

Teaching of History in the post-Revolutionary Iran:
The Ideological, Political and Cultural Discourses Embedded in
a Secondary School Contemporary History Textbook

by
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Abstract

This study explores the way in which the Iranian Post-Revolutionary political and religious authorities subordinate the teaching of History to their political agenda by analyzing the political, ideological, and cultural discourses embedded in the secondary school history course book, The Contemporary History of Iran (*Tārīkh-i Mu'āshir-i Iran*), which is a mandatory textbook in the Iranian education system.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

According to Dewey, (1935) democracy as a form of social inquiry is the best way of dealing with conflict of interests in a society. The political system of democracy aims to bring these conflicts out into the open where their special claims can be seen, discussed and judged in the light of more inclusive interests than are represented by either of them separately (p. 79). Iran, as a country experiencing a period of transition to democracy, is desperate for educated civic decisions (Kheir-Abadi, 2010). If we accept that learning to think critically is the central purpose of education (Dewey, 1933), the question to be asked here is whether teaching of history in the Iranian educational system offers the conditions for the development of critical thinking.

Following the Islamic Revolution of 1979, the period between 1980 and 1983 saw an Islamization of the universities. These ideological changes, known as the Cultural Revolution, aimed to ensure an “Islamic atmosphere” for every subject from engineering to humanities (Sedgwick, 2008). The Iranian universities were closed for three years in the course of which a revolutionary project to purge and widely change the existing academic curricula was implemented. The Cultural Revolution also had an impact on the school system. In particular, the history curriculum has been continuously and rapidly changing, not only during the revolutionary turmoil of the first decade of the revolution (1979-1989), but also during President Khatami (1997-2005) and President Ahmadi-Nejad’s conservative era (2005-2012). Recently, Hujjat al-Islam Zū al-‘Ilm, director of the Curriculum Development Center at the Iranian Ministry of Education, stated that “although in academia history is regarded as a professional science, we consider it, in pre-university education, as source of inspiration for students’ identity and culture”

(Zū al-'Ilm, 2009). He points out that the purpose of teaching history in the pre-university curriculum is increasing “the sense of national identity” and achieving “social insights and cultural benefits” (Zū al-'Ilm, 2009). In this context, the terms “national identity”, “social insights”, and “cultural benefits” have been employed to orient the study of history around a pre-planned objective.

Purpose

The main objective of the proposed research is to explore how the Iranian Post-Revolutionary political and religious authorities subordinate the teaching of History to their political agenda. To make the research manageable, the study will analyze the political, ideological, and cultural discourses embedded in the secondary school history course book, *The Contemporary History of Iran (Tārīkh-i Mu'āšir-i Iran)*¹, which is a mandatory textbook in the Iranian education system. Based on the works of Peter Seixas, Sam Wineburg, and Stéphane Levesque (2000) on historical literacy, the study concentrates on examining the discourse enacted by the Iranian government through the textbook and compares the tenets of a historical literacy with the official aims and objectives of the history curriculum in Iran. Relying on Michael Apple's (2004) critical theory about the politics of the textbook, and Mohammed Arkoun's (2001) theory of the “Unthought” in contemporary Islamic thought, the study will analyze how the Iranian Post-Revolutionary history curriculum has been influenced by the ideology of the Islamic Revolution, and also what kind of logic of history the government has articulated in light of the goals of the Islamic Revolution.

Rationale

A critical analysis of *The Contemporary History of Iran* leads to an understanding of how historical arguments have been built; moreover, it will allow us to access the use of different

¹ Velayati, Erfanmanesh, Mirzaii, and Tavakoli (2011), “Tārīkh-i mu'āšir-i Iran [The contemporary

kinds of evidence such as public statements, private records, numerical data, and visual materials (Stearns, 2008). We also need to have a keen point of view while reading the history textbook in order to distinguish the biases and prejudgments in the text. If the vast majority of citizens do not recognize bias in history textbooks; if they cannot detect ideology, slant, and spin if they cannot recognize propaganda when exposed to it, they cannot reasonably determine “what history has to be supplemented, counter-balanced, or thrown out entirely” (Paul & Elder, 2008, p. 2). This becomes clear when one notes how the Iranian post-Revolutionary education policies are influenced by Islamization and anti-Western discourses and the way education textbooks constantly change according to the short-term political goals and requirements (Mehran, 1990, p. 54).

When examining the logic of any kind of argument, there is a method of selection that the historian engages in and this process is not an arbitrary one. This problem is even more critical when it comes to writing a history textbook. It is important to note that like other textbooks, a history textbook plays a significant role in classroom instruction. In a passive pedagogical approach, textbooks are a powerful source dominating students’ learning. For many students, history textbooks are their first and sometimes only early exposure to books and to reading. Members of the public consider the textbook as authoritative, accurate, and necessary (Down, 1998). Also, teachers rely on the textbook to organize lessons and structure subject matter. The textbook is in fact both “the subject matter authority” and “the heart of the instructional program” (Down, 1988, p. 1). In conducting a research on student assessment of textual information, Seixas (2001) found that students usually do not question textbooks. Teachers’ reliance on the textbook is authoritative which in turn “stifles student inquiry” (p. 558).

Content and pedagogy were seen as separate components in the process of teaching and

learning history. However, this understanding has been seriously questioned by history educators (Seixas, Stearns, & Wineburg, 2000). History education scholars argue that history teaching and learning is to a great extent about the process of communicating knowledge about the past. Based on this view, teaching and learning history is more an epistemological and cultural act that conveys deep and sometimes unintended messages about what it means to be historical. According to Seixas, Stearns, and Wineburg (2000), teaching history is a technical act that conveys knowledge and becomes a cultural act. It teaches the students about the nature of understanding and about their own role in making historical knowledge. Furthermore, various studies illustrate that teaching and learning history is attached to changes in the discipline of history and debates over issues of nation, race, gender, culture and identity have strong implications for what kind of history should be taught in schools (Apple, 2004).

The crucial questions to be asked while encountering the history text are, “Is school history primarily an uncritical heritage exercise intended to convey a particular version of the past?” (Seixas, Stearns, & Wineburg 2000, p. 2); “What has been left out of this text?”; “What would I think if different facts had been highlighted here?”; “What if this text [textbook] had been written by those who hold a point of view opposite to the one embedded in the story as told?” (Paul & Elder, 2008, p. 5) The answers to these questions cannot be reached unless one engages in a critical analysis of the history textbook. Openness to a range of insights from multiple points of views and willingness to question our various perspectives helps us to find out how the writer exaggerates, distorts, adds or omits facts or not to highlight some points in the text (Vansledright, 2009).

A critical study of history enables us to understand various arguments that lay claim to that past, to judge statements about what the past means, and “to navigate effectively those competing

interpretations of life and culture as it occurred before their arrival” (Vansledright, 2009). In the discipline of education, a critical study of history texts helps students and educators to access strong cognitive tools and equips them with ideas to deal with the complexities and uncertainties involved in making sense of ambiguous past events.

Historical analysis has significant implications for applying criteria, concepts, and practices used by historians (thinking as historians do); it guides us to achieve a deep understanding of the past and to learn how to interrogate historical writing and artifacts including textbooks and other writings and representations. Judgments about historical significance, ideas about continuity and change, progress and decline, the application of rules governing evidence, and the use of historical empathy² are among the tools, concepts, and practices of a critical disciplinary history analysis. History textbooks in particular must prepare students with powerful, technical concepts and ideas to make sufficient sense of the unstable and complex past they encounter (Vansledright, 2009).

Literature Review

Apart from some limited articles in general magazines and newspapers, and some unscholarly debates sponsored by Iran's national broadcasting organization, there has been, as yet, negligible academic research on the analysis of history textbook in Iran². Little attention has been paid to the educational textbooks in general. For the purposes of this research, however, I will discuss two articles (one in Farsi and one in English) which have particularly focused on the post-Revolutionary history textbooks.

Ranjbarian (2012), in his article, “A comparison between three different versions of the secondary school history course book, The Contemporary History of Iran (*Tārīkh-i Mu‘āṣir-i*

² See Bryant and Clark (2006), *Historical Empathy and Canada: A People’s History*.

Iran)” (2002), compares two approaches in writing history textbooks. He chooses the Iranian Constitutional Revolution in 1906³ (the revolution which led to the establishment of parliament and modern law in Iran) and compares the post-revolutionary reformists and conservatives’ points of view toward this historical event. According to Ranjbarian (2010), history textbooks of the reformists’ era (1997-2005) tried to emphasize the influence of Western’s intellectuals and international factors rather than the role of shi’ites⁴ clergies and religious trend⁵. He criticizes the reformists’ point of view and supports the conservatives’ approach (2005-2012) in which the role of the native and the traditional groups in Iranian Constitutional Revolution has been highlighted more efficiently (Ranjbarian, 2010).

In this comparison, Ranjbarian (2010) merely prepares the list of contents in each chapter and does not examine the authenticity of the references used in the textbooks. In fact, by criticizing the history textbook of the reformists’ era (1997-2005), he indirectly criticizes the reformists’ government education policies and supports the conservatives’ (2005-2012) educational policies. Thus, the article is biased and fails to comply with the standards of scholarship (Ranjbarian, 2010).

The other article I wish to consider, which is written in English is “The Immemorial Iranian

³ Constitutional Revolution (*Enghelab-e mashruteh*) took place between 1905 and 1911 and led to the establishment of parliament and constitutional monarchy in Iran (Arjomand, 2011).

⁴ “Shi’a” (Muslim) definition: a member of the second largest religious movement within Islam, which is based on the belief that Ali, a member of Mohammed's family, and the teachers who came after him, were the true religious leaders (“Cambridge Dictionary online”, n.d).

⁵ During the last decades, Iranian intellectuals have been struggling with the relationship between Western ideas and those of their own culture. Many of them rejected the imperial pretensions of the West. The post-revolutionary regime used this idea and merged it with politicized Islam and displayed its animosity against the West (Boroujerdi, 1996).

Nation? School Textbooks and Historical Memory in Post-Revolutionary Iran” written by Ram (2000). Analyzing and comparing the two pre- and post-revolutionary school textbooks, Ram supports this idea that the Islamic Republic of Iran follows the Pahlavi’s nationalist narrative discourse of the “immemorial Iranian nation” (or the “Aryan hypothesis”)⁶ by an apparent shift from “Iran Time” to “Islam Time” (Ram, 2000, p. 67). According to Ram, similar to Pahlavi-era textbooks, in post-revolutionary textbooks there is an emphasis on nationalist discourse based on what was articulated by European scholars of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He implies that Iranian authorities, after the Revolution, merged the discourse of nationalism which is the product of modernity, with the traditional and religious pre-modern values and practices (Ram, 2000). Following a systematic method, this article successfully compares the pre and post-Revolutionary textbooks and uncovers some ideological approaches embedded in these textbooks.

Textbook analysis as a systematic method has not clearly been understood in the Iranian educational system and many issues remained unexplored. This study, as the first scholarly piece in this area, may contribute toward a better understanding of the ideological, political and cultural discourses embedded in the textbook. This will be done by analyzing the discourse of the

⁶ According to Britannica Online Encyclopaedia:

Aryan is former name given to a people who were said to speak an archaic Indo-European language and who were thought to have settled in prehistoric times in ancient Iran and the northern Indian subcontinent. The theory of an “Aryan race” appeared in the mid-19th century and remained prevalent until the mid-20th century. According to the hypothesis, these probably light-skinned Aryans were the group who invaded and conquered ancient India from the north and whose literature, religion, and modes of social organization subsequently shaped the course of Indian culture, particularly the Vedic Religion that informed and was eventually superseded by Hinduism. (“Britannica Online Encyclopaedia,” n.d.)

textbook and its production within a historical context, and by exploring the way in which the textbook allows or prohibits the process of engaging in historical literacy.

Research questions

Using historical literacy as a disciplinary knowledge by uncovering the discourse of the history textbook, and within the theoretical framework provided by Apple and Arkoun, this study raises the major research questions following by a set of sub-questions. This includes: What has been the impact of the ideology of the Islamic Revolution on the history curriculum? and What kind of logic of history has the government articulated in the light of the goals of the Revolution? A set of sub-questions derived from the major research questions:

1. What is the fundamental purpose of studying history in the current context?
2. What kinds of problems /questions does the history textbook address? How are they addressed?
3. What seem to be the criteria for selecting what are presented in the history textbook? What kind of data was included or omitted and why?
4. What are the main constitutive elements (assumptions, leading concepts, notions of citizenship) of the interpretation provided in the textbook? What is the message?
5. What are the government's instructional and civic aims?
6. How do Iranian's educational policies understand "historical literacy"?

Limitations

A major material limitation of this study is that many of the required materials and governmental archives remain classified and the state has control over when they will be made public. This study also engages with the text and its production and intentionality. In practice, although

teachers are supposed to follow the textbook's content and direction, the text is often mediated by the teacher's own understandings of history, life experience, and background; these added dimensions could lead to an alternative view. Therefore, the students' understanding of a textbook depends on the class environment and the teacher's method and his/her cultural, and social characteristics. This difference between ways of teaching through a history textbook can be explained by Apple's concept of selective tradition, which notes that, in addition to textbook authors, teachers also selectively transmit knowledge forms (Apple, 1990).

Organization of the study

The investigation and findings of this study are reported in the following order in this dissertation. In chapter one, I will provide the background to the study, the purpose of the study, the research questions, and introduce the theoretical framework utilized in the study. Chapter one also includes the significance of the study and its limitations as well as definitions of terms and an introduction to the overall thesis.

Chapter two discusses the theoretical and methodological frameworks, while chapter three presents the historical context starting from Iran's first encounter with modernity (early nineteenth century) prior to the Islamic Revolution (1979).

Chapter four evaluates the Islamic Revolution's official educational goals based on the Islamic Principle and explains the way in which these educational goals influenced the design of the history textbook and the teaching history in Iran.

Chapter five is devoted to the analysis of history textbook, *The Contemporary History of Iran / Tārīkh-i Mu'āṣir-i Iran*. Chapter six will discuss the results and conclusion of the analysis of the textbook.

Chapter 2

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This study analyses the ideological impact of the Islamic Revolution on history education in Iran. The theoretical and methodological framework is based on the tenets of historical literacy, Apple's critical theory (2004), and Arkoun's (2001) theory on religious societies. Historical literacy was embraced and further developed by Seixas (2001), Wineburg (2000), and Levesque (2008). Historical literacy refers to a disciplinary knowledge which informs the reading of historical writing and the way of developing that knowledge. It helps discover how Iran's educational policies understand historical literacy and how the text is designed.

Michael Apple's critical theory applied "to the politics of the textbook" is applied to identify and explain the various forces shaping the production of school textbooks and the way in which powerful groups build political and cultural agreement via educational texts. Using Apple's theory (2003), I explore the underlying political aims and discuss the main constitutive elements (assumptions, leading concepts, notions of citizenship) sustaining the interpretation provided in the textbooks. I am not using Apple's critical theory as an explanatory method but as a heuristic tool to identify how educational institutions, as the main government's agencies transmit hegemony or the effective dominant culture (Apple, 2004).

Mohammed Arkoun's (2001) theory is known as the "Unthought in contemporary Islamic thought". It specifically explains how in Islamic societies, the state, the traditional and the religious authorities regard certain issues as "Unthinkable", setting parameters to "the horizons and themes of discourse", and consequently in the educational system. Arkoun's theory becomes a valuable heuristic tool used to explain what seem to be the criteria for the selection of themes

and information in the textbooks.

Historical literacy as a disciplinary knowledge

According to the national center for history education in Australia, “historical literacy” is a systematic process with particular sets of skills, attitudes and conceptual understandings that mediate and develop historical consciousness” (“The Australian Center for History Education”, n.d.)⁷. As a result, school history develops and enriches an informed collective memory as part of the students’ lifelong learning. American historian, Paul Gagnon, used the term historical literacy in his influential 1989 book *Historical Literacy: the Case for History in American Education* in 1989. However, the definition of historical literacy originated in 1987 with the Bradely Commission’s report on history teaching and the US anti-social-studies standards debate of the late 1980s (“The Australian Center for History Education”, n.d.).

The term historical literacy⁸ was referred to by a group of US researchers, not only as the learning of historical events, but also as the use of interpretive reasoning. In historical literacy, the first important task is to recognize “historical events” and “history’s conceptual tools” to deal with them. The second task is to define “historical syntax”, so that all students could find this knowledge useful and empowering (“The Australian Center for History Education”, n.d.).

In a passive pedagogical approach, textbooks are a powerful source dominating students’ learning. For many students, history textbooks are their first, and sometimes only, early exposure

⁷ According to Seixas (2006) “historical consciousness” means to think critically about the past as the way it shapes our sense of the present and the future (p. 8).

⁸ See Sandwell (2010), “History is a Verb: Teaching Historical Practice to Teacher Education Students”; Von Heyking (2004), “Historical Thinking in Elementary Education: A Review of the Research”; Seixas and Peck (2004), “Teaching Historical Thinking”; Denos & Case (2006), “Teaching about Historical Thinking”; and Sears and Christou (2011), “From Neglect to Nexus: Examining the Place of Educational History in Teacher Education for an insightful analysis of historical literacy”.

to books and to reading. Members of the public consider the textbooks as authoritative, accurate, and necessary. Also, teachers rely on the textbooks to organize lessons and structure subject matter. The textbook is in fact both “the subject matter authority” and “the heart of the instructional program” (Down, 1988, p. 1). In conducting a research on student assessment of textual information, Seixas (2001) found that students usually do not question textbooks. Also, teachers rely heavily on the textbooks and therefore “stifle student inquiry”. He also describes textbooks as “the source of knowledge” and “a compendium of unquestioned facts” (Seixas, 2001, p. 558).

“Content” and “pedagogy” were viewed as separate components in the process of teaching and learning history (Seixas, Stearns, & Wineburg, 2000). This understanding has been seriously questioned by history educators. History education scholars argue that history teaching and learning is, to a considerable extent, about the process of communicating knowledge about the past (Seixas, Stearns, & Wineburg, 2000). Based on this view, teaching and learning history is more an epistemological and cultural act. According to Seixas, Stearns, and Wineburg (2000), teaching history can be constructed as a cultural act that conveys deep and sometimes unintended messages about what it means to be historical in a modern society. It teaches students about the “nature of understanding and about their own role in making historical knowledge” (Wineburg, 2000, p. 3). Seixas (2006) identified six “structural” historical concepts that provide the basis of historical thinking; these concepts are distinct but closely interrelated historical thinking concepts. Students should be able to “establish historical significance, use primary source evidence, identify continuity and change, analyze cause and consequence, take historical perspectives, and understand the moral dimension of historical interpretations” (p. 1).

