Majid Mohammadi

The Iranian Reform Movement

Civil and Constitutional Rights in Suspension

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To my beloved son, Nima, who copyedited the draft of this book

Preface

Two decades after a brutal attack on university student dorms in Tehran and Tabriz and the closure of the Iranian semi-independent press in 1999, and a decade after the uncompromising Green Movement, it is time to take a close look at the movements that have both mobilized millions of young men and women and organized the foundations of civil society institutions in Iran. For Iranian society, after a revolution that was used as a pretext to establish an Islamic government and a decade of war, these were new and fresh experiences. Hope was replacing fear and optimism was in the air. After years of darkness, mourning, death, grief and eulogy, Iranian society was waking up to color, life, laughter, pleasure, lust and joy; the positive mood could not help but have an impact on Iranian politics.

The task of creating the new Iranian man and woman out of the clerical model for a perfect human being was a total disaster; Iranians who woke up to the exclusivism and closed society of Iran under Khomeini did not want to perpetuate his political fiasco after his death. Even the new junior leader wanted to get rid of Khomeini's inheritance to establish his own. In less than a decade, most of Khomeini's followers were protesting against his political tradition and began to discuss both political development and democracy.

The need of Iranian people to live in peace, happiness and friendship with others, and an insatiable hunger for knowledge, life and communication in Iranian society, imprisoned by the clerics in the name of religion and morality, began reasserting itself after years of death, darkness and violence. The Iranian reform movement was a non-violent protest against

Shi'i Islamism as it was introduced and enforced in Iranian society. Khamenei and his loyalists' inability to control every aspect of Iranians' life and the duality in the governmental structure in the 1990s made the movement possible. Later, however, they learned how to control every aspect of Iranians' lives, leading the movement down a dead-end.

As an analyst, political activist, writer, columnist and researcher, I was entirely and deeply involved in this movement in different capacities and activities. Banned from teaching in universities and colleges due to my pro-democracy and human rights ideas, I was involved in workshops, focus groups and editorials which produced theoretical frameworks for establishing new institutions and outlets to resist the authoritative and totalitarian policies of the ruling clerics.

Although deeply involved in this movement, I do not believe the "you can't understand it until you've lived there" argument. Any freedom-loving democrat who has had an eye on Iran for the past four decades and followed the political and social developments could have written such a work. I was there when it happened and experienced the tragedies of life in that society; now I am narrating a sad story, albeit one with some bright points to offer.

The main argument of the book is the inescapability of democracy in a country that has the infrastructure, social forces and social movements for building such momentum. The democratization process may have had its ups and downs in the last century, beginning with the Constitutional Revolution in 1906, but it has never stopped gaining traction.

Each chapter in this book is an analytical memoir, reflecting my hopes and grievances at the time. My aim is to record and explain the social, cultural and political developments leading to the various aspects of Iranian reform movement: crucial social forces, efforts to objectify the movements' demands, and their endings. Unfortunately, based on the reform movement's failures and the success of government oppression, civil and constitutional rights have been suspended for a long time in Iran.

After a brief historical background of the Tobacco Movement and the Constitutional Revolution, the first chapter focuses on intellectual, theoretical and social pretexts, forms, strategies and tactics of non-violent actions in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Iran. The impact of these non-violent actions on nation- and state-building processes and how civil resistance influenced the struggle for Iranian independence are also discussed.

The second chapter reviews the political development that has been underway in Iranian society over the three decades from the late 1970s to the 2000s. It explains political developments by considering three different and parallel processes: state-building; the development of political pluralism; and democratization. Although achieving democracy is on the agenda of a majority of Iranians, it is not clear what kind of democratic regime will be installed and what force will be more active: a dual sovereignty, permanent civil disobedience, a unified social movement, or another form of guided democracy.

The third chapter documents the emergence of a reform movement in Iran in the late 1990s. The first section raises a number of more general questions pertaining to such a movement in the context of an authoritarian political regime. My first question relates to the question whether we can indeed speak of a social movement in the context of Iranian society in the post-revolutionary era. In the second section, I stipulate the presence of a reform movement in Iran in the second half of the 1990s and then proceed to "prove" its existence by referring to the noticeable increase of non-governmental organizations, the noticeable increase of an independent press, the diversity of narratives reflecting different ideologies, policies and lifestyles, powerful counter-movements, dramatic changes of individual appearance in public, a dramatic decrease in youth appearances in religious places in the hands of people who represent ideologized religion, and the electoral successes of reformist candidates.

The second section of this chapter reviews the different explanations for the nature of this movement. Main issues, theory of state, distinguished group, theory of citizenship and expected outcome will be looked at in each possible explanation. This section is an attempt to provide different social movement theories as explanations for the Iranian scene. Leadership, success and political implications, such as destabilization, are discussed in the subsequent sections. The conclusion is an attempt to relate my empirical findings to a broader conceptual and interpretive agenda.

Ideology was the main discourse of the 1970s and 1980s in Iran but human rights took over in the 1990s and 2000s. Iranian political literature, even among authoritarian factions, is filled with human rights terms and concepts. The next chapter studies this issue in three sections. The first examines interpretations of human rights among Iranian reformists. The second examines the institutional obstacles to improving the observance of human rights vindications. The third, after noting the lack of strategies, policies, programs and regulations for the vindication of human

rights in Iran, enumerates some of the activities that could facilitate monitoring human rights violations in Iran.

Additionally, women have been one of the most important social groups in the Iranian reform movement.[1] Iranian female university students, intellectuals, journalists and lawyers have raised the standards of political activism in Iran. Along with male university students, journalists, intellectuals and political activists, Iranian feminists, both religious and non-religious, are the core of this movement. After presenting a compendium of the structural and ideological gender inequalities in Iranian society, mostly in the post-revolutionary era, the fifth chapter of the book provides basic information and analysis about Iranian feminists in the reform movement framework.

I also review the relationship between Iranian feminism, on one hand, and the democratization process and demand for the vindication of civil rights of all Iranian citizens as the main issues of this movement, on the other. This review will be carried out in three parts: the essence of Iranian feminism in post-revolutionary Iran, the interactions of women activists and other activists in this movement, and the impact of feminism on the Iranian reform movement.

In spite of the crackdown on the independent press (the closure of more than 100 daily, weekly and monthly newspapers in the period of 1999–2004), what we can call a reformist press still exists in Iran. This phenomenon could not and cannot be eradicated, although there are qualitative developments and changes after the worst days for freedom of expression in Iran, April 25–28, 2000. Press trials that ignore due process, the imprisonment of journalists and the continuation of the judiciary's pressure on the press are some aspects of power struggle between political factions in Iran.

The sixth chapter will mainly address three questions. Why did this crackdown happen? Why and how can a non-authoritarian press survive the attacks of an authoritarian regime? What are the developments of the Iranian non-authoritarian press in managerial, organizational, editorial and thematic aspects? The answer to the first question is a legitimacy crisis of the religious leadership. The second question can be answered by looking at deep social discrepancies, the divided polity, the legal structure of license issuing for the press, alternative modes of information flow, nonviolent methods of action in reformist positions, social networks and temporary statuses that are not controllable by the government.

My answers to the first and second questions deal with the theoretical roots of the development of the Iranian press. Possible answers to the third question are factors such as the diminishing of an independent press and the monopolization of both the authoritarian and reformist press in the hands of politicians who are inside the political caste. More editorial control on journalists, especially in critical subjects and sensitive information, decreases in circulation, extensions of red lines and a waning of investigative and critical journalism will also be studied.

The seventh chapter is a trilogy on the Iranian student movement. The first episode of this trilogy traces the development of the Iranian university student movement in post-charisma Iran. I explore the changes this movement has experienced and the mechanisms it has been subject to in transferring from a justice-oriented movement to a democracy-oriented one. The main forces influencing this movement are intellectuals and women. It was a crucial element of a movement that was mostly characterized as a reform movement in contemporary Iran.

Three hypotheses are formulated with respect to the determinants of student support for the reform movement in Iranian universities in the 1990s: student reformism appears to flourish particularly among students who (1) receive government assistance, (2) attend larger universities, and (3) do not belong to the traditionally religious groups based in mosques. Based upon this analysis, some generalizations are formulated concerning (1) the psychology and behavior patterns peculiar to students due to their status in society, and (2) some social conditions favorable to student movements. Conversely, two hypotheses are formulated with regard to the determinants of the student withdrawal of support for the reform movement after 2000: (1) the failure of elected bodies to fulfill the goals of the reform movement, and (2) the insistence of Islamist reformers on ideological and behavioral principles that have been at the core of the Islamist ideology in Iran.

The second episode relates to the transition process from party politics and civil society activism to passivism and civil disobedience as the main strategies of the Iranian student movement in its struggle against despotism and authoritarianism in contemporary Iran. After a short review of the history of this movement, I will explain its foundations, contexts and implications.

Based on discourse analysis of the statements of university student organizations between 1996 and 2006, the third episode will address the pros and cons of five approaches to politics in the reform movement era

based on five discourses among university students in the past two decades of Iranian politics and their consequences for reshaping the Iranian polity. This section first discusses five socio-political processes: Islamicization, social differentiation, limited political competition, transformation of Shi'i authority and the personalization of power. These processes would subsequently lead to four social and political schisms in Iranian society: inequality, political, social and cultural discrimination, and secular–Islamist tension. These developments are crucial in shaping not only schisms and gaps between different political factions and student groups, but also in some stages, links and bridges among them.

Referring to these schisms, political discourses shape the ideologies and actions of Iranian student movements. These discourses are social justice, tradition, totalitarianism, pluralism and Islamic democracy. Even if these discourses were no more than intellectual pronouncements by the university students, they were powerful enough to extend to Iranian political society. Studying these discourses may help us to better analyze and clarify the interactions among different Iranian student groups and to understand how they react to political events external to the student movements. My approach to understanding the socio-political processes, social schisms and discourses is analytical and interpretative.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (*Sepāh-e Pāsdarān-e Enqelāb-e Eslāmi*) was established under a decree issued by Khomeini as the Revolution's leader on May 5, 1979, less than three months after the victory of the Iranian Revolution. The Revolutionary Guards were intended to guard the victorious revolution, to consolidate the clerical regime, and to assist the ruling clergy in the day-to-day enforcement of the government's Islamic codes and morality. It was also impossible and completely irrational to dissolve and disorganize a well-equipped and well-trained army, although the new regime could not trust it. The Islamization of an Americanized army that was emasculated in the first two years after the victory of the Revolution was not an easy or rapid activity. In this situation, a dual military system was unavoidable. The eighth chapter of the book discusses the reasons and causes for this duality in the Iranian polity and governmental structure.

Post-revolutionary Iran is the only nation-state that has two formal military systems under one commander-in-chief: the guardian jurist, beside its militia (*Basij*) and the disciplinary forces. Each of these two military systems has an army, navy and air force. This chapter examines the sociological causes (from the revolutionary leaders' and analysts' point of

view) of this dual system, the interaction between the society and military, how this dual system can survive, the relationship between dualism in the military system and dualism in the political system, and the consequences of this duality for social and political structures and changes. The duality lies the context in which the military forces interfere in the day-to-day politics and at the same time decrease the legitimacy and popularity of the country's armed forces.

Another context of the reform movement was the new communication tools. The Internet was introduced to the Iranian public sphere in 1998. After only five years, almost every governmental and private institution, medium, political party and non-governmental organization had its own website. The government has filtered more than six million websites but this has not stopped a large number of political activists from establishing their own websites and publishing statements, essays and journals almost every day. Although some of these websites are only propaganda and commercials, the sponsors and gate-keepers have begun to gather, compose and disclose their information to publish descriptive or analytical essays and stories to ensure more visitors. They have also made access to some parts of their archives possible.

I propose in the ninth chapter that the spread of the Internet throughout Iranian society has opened the lid of a treasure trove of information, which has led to a more open public sphere, and the Iranian government cannot resist this trend. Virtual social networks had a defining role in the Green Movement of 2009. This, of course, does not mean that the Internet alone will democratize or liberalize Iranian society, strengthen civil society institutions and make censorship impossible. I will adopt a case-oriented and causal/analytical comparative method to study the neutralizing effect of increasing Internet access and thus the number of websites that describe the institutional and cultural limitations on the free flow of information.

Chapter 10 discusses the end of an era and the beginning of the new phase of the reform movement. Considering the important political developments of the 2000s, such as the parliamentary and presidential elections of 2004, 2005 and 2008, I will try to give a picture of the polity and society that Khamenei and his loyalists have been trying to establish and maintain. The government strategy has been rule by fear in a society that is tired of violence. The government's main approach to controlling society has been through Islamicization. The Islamicization process has led to a shaping of a police state that does not tolerate dissent. The final section of

this chapter deals with the challenges of Iran's foreign policy for the nation as a whole and for the reform movement. Iran's foreign policy is directly under the influence of domestic policies and in turn has had an influential impact on political processes in the country.

I finish the book with a review of the Green Movement of 2009, a response to the actions of increasing role of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps in Iranian politics. Here I introduce the context, discourse and strategies selected to challenge the Islamist government after the fraudulent presidential election of June 12, 2009. The leadership, organization, media and social forces involved are discussed.

The coming chapters of this book cover the reform movement in Iran between 1996 and 2009 and its aftermath. This movement is a rare case of a non-violent movement in a region that is the hotbed of violent Islamist movements and ideologies. The most important agendas of this movement were constitutionalism, the free flow of information, democratization, the promotion of rule of law and the vindication of human rights. In this study, I try to understand how this movement has transpired in a country with an authoritarian Islamic regime, how it grew, how it failed and what its achievements were. Iranian women, university students and journalists were the most active groups in this movement; the seminaries, judiciary and paramilitary forces played the role of a counter-movement.

While Khatami was a political figure of the movement, one who was supposed to represent the silent and repressed majority that voted for him, too often he played the role of a therapist who listened to a minority of privileged and powerful while not listening to his true patients. He and his administrations were working for the same ruling class that was trying to topple him. From his first day in office, he was a dead man talking to the crowd at his own funeral. He was the mirage of hope in the desert of structural corruption, the rule of a few and by fear, and a religion of death.

