

# The Draft of Despotism, This Time Without a Turban

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Excerpted from Mohammad Maljoo's Telegram channel:

Two narratives stand on opposite sides of a political divide, yet when you look in the mirror, they reflect the same face: both view history not as an arena of pluralistic forces, but as a field for the exclusive appropriation of agency. Both rewrite yesterday's history so as to pre-emptively seize tomorrow's power. Both share a single logic: the logic of appropriating history to appropriate power.

Official historiography in the Islamic Republic fundamentally reduces the process of struggle against the monarchy in a targeted manner to the struggles of the Islamist movement from June 1963 onward. As if before and after June 1963 there was neither the extensive organization of the Tudeh Party of Iran in the 1940s, nor the uprising of national forces at the juncture of the nationalization of the oil industry led by Mohammad Mossadegh, nor the guerrilla struggles of leftist forces from the late 1960s. This systematic erasure is not only an epistemological error regarding yesterday, but also a strategy for the monopoly of power today. When all historical agency is summarized in a single current, post-revolutionary political monopoly also appears as the "natural right of the conquerors." Historiography, relying on the fascist technique of selective amnesia, turns into a legitimizing tool for today's monopolistic power.

Yet this is precisely where comparison begins and masks fall off. Today, a significant portion of monarchist forces, in their conflict with the Islamic Republic, reproduce the exact same logic. For them, too, the history of resistance must be single-voiced, a narrative centered around one name, one dynasty, and one flag. Within this framework, for instance, both the Green Movement in 2009 and the "Woman Life Freedom" movement in 2022 are entirely denied. These movements are not recognized as independent and self-originating moments of collective action, but are only considered valid to the extent that they dissolve into the monarchist narrative. If they do not submit to dissolution, they are marginalized. If they resist, they are disparaged.

The symbolic suppression of slogans, the appropriation of uprisings, the denial of non-monarchist figures, and the redefinition of every protest movement as a prelude to the return of a centralized

order are all clear signs of a tendency toward a single-leadership model. This is the very logic of "all or nothing": either dissolve into me or be eliminated.

Such a logic is not merely tactical but inherently despotic. This logic fundamentally conditions any intellectual or practical independence on the unquestioning acceptance of the monarchist hierarchy and does not recognize the right to existence of other social and political forces. Monarchists practically shy away from a "legitimate plurality" in the political arena and only recognize others when they set aside their independent identity and goals and completely dissolve into the framework of the monarchist narrative and logic.

Thus, the apparent conflict between two discourses—one Islamist and the other monarchist—reaches, at a deeper level, a shared fundamental trait: intolerance toward historical and political pluralism. Those who deny the history of others today will not submit to the plurality of power tomorrow either. The appropriation of the past is, in fact, an exercise in the appropriation of the future. The monopolistic logic of the Islamists is being repeated in the guise of the monarchists.