Teaching and learning history is related to changes in history as a discipline, and debates over

issues of nation, race, gender, culture, and identity have strong implications for which kind of history should be taught in schools. Crucial questions that could be asked while encountering a history text would be the following: “Is school history primarily an uncritical heritage exercise intended to convey a particular version of the past?” (Seixas, Stearns, & Wineburg 2000, p. 2); “What has been left out of this text?”; “What would I think if different facts had been highlighted here?”, and “What if this text [textbook] had been written by those who hold a point of view opposite to the one embedded in the story as told?” (Paul & Elder, 2008, p. 5). These questions cannot be answered unless one does a critical analysis of history textbooks. Openness to a range of insights, from multiple points of views, and willingness to question our own perspectives help us examine how the writer exaggerates, distorts, adds facts or omit them on order to highlight some points in the text (Vansledright, 2009).

During the 1980s, the debates prompted by the linguistic turn and a preoccupation with the language of representation along with new philosophical discourses opened the door to skepticism about the possibility of historical knowledge which often resulted in a simplistic relativism in some history classes. Meanwhile, these debates became inclusive of new themes, ideas, voices, and experiences and allowed for new considerations on the interdisciplinarity of the historical enterprise (Bruno-Jofré, 2010). The question of how to measure and track students’ progress as historical thinkers and assess their historical literacy has been one of the major issues in teaching history. Bruno-Jofré is concerned with how to teach history in a way that allows students to develop the intellectual habits of the mind that can help them to become literate in history and have inquisitive dispositions and concern with evidence, warrants, and argumentation (Bruno- Jofré, 2010).

Bruno-Jofré and Steiner inspired by Osborne (2007) talked about historical mindedness as a

major educational aim in teaching history (Bruno-Jofré & Steiner, 2007). “Historical mindedness” is defined as a way of living, a disposition or an outlook to see the world and situate oneself in the temporal and spatial dimensions that are desirable in a literate and democratically-minded person; it can be realized through the enhancement of skills and attitudes related to the historical thinking qualities. As Bruno-Jofré (2010) notes, learning these skills can help students to perform better, not only in their workplace, but also in their personal development by allowing them to question their reality and the way politicians and interest groups introduce major political decisions.

Seixas and Ercikan (2004) describe how teaching historical thinking can help students not only “learn the facts,” but also be able to think about the nature of historical interpretation, the relationship of the past to the present, and the uses of the past, and citizens in making decisions about the future (“The Historical Thinking Project”, n.d.). What makes historians experts is not merely their vast knowledge of historical periods (and events) but their sophisticated perspectives on history and critical use of key concepts like evidence, historical empathy, and narrative (“The Historical Thinking Project”, n.d.).

Questions like “How do we know about the past?”; “Why did it happen?”, and “What was it like back then?” (Lee, 2005, para. 9) are among the inquiries that engage historians in a research process of investigating past events and producing evidence-based accounts. A number of history education researchers such as Levesque (2008) explain that to achieve historical literacy, students should be challenged to think like historians and raise essential questions that cannot be answered with classroom texts and cross-curricular literacy skills. These questions can be chosen based on “use of inquiry, need of significance, role of self/identity, sense of empathy, use of evidence importance of causation, connection to the present, role of judgment, language of history, and use

of historical narrative” (as cited Queen’s Education Letter, 2008).

Wineburg’s (2001) argument on historical literacy is based on a set of questions: “What history should our children learn?”; should they learn “the patriotism, heroism, and ideals of the nation” or “the injustices, defeats, and hypocrisies of its leaders and dominant classes?”; “What is history good for and why even should teach history in schools?” (pp. 5-6). Wineburg’s argument points to:

A tension that underlies every encounter with the past: the tension between the familiar and the strange, between feelings of proximity to and feelings of distance from the people we seek to understand. In order to achieve mature historical thought, we must be able to navigate the jagged landscape of history, to traverse the terrain that lies between the poles of familiarity. This way of viewing the past is beneficial and speaks to us without intermediary or translation. However, what we often do is to transform it to another commodity for our instant consumption by discarding or ignoring vast regions of the past that either contradict our current needs or fail to support them easily. Before looking at the past, we know more or less what we’re looking for. Without trying to change or rethink who we are, we form the past as we want, like clay in our hands. (pp. 6-8)

Wineburg (2001) considers “historical literacy” as a tool which helps us to reconcile two contradictory positions: first, that our developed methods of thinking are an inheritance that cannot be sloughed off; second, that if we do not slough them off, “we are doomed to a mind-numb- with and distance from the past” (p. 7). Focusing on history education, Wineburg (2001) regards textbooks as potential vehicles for creating historical understanding although textbooks present big challenges and create a set of problems of their own. For example, textbooks employ many technical conventions:

First, textbooks eliminate metadiscourse (historians writing for one another), or places in the text where the author intrudes to suggest judgment, emphasis, or uncertainty. Second, in textbooks, it is hard to find out the origins of information because the documentary record rarely is cited in textbooks. Finally, there is no visible author to encounter the reader in textbooks; instead a corporate author speaks from a position of transcendence, a position of knowing from on high. (p. 8)

Wineburg (2001) criticizes the poor teaching of history and the fact that students do not know the simplest and most obvious facts (p. 8). Lee (2004) also reflects on the same concern in his paper titled “Historical literacy: theory and research”. He argues that history education obviously is “more” than knowledge of token past events, but there is not always agreement as to what this “more” should be. Lee describes that in the UK, after the 1970s the importance of teaching students about the discipline of history has been widely recognized. However, we still are far from managing how to teach historical literacy in school (Lee, 2004, para. 3).

Lee notes that in the UK, during the last decades, history educators tried to address issues such as: “what is meant by and how to develop students’ understanding of the discipline of history”, and “what students are supposed to know about the past by the end of their school courses” (Lee, 2004, para. 4). He also highlights that the public generally expects students to recall discrete items and events when determining their knowledge of history. However, the point is that historical knowledge does not consist of discrete items, and history cannot be treated as an accumulation of events. That is why we need a workable notion of historical literacy to understand historical processes behind events. Lee refers to Rösen’s work on historical consciousness and his concept of “disciplinary matrix” which connects history and everyday practical life and remarks. Lee makes the point that our historical understanding is led by our

interests which provide the basis to place ourselves in time. However, “History transcends the particularity of the commonsensical orientation of action within the life-world”; and “it is an achievement with its own methodological rules and practices guided by theory” (Lee, 2004, para. 5).

Relying on Rösen’s view, Lee points out that learning history is not merely a process of acquiring history as “objective” facts and historical knowledge should begin to play a key role in “the mental household of a subject” (as cited in Lee, 2004, para. 8). In other words, such knowledge must not be passive, but play a part in the learner’s life. Therefore, through its role in orientating us in time, historical consciousness has a practical function (Rösen 1997, as cited in Lee, 2004, para. 8).

Based on Lee’s argument, the task of history is to give us “a sense of our own identity, but in a way as to stimulate and facilitate our co-operation with other people, other nations, and other cultures” (Lee, 2004). While history transcends “commonsensical” orientation, it is still associated, in complex ways, with our everyday life (as cited in Lee, 2004, para. 6). Rösen (1997) thinks that historical consciousness addresses some principles for constructing a concept of historical literacy. Lee also points to Oakeshott’s explanation about the main requirement of historical literacy. Oakeshott argues that “students understand something of what history is, as an engagement of enquiry” with its own “identifying marks, some characteristic organizing ideas and a vocabulary of expressions to which it has given specialized meanings: past, happening, situation, event, cause, change and so on” (as cited in Lee, 2004, para. 10). According to Bevir (2000), Collingwood (1999), Dray (1995), Nielsen (1981), and Van der Dussen (1981), such explanation implies that students need to know, for example: how historical knowledge is possible which requires students to recognize that historical explanations may be “contingent or

conditional” and that “explanation of action requires the reconstruction of the agent’s beliefs about the situation, values, and relevant intentions” (as cited in Lee, 2004, para. 11). Lorenz and Bevir (2002) argue that as an account of historical literacy, students should also realize that historical explanations are not copies of the past, but they might be “evaluated as answers to questions in terms of (at least) the range of evidence they explain, their explanatory power and their congruence with other knowledge” (as cited in Lee, 2004, para. 11). Lee draws our attention to the fact that many students operate with sets of ideas that work well in everyday life, but they cannot easily perceive ideas related to historical knowledge. This is because students have a notion of fixed past and that one true account of it may be given; since they were not there to see the past, and only direct acquaintance gives us reliable knowledge, they cannot really recognize what happened (Lee, 2004). Lee asserts that understanding how historical claims can be made, and the different ways in which they may be supported or challenged constituted the foundations of historical literacy. Ideally, students leaving school should be able to use the past to help them make sense of the present and the future; in order to learn how to do this, students must be equipped with two kinds of tools: first, “an understanding of the discipline of history”, and “a usable framework of the past” (Lee, 2004, para. 3). Nevertheless, having a sense of historical knowledge along with some understanding of how historians organize and explain the past does not mean that students can orient themselves in time. Based on what Oakeshott (2002) explains, if students are not equipped with an “intellectual toolkit” for coping with historians’ disagreements, and do not expect historical accounts to mirror the past, they might develop a “big picture” when they encounter various competing accounts offered by the world outside school. It is not denied that they might be successful to distinguish practical pasts designed to prove points about who they are, and what they should do next, but the problem is that it is hard to say if this will

automatically be the result of students' improvement of practical historical knowledge (as cited in Lee, 2004, para. 22).

Seixas (2000) has also been concerned with the nature of historical knowledge when dealing with the issue of "how history curriculum practitioners handle conflicting historical accounts of the same historical phenomenon" (p. 22). Seixas identifies "collective memory", the "disciplinary" orientation, and "the postmodern orientation" as important components in developing an approach to history literacy.

Seixas (2002) writes that teachers tend to use three approaches when dealing with "conflicting interpretations of the past" (p. 22). These approaches are informed by particular understandings of epistemological processes and pedagogy. The first one is simply to teach "the best story" the same way it happened. Seixas calls this approach "enhancing collective memory" because it does not engage students in the historical discipline's modes of inquiry. The second approach consists of introducing the students to more than one version of the story and leading them to find out which one constitutes "the better interpretation on the basis of a series of documents, historians' assessments, and other materials. Classes with this orientation "rather than being told simply to believe a single story, make students to come to an understanding of a valid historical account" (Seixas, 2002, p. 22). In this stage, students learn "disciplinary criteria" and recognize what makes good history. Hence, this approach would be a "disciplinary" approach. The third orientation addresses the lack of certainty about the notion of the "best story" (Seixas, 2002. p. 22). In this process, students look into both narratives of an event with the supporting documentation, and then related the versions of the past to their political uses of the present. In this orientation, students are responsible not to get to the "best" or most valid point on the basis of historical evidence, but to notice "how different groups organize the past histories and how their

rhetorical and narratological strategies save present-day purposes” (Seixas, 2002, p. 22).

Seixas (2000) identifies this orientation as the postmodern approach and clarifies that his aim is not to assess alternative narratives of the past’ it is rather to realize “what the single best version provides for students in the school [and] for the society as a whole” (p. 22). To answer this question, he develops three interrelated answers: “identity, cohesion, and social purpose (provided the history is taught and taught well)” (p. 23). Seixas (2000) argues that “the single best version” is useful for “constructing a group identity defined by common experience and belief” and characterizing a group identity could help history education to provide social cohesion. He also claims that other group identities such as ethnicity, gender, class, ability, and sexual orientation provide competing possibilities. In all cases, history provides identity and cohesion within the group, but may lead to fragmentation of the national story. Moreover, learning the best version of history provides a compelling moral framework and “offers a trajectory that ties individuals’ decision and actions in the present to the longer course of events, whether expressed in the struggle for human rights, sacrifice for the national good, moral uplift or economic well-being through hard-work, class struggle, or gender equality” (Seixas, 2000, p. 23). Seixas holds this view that it is not possible to step toward any social or national purpose without invoking “the best version of history” to support it; furthermore, the idea of social change (or even the conscious ideal of social conservation) is meaningless without a historical orientation in which to frame it (Seixas, 2000, p. 23). For Seixas, while an “authoritative interpretation of the past is consistent with an authoritarian political culture, the epistemology that underlines this educational approach is suited to the education of critical citizens in a liberal democracy” (Seixas, 2000, p. 25). Disciplinary orientation has this responsibility to prepare students to arrive independently at reasonable and informed opinions which allows them to exercise building historical knowledge

and criticizing others' historical accounts.

While collective memory and the disciplinary have shaped a great part of historical literacy, the third orientation is less well known. This orientation originates from “the postmodernist challenges to historical methodology” as a way of knowing. Just as the postmodern attention to “narrative, positionality and progress”, in this orientation there is something highly beneficial about “the focus on the textualization of the past” (Seixas, 2000, p. 30). Postmodern orientation reminds us that the past is inaccessible and that the only way that we can construct an interpretation is by means of its textual remainders. It also shows that historical documents require interpretation for their “discursive organization, the condition of their production, and the way in which they have been used over time” (Seixas, 2000, p. 30). However, when the process is finished, we should note that what we have is only an interpretation, and not the past itself.

According to Seixas, postmodernism supports the basis of traditional historiography. Also, postmodernism reveals the limits of historians' readings by pointing to the forces that have shaped the archive itself, its gaps and its silence. Moreover, it encourages us to note the texts that have survived and therefore, in many ways, helps historians to improve their systematic historiography (Seixas, 2000).

The importance of historical literacy is also reflected in the works of Stéphane Levesque by his emphasis on students' historical thinking and its contribution to democratic citizenship. Levesque (2008), like other scholars in this field, argues that historical knowledge of political, social, cultural, and economical systems relates to the democratic knowledge necessary for active citizenship. Therefore, being skillful in the knowledge of history and ultimately practicing history engages students in a democratic society in an active way, well beyond acquiring a deep sense of patriotism (Levesque, 2008, p. 35). According to Stearn, in order to improve democratic

citizenship, political institutions should also help people become familiar with comparative historical analysis, comparisons of past and current events, and also in development of “democratic habits of mind” (as cited in Levesque, 2008, p. 35).

Levesque (2008) draws our attention to the point that personal interests, areas of significance, and questions in mind influence historians’ approach encountering the past. Clearly historians’ knowledge or their lack of knowledge of certain historical subjects influences their historical accounts. Historical investigation involves a deep understanding of both power and limits of history. For Levesque, disciplinary steps are extremely crucial to reduce these inefficiencies; first, historians only research on some aspects of the past which they think are worth to be investigated and to be uncovered. Second, historians approach “significance past” with some judgments and understand historical events as part of a “larger narrative or sequence of events that provides meaning and direction to the event” (p. 37). This understanding indirectly relies on a procedure of recognizing events as signifying the complementary concepts of continuity and change and those of progress and decline. The third step of historians’ inquiry is researching since they must rely on supporting evidence. In this step, they should carefully choose and analyze the evidences, with a deep sense of “historical empathy to avoid naïve or intuitive “presentist” judgments of the past actors. As a result, the whole process brings forward the main questions which historians attempt to answer in the text (Levesque, 2008, p. 38).

Levesque (2008) developed a set of five essential questions, and argues he that each question logically leads to the inquiry and analysis of concepts that assists us in finding answers to queries emerging in history education practice. This set of questions also helps us to better understand and use those concepts in history education. According to Levesque, these essential questions not only focus on the discipline but also give raise to other important questions whose answers are

hard to be found. Pedagogically, they are thought-provoking and help students to make sense of important and complicated ideas and knowledge of history (Levesque, 2008).

Levesque (2008) identifies these concepts as “background” concepts because they are seldom discussed in history texts:

These essential questions and associated procedural concepts are 1) what is important in the past? – Historical significance; 2) What changed and what remained the same? – Continuity and change; 3) Did things change for better or worse? – Progress and decline; 4) How do we make sense of the raw materials of the past? – Evidence; 5) How can we understand predecessors who had different moral framework? – Historical empathy. (p. 38)

Similar to Seixas, Levesque (2008) also explains that despite the increasing social and political interest in revitalizing history in schools, there is still little consensus on the direction and approach of history education. Levesque emphasizes that teaching students to think historically can be a valuable contribution to the short-and long-term challenges awaiting them (Levesque, 2008). Although students need to achieve historical knowledge in the form of “stories”, it is clearly not sufficient to go beyond “intuitive and manipulative forms of thinking about the past”. To think historically, students must engage in analytic practice and learn to compare different historical accounts they encounter and construct their historical arguments and interpretations by using the procedures, concepts, and standards of the discipline (Levesque, 2008).

A similar point on the methods of historical literacy is made by Lowenthal (2006) according to whom certain skills are required in order to achieve historical literacy:

These methods of thinking are: 1) *Familiarity*: ability to recognize and situate a substantial common store of references about a consensually shared past; 2) *Comparative*

judgment: ability to absorb and critique evidence from a wide range of variant and conflicting sources; 3) *Awareness of manifold truths*: ability to understand why different viewers are bound to know the past differently; 4) *Appreciation of authority*: ability to acknowledge debts to forerunners and to tradition while avoiding blind veneration or unquestioning adherence to earlier views; 5) *Hindsight*: awareness that knowing the past is not like knowing the present and that history changes as new data, perceptions, contexts, and syntheses go on unfolding. (p. 64)

Another important issue in historical literacy is the relationship between history and beliefs which has been discussed by Wertsch (2000) raising this question “what constitutes knowledge and belief in the case of historical texts and how such knowledge and belief are related?” (p. 40). From a socio-cultural analysis’ point of view, Wertsch points out that human action, including speaking, thinking, and remembering inherently involve an irreducible tension between active agents, on the one hand, and the cultural tools they employ to carry out action on the other hand (Wertsch, 2000). Wertsch argues that to represent and interpret the past, we need to employ some “active agents” as well as some cultural tools in the forms of texts provided by a sociocultural setting, just as the way speaking needs a particular language with all the “affordances” and “constrains” enacted by grammar, vocabulary, and so forth (p. 40).

In a study of the official history of Soviet Estonia, Wertsch (2000) reports that adherence to a single, monolithic view of the past had been strictly enforced in the public sphere. The tight central control of instruction, the media, and other sources of information were accompanied by harsh sanctions for publicly discussing alternative interpretations. This repression put a negative effect on history education. But clearly, at least in some circles, this procedure turned history into a challenging subject and resulted in the emergence of unofficial accounts that stood in clear

opposition to the official version (Wertsch, 2000). Hence, during the 1970s and 1980s, in Estonia there was an increasing suspicion about official history which resulted in active and public production of unofficial histories through the underground press, jokes, drama, and other avenues. One important outcome was a growing salience of unofficial accounts of the past and an intensified opposition between official and unofficial histories (Wertsch, 2000).

