



The Challenge of Democratization from Within: *Rethinking Iran's Green Movement and the Arab Spring*

**LIU INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL ISSUES
UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA**

MARCH 01, 2013 / VANCOUVER B.C. CANADA

HOSTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH GREEN COLLEGE



8:40-9:00AM / WORD OF WELCOME

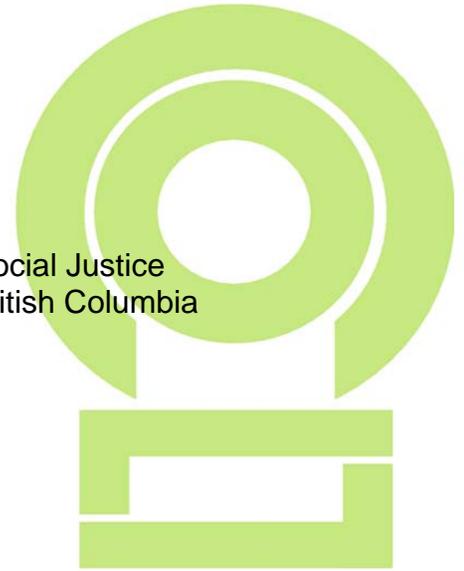
Conference Chair / Mojtaba Mahdavi

Liu Institute Visiting Fellow in Residence at Green College, University of British Columbia
Associate Professor, Political Science and Middle East Studies, University of Alberta

9:00-10:30 AM / KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Chair / Sunera Thobani

Associate Professor, Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality and Social Justice
Faculty Associate, Liu Institute for Global Issues, University of British Columbia



HAMID DABASHI
*Opera Aperta: Fragmented Archives,
Impermanent Allegories, and Open-
Ended Revolutions*

Biography

Hamid Dabashi is Cecil H. and Ida Green Visiting Professor at Green College, and the Hagop Kevorkian Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Literature at Columbia University in the City of New York. He has taught and delivered lectures in many North and Latin American, European, Arab, and Iranian universities. He is a founding member of the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society, as well as a founding member of the Center for Palestine Studies at Columbia University. He has written 25 books, edited 4, and contributed chapters to many more. He is also the author of over 100 essays, articles and book reviews in major scholarly and peer reviewed journals on subjects ranging from Iranian Studies, medieval and modern Islam, comparative literature, world cinema, and the philosophy of art (trans-aesthetics). A selected sample of his writing is co-edited by Andrew Davison and Himadeep Muppidi, *The World is my Home: A Hamid Dabashi Reader* (2010). His most recent works are *Islamic Liberation Theology: Resisting the Empire* (2008); *Post-Orientalism: Knowledge and Power in Time of Terror* (2009); *Iran, The Green Movement and the USA: The Fox and the Paradox* (2010); *The Arab Spring: The End of Postcolonialism* (2012).

10:45-12:45 PM / PANEL 1

Middle East: The Challenge of Democratization from Within



Chair / Tamir Moustafa

Associate Professor of International Studies
Stephen Jarislowsky Chair, Simon Fraser University

Panelists

Hani Faris

Political Science, University of British Columbia
Fouling the Arab Spring: The Effects of Foreign Interventions in Arab Social Uprising

Michael Byers

Professor and Canada Research Chair in International Law and Politics, University of British Columbia
R2P and the Arab Spring

Peyman Vahabzadeh

Sociology, University of Victoria
Suggestion, Translation, Transposition: Reflections on the Middle East and Beyond

Mojtaba Mahdavi

Political Science, University of Alberta
Will the Green Movement Succeed? The Challenge of Democratization in Iran

Navid Pormokhtari

Political Science, University of Alberta
Iran's Green Movement: Doomed or Victorious, Dead or Alive?



HANI A. FARIS
***Fouling the Arab Spring: The Effects of
Foreign Interventions in Arab Social
Uprising***



The striking features of the Arab Uprisings in Tunis & Egypt were their total spontaneity and largely non-violent nature. This explains why social scientists, specialists in Middle East studies and Arab and foreign governments and their intelligence services failed to predict the outbreak and outcome of these revolutions. Libya and Syria present markedly different cases. How has the involvement of foreign powers in the two countries affected their uprisings? In light of these interventions and the devastation they have caused, is it still acceptable to talk of an Arab Spring?

