Chapter 3: THE THEORETICAL MODEL OF THE IRANIAN MODERN HISTORY

As mentioned in the previous chapters, and following the diagnosis made by Hodgson (2002), Rodrik (2007), the World Development Reports (2005, 2015) and Easterly (2001, 2007a, 2007b, 2014), this study aims to come up with a conceptual model uniquely tailored to the Iran-specific experiences of socio-economic development using a double-hermeneutics hybrid methodology. The main argument of this study revolves around the proposition that Iranian experience of socio-economic crises may be the outcome of failure to produce stable regime of truth (Foucault, 1980) because of the dynamic interplay between the context of culture and the context of situation, as formulated by Malinowski (1935: 73). Foucault (1980: 93-4) makes the following ground-breaking and astonishing observation:

> "In the last analysis, we must produce truth as we must produce wealth, indeed we must produce truth in order to produce wealth in the first place".

In the case of Iran, the failure to produce truth seems to be at the heart of the failure to produce wealth. The failure to produce truth and wealth seems to be in turn rooted in the hyper-complex nature of the Iranian contexts. The composite notion of belated inbeteenness attempts to capture the Iran-specific nature of context of culture and context of situation.

THE STATE OF BELATED INBETWEENNESS

The two distinct notions of contexts can pave the way for delving deeper into the troubled relation between truth and wealth. In modern history of Iran, the 'context of culture' is characterized, in this work, by the notion of 'inbetweenness' and the 'context of situation' by the concept of 'belatedness' (Bhabha, 1990a, 1990b, 1994; Huddart, 2006; Shayegan, 2007, 1997; Byrne, 2009; Seeburger, 2016). In the following sections we address each of these notions separately and explore how they combine to create a state of confusion in the Iranian *dasein*, which further through cascading effects leads to the formation of unstable coalitions, dysfunctional institutions, and emergence of a chaotic order.

INBETWEENNESS AND CULTURAL SCHIZOPHRENIA

Various theorists have embarked on addressing the predicaments associated with the state of being trapped between contradictory cultural forces. For Shayegan (1997: ix, 77) the state of inbetweennes implies that: "we are situated on the fault-line between incompatible worlds", "each of which marks a different 'historical a priori'." This state is further characterized by features like "inner contradictions", "living in different periods of time" and missing "the crucial moments of history". These inner contradictions, as Tavakoli-Targhi (2009: 5) observes, prompt "the emergence of a schizophrenic view of history and the formation of

schizophrenic social subjects" and breeds constant waves of resentment and discontent (Mansouri-Zeyni and Sami. 2014; Brah and Coombes, 2000). Shayegan (1997: 25) gives the example of possible contradictions between three systems of law (Sharia, customary or common law, and modern law) in the Moroccan context. The state of inbetweenness is alternatively dubbed as the state of cultural schizophrenia by Shayegan (1997) and is defined by de Alba (1995: 106) as

> "the presence of mutually contradictory or antagonistic beliefs, social forms, and material traits in any group whose racial, religious, or social components are a hybrid (or ***mestizaje***) of two or more fundamentally opposite cultures".

Kraidy (2012: 238) reports the same phenomenon in Saudi Arabia, Merrell (2003: 189) in Mexico, Tejapira (2002: 210, 212-3) in Thailand, Visser (2008: 232) in China, Olesen (1995: 227) in Afghanistan, Esposito (1999: 194) in Turkey, and Daniels (1985: 47) in Russia. Alongside Shayegan, Jahanbegloo (2004: xi), Ringer (2004: 47), Sadri (2004: 118), Tavakoli-Targhi (2004: 132), and Tehranian (2004: 200) among others referred to various forms of cultural or national schizophrenia in Iran.