As it is conceived by contemporary curricular experts, history is set to produce good citizens and critical thinkers and a usable model of historical literacy can draw together the different elements in history education and make them more useful. A concept of historical literacy demands that we go beyond this by beginning to think seriously about the epistemological and pedagogical approach and disciplinary understandings that underpin this approach.

A critical study of history enables us to understand various arguments that lay claim to the past, judge statements about what the past means, and “to navigate effectively those competing interpretations of life and culture as it occurred before their arrival” (Vansledright, 2009, p. 434). In education curriculum, critically studying a history text helps students to access strong cognitive tools and ideas to deal with the complexities and uncertainties involved in making sense of ambiguous past events.

Applying criteria, concepts, and practices used by historians (thinking as historians do) guides us to achieve a deep understanding of the past and learn how to interrogate historical writing and artifacts including textbooks and other writings and representations. Judgments about historical significance, ideas about continuity and change, progress and decline, the application of rules governing evidence, and the use of historical empathy are among the tools, concepts, and practices of a critical disciplinary history analysis. History textbooks in particular must prepare students with powerful, technical concepts and ideas to make sufficient sense of the unstable and

complex past they encounter (Vansledright, 2009).

Apple's critical social theory

There is substantial growth in historical analyses based on critical social theory and its application to textual interpretation in education which aims to find out the systemic problems related to gender, race, culture, and class (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991). Following Foucault's theory of power & knowledge (1977), Apple & Christian-Smith in their book, "The Politics of the Textbook", identify issues of power and privilege in education raising the questions of whose knowledge becomes socially legitimate in schools and whose culture is taught—the *textbook* (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991). In Iran, after the Islamic Revolution (1979), the education system changed in accordance with the ideological doctrine of the Islamic movement. Textbooks are the results of the political and cultural agendas, battles, and compromises and they are authorized and published within the political and ideological constraints of resources and power (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991).

According to Apple (1990), there are three concepts that determine the nature of knowledge in a society that can make their way into the school's textbooks ideology, hegemony, and selective tradition. Based on what happens in Iran, it can be understood that ideology plays an important role in knowledge structure. It means that some particular groups, political programs or social movements, and worldviews or outlooks justify and legitimate their ideological control over the less dominant. This control often distorts people's picture of social reality and serves the interests of the dominant classes in a society (Apple, 1990).

Accordingly, this ideology influences school curricula which count as legitimate knowledge, and comes up as the result of complex power relations and struggles involving class, race, gender, and religious group affiliation (Apple, 2003, p. 2). The serious debates on "official knowledge"

show that what is included and excluded in textbooks often proxies for wider questions of power relations. Thus, the textbooks signify, through their content and form, particular constructions of reality, particular ways of selecting and organizing the vast universe of possible knowledge (Apple, 2003, p. 3).

Textbooks are a form of cultural politics involving the very nature of the connection between cultural visions and differential power (Apple, 2003). Therefore, by encountering the text critically, one can determine the embedded meaning and politic. Textbooks can be considered as evidence of a dominant authorial viewpoint. By analyzing the textbook used in history classes in Iran, this study will identify the probable fallacies, biases and propaganda, value judgments, reductionist interpretations and stereotypes hidden in the text in order to explain how the political and religious authorities impacted history courses in schools.

With regard to the relation of social power structure and education system, Apple (2004) explains that the structuring of knowledge in educational institutions is closely connected to the principle of social and cultural control in a society. Organizations of “cultural preservation and distribution” like schools can construct or reconstruct forms of conciseness that enable social control to be sustained without the interference of leading groups to restore power or dominate them. Hence, one can understand “the school as an institution, as the knowledge forms, and as the educator him or herself” (Apple, 2004, p. 3).

Apple (2004) argues that structural relations “determine” these three aspects of schooling and introduces the concept of “hegemony” as key concept to understand these structural relations. He focuses on Gramsci’s concept of hegemony and relies on Williams’s clarification of this concept. As Williams explains, hegemony acts to “saturate” our very consciousness; accordingly, our common sense interpretations and our educational, social, and economical world become “the

world *tout court* or the only world” (as cited in Apple, 2004, p. 3). Hence, “hegemony refers to an organized assemblage of meanings and practices, the central, effective and dominant system or meaning, values and actions which are *lived*” (Apple, 2004, p. 3). It is attributed to a set of meanings and values which create a sense of reality for most people in society; a sense of absolute experienced as a reality beyond which it is very difficult for people to pass in most areas of their lives. Apple considers educational institutions as one of the main agencies of transmission of hegemony or the effective dominant culture (Apple, 2004). At a philosophical level, Apple (2004) relates the process of *selective tradition* with the term of “effective dominant culture” and then relates these two with the concept of “the tradition” and *the* significant past. However, the selectivity always results in the neglect and exclusion of a whole possible area of the past and the present as well as certain meanings and practices. Furthermore, “some of these meanings and practices might be reinterpreted, diluted, or put into forms which support or at least do not contradict other elements within the effective dominant culture” (Apple, 2004, p. 4). Education is among these forces that are deeply involved in a constant formation of hegemony or the effective dominant culture.

Ideology, as a main effective dominant culture, is interconnected with curriculum and educational policies and it deeply influences educational theories and pedagogical systems. According to Apple (2004), we need to examine critically, not just, “how a student acquires more knowledge”, but “why and how particular aspects of the collective culture are presented in school as objective, factual knowledge” (p. 4). The important point is to recognize the way official knowledge embodies ideological configurations of the dominant interests in a society and the way schools legitimate these limited and partial standards of knowing as unquestioned truths (Apple, 2004). Apple discusses that schools selectively preserve, reinterpret and develop knowledge, and

therefore influence the “conceptual categories which belongs to the processes of controlling knowledge and act as if educators are neutral participants in the educational enterprise” (p. 4).

Apple conceives the “national curriculum” as a mechanism for political control of knowledge that if once becomes established, there is little chance of turning back (Apple, 2004, p. 227). He argues that by examining the underlying logic of national curriculum, one finds out that behind educational justifications for a national curriculum and national testing, there are economic and ideological alliances with an increasing power. Whereas, national curriculum must neither homogenize the culture, history, and social interest, nor homogenize the students (Apple, 2004)

The Unthought in contemporary Islamic thought

In view of what has been said above, the theory of “the Unthought in contemporary Islamic thought” developed by Arkoun, the Algerian thinker and expert in Islamic studies (1928-2010), would enrich the analysis. Arkoun (2003) uses analytic evaluations (deconstruction, hermeneutics, and their various poststructuralist relatives) in his analysis of Islam. He called his approach “applied Islamology” based on a term set by a group of anthropologists who started the practice of “applied anthropology” during the 1980s and 1990s. He argues that “applied Islamology” uses a progressive-regressive method, combining a long-term historical perspective with a short-term perspective. Given a number of contemporary discourses emerging in Islamic contexts, Arkoun goes back to the emerging period of Islam, and the “Golden Age” of its civilization which is used as mythological references to reactivate “values” and ethical and legal paradigms and reexamines it according what he call a “critique of Islamic reason” (Arkoun, 2001, p. 10). According to him, studying Islamic societies is not possible unless one notes that religion and everything related to it is one of the most important configurational spaces (Arkoun, 2001, p. 10). Hence, religion in Islamic societies is one of the most determining forces in the educational

system as it is imposed everywhere at all levels, especially in education of the social sciences (Arkoun, 2001).

According to Arkoun (2001), Islam as a religion or a world vision sustained by a still-living tradition, with a great verity of cultural, social, and political expressions remains a challenge to the social sciences. He discusses how a tradition of thought allows us to think about a particular subject within a particular domain of human existence (Arkoun, 2002). He refers to limits imposed by political and social pressure on the innovative and critical facilities of reason and explains that “there are a number of ideas, values, explanations, horizon of meanings, artistic creations, initiatives, institutions, and way of life that have been discarded, rejected, ignored, or doomed to failure, by the long-term historical evolution called tradition or living tradition [traditions which are alive and dominant among people]” (Arkoun, 2002, p. 11). According to Arkoun, in such living traditions or linguistic mental spaces (logospheres), there are some issues which are narrowed and weakened, thus, creating frontiers between the thinkable and unthinkable.

Arkoun (2001) defines “unthought” as the power employed by the traditional “Ulama” and ideological Islamic states in order to guarantee that a deeply dogmatic and unapproachable version of Islam is protected from all intellectual and scientific analysis. He uses “unthought” to refer to “an Islam that is isolated from the most elementary historical reasoning, linguistic analysis or anthropological decoding” (Arkoun, 2002, p. 308).

Arkoun (2001) points out that even in democratic, dynamic and free societies, any change in political power results in changes in “the horizons and themes of discourse” (p. 12). These changes happen not only to laws but also to the philosophical rationale underlying the creation of law shifts to a different “thinkable” (p. 12). The space of the unthinkable in a religious society

can be expanded via “authoritarian, obscurantist, intolerant will-to-power” policies embodied in a “dual censorship” imposed by both the state and public opinion and sometimes, this control over thinking becomes interiorized in the name of the nation, or religion (Arkoun, 2001, p. 12). Many issues, which cannot be freely thought of in Muslim societies are somehow related to religious life and discourse and have been under the control of both the state and official religious authorities (Ulama). As Arkoun (2001) notes, the opposing social force (which refers here to some pre-revolutionary Iranian political and religious groups) can potentially develop the political discourse (like Iranian post-revolutionary regime), and expand the space of thought and generate a shift to a “populist ideology” that may increase “the extent of the unthought” (p. 15).

It can be argued that whenever a tradition of thought (such as the post-revolutionary Islamic thought in Iran) declares a subject as “unthinkable” (like the lack of democratic control over religious governing), a new limitation in the critical thinking realm will appear. The “unthinkable and unthought issues [have been] cultivated by the education systems, the discourse of political and academic establishments, and the media that feed on this rhetoric and seek to increase their following by outdoing each other with anticipations of interpretations from the leading minds” (Arkoun, 2001, p. 18).

Arkoun (2001) underlines the importance of historical epistemology in contrast to the purely descriptive, narrative presentation of what Islam or Muslims say, do or achieve as social and historical protagonists. Arkoun poses questions such as: “to what extent are these protagonists aware of the ideological dimensions of their discourse and historical actions?”; “Which cognitive structures do they use for the purpose of interpreting their religion, applying it to their actual life or reshaping it on the basis of historical pressures?”; “to what extent do they develop a critical relationship with their past and their present in order to have better control over their future, and

how relevant, effective and creative would such a relationship be?” (p. 10).

While writing history, it is important to make an issue of each word, each concept, and each attitude used by the social protagonists and to bring evidence in the interpretative process. Otherwise, history become misleading and even dangerous for people who integrate the representations of the past as proposed by historians as undisputable truth. In this case, each social group builds an image of its past “without having the means of differentiating this mythical, or ideological image from the critical problematization provided by modern historians” (Arkoun, 2001, p. 24).

Using the heuristic tools of historical literacy developed by Seixas (2010), Wineburg (2000), and Levesque (2008), Apple’s critical theory of “the politics of the textbook” (2004), and Arkoun’s theory of the “Unthought in contemporary Islamic thought” (2001), this thesis will focus on the analysis of the Iranian secondary school history course book, *The Contemporary History of Iran (Tārīkh-i Mu’āṣir-i Iran)*. The aim is to examine the political, ideological, and cultural discourses embedded in the textbooks and explain how the Iranian Post-Revolutionary political and religious authorities subordinate the teaching of history to their political agenda.

Chapter 3

Contextualization of the Research

Iran's encounter with modernity can be analyzed considering three main chronological periods with their specific characteristics. The first period covers the Qajars era that stretches from the end of the nineteenth century to the first quarter of the twentieth century (1885-1925); it was during this period that a group of French and British military training missions were invited to the country, and a few students, mostly from aristocratic families, were sent to European countries such as France, Britain, and Russia to learn military, administrative, professional, and technical skills, a practice that continued for some decades (Banai, 1961). The second period is that of Reza Shah Pahlavi (1925-1941) who enacted socio-economic reforms, reorganizing the army, government administration and finances while reinforcing a modern nationalism (Abrahamian, 2008). The third period began with Mohammad Reza Shah (1941-1979) who implemented a modernization program known as the White Revolution. The latter affected not only the national and international economic relations but also the social institutions and cultural patterns of the country (Mirsepassi, 2000). In this chapter, I provide the historical context of Iran's encounters with modernity during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The implications of modernity on educational developments will be utilized as a framework to later analyze how the traditional educational system and its policies were transformed during the post-Revolutionary Iran. This is followed by a discussion on the way historians approach the study of the past by examining various historiographical currents dominant in the three periods.

Prior to the formation of the modern educational system during the early twentieth century in Iran, children received their early and intermediate education in the *maktab* or *maktab-kaneh*

(place of writing) under the tutelage of a clergyman who worked alone or sometimes with one or two assistants (Dustkhah & Yagmai, 1997). Girls and boys studied together from the age of five or six until they were nine or ten years old. Generally, girls' education ended at the age of nine or ten and those families who wanted further education them sent their girls to separate girls' *maktabs*.

There were two kinds of *maktabs* in Iran during the 19th century. The first one was "in-house *maktabs*," which was held in the homes of wealthy people and only the children of the households and their dependents could attend. The teacher was employed by the head of the household and often became a resident as well. The second kind was "common *maktabs*" for the children of middle-class families. These classes were generally held in religious places like mosques or the teachers' homes and teachers received cash or gifts for their service (Dustkhah & Yagmai, 1997).

Maktab hours lasted from early morning until sunset and children had to sit silently during the entire school hours without any movement or physical play and activity. Very limited subjects were taught in the *maktabs* and history in particular was not introduced and regarded as a subject. The *maktab*'s curriculum consisted of learning the Arabic/Persian alphabet, Persian language, basic mathematics, learning the Quran and some of the prayer books. These materials were mostly taught to the children with an emphasis on memorization and verbal repetition. They had to pay careful attention to the class and had to remain focused on their books or writing. Corporal punishment was also very common in the *maktabs* (Dustkhah & Yagmai, 1997).

The *maktabs* or traditional education continued in an unofficial way in some towns and a few villages after the modern educational system was established. The Reza Shah's state attempted extensively to bring the *maktabs* under control by increasing their teachers' qualification and by

regulating their management, safety, and hygienic standards (Dustkhah & Yagmai, 1997). Religious families regarded the new educational institutions as the influence of westerners and “infidels” and preferred to send their children to *maktabs*; other families sent their preschool-age children to *maktabs* to learn the Quran before enrolling them in the modern schools (Dustkhah & Yagmai, 1997). *Maktabs* or traditional schools disappeared before the mid-20th century.

Despite of the lack of interest in modernization during the Qajar’s era, modern ideas were introduced to society by students sent to Europe. Abbas Mirza (1789-1833), Prince Regent and governor-general of Azarbaijan and the Iranian military commander in Russo-Persian wars, along with his reform-minded ministers Mirza Isa and then his son Mirza Abulqisim (Qa’im-Maqam I and II) brought about a series of reforms. These efforts firstly aimed to form a new army (*Nezame Jadid*), along European lines. The first steps were taken by translating French military books on artillery and war technique as well as hiring European advisors to train Iranian troops. At the same time, he dispatched two student missions to Europe, the first in 1811 and the second in 1815. All these measures were founded on both admiration and emulation of Europe as the pioneer of the progress and a model for change.

Meanwhile and via these contacts, a modern education system was introduced in Iran during the last decades of the 19th century. The spread of modern education was accompanied by the Western idea of nationalism. Modern education actually started with the establishment of missionary schools and more importantly with the creation of the polytechnic institute (*Dar-al-Fonun*) in 1852 (Ashraf, 1997). The establishment of *Dar al-Fonun* by Amir Kabir, the chief minister of Nasser al-Din Shah Qajar (1831-1896), was an important modern change in Iran. *Dar al-Fonun* had been planned along the lines of the renowned French ecoles polytechniques, where European (many of them Austrian) teachers taught military, medical and other sciences as well as

modern languages. For the first time, in *Dar-al-Fonun* in the Faculty of Political Science in 1899, history courses were offered and textbooks on the history of Iran were used. History textbooks were mainly devoted to pre-Islamic history of Iran and pre-Islamic Persian kings, Sasanid history, the Parthian roots of the Qajars, and the *Shah-nameh* of Ferdawsi⁹ (Ashraf, 2006). The main goal of composing the history textbooks during this time was to convey a glorious past as a way of helping people go beyond their miserable present; this was also a way of searching for Iran's national spirit and glory as well as the ancient soul of an "organic entity with its own distinct culture". Thus, the state aimed at developing the belief that there was a continuity in Iran's history "from the immemorial past to modern times" with a "romantic view of a pre-Islamic golden age" (Ashraf, 2006).

It has been noted by Moaddel (2001) that Iranians familiarized themselves with the modern Western world during the Qajars by introducing new structures; Iranian students were sent abroad to study, the first draft of a constitutional law was presented to the shah, the state council and the first political group modeled after European Freemasonry societies (*faramoushkhaneh*/the house of oblivion) was also founded. Other important changes included the improvement of economic, financial and communications systems (Moaddel, 2001, p. 708). Moreover, the publishing of several papers and books on political criticism such as *Qanun* (Law), newspaper published by Mirza Malkum Khan, the highly influential novel titled "The travelogue of Ebarhim Beig" by Zeinol'abedin Maragheh'i, and "The history of Persia" written by the British Major-General, Sir John Malcolm (1769-1833) which was published in 1815 in India were among the first

⁹ Ferdawsi was regarded as the representative of the nationalistic ideas of a Neo-Zoroastrian movement (Katouzian, 2009).

nationalistic writings in which the cause of Iran's decline was explained (Katouzian, 2009, p. 176).

