The goal of this study is to enrich political theory and the sociology of revolution by a historicized analysis of messianism. It examines messianism as a major source in the motivation of revolutionary social action with the aim of reaching a comparative sociological understanding of its Islamic variant, Mahdism, in relation to the pattern of revolution in the Islamicate civilization. To this end, the structural models of the sociology of revolution provide the societal context for the analysis of the motives of the historical agents of revolutionary action and channels its unfolding along structural paths that are independent of their will. Explaining the transition from the charismatic, apocalyptic motivation—motives that set the process of revolution in motion—to the instrumentally rational motivation aiming at winning the power struggle is the thorniest conceptual problem we need to solve. This challenge is the crux of the analytical integration of millennial motives, as they unfold in the process of revolution, with the societal structure of domination as it is being transformed under their impact. If we meet it successfully, we will have integrated the theory of apocalyptic politics or political messianism with the sociological theory of revolution. The broadening of analytical horizons resulting from such theoretical integration will in turn solve some major problems in the historiography of the rise of Islam and its sociopolitical revolutions.

1. It is this instrumentally rational motivation that makes the outcome of the process dependent on structural conditions and thereby partially independent of the will of the messianic actors.
This original undertaking is indeed timely. A leading sociologist of revolution concluded in a recent survey of the field: "If Marxism-Leninism was the dominant revolutionary ideology of the last century, Islam may be the dominant revolutionary ideology of the present." A century and a half earlier, Alexis de Tocqueville (d. 1859) considered the political religion born of the French revolution of 1789 a new Islam that terrified contemporary observers by its missionary fervor. The Great French Revolution had indeed "developed into a species of religion... This strange religion has, like Islam, overrun the whole world with its apostles, militants and martyrs."

Yet, there is no substantial theoretically informed study of revolutionary movements in the richly documented Islamic history. Nor do we have a comparative study of religion and revolution that significantly includes Islam. The modern myth of revolution was born of the French Revolution of 1789. As a noted historian of the French revolution has put it recently: "revolution was revolutionized in 1789 when the notion of revolution as fact gave way to the conception of revolution as an ongoing act." The concept of revolution generated a transportable script as its agenda that was then given a sociological inflection by Karl Marx during the European Revolution of 1848 and was propagated into the rest of the world by Marxism-Leninism in the twentieth century. For long, the Marxist-Leninist variant of the myth served as an ersatz theory of revolution. As the number of Muslim revolutionaries in the Afro-Eurasian landmass in the first quarter twenty-first century far exceeds that of the Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries a century earlier by any reasonable estimate, is it not time for a fresh look at the alternative conception of revolution from the perspective of Islamic history and its Mahdistic political messianism?

2. Goodwin 2005, 422.
3. Tocqueville 1955, 13. Tocqueville (1959, 114) further finds that the "character of the revolutionary conquests... has something in common with the early Islamic period"—namely, that of the Arab conquests.
4. See Baker 2013, 189: It follows that "there were no ‘revolutionaries’ before revolution was revolutionized."
THE APOCALYPTIC MOTIVATION OF REVOLUTIONARY ACTION: THE PROCESS OF REVOLUTION AS REALIZATION OF MESSIANISM AND THE STRUCTURAL MODELS OF ITS OUTCOME

Max Weber, a founding father of sociology, proposed the understanding of the motivation of meaningful social action as its major task and distinguished between the subjective and objective meanings of social action. He called the motives of social action its subjective meaning. Revolutionary action is meaningful for the historical actors themselves, and its subjective meaning consists of the motives of the revolutionaries. The objective meaning of revolutions, which is determined by theorists and not the actors themselves, consists in the significance of consequences in world history and in terms of the value-ideas that set them in motion and that are further defined in the course of revolutionary action.

The apocalyptic view of politics can supply a powerful stimulus to agency by generating a pattern of politics driven by uncompromising ethics of absolute ends that can be called “absolute politics.” It is apt for describing political action during the great opening and the freedom that occurs with the collapse of the old regime and at that moment of revolutionary liminality, when the sociopolitical rules and conventions are broken, and a new beginning can be made. The apocalyptic vision is a powerful means for transcending the normative order. True order is no longer identified with this world but requires a radical break with it; the existing reality is radically rejected, indeed destined for cataclysmic destruction. By holding up the vision of the imminent destruction of the current cosmic and normative order and its radical sociopolitical transformation, political messianism generates powerful motivation to inner-worldly absolute social action aiming at the destruction and reconstruction of the world, including its political order. It thus establishes a transcendent cultural form that can grow autonomously and be transplanted and potentially universalized in world history. This is how Weber saw it in the preface to his unfinished study of ancient Judaism, whose significance in world history he attributed to the “conception of a future God-guided political and social revolution” that it generated.