Inbetweenness and hybridization

The state of inbetweenness instigates incessant waves of processes of hybridization (Canclini, 2005: xxvii) or grafting and patching operations (Shayegan, 1997: 60, 76) between the alternative forces (regimes of truth) leading to the emergence of numerous hybrid forms of voices, coalitions, institutions, discursive and non-discursive practices, and diverse forms of life[32]. Here we clearly distinguish the three notions of inbetweenness, denoting a state, hybridization[33], which is a process, and hybridity, referring to the outcomes of the interaction between the state and the processes. These hybrid outcomes can survive and thrive or can go extinct or become dysfunctional and deformed or mutilated (Shayegan, 1997: 54) depending on whether they are products of reverse social engineering or the embedded outcomes of evolutionary processes of chaotic synchronization. These hybrid forms can be deemed as legitimate, bastard, monstrous, or zombie-like. Cultures (a mixture of legitimate and illegitimate forms of life) and civilizations (institutionalized forms of life) are the by-product of the process of hybridization of alternative regimes of truth.

Crucially, the state of inbetweenness has no significant resemblance to the phenomenon of multiculturalism in the West (Kymlicka, 1995; Taylor, 1994) - or its latest reincarnation in the

[32] See also Shirazi (2018) for the application of the notion of 'space-in-between' to the Iranian architecture. In the following sections we address the question of why these processes of hybridization are inevitably triggered and how the features of "grafting and patching operations", "living in different periods of time" and missing "the crucial moments of history" work themselves in the notions of "vanishing mediators" and "reverse social engineering".

[33] Later on, we will explore how the notion of hybridization can be connected to the Deleuzian notion of rhizome (Colman, 2010) and the process philosophy in general.

notion of postsecularism (Calhoun et al., 2013, 2011) - due to the dominance of modernity in the Western context of culture and its stable institutionalization while being subject to incremental consensual changes. Even diaspora population immersed in their own particular form of state of inbetweenness face a fairly stable background in the Western context, which does not exist back in the homelands (for example in the case of legal systems or parliament or functioning banking system, hospitals, schools, police, and army, among others). Shayegan (1997: vii) emphasizes this point in the following terms: "The real tenor of this experience, in its current critical phase, hardly impinges on the Western consciousness. For the truth is that it is not a Western problem. The only people really qualified to draw attention to it are those who pay the price, in 'unhappy consciousness." Essentially, hybridization within a stable background with functional institutions, governance structures and price system, what Bauman (2000) dubbed as "liquid modernity", is markedly different from hybridization within a fluid background, lacking institutional stability, functioning governance structures and working price system in almost all fields of life, work, and language. Postmodern forms of playful hybridization in the western and Japanese contexts, for instance, happen within stable institutionalized modern or hybrid backgrounds.

In a larger global context, cultures and regimes of truth may converge, diverge, or mix (Pieterse, 2015: 60) and experience 'convergent divergence' (Gourevitch, 2003: 325; Taylor, 2001: 185) or various forms and degrees of "glocalization" (Ritzer and Atalay 2010: 319) or 'disjunctive synthesis' as Deleuze and Guattari (1984: 83) put it. Under various forms of pressures of hybridization, they may also collapse and become failed states. This produces our four types of societies: homogenous, heterogeneous, troubled, and failed, as mentioned before.

Belatedness and cultural trauma

Belatedness, as Clark (2001: 31) defines it, is "the feeling that one has come upon the literary or cultural scene after his or her time, or after all "significant" contributions have been made". In the literature on socio-economic development (Chang, 2003; Easterly, 2007a, 2007b, 2014 among others), the notions of a nation-state being a "late-comer" to the development scene and the associated urge for "catching-up" with the pioneer nation-states and "leapfrogging" the state of backwardness captures the notion of belatedness (Yap and Rasiah, 2017; Lee, 2016; Pieterse, 2010: 132). In the context of socio-economic development, belatedness, being late to the packaged truth of modernity and development, became interwoven with extreme trauma due to the catastrophic encounter with multiple manifestations of dark and bright faces of modernity (Hairi, 1987). In the Iranian modern context, modernity with its global bio-politics and modes of governmentality has been frequently experienced as an overwhelming force (Juggernaut) and waves of floods through incessant encounters with its military, techno-scientific, legal, economic, and cultural faces (Nasri, 2007; Vahdat, 2002). The traumatic

encounter with all contradictory manifestations of modernity as 'dark light' generated, as Mathee (2002) observes, the sense of "suspicion, fear and admiration" and instigated 'politics of despair and resentment' in the Iranian subject. The decadent and predatory nature of modernity alongside its glories of science, technology and rule of law prompted the senses of shock and awe, agony and ecstasy in the Iranian *dasein* (see for example the notion of post traumatic syndrome with regard to 1953 coup in Dabashi, 2010: 92). Belatedness (being late to modernity) is, as such, interwoven with trauma. To explore how this connection is established we need to briefly delve into the literature on trauma studies.