There has been no extensive study that covers this social movement. My work discusses the background, courses of actions and implications of this rare and non-violent movement in the Middle East, which gave hope and optimism to democracy and human rights activists in Iran and elsewhere for a very short period of time. The academic and media attention in the USA and Europe has mainly been focused on Islamist movements in the Middle East; in this context, a civil and non-violent movement receives almost no attention other than as an opposition to the Islamist ruling clerics of Iran.

Chapter 10 was published in the *Journal of Middle Eastern and North African Intellectual and Cultural Studies* 4(1), 2006). Chapter 5 was published in the *Journal of International Women's Studies* (Nov. 2007; 9(1)). Section three of Chap. 7 was also published in the *Iranian Studies Journal*, (2007, 40, 5). Some sections of Chaps. 10 and 11 have been disseminated through the Gozaar webzine.

Transliteration

The system of transliteration used in this study renders consonants according to the system adopted by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, but omits diacritical marks, with the exception of the *hamzeh* (indicated by an apostrophe,') the *ayn* (indicated by a grave,'), and Ā and ā for long *alef* (a in Persian). Vowels are rendered to reflect the sound in English that most closely approximates modern Persian pronunciation. Words commonly used in English are transliterated according to common practice. The common spelling of names such as Reza, Tehran, Shah and Khan has been retained. Personal names are rendered in accordance with the transliteration rules outlined here, except when cited in European language sources.

I have not changed the transliteration of the Middle Eastern names that have been already used in English, such as Sayyid Qutb and Ahmadinejad, while I have used Seyyed when it is applied in Persian literature. I have not changed the transliteration of these words if used by other scholars and quoted in my work. All Persian and Arabic words used in the text are italicized. In transliterating of common words used both in Arabic and Persian I have used their own system respectively, for example, *fiqh*, *'urf*, *dhemmi*, *ijtihad*, *mujtahid, madrasah* and Islam if they are used in Arabic and *feqh*, *'orf*, *zemmi*, *ejtehād, mujtahed, madreseh* and Eslam (when it is used in the name of books or individuals) if they are used in Persian. All translations are by the author, unless otherwise stated. All *ezāfeh*s (a noun governing the genitive or possessive case) are transliterated as *–e* or *–ye*, depending on the last character in the Persian word.

In the text, dates are all in Gregorian calendar unless they refer directly to Persian texts. Wherever a date is given in the Islamic solar (*shamsi*, A. S. *anno shamsi*) or lunar (*qamar*i, A. Q. *anno qamari*) calendar, they are followed by the corresponding Gregorian date. In the bibliography, I have mentioned Gregorian and Islamic solar/lunar years for books that are originally written in Persian/Arabic.

I have avoided using the clerical and other titles such as *ayatullah*, *sheikh*, *hojjat ul-Islam* and grand *ayatullah* before the names of the clerics; in fairness, I have done the same with the titles of university scholars. In the Muslim world, these titles are arbitrary, self-granted, and most of the time misleading. It is almost impossible to weigh the knowledge, social popularity and authority of Iranian individuals by simply looking at their titles.

Stony Brook, NY Majid Mohammadi

Note

1. In my view, the reform movement began in 1996 when reformers broke the majority of the authoritarian faction in the fifth parliamentary election. It strengthened in 2000 when the sixth parliament (during the Islamic Republic) was elected with a reformist agenda. The movement came to a halt in 2001 when Khatami was elected for the second term; this is because he was not re-elected based on a reform agenda in the 2001 presidential election.

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List of Abbreviations

CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
EU	European Union
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IRGC	Islamic Republic Guards Corp
IRI	Islamic Republic of Iran
IRIA	Islamic Republic of Iran Army
IRIB	Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting
IRM	Iranian Reform Movement
IRNA	Islamic Republic News Agency
MIRO	Mujāhedin of the Islamic Revolution Organization
Mossad	HaMossad leModi'in uleTafkidim
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
ROTC	Reserve Officers' Training Corps
RSF	Reporters San Frontiers (Reporters without Borders)
RTT	Round Table Talks
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UCB	Unity Consolidation Bureau
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USD	United States Dollar
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

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PART I

Background

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CHAPTER 1

Civil Resistance and the Non-Violent State-Building Process in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Iran

The Tobacco Movement of 1890–1892 marked the beginning of more than a century of non-violent civil resistance in Iran. This movement and the succeeding Constitutional Revolution of 1906–1907 played important roles in forming the Iranian national identity and political culture, which in turn have indirectly influenced more recent non-violent civil insurrections. Almost all modern movements in Iran, including the Nationalization of Oil Movement of 1951–1953, the Revolution of 1979 and the Green Wave of 2009 have drawn on the Tobacco Movement and Constitutional Revolution and reflected most of their strategies and tactics.

This chapter discusses the Tobacco Movement and the Constitutional Revolution and how both established the foundations of and shaped national and collective identities. Each is an example of a non-violent struggle for people's sovereignty, the rule of law and self-determination. In addition, these cases enable us to elaborate on historical acts of non-violent resistance in the context of the Iranian national liberation struggle as well as historical developments regarding discourses on non-violent resistance. This will help us assess the basic demands of the Iranian people and the impact of non-violent resistance on the formation of a nation, as well as on shaping collective or communal identities.

After providing a brief historical background to these two movements, this chapter focuses on the intellectual, theoretical and social pretext, forms, strategies and tactics of the non-violent action in late nineteenth

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and early twentieth-century Iran. The impact of these non-violent actions on the nation- and state-building processes and how civil resistance influenced the Iranian independence struggle are also discussed.

1.1 Nation- and State-Building Processes

Nation- and state-building processes have occurred in two different forms: violent and non-violent. Based on the methods undertaken in these processes, different nations and states have been created. Violent methods usually lead to a state that has no respect for human rights and the rule of law, at least for a period. A good example is the Iranian Revolution of 1979; its goal was to establish a revolutionary state and it consolidated its power through bloodshed, murder and torture. Conversely, non-violent methods lead to a democratic state that recognizes human rights and their foundations.

Demonstrations, civil disobedience and other forms of non-violent action have subverted the ways that most Iranians have adopted to order the institutions and discourses associated with the state-building process in the country. These non-violent actions have formed the cultural identity of modern Iranian society in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In contrast, Iranian clerics adopted violent methods to establish the religious state and have continued a long history of violence against their dissidents.

The theoretical and practical reforms pursued by Iranian intellectuals and nationalist politicians were aimed at modernizing the state and giving a new meaning to Iranian identity. However, Iranian reformists knew that they would not be able to establish a new state and a modern nation from the ashes of the Iranian empire without following the path of developed European nations. To do this, they felt the need for both a national identity shaped through the revival and reconstruction of a national heritage, and the diffusion into Iranian culture of Western civilization. The motivations for the participants' movement derived from pre-material politics and newly created identities, particularly those from the small but growing middle class.

The most critical points of nation-building in Iran's modern history have occurred when social and political movements have been pushing for reform and modernization. During these periods, Iranians have put their differences aside and focused on Iranian national identity, interests and history. The modern nation- and state-building processes began in the second half of the nineteenth century, when social movements were on the

rise. The civil resistance of the population to autocracy, corruption and superpower domination was crucial to the formation of a national consciousness and a collective identity.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Iran entered the modern international system of sovereign statehood (Arjomand 1988: 27) and the political elite was ready to receive the modern idea of a state as an institution distinct from the king and his court. Most of the building blocks of modern states—the rule of law, the separation of powers, a centralized government, a constitution and an independent judiciary—were introduced by the intellectuals and politicians who were active in the non-violent social movements.

Iran's road to self-determination and its non-violent civil resistance to the domination of the Russians and the British Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries continuously faced political obstacles. Monarchical absolutism was seen as collusion with the great powers. The Tobacco Movement and 1906 Constitutional Revolution were intended partly to address these obstacles in different contexts. Although Iran was never colonized, the political regimes fell under the influence of great powers during the rule of the late Qājārs, Pahlavis and Khameneis.

Iranian activists aimed to address the legitimacy crisis of the state by shaping a framework of rule that recognized popular sovereignty and the rule of law. These are the bases of any modern state. The Constitutional Revolution was the reformers' reaction to insurmountable obstacles placed in front of repeated attempts to realize reform by reorganizing and modernizing Qājār governance. This goal was pursued by reformers such as Amir Kabir and Sepahsālār, both prime ministers. The revolution of 1906–1907 was based on an accumulation of demands for reforms to modernize the state, which would in turn incorporate Iran into the international system of sovereign states. The political elite pursued this objective during the reign of Reza Shah Pahlavi.

1.2 The First Civil Resistance: The Tobacco Movement

Under the Qājār dynasty (1796–1925), Iran was increasingly subject to the economic and political domination of the great powers Russia and Great Britain due to the corruption of the Iranian court and the country's weak armed forces. Because of a lack of industrialization and corruption-based treaties, there was a huge gap between imports and exports. This led to

discontent among the peasantry and craftsmen. Some of the *ʿulamā* (clerics), merchants and *bāzāris* (tradesmen and shopkeepers) objected to the concessions granted to the great powers, while some of them supported the shah's court. Nevertheless, the polity was not ripe for reform and high-ranking officials such as Abbās Mirzā (1789–1833), Qā'em Maqām-e Farāhāni (1779–1835), Amir Kabir (1807–1852) and Mirzā Husayn Khān Sepahsālār (1828–1880), all prime ministers, failed in their attempts at educational and administrative reform.

In 1890, unpopular concessions on tobacco and other product monopolies given to a British company led leading shi'i clerics to call for nationalist protests and a nationwide tobacco boycott, which succeeded in forcing Nāser ul-Din Shah to cancel the concession granted to the imperial power of Great Britain in early 1892.

The Tobacco Movement was strengthened by a *fatwa* issued by Mirzā Hassan Shirāzi, a cleric residing in Najaf, Iraq (at the time the city was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire). This *fatwa* had a huge impact on mobilizing the population against the use of tobacco and hence had a substantial anti-imperialist component. By declaring the use of tobacco to be tantamount to waging war against the Hidden Imam, Shirāzi identified the colonial powers as the enemies of Islam.[1] This duality later became the context for the dehumanization of the West and the sacralization of the Muslim nations by Islamist ideologies and groups.

Shirāzi's *fatwa* was a turning point in the struggle between the king's court and shi'i clerics for power. For decades, the clerics had been using the extension of foreign imperial influence into Iran as a pretext for delegitimizing the Iranian government. Their first protest against this trend was against the Reuter Concession in 1873. Through this and other protests, religious institutions played a monumental role in the politics of the nation, a role which has functioned as a double-edged sword since. Religious institutions have supported various social movements while simultaneously directing them toward an Islamist agenda.

Although clerics protested in order to increase their own social power, the non-violent nature of these demonstrations helped to instigate mass participation. At the same time, some powerful clerics supported the king and opposed any reform. This resistance to foreign powers was peaceful action that targeted foreign trade. A considerable section of Iranian society stopped using tobacco to exert pressure on the government to annul the tobacco treaty. The boycott finally worked, ultimately proving to the Iranians that non-violent people power was a potent force for creating change.

The Tobacco Movement presents in microcosm many of the features which reappeared in the Constitutional Revolution of 1906–1907 (Keddie 1966: 1) and in other movements in modern Iran. This successful mass protest showed how attempts by foreign powers to infringe Iranian sovereignty would be met by resistance from the local population. It also inspired Iranians to resist despotic and authoritarian governments. The victory of the mass movement made it clear to the Iranian people that they could win if they were united against the powerful, encouraging opponents of the Iranian governments in the years to come to take action. This success proved that it would be possible to resist the shah and his court and that even the most powerful would submit to the will of the people.

1.3 A Non-Violent Social Movement: The Constitutional Revolution

The demand for reform in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries met little or no response from the different administrations appointed by the Qājār kings. The Tobacco Movement increased and gave a focus to a series of grievances which had accumulated from the nineteenth century (Keddie 1966: 2).

In 1905, an uprising initially led by merchants and clergy ensued which would continue for the next six years. This was in opposition to widespread corruption by the Qājār dynasty and its allied regional nobles and resulted from a series of other concessions to Russian and other foreign interests. This civil resistance was merely a continuation and intensification of the Tobacco Movement of the 1890s. In what became known as the Constitutional Revolution, thousands of Iranians engaged in peaceful protest, boycotts and mass sit-ins, along with occasional riots and scattered armed engagements in the aftermath.

The alliance of merchants and clergy that emerged during the Tobacco Movement continued and was effective in putting pressure on the shah to accept some reforms. The Constitutional Revolution involved three groups in Iranian society in the early twentieth century: part of the *ʿulamā* who were not pro-court and favored limitations on the king's arbitrary power; the *bāzāris*, whose trade was at risk due to the monarch's concessions to the great powers; and the intellectuals, who were witnessing the theoretical and revolutionary developments in Russia, Japan, Egypt, India and Turkey and wanted the same developments to occur in Iran. Ethnic

and religious minorities such as Zoroastrians, Jews, Armenians and Bābis were also vital forces in favor of the movement (Sanasarian 2000: 49; Klüsener 2008: 15; Berberian 2001; Keddie 1962: 107).

As one of the most important events in Iranian history, the Constitutional Revolution was the beginning of a long struggle for the rule of law and constitutional politics. Elections as the basic method of conflict resolution and as an alternative for violence were established by the constitution of 1906. By the formal adoption of constitutional politics, the path to democratization was started in the country; this continued to the Green Movement of 2009.

As a result came significant political and social reforms, including the establishment of an elected parliament (*Majles*) to share power with the shah, a constitution (*qānun-e asāsi*) and some anti-corruption measures. Nevertheless, the legacy of this movement is mixed. On the one side, Mohammad Husayn Na'ini and his theory of limited government as justified by the Islamic text and the principles of Islamic jurisprudence (Na'ini 1955) emerged; on the other, there is Shaikh Fazlullah Nuri, who tried to legitimize the absolute monarchy and the authoritarian governance based on his understanding of Islam (Nuri 1988). This challenge is still alive in Iranian politics.