In 1858, the first military school was founded in Tabriz, and then in 1882 a similar school was established in Isfahan (*Madrassa-ye homayuni*). In the same period, Christian missionaries established a number of schools and secular educators were hired in Tehran and provincial towns (Ashraf, 2006). For the first time, Iranian intellectual elites found the opportunity to become familiar with new political concepts such as the notion of "the state" and various types of governing as well as with the ideas of "national will" and the "right of freedom" (Moaddel, 2001, p. 709). Meanwhile, other intellectuals proclaimed the importance of scientific knowledge and asserted their concern about the governors' "arbitrary rules" (*estebdad*)¹⁰, the lack of social security, and the lack of public awareness of civic rights. These modern thoughts could facilitate the establishment of modern organizations and necessary changes such as judicial reforms and the promulgation of a constitutional law. The discovery of these new concepts and meanings was not the result of abstract philosophical reflections, but developed from observing the European social and individual life styles. In 1887, Mirza Hassan Roshdiah founded the school of *Roshdiah* (*Madrese-ye Roshdiah*) in Tabriz which became a model for other modern schools. At the same time, the Council on Education (*Anjoman-e maaref*) was founded and supervised a number of private modern schools. The Ulama, religious families, and traditional schools' tutors resisted

¹⁰ This point has been comprehensively discussed in Homa Katouzian's (2009) work, "The Persians". In his words, "for the first time in Iranian history they struck upon the most ancient and fundamental problem of the state and society, that is, arbitrary rule (*estebdad*), which revealed the *differentia specifica* between Iran and Europe: in the latter, lawful government and orderly society had been the rule rather than the exception" (p.157). For further discussion on the theory of arbitrary rule as an approach to the study of Iranian society see Katouzian (1997), "Arbitrary Rule: A Comparative Theory of State, Politics and Society in Iran in *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*."

modern secular education because it challenged traditional religious values and shifted control of education from the religious institutions to the state school, and also affected the financial stability of religious teachers.

The Iranian Constitutional Revolution was the most important modern intellectual movement that led to the establishment of the parliament in 1907. This movement was nourished by the intellectuals' movement, the country's poor economic situation, the growing dissatisfaction of radical merchants and the guilds, and the *Ulama's* participation. This movement is considered the beginning of a new era in Iran's history which set limit to the Shah's arbitrary power and prepared the stage for significant socio-political changes (Moaddel, 2001).

Based on the Constitutional law of 1907, it was declared that the government should establish and administer schools through the Ministry of Education (*Vezeerat-e maaref*). A few years later, the Supreme Council of Education (*Shura-ye ali-e maaref*) was invested with broad powers (*Tarikhche-ye Maaref-e Iran*, p. 531). Also, in 1911, the Parliament ratified a fundamental law for education which called for universal primary schooling for children aged seven years and over (*Tarikhche-ye Maaref-e Iran*, p. 532). However, there were still major obstacles to the development of modern education because of political instability, *Ulamas'* opposition, lack of both funding and qualified teachers (Ashraf, 2006).

On February 1921, Reza Shah was brought to power by a military coup. The building of a modern state was the regime's main instrument to achieve national unification, centralisation, and integration (Cronin, 1998). Reza Shah laid the foundation of modern nationalism not only based on the country's real and imagined ancient glories but also on the notion that the Aryan people were the race that had created the great social and scientific European civilization (Katouzian, 2009). Reza Shah used a military dictatorship to establish a unified army, stamp out chaos, build

national control, separate religion from the state, extend modern secular education, promote modern industry, impose a uniform dress code, impose the Persian language on the linguistic minorities and improve the status of women (Katouzian, 2009, p. 201).

In 1935, influenced by proto-Nazi German officials, the Iranian government chose its modern country's name, "Iran" and replaced the historic term "Persia" presuming that the new name would enhance the status of Iran in the West (Katouzian, 2009, p. 218). By building museums, the mausoleum of Ferdawsi (national poet), the Imam Reza's shrine (the Imam of twelver Shi'is) and a state library, Reza Khan intended to "prove" that these national figures had been "true Aryans" (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 88). Also, the state prohibited displaying or expressing any religious faith publicly, including the women's wearing of the headscarf (*hijab*) and public religious festivals and celebrations. The *Ulama* were forbidden to preach in public and mosque activities were heavily restricted and regulated (Katouzian, 2009, p. 218). Moreover, the government enforced a compulsory dress code which was welcomed by many modernist nationalist elites, but resented by the *Ulama*, the ordinary people, and the majority of nomadic tribes (Katouzian, 2009, p. 218). According to some Iranians and outside observers, this Westernization brought law and order, discipline, central authority, and modern amenities (schools, trains, buses, radios, cinemas, and telephones) to the country; others believed that it brought oppression, corruption, taxation, and lack of authenticity to the Iranian society (Abrahamian, 2008).

Similar to other changes of modernization, the secularization of education was hustled under Reza shah. In 1922 a new education law was ratified by the Parliament based on which all educational matters were entrusted to the Supreme Council of Education (*Shoura-ye Aali-ye Maaref*). In 1927, due to the increased budget of the Ministry of Education, educational

enrollment at all levels increased substantially, and in 1935 Tehran University was founded. Also, in the interwar years, around 1500 students were sent abroad by the government to pursue their education. These students had upper and middle class backgrounds and were mainly sent to France, Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, and Great Britain. They played an important role in modernizing the country and its educational system after their return (Elwell-Sutton, 1942, p. 138).

During the 1930s the educational reformation led to considerable improvement in the educational system. The state integrated and centralized education; established a national, tuition-free, and modern school system; founded a university; promoted women's education; and initiated an adult-education program (Ashraf, 2006). However, this development was more an elitist policy and served those who lived in urban areas, especially the children of upper and middle class families. History in schools was taught at all levels in a propagandist style that exaggeratedly glorified ancient Persia. Although academic education became very significant as opposed to practical and professional training, academic exams were slightly more than memory tests and the educational textbooks suffered from a lack of critical interpretation and analysis. Modern education, as a result, became more of an aimless imitation of the superficial aspects of Western Civilization (Katouzian, 2009).

The process of modernization continued during Reza Shah's son, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (1941-1979). Like his father, he also had an Aryanist and pan-Persian view of Iranian history. He concentrated on the social and economic development as an attempt for the country to resemble the modernized system of Western Europe, and later the United States (Katouzian, 2009). Between the years of 1960 and 1970, due to the results of increasing oil incomes, the Iranian society encountered a modernization program sponsored by the government known as the

White Revolution (*Enghelab-e Sefid*, 1963). This program strongly changed the economic relations, social institutions and cultural patterns of the country spurring a huge migration of the rural population to the urban centres (Mirsepassi, 2000).

One of the main initiatives of the White Revolution was the 1962 land reform which abolished the traditional landlord-tenant system. Electrification of the country, liberation of women and their participation in the political and social life, the creation of equity courts in rural areas, and a complete revision of the administrative and educational system of the country were among the main undertakings of the White Revolution. This modernization program completely transformed urban life and generated severe tension with traditional social constructions (Rassekh, 1971).

During the era of Mohammad Reza Shah, the educational reform followed the same outline but in a more sophisticated manner. Iran moved away from the French educational model and adapted the American education system mainly due to the strong political relationships between Iran and the United States. The new model brought centralized administration and a supervisory structure, determining the content and organization of education at all levels, planning and developing curricula, preparing textbooks, training teachers, administering examinations, supervising grading, and the establishment of a literacy corps (*sepah-e danesh*) in rural and tribal areas (Ashraf, 1997). Meanwhile, some foreign countries established private schools for Iranian students. The education policies and teaching programs in these schools were in accordance with the Western modern education system following a secular, nonreligious pattern (Mohsenpour, 1988).

During the 1950s–1970s, a number of universities were founded in Tehran and provincial towns. “These universities were Azarbaijan in Tabriz, Ferdawsi in Mashhad, Pahlavi in Shiraz (all 1949), Isfahan in the city of Isfahan (1950), Jondishapour in Ahvaz (1954), Melli in Tehran

(1957), Aryamehr (now Sharif) in Tehran (1962), Bu- Ali Sina in Hamedan and Azad in Tehran (both 1972), Reza Shah Kabir in Babolsar and Baluchestan in Zahedan (both 1973), and Gilan in Rasht and Kerman in the city of Kermān (both 1974)” (Ashraf, 2006).

These changes mostly affected people in the military, administrative elites and the ones that were educated. During the 1960-70s, there was an increasing trend among the public to regard the educational reform representing the Western culture. In fact, the social changes did not influence the political power structure. These changes were not accompanied by modern Western culture and the political patterns which were in harmony with technology and modern science. Early on, Mostashar al-Dauleh (1823-1895) in his book “One Word” (*Yek Kalameh*) posed the question of the Iranian decline and criticized those elites who focused on “the history and technology of Europe” and neglected its principles and foundations of the administration. He described them as those who only look at the surface and overlook the undercurrent (Katouzian, 2009, p. 175).

The economic and social relations of the society were changing without the participation of the people affected by these change. Some intellectuals gradually became concerned with the rapidity of the social changes and started to question the modernization process and its outcomes. In fact, influenced by post-colonial discourses¹¹, all around the world they became skeptical about

¹¹ Post-colonialism is as a postmodernism intellectual discourse which addresses the responses and analyses of the cultural legacies of colonialism and Imperialism. Post-colonial theory addresses the matters of identity, gender, race, ethnicity, and their interactions in the development of a post-colonial society, and of a post-colonial national identity (“Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern World,” n.d). Edward Said’s (1935-2003) theory of “Orientalism” established a new path in the field of post-colonial studies. The term “orientalism” was neutrally used in the European countries to describe the study and artistic depiction of the Orient, and subverted it to mean a constructed binary of the world into the Orient (East) and the Occident (West). Said defines the term “orientalism” as a structured set of concepts, assumptions, and discursive practices that were used to produce, interpret, and evaluate knowledge about non-European peoples. It criticizes the way a colonized people’s cultural knowledge was used against them, in service of

the enlightenment discourse of “internationalism” and they preferred to look at their own traditional culture. The prefabricated and montage-style modernization pursued by the Shah, the gap between the new kind of education and old religion, and also the philosophical self-doubts expressed by Western thinkers cast a shadow of doubt on many intellectuals whose “nationalistic sentiments” were evoked in Iran during the 1960s (Broujerdi, 1996).

Religion as a traditional system of beliefs and behaviour was especially distinguished among the middle class *bazaaries* whose role in the economic situation was crucial, and who also had a close relationship with the *ulama*. Compared to the other groups, the *ulama* were more concerned about the influence of modernization (Sunderland, 1968). They were the most organized and articulated group in the society that had a clear political outlook and enjoyed popular support. Therefore, they could contest modernity and its outcomes that became the representative of the public groups during the 1960s and 1970s.

Ali Shariati (1933-1977) and Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1902-1989) were the two most outstanding representatives of the Islamic group during the 1960-1970s. While some people regarded Shariati as the true ideologue of the Islamic Revolution, others regarded Khomeini as both the leader of the revolution and also the Jurist (*Faqih*) who formulated the concept of Jurist’s Guardianship (*Vilayat-i Faqih*). Khomeini in his preaching and writings regarded monarchy as pagan, which is against true Islam (Abrahamian, 2008). He expressed his disapproval of the Shah who supported Israel against the Muslim world, became an ally of the Western countries in the Cold War, undermined Islam by blindly imitating foreign countries, spread the plague from the

the colonizer’s interests (Said, 1978). For Said (1979), the relationship between the Occident and the Orient is a relationship of power, and “orientalism” is more a sign of European-Atlantic power over the Orient (pp, 5-6).

West or *garbzadegi* (Westoxicated), a term raised by Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1923-1969) a prominent Iranian intellectual, writer, and social and political critic (Abrahamian, 2008).

These ideological movements, persistent socio-economic inequalities, widespread corruption of government officials, and political repression finally resulted in the Iranian Revolution in 1979. The Iranian Islamic Revolution, one of the main political reversals of the 20th- century, put an end to Iran's monarchy and replaced it with an Islamic republic regime. It transformed the cultural basis of society and replaced it with a new value system (Sobhe, 1982). Obviously, these dramatic political, social and cultural changes deeply transformed the pre-revolutionary values, ideas, models, policies and the educational system. After the Revolution, Islam turned into an ideology capable of granting identity and legitimacy to the project of society, and integrating and mobilizing the masses. The post-Revolutionary educational reform has been interpreted as a reaction against what the Revolutionaries called "cultural invasion" or "*garbzadegi*" (Westoxication) (Mohsenpour, 1988, p. 77).

A deep cultural analysis of Iran's situation after the revolution shows how powerful social forces could control both the social and cultural discourses in the society. As an ideological movement, the Islamic revolution changed the cultural basis of society and replaced them with a new value system. Shi'ism was transformed into a highly politicized doctrine and turned into a radical ideology (Abrahamian, 2008). The leaders of the Islamic revolution aimed to create a new social structure and a "new people" by changing the regime and its political and ideological characteristics (Abrahamian, 2008). Obviously, these dramatic political, social, and cultural changes, profoundly transformed the educational system, its values, ideas and policies.

After the revolution, during a three-year period (1979-82) the Cultural Revolution took place. The Revolutionary government closed all colleges and universities in the summer of 1980,

announcing that the system of education had to undergo “purification” and “Islamization” (Mohsenpour, 1988, p. 77). After the Revolution, the policy makers believed that the pre-Revolutionary school system had ruined students’ values, religious beliefs, and that it “spread atheism and polytheistic teaching, presented the monarchy as a plausible political system, and presented capitalism as the best and most suitable economic system” (Mohsenpour, 1988, p. 77). Hence, the authorities announced that from that point on education had to be designed in accordance with the Islamic ideology. After re-opening the educational institutions, many books, thousands of students and lecturers were purged from the schools and universities. Only individuals who were “adherent to Islamic principles” and “committed to Islam” were accepted in higher education institutions (Mohsenpour, 1988, p. 77). Ayatollah Khomeini, the supreme leader of the Revolution, called the Cultural Revolution “a revolution in values,” aiming at replacing secular and Western aspects of Persian life with a new and independent religious and political order (Ashraf, 1997). Education became the major tool in reaching this ideal and the aim was to create new Muslim people (Ashraf, 1997).

After the 1979 Revolution and up to now, the ideological/religious reforms together with the educational transformation have been going hand in hand. The main goal of policy-makers has been to shape students’ behavior according to Islamic tenets by modifying the curricula and textbooks (Mehran, 1992, p. 11). “A significant portion of school courses in Iran now consists of religious studies, Islamic ethics, Arabic, and the study of the Qurān” (Mehran, 1992, p. 11). Also, the content of other subject matters in the humanities are deeply influenced by Islamic religious worldview. As Higgins and Shoar-Ghaffari explained soon after the Cultural Revolution, all the schools were converted to single-sex institutions, and Islamic dress codes were imposed (As cited in Ashraf, 1997).

Due to the ideological and cultural turns and their effects on the educational system, the history curriculum was drastically changed during the revolutionary turmoil of the first decade of the revolution' this was during the reformist era of President Khatami (1997-2005) as well as during President Ahmadi-Nejad's conservative era (2005-present).

Historiography in Iran

The history of Iran, as known today and insofar as pre-Islamic Persia is concerned, is mainly based on research conducted by Western scholars. However, it was not until the mid-nineteenth century when Iran's interaction with the West intensified that the country could access the works of European researchers. Before that time, Iranians merely had a traditional history which was a combination of myth, legend, and factual history (Yarshater, 2004).

According to Adamiyat, historiography in Iran manifested two general approaches. The first one is the ancient, "national approach", and the second is the "Islamic approach" (Adamiyat, 1971, p. 134). The "national approach" in its primitive form has roots in oral tradition and originates from a legend-ridden, chaotic form of historiography. It begins with the spread of Zoroastrianism and continues to the end of the Sassanid period. Unlike the pre-Sassanid history, the histories of the Sassanid period paid attention to evidence based interpretation; perhaps this is because it was immediately followed by the Islamic era.

The historiography of the Muslims encompasses the Islamic world starting with the emergence of Islam and the Muslim conquests and contains the age of the Caliphate, and then the Iranian dynasties. This approach has some general basic characteristics such as the chronological order of historical events, biographies of Caliphs and kings, genealogies, traditions and regional histories (Adamiyat, 1971). However, there are some outstanding figures in this tradition that made distinguished efforts to write history using a scientific and critical method during early

centuries of the Islamic era; this includes scholars such as *Muhammad Ibn Jarir al-Tabari* (838–923), *Abu al-Rayhan al Biruni* (973-1048), and *Ibn Khaldun* (1332-1408) (Adamiyat, 1971).

Adamiyat considers the 14th to 19th centuries as “the period of the decline and stagnation of historiography” and states that during this period, there was “no serious attempt toward historical evaluation, criticism or assessment of sources, or historical deductions” (Adamiyat, 1971, p. 135). He also points out that the recorded events were merely “chronicled without analysing their causes and effects”, and that many facts were omitted deliberately due to “the fear of retribution”, or “the lack of the understanding of the events interrelationships” (Adamiyat, 1971, p. 135). This retrogression in historiography continued during the Safavid era (1501–1736) because of sectarian conflicts between Sunnis and Shiites and also because of the “predominance of religious superstition” at that time (Adamiyat, 1971).

The historiography in Iran was relatively the same until the beginning of the 19th century when a new current of writing history gradually aroused during the Qajar Period as a result of Iranian’s interaction with the European countries. At that time, the Iranian rulers became interested in understanding the new civilization in order to find out the secret of Europe’s progress and their own weakness (Adamiyat, 1971). Books like “the history of Peter the Great” by Voltaire, Napoleon’s biographies, and “the decline and fall of the Roman Empire” by Gibbon were among the first books translated and published in Persian (Adamiyat, 1971, p. 136). Also, the Orientalists’ archaeology and epigraphy opened a new chapter in the history of Pre-Islamic Iran. For the first time, a British diplomat and orientalist, Henry Rawlinson (1864-1925) translated the *Bisotun* inscription¹² into Persian and George Rawlinson’s work (Henry’s brother, English

¹² The Bistun Inscription is a multi-lingual inscription authored by Darius, sometime between his coronation as the king of Persian Empire in the summer of 522 BC and his death in autumn of 486 BC. It is

scholar and historian, 1812 –1902) on the Sasanian history was also translated and published in Persian (Adamiyat, 1971, p. 137).

Another important event that helped the Iranians understand Western historiography was the establishment of the Poly-technical School (*Dar al-Funun*) in 1851. The staff of this school translated a series of historical works (from French, Russian, and English) about many of the Western countries and some Asian states. The familiarity with these works played a major role in the development of historical studies and its methodological and structural improvement (Adamiyat, 1971).

At the same time, some students and Iranian officials who travelled to Europe had learned to assess historical data and started to publish them in journals. Also, some Europeans travelled to Iran and gathered valuable historical and geographical information. Meanwhile, influenced by Western methodology in historiography a group of scholars attempted to examine and correct historical writing (Adamiyat, 1971, p. 140). *Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzadah* (1812-1878) and *Sayyid Jamal al-Din Asadabadi* (1838-1897) were among the main intellectuals who criticized traditional Eastern historiographers and had an important role in the development of historiography in Iran during the Qajars (Adamiyat, 1971).

