done without political power". At the same time, he argued that "there are numerous other things which do not at all depend upon political power".\textsuperscript{722}

\textsuperscript{713} Rudolph/Rudolph. Pages 78-79.
\textsuperscript{714} Rudolph/Rudolph. Page 17.
\textsuperscript{715} Ed. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore. \textit{A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy}. Princeton University Press, 1957. Page 261
\textsuperscript{716} Parekh. Page 156.
\textsuperscript{717} Dalton Pages 10-11.
\textsuperscript{719} Terchek. Page 26.
\textsuperscript{720} Terchek. Page 41.
\textsuperscript{721} Pare. Page 62.
\textsuperscript{722} Quoted in Pare. Page 62.
For Gandhi, the limit to a shared public truth is the guarantee of freedom; in this context the state only occupies a purely formal or structural role, in guaranteeing democratic rights, but has no role in arbitrating public truth. He argued that "freedom of conscience and religion is essential".\textsuperscript{723} He emphasised the need of a division between the private and the public spheres in saying in 1924 that "I cannot impose my personal faith on others, never on a national organization".\textsuperscript{724} Thus, the state remains equidistant from each religion according to the secular ideal, while the realm of meaning is left to the evolving space of the public sphere. Gandhi argued in 1942: "What conflict of interest can there be between Hindus and Muslims in the matter of revenue, sanitation, police, justice, or the use of public conveniences? The difference can only be in religious usage and observances with which a secular state has no concern".\textsuperscript{725} It was this secular logic that provided the basis for his assertion that the "ability to reach unity in diversity will be the beauty and the test of our civilization".\textsuperscript{726}

Moreover, as the technique of non-violence recognises no enemy the problem of political oppression must therefore be confronted purely on the level of the struggle to transform existing institutional forms. Gandhi argued in 1921 that "Our non-co-operation is neither with the English nor with the West. (It) is with the system the English have established in India".\textsuperscript{727} When delivering an independence pledge in 1930 he declared his "ambition" as no less than "to convert the British people through non-violence".\textsuperscript{728} Transforming the political system within the framework of non-violence is a matter of actively directing the evolution of conscience at firstly the individual and ultimately the societal level, operating through the "whole organisational and industrial system of the territory which lies to the rear of the army in the field" in a struggle.

\textsuperscript{723} Tendulkar 2. Page 153.
\textsuperscript{724} Tendulkar 2. Page 167.
\textsuperscript{725} Chandra. \textit{Gandhiji, Secularism and Communalism}. Page 3.
\textsuperscript{726} Tendulkar Volume 2. Page 178.
\textsuperscript{727} Tendulkar Volume 2. Page 64.
\textsuperscript{728} Tendulkar Volume 3. Page 17.
requiring “enormous sacrifices by infinite masses of people”. The possibility of doing so already entails a great depth of hegemony among the population prior to any eventual transfer of power. For the French Revolutionary ideology, to the contrary, the character of implementing public truth is a political programme defined by the very absence of limits and taking recourse to violence against opponents in the name of specific and exclusive ontological claims, involving a programme imposed from above following a violent seizure of power.

Saint Just accordingly argued that “reason and justice are one” and justified the unlimited detention of political prisoners in the name of the “progress of reason and justice”. He urged the French people not to hesitate in executing Louis XVI but to “walk straight to the truth”, as if the moment of violence would somehow fulfill a higher design. Elsewhere he argued that the “everything must be done that the hatred of kings passes into the blood of the people”. He insisted that “the nation has only one heart”; that “the general will can never harbour any principle alien to itself”; and that the “pure love of the nation is the foundation of liberty”. One must therefore identify wholeheartedly with a single definition of the nation in order to qualify as a good citizen in this interpretation of Rousseau’s theory of the general will. In the name of “purity” and the “supreme power of truth”, he argued that the Republic by way of “conscience” or the “public spirit in people’s heads” fight “conspiracies” and “deliver the people from the malignance of factions” by “punishing hypocrisy”. The struggle against enemies at both the level of thought and action is hence at the core of a concept of national identity in which “the people is one”. As Arendt has observed, only “in the presence of the enemy can such a thing as la nation une et indivisible, the ideal of French and all other nationalism, come to pass”.

729 Gramsci. Pages 234/238.  
This construction of unity in the French Revolutionary paradigm is provided with a foundation in philosophical absolutism transposed to the realm of modern politics. The problem in its philosophical context had been concerned with the issue of certainty in the disorder of modern experience. The "Ideology of Reason" central to the French Enlightenment "reason was not just pitted against religion, defined in opposition to religion (but) was implicitly granted the same absolute, dogmatic status as religion".\textsuperscript{737} The practical consequence is the violence implicit in the means to the ideal end of a "conflict free society" based on the epistemic ideal of "abstract Reason". In this we encounter the dangerous problem of the state taking on the role of guaranteeing certainty by closing the problem of conflicting meaning and interests through violence in terms of one claim or the other. It is the undoing of the secular principle of an open public sphere.

The construction further creates a politically dangerous binary between tradition and modernity. Arendt has pointed out the link between the ideal of a "new beginning" and violence in that "the task of foundation, the setting of a new beginning (...) seemed to demand violence and violation" in order to simulate the "repetition" of the "beginning of all history".\textsuperscript{738} This conception of the Revolution as embodying a limitless totality was expressed in Sieyes \textit{What is the Third Estate?} when he proclaimed that the "nation is prior to everything. Its will is always legal; indeed it is the law itself".\textsuperscript{739}

Thus in response to those who charged that his "principles are without any guarantee against violence", Saint-Just replied that "the true is always without guarantee; everything follows from it".\textsuperscript{740} In so far as the French Revolution was conceived by its principle actors in terms of limitless philosophical ambition, this is essentially a philosophical conception of totality that was further affirmed in Saint Just's rather infamous claim that "everything must be permitted to those who


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follow the direction of the Revolution".\textsuperscript{741} The means, then, are entirely without limit in the
struggle for the absolute or Final End, and the obstacle to this Final End is in the hidden thoughts
and activities of the nation's enemies who represent surviving elements of the accumulated
corruption of the nation's past.

Michael Polanyi has identified these epistemic tendencies with a paradigm of conscience
expressing the "self destructive implications of the Enlightenment" or "moral passions" which
break with the traditional definition of "moral man achieving serenity by curbing his passions".\textsuperscript{742}
From the point of view of "moral passion", a "comprehensive moral protest that is without
precedent in history", the situation is characterised by Polanyi as follows: "If society is not a divine
institution, it is made by man, and man is free to do with society what he likes. There is then no
excuse for having a bad society, and we must make a good one without delay". It follows that man
is under the obligation to "take power" by way of "revolution" with the aim of achieving "a
comprehensive improvement of society" by way of "comprehensive powers" and to "regard all
resistance to yourself as high treason". By this logic, Polanyi argues, "there is a progression from
Robespierre to his successors \textit{which transforms Messianic violence from a means to an end into an
aim in itself}".\textsuperscript{743}

Saint-Just consistently evoked the ideal of moral passion in his numerous references to the
value of hate as an elemental force and his call to judge the enemies of the Revolution "with
furor".\textsuperscript{744} The final implication of moral passion is an appeal to what Arendt has called the "pre-
political", which substitutes an "anonymous stream of violence for the free and deliberate actions
of men".\textsuperscript{745} Hence the 'elemental' force of violence supersedes the 'conscious' process of
communication as a means, insurrection is ranked at a higher plane than transformation, and
destruction deemed superior to reconciliation. Yet this endorsement of violence is unthinkable

\textsuperscript{741} Furet/Ozouf. \textit{Idees}. Page 427.
\textsuperscript{742} Michael Polanyi. \textit{Beyond Nihilism}. Page 97.
\textsuperscript{743} Michael Polanyi. \textit{Beyond Nihilism}.
without the prior ontological claims (on the historical role of a class, or the fundamental goodness of natural man and the people) which sanction its final objective. In these debates we see the opposed figures of insurrection and transformation, the imaginary of a pure instant versus the reckoning with temporality.

Gandhi was very much an advocate of prolonged transformation over the instant of insurrection. The French Revolutionary construct of epistemic absolutism and moral passion constitute the primary point of contention, very much linked to the problem of violence, between Gandhi and the French Revolutionary ideology in its totalising aspect. Arendt's remark on the supposedly inherent nature of "all nationalism" does not apply to the overall historical experience of Indian nationalism as developed during the independence struggle. Nor is her additional claim that any mass based revolution seeking to tackle the pressing vital issues of material want and hunger necessarily finishes in a totalitarian state borne out.\footnote{Arendt on the "Social Question".} The Indian experience was after all "one of the biggest mass movements modern society has ever seen".\footnote{Bipan Chandra. India's Struggle for Independence. Page 13.} This gap in her work suggests a severe short sightedness in the study of national revolutions even by highly acclaimed, competent and influential scholars.

We see, in these two different models, completely opposed ideas of truth: (1) in the French Revolutionary discourse, the absolute absence of limits is the condition for living in Truth, as limits in the public space imply hidden things, shadows veiling conspiracies or doubts, and so forth, and therefore a compromise of the Truth which is necessarily whole or not the Truth at all. Hegel wrote, very much taking up this line of thought on a philosophical level, that the "True is the whole" and the "whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development".\footnote{O.W.F. Hegel. Phenomenology of the Spirit. Oxford University Press, 1977. Page 11.} The essence guarantees the identity of Truth, and in the historical process functions as the Final End in which the Truth already exists as a complete yet unrealized whole or ontological figure. This is Absolute Reason as criticised by Dewey for assuming "that there is
somehow fixed in advance, a single ‘literal’ sense to ‘exist’ or ‘identity’", and constructing “a Reality feudally superior to the events of everyday occurrence” which ignores the “full complexity of moral experience as lived”. Tendencies of organisation centring such lived experience are anchored in temporality rather than absolute ends, and by extension a politics of temporality is more democratic, situation-specific and less concerned with horizons of higher truth.

(2) In the thought of Gandhi, conversely, the existence of a strict limit (that is, the pledge of non-violence) is the very precondition for the mere possibility of even seeking the Truth. It is a secular ideal of truth. There being no ideal or universal blueprint, social conflicts may only be confronted in the complexity of the everyday world where they are lived. Once violence is introduced, the outcome becomes the random consequence of brute force. He thus argued that “there is no way to find Truth except the way of non-violence”. Tendencies to moral passion in the necessity of a “detached state of mind”, or the ideal of inner peace at the core of Gandhi’s philosophy. He insisted that in “civil disobedience there should be no excitement”. In 1925 he argued that it is crucial to conceive nationalism beyond hatred and to struggle for national independence without hating the tyrant. Satyagraha was “a doctrine in which you get rid of that kind of passion and ill will in the quickest manner possible”. Gandhi first articulated the basic difference between his own view and the French Revolutionary tradition methodically in 1909. In the South African struggle he insisted that the “weight” of a “pledge” held greater power than the violence of the South African state. In the same year during a four month stay in London following the political assassination of Sir Curzon Wyllie he met well known Indian terrorists and argued that their patriotism was “blind” because violent

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means could only result in further violence and disaster. During this year he clearly contrasted “pledge” to “violence” as a political principle in Hind Swaraj, the record of these conversations.

A double critique of the school of violence is at work in these writings, taking issue with the practical consequences of both absolute reason and moral passion as a programme of nation building. The first is epistemic and the second concerns the ideal of conscience. Firstly, there is a conception of “relative” rather than “absolute” knowledge underlying the limiting principle of “pledge” over the limitless programme based on “violence”. For Gandhi “man is not capable of knowing the absolute truth and therefore is not competent to punish”. This is the very basis for the limit which is therefore designed to preserve a condition of open-ness. It is precisely the “inability to know this absolute truth that required he maintain an unceasingly open approach to those who would differ from him”.

The heritage of Machiavelli which insists upon the central role of violence in the political realm is thus replaced by a strict boundary set before practice through which the public sphere is opened up on a mass scale and functions on three levels of persuasion. These include “persuasion through reason”, “persuasion through suffering wherein the satyagrahi attempts to dramatise the issues at stake and get through to the opponents unprejudiced judgment so that he may willingly come again onto a level where he may be persuaded through rational argument”, and finally “non-violent coercion characterized by such tools as non-cooperation and civil disobedience.”

The ideal of “limit” as a guardian of Truth, or the freedom to search for it, is expressed in the principle of “non-beginning”. Gandhi’s principle of “non-beginning” constitutes an alternative to the French Revolutionary principle of “rupture”. Each is grounded in a different logic: that of “rupture” in ontology and that of “non-beginning” in experimentation. The ideal underlying
“rupture” of a “unique event” or “beginning that is separated from everything” evokes a pure and completed Platonic essence transposed to historic time and looking through a single point of view grounded in certitude. This is replaced in Gandhi’s thought by an evolving web of interrelations or “conditioned genesis” in an unfinished universe composed of multiple points of view and where experiment is the only guiding principle. He described this as an “oceanic circle” or “free and voluntary play of mutual forces”. The “rupture” centres a teleological push from within, or “necessity”, and the “circle” a fundamental interdependence within the changing environment. These are really, in their practical application, two distinct ways of conceiving the identity of the modern state and the role of the state in relation to civil society.

Calling for the “surrender of all titles of honour and honorary offices, boycott of schools and colleges and law courts and the councils”, Gandhi conceives a broader definition of the state apparatus to be transformed including not only the government, the bureaucracy, the police, and the military but also the educational system, the media and the judiciary. The entire social environment as the integrated field of state and civil society must be involved in the process of transformation to a democratic order, and not simply the state as the apex or the centre of power.

The principle of ‘rupture’ is grounded in the episteme of ‘here’ and ‘hereafter’ at the centre of attacks by the European ‘philosophers of suspicion’ since the nineteenth century in their genealogical deconstruction of Western Christian thought and its legacy in both Enlightenment moral idealism and modern revolutionary ideology. In one way, such criticisms represent an attack of the tradition of counter-Enlightenment. The problem of this episteme, which is at the core of debates about post-structuralism, in fact does not have real application where the discourse of “non-beginning” as conceived by Gandhi is concerned. The discourse of “non-beginning” in fact partakes of an alternative paradigm that we may describe as ‘imminence’, and is far closer to the

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thought of Dewey in his ideas on “conceptual pluralism” and “deliberative democracy” or growth as a moral end.

In the concept of “non-beginning” Gandhi denies the notion of any strict historical rupture, seeing rather degrees of continuity and discontinuity, and therefore does not accept that societal evolution must one day attain completion by ending in a certain form. There is no “end of history” and nor, as a result, can there be what Dewey has criticised in the dominant Enlightenment tradition as a “call to create a world of ‘reality’ de novo”.760 The relative nature rather than absolute nature of knowledge also implies its social nature because the “truth which is not absolute relates to and partakes of human needs” and “individual man searches for the truth in terms of the community of which he is a part”.761 Although morality remains autonomous of religious and other cultural forces, the concept of reason as a force of social agency does not exist entirely independently of religious and other imminent influences already functioning in the social and cultural environment. Reason does not therefore imply the need for “pitting the past against the present” driven by an ideal of absolute rupture.762 While Gandhi did argue that “every religion has, in this age of reason, to submit to the acid test of reason and universal justice if it is to ask for universal assent”, he did not thereby argue that tradition should be destroyed to start anew at ground zero based on abstract reason.763 In sum, we have a more modest but no less critical notion of reason.

Gandhi’s axiom, “the non-beginning of a thing is supreme wisdom”, rather suggests a conception of rationality as choosing intelligently among existing alternatives in a given situation to promote certain already existing democratic tendencies and actively oppose others of a socially oppressive nature.764 This paradigm of rationality is carried out within the democratic framework of non-violent conflict resolution, conceiving existing traditions within an evolutionary continuum, and organisationally related to “the aspirations and objective needs of the popular social and

economic forces”. It was on this basis that Gandhi fought against “untouchability” and the oppression of women in Indian society, transforming cultural institutions from within through political tactics generating persuasion, and in the overall process of constructive work. These ideas are very similar to Dewey’s general concept of “reflective transcendence” by which the “choice is not between a moral authority outside custom and one within it (but) between adopting more or less intelligent and significant customs”. Gandhi applied these same tactics in seeking to defuse inter-communal tensions. The rationality behind these political manoeuvres is akin, again, to Dewey’s imminent concept of rationality.

The alternative to “abstract Reason” for Dewey is a principle by which “communal dialogue between diverse perspectives allows us to develop flexible, well-tested points of view”, an approach more effective and inclusive than “setting out individually to construct a foundational, perspective-independent truth”. Dewey viewed reason as “inherently social, embodied, and historically situated” with an emphasis on “practical enquiry” and “beliefs as tendencies to act” over “intellectual abstractions”. According to Hilary Putnam, “Enlightenments’ (...) are simultaneously revolutions in our epistemological thinking and in our ethical thinking” in which we learn “what it is to apply intelligence to an ethical or political problem”, and he argued that Dewey’s thought constituted a “third moment” in historical Enlightenment. Yet many of the central ideas that Dewey conceived abstractly Gandhi actually put into practice and therefore anyone with a serious interest in Dewey’s ideas would do well to look closely at the example of Gandhi’s political practice.

In the politics introduced by Gandhi through the Indian National Movement the means became the focus, as a process of growth, over Final Ends, implying an open and communicative (i.e.; temporal) rather than teleological and fixed absolute rationality. Gandhi did not suggest that

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765 Rudolph. Page 78.
“truth could be a universally valid object of acknowledgement (but) only claimed to have found a way or means to the truth”. From his point of view “the relative character of truth for any finite individual was the operative principle (...) and the very grounding for his strong insistence on the need for rational dialogue to overcome social conflict and disputes”.769 In this way there are no Final Ends in Gandhi’s thought, “essence” or single definition to be fixed once and for all, and the point is rather to keep the process of social and political evolution as open as possible to the full plurality of contributions within the limit of non-violence. A forcible closing of this open temporal frontier by any party, in selecting a single definition of the nation to the exclusion of all others as a form of public politics, would indicate a betrayal of the quest for Truth.

Gandhi articulated the entire project of Indian independence in these terms. He accordingly described Swaraj, or independence, by saying that to “give Swaraj one definite meaning is to narrow the outlook, to limit what is at present happily limitless. Let the content of Swaraj grow with the growth of national consciousness and aspirations”.770 This is an idea certainly incompatible with the uniformity implied in the Rousseauian “general will”, reflecting Gandhi’s reckoning with the cultural multiplicity of Indian society and the nation’s heterodox tradition of reason. Amartya Sen has written an account of this distinctive Indian tradition of Enlightenment, arguing that “the history of heterodoxy in India has a bearing not only on the development and survival of democracy in India” but “has also richly contributed (...) to the emergence of secularism in India”.771 The heritage of Enlightenment therefore found its way into the Indian National Movement not merely by way of the various threads of the European and American Enlightenments but also by way of the complex Indian Enlightenment already discussed in this study.

769 Bondurant. Pages 16-17.
770 Tendulkar. Volume 2. Page 240
In explaining the alternative paradigm expressed through Gandhi’s thought and practice we therefore may look, for example, to such highly influential Indian thinkers as Nargajuna (2 BC) and his concept of the “middle way”. His concept of “emptiness” argued that philosophy focused on the notion of “being” or “entity” suggests an “essence” or existence independent of the surrounding environment. The concept of “emptiness” lies at the middle way between existence and non-existence, of which neither extreme is appropriate in describing the world as we live it. “Emptiness” implied entities without essence, or a world characterised by dependent origination and interdependence, where it was futile to think in terms of fixed or original identities or pure cause and effect. He thus thought of the world in terms of changing conditions and relationships of interdependence, his work accomplishing a “comprehensive critique of metaphysical dogmatism”.772

Finally, the paradigm of the Indian National Movement and Satyagraha rests upon the logic of choice over discovery.773 The Truth for Gandhi is not ontological, an identity already fixed in advance outside the flow of time, waiting to be discovered, since “the real definition (of Swaraj) will be determined by our action, the means we adopt to achieve the goal”. In this sense it is a temporal choice, a heritage reconstructed by our actions and values today. He continues: “If we would but concentrate upon the means, Swaraj will surely take care of itself. Our explorations should take place in the direction of determining not the definition of an undefinable term like Swaraj but in discovering the ways and means”.774

The French Revolutionary paradigm of “rupture” was a quest for a-temporal “foundations” in “the goodness of unmasked human nature” or “the infallibility of the people”.775 This had its roots in Rousseau’s idea of l’ame dechiree. To recover the “foundation” in these “original men” it was necessary only to tear aside the artificiality of the socially and the politically accumulated

773 These expressions coined by Amartya Sen. See Argumentative Indian.

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institutions and all the people with them to undo the corrupting work of time and lay bare the
timelessly pure.\footnote{Arendt. \textit{On Revolution}. Page 109.} An ontology of “man’s nature” is at the core of this metaphysic of development,
justifying change at any cost, with the function of providing certainty or closure where modern
social conflicts in fact keep the situation in perpetual unrest. This unrest is temporality, which
democracy seeks to manage non-violently without attempting to close it. In Gandhi’s thought there
were no such timeless foundations, but only vows in the imperfect but corrigible world of time.

Gandhi did not seek to impose closure upon modern experience, but to devise tactics for
living harmoniously in the continual open-ness, diversity and uncertainty of a large multi-religious
nation-state linked to the wider world of globalisation. This is the irony of claims that Gandhi
sought to adhere to some frozen pre-modern traditional past. His concern with democracy at the
national level clearly involves a recognition of the nation-state. At the same time he was acutely
aware of its danger. The same principle of limitation guided Gandhi’s thought on industrialisation.
He argued in 1919 that “opposition to machines is not the point. What suits the country is the
point. What machines are meant for”.\footnote{Gandhi. \textit{Hind Swaraj and other writings}. Page 165.} He criticised the ‘total’ goal of development as an
ideological veil for a uniform economic pattern dictated by the expanding boundaries of
international capital, but otherwise had “nothing to say against the development of any other
industry by means of machinery”\footnote{Gandhi. \textit{Hind Swaraj and others writings}. Page 165.}.

The concept of dharma which functions as a moral code in \textit{ahimsa} is emphatically modern
in its intentions and application, but functions based on a rationality of intelligent selection among
alternatives rather than fixed teleological ends.\footnote{Chandra. \textit{Gandhiji, Secularism and Communalism}. Page 11.} What Gandhi really opposed was the principle of
blind totality as a motivation in politics and human affairs. Hence Gandhi argued in 1909 that “It is
impertinence for any man or any body of men to begin or to contemplate reform of the whole
world". By this he meant that for the Indian National Movement there could be no "rigid general principles" or any "sharp break" with the past. For this reason Gandhi stressed that civil disobedience "can never be directed toward a general cause" and the "issue must be definite and capable of being clearly understood and within the power of the opponent to yield". This temporal and context specific emphasis entails that "the method properly applied must lead to the final goal".