1.4 The Roots of Non-Violent Action

What led the Iranian people to pursue such non-violent action to protest against the policies of their governments? What are the intellectual and theoretical roots of non-violent action in this period? Over four to five decades, Iranian reformists paved the way for the priority of non-violent over violent action in the Tobacco Movement of 1880–1882 and the Constitutional Revolution of 1906–1907. They did this through four distinctive endeavors.

The first was an intellectual revolution, whose main thinkers were Mirzā Āqā Khān Kermāni (1853–1896), Mirzā 'Abd ul-Rahim Tālebof Tabrizi (1834–1911), Mirzā Malkam Khān (1833–1908), Mirzā Fat-h Ali Ākhoundzādeh (1812–1878) and Seyyed Jamāl ul-Din Asadābādi (1838–1897). They promoted liberal ideas such as critical thinking, freedom of choice and belief, the necessity to limit political power, tolerance, social activism, social justice, constitutional rights, due process and economic development. These thinkers never promoted violence; their ideals did not require violent action.

Such liberal ideas were the same as used in the Tobacco Movement and the Constitutional Revolution. People who boycotted smoking tobacco wanted to limit the power of the government to enter into treaties that were counter to the interests of the country. They did not want to see their fellow citizens lashed in public without a fair and open trial; they asked for the right to criticize the government without having to pay a high price to exercise their rights.

The second endeavor was to introduce the idea of the rule of law to the Iranian people. Mirzā Malkam Khān and Mirzā Husayn Khān Sepahsālār were harbingers of this idea in Iran in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the 1850s and 1860s, the rule of law was the dominant discourse in the country (Ādamiyyat 1973: 170). Iranian intellectuals and the Europe-educated elite were looking for a set of systematic rules that (1) guaranteed the equality of individuals before the law; (2) recognized the professionalization of judicial procedures; (3) marginalized the will of the powerful as the source of law; (4) limited the power of the shah, his court and the administration; and (5) took into account the social and civil rights of individuals (Ādamiyyat 1973: 172; 1960: 136–37, 214–18). They wanted the judiciary to be the only authorized body to have jurisdiction over the population and to have the power to issue verdicts. With respect to these, they were looking for a balance to be maintained between crime and punishment.

The agenda of Sepahsālār, when he was the minister of justice, was to provide the country with an independent tribunal and a unified code of law (Nashat 1982: 43). By launching a weekly newspaper, *Vaqāye'-e 'Adliyyeh* (Judiciary News), he played a crucial role in spreading the culture of the rule of law to the country. Although his reforms were short-lived and lapsed after his fall in 1873 (Martin 1989: 77), his ideas returned during Amin ul-Dowleh and the Constitutional Revolution.

The third endeavor was to pursue social, economic and political reforms instead of revolution or rebellion to change the polity. Inspired by reforms made in the Ottoman Empire, the first reforms to modernize the Iranian state began in Azerbaijan by the crown prince, Abbās Mirzā, and his minister, Mirzā Bozorg Qā'em Maqām, during the first decade of the nineteenth century. Their reforms mostly focused on the military. They wanted the government to react to situations involving military conflicts such as the Perso-Russian Wars (Arjomand 1988: 30).

Mirzā Taqi Khān Amir Kabir, the chief minister to Nāser ul-din Shah for the first four years of the shah's reign and one of the most capable and innovative figures to appear in the whole Qājār period, was another reformer in this era. His goal was to create a prosperous and well-ordered

country. He wanted to tackle problems such as the extravagances of the court, military weakness and administrative inefficiency.

Among the various measures enacted by Amir Kabir, the Dār ul-Fonun foundation in Tehran was possibly the most lasting in its effects. The initial purpose of the institution was to train officers and civil servants to pursue the regeneration of the state that Amir Kabir had begun, but as the first educational institution giving instruction in modern learning it had a far wider impact. It functioned as a window on European civilization, and its graduates were trained to a level that could guarantee the continuation of their studies in Europe.

The fourth endeavor was judicial reform to establish the foundations of due process, access to justice and the development of a more impartial, independent, accountable and effective judiciary that was able to control corruption and improve governance. This began early in the nineteenth century when the crown prince ʻAbbās Mirzā tried to ensure that honest and capable judges were appointed to the *shar'i* court. He also established a new *divān-khāneh* in Tabriz, his own seat of government, which supervised *qāzis* (judges) appointed to the other towns in Azerbaijan (Najmi 1958: 29, 198).

Later, Mirza Abu al-Qāsem Qā'em Maqām-e Farāhāni, the first prime minister of Mohammad Shah, took action to establish a *divān-e ʻedālat*, or court of justice, that dealt with customary law cases. Mirzā Taqi Khān Amir Nezām (Amir Kabir) was the first to attempt to bring about a structural reform of the judicial system. Sepahsālār continued the efforts to centralize the judiciary system by strengthening the central *divan-khaneh* (Arjomand 1988: 32). His reforms continued during the reign of Amin ul-Dowleh in the early 1890s.

All of these actions decreased the resort to violence to pursue social reform and increased the chance that non-violent and civil measures would be taken. The first two were based on education and raising public awareness of the social and political situation by publishing books and newspapers. The third and fourth were mostly practical efforts to promote the lives of the people through reform.

1.5 Forms of Non-Violent Action

Non-violent action as a set of techniques of struggle melded together into a campaign (Martin 2006) is not a twenty-first century phenomenon in Iran. In an Iranian context, it goes back to Qājār era, when

Iranians began to demand their rights. Non-violence in the Iranian context has been a way of life and a form of protest from the start of modern social movements. For most Iranians who have lived under despotic regimes, political protest is a part of everyday life and should aim to minimize harm to themselves and others. To do this, protests should avoid any violent personal behavior, work positively to help others and reduce the level of authoritarian and totalitarian domination, domestically and internationally.

The most prominent and effective forms of non-violent protest against the despotic regimes of Mozaffar ul-Din Shah and Mohammad Ali Shah were demonstrations, taking refuge in sanctuaries (*bast neshini*, in sacred and secure places such as mausoleums, mosques and foreign embassies), strikes and petitions (*'arizeh*). As long as the government did not violently interfere, all of these actions were peaceful ways to express dissent.

Demonstrations of discontent began in 1905 when some tradesmen received corporal punishment for sugar price gouging. A large group of both *mullas* and *bāzāris* participated in the demonstrations. The protest led to the taking of sanctuary in the Royal Mosque and the shrine of Shah 'Abd ul-'Azim in Ray, a small city south of Tehran.

In 1905, the shooting of a demonstrator led between 12,000 and 14,000 protestors to take *bast* in the British Legation and demand a written constitution. The government could not attack them, while some sections of the population aided in providing food and other necessities to the protestors. At the time, the *bāzār* was the most important non-sacred public sphere in the country, and guilds were powerful representatives of different groups of *bāzāris*. Any strike in the *bāzār* would have a crippling effect on the economy, and both the king's court and *bāzāris* were aware of this power. Between the spring of 1905 and the summer of 1906, three sets of strikes and protests took place in Tehran, at the Shah 'Abd ul-'Azim Shrine and in Qom. These strikes attracted a broader number of participants and extended the primary agenda of the house of justice (the demand for justice) to a more crucial institution of democracy—the parliament (Afary 1996: 51).

Iranians in rural areas, mostly peasants, could only make their voices heard by sending petitions and letters to newspaper editors, delegates to the Majles (when the parliament was established later) or members of the *anjuman*s (councils) of the *mujahedin* (fighters). Such petitions and letters often included several signatures from prominent members of the community. The members of *anjuman*s and delegates of the Majles used

to write letters on behalf of their constituents. Petitioners complained about their difficult lives, ill treatment by overseers and landowners, and periodic rampages by local bandits (Afary 1996: 151–154).

The four forms of non-violent action were interrelated and one would lead to another, strengthening their effects in the public arena. When letters and petitions were ignored, the petitioners would begin a protest or strike. Strikes would lead to protests and protests would lead to taking sanctuary in the shrines as a last resort. Instigation and mobilization to violent action were rare and the public did not follow this path.

These forms of non-violent actions are all participatory systems. For example, anyone can join a demonstration or a strike. If the guilds hold a strike, every *bāzāri* who wants to join in can do so. Due to the variety of methods, there were usually opportunities for just about anyone to participate, including women, children, the elderly and even people with disabilities. These types of action do not require special skills and strengths.

Beginning with the Tobacco Movement, all of these forms repeated themselves in Iranian social and political movements over a century-long struggle for freedom and justice. Iranians are still writing letters and petitions to protest against the actions of the Islamist regime. Strikes and demonstrations have also survived. The only form that has vanished is *bast*. During the uprisings following the presidential election in June 2009, some activists suggested taking sanctuary in Khomeini's mausoleum but this was not accepted by the others as an effective mode of protest.

1.6 Strategies and Tactics

Non-violent action has been widely used to oppose repressive and authoritarian regimes in Iran; some of these actions have been successful and some have failed to bring about change in the form of justice and freedom. In terms of pushing the regimes back, the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906 and Revolution of 1979 are success stories, although they could not establish a longstanding democracy. The most obvious successes are when regimes are changed or toppled, with rulers confirming the people's demands or leaving the country.

Why did Iranians choose non-violent means over conventional and violent action? There have been four different reasons for the choice of non-violent strategies. First, they wanted to win greater support among the population and public opinion, and knew that non-violent methods usually won more support than violence. Iranian activists intended to influence public opinion and mobilize the people in a mass movement.

Non-violent actions are more convenient for the general public to participate in and more attractive for individuals who are not ready to fight and go underground, while violent strategies are only able to attract a small group, which over time becomes more and more isolated. Opponents of the government, not being physically harmed and less fearful, feel freer to join a non-violent opposition.

Secondly, it widely and boldly challenges the legitimacy of the behavior and policies of the existing regime. The despotic regimes have no choice except to resort to their coercive powers; the more they use them, the more their legitimacy vanishes. The confrontation between non-violent opposition and a violent regime is a destructive one for any political regime, even if it is supported by powerful foreign countries and has access to natural resources that makes it viable to run the country without taxation.

The third reason is to extend the umbrella of a movement. Without a non-violent approach, it is almost impossible to establish an inclusive alliance among different social strata and groups. The Tobacco Movement witnessed a successful alliance between *ʿulamā*, intellectuals and *bāzāris*. Even in the shah's court, the movement was able to attract some support and this was transferred to the monarch and his affiliates. The Tobacco Movement had support from every corner and stratum of Iranian society. The 1979 Revolution was based on a broad alliance of tradesmen and clergy on one side and intellectuals and technocrats on the other.

Fourthly, it allows for widespread participation. The elderly, disabled, women and even children are able to participate in non-violent action, while violent struggles are limited to young, healthy men and women. People are able to continue their business and regular lives when participating in non-violent movements, but members of violent movements have to withdraw from everyday tasks; this is not bearable for a long period of time. The Tobacco Movement and the 1979 Revolution (before its victory) could not be labeled armed or violent and the government had no justification for oppressing them based on the actions of mainstream activists.

These reasons are the key to success. As was experienced in the Iranian movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there were tangible advantages of civil resistance relative to violence in achieving tactical and long-term strategic objectives in the struggle for self-determination.

During the Constitutional Revolution, there was no competition between violent and non-violent elements in the struggle, but when parliament was bombed by the counter-movement, some groups clung to their guns to fight the central government. The shah's coup against the

first Majles (1906–1908) aimed to break the populist alliance among *ʿulamā*, *bāzāris*, artisans and the intelligentsia and replace it with forces balancing tribal and landowner interests. The 1908 coup was run by the Iranian Cossack Brigade, supported by Russia. This move made the revolution violent; revolutionary guerillas protested against the shah in Tabriz and Rasht and marched south to take Tehran (along with Bakhtiari tribesmen moving up from the Fars province).

This non-violent independence movement was empowered by particular structural conditionalities, such as the leadership of non-militant clerics, merchants and intellectuals, and their ties to the shah's court, which were supposed to be used for both pressure and compromise. It was also constrained by the weakness of the middle class, low rates of literacy and the low concentration of the population in urban areas. The tactics and strategies of non-violent resistance were developed and evolved in relation to these conditionalities. As a result, the non-violent movement created a context for using domestic and international pressure to influence the power structure.

The dominance of the non-violence strategy does not mean that violence was totally absent from the movements mentioned in twentieth-century Iran. It also does not mean that non-violence is the only route to emancipation. Sometimes when there is enough support for a movement and the non-violent opposition fails to remove the government, the revolutionaries resort to armed struggle and overthrow the governments (such as the Sandinistas against the Somoza regime in Nicaragua). In some cases, a controlled level of violence can contribute to the establishment of a relatively non-violent state, such as South Korea during its military governments.

1.7 Civil Resistance and the Struggle for Independence

Civil resistance during the late nineteenth century shaped the discourse and framework of action over the next 150 years of social and political movements in Iran. In the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Iranians have been demanding the people's sovereignty—the rule of law and democracy that were at the heart of the Constitutional Revolution. Iranians have been using the same strategies and tactics to protest against corrupt and authoritarian governments which are weak in confronting the interests of the great powers and have minimal concern for the welfare and demands of the population.

The interconnection between misrule and the activities of the foreign governments was always a source of discontent and dissent. The independence struggle in the Iranian case was allegedly aimed at breaking this connection and giving power to the people to stand against both the influence of the great powers and the dictatorship of the domestic rulers.

The non-violent actions of the late nineteenth century were also crucial in collective issue-framing in the Iranian struggles for freedom and justice—the core ideas of Iranian nationalism in the twentieth century. These actions have led to a wider appeal for more universal principles, such as due process, human rights and minority rights in the early twenty-first century.