Biography

Hani A. Faris is Adjunct Professor in the Department of Political Science and Research Fellow in the Institute of Asian Research at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. He has served on the faculty of Kuwait University, American University (Washington, D.C.), Harvard University, McGill University and Simon Fraser University. Dr. Faris has authored *Sectarian Conflict in the Modern History of Lebanon* (1980); *Beyond the Lebanese Civil War* (1982); *US Policy in the Middle East* (1984); co-authored *The Arab Position on the Israeli Invasion of Lebanon* (1983); edited *Arab Nationalism and the Future of the Arab World* (1987) & *The One State Solution to the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Country for All its Citizens* (2011). He has written extensively on such topics as Arab nationalism, the Middle East in world politics, Zionism, Lebanese politics, history of the Palestinian issue, and Third World development. Dr. Faris has served as Assistant Director General of the Palestine Research Center (1967–1968); Academic Vice Dean for Graduate Studies at Kuwait University (1978–1981); President of the Association of Arab–American University Graduates (1984–1985); advisor to the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security (1989–1991); member of the Board of Editors of *Arab Studies Quarterly* (1987–1990), member of the Board of Editors of *Contemporary Arab Affairs* (2008–Present), and President of the Board of Directors of Trans Arab Research Institute (2007–Present).



MICHAEL BYERS
R2P and the Arab Spring

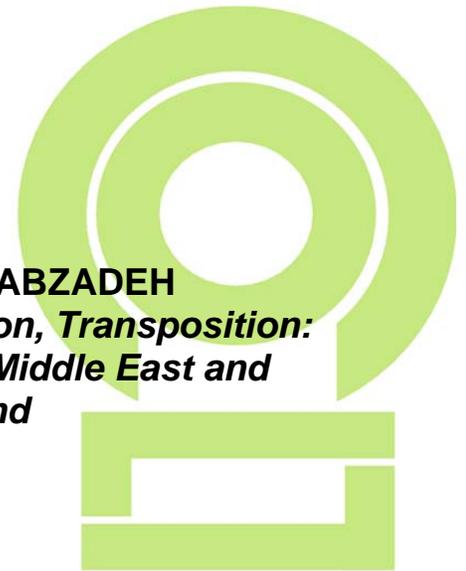


Biography

Michael Byers holds the Canada Research Chair in Global Politics and International Law at the University of British Columbia. His work focuses on the interaction of politics and law with respect to human rights, the use of military force, the Arctic, and Canada-US-Russian relations. Dr. Byers has been a Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford University, and a Professor of Law at Duke University. He has also taught as a visiting professor at the universities of Cape Town, Tel Aviv, and Novosibirsk. Dr. Byers is the author of six books, including the soon-to-be-published “International Law and the Arctic” (Cambridge University Press).



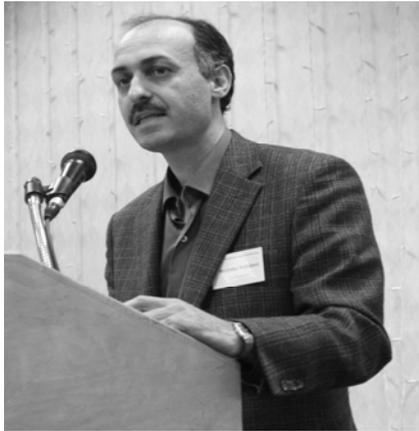
PEYMAN VAHABZADEH
***Suggestion, Translation, Transposition:
Reflections on the Middle East and
Beyond***



This paper offers, in an experimental way, a theoretical approach to the connection between Iran's Green Movement, the Arab Spring, and the Occupy Movement. Inspired by phenomenological approach, the concept of suggestion refers to the unintended releasing of possibilities for action beyond the original frames with which action is identified. Once suggestion allows for a specific mode of acting to be taken outside of its original ambit and into a new context, action is translated into the "language" of new contexts and new mandates. Together suggestion and translation allow for the transposition of a specific mode of action into becoming, at least for some time, a universal trend that captures the imagination of the activists. By drawing on the evidence and instances in the Green Movement, the Arab Spring, and the Occupy Movement, it is hoped, we can understand how movements affect each other beyond their actors' intentions.