Gandhi presented in vows an alternative to the preoccupation with absolute foundations. Vows are of a temporal nature, taken within a specific horizon and for a specific purpose. In so far as a "liberal society is one which is content to call ‘true’ (or ‘right’ or ‘just’) whatever the outcome of undistorted communication happens to be, whatever view wins in a free and open encounter," we may contrast the project of democracy as a system of constraints to protect liberty with the project of ideal absolute ends prepared to sacrifice liberty to attain its sublime goal. The principle of vows as practised by Gandhi belongs within the first tradition.

Gandhi said in 1929 that a "life without vows is like a ship without an anchor or like an edifice that is built on sand instead of solid rock". There is no foundation which guarantees stability, only the concentration upon the means which expresses the experimental principle over the teleological certainties of historicism in which the specific moment is irretrievably swallowed in a larger vision. Satyagraha is a "technique which may be wielded by an individual" and so "precludes historicism, a metaphysical explanatory principle". Gandhi insisted that in social struggle "any isolated good act has its consequence, no matter whether it is done by the humblest or the highest". This follows Thoreau's championing of "peaceable revolution" in which conscience has the power to make moral distinctions and the enormous potential power to non-violently

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783 Rorty. 67.
785 Bondurant. 166.
withdraw support from the state so that “it matters not how small the beginning is”.\textsuperscript{787} Certainly in Gandhi’s idea of political struggle there were moments of directness; but it was the multiple and dispersed series of moments leading up to that moment of directness that had the highest importance in deciding the outcome.

2. \textit{The principle of experimentation and non-violence as inclusion.} The Indian National Movement employing the technique of Satyagraha under Gandhi’s leadership was a modern experiment. Gandhi considered the idea that one might “lead the nation to its predestined goal” a “hallucination”.\textsuperscript{788} He considered that “non-co-operation was a dangerous experiment” in which “there was every possibility of a mistake in its application to large masses”.\textsuperscript{789} Gandhi believed that “Life is but an endless series of experiments”, a point of view similar to that expressed by Dewey when he wrote that “life is itself a sequence of trials”.\textsuperscript{790} Very much unlike “the Incorruptible” Robespierre of the French Revolution, Gandhi claimed that his was a “struggling, striving, erring, imperfect soul” which could “rise only by experimenting on myself”.\textsuperscript{791} In this there is a further emphasis on temporality rather than the absolute. Upon his release from prison in 1924 following the Non-Cooperation Movement and the period of dispute between No-Changers and Swarajists, Gandhi charged that each side had “claimed the monopoly of truth with an ignorant certainty of conviction” and promptly sought a possible middle way in the deadlock.\textsuperscript{792}

It was this experimental conviction that characterised Gandhi’s entire political career. In this way he was able to “use the traditional to promote the novel; he reinterpreted tradition in such a way that revolutionary ideas clothed in familiar expressions were readily adopted and employed

\textsuperscript{787} Henry David Thoreau. \textit{Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers}. Emulation Books, Montreal. 1963. Pages 12,3,11.
\textsuperscript{788} Tendulkar. Volume 2. Page 136.
\textsuperscript{789} Tendulkar. Volume 2. Page 149.
\textsuperscript{791} Tendulkar. Volume 2. Page 149.
\textsuperscript{792} Tendulkar. Volume 2. Page 127.
towards revolutionary ends”.\textsuperscript{793} There is in this outlook a rejection of the premise of ontology that characterises the dominant French Revolutionary paradigm of modernity in its philosophical ambitions. In 1925 he made this point explicit, stating that “We need not debate whether what we see is unreal, and whether the real behind the unreality is what we do not see. Let both be equally real, if you will”.\textsuperscript{794} This may well be compared to Dewey’s concept of “conceptual pluralism”, which denies the need for any “assertion about the real object or the real world or the reality”, while asserting that “an uncorrupted realism would accept such things (as error, dreams, hallucinations) as real events, and find in them no other problems than those attending the consideration of any real occurrence – namely, the problems of structure, origin, and operation”.\textsuperscript{795}

This idea is also strongly present in the Bhagavad-Gita, as Gandhi understood it, in the concept of “non-attachment”. This concept, with its focus on the “goal of self realization (…) without fear of consequences or desire for a reward”, was central to Gandhi’s thought.\textsuperscript{796} It is at bottom precisely the opposite of the Western tradition of metaphysics. Metaphysics by nature wants to lay a final claim to the truth about the nature of being. The ideology of the French Revolution, and the historicist theoretical perspective which long prevailed in its interpretation, made central the transcendence of all limits – to the “End of History”, to Absolute Knowledge or Absolute Freedom. In going beyond all limits the aim is to fix a final and frozen end in the “conflict free society”.

The Bhagavad-Gita concept of “non-attachment”, at least in its modern interpretation by Gandhi, rejects the inclination to hold onto a single ontological definition of truth in principle. Contrary to the fundamentally metaphysical impulse to go beyond all limits to some pure state of “true reality”, the concept of “non-attachment” values the ideal of self limitation. Essentially the doctrine argues that there is an error in attempting to cling too tightly to any one idea about the

\textsuperscript{793} Bondurant. Page 105.
\textsuperscript{794} Tendulkar. Volume 2. Page 216.
\textsuperscript{795} Dewey. \textit{The Philosophy of John Dewey}. Pages 86, 89.
\textsuperscript{796} Nanda. Page 68.
nature of reality, or any one “thing” in particular. The principle of self limitation in Gandhi’s thought and political practice is accordingly not concerned with fixing a dogmatic boundary around truth or practice. On the contrary, the “limit” is intended to permit the ongoing discussion of truth on a community wide basis and thus to keep the definition of truth, tradition, community, identity; etc, wide open through the continual input of all participants in the social process. This practice is consistent with a secular Enlightenment tradition in the West, but at the same time introduces significant new aspects and provides new conceptual anchors.

There is no leap out of time, the ‘tabla raza’ contained in the ideology of the French Revolution which constitutes the ideal of “speed” expressed in its ultimate dimension. The idea of “non-attachment” as conceived by Gandhi is inextricably linked to the principle of experiment and time. The Indian National Independence Movement expressed such an experiment.

The principle of experimentation is in this way linked to the technique of non-violence and both are linked to the possibility of a genuinely democratic politics at the level of the mass movement. Gandhi’s aversion to violence was in considerable part a question of correct political method in the work of nation making. He argued on a practical level against the “futility of violence”. When he argued, in 1931, that “violence cannot bring Swaraj” but “only lead to disaster” he was insisting among other things that any political movement driven by violence is inherently exclusive. Pointing out the enormous number of women and children who had participated in the freedom struggle, he argued: “We were able to enlist as soldiers, millions of men, women and children, because we were pledged to non-violence”. The technique of non-violence involves the widest possible latitude of inclusion and seeks to give expression to the force of public opinion through intelligent resistance. Gandhi therefore did not see the Indian capitalist class as enemies, but rather wished to “awaken them to their sense of duty”. He asked, “Do

you wish to estrange them? Don’t you want them to work with you for the common end?" He thus avoided estranging sections of the population based on any given ontological premise: that religion is incompatible with modernity, that the capitalist must be destroyed as a class to fulfil the logic of historical necessity, that peasants are incompatible with modern revolution, that a race or ethnic group is imbued with any fixed qualities, or any other.

The principle of experimentation linked to non-violence is therefore a programme of inclusion based on humanist principles. The Indian National Movement “did not require any particular political or ideological commitment from its activists” and did not “try to limit its following to any social class or group” provided that “the commitment to democratic and secular nationalism was there”. It had no class essence and was a “popular mass anti-colonial movement” which was “open ended, without a fixed class hegemony or a necessary class character”. It was a movement of the broad general population “including peasants and workers, artisans, the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie, the intelligentsia, and sections of the landlords”.

At the core of this wide latitude of inclusion was the technique of non-violence: “The adoption of non-violent forms of struggle enabled the participation of the mass of the people who could not have participated in a similar manner, or whose involvement could not have been so deep, in a movement that adopted violent forms”. This is because “Participation in violent activity, whether of a terrorist or a guerrilla nature, or in an army of liberation, necessarily involves long absences from home, total disruption of normal life, complete abandonment of normal livelihood, and loss of life”. This would explain why “in the national movement for Indian Independence, led by the Congress Party, there were many more women in positions of importance than in the Russian and Chinese revolutionary movements put together”. Within the inclusive context created by experimentation and non-violence individual people are not perceived as a means to an

800 Tendulkar Volume 3. Page 70.
801 Bipan Chandra. India’s Struggle for Independence. Page 79.
804 Bipan Chandra. Indian National Movement.
end but each as an end in themselves, and the focus must be upon specific problems in everyday life rather than imagined or transcendent horizons. In this spirit Gandhi argued in 1924 that “The individual is the supreme consideration”.805

It was also the experimental method developed through experiences of Satyagraha beginning in South Africa that produced the strategy of struggle-truce-struggle (S-T-S), intended to sustain a mass movement over a long period of time. This strategy is also an expression of the temporality of democracy. It was grounded on “the assumptions that by its very nature a mass movement could not be carried on or sustained indefinitely or for a prolonged period, that a mass movement must ebb sooner or later, that mass movements had to be short lived, and that periods of rest and consolidation, of ‘breathing time’, must intervene so that the movement could consolidate, recuperate and gather strength for the next round of struggle”.806 The principle of non-violence and the strategy of S-T-S both are both an expression of a strong concern within the Indian nationalist leadership over maintaining the democratic integrity of the mass movement, and represent political structures deliberately deployed in practice to this end.

According to the experimental principle, Satyagraha movements during the Indian National Movement were always preceded by careful and extensive periods of research on the ground to ascertain the veracity of the opposing points of view in the dispute. Gandhi’s principle involved “never intervening in a situation without first studying it with great care”.807 One example among many was in Champaran in 1917 when Gandhi was called to investigate a conflict between peasants and European planters. Gandhi and his colleagues “toured the villages from dawn to dusk (and) recorded the statements of peasants, interrogating them to make sure they were giving correct information”. Eventually, with “evidence collected from 8,000 peasants, he had little difficulty in

806 Bipan Chandra. India’s Struggle for Independence. Page 510.
convincing the (government) Commission that the *tinkathia* system needed to be abolished and that the peasants should be compensated for the illegal enhancement of their dues*.808

Experimentation, flexibility in tradition or the transformation of traditional concepts, choice in identity, democracy as an end in itself, truth as the outcome of communication, process over event – these values at the heart of the Indian National Movement point to the case for transformation, based on a broader, more humanitarian, more prolonged, and more inclusive field of political struggle than simply the violent seizure of state power with the aim of imposing Enlightenment - or some other ideology - from above. All of these are aspects of non-violence. Because of the technique, the masses of India, unlike those in other nations seeking independence and radical social democratic transformation, did not become the victims of the very means they employed to attain liberation.

1. The heritage of non-violence in the Nehru period

A study of the Nehru period as the heir to the Indian National Independence movement is a passage lined by many doors, and behind each is a complex ongoing debate with much relevance for our times. This is because the Nehru period, when juxtaposed with these debates, unsettles their basic terms and thereby brings their principle claims and assumptions into question, suggesting new horizons for debate. Looking into the complexity of the Nehru period we often see the heritage of non-violence as a clear underlying principle moving through what is sometimes the turmoil of events.

Behind the first door we find an ethical debate that has been going on in various forms and many locations since the time of early modernity and the European Enlightenment. This debate concerns autonomy and ethics, which is also the problem of modern political violence. Aspects of this debate are to be found in Alasdair MacIntyre’s *A Short History of Ethics*, itself in many ways a

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808 Chandra. Pages India’s Struggle for Independence. 178-9.

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reflection on the ethical consequences of the Western Enlightenment. MacIntyre does not always explicitly talk about the nation, though that is in large part what is at stake. The centrality of political non-violence in the Indian National Movement makes it of obvious relevance in this debate. Yet non-violence as an underlying politics in the post-independence period has even further implications.

The Nehruvian experience in this context points to liberty not as a single metaphysical reality based merely on a system of interlocking rights but to a molecular liberty of multiple, conflicting, and sometimes mutually subverting freedoms that require constant negotiation via a democratic/secular institutional framework and the participation of broad and diverse sections of the population. Freedom in this sense cannot be ‘imposed’ from above, as if a gift from a higher power, but is creatively lived through multiple agents and always unfinished. It is based on the principle of non-violence as an open space. Being grounded in the flow of everyday time and involving an activation of all existing cultural circuits in the wider political process, we might call this internally pluralistic notion of national autonomy the *temporality of democracy*.

This experience of national autonomy differs from what is often described as the dominant trend. Thus the second door opens upon the debate on nationalism, and the influential point of view expressed in Ernest Gellner’s *Nations and Nationalism*. In fact Gellner seeks to uncouple nationalism from the Enlightenment. Yet we find that the bare sociological claims made by Gellner concerning the function of language and communication do not preclude the existence of a larger multi-religious/multi-linguistic national experiment modelled on the ideals of Enlightenment, and that the Indian experience therefore contradicts the tacit pessimism in Gellner’s conclusion on nationalist politics as exclusively wedded to assimilation, exclusion and violence.

The Indian National Movement and the Nehru period were based on forms of Enlightenment universalism; but this was not the universalist assumption that ‘we’ can understand any and all ‘alien beings’ in order to assimilate them to our ‘rationality’. It was rather a
universalism grounded in respect for difference without the need to necessarily ‘understand’ it, at
the core of which is a strong belief in the practical imperative of non-violence rather than universal
epistemic finality. Very much the contribution of Gandhi, this alternative universalism to the French *Encyclopédie* variety is closer in some ways to a religious universalism. It also shares
something in common with the ‘moral sense’ of the British Enlightenment, itself an alternative to
‘universal Reason’ while still grounded in the tradition of natural rights. And certainly the
Gandhean-Nehruvian tradition is grounded in the universalist tradition of natural rights in a radical
and unique way. In the secular context of modern Nehruvian politics it has a unique quality that we
might call a molecular or context specific universalism. Universalism that is not context specific
would tend to be tyranny (i.e., violence).

Thirdly, the secular element being at the core of Nehruvian universalism, it is necessary to
reflect on the charge that a secular politics based on the nation is simply a derivative form of
Western politics and ideology and is therefore an inherent violence against Indian cultural, social
and historical autonomy. We find this point of view expressed on the Enlightenment and the nation
by Partha Chatterjee from what may be called a poststructuralist or subaltern perspective. This
project seeks to go “outside” of both nationalism and the Enlightenment presumably to a more
“authentic” form of social and political organisation entirely beyond the epistemic and political
legacy of European colonialism and grounded in “community”. Yet the nationalist discourse to
emerge from the Nehru period does not, upon close examination, conform to the “derivative”
paradigm of the nation as evoked by Chatterjee - it displays its own qualities that combine both
Indian and non-Indian traditions. Above all, it is characterized by the core tenet of non-violence
extending from the National Movement to the Nehru period as a guiding principle.

The principle of non-violence is not, at bottom, spiritual or otherworldly. The Nehruvian
conception of the nation embraces a universalism which is not based on an ideal of truth as pure,
total, above politics, or beyond the existing circuits of power – the fairly a-historical ‘philosophical’
construct driving, for example, Kemalism or the ideology of the French Revolution. By establishing a vanguard party as representative of a higher and single 'general will', such metaphysical ideas of truth in a political context ironically produce power without limits and subvert the premise of secularism as a permanently open space for negotiating difference. Nehru called for the "broadest national point of view and not the narrow party point of view", meaning in both theory and practice not the singular 'general will' but a point of view grounded in a multi-centred source of power. He argued that conditions "differ so much in various parts of the country that any rigid rule or attempt at uniformity does not appear to be desirable". On the grounds that "one pattern is unsuited to another place" he insisted on the "absolute importance of self reliance".

The Nehruvian nationalist discourse, as a context specific universalism, is, then, highly power sensitive. In the Nehruvian framework culture is lived materially in specific circumstances, the nation has no inherent essence, and the nation in relation to culture is defined by a specific and differentiated power structure which continuously negotiates the inherent conflicts of a large and highly diverse modern society with non-violence as a guiding ideal. Coercion was avoided wherever possible, as in the Kashmir crisis in 1953 when Nehru said that "the people of Kashmir must decide their own fate".

Nor do we find a totalizing claim to 'scientific truth' in either Nehru's writings or his political practices. The Nehruvian commitment to science and development as a national end has a pragmatic and not a metaphysical character. This is why Nehru argued consistently that the "ideological approach is less important than the practical one". Science, technology and economic development are intended for the broad public welfare on a material level- they do not represent a 'whole' claim to metaphysical truth on a supposedly higher level than other religious or

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810 Nehru. *Letters to the Chief Ministers. Volume 5*. Page 266.
cultural worldviews as we find in the Positivism that inspired the Kemalist Westernization drive. Nehru openly distrusted metaphysics in politics, whether of the religious or scientific variety, saying that he did “not propose to discuss these metaphysical aspects” as they “take us away from the problems of life that face us”. Whatever the real sociological effect of modernization and scientific advance on traditional experience, science is not conceived as a rival ideology intended to threaten, compete with, or supersede traditional views in the Nehru period. Nehru regularly argued that “forced imposition of ideas on any section of the population is bound to fail”.

The three debates on Enlightenment – with respect to autonomy, the nation and authenticity - are interlinked and their overlapping dimensions provide the theoretical enclosure for the more empirical discussion of the ideas and practices of the Nehru period, in a way that may sharpen and render visible their meaning as an experience in continuity with the Indian National Movement under Gandhi’s leadership. Nehru himself consistently affirmed this link, saying on the occasion of Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai’s visit to India in 1954 that “peaceful struggle for independence under Gandhiji’s leadership (…) had conditioned us” and India’s “policies had developed from that struggle and we propose to follow them”. He argued that it would be a tragedy if contemporary India were to “forget the principle urge of the national movement we are supposed to represent”.

This continuity is based on six interrelated ideological points of transmission: 1. Multiple points of view; 2. Development and freedom; 3. The temporality of democracy; 4. Context specific universalism; 5. Non-assimilation; 6. Non-historicism.

Nehru saw a unity of means and ends in non-violence at the core of this unique Gandhean legacy, arguing that this was the “foundation of Gandhi’s approach to politics”. He wrote that it was the “first time in the world’s history that we saw a great political mass movement wedded to these ideals”, and contrasted it to Soviet and Chinese communism as based on “class conflict,
hatred and violence” in terms of means – though not ends in broad economic and political justice.\textsuperscript{818} He also argued that the violence of the means had “distorted the ends” in the communist approach to social transformation in these countries.\textsuperscript{819} Finally, the six points as an integrated whole constitute a nationalist politics of secularism which, as Nehru said, does not “mean a society where religion itself is discouraged”, but rather “free play for all religions” so long as they do not interfere with “each other or with the basic conceptions of our state”.\textsuperscript{820} The emphasis on means over Final Ends is part of the temporality of democracy.

A politics imposed from above without consent could hardly be non-violent, and in the Nehru period a political programme of nation-making or modernisation was undertaken from below, or with the broadest possible participation of the Indian masses. The Nehru period, as probably the largest experiment in democracy in world history, is grounded in the long term prior creation of a broad democratic culture through the national movement. During the independence struggle, tens of thousands of cadres in both urban and rural areas had popularized notions of parliamentary democracy, republicanism, civil liberties, and social-economic justice at the grassroots level.\textsuperscript{821} The national leaders recognized that the democratic movement had to remain organizationally open and accommodative to unite a highly diverse religious, ethnic and linguistic population. The possibility of this pluralism was founded on the politics of non-violence.

Nehru argued consistently for the need to think “less of the top structure and more of the bottom” as “real change comes when the bottom layers begin to function”.\textsuperscript{822} He learned from participation in the independence struggle that the process of creating democratic roots is not a self evident truth or a natural condition, but an extended struggle as nations have to “build themselves

\textsuperscript{818} Nehru. Letters to the Chief Ministers. Volume 4. Page 535.
\textsuperscript{819} Nehru. Letters to the Chief Ministers. Volume 3. Page 583.
\textsuperscript{822} Nehru. Letters to the Chief Ministers. Volume 5. Page 30.
In this we see another aspect of the temporality of democracy. Nehru further knew that it was necessary to build a sustainable democratic political order in the aftermath of independence to maintain the sense of national unity that had been created during the independence struggle.

A very particular outlook went into the transfer of power from the popular mass movement to the creation of the parliamentary system, and this outlook was embedded in the 1950 Indian Constitution and the federal system based on a broad cultural outlook and multi-centred source of power. The pluralistic nature of political developments during the Nehru period was made possible within the framework of the Constitution of 1950. Based on the ideology and values of the national movement, the Constitution of 1950 was structured around the creation of the widest possible consensus rather than imposition of a uniform will. The demand by Congress leaders for a declaration of the rights of the Indian people had first been made in 1895, and the demand for adult suffrage had first been made in the twenties. With independence adult franchise was introduced without property, income or educational qualification among a population that was largely illiterate.

At the core of the Indian Constitution of 1950 which defined the powers and functions of post-partition/post-independence India was a reckoning with the temporality of democracy and the concept of context specific universalism. This was grounded in the system of Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles. The Fundamental Rights guaranteed by the Constitution were the traditional civil rights – freedom of speech, assembly, etc. – intended to protect the individual citizen from violence from the state/others in every case. These had highly important consequences in terms of protecting the autonomy of civil sources of power – universities, the media, trade unions, etc. which were essential to the functioning and survival of Indian democracy. They also guaranteed the freedom of political opposition. In post-independence India, “the state was to encroach as little as possible on rival civil sources of power such as universities, the Press, trade


\[824\] Chandra, et.al.. India After Independence. 1947-2000 33,43.
\[825\] Chandra, et.al.. India After Independence. 1947-2000 32.
unions, peasant organizations and professional associations". This aspect of the constitutional structure guaranteed a fixed foundation for public expression of multiple points of view.

The Directive Principles on the other hand were the new economic and social rights which could not be guaranteed immediately but only in the course of economic and social development: these represented the dynamic element of longer term social transformation. They also acknowledge the unforeseeable paths of these transformations over the course of time and effected from diverse sources of civil and political power: the specific content of each case. The implicit recognition in this system is also that economic development and political freedom are inextricably joined in the construction of the democratic nation and cannot be legitimately separated.

The Constitutional system does not represent freedom as a seamless metaphysical web. Nehru conceived it in terms of regulating the problem of conflicting and mutually subverting freedoms between a fixed principle of individual liberty (in Fundamental Rights) and a dynamic principle of social change (in the Directive Principles). He argued that the “Directive Principles of State Policy represent a dynamic move towards a certain objective (while the) Fundamental Rights represent something static, to preserve certain rights which exist”. He acknowledged that “in the process of dynamic movement certain existing relationships are altered, varied or affected” and that there “is a certain conflict in the two approaches”. The underlying principle remained that of unity in diversity. In this spirit in 1953 Nehru charged groups attempting to suppress Urdu with “a narrowing of our cultural outlook” and a violation of the Constitution.