According to Adamiyat, although Iranian historians during the Qajar period became familiar with modern historiography from the beginning of the 19th century, the discipline of history in Iran has made little progress; also the overall work of the historians is not of great value. It can be argued that they may not have been fully successful in understanding and applying the critical methods necessary in doing historical research. Thus, their work suffers from a lack of academic

located on Mount Behistun in the Kermanshah Province of Iran, near the city of Kermanshah in western Iran (“Encyclopedia Iranica”, n.d.).

research method (Adamiyat, 1971). As Adamiyat notes, merely presenting the facts, the lack of standards for historical analysis, and a disregard in the economic, social, political, and intellectual currents are among the causes of the decline on historiography during this period in Iran (Adamiyat, 1971).

During the Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1979), historical studies were mostly about documenting Iran's national identity and histories of ancient, medieval and modern Iran. Some historians of the time wrote "a nostalgic rendition of the remote past" and considered the Pahlavi rule as an "age of stability, material progress, and a renewed grandeur" (Amanat, 2004, para. 2). Therefore, history played a crucial role in legitimizing the authority and its program of secularizing reforms. As a matter of fact, writing history was not free from the yoke of the state and was incapable of nurturing a new devotion to critical methodology (Amanat, 2004). Due to the state's arrogation to positive sciences at the expense of the humanities, studying history was neglected at academic and popular levels. Amanat (2004) argues that school textbooks of that time followed a "dynastic format" of Iran's history with a "classical periodization" (para. 3). The tone of these books was dull and dry and it turned into one of the most tedious courses in the school curriculum. Also, the state's policy in prompting an ancient past and a nationalistic pride had a detrimental impact on the dispassionate neutral historical inquiries (Adamiyat, 2004). Again, in writing history, little attention was paid to the social and economic aspects including urban life, non-elite culture, women, and cultural stereotypes; there were also biases toward the internal and external "other" and toward the development of the religious establishment (Adamiyat, 2004, para. 36).

By the end of the Pahlavi period and the dawning of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, a few inquiries were conducted about the forbidden past, specifically about the history of the National Movement during the 1940s and the Constitutional Revolution, and the causes of its failure. As in

the Pahlavi era, there was again a lack of serious scholarship and critical historiography and there were still obstacles in the way of rigorous practice of history. The post-Revolutionary period highlighted few success and many failures of the previous regime. Like before, the post-Revolutionary history books, similar to previous times, were not committed to critical thinking, close examination of the sources, accurate reporting and neutrality (Amanat, 2004).

Ram (2006), in his article, “The immemorial Iranian nation? School textbooks and historical memory in post-revolutionary Iran”, analyses and compares the two pre- and post-revolutionary school history textbooks and explains how the post-Revolutionary authorities follow the Pahlavi’s nationalist narrative discourse by creating an apparent shift from “Iran Time” to “Islam Time” (p. 67). In the following chapters, I will investigate and explain how the Iranian Post-Revolutionary political and religious authorities subordinated the teaching of History to their political agenda, and how their goals and policies changed the context of history textbooks.

Chapter 4

History Education after the Islamic Revolution

In this chapter, I describe and analyze the way the Islamic Revolution, as an ideological movement, identified “a new model citizen” and designed new official educational goals based on Islamic principles. I also examine the most recent document containing the official educational goals of The Islamic Republic of Iran (2011) issued by The Supreme Council of Education. Then, I explain how these new educational goals influenced the production of the official history textbook, and the teaching of history in Iranian schools.

A deep cultural analysis of Iran’s situation after the Revolution shows how powerful social forces and institutions control the social and cultural discourses. The Islamic revolution was an ideological movement which changed the cultural basis of society and replaced them with a new value system. What distinguishes the Iranian Revolution from other Revolutions was its political and ideological characteristic. According to Arkoun (2001) any change in political power results in changes in “the horizons and themes of discourse”. These changes happen not only to laws but also to the philosophical rationale underlying the creation of law shifts to a different “thinkable” (p. 12). Based on what Arkoun explains, after the Revolution, the traditional “Ulama” and the ideological Islamic states use their power in order to guarantee that a deeply dogmatic and unapproachable version of Islam is protected from all intellectual and scientific analysis (Arkoun, 2002).

The authorities of the Islamic Revolution stated that their goal was to create “new people”. In fact, the post-Revolutionary educational reform was an extreme reflection of what they called “cultural invasion” (McCullough, 1997, p. 204). The post-Revolutionary officials seriously

questioned the pre-Revolutionary education system and claimed that the pre-Revolutionary schools “weakened students’ religious beliefs, spread atheism and polytheistic teachings, presented monarchy as a plausible political system, and propagated capitalism as the most suitable economic system (McCullough, 1997).

Arkoun (2001) states that the space of the unthinkable in a religious society can be expanded via “authoritarian, obscurantist, intolerant will-to-power” policies embodied in a “dual censorship” imposed by both the state and public opinion (p. 12). The supreme leader of the Islamic revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini in one of his earliest lectures, highlighted the importance of education and the necessity of a fundamental change in the education system in order to stand up against imperialism and the super-powers. He pointed out that intellectuals must give up their fascination with “Westernization¹³ or Easternization” and “follow the straight path of Islam and nationalism” (as cited in McCullough, 1997, p. 204). He also asserted that a Revolution should come about in all the universities throughout Iran, and those teachers who are in contact with the East or the West must be purged and the universities should turn to the “healthy places for the study of higher Islamic teachings” (McCullough, 1997, p. 204). In his radical speech, Khomeini

¹³ While modernization and westernization had begun in the early twentieth century, it had found its critics among various modern as well as traditional middle class writers, scholars, intellectuals and activists. Many of the most secular intellectuals – virtually all leftists, and most of them Marxist-Leninists – began to discover the virtues of the country’s religious culture and traditions, decry Weststruckness, and advocate cultural authenticity and “nativism” (Katouzian, 2009, p. 292). The terms *gharbzadegi* and *gharbzadeh* (variously translated, respectively, into “Westoxication” and “Westoxicated”, “Weststruckness” and “Weststruck”), which Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1923-1969), one of the prominent Iranian intellectuals of that time, had used to attack the cultural and politico-economic influence of the West was deeply noticed after the Revolution and became one of the most important ideological principles of Islamic states (Al-Ahmad, 1982).

announced that the former regime's teaching structure should be immediately stopped because "all the misery of Iranian society during Pahlavi's dynasty was due to the Western false teachings" (as cited in McCullough, 1997, p. 204). Students are also recommended to refrain from relying on foreigners, and to "not [to] follow wrong path of the uncommitted intellectuals who are separated from people". Instead, they should set aside "the slogans of deviant groups" and "return back to beloved and genuine Islam" (as cited in McCullough, 1997, p. 205). These limits and pressure imposed by political and social powers pressure curtail the innovative and critical facilities of reason. As Arkoun (2002) explains, the Islamic state discards, rejects, or ignores some ideas, values, explanations, horizon of meanings, artistic creations, initiatives, institutions, and way of life by the long-term historical evolution called "tradition or living tradition" [traditions which are alive and dominant among people] (p. 11).

Based on what Arkoun explains, the Islamic Republic authorities interiorized control over thinking in the name of religion and nation (Arkoun, 2001). Following Ayatollah Khomeini's word, the authorities identified "a new model citizen" as "a religious and pious individual" who "cares about his/her Iranian identity as a Muslim" and "is proud of the Islamic heritage" (as cited in Mehran, 1990, p. 54). Also, he/she must be loyal and committed to the government and "the opponent of any form of dependence and foreign domination" (Mehran, 1990, p. 54).

The other basic education principle originated from Islamic thoughts according to which human nature is capable of being both "good and evil". Each individual can reach the extreme levels of perfection or can fall in degradation. By training individuals in a certain way, they can reach a high premium placed. Ayatollah Beheshti, a revolutionary clergyman, argues that only "a correct suitable education cultivates the virtues of individuals and releases them from the bonds and attractions of carnal desires" (Beheshti, 1983, pp. 45-56).

Another educational principle emphasizes “the power of human’s inner will” and this belief that human beings are free spirits and not the helpless victim of economic, political, social, or biological determinism. Education can deeply influence the choice of individuals and help them to recognize their responsibilities (Shari’atmadari, 1983, p. 13). “Purification” and “commitment” are introduced as two other main principles formulated in the post-revolutionary Islamic education (Mehran, 1990, p. 55). While “purification” is a traditional theme in Muslims’ education and refers to inner spiritual purification, “commitment” was a new subject raised by the authorities of the Iranian government mainly under the influence of leftist and socialist thoughts and particularly Al-e Ahmad’s beliefs. Education is responsible in “creat[ing] a favorable environment for the growth of moral virtues based on faith and piety and to banish forms of vice and corruption” (Islamic Republic of Iran, 1985). This can be explained by using Apple’s (2001) critical perspective which states that the structuring of knowledge in educational institutions is closely connected to the principle of social and cultural control in a society. Organizations of “cultural preservation and distribution” such as schools can construct or reconstruct forms of conciseness that enable social control to be sustained without the interference of leading groups to restore power or dominate them (Apple, 2004).

As Mehran (1990) explains, anti-western views were also very essential in determining education principles. Achieving “independence from foreign dominance, economic self-sufficiency, social justice for the oppressed and cultural pride and strength against colonial intimidation” were among the objectives of the educational policies (p. 57). Given such targets, the primary goal of schooling was training independent “fighters of colonialism and exploitation”. Nativism was represented as the refusal of Western values and emphasis on “sense of pride and glory in being part of an Islamic culture” (Mehran, 1990, p. 57).

Whereas Islamic culture turned out to be the main part of Iranian identity, learning Arabic, the language of the Qur'an, became obligatory. For officials, Islam became the binding force which united Iranians, while in the pre-Revolutionary period, people was stressed to enrich their national Iranian cultural heritage and civilization by linking their culture to the pre-Islamic Iranian history (UNESCO, 1971) (as cited in Mehran, 1990, p. 59). This demonstrates how the official knowledge of educational organizations can form particular constructions of reality, particular ways of selecting and organizing that vast universe of possible knowledge (Apple, 2003).

The Islamic state also widely used cognitive structures for the purpose of interpreting their religion and applied it to their actual life and reshaped it on the basis of historical pressures (Arkoun, 2003). As an example, the Iranian ministry of education announced that education is a form of worship and the search for knowledge is a "*jihad for Allah*" (struggle for God). Education, according to the state's authorities, is "not just a social necessity, but a holy duty" (Islamic Republic of Iran, 1983a). Schools were defined as "human manufacturing factory" and "the centre for modelling human beings" (Bahonar, 1985, p. 14). So, the Iranian education's responsibility was to "educate committed individuals who were aware of their responsibilities and obligations" and to "produce religious experts who are loyal and dedicated members of the community". As Mehran argues, the ultimate goal of post-revolutionary education was to build "a new committed Islamic person whose values and beliefs are in exact accordance with the ideology of the ruling power" (Mehran, 1990, p. 59).

By changing "the horizons and themes of discourse", and by changing the philosophical rationale underlying the creation of law shifts to a different "thinkable" (Arkoun, 2001), the High Council of Education declared that after some investigations and studies, they had made some

decisions and goals to provide students with “Islamic purification and education”. It was asserted that students’ belief system should be empowered by respecting “God, Mohammad’s prophecy and revelation, resurrection, justice of God, Imamate and the leadership of the pure Imams” (as cited by Mohsenpour, 1988, p. 77). This demonstrates that many issues, which cannot be freely thought of in Muslim societies are somehow related to religious life and discourse and have been under the control of both the state and official religious authorities (Ulama) (Arkoun, 2003).

Islamization of the educational system particularly influenced gender issues in Iran. Male-female segregation in schools was one of the main policies implemented in 1979. Furthermore, in 1981, the Ministry of Education asked the female employees and students to wear special Islamic uniforms. Based on this rule, girls from the age of 6 had to wear Islamic uniforms and head covers to school, and female instructors at literacy classes were required to wear the complete black veil, or chador (Mehran, 2003, pp. 277– 278). There were changes in the social context as expressed in the assertion of the different nature and needs of males and females (Mehran, 2003, p. 278).

An examination of the most recent document of the official educational goal of the Islamic Republic of Iran (2011)

The document (2011) opens with two lines or verses of the Quran¹⁴ It states that the only way of dealing with the country’s educational challenges is to follow the supreme leader’s words about

¹⁴ The first verse indicates that redemption is only possible when the people are purified. Getting to this point won’t be possible unless the whole society takes a firm collective action. “Allah will not change the good condition of a people as long as they do not change their state of goodness themselves”. Ar-Ra’d: 11. The second verse states “Whoever works righteousness, whether male or female, while he (or she) is a true believer (of Islamic Monotheism) verily, to him We will give a good life (in this world with respect, contentment and lawful provision), and We shall pay them certainly a reward in proportion to the best of what they used to do (i.e. Paradise in the Hereafter)” Al-Nahl: 97.

the necessity of a fundamental transformation of the educational system based on an “Islamic-Iranian method of education” in order to prevent imitating old, alien patterns (p. 7).

The Supreme Council of Education (2011) defined the historic and momentous mission of the Islamic Republic’s education as “educating proficient human beings whose qualification meets the standards of the Islamic Republic; people who can renew and revive the Iranian/Islamic culture and civilization heading in the direction of establishing the Universal Community of *Mahdaviat*” (*jame’e-ye jahani-ye Mahdaviat*)¹⁵ (p. 9). This aim could be reached by providing adequate resources, offering careful supervision, and training motivated and qualified personnel. It has been declared that this noble goal will not be achieved unless the state engages in major cultural, economic, social, and scientific efforts. Education is considered as the main basis for stepping toward a comprehensive progress and as the most essential tool for training qualified human resources in various fields.

Emphasizing the influence of ideological knowledge structure, Apple (1990) argues that particular groups, political programs or social movements, and worldviews or outlooks justify and legitimate their ideological control over the less dominant ones. This control, he argues, often distorts people’s picture of social reality, thus, serving the interests of the dominant classes in a society (Apple, 1990, p. 20). Apple’s argument is applicable to the analysis of the document under discussion. Among other things the document reads that the “reconstruction of the great Islamic civilization”, “constructive presence of the Iranians in international stage”, and “preparation for restoring justice and spirituality all over the world” depend on “educated

¹⁵ Mahdaviat: Following Mahdi; “Mahdi” means “the rightly guided one” and refers to the name of the restorer of religion and justice who, according to a widely held Muslim belief, will rule before the end of the world. Based on the Twelver Shi’ite believe Mahdi or the 12th Imam was hidden by God following the death of his father in 874 (Madeloung, 2012, para. 1).

knowledgeable, moral, pious individuals” (The Supreme Council of Education, 2011, p. 9). In the document (2011), it is also argued that “only such individuals are able to actualize universal justice and restore the Iranian/Islamic civilization and only an Islamic state can facilitate the flourishing of human being’s talent and capabilities” (p. 9).

Arkoun explains that religion and everything related to it is one of the most important configurational spaces in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Islam is one of the most determining forces in the educational system as it is imposed everywhere and at all levels, especially in the social sciences (Arkoun, 2001). It is agreed that all policies, educational planning, and reforms need to be based on the national declaration of educational goal. Educational staff are asked to behave in accordance with the value system derived from the Quranic teachings, the Prophetic tradition, the Shi’ite Imams’ sayings and deeds, and the words of the supreme leaders. Among thirty propositions determining the educational value system, ten of these emphasize the centrality of the Islamic ideology. *Mahdaviat*, restoring the universal justice community, choosing the Prophet, his daughter, and the Shi’i imams, as education role models, and following the Islamic Supreme Leaders’ words are among the propositions of the document (The Supreme Council of Education, 2011).

Preservation of “national unity” and “social solidarity” based on the Islamic-Iranian national identity, patriotism, honoring noble Islamic-Iranian values and civilization, and reinforcement of the Persian language as the common language are among the core issues that the textbook’s authors had to consider when writing it (The Supreme Council of Education, 2011, p. 9). As Arkoun (2001) discusses, while writing history, it is important to make an issue of each word, each concept, and each attitude used by the social protagonists and bring evidence in the interpretative process. Otherwise, history would be misleading and even dangerous for people

who integrate representations of the past as proposed by historians as the indisputable truth about this past. In this case, each social group builds an image of its past “without having the means to differentiate this mythical or ideological image from the critical problematization provided by modern historians”. (p. 24)

History education in Iranian schools (students, teachers, and officials)

History education scholars argue that history teaching and learning is, to a great extent, about the process of communicating knowledge about the past. As I explained in the methodology chapter, historical literacy can help students not only to “learn the facts but to think about the process of historical interpretation, relate the past to the present, and question the uses of the past (“The Australian Center for History Education”, n.d.)

As Abbas Partoee-moghadam, the official expert of the history education group at the Curriculum Development Center at the Iranian Ministry of Education, criticizes history teaching in Iran and points out like other courses in humanities, teaching history in Iranian educational institutions faces many problems; these includes having an inappropriate approach, following unrealistic goals, and the lack of a comprehensive approach when selecting and organizing the content of the textbook (Kheir-abadi, 2010). He believes that the current history curriculum fails to educate citizens who are creative, knowledgeable, and committed and are capable to think critically (Kheir-abadi, 2010).

In order to acquire historical literacy, students should be able to realize that historical explanations are not copies of the past and that they should be “evaluated as answers to questions in terms of (at least) the range of evidence they explain [and] their explanatory power and their congruence with other knowledge” (as cited in Lee, 2004). However, as Partoee-moghadam mentions, the current content of the official textbook consists of a collection of political and

martial information, events, and news. As a result, by reading the textbook, students do not learn as much as they should and their brain merely stores some irrelevant and meaningless historical data without being capable of relating these events with each other and with their daily social life (Kheir-abadi, 2010).

This is a clear contrast to an active cortical method in which the aim of history teaching is to challenge students to think like historians and raise essential questions that cannot be answered with classroom texts and cross-curricular literacy skills. These questions can be chosen based on the “use of inquiry, need of significance, role of self/identity, sense of empathy, use of evidence, importance of causation, connection to the present, role of judgment, language of history, and use of historical narrative” (Levesque, 2008). Kheir-abadi (2010) criticizes the authors of the Iranian history textbook as the followers of a single, monolithic view of the past, and for emphasizing on political aspects of a historical event exceedingly more than the cultural, social, and economic dimensions. He adds:

In fact, the current history textbook is more the history of the rulers and politicians and less the history of people and the country’s social life. That is why history courses are not very popular in schools and students often consider it as an unpleasant and unimportant subject. (Kheir-abadi, 2010)

On the basis of this, history in the Iranian educational system is not equipped with a workable notion of historical literacy to help the students to understand historical processes that lie behind events (Lee, 2004).