Biography

Peyman Vahabzadeh is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Victoria. His areas of research and teaching include: classical and contemporary social theory, social movements, phenomenology, exile, and Iranian Studies. He is the author of *Articulated Experiences: Toward A Radical Phenomenology of Contemporary Social Movements* (State University of New York Press, 2003) and *A Guerrilla Odyssey: Modernization, Secularism, Democracy and the Fadai Discourse of National Liberation in Iran, 1971-1979* (Syracuse University Press, 2010), the guest editor of the special issue of *West Coast Line* on "Writing Rupture: Iranian Emigration Literature" (2003) and the co-guest editor of the special issue of the *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* on "Democracy, Religion, and the Politics of Fright" (2007). Dr. Vahabzadeh has also authored six books in Persian in poetry, fiction, literary criticism, and memoirs. He has been a regular commentator on Iranian affairs in Canadian media.



MOJTABA MAHDAVI
***Will the Green Movement Succeed? The
Challenge of Democratization in
Postrevolutionary Iran***

Iran's prodemocracy Green Movement precedes the Arab Spring, but the Islamic Republic seems dominate the political field. This paper examines whether the Movement is capable of materializing Iran's a century-old quest for democracy? What structural and agential factors contribute to the success or failure of the movement? This paper keeps an equal distance from vulgar voluntarism and structural determinism and provides an operational definition of structure and agency by subdividing each into three levels of analysis. The structural factors are measured by examining the structure of the Iranian state, Iran's socio-economic uneven development, and the global structure of power. The agential factors are examined in terms of the leadership capability, the organizational arrangements, and the intellectual discourse. The findings suggest that Iran's democratization is surrounded by a number of domestic and global obstacles: Iran's oil-centered rentier state; the global realpolitik, which is more concerned about Iran's nuclear issue and less concerned about democratization; and the weakness of the leadership, well-organized civil society institutions, and an inclusive political discourse of the movement. However, Iran's future prospect is optimistic due to the following elements: an epistemic shift in Iran's political culture towards a recognition of non-violence and pluralism; a crisis of legitimacy and factional politics in the state; and a vibrant civil society due to demographic changes. Hence, the Green Movement will most likely succeed to bring a democracy from within.

Biography

Mojtaba Mahdavi is the Liu Institute Visiting Fellow in Residence at Green College (2012-13) and Associate Professor of Political Science and Middle East studies at University of Alberta, Canada. His recent books include *Towards the Dignity of Difference? Neither End of History nor Clash of Civilizations* (co-edited, Ashgate Publishing 2012) and *Under the Shadow of Khomeinism: Problems and Prospects for Democracy in Post-revolutionary Iran* (Rowman & Littlefield, forthcoming). He is currently working on two book projects: *Post-Islamism in Context: Neo-Shariati Discourse*, and *Political Sociology of Post-revolutionary Iran*. His contributions have appeared in several refereed journals and essays, edited volumes and interviews in English, Farsi and Turkish languages. He is the recipient of several awards and grants including those from The Conference Fund of the SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada), the IDRC Canada Partnerships Grant, Killam Research Operating Grants, and the Worldwide University Network (WUN) Grant. Dr. Mahdavi's research interests lie in democratization in the Muslim World, secularism, Islamism and post-Islamism, modern Islamic political thought, social movements, and international politics of the Middle East.



NAVID POURMOKHTARI
*Iran's Green Movement:
Doomed or Victorious, Dead or Alive?*



My research will evaluate Iran's 2009 Green Movement under the rubric of social movements. This is a crucial area of enquiry because this movement is the first recent mass mobilization in the Middle East against a repressive and authoritarian regime, having preceded the 2011 'Arab Spring'. I will employ a constructionist model to demonstrate how the concept of 'perceived' opportunity can facilitate an understanding of collective action in a repressive setting, and to assess its potential impact on Iran's sociopolitical landscape. In applying the constructionist concept of perceived opportunity to an analysis of the Green Movement and taking into consideration the Middle Eastern, authoritarian setting in which it operates, I would argue that Iran's Green Movement is best described as 'a movement of movements'. This means that the Green Movement is dynamic in two primary ways. First, its capacity to function in both an organized and disorganized manner gave it the flexibility to respond effectively to regime efforts to suppress it. Second, groups that were able to mobilize on their own to express specific grievances seized a perceived opportunity to join a larger movement, which created a unique and pluralist form of collective action. In the final analysis, every opportunity for mobilization is what the mass of people chooses to make of it.