Sztompka (2004) identifies traumatic events with four features of being sudden, comprehensive, fundamental, and unexpected. Heller (2007: 103) classifies three forms of traumas: structural (like the trauma of birth and death), historical (like Holocaust or slavery), individual (like cancer). Based on the works of Luckhurst (2008) and Latour (2004), Rothberg (2014: xi) maintains that "Trauma is perhaps best thought of not as any kind of singular object but rather … as 'knots' or 'hybrid assemblages' that 'tangle up questions of science, law, technology, capitalism, politics, medicine and risk'." The conception of trauma as a tangled object and a social assemblage fits well with Lacanian-Zizekian conceptions of three registers of real, symbolic, and imaginary and the characterization of their affirmative and negating dimensions in this study. This saves trauma studies from a lot of confusion and muddled theorization. Trauma is a sudden, drastic, unexpected and overwhelming event in its dimension of real and is entangled with science, religion, technology etc. in its provocation of perplexity and its resultant speech acts, and discursive and non-discursive practices associated with the truth claims of symbolic dimension, and myth, ideology and identity in its imaginary dimension.

These three registers can be seen at work in the observation made by Faulkner (2007: 126): "According to Freud, the trauma results from a shock to the mental apparatus caused by a large quantum of stimulation for which one is insufficiently prepared. The repetition of this incursion in dreams, and the transference, represents a belated attempt to master the situation—to lay claim to the experience". In effect, the real hits the social assemblage, the social assemblage tries to make sense of it and to explore various forms of "truth about it" through the typologies and classifications available in the symbolic order and to make a claim on it through packaging, naming, and appellation available in the imaginary order. The manifestation of belatedness emerging as trauma creates rupture in the fabric of time and partitions it into a 'before and after' structure. As Faulkner (2007: 126, footnote 11) observes "Trauma signals the beginning of temporality insofar as the subject is formed in relation to it". Seeburger (2016) characterizes trauma by the inextricable interconnection of following four features: (1) belatedness, (2) excessiveness, (3) importunity, and (4) irremediability.

From the moments of drastic encounters with the incomprehensible comprehensiveness of modernity in the first half of 19th century, Iranian *dasein* has been struck by the excessiveness of the trauma of 'development gap' (Nasri, 2007; Tavakoli-Targhi, 2001) and has been ever since engaged belatedly to catch-up with it. With its excessiveness and belatedness, trauma challenges us to rethink thinking itself and drastically inspects our cherished and largely habitual and unconscious sets of associations embedded and sedimented in our background. Trauma, as Seeburger (2016: 172) reminds us, challenges the most fundamental categories of thought: life and death, identity and difference, sameness and otherness.

Ultimately, "to think the disaster" may lead to the suspicion that the "disaster is thought" (Seeburger, 2016: 163). Seeburger (2016: 170) captures this feature in the notion of importunity. After 9/11, the Americans were importuned with the question of "why do they hate us so much?" (Faulkner, 2007: 129, footnote 24). In Iran, the question of "why are we backward?" has been importuned by the traumatic encounter with modernity in the last 200 years. Seeburger (2016: 171) further adds that

> "ineluctable importunity of trauma also links into the incomprehensibility that, together with its comprehensiveness, constitutes trauma's excessiveness".

Beyond the development gap, the state of belatedness for the Iranian *dasein* was rooted at the deeper level of traumatic encounter with modernity's radical otherness as a novel regime of truth. This phenomenon is dubbed as cultural trauma (Alexander *et al*., 2004; Smelser, 2004) in the literature on trauma studies. Meek (2016: 30) sees it in the following terms:

> "Cultural trauma is composed of images and narratives that convey the impact and threat of catastrophe on large populations".

