STRUCTURAL OPPORTUNITY AND PERCEIVED OPPORTUNITY IN SOCIAL-MOVEMENT THEORY: THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION OF 1979*

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Tocquevillean analyses of social movements are limited to cases in which structural opportunities (the vulnerability of the state to popular political pressure) coincide with perceived opportunities (the public's awareness of opportunities for successful protest activity). This alignment may not always occur, however. I examine the implications of a mismatch between structural opportunities and perceived opportunities using participant and eyewitness accounts of the Iranian revolutionary movement of 1977 through 1979. By several objective measures, the monarchy was not structurally vulnerable. Yet Iranians appear to have perceived opportunities for successful protest, basing their perceptions on a shift in the opposition movement, not on a shift in the structural position of the state. In the conflict between structural conditions and perceived opportunities, the structural conditions gave way. Only by examining cases in which structural opportunities and perceived opportunities are out of balance can the relative effect of each be determined.

"When a people which has put up with an oppressive rule over a long period without protest suddenly finds the government relaxing its pressure, it takes up arms against it."

—Tocqueville 1955:176

Alexis de Tocqueville's famous dictum is based on two observations about the French Revolution. On one hand, the government undercut and alienated its bases of support through ill-conceived efforts at reform. On the other hand, the populace perceived a lessening of "pressure" and rose up to take advantage. The strength of Tocqueville's analysis lies in its combination of objective and subjective factors. It is not only the structural weakness of the state that precipitates revolution in Tocqueville's model, or the subjective sentiments of collective efficacy, but the combination of the two.[1]

Social-movement theory has recently revived this combined approach after years of veering between structuralist and subjectivist extremes (Foran 1993b; Klandermans, Kriesi, and Tarrow 1988; Morris and Mueller 1992). McAdam's (1982) oft-cited book, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency*, may be the model for contemporary social-movement theorizing on structure and consciousness. McAdam argues that the "structure of political opportunities" is one of two major determinants of political protest, the other being organizational strength: "The opportunities for a challenger to engage in successful collective action . . . vary greatly over time. And it is these variations that are held to be related to the ebb and flow of movement activity" (pp. 40–41). The "crucial

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[1] Tocqueville discusses social-structural factors in addition to state structure. I do not address this aspect of Tocqueville's analysis here.

point," he states, is that the political system can be more open or less open to challenge at different times (p. 41). But structural conditions, McAdam argues, do not automatically translate into protest: They are mediated by "cognitive liberation," an oppressed people's ability to break out of pessimistic and quiescent patterns of thought and begin to do something about their situation (pp. 48–51).

McAdam's (1982) analysis shows the tight fit between subjective perceptions and the structure of opportunities. The optimism of African Americans in the 1930s (pp. 108–10) and early 1960s (pp. 161–63) reflected structural shifts in Federal policies (pp. 83–86, 156–60). Conversely, in the late 1960s, perceptions of diminishing opportunities reflected the actual diminishing of opportunities (p. 202). State structure and subjective perceptions are treated as closely correlated.

Structural opportunities generally coincide with perceived opportunities in other recent studies in the Tocquevillean tradition. Tarrow (1994), for instance, recognizes the interplay between the macro- and micro-levels of analysis. He notes that "early risers"—protest groups at the beginning stages of a cycle of widespread protest activity—may make opportunities visible that had not been evident, and their actions may change the structure of opportunities (pp. 96–97). However, over most of the protest cycle, perceptions closely follow the opening and closing of objective opportunities (pp. 85–96, 99). "The main argument of this study," Tarrow emphasizes, "is that people join in social movements in response to political opportunities" (p. 17).

Goldstone (1991a, 1991b) also combines aspects of the state's structure (state breakdown) and subjective factors (ideology and cultural frameworks) in his analysis of the early modern revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. State breakdown, the result of nonsubjective causes like "material and social change" (Goldstone 1991a: 408), is accompanied during revolutions by subjective perceptions of breakdown, namely "widespread loss of confidence in, or allegiance to, the state" (Goldstone 1991b:10). Subjective perceptions do not play an independent role until after the state has broken down.

These Tocquevillean analyses recognize that structural opportunities and perceived opportunities may not always match. Cognitive liberation is a distinct variable that is not reducible to political opportunity structure, according to McAdam; "early risers" may protest despite unfavorable structural conditions in Tarrow's model; not all state crises lead to revolution, Goldstone notes. The Tocquevillean tradition, however, has focused on cases in which the opportunity structure and perceptions agree, and has not examined mismatches.

PROTESTORS' DEFINITIONS OF OPPORTUNITY

The correlation between subjective perceptions and structural conditions may not hold true for some cases. Two possible mismatches occur when (1) people fail to perceive opportunities, or (2) they perceive opportunities where none exists. The first possibility has been explored in many works, primarily in the Marxist tradition, which blame false consciousness and ideological hegemony for masking opportunities or deflecting attention from them.

The second mismatch has been raised in the critical-mass approach to collective action, which argues that protestors define opportunities primarily with reference to patterns of oppositional activity (Goldstone 1994; Granovetter 1978; Kuran 1989; Marwell and Oliver 1993; Oberschall 1994; Schelling 1978).[2] Individuals are more likely to participate in the protest movement when they expect large numbers of people to participate.[3] The critical-mass approach implies that individuals calculate opportunities, not simply in terms of changes in the structure

[2] Another definition of opportunities comes from resource-mobilization theory: The perceived balance of forces may shift because of changes in the opposition's resource, organizational, or network base. Micromobilization theories offer another definition of opportunities; solidarity with one's peers is more important than the balance of forces and the expected success of protest.

[3] Thus critical-mass models present a direct challenge to free-rider models, which argue that other people's participation provides disincentives for individual participation (Olson 1965; Tullock 1971; also see Lichbach 1994 for a thorough review of the social-movement literature on this issue).

of the state, as Tocqueville argued, but primarily in terms of the strength of the opposition. They may feel that widespread participation in protest changes the "balance of forces"—what Gramsci (1971) calls the "relation of political forces"—between the state, the opposition, and other interested parties. State crisis does not precipitate revolutionary mobilization, in this view, but "an evaluation of the degree of homogeneity, self-awareness, and organisation attained by the various social classes" (Gramsci 1971:181).