In a survey conducted on high school students in order to find the practical ways of encouraging them to become more interested in Iranian contemporary history courses, the author interviewed a number of high school students in Mashhad trying to find out what are the

educational problems of teaching history in Iran are, and how they could be addressed (Iran-danesh, 2012). The students' answer to the question of why they are not interested in history shows that most of them do not consider history courses seriously because it is "not a main subject" in "the Iranian University Entrance Exam" known as Concours (*konkoor*). Some students found history classes "tiresome and dull" and others complained that "the content of the books are repetitious" and that they had, more or less, very similar content in their middle school's history textbooks. They also mentioned that history makes them to have a "cynical view toward the past" and "they find it hard to believe what the book says" (Iran-danesh, 2012). Others regarded the history classes as "the resting class" because during these classes they do not need to do anything but to listen to the teacher when she/he reads the book (Iran-danesh, 2012). These experiences are not in line with the notion of a historical knowledge that does not consist of discrete items or is treated as an accumulation of events, nor is it in agreement or with an analytical approach which provides students with technical concepts, ideas, and intellectual means to make sense of the unstable and complex past they encounter (Vansledright, 2009).

This survey clarifies that the content of the history textbooks used in Iranian schools fails to attract students' attention because of its repetitious nature and its decontextualization of the historical events and its unidimensionality. It has also been stated that the textbook has been designed in a way that compels students to passively memorize the content (Iran-danesh, 2012). Generally, the history textbook generally was found to be a single-dimensional heavy textbook which fails to attract students' attention.

Scholars argue that in order to achieve historical literacy, students should be challenged to think like historians and raise essential questions that cannot be answered with classroom texts and cross-curricular literacy skills. These questions are constructed having in mind the "use of

inquiry, need of significance, role of self/identity, sense of empathy, use of evidence importance of causation, connection to the present, role of judgment, language of history, and use of historical narrative” (Levesque, 2008). However, the teaching of history in Iranian schools merely relies on the textbook rather than on any other educational tools and resources such as museums and libraries. Moreover, the textbooks are not prepared with enough maps and pictures to properly represent the historical events properly. Lastly, the teaching of history by unskilled and reluctant teachers easily permeates students’ negative view of history as an academic course (Iran-danesh, 2012).

Reading the previous lines, one realizes that teaching history in Iran has many failures and in particular the lack of attention to supporting evidence. Hence, students are not encouraged to investigate and weight evidences with a deep sense of historical empathy to avoid naïve or intuitive “presentist” judgments of the past actors (Levesque, 2008). As Seixas, Stearns & Wineburg (2000) state, given poor pedagogical practices, pedagogical inefficiencies as well as ideological, political, and social limitations in history classes often leave no room in history classes to raise provocative questions such as:

What has been left out of this text?; what would I think if different facts had been highlighted here?; what if this text [textbook] had been written by those who hold a point of view opposite to the one embedded in the story as told? (p. 2)

As a result, history teaching fails to educate students to see the world and can situate themselves in the temporal and spacial dimensions that are desirable as in a literate and democratically–minded person (Bruno-Jofré, 2010).

Another fundamental problem affecting the teaching of history in Iran is the influence of short-term political policies on the history textbook’s content. Rasoul Jafarian, the head of the

Parliament library of Iran, criticizes the way the authors of the Iranian contemporary history textbook change the content of the book based on the current Government's benefits and expectations. For example, he states that the name of the fourth president of Iran after the Revolution, Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani and his political act have been omitted from the 2009 contemporary Iranian history textbook and his historical role has been neglected in the parts which related to the early post-Revolutionary years and the Wartime (1979-1990). Jafarian (2012) also states that Mr. Hashemi-Rafsanjani's not only had many high governmental positions since 1980 but also that his memoirs and books are among the main contemporary Iranian historical documents. He argues that Hashemi-Rafsanjani's works are authentic historical sources and that the current authors of the history textbook should note that "being the member of a particular political group" and "following its political benefits" should not keep them from using an authentic historical approach (Jafarian, 2012, para. 6).

This approach opposes Stearn's view, according to which, in order to improve democratic citizenship, political institutions should provide the opportunity for people to become familiar with comparative approaches of historical analysis and be able to compare past and current events, and in this way develop their democratic habits of mind (as cited in Levesque, 2008).

Jafarian highlights that editing and omitting names and events from history textbooks happens in Iran every 4-5 years as the government changes. He believes that the problem cannot be solved unless educational organizations do their job independently without having to send the textbooks to a governmental organization, to be altered and modified, according to their political interests before proceeding to be published. He states that such a governmental interference obviously is not based on academic standards and as a result, textbooks record "a biased unrealistic version of

history” which represents “the short-term political interests of a certain group of society” (Jafarian, 2012, para. 7).

This chapter has explained and analyzed how the Revolutionary ideological movement in Iran identified “a new model citizen”, and designed new official educational goals based on Islamic principles. Using Apple’s (2004) critical theory and Arkoun’s (2001) theory of the “unthought” in religious societies, I have examined the most recent document of the official educational goal of The Islamic Republic of Iran (2011) issued by The Supreme Council of Education. Furthermore, based on the tenets of historical literacy, I have identified the limits and barriers imposed to history education in Iran and the impact of the ideological and political hegemony on the content of the history textbook and history education in the Iranian educational system.

Chapter 5

Textbook Analysis

In this chapter, I analyse and examine the political, ideological and cultural discourses embedded in the secondary school history course book, *The Contemporary History of Iran (Tārīkh-i Mu'āshir-i Iran)* which is a mandatory textbook in the Iranian education system. The analysis of the textbook is based on a theoretical framework constructed by historical literacy method, Apple's critical theory, and Arkoun's framework to analyze religious societies. First, I explore the textbook's content and the identified aims and objectives; this is followed by a critical analysis of the various chapters. I have combined some chapters together mostly because their contents are similar in narrating a detailed simple version of the past, and not highlight on any thought-provoking issue.

The book begins with a picture of Ayatollah Khomeini and his statement: "Today the students must do their best to learn the history of our Islamic revolution and the significance of people's alliance with the ulama" (as cited in Velayati, Erfanmanesh, Mirzaii, & Tavakoli, 2011, p. 1). Both the picture and the words of Ayatollah Khomeini, the main religious and political leader of the Islamic Revolution, remind us that the textbook is authorized and published within the political and ideological constraints of resources and power (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991).

Also, by looking at the content of the Iranian contemporary history textbook and its structure, one realizes how the ideological supremacy influences school curricula and how legitimate knowledge arises as the result of complex power relations and struggles involving class, race, gender, and religious group affiliation (Apple, 2003). After the Islamic Revolution (1979), the traditional "Ulama" and the ideological Islamic states used their power in order to guarantee that

the Islamic ideology was protected from any kind of intellectual and scientific analysis. Changing the official knowledge could help them reach this goal (Arkoun, 2002). According to Apple, the serious debates on “official knowledge” shows what is included and excluded in the textbooks often proxies for wider questions of power relations. Thus, through its content, the textbook generates particular constructions of reality and ways of selecting and organizing vast universe of possible knowledge (Apple, 2003).

Textbook’s Content

A word to teachers	
A word to students	
A brief review of the history of Iran before the Qajar (1785)	1
Lesson 1: The Qajar Rule from Agha Mohammad Khan to Mohammad Shah [1794–1848]	17
Lesson 2: The Naser al-Din Shah reign [1848–1896]	27
Lesson 3: The Iranian constitutional movement: roots and backgrounds	37
Lesson 4: The beginning of the Iranians’ movement against arbitrary rule and the triumph of the Constitutional Revolution [1906]	43
Lesson 5: The Constitutionalism under Mohammad Ali Shah [1907–1909]	52
Lesson 6: The second period of Constitutionalism (1909–1914)	61
Lesson 7: The 1921 Coup	72
Lesson 8: Reza Khan: stabilizing power	81
Lesson 9: The characteristics of Reza Shah’s Rule.	89
Lesson 10: The Fall of Reza Shah [1941]	98
Lesson 11: The occupation of Iran by the Allies and its consequences [1941]	106
Lesson 12: the Oil Nationalization Movement [1951]	112
Lesson 13: the backgrounds of the 1953 Coup	118
Lesson 14: the 1953 Coup	129
Lesson 15: a twenty-five-year America’s dominance over Iran	135
Lesson 16: the backgrounds and aims of the American reform in Iran	142
Lesson 17: the roots of the emergence of Ulama’ movement	146

Lesson 18: the Revolt of June 1963	152
Lesson 19: Iran's changes after Imam Khomeini's exile [1963]	162
Lesson 20: Iran at the threshold of the Islamic Revolution [1979]	173
Lesson 21: The triumph of the Islamic Revolution [1979]	181
Lesson 22: The provisional government of Bazargan [1979]	190
Lesson 23: The first presidency [1980–1981]	199
Lesson 24: the imposed war of Iraq against Iran [1980–1988]	210
Lesson 25: The goals and the achievements of the Islamic Revolution	220
Resources	233

(Velayati, Erfanmanesh, Mirzaii, & Tavakoli, 2011)

While many scholars emphasize on the necessity of following an analytical approach for teaching history, evidence shows that none of the methods and strategies of historical literacy have fully and clearly been introduced and formulated in the Iranian education system. There is no room to introduce the students to other versions of the story, and students are not engaged in an inquiry process of assessing the historical evidence and comparing these, and relating them to their present (Seixas, 2000). The textbook merely asks teachers to follow an “analytical and scientific approach” with no frame of reference to its meaning. Teachers are asked instead of relying on the narratives they should choose “an analytical framework” and explain “the cause and effect relations” of each event for students by using evidences and historical documents. The point here is that the cause and effect relations should lead to a justification of the pre-established ideological framework which is at the core of the Revolution and is embedded in the text. It is an interesting case of indoctrination. Also, teachers are told not to encourage students to memorize the book's context but to teach them how to analyze historical events (Velayati, Erfanmanesh, Mirzaii, & Tavakoli, 2011). However, the students are not allowed to think freely and there are always frontiers between the thinkable and unthinkable (Arkoun, 2002).

Although in the textbook teachers are strongly recommended to rely on the textbook to organize lessons and structure the subject matter, they are not provided with guideline on how to develop an analytic approach in history and how to teach history analytically. Most importantly, as Arkoun (2002) explains, in an ideological society such as Iran, Islam as a religion or a world vision sustained by a still living tradition, with a great verity of cultural, social, and political expressions remains a challenge to the social sciences. These living traditions have powerful influence on the educational system, the humanities, and the social sciences. Therefore, even if the teachers are recommended to follow an “analytical and scientific approach” instead of the “narrative historiographical approach”, the dominant traditions of thought do not allow them to speak or even think about some particular subjects (Arkoun, 2002). Arkoun refers to the limits imposed by political and social pressure on “the innovative and critical facilities of reason and explains there are a number of ideas, values, explanations, horizon of meanings, artistic creations, initiatives, institutions, and way of life that have been discarded, rejected, ignored, or doomed to failure, by the long-term historical evolution called tradition or living tradition [traditions which are alive and dominant among people]” (p. 11). Hence, in such living traditions or linguistic mental spaces (logospheres), teachers cannot freely speak about certain issues. As a result, these issues become narrowed and weakened and become to recognize as “unthinkable” issues (p. 11).

The authority of the traditional “ulama” and the ideological Islamic states guarantee that in the Iranian education system, a deeply dogmatic and unapproachable version of Islam is protected from all intellectual and scientific analysis. Here “unthought” is referred to “an Islam that is isolated from the most elementary historical reasoning, linguistic analysis or anthropological decoding” (Arkoun, 2002, p. 308).

In the textbook, 28 goals have been identified as the aims and objectives of this history textbook. Teachers are asked to make sure that the students learn and come to a relatively good understanding of these defined aims by the end of the term. These aims are defined as:

1. How the Qajar dynasty [1794–1848] was established and was stabilized by explaining the domestic and foreign causes.
2. The Imperialistic goals of the European countries (England, France, and Russia) in Iran and their competitions during the first decades of the Qajar Period [1790s–1820s].
3. Students’ knowledge of the kings and senior officials’ characteristics and their governance approach.
4. Britain and Russia’s constant influence and interference in Iran’s domestic issues during the Qajar period [1794–1848].
5. Iran’s social and economic system and its transformation during the Qajar period.
6. The social, economic, and cultural results of the improvement of Iran’s international relation with the European countries.
7. The background causes of the popular movements during the Tobacco Revolt [1891–1892] and the Constitutional Revolution [1906].
8. The outcomes and consequences of the Tobacco Revolt and the Constitutional Revolution.

9. The social, cultural, and political role of the ulama in their opposition to the arbitrary rule and foreign Imperialism as well as the triumph of the Constitutional Revolution [1906]
10. “Formation of non-seminary (*gheir-e hawzavi*) educated people” (intellectuals) and their social and political influence.
11. The effects of World War I & II on Iran.
12. The emergence, establishment, and fall of Reza Shah’s dictatorship and the Pahlavi dynasty [1921–1941] focusing on its interior and foreign causes.
13. The aims and consequences of Reza Shah’s measures.
14. The struggle and competition of the great powers, (Britain, Russia, and the United States) to gain influence and dominance over Iran.
15. The Oil Nationalization Movement [1951]; its background causes and consequences.
16. The 1953 coup and its interior and foreign causes.
17. The United States’ political, economic, and military influence and domination after the 1953 coup.
18. The background causes of Islamic Religious Movement.
19. The role of Imam Khomeini in his opposition to foreign dominance and the Pahlavi regime’s dependency.

20. Protesters and opponents of the Pahlavi regime (their strategies and points of view).
21. The Islamic Revolution [1979] and the overthrow of Pahlavi's monarchy.
22. The establishment and consolidation of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
23. The conspiracy of foreign powers particularly the United States against the Islamic Republic of Iran.
24. Sabotage measures of terrorist groups and interior counter-revolutionary' activates after the Revolution.
25. Iranian people's resistance against conspiracies and enmities of interior and foreign enemies of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
26. The imposed Iraq War against Iran and the defense of Iran's people against aggressor and the war's consequences.
27. The leadership and management of Imam Khomeini (1900-1989) & Ayatollah Khamenei.
28. The achievements of the Islamic Republic of Iran (its independency from the political, economic, and cultural aspects) (Velayati, Erfanmanesh, Mirzaii, & Tavakoli, 2011).

Chapter 1 of The Contemporary History Textbook

The first chapter of the textbook discusses the Qajar's rule from Agha Mohammad Khan to Mohammad Shah [1794–1848]. This chapter briefly describes how the Qajar dynasty came to the

power, and then immediately reflects on the Aqha Mohammad Khan's last great military campaign in Georgia, and his attempt to get back the lands which had slipped out of Persian suzerainty earlier. While some well-known historians such as Homa Katouzian (2009) and Arvand Abrahamian (2008) describe that this campaign (1795) was a disaster and led to the massacre of the people of Tiflis after the town was captured, and 15,000 souls were taken into slavery, the textbook regards this event as a successful war which resulted in restoration of Iran's rule (Velayati, Erfanmanesh, Mirzaii, & Tavakoli, 2011). This point of view, which is clearly opposite to that of other main historians, demonstrates that the authors of the book only highlight some aspects of the past that they think are worth to be investigated and to be uncovered. They choose a significant past and emphasize on a particular aspect of reality construction, and they select and organize the past based on their own political discourse (Apple, 2003).

Influenced by the anti-imperialistic discourse, the rest of the chapter discusses the European imperialist military-political invasion of Iran and it explains how Iran's defeat in the Russo-Persian war (1804) resulted in the Iranians suing for peace via British mediation and the subsequent signing of the Golestan treaty in 1813. As a result of this Treaty, most of the Caucasus was ceded to Russia, and only the Russians could keep a fleet in the Caspian Sea. This treaty is regarded as the sign of erosion of Iran's independence in the hands of Russia. The existing literature reiterates that textbooks are "potential vehicles for creating historical understanding and the authors speak from a position of transcendence, a position of knowing from on high" (Wineburg, 2001, p. 7). In Wineburg's view, before looking at the past, we know more or less what we are looking for. Without trying to change or rethink who we are, we form the past the way we want, like clay in our hands. Selectively, the book focuses on the role of the ulama and the way the ulama's objections and religious decrees (*fatwas*) encouraged people to defend their

country, and explains how much their participation in the battlefield was crucial in preventing the Russian army advance into Iran's territory (Velayati, Erfanmanesh, Mirzaii, & Tavakoli, 2011).

Accordingly, "the ineptitude of the rulers and the Britain's betrayal" are counted as the main causes of the treaty of Turkamanchai in 1828 by which the whole of the Caucasus was permanently ceded to Russia, including the khanates of Nakhchivan and Yerevan, and an indemnity of one million roubles was paid (Velayati, Erfanmanesh, Mirzaii, & Tavakoli, 2011, p. 22). Besides, "The capitulation agreement" (1828) which gave Russia extra-territorial rights in Iran for the voluntary repatriation and legal protection of its subjects as well as former subjects of the Russian empire is regarded as "one of the most ignominious treaty" during the contemporary Iranian history which led to "the loss of the country's independency" (Velayati, Erfanmanesh, Mirzaii, & Tavakoli, 2011, p. 22).

Chapter 2

The second chapter which is about the Naser al-Din Shah period [1848–1896] introduces three historical characters of that time (one national and two religious characters), and provides some biographical information about them in separate columns. The authors' choosing these individuals as the main historical characters of that time illustrates that the Islamic States' officials intend to convey a particular version of the past and use specific information to prove their political agendas (Seixas, Stearns, & Wineburg, 2000).

The first character is Amir Kabir (1807-1852) who ruled the country in the shah's name. In this textbook (2011), Amir Kabir is described as:

A patriot and a nationalist historical character who made a great effort for the countries' independency and integrity and fought against aliens' dominance during his political life.

He is also admired for strengthening the national army and economic developments. But, more importantly, he is prized for foiling the Babi-Baha'i sect's intrigue. (p. 29)

As Apple (2004) argues, ideology plays an important role in knowledge structure where some particular groups, political programs, social movements, and worldviews or outlooks justify and legitimate their ideological control over the less dominant. This control often distorts people's picture of social reality and serves the interests of the dominant classes (Apple, 1990, p. 20). Based on this idea, "the Babi-Baha'I sect" was defined as:

A deviant group and a trick of the imperialism to weakening the religious and cultural foundations of Islamic societies; the leader of this misled sect, Sayyed Ali-Mohammad Bab, claimed that he was an intermediary between the people and Imam Mahdi (the 12th Imam of Shiite) and at the end he claimed prophecy and offered a new religion. He was excommunicated by Shi'a ulama and was executed by the command of Amir Kabir in Tabriz¹⁶. (p. 29)

Obviously, after reading the above statement, one recognizes that Baha'ism is not a legal religion in the Islamic State. After the 1979' Revolution, before returning to Iran, Khomeini, in an interview conducted by Professor James Cockroft, stated that Bahais would not have religious freedom:

"Cockroft: Will there be either religious or political freedom for the Bahais under the Islamic government?"