As Neria and Ataria (2016: 394) put it

> "major events such as the Holocaust, the Vietnam War, and the 9/11 attacks have the potential to penetrate the core of societies, transforming basic ways of intellectual functioning, and overhauling their cultural infrastructures".

As such, cultural trauma can lead to the crisis of meaning and identity. Eyerman (2004: 63) attests that: "A traumatic tear evokes the need to "narrate new foundations", prompting the emergence of what Sztompka (2004: 160) calls a "whole "meaning industry".

The bewildering and overwhelming nature of encounter with cultural trauma of modernity manifests itself in the epoch-making emergence of incomprehensible comprehensiveness of an almost fully shaped novel regime of truth, representing a radically different grid of intelligibility. As Zizek (2008: 13, original emphasis) reminds us

> "[A] true historical break does not simply designate the 'repressive' loss (or 'progressive' gain) of something, but ***the shift in the very grid which enables us to measure losses and gains***".

Faulkner (2007: 134, original emphasis) captures how trauma is deeply rooted in our encounter with the other:

> "our difference from one another is ***essentially*** traumatic. We affect one another ***from another place***- the unanticipated and uncanny outside (what Lacan will call 'the Real') that nonetheless wields the authority of inevitability upon us. … Lacan contends, psychoanalysis is at bottom an ethical enquiry that attempts to negotiate the relation between the self and the other, by interrogating the site of their encounter in the trauma. This otherness, the real, is both revealed and occulted by the trauma".

This insightful passage captures the nature of 200-year ambiguity and confusion of the Iranian traumatic encounter with modernity.

Crucially, cultural trauma can be transmitted from one generation to the next through common narratives (Heller, 2007: 114)[34] and can "fuel cycles of retraumatization" (Vermeulen, 2014: 145) through continuous exposure to the source of trauma or continuous failure to 'work through' it. As such, trauma can be continuous as well as sudden. As Vermeulen (2014: 144) puts it trauma can be a continuum for the vulnerable groups and communities.

In the same spirit, Ifowodo (2013: 21) refers to colonialism and post-colonialism as traumatic processes:

> "At the very least, we must acknowledge that the historical trauma caused by colonialism created a radically altered sense of self for the colonized and causes the postcolonial subject, even now, to pose to him or herself, consciously or unconsciously, the question, "In reality, who am I?"

As such, in an excessively vulnerable context of belatedness, cultural trauma of encounter with modernity can be both a sudden event and a continuous process. The exposure to all diverse faces of modernity alongside its deepest transformative and terrifying kernel has been the source of cycles of re-traumatization in the modern history of Iran, manifested in strong and weak events of the Iranian modern history alongside the traumatic experience of dysfunctionality and deformity in all realms of life, work and language.

Kamrava (2018: 52) addresses the same phenomenon under the broader notion of "human security" and sees the troubles of the Middle East region having deep roots in the serious threats and challenge posed to the human security in that region. Belatedness trigger the transformative and endemic sense of traumatic insecurity associated with the erosion of cultural identity. Halliday (1990: 248) finds that

[34] See also Schwab, 2010, for the notion of 'transgenerational trauma' and DeGruy, 2005, for the notion of 'post traumatic slave syndrome'.

> "this supposedly paranoid streak" in the political culture of modern Iran have "its historical national roots" in traumatic experiences of "external interventions", "just as the anxiety and illusions of individuals can have roots in their own earlier traumatic experiences".

This can be related to the notion of "cultural trauma" developed by Alexander *et al.* (2004: 1) as "a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon the consciousness of members of a collectivity, and changes their identity fundamentally and irrevocably". The continuous encounter with various faces of modernity acted as a form of stretched event, leaving its horrendous scars on the Iranian forms of individuality and collectivity. As such, after the humiliating defeats of the 19th century in the hands of the Russians and the British and the subsequent chain of events, the last 200 years of Iranian history forms a Deleuzian single series (Young, 2013: 96, 282; see also Katouzian, 2004: 34; Akhavi, 1998: 695; Arjomand, 1988: 30, for the potent sense of humiliation in shaping the different episodes of the Iranian modern history).