The collective-behavior school of analysis, with its roots in symbolic interactionism, is a further precursor to critical-mass theory. Though collective-behavior analyses are often limited to the study of crowds, the approach is analogous: The fact that others are protesting affects potential protestors and attracts them (Blumer 1969). While critical-mass theory has relaxed the Gramscian assumption of class actors and the collective-behavior assumption of social disorganization, and has replaced the collective-behavior focus on irrational, emotive protest behavior with an assumption of rationality, these precursors provide an alternative to the Tocquevillean approach.

Empirical studies have confirmed elements of the critical-mass approach. Klandermans (1984) and Opp (1988) find a correlation between the expected numerical strength of a protest movement and the likelihood of participation. Other researchers find that expectations of repression are generally uncorrelated with protest participation (Muller, Dietz, and Finkel 1991; Muller and Opp 1986; Opp 1994; Opp and Gern 1993; Opp and Ruehl 1990).

However, critical-mass studies do not emphasize the distinction between their findings and the state-centered Tocquevillean approach. For instance, Opp and his collaborators, whose work is increasingly influential in social-movement theory, write that their research program "is not in complete disagreement with a structural framework" (Opp and Gern 1993:661). Elsewhere, Opp (1994) notes that subjective-perception data "reflect the real situation" (p. 110) and that decreases in objective repression, "we assume" (p. 127), result in corresponding shifts in perceptions. Indeed, Opp's research on repression is intended to show that opportunity structure *does* have an effect, albeit a complex one, on protest activity. On one hand, he hypothesizes that repression increases the cost of protest and thereby chills it. On the other hand, repression may increase discontent and micromobilization processes, thereby inflaming protest (Opp and Ruehl 1990). However, instead of the expected negative effect of repression, regressions consistently show a positive effect, or at best statistical nonsignificance, even after controlling for proxies for micromobilization. Although Opp and Ruehl (1990:541) recognize that they were unable to control for all intermediary variables, their results show that expected repression does not deter people from protesting. If repression represents the structure of opportunities (as Opp, McAdam, and others argue), this finding suggests that protestors are either unconcerned about opportunities (and by extension about whether protest succeeds) or are defining opportunities in some different way.

I explore this latter possibility through an examination of the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Protestors *were* concerned with prospects for success—they did not participate in large numbers until they felt success was at hand. However, most Iranians did not feel that the state had weakened or that structural opportunities had opened up. Indeed, I argue that the state was *not*, by several objective measures, particularly vulnerable in 1978 when widespread protest emerged. Instead, Iranians seem to have based their assessment of the opportunities for protest on the perceived strength of the opposition. In other words, Iranians believed the balance of forces shifted, not because of a changing state structure, but because of a changing opposition movement.

Unlike the Tocquevillean cases, then, structural opportunities and perceived opportunities may have been at odds. Thus, the Iranian Revolution may constitute a "deviant" case for social-movement theory, one that allows a comparison between the relative effects of structural versus subjective factors. This is a historic issue in sociological theory, and far too weighty for the imperfectly documented Iranian case. However, the case at least raises the historic issue in a new guise for social-movement theory. In addition to researching the links between the structural

and subjective levels of analysis, as social-movement theory has attempted to do in recent years (for instance, Klandermans et al. 1988), the case suggests that conflicts and disjunctures between these levels are also worth examining.

METHODOLOGY

As this paper is theory-driven, not case-driven, I will not discuss the many explanations for the Iranian Revolution. However, I take as measures of state structure four elements that are often cited in the literature on Iran: (1) the undermining of the monarchy's social support by reforms, (2) international pressure on the monarchy, (3) overcentralization and paralysis of the state, and (4) the state's vacillating responses to the protest movement. I argue that none of these factors represents a structural weakness of the state.

This is not the usual picture of the Iranian Revolution. Scholars who argue that the structure of the Iranian state was conducive to revolution usually presume that Iranians must have perceived it as such. Although some scholars have interviewed expatriate Iranian elites, no scholar has researched *popular* perceptions of the state. This is perhaps understandable, given the difficulties of studying a relatively closed society like post-revolutionary Iran. And, in a way, the past is also a closed society.

I draw on seven forms of eyewitness accounts of the Iranian revolutionary movement of 1977 to 1979, three of them contemporaneous and four of them after-the-fact: (1) journalists' accounts, both Iranian and foreign; (2) opposition publicists' *i'lâmîyih*'s, or pronouncements, some of them distributed clandestinely as a form of alternative journalism; (3) government documents, especially U.S. diplomats' records, some of them seized and published by the militant students who occupied the U.S. embassy in Tehran (*Asnâd-i Lânih-yi Jâsûsî* 1980–1991), and some of them obtained through the Freedom of Information Act and published by a private nonprofit organization in Washington, D.C. (National Security Archive 1989); (4) memoirs by Iranians and foreigners resident in Iran during the revolution; (5) oral histories of prominent Iranians, mostly expatriates opposed to the post-revolutionary regime, conducted by projects at the Foundation for Iranian Studies (1991) and Harvard University (Harvard Iranian Oral History Collection 1987); (6) interviews with Iranians, again mostly prominent expatriates, that have been excerpted in academic and journalistic studies of the revolution; and (7) supplementary interviews with nonexpatriate and nonprominent Iranians I conducted in Istanbul, Turkey (see the Appendix). Taken together, these sources corroborate one another. The preponderance of evidence suggests that Iranians did not perceive the Pahlavî state to be weak; indeed, they feared a crackdown right through the regime's final days. However, in early September of 1978, they began to consider the revolutionary movement to be stronger than the state.

Because I do not proceed chronologically, a brief summary of the events leading to the fall of the Iranian monarchy in February 1979 is in order. The revolutionary movement is generally dated from mid-1977, when liberal oppositionists began to speak out publicly for reforms in the Iranian monarchy. Late in 1977, some of Iran's Islamic leaders called for the removal of Shâh Muhammad Rizâ Pahlavî, and their followers embarked on a series of small demonstrations that the regime suppressed with force. Casualties at each incident generated a cycle of mourning demonstrations throughout the first half of 1978. The bulk of Iran's population, however, did not participate in these events. The revolutionary movement attracted a large following only in September 1978, following a suspicious theater fire and a massacre of peaceful demonstrators; both events persuaded many Iranians that the Pahlavî regime must fall. Beginning in September 1978, strikes began to shake the country and built up to a virtual general strike that lasted until the revolution's success in February 1979. By the end of 1978, the shah was actively seeking a reformist prime minister. When he finally found an oppositionist willing to take the position and left for a "vacation" in mid-January, the country had become ungovernable. Exiled religious leader Imâm Rûhullah Khumeinî returned to Iran to great acclaim at the end of January and named his own prime minister. Two weeks later, a mutiny in one of the air force barracks in Tehran sparked an un-

planned citywide uprising. Within 40 hours, the military declared its "neutrality" and allowed the revolutionaries to take power.