¹⁶ Babism is a 19th-century messianic movement in Iran and Iraq under the leadership of Sayyed Ali-Mohammad Shirazi, the Bab (1819-1850). Babism was the only significant millenarian movement in Shi'ite Islam during the 19th century. Also, Baha'ism or Bahai faith, is a religion founded in the nineteenth century by Baha'-Allah that grew out of the Iranian messianic movement of Babism and developed into a world religion with internationalist and pacifist emphases" (Encyclopedia Iranica, 2011).

Khomeini: They are a political faction; they are harmful. They will not be accepted.

Cockroft: How about their freedom of religion– religious practice?

Khomeini: No”¹⁷ (Cockroft, 1979).

The structuring of knowledge in Iranian educational institutions is aligned with social and cultural control educational institutions are means of cultural preservation and reproduction which aim to construct or reconstruct ways of sustaining the Islamic state without interference from groups questioning that state (Apple, 2003).

The second character is Seyyed Jamal al-Din Asadabadi (Afghani) (1838 –1897), who was a political activist and Islamic ideologist during the late 19th century. The book describes him as “a thinker, a great revolutionary eloquent speaker, and one of the leaders of anti-imperialism in

¹⁷

The International Religious Freedom Report states that:

In 2011 “at least 60 Baha’is were arbitrarily arrested in Iran. Some were later released after paying a large fine or posting a high bail. By the end of the year, at least 95 Baha’is were in jail and 416 Baha’i cases were still active, the report stated, citing human rights groups. Meanwhile, at least 30 Baha’is were barred or expelled from universities. In May of 2011, the Baha’i Institute for Higher Education (BIHE), created to give Baha’is in Iran an alternative way to earn a college degree, was reportedly declared illegal, the report stated. (para. 3)

The State Department report (2012) catalogs the injustices committed against this minority religious community, numbering between 300,000 and 350,000 people:

Baha’is are banned from the social pension system, barred from leadership positions in the government and military, denied compensation for injury or crimes committed against them, refused the right to inherit property, and prohibited from officially assembling, the report stated. Their marriages and divorces are not officially recognized. Acts of arson were reported throughout the year targeting Baha’is in several cities, according to the report. In some cases, letters sent to the owners of the burned businesses warned that Baha’is should not befriend Muslims. Also, Baha’i children were reportedly harassed in school and subjected to Islamic indoctrination, the report stated. (para. 6-7)

Islamic societies during the Qajar period”. Jamal al-Din Asadabadi supported the idea of “unity of Muslim societies” (Velayati, Erfanmanesh, Mirzaii, & Tavakoli, 2011, p. 28). He has been regarded as the one who fought against despotism and imperialism and who criticized the British diplomatic imperialistic activities in Eastern countries (Katouzian, 2009). Apart from the book, other historians discussed the influence of Jamal al-Din Asadabadi’s remarks on Mirza Reza Kermani who shot Naser Al-Din Shah’ dead in May 1896 as he was visiting the shrine of Hazrat-e Abodl’azim near Tehran¹⁸. Obviously, this character was chosen due to the fact that his ideas were very close to the Islamic State’s cultural and political aims. In fact, Asadabadi’s dream was creating a Pan-Islamic nation free from imperialist domination.

The third historical character is Mirza Hasan Shirazi (1814-1896), the senior religious authority (Marja’). When, in 1890, the shah granted a concession to the British firm Talbot for the monopoly production, sale and exportation of Iranian tobacco, many of the ulama objected because they regarded themselves as “the protectors of the people’s interests”, and also because of “the fear of growing European domination” (Velayati, Erfanmanesh, Mirzaii, & Tavakoli, 2011, p. 33). The Talbot concession caused economic recession and dramatically influenced domestic trade and production. Most of the ulama accepted the call of the protestors for support. One of them was Mirza Hasan Shirazi who published a religious decree (*fatwa*) equating the consumption of tobacco with waging war against the Hidden Imam¹⁹. The book regards this religious decree as “the main people’s motivation for Tobacco Revolt” (1891) and also considers

¹⁸ According to Katouzian (2009), Mirza Reza was instructed to assassinate the shah by Seyyed Jamal al-Din Asadabadi, whose devoted disciple he was, his strongest motive was to avenge the shah’s ill-treatment of his mentor, although he himself had also experienced torture and jail.

¹⁹ The *fatwa* was “as from today, consumption of tobacco and smoking the water-pipe (qalian) is forbidden (haram) and tantamount to waging war against the Imam of the Time” (Katouzia, 2009, p.164).

it as the first time that the ulama raised their power and authority. It has been explained that the people responded to this *fatwa* with full vigor and boycotted the use of tobacco. Because of this Revolt, the shah cancelled the entire concession and had to pay a £500,000 cancellation fee facilitated by the Imperial Bank of Persia.

Many historians regard this Revolt as the beginning of the people's awakening and a preparation for the Constitutional Revolution in 1906 (Katouzian, 2009; Abrahamian, 2008). However, the authors of the textbook deeply emphasize the role of religious groups. This emphasis can be explained by the hegemonic role of the ulama in the Islamic state. As Apple states, hegemony refers to "an organized assemblage of meanings and practices, the central, effective and dominant system or meaning, values and actions which are *lived*" (Apple, 2004, p. 3). In the Islamic state, religion is regarded as "an important value system which creates a sense of reality for most people in society; a sense of absolute experienced as a reality beyond which it is very difficult for people to pass in most areas of their lives" (as cited in Apple, 2004, p. 3). Apple considers educational institutions as one of the main agencies of transmission of hegemony or the effective dominant culture.

Chapter 3

The chapter quotes a short statement by the current Islamic Republic's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei claiming that:

We should be proud of the Constitutional Revolution (1906) as a turning point in contemporary Iran's history. We should always remember the ulama were seeking justice by their dedication, sanctuaries, and resistance during the Constitutional Revolution. We should notice that they were perusing not only moral justice but also governmental justice (as cited in Velayati, Erfanmanesh, Mirzaii, & Tavakoli, 2011, p. 37).

This statement conveys the message that religion has political authority and that an ideal state is an Islamic one in which the primary basis for government is Islamic religious law. As Arkoun (2001) argues, it is not possible to study Islamic Societies unless one notes that religion and everything related to it is one of the most important configurational spaces. The Islamic state as a political power transforms “the horizons and themes of discourse”; these changes happen not only to laws but also to the philosophical rationale underlying the creation of law shifts to a different “thinkable” which here can be identified as the Islamic State (Arkoun, 2001, p. 12).

The chapter identified five issues as the main causes of the emergence of the Constitutional Revolution. These issues are Iran’s loss of territory, imperials (Britain, Russia and France) dominance over the country, arbitrary government’s actions, people and the ulama’s opposition to arbitrary rule and imperialism, and the spread of intellectual thoughts via newspapers, books and travelogues. The book overwhelmingly focuses on the role of religious trends and the ulama and their opposition to the authorities’ tyranny. In many parts of the book the ulama are regarded as the only group who were close to people and understood the public. By highlighting the charismatic role of the ulama, the book aims to give the reader this idea that the ulama always have had a wise and correct understanding of the social, political, and cultural situation of the country. Consequently, religious groups are the only ones that people can trust.

The textbook does not even consider the role of modernity including the printing industry, the European intellectual trends, and modern political and social trends. In contrast, academic historians explain how the rapidly growing voluntary associations and societies resulted in Iranian’s familiarity with modern political and social thoughts and, for example, how during the constitutionalist movement, western political ideas, such as the notion of the modern public sphere or conception of civil society, emerged in the Iran society of Iran in the form of

independent and critical newspapers and journals (Katouzian, 2009).

Chapter 4, 5 & 6

These chapters of the textbook describe the Constitutional movement and also a series of social and political events (1905-1906) which finally resulted in the triumph of the Constitutional Revolution (1906). As in previous chapters describing these historical events, religion has been regarded the main inspiration for people's agency, and the ulama were introduced as the main leaders of the movement. It is believed that without their canonical role, people could not reach their political and social goals. For example, the "fact" that on the eve of the revolution in 1905, the discovery of a photograph of a fancy dress party showing some Belgians wearing the mullahs' attire was identified as the main cause. Although historical sources proved that this picture was taken two years earlier and people's dissatisfaction had rooted predominant political and economic dissatisfaction (Katouzian, 2009). In this story, the ulama's cooperation and alliance is highlighted as "the main motivation for people's uprising which led to their sanctuary in the shrine of Hazrat-e Abdol'azim" (Velayati, Erfanmanesh, Mirzaii, & Tavakoli, 2011, p. 44). Similarly, the ulama are regarded as the main representatives of the country's political independence. As Arkoun (2001) argues, by using this strategy, the Islamic State aims to influence public opinion and control ways of thinking by interiorizing interpretations of the world in the name of the nation or religion.

Using supporting evidence and with a sense of historical empathy, some academic historians analyze how the government's tyrannical behavior, with some of the ulama in Kerman, its arbitrary actions in various parts of the country, an increase in the price of sugar, and the government's blaming of the bazaar and bastinadoing three prominent sugar merchants caused the movement's explosion (Abrahamian, 2008). Abrahamian explains how these confrontations

paved the way to two major protests, which, in turn, led to the drafting of a written constitution in June 1906.

Many scholars wrote about the Constitutional Revolution as one of the main historical events in contemporary Iran (Katouzian, 2009; Abrahamian, 2008). Nevertheless, the authors of the textbook merely adhere to a single, monolithic view of the past and disregard academic historical works that contradict their views. The book leaves no place for other authors' opinions, judgment, emphasis, or uncertainty. Also, it is hard to find out how the text was developed and the documentary record rarely is cited in the textbook. Moreover, there is no visible author to encounter the reader in textbooks; therefore the textbook speaks from "a position of knowing from on high" (Wineburg, 2001).

In chapter five some of the obstacles and barriers on the way of the first constitution are explained, and again the role of religious authorities (*mujtahids*) and their struggles to change the law in accordance with the Islamic law (Shari'a) are highlighted. As Katouzaian (2009) explains, during the first assembly, a large group of parties, organizations and newspapers were established. Influenced by these intellectual changes, some of the revolutionary radicals who were especially influential in some of the official and unofficial leagues or associations (*anjomans*) did not compromise with religious groups; they insisted on the unlimited power of the people and on applying European modernization (Katouzain, 2009). They criticized the constitutional clause for giving the ulama veto power over parliamentary legislation and argued that the traditional law (shari'a) had nothing to say about state laws and therefore it should be limited (Abrahamian, 2008). This view was opposed by some religious traditionalists such as Sheikh Fazlollah Nuri, the most senior of the three religious authorities (*mujtaheds*) in Tehran. As a result, he broke his alliance with his two colleagues and "formed a Society of the Prophet, rebuilt bridges to the shah,

and issued a major *fatwa* denouncing the Liberals” for opening up the floodgates to anarchism, nihilism, socialism, and naturalism” (as cited in Abrahamian, 2008, p. 50). He also states that “Babis, Bahais, and Armenians were scheming to destroy Islam with such heretical innovations as elected parliaments, secular laws, and, worst of all, religious equality” (as cited in Abrahamian, 2008, p. 50).

The textbook emphasizes how Sheikh Fazlollah Nuri and his sustained efforts were effective in the establishment of a constitutional clause for giving the five *mojtaheds* veto power over parliamentary legislation. The textbook also highlights that in the assembly, *mojtahids* had the main responsibility to control and supervise the Law’s formulation and approval to be in accordance with Islamic law (*shari’a*). As Levesque (2008) clarifies, the text reflects on some particular interests and areas of significance in the mind of the authors and their judgment on the influences of selected historical accounts. An increasing amount of literature is devoted to the negative influence of the western thoughts and Liberal parties on the first Iranian Constitution. It has been explained how as a result, Sheikh Fazlollah Nuri left the Constitutionalist and announced that Constitution had to be religiously legitimized (*mashroute-ye mashrouee*) (Velayati, Erfanmanesh, Mirzaii, & Tavakoli, 2011). Since Sheikh Fazlollah Nuri was a strong opponent of the separation of the state from religion, his political ideas have been deeply honored by the Islamic regime. By admiring this historical character, the Islamic Republic develops a relationship with its past and present in order to have better control over its future (Arkoun, 2001).

However, historical sources which were not used in the textbook look at Sheikh Fazlollah Nuri’s political role from a different point of view; they explain how he became the leader of the shah’s coup that wanted derogation of the Constitution (1909) and approved the shah’s

restoration of arbitrary rule. Historical evidences show even the other ulama in Najaf disproved Nuri and his group and supported the Constitution against the shah and Nuri's claim (Katouzian 2009, Abrahamian, 2008). After the coup and then the constitutionalists' victory, a special tribunal was set to punish those responsible for the civil war. Sheikh Fazlollah Nuri was among those executed. He was hanged after being found guilty and was charged with the capital offense of "sowing corruption on earth" the same charge he had levied against his liberal opponents (Abrahamian, 2009, p. 53).

While Nuri deeply hurt the feelings of the constitutionalists and also the other ulama in Najaf publicly condemned him as a corruptor (*mofsid*) (Katouzian, 2009, p. 187), the current post-Revolutionary regime deeply prizes him as the only *mojtahed* who defended the religiously legitimized constitution (*mashroute-ye mashrouee*) and opposed a constitution based on Western's intellectualism. The textbook (2011) states that:

Nuri's execution was the most horrible action of the constitutionalists and one of the dirty deceptions of Imperialists (Western countries) in Iran. The Democratic Party in particular was the representative of western cultural and political invasion which aimed to separate religion from the state and deviate the movement from its noble goals (p. 61).

A part of the chapter is devoted to Ayatollah Khomeini's life and how, during the World War I, when Ayatollah Khomeini was a teen, he was aware of the political and social situations of his time. To prove this claim, the textbook relies on his poetry booklet in which a Bahar's ²⁰ famous patriotic poet is included. By signifying even the tiniest attitude of the State's political leader, the authors try to build a positive and powerful image of Ayatollah Khomeini's past without relying

²⁰ Mohammad-Taqi Bahar (1884-1951) is an Iranian poet. His poems are fairly traditional and strongly nationalistic in character.

on adequate supporting evidence, something that is relevant in a commitment to historical literacy (Levesque, 2008).

Chapter 7

Chapter seven begins with the Britain-Iran's agreement of 1919 until Reza Khan's coup of 1921 which was supported by Seyyed Zia (a leading journalist and political activist who had close relations with British diplomats in Tehran). When compared to other chapters, this one narrates the historical events in a relatively similar manner to academic historians. However, the chapter merely narrates the facts without reflecting on any thought-provoking issues that could enable students to make sense of important and complicated ideas and knowledge of history (Levesque, 2008). Some of the historical events of this period include World War I, the Russian revolution of 1917, Russia's loss of power in Iran, and Britain's replacement as the sole remaining power in the Middle East are among some historical issues of this period.

Chapter 8

In many historical works, Reza Khan is described as a modern dictator who overthrew the Qajars and replaced them with his own monarchy. Providing a fair description, Reza Khan is regarded as the one who put an end to chaos in the provinces as well as the center, established domestic order and stability and brought a period of dictatorial government which later turned into arbitrary rule. Katouzain (2009) states that "his self-confidence at first served him well, but easy success – together with the absolute power of the ruler and the extraordinary subservience and sycophancy of the ruled – later turned into self-delusion" (p. 201).

The textbook (2011), however, only highlights the negative aspect of Reza Khan's character and states:

According to many historians, Reza Khan was not talented nor had a distinguished

personality. But, his authoritarian and military character helped him to be successful over his opponents and to achieve his goals. He never revealed his intention while conducting his plans (being sneaky) while he was capable of doing anything and never avoided his responsibilities; thus, he was a relatively suitable alternative to the Qajars' weak-willed and inefficient rulers (p. 78).

Due to the Islamic state's hatred for the pre-revolutionary regime, the textbook neglects the whole aspect of reality by offering limited information which creates a fixed notion of the past (Lee, 2004). As a result, students fail to recognize the relevance of weighing information. This approach obviously conflicts with the historical literacy in which students are encouraged to engage in an analytic approach, compare the different historical accounts they encounter, and construct their historical arguments and interpretations, by using the procedures, concepts, and standards of the discipline (historical literacy) (Levesque, 2008, p. 171).

For the same reasons, the chapter in an elaborated manner, deals with deal in an elaborated manner with one of the mojtahed-politicians of Reza Khan' period, Hassan Modarres (1870–1937), who led the Majlis majority and opposed Reza Khan's dictatorial aspirations. In the beginning, he decided to try a new course of political compromise with the Shah, but he was not successful. In 1972, he was arrested and banished; he was taken to a prison citadel in the eastern desert, and later murdered by a special police death squad sent from the capital (Katouzian, 2009).

Chapter 9

Chapter nine identifies the characteristics of Reza Khan's government and his political, social, and cultural actions during this era (1921–1941). Some of these characteristics include political dependence, dictatorship and monarchy, radical nationalism, militarism, weakening of religious

values, enforcing compulsory dress code, and banning the wearing of *hijab* (covering and veiling) for women.

To critically evaluate this part, it should be mentioned that the textbook criticizes Reza Khan's policy of radical nationalism which resulted in the denigration and castigation of Arabs and Turks. The textbook had made the point that Reza Khan ignored Iranian ethnic groups including Turkish, Kurdish, Arab, and other groups, pretending that Persian was the only language spoken in Iran (Velayati, Erfanmanesh, Mirzaii, & Tavakoli, 2011). However after the Revolution, the situation of ethnic and religious minorities has been growing worse. The U.S. State Department's 2008 Annual Report on International Religious and ethnic Freedom cited Iran for "widespread serious abuses, including unjust executions, politically motivated abductions by security forces, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, and arrests of women's rights activists" (Hassan, 2008, p. 1). The report also cited violence, legal and societal discrimination against women, ethnic and religious minorities. In other words, while criticizing Reza Khan's political approach, the Islamic regime follows the same method, and as Ram explains, by displaying an apparent shift from "Iran Time" to "Islam Time", the Islamic Republic develops a radical nationalism via political Islam (Ram, 2000, p. 67).