1.8 Lessons Learned

The experiences of the Tobacco Movement and the Constitutional Revolution gave an opportunity to the Iranian population as a whole and the activists in particular to learn and repeat them when public demands were high and the government was not ready to listen. There are four important lessons: (1) the importance of making alliances (such as between merchants and clerics); (2) the use of strategies that do not instigate violence; (3) participation in action such as strikes and taking sanctuary that put the legitimacy of the government in question, instead of fighting violently against the despotic government; and (4) not expecting foreign support to attain their goals. Iranians have had all of these lessons in mind during successive movements in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

1.9 Conclusion

Iran's independence movement was not limited to a specific uprising or social movement but gained momentum during three social movements: the Constitutional Revolution of 1906; the Nationalization of Oil Movement between 1951 and 1953; and the Iranian Revolution of 1979. The Iranian independence movement was a process at work for more than a century and is about self-determination. Building upon the achievements of previous such movements, the main agenda of the Green Wave of 2009 was self-determination by the people (not the government) and the promotion of democracy.

The lessons of civil resistance, past experiences and tacit stories of non-violent civil resistance during the Tobacco Movement and the Constitutional Revolution failed to shape the structure and political culture of the state.

This was due to the non-inclusive policies of the dominant classes, who opposed the inclusion of the majority and granted privileges to these dominant groups. Once the post-movement government consolidated, it began to eliminate any opposition. This experience was repeated in the Revolution of 1979, while the uprisings before the victory were mostly pluralistic and inclusive.

While Iranian society has been historically attuned to what needed to be done in organized non-violent resistance, the politically dominant group has not learned any lessons from past experiences. A lack of powerful social strata and economic classes and the weakness of civil society institutions have given this opportunity to the existing government to grab and hold power violently and use natural resources to fuel its repressive machine.

The degree of violence before the victory of the Iranian social movements in the twentieth century has been lower compared to the violence in the aftermath of these movements. Iranians have been successful in limiting state violence by adopting strategies of non-violence but they have always failed when dealing with the power-sharing phase and in ensuring that nobody is hurt fighting for a greater cause.

Note

1. Hidden Imam refers to the 12th Shi`i Imam believed to rise at the end of time.

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CHAPTER 2

The Iranian Reform Movement and Political Developments in the Last Quarter of the Twentieth Century

Political development has been a major global phenomenon in the years since World War II, spreading with particular vigor from the 1970s in many peripheral countries. The need for political development in Iran culminated in the religious revolution of 1978–1979. Since the Revolution, this process has expedited and continued to be a strong impulse in Iran's polity.

By political development, I mean three different and parallel processes: state-building; the development of political pluralism; and democratization, which depends on the other two processes. State-building refers to the "purposive effort and conscious arrangement to a design" of an artificial, engineered institutional complex (Poggi 1978: 95). It represents a change from a traditional state to a system of macro-policy-making, administration and control. Political pluralism refers to the idea of the multiplication of connection lines through which governing assemblies can be constructed from a variety of perspectives with vested interests (Connolly 1995). The democratization process refers to the objectification, reification and institutionalization of broad and relatively equal citizenship with the binding consultation of citizens in regard to state personnel and policies, as well as the protection of citizens from arbitrary state actions (Tilly 1995).

Political development can be explained through two different approaches: a structural approach and an agency approach. In the structural approach, long-term and deep structural changes are considered the prerequisites of a stable and effective democracy (Lipset 1959). This

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approach focuses on traditions, institutions, and social classes and strata. A class struggle between the middle and working classes, a civil society and an advanced level of economic development are the social bases of democracy in this approach. The agency approach, by contrast, emphasizes the significance of the strategic choices, policies and interactions of the ruling elites in the transition (O'Donnell et al. 1986). Political processes, elite initiatives and politicians' rational actions and negotiations are important in this approach. I have chosen the first approach in this chapter due to its effectiveness in explaining political trends in Iran.

2.1 State-Building

Iran as a nation-state has a common language, history, culture and religion. There are many languages, dialects, different cultures and various religions in Iran, but the Persian language, having existed for two and a half millennia, though in changing forms, and Islam as one of the important foundations of social values, are factors making for the integration of Iranian society. Given its long history of political and administrative unity, the process of nation-building in Iran can be considered finished. The state-building process, in contrast, has been an ongoing process from the time it began during the Safavid dynasty, 500 years ago.

From the end of Sassanid dynasty to the Afshār-Zand period, Iran did not have a central state, but rather many tribes with their own governments. The kings of the Safavid dynasty united the country and tried to centralize power. After the Safavid dynasty, especially during the late Qājār and then Pahlavi dynasty, the state-building process in Iran was not only internally organized, external forces were also in effect. Great Britain, Russia, and the USA were active forces in Iranian politics for 150 years: Russia and Britain from early 19th to mid-20th centuries and USA after the WWII.

After the Iranian Revolution of 1979, external forces weakened and the state-building process continued around internal elements, although foreign powers continued to have a prominent importance in domestic politics through conspiracy, development and dependence theories. Internal forces, in spite of their weakness and lack of organization, were able to engage in high-level and formal political activities and adapt themselves to the necessities of a modern state.

The state-building process is not only occurring in Iran, but in many developing countries in Asia, Africa and South America. However, the process in Iran has different and unique features. These include:

1. The separation of powers, particularly between the executive and judicial branches, is not completely accomplished legally. The two branches continue to interfere with each other. Separation is constitutionally but not politically accepted. Incidental interference has intensified; the executive power has judicial activities in area of business (executive courts who fine shopping centers and dealers) and culture (censorship of books, scripts and plays by the Ministry of Culture); on the other side, the judiciary does surveillance and police work;
2. Institutions under the control of the leader interfere in all legislative, executive and judicial branches of government. The hands of a hidden or "deep" state and a political mafia are apparent in all forms of public administration. Divided sovereignty is being intensified and weakened at the same time. Authoritarian forces intensify this division while democratic forces subvert it;
3. In many countries, the nation-building and state-building processes are simultaneous, but the state-building process in Iran lags behind the nation-building process. This is because of a tribal political structure that continued on into the twentieth century; only part of the tribal system weakened during Reza Shah's reign.

In the state-building process in Iran,

- The state spreads its control over the public sphere but does not recognize itself as responsible for social difficulties and problems. However, the state in Iran is in charge of many areas of life and people expect the state to manage or take care of their affairs. Patriotism is the result of a two-sided expectation between people and the state: people expect the state to protect them in any situation and the state expects people to obey. Censorship, as an example, is one of the results of correct behavior according to this expectation in the culture and media. The consequence of these expectations is control over the content of speeches and writings in cultural domains and the media, and approbatory control over political participation and competition;
- Policy-making, at a macro-level, has led to disorder in public affairs. The state in Iran, aside from defense and security, has multiple tasks on its hands, such as propaganda and cultural engineering, public services and commerce. In most societies of the world, the private sector is responsible for these services. This vast expanse of state functions is an obstacle to effective policy-making on the micro- and

macro-levels. In many fields, there are no well-organized macro-policies interrelated with micro ones. Governmental officials are not engaged in policy-making because the state is traditionally an instrument for the distribution of benefits and rents to the ruling class, and consequently, it is not accountable to any public entity;

- Execution of policies based on regulations that are sanctioned by the parliament does not leave many executive responsibilities to lower levels such as boards and councils. The Iranian state has not left affairs such as education, insurance, banking and big industries to the private sector because there is no trust between the state, on one side, and civil society institutions and citizens, on the other. The state also has little power to manage the risks of participation and to resolve conflicts. The Iranian state, after the Revolution, has exploited the advantage of self-determination and self-administration (the Iranian concept of independence), but has not been able to build a strong party system, civil society politics and effective governmental institutions. The state is characterized by a heterogeneous, non-partisan and majoritarian electoral system in a partial, deficient and incomplete democracy (in other words, democracy for some). This democracy works in a context of authoritarianism. Coalition cabinets are not based on a coalition democratic campaign but on the will of appointed bodies of government. Civil society institutions, as the result of this state-centrism, are under totalitarian control and weak.

2.2 Political Pluralization

The political pluralization process in Iran began after the Iran–Iraq war (1980–1988). After violent confrontations between the Khomeini loyalists and other political parties (nationalist, nationalist-religious, Marxist Leninist and Maoist, and Mojahedi-e Khalq (people's mujahedin, MEK) and successful the subduing of the opposition, the polity was almost closed. There were only two factions remaining: the Islamist right and left—and both supported Khomeini's decisions and policies. Khomeini's death was a turning point in the political process.

The first stage of the pluralization process has ideological and theoretical aspects: the idea of one ideology and one theory in each field changes to multiple ideas and theories, includng religion and ethics. Intellectuals and researchers have had an important role in proposing, explaining and promoting those ideas and theories. Iranians gradually began talking about "religious pluralism" alongside religious dogmatism, "cultural

pluralism" alongside traditionalism, and "social pluralism" and civil society alongside having one's lifestyle imposed by the state and mass society. Religious intellectuals gathered in the Kiān circle (a circle including some of religious intellectuals working as a think tank for Kiān Magazine) and secular intellectuals active in publishing modern novels and political theories of liberalism and democracy had an important role in this development. As a result, Iranians began to talk about a "multi-cultural concept of human rights" instead of a mono-cultural one, "toleration" as opposed to the intolerance of authoritarianism, and "political pluralism" instead of a one-party system or totalitarianism.

One theory that has weakened in the 1990s is the idea of the conspiracy theory—explaining all domestic politics through the interests and actions of foreign powers. Many intellectuals and researchers have thus been trying to internalize the country's problems and priorities. As far more political interests and agendas emerge, there is less emphasis on invisible hands as an explanation for changes in politics. In the 1980s, the sources of disorder in formal political literature were expected to be enemies from abroad, but in the 1990s this idea was very limited only to political minority of authoritarian, although powerful, groups. Even power elite changed in this regard. Deviance labeling has also lowered among politicians. The subjects under discussion in the 1990s and the 2000s have been (1) social order (instead of social conflict, as in the 1970s and 1980s), which must be rooted internally in national political forces; (2) the peaceful settlement of conflict between political forces by an impartial agent, that is, the state; and (3) plurality of religious dogmas and voices, one of the foundations of power redistribution.

The pluralization process that is based on the differentiation of social structure does not stop at the level of ideas, ideologies and theories. It also spreads to lifestyles and social habits. Iranian citizens who cannot show their different lifestyles in the public make their private realm a safe haven for a diversity and variety of forms and contents of physical life. Iranian families and individuals have many different ways of eating, drinking, dressing, communicating, entertaining and pursuing intimate relationships in the context of their private lives. The Iranian government believes in a close relationship between ideas and theories, on one hand, and behaviors and actions, on the other, and bans new ideas to prevent new and different behaviors and presentation of selves other than mainstream ones. This social pluralization emerges when elections or any other public sphere actions are held.

The result of this level of pluralization can be seen in the arena of policies. Different policies are expressed in the political statements of the political groups and organizations. Policy-level pluralization began in the middle of the 1990s. In the second half of the 1990s, new parties and independent political organizations were set up and some formed coalitions during the successive parliamentary and presidential elections. Each coalition has its own economic, social, and cultural bonds and policies. Reformers, for example, have presented a policy of détente in international relations, while authoritarians continue their demonization of foreigners, especially Westerners. The reformers emphasis on free access to media and authoritarians believe in a high level of control, especially the Internet and satellite television. Central members of the ruling factions drift between governmental officials, the hidden government and the shadow government. Iranian society is somewhere between a bottom-up and top-down partial democracy and these drifts are part of real politics.

The third and most important level of pluralization in Iran, other than ideas and actions, is located at the institutional level. At this level, in a one-party or one political faction system, anti-contractarian perspectives and political unifications alter to become multi-factional politics, contractarian perspectives and political differentiation. Iranian society is experiencing a multi-wing system, with coalitions between parties and organizations that belong to one wing. Most Iranian individuals, reformers or anti-Islamic regime opposition are not completely against the elected political institutions because they know they can change the president or the representatives of the parliament in the next cycle, but the gap between citizens and political bodies cannot be filled with appointed members.

There are some limitations on the pluralization process. The first are cultural and social values such as the priority of ascription to achievement, exclusivism, the idea of religious solidarity that excludes those who are not true believers or have other religions, collectivism, particularism and diffuseness (Parsons 1991). These values are, in some levels, opposed to modern values such as the respect for privacy, inclusivism, the appreciation of diversity and the protection of basic human rights, and do not mesh with the implications of new technologies and services that individuals use in their everyday lives. Iranian intellectuals have been trying to find a way for these two different sets of values to coexist. The second is a traditional social structure that includes closed kinship relationships and a hierarchical system of power in communities. The hard core of the ruling class—clerical authority—has seriously challenged the new aspects of the social structure,

such as civil society and the rule of law. The third limitation is a political culture that is based on authoritarian ideas and excludes political activists who present critical ideas and do not accept existing boundaries.

2.3 Democratization

The situation of Iranian democracy in the 2000s and 2010s can be analyzed as a mock-up, a deficient or sham of democracy, a point floating between authoritarianism and totalitarianism. In the 1990s, reformists wanted to believe that the political system was floating between authoritarianism and partial democracy (as is presented by Dahl 1989: 221). The veto of the Guardian Council makes candidacy a privilege and not a right, which leads to an authoritarian system. The powerful appointed bodies of the government make the Iranian political system a sham of democracy because only some sections of the government are elected and because the appointed sections have the upper hand. The real politics and the way of ruling by the leader make democracy a veneer because elected bodies can accomplish nothing. The majority in the Majles and the President are not really in charge and the real power is in the hands of the authoritarian faction.