In absolute politics, no boundaries are set to political will, and everything social is seen as transformable by politics. The revolutionary impact of absolute politics on preexisting social alignments and interests follows from the transformation of identity and values of the historical actors in the course of action. Absolutization of the ends of political action makes it constitutive of the identity of the participant. Absolute ends do not stop at moral sentiment but lay claim to reality itself and thereby to the radical transformation of the world that is found to be at variance with it. The ideologies of absolute politics are born of the claim to possessing the truth and to changing the world congruently. The goals of political action are set accordingly. The politics of absolute end thus justify the claim to converting others to the cause and giving political action a universalist and proselytizing character. This is typical of the missionary world religions of salvation.8

The claim to the possession of cosmic reality itself made messianism fundamentally religious: it thereby made revolutionary politics heteronomous. The apocalyptic vision of messianism was by no means confined to political order, and its political impact was therefore variable. Apocalyptic texts can be read very differently, and they can be compatible with categorical pacifism, as in the mainstream Christian interpretation, or with militancy, as we shall see was the case with the Essenes of the Qumran community as Muhammad’s messianic predecessors. If absolute politics are the result rather than the cause of messianism, it follows that apocalyptic messianism must sociologically be analyzed in terms not of its political causes but its sociopolitical consequences.

The political revolutions motivated by messianism remained subordinate to millennial religious ends for two millennia. Then the French Revolution secularized old messianism into political messianism in the form of Jacobin revolutionary action driven by the modern myth of revolution made into the social revolution by Karl Marx. The modern idea of revolution thereby became an autonomous political phenomenon, being conceived as a redemptive, people-guided, social and political revolution, acquiring a strong, albeit hidden, religious dimension. The apocalyptic vision, thus secularized, became a major source of motivation to revolutionism in modern history. Revolution consequently became the engine of history as long as the modern myth of revolution was accepted as a secular, political religion.

While Marxism as secular religion attained its climax in the twentieth century, the inadequacy of the Marxian idea of revolution as a theory became apparent to the more perceptive observers of Communism and Fascism. Already in 1920, Fritz Gerlich wrote on “Orthodox Marxism as chiliasm” (millennialism) and a “religion of salvation for this world.” In 1929, Karl Mannheim compared the “spiritualization of politics” (Vergeistigung der Politik) in the twentieth-century revolutionary movements to the chiliasm of the Peasant Wars and the Anabaptists in early modern Germany. He emphasized the qualitative difference between the sacred, kairotic time of chiliasm, when the here and now is pervaded by eternity, with the routine, chronological conception of time in the post-Enlightenment, nonrevolutionary modern politics.

Mannheim’s distinction between kairotic and chronological time was associated with his more general conceptions of “utopia” and “ideology” as the respective cognitive/normative worldviews of chiliastic versus secular politics. The distinction was in fact the tip of the iceberg of the contrasting motivational patterns prevailing in spiritualized and routine political action. In contrasting these distinctive patterns of motivation, I call the first messianic or apocalyptic, instead of using Mannheim’s term utopian, and I further qualify it as charismatic in order to highlight the pervasion of charisma in a new community of fellow believers, which made them live in the kairotic time set by the new revelation. The second pattern of motivation comprising the routinized, chronological conception of time, I shall discuss presently as a consequence of “realized messianism.”