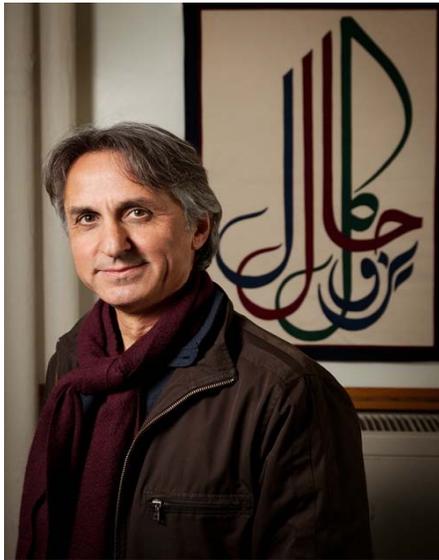
Biography

Navid Pourmokhtari is a doctoral fellow at the University of Alberta. His research interests are diverse, encompassing issues and concerns whose scope is international, e.g., terrorism and human trafficking. Since commencing his doctorate studies, he has developed an interest in examining oppositional social movements in the Middle East, e.g., Iran's Green movement. His recent work focuses on analyzing the Green Movement with a view to revealing its origins, attributes and potential for bringing about profound socio-political transformation in Iran and, more broadly, throughout the Middle East.

1:30-3:00 PM / Keynote Address

Chair / Derek Gregory

Peter Wall Distinguished Professor, University of British Columbia



ASEF BAYAT
The Coming of Post-Islamist Democracy



Biography

Asef Bayat, the Catherine and Bruce Bastian Professor of Global and Transnational Studies, teaches Sociology and Middle East at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Before joining Illinois, he taught at the American University in Cairo for 16 years, and served as the director of the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) holding the Chair of Society and Culture of the Modern Middle East at Leiden University, The Netherlands. His research areas range from social movements and social change, to religion-politics-everyday life, Islam and the modern world, and urban space and politics. His recent books include *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn* (Stanford University Press, 2007); (with Linda Herrera) *Being Young and Muslim: Cultural Politics in the Global South and North* (Oxford University Press, 2010); and *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East* (Stanford University Press, 2010). The revised and extended edition of *Life as Politics* will be published in May 2013, and so will *Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam* (Oxford University Press).

3:15 - 5:00 PM / Panel 2

Middle East: The Challenge of Democratization from Within



Chair / Ken Seigneurie

Director, World Literature Program
Simon Fraser University

Panelists

Farid Laroussi

French, Hispanic and Italian Studies, University of British Columbia
Revolution in the Age of Identity: North Africa and the Postcolonial Condition

Nermin Allam

Political Science, University of Alberta
Media Portrayal of Women in the Egyptian January 25th Uprising: The “Even” Women Participated Rhetoric and Subtle Gender Stereotypes

Paul S. Rowe

Associate Professor and Chair of History, Geography, and Political & International Studies, Trinity Western University
Democracy and Disillusionment: Copts and the Arab Spring

Siavash Saffari

Political Science, University of Alberta
A Post-Arab Spring: Rethinking the Religion-Democracy Nexus in the Middle East

Roozbeh Safshekan

Political Science, University of Alberta
The Role of Media in Shaping Iran’s Social Uprisings: A Comparative Study of the Green Movement and the 1979 Islamic Revolution



FARID LAROUSSE

Revolution in the Age of Identity: North Africa and the Postcolonial Condition

Political power in North Africa has too rarely been articulated in terms of true, participative democracy, from the independence till after the so-called 'Arab Spring.' The colonial continuum, in its economic dimension, is one term of the equation. It also takes a very critical approach to unhinge the postcolonial paradigm from categories that have failed to apply in that one region with three different countries. There must be a reason why the Algerian and Moroccan regimes have remained largely untouched by the popular uprisings. One epistemological argument that will concern us is the question of whether it is still wise to address North Africa's situation in view of bilateral constructs (France, the Middle East, secularism, colonial memory, and so forth) that eschew identity in favor of identifications.

