

Transition to the Past, a Path to Escape the Deprivation of the Present; Analysis and Representation of the Nostalgia Role in Purifying the Pahlavi Era

Mohammad Esmaeil Nabatian*

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Assistant Professor, Faculty Member of the University of Tehran, Tehran, IRAN

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Abstract

Nostalgia or longing for the past is a crucial concept in discussions of the cultural and political aspects of society. This concept signifies despair and deprivation from the current conditions and the emergence of a longing for the past, a past that is idealized and free from shortcomings, constructed in the minds and memories of today's society. Nostalgia can be seen as a form of self-deception, a distortion of the past and the editing of events to present a dreamlike vision, bringing a sense of joy and healing for the pain. One phenomenon in certain parts of Iranian society in recent years is the yearning for the past in the Pahlavi era and the emergence of a nostalgic sentiment towards it. The main thesis of this article is 'How does nostalgia play a role in alleviating the reproduction of an idealized and imaginary past of the Pahlavi period by opponents of the Islamic Republic in addition to its acceptance in certain segments of Iranian society?' The hypothesis is that given the presence of two components of nostalgia, namely despair of the present and longing for the past, today's Iranian society, faced with economic hardship and an uncertain future, turns to an idealized and imagined past to alleviate its pain. This constructed and fertile psychological ground in society facilitates the disregard of any shortcomings, corruption, crimes, deprivation, oppression, dictatorship, dependency, etc., during the Pahlavi era, and plays a role in the construction of an imaginary and purifying society and the exposure of Pahlavi crimes by opposition movements and media outlets inclined toward nostalgia and regression.

Keywords: Nostalgia, Islamic Revolution, Islamic Republic, Pahlavi Purification

*. Corresponding Author: me.nabatian@ut.ac.ir

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Introduction

Nostalgia or longing for the past, also known as the pain of exile, is an important concept in the field of political psychology. Understanding nostalgia and its dimensions plays a significant role in explaining and recognizing human behavior and its effects on art, literature, science, culture, and even politics. In recent years, the nostalgic sentiment towards the pre-revolution era and its representation in the public sphere of society has been growing, resulting in dissatisfaction and resentment towards the present and the emergence of a joyful and unrealistic perception of an idealized past. In this regard, it is important to understand why society seeks refuge in the past and strives to reclaim a past that may be devoid of external reality or even holds unpleasant memories.

The central topic of discussion is the analysis of the role of nostalgia in the public sphere of Iranian society. Nostalgia is an appropriate concept and logic to explain the flourishing of past-oriented attitudes in Iranian society, with its external manifestation observed in the Pahlavi purification and admiration for it. Therefore, the main question of this article is how nostalgia has influenced the reproduction of an idealized and imaginary past of the Pahlavi period by opponents of the Islamic Republic and its acceptance in certain segments of Iranian society. The main hypothesis of the article is that considering the existence of two elements of nostalgia, namely despair of the present and longing for the past, today's Iranian society, in the face of economic hardship and an uncertain future, turns towards an imagined and idealized past to find solace for its pain, constructing it in their own minds.

This constructed and fertile psychological ground in society provides a basis for ignoring any shortcomings, corruption, crimes, deprivation, oppression, dictatorship, dependency, etc., during the Pahlavi era, allowing them to be overlooked in the minds of society. It plays a role in constructing an imaginary and purifying society and the exposure of Pahlavi crimes by opposition movements and media outlets inclined toward nostalgia and regression.

1- Research Background

Nostalgia has been primarily explored in literary, artistic, and poetic works, with terms such as the pain of exile, longing for the past, elegy, nostalgia, homesickness, longing, estrangement, nostalgic melancholy, and nostalgia being frequently observed in numerous articles analyzing and explaining the romantic and emotional atmosphere prevailing in the poetry of Persian and Arabic poets from early to contemporary periods (Noormagz, 1402).

In the field of political psychology, there are also works that, based on specific topics or in general, discuss nostalgia in politics, such as "Political Psychology" by Ibrahim Barzegar, "Political Psychology: Situations, Individuals, and Examples" by David Patrick Houghton, "An Introduction to Political Psychology" by Beth Dietz, Thomas Preston, Elena Mastors, and Martha Cottam, "Political Psychology of the Qajar Kings" by Ibrahim Barzegar, "Political Psychology Based on the Indigenous Approach" by Hossein Mahdavi, "Political Psychology" by Saeed Abdolmaleki, "Political Psychology" by Ali Fathi and Interview with Zygmunt Bauman titled "From Utopia to Retrotopia: Hope has Migrated from the Future to the Past."