THE STRUCTURE OF POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY

Scholars of the Iranian Revolution have generally characterized the Pahlavî regime as highly susceptible to collapse. Four structural weaknesses are often cited as constituting a structure of political opportunities conducive to revolution.

Monarchy's Social Support Undermined by Reforms

One alleged weakness of the state is the undermining of the state's social support, particularly by the elite, as a result of the monarchy's vigorous efforts at reform. This argument takes different forms depending on the affected group. For instance, the shah's land reforms of the 1960s threw the landed oligarchy into the opposition. The shah's industrialization policies and punitive price-control measures threw the traditional *bazaari* sector into the opposition. Harsh labor repression threw workers into the opposition. The overheated oil-boom economy led to the inflation of urban housing prices, throwing poor migrants into the opposition. Political repression threw intellectuals and the middle classes into the opposition. Secularizing reforms threw religious leaders into the opposition. In sum, the state "destroyed its traditional class base while failing to generate a new class base of support" (Moshiri 1991:121; also see Bashiriyeh 1984:94–95; Foran 1993a:391; McDaniel 1991:103–105).

There are three problems with this argument. First, the affected groups were not entirely oppositional. Second, even as reforms created enemies for the state, they also created new allies. Third, the shah needed relatively little internal support because of the state's oil revenues and international support, and this internal autonomy may have strengthened rather than weakened the state.

The most affected elite group was the Islamic clerics. State reforms took away their longstanding judicial roles, limited their educational roles, and challenged their role in welfare distribution. Clerics had the clearest reason to resent the Pahlavî state. Yet prior to the revolution, relatively few clerics favored Khumeinî's revolutionary proposals. During the revolutionary movement, senior clerics tried to dissuade protestors from confronting the state, and one cleric even met secretly with government representatives to seek a compromise (Kurzman 1994).

Similarly, leading oppositionist *bazaaris* and intellectuals opposed the revolutionary tide; they favored reforming the monarchy, not ousting it. Workers' demands centered on workplace gains and only switched to revolutionary demands in the fall of 1978, months after the revolutionary movement began (Bayat 1987:86–87). Urban migrants who suffered the most from the state's policies did not participate in large numbers in the revolutionary movement (Kazemi 1980:88–95; Bauer 1983:157–60). Indeed, strikers at one factory blamed recent urban migrants for being too apolitical (Parsa 1989:5). In sum, the extent to which the shah's reform policies undermined his popular support should not be exaggerated.

Meanwhile, the state created new classes dependent on state patronage and therefore inclined to support the shah. The most important of these was the military, which expanded greatly during the shah's decades in power. The loyalty of the military remained largely unshaken to the end (see below). Another class created by state fiat was the industrial bourgeoisie, which emerged through credit subsidies (Salehi-Isfahani 1989) and royal patronage (Graham 1980:48). This class allegedly abandoned the shah by transferring its assets overseas and then emigrating at the first hint of trouble. Certainly rumors to this effect were circulating during the fall of 1978 (Naraghi 1994:97). But evidence suggests that some of the bourgeoisie stayed and actively supported the shah to the end. Groups of industrialists met in November 1978 and January 1979 to determine common solutions to strikes and money shortages; representatives worked with the prime minister on these matters (Âhanchîân 1982:370–85; National Security Archive 1989: Document 2127). Thus, the shah was not totally abandoned by his allies.

In any case, the shah's access to oil revenues and foreign support made internal support less important than it was for most re-

gimes. On theoretical grounds, it is difficult to say whether this is a sign of state weakness or strength. While reliance on foreign powers may create an image of a puppet regime, state autonomy is often identified as a strength, as the state can impose collective solutions on recalcitrant social groups (Migdal 1988). If the basis for autonomy breaks down, of course, the state is left without a reed to lean on. However, the shah retained international support during the revolutionary movement.

International Pressure on the Monarchy

The second alleged weakness of the state is the widespread impression that international constraints stayed the monarchy's hand and prevented the crackdown that would have crushed the protest movement. Many academic analyses have applied Skocpol's (1979) structural model to the Iranian Revolution, arguing that international pressures weakened the state and made it vulnerable to revolution (Ashraf and Banuazizi 1985:19–20; Liu 1988:202–203; Milani 1988:30–31).[4] However, none of these analysts presents evidence of such pressure.

Jimmy Carter campaigned for President in 1976 on a platform that included the consideration of human rights in U.S. foreign policy, and he threatened to weaken U.S. support for the shah. But this threat never materialized. When the shah visited Washington in November 1977, Carter's meetings with him barely touched the subject of human rights (Carter 1978:2028–29, 2033). A month later, Carter made his famous New Year's toast to the shah in Tehran: "Iran, because of the great leadership of the Shah, is an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world. This is a great tribute to you, Your Majesty, and to your leadership and to the respect and the admiration and love which your people give to you" (*Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, January 2, 1978, p. 1975).

As the revolutionary movement grew during 1978, the shah received no international complaints about his handling of Iranian protests, even when his troops shot hundreds, perhaps thousands, of unarmed demonstrators in Tehran on September 8. In fact, Carter telephoned the shah from Camp David two days later to express his continuing support (Carter 1979:1515).[5] When the shah installed a military government on November 6, U.S. officials voiced their full approval (*New York Times*, November 7, 1978, p. 14). National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski had telephoned the shah several days earlier to encourage him to be firm (Brzezinski 1983:364–65; Carter 1982:439; Pahlavi 1980:165). Riot-control equipment, blocked for months on human-rights grounds, was then shipped to Iran (*Newsweek*, November 20, 1978, p. 43). As late as December 28, 1978, the U.S. Secretary of State cabled to his ambassador in Tehran the firm statement "that U.S. support is steady and that it is essential, repeat essential, to terminate the continuing uncertainty" (National Security Archive 1989: Document 1972).

Throughout the fall of 1978, the shah met regularly with the U.S. ambassador, William Sullivan. The shah's final autobiography notes that "the only word I ever received from Mr. Sullivan was reiteration of Washington's complete support for my rule" (Pahlavi 1980: 161). In fact, according to Sullivan (1981), "the Shah himself in due course told me he was somewhat embarrassed by the constant reiteration of our public support, saying it made him look like a puppet" (p. 204).