The enforcement of a compulsory dress code is comparable with the compulsory use of *hijab* (covering and veiling) for women in Iran after the Revolution. In 1979, after the Islamic Revolution, *hijab* became an emblem of its political, religious, and national identity and Iranian women covered by black chadors became the visual symbol of not only the Islamic government but also a representation of the ideal type of Iranian women (Mouri, 2012). Therefore, the government disseminated a distorted image of Iranian women's lifestyles by denying the existence of many others who did not wear chadors or believe in wearing hijab (Mouri, 2012).

Chapter 10 & 11

In chapters ten and eleven, the World War II, Iran's occupation, the collapse of Reza Shah's regime, the country's modernization process, and the socio-cultural changes during Reza Shah's period are discussed. In several parts of these chapters, it is noted that Reza Khan modernized the country in order to "satisfy British politicians" and to "support them to actualize their imperialistic goals" (Velayati, Erfanmanesh, Mirzaii, & Tavakoli, 2011, pp. 101-105). Other topics discussed in these chapters are: Iran's occupation by the Allies (1940s) and its consequences, the formation of political groups, Reza Shah's abdication followed by Mohamad Reza Shah's succession, the nationalization of oil, and the establishment of the state Israel. The authors of the textbook elaborately point to the historical conflicts of the Middle East & Israel, and the "fact" that "the ulama never have and will never recognize Israel as a legitimate state" (Velayati, Erfanmanesh, Mirzaii, & Tavakoli, 2011, p. 110). As Apple (2004) states, by revealing its political positions, the state aims to build a "national curriculum" as a mechanism for political control of knowledge. Once this national curriculum is established, there is little chance of turning back. By examining the underlying logic of the national curriculum, one finds out that behind educational justifications for a national curriculum and national testing (the Iranian regime's position on Israel), there are political and ideological alliances with an increasing power. Apple (2004) explains that in its ideal form, national curriculum should not homogenize the interests of the political groups (the ideological and political interests of the Islamic State).

The textbook also describes the formation of political parties during 1940s and regards it as the sign of "disunity among people" and "foreign countries dominance" (Velayati, Erfanmanesh, Mirzaii, & Tavakoli, 2011, p. 110). The text does not mention that Islamic groups were also a part of these newly formed groups. As Katouzian (2009) explains, one of these Islamic groups was the

conservative Islamists, known as “quietists” group, which dominated the religious establishment in Qom and Tehran (p. 226). This group did not display enthusiasm for the political issues dominant at that time such as the nationalization of oil and the development of the Popular Movement led by Mohammad Mossadeq (1882-1967). The second group was pro-constitutional and anti-imperialist party. Its leader was Ayatollah Kashani, (1882-1962) who strongly supported oil nationalization and Mosaddeq’s premiership. After the Coup of 1953, Kashani openly joined Mosaddeq’s opposition (Katouzian, 2009). The militant group of Fada’iyan-e Islam was the third group. This organization was not comparable with the two other groups in rank, number or popular base. However, this group demanded the strict application of the shari’a by using violence against those it deemed to be “apostates” (Katouzian, 2009, p. 244). They also fought for the creation of an Islamic state. Fada’iyan-e Islam shaped a distinctly populist-Utopian dimension in the Islamic state. Based on Apple’s (2004) concept of effective dominant culture, it would be understandable why the Islamic State neglect that this group was a terrorist organization. The authors of the textbook exclude a whole possible area of the past and presenting certain meanings and practices. Apple notes that there are practices and meanings that are reinterpreted, diluted, and put into forms which support or at least do not contradict other elements within the effective dominant culture and education is among these forces that are deeply involved in a constant formation of hegemony or the effective dominant culture.

Chapter 12, 13, 14 & 15

Talking about the Oil Nationalization event of 1951, the textbook emphasizes the religious and political role of Ayatollah Kashani highly more than Mossadeq’s role, as the main leader of the Popular movement and Oil Nationalization.²¹ According to Abrahamian (2008), Kashani had

²¹ Mossadeq’s goal was to strengthen constitutional and democratic government. He pursued a

informal ties to the secretive Fadayan-e Islam. While both Ayatollah Kashani and the Fadayan-e Islam were the former supporters of Mossadeq, they turned against him after 1953's Coup and became mortal enemies of the movement and its leaders because Mossadeq was more a national feature than a religious one. Also, Mossadeq never supported the idea of the establishment of Islamic state.

These chapters also talk about the historical events that took place after the 1953 Coup. Following the general perspective, the authors consider the 1953 Coup as a product of the close collaboration between Mosaddeq's domestic, as well as foreign opponents, and emphasize on the role of foreign governments, especially the United States, in organizing and financing the Coup. The textbook also states that the fall of the Mossadeq government and the second period of Mohammad Reza Shah's rule (1953–1979) was the period of Mohammad Reza Shah's dictatorship.

Chapter 16, 17, 18 & 19

These chapters discuss the aims of the Americans' foreign policy in Iran. It is explained how Ayatollah Khomeini came to public notice for the first time and became a national figure due to the growing tendency among some of the ulama and the religious community against the concentration of power and the encouragement of modernism, Americanism and good relations with Israel (Katouzian, 2009). The revolt of June 1963 is another main event that is commonly regarded as a watershed in the relationship between the state and society leading to a new era and

non-aligned foreign policy which, since the early 1940s, he had described it as the policy of "passive balance". For him oil nationalization was a necessary step towards the achievement of full independence and democracy (Katouzian, 2009, p. 246).

which ended with the revolution of 1979. Khomeini's exile in 1963 due to criticizing the Shah for granting Americans "capitulations", and the Shah's White Revolution in 1963 are among some of the other important events in these chapters. Most of the events are reported in accordance with the main contemporary Iranian history books. However, once again, the role of the ulama and the religious groups has been highly elaborated in many parts of these chapters reminding us of the relation of social power structure and education system and the way in which the structuring of knowledge in educational institutions is closely connected to the principle of social and cultural control in a society (Apple, 2003).

Chapter 19, 20, 21 & 22

Among the most notable events in chapters 19 and 20 are Iran's situation in the beginning of the Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini's exile to Paris in 1978, *Ashura's* demonstration in 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini's return from exile on February of 1979 after the shah left the country, Bazargan's provisional government, and victory of the Revolution.

Historians explain how the Islamic Revolution took shape as a result of different political, social, and cultural developments, and that it erupted like a volcano given the overwhelming pressures that had built up over the decades deep in the bowels of Iranian society. As an example, Abrahamian (2009) notes that by 1977, the Shah had alienated almost every sector of society. He states:

In an age of republicanism, he supported monarchism; in an age of nationalism and anti-imperialism, he came to power as a direct result of the CIA's overthrowing Mossadeq, the symbol of Iranian nationalism; and in an age of neutralism, he mocked non-alignment and Third Worldism. Instead, he appointed himself America's representative in the Middle East and openly sided with the USA on such sensitive political issues such as Palestine

and Vietnam. Moreover, in an age of democracy, he advocated the virtues of order, discipline, guidance, kingship, and personal communication with God and these altogether resulted in the formation of opposite groups. People openly declared their objection to the Shah by means of public manifestos and newsletters. (p. 161)

The textbook, however, claims that the people already had chosen their country's future political system model which was an Islamic state. Velayati, Erfanmanesh, Mirzaii, & Tavakoli (2011) argue that although protesters, in their famous slogan, "Independence, Freedom, Islamic Republic", knew which kind of state they were looking for, Ayatolla Khomeini determined to conduct a national referendum at the very beginning of the Revolution so that the people could specify and consolidate their own Iranian new state in a better way (p. 191).

The authors of the textbook choose some events of the past selectively and neglect and exclude the others (Apple, 2004). The text does not explain that the referendum was held on December 2, 1979 after Khomeini's Ashura lecture in which he declared that those abstaining or voting "no" would be "abetting the Americans" and "desecrating the martyrs of the Islamic Revolution" (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 168). In that lecture, Khomeini equated the ulama with Islam, and those opposing the constitution, especially lay "intellectuals," with "satan" and "imperialism" (as cited in Abrahamian). As Abrahamian (2008) argues, the assumption that any sign of disunity would tempt America to attack Iran and also the hesitation of some political party leaders, due to their fear of anarchy made the result of the referendum as a foregone conclusion where 99% voted "yes" (p. 168).

After the victory of the Revolution (1979), the uneven struggle between Khomeini and his disciples committed to institutionalize their concept of Supreme Leader (*velayat-e faqih*) on the one hand, and Bazargan, the official prime minister who aimed to establish a republic that would

be Islamic in name but democratic in content in the other hand, resulted in Khomeini' being the Supreme Leader for life (Abrahamian, 2008).

Due to the ideological power relations on official knowledge, the textbook paints an unreal picture of the provisional government of Bazargan and describes his government as “a weak aimless government” that “failed to operate efficiently and follow the Imam Khomeini’s revolutionary path” (Velayati, Erfanmanesh, Mirzaii, & Tavakoli, 2011, p. 193). The authors of the textbook (2011) blame the provisional government for “gradually splitting its way from Imam Khomeini and his followers and continuing this to the point that one of its member announced that the Islamic rules are “useless” (p. 193).

Chapter 23, 24, & 25

The Islamic republic’s first presidency, the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1989), Iran’s acceptance of the UN ceasefire resolution (1988), the death of Ayatollah Khomeini (1989), and the election of Ali Khamenei as the supreme leader by the Assembly of Leadership Experts at the same time, are among the main Post-Revolutionary events discussed in these chapters.

The authors select and organize the official knowledge by constructing a reality grounded on the state’s ideological and political supremacy. The textbook constructs or reconstructs a form of conciseness that enables the Islamic state to be sustained without the interference of leading groups to restore its power and dominance. Hence, the textbook avoids talking about events such as the first-revolutionary assassinations, the suppression of many pre-revolutionary political groups, hostage-taking and occupation of the American embassy in 1979, the fall of Montazeri (1922-2009) who was Khomeini’s deputy and heir designate, due to his objection to Khomeini’s order to execute many political prisoners held in jail²². Some of the most important historical

²²

According to Katouzian, “the prisoners to be executed included many who had already served

topics neglected by the textbook are: the influential political and reformist role of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the fourth president after the Revolution and the member of Assembly of Experts (*majles-e khobregan*), the conflicts between him and the current conservative president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and the crucial role of Mohammad Khatami, the previous president of Iran and his constructive reformation era (1997-2005).

The topics discussed in the textbook show that the space of the *unthinkable* in a religious society can be expanded via “authoritarian, obscurantist, intolerant will-to-power” policies embodied in a “dual censorship” imposed by both the state and public (Arkoun, 2001, p. 12). This control over thinking is interiorized in the name of the nation, or religion. The process becomes clear in the last chapter of the textbook where the aims and objectives of the Islamic Revolution are described (Arkoun, 2001). The political discourse of the Islamic state has been developed and interpreted based on the concepts of a famous pre-Revolutionary slogans: “*Independence, Freedom, Islamic Republic*” (Velayati, Erfanmanesh, Mirzaii, & Tavakoli, 2011, p. 221). Relying on Ayatollah Khomeini’s words which regarded “intellectual independence” as the key to reach other forms of independency, the chapter emphasizes that “we need to get back to our own rich Islamic and Iranian culture instead of following the foreigners” and identifies the country’s “*independence*” as “intellectual, political, and economic independence (Velayati, Erfanmanesh, Mirzaii, & Tavakoli, 2011, p. 221).

The change in political power deeply transforms “the horizons and themes of discourse” not only in laws but also in terms of the philosophical rationale. For example, while defining the

or were about to finish serving their jail sentences. In the event – and according to various estimates – 2,000 to 7,000 inmates were executed, some of them recently captured Mojaheds but many also existing Mojahed and leftist prisoners” (p. 351).

concept of freedom, the textbook creates a new meaning and increases the extent of the unthought. The authors of the text argue that by “*freedom*”, we do not mean an “absolute freedom” which leads to chaos but “a freedom which is restricted by the Islamic rules”; this Kind of freedom must be in accordance with “the divine law” and “human nature” (Velayati, Erfanmanesh, Mirzaii, & Tavakoli, 2011, p. 221). Based on what Arkoun explains, the state shifts to a different “thinkable” by imposing the idea that this kind of freedom has superiority over other types of freedom (Arkoun, 2001, p. 15).

Aware of the ideological dimensions of their discourse and historical actions, as well as using particular cognitive structures to interpret their religion (Arkoun, 2003), the authors of the textbook declare that “*Islamic Republic*” means that Iranian people look for a kind of “*freedom*” which accompanied by “*independency*” is in accordance with Islamic Holy Law” (Velayati, Erfanmanesh, Mirzaii, & Tavakoli, 2011, p. 221).

Via textbook, the state’s authorities attempt to generate a shift to a “populist ideology”, and create particular living traditions or linguistic mental spaces (logospheres) by constructing “an Islam that is isolated from the most elementary historical reasoning, linguistic analysis or anthropological decoding” (Arkoun, 2003, p. 11). The authors interpret the “Islamic Republic” as a “religious democracy”, a form of government which relies on “people’s will” and “the Islamic holy law”. The authors also claim that the Islamic Republic relies on people’ votes which enforce the Islamic law under the supervision of the Supreme Leader (*velayat-e faqih*) who has a “divine legitimacy”, and acts according to Islamic Shi’i principles. This is at the central core of the foundation of the Islamic Republic (Velayati, Erfanmanesh, Mirzaii, & Tavakoli, 2011). The Islamic Republic’s achievements are defined as political, cultural, and economic. Essentially, the Islamic doctrine of “Supreme Leader” (*velayet-e faqih*) is regarded as a progressive principle

which guaranties “the country’s territorial integrity”, supports “people’s national interests”, preserves the country against “returning to dictatorship”, and protects it from the influence of foreign powers (Velayati, Erfanmanesh, Mirzaii, & Tavakoli, 2011, p. 224). It can be argued that the traditional “Ulama” and the ideological Islamic states employ their power in order to guarantee that a deeply dogmatic and unapproachable version of Islam is protected from any kind of critical or intellectual analysis (Arkoun, 2002). Also, using its hegemony, the State “saturates” people’s very consciousness, so that their common sense interpretations and their political, educational, social, and economical world become “the world *tout court* or the only world” (as cited in Apple, 2004, p. 3).

Based on a theoretical framework constructed by historical literacy method, Apple’s critical theory (2004), and Arkoun’s (2001) framework on how to analyze religious societies, this chapter has analyzed the textbook by explaining the political, ideological, and cultural discourses embedded in the literature of the secondary school history course book. This was done by evaluating the textbook’s content uncovering the methods and strategies used in the schools in order to develop the state’s ideological and political supremacy.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This study has explored the way in which the Iranian Post-Revolutionary political and religious authorities subordinate the teaching of History to their political agenda by analyzing the political, ideological, and cultural discourses embedded in the secondary school history course book, *The Contemporary History of Iran (Tārīkh-i Mu'āshir-i Iran)*, which is a mandatory textbook in the Iranian education system. The study has concentrated on examining the discourse enacted by the Iranian government which through the textbook compares the tenets of a historical literacy with the official aims and objectives of the history curriculum based on the works of Seixas, Wineburg, and Levesque (2000) on historical literacy.

This study has relied on Apple's critical theory applied "to the politics of the textbook" in order to identify and explain the various forces shaping the production of school textbooks in Iranian educational system. It has also explored the underlying political and ideological aims of the Islamic State. Using Arkoun's (2001) theory, known as the "Unthought in contemporary Islamic thought", this thesis explains how in Iranian Islamic society, the traditional and the religious authorities regard certain issues as "unthinkable" and how the parameters of the "unthinkable" influence "the horizons and themes of discourse", and consequently impact on the educational system. Arkoun's theory, as a valuable heuristic tool, identifies the Islamic State's criteria for the selection of themes and information in the textbooks.

I have raised a main question and some sub-questions concerning the impact of ideology on the Iranian history curriculum and the kind of logic of history the government is articulated in the light of the goals of the Revolution.

The major findings of this study can be summarized as follows: as an ideological movement, the Islamic Revolution changed the cultural basis of society and replaced them with a new value system. The traditional “Ulama” and the ideological Islamic states used their power in order to guarantee that a deeply dogmatic and unapproachable version of Islam is protected from all intellectual and scientific analysis (Arkoun, 2002). For this reason, the authorities of the Islamic Revolution decided to construct a new educational system to create a new official knowledge and new people.

The Islamic Republic authorities interiorized in people’s mind their control over thinking in the name of religion and the nation. They identified a new model citizen. These new “new people” were religious and pious individuals who cared about their Iranian identity as Muslims and were proud of their Islamic heritage. They were also loyal and committed to the government and reject any form of dependence from foreign domination. The objectives of the Post-Revolutionary educational policies were set to achieve independence from foreign dominance, economic self-sufficiency, social justice for the oppressed, cultural pride, and strength against colonial intimidation. The ultimate goal of education was to build new committed Islamic individuals whose values and beliefs are in exact accordance with the ideology of the ruling power. The government reached this goal by changing the horizons and themes of discourse as well as the philosophical rationale underlying the creation of law shifts to a different thinkable (Arkoun, 2001). Using various evidences, this study has explained how in Islamic society many issues cannot be freely considered because they are somehow related to religious life and discourse, and have been under the control of both the state and the official religious authorities (Ulama). This study has also shown how based on the Islamic principle, the State regards schools as a factory designed to model human beings.

This discussion has focused on history education in the Iranian educational institutions and has explained that teaching history in Iran faces many problems such as following unrealistic goals, and lack of a comprehensive approach to select and organize the content of the textbook. It has demonstrated that the current Iranian history curriculum fails to educate citizens who are creative, knowledgeable, committed and are capable of thinking critically. Moreover, evidence has been provided which demonstrate that the current content of the Iranian official textbook consists of a collection of political and martial information, events, and news that has been carefully selected by Islamic bureaucrats.

This study also demonstrates that the authors of the Iranian history textbook follow a single, monolithic view of the past and emphasize on political aspects of historical events more than their cultural, social, and economics dimensions. In fact, the current history textbook has become a history of the rulers and politicians rather than the history of people and the country's social life. This is one of the main reasons that history courses are not favored by Iranian students and that the subject of History is often considered as unpleasant and unimportant.

The dissertation concludes that the content of the history textbooks used in Iranian schools fails to attract the attention of students because of its constant repetition and decontextualization of historical events which renders them unidimensional; the textbook is also designed in a way that compels students to memorize the content passively. More importantly, the chapter on textbook analysis demonstrates that teaching history in Iran has many failures such as poor pedagogical practices and ideological, political, and social limitations. These inefficiencies do not allow students and teachers to raise provocative and challenging questions in history classes. By comparing other academic historical accounts to the history textbook's content, this study finds

that the textbook records a biased unrealistic version of history which represents the short-term political interests of a certain political and religious groups of society.

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