Upon examining various sources, several rare works have addressed the discussion of nostalgia in Iranian society, including:

- 1) The article "Seeking the Future in the Past and the Nostalgic Representation in Contemporary Iran" by Ali Ashraf Nazari. The main topic of this article is the retrieval of nostalgia for ancient Iran and Iranian nationalism in the society of the Constitutional era in Iran.
- 2) The book "Narration of the Adopted Father" (The Pahlavi Regime from the Perspective of Espionage Nest Documents) by Hojjatollah Nouri Sari. The author aims to represent the politics of the United States in purifying the Pahlavi regime and depict an idealistic and visionary system and society of the Pahlavi era based on espionage nest documents, explaining the social conditions of Iranian society during the Pahlavi period and the aspects of Pahlavi's governance in domestic and foreign policy. Although this book shares similarities with the present article regarding the issue of Pahlavi purification, its approach is not focused on the political psychology and the role of the nostalgia concept in this matter.
- 3) The article "Revisiting the Pahlavi Purification Project in Iran through Historical Sources Published in the Islamic Republic" by Rouhollah Shakery and Sohrab Moghadamishahidani. As the title suggests, they have solely critiqued historical sources related to the Pahlavi purification.
- 4) The articles "Examining the Relationship Between Modernity and Islamic Fundamentalism based on the Concept of Nostalgia" by Ahmad Mohaghghar and Muhammad Khatibi, and the article "Societies in Nostalgia: Exploring the Phenomenon of New Spirituality in Iran" by Sara Shariaty, Susan Bastani, and Behnaz Khasrovi, along with the field research conducted by Ebaahim Ahmadi (a researcher from the Faculty of Social Sciences, Zahed University) on the psychological function of nostalgic emotions among Tehran and Karaj residents. Although these studies discuss the relationship between nostalgia and psychological developments in Iranian society, they are significantly different from the topic of this article.

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After examining numerous works, no research specifically focusing on the representation of nostalgia in the Pahlavi purification in Iranian society was found, and only Ali Ashraf Nazari's article has significant methodological similarities to the present article. However, the subject and time period under discussion in the two articles are fundamentally different. In response to recent protests and disturbances, one phenomenon has been the admiration for the Pahlavi era and the expression of nostalgic feelings towards that period. This subject has not been given attention in any work from a cognitive psychology perspective. The present article, employing a descriptive-analytical approach, addresses the psychological and political aspects of the Pahlavi purification and the inclination of certain segments of society towards it, taking into account the existing gap.

2- The Conceptual and Theoretical Framework of the Article

It discusses political psychology, which is an interdisciplinary field combining politics and psychology. It focuses on understanding the inner world of individuals and their interaction with the external and social world. One of the fundamental issues in political psychology is the construction and formation of political attitudes (Barzegar, 1388: 1).

One of the concepts in political psychology that plays a role in explaining how individuals form political attitudes is the concept of nostalgia. "Nostalgia" is derived from the Greek words "Nostos," meaning return to home, and "Algos," meaning pain or longing. In essence, nostalgia refers to the pain and longing caused by being far away from home and the desire to return to it. Historically, the expanded meaning of nostalgia has become synonymous with the grief of exile or longing and regret resulting from being separated from something (Yavar, 1394: 81).

This pain and longing signify a sense of loss and yearning, "the pain of an unfulfilled wish or an expression of longing for return" (Malpas, 2012: 87, quoted from Yavar, 1394: 81-82), or an "Intense desire or eager affection for the past" (Oxford, 1998: 1266), and a "Longing to return to past conditions, events, and situations." (Collins Dictionary, quoted from Ashraf Nazari, 1399: 209).

Nostalgia is the result of the dialectic between the past and the present, something or an element that is not present at the moment but existed in the past. However, nostalgia itself is not the past; it is the awareness and feeling of humans regarding the absence of the past, which does not exist in the actual past, allowing them to endure the sorrow and despair of the present (Yavar, 1394: 86).

Research on nostalgia indicates that returning to the past and seeking refuge in it are psychological reactions to dissatisfaction with the present

state (Bauman, 1397; Robertson, 1393). Individuals immerse themselves in the past and engage in mental reverie to alleviate their pain and distress. It seems that the movement of life is turning towards the past instead of the future. In fact, the feeling of nostalgia in individuals is a dual emotion: dissatisfaction, pessimism, and deprivation from the present, and a yearning for the past and an effort to retrieve its memories, even the bitter ones. Essentially, nostalgic narratives are attractive and pleasant for individuals. Nostalgia serves as a mediator and preserver of a community's past identity along its historical path. For this reason, nostalgia has an ideological aspect and even evokes a sense of belonging to a past that never existed (Sojudi, 1394).