The shah was apparently unaware of divisions within the U.S. administration (Pahlavi 1980:165; Sick 1985:345). Carter's cabinet was split into hostile camps over the extent of force the shah should use, the advisability of a coup d'état, and the desirability of a nonmonarchical government in Iran—in short, how to respond to the Iranian revolutionary movement. This debate was never resolved. As a result, Washington never sent detailed recommendations to Iran. Ambassador Sullivan in Tehran repeatedly told the shah that he had "no instructions" from his superiors (Pahlavi 1980:161; Sullivan 1981: 191–92).

This lack of instructions may have deepened the shah's suspicions about the United

[4] Skocpol (1982:267) denies that her theory applies directly to the Iranian Revolution, particularly with regard to international pressures.

[5] Oddly, the shah denied that Carter called him (Pahlavi 1980:161).

States' true intentions. The head of the French secret service insisted to the shah that the United States was secretly planning his ouster (Marenches 1988:125–26), and the shah asked visitors on several occasions whether the United States had abandoned him (Naraghi 1994:124; Pahlavi 1980:155; Parsons 1984:74; Sick 1985:53, 88; Sullivan 1981:157). Offhand public remarks by U.S. officials suggesting that the United States was considering various contingencies in Iran reached the shah and worried him, despite official denials and reassurances (Sick 1985:88, 110).

In sum, the United States continued to pledge its support, although the shah did not entirely believe it. But there is no evidence of international pressure constraining the monarchy's response to protest.

Overcentralization and Paralysis of the State

A third alleged weakness focuses on the structure of the Iranian state. According to this argument, a concerted crackdown would have worked, but the state lacked the will to carry it out. At its basest, this explanation accuses individual officeholders of treason. At its most theoretical, this analysis argues that the Iranian state was structurally susceptible to paralysis because of its overcentralization around the person of the shah. Fatemi's (1982) analysis is perhaps the most succinct: "Since the *raison d'être* of this organizational structure was mostly to protect the shah and his throne from potential threats, such as military *coups d'état* and strong political rivals" (p. 49), the state demanded loyalty to the monarch, arranged overlapping responsibilities and rivalries, and forbade lateral communication. "To operate this system the shah had effectively made himself the sole decision-making authority in every significant phase of Iran's political affairs" (p. 49). Therefore, the system depended for its operation on a fully functioning shah. In 1978, however, the shah was ill with cancer. According to this thesis, the state was thereby paralyzed in its response to the protest movement (Arjomand 1988:114ff, 189ff; Zonis 1991).

There is abundant evidence of the centralization of the state around the person of the shah. There is also evidence of the shah's illness. He was under medication and appeared at times to be depressed or listless and not his usual decisive self (Kraft 1978:134; Sick 1985:52–53, 61; Sullivan 1981:156, 195, 196, 198). But evidence of paralysis is much less convincing. To be sure, the shah repeatedly stated his unwillingness to massacre his subjects in order to save his throne (Marenches 1988:130; Parsons 1984:147; Sullivan 1981:167). "The instructions I gave were always the same: 'Do the impossible to avoid bloodshed'" (Pahlavi 1980:168).[6] One general allegedly offered to kill a hundred thousand protestors to quell the disturbances. Another supposedly proposed to bomb the holy city of Qum. The head of a neighboring country suggested the execution of 700 mullahs. The shah vetoed all these plans (Mirfakhraei 1984:443; Reeves 1986:188; Stempel 1981:280).

However, the refusal to authorize slaughter does not necessarily indicate lack of will or structural paralysis. Less extreme measures were vigorously pursued. Throughout the fall of 1978, security forces routinely broke up protests at gunpoint. They arrested virtually every prominent oppositionist in the country at least once. At one time or another they occupied virtually all key economic and governmental institutions and forced striking personnel back to work in the oil fields, power stations, airlines, customs offices, and telecommunications centers (Kurzman 1992: 194–99). Plans began to be drawn up for a possible pro-shah military coup (Copeland 1989:252; Yazdî 1984:249–99).

Moreover, the Pahlavî regime—despite its pretensions—was a Third World state and not overly efficient in the best of times: Iran's intelligence service was hardly more than a glorified police force, according to the head of the French secret service (Marenches 1988:121); Tehran had no sewage system (Graham 1980:22); and industry suffered frequent power shortages (Graham 1980:120–21). The flurry of state actions in response to the revolutionary movement hardly represents paralysis.

[6] The shah had given similar orders in previous crises, according to generals and politicians involved in episodes in the 1950s and 1960s (Afkhami 1985:94).

State Vacillation

A fourth possible weakness concerns the state's "vacillating" (Abrahamian 1982:518; Keddie 1981:255) or "inconsistent" (Arjomand 1988:115; Cottam 1980:18) responses to the protest movement. The combination of concession and repression is said to have encouraged protestors while providing them with new reasons to protest. Because of this vacillation, according to these analyses, the Iranian revolution grew from a small and sporadic movement into a massive and continuous upheaval. The implication is that a more one-sided policy—either reform *or* crackdown—would have been more effective in stifling protest.

Such a conclusion goes against the advice of numerous royal advisors. In ancient India, Kautilîya (1972:414) instructed kings on how to deal with revolts: "Make use of conciliation, gifts, dissension and force." In eleventh-century Persia, Nizam al-Mulk (1960, chaps. 40, 44) urged caliphs to imitate the mercy and liberality of Harun ar-Rashid, but also the deviousness and repression of Nushirwan. In sixteenth-century Italy, Machiavelli (1980, chaps. 8, 17) advised princes to gain both the fear of the people and the love of the people, combining punishment and reward, cruelty and clemency. In the twentieth century, U.S. State Department analyst W. Howard Wriggins (1969:258–63) theorized on the strategic mix between rewarding the faithful and intimidating the opposition. On theoretical grounds, then, it is not clear whether a combined state response constitutes vacillation and vulnerability, or carrot-and-stick and co-optation.

In any case, the shah had used a similar strategy for years. The two major pre-revolutionary studies of the Iranian political system make this point repeatedly. Zonis (1971) notes that co-optation of the opposition had become routine, to the extent that the shah told one foreign visitor not to worry about youthful subversives. "We know just who those young men are and will be offering them high-level jobs as appropriate" (pp. 331–32). Bill (1972:100) describes the state's "three-pronged strategy of intimidation, bribery, and selected concessions" toward student oppositionists. Both authors view the shah's repression and his co-optive concessions as complementary parts of a single coherent system of political opportunities.

