

one can only conclude that, whatever Ahmadinejad's calculated nuance, the policy of the Islamic Republic is clear.

The United States has much to answer for in its tortured relations with Iran, but the "wall of mistrust" will never come down if we do not hold the Islamic Republic to account for its many misdemeanors, from the hostage crisis to the ideological tunnel vision of its hard-line political establishment. There were attempts to confront these issues during the presidencies of Rafsanjani and Khatami. But Ahmadinejad had no such qualms and basked in an indulgent notoriety and reckless attitude to governance, the consequences of which are being felt by Iranians to this day. The development of the security state from 2009 onward and the consolidation of power within the household of the Supreme Leader are not inconsequential issues on the prospective road to better relations, and any attempt to reconstruct US–Iran relations on a sounder footing would need to confront them. Regrettably, in this regard, this study falls short.

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**Hidden Liberalism: Burdened Visions of Progress in Modern Iran. Hussein Banai (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2021). 174 pp. Hardcover \$99.99. ISBN 9781108495592**

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The study of liberalism within the Iranian history of ideas is limited by a relatively small number of available sources, including Siavoshi's *Liberal Nationalism in Iran* and Mirsepassi's *Political Islam, Iran, and the Enlightenment* and *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization: Negotiating Modernity in Iran*.<sup>1</sup> In *Hidden Liberalism: Burdened Visions of Progress in Modern Iran*, Hussein Banai tries to fill this gap. The result of his attempt is a well-written and well-organized book, embracing both the theoretical aspects underlying the subject and the relevant historical facts essential to the main theme of the book: reasons for the invisibility of liberalism in nonliberal societies, especially in Iran and in its intellectual and political discourse. Banai identifies an "acute sense of the limits to the public pursuit of liberal ideals based on practical experience" as the main issue (7). He proposes that in the case of Iran, hidden liberalism has been formed as a particular mode of thought that differs from its Western variants in its level of visibility and explicitness. The book also gives an account of some of the objections to this emerging liberal thought that appeared in Iran's intellectual sphere in the course of the twentieth century.

*Hidden Liberalism* is organized into five chapters, including the introduction and conclusion. Chapter 1, the introduction, starts by laying out the claim that in Iran's history

<sup>1</sup> Sussan Siavoshi, *Liberal Nationalism in Iran: The Failure of a Movement* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Ali Mirsepassi, *Political Islam, Iran, and the Enlightenment: Philosophies of Hope and Despair* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011) and *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization: Negotiating Modernity in Iran* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

liberalism has existed in hiding. Banai defines liberalism through theoretical frameworks proposed by Duncan Bell and James C. Scott, such as the “summative conception.” This conception asserts that liberal tradition is formed by the accumulation of arguments that are self-identified as liberal by their proponents. He reviews the early spread of liberal thought in the country, counting Malkum Khan and his secret societies (Faramoush-Khaneh) as one of the earliest examples. In chapter 2, “Aspects of Political Liberalism in Modern Iran,” Banai borrows and reconfigures the framework of Alan Ryan in *The Making of Modern Liberalism*, drawing on the concepts of political “antipathies” and “prescriptions” to categorize various liberal efforts in the history of Iran since the Constitutional Revolution.<sup>2</sup> Antipathies oppose the “infringement of the personal and collective liberties of citizens” (27); examples include antitraditionalism and antiabsolutism. Prescriptions encompass normative values, such as constitutionalism and pluralism, that are premised on liberal theories. Historical contextualization of liberalism in Iran, alongside categorization of liberal trends, according to Banai, provides a comprehensive perspective of the development of liberal thought since the late nineteenth century in the works and practices of Akhundzadeh, Mostashar al-Dowleh, Mosaddeq, and religious intellectuals, among others.