Biography

Farid Laroussi received his Ph.D. in French literature from University of Virginia (1997) and Doctorate in American literature from University of Toulouse (1998). He joined the University of British Columbia in 2010. His academic research focuses on contemporary French studies, Maghreb literatures in French and postcolonial studies. He has published extensively on questions pertaining to cultural representations and literary constructions and on issues regarding identity and identification, both in France and the Maghreb. His second book *Postcolonial Counterpoint. Orientalism, France and the Maghreb* is forthcoming.



NERMIN ALLAM
***Media Portrayal of Women in the Egyptian
January 25th Uprising: The “Even” Women
Participated Rhetoric and Subtle Gender
Stereotypes***



Stereotypical images of women as inert, docile, and subservient largely inform media representation of women in the Middle East. The Egyptian media's portrayal of women is no exception. Although Egyptian print media outlets vary between national, oppositional, and partisans, most portray women in a traditional, cultivated role. The docile portrayal of women in media, however, appears less dominant at times of political struggles. Times of struggles have particular effects on women. Under such circumstances, women tend to become more active in the public sphere, traditionally occupied by men. In reviewing the media portrayal of women at times of conflict, many scholars found that media depicted women above and beyond their traditional roles. Yet this transition in media portrayal is critiqued for framing women's engagement as temporarily, meeting a serious crisis situation where “even” women are needed. Images of women leading and/or participating in violent demonstrations are used to maximize the emotional effect of the contradiction between the traditionally protected woman and the rebellious one. Bearing in mind the biased portrayal of women in Egypt's media in general, it seems that examining the media framing of women's engagement in the January 25th Egyptian uprising is of particular importance. It illuminates the extent to which the Egyptian January 25th uprising made a difference in the framing of women in national media print. There are two central research questions in this study. First, in comparison with men, how does uprising-related print media news frame women? And second, how do these images compare to the portrayals of women in Egypt's print media, prior to the uprising? These questions are examined through analyzing the representation of women in newspapers' coverage of the uprising. The analysis of two widely circulated national newspapers will be carried out using content and discourse analysis.

Biography

Nermin Allam is a doctoral candidate in the University of Alberta's department of political science. She holds a Masters degree in International Relations from the University of Alberta and a Bachelor degree in Political Science from Cairo University. Her interests range widely in politics, philosophy and sociology. Her areas of specialization include: Middle Eastern studies, continuous politics and politics of differential mobility. Allam's latest area of research explores women's participation in the Arab Spring, their challenge to stereotypical depiction of them as inertness and their instigation of indigenous model of agency.



PAUL ROWE
Democracy and Disillusionment: Copts and the Arab Spring



An unforeseen constellation of liberal, socialist, and Islamist forces championed the revolutionary movement that forced the resignation of Egyptian President Mubarak in February 2011. They ended the thirty-year reign of Hosni Mubarak, but they also represented a new mobilization of youth and social media, thereby altering the political culture. The revolutionary movement also responded to a long history of sectarian baiting undertaken by the former regime by uniting Egyptian Muslims and Christians (Copts). In spite of the best efforts of the former regime to frighten Copts out of participation in the revolution, they participated openly and enthusiastically. In the revolution, they saw the promise of a liberal Egypt for all Egyptians, one in which Copts could take their place as full citizens. The Copts' initial optimism about the revolution quickly turned to pessimism in its wake. Instability under the armed forces regime caused anxiety among Copts about their future security. To voice their concerns, Copts began to challenge the traditional role of the Coptic Orthodox Church in representing Christian interests. Abortive political movements arose to agitate against ongoing discrimination and vigilantism, only to lead to the dramatic massacre of two dozen Coptic protestors in October 2011. With the death of the Coptic Patriarch Shenouda III in April 2012 and the victory of Muhammad Morsi in the presidential election of June 2012, a new era of uncertainty arose for the Coptic community. The continuing breakdown of order in late 2012, coupled with the swift passage of a constitution over the objections of most liberal and Coptic opposition forces, has eroded the initial optimism with which the Copts greeted the revolution. How will Copts represent their interests in postrevolutionary Egypt? In spite of the resurgent power of the Church under a newly anointed patriarch, the revolutionary experience has emboldened Coptic liberal activism in a way that will persist.