This combined approach continued through 1978 (Kurzman 1992:81–91). At several crucial junctures, the shah cracked down on protestors, but at the same time offered minor concessions and promised future reforms. In mid-May, soldiers opened fire on a demonstration in Tehran, but troops were removed from the seminary city of Qum and a ban was announced on pornographic films, clearly gestures toward religious oppositionists. In early August, the shah announced that free elections were going to be held, but soon placed the city of Isfahan under martial law. In late August, the shah placed 11 cities under martial law, but also granted various concessions, including freedom of the press, and appointed a new prime minister thought to be more acceptable to the religious opposition. In November, the shah installed a military government that flooded Tehran with armored vehicles and cracked down on the oilfield strikes. At the same time, the shah made an apologetic televised speech and promulgated limits on the royal family's business activities.

There was a definite logic to these state responses. The government sent protestors a mixed but consistent message: Continue protesting and you'll be killed; stop protesting and you'll get reforms. The combination of crackdowns with promises of future reforms was intended to defuse the short-term situation while reaffirming the long-term commitment to liberalization. The shah stuck to the structure of political opportunities he had maintained for decades, one that was conducive to co-optive political participation and inimical to revolutionary street protests.

THE PERCEPTION OF POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY

Perceptions of the State's Coercive Power

Casualties increased as the protest movement progressed.[7] Moreover, the Iranian people recognized that street protests were danger-

[7] Tabulation of the "martyrs of the revolution" listed in *Lâlih'hâ* (circa 1980) finds increases of 30 to 150 percent each month through the fall and winter of 1978 and 1979. Bill (1988:487) has also

ous, including the large demonstrations that were legal, well-organized, and rarely repressed.[8] For instance, marches on the religious holidays of Tâsû'â and 'Âshûrâ in December 1978 were certain to attract millions of participants, but they still inspired fear. The leading cleric in Shiraz warned on the eve of the demonstrations: "Maybe we'll be killed tomorrow. We're facing guns, rifles and tanks. Whoever is afraid shouldn't come" (Hegland 1986:683). One man in Tehran wrote out his will before heading out to march (*Pîshtâzân* 1981:173).

Fear of state reprisal lasted through the final hours of the Pahlavî regime, as security forces continued to shoot and arrest protestors. In December 1978, Iranians feared that hundreds of CIA operatives were being smuggled into the country to squelch the revolutionary movement (Khalîlî 1981:128). In early February of 1979, just a few days before the shah's regime fell, one newspaper columnist noted: "In Tehran, conversations are limited to this: how will the revolution, which has gone half-way, deal with the fundamental power of the government? Will it resign? Will there be a fight? And how far would fighting go?" (*Âyandigân*, February 6, 1979, p. 12).

But recognition of the state's coercive power did not translate into obedience. Frequently, repression led to increased militancy. In late August, after the immolation of several hundred moviegoers in Abadan—a tragedy many Iranians blamed on the state—protests increased from several thousand participants to hundreds of thousands. In early September, the day after hundreds and perhaps thousands of peaceful demonstrators were gunned down in Tehran's Zhâlih Square, wildcat strikes spread across the country. In early November, within weeks of the installation of a military government, the opposition denounced the government as illegal and began planning for huge confrontations during the Shi'i holy month of Muharram.

On an individual level, acts of repression that hit close to home were a major source of revolutionary zeal. An anthropologist who spent much of the revolutionary period in a village near Shiraz reports that this response was called "*az khud guzashtih*" or "*az jân guzashtih*" (literally, "abandoning oneself" or "abandoning life"):

> People felt this emotion and gained this attitude through hearing about or participating in events in which government forces treated people with violence and injustice. . . . Villagers reported to me their horror, fury, and frustration upon hearing about such events, as well as their resolve that they would never rest until the shah and the government that did such inhuman things to their fellow Iranians no longer existed. (Hegland 1983:233–34)

Repression was such a mobilizing force that the opposition circulated a hoax audio cassette, along with other opposition cassettes, on which an indistinct voice resembling the shah's was heard giving his generals formal orders to shoot demonstrators in the streets (Sreberny-Mohammadi 1990: 358). If scare tactics of this sort were revolutionary propaganda, and not counterrevolutionary propaganda, then something was clearly amiss with the shah's carrot-and-stick strategy.

Perceptions of the Opposition's Power

What was amiss, I propose, was the Iranian people's perception of political opportunities. Iranians continued to recognize and fear the state's coercive powers. However, they felt that these powers were insignificant compared with the strength of the revolutionary movement. Confirming critical-mass hypotheses, these perceptions caused Iranians to become more active, not to withdraw into free-rider status. Popular perceptions are difficult to identify, particularly during a period of repression and unrest. But this is no excuse for leaving popular perceptions unexamined. The bits of evidence that exist show consistently that Iranians considered the strength of the protest movement to be a decisive factor in their decisions to participate.

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used this source as a sampling of revolutionary fatalities. I appreciate Professor Bill's assistance in locating this book.

[8] "Even if one assumes that the government had lost its will to repress people, it is not altogether clear that participants in the revolution were aware of this fact or would have believed it" (Moaddel 1993:156). However, Moaddel's explanation for revolutionary participation focuses on Islamic ideology, as opposed to popular perceptions of the opposition movement's strength and prospects.

At the first mass demonstration of the protest movement, on September 4 in Tehran, journalists reported a sense of euphoria among the protestors: "'The shah is finished,' they cry above all" (Brière and Blanchet 1979:46). This judgment was premature, but the sentiment seems genuine. Protestors felt that revolution was not only possible, but practically inevitable:

> A year before, I heard news about demonstrations, but I didn't feel that it was something very important. That is, I thought, well, something is happening, but I didn't think that it would bring about a basic change in my country. Later, in September 1978, at the start of school, when we began classes, everything had changed. All of a sudden, the feeling arose that things weren't that way anymore. (Maryam Shamlu, from an interview in May 1983)[9]

A lawyer from Tehran recalled a large demonstration:

> I had the sense that the bourgeois had come to see what was happening, without much conviction, to eventually, one day, be able to say, "I was there," and not to be looked upon badly by certain devout neighbors. The future was up in the air, better get on board. (Saint-James 1983: 191)

