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Review

Reviewed Work(s): Street Politics: Poor People's Movement in Iran by Asef Bayat

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tions and details, it is still somewhat weak in explanation and theory. The latter point is a familiar criticism of area specialists by mainstream political scientists. For example, any discussion of the "representation theory," "organizational theory," or "attitudinal theory" would have contributed more significantly to the breadth of knowledge that this study brings to the field. In fact, the field would have gained more if the author had shown the limits of the explanatory power of the above-mentioned theories and suggested a theory of his own, even though it is hazardous to offer political predictions or theories. Nonetheless, my suggestions do not take anything away from the contributions of Bakhtiari's book to the field. Finally, I must state that, in addition to his excellent chronological description of the complex parliamentary political process of Revolutionary Iran, Bakhtiari's book contains a number of useful tables and statistics, as well as an extensive bibliography and index.

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***Street Politics: Poor People's Movement in Iran***, Asef Bayat, New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, 216 pages + plus glossary.

A common assumption about the role of city squatters (who are also referred to as the lumpen proletariat, the disenfranchised, or the urban poor) in Iran's 1979 revolution has been that they were a pivotal part of the revolutionary movement and provided the new Islamist leadership with a solid social base. Certainly, as the author of this book notes, the new Islamic leadership's usage of the term *mustaz'afān* partially referred to the urban disenfranchised. Yet, the above assumption has been, for the most part, based on non-empirical observations of this segment of the Iranian population. The question of what, if any, independent grievances the disenfranchised population had, remained, until the publication of this book, under the shadow of the assumption that this class followed the Islamist leadership of the 1979 revolution.

Asef Bayat's new book is a genuine attempt to address the question of the social and political interests of the disenfranchised during the revolution. As in his previous study of the working class in Iran, the author attempts to dispel the popularly held assumption that urban squatters joined the revolution uniformly and provided the Islamist leadership with a secure social base. In that work, *Workers and Revolution in Iran* (Zed Books, 1987), Bayat showed that there was an absence of political vanguard leadership among workers during the 1979 revolution. Furthermore, he showed that Iranian workers had economic and political interests independent of political groups that sprang up after the revolution. He uses a similar method in his investigation of the urban poor in Iran. By studying the urban disenfranchised, his goal was to ". . . de-emphasize the totalizing notion of 'the revolution' as the change par excellence, to discard the assumption that real change for all social groups comes necessarily and exclusively from a generalized political campaign." (5)

The study focuses on Tehran's urban poor population and is based on the examination of rich sources, including the daily newspapers and some one hun-

dred interviews, sources rarely used before. Tehran is a logical place to sample the urban disenfranchised because it is Iran's largest urban center and has the largest number of squatter neighborhoods. The fact that the author's study includes some of his own personal experience and family background makes it even more interesting.

According to Bayat, by 1980 some fifteen percent of Tehran's population belonged to the urban poor. Sixty to eighty percent of these engaged in unskilled construction jobs (30).

Bayat's main point regarding previously held views of the disenfranchised is that they are theoretical rather than empirical. His approach to the subject is empirical. He points to a lack of solid evidence that the poor were organized by religious institutions in the anti-shah struggle of 1978–79. On the contrary, he suggests that the underclasses were at least partially pro-shah, were not instrumental in overthrowing the political system, and participated in the revolution for their own self-interest rather than because of any grand political design. The urban poor's interests (e.g. building houses without permits on land belonging to others and tapping into municipal electricity and water services without permission) put them in conflict with municipal authorities but not necessarily with the shah's regime. According to the author, some disenfranchised were hostile to local municipal authorities but supported the shah even after his overthrow, viewing local officials as causing their hardship without the shah's knowledge.

After the revolution, the urban poor continued to organize on their own, without much apparent involvement by political groups opposed to the new regime, and soon found themselves confronting the Islamic Republic for many of the same reasons. Bayat's observation that Marxist groups had no presence among the urban poor and that the Mujahidin Khalq Organization had only limited presence is very interesting, since they both claimed to represent the poor in their struggle against the Islamic Republic. The author explains a variety of tactics used by the disenfranchised to organize and suggests that for the most part the revolution did not improve their lives.

Bayat's study of the urban poor opens a window into this numerically significant portion of Iran's population. The study is a provocative challenge to common beliefs on the position of this class during the revolution and its aftermath. As a result, this study should be a useful source for comparative work on the disenfranchised in other developing countries.

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*The United States and Iran; In the Shadow of Musaddiq*, James F. Goode, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997, xiv + 235 pp.

There is a great irony in United States–Iranian relations. The U.S.A. fancies itself the leader of the “free world,” a democratic republic that defends freedom and godliness from would-be tyrants around the world. Thus the U.S. led a “Crusade in Europe” during World War II, fought against the “Evil Empire” of the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and organized an alliance in the early