Biography

Dr. Paul Rowe is Associate Professor of Political and International Studies at Trinity Western University (TWU). Prior to his appointment at TWU he taught at the University of Western Ontario and Queen's University. His areas of expertise include: Middle Eastern Politics; Religion and Politics; Developing World Politics, International Politics; and Christian Minorities in the Middle East. His most recent book, *Religion and Global Politics* (Oxford University Press Canada), was published in 2012. Dr. Rowe grew up in London, Ontario, and completed degrees at the University of Toronto and Dalhousie University prior to doctoral work in Political Science at McGill University, which he completed in 2003. His doctoral dissertation focused upon the politics of Christian minority communities in Middle Eastern states. He has lived for extended periods in the Middle East and South Asia and continues to study the politics of religious groups in developing countries and at the global level.



SIAVASH SAFFARI
A Post-Arab Spring: Rethinking the Religion-Democracy Nexus in the Middle East



Rooted in the ideas of classical European sociological theorists, the secularization thesis dominated the debates on the relationship between religion and sociopolitical development for much of the twentieth century and continues to be reproduced in contemporary discussions. In its various accounts, the thesis advances a particular narrative of European modernity, which regards modern developments to be the product of a progressive rationalization and secularization of public life, as the universal trajectory of social and political change in all human societies. In the literature on modernity and development in the Middle East, however, the universalist assumptions of the secularization thesis were challenged by two culturally essentialist discourses, namely Muslim exceptionalism and Islamism. Both discourses forcefully advanced the idea that Muslim cultures and traditions are inherently incompatible with the modern concepts of human rights, democracy, and secularism. In recent decades, these two discourses have themselves been the subjection of radical deconstruction and demystification. The recent rise of the Green Movement and the Arab Spring has once again revealed the inadequacies of the prevailing conceptual frameworks for capturing the dynamics and nuances of the modern processes of change in the Middle East. These developments have also reminded us of the urgency of a conceptual rethinking in analysing the relationship between religion and sociopolitical development in the region. This paper asks if contemporary Islamic social and political thought offers any capacities for contributing to this theoretical rethinking. In particular, it examines the contributions of the neo-Shariati school to the debates on the relationship between religion and sociopolitical development in contemporary Iran. The paper argues that by developing a theory of indigenous modernity through a synthesis of global and local, and universal and particular, the neo-Shariatis contribute to the on-going negotiation of a third way between hegemonic universalism and cultural essentialism.

Biography

Siavash Saffari is a PhD candidate in Comparative Politics and Political Theory at the University of Alberta, where he also teaches a course on the Comparative Politics of the Global South. He holds a BA from Simon Fraser University and an MA from McMaster University in Political Science. Some of his research interests include contemporary politics and social movements in the Middle East and Northern Africa, theories of modernity and development, critical theory, and postcolonial thought. He is the recipient of a number of academic awards and recognitions, including a 2010-2012 Doctoral Fellowship Award from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).



ROOZBEH SAFSHEKAN

The role of media in shaping Iran's social uprisings: A Comparative study of the Green Movement and the 1979 Islamic Revolution



Media has played a central role in the last two great socio-political uprisings in the Iranian history: The Islamic Revolution of 1979 and the Green Movement of 2009. This paper explores how the novel and specific use of media by the political opposition contributed to the success or decline of these movements.

The Islamic Revolution and the Green Movement were both unique in using the media of their time to achieve their goals. Whereas media is often portrayed as a neutral conveyor of messages, these cases demonstrate that media shapes the characteristics and outcomes of uprisings. In both uprisings, “big media” was firmly in the hands of the state and large corporations. However, ordinary citizens had access to “small media” to broadcast their voices.

The different outcomes of these two uprisings can in part be explained by the ability of political opposition to effectively use small media. The paper does not claim that the use of small media in the Islamic Revolution and the Green Movement was the most decisive factor in the success of the first and decline of the second. However, it underlines the significance of small media in the success of social movements. The Islamic Revolution was very effective in leveraging small media, contributing to its overall success. The Green Movement, in contrast, became less effective in using small media in its later stages, leading to its inability to maintain momentum over time.

Biography

Roozbeh Safshekan is a doctoral student in political science at the University of Alberta. He obtained masters in Middle East Studies from Columbia University and Political Science from the University of Tehran. His past publications include “The Ayatollah's Praetorians: The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the 2009 Election Crisis” published in the *Middle East Journal*, among others. His research interests include Iranian domestic and foreign politics, U.S. foreign policy toward the Middle East, international relations theory, and comparative social movements.