Nostalgia longs for a lived experience in an authentic place and, as a result, takes on a utopian aspect, looking toward a past in the future (ibid.). "In a figurative sense, nostalgia is a space that depends on its absence. It is nostalgic because it is not present; if it existed, it would no longer be nostalgic! In fact, nostalgia venerates the past, defines it in contemporary space, and urges us to consume the past. In reality, nostalgia is always a construct, not a pre-existing truth, but it pretends to refer to a lost truth." (ibid.)

In this regard, Zygmunt Bauman's interpretation of nostalgia can be mentioned. He describes nostalgia as a representation of a shift in trust and distrust, expressing it through two concepts: utopia (the design of an ideal city in the future) and retrotopia (a return to the past due to anxiety and disillusionment with the present, seeking refuge in the past). Trust shifts from the future to the past, while distrust moves in the opposite direction (Bauman, 1397). This trust in the past and turning away from the present and the future is such that even a nostalgic individual seeks refuge in a past that was once belittled and condemned.

Essentially, people's recourse to the past occurs when they feel that the current changes in society have undermined their interests and lifestyle, creating insecurity and a sense of existential threat to the community (Ashraf Nazari, 1399: 203).

It is here that the concept of nostalgia emerges as a means of constructing a narrative-based symbolic system of the past, allowing individuals to pleasantly pass their present by envisioning a beautiful and idealized, albeit imaginary, past. In fact, a struggle arises between the fictional pride of the past and the actual memories of the past, where this pride always remains triumphant (ibid: 231), because the past is always remembered as excellent (ibid: 216).

Considering the conceptual framework presented for nostalgia, this concept has the capacity to explain the psychological foundations of the inclination and acceptance of the purification period of the Pahlavi era.

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Therefore, we have employed a descriptive-analytical method, focusing on the concept of nostalgia, to examine the psychological background of the Pahlavi period's purification and the inclinations of certain segments of society.

3. The Two Fundamental Components of Nostalgia: Dissatisfaction with the Present and Longing for the Past

The feeling of nostalgia in individuals creates a dual sensation: pessimism about the current situation and a desire for liberation, along with optimism about the past and a longing to return to it (Ashraf Nazari, 1399: 204). Based on this foundation, nostalgia encompasses two essential elements: a sense of dissatisfaction with the present and an eagerness to return to a past that is idealized and transcendent. With these components of nostalgia in mind, we proceed to examine the question and hypothesize within the context of Iranian society.

3.1. The Feeling of Dissatisfaction with the Present and Ambiguity about the Desirable Future

Fundamentally, longing for the past arises in the mind when an individual becomes dissatisfied with the current situation and loses hope for improvement. It is then that they seek solace and healing by turning to a past that they have constructed in their mind as beautiful and flawless. These conditions of despair, restlessness, and ambiguity are caused by various factors. Here, we delve into the factors that lead contemporary Iranian society to feel dissatisfied with the current state and uncertain about the desired future.

3.1.1. Hardship of Livelihood Due to Persistent Inflation

Inflation has become a permanent part of people's lives in Iran, particularly since the 1350s. After the end of the war and the implementation of development programs in 1368, inflation became a necessary reality and a social phenomenon in Iranian society. Over the course of more than three decades, it has experienced significant fluctuations and economic pressures.

Through the lens of the concept of habitus, living under economic pressures, especially inflation, has led to the formation of specific habits or routines in the society, particularly among young people. The central components shaping this habitus are the centrality of money and living in conditions that create a sense of abnormality.

According to Bourdieu, individuals act based on their habits, which provide them with descriptive frameworks to interact with the world. Individuals in society, in order to cope with living in inflation and tackle an environment constantly influenced by inflation, act according to specific habits that essentially guide their actions and behavior (Afrasyabi

and Baharloui, 1399: 40). The particular habitus of individuals who have faced prolonged inflation is based on a habit of living in uncertainty and lack of motivation, which is unpredictable and creates an ambiguous future in their minds. These conditions lead society towards anomie or social abnormality.

Sociologists such as Durkheim have emphasized the role of economic pressures and rapid changes in shaping anomie and social abnormality (ibid: 41). According to the theories of new social anomie, the experience of economic inflation provides the foundation for institutional anomie, including cultural values. Sociologists like Messner and Rosenfeld believe that the economic institution is stronger than other institutions (such as family, education, and politics) and creates resistance to their functioning. This superiority of the economic institution compared to others, by disregarding their non-economic roles and functions, leads to the adaptation of other institutions to economic needs and consequently, the penetration of economic norms into them (Muftic, 2006: 631, quoted from Afrasyabi and Baharloui, 1399: 41).