On a smaller scale, it appears that Iranians preferred to participate in a particular protest only if they had assurances that others would protest as well. U.S. diplomats in Tehran noted during the strike day of October 16, 1978:

> Most shops have closed during [the] morning, however, as shopkeepers evaluated [the] local situation: no one wants to have the only open shop on the block. . . . Everyone knew of Khomeini's appeal [to strike], yet [the] vast majority came to work, they decided to stay or return based on what neighbors were doing. (National Security Archive 1989: Document 1594)

At its margins, this desire to go with the flow shaded into fear of persecution for nonparticipation. "I could not go to [the] office against the will of my employees," said the managing director of a state agency that was on strike. "Besides, anything could happen to me" (Farazmand 1989:172). The owner of a tiny shop in central Tehran expressed a similar opinion:

> He explained candidly that he had put a photograph of the Ayatollah, whom he said he respected, in his store window because he feared it would be smashed otherwise. "Most of the people want an Islamic Republic," he said wearily. "And I want anything that most of the people want." (*New York Times*, February 2, 1979, p. A9)

The fear of violence should not be overestimated, however, despite the dark suspicions of several foreign observers—notably British Ambassador Anthony Parsons (1984:81), U.S. military envoy Robert Huyser (1986:22), and U.S. diplomats (*Asnâd-i Lânih-yi Jâsûsî* 1980–1991, vol. 25, p. 50; vol. 12, part 2, pp. 16, 79–80; vol. 13, part 1, p. 48; vol. 13, part 2, p. 71). The Iranian Revolution exhibited remarkably little retribution against backsliders, especially when compared with the revolutionary violence reported in South Africa, Palestine, and the Sikh independence movement in India.

Rather, the fear of violence should probably be considered part of the overall "bandwagon effect" (Hirsch 1986:382), whereby individuals' willingness to participate in a protest is correlated with their expectations of the size and success of the protest. Other critical-mass studies are better able to delve into the details of the social-psychological mechanisms at work here, given their more accessible research sites. In the Iranian case, in which random sampling is not possible, only the broad outlines of the process can be identified.

Perhaps the best evidence of the bandwagon effect comes from the reformist oppositionists who opposed outright revolution. These liberals are more fully represented than are other social groups in the government, journalistic, and oral-history sources available for this research. Liberals were highly sensitive to the structure of opportunities—they had begun to speak out publicly for reform in 1977 when the shah allowed such opposition to be voiced. In late 1977, when the shah clamped down again after his cordial meetings with Carter, liberals muted their protests. In the summer of 1978, when the shah made a few concessions and promised

[9] Maryam Shamlu, former head of the Women's Organization of Iran, was interviewed in Washington, D.C. in May 1983 by Mahnaz Afkhami (Foundation for Iranian Studies 1991, transcript p. 24).

to hold free elections, liberals were elated and rushed to take advantage of the new freedoms (Kurzman 1992:106–109). During the fall of 1978, liberals began to sense that the opposition movement was larger than they had imagined, and "out of our hands."[10] This sense crystallized for some on September 4, when liberal *bazaar* oppositionists chased in vain after a massive revolutionary demonstration, trying to disperse the crowd and reminding people that they were not supposed to be demonstrating.[11]

In the following months, liberals joined the revolutionary movement, not because they now favored revolution, but because they felt the revolutionary movement was too strong to oppose. In a memorandum of November 5, 1978, the U.S. embassy reported that one leading liberal "privately accused Khomeini of irresponsibility and said he 'acts like a false god.' But we have no sign he or any other oppositionist dares to attack Khomeini publicly" (National Security Archive 1989: Document 1685). In a memorandum dated December 8, 1978, a U.S. diplomat reported asking a moderate Iranian religious leader if he and other clerics would approve a constitutional settlement to the crisis and go against Khumeinî. The cleric, "perhaps not wanting his followers to understand, replied in broken English, 'That would be dangerous and very difficult'" (*Asnâd-i Lânih-yi Jâsûsî* 1980–1991, vol. 26, p. 61). By the end of 1978, when the shah was casting about for a prime minister, a series of liberal oppositionists turned down the position. Several months earlier they would have considered the appointment a dream come true—now they considered it futile.[12]

PERCEPTION VERSUS STRUCTURE

Confident of the revolution's ultimate victory, millions of Iranians participated in mass protests against the shah in the final months of 1978. Yet, at the end of the year, the shah's military remained largely intact. The two sides faced a potentially cataclysmic confrontation. But as protestors' perception of political opportunities clashed with the state's structural position, the structure of the state gave way.

As late as early December 1978, top generals still thought they could subdue the protest movement (Kamrava 1990:39). Thus, the collapse of the military followed, rather than preceded, mass mobilization of the protest movement. Like the broad state-breakdown argument, this suggests that military breakdown may be an outcome of mobilization rather than a necessary precondition (Chorley 1973; Russell 1974).

During demonstrations, protestors handed flowers to soldiers and chanted slogans such as: "Brother soldier, why do you kill your brothers?" and "The army is part of the nation" (Kamalî 1979). On several occasions, large throngs of protestors persuaded soldiers to give up their arms, throw off their uniforms, and join the demonstration (Simpson 1988:33). On other occasions, protestors attacked security personnel and even military bases (Parsa 1989:231–37).

Nonetheless, the effectiveness of popular pressure on the military is unclear. Even in mid-January 1979, as the shah was about to leave Iran, desertions remained relatively low, only about a thousand a day out of several hundred thousand troops, according to the Iranian chief of staff (Gharabaghi 1985: 122). However, authorized leaves may have been increasing dramatically as soldiers requested furloughs to check on their families and property after riots and other disturbances (Zabih 1988:33). (In a Crisis Meeting on January 23, the chief of staff estimated that the armed forces were only at 55 percent of their strength, although the tone of his comments suggests that this figure was picked more for effect than for accuracy [*Misl-i Barf* 1987:175].[13]) Small mutinies in-

[10] Eslam Kazemieh was interviewed in Paris on October 31, 1983 and May 8, 1984 by Shirin Sami'i (Foundation for Iranian Studies 1991, transcript p. 32).

[11] Abol Ghassem Lebaschi was interviewed in Paris on February 28, 1983 by Habib Ladjevardi (Harvard Iranian Oral History Collection 1987, transcript of tape 3, p. 5).

[12] Lebaschi (Harvard Iranian Oral History Collection 1987, transcript of tape 3, p. 10); Mohammad Shanehchi was interviewed in Paris on March 4, 1983 by Habib Ladjevardi (Harvard Iranian Oral History Collection 1987, transcript of tape 4, pp. 5–6).