In the following decade, Eric Voegelin coined the somewhat unfortunate term, “modern Gnosticism,” to refer to the so-called spiritualization of politics in Europe; later, however, in The New Science of Politics (1952), he developed the more suggestive idea of “political religions” with reference to twentieth-century revolutionary Communism and Fascism. In the same year, Jacob

11. This follows the original collective conception of charisma as the inherence of the holy spirit in the church in early Christianity by the Protestant theologian, Rudolph Sohm (1888) in preference to its unduly individualistic conceptualization by Max Weber as “charismatic leadership.”
12. This was very much in line with Tocqueville’s above-cited description of the French Revolution. The term is nevertheless ambiguous, as Voegelin himself finally concluded. (Cattaruzza 2018, 218n41)
Talmon published *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (1952), which he followed up with *Political Messianism: The Romantic Phase* (1960). He equated the terms he coined, “totalitarian democracy” and “political messianism,” and he made the Jacobinism of the French Revolution the modern sources of both. The messianism of Antiquity and the Middle Ages, our subject and the source of their metaphor for modern totalitarian movements, was not studied directly by either Voegelin or Talmon any more than it had been by Weber.

Weber had nevertheless put forward a compelling conceptualization of “world religions” as grand solutions to the problem of the meaning of life with far-reaching ethical implications for social action in the economic and political spheres that could lend itself to the comparative analysis of the total ideologies of the twentieth century as equivalent secular meaning systems giving urgent purpose to sociopolitical action. In the mid-1950s, Manuel Sarkisyanz showed the Bolsheviks’ harnessing to the Marxian scientific socialism of Orthodox Christian themes in Russia and of Islamic and Buddhist millennial beliefs in Asia, and shortly thereafter Norman Cohn published his study of Christian revolutionary messianism and its bearing on twentieth-century political religions.13

It goes without saying that world history did not stand still after Fascism and Communism, whose days were in fact numbered. Roughly coinciding with the collapse of Communism, the last quarter of the twentieth century witnessed a revolution that combined the technical, ideological advances of the century’s political religions while emphatically retaining the promise of otherworldly salvation—namely, the Islamic revolution of 1979 in Iran. “Rather than creating a new substitute for religion, as did the Communists and the Nazis, the Islamic militants . . . fortified an already vigorous [world] religion with the ideological armor necessary for battle in the arena of mass politics. In doing so, they have made their distinct contribution to world history.”14 Furthermore, what should become evident as we proceed is that it was not accidental that the Islamic revolution of 1979 was born of Shi’ite Islam, which preserved the heritage of its pristine apocalyptic messianism, and not of Sunni Islam, which developed largely from the historical memory of the realized messianism of the last eleven years of Muhammad’s prophecy in Medina.

The spectacular and unexpected Islamic revolution in Iran notwithstanding, the insights drawn from these works on secular Western revolutionary movements in relation to religion have not been applied to the revolutionary movements in the Islamicate civilization. Nor has Weber’s assertion about the revolutionary potential of ancient Judaism ever been critically examined in light of the sources discovered since his death. Our goal in the present study is to rectify the long neglect of a world religion that can lends itself to revolutionary interpretation and can motivate revolutionary action more readily than any other. In pursuing this goal, the opportunity will also be taken to supply an analysis of the developments in ancient Judaism not known to Weber that may justify his assertion. In fact, one of the main findings of the present study is the transmission of the Danielic and Qumran apocalyptic ideas to Arabia through the Jews of Medina, and this finding provides us with a unique opportunity for beginning our analysis of messianism where Weber left off.

Chapter 1 accordingly examines the emergence of apocalyptic messianism and the motivation of the idea of a revolution guided by God with an extensive analysis of the roots of political messianism in the Maccabean revolt against the Seleucids in the second century before the Common Era. Ancient apocalyptic messianism is the root of the motivation for revolutions in the Judeo-Christian and Islamicate civilizations as well as those of the modern world in the secular age. Certain key elements of ancient apocalyptic messianism will be shown to have been transmitted to Arabia indirectly through Manichaeism and directly through the Dead Sea Scrolls of the nonrabbinical Qumran sectarians.