Thus, in societies where the economic institution dominates, cultural values encourage the pursuit of success through any means possible. The dominance of the economy weakens the power of other institutions in social control and prevention of deviance (Messner and Rosenfeld, 1997: 213, quoted from Afrasyabi and Baharloui, 1399: 41).

In these economic hardships, where individuals in society have become disillusioned with improving their situation and have a vague sense of a desirable future, they seek refuge in the past, which are a construct of their own minds and a beautiful and idealized vision of the past. In these particular psychological conditions of society, the media can present the constructed past in a more idealistic and beautiful way to the masses and create fantasies in their minds, leading to a sense of returning to the past during the Pahlavi era.

3.1.2. Avoidance of Certain Revolutionary Ideals Like Justice

The first decade after the Islamic Revolution can be considered as the crystallization of revolutionary ideals, particularly in terms of social justice. However, this process did not continue after the end of the war, and with the implementation of the country's reconstruction plan, the focus shifted towards capitalist development. Capitalist development has certain coordinates, and its implementation in each period has specific consequences and requirements.

One of the characteristics of capitalist development is the creation of anomie and irregularity within society. In the process of implementing capitalist development programs, individuals in society gradually succumb to the pressure caused by liberal economic policies and injustice,

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leading to a state of anomie. This situation can be observed in certain sections of Iranian society, especially among the youth, who, due to living in an extended period of inflation and despair of achieving a desirable future, lose their motivation to adhere to societal norms and values and navigate through uncertain and futureless circumstances (Afrasyabi and Baharloui, 1399: 41-42).

Especially in the course of capitalist development in Iranian society, we witness the gradual erosion of idealistic values like justice and an increasing trend of inflation, discrimination, and political and economic rent-seeking, which exacerbate this anomie and weaken the attachment of various segments of society to the values and ideals of the Islamic revolution (Afrasyabi, 1400: 255-276).

It is noteworthy that groups benefiting from the interests and rents of this development model, through their numerous media outlets, insist on the necessity of continuing this trend (Darvishi, 1387: 328). Meanwhile, the dominance of money and capital over society has resulted in a detachment from cultural norms and revolutionary values, and a focus on money as the main determinant of social existence (Raghfar, 1397). Among these values, we can mention the principle of public service in society, human behavior within the framework of divine guidance, emphasis on Islam as the comprehensive way of governing society, the principle of anti-oppression, justice-seeking, and spirituality-oriented. These values have been eroded and diminished as a result of the implementation of capitalist development and the dominance of capital and money in people's minds (Darvishi, 1387: 328).

This growth of ambiguity and non-compliance with societal norms creates a great deal of social unrest, considering individuals as suspended elements. In such conditions, the heightened feeling of nostalgia and backward-looking mentality in Iranian society can direct this social unrest. Considering the similarities between the two patterns of development before and after the revolution and their social and economic consequences, society can be driven towards a sense of attachment to the past and a favorable sentiment towards that aged past.

3.1.3. The Role of Media

Today, media plays a role far beyond information dissemination and news coverage; it defines and instills a certain lifestyle. Numerous research studies have been conducted regarding the influential role of media in shaping societies. Prominent Western researchers such as Manuel Castells, David Riesman, and Noam Chomsky have delved into explaining the position of media within the power system in the modern era. They have identified the use of persuasion, advertising, and news manipulation as the most significant methods of mass manipulation

employed by those who control society and hold primary power (Chomsky, 1401: 18, 168-173; Castells, 1389; Riesman, 1950; Burman, 1401: 114-123; Saedi, 1385).

Essentially, media possesses extraordinary capability and capacity to induce desired thoughts. The structural power of language allows powerful groups to steer the dominant discourse in society to their advantage. Media employ the creation and utilization of ideological and hegemonic concepts to achieve this goal (Burman, 1401; Ahrari, 1383: 73-76).

The ruling system and the opposing movements to the Islamic Republic, utilizing their own media empires, especially the virtual space and social media, play a significant role in highlighting problems and corruption, creating ambiguity about a desired future for society, inducing a sense of hopelessness regarding the improvement of current conditions, and directing public opinion towards deviating from existing values and norms and leaning towards Western values.

Taking into account the Pahlavi government's policy of promoting Western values in society and creating a modern Western society, on one hand, and the role of Western and anti-revolutionary media in instilling an idealistic cityscape based on Western values, on the other hand, a beautiful, modern, and prosperous portrayal of the past is created in the minds of today's society. This reinforces the feelings of longing for the past and the prevalent nostalgia in Iranian society, providing a refuge for healing the hardships of the present, reducing economic challenges, and alleviating the loneliness resulting from anomie and hopelessness.

