

Post-Islamic Utopias, Contentious Memory and the Revolutionary Mobilization in Iran

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Abstract : This article aims to study the recent Iranian national uprising of "Women, Life, Freedom" as a site of memory which renders the political possibility of imagining the post-Islamic futures in Iran. "Women, Life, Freedom" movement in Iran has been arguably the most pervasive social movement since the Islamic Revolution (1979) as it has posed serious issues and conflicts for the present Islamic state in Iran. The core argument of this article, however, is oriented toward the critical role of collective memory as a means of political transition and revolutionary mobilization. "Women, Life, Freedom" movement, among other things, has revitalized the popular binary opposition of pre-1979 and post-1979 Iran through which the Ancien Régime or the pre-1979 era is likely to be interpreted, read, and remembered in terms of present post-1979 cultural and political demands. As remembering involves everyday participation in shaping and reshaping the past through new codes, criteria, and values, it is argued that the presentist refashioning and remembering of the pre-1979 monarchical era has been one of the major facilitatory forces for the on-going revolutionary mobilization in Iran. The construction of the pre-1979 memory and the return of the dynastic specter has played a significant role in revolutionary mobilization as it has provided the protesters with the possible perspectives of post-Islamic regime in Iran. Additionally, the question of compulsory "Hijab" (veiling) as the prime mover of "Women, Life, Freedom" movement in Iran has strongly contributed to the everyday comparative discourse of pre/post 1979 memory. According to this presentist remembering of pre-1979, the Pahlavi dynasty would be conceived as a symbol of modernization, westernization, secularization, and non-compulsory Hijab. While the memory of the pre-revolutionary Iran is genuinely an imaginative as well as a constructed entity that finally culminates in the public condemnation of the very Islamic revolution (1979), it serves the enrichment of the Iranian political imagination as it paves the ways for the revolutionary mobilization and then the overthrowing of the Islamic regime in Iran. This article makes a case for the ways that the public narrative and discourse around the Islamic regime (especially the Islamic Hijab) led to the refashioning of the memory of pre-1979 era and inspired the revolutionary mobilization in Iran.

Keywords : post-islamic, utopias, memory, revolutionary, mobilization, Iran

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