The world-historical significance of Muhammad’s messianism is much greater than that of the Danielic and Qumran messianism in which it was rooted. This is because Muhammad succeeded in realizing his messianism through a political revolution in seventh-century Arabia. The progressive realization of the Meccan apocalyptic messianism after his migration to the oasis

15. Marshall Hodgson published The Order of Assassins on millennium and revolution in medieval Iran in 1955 but it did not attract any general attention.
16. Weber died before completing his study of ancient Judaism. Had he advanced as far as the book of Daniel and the two Maccabees, he may have given us a sense of the source of motivation to the apocalyptic vision that motivated God-ordained revolutionary sociopolitical action, but it would have been narrowly based. The Dead Sea Scrolls of the Qumran community, by far the richest set of apocalyptic texts in world history, were discovered long after his death.
of Yathrib meant the creation of a protostate in Medina that achieved the political unification of Arabia within a few years of his death. This dramatic transition already requires a sharp analytical distinction between the two stages of Muhammad’s prophecy, but the radical change resulting from the impact of realized messianism was particularly profound after the death of the Prophet. The charismatic community under a living messianic leader ceased or was rather transfigured as the Prophet’s disciples became authoritative narrators of the memory of the kairotic years, conceived as the sacred history of the charismatic community when heaven and earth were joined through the revelation of God’s last Messenger. Meanwhile, the Prophet’s successors, the first caliphs, engaged in the rational management of the war of unification and subsequent state-building for conquest in measured chronological, secular time as they routinized Muhammad’s prophetic charisma into the institution of the caliphate. With the death of the Prophet Muhammad the Messenger of God, the kairotic time of liminality thus collapsed into the chronological time of political unification and empire of conquest. Islamic history as we know it began.

It was with good reason that the decisive migration of Muhammad from Mecca to Medina, marking the inception of eleven years of progressively realized messianism, was chosen as the beginning of the Islamic era, and the years of Medina conceived as its sacred, protohistory. Since I consider apocalyptic and realized messianism the two stages of Muhammad’s prophecy separated by a change in the pattern of motivation, a few analytical remarks on the realized messianism in Islamic protohistory seem in order. Muhammad began to enhance his authority as an invited arbitrator (hakam) and a holy man, Muhammad the “Prophet” (nabi), with a view to building his own polity in his chosen “abode of migration” (dār al-hijra). Within some two years of his arrival in Yathrib, which was renamed the “City of the Prophet” (madinat al-nabi), Muhammad instituted a pact of brotherhood between the Muslim migrants from Mecca who followed him and the new local converts, and he signed a number of pacts (most probably three) with the Jews of Yathrib. Shortly thereafter, he assumed the unwonted and non-Abrahamic title of “the Messenger of God” (rasul Allāh) and as such led the Islamic Constitutive Revolution that unified Arabia and established Islam. The sober, instrumentally rational and at times ruthless statesmanship he displayed in realizing his messianic mission and the apocalyptic vision of his Meccan preaching was indeed remarkable—so much so that it gave birth to a realistic mainstream historiography that minimized the liminal apocalyptic breakthrough of the
initial revelation, or rather compartmentalized and insulated it within an increasingly otherworldly religious sphere. However, as an apocalyptic repository in the Islamic scriptural tradition, its record constituted a reservoir to be tapped by Shi‘ite Mahdism in subsequent centuries.

As for the (Sunni) mainstream Muslims, the apocalyptic preaching about the End of Time (ākhir al-zamān) by God’s last messenger was still read charismatically but as a nonapocalyptic, routinized, universal, sacred history of the divine guidance of humankind through a series of prophets. The Muslim community of the empire of conquest was no longer living in kairotic time, and although it cherished the memory of the Prophet and his disciples, it even forgot about their new identity and new sacred names given to them under the new revelation. Muhammad was the one exception whose postrevelation identity was congealed into a new name. Muhammad (the praised one), and his messianic designation as the Paraclete, Ahmad, was awkwardly relegated to commentaries that claim it to have been his given name!17

It was indeed the very “conception of a God-guided political and social revolution” that motivated Muhammad to carry out his Constitutive Revolution in Arabia; realized messianism was, if anything, a revolution in world history. The apocalyptic vision that set this divinely guided Constitutive Revolution in motion is examined in chapter 2. Muhammad’s Constitutive Revolution occurred on the periphery of the Persian (Sasanian) and the Ethiopian empires, as well as on that of the Byzantine Empire. Apocalyptic ideas received through Manichaeism, transmitted through the vassal state of Hira in Sasanian Mesopotamia, nonrabbinical Judaism, and partly through Ethiopia, I argue, constituted an important ingredient in Muhammad’s revolution in Arabia, and were thus major influences in the elaboration of Islam. The career of Islam therefore began as an apocalyptic messianism that created and cemented Muhammad’s charismatic community of the faithful. The believers’ revolutionary struggle in the path of God in kairotic, sacred time under a charismatic messianic leader and in accordance with God’s continuing revelation, marked the onset of the period of realized messianism and the creation of a new political order. With the realization of the messianism of Muhammad as the Messenger of God came the routinization of the prophetic charisma of Muhammad and the institutionalization of Islam as a new world religion. First and foremost, there was

the arrangement of recorded divine revelations into the Qur’an as the book of God. Thereafter, Muhammad’s Constitutive Revolution in Arabia set the distinctive pattern for millennial revolutionary action in the Islamicate civilization in the form of struggle in the path of God (jihād).

