LEFTISTS AS POLITICAL OPPOSITION IN IRAN
Amanda Jarvis (Soheila Amirsoleimani)
Department of Languages and Literature

It’s still commonly believed that a theocratic dictatorship was the inevitable conclusion of the 1979 Iranian Revolution due to decades of authoritarian secularization and westernization alienating the population. Scholarship reflecting the ad hoc nature of the Revolution and diversity of participants is increasing, but the former opinion still persists. This paper will illustrate that the 1979 Revolution was a pro-democracy movement that was later coopted by the religious right, and that a theocratic dictatorship was not at all the initial goal of the majority of revolutionary participants. It wasn’t until February 1979 that Khomeini’s political maneuvering began to form the political and legal nature of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Pahlavi regime, moderates/liberals, and even other leftists had consistently considered leftists as a more pressing political threat than the religious right, and Khomeini’s and the Islamic Republic Party’s dominance came as a surprise to many revolutionary actors.

This paper provides a brief background on the foundations of leftist organizations in Iran, discusses Feda’ian and Mojahedin participation in the revolution and post-revolutionary government, and explains how leftists were ultimately eliminated by the religious right.