That is why Ayatollah Khamenei emphasizes the issue of "Hope" and considers it one of the central points in the forward movement of the Iranian nation. He states, "Hope is the greatest driving force for humans. Hope for victory, hope for progress, and hope for success motivate every human being to move forward" (Khamenei, 24/07/1376).

On the other hand, "Today, our enemies, who are disappointed in face-to-face encounters with this nation and try through various means to influence this nation, attempt to portray a bleak and obscure future; they try to make the youth hopeless" (ibid: 24/12/1383).

The role of the media was clearly observed during the autumn protests and disturbances of 1401 (2022). In the atmosphere created by the anti-Islamic Republic media, various psychological techniques, behavior modification, mind management, and psychological warfare tactics were employed to shape a perception of misery, misfortune, and an uncertain future in the minds of individuals detached from societal norms and values. This led certain segments of society to move in a direction dictated by the media, as the notions instilled by the media in virtual and digital

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spaces held greater value than those in the physical realm (Fathi Ashtiani, 1402).

3.1.4. Westernization

Westernization in Iranian society is synonymous with the entry of modernity into Iran. The infatuation and excessive admiration of some intellectuals for the West has led to the maturation of Westernization tendencies in Iranian society, gradually spreading through social and political layers and casting its shadow over the history and contemporary political and cultural developments of Iran (Fardid, 1385; Al-Ahmad, 1400; Naghavi, 1361; Baratnejad, 1389). Essentially, the Islamic Revolution took shape in opposition to this mindset and guided society towards a path other than the one it had already traversed.

Despite the anti-Western nature of the Islamic Revolution, after the revolution, certain movements gradually took steps towards embracing Westernization. This trend gained momentum after the end of the war, particularly during the period of reconstruction, to the point where in the policies of some governments, development was pursued through a path of Westernization, even contrary to revolutionary ideals, leading to admiration for the West. It diverged the revolutionary society from the pale-colored Pahlavi era society, as values were nourished from a different source and origin.

In essence, Westernization has its own coordinates, and its adoption in each period can result in the external crystallization and uniform social instruments. Hence, the inclination towards the West and the adoption of Westernizing policies by certain governments of the Islamic Republic and political movements have created the conditions for a parallel mentality between the two periods in the Iranian mindset. This parallelism has reinforced the foundation of the past while living in the present.

3.2. Longing for an Extraordinary Past

Psychological contemplation within Iranian society reveals a kind of nostalgia-induced richness in people's daily lives. It refers to a state in the past that evokes pleasant feelings and enjoyment of what is no longer present. The past discussed in this article specifically pertains to the Pahlavi era, especially the 1350s. During this period, with the sudden rise in oil prices and increased oil revenues, the propaganda machine of the Pahlavi government attempted to showcase Iran as a modern and standing figure at the gateway to a great civilization. Today, opposing media outlets, relying on the same past data, strive to instill in society, especially the younger generation, a vision of a beautiful, modern, free, and faultless era. Here, we examine the factors that contribute to the potential creation of longing for the past in the minds of Iranian society.

3.2.1. The Mirage of Modern Development and Great Civilization in the Pahlavi Era

An examination of the politics, programs, advertisements, art, and media affiliated with the Pahlavi regime indicates the presentation of a modern, affluent, powerful, and free Iran. This constructed atmosphere is clearly seen in the speeches of the Shah and his officials. The 2500-year celebrations and the Shiraz Art Festival can be considered reflections of this perception by the Shah and his statesmen. During this period, the great civilization was designated as the "Season of the Shah," signifying the seasons of Iran's history, which Pahlavi sought to attain (Pahlavi, 1389: 225). These advertisements and psychological engineering of development and modernization occurred while in the years leading up to the revolution, "Symbolic maneuvers of the regime had no impact on the lives of the lower classes" (Beshiriye, 1393: 165). Independent foreign researchers at the time also acknowledged the illusion of development and civilization in that era (Katuziyan, 1372: 312-327).

As Katuziyan writes about the development during this period: "What happened in Iran was neither social nor economic progress nor modernism, but rather a semblance of modernism that was expedited by the oil revenues... At the time when the country was on the threshold of the gates of a great civilization, the share of industrial production (including handmade, rural, and traditional products) in the non-oil GDP was 20 percent, while the services sector accounted for 56 percent. Nonetheless, urban transportation, especially in Tehran, was so deteriorated that it is indescribable." The living conditions, except for government affiliates and the merchant community, were either horrifying or extraordinarily problematic. Most small and large cities, including Tehran, lacked efficient sewage systems. Healthcare services were expensive and unreliable for the wealthy, while they were costly and dangerous for the impoverished (Katuziyan, 1372: 323).