The Nehru period is accordingly not the story of a single-party state but multiple sources of power often originating outside of the state from differing civil sources of power, and putting alternating turns on the path of nation-making. In this context Nehru sometimes yielded to public opinion and sometimes struggled with other sources of civil and political power. We do not see a story of power seeking to localize itself within a single centre and eliminating any rival in a

827 Chandra, et.al.. Page 46.

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campaign based inevitably on violence. We see in the post-independence political system many points of relative autonomy in what was an experiment in democracy of unprecedented scale. Where we see a failure on the part of the new government is in neglecting to build the organizational and institution structures necessary to indefinitely sustain these popular energies, and a gradual sliding into place of the inadequately restructured bureaucratic machinery inherited from the Empire. All the same, this popular and multi-centric element makes it impossible to talk about the Nehru period teleologically - even as it was a political process of national unification and organization involving radical stakes and areas of non-negotiable contestation.

Given these multiple influences the course of nation-making was relatively open or non-linear, but at the heart of this process the area of non-negotiability remained secularism - for the very pluralism of the system could not be possible in its absence. Secularism, then, is the institutional expression of the politics of non-violence. The centrality of this issue is reflected in Nehru’s insistence during the first national elections that the basic struggle of the time was between secular and communal forces, and he said that “we stand till death for a secular State”.

It follows that Indian secularism was shaped by this struggle. Between the national movement and communalism, we are talking about two different ends for the nation. Communalism is a variant of ethnic nationalism, a modern state founded on allegiance to a given cultural religious identity, in its most dangerous form - within what is a wide range - drifting into a fascist politics. The national movement, conversely, sought to create a parliamentary and secular political order. From the communalist point of view, the issue of autonomy for the nation concerns the threat to authenticity for one community; from the parliamentary-secular point of view, national autonomy is secured by a secular policy based on citizenship for members of all ‘communities’. Between a politics of autonomy based on claims to authenticity or citizenship, then, we are talking about two different languages discursively and two different games politically.

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, the father of modern extreme Hindu nationalism, pioneered the project of building a Hindu nation based on the rejection of the “non-self” in Muslims or other religious minorities. He conceived this “battle of centuries” as the very meaning of the nation in a rejection of the secular principle. Rejecting the plurality of belief, he gave a single definition of Hinduism and called upon the community to “Die for Dharma, and while dying kill all”. He also rejected the concept of universal humanity that underpinned the Gandhi-Nehru tradition’s commitment to natural rights. His outlook was not backwards-looking: he was fascinated by speed and advanced technology. In sum, he presented the Indian Hindu masses with a radical and violent modern alternative to the democratic experiment born of the national independence movement and founded on non-violence.\textsuperscript{831}

The struggle against communalism was the shaping force behind the creation of modern Indian secularism in contrast to the struggle between church and state in Western Europe. Secularism in the Indian context emerged in an activist context as a point of unity for the Indian masses in the independence struggle. This was the national aspect of the Indian Enlightenment — a national independence movement centred pragmatically and ethically on the principle of strength in diversity. And non-violence constitutes the universal aspect. The national and the universal are not so much resolved into one as held in tension in a system built for negotiation and compromise within a broadly united national community of difference where a horizon of ultimate synthesis is not envisioned. The nation is meant to remain plural. The politics of secularism is what is meant by the preservation of a public space for multiple points of view and lines of action — or, the open space based on non-violence.

We see the politics of pluralism played out in the language policy, the process of linguistic state reorganization, the tribal policy, the Constitutional and federal structure, the national elections, all of which presented a complex and multi-sided interaction of popular movements, civil

society, and ruling/opposition parties within a broad national context comprising both rural and urban areas. At least forty percent of eligible women voted in the first national elections, reflecting the expanding patterns of participation inherited from the independence struggle and ongoing changes in the structure of family relations.³³² Where the urban based organs of civil society were often beyond the reach of the rural poor, their mass participation in elections became their instrument for impacting events. Taking place under desperate conditions these experiments in endogenous development and conflict resolution did sometimes spill over into violence, but under Nehruvian leadership we see a clear line of intent aiming for the realization of core democratic and secular principles in what was a wager in sharing power at the broadest possible level.

The leaders in the Nehru period began with considering debates over the possible merits of authoritarianism as the single or legitimate road to national modernization in a poor and largely illiterate country damaged by the colonial legacy – and overwhelmingly rejected that conventional option in favour of universal adult suffrage and civil liberty. This option was entirely consistent with the premises of non-violence as a notion of autonomy. The subsequent experiment points to an alternative paradigm of development not merely in the narrow sense of GNP growth and industrialization (which need not necessarily be democratic) but as a larger process of expanding human freedom; that freedom is not merely the primary object of development but also its principle means; that such means necessarily involve the ability to take active part in the community. This is the second point of ideological transmission in development and freedom, or the need for the broad public to be involved/to be agents in their own modernization process.

Amartya Sen calls this “substantive freedom”, or the capability to choose a life one has reason to value. Such a course of development can be decided only through the valuation of public priorities and creation of value judgements by way of public discussion. Consequently democratic institutions can never be viewed as mechanical devices but are necessarily conditioned by public

values and priorities of a temporal nature. The subsequent experiment demonstrated therefore that democracy as a system is not a mirror reflecting a timeless “general will”, but an entire system of multiple and continuously evolving social relations grounded in basic secular ideals and institutions. The core secular value in the Indian context has its roots in non-violence as a permanently open and mobile space for difference.

2. Enlightenment and nationalism

The post-independence Indian experiment in democracy did not, moreover, affirm Gellner’s definition of the “nationalist principle”, in which the “territorial political unit” must “become ethnically homogeneous” through some strategy that “either kills, or expels, or assimilates all non-nationals” and according to which two men “are of the same nation if and only if they share the same culture.”

Certainly Nehru saw himself in the tradition of the Enlightenment and an ideal of universal humanism, and he was a nationalist (i.e., he placed the nation as a secular allegiance at the centre of local loyalties of region, religion, language etc). He argued that “progress must be India-wide”. This coupling of nationalism and universalism is something of a paradox, but it is also the nut around which the uniqueness of the Indian Enlightenment turns.

Nehru clearly recognized the nationalist danger Gellner was alluding to, writing that India is a “composite country” in “religion, in customs, in languages, in ways of life” and “any attempt by

833 This is the paradigm expressed in Amartya Sen’s Development as Freedom. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000.
the majority group to impose itself on others can only lead to conflict".\textsuperscript{837} He therefore argued that a "common purpose does not mean uniformity of thinking or regimentation of ideas".\textsuperscript{838} The nation was for Nehru an object of pragmatic ethical estimation and not dogmatic certainty; he did not see fit to unflinchingly commit mass murder in its name on the grounds that no higher truth or authority exists. He described the nation in relative terms as far from ideal, but an advance over caste, regional and other groupings.\textsuperscript{839}

At this point we may consider the broader problem of the Enlightenment and nationalism. What is at first striking in all of the cases presented here (India, Turkey, and Iran) is that the Enlightenment came into being within the context of a politics of nationalism, and transcended the limits of a middle class intellectual discourse in the context of various forms of national mass movements for independence. The principles, values and aims of the Enlightenment have no existence apart from their transformation within the political context of a mass nationalist movement. As a result, it is firstly unthinkable, within the limits of this discussion, that nationalism and Enlightenment be uncoupled, and secondly the interest of Enlightenment is primarily a question of means. People seeking to institute what they saw as the politics of Enlightenment often took violence to be a matter of course in doing so, and this is what radically distinguishes the Indian perspective. This requires that historical events be looked at through a lens that is at once ethical and historical.

The coupling of nationalism and Enlightenment inevitably raises a tangle of thorns. On the one hand, "modern nationalism" is identified as a "product of the French Revolution and subsequent wars", suggesting a direct lineage between the French Enlightenment and the birth of modern nationalism.\textsuperscript{840} From this point of view we might see in modern nationalism a fuller and more broadly inclusive fulfillment of the rather elitist Enlightenment discourses in the politics of

\textsuperscript{838} Nehru. Letters to the Chief Ministers. Volume 3. Page 386.
\textsuperscript{839} Nehru. Letters to the Chief Ministers. Volume 3. Page 387.
\textsuperscript{840} Bayly. Page 20.

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bloody revolution. While the true depth of Enlightenment philosophy as an influence on the leading political actors of the French Revolution might be held to be exaggerated, in principle the coupling of Enlightenment principles of human autonomy and nationalist projects of emancipation would appear to be sound.841

However, this view is bathed somewhat in the golden and heroic aura of early modern history, and general views on nationalism in the late twentieth-century took a considerably darker turn - especially with regard to nationalist movements in the Third World.842 It was not uncommon for Enlightenment and nationalism to be identified with opposite values. This point of view is certainly implicit in the theory of nationalism articulated by Gellner. The Enlightenment reveres the “universal in man, not the specific, and certainly not the culturally specific”.843 By this account nationalism, whatever it might or might not have been, has abandoned all claims to universality or humanism as a founding principle; the distinction between civic nationalism and ethnic nationalism seems to have faded almost to irrelevance in Gellner’s discussion.

Gellner’s theory describes the structural foundations of nationalism as an almost inescapably determining force in the modern world. His account of this is objective, based on the study of specific institutions and historical processes. Yet what also seems undeniable in Gellner is that he attributes an “essence” or “imperative” to nationalism that paints it in the darkest and most foreboding of colours as a matter of “structural inevitability”. At the centre of what is otherwise a groundbreaking and interesting sociological analysis there is a fancifully conceived dark heart - fanciful because of the sheer determinism with which it is asserted. What Gellner’s account categorically denies is the real importance of guiding ideas in the unfolding of a mass movement and the process of nation-making, and the fact that these ideas contribute to consequential

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841 See Daniel Mornet. Les Origines Intellectuelles de la Revolution Francaise. Paris, Armand Collin, 1933. Mornet reveals that on the eve of 1789 not more than ten men identifying themselves as revolutionaries had in fact read the works of Rousseau.

842 See Franki Furedi. The New Ideology of Imperialism for a detailed account of this tendency in academic and popular writing on nationalism in late twentieth century Western Europe and the United States.

843 Gellner. Page 131. This discussion is with particular reference to Kantian philosophy.
differences in the outcome. In sum, Gellner does not give any account of the important range of degree in the democratic character – or lack thereof – of a given nationalist ideology, movement or political order. And here we consider a key aspect of the democratic to be the non-violent resolution of social conflict.

Gellner openly deems it irrelevant to consider nationalist ideas as such, as they are a priori forms of “false consciousness” or self deception, and the actors “almost without exception (...) fail to understand what it is that they do”. The Industrial Revolution itself, the alleged original fountainhead of the nationalist structural metamorphoses, was born out of the fundamental blindness of human experience and will never be fully comprehended even as it is persistently imitated. It is sometimes difficult to identify whether Gellner’s account of modernity is driven by a somber realism or a mood of pessimism regarding the possibility of human agency. And the politics of non-violence makes sense only in terms of an acceptance of human agency. That is why two key claims that Gellner insists upon become of central relevance here: that inherent links exist between nationalism and violence as a world of “rival cultures struggling to capture the souls of men” in a “period of transition (...) bound to be violent and conflict ridden”, and nationalism as a politics of cultural homogenization in which most “cultures are led to the dustheap of history by industrial civilization without offering any resistance” or dissolve “into the wider culture of some new national state”. This point of view is advanced almost as an ontological claim about the “inescapable logic” of the “nationalist imperative”.

These views are certainly not confirmed by the Indian National Independence Movement or the Nehru period. The aspiration to “internal homogeneity and external autonomy” does, at some general level, characterize the paradigm of the French Revolution and other nation-states which

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844 Gellner. Page 35.
847 Gellner. Page 47.
848 Gellner. Page 100.

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have followed this model.\textsuperscript{849} If the consequences of following this paradigm are national autonomy in the international context - which allowing for the violent intentions of a given state may not be necessarily democratic - the implications of the corresponding project of internal homogenization are violently anti-democratic in violating local autonomies/identities.

Even leaving aside the moral question, within the context of the Indian national movement under Gandhi it was recognized pragmatically that in a multi-religious, ethnic and linguistic country of such scale diversity was necessarily either a source of strength or of weakness - and in either case could not be 'overcome'. Nehru perceived the need to extend this into the post-independence period, saying that "any reversal of democratic methods might lead to disruption and violence".\textsuperscript{850} Democracy rather than coercion was the only viable pragmatic option in the political task of creating forms of mobilization and ideological constructs capable of turning plurality into a force of political strength among a gigantic and diverse population.

In other words, democracy is the only real alternative to political violence at the revolutionary impasse of Indian independence. Nationalism as a "prime mover" in this revolutionary context should be understood not as natural or universal but in terms of the specificity of the colonial situation as producing "a powerful, almost elemental urge" and expressing "the deeply-felt experiences of cultural humiliation and marginalization, economic exploitation and political subordination that are an inevitable part of the colonial interaction".\textsuperscript{851} Given this primary element in anti-colonial nationalist mass movements at the general level, the role of the ideological and ethical outlook in non-violence takes on an even greater significance. For Indian nationalism is no more inherently non-violent than in any other colonial situation.

The foremost concern in post-independence Indian politics - following the catastrophe of partition, the refugee crisis, and through ongoing tensions with Pakistan - was national stability. In

\textsuperscript{849} Gellner. Page 13.
\textsuperscript{850} Chandra, et.al. \textit{India After Independence}. Page 85.
Pakistan Nehru saw the communal ideological drive to “differentiate and create two classes of citizens (...) the latter having some kind of inferior status and less opportunities”. Yet through this period of frequent and dangerous upheaval we never the less see an extension and institutionalization of the National Movement politics of pluralism/non-violence in the recognition by the Indian Constitution of sixteen major languages, including English and Sanskrit; the creation of multiple linguistically based and semi-autonomous states – an action pushed from below by public opinion - that came through much public struggle (demonstrations, strikes, riots) and negotiation to function as an ultimately national unity within the broader constitutional/federal framework; and the tribal policy of “integrating the tribal people (...) even while maintaining their distinct identity and culture”. Nehru wrote of the tribal people in 1952 that “we have to take special care not to impose ourselves and our ways on them” or “allow them to be exploited by others”. He warned against any politics that might contribute to their becoming “drab imitations”.

None of these three post-independence developments occurred from above in predetermined form and their stories display a multi-centred pattern of power. Even with the resistance of entrenched rulers in the Princely states to accession following independence we see a direct appeal made to the populations of the states, in which they are offered the choice between joining India or Pakistan. In these accessions popular movements within the Princely states played an important role in the outcome. Similarly, with land reform and Zamindari abolition which aimed to dismantle the hierarchic semi-feudal structures in the rural areas, the project was undertaken in a relatively prolonged and painstaking way within the framework of the Constitution. In this context the courts became a site of open contestation over conflicting views on rights.

The ideal from the point of view of the Nehru government grounded in non-violence was

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that differences of language, religion and culture should not be seen as obstacles but sources of
strength. Nehru argued that India "has infinite variety and there is no reason why we should try to
regiment it after a single pattern".856 The reality on the ground was invariably more complex, with
communalist, casteist, linguistic and regionalist loyalties as possible axes of politicization in
competition over jobs, education and other opportunities. Through these difficulties, Nehru warned
that the "way to closer union is not by compulsion but by developing closer association".857 The
Nehruvian politics of non-violence was the process of negotiating potentially explosive troubles
within a broadly democratic framework.

Following prolonged debate and struggle over whether to use Hindi or English as the
official language in conjunction with the fourteen national languages, and a general mood of fear in
the south as a group of pro-Hindi fanatics sought to implement Hindi by force, the government
ultimately passed the Lok Sabha bill in 1967 establishing a policy of bilingualism. Nehru had set
the tone for this in 1959 when he told the people of the south that "if they do not want to learn
Hindi, let them not learn Hindi".858 A broadly accepted solution was found by way of a politics of
negotiation and compromise and the issue ceased to be a source of social conflict. The nation
ended up with two official languages that function as links of continuity among the multitude of
more regionally based languages, with media, basic education and administration functioning in a
multilingual fashion. At the same time a greater and greater degree of mobility occurs between the
different states. We see that highly dangerous elements and outlooks were present within the
situation at its early stage – they were simply not permitted, on account of the pluralistic structure,
to altogether dominate the course of events.

In reforming the haphazard arrangement of multi-lingual and multi-cultural states as left by
the British Empire, the government aimed to create linguistic states as administrative units in order
to provide the foundations for democracy by way of common political and administrative


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languages. This conception of post-Indian national organization as a mosaic of linguistic units went back to Gandhi. However, the Dar Commission in 1948 decided to postpone this operation for some years as pressing issues of stability appeared as a priority. Votaries of linguistic states subsequently organized and pushed for the policy, leading to a second committee (JVP) which agreed to create new states where the demand was strong and other language groups involved were in agreement.

When powerful public protest over the Andhra controversy in 1952 resulted in the government yielding to the demand for a separate linguistic state, a rash of similar demands erupted for altered boundaries on a linguistic basis. The resulting States Reorganization Commission of 1953 underwent a two year process of reckoning with these issues, faced with demonstrations, strikes and other agitations, and in 1956 the States Reorganization Act was introduced creating new states along linguistic lines with several exceptions. This was widely accepted by the population. Yet where severe disagreement continued, notably in Maharashtra, powerful and broadly based opposition movements formed and a protest vote in the 1957 elections only narrowly let the Congress Party pass. Popular agitation continued over a further five year period and in 1960 the government yielded and divided the state of Bombay into Maharashtra and Gujarat. We regularly see a concession by government to the pressures of public opinion when the problem can be negotiated to the general satisfaction of the varying participants in the issue at stake.

However, in a further 1956 incident in Punjab the demand for a separate linguistic state took on overtly communalist overtones. When the Akali Dal and the Jan Sangh respectively representing Sikh and Hindu communal political interests advanced this campaign, Nehru and the Congress leaders categorically refused to concede to the demands.

The guarantee of minority rights within these new states inevitably also became an issue. Within this context the state sought to establish a balance between protecting the existence of minorities and curbing separatist impulses which created serious conflict within the new states.
After ten years of multiple struggles the linguistic reorganization process in India was completed and from 1956 political tendencies showed – remarkably from the perspective of Gellner’s thesis - the loyalty to language to be consistent with loyalty to larger multi-lingual, ethnic and religious nation. What is significant is that where public activism remained within the confines of the democratic national paradigm, of whatever political shade, the government was willing to seek and negotiate a solution where possible so long as the demands did not violate the rights of others. Within this space all manner of political and civil organizations took form expressing a wide range of views, and multiple techniques of political resistance were employed. Those which remained non-violent made legitimate contributions in shaping the path of nation-making, and the population felt itself invested in the creation of the modernization process. These events illustrate Nehru’s remark that “the guiding principle is participation of the people in their own improvement”.

Where, however, the demands adopted the paradigm of communal ideology, no space for negotiation was possible as the construction of a communal state would destroy the underlying secular fabric essential to the nation’s very existence as a multi-religious/linguistic entity. Yet where communal organizations did accept the premise of a secular democratic organizing principle as the basis for the outcome in the national political process, they were permitted to function even while upholding varieties of communal ideology.

3. Enlightenment and autonomy

We may next consider the broader background to the question of Enlightenment as a problem of autonomy. In a way, Gellner and MacIntyre present opposed perspectives on the

modern condition. Gellner seeks the essence inside of events, and it is this tendency to see a fixed inner logic uniformly driving events that squeezes the element of freedom entirely out of consideration. That is why he can afford to dismiss the importance of human intentions, ideas, and even the relative autonomy of consciousness in the context of modern nationalism out of hand. In short, Gellner – in spite of describing structures as historically conditioned - embraces a deterministic notion of time via the determining character of structures from within. There is not really space for hope in his account of nationalism. For Gellner it would seem that in the nationalist context at least the faith in political action is simply dead. He celebrates the Enlightenment but merely at the limit of individual experience.

In MacIntyre’s account we confront the same historical vista as in Gellner – the end of a fixed and hierarchic order in which identity is decided according to set roles, followed by the onset of a mobile mass society of perpetual growth, centred on the individual, in which roles are optional and instrumental. But MacIntyre, in his insistence that all moral ideas have a history and are not absolute, sees this horizon as more like a garden of forking paths in which the ethical vocabulary we adopt is of great consequence. MacIntyre sees the most promising vocabulary in the modern context in terms of broad democratic potential in the tradition of natural rights dating back to the Putney debates in the 1640’s English Revolution. He contrasts Hobbes’ view of “high-minded ideals” as “but a mask for the drive to domination” and refusal to take “stock in the appearance of freedom as an ideal and a goal” to his own insistence that the emergence of this ideal is “the most important social change in the history of this time”. For Hobbes there was an a-historical and rationally accessible antecedent reality that needed to be uncovered to restore political order as such to meaningless chaos. For McIntyre no such certainty exists but there are choices effecting meaningful differences in lived experience – or temporality - and therefore hope.

In the perspectives of both Gellner and McIntyre there is a reckoning with the irreversible

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historical and sociological reality of modern secularism as a new configuration of power. The horizon discussed by the two writers is an end to "old worlds" where "each of them (was) a cosmos: purposive, hierarchical, 'meaningful'."\textsuperscript{862} The secular epistemic counterpart in the new society is, as described by Gellner, a "common conceptual currency" where "all facts are located within a single continuous logical space" and there are no "special facts, sacralised and exempt from ordinary treatment".\textsuperscript{863} This is what MacIntyre identifies as the "autonomy of secular activity" to emerge with the Reformation and articulated initially by Luther, Machiavelli, Hobbes and Spinoza, the double world of the temporal and eternal linked to a fact-value split.

It is along such lines that MacIntyre evokes the basic problematic of Enlightenment – it is the end of political order as a given/unalterable context and at the same time the increasing possibility for "more and more people to play a part in altering or modifying political institutions".\textsuperscript{864} McIntyre does not evoke freedom as a metaphysical category or value. As an appeal, it "often did mask religious intolerance and economic ambition".\textsuperscript{865} Yet as the sacred and the secular fell apart, the relation of criticism to social change became crucial in the growing competition between rival criteria.\textsuperscript{866} This realm of growth – not underpinned by any absolute value - is for McIntyre the underlying meaning of freedom.

In this realm we see the modern dilemma of the individual and the community and the community in relation to multiple communities, or the citizen and the nation. It entails the conflict of political structure and social values; the creation of moral rules as technical means to political ends; an existential crisis of meaning in a pluralistic modern social space signifying a breakdown of trust. Where trust breaks down and communication becomes futile in a conflict situation, there is often recourse to violence and the nation may be torn apart. Solidarity may be privileged over liberty in the name of security, and freedom may be evoked in terms of an existential struggle for

\textsuperscript{862} MacIntyre. \textit{A Short History of Ethics}. Page 23.  
\textsuperscript{863} Gellner. Page 21.  
\textsuperscript{864} MacIntyre. \textit{A Short History of Ethics}. Page 124.  
\textsuperscript{865} MacIntyre. \textit{A Short History of Ethics}. Page 135.  
\textsuperscript{866} MacIntyre. \textit{A Short History of Ethics}. Page 142.
authenticity.