The origins and history of Muhammad’s Constitutive Revolution are one thing; its historical memory that can motivate the revolutionary social action of Muslims in the following generation is quite another. The memory of the Messenger of God was modified into the messianic figure of the Mahdi in the utopias of heterodox sects that challenged the basis of the status quo, just as the script of the French Revolution in the historical memory of subsequent generations of revolutionaries created the myth of revolution that produced a cycle of modern revolutions in the ensuing two centuries. And just as was to be the case with the modifications of the modern myth of revolution, each modification of the myth of the Mahdi could motivate an epicycle of Mahdistic revolutions. As the remaining chapters of this book will show, the myth of the Mahdi, forged as Muhammad redivivus, served as the inexhaustible resource for subsequent generations living in routinized, chronological, and secular times to reverse the routinization that was consequent on realized messianism.

Both revolution and messianism are defined typologically in this study. Political messianism is defined in terms of a cluster of beliefs we may call the “messianic syndrome”—beliefs that are present to varying degrees in all the movements included in the category. There is a strong family resemblance among the cases of Mahdist revolution studied in the Islamicate civilization, a less strong family resemblance between them and ancient apocalyptic messianism, and a categorical affinity with modern revolutions as well as with a broader variety of millennial experience in world history.18 Even though our definition is typological, etymology is our inevitable beginning, and the Messiah (the anointed one) was the title of the king of Israel under the monarchy of the House of David. Some “protomessianic” dimension may have been built into the Judaic notion of the ideal king even before its collapse.19 But, as the Davidic monarchy was never restored after the Babylonian captivity, the messianic trait was greatly strengthened during the Second Temple period, and the conventional wisdom places the origins of messianism in this period. This

messianism, however, was particular to the Jews, and it did not develop out of the ancient Jewish historical experience into what Talcott Parsons called an “evolutionary universal” until the double civilizational encounter with the Persian and the Greek culture in the earlier and later chapters of the book of Daniel.20 The importance of Israel as a seedbed society for the universalist development of messianism as a general religiocultural form that was inherited by Muhammad can thus be dated to this period.

The generic and universalistic form of apocalypticism, inspired by the “God of heaven” and containing all the elements of the messianic syndrome in a variable configuration, thus emerged from the revolutionary conflict between the religion of Yahweh and the imperialism of the Seleucid successors of Alexander the Great in the third quarter of the second century BCE.21 Foremost within this generalized messianic syndrome or cluster is apocalypticism, as epitomized much later in John’s book of Revelation (Apocalypse), which is the revelation of the scenario for the End of Time. Apocalypticism can therefore be defined as a cluster of belief concerning the nearness of the End of Time, the signs of which make for a time of unprecedented cataclysmic disaster, an age of gloom and doom marked by unimaginable trials and tribulations that can only be ended by divine intervention and finally, by the appearance of a charismatic leader sent by God to end the world as we know it.

What happens the day after is a consequential part of the messianic syndrome. It could be of renewal of the world (frašo kereti), as in Mazdaean Iranian religions, or it could be an “apocalyptic theodicy” that is later routinized and rationalized into an otherworldly eschatology, taking the form of the theological idea of the end (eschaton) as the Day of Resurrection and Last Judgment in the Abrahamic religions.22 The charismatic leadership of the Messiah, as etymologically implied by messianism, is only one of these three components of apocalyptic messianism that can together generate an intensely charismatic and emotional tenet that propels revolutionary social action here and now that is made into kairotic time. The unfolding of the millennial motive in Mahdism as the Islamic variant of political messianism is here analyzed with a view to its long-term consequences in a small number of cases of

21. See chapter 1, below.
sociopolitical transformation that are important enough to be called revolutions. Centuries later, with the French revolution, the religiocultural messianic form was secularized into the modern myth of revolution.