In essence, with the development program of the Pahlavi era, which relied on significant oil revenues, not only did the economy and livelihood of the people not flourish, but it led to a mockery of the general population (Kadi, 1390: 295). Abrahamian writes about this: "With a sudden five-fold increase in oil revenues, people's expectations soared, and as a result, the gap between the regime's promises, claims, and achievements on one side, and people's expectations and achievements on the other, deepened" (Abrahamian, 1377: 549 and 535).

The development policies of the Pahlavi government and excessive oil revenues did not put an end to poverty for the millions of masses; instead, it modernized its form (Abrahamian, 1377: 551). "Excessive oil revenues did not alleviate the poverty of these millions of masses who

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were mostly driven from villages to cities" (Abrahamian, 1377: 551). In reality, "People struggled with food shortages, rent increases, high prices, taxes, and the acute housing problem" (Bashiriye, 1393: 165).

Robert Graham interprets the unrealistic and grandiose policies of the Pahlavi era as a "Mirage of Power" (Haji Yousefi, 1377: 11). Essentially, the characteristics of the Pahlavi government, such as personalization, rentierism, and authoritarianism in economic development policymaking, had anti-developmental effects and negative consequences. It mostly created an illusion of development and the attainment of the gates of a great civilization (Haji Yousefi, 1377: 20; Zonis, 1378: 33-34).

The policies of the Pahlavi regime contributed to the emergence of a mass movement and the beginning of popular opposition. According to Abrahamian, the increasing number of urban poor and impoverished rural migrants can be seen as the main supporters of the Islamic Revolution. These very individuals from the lower class later became famous as the oppressed (Abrahamian, 1377: 534).

Despite the statistics, meticulous evidence, and scientific analysis of the mirage of development during this period, in both the Pahlavi era and recent years, reliance has been placed on actions that create a beautiful and visionary image in the minds of the Iranian people, both in advertising and in the media. It aims to evoke a prosperous, modern, powerful, and free society.

3.2.2. The Allure of Ancient Glorification and Its Manifestation during the Pahlavi Era

If today the supporters of monarchy and opponents of the Islamic Republic recreate an idealized version of the Pahlavi era, it is an experience they also had at the beginning of the first Pahlavi monarchy. The Pahlavi, given that they came to power with the support of foreign-backed coups, relied on a nostalgic model to gain credibility and legitimacy. In this regard, they excessively revived Iran's ancient past. In fact, politics in the Pahlavi government turned into a nostalgic game (Yavar, 1394: 84).

In the words of Muhammad Reza Pahlavi, the re-creation of the past and reference to ancient times are repeated frequently to tie a period of contemporary decline to a desirable situation in ancient Iran, presenting it as an idealized past and depicting an unrealistic status quo that is currently unfolding and will continue in the future. A kind of blending of the past, present, and future has taken place within a discursive framework (Pahlavi, 1352: 9).

The Shah utilized and referred repeatedly to Iran's ancient position during the Achaemenid era in order to establish the legitimacy of the Pahlavi regime (Yavar, 1394: 102). Ancientism is one of the important

issues in the history of Iranian thought in the past two centuries and has gained significant importance in cultural, literary, and even political aspects. Ancientism aims to revive and rejuvenate ancient traditions and beliefs, creating a new order in social, cultural, and political thinking. It seeks to establish modern cultural and social foundations based on ancient traditions and creates a contrast between two historical periods in Iran, pre-Islamic Iran and the Islamic era. It presents Islam and its teachings as the cause of Iranian backwardness.

Ancientism, as an intellectual, cultural, and political phenomenon, has its roots in various internal and external factors. The most important of these include the discovery of the cause of Iran's backwardness by some intellectuals, the influence of the West and its historical developments, such as the Renaissance and the perspectives of Western intellectuals and writers, as well as the influence of Orientalism and the slogans of the nationalism school of thought. With the support of these ancientist and nationalist slogans, Reza Shah was able to utilize this intellectual movement to serve his own government. In this regard, he took actions that resulted in the formation and consolidation of the Pahlavi regime. (Kajbaf, 1390: 137).

