

a nationalist ideology), links to the US and the EU are moderate, and Western leverage is weak. Yet, the regime in Algeria was arguably more competitive than Tunisia's and, at moments, even Morocco's. As many scholars argued, Algeria was the first in the region to implement serious democratic reforms. These included the establishment of the multiple party system and the organization of free and competitive elections, which the Islamic Salvation Front was poised to win overwhelmingly in 1991. Algeria was also the least affected by the Arab Spring and, as many regional specialists pointed out, the bloody civil war that followed the military intervention (1991–94) is an important factor. Algerians were simply reluctant to take to the streets when the only two realistic choices (remnants of the National Liberation Front/military establishment or the Islamists) were not appealing. Again, the vicissitudes of the authoritarian regime in Algeria could be explained independently from Western linkage or leverage. The absence of a serious democratic alternative that can benefit from external support also motivates the regime's behavior. Likewise, Hill's case of Mauritania illustrates Levitsky and Way's foundational argument that not all political transitions lead to democratization. Yet we have long known that regime transitions are inherently uncertain, which is among the rare consensus of the literature. In the Maghrib, Mauritania is the least exposed to Western democratization pressure and has the weakest organizational capacity; but like other countries in the region, it experienced episodes of democratic opening and backsliding in which Western behavior mattered little.

In sum, *Democratization in the Maghreb* illustrates that divergent political trajectories in Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, and Mauritania could be equally explained by gauging the behavior of local actors, and more specifically the relative strength and course of action of democracy advocates, rather than by these states' linkage to the West or the intensity of Western leverage. This conveys a stark but important question: why should the West and the authoritarian regimes take seriously the democratization path when autocracy remains the only game in town?

ALI MIRSEPASSI, *Transnationalism in Iranian Political Thought: The Life and Times of Ahmad Fardid*, The Global Middle East (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). Pp. 498. \$99.99 cloth. ISBN: 9781107187290

REVIEWED BY POUYA ALIMAGHAM, Department of History, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass.; e-mail: [ipouya@mit.edu](mailto:ipouya@mit.edu)  
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While most academic studies on the Iranian Revolution focus on sociopolitical and economic analyses, a handful of manuscripts also pay due attention to its thinkers and ideologues, ideologies and discourses. Ali Rahnama's *An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ali Shari'ati* (London: I.B.Taurus, 1998), Hamid Dabashi's *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundation of the Islamic Revolution in Iran* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2006), and Mansoor Moaddel's *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution* (New York: Columbia University, 1993) are but a few. Many have nominally covered Ahmad Fardid's thought and discourse almost exclusively as they relate to his notion of "Westoxification," but few have ventured into the life, mind, and impact of Fardid himself—preferring instead to focus on Jalal Al-e Ahmad, the ideologue who popularized what came to be Fardid's highly consequential attack label. Ali Mirsepassi finally and purposefully fills this void with his critical study, *Transnationalism in Iranian Political Thought: The Life and Times of Ahmad Fardid*.

In doing so, Mirsepassi argues that Fardid "embodies ideas and philosophical claims on certain traditions, including Eastern spirituality, Heideggerian anti-modernism and nativist anti-Orientalism" (p. 345), in order to formulate an "authentic" discourse "to revolt against the

international order shaped by the modern West” (p. 3)—especially the West’s domination of pre-revolutionary Iran. Fardid, who spent years in postwar Germany and France, was enthralled by European thought of a particular antimodernist strain, and intertwined this outlook with Persian mysticism and Eastern Spirituality (and intuitive knowledge) to accuse any Iranian of Westoxification if they were seemingly influenced by the Enlightenment or other Western ideas—even dismissing such important thinkers of centuries old, such as Avicenna, Al-Farabi, Suhrawardi, and Molla Sadra “on the basis of being influenced by Greek/Western/rational philosophy” (p. 21), all of which are corrupting “alien influences” (p. 26). Fardid’s worldview mirrors that of many other Islamist ideologues and their far-right counterparts in the West who see the world not full of gray areas in which ideas are shared, morphed and expanded upon, and relayed, but dichotomous and mutually negating. That Fardid was known for his excessive drinking and smoking and lack of traditional piety was of no personal consequence to his pontificating of the importance of a higher Islamic consciousness necessary to resisting the “plague from the West.” The logical conclusion of this worldview, according to Mirsepassi, was actualized in a militant antimodernist Political Islam—as implemented by the revolutionary state—that consolidated power at the expense of other revolutionary factions, and continues to crush dissent. Tragically, Fardid even supported the closing of Iran’s universities after the revolution in order to purge them of “Westoxified” students and faculty—a sort of “house cleaning”—Iran’s equivalent of a Cultural Revolution that ruined the futures of countless people who fought for the revolution (p. 248).