Aware of the triangle of political/social rights, national solidarity and the crisis of trust in modern mass society, Nehru articulated and put into practice an alternative paradigm of autonomy. He believed above all in the value of social criticism in relation to social change as the driving force of Indian nationalism. That is why he insisted that an “effective Opposition is desirable” for keeping “Government and majority party wide awake” and creating a “clash of ideas” out of which “new aspects of the problems that confront us are (...) brought to light”\textsuperscript{867} Influenced by his experience with the National Movement, he believed that the daily choices of ordinary individuals were of important social consequence. Nehru wrote in 1954 that “we are the children of the revolutionary period in India’s history. We have derived our strength from our people and we go to those people whenever any important development takes place which is likely to effect them”.\textsuperscript{868}

Nehru observed that in an authoritarian society where there is no freedom of criticism, individuals will not dare to take responsibility for decisions.\textsuperscript{869} For Nehru the problem of autonomy really begins at the individual and even the inner level. He spoke several times of the “inner life”, claiming that “non-violence begins in the mind”.\textsuperscript{870} Non-violence being at the core of his political outlook, this goes some way to explaining the importance Nehru consistently placed on self reliance and learning over ideology. He also condemned the excessive and blind speed of modernity in arguing that the “conquest of the world must be accompanied by the conquest of oneself”.\textsuperscript{871} At bottom, this outlook on the primacy of individual conscience necessitated Nehru’s lifelong insistence on the importance of traditional political rights and the central role of Fundamental Rights in the 1950 Constitution. He condemned Communist countries for “suppressing individual freedom” and argued that the individual should not be “sacrificed” on the

\textsuperscript{867} Nehru. Letters to the Chief Ministers. Volume 3. Pages 1,2.
\textsuperscript{868} Nehru. Letters to the Chief Ministers. Volume 3. Page 489.
\textsuperscript{869} Nehru. Letters to the Chief Ministers. Volume 4. Page 114. Nehru was discussing official cover ups for instances of industrial mismanagement in the Soviet Union and China.
\textsuperscript{870} Nehru. Letters to the Chief Ministers. Volume 5. Page 426.
\textsuperscript{871} Nehru. Letters to the Chief Ministers. Volume 5. Page 72.
road to larger political ends. He argued that “our objective is individual improvement”. Yet Nehru was certainly not a libertarian individualist dismissing the importance and reality of individual belonging and expression within a cooperative context. He understood very clearly the need for broad and long term social transformation involving the masses - and hence the Directive Principles in the Constitution. We cannot identify Nehru with the Lockean transmutation of the individual within natural rights doctrine into the free individual of the market place. Nehru was a socialist with a deep commitment to democratic institutions, often speaking of a mixed economy. His idea of natural rights was closer to the original conceptions of the Levellers and the Diggers in which every individual, simply by grace of being born, is entitled to certain fundamental social and political rights.

In this way Nehru championed two political elements which are often described in mutually hostile terms: the French Revolutionary demand for nationality as fraternity in the ‘common good’ and the principle of liberty in the individual. He did not seek to synthesize them into one higher truth. Recognizing social solidarity and legal differentiation as two constitutive elements of the modern political life, Nehru privileged neither but permitted them to co-exist in a creative tension through the system of Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles. Always unfinished and requiring continuous negotiation, this was also the temporality of democracy.

Nehru articulated the sense of social solidarity he envisioned in terms of a certain ideal of the public life. This is best shown through his frequent remarks expressing his view of democracy. In stressing the danger that under rapidly developing dictatorships “the creative spirit may gradually fade away”, he argued that “democracy” even “apart from its institutions” is a “way of Government and of life itself”. Elsewhere he argued that, despite their importance, elections at stated intervals are not enough – a “sensation has to be created so that the people may feel that the

plan is something that has been evolved with their co-operation and they are responsible for its success" as well the related "benefits and obligations". Thus Nehru envisioned a deeper national solidarity in the projection of a common sense of hope for the future. Within this broader secular universe of hope, particular religious and cultural understandings were perfectly at liberty to experience the world according to their beliefs. The modernization programme required the participation and consent of all of these groups. There was no violent clash between some ideology of the state and any given belief system.

The study of the Nehru period as the heir to the National Movement therefore provides an alternative framework of modern autonomy in terms of moral rules as technical means - i.e., in the context of nation-making. Nehru avoided the conventional road to national unity based on a single universal truth claim, introducing a paradigm of national autonomy grounded in potentially boundless diversity. We have seen how nationalism in the Nehru period was not embodied in the pattern of inner homogenization and outer autonomy, but in multiple inner autonomies operating in relation to the centre.

The issue of gaining autonomy has four aspects within the post-independence Indian context: 1. The international issue of political and economic dependence; 2. the national issue of ending systems of socio-economic and cultural inequality (landed elites, caste, gender inequality); 3. the creation of representative democracy with an acceptance of diversity, and 4. the achievement of these goals with the broad support of the population.

In the last we see an unprecedented political innovation: the attempt to undertake national economic development within a democratic political structure. This experiment reflected Nehru's conviction that political freedom was not merely the end but also the means of development, and the two could not be severed. He wrote that if "poverty and low standards continue then democracy, for all its fine institutions and ideals, ceases to be a liberating force. (...) political


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democracy is not enough. It must develop into economic democracy also.” He fully recognized the unprecedented nature of the undertaking, adding: “If India succeeds in achieving these results under a system of political democracy, that indeed would be a great victory not only for India but for democracy”.876

We have seen how Nehruvian nationalism does not follow the pattern of internal homogenization/outer sovereignty but functions by way of multiple inner autonomies relating to the centre based on a principle of non-violence. It follows that in the international dimension post-independence India also followed the alternative road of non-alignment in which the “object was to find some honourable and reasonable way which would be acceptable to both parties”.877 Nehru wrote that “our way is not a way of war but of peace and our idea of strengthening a nation is to rely on ourselves”.878 He identified non-alignment with the heritage of Gandhism as “not idealistic but eminently practical”.879

At the core of this foreign policy is once again the specific ideal of autonomy and self reliance that we find at work generally in the Nehru period. In related way, the pursuit of national autonomy also required the de-structuring of India’s dependent articulation within the metropolitan economy that had subordinated Indian economic interests to Britain since the 1750’s.880 This required the creation of an independent economic base, the object particularly of the Second (1956-61) and Third Plans (1961-66).

Nehru conceived these national development plans within a framework of democratic social justice, writing that “It is clear that we cannot proceed along authoritarian lines (...). The problem (...) is how far we can achieve our objective through democratic planning without too much

compulsion".\textsuperscript{881} He insisted that the higher end did not justify the use of unethical means, saying that "greater production without social justice is not only wrong in itself but also unstable".\textsuperscript{882} While in considerable part socialist in orientation these Plans were undertaken often in negotiation and co-operation with the Indian capitalist class, again reflecting Nehru’s refusal to force an official ideology on any section of the population.\textsuperscript{883} The Plans were undertaken under the principle of growth with equity with the aim of eliminating the barrier to national unity in regional inequality.\textsuperscript{884}

The Plans were also guided by a national policy which was consciously context specific. Nehru insisted that Planning be relative to the "changing scene in India and the world" and adapted to it.\textsuperscript{885} In discussing the option of village and large scale cooperatives in 1952, Nehru wrote: "Conditions differ greatly in India and perhaps a single and general answer will not suit all the states, even though our ultimate objective everywhere might be the same".\textsuperscript{886} There was the consistent refusal to "accept any rigid model or theory" in an "approach (that had) all along been rather pragmatic" as Nehru contemplated the growing need in 1957 to "put greater emphasis on smaller undertakings (...) which take advantage of local resources and develop local economies".\textsuperscript{887} Regarding education, Nehru wrote in 1952 that it may be "adapted to changing conditions in different states" while the "principles governing it should not be bypassed".\textsuperscript{888}

These projects were accomplished through the economic and administrative structures of the pre-colonial and colonial period, but with the vision and values derived from the national movement.\textsuperscript{889} The colonial state apparatus had hardly been designed to meet the radical democratic aims of the National Movement, and would need to be extensively reconstructed for the purpose. This post-independence move reflected the legacy of the Gandhean era in the idea of "non-
beginning”, which rejected a *tabla raza* approach and promoted the advantages of using and reforming existing and familiar institutions. The army – the second legacy from the Empire – was kept to a minimum size and remained largely outside of politics. Its relative weakness in the international context proved a liability later with the Indo-Chinese War of 1962.

The administrative and bureaucratic structure wielded a more formative influence in the Nehru period. Inadequately restructured by the Nehru government and composed of conservative individuals of a different ideological orientation, the administrative machinery was able to act as a powerful political agent in restraining the full force of government land reform, women’s emancipation and anti-caste policies, and stifling grassroots democratic activities with bureaucratization. One such example was with rural cooperativization which, though intended to promote grassroots power, was considerably co-opted by the bureaucracy.

This by turn reflected the failure of the Nehru government to build adequate organizational structures for institutionally sustaining the enormous floods of public energy in the post-independence period. The same problem also led to patterns of official corruption and instances of police brutality in the ensuing decades. Nehru himself came to recognize the bureaucratic excess as early as 1952; with regard to the tribal people of the northeast, he cited “too much of a legalistic and bureaucratic approach to a problem which above everything requires a human approach and imagination”.

4. Enlightenment and authenticity

Whatever these failings may have been, in the ideology of the Nehru period as the heir to the National Movement we can point to a mass political movement which conceived itself within the democratic tradition of Enlightenment but derived its inspiration from indigenous traditions at

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891 Chandra, et.al. *India After Independence*. Page 400.
least as much - and probably more - than from those of Western Europe or the United States.\textsuperscript{893}

Widespread and growing participation from both urban and rural areas in the universal suffrage elections of 1952, 1957 and 1962 seem to ratify the ongoing hegemony of the ruling Congress Party. Whatever the demerits of the administrative machinery, a well trained and experienced civil service in the initial period was surely an asset in dangerously unstable times.\textsuperscript{894}

Yet Chatterjee takes the more heroic step of wanting to be rid of the state altogether, seeing a continued absence of true autonomy for India in the "lack of autonomy of the nationalist discourse", i.e., it is "derivative".\textsuperscript{895} Practically, there is not much to go on this line of argument. This point of view may make inspiring reading when ventured in the vaguely abstract and colourful language of Continental theory; but it ignores the reality that without security there cannot be freedom, and that weak or collapsed states in the contemporary world present as great a threat to freedom as tyranny. Freedom itself is not a natural condition that will flower once the state is banished, but a complex and delicate construction that must be maintained through continuous adjustment involving relations between civil sources of power and the extended bodies of the state.

Theoretically, however, it has stirred much debate. These debates often pose important questions about reification in the realm of ideas and the erasure of marginalized people when those reified ideas are implemented in political reality. However, the value of poststructural critiques seems to stop largely at the level of unmasking and does not venture much of practical substance beyond providing individual inspiration and enquiring conversation.

Chatterjee describes the Nehru period as driven by the "ambit of bourgeois-rationalist thought" based on a "lack of autonomy of nationalist discourse itself".\textsuperscript{896} Chatterjee, too, then, is concerned with the problem of autonomy, or freedom. As he writes, his "concern in this book is

\textsuperscript{893} Chandra, et.al. \textit{India After Independence}. Page 23.
\textsuperscript{894} Chandra, et.al. \textit{India After Independence}. Page 139.
\textsuperscript{895} Chatterjee. \textit{Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World}. Page 11.
\textsuperscript{896} Chatterjee. \textit{Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World}. Page 10-11.
with social agency". For Chatterjee, following a Foucauldian line, knowledge amounts to domination and he seeks to overcome the Western – sometimes evoked as colonial, sometimes as capital – dominance which "remains on the epistemic plane". In the process of doing so Chatterjee implicitly dismisses all Indian politics since independence as tainted by inauthenticity because of the "lack of autonomy in the nationalist discourse".

We are presumably meant to believe that the 'theoretical intervention' of which he is a part represents the first instance of a truly democratic Indian politics. Yet as Chatterjee roundly attacks all concepts such as "liberty" and "justice" as a part of the hypocritical panoply of epistemic inauthenticity, we have little notion of what these authentic Indian politics beyond the "epistemic prison" will look like.

It is as if a pure Western episteme somehow remained unscathed, lurking beneath the surface, throughout the entire historical passage of Indian independence – using Gandhi more or less like an innocent puppet in order to win the approval of the religious masses – only to then openly spread its wings in the post-independence Indian state once the door was already firmly locked on the unsuspecting Indian population. This story summarizes the main line of argument in Nationalist Thought, which uses a Gramscian framework to describe the Indian National Movement and the event of independence as a "passive revolution" used for bringing the bourgeoisie to power and enthroning international capital in India mainly by way of epistemic structures.

From reading Chatterjee's account, we almost have the impression that Gandhi was somehow the dupe of a terrible conspiracy – but a conspiracy devoid of human intentionality, one of 'discursive logic'. Chatterjee may make nebulous claims to the Marxist tradition to identify his struggle with the most oppressed, but in a far more substantial way his mode of analysis partakes of the Heideggerian notion of the "unthought". The uniform identification of all "nationalist

emancipation" as necessarily "a story of betrayal" in which individual actors are merely the unwilling puppets of underlying epistememe – this is much closer to the politics of paranoia and pessimism that we find in Heidegger's lamentations of a lost authentic being. Ultimately, the whole discourse of the "derivative" rests on the tacit and seductive idea or promise of such an authentic Indian being or community glowing somewhere beyond the "cunning of reason" or the prison of modernity.

The villain in Chatterjee's scenario is the "intellectual premises of modernity", or "epistemic privilege" as "the last bastion of global supremacy" following the challenge of anti-colonial movements.899 This is embodied in the "universal ideal" of the "Enlightenment" as the "implantation into new cultures of an alien framework".900 It seems that Chatterjee is alone among the few to have successfully recognized the plight and broken free from its insidious clutches.

Chatterjee identifies the emergence of a consciousness of the problem of secularism – and the inextricable link between secularism and civil society – as an 'epistemic conspiracy' in which the invisibly guiding powers of the 'unthought' mingled with the terrors and anxieties of a new middle class ascending to power finally and unwittingly embraces the very practices of domination it had sought to overcome. This trap is evoked in terms of the plight of "prisoners of an incorrigibly historical vision of ourselves and the world".901 Although Chatterjee claims the work is about agency, we do not see agency so much as human beings as puppets trapped in the ghostly framework of intermeshing gears and structures of thought, being run in this direction and that, in blindness to unknown ends – it is a work of conspiracy with all of the anxiety this entails. In Chatterjee's language "Reason" is "carried", as if it were a disease.902

Where many might see a dialogue – though certainly not one innocent of power relations – between Western ideas and Indian traditions, for Chatterjee it is tinged with a mood of conspiracy.

It is as if we were all the unconscious slave of a pernicious and hidden ‘structure of thought’ that we don’t see, but which guides our every thought and action. Hence, our efforts at liberation amount in practice to confused coercion and domination of the ‘other’ we intend to liberate. Chatterjee’s ‘theoretical contribution’ is going to liberate us from this evil circle – which is the words and concepts we unreflectingly use – so that we may live and think authentically, i.e., beyond the poisonous grip of unconsciously buried ‘alien’ structures of thought, that is, freely. Thus, beneath the elegantly sophisticated and seductively rich layerings of theoretical language, the contention is straightforward and has been made before: freedom is not linked to institutional mechanism, but to authenticity grounded in the community. For those with a memory of the outcome of these kind of politics, it is difficult to be convinced.

The Enlightenment paradigm, moreover, is nowhere near as singular or all-pervasive as Chatterjee suggests. Nehru was certainly a modernist thinker, concerned with the “changing, dynamic, fascinating, and sometimes rather terrifying aspects of the modern world”903 Yet if we look closely at Nehru, we see that he seriously challenges the dominant paradigm of modernity as articulated in his politically active lifetime.

1. The Secular Constellation. Nehru did not confuse civic with ethnic nationalism. He distinguished between nationalism as emancipatory and narrow, identifying an “insidious form of nationalism” in the “narrowness of mind that develops within a country, when a majority thinks of itself as the entire nation and in its attempt to absorb the minority actually separates them even more”.904 If this applied to emerging nations Nehru was also sensitive to the similar logic of exclusion at work in the Eurocentric paradigm of historical modernity, writing that “Ancient Greece is supposed to be the fountain-head of European civilization and much has been written

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about the fundamental difference between the Orient and the Occident (...) a great deal of (which) seems to be vague and unscientific".905

Underlying this rejection of essentialism is a more complex view of Nehru’s concerning a profound and living historical interconnection between the world’s different cultures that rules out any ideal of the pure nation or universality as a single rational necessity mowing down the contingent and singular world of obsolete traditional practice and belief. This amounts to a rejection of historicism. He accordingly deemed it “absurd” to use the term “backward” for India’s tribal people.906 This anti-essentialist outlook is grounded in Nehru’s secularism. A committed secularist, Nehru also rejected romantic claims to religious or cultural “authenticity” in the divisive form of communal politics (i.e., the other side of the historicist coin in claims of the ‘particular’ against the ‘universal’).

It follows then that Nehru also rejected historicism in its ‘scientific claims’- i.e., that science has no accidental or heterogeneous aspect, as with every other area of the human condition as ongoing struggle. That it is a form of metaphysical necessity constantly building the tower of truth toward the eventual total completion that will finally put to rest all disagreement about ‘reality’. Although a believer in the importance of modern science for human welfare, Nehru broke with certain ‘scientific’ and ‘materialist’ dogmas enshrined in dominant discourses of modernity and development. He did not see science as a quasi-religious ‘force of historical necessity’ or ‘salvation’ leading to a ‘new world’ in the manner of the Comtean positivists or their followers.

Nehru accepted that religion within certain limits, above all as values and ideas, could contribute meaningfully as a positive force for social change. He saw religion as containing both “positive and negative qualities”, from “moral strength” to “superstition”.907 Although not an adherent of organized religion, he spoke often of the “spiritual” or “human side” of building

905 Nehru. The Discovery of India. Page 340.
democracy in contrast to the mechanical. He argued that development should “not be separated from values”, and once spoke of a “Vedantic approach” against violent development. He also spoke often of the “spiritual crisis” or “vacuum” of modernity, but significantly never urged that it be filled by any particular doctrine.

But above all Nehru recognized the importance of religion as part of an Indian and human heritage of thought and values. During a visit to Japan in 1957 he identified the roots of modern Indian thought and politics not merely in Gandhi, but also the Buddha, Ashoka’s edicts and the Upanishads. He certainly rejected the idea of doing violence to the “traditional past” in the name of “reason”, writing that “we cannot uproot all our history just because some abstract logic requires it”.

What Nehru embraced was the inherent dynamism of modernity, and he saw its energies all around him in what he called the “creative spirit of man”. Experience for Nehru was creative rather than based on fixed and unalterable criteria. Hence his frequent references – in complete rejection of the Hegelian paradigm of historical Reason – to the crucial importance of the “imagination”. Such a humanist ideal was also why Nehru was committed to a democratic politics, or involvement of the Indian masses in their own modernization project through diverse elements of civil society and a democratic legal apparatus. This too was an aspect of secularism for it implied the rejection of transcendental doctrines to be imposed from above in an affirmation of the immanence of humanism in time. Finally, the humanist emphasis on creativity, immanence and imagination points to a pragmatism, and Nehru argued that our “approach cannot be dogmatic or a

914 Nehru. Letters to the Chief Ministers. Volume 3. Page 159, 206, 482.
doctrinaire one. It must be pragmatic”.\textsuperscript{915} In fact, Nehru’s concept of autonomy was ultimately grounded in the individual. He wrote in 1953 that “each individual is a problem for us and his wellbeing a concern”, complaining that “notes and summaries and statistics (...) miss the human element”\textsuperscript{916}

Nehru’s constantly changing outlook represents the thought of a man who strived to remain awake and alert to the environment and who consistently did not slide back into the shelter of metaphysics. He called for the need “to be wide awake all the time and responsive to new trends, new forces, new ideas, new developments”.\textsuperscript{917} We hardly see, then, a man in the grip of somnambulistic theoretical dogmas about eternal reality. Nehru also regularly criticized the idea of modernization from above by the state based on a fixed ideology. It therefore borders on the ridiculous to attempt to identify Nehru with the “episteme” of so-called “post-Enlightenment rationalism” or the “primacy of the economic” as if he harboured even unconsciously the fixity of ideas and determinist convictions about science and reason that we find in an avowedly rationalist thinker like Leibnitz or a planner like Stalin.\textsuperscript{918}

Nehru argued forcefully against those who cease to “grow and become static in a changing world”.\textsuperscript{919} Rejecting the very premise of timeless or transcendental horizons of the social order, he affirmed temporality by arguing that “whatever policy we may adopt, our choice is ultimately limited by our capacity in the present”.\textsuperscript{920} He urged that nations “do not progress by magic leaps”.\textsuperscript{921} We have to wonder how much the metaphysics – in this case, of poststructuralist abstractions - is actually in Chatterjee’s mind.

2. Unity of means-ends. Following Hegel’s meta-narrative of historical development, many twentieth-century revolutions finished by becoming the victims of the very means they used to

\textsuperscript{915} Nehru. Letters to the Chief Ministers. Volume 3. Page 402.
\textsuperscript{916} Nehru. Letters to the Chief Ministers. Volume 3. Page 306.
\textsuperscript{917} Nehru. Letters to the Chief Ministers. Volume 3. Page 500.
\textsuperscript{918} Chatterjee. Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World. Page 139.
\textsuperscript{919} Nehru. Letters to the Chief Ministers. Volume 3. Page 429.
\textsuperscript{920} Nehru. Letters to the Chief Ministers. Volume 3. Page 19.
\textsuperscript{921} Nehru. Letters to the Chief Ministers. Volume 3. Page 250.
achieve liberation – i.e., victims of the extreme violence of those means considered to justify the “final end” (i.e., in a conflict free society). The Gandhean contribution, adopted by Nehru, was a reconstruction of the political problem of means and ends as it relates to the passage to modernity. The unity of means and ends is founded in non-violence, but also entails the reconciliation of a moral vision (including history and traditions) with a modern programme for democratic national organisation – something certainly unthinkable within the Hegelian paradigm of advance to a crowning Absolute Knowledge. In Hegel lesser forms of knowledge may provide something of intermediary scaffolding on route to the summit of Absolute Knowledge but are certainly consigned to dialectical oblivion by the roadside in a preordained total order that is closed. The unsettling upshot of Hegel’s uncoupling of means and ends is that, for example, in front of Europe other civilizations are without value and are mere instruments in the self actualization of European modernity or the Idea.922

For Nehru, as for Gandhi, reason had an important and real but certainly not supreme or unlimited function. It was not going to “take us home” (i.e., as for Hegel, to a world beyond time at the “end of history”). Gandhi and Nehru accepted the limits of reason within time. In this way they broke with one dominant discourse of modernity as articulated by the French Revolutionary ideology and by Hegel, the violent leap out of time, but shared the perspective of other perhaps less cited figures who saw a more modest role for reason (i.e., John Dewey, or Alexander Hamilton in his warning against the “chimerical pursuit of a perfect plan”).923

3. History – open or closed.

In the *Discovery of India* Nehru presents an alternative vision of history based on a principle of open-ness. At the outset, Nehru rejects the idea of any single impulse or “necessity” driving either a given civilization or history as such of the kind that we find notably in Hegel but a great deal elsewhere besides. Nehru writes that it “seems absurd (…) to talk of an impulse, or an idea of

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life, underlying the growth of Indian civilization. Even the life of an individual draws sustenance from a hundred sources”. Nehru believed in multiple origins. He described, for example, Hindu culture of Vijayanagara as “deeply transformed through nearly two centuries of intense and creative interaction with the Islamic world”.  