This brings us to the sociopolitical theory of revolution that began with the analysis of the revolution as a process conceived as its “anatomy.” The process of revolution was seen as the revolutionary power struggle among the contenders in the competition engendered by political mobilization that was in turn caused by the breakdown of the old regime. On closer inspection, the process of revolution is more complex and can heuristically be thought of in two phases, the short and the long terms. While the short-term outcome of a revolution is the result of the process of power struggle among the contenders, the long-term consequences of major revolutions, their teleology, unfold through a different process that takes longer to end. This second process I call constitutional politics; it is driven by disagreements over the principles of the new political order and involves the resolution of differences about the proper institutionalization of fundamental values implicit in the motivating apocalyptic vision. The consequences of revolution are the outcome of this long-term struggle for the constitution of a new political order. These consequences set the direction of sociopolitical transformation and depend on the power coefficient of the contending groups and forces in the first process of revolution but also on what Weber called their “ideal interests.” The ideal interests of the winners of the revolutionary power struggle set the parameter of the constitutional politics in each revolution. Constitutional politics, in other words, is the politics of postrevolutionary political and social reconstruction through the institutionalization of competing principles of order.

In both phases of the process or revolution, the constitutional politics of a millennially motivated or Mahdist revolution is inflected distinctively by the routinization revolutionary charismatic leadership of the claimants to Mahdihood in the struggle for the reconstruction of the political order of realized messianism. The messianic myth in Mahdistic or any other modified form, however, can reverse this routinization and motivate the regeneration of revolutionary liminality and with it the resacralization of the motivation to revolutionary absolute politics in kairotic time. The goals of revolutionary

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23. Edwards 1927; Brinton 1938. The process of revolution was conceived as the rotation of “moderates” and “radicals” in the Reign of Terror and the final return to the moderates with the passing of the revolutionary fever and the return of the body politic to normalcy.
absolute politics differ from case to case, directing each Mahdist revolution along different paths in the face of historical contingencies and thus giving it a distinct and historically unique teleology.

In Mahdist uprisings, social action in expectation of the Hour (al-ṣā‘a) of cosmic cataclysm ushering in the Day of Judgment, was soon conceived as the End of Time (ākhir al-zamān) and can be categorized as millennial. The belief in the End of Time tends to be associated with the advent of a messianic savior figure to prepare the world for the Last Judgment. Muhammad inherited the belief in apocalyptic messianism from various channels: the book of Daniel, the Dead Sea Scrolls through the nonrabbinical Jews of Arabia, Manichaem, and, lastly through Christianity, which probably supplied the Paraclete with the Gospel of John, but only through Manichaean Christology. Within a generation after Muhammad’s death, the notion of the Qa‘im (qā‘im), meaning the riser/redresser, had entered the radical, oppositional heterodoxy of the Islamicate civilization as the supreme messianic figure. The Qa‘im was before long assimilated to the Mahdi (al-mahdi, meaning the rightly guided) as Muhammad redivivus reshaped into the savior of the End of Time. Millennialism, then, takes on the distinctive form in the Islamicate civilization that we here call Mahdism.

It goes without saying that the unfolding of millennial motive does not occur in a vacuum but takes place in a historical context with its particular contingencies and in a society with a definite sociopolitical structure. This study presents a distinctive pattern of revolution in the Islamicate civilization illustrated by a detailed comparative analysis of the cases. In other words, the pattern of motivation that sets a Mahdist revolution in motion is complemented by a typological analysis of the structural changes derived comparatively from major revolutions in world history. Elsewhere, I have proposed a typology of ancient and medieval revolutions that shifts the analytical focus from the causes to the consequences of revolutions.24

The main ideal types of revolution found in the ancient and medieval world, I called Integrative Revolution, since this term captures the relation between revolution and the enlargement of the political community. It is divided into

24. See Arjomand 2019, 315, table 3. The causes are reconsidered in the light of this shift, and the causes and consequences of revolutions are combined to build a small number of heuristic ideal types for comparative analysis.
three subtypes. The ideal type, which I call “Constitutive Revolution,” models the revolutionary construction of an integrated political community from segmentary tribal societies or self-contained city-states. The social revolution of Islam is known as the Abbasid Revolution and it is covered in chapters 4, 5 and 6. Its structural model fits the two other subsidiary ideal types of Integrative Revolution, each highlighting a different aspect of it: the Aristotelian-Paretan revolution of disposed counter-elites; and the Khaldunian revolution from the tribal periphery of empires.