The manuscript’s thesis and content are highly sensitive; therefore, Mirsepassi’s voice is refreshingly present in the book. Unlike many manuscripts on Iran, he lets his voice sound through the text—acknowledging Fardid’s academic contributions while simultaneously expressing disdain for his more noxious interventions. For instance, Mirsepassi recognizes that Fardid was consequential and that he was the intellectual who introduced phenomenology and existentialism to Iran; but he also notes that Fardid was vulgar, bigoted, envious of other intellectuals, paranoid and conspiratorial, cowardly in avoiding publishing his ideas in fear of rebuke, and a power-hungry political opportunist. Brilliance indeed does not necessarily amount to having a positive impact, and the author forcefully articulates his opposition to Fardid as someone who did far more damage than good to Iran’s political thought and evolution (see Chapter 8). Fardid, according to Mirsepassi, played (and his legacy continues to play) an important role in the Iranian state’s justification in suppressing liberal voices as Westoxified. Despite Mirsepassi’s legitimate criticism of Fardid, he does give ample room throughout the manuscript to Fardid’s defenders, even devoting an entire chapter (Chapter 9) to allow them as well as his critics to have their day—though he does come down on the side of Fardid’s critics.

There are a few minor issues with the manuscript, however. While Mirsepassi’s voice is present in the work, sometimes his loaded terminology warrants explanation. For example, he refers to the Iranian government as the “Islamic State”—a highly suggestive nomenclature especially in the era of the so-called Islamic State terror group. The extremist organization professes to be an Islamic State because, *inter alia*, it does not have any representative bodies or an electoral system. By contrast, the Iranian government styles itself as an “Islamic Republic” because unlike its Islamic State enemy, it is a system based on dual sovereignty—divine and popular. The popular sovereignty aspect of the system is manifest in the representative branches of government, namely the presidency and the parliament, both of which are rooted in a lively electoral process. To be sure, the electoral process in Iran is highly flawed and controlled, but referring to the Iranian government as the Islamic State is misleading—or at least warrants a proper unpacking.

Additionally, a more thorough investigation of how Western domination of Iran, at the hands of states that espoused Enlightenment ideas, discredited modernity in the eyes of such thinkers as Fardid would have been revealing. Mirsepassi briefly touches upon this theme when discussing the Anglo-American overthrow of Iran’s experiment with democracy in 1953 (p. 43), but a wider discussion is warranted to illustrate how Western intervention discredits not just newly installed

governments and their foreign backers, but the ideology of those foreign conspirators as well. Some attention to this point may be a slight digression from the overall theme of the book, but the point should be pressed whenever possible.

Finally, there is no doubt that the manuscript is written with an academic audience in mind. He even addresses his audience by “inviting critical scholars to be more consistent, and to have the intellectual courage to use a similar critical attitude in their interpretation of those who, in the name of Islam or spiritualism, or other authenticity ideologies, produce knowledge” (p. 351). Doubtless, the author’s message is an important one, but the book is too important to be accessible only by an academic audience. The difficulty of the manuscript for the nonspecialist, as illustrated in the many complex ideas that he presents with the assumption that the general reader will have a proper grounding a priori, is cause for concern for the study’s accessibility.

Having said that, I highly recommend *Transnationalism in Iranian Political Thought*. It sheds valuable light on how one person can indeed make a difference—and not always for the better—how ideas travel thereby showcasing “transnationalism in Iranian political thought,” and the conditions that gave rise to antimodern thought in Iran during the 60s and 70s, the implications of which reverberate until the present. As such, it is an important study in the history of the Iranian Revolution that transcends sociopolitical and economic analyses that largely ignore the role of ideas and ideology. That is not to say that the foundational studies on the historical event and its aftermath are unimportant. Rather, that is to say that ideas and ideology matter, too.

SIAVASH SAFFARI, *Beyond Shariati: Modernity, Cosmopolitanism, and Islam in Iranian Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). Pp. 213 pages. \$97.00 cloth. ISBN: 9781107164161

REVIEWED BY ARASH DAVARI, Department of Politics, Whitman College, Walla Walla, Wash.; e-mail: [davaria@whitman.edu](mailto:davaria@whitman.edu)  
doi:[10.1017/S0020743817001155](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743817001155)

Textbook treatments of international politics tend to associate the phrase “dialogue among civilizations” with former Iranian President Mohammad Khatami. Shortly after his election in 1997, Khatami proposed a General Assembly resolution asking the United Nations to commit to the phrase’s aspirations. In effect, he was asking for a different world order—one that contrasted with years of Cold War and anticipations of a clash of civilizations in its wake. Around the same time, American political theorist Fred Dallmayr published a number of works promoting a line of inquiry he called comparative political theory (e.g., *Dialogue Among Civilizations: Some Exemplary Voices* [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002]). For Dallmayr, comparative political theory involves a dialogical approach, interpreting unlikely pairs of thinkers together and finding common ground across cultural divides. In recent years, his efforts have caught on. Comparative political theory has become a burgeoning subfield of political science in Europe and North America—a disciplinary formation where the postcolonial turn transforming other corners of the social sciences and humanities has generally been absent.

*Beyond Shariati*, Siavash Saffari’s first monograph, brings together Khatami’s better-known and Dallmayr’s lesser-known calls for a “dialogue among civilizations,” applying Dallmayr’s approach to a group of contemporary Iranian intellectuals known as neo-Shariatis. In the early 2000s, as Khatami’s presidency continued to spark hope, neo-Shariatis entered a newly invigorated public sphere with their own distinct brand of reformist discourse. Positioning themselves against Abdolkarim Soroush—whose concept of “minimal religion” they misread—they argued for a pragmatic form of indigenous modernity, one that took the “public presence and social