By extension, he also conceived the future of independent India in terms of a “desire for synthesis between the old world and the new”. While seeking to reform many customs, he did not undertake a project of violently ‘transcending’ India’s past traditions. Taking a dynamic and creative perspective on tradition, he wrote that traditions “have to be accepted to a large extent and adapted and transformed to meet new conditions and ways of thought”. He therefore saw tradition in terms of proximate and not ultimate questions, or everyday rather than metaphysical, that is, in terms of temporality. Rather than framing a general picture of reality, and deciding the definition of things within it once and for all, he thought in terms of how existing beliefs can operate effectively in terms of practical problems.

Nehru’s strategy of “absorb(ing) new ideas while retaining the old” is linked to a view of history without purity, in which peoples are continually “mixing with each other and slowly changing”. He wrote that historically “India was not isolated, and throughout this long period of history she had continuous and living contacts with Iranians, Greeks, Chinese and Central Asians and others”. There are no pure forms or underlying substructures of identity. To be sure he sees the political and economic domination of European colonialism as having violently broken many of these intercultural links. But there was no stable pre-colonial identity. His view of identity remains hybrid, with “every outside element that has come to India” having “given something to India and taken much from her” and having “contributed to its own and India’s strength”. As Nehru repeatedly argued, difference is a source of creativity and growth.

924 Nehru. The Discovery of India. Page 146. (check if covers previous note)  
925 Nehru. The Discovery of India. Page 41.  
926 Nehru. The Discovery of India. Page 47.  
927 Nehru. The Discovery of India. Page 45-47
This outlook differs greatly from the Hegelian view of radical assimilation in meaningful historical change as “the interaction of pure knowing with itself” or “notional integration” leading to “Absolute Knowledge”, the “test of whose absoluteness consists simply in the fact that nothing further remains to be taken of” at the End of History.928 This Hegelian idea of autonomy is identified with absolute purity – beyond the limits of habit, imagination and contingent consciousness, we find a realization of absolute identity “with itself alone”.929

Nehru explains his view in terms of an “approach (...) of experiment based on personal experience” which is “not authoritarian or dogmatic but (...) an attempt to discover for oneself”, and attributes this outlook to the influence of an early Indian philosophy. At the same time he borrowed freely and openly from Western intellectual traditions, without claiming a single doctrinal allegiance. Indeed, Nehru explicitly rejected totality as a premise for social change, writing that we “are never interested in changing the whole environment; there is much that we take for granted and accept as it already is. Upon this background our activities focus at certain points in an endeavour to introduce needed changes”. This is the opposite of Hegel’s view in which the “True is the whole (but) the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development”, a doctrine making claims about Final Ends based on the totality.

Nehru’s outlook reflects an ethic of growth over Final Ends – the temporal realm where accident, chance, error and learning are political aspects within the framework of experiment based on non-violence. In arguing that with the approach “devoid of hatred and the spirit of conflict and violence” the “errors we make will be corrected”, Nehru asserts that “right means” are of primary importance – a position which inherently rejects claims to an epistemic absolute.930 This emphasis on means is also the temporality of democracy. Nehru’s thought was emphatically anchored in

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time – he attributed meaning to each event because of its particularity and uniqueness in the flow of
time. He wrote that “everything continually changes and life in all its forms is a stream of
becoming. Reality is not something that is permanent and unchanging (...) but a thing of forces
and movements, successions and sequences”.

For Nehru nation-making was an open process. He knew there was no single universal
scheme to be solved one time from the summit of the state as a monopoly on violence, that ‘general
will’ could never be a clear Euclidean shape defined by a single final value, but a discontinuous and
evolving world of irregular and conflicting shapes requiring the democratic experiment be
performed over and over again multiple levels of scale to retain legitimacy.
2.3. Iranian Enlightenment: struggle for multi-cultural democracy and its demise.

Behind the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1906-1911) there is a complex multi-part historical evolution. The Constitutional Revolution took shape around political principles and intellectual concepts that we identify with Enlightenment, but was at the same time very specific to Iran’s particular historical and cultural situation. The Constitutional Movement contained diverse and often contradictory threads, and may be viewed as a series of political experiments that culminated in the highly popular National Movement of the post-Reza Shah period under the leadership of Dr. Mohammed Mossadeq (1882-1967) before that movement reached its abrupt and rather inglorious end in 1953.

Nineteenth century Iran was a world of social complexity and regional diversity: with a population largely fragmented by the geographic terrain into isolated villages, towns and tribes, there were multiple languages of which Persian, Armenian, Arabic and Turkish were only a few. There was also considerable religious difference with Muslims, Nestorian/Catholic Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians. The Muslims were divided not only into the Shi‘i and Sunni branches, but the Shi‘i majority itself was divided between the official Mujtahedi Twelvers and many smaller groups, schools and sects scattered throughout the country.

Throughout the nineteenth century, moreover, Shi‘ism had developed two major schisms in Shaykhism and Babism. The leaders of religious sects presented the most serious challenge to the shah during the first half of the nineteenth century. In the 1840’s, two rebellions broke out led first by the Ismailis and then by the Babi Movement led by Mirza Ali Mohammed, or the bab (gateway) to the divine truth.931 Within these new movements there was a great diversity of belief. An offshoot of Babism in 1863, the Baha’is, introduced a “cosmopolitan, pacifist and liberal

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Shaykhism initially drew off Sufi concepts to argue that the "community was in constant motion toward improvement," entailing a doctrine of social progress, while a later offshoot of the same group denounced reform and insisted upon submission to the state. These debates inevitably reflected re-evaluations of old certainties in attempts to reckon with a time of increasingly profound change.

Such diversity and ongoing change is the background for the project of modern nation-making that the Constitutional Revolution initially undertook. Secondly, we have to understand this project within the context of the international jigsaw at work during the reign of Nasir al-Din (1848-1896). Altogether the Qajar dynasty ruled Iran from 1794 to 1925, when Reza Khan put it to an end. It was during a period of anarchy that the Qajars came to power and they never entirely consolidated their position. From as early as 1800 the impact of European imperial rivalry had been felt on Iran, when Napoleon Bonaparte aspired to use the country as an alternative springboard to Egypt for an invasion of British India. Though the particular project was aborted these developments led to Russian invasion and the humiliating Treaties of Golestan (1813) and Torkaman (1828) in which Iran both lost considerable territory and had to award capitulations to Russia.

Witnessing these events and fearing the dangers of an expansionist Russia to the Indian Empire, Britain also invaded Iran from the south. In the 1857 Treaty of Paris the British secured the kingdom of Afghanistan as a barrier to French, Russian and possible Iranian designs on the Indian Empire. By way of this treaty the Qajars gained international recognition as the legitimate rulers of Iran but had to grant significant commercial capitulations to Britain in return.

These developments initiated the era of foreign economic penetration and set the pattern for future commercial and political relations between Iran and the European powers. During the

933 Abrahamian. *Iran Between Two Revolutions*. Pages 14-16.
934 Mansfield. *A History of the Middle East*. Pages 140-42.
century the total volume of foreign trade increased by as much as eight times. This amounted to the importation and consumption of luxury products by a small percentage of the population to the detriment of local industry and the welfare of the majority. As traditional handicrafts were undermined by economic penetration radical social dislocations were produced. Among other privileges, foreign merchants could henceforth move freely in Persia exempted from the jurisdiction of shari’a law courts. The result of this was that Iranian independence became, between Britain and Russia, something of a fiction as “the mutual desire to forestall control of Iran by the other party was the most important factor in maintaining Iran’s formal independence”.

Nasir al-Din therefore entered the scene within the context of the nineteenth-century effort at modernization. Beginning with Fath ‘Ali Shah (1797) and Muhammad Shah (1834-1848), this involved the pursuit of administrative stability and military security through the creation of a functioning state-wide bureaucracy and an effective standing army. Over the long course of his reign Nasar al-Din swung between timid efforts at reform and violent reassertion of the status quo as he recognized the growing dangers of an increasingly self conscious Iranian public opinion.

Nasar al-Din established a government printing office that published translations of European classics including Voltaire’s essays on Peter the Great, Alexander the Great and Charles the Great of Sweden. He appointed Mirza Taqi Khan as vizier, who attempted administrative and military reforms inspired by the Tanzimat reforms of Ottoman Turkey. Mirza Taqi also founded the Ecole Polytechnique in Tehran. Yet under the impact of court extravagance and economic crisis these attempts ultimately did not meet with success. Moreover, the failure of the constitutional movement in Ottoman Turkey and Abdul Hamid’s II’s reversion to autocratic rule in 1878 encouraged Nasar al-Din to abandon his earlier liberal reformist experiments.
In 1872 he initiated the strategy of using foreign concessions as a means to raising the funds for developing a modern military. The most famous concession was to Baron Julius de Reuter in 1873, described by Curzon as “the most complete surrender of the entire resources of a kingdom into foreign hands that has ever been dreamed of.”\textsuperscript{940} This general strategy entailed relinquishing the idea of fortifying the society as a whole through administrative and military stability in a challenge to foreign domination and rather strengthening the state in collaboration with foreign powers at the expense of the society in a continuing relation of dependence.\textsuperscript{941} Unsurprisingly, it was the peasant majority who were taxed most heavily in order to pay for the increased purchase of foreign goods such as tea, sugar, tobacco and textiles.\textsuperscript{942}

These were limited and opportunistic dreams of holding onto power against the winds of change. The creation of a public consciousness out of the ethnic, religious and geographical dispersal involved profoundly more global dimensions. There were visible ways in which as a semi-colonial experience the international situation physically created such a public. Firstly, European economic penetration threatened the urban bazaars and coalesced the scattered commercial interests into a cross regional traditional middle class which for the first time took consciousness of its common problems. Secondly, the creation of modern educational systems introduced new concepts and produced a new professional middle class or the intelligentsia. With this the discourses of liberalism, nationalism and socialism entered Iran and words such as nationality, the people, feudalism, parliament, despot, democrat and aristocrat entered the modern Iranian vocabulary. These, in turn, combined with already existing Iranian discourses such as the anti-state Shi‘i ideas of the traditional middle class.\textsuperscript{943} This outlook is grounded in “the original

\textsuperscript{940} Keddie. \textit{Modern Iran. Roots and Results of Revolution}. Page 54.
\textsuperscript{941} Abrahamian. \textit{Iran Between Two Revolutions}. Page 52.
\textsuperscript{942} Keddie. \textit{Modern Iran. Roots and Results of Revolution}. Page 51.
\textsuperscript{943} Abrahamian. \textit{Iran Between Two Revolutions}. Pages 50,51.
Shi'ite belief that the practical leadership of the Islamic community had been *usurped* making “the state itself symbolic of the usurpation of the kingdom of God on earth”.944

The matrix of Iran’s transformation, however, was on a still wider basis as Iranian merchants and workers travelled to India, Russian Transcaucasia and Turkey, witnessing reforms and hearing liberal or radical ideas concerning government and social reforms that might free the country from foreign control.945 If we look at the principle figures who articulated the nineteenth century Iranian discourse on reform, we see an array of international dimensions pointing to a growing public consciousness of national existence within a wider constellation of state and civil forces of power.

Sayyid Jamal al-Din “al-Afghani” (1839-97) came from a family of Azeri-speaking landowners and received a complete Shi'i education in the rationalist philosophical tradition of Avicenna.946 He took an interest in unconventional subjects such as Shaykhism and Babism, and eventually became fascinated by modern sciences. Around this point he claimed to have “obtained nothing from traditional learning”.947

Going to India on a quest to discover the modern sciences, he arrived in Bombay in 1857 and witnessed the Indian Mutiny. The experience marked him deeply, for he saw both the potential power of popular religion linked to political action and the defeat of this mass uprising by the power of modern technology. He thus concluded that if the Middle East was to resist full colonization, it was necessary to both fully adopt modern technology and mobilize the latent powers of popular religion against imperialism. In India al-Afghani was involved in polemics with both religious and antireligious Muslims in attempts to overcome the religious/non-religious dichotomy from a basically pragmatic point of view. In these debates he criticised those Muslims

947 Abrahamian. *Iran Between Two Revolutions*. Page 62.
who did not wish to participate in the common struggle for national liberation out of a sense of separate religious identity. \(^{948}\)

Al-Afghani subsequently spent time in Afghanistan where he was a guest at the royal court. He then lived in Istanbul for a period where he gave a now famous lecture at the newly created House of Sciences (Dar-ul-funun) at its opening ceremony in 1870. This was an institution established by readers of Voltaire and Diderot with certainly more iconoclastic ideas than him. \(^{949}\) Yet there he reportedly caused a scandal by arguing that the survival and progress of humanity depends upon science, technology and reason, and thereby implying the autonomy of rational human existence from the Shari‘a and God’s will. In his lecture, al-Afghani “presented a thesis which had been well refuted since the time when kalam triumphed over philosophy” in traditional Islamic thought. \(^{950}\) Exiled from the Ottoman Empire in 1871, he subsequently lived first in Egypt and then Paris.

Later, in 1886, when Nasar al-Din took an interest in his reformist and pan-Islamic writings al-Afghani was invited back to Iran as an honoured member of the Royal Council. But when, in 1890, al-Afghani led the popular denunciation of the tobacco concession to a British company he was deported yet again. Despite this, his influence in Iran remained powerful and in 1896 – supposedly under the suggestion of al-Afghani who was then exiled in Istanbul – an out of work trader and disciple assassinated Nasir al-Din at the shrine of Shahzadeh Abd al-Azim, setting in motion the final decline of the monarchy. \(^{951}\)

Al-Afghani spent his final years in Istanbul as an honoured guest for the autocratic regime of Abdul Hamid II. His *Refutation of the Materialists*, written previously in India in 1878 against philosophical naturalism, became the confirmation of the “wisdom of (Abdul Hamid’s) persecution

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\(^{948}\) Abrahaiman. *Iran Between Two Revolutions*. Page 63.

\(^{949}\) Berkes. Page 178.

\(^{950}\) Berkes. Page 188.


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of the constitutionalists". At the time of his death al-Afghani expressed hope, believing that the "stream of renovation" flowing from West to East would destroy the "edifice of despotism" and expressed regret for having spent insufficient time sowing "the seeds of (his) ideas on the fertile ground of the people's thoughts".

What is striking about the story of al-Afghani is less the Pan-Islamic call for the adaptation of the umma to the scientific and technical realities of the modern world in a rationalization of the Islamic faith – though this is striking in pointing to the range of contention already being publicly voiced merely over the definition of Islam – but rather in suggesting the globally interconnected, interactive and overlapping nature of the process of nation-making itself. The multi-centred reality of the political debates and events from Bombay to Istanbul demonstrates this in a way that al-Afghani’s remark about the one-directional "stream of renovation" certainly fails to appreciate. Such a one-directional perspective has also been voiced by some of the major historians of the Constitutional Revolution, as when Morteza Ravandi argues that a ‘causal’ relation exists between the "awakening" (bidari) and the introduction of European culture. In fact, the underlying pluralistic reality of the period of Constitutional struggle is in contradiction with the rather homogeneous and narrow discourse of the nation that came to prevail with the victory of the Constitutional Revolution.

Firstly, political events in Japan, particularly the constitutional movement (1889) and the defeat of Czarist Russia by a nationalist Japan in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5) had an important impact in influencing Iranians to undertake the struggle against absolutism and seek a constitutional government. Moreover, the news of Japan’s constitutional movement reached Iran through the Iranian constitutionalists’ largest Persian language newspaper that was based and published in Calcutta. Similar Persian language newspapers were also being published in Egypt at this time. Secondly, the internal forces driving the Constitutional movement were neither ethnically

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953 Abrahamian. Iran Between Two Revolutions. Page 65.
nor religiously homogeneous, with minority groups such as Jews, Armenians, Zoroastrians and Babis participating in the movement. Finally, other significant actors in the movement had spent time in Russia and the Caucasus where they were deeply influenced by revolutionary socialist ideas, and still others derived their understanding of modernity from writings and journals being published inside the Ottoman Empire.955

Among the most representative of nineteenth century Iranian intellectuals in terms of foreshadowing what finally surfaced as the dominant ideology of the Constitutional Revolution is perhaps Malkom Khan (1833-1908). The newspaper Qanun (Laws) that he published from exile in London at the end of his life — its mere possession in Iran a state crime — was later "hailed as a major factor in the outbreak of the Constitutional Revolution". At the core of this newspaper was the demand for a "national consultative assembly" with the "full authority to formulate laws that would initiate social progress".956

Like al-Afghani, this was an individual whose active political life was a search for an answer to Iran’s dilemma spanning several continents. A committed constitutionalist, he wanted to transform his country in order to rescue it from foreign domination. But his activist life alternated between attempts at such change from above though the Iranian administrative system — finding the way every time blocked — and the impotence of repeated exile abroad. Shaken repeatedly between these two worlds, he was eventually pushed from an attitude of cautious administrative reform to one of revolt through appeal to the anger of the Iranian masses.

Yet he did not fully trust the public which, through organized popular uprising, very likely formed the only viable road to the realization for his plans. This mistrust seems to have been grounded in a belief in the necessity for "Iran’s capitulation to Western values" based on the "acquisition of Western civilization without Iranian intervention".957 This outlook typified many

956 Abrahamian. Iran Between Two Revolutions. Page 68,69.

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intellectuals of the politically active generation in the Constitutional period. This resulted at least at the level of intellectual influence from the fact that “France served as the Mecca of modern intellectual and political thought” and Iranian intellectuals of the time “were very much interested and affected by the experience of the French Revolution, and (...) felt a great deal of sympathy for its principles and aims”. One historian of Qajar Iran has described the period as one where each intellectual “has a book about the French Revolution and yearns to play the role of Dante, and they are hot with fiery words”. This was a generation that celebrated the ideas of Descartes, Rousseau, Voltaire and Montesquieu.

On the one hand Malkom Khan’s commitment to liberal institutions and rule of law was a vision of Iranian national emancipation; on the other the tacit West-centric core of his thought amounted to the uncritical acceptance of a static paradigm of universal modernity. Hardly conducive to the vigour and spontaneity of a mass political movement, this ideology made headway in the minds of the intelligentsia grown from an abyss of mistrust dividing the leaders of the Constitutional movement from the broader Iranian public. While it was certainly only one of the competing intellectual threads seeking to give the Constitutional Movement direction, this ideology finally achieved dominance and found its political articulation in a programme of modernization from above in the period of Reza Shah (1926-41).

An Armenian educated at French Catholic school in Isfahan and then awarded a state scholarship to study engineering in France, Malkom Khan become deeply involved in the positivist theories of Saint Simon and the Religion of Humanity of Auguste Comte. Following the Marquis de Condorcet, these discourses essentially teach that the inevitable growth of scientific knowledge will finally result in perfection based on a universal human nature - a world beyond the evils of traditional political tyranny and the cultural confusions of modern liberal individualism.

958 Mirsepassi. Page 60.
Upon his return to Iran Malkom Khan entered the Iranian political scene as an administrator committed to a politics of liberal reformism. Converting to Islam – very likely in order to further his career – he joined the newly established House of Science (Dar al-Fonun) and founded a secret society based on the European Freemasons that he named the House of Oblivion. Gaining the interest of the Nasar al-Din in his ideas, he drafted the first systematic proposals for reform in nineteenth century Iran with his Ottoman Tanzimat-inspired Book of Reform (Daftar-i Tanzimat). The work posed two alternative futures for Iran: either foreign domination by the West or emancipation through the introduction of a new system of laws. He promoted a system of secular law distinct from the Seri’a based on public welfare and the equality of citizens, and envisioned within a broad framework of administrative and military reform touching education, taxes, banking and transport. This was essentially a vision of nation-making from above – while envisioning justice for the general population, it did not embrace the idea of their participation.

The favour and influence that Malkom Khan enjoyed in Nasar al-Din’s court was short lived. The monarch’s initial enthusiasm quickly turned when a strong backlash from aristocratic and clerical elements condemned the reform ideas as heresy and Malkom Khan was exiled to the Ottoman Empire. In 1871 his fortunes turned when Nasar al-Din again decided upon a course of reform and invited him back to Iran to function as a special advisor. But no sooner had reforms in the court budget and the separation of executive and legislative branches been undertaken did the clerical and aristocratic opposition again raise a chorus of condemnation. The reforms were once again called to a halt and Malkom Khan was sent off to London as an ambassador.

From there he continued to urge the Iranian court to follow a path of reform until he fell out of favour once more and lost his ambassadorship in 1889. It was in the wake of this misfortune that he underwent the transformation into a furious and radical journalist calling for the modernization of Iran - on the basis of a partnership with the ulama that he had previously denounced. The newspaper Qunan became his weapon in cloaking the ideas of Comte and Saint Simon in
respectable Islamic terminology – showing in effect how superficially he viewed both the Iranian masses and popular religion as a force to be manipulated on the road to universal ideas. Malkom Khan hailed the outbreak of the Constitutional Revolution and was considered by its leaders as a mentor, but was unable to return to Iran and participate. He died in exile in 1908 as civil war was breaking out in Iran.

The major turning point in nineteenth century Iranian politics was the Tobacco Crisis of 1891-92, as “for the first time in memory, the state had been compelled to bow to popular opinion in response to widespread urban rebellion”. This event prefigured and displayed many of the main elements of the Constitutional Revolution of 1906-11. For the first time we see that a local revolt can transform into a general rebellion, indicating the growing awakening to a national consciousness and power; and in this instance we see the possibility of the intelligentsia and the traditional middle class working together. Above all, we see that the Qajar regime is incapable of resisting the force of public opinion organized as a nation-wide mass movement.

With the intervention of the popular Iranian urban masses we also see the modes of resistance have a traditional foundation and that these modes are largely of a non-violent nature. Although there was no organized ideology of non-violence on the part of the leaders to guide them, these active expressions of popular discontent largely remained within the limits of non-violence until particularly intense threshold moments provoked explosions. At the same time we see persistent acts of assassination by individuals that the leaders of popular movements did not tend to denounce. In short, the political activities of the broad population, grounded in traditional forms of protest, harboured a potential that the ideological leadership seemed frequently blind to.