There is limited accountability of the executive power to the citizens, and competitive elections at the state level are non-free and unfair. The rights of freedom of speech and congregation are always violated and associational autonomy is often compromised at the civil society level (Table 2.1). In the 1990s, Iranian society was changed from an authoritarian

Table 2.1 Comparing liberal democracy, partial democracy and authoritarianism in the two categories of state and civil society

	Liberal democracy	*Partial democracy*	*Authoritarianism*
State	Accountable government	Limited accountability of government to citizens through elections	Not accountable
	Free and fair competitive elections	Non-free and unfair competitive elections	No competitive elections
Civil society	Civil and political rights	Rights to free expression curtailed	Severe restriction on individual civil and political rights
	Associational autonomy	More or less compromised associational autonomy	Non-existent autonomous association

political system at the end of Iran–Iraq war to a dual political system that was partially based on representation and political monopoly at the same time. There is a semi-absolutism and semi-representative political structure that has led to a divided polity and dual sovereignty.

Two kinds of democratization are competing against each other in Iran: democratization without pluralization and democratization with pluralization, that is, mass democracy (no party system, with no diversity of ideas in public sphere) versus liberal democracy. Non-liberal reformists and socialist democrats who are inside the government advocate the first kind of democratization and most reformers outside the government advocate the second. Socialist democrats believe that Iranian society needs more social equality and justice.

Iranian socialists believe that Iran as a nation-state is not at the stage of pluralization and liberalization. This means that the partial opening of an authoritarian system, short of choosing governmental leaders through freely competitive elections (Huntington 1991: 9), is not desirable even if possible. They say that this democratization would take place under an authoritarian regime and cannot attain the level of liberal democracy. They criticize political activists and columnists whose speech and writings are in the context of liberal democracy and who have increased the level of their political demands. However, pluralists and liberalists think that democracy without pluralization and liberalization is impossible, and authoritarianism is losing its constituents day by day.

The fundamentals and prerequisites of democracy are participation for all, competition for all, independent groups, institutionalization of the electoral system, rotation of elites and a civil political culture. The democratization process in Iran has passed two prerequisites—participation for all and the creation an electoral system—while the number of independent groups is increasing; however, as far as other prerequisites are concerned, Iran's democratization process is at the beginning of its journey. It is better to call it an authoritarian system with engineered elections.

The situation of Iranian society with regard to these prerequisites is explained in the following seven sub-sections.

Participation

The religious revolution of 1978–1979 was based on populism. The Islamic regime that was born in that revolution tried to spread its ideology to all aspects of Iranians' lives—the educational system, security and

military, intelligence, the welfare system, media and entertainment, social activities (through production, distribution and consumption co-operations) and the judiciary. This extension of Islamic ideology was based on populism that was the fundamental ideology and paradigm of the era. In this paradigm, the atomic individual participates but s/he has no individual idea or interest, no privacy, and must be similar to others. This paradigm increased participation but decreased the tolerance and liberty of the individuals to choose their own way of thinking and lifestyle. Populism was very popular and successful during the war (1980–1988) but has weakened since.

Populism in Iran focused on the need for shared values and transcended ideological conflicts. The paradoxical feature of religion appeared at this point. Religion in Iran has had a dual role in promoting and weakening democratic values. It has presented a shared value system that is necessary for stable democracy, but at the same time, it has prevented believers from accepting the participation and competition of other religious or non-religious groups, who are considered non-true believers. It offers inequality between believers and non-believers, between men and women, between clerics and laymen and laywomen, and between rulers and subjects. Religious institutions in the hands of authoritarian faction manipulate the truth of their faith, seeing it as the only true belief and putting limitations on the political and social participation of others. On the other hand, some ideas about participatory religious democracy are heard from religious intellectuals (Soroush 1993) that are similar to Unitarian ideas about democracy (Heller-Wagner 1995).

Electoral System

On the basis of the Islamic Republic of Iran's constitution of 1979, the president, the parliament and the councils of cities and villages are elected directly by the people. The Assembly of Religious Experts selects the leader of the Islamic Republic. Members of this council are elected only from Islamic jurists; the control of the Guardian Council means that candidates in these elections must be approved. This electoral system is not extended to the judicial system. The members of the Guardian Council and the high-ranking officials of the judiciary are appointed directly and indirectly by the leader (Fig. 2.1).

In spite of ideological control by the Guardian Council (all candidates must be confirmed by this council in the presidency, parliamentary and the

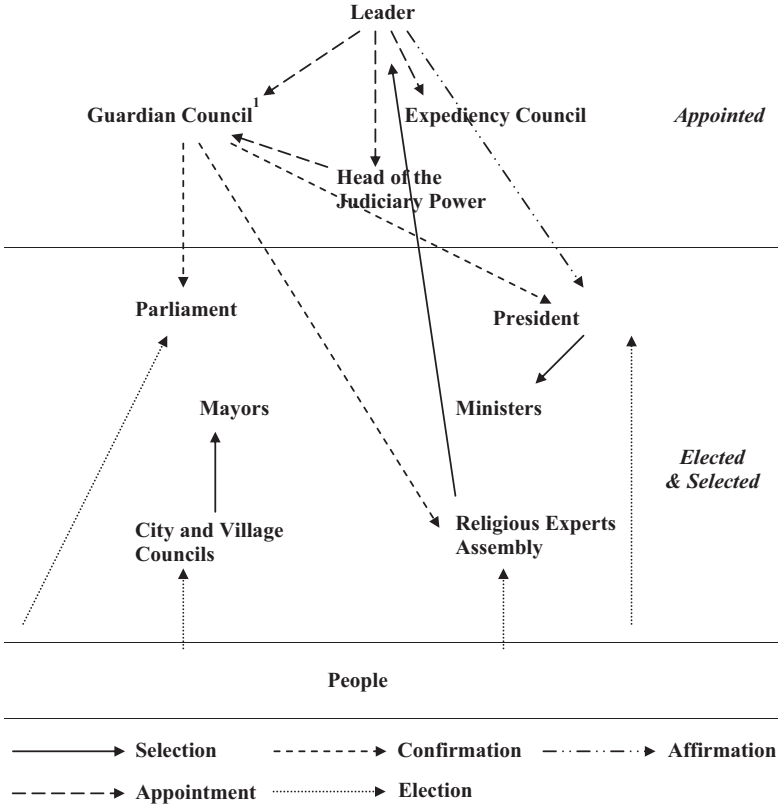

Fig. 2.1 Iran's political structure due to election and pyramid of power (Note: Out of twelve members of the Guardian Council, half are appointed by the leader and the rest are appointed by the head of judiciary power)

experts assembly elections) and the theory of an appointed leader (by God), this election system circulates the political elites in a limited way. It gives the citizens the opportunity to choose their representatives and president, even between the candidates that the Guardian Council has confirmed. On one hand, this system allows individuals to change the administration and on the other hand pushes power elites to do what the people want. Iranian citizens have no access to suitable institutions and organizations to present their demands peacefully and requests, but every time they have done this, the power elites have followed them. When

people were able to speak out in the 1990s, the reformist elite followed. Filtering Internet news sites, censorship of the press and publishing industry, jamming satellite signals and prohibiting gathering and demonstrations aim at hindering the demands of the people.

The electoral system is able to institutionalize democracy step by step, if competition is allowed. Most Iranian political activists know that stability and the distribution of information are the bases for the effectiveness of this electoral system and it takes time to put in place successful elected bodies. The authoritarian faction also knows this and closes down all the windows for the free flow of information and free elections.

Independent Groups

There are still many areas of Iranian social life that lack any union or association but these institutions are forming and have started to strengthen. From 1996 to 2002, a considerable number of scientific, cultural and political associations were set up. These associations reduce violence by increasing the bargaining power of citizens. They can replace violence with dialogue and push the government to carry out its duties and consider citizens' rights. Political parties admit the members of these associations. These associations establish the core of civil society in Iran, that is, unforced human association and a set of relational networks, in Walzer's view (1995).

These groups, if they are able to organize and mobilize, establish the building blocks for compromise between political factions and social groups that are the foundations for social integrity and coherence. They are also able to increase social capital by building trust among influential actors. The government policy against independent groups, if it is not able to stop them functioning, is to set up fake ones; these are funded by the government but pretend to be independent, financially and administratively.

Institutionalization

Many political bodies, elected and appointed, and political organizations have been established on the basis of Iran's constitution (Fig. 2.1). However, most of strategies and policies toward democracy have not been institutionalized. The globalization process internationally and nationally has had a great influence on institutionalizing research and survey institutions, societal services and actions concentrated on democracy, although cultural and social divisions decrease the speed of this process.

Most institutions that are the backbone of democracy are missing in Iran. Some examples are legal non-governmental organizations, independent think tanks, poll survey institutions, labor unions, cultural foundations and national political parties. The government's policy has been to build real legal obstacles to these institutions and if they exist, make them to pay a very high price for any action.

Elimination of Privileges

There are many economic, social and political privileges that strongly influence the Iranian polity. However, there is a high level of pressure from public opinion and social forces to decrease or eliminate these privileges. These privileges are rooted in kinship, in tribal and ideological relationships that are the result of affection, not interest. The most powerful groups in the country are related to each other by blood or marriage. Local officials are also related by tribal linkages. When one influential individual attains an office, he brings with him many people to fill managerial positions.

The limitation of resources and the noticeable increase of population, the liberalization of media and the legalization of political actions will decrease these privileges. In the democratization process, these privileges change to other forms and new forms have other possibilities and consequences. Privileges are always the result of the lack or weakness of a checks and balances system. In the democratization process, this system becomes more and more powerful. The attacks by the appointed bodies on the independent media after 1997 partially come from the eagerness of those bodies to retain their privileges.

The authoritarian ideology of the hard core of the political system—the military, judiciary and intelligence system, which are all under the control of the leader—is supported by privileges. These privileges, which may be forbidden in the beginning of the Islamic political regime based on its ideology, gradually became an important part of it. Later, ruling ideologues thought that if these privileges were stopped, the end of ideology must be declared. These privileges are the main sources of corruption in an authoritarian government such as in Iran. Elimination of this structurally based corruption is very difficult because people's representatives and independent media are not allowed to review them. The main function of the appointed bodies, especially the Guardian Council, is to preserve those privileges by vetoing independent candidates and preventing the rotation of elites.

Rotation of the Elites

Authoritarian regimes are characterized by economic and political monopolies. The social bases of monopolies in Iran after the Revolution are:

(a) Ideological admission and recruitment. Every person in Iran who wants to continue his or her education at a higher level or every individual who wants to attain a higher position in the executive, legislative and judicial branches must be ideologically admitted. Only a very small caste of the population—clerics and their loyalists—have this opportunity;
(b) Limited social trust. Iranian communities are based on religious, ethnic, friendship and kinship bonds and their overlaps limit trust to special kinds of social relationship. This is a great obstacle for affiliation to parties, non-governmental organizations or institutionalized polity; trust inside and between circles facilitate linkages between them and people can be successful in politics when they have these linkages with a sufficient number of these circles. This makes the power structure one-dimensional and exclusivist, protected by appointed political bodies;
(c) Charismatic and traditional leadership that makes the leaders irresponsible, over the law and oversight, and non-accountable to the public. The leader of the Islamic Republic is not actually responsible to any political body, although the religious experts assembly can legally probe and investigate him;
(d) Limited political participation. The participation of Iranian citizens is limited to voting. Most individuals do not have the opportunity to participate as extensively as they wish in all decision-making that pertains to them. Unlimited participation in collective decision-making includes a wide variety of activities requiring a varying degree of commitment and involvement; this is not limited to the political system but extends throughout all realms of social life. Participation in Iran does not extend to most of the realms of social life. This limited level of participation cannot teach an individual political skills and norms and cannot motivate them to become involved in larger political issues. This is one of the reasons for the low level of socialization and rationalization in Iran today. It cannot widely disperse the responsibility that is necessary for collective decision-making; decision-making is limited to high-ranking governmental officials.

Education in Democracy

The educational system in Iran has not accompanied the democratization process but some problems such as the decrease in public resources has pushed it to incorporate some levels of participation. The low budget for schools in the 1990s made government accept the idea of student councils in all government schools elected by the students (this did not last). In the second half of the 1990s, the school head was elected in some government schools. At the time, there is nothing about democracy or its bases and consequences in the textbooks of Iranian students.

State and political parties are necessary, but not enough for building a democracy. The state and parties do not do anything voluntarily within the framework of the socio-cultural dimension of democracy. Processes such as urbanization, increasing the literacy rate and decreasing the size of the government are very important in increasing the need for democracy. Public interest groups at the socio-cultural level represent crucial cases of informal democratic education in Iran after 1997.

2.4 Conclusion

Understanding the competitive imbalance in Iran's polity requires a sustained and comprehensive analysis of the dynamics of all aspects of Iranian politics, including in-the-political arena performance, front office structure and machinations, the development of participation and competition systems, and the interaction between Iranian politics and the foundations of local and national social structures. Iran, in its political transition from authoritarianism to democracy, is experiencing a fluid and uncertain period when new democratic structures are about to emerge, while structures of old regime still exist.

There remains an ongoing competition and conflict for supremacy in the coercive political arena between different coalitions inside the government and actors outside them. Iran is not in the process of consolidation, that is, a multi-faceted process by which democratic structures, norms and regime–civil society relationships are firmly established (Linz and Stephan 1996). After the crackdown of 2009, Iran is in the process of decline in terms of the institutional efficacy of civil society, political parties and governmental institutions. It is not clear yet what kind of democratic regime will be installed and what the direction of this divided state's development is: a dual sovereignty (Tilly 1978), permanent civil disobedience, a unified democratic state or another form of authoritarianism, though less repressive.

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PART II

Foundations and Platforms

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CHAPTER 3

Nature of the Iranian Reform Movement: Existence and Causes

Intellectuals, students and women have been potential and actual forces for social and political development in contemporary Iran. In the second half of the 1990s, hundreds of Iranian intellectuals, students and women were jailed because of their oppositional and dissenting ideas; newspapers and magazines that were tribunes of suppressed groups were banned by the judicial system because they criticized governmental policies, decisions and actions; university students were suppressed by police and pseudo-military groups run by the leader of the Islamic Republic in their dormitories and in permitted meetings and demonstrations (licenses for these meetings and demonstrations were issued by the Department of the Interior) in the streets and meeting halls; gatherings and meetings of university students and lectures of intellectuals were closed or interrupted and attendees were beaten by a gang called Ansār-e Hezbollāh all around the country; parliamentary elections in some cities which voted for reformers were canceled by the Guardian Council; reformers were deprived of their political rights because of their ideas about cultural and political reforms and people's civil and constitutional rights; and most of the reformers' candidates were disqualified by the Council.