3.2.3. Instilling the Longing for Social Freedom in the Pahlavi Era

In recent years, efforts have been made to present a beautiful image of social and modern freedoms in Pahlavi-era society, portraying a free society without religious, social, and political restrictions for today's young generation, with the Pahlavis being praised as its advocates and implementers. The emphasis was more on promoting Western freedoms and creating a society without constraints. Various programs were designed and implemented to instill Western values, sexual corruption, etc., in society. One of the most important of these programs was the Shiraz Art Festival, which even the then British ambassador, Anthony Parsons, criticizes for its blatant disregard for values (Parsons, 1390).

The portrayal of social freedom policies and programs in the Pahlavi era contradicted the realities that are reflected in documents and meticulous works. As described by Abrahamian, instead of renovating the political system, power was concentrated in the military forces and the support network of the court and essentially, freedoms were defined within the framework of the Shah's absolute power (Abrahamian, 1377: 535-539).

This instillation of freedom during the Pahlavi era occurred while Amnesty International's 1976 (1355) report estimated the number of political prisoners in Iran to be between 25,000 to 100,000. According to John Foran, no other country in the world had such a history of human rights violations comparable to Iran (Foran, 1376: 466). The social

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suffocation can even be observed in the memoirs of Asadollah Alam, a minister in the court and a longtime aide to the Shah (Alam, 1390, Vol. 3: 140; Vol. 5: 171; Vol. 3: 73, 74, 79, 247, 249; Vol. 2: 259). The suffocation and autocracy of the Pahlavi government are reflected in various works of researchers (Katuziyan, 1372: 269, 272-273; Halliday, 1358).

3.2.4. The Role of Media in Representing an Imaginary and Hyper-real Image of the Pahlavi Era

The redefinition of the aforementioned three factors has been influenced by the role of the media, creating a beautiful and idealistic image of those claims in the social consciousness. The opposing forces of the Islamic Republic and counter-revolutionary movements, by utilizing the expertise of Western media and relying on financial resources from Western powers on one hand, and the media vacuum in the Islamic Republic and the weakened state of the media, especially the state broadcasting corporation on the other hand, and the use of the power and proliferation of nostalgia in Iranian society, have sought to represent the Pahlavi era and have been able to create an illusory and hyper-real image of that period to the society, especially the younger generation.

The production of news, documentaries, and films, along with their reproduction on numerous social media platforms, creates such an atmosphere of reality in the minds of the younger generation reliant on the virtual space that even the presentation of hundreds of real documents cannot soften their mindset. This media-induced instillation is based on the sentiment of nostalgia and the proposition that the past is always remembered as perfect and intensifies it.

3.2.5. The Emergence of Complete Idealistic Dream-weaving in Times of Crisis and Turbulence

During difficult and turbulent times, especially with continuous and escalating inflation in society, we witness complete idealistic dream-weaving centered on a black-and-white worldview. This dream-weaving contributes to the dualistic perspective in society that, in reality, represents a sort of polarity for recreation of lost dreams and restoration of tranquility, trust, solidarity, and coexistence (Ashraf Nazari, 1399: 226).

The Iranian people, who once embarked on a revolution to free themselves from the hardship and suffering of the Pahlavi monarchy, are now facing heavy economic problems and turmoil. As a result, they see that dream, for which the revolution was initiated, as unattainable. They believed that with this revolution, the darkness would turn into complete whiteness, and now they feel that the white dream has not been fulfilled. This black-and-white perception in society prevents the acceptance of the

difficulties of the current time and perceives it entirely as black. Conversely, to move beyond the darkness at present, it portrays a past overflowing with whiteness to alleviate the yearning for that whiteness and dream, mitigating the hardships of the current darkness. In these conditions of black-and-white thinking, every news, analysis, and report from the present is seen as distorted and false, while any statement, analysis, or content from the past is portrayed as white and free from darkness and hardship. Naturally, to escape the confusing present and the uncertain future, people take refuge in the past, imagining it as a safe haven to find solace and happiness.

Conclusion

Nostalgia is an influential concept in discussions of political culture and political psychology. This concept denotes a state of despair and deprivation from harsh present conditions and the emergence of longing and enthusiasm for the past—an idealized past free from shortcomings that is constructed in the collective psyche today. Nostalgia is essentially a self-deception to escape the current unstable conditions and alleviate present suffering. In recent years, as cultural and social phenomena in certain sections of Iranian society, there has been a transition from abhorrence and hatred of the Pahlavi era to a cleansing of it as an idealized past through a form of nostalgia. In explaining this phenomenon, the question arises: ‘What role has nostalgia played and how has it influenced the reproduction of the distant and idealized past of the Pahlavi era by opponents of the Islamic Republic and its acceptance in certain sections of Iranian society?’