[13] *Misl-i Barf* (1987) purports to be transcript of three meetings of military leaders in the last

creased (Parsa 1989:241–44). On December 21, 1978, the U.S. embassy reported:

> Base security has been tightened on more than one base or unit area, apparently because of indications of decreasing loyalty among junior personnel as well as concern that deserters may attempt to return in uniform to seize arms. (National Security Archive 1989: Document 1950)

Whether or not popular pressure was effective, however, military leaders were clearly worried about it. This concern prevented the military from being used to its full capacity because each military operation exposed the troops to fraternization and further appeals from protestors. On January 15, 1979, the head of the ground forces proposed keeping the soldiers away from this nefarious influence:

> We should round up the units and send them someplace where [the demonstrators] won't have any contact with the soldiers. Because yesterday they came and put a flower in the end of a rifle barrel, and another on the [military] vehicle. . . . The soldiers' morale just disappears. (*Misl-i Barf* 1987:50)

During the largest demonstrations, military commanders kept their troops well away from the march routes, guarding "key" sites and neighborhoods (National Security Archive 1989: Document 1900; *Âyandigan*, January 20, 1979, p. 2). On a few occasions they ordered the military back to barracks, twice as a direct result of defections (*Los Angeles Times*, December 19, 1978, p. I–22; *Hambastigî*, December 24, 1978, p. 2).

In early 1979, Iranian military commanders struggled to keep the military intact and gave up trying to use the military to govern the country. They had been trained to fear a Soviet incursion and saw the collapse of the Iranian military as an invitation to aggression (*Misl-i Barf* 1987:118–21). In Mashhad at the height of the unrest, one commander said that the military was unable to defend the nearby border with the Soviet Union. "The important border now is our own garrison" (*New York Times*, January 4, 1979, p. A10).

But several hundred thousand troops could not be held in their barracks for long.[14] A number of soldiers, even officers, slipped out and joined protests—out of uniform, of course, because a uniform would attract dangerous attention from protestors and security forces that remained loyal (Balta and Rulleau 1979:59–60). In early February of 1979, when whole units of troops began to demonstrate in uniform against the shah, the military's disintegration was imminent. After only a day and a half of street fighting, the chiefs of staff declared the military's "neutrality" and allowed the revolutionaries to take power (Gharabaghi 1985:207–49).

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL-MOVEMENT THEORY

I have argued that the Iranian state was not particularly vulnerable to revolution in 1978, according to several indicators. The Pahlavî regime's domestic support had not withered away, nor had its international support. State centralization and the shah's illness did not prevent the state from responding actively to the revolutionary movement, combining carrot and stick, cracking down on opposition activities while promising future reforms, as it had done for decades.

In terms of popular perceptions, the Iranian people considered the coercive power of the state to be intact right up to the end. At the same time, however, evidence suggests that the Iranian people considered political opportunities to have increased as a result of the growth of the opposition. The strength of the revolutionary movement induced even nonrevolutionary liberals to join in. Acting on this perception of opposition strength, Iranians altered the structure of opportunities by fraternizing with the military and making it partially unusable as a coercive force.

In more theoretical terms, there was a mismatch between the structure of political opportunities and popular perceptions of political opportunities. Rather than calculate op-

month of the Pahlavî regime; it cannot be verified, but seems highly realistic. The generals do not appear bloodthirsty or anti-Islamic, as might be expected of a fabricated transcript published in post-revolutionary Iran. According to comments in the transcript, the recordings were made on the orders of the chief of staff.

[14] This point was raised by Respondent 98, a career soldier from Tehran interviewed in Istanbul on February 23, 1990.

portunities solely on the basis of changes in the state, as Tocquevillean theory suggests, Iranians appear to have calculated opportunities on the basis of changes in the opposition. Ultimately, their perceptions proved self-fulfilling: The balance of forces had indeed tilted toward the opposition, and perceptions proved stronger than the state structure.

This finding suggests that social-movement theory should reconsider the relation between "objective" and "subjective" definitions of political opportunity. If opportunity is like a door, then social-movement theory generally examines cases in which people realize the door is open and walk on through. The Iranian Revolution may be a case in which people saw that the door was closed, but felt that the opposition was powerful enough to open it. These people were not millenarians, masochists, fanatics, or martyrs—the case is not dismissed so easily. It turns out that Iranians were able to open the door on their own.

Thus Iran is a "deviant" case for social-movement theory, a case suggesting that perceived opportunities may affect the outcome of revolutionary protest independent of structural opportunities. This conclusion is hardly novel. The critical-mass school, drawing on a long tradition in sociology, has often examined protestors' and potential protestors' perceptions. However, this school has avoided emphasizing its differences with the Tocquevillean tradition. The Iranian case makes these differences clear. However, a single "deviant" case cannot answer all the questions that it raises. Are perceptions always stronger than structures? Under what conditions do perceptions outweigh structures? Only through research on additional cases in which perceived opportunities and structural opportunities fail to coincide can the relative weight of each be understood.

Such research will encounter difficulties. First, the identification of appropriate cases will not be easy. Many theorists will assume that if protest occurs, structural conditions must have been conducive. Therefore, any case study proffered to the contrary may be dismissed out of hand. Furthermore, the Tocquevillean tradition presents a moving target, as theories of political opportunity increase. Like any research program (Lakatos 1978), Tocquevillean theorists can develop new corollary analyses to bring seemingly deviant cases back into alignment. As a result, it may not be easy to convince these theorists that cases exist in which structural opportunities and perceived opportunities do not coincide.

Second, the measurement of popular perceptions will be difficult. The survey instruments developed by Opp, Muller, and their collaborators (Muller et al. 1991; Muller and Opp 1986; Opp 1994; Opp and Gern 1993; Opp and Ruehl 1990) represent great strides in identifying the key perceptions involved in protest behavior. However, systematic surveys are not feasible in the midst of revolutionary turmoil, so the issue of recollected motivations enters the picture. In addition, the countries most amenable to survey research may be the least "deviant" cases from a Tocquevillean point of view. Countries like Iran, whose regimes are less open to the free flow of information and thus to independent survey analysis, may be precisely the countries in which information about the structure of opportunities is also not widely disseminated, so that perceptions of opportunities may be more out of synch.