The Tobacco Crisis started when Naser al-Din sold still another concession in the form of a fifty percent monopoly over distribution and exportation of tobacco to an Englishman named Major

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960 Abrahamian. *Iran Between Two Revolutions*. Page 67. At a public lecture in London in 1889 Malkom Kahn proclaimed this as his aim.
961 Katouzian. Page 53.
962 Abrahamian. *Iran Between Two Revolutions*. Page 73.
Talbot. A liberal Iranian newspaper published in Istanbul, Akhtar (Star), charged that as a result of
the concession the vast majority of tobacco profits would henceforth remain with the English
company and that a sizable number of Iranians would be put out of work. The popular action
began in Shiraz, the main tobacco growing region, with a shutdown of the bazaar upon the arrival
of the company agents in 1891. By way of the new telegraph system the shutdown spread into a
general strike of the leading bazaars including Isfahan and Tehran. A religious fatwa at this point
also contributed to a state-wide consumers' boycott. Further demonstrations followed on the streets
of Tehran, support was expressed from afar by Jamal al-Din in Istanbul and Malkom Khan in
London, and Nasar al-Din was eventually forced to back down and cancel the concession. It was
clear by now that Iran was involved in a struggle from multiple sides over the future political shape
of a nation in the making – and the growing intensity of the national struggle at political and civil
levels showed that something of fundamental importance was at stake in the minds the various
actors.

In the aftermath of the Tobacco Crisis Nasar al-Din shied away entirely from reform and
committed himself to a course of resolute political repression. He sought to repress expressions of
burgeoning civil society in the form of newspapers, schools and scientific societies, even resorting
to the closure of tea houses as a bad influence on the popular masses. Above all he sought to close
the country off from European influences – restricting travel abroad and claiming at one point to
want ministers "who did not know whether Brussels was a place or a cabbage". Having seen the
implications of the united efforts of the population, he attempted to undermine national unity by
manipulating inter-communal rivalries and making scapegoats particularly of Babis. It was this
period of repression which culminated in the assassination of "the last effective ruler of Qajar Iran"
in 1896.

963 Abrahamian. Iran Between Two Revolutions. Page 73.
964 Abrahamian. Iran Between Two Revolutions. Page 74.
965 Katouzian. Page 53.
2. The Constitutional Revolution (1906-1911)

Following the death of Naser al-Din the new monarch, Muzaffar al-Din Shah (1896-1906) introduced the unlikely policy of highly unpopular economic measures combined with a relaxation of political repression. This was the period of the infamous D’Arcy concession of 1900, when a concession was granted to a British company for the exploration and production of Iranian oil until 1960. In 1908 the Anglo-Persian Oil Company was set up, 51% of its shares going to the British government. The political liberalization combined with increasing foreign economic penetration only encouraged further resistance against a state not only perceived as having failed to protect the country and its independence, but also using the narrowly distributed fruits of that subordinate position as its own lifeline.

The result of the new shah’s double policy was therefore a widespread blossoming of public forces of opposition. We see an emergence of multiple organized particles united in the aspiration to create a plateau for a functioning civil society out of a condition of official lawlessness. Numerous important opposition parties or clandestine organisations appeared, including the Social Democratic Party, the Society of Humanity, the Revolutionary Committee, the Secret Centre and the Secret Society. These had their foundations largely in the modern intelligentsia, though some (such as the Secret Society) were formed of the traditional middle class.

Some were of a more socialist orientation, such as the Social Democratic Party which worked with migrant workers in the Baku oil fields organizing strikes, eight hour work days, pension plans and so on. This current of radical socialist politics – the ancestor to the highly popular and powerful inter-war Tudeh Party – emerged in the north and fell at varying moments on either side of the divide between a nationalist politics committed to Iranian autonomy and an


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‘internationalism’ on behalf of the Cold War political aims of the Soviet Union. This political confusion de genres coupled with a political discourse openly hostile to religion as such contributed much to first the marginalization and then the ultimate downfall of a broadly based politics of the Left in Iran.

Meanwhile the Society of Humanity, as the heir to Malkom Khan, followed the radical positivist teachings of Saint Simon and Auguste Comte, focusing more on legal equality and social engineering as a means to national development. The Society of Humanity adopted a practice of “ceremonial secrecy” copied from the European Freemasons in order to protect themselves from the conservative authorities and the religious masses. This reveals the gulf of mistrust dividing them from their would-be supporters among the general population. Others sought to forge links with the urban masses based on a mix of religious and secular principles while embracing more radical tactics, as with the Revolutionary Committee which was devoted to the “overthrow of despotism”.

Iran’s first state-wide stock company was founded “to preserve the country’s independence by fostering such modern industries as textiles, and by protecting the traditional handicrafts, particularly the miniature arts”. Sayyid Hassan Taqizadeh, who was to play an important role in the Constitutional Revolution, was involved in the publication of a new Persian-language journal called “Treasure of Knowledge” (Ganjeh-i Fonun). Taqizadeh adopted a strongly West-centric line, arguing for “absolute submission to Europe, and the assimilation of the culture, customs, practices, organization, sciences, art, life, and the whole attitude of Europe, without any exception save language”.

It was such influential and not uncommon ideological perspectives – anchored in a belief in the unique supremacy of European modernity – that made the Constitutional Revolution a “narrow prism” upon the past, encouraging an initial view of it as “nothing but a corrupt state (dawlat)

967 Abrahamian. Iran Between Two Revolutions. Page 75-79.
968 Mirsepassi. Page 54.
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oppressing the people (mellat)” or later “a shameful age of dogmatism, fanaticism, and rampant clericalism” and merely an “embarrassing prelude to the revolution”.969 Hardly pragmatic or conciliatory, so reductive and categorical a rejection of Iran’s pluralistic past could project nothing but the most thinly abstract, uncompromising and singular vision of the ‘secular’ future. It was the tension between such a dogmatic outlook and the mutual intransigence in conservative religious elements and certain later religious ideologies that contributed in large part to violently splitting Iranian national politics along ‘religious’ lines and introducing a road to ‘authenticity’ into popular politics at the expense of democracy as a ‘derivative’ idea.

At this early stage no such distinction had yet been made and so we find, for instance, a discourse of national development with cosmopolitan dimensions and epistemic priorities underlying the proclamations of influential religious figures of the time. A National Library and private secondary schools were opened, the founder of which was a popular preacher who proclaimed that only education “separates humans from animals (...) generates light in an environment of intellectual darkness (...) and shows us how to build power plants, steam engines, factories, railways, and other essential prerequisites of modern civilization”. He hailed Japan as having been able to “transform itself in one generation from a backward nation into an advanced powerful nation”.970 His integrity as a preacher was not held up to question by any sizeable part of the population. Political and economic restructuring inevitably posed a potential threat to the ulama as a traditional vested interest (i.e., in terms of an independent modern judiciary), but the ideology of authenticity as a discourse had yet to gain popular ground.

By 1905 Iran was visibly entering a revolutionary conjuncture within the international and domestic configuration of the Russian Revolution of 1905, which both inspired hope in the power to subvert a powerful absolutist state and momentarily removed the ever-present threat of Russian intervention to prop up the Qajar regime; the victory of Japan in the Russo-Japanese War, in which

969 Abrahamian. Iran Between Two Revolutions. Page 10.
970 Abrahamian. Iran Between Two Revolutions. Page 76.

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the only constitutional Asian government defeated the Russian Czarist autocracy; these combined events had the effect of disrupting trade in the north and causing prices to rise sharply, which induced further unpopular state economic measures as the Qajar state snatched ever more rapidly at the population’s resources to right itself; and a bad harvest contributed to the seriousness of the country’s economic crisis. At this point the “government’s financial and moral bankruptcy was absolute”.971 The Revolution involved people “from all walks of urban life except for the military-bureaucratic establishment”. The peasant class, however, “were neither specifically represented in the objectives of the revolution nor autonomously took part in it”, doing so only when “mobilized and led only by their own landlords”.972

What is most striking in the events that followed is that the Iranian public, by and large, took a line of non-violent civil disobedience in order to voice their demands for reform to the state; and it was most often the brutal retaliation of the state that produced situations of violent conflict. These forms of non-violent civil disobedience were often grounded in various types of traditional Iranian popular protest such as religious processions and the ‘sit in’ (bastnishini). What this suggests is that force of public opinion as expressed through a growing mass movement was significantly constrained by the ethical framework of popular religious traditions of resistance, and the task of the leaders (whether the modern intelligentsia, the traditional middle class, or the ulama) was to find modes of organizing these largely spontaneous upsurges at the national level.

Secondly, the problem of violence was tacitly at the core of the Constitutional Revolution. The concept of the constitution was not borrowed wholesale from Western political experience. The word mashruteh means ‘conditioned’ or ‘constrained’, and the principle demand of the Revolution was “the establishment of a constrained or qualified monarchy”. This aim was counterposed to what was commonly identified as the existing “rule of force”, as in traditional Shi’ism the state itself is identified with the “rule of force”, or pure violence without spiritual guidance. In

972 Katouzian. Page 60.

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combining this traditional view with a politics of modern constitutionalism, the revolutionaries sought to abolish the violence and danger of an organized and official lawlessness by dividing the absolute power of the state on the basis of a government legitimized by popular consent.

Thirdly, we cannot apply the paradigm of the French Revolution or Enlightenment to the Iranian Constitutional Revolution: i.e.; the secular wing opposed to the religious wing in which religion is inherently a force of reaction and the enemy of open society. In the Constitutional Revolution religious institutions, groups and individuals played a far more complex and ambiguous role on various sides of multiple political divides. Indeed, without the “total support to the revolution” given by the three most eminent Shi’ite leaders of the holy city of Najaf, Iraq, through “edicts and public statements, communicating with religious and other leaders of the revolution, sending acrid letters and telegrams to the Shah”, the “revolution could not have succeeded when and how it did”.973

During the early stage of the Revolution there seems to have been a general consensus as merchants, lower administrative ranks, landlords, noblemen, common preachers and theological scholars “all took part “with the single unifying aim of destroying despotism and replacing it by a constitutional government”. This ‘consensus’, if you like, was not based on a shared terrain of abstract ideological assumptions concerning the merits of a democratic over despotic political system; it was rather that nothing was to be lost with the end of the increasingly unpopular political order and a significant amount to be gained from changing it. At the same time the model of a constitutional state as internationally strong and providing certain domestic securities, liberties and prosperity was availably in existence not only in Europe and North America as core capitalist powers but also Japan and lately Russia as new experiments in nation-making.

The Iranian public consensus was converged upon the specific issue of the rule of law and bespoke a concern with ‘material’ conditions, and this is why – in contrast with the earlier

973 Katouzian. Page 56-64.
nineteenth century revolts of the Babi and Shaikhis — despite the highly significant degree of ulama participation there was no demand for a change of any kind on the doctrinal level. The doctrinal, for the early part of the Revolution, remained as it were bracketed outside of the fray — making the use of religious terms to promote the struggle appear largely symbolic. The struggle — “fought by all classes and individuals who hoped to gain from its results” — was conceived in terms of a specific field of converging secular interests that had no direct bearing on the status of a person’s belief.\footnote{Katouzian. Page 60-64.} The second underlying aspect that accounts for the ‘consensus’ is the common desire for mastery of the laws, the economy, and so on, in the face of open intervention and domination by foreign powers. In this we have the conjoined national aspect. The molecular political processes shaping the Constitutional Revolution were simultaneously and unconsciously carving out a secular space for thought and action in the emerging Iranian national context.

The point of view of Mostashar ad-Dowleh, a deeply religious middle-level civil servant who spent time working in St. Petersburg and Bombay, typified this ‘consensus’ in calling it “self evident that in the future no nation — Islamic or non-Islamic — will continue to exist without constitutional law (…). The various ethnic groups in Iran will not become one people until the law upholds their right to freedom of expression and to the opportunity for education”\footnote{Mottahedeh. The Mantle of the Prophet. Page 52.}. Inevitably, the implementation of this constitution in dismantling a traditional hierarchic order would entail multiple points of negotiation arrayed across a field of dangerously conflicting interests and points of view. But it is not evident that Mostashar ad-Dowleh’s view of an impending Iranian modernity is inherently in conflict with Shi’ism or religion as such, unless we take freedom itself to mean a metaphysically defined entity with religion as its sworn enemy on some epistemic battlefield linking truth and virtue.

The Constitutional Revolution was an event that began from below in 1905 with three public protests. The first took place during the month of Muharram and was integrated with the
traditional Shi'i ceremony of mourning. A spokesman described the protest as a call to the government to “reverse its present policy of helping Russians at the expense of Iranian merchants, creditors and manufacturers” and to “protect our businessmen”. We thus see how a traditional spiritual structure was employed as a modern political instrument to achieve secular ends (i.e., the ends to be achieved were independent of religious doctrines and practice). It took place as a procession by two hundred shopkeepers and moneylenders requesting the repayment of loans borrowed from them and the dismissal of Mr. Naus, the Belgian director general of customs. Shops were closed and photographs of Mr. Naus dressed as a mulla at a fancy dress party were distributed. A congregation gathered at the sanctuary of ‘Abdul ‘Azim. Muzaffar al-Din Shah responded with promises to meet the demands that were never kept.

The second protest occurred later in the same year, again issuing the same demands along with more. When a seventy nine year old sugar importer who had financed the repair of the central bazaar and several mosques was publicly charged with speculation and ordered to lower prices, he defended himself by arguing that import prices were necessarily high because of the disorder in Russia. The governor of Tehran - ostensibly in an effort on behalf of the public to lower sugar prices – subsequently ordered that he and another sugar importer be publicly beaten on the soles of their feet. For much of Iranian history under the Qajar dynasty such a punishment would have been, however much regretted by the public, a matter of course.

On this occasion the public reacted with absolute condemnation as stores and workshops closed throughout the bazaars and the protesting crowds filled the main mosques. A public demand was made for the establishment of a House of Justice (Idalat-khaneh) – a concept left deliberately vague perhaps to maintain unity among potentially conflicting views on national reform. There was a series of “street demonstrations, mosque meetings, political leaflets and proclamations, and

976 Abrahamian. *Iran Between Two Revolutions*. Page 81.
'sit-ins' in sanctuaries (bastnishini). At first the government countered that a House of Justice would destroy all ranks "even between princes and common grocers". The general strike in Tehran lasted for one month before the government finally gave in to the pressure, and the crowds returned from the 'sit-in' shouting "Long Live the Nation of Iran" (Mellat-i Iran). It was reportedly the first time this phrase was used. Both the government's taunt and the shouting of the street procession indicate the emergence of modern political stakes articulated within a secular conceptual framework and vocabulary.

The third protests broke out in 1906 when a local preacher was arrested for his public charge that "backwardness" was the result of "autocracy and injustice and the want of laws", and his condemnation of the government as "a parasite". The subsequent shooting of a theology student who happened to be a sayyid (descendent of the Prophet) during a mass student demonstration outside of a police station resulted in thousands of students, shop keepers and guild members proceeding from the main bazaar to the central mosque in a public funeral procession. The issue at stake was articulated in terms of the right to protection from arbitrary arrest – yet strikingly we see no divorce between ethics and politics, as would later characterize the discourses of both Comte and socialist inspired politics in their claims to a value free 'scientific universality' in politics.

When attacks by the Cossacks resulted in twenty two deaths the two largest scale bastnishini to date were simultaneously organized with the aim of paralysing the country on both the legal and commercial levels. Muhammed Sadeq Tabatabai, one of Tehran's more respected mujtaheds, led a group of religious notables, their families, and two thousand religious students to perform a bastnishini at the holy city of Qom. As a result Tehran was to be left without judicial actions and legal transactions until the shah met the popular demands.

979 Abrahamian. Iran Between Two Revolutions. Page 82- 83.
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At the same time two merchants of the Secret Society led the second *bastnishini* at the British legation. This crowd was largely merchants and craftsmen from the bazaar organized by guild elders, putting Tehran business at a standstill.980 Numbering fourteen thousand, the ‘sit in’ was quite orderly and almost nothing was damaged apart from the flowerbeds. Teachers from the Polytechnic and the newly opened schools of agriculture and political science arrived and gave lectures on constitutional government, reportedly transforming the gathering into “one vast open-air school of political science”.981 These events of 1906 “brought honor and fame to the supporters of the new education” as they introduced a new political vocabulary to the urban masses.982 Women’s demonstrations were also organized outside the legation, a “new feature of the period” being “the entry of many women into the political arena”.983 A committee was organized to transfer money from wealthier merchants to poorer workers who could not afford to keep up a prolonged strike.984 We could say that this finally successful political movement, aiming for the realization of secular goals, was very much grounded in a participatory and self reforming sense of community carried along by a common secular objective.

The movement subsequently spread to the provinces, with particular force in the relatively prosperous and progressive province of Azerbaijan, and general attitudes hardened among the leadership as demands shifted from simply a House of Justice to a Constitutional government and a National Assembly (*Majles-i Melli*).985 In August 1906 the encircled and outmanoeuvred government finally yielded to the pressure of the general strike as news started to circulate of coming defections even among the Cossacks and telegrams arrived from Baku and Tiflis threatening to send armed volunteers.986

980 Keddie. *Modern Iran*. Page 67
984 Abrahamian. *Iran Between Two Revolutions*. Page 84, 85.
986 Abrahamian. *Iran Between Two Revolutions*. Page 85.
The subsequent period of preparing electoral law and formulating the National Assembly was also a time of great creativity in the surrounding realm of the emerging Iranian public sphere. Political organizations favouring the constitution multiplied in the form of professional associations and ethnic clubs for Zoroastrians, Armenians and Jews. The circulation of newspapers also leaped from six to over one hundred during a ten month period following the triumph of the Revolution with names such as ‘Unity’, ‘Awakening’ and ‘Progress’.

The old order had been overturned by a co-operation among merchants, street peddlers, wholesale dealers, shopkeepers, science and theology students, ulama, civil servants, and members of numerous religious groups. When the National Assembly opened in October 1906 its social composition reflected the dominant role of the traditional middle class in being composed of 26% guild elders, 20% clergy men, and 15% merchants. It was made up of three groups in the Royalists (princes, nobles, landowners), the Moderates (led by the merchants who had led the ‘sit-in’ linked to the ulama) and the Liberals (led by Taqizadeh and other intelligentsia).

A process of interaction among different and potentially conflicting forces was behind the formulation of the new Iranian constitution. Power was disproportionately invested in Tehran, holding sixty seats to only ninety six for all of the provinces combined. Basing itself on the Belgian Constitution, the National Assembly declared itself “the representative of the whole People”. Sovereignty was declared to be derived from the people and not God. The shah’s real powers were all but stripped away. Under the instigation of a group of mullahs a “supreme committee” of ulama was appointed to scrutinize all laws being passed in terms of their compatibility with the Seri’a – reproducing what is the traditionally consultative but not legislative role of the Shi’i ulama in relation to political power. In this way the “traditional gospel of Shi’ism had been incorporated into a modern structure of government derived from Montesquieu”.

987 Abrahamian. Iran Between Two Revolutions. Page 88.
988 Mottahedeh. Page 221.

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Muzaffar al-Din Shah sealed the revolution by ratifying the constitution only days before his death, but the struggle between royal authority and the Constitutional movement was in fact only at the beginning. Muhammad Ali Shah (1907-1909) began his very short lived period in power determined to undo the achievements of the Revolution and restore the nineteenth century style of rule that had existed during the reign of Naser al-Din. The new shah set up the stakes for his confrontation with the National Assembly by launching two consequential new lines of debate.

Firstly, he replaced the liberal prime minister with a conservative premier who, having spent a period of time in Japan, now believed with certainty that social reform could best be carried out only by an autocratic central state. From this perspective, the constitution presented an obstruction to the goal of swift national unification and development. Secondly, he tried to change the dominant terms of the debate over constitutional versus royal power by insisting that the true opposition was not between ‘constitutionalism’ and ‘despotism’ as the Constitutional leaders had argued but rather ‘constitutionalism’ and ‘Islamic law’. He thereby created the grounds for identifying constitutionalism as a part of an alien and hostile culture, i.e., as ‘inauthentic’. These fairly new and very divisive political arguments would have an afterlife in Iran well beyond Muhammad Ali Shah’s very short and ill fated reign as surely as would the legacy of the Constitutional Revolution itself.

Muhammad Ali Shah’s initial challenge to the National Assembly was his refusal to ratify the new Constitution on the grounds that he wished – citing the German constitution – to keep control over the armed forces. He rejected the structure of the Constitution as composed of guarantees of “citizen equality before the law, protection of life, property, and honor, safeguards from arbitrary arrest, and freedom to publish newspapers and to organize associations” in addition to a section detailing the division of powers and reducing royal power to insignificance.

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989 Abrahamian. *Iran Between Two Revolutions*. Pages 89-91. And previous citation.
990 Abrahamian. *Iran Between Two Revolutions*. Page 89.
His refusal met with immediate and widespread public protest as the major cities conducted new bastnishini and strikes that paralysed major sections of the economy including the telegraph offices. Numerous provinces, notably Azerbaijan, threatened to succeed from the nation should the constitution not be ratified. The various associations also swiftly united in the Central Society to mount a general strike in the main bazaar and the government bureaucracy accompanied by a meeting of 50,000 and 3,000 armed volunteers to defend the National Assembly. At the culmination of these events the prime minister Amin al-Sultan who had argued for the unique legitimacy of an autocratic path of development was assassinated outside of the parliament. Muhammad Ali Shah at this point retreated and agreed unconditionally to the demands of the National Assembly, even joining the Party of Humanity along with an entourage from the court to demonstrate the sincerity of his sudden change of heart. A profound reversal in the balance of power had taken place in Iran in terms of multiple organized elements of civil society functioning at a broad national level.

However, the united front achieved by the National Assembly began to unravel over several points in the coming times in a way that led unexpected strength to the royalist political wing. The general background to this moment of disintegration was the division of Iran into British and Russian zones, in anticipation of the coming struggle with imperial Germany, with the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907. This experience, coupled with still deepening economic crisis, dampened the spirits of both Constitutional leaders and the general public, particularly as following the British legation ‘sit-in’ many had come to believe that Britain supported the aims of the Constitutional struggle. This unhappy new development lent itself to a mood of persecution that provided a fertile ground for harvesting the politics of authenticity introduced by Muhammad Ali Shah’s discourse on the antithesis between constitutionalism and the Seri’a.

991Abrahamian. *Iran Between Two Revolutions*. Page 91.
992 Mansfield. Page 146.
Two roads diverged for the National Assembly between a politics of assimilation or pluralism, the centralization or federalization of power, and the proper latitude of public inclusiveness for a democratic political system, creating severe tensions at the heart of the movement. Debates opened concerning the Liberals’ proposed electoral reform measures: the Moderates objected that in a largely illiterate country universal male suffrage would constitute a dangerous opportunity for manipulation by forces of reaction; secondly, the proposal for expanded representation for religious minorities was countered with the claim that this would potentially subvert the Seri'a; and finally the proposal for the enlargement of representation for provincial regions would threaten national division and anarchy. The climate of tension over these issues was further aggravated by articles published outside of the Parliament by the more radical wing of the Liberal faction which blamed the decline of the Middle East on “clerical ignorance, superstitions, petty-mindedness, obscurantism, dogmatism, and insistent meddling in politics.”993 In these terms, the legitimacy of the Supreme Committee was challenged. At the same time the founding of a girl’s school provoked an outcry among the religious conservative element, further triggering a deadlock.