In the social realm, the number of non-governmental organizations and independent newspapers and magazines increased in this period—and then decreased—and civil disobedience was increasing and a counter-movement vigorously organized. Non-governmental organizations were established in the academic, cultural and social domains. The most active

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belonged to university students and faculties, writers and artists, women and the younger generation.

These events and their consequences raise many questions. Can we explain them by considering them as stages and actions within the framework of a social movement? What was the nature of this movement? Was it a social justice, equality, inclusion, or difference-oriented movement? Was it a constitutional movement? What were the demands of this movement: welfare, liberation, the recognition of difference or freedom of speech and lifestyle? What were the reasons and causes of this movement? What were the main reasons and causes of resistance against it? Was this movement successful? How was this movement directed? Was this movement in a position to destabilize the state? This chapter attempts to answer these questions.

Is the concept of non-violent movement an appropriate label for what I discern in contemporary Iran? Political events in Iran in the 1990s can be explained in six different ways: (1) as a power struggle over absolute power; (2) as the preliminary stages of a revolution against a religious regime; (3) as regular challenges in a democratic state; (4) as a protest movement; (5) as a non-violent movement; and (6) as the product of factional politics and dual sovereignty.

Noticeable participation and the political activities of different groups make the first choice irrelevant, although power struggles are unavoidable in an authoritarian political structure. There was also no sign of a revolutionary situation or revolutionary literature in the political discourse of Iranian society in this period. Noticeable violations of people's political rights made it difficult to present the ongoing events as regular challenges in a democratic state, although some branches of government were directly or indirectly elected by the people.

Iranians experienced an evolution of protest movements with broad popular support that led to the Iranian Revolution. The consequences and implications of protest movements were deeply embedded in the collective memory of Iranians. They consciously refused to be engaged in protests without any rational cause or implication in the 1990s. They knew that riots and revolt would result in more repression from a political regime that does not tolerate any opposition, whether legal or illegal. Iranian reformers knew that only a more succinct focus on the distinctive dynamic between religious, political and extra-political authorities could influence the political sphere.

Relating this movement to a broader theme, such as social movements under theocratic, authoritarian or sultanistic regimes, cannot help me explain it because this broader theme does not add any analytical aspect to my explanation. Exploring some of these themes will not give the reader a better sense of how social movements, including a reform movement, create a public sphere through which can be articulated its political agendas and goals. This broader theme is similar to many different social, economic or cultural conditions that are not necessarily the cause or reason for these movements. Different regimes can culminate in different kinds of movements. All of these ideas require more detailed attention about the nature of this movement.

I will modify my own view about the nature of this movement when I discuss strong and diverse social trends. One of the defining specifications of a social movement in the social movement literature is its separation from the state. This specification is absent in a political faction of dual political structures and deep factional politics, where outsider opposition is treated as treacherous, while the main "opposition" is inside the state and is as powerful as the ruling faction. In this dual structure, the movement seems to be operating through the state and in some cases, becomes part of the state. This approach can yield important theoretical insights into the dynamic of state–society relations.

The genesis of this movement can be traced in the dissemination of ideas about diverse lifestyles by independent intellectuals and political activists and the end of violent urban revolts and riots in the years between 1994 and 1997. In this period, there were no reformers among high-ranking governmental officials in the Iranian political structure. Therefore, the reform movement in Iran was not and cannot be a product of the reformist presence in the government. The reformist wing's success in elections is also not a product of a longstanding, ongoing formation of a reform movement, but both were the result of (1) changes in people's lifestyles and consumption patterns, (2) the articulation of these changes by intellectuals, whether religious or secular, and (3) the prior politicization of the public during the Iranian Revolution and the everyday interference of government in people's lives.

The idea of civil society came to Iranian political literature when the public sphere was diversified and the revolutionary approach to political development was over. The social reality of diversity came before the idea of recognizing different lifestyles and ideas. The pressure by ruling clerics to homogenize society and make copies of an ideal human being—a

devout or ascetic cleric—expedited the appearance of different ideas and lifestyles, first in private and then in public.

The pressures on the state due to vast politicization in the previous decade incited demands for participation in the 1990s. This pressure first led to the idea of religious democracy among the religious activists and then, after the diversification of society, to the idea of religious pluralism and the recognition of competing groups in the polity. The Iranian state was not able to narrowly institutionalize the channels of representation that were created in order to legitimize state power within the confines of the ideological nation-state.

I will first provide a rigorous examination of the reality, nature and process of Iranian non-violent movement, the reform movement that began in the 1990s, including the special character of this movement; in other words, I will concentrate on the vindication of civil and constitutional rights. The explanation of this movement is inspired by Calhoun and Tilly's account of the nineteenth century, as explained in the third section of this chapter (Calhoun 1993; Tilly 1984). This will lead to an exploration of why and how such a movement spurred the development of independent institutions. After this explanation is offered, I will be in a position to undertake the description of the most important aspect of the first two parts of this chapter: to clarify the exact agenda of this movement—citizenship and the situation of its leadership, that is, its leaderlessness. In fourth section, I will examine the extent to which this movement has influenced the Iranian polity and how it impacts the political structure and state institutions.

3.1 Is This a Movement?

The first reform movement in Iran under the Islamic Republic[1] began before the election of the fifth parliament. This movement has its roots in three developments that took place after the end of the Iran–Iraq war: the presentation of new readings of Islam by religious intellectuals; the return of about one million veterans back home, who then became involved in everyday affairs; and economic development and reconstruction and their consequences, such as corruption and clientalism. Although this movement did not culminate in the victory of the legal opposition in the parliamentary election of 1995, it led to the election of President Khatami in 1997 and again in 2001, the victory of the reformers in municipality election in 1998, and their victory in the sixth parliamentary election in 2000. Khatami and the reformist candidates in those elections spoke

about the denied rights of women, young people, intellectuals, religious minorities and the democratization of politics. They encouraged independent groups to establish non-governmental organizations as an important part of civil society.

Authoritarians and totalitarians used to deny that there was a reform movement in Iran. They analyzed all the actions of reformers and events related to the movement as actions conducted from abroad—the "Great Satan, U.S.A"—and not something with its roots in domestic polity. They also interpreted the successive victories of reformers in elections as political events in the framework of a sultanistic regime—as what people do on the basis of their duties to participate in political life and to obey the rule of *faqih*. Due to the weakness of elected bodies compared to appointed ones, authoritarians and totalitarians were correct when they said after each victory of the reformers that "nothing is changed". A high level of participation in elections, from their point of view, was a vote in favor of the foundations of the Islamic Regime and religious leadership; they saw any discontent as relating to the existing government, not the political regime itself.

The movement's sympathizers or most likely adherents were university students, women and young people, because these groups were mostly deprived of their rights during the decades after the Revolution. Although there was no consensus in "the reform movement" on the objectives of the movement or what citizenship was, all the groups agreed on rights that are denied.

Nonetheless, extensive evidence supports the idea that a reform movement emerged in Iran. There is much institutional and non-institutional evidence and many consequences, social and cultural, of an existing and active movement in Iran between 1997 and 2001.

A Noticeable Increase in Non-Governmental Organizations

There is no formal and yearly data about the number of Iranian non-governmental organizations and there are no reports about this subject based on surveys. Nevertheless, every week there is news about new non-governmental organizations in academic, cultural, political and social spheres. On some estimates, the number of these organizations doubled between 1997 and 2001. The main idea of reformers in this movement was to shape and strengthen the sector between the state and society, that is, civil society. The Iranian reform movement began with some opening

up of the public sphere; the next step was to institutionalize this through civil society. Therefore, non-governmental organizations were not the engine of this movement, but they institutionalized changes in the public sphere. One of the main ideals of this movement, in the reformers' view, was a shift from mass society, which was the social paradigm of 1980s in Iran, to a civil society.

Iranian non-governmental organizations were very close to the elected branches of the government, but this did not mean that they had enough support from those branches, or that the government had a large influence on them, or they were government-made. University student associations were the most politically progressive while labor associations were the most conservative. Scientific associations had nothing to do with politics. Non-governmental organizations in the realm of art and culture were socially active, but during the presidential elections supported reformer candidates.

A Noticeable Increase in the Independent Press

Between the mentioned periods, the number of daily newspapers increased from 10 to 58; most of these newspapers were independent and were published by intellectuals and political activists. Although 30 newspapers were banned in this period,[2] reformers still had some tribunes to publish their ideas. In this period, the press circulation doubled. Establishing an independent press was one of the important stages in institution-building in this non-violent movement.

Narratives that Reflected Other Lifestyles and a Better Understanding of Different Suppressed Groups

These narratives offered a link between national struggles, between right and left, and between conservatives and reformers. They are also reflected a link between local struggles (federalism and centralism) and between religious pluralism and religious dogmatism. Narratives indicate a sense of virtue among persecuted and tormented groups despite their marginal status and efforts to discredit them.

Most of the narratives are crystallized around the activities of clerics, the police, the Basij (Iran's reserved army, mobilization and counter-dissidence army, or religious and moral police, depending on the point of view), guerrillas and totalitarian groups that interrupt and disturb people

in any kind of public and private spaces. Public spheres including the media, public hearings, universities and schools, parent–teacher associations, mosques and places of prayer, playgrounds, sport complexes and other assembly places were requisitioned by the state. Nevertheless, stories about serial killings by the agents of the security system (1988–1999) inside and outside the country, assaulting the parties and offices of the independent press (in the 1990s, intensifying in the second half of this decade), the killing of about 3000–5000 prisoners in prison (1988) who were incarcerated by covert courts without lawyers present, attacks on university dormitories in Tehran and Tabriz (1999), attacks on university students in Khorram Ābād (2000), and the serial killing of prostitutes by one member of Basij in Mash-had (2000) and serial killings of "others" by Islamists in Kerman were narrated in cabs, public bathrooms, restaurants, hair salons and pools.[3] These places became spaces for the exposition of society's narratives.

When the conditions of repression are paramount and the possibility of overt resistance is small, narratives are preserved in the most private of free spaces (Couto 1993: 77), such as in the family or other uncontrolled places. In situations where the possibility of repression diminishes and the prospects of successful overt resistance or action (for instance, dancing and singing in a society in which it is forbidden to be happy and have fun) increases, people take initial steps of resistance or action against governmental formal culture.[4] Part of this resistance involved claiming the right to be different from a dominant governmental culture that was only a limited part of the traditional culture, manipulated by the state's ideology to be the dominant culture and run by the ruling clerics.

The narrative of the reform movement reflects the acquisition, preservation and use of free spaces, on the one hand, and opposition to the climate of fear, corruption and repression, on the other. The content and virtues extolled in the former are examples of self-esteem within society, young people's resistance to subordination, and changing the applicability of public spaces such as restaurants, preservations and theme parks. Examples of the latter include harm done by the officials and authorities, taking bribes, and the long-term consequences of what authorities have done to people by using force in response to any protest.[5]

The government has not allowed the formal media to present these narratives. Those who began reporting based on these narratives were immediately silenced. Thus, the medium for transferring these narratives was mostly through rumor. In this medium, people usually add their own

idealized facts, interpretations and myths to the stories heard. One of the main sources of the delegitimization of the religious state is a media that cannot be controlled by the state. The methods of news-making and news-manipulating by state-run radio and TV and the closing of Iran's independent press by the judiciary have helped rumor become one of the most important "media" in contemporary Iran.

Counter-Movement

There was a very strong counter-movement supported by Iran's leader in the years after the reform movement came on the scene—this was called fundamentalism, Islamism or extremist revivalism.[6] This counter-movement differed from conservatism inside the regular and factional politics, although some parts of governmental institutions, especially institutions that were under the control of the Leader of the Islamic Republic informally supported it and used it when they felt their official positions to be at risk.

This counter-movement includes Ansār-e Hezbollāh (a pseudo-military group) as the main force of repression, Mo'talefeh (the group that is the hardcore of the authoritarian faction) and graduates of Haqqāni Seminary School (a seminary school in Qom that is famous for training disciples in an intolerance toward democracy and freedom; its graduates are the high-ranking officials in the judiciary and the security systems). It has spread its respective networks all over the country and is directly supported and run by Iran's leader and his appointed people in the police, judiciary, security and military forces. Shi'i puritans, traditionalists and authoritarians support the groups that are initiators and pioneers in the counter-movement.

Technocrats, university students, women, young people and intellectuals mostly supported the movement. The counter-movement groups could do whatever they wanted against these groups and individuals and no one could protect them against attacks or assault: Ansār has been attacking reformists' hearings, conferences, offices and gatherings, assaulting their members and sympathizers, suppressing their demonstrations, and even arresting people in the streets[7]; Haqqāni School disciples as judges and security officials have been arresting and detaining reformers; there has been no limitation on what they have committed, from the serial killing of intellectuals (1988–1998), banning 30 newspapers in one month (2000), forced confessions (1980–2017), and the long—in some cases one year—solitary confinements of intellectuals, journalists and political activists.

Movement–counter-movement interaction and the interplay of different movements (student, women, youth, and intellectuals, on the one hand, and seminary students, traditional retailers transformed into importers and exporters after the Revolution, and commanders of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps who came from lower middle class and poor families, on the other) are ongoing features of the reform movement in Iran. The country's dual structure of state, that is, the symbiosis of elected and appointed bodies of government, increases this interaction but cannot handle the ongoing challenges such as demand for freedom of speech, associations, media and gatherings, increasing poverty, and rampant corruption.

Face-to-face confrontations are part of a large conflict between two opposing social movements: the democratization or reform movement, and fundamentalist or revival movement. In some cases, such as discussions about the foundations of theocracy or religious leadership, revivalists or so-called fundamentalists do not submit to conversations in public, but participate in discussions about real politics and campaigns. They want to leave the foundations of the Islamic state unquestioned.