Third, identifying a set of "deviant" cases in which perceived opportunities outweigh structural ones may be inherently self-defeating. Take, for instance, the hypothesis that regimes that block the free flow of information are more likely than other regimes to have mismatched structural opportunities and perceived opportunities. Haven't we, then, identified the structural conditions under which structural conditions are not important? In other words, haven't we simply redefined structure to include the free flow of information, thereby bringing structure back into alignment with perceptions?

Fourth, examining perceptions independently of structures places social scientists in an anomalous position because their privileged position as observers is called into question. In social-movement theory, structural opportunity means the social scientist's perception of opportunities. This scientific perception is more informed than contemporary popular perceptions because it is after-the-fact and arguably more objective. However, cases in which perceptions outweigh structures present the risk that scientific perceptions, for all their rigor and

hindsight, may not be as important as the perceptions of the social-movement participants.

Fifth, if perceptions can outweigh structures, then protest may not be predictable, even in principle. The Tocquevillean tradition has embarked on one of the greatest quests in social science: To discover the regularities underlying irregular behavior—the rules underlying behavior that flouts the rules. However, if protest results from perceptions and not structures, then there are no advance clues. Given social science's poor record of predicting major protest movements, including the Iranian Revolution, this conclusion may be comforting. But many social scientists may not want to abandon the quest for predictability.

The single case of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 cannot resolve any of these weighty issues. However, the mismatch between structural opportunities and perceived opportunities in this case has far-reaching implications for social-movement theory. The Tocquevillean tradition has avoided these disconcerting implications by failing to study such cases, and the critical-mass school has thus far not shown the desire to challenge the Tocquevilleans. My goal has been to show that the two approaches are at odds with each other and to stimulate further debate.

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Appendix. Interview Evidence of Perceived Opportunities During the Iranian Revolution

To corroborate the fragmentary evidence concerning popular perceptions of the Iranian state and the revolutionary movement, I planned to interview a representative sample of Iranians in 1989 and 1990. When I was unable to obtain a visa to Iran, I pursued this research in Istanbul, Turkey, where many Iranians traveled at that time for tourism and business. In six months, I conducted semi-structured interviews in Persian with 83 temporary visitors who intended to return to Iran. This sample included Iranians from more diverse backgrounds than are found among expatriates. Nonetheless, this sample was not representative of the Iranian population at large—it was far more urban, somewhat more white-collar, and almost entirely male.

The study of closed societies through interviews abroad has been successful in several studies (Millar 1987; Whyte 1983). However, because of a lack of funds and a way to sample the fluid Iranian visitor population of Istanbul, my interviews could not be as systematic as in these other works. Although my interviews may give a "sense" of Iranian popular perceptions that is more representative than those of prominent expatriates who have been quoted in previous analyses of the Iranian Revolution, they cannot prove what those popular perceptions were.

The bulk of the interviews confirmed that respondents judged political opportunities not in terms of the power of the state, but in terms of the power of the opposition. Only a few of my respondents—generally the better educated ones—made any reference to the shah's liberalization reforms, and some of these references were derisive comments on the reforms' insincerity. One respondent attributed the shah's liberalization reforms to pressure from Carter. I asked if he had felt freer as a result. "No, things were getting worse. But we all had solidarity," he responded, clasping his hands together to demonstrate.[a] This impression of worsening political conditions was widespread.

Some of the more devout Muslim respondents said they worried that Islam was in danger, that the shah was systematically undermining the religious establishment.[b] Several respondents gave unsolicited accounts of being *"az khud guzashtih"* (see p. 161), although none used this term. One man attributed his revolutionary participation to the shooting of his brother. "It was this way for everyone," he said. "If my brother, or my friend, or my child was shot, I would get angry and pour out into the streets."[c]

However, the most common explanation for respondents' participation in the revolutionary movement referred to the strength of the opposition. Contrary to the stereotype of Shi'i Islam, most Iranians were not eager for martyrdom. When religious leaders urged Iranians to sacrifice themselves for Islam in late 1977 and early 1978, very few responded to the call. "I was prepared to be killed at that time, for our goals," one respondent recalled[d]—but neither he

[a] Respondent 55, a Tehran *bazaar* worker, interviewed on November 29, 1989. (Occupations and place of residence are at the time of the revolution.)

[b] Especially Respondent 16, an unemployed young religious activist in east Tehran, interviewed on November 1, 1989.

[c] Respondent 59, a bank official from Tehran, interviewed on December 3, 1989.

[d] Respondent 89, a company official from Khuzistan, interviewed on February 19, 1990. One of the stock comments I heard was, "Iranians know no fear." This comment was often, paradoxically, accompanied by accounts of how the respondent had run away when security forces opened fire.

nor most Iranians joined the protest movement until late in 1978, when they had safety in numbers:

> The more people, the less fear. (Respondent 11, army conscript from Tehran, interviewed October 26, 1989)
>
> I saw in the streets the crowds getting bigger and bigger. . . . I saw my friend in the street shouting, 'Death to the shah,' and my fear left me. (Respondent 46, unemployed former conscript from Tehran, interviewed November 22, 1989)
>
> When everyone was in the streets, huge crowds, I'd go. I didn't go if there was going to be danger and shooting. (Respondent 48, telephone company official from Tehran, interviewed November 22, 1989)
>
> It wasn't just one, two, or a thousand people. (Respondent 52, shopowner from Shiraz, interviewed November 27, 1989)
>
> There were lots of people there. If it had been just one person. . . . (Respondent 58, government official from Gombad, interviewed December 1, 1989)
>
> When everyone is shutting down [their shops], the rest shut down too. (Respondent 62, shopowner from Tehran, interviewed December 4, 1989)
>
> When the people were of a piece (*yik-parchih*), I participated. (Respondent 67, high school student from Luristan, interviewed December 7, 1989)
>
> Everyone was there. There were so many people. If it was just a small demonstration, I didn't go. But those huge demonstrations—fear had no meaning then. (Respondent 72, high school student from Tehran, interviewed December 13, 1989)
>
> It was not an individual decision. Everyone was of a piece. When everyone is of a piece, one person cannot stay separate. (Respondent 77, auto mechanic from Tehran, interviewed December 20, 1989)

Some of these voices were apologetic, as though admitting to a lack of heroism. Others distanced themselves, through their comments, from the tragic turns that the revolution later took. Others were proud of the country's unanimity in protest and of their participation. In any case, these voices constitute further evidence that Iranians' calculations about opportunities were focused on the strengthening of the opposition, not the weakening of the state.

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