Alexander *et al.* (2004) further identify that the event per se does not cause trauma but is mediated by its representation. The gap between event and its representation is bridged by "trauma process" involving "carrier groups" like elites, intellectuals, clergies, poets and artists involving in the creation of negative meanings associated with the triggering events. This is a Lacanian process of encounter with the real and its ensuing symbolic and imaginary registers. This process generates a series of traumas, paradoxes, and myths associated with a particular set of events like the Russo-Iranian wars or Iran hostage crisis or the whole stretched event of encounter with modernity (*see* Mobasher, 2012, for the trauma of the Islamic Revolution for the exiled Iranians, for instance).

The traumatic experience of belatedness creates what Fanon calls the "zone of occult instability" (Ifowodo, 2013: 14), and what Chakrabarty (2011: 168) calls the 'now' imagination (as opposed to the 'not-yet' imagination) and instigates waves of acting-out in the form of various episodes of reverse social engineering in order to stop and reverse the excruciating pains associated with zone of occult instability and its associated development gap, and to escape from a world that seems 'nasty, brutish and short'. As Ifowodo maintains,

> "The occult, if we must spell it out, suggests not only the supernatural but also that which is not easily apprehended or understood-indeed, that which is concealed or occluded from us under normal modes of inquiry".

Fanon calls for taking a psychoanalytic position (Ifowodo, 2013: 25), which requires the art of listening to the free associations of all sides of the traumatic experience, namely, the colonizer and the colonized, the perpetrator and the victim, the self and the other.

Belated inbetweenness and tragedy of confusion

Overall, while the state of inbetweenness makes us exposed to schizophrenia, the state of belatedness makes us vulnerable to various episodes of reverse social engineering and acting-out. The state of 'inbetweenness' has manifested itself in the modern history of Iran in the state of bewilderment and perplexity, grasped via the notion of 'tragedy of confusion'. This notion is designed to capture the urgent and pressing sense of being torn between warring regimes of truth[35]. The modern history of Iran appears to be littered with ample evidence of tragedy of confusion. The Travel Diary of Ebrahim Beg (*Siyahatnameh-ye Ibrahim Beig*) (Maragha'i, 2006) written at the end of the 19th century and one of the texts behind the Constitutional Revolution captures, as reported in Nasri (2007: 89, *see* also Sohrabi, 2012: 121-3), the Iranian state of confusion succinctly:

> everywhere the landscape is disturbed (*ashofteh*), people disturbed, commerce disturbed, imagination disturbed, beliefs disturbed, city disturbed, king disturbed, oh God, why is there so much disturbance [everywhere]?

This description seems to be applicable to almost all episodes of Iranian modern history- as Movahhed (1999, 2004) uses the notion of "confused (or disturbed) dreams (*khab-e ashofteh*)" to characterize the ONM, affirming Ibrahim Beig's insight on the nature of Iranian modern social reality- barring for the rare and fleeting moments of manifestation of "perfectly unified collective will" (Foucault, as reported in Afaray *et al.*, 2005: 95) or rare cases of institutional stability. About a century after Ibrahin Beig, Simin Daneshvar (1993, 2001), the prominent Iranian novelist, explores the same themes of "disturbance", 'bewilderment', 'perplexity' and 'confusion' in her trilogy "Wandering Island (*Jazireh-ye Sargardani*)", "Wandering Cameleer (*Sareban-e Sargardan*)", and "Wandering Mountain (*Koh-e Sargardan*)". Iran alongside its leaders, citizens, groups, parties, organizations, and institutions seems to be trapped in the state of confusion.

The state of belatedness, on the other hand, refers to the state where Iranian social order has found itself dwarfed by the shocking arrival of modernity, positioning it in the state of catching up (Abramovitz, 1986) and outside-in (rather than inside-out) model of evolution and development. The interaction between these two states is captured in the theoretical model proposed in this study as articulated in the following sections and in the previous and next chapters. This model starts from the level of mind as a social institution, as elaborated by Arkoun (2006) and the transaction-cost economist, Williamson (2000), and explores the implications of the specific characteristics of Iranian mind and preference structure in an attempt to develop a multi-level (micro, meso and macro) dynamic model in fulfilling the aim of this study.