In some periods of Iran's contemporary history, such as during the Iranian Revolution, these conflicting movements have come together, but in some other periods they have acted against each other. This goes back to the Constitutional Revolution of 1906–1907, where the constitutionalists (*mashruteh khāhān*) fought against the absolute power of the Qājār kings and the Islamists were in a coalition with the court against them. These different movements not only responded to other movements; each one had its own social basis and agenda, although any social movement of potential political significance generates opposition (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996: 1630).

Movement–counter-movement conflicts, hand in hand with the deep dualism in the Iranian constitution, have created a divided governmental authority in the country, which some scholars have called dual sovereignty. The government is divided between elected institutions such as the president, parliament or municipality councils, and appointed institutions such as the Guardian Council, Expediency Assembly, the judiciary and the armed forces; this is one of the effects or the causes of the movement–counter-movement challenges from different aspects. Iran's constitution of 1979 is written on the basis of these structural conflicts and has the capacity to endure a divided government or dual sovereignty.

Reformists refer to the reform movement in contemporary Iran as "the Second of Khordād" movement (May 23, presidential elections day 1997, which led to Khatami's presidency). This naming has encouraged the

counter-movement to make use of other national events, such as third of Khordād—the day of liberation of Khorram Shahr from Iraq's occupation. The reform movement has excited the counter-movement to portray the conflict as one that entails larger value cleavages in Iran's society. This movement, which has suffered many defeats from the counter-movement, has to shift targets and objects to sustain itself, because the counter-movement had many institutional venues available for action.

The counter-movement has developed isomorphic structures, such as the Pen Association in opposition to the Press Association, the Cinematic Association of Sacred Defense against the House of Cinema, which involves all associations of filmmakers and people who are concerned about cinema, the Islamic Society of Students, and a couple of others against the Islamic Association of Students. The counter-movement is not capable of institutionalizing its tactics, because the reform movement is not allowed to do this. They have similar opportunities, obstacles and political contexts to work on. The movement and counter-movement suffer the same problems: cronyism among friends or families, a weakness in mobilizing the next generation, a lack of ability to set up alternative policies or programs and non-transparency. They both work on an ambiguous sea of ideal and ambiguous positions and attitudes that are not translated into practical programs and are thus not operationalized.

Dramatic Change of Individual Appearances in Public

After the Revolution, the government enforced a dress code based on a special reading of *shari'ah* law. Women have to wear the *hejāb* (hiding the whole body except face, palms and the lower part of the foot); they must only wear dark colors and cannot wear make-up in public. Violations against these codes increased in the second half of the 1990s and the number of non-conformists was so high that religious police could not detain and punish them all. Detaining a noticeable number of these people was impossible. Every day people could see numbers of police buses and vans in crowded streets and squares that were leaving full of detainees, but these measures did not stop middle class people from violating the authoritarian ideological dress code.

If a civil rights movement is defined as institutionalized fighting against violations of civil rights by state, these behaviors cannot be evidence for an outgoing movement, but if we define a civil rights movement as resistance against assimilation into an authoritarian lifestyle, these behaviors are

evidence of ongoing non-violent resistance. These behaviors did not stop at the level of individual resistance and were transformed into an identity issue for a new generation of activist women. This new identity, built on cultural resistance, has been the basis of a loosely organized reform movement by women. The organized groups chose their members from among people who were upset about violations of their rights and wanted to do something about it.

The civil rights movement, as far as it is defined by fighting for the vindication of civil rights, could not be limited to only some special types of campaign. Social movements can be objectified in a series of strikes or demonstrations, but they are not limited to these forms: they can also be realized in a series of attempts at organization, at reacting against a forced way of life or acting against an ideology. The latter meaning of social movement is used when uprisings and protests are oriented to make governments less coercive, more inclusive and more accountable.

A Dramatic Decrease in Young People's Appearance in Religious Places

Religion has had a double function in legitimizing power: legitimizing a theocracy immediately after the victory of the Iranian Revolution, and de-legitimizing it just one decade after by return to its spiritual basis. The legitimating function was the result of an ideological reading of the religious texts for a political campaign, and the de-legitimating function was the result of a civil religion that believes in the separation of religious institutions and governmental institutions and not in the separation of religion and politics. Authoritarians and totalitarians have always explained secularization as the deprivation of religious people of their political rights.

Religious facilities in Iran in 1980s and 1990s were mostly governmentalized and highly controlled by governmental officials. They represented an official reading of Islam—an authoritarian and totalitarian one. Therefore, people who had another reading of religion and Islam, mostly young people, did not go to these places. Religious places were representing a reading that most people could not endorse.

The reform movement embraced a non-violent religious movement reading religious texts on the basis of accepting democracy, liberalism, pluralism, human rights and tolerance as the basis of a modern society, as opposed to totalitarian, authoritative and autocratic readings of religious texts that are influenced by secular models of ideology. The reading that is

supported by the state is an apology for and a legitimation of the status quo, and its culture of intolerance, hatred, conscience of the whole—reduced to a few—and an instrument of the peripheral strata in underdeveloped or developing societies. In contrast, the reformers' readings of religion presented it as disestablished, culturally pluralistic and structurally adaptable to humanitarian and libertarian concerns, both empowering and voluntaristic. Therefore, the reform movement, like the Revolution of 1979, includes both religious and secular activists, although religious revolutionaries immediately after the Revolution, when they took power, declared it to be a religious revolution.

A New Public Discourse Directed at Civil Ideals

The high social status and a critical role for intellectuals, university students and women as recipients of constitutional, civil and human rights enabled Iranian society as an entity to become a field of public discourse. The intellectual workers' activities, although fragile and with no legal protection, were critical in establishing this discourse. These developments, beside the four-cornered competition of clerics, university students, women and intellectuals, enabled the reform movement to develop with the unique force it acquired in a transitional and post-revolutionary time. The public acceptance of the changed legal status of governmental subjects to citizens, except among the 10–15% of the population who were pro-authoritarianism, shows the early development in the understanding of the very concept of the individual in the context of an Iranian nation-state as early as the 1990s among revolutionaries and the new generations.

While, on the one hand, the competition between clerics, students, women and intellectuals enabled citizens to expand their legally protected sphere of action, it also created a community of interests out of different groups who were part of the government. Islamicized law could not provide the advantage of the independent and free personality that allowed Europeans to enjoy a special level of rights in the nineteenth century, but it could show the new generation that they could not fulfill their demands by resorting to Islamic law. The reform movement was not ready to lose its original force in the near future while the clerics who expanded the boundaries of centralization by forcing the frame of an Islamic state onto appointed institutions did not understand the need for more liberal and democratic policies and did not know that there must be a balance between protectionism and particularism.

While the clerics' social power was eclipsed, the intellectuals, whether religious or secular, found themselves at the center of a public discourse of greater scale, and therefore its political capital grew rather than waned. More important was the increasingly well-established idea that political rights and obligations stemmed from new ideas and not from wealth, inheritance, political power and the way of production. However, the clerical authority was already in the process of being eroded by new philosophical and ideological skirmishes whose promotion of the idea of human, constitutional and civil rights, including political and social rights, fitted well with the demands of citizens. The citizens' dream, now systemized, was in the process of being considered the foundation of political legitimation.

It has been questioned whether the attempted reconstruction of society based on the new dream was wise. Yet, set in the form of an ideal counterpoise to the state, civil society and its reinvigorated defense of the rule of law and its respect for individual freedom of thought and dignity was presented as the foundation of the reform movement.

The new Iranian dream appeared at three levels. The most profound level of the dream was the idea that the Iranian citizen would bow only to political obligations established by the law. The second level was that s/he would accept an equivalent to the sacred law—secular law. Third, while none of these systems were able to assert themselves unequivocally, the Iranian citizen's dream shifted to the ideal of a social equilibrium created under the aegis of a just ruling system, not just an alleged "just ruler".

Two distinguishing characteristics of this dream should be highlighted. First, it relied on the legal authority of a leader to fill the cracks of a compromised, unrealized system of justice, a feature that was minimized by the rationalization of legal practice and the self-referential aspect of law in Europe. Second, the dream adopted the concept of plurality of thought and lifestyle as the basis of political and cultural diversity.

The "mosaic" of the Iranian public sphere did not consist of voluntary association, but of segmented expectations imposed by the state. A further development in this process of segmentation and differentiation was the formation of a secular legitimation mechanism of legally constituted communal and consultative collectives such as city councils and parliament. These institutions were further promoted by opposition to the religious establishment and its bureaucracy, principally as an unexpected outcome of the ideologized public sphere. The Islamic

components of this society were religious communities and groups belonging to different ideological schools, guilds, fraternities, lineage groups and ethnic communities.

In the somewhat different sense of the control of the public sphere by discontented intellectuals or resentful young people, various groups did play an important role in the public life. The governing powers in the public were hostile to intellectuals' and young people's interests, simply because they were different. Intellectuals neither enjoyed the exercise of power nor could benefit from constraints on government policy. This has enabled the protection of the interests of many such groups in some of the more delicately constituted societies of the modern industrial world.

The difference between the structural elements of the Iranian public sphere and those of the West may also be recaptured in the role of Iranian intellectuals who did not muster as much strength as the educational and research institutions and the interest groups. The intellectuals' status in the public sphere was structurally more ambiguous compared to that of the *'ulamā*, and their links with the central political authorities were more ubiquitous. It is true that the intellectuals have often been inspiring the leaders of populist outbreaks against unjust rulers, but in the reform movement, having the experience of a war and a revolution in mind, they avoided street politics and besieging the masses. In that sense, they constituted a structural counterpoise to the political hegemon.

In the West, the tacit contract exists in the general frame of a more clearly enforceable legal contract. The fact that most Iranians only recognized the physical person—not corporations—as endowed with legal personality and rights was as important as the diversity of ideas in the public sphere for municipal developments and the representation of corporate rights. This aspect grew in importance as civil interests were collectively organized.

There exists, of course, another, more positive way of examining the social structure of Iranian society: looking at it from the internal perspective, Iranian authoritarianism may be understood as embedded in the "life-world" created by a traditional religious discourse. This life-world of Iranians had a dynamic of its own, recursive in its reference to a golden age of Islam, progressive in the sense of gradually mobilizing citizens and increasing the number of civil society institutions for the elaboration of a civil ideal workable in modern times. Again, using an approach that focuses on political activity as "embedded" in the life-world of Iranians, we can see the role of intellectuals in a different perspective.

3.2 Social Justice, Equality, Inclusion, and Diversity in Social Movements

Social movements are the embodiments of an apparently powerless people's efforts to resist political and cultural repression and subordination. They are sustained interactions between changing sets of challengers and authorities and can be traced to the everyday interests, actions and resistance, institutions, and collective actions of potential and actual participants in those interactions. Therefore, we cannot limit social movements simply to institutionalized or organized ones. To be institutionalized or organized is not the key element of the social movements; some movements are not organized and institutionalized, while some are. Students act more in unison than intellectuals or women in the events mentioned in Iran, but this does not mean that they are the center of this movement: they are, in fact, the consumers of what is produced by the intellectuals.

Social movements can be embodied in different forms—such as human rights, civil rights, labor, student, peace, environmental, women's or constitutional movements. These movements, whether we define them in terms of collective behavior, resource mobilization, political process or as the result of large-scale structural and cultural change, are more or less loosely organized.

The actions of social movements can be seen in two different ways: positive, such as the organized actions that are conducted by non-governmental organizations or public institutions, allowing oppositions to survive in a formal sector of polity; and negative, such as the resistance of unorganized or loosely organized people who consciously avoid being in particular places or wearing symbolic clothes and who violate unwritten enforced or written regulations. In times of lobbying or bargaining, organized actions are more effective, but when the path of negotiation is closed, unorganized and symbolic actions are more effective.

The Question of "Why"

The Iranian reform movement after 1997 mostly worked outside formal institutional—mostly governmental—channels and emphasized a variance of lifestyles, rights, and cultural and social demands within the framework of Iran's Civil Code and Constitution of 1979. This movement tried to institutionalize itself, but authoritarians who controlled the security system, the judiciary, armed forces and police were closing what reformists

were opening, mostly and especially in the press and in the realms of public opinion. In this stage of transition from a mass society to a civil society, from traditional and charismatic bases of legitimacy (during Khomeini's leadership) to a legal one, from democracy for some to democracy for all, from being subject of the state to citizenship, and from social citizenship to civil and political citizenship, institution-building is particularly difficult.

Calhoun and Tilly's explanations of new social movements of the early nineteenth century (Calhoun 1993; Tilly 1984) help us to understand and categorize this movement. Its issues, tactics and constituencies are comparable to the movements to which Calhoun and Tilly refer. Their issues challenged the conventional division of politics and the emphasis on the nationalization of the political sphere. Their main tactics were to carry out non-violent action against violence and censorship. Their constituencies were a network of individuals and groups with common ideas and demands, such as special-purpose associations (professional, scientific and cultural associations). There was a decline in the importance of ethnic groups and communities as the loci of shared interests, and a growing importance of organized human resources, and not capital or labor, and people who participate in the power struggle. We can see all these issues, tactics and constituencies in new social movements, including in the reform movement in Iran.

We cannot put the recent Iranian movement in the same category as labor or an unemployed workers' movement, although the rate of unemployment in this period increased from 9.1% in 1997[8] to 14.2% in 2000 and 13.8% in 2001[9]; activists of this movement do not fight for more jobs, social justice, and equality—those were later the demands of the countermovement. It is also not a welfare rights movement that asks for inclusive or comprehensive social services, although more than 45% of the population was not covered by the social security system.[10] There is no evidence of a poverty-oriented agenda in this movement—demands for pipes, electricity, schools and roads. What we saw in the silent movements or street unrest of the Iranian poor in the 1990s (Bayat 1994: 10–14) was totally absent in this movement.