The contradictions are plentiful: the Liberal faction advocated the extension of political power to universal suffrage while also hoping to abolish the false religious beliefs of the general population, a view doubtlessly grounded in the belief in a pristine universal ‘human nature’ waiting to be emancipation beyond religious superstition. The Moderate faction aimed to represent the Iranian people while stratifying the diverse population in a way that privileged the religion and language of the majority. Both wings, in more or less ignoring the question of social rights, invited a rival political force to stand up for the economically most oppressed in the absence of any politics on their behalf in the existing National Assembly. For all the enthusiasm generated by the

993 Abrahamian. Iran Between Two Revolutions. Page 93.
Revolution people's opinions and loyalties change constantly, particularly where expectations raised and promises made one week are swept under the carpet the next.

It was at this conjuncture that Muhammad Ali Shah began to break out of the near total political isolation that had seen his swift defeat during the first great waves of bastnishini civil disobedience movements, and he made a barely perceptible but real headway in the modern political game of gaining public support. Increasing lower class discontent at a time of bad harvest and general high rates of inflation, particularly food products, and continued foreign subjection, began to manifest itself in feelings of hostility for the deputies of the National Assembly. A quiet recruitment programme began in the poorest quarters of the capital aiming to stir up the momentum of counter-revolution.

A seminal figure in Shaykh Fazallah Nouri - a highly respected and conservative mujtahed who had never the less participated in the 1906 protest - was drawn into these efforts in reaction to the hard anti-religious line of the radical Liberal wing. On one level his outlook reflected a broader anxiety among many mullahs who, having supported the revolution, now “saw that a constitution on a foreign model and ideas of justice not traditionally accepted in Shirah Islam had been pushed forward by the secular constitutionalists” and experienced a certain doubt about its implications for Shi’ism.994

On another level, though, Fazallah Nouri made a deeper claim that initiated what might be called an epistemic rupture. He argued that a human institution designed for the purpose of legislation was an offence against Islam as “the Prime Legislator had already spoken” (i.e., the Qu’ran).995 In place of a Parliament he promoted an assembly created with the purpose of carrying out the Islamic injunction “to command the good and forbid the evil”.996 He thereby declared that constitutional forms of government are inherently inauthentic, and so therefore are Iranian

994 Mottahedeh. Page 224.
996 Mottahedeh. Page 222.
constitutionalists for wanting to introduce “the customs and practices of the abode of disbelief”.997

The claim to ‘authenticity’ could of course be levelled from all sides; in response to his campaign Nuri was officially ‘unfrocked’ and excommunicated by the Shi’ite leadership in the holy city of Najaf – to whom he had at first appealed for support - who were supporting the Constitutional Revolution.998 We also might speculate about the threat to the traditional powers of the religious leaders with a modern independent judiciary or personal rivalries as greater motivations to Nuri’s politics than harm to the faith. What is undoubtedly the case on a broader basis, though, it that his call for an Islamic government in fact went against the historical grain of Shi’ite leaders being invested with “independent power and prestige precisely because of their usual lack of direct association with the despotic apparatus”.999

Founding the Society of Mohammed in opposition to the “heathen” constitutionalists, and under the blessing and encouragement of Muhammad Ali Shah, Fazallah Nouri drew a crowd of several thousand mullas, theology students, peasants, unskilled workers, and craftsmen to Cannon Square where he delivered a sermon denouncing “the concept of equality as an alien heresy”.1000 He declared that the Liberal wing, like the French Jacobins, was paving the way to nihilism. Underlying his discourse was the fundamental opposition between Mashrui‘eh (Islamic law) and Mashruteh (constitution) that had earlier been introduced by Muhammad Ali Shah, with whom he hoped to share power in a future post-constitutional state.1001 Arousing the assembled crowd to the pitch of passion with his sermon, he intended to lead a march upon the National Assembly.

However, massive public support for the National Assembly turned the march back as a general strike ensued and 100,000 citizens appeared to defend in the streets to defend it.1002 A foreign observer described the diversity of the crowd that rallied to defend the National Assembly.

997 Mottahedeh. Page 221.
998 Katouzian. Page 64.
999 Katouzian. Page 63.
1000 Abrahamian. Page 95.
1001 Katouzian. Page 63.
1002 Abrahamian. Page 95.
in terms of “Europeanized young men with white collars, white-turbaned mullas, Sayyids with the
green and blue insignia of their holy descent, the kulah-nomadis (felt-capped peasants and
workmen), the brown 'abus (cloaks) of the humble tradesfolk; - all in whose hearts glowed the
sacred fire gathered there to do battle in the cause of freedom”.1003 The description clearly shows
the gravity of the mistake in imagining this seminal event in modern Iranian history as a perennial
clash of ‘Islam’ against ‘freedom’ (i.e., as in the imaginary world of monolithic caricatures that we
find in, for example, the unfortunately influential writings of Bernard Lewis or Samuel
Huntington).

Once again Muhammad Ali Shah was forced to retreat and swear his loyalty to the
constitution. But secretly he continued his efforts and gained the generous financial support of a
magnate threatened by new parliamentary budget cuts, as well as the backing of several regional
tribes who were unhappy with the distribution of power under the new constitutional
arrangement.1004 Using the Russian-led Cossack brigade he launched a new and direct assault on
the National Assembly, and carried out a successful coup d'état. The leaders of the Constitutional
movement unlucky enough to be caught were poisoned, strangled, tortured and banished. The mere
sudden and violent seizure of state power, however, proved to be inadequate in this case as masses
of armed volunteers from the provinces rose up in Tabriz, Isfahan and Rasht, spreading to other
cities and finally erupting as well in Tehran.

The Provisional Government of Azerbaijan, standing in for the National Assembly, largely
carried the civil war that followed. Within a month the royal position had deteriorated and a new
Grand Assembly convened in Tehran following the convergence of two rebel armies upon the
capital. In the aftermath a new electoral law was passed that reduced property qualifications and

1003 Abrahamian. Page 95.
1004 Abrahamian. Page 96.
reduced Tehran's allocation from 60 seats to 15 as the government sought to reward those who had brought victory in the civil war.\textsuperscript{1005}

By the end of 1908 the constitution had been secured, but the evidence of the popular classes showing support for the royalist cause during the civil war demonstrated that the National Assembly – with its aspect of rejecting the traditional past and introducing European modernity into Iran - had not been entirely successful in winning broad public hegemony. One member of the council noted that while the traditional urban middle class had remained committed to the constitution, the “slums had been turned into hotbeds of reaction”.\textsuperscript{1006}

3. The Interregnum 1941-53 and the Iranian Popular Movement (Nehzat-e Melli)

The Reza Shah Pahlavi period (1926-41) was based ideologically on the most extreme elements in the Liberal wing of the Constitutional Revolution – the path of nation-making as the elimination of the local, achieving freedom from religion in the name of an Aryan pre-Islamic heritage, contempt for the superstitious masses, and creating modernity from above as a unified state grounded in a single national identity conceived along Western lines. The background to this was disillusionment with the constitutional experiment, an outlook summed up by the historian Sayyed Ahmad Kasravi: “After twenty years of constitutional government (we) now know that that the blame (for backwardness) rests not with the rulers, but the ruled”.\textsuperscript{1007} The means to be employed in this new road to national ‘regeneration’ from above were violence and the crushing of civil society. In this period the Parliament was reduced to a merely “ceremonial function”, all independent newspapers were closed down, political parties destroyed and all trade unions

\textsuperscript{1005} Abrahamian. Page 101.
\textsuperscript{1006} Abrahamian. Page 98.
\textsuperscript{1007} Abrahamian. Page 126.
banned.\textsuperscript{1008} It was superficially a period of political quiet and order, concealing an inferno of hidden internal conflicts beneath an iron fist.

Reza Khan came to power through a coup d'état in early 1921 voicing his aims in strong nationalist terms. Following the coup, however, the “British continued to have influence on the oil producing regions of Iran” and “did not object to the coup”\textsuperscript{1009} Reza Shah promised to “initiate an age of national revival by ending internal disagreement, implementing social transformation, and saving the country from foreign occupation”\textsuperscript{1010} In 1925 by way of a Constituent Assembly he deposed the Qajar dynasty and took the imperial throne. His achievements were significant; by building national roads he laid the infrastructure for economic and particularly industrial development; he developed state administration in the urban sectors by raising revenue from the rural masses; he extended the power of the state to even the most remote towns; between 1925 and 1941, the annual allocations for education increased twelvefold, thus transforming the intelligentsia from a narrow strata to a modern middle class; largely out of developing the oil industry a modern working class was created.\textsuperscript{1011} He changed the law, introducing a version of the French Civil Code in contradiction of certain Qu’ranic canons and stripped the ulama of both their traditional land and power.\textsuperscript{1012}

In the domain of national independence he was unable to fulfil his promise. After cancelling the D’Arcy concession in 1932 he signed an equally unfavourable agreement only a year later under the threat of losing Iran’s foreign assets. In seeking to raise the status of women, he did not give them the right to vote but opened access to higher education and -- more controversially in view of the violent manner of imposing this ‘freedom’ - outlawed the veil. He imposed the wearing of European brimmed hats as “international” headgear, with the aim of eradicating visible ethnic

\textsuperscript{1008}Abrahamian. Page 138,39.  
\textsuperscript{1010}Abrahamian. Page 118.  
\textsuperscript{1011}Abrahamian. Page 137-147.  
\textsuperscript{1012}Abrahamian. Page 140.  

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difference. In such social reforms based on the long-range goal of rebuilding Iran culturally according to his own image of Western modernity he was inspired by Kemal Ataturk.

There was initially support among sections of the civilian population. His path to power "was paved not simply by violence, armed force, terror, and military conspiracies, but by alliances with diverse groups inside and outside the Fourth and Fifth National Assemblies" in elements from the Reformers' Party, the Revival Party, the Socialist and the Communist Parties. These individuals - among whom were counted not only conservatives but also reformers, radicals and revolutionaries - believed in the necessity for a quicker, surer and more effective road to national unification and empowerment in a "revolutionary dictator' who would forcibly liberate the ignorant masses". In the Fifth National Assembly the Revival Party, formed of "young Western educated reformers who had previously supported the Democrats", held a majority under Reza Khan's guiding hand.\textsuperscript{1013} Reza Khan initially used "the army, through a policy of national conscription, to indoctrinate young Iranian men with the concept of Iranian nationalism" increasingly "influenced by fascist doctrines espoused by the Germans".\textsuperscript{1014}

However, over the course of his reign he successively alienated the great bulk of his own supporters from first the traditional middle class and later from the modern middle class as well by seeking to concentrate power within his own hands and wealth largely within the court, and by his continued servile relation to the Western powers in seeking these ends. It was, among other things, the sheer violence of his political rule that widened the gulf between Reza Shah and the country. One of his earlier enthusiastic supporters, Taqizadeh, who had led the Liberal wing during the Constitutional Revolution and urged total Westernization, lost his ambassadorship in Paris and then made excuses for not returning to Iran.

In a journal describing the outlook of pro-Reza Khan reformers, \textit{Iranshar} (Country of Iran), we find a celebration of pre-Islamic Iran and discussions of Voltaire's anticlericalism, Gobineau's

\textsuperscript{1013} Abrahian. Page 121-144. \textsuperscript{1014} Poulson. Page 141.
racism, and Gustave le Bon’s work on the ‘irrational mob’. It is argued that the French Revolution provided a model on how to “liberate the ‘common masses’ from clerical domination. The seventh century Arab invasions are blamed for Iran’s backwardness and it is argued that the country cannot progress until freed from the “shackles of the superstitious and religious clergy”. The backwardness of Iran is also explained in terms of the harmful effects of ethnic diversity. The journal urges the need to “eliminate local sects, local dialects, local clothes, local customs, and local sentiments”. On this basis it will be possible to “form a centralized state and a unified national identity”.

The campaign, according to *Iranshar*, envisioned “extending the Persian language throughout the provinces; eliminating regional costumes, destroying local and feudal authorities; and removing the traditional differences between Kurds, Lurs, Qashqayis, Arabs, Turkomans, and other communities that reside within Iran”. This extreme vision of forced assimilation as the basis for the nation was legitimized on the basis of such historical precedents as Germany, Italy, Poland, Rumania and the Ottoman Empire. The policy toward the tribes was also conceived on the basis of achieving “one people, one nation, one language, one culture”; viewed as part of a “primitive state of nature”, they were disarmed, conscripted and forced into “model villages”.

It was therefore natural that provincial territories should have suffered under Reza Shah’s regime, and Azerbaijan – that had contributed perhaps most to the pluralistic heritage of the Constitutional Revolution – suffered more than any other during this fifteen year period. The period of ‘one man rule’ ended when Reza Shah was toppled from power by the Allied Occupation in 1941, and fled into South African exile where he died three years later. The country found the despotic machinery empty and the Parliament – which had functioned as a rubber stamp – once again became a meaningful centre of power as the suppressed ministers and political leaders came out of hiding, blinking in astonishment that it was suddenly all over, and threw themselves in

1015 Abrahamian. Pages 123-53.

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frenzied attempts to shape the country's future after years of iron political repression under the will of a single man.

Beyond the political centre of Parliament the surrounding civil society also newly awoke to busy existence as workers unions were formed, new political parties organized, and the print media revitalized as the number of Iranian periodicals in publication leaped from 41 to 582 after the fall of Reza Shah. There was a swift renewal of guilds, associations and other voluntary societies. Out of numerous labour organizations the Council of United Workers was formed by the summer of 1942 representing over 26 industrial, craft and white collar unions. By 1944 the Central Union of Federated Trade Unions of Iranian Workers and Toilers had been formed, and British foreign office documents record the number of union members at 75% of the total industrial labour force in Iran.

Political parties at this historical interval also became, for the first time, the "dominant forms of political participation and citizen involvement in national affairs". The National Front, the Tudeh Party, the Democratic Party of Iran, the Democratic Party of Azerbaijan, and the Democratic Party of Kurdistan were among the most prominent among an ever changing and chaotic labyrinth of political parties and organizations. The historical interval of the post-Reza Shah period therefore presented a "rare historical opportunity to construct the democratic political structure and secular pluralist culture that the country had strived for so long to achieve".

At the same time in the period between "1941 and 1951, when Mossadeq became prime minister, cabinets generally did not last more than a few months, and there were revolts in the provinces and destructive conflict within the Majles itself." Iran found itself in a situation of dual sovereignty, or the division of despotic power, between the revived Parliament and the new monarch Muhammed Reza Shah Pahlavi (1941-79). Although he had inherited a drastically shrunken version of his father's absolute power, an intense struggle over political power was in the

1016 Mirsepassi. Pages 67,68.
1017 Mirsepassi. Page 66.

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making. In this instance there were five existing poles of contending national power: the court, the Parliament (*Majles*), the cabinet, the foreign embassies and the general public, with each centre containing its own multiple inner conflicts.\textsuperscript{1019} Meanwhile, the suppressed national tensions of the Reza Shah period were becoming visible on two plateaus: severe class antagonisms within the towns and ethnic rivalries in the countryside.\textsuperscript{1020} The legacy of the Reza Shah development drive was radically dangerous regional and class inequality in which the “upper and new middles classes became increasingly Westernized and scarcely understood the traditional or religious culture of most of their compatriots”.\textsuperscript{1021}

Ahmad Qavam, a constitutional monarchist, became premier in 1941 determined to cut the tie between Muhammed Reza Shah and the military but was soon confronted with the Azerbaijan crisis. After the Second World War the Soviet Union remained in northern Iran after the other Allied powers had withdrawn. The Soviet Union was viewed with deep admiration by many Iranians at the opening of this political period because of its heroic struggle against fascism during the Second World War. However, the demand for an oil concession in Azerbaijan inevitably raised the problem of defining the boundary between Iranian national autonomy and Soviet interests.

It was natural that in the wake of the violently homogenizing Reza Shah era regional provinces – particularly on the scale of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan - should seek some greater degree of political autonomy, an aspiration with which much of progressive opinion in Tehran had sympathy.\textsuperscript{1022} However, this aspiration as undertaken by the Democratic Party of Azerbaijan became tangled up in the Soviet occupation of the north and the fate of the Tudeh Party.

The Tudeh Party, a powerful nationwide political organization, had come into existence in 1941 as “a coalition of radical and progressive Iranians” and was “initially committed to Iranian national independence” while applauding “the Soviet Union as the champion of anti-fascist struggle

\textsuperscript{1019} Abrahamian. Page 170.  
\textsuperscript{1020} Abrahamian. Page 172.  
\textsuperscript{1021} Keddie. Page 111.  
\textsuperscript{1022} Katouzian. Page 150.
and an ally of the Third World and colonized countries”\textsuperscript{1023} Initially there was no necessary contradiction in this -- the contradiction would later become apparent in the course of developing Cold War politics and ideologies. The Tudeh Party announced in 1943 that under no circumstances would it consider granting further concessions to any foreign power. However, when the Soviet Union made its demand only a year later the Tudeh Party relented on ‘ideological’ grounds and gave its full support. Within this political zone of intensity the Tudeh Party experienced the onset of a narrowing of leadership and ideology toward becoming a Stalinist pro-Moscow Party, and as a result ultimately lost a great deal of public support among Iranians. Much of that support migrated to the nationalist movement led by Dr. Mohammed Mossadeq; his articulation of an alternative Iranian modernity in the Enlightenment tradition constitutes, in its contest with the Tudeh Party ideology, an episode of clashing universalisms.

When Azebaijani autonomy was quickly and bloodlessly seized in 1945, it was done so under the Soviet military protection. In 1946 the Qavam-Sadchikov agreement was made, granting the Soviet Union a fifty year concession for north Iranian oil in return for leaving Iranian territory. Azerbaijan was subsequently invaded by central Iranian troops and a massacre ensued. The Azerbaijan crisis raised several key questions: 1. the problem of Iranian national autonomy versus regional autonomy; 2. the problem of the “universal mission” (i.e., the international proletariat) of the Soviet Union via the Tudeh Party versus Iranian nationalist political aspirations. It was within the uniquely complex framework of such overlapping international and national relations, upholding conflicting universal ideologies, that the political struggles of the post-Reza Shah period were fought.

The remarkable rise of Dr. Mohammed Mossadeq (1882-1967) as the dominant nationalist leader after 1949 is linked to these events as his National Front organization offered an Iranian alternative to the many Left-inclined individuals who became too disillusioned to stay with the

\textsuperscript{1023} Mirsepassi. Page 69.
Tudeh Party following the Azerbaijani crisis. This happened within the general layout of the post-Reza Shah period involving a struggle between “the battered forces of despotism and the anti-despotic forces of both left and right: landlords and big businessmen belonged to the conservative, and the middle merchants, retailers, artisans, workers, younger intellectuals and students to the radical, wing of this broad anti-despotic tendency”.1024

Initially, Mossadeq envisioned a widely pluralistic organization as the basis for the national movement, arguing that “Iran, with its many conflicting groups, does not need a disciplined party with a precise program. On the contrary, Iran needs a loose coalition of organizations in a national front with a general and broad program”. It was on this basis that he refused “to establish yet another political party”.1025 Yet he was also a nationalist who aspired to “speak for the nation as a whole”, with the obvious idea that this was not possible through one supreme or dominant voice.1026 From the outset Mossadeq appeared opposed to an ideologically monistic political structure based in a completed or fixed idea of nation-making and adopted an ideologically heterogeneous approach. At the same time he had political tactics for struggle, i.e., means, which leaned upon populism and voluntarism.

We see this Left-migration reflected in two of the four core organizational structures that came to support the National Front following its eventful formation in 1949 in response to the swift seizure of power by the Shah through a policy of martial law following the assassination attempt on his life in February 1949 – a moment that restored him, on the eve of the 16th Majles elections, powers near similar to the pre-1941 period.

Firstly, the Iran Party swung from a pro-Tudeh to a pro-Mossadeq position during the 1947-1949 period, retaining its socialist ideology and professional middle class base in engineers, university students, government ministers, and modern educated women. It called for national independence and the creation of a socialist society. Citing Montesquieu, it called at the same time

1024 Katouzian. Page 165.
1025 Abrahamian. Page 225.

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for a constitutional monarchy. It promoted neutralism in international affairs and non-violent means in ousting the aristocracy within the framework of constitutional law. It also opposed “atheistic international communism” in the name of the “legitimate rights of religion and national identity”.

Secondly, the Toilers Party, composed largely of shopkeepers and students, was also led by a defector from the Tudeh Party. It also called for national independence and expressed opposition to “all forms of imperialism, including Russian imperialism”. The party adopted a universalist outlook, claiming to “identify with the peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, with the democratic movements in Europe, with the rank and file of the Tudeh dissatisfied with pro-Russian undemocratic leadership”. It published critical essays on the writings of figures such as Richard Wright, Karl Marx, Andre Gide and Bertrand Russell and on movements such as the Chartists or Yugoslav workers’ control. It declared a “respect Islam because it is the religion of our people”.1027

Though failing to resemble any dominant model for a political programme along the conventional modernity-tradition binary, its sometimes contradictory ideological configuration matched the aspirations of much of the growing Iranian popular movement at this time.

The mass migration from the Tudeh Party to key organizational elements within the National Front also reflects the broader ‘global’ contradictions in the dominant discourse of Enlightenment as a project of abstract universalism – a metaphysics that still underpinned the materialist outlook of dominant mid-twentieth century Marxist paradigms and was darkly compounded by Stalin’s political influence in the form of a totalitarian pragmatism.