[35] See a similar, but less theorized, Weberian concept of "war of gods" or "collision of values" (Lowy, 1996: 2) and its application in the Latin America.

Proposed Conceptual Model

The proposed conceptual model can be expressed in the following way: Tragedy of confusion emanates from the state of inbetweenness with its associated confused preference structure, as Iranians have been captivated by three rival regimes of truth and identity markers of Islam, Persianism (the idea of pre-Islamic Iran), and western modernity. The state of inbetweenness in its interaction with the state of belatedness prompts the translation of three regimes of truth into three projects of social engineering, namely, 'Persianization', Islamization, and modernization in order to achieve social transformation to fill the development gap and repair its associated waves of identity crisis.

Reverse social engineering requires the formation of collective will and collective action, which through formation of stable coalitions could achieve its goals. But in the state of confusion the formation of such coalitions is almost impossible. This leads to a phenomenon described as 'situational impossibility theorem' in this study, indicating that in the complex interplay between the state of inbetweenness and the state of belatedness (hence, belated inbetweenness) it is impossible to form stable coalitions in any areas of life, work and language to achieve the desired social transformations (we will see why later). This leads to turning Iran into a country of unstable coalitions and alliances in macro, meso and micro levels. This in turn results in the emergence of the phenomenon of 'institutional failure' in the form of inability to construct stable and functional institutions such as modern nation-state, or market economy based on property rights or any other stable forms of institutional structures, which turns Iran into the country of institutional dysfunctionalities and deformities. The accumulated experiences of 'tragedy of confusion', 'formation of unstable coalitions' and 'institutional failure' lead to the emergence of a society immersed in a state of 'chaotic order'.

The state of chaotic order can be explained in the following terms: the experience of tragedy of confusion with its associated instability of coalitions and institutional dysfunctionalities frequently leads to the emergence of widespread sense of discontent and disillusionment, in turn, triggering the emergence of large- and small-scale social movements and revolutions culminating in the experience of constant waves of socio-political instability, where the society oscillates between the chaotic states of socio-political anarchy emanating from irreconcilable differences between and within various social assemblages in the springs of freedom, and repressive states of order in the winters of discontent. In this process, the order is restored based on the emergence of a final arbiter or the Iranian leviathan as the evolved coping strategy for achieving conflict resolution leading to socio-economic crises and stagnation.

The following chapters, hence, aims to briefly discuss and unpack the components of this theoretical model.

Conclusion

This chapter strives to come up with a country-specific model of Iranian experience of socio-economic development in the last 200 years. This model relies on the two notions of belatedness and inbetweenness. Their meanings and application to the Iranian context is explored based on the theoretical insights from a multitude of disciplines. It is shown that the process of hybridization in a stable background is different from unstable background, which produces four types of societies. Inbetweenness is related to being torn between contradictory forces and belatedness is related to the pressures and urgencies associated with the need to catch-up with pioneer societies. The relation between belatedness and trauma is explored. Trauma as shock is related to the notion of unpreparedness. Four features of traumas were explored and shown how traumatic events can turn into a process and be transmitted intergenerationally and turn into a deeper problem in the shape of cultural traumas, where the collective and personal identities and meanings are violently questioned and deeply shaken. At its deepest level the other is experienced as traumatic, which induces a sense of identitylessness. In the traumatic encounter with modernity, Iran started from a series of military defeats and woke up to the development gap and travelled deeper into cultural trauma and crisis in meaning, and ultimately experiencing the radical other as traumatic. The implications of the state of belated inbetweenness turns Iranian modern history in the last 200 years into a single series encompassing "haunting legacies, violent histories, and transgenerational trauma" (Schwab, 2010), or what Limbert (2009) calls "the ghosts of history", mediated by tragedy of confusion in the zone of occult instability and the emergence of a 'now' consciousness triggering waves of reverse social engineering as a way of 'acting out'.