

models, pinning the study's broader contribution on their explanatory value. Perhaps, then, this study can also be appreciated precisely because the author has identified and grappled with this dilemma – certainly present, in some variant or another, to anthropology and other social science disciplines as well. A provocative assertion follows (even if it is not one that Brockett himself announces or intends): narratives that seek to explain political process need social theory, but they also inevitably disrupt the theory they invoke, wreaking havoc with its neat categories, overflowing its well-crafted propositions.

Brockett's study, in sum, has framed crucial questions, provided important new data and suggestive lines of analysis for addressing them, but ultimately has left us awaiting the next generation of historians (or social scientists with special reverence for ethnographic history) to provide comprehensive, context-sensitive answers.

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NOMANI, FARHAD and SOHRAB BEHDAD. *Class and Labor in Iran. Did the Revolution Matter?* Syracuse University Press, Syracuse 2006. xiii, 268 pp. \$49.95. DOI: 50020859007063262

This book provides a comprehensive examination of the changing class structure of the workforce in Iran over time and particularly in the post-revolutionary period. The authors sketch the trajectory of class changes in the last three decades and provide an insightful analysis of the subject that has long been over due. The book has a meticulous structure starting with a clear conceptual framework and theoretical base that provide an unambiguous context for statistical analysis of Iranian census data between 1976 and 1996. The authors recognize two distinct periods in the post revolutionary era. The first period began in 1979 and came to an end by the end of the 1980s corresponding, among other things, to the death of the Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989. The second period began with the death of Ayatollah Khomeini and is extending to the present.

The first period was a decade of revolutionary fervour, economic crisis, the Iran–Iraq war, and above all a decade of disruption in capitalist relations or production. There was a large-scale nationalization of modern manufacturing industries and the entire banking and the insurance system without provision of any compensation for their original private owners. That the revolutionary upheaval was accompanied by antagonism towards capital destabilized the sanctity of private property rights. The outcome of the post-revolutionary disruption in private property relations was a large capital and managerial flight, a severe disruption in production, a sharp decline in output, and above all a severe economic crisis that was further accentuated by the international isolation of the country following the American hostage crisis.

The second period was shaped by economic reforms and policies towards restructuring the economy *à la* the IMF and the World Bank to reverse the negative consequences of the revolutionary upheaval on the accumulation process. Even though the state's liberalization policies of reinvigorating the capitalist relations of production have been patchy, the second period, which extends to present, is a period of reversing the transitional changes in the 1980s.

The chart of the trajectory of class changes is then analysed in the context of these two periods. The authors employ the concept of *structural involution* and *deinvolution* as a basic framework. *Structural involution* is defined as a degenerative process that impeded

the accumulation process in the first period: “We contend that the outcome of an economic crisis of the postrevolutionary type is more than just a decline in output. The social turmoil will cause capitalist relations of production to wither and petty-commodity economic activities to thrive [...]. It is manifested in sectoral shifts in production and employment, increased peasantization of agriculture, de-proletarianization of the workforce and the expansion of service activities” (p. 4).

The result of the *structural involution* over the first period that in terms of the census data corresponds to the period of 1976 to 1986 was a dramatic decline in the size of the working class. This was true particularly for the private sector that was by far the dominant sector in terms of employment and output in the pre-revolutionary period. Instead “the petty bourgeoisie replaced the working class as the largest social class in Iran” (p. 104). Simultaneously, the size of the traditional capitalists, especially in agriculture, increased. This reflected the confiscation and redistribution of land that in turn increased the number of agricultural capitalists. The *structural involution* was also accompanied by the shrinkage in the relative size of modern capitalists.

The authors maintain that the social class structure in the second period, which is the period of economic reforms and strengthening of the capitalist relations since the late 1980s, has been changing, reversing the earlier trend. “The impact of economic liberalization is reflected mainly in the changes in the configuration of social classes [...]. Generally we observe two principal trends. First, there is a decline in importance of the petty-commodity activities and a simultaneous growth in the relative importance of capitalist relations of production, manifested in proletarianization of the workforce and depeasantization of agriculture [...]. Second, we observe a noticeable increase in the managerial and technical complexity of capitalist relations of production [and] a relative decline in the importance of traditional activities” (p. 109). The book also incorporates the changing nature of women’s employment over this period as well as the impact of population growth and urban–rural divide on the class structure.

For sociologists and political scientists interested in social-class analysis in Iran this book provides a great wealth of information, also in terms of data. The authors have redefined Iranian census data with regard to the labour market. Redefined data provide detailed information on the class composition of the Iranian economy over the period 1976–1996.

One of the conclusions of the book is that the main loser, particularly in the first period, was the Iranian working class that was marginalized as there was a sectoral shift from industry to agriculture as well as disruptions in the production process. In the case of women, who were subject to explicit discrimination in the labour market, the authors argue that “The women in the upper occupational categories, that is, those with capital, skills, and higher education, were able to maintain their position, or enter the job market, whereas those endowed with less education and no capital were ejected from their positions or were unable to find employment” (p. 141).

However, there are two relevant issues that are not addressed in the book. First, the authors put a great emphasis in their analysis on the specificity of the post-revolutionary situation. Consequently, the authors undermine the universality of the Iranian case as a country undergoing a de-industrialization process, particularly in the first period. In the case of Iran, de-industrialization has been the outcome of the Islamic revolution rather than a response to the change in the global comparative advantage. The latter, for example, has been the case with the United States and the United Kingdom that have lost

comparative advantage in manufacturing to China and other emerging markets. Nevertheless, in all those countries going through de-industrialization it is the unskilled workers who are the losers. The growing marginalization of unskilled workers in the United States and the United Kingdom is a clear indication of this trend. In this respect Iran is not that different from other de-industrialized countries.

Second, the concluding chapter in the book, which includes an overview of the economy with a focus on high rate of unemployment, does not lead to any policy recommendation. The authors maintain that a growing proportion of youth with high school certificates or higher levels of educational attainment are falling into the group of poor households. Nevertheless, the authors abstain from making any policy recommendation.

Nevertheless this book provides a rich analysis of the evolving class structure of the Iranian economy and should be of great interest to all students and scholars concerned with the subject.

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