Banai continues to describe the reasons behind the invisibility of liberal thought and practice in Iran since the Constitutional Revolution through an examination of antiliberal thought before the Islamic Revolution (chapter 3) and in postrevolutionary Iran (chapter 4). In chapter 3, he traces the historical context of antiliberal thoughts, particularly the “three strands of critique within the Westoxication (*gharbzadegi*) genre” (81) in the works of Iranian intellectuals such as Shadman, Fardid, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad. By implicating *gharbzadegi* as both a “symptom and a cause of changes in the socioeconomic, political, and cultural structures that shaped the concerns of Iranian intellectuals in the second half of the twentieth century” (97), he contextualizes the Islamic Revolution as an antiliberal thought and practice and at the same time shows that *gharbzadegi* contributed to the invisibility of liberalism in postrevolutionary Iran. Chapter 4 explores monistic thought in the Islamic Republic by explaining Khomeini’s religious and political thought, particularly his theory of “guardianship of the jurist” (*Velayat-e Faqih*). It also examines two sets of liberal thoughts presented by Bazargan, who tried to make the Islamic Republic more democratic, and Soroush, who has advanced a pluralistic vision of political Islam. These strains of liberalism were different not only from one another but also from the discourse of the Islamic Revolution. In the final chapter, Banai explores hidden liberalism and its implications for studying liberal thought-practices in non-Western, postcolonial settings, highlighting the neglect of indigenous views and practices in mainstream political thought. The author critiques the West-centric view of liberalism as a universal standard and proposes considering hidden liberalism in non-Western countries to make the study of liberalism more inclusive. He concludes that the dominant scholarship on liberalism is limited to liberal thought within the limits of the life and time of Western liberalism. *Hidden liberalism* is an example of expanding the boundaries of this literature.

Banai’s study relies on a careful examination of primary sources of the mentioned intellectuals, with an interpretive approach to concepts, texts, and speeches aimed at exploring neglected phenomena and providing a contextual understanding of the emergence and development of ideas over time. Through historical contextualization of liberal thought in Iran, Banai remains committed to the Cambridge method, a prominent school of thought in the historiography of ideas that foregrounds the historical context of ideas in conjunction with the scrutiny of primary sources.

Although the author’s treatment of secondary literature on the intellectual history of Iran provides an overview of liberal thought in Iran over the last century, it omits certain aspects of the relevant scholarship. Banai addresses the most prominent postrevolutionary liberal intellectuals of Iran, but his focus is primarily on religious intellectuals such as Soroush

<sup>2</sup> Alan Ryan, *The Making of Modern Liberalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).

and Bazargan, about whom many secondary sources exist. Nonreligious intellectual figures or trends that have usually been overlooked in the literature on contemporary Iranian intellectual history have again received little attention in this work. This is despite the fact that the nonreligious liberal trend has enjoyed increasing significance in Iran's intellectual sphere in the last two decades. Examples include periodicals and magazines such as *Mehrnameh*, *Siasat Nameh*, *Agahi-e No*, *Tajrobeh*, *Golestaneh* and *Ham-Mihan*, and secular intellectuals like Morteza Mardiha and Mousa Ghaninejad, who have contributed extensively and directly to liberal thought in postrevolutionary Iran. This literature and these individuals have a more apparent direct impact on the public discourse and vitality of liberal thought in Iran than, for instance, Mirsepassi or Jahanbegloo, better-known nonreligious intellectuals who are mentioned briefly in chapter 2 but "do not outright identify their positions as liberal ones" (57).

In addition, Iranian antiliberal and secular leftist thought has had its representatives both inside and outside of Iran after the Islamic Revolution. Apart from exiled leftist political parties, there have been leftist intellectual institutions and individual scholars in the last two decades who have criticized liberal trends of intellectual thought; institutions such as *Porsesh* and individuals like Morad Farhadpour and Mohammad Maljou, among others. That is to say, as a reaction to the emergence of leftist thought in the 90s, hidden liberalism started to express itself more vividly in the following decade: a pattern of thought that does not define itself "strictly within the Islamic tradition" (140). Some of its examples have been mentioned. To provide a more comprehensive understanding of the intellectual history of liberalism in Iran, it is imperative to address the latest developments in this field. Dedicating more space to the later developments of liberal thought would have completed the historical trajectory that the book provides. Nevertheless, Banai's argument on the hidden nature of liberalism lays the foundation for this additional work by shedding light on the historical period before these developments.

*Hidden Liberalism* is an intellectually rigorous work and one of the first intellectual histories of Iranian liberalism; it paves the way for further exploration of this underexplored territory. The author's intention "to expand the scope of comparative studies of liberalism beyond the modern West" (11) and to suggest a new model of inquiry inclusive of non-Western liberalism is a valuable contribution to the field. It invites further exploration of the development of liberal thought, particularly in contrast to Iran's religious context.

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**Women and the Islamic Republic: How Gendered  
Citizenship Conditions the Iranian State. Shirin Saeidi  
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*Women and the Islamic Republic: How Gendered Citizenship Conditions the Iranian State* is a very welcome addition to recent publications in Iranian studies that contribute historically situated and deeply contextual, ethnographic research on postrevolutionary women in Iran (e.g.,