Mossadeq’s thought and practice was a context specific and pragmatic Iranian variant on the tradition of universal Enlightenment. He was viewed as “an educated man who was deeply rooted in Iranian traditions”.1028 In challenging the Tudeh Party over national autonomy it also engaged in a confrontation with these broader and contradictory ‘global’ discursive dimensions within the

1027 Abrahamian. Page 253-257.
politically fertile but also severely perilous interregnum of 1941-53 – a tunnel of opportunity eventually blown away by a constellation of global events. In response to the rather pragmatic Tudeh argument that the Soviet oil deal could be used as a countervailing force against British power in Iran, Mossadeq replied that this was analogous to asking “a person one of whose hands has been amputated to have the remaining hand cut off”.1029

Mossadeq thus stood uncompromisingly for Iranian national independence, as his financially reasoned 1944 parliamentary speech on the robbery of Allied occupation encapsulated.1030 At the same time he critically reconstructed the received nationalist paradigm within Iran as inherited from the Iranian Constitutional Revolution. He moved beyond the construction of Iranian historical memory as merely a state of dogmatism and fanaticism to be transcended, and sought to make it a resource for a progressive national political movement. Mossadeq has been described as “the lightening rod that lay both chronologically and intellectually at the cente of Iranian politics of the twentieth century”, and as the leader who came “closer than anyone else to ending the tradition of (Iranian) monarchy” before the 1979 Revolution.1031

Mossadeq viewed himself within the tradition of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution and saw his political work as the “completion of the Constitutional Movement”.1032 He was born into the heart of old regime Qajar court life and at only fifteen was appointed treasurer of Khorasan province following the death of his father, who had been treasurer general. In this way he gained a great deal of practical insight into the workings of government at an early age. He was of the first generation to study at the newly opened School of Political Sciences, Tehran, whose members formed the leaders in the bastnishini at the British delegation in 1906. Elected to the very first Parliament in the same year, he was ultimately refused the seat because he was less than thirty years old. At this time Mossadeq was twenty four. In 1909 he attended the Ecole des Sciences
Politiques in Paris and he finally completed a Swiss doctorate in law. He subsequently returned to Iran where he first taught at the School of Political Sciences and then after 1919 held the highest posts including minister of justice, finance, foreign affairs and was governor of Fars and Azerbaijan.\textsuperscript{1033}

During this time he began to articulate a discourse linking the issue of concessions to the problem of Iranian national autonomy, arguing that for “a government to be independent it must govern all those residing in its territory … In the final analysis, a government which does not govern either its own citizens or foreigners is no government and will become the dependency of another government that possesses this position (of full sovereignty)”.\textsuperscript{1034} This outlook based on a concept of “negative equilibrium” evolved into his later stand on the Soviet concessions in the north and the nationalization of Iranian oil in 1951. At the same time Mossadeq was aware that national autonomy without a constitutionally specific balance of forces did not guarantee public liberty. He articulated a discourse of national autonomy on two levels: firstly, the international level, and secondly the constitutional-legal level. This was the strongly constitutional current in Mossadeq’s outlook.

Mossadeq was a longstanding advocate of constitutional government. In 1925 he stood among the few to openly challenge Reza Shah’s rise to absolute power, arguing in the Parliament that if “we take this retrograde step and say he is king, prime minister, ruler, everything, this is nothing but reaction and autocracy”.\textsuperscript{1035} In the wake of this he spent much of the Reza Shah period either in prison or under house arrest, using his time in the 1930’s for sugar beet cultivation, well drilling, opening a primary school and running a medical dispensary out of his home.\textsuperscript{1036}

However, unlike the influential Westernist factions within the Constitutional tradition, he attempted to seriously engage the problem of creating a space for reconciling Iranian traditional

\textsuperscript{1033} Mottahedeh. Pages 114-116.
\textsuperscript{1034} Mottahedeh. Page 123.
\textsuperscript{1035} Mottahedeh. Page 124.
\textsuperscript{1036} Mottahedeh. Page 124.
Shi'i law and modern constitutional law. This was in part the subject of his doctorate of 1914 that was published in the same year. Running against “a thousand years of Shiah thought in asserting the superiority of reason to other sources of law”, he “developed a historical scheme that completely justified his turning the tradition upside down”.\textsuperscript{1037} He identified the historical epoch following the Constitutional Revolution as one in which law is no longer a stationary entity to be “discovered” in conformity with religion but rather something to be “made” within the specific context of evolving modern conditions, at the same time promoting a consultative role for jurisconsults versed in Shi'i legal tradition.

This amounts at the epistemic level to the argument that legislation is not the “search for a reading of God’s mind detached from cultural and social circumstances” but a flexible and adaptive endeavour dedicated to a democratic politics and without final ends.\textsuperscript{1038} He in this way attempted to give the Seri'a a modern temporal political basis adapted to democratic conditions of ongoing multi-perspective negotiation and social reform. These efforts reflected Mossadeq’s conviction that Shi'i Islam is “one of the most important parts of the cultural and social world of Iranians”. Arguing that “Iranian solutions must take heed of Shiah beliefs”, he opposed the idea of modernization as a politics of “imitating Europe”.\textsuperscript{1039}

Mossadeq emerged from his exile from politics in 1941 a man “proven ‘pure’ in motive by his consistency through long life experience”, having “fulfilled an essential moral drama that Iranians expect to see performed on the political stage”.\textsuperscript{1040} In the early forties he fought against concessions through the parliament, passing a bill in 1944 forbidding the Cabinet to even discuss concessions with foreigners.\textsuperscript{1041} In the late forties following the declaration of martial law he undertook the leadership of the main opposition movement to the Shah deriving political legitimacy from the tradition of the Constitutional Revolution. Public support for the Shah was very low at

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\textsuperscript{1037} Mottahedeh. Page 119.
\textsuperscript{1038} Mottahedeh. Page 120-21.
\textsuperscript{1039} Mottahedeh. Page 121.
\textsuperscript{1040} Mottahedeh. Page 125.
\textsuperscript{1041} Mottahedeh. Page 126.
\end{flushright}
this time because his recent political coup evoked dark memories of the dictatorial period of his father; newspapers were suppressed and the Tudeh Party had been banned. The Shah’s unwillingness to confront Britain over the oil controversy undid any national credibility as a nationalist leader he might otherwise have had.

In late 1949, just on the eve of the Shah’s departure for the U.S.A. in search of foreign aid, and in what seemed to be the peak of his newly obtained powers, Mossadeq led a large procession of politicians, university students and bazaar traders into the palace gardens to perform a bastnishini in protest against the lack of free elections. This action applied enough force to make the court promise to end electoral fraud and led to the formation of the broad coalition of the National Front (Jeb’eh-i Melli). Within the tradition of the Constitutional Revolution, the movement was launched with a non-violent protest. The National Front put forward three demands: “honest elections, lifting of martial law, and freedom of the press”.

There is no doubt that the aim of the National Front – just as with the Constitutional Movement of which it was the conscious heir – was fraught with difficulties, contradictions and ambiguities in the uncharted project of creating a modern civil society/rule of law in the Iranian context based on parliamentary democracy and achieving full national independence. These contradictions at the local level were in considerable part the result of differences between the modern and the traditional middle classes in terms of – for example - ideals of state development vs. free trade, or the Napoleonic code vs. the Seri’a as the principle component of legitimate law. These contradictions would have very serious practical consequences in terms of, for example, the movement to extend suffrage to women.

Yet for all the tensions resulting from these sometimes incompatible elements the framework encasing the heritage of the Constitutional Revolution, in terms of principles and aspirations, was in practice adequate to unite the modern and traditional classes at least during the
period of common struggle—i.e., a representative Parliamentary body unifying the Iranian nation on the basis of the rule of law.

Mossadeq’s leadership of the National Front was an experiment in creating a political force capable of reconciling these social elements within the framework of a democratic political organization at a time when Iran knew a “relative invisibility of religious politics” in terms of any call for an anti-secular religious dictatorship.\(^\text{1044}\) It is for this reason that the Iranian popular movement, in spite the weaknesses which partly explain its final undoing by its opponents, is a fascinating and worthwhile experiment to consider as a case of concrete mass political action on a national scale.

In 1950 the sixteenth \textit{Majles} began with the government stocked with royalists in reflection of the Shah’s growing grip on power. Taking up the court on its promise to end electoral fraud, the National Front sponsored candidates in the main cities as well as functioning through the civil network of the populace. It organized guild strikes against proposed tax increases on tradesmen and craftsmen and mobilized protests among bakers against government inefficiency in delivering wheat. A series of public meetings in the university and the bazaars culminated in a rally of 12,000 outside of the parliament building. These events climaxed with the assassination of the court minister Abul Hussein Hezhir. Under this fierce public pressure new elections in Tehran were ordered by the frightened prime minister in which Mossadeq and seven of his colleagues won. Although this was merely eight out of the already installed one hundred and thirty, the subsequent months showed that “the eight, supported by the middle classes, could shake not only Parliament but also the shah and the whole country”.\(^\text{1045}\) The parliament took on an increasingly volatile continuity with popular activity on the streets.

This opening moment typified the entire approach of the Iranian popular movement of the late forties and early fifties under Mossadeq’s leadership. With the aim of creating an independent

\(^{1044}\) Mirsepassi. Page 68.
\(^{1045}\) Abrahamian. Page 261.
and democratic Iranian society based on the rule of law, Mossadeq consistently drew from the
nationalist passion of the masses as if seeking to drive the state by the force of these elemental
energies. He sought to undertake the democratic transformation of Iranian society based on sheer
popular momentum. Mossadeq was the “first Middle Eastern leader to create a vast following by
using the radio”. This was the strongly populist or voluntarist current in Mossadeq’s outlook,
which would ultimately prove compromising to his simultaneous lifelong legalist or
constitutionalist ideals.

The newly installed National Front declared that “although its delegation was small its voice
would be clear and loud since it represented the whole nation”. Mossadeq charged the existing
Constituent Assembly, filled with royalists from trumped elections, to be “fake and illegitimate”.
He argued that the “country belongs to the people and the people have the right to choose their
representatives” and that only the people “have the right to change the constitution”. Yet almost
immediately the different elements within the National Front were pursuing differing paths to the
end of national reconstruction. These differences generally concerned the degree of bureaucratic
intervention in the project of national development and the role of Islamic law within the legal
system. But the overall outlook of the National Front was expressed by Ayatallah Abul Qasem
Kashani, a leading political mujtahed, when he warned that “a nation that has willingly spilled its
own blood to obtain the constitution will never again fall victim to despots and dictators”.

When in June 1950 the government submitted a proposal to the parliament for revising the
1933 Anglo-Iranian Oil Company Agreement, the National Front denounced this highly unpopular
proposal and called for the nationalisation of the oil company. This action marked “the high point
of support for the National Front”. They did so on the grounds that “so long as a large and
powerful foreign company owned the country’s most important modern industry, effectively

1046 Mottahedeh. Page 127.
1047 Abrahamian. Page 262.
1048 Abrahamian. Page 263.
1049 Poulson. Page 172.
controlled one of its provinces, and interfered in its politics to defend and promote its own interest, it would not be possible to establish either sovereign or democratic government". This unprecedented radical move – which really pushed the nation along a road to the point of no return within the framework of international relations - was met by a passionate outpouring of popular support from the streets as the “AIOC was seen as a major cause and channel for British influence and control over Iran”. This action would have longer term influence in the politics of the Third World, particularly with Nasser and the nationalisation of the Suez Canal.

If the movement had been launched by peaceful means, it was quickly spurred along by individual acts of public violence designed to inspire terror. The assassination of a pro-British politician led to the Shah appointing General Razmara as prime minister in the confidence that this powerful personality would quickly push the proposals through before too much trouble could arise. On a more general level Razmara represented the Shah’s bid to deflect hostility from himself. Razmara was a conservative reformist figure at the helm who would neither threaten the existing status quo internally vis a vis landlords nor the international arrangement that secured the Shah’s lifeline. Razmara initiated peasant land reforms, promoted provincial assemblies and eased the restrictions on the Tudeh Party, perhaps intending to create a veil for pushing through the oil proposals. This met with a highly violent reaction among much of the general population. The National Front launched an attack on the grounds that full national independence should precede domestic reform and Mossadeq addressed a rally of 12,000 in Tehran to voice this message. Mass public demonstrations climaxed in Razmara’s assassination in 1951 which was followed by widespread rejoicing in the streets.

Razmara’s death was a turning point because it pushed a radical change of outlook within the parliament among deputies previously loyal to the Shah’s designs. With Razmara’s

1050 Gasiorowski/Bryne Pages 5,6.
1051 Keddie. Page 124.
1052 Mottahedeh. Page 127.
1053 Katouzian. Page 165.
1054 Abrahamian. Pages 265, 265.
death those conservative elements in the population who had supported him now put their weight provisionally behind Mossadeq as “the least of all potentially successful evils”, further altering the balance. 1055 Presumably sensing the wind turning against them in a gathering storm of public anger many previously conservative state ministers also began to fall in behind Mossadeq and the National Front in its outlook and plans. Immediately following Razmara’s death the bill to nationalize the British oil company was passed and two months later Mossadeq was voted prime minister. They say the tree of liberty is watered by the blood of tyrants.

From this point on Mossadeq used the streets of Tehran like the rudder of a ship to steer the parliament his way, going repeatedly over the heads of the ministers to appeal directly to the general public. One of the ministers protested that statecraft “has degenerated into street politics”. 1056 At the international level an explosion of hostile controversy over the oil nationalization and plummeting oil revenues were swiftly eclipsing Iran’s economic horizons. Between 1952 and 1953 Iran broke diplomatic relations with Britain, was militarily blockaded and boycotted, and rolled over into a danger zone of deepening economic crisis.

In the entire period between 1951 and 1953, Mossadeq was in charge of only one organ of the state, while the “rest of the state apparatus was still in the hands of despotic agents and institutions”. 1057 This was a particularly difficult situation as while “Mossadeq and his colleagues believed in the system of parliamentary democracy”, the opposition of both Left and Right were in the tradition of “the politics of elimination”. The Mossadeq government’s policy toward “illegal campaigns against it was extremely lenient” – surely one element in the government’s eventual downfall. 1058

In the growing conflict with the remaining active royalist and pro-British elements dispersed throughout the national state apparatus, Mossadeq sought to increase the pressure on them by

1055 Katouzian. Page 165.
1057 Katouzian. Page 164.
1058 Gasiorowski/Bryne Page 19.
removing the disqualification on illiterates in the electoral system and so putting additional popular power behind his planned reforms. Yet a coalition of royalist, military and tribal leaders managed to thwart this effort.

In the seventeenth Majles in 1952 there was a doubling of voter turnout and the National Front won most seats in the major cities. In the provincial constituencies, however – where the National Front had earlier rebuffed Razmara’s move to set up regional assemblies – there was a greater support for the opposition. Seeing that the opposition would take the majority of the provincial seats, Mossadeq stopped the voting as soon as a parliamentary quorum of seventy nine deputies had been elected.\footnote{Abrahamian. Page 269.}

No doubt seeing this opposition in the countryside as the work of vested landed interests, the National Front undertook a “propaganda war against the landed upper class”.\footnote{Abrahamian. Page 270.} The parliamentary struggle culminated in a major national upheaval when Mossadeq escalated the conflict by demanding the Shah relinquish his unconstitutional command over the armed forces and transfer them to the parliament. Arguing that short of this “the struggle started by the Iranian people cannot be brought to a victorious conclusion”, he resigned his premiership in an appeal to the public to undertake the removal of this obstacle through its own powers.

Now with the support of the semi-legal Tudeh Party, strikes and mass demonstrations erupted spontaneously in all of the major towns in favour of Mossadeq. Again, we do not see the participation of the peasants as a class in these uprisings. When the military was called in by the Shah there followed five days of bloodshed as the urban population “fought tanks and bayonets with bricks, stones and bare hands”\footnote{Katouzian. Page 176.}. Violent clashes occurred in the drapers’, grocers’ and metal workers’ sections of the bazaar and in the working class districts on the eastern side of the city near the railway workshops and industrial plants. The city was ultimately left in the hands of the protestors as military commanders, fearful of flagging troop loyalty, ordered their forces back to
their barracks.\textsuperscript{1062} Terrorized by the scale of the disorder, the Shah gave in and requested that Mossadeq return to office to form a new government. This was a total victory for the National Front, and became known as \textit{Siyeh-i Tir} (July 21).

In the wake of this victory Mossadeq used emergency powers and struck against the court, excluding royalists from the cabinet. He placed the military under civilian rule and seized royal lands to finance a Health Ministry. By 1953 the Shah was stripped of all of the powers he had fought to recover. Land reforms were introduced to increase the peasant’s share in annual produce and shift the burden of taxation away from low income sections of the population.\textsuperscript{1063}

When serious opposition to these measures was raised by remaining conservative sections of the parliament, Mossadeq dissolved the parliament in 1953 and called for a national referendum to gage the degree of public support for his line of social reforms. He announced that the “people of Iran – and no one else – has the right to judge on this issue. For it was the people of Iran who brought into existence our fundamental laws, our constitution, our parliament, and our cabinet system”.\textsuperscript{1064} Moreover, in this instance Mossadeq cited an argument based on the ‘general will’, saying that the people must be “powerful in will so as to carry out their discernment”.\textsuperscript{1065} The popular referendum came out in favour of Mossadeq’s action, though certain details attending its organization cast some doubt on the freeness of its atmosphere (i.e.; yes/no boxes were set up separately undoing any notion of a secret ballot).

In the months following \textit{Siyeh-i Tir} the traditional wing of the National Front started to break off. Many among them accused the government of using tactics that amounted to class war and opposed the nationalization of key industries (communications, transport), complaining that Iran “would end up like the Soviet Union”. The move to enfranchise women also provoked their opposition. At the end of Mossadeq’s six month emergency powers period, he requested a further

\textsuperscript{1062} Abrahamian. Page 272.
\textsuperscript{1063} Abrahamian. Page 273.
\textsuperscript{1064} Abrahamian. Page 274.
\textsuperscript{1065} Mottahedeh. Page 129.
twelve months to complete the wave of social reform he had begun and received the charge from the traditional wing of “transforming Iran into a vast prison”.\textsuperscript{1066}

It is well known that the political experiment of the Iranian Popular Movement was cut short by coup d'etat carried out by a group of foreign and domestic forces, in large part organized and funded by the C.I.A. from the basement of the U.S. embassy in Tehran. The final success of the coup in 1953 which restored to Muhammed Reza Shah dictatorial powers that would last until the 1979 Revolution was preceded by two other attempts in which the popular masses intervened and thwarted the takeover, in the second instance forcing the Shah to flee into exile.

In the first of these on 28 February 1953 a band appeared at Mossadeq’s home and attempted to assassinate him. A crowd attacked the band outside of the gates of his house, led by the celebrated writer and translator Jalal Al-e Ahmad, who was leading the Third Force Party (an offshoot of the by now broken Toiler’s Party).\textsuperscript{1067} The Third Force called for women’s suffrage and further land distribution.\textsuperscript{1068} In the subsequent and more serious attempt the coup was again foiled by mass public reaction causing the Shah to flee to Baghdad, and the event was followed by several days of highly destructive rioting. In the final attempt, a section of the army and a group of paid rioters including prostitutes and mobsters led from the red light district by Sha’ban the Brainless managed to capture and loot Mossadeq’s home and force him into temporary hiding until his capture.\textsuperscript{1069} It is reported that after two days of hiding in a cellar, when one of Mossadeq’s minister’s said “How badly it all turned out!”, Mossadeq replied “And at the same time how really well it turned out, how really well!”, implying that there existed for him some appeal in the tragic.\textsuperscript{1070}

The project of constructing secular politics and cultural pluralism endured a fatal blow with the successful coup d’etat of August 1953 as the returning Shah’s regime undertook the systematic

\textsuperscript{1066} Abrahamian. Pages 275,276. 
\textsuperscript{1067} Katouzian. Page 177. 
\textsuperscript{1068} Abrahamian. Page 277. 
\textsuperscript{1069} Katouzian. Page 179. 
\textsuperscript{1070} Mottahedeh. Page 133.
limitation and destruction of all forms of democratic and secular political organization and institutions including trade unions, student organizations, political parties and associations, and parliament. In the final two decades of the Shah’s reign “no legal opposition political parties or organizations existed in the country” and even underground opposition was effectively crushed.¹⁰⁷¹ Thus in the post-coup period under a renewed regime of state-driven ‘Westernization’ from above the only political spaces for dissent emerged in the mosques, seminary schools, bazaars, universities and groups in exile, inevitably contributing to the de-secularization of Iranian politics.

Iranian intellectuals in the post-coup period have evoked it as a time of “strangulation”, “loneliness”, “darkness”, “fatigue”, and “nothingness”.¹⁰⁷² It was within this atmosphere that in the late 1960’s Ahmed Fardid (1912-1994) was appointed professor of philosophy at Tehran University. Fardid is well known for having introduced German philosophy into Iranian intellectual circles.¹⁰⁷³ At the time of the Constitutional Revolution, German philosophy had enjoyed the least popularity in comparison with that of France and England.¹⁰⁷⁴ Fardid was a particular authority on Martin Heidegger, the interwar German thinker whose famous Being and Time (1926) revolted against empty Enlightenment universalism in the name of local cultural authenticity or ‘being’, and who was later embroiled in controversy over his involvement in the Nazi regime. Fardid derived from Heideggerian historicism a notion of history as a fluid field of competing understandings of truth in which one is eclipsed by another in an ongoing power struggle at a given time.

Fardid interpreted the Western Enlightenment as the historical advent of truth interpreted as material ‘reality’ triumphing over the authentic “true spiritual essence” of Islam and the “East”. Once again reproducing Heidegger’s historicist argument, he argues that the core of Western

¹⁰⁷¹ Mirsepassi. Page 70.
¹⁰⁷² Mirsepassi. Page 76.
¹⁰⁷⁴ Mirsepassi. Page 60.
scientific truth is the drive to world domination while in the spirituality of Islam we find benevolence and compassion. The earlier discourses of authenticity articulated by Muhammed Ali Shah and Nouri were thus given a substantiated metaphysical basis in the great ‘epistemic turn’ coming out of Western philosophy itself in Heidegger’s rejection of the entire Western metaphysical tradition going back to the ancient Greek origins. Fardid in this way concludes that Iran must abandon the dominance of the West (Gharb) in order to once again ‘find itself’. Fardid’s rather obscure ideas were “warmly received by an important segment of the community of Iranian intellectuals eager to reassert their own identity”. 1075

The same Al-e Ahmad who had fought to defend Mossadeq against the conspiracy, a once but subsequently violently disillusioned member of the Tudeh Party, picked up on Fardid’s discourse and produced the most influential book of the 1960’s and 1970’s with his Gharbzadegi (1962) or ‘Westoxication’. It represented a complete turnaround from his earlier ideals grounded in a radical universalism and the embrace of a ‘local’ and ‘authentic’ solution. He argued that Iranian modernization was a disease from the West, that Western ideas were inherently complicit in Western power, and hailed Nouri as a martyr in his struggle against the Constitutional Revolution and call for an ‘authentically’ Iranian road. His book was published only one year after the death of Ayatollah Boroujerdi and the ending the relatively subdued period of the clerics when the Ayatollah Khomeini began to mobilize the Shi’i establishment to radical political ends.1076 Al-e Ahmad’s book, together with the slightly later work of Al-e Shari’ati, created a fashionable modern ideology that drew nearly an entire generation of the modern Iranian middle class and the youth into complicity with the emergence of a religious mass movement in reaction against a ‘Westernizing’ regime that had, by its tyrannical hold on power and severely uneven development project, succeeded in alienating all but the entire Iranian population. In this intellectual climate it became easier for many to convince themselves that the earlier struggles of the Constitutional

1075 Boroujerdi Pages 64,65.  
Revolution and the Popular Movement had been nothing more than meaningless and misguided flights of 'inauthenticity' derived from a culturally alien Enlightenment. Looking back from the perspective of the present, what is called the Enlightenment is nowhere near as simple as either its cheerleaders among the advocates of the 'Western tradition' nor its enemies among movements for 'local authenticity' would have it. A look at the Enlightenment in its real complexity explodes both of their by now rather dogmatic and tired points of view.