The ideal type of revolution, which I call Tocquevillean, captures the centralization of power in the modern state and is thus the main ideal type of revolution. According to the ideal type of Constitutive Revolution, radical change in the political order may result from the incongruence between cultural and political integration. This can arise in a culturally unified society, where the structure of authority remains segmented—confined to tribes or city-states. The larger society is culturally unified while political authority is segmented, except under martial emergency, and political integration remains either intermittent, in the form of ad hoc confederations of tribes and city-states, or weak, based solely on networks of personal ties among patrons and clients across the segments. Such societies, including the “segmentary states” that are found to be prone to rebellions, can be restructured through revolution. The type of revolution that belongs to these societies is an Integrative Revolution that constitutes a new political order by institutionalizing central political authority and unifying the segments into a more integrated political community. See Arjomand 2019, ch. 1.

Aristotle’s idea of revolution as the enlargement of the political community in oligarchies and aristocracies can serve as the starting point for this model. According to Aristotle (Politics 1305a–1307b), oligarchies and aristocracies are prone to revolution because of those they exclude from the political society. Impoverished members of the governing class in oligarchies become revolutionary leaders; the regime is undermined by persons who are wealthy but are excluded from office; and sedition in aristocracies arises when the circle of government is too narrow and “the masses of a people consist of men animated by the conviction that they are as good as their masters in quality.” Among the moderns, Pareto’s theory of revolution comes closest to Aristotle’s idea. Put simply, his theory is as follows: If access to the political class, the ruling elite, is blocked to energetic and resolute individuals—lions—from the lower classes; and if the elite ruling by cunning—foxes—become weak and incapable of stern repression because of an increase in the proportion of foxes over lions in its composition, a revolution is likely to occur. In this situation, socially upwardly mobile individuals who are excluded from power develop into a revolutionary counterelite that eventually seizes power and makes history the graveyard of yet another aristocracy. The leadership of the revolutionary counter-elite often comes from politically dispossessed aristocracies. See Arjomand 2019, ch. 1.

The model is described in chapter 9 as the Maghrebi conception of revolution.
modern revolutions. Nevertheless, it can capture important aspects of ancient and medieval revolutions—namely, the centralization of power as a consequence of the revolutionary power struggle. As such, it can throw considerable light on the centralization of power after the Second Civil War and the Abbasid Revolution. The model of centralization of power as both the cause and the consequence of revolution is therefore used in chapter 3 to interpret the cycle of civil wars of the seventh century that culminated in the Abbasid Revolution in the mid-eighth; these can therefore all be considered the long-term consequences of the rise of Islam as a Constitutive Revolution. The Tocquevillian focus on the concentration of power and its dysfunctional results highlights the importance of the breakdown of centralized power, the state, as a cause of revolution. This draws our attention to the self-destruction of the Umayyad state in 744 CE as the beginning of the Hashemite Revolution analyzed in chapter 4.

The modified Tocquevillian model also highlights another consequence of the concentration of power in the state prior to the revolution.28 This requires a systematic treatment of the revolutionary role of the groups that are dispossessed by the growing state. The considerable revolutionary role of declining classes, and of cohesive social groups with strong solidarity that are dispossessed by the centralization of power or threatened by socioeconomic change, is generally neglected. The chapters on the Abbasid Revolution in this study highlight the leadership of the dispossessed aristocracy of Medina belonging to the clan of the Prophet, the Banu Hāshim, in the revolution against the Umayyads.

Finally, the Tocquevillian model helps us focus on the formation of a new political class as a consequence of postrevolutionary centralization of power in the process of state building under the early Abbasids itself, a process described as the rise of caliphal absolutism.29 The other important Iranian social group consisted of the bureaucratic elite integrated into the new political community for the purpose of state-building by the early Abbasid caliphs—that is, the secretaries (kuttāb), who had played an increasingly important role in the late Umayyad administration, but who nevertheless suffered the degradations and disabilities that pertained to the status of the mawāli.