The influence of political propaganda on society, including the purification of the Pahlavi era, requires not only having powerful media but also establishing the psychological grounds for acceptance. Nostalgia plays a role in the daily lives of Iranians and even contributes to its enrichment in society. This feeling emerges due to the sufferings of the present circumstances and the sense of concern and ambiguity about the future, providing relief and escape from these uncertainties. Even those who have no personal experience of that historical period seek refuge in this sentiment. This mental and psychological connection between the present and the past in the Iranian psyche, and their longing for the past, creates conditions for accepting the past in any form. Because ultimately, in nostalgia, the longing is not for the real or experienced past or memories that undoubtedly come with hardships and shortcomings. It is rather an abundant desire for an idealized and imagined past, free of deficiencies and imperfections, constructed in the minds of individuals.

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This flawless and perfected construction of the past creates a basis for disregarding any kind of deficiencies, corruption, crimes, deprivation, oppression, dictatorship, dependence, etc., in the minds of society during the Pahlavi era. It drives the construction of a non-existent place and an idealized society, with the help of media opposing the Islamic Republic, and plays a role in the reconstruction of society towards a bitter, real past. Nostalgia, relying on its two constituents of despair from the present and longing for the idealized and distant past, plays a role in shaping attitudes. In the dimension of despair and deprivation from the current situation, there are multiple factors that contribute to the creation and expansion of this disillusionment. These include the hardships of life caused by prolonged inflation, which pushes society towards anomie and deviation from revolutionary values, and fosters hopelessness regarding the improvement of current conditions. The second factor is the deviation from certain ideals of the Islamic Revolution, such as justice. Millions of Iranians, who participated in the revolution to achieve Islamic and humane ideals and to oppose the oppressive, corrupt, and tyrannical Pahlavi regime, become disheartened when they witness certain policies and injustices, leading to doubt about the possibility of improving conditions and achieving a desirable future. The third factor is the role of media opposing the Islamic Republic and Western media empires in magnifying problems and instilling a sense of despair about the ability of the Islamic Republic to overcome these challenges. This factor, by highlighting the previous two factors and, in contrast, downplaying the achievements of the Islamic Republic in various scientific, economic, and cultural fields, plays its part in shaping attitudes. The fourth factor is the Western-oriented policies of certain governments and political movements within the Islamic Republic and the false portrayal of the path of independence over the past four decades, which practically echoes the previous path before the revolution. In the second component of nostalgia, namely the longing for the past, the exact opposite path is followed, and through the utilization of nostalgic sentiments, a beautiful, idealized, flawless depiction of the past is drawn and ingrained in society. This component is influenced by the following factors:

The first factor is the presentation of a modern and idealized visual model of Iran during the Pahlavi era, especially relying on promotional materials from that period. The second factor is the presentation of a beautiful image of social freedoms in Pahlavi-era society, despite evidence and documents indicating even suffocation in the realm of social freedoms. The third factor is the instillation of a sense of national pride by representing the ancient history of Iran and its glorious manifestation during the Pahlavi monarchy. Media opposing the Islamic Republic, as

the fourth factor, play a fundamental role in representing the above three factors and shaping the thoughts of society. The fifth factor is the complete fantasizing around the dichotomy of black and white perspectives. Accordingly, Iranian society imagines that after the revolution, that complete whiteness has not been achieved. This black-and-white perception inhibits the acceptance of the difficulties of the present time and perceives it entirely as black, thus depicting a past full of whiteness as an escape from this darkness.

In conclusion, it can be said that during the period of economic hardship, prolonged inflation, and repeated exposure of financial misconduct that leaves the masses disillusioned about the improvement of conditions and a desirable future, individuals are driven towards a complete fantasizing around the dichotomy of black and white perspectives. This black-and-white perception in society hinders the relative acceptance of the difficulties of the present time and perceives it as entirely black, while, conversely, depicting a past full of whiteness and idealization as an escape from the current darkness and a means to alleviate existing pains.

This mental and psychological atmosphere in Iranian society creates the capacity to accept an inverted interpretation of the realities of the Pahlavi era and the period of the Islamic Republic, in a way that independence, freedom, relative prosperity, and genuine national power during the Islamic Republic era are displaced with dependence, deprivation, suffocation, and real oppression. A nostalgic sentiment towards an imaginary and purged past devoid of suffocation, oppression, corruption, and crimes is formed. Media opposing the Islamic Republic, relying on this nostalgic sentiment, aim to undermine the Islamic Revolution and its achievements, praising the past as a construct, and by influencing certain segments of society, especially the younger generation and instilling hopelessness, they facilitate the path of protest and unrest against the Islamic Republic system.

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