It is not even a conventional liberation or liberalizing movement, because the Iranian Revolution, as most Iranians believe, was the end of any kind of liberation or independence movement and there was no longer any assumption of fixed individual identities or interests. It is a reform movement that focused on levels of mobilization, strategies of policy participation and competition, organizational strength, and political opportunity structure, though it has been unsuccessful in many areas.

Why is this movement a civil and constitution al rights movement, and not a human rights or social rights movement in the age of human rights? The public demand to stop the violation of Iranian people's rights is reflected in a civil and constitutional rights movement, because social citizenship never appeared as a consensus of values in Iran and social justice demands during the Revolution culminated in shaping a new ruling class of clerics and revolutionaries. The confiscation of upper class properties and allocating public resources to a few revolutionaries and the families of the ruling clerics was the rule and not the exception. Other than that, the activists and carriers of this movement are intellectuals and journalists and not the leaders of labor unions. A majority of Iranian people in different elections have voted for programs insisting on civil rights and not human rights.

Iran has not been a fertile land for rights. The Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906–1907 was not successful and led to the shelling of parliament by the shah's army; the Constitution of 1979 was not a suitable legal context able to vindicate Iranians' rights either. Hence a change in the Constitution was not on the table. Above all, the process of state-building was not finished; post-nation-state agendas such as human rights were absent.

Some of the clerics in the polity did not consider the state as the organization with a monopoly on the instruments of violence in a fixed territory[11]; they were trying to merge governmental organizations into religious ones. Making claims on the state on the basis of human rights happens when civil, social or political rights are insufficient to pursue demands within the framework of nation-states (Jacobson 1996: 2–3). There were also some reformers, mostly religious, who did not believe in human rights as was posited in the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights, Declaration of Independence of the USA, or Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen. They were still thinking that these rights were mostly used by Western superpowers against societies who do not believe in their hegemony. Some of them were also skeptical about the philosophical and cultural foundations of these declarations.

Thus, Iranian political activists could work solely in a national legal domain, concentrating on civil and constitutional rights that covered only some sections of individuals' rights in an age that is called the "age of rights" (Henkin 1996).

The Iranian movement of 1990s was not a solely constitutional movement, for three distinct reasons. First, the reformers could not address all of their demands within the framework of the constitution. There are

some elements of a free society and rule of law system in the constitution but it contradicts itself by putting the Guardian jurist above the law. It does not address many of the rights and institutions that the reformists were looking for. A good example is denying private TV and radio channels, which reformists believed should be allowed. The second reason is the reformers' emphasis on social issues that are naturally absent in the Iranian constitution. This constitution has created a monster that interferes in all aspects of Iranians' lives and is a burden on the citizens' shoulders in their day-to-day activities. The third reason goes back to powerful elements in the movement that were pressing for a change to the constitution. Although the reformists were trying to work within the framework of the constitution, this does not mean that they believed in that document. They were looking for an opportunity to change it.

The reform movement in Iran, like the new social movements in the early nineteenth century, challenged the conventional division of politics to include issues that had been considered outside the domain of political action. This movement brought subjects such as lifestyles, the free flow of information and privacy to the political sphere. This movement grew from (1) the Islamic left,[12] when there was no hope that it would be endorsed by high-ranking officials of the government, (2) women-run non-governmental organizations that were trying to play a more active role in society, (3) religious intellectuals and writers who were thinking in the same religious paradigm, organized in Kiān circle,[13] and (4) a student movement that was ready to act and think in a new paradigm. After two years, in 1998, the Religious-Nationalist Coalition,[14] the new left[15] and secular intellectuals[16] (such as the Iranian Writers Society) joined them. They all had a consensus on at least the vindication of civil and constitutional rights, although secular intellectuals and activist women were mostly thinking about human rights instead of civil or constitutional rights. The reason for this inclination was their distance from the ideological core of the Islamic state.

There has been no sign of a peace movement in the recent movement of Iranian society. Peace movements have made no social ground in the post Iran–Iraq war era (which ended in 1988), in contrast to the post-war eras, such as the 1960s, in other parts of the world (Edwards and Marullo 1995: 908–927). Environmental concerns are also absent in this movement, although there are always some overlaps between the different kinds of movements in terms of some activities and events. Activists of this movement, like most of the nineteenth-century social movements (Tilly 1984: 307), did not have at their disposal the creation of big parties, the

launching of strikes, the organizing of demonstrations, or any other means which were sometimes commonplace in violent uprisings such as riots, unrest or revolutions. Instead, it included an emphatic rationalization and a nationalization of politics, a greatly increased role for special-purpose associations such as professional, scientific and cultural associations, a decline in the importance of ethnic groups and communities as the loci of shared interests, and a growing importance of organized human resources. Capital and labor as the main factors in the power struggle were not the determining elements of this movement.

The last decade of the twentieth century saw the rise of a social and political movement in Iran in the sense of a set of activities which were deliberately based on shared ideas about the dignity of human beings, a unifying belief in non-violent actions against a repressive state, and a common program for dialogue between individuals and groups. Other shared ideas include the vindication of civil and constitutional rights, denying the second-order citizenship of the majority of the Iranian people, the accountability of the state, the rotation of the political elite, and a collective struggle to realize that program. These ideas are very similar to what Tilly says about the agendas of nineteenth-century social movements (Tilly 1984: 303). This movement's activists did not ask for new rights never mentioned in Iranian legal texts; they demanded the vindication of the rights that were part of the civil or constitutional law of the country. After experiencing a revolution and a long war, they knew the low potential of the political structure and were aware of consequences of utopia-seeking in an underdeveloped society.

In spite of the great cost paid by journalists, intellectuals, women and students, the reform movement era has been a period of transformation which has made the non-violent social movement, instead of street politics or revolution, a standard way of doing political business.[17] We cannot see any kind of violent, excited or fervent language in the literature of reformers and people who sympathize with or support them. Violent language is the characteristic of the counter-movement; reformers have persistently tried to avoid identifying themselves using counter-movement language. The language and literature of the counter-movement was in the style used during the mass, closed society, non-participatory and non-competing politics of the 1980s.

The harvest season for this movement was election time, which was run by party and electoral politics; the participation of a large number of committed supporters became an increasingly effective way to score political

points.[18] There was interdependence between the reform movement and national electoral politics; this phenomenon was new in political sphere of Iran. Nevertheless, the state controlled most of the resources and held exceptional power, partly because of oil revenues and its consequent non-dependence on taxes, partly because of the authoritarian political culture of the society, and partly because it used religion as its legitimating factor to define new actors and weaken others in any arena, but it did not have the power to totally destroy new groups coming out of universities and intellectual circles—these were reference groups for the middle class and had some interaction with different social strata.

The Question of the Movement's Nature

There are four different possible explanations of this reform movement in Iran. This movement can be explained as:

1. Collective action with some continuity to promote change in society. Social movements, in this view, consist of "collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elite, opponents, and authorities" (Tarrow 1994: 3–4). This collective action could take place outside the formal political system, in multiple groups, but it has its own political impact. There is a network of individuals and groups with common ideas and demands that has an important impact on the level of contributions in political events, such as elections and factional political campaigns. This network contributes money, time and passion.

   The attention of political power to the demands of a movement is not enough. If public demands are not met, political tensions are not avoidable. Activists, in this approach, are not people with determined rational political goals, but individuals who are trying to cope with the challenges, disruptions and demands of society. Their efforts are designed to link groups to the state in an emancipatory way (as Bickford puts it, 1999: 93) and to redefine and reclaim the meaning and value of a group identity; the Islamic left in power in the first decade after the Revolution represented this explanation. President Khatami and his supporters in the Sixth Parliament of the Islamic Republic were brought up in the Islamic left tradition.
2. Resource mobilization during the first and second development programs after the Revolution. The client–patron factor emerged in this approach. The patronage policy in the political/organizational

realm of Iranian society was concentrated on a monopolistic allocation of oil revenues and mobilized only the upper middle class. The strengthened upper middle class was not content with its benefits from the economic sector and its status in the society, demanding its share of power. At the same time, the polity was closed to new forces and could not respond to any new demands.

The activists in this approach are the representatives of upper middle class, mostly technocrats, who have access to economic resources and powerful figures, but are deprived of their own political resources. The establishment of a clientalist group called Kargozārān-e Sāzandegi (the Economic Development's or Economic Constructions' Agents), whose members were in the former president Rafsanjani's cabinet, explains this movement with resort to resource mobilization approach.

3. Political process inside the polity. The social movement, in this approach, came into being with the growth of modern nation-states and developed into a familiar instrument for pressing claims (Tilly 1984: 297–317). The context of social movement, in this approach, is the political opportunity structure and social, cultural, economic and political discrepancies that provide important insights and significant theoretical leverage, on the one hand, and suitable grounds for action on the other, for the emergence, development and ultimate impact of social movements. When the state does not have the ability to resolve conflicts definitely, groups have to choose to be part of a movement to express their opposition to it. The assumption of this approach is that the process of state-building came to an end in post-colonial era.

The reform movement, in this approach, is a new answer to the delegitimizing crisis of the theocratic state in a coherent, durable and self-propelling social unit, but it is not necessarily a counter governmental movement. Iranian society is not structured as a pot of social classes, and social classes and citizenship have not simultaneously existed. Thus, this movement is explained in terms of a given process's boundaries, continuity, plasticity and complexity as the common characteristic bases of social movements (Tilly 1995: 1605).

The activists in this approach are religious intellectuals who present other and new interpretations of religious texts on the basis of the requirements of modern society and the modern state. The members of Kiān circle were discussing, writing and publishing new, civil and pluralistic interpretations of religious texts. Members of this circle explained the reform movement in Iran as a solution to problems produced by social and political discrepancies.

4. Post-material movement emerging from the private sphere into the public. In this movement, as in the Iranian Revolution of 1979, there is a post-materialistic aspect that crystallizes around issues related to gender, culture and new readings of religion and tradition, and not necessarily equality or welfare. This approach concentrates on networks of informal interaction to explain what is going on in the realm between private and public life. This is my approach in explaining the latest movement in Iranian society, because all of the evidence introduced in the first section of this chapter fits it: this movement does not emphasize welfare, social justice and eradicating corruption, but concentrates on cultural and political freedom, tolerance, the peaceful rotation of the elite and meritocracy (Table 3.1).

A noticeable increase in non-governmental organizations and an independent press is an indication of the will of activists to reflect the diversity of interests, ideas and beliefs in Iranian society, whereas totalitarian and authoritarian groups have been trying to tell people that there is or must be agreement on every policy and strategy of the state. In this approach, tolerance is necessary because of the diversity of groups, and not vice versa. New narratives, on one hand, reflect other ways of thinking, different

Table 3.1 Characteristics of Iran's reform movement, 1997–, on the basis of four different approaches to social movements

	Main issue	*Theory of state*	*Activists (distinguished group)*	*Theory of citizenship*	*Expected political outcome*
Collective action	Rotation of elite	Statist	Ignored or suppressed elite (Islamic left)	Communitarian	Party politics
Resource mobilization	Distribution of resources	Elitist	Technocrats (clientalist forces)	Authoritarian	Meritocracy
Political process	Tolerance	Pluralist	Religious intellectuals (Kiān circle)	Liberal/ communitarian	Liberal/ social democracy
Post-material movement	Difference	Pluralist	Intellectuals (journalists working in the independent press)	Liberal/radical	Civil society democracy

lifestyles and different understanding of what is happening in society. They ignore the formal narratives that come out from state-run radio and TV, and indicate a sense of virtue among a brutalized people and their intellectual representatives, despite their marginal status and efforts made to discredit them.

The first group that brought these narratives to the public media—through the press and books—were journalists who were working in the independent press and then members of the Association for Defending Press Freedom.[19] Dramatic changes of individual appearance in public or a decrease in young people's appearances in religious places show the will of the new generation (more than 60% of the population) to resist the obligations of government to push the society toward homogenization or, if it rejects this, pay the price. The counter-movement shows the inability of the state to keep the society as a mass society and keep the citizens as subjects of the state.

Main Subject: Citizenship

Membership of the political community in Iran is dual. In a special reading of the religious state, only true believers and people who have a special way of life or people who know how to pretend to have the official lifestyle and beliefs can be members of the political community.[20] Only these people, on the basis of the Guardian Council's interpretation, can present themselves as candidates for the Experts Assembly, parliament, city councils or the presidency. Ideological selection carried by the governmental offices prevents others from attaining higher governmental positions. Therefore, there are two levels of citizenship and a democracy for a few: social citizenship that entails all people who are legal citizens, and political citizenship, which entails only those who belong to the ruling caste or the people who pretend to have those ideas; and democracy for people who believe in an authoritarian ideology of the state.

Iranian citizens, from an authoritarian point of view, have only the right to elect people who are introduced to them by traditional authorities (*bai'ah* or *bai'at*), not the right to be elected or elect whomever they want. They are originally excluded from the polity, unless they prove that they are true believers to the authoritarian ideology and loyal to the religious leader. Thus, they have political duties and not political rights; there is no particular relationship between rights and benefits, on the one hand, and duties and responsibilities, on the other. The reform movement in Iran, like many

social movements, arose as groups such as women, certain economic groups such as technocrats, intellectuals, religious and ethnic minorities, and especially young people pushed for inclusion. All of these groups fought for their denied cultural, political, economic and social rights.

This movement has principally emphasized citizenship in terms of rights, rather than duties or identity. This movement puts the emphasis on the authentic political inclusion of different groups of any sex, ethnicity, religion or ideology; this is inclusion in the polity, not necessarily in the government. Formal political equality can always hide exclusion or subjection. The emphasis on civil society is part of a new political discourse in Iranian politics. This discourse reflects this idea that not all social interactions have to be encompassed by the state.

Civil society, in this version, includes voluntary political and social associations that are not unduly depleted by the groups who have entered into the state, and have a legitimized presence with different readings of religion or the constitution in the polity and state. Authoritarians believe in a passively exclusive state and clerical corporatism and only speak out within the framework of traditional discourse; in other words, there is a monopoly of the interpretation of religious texts by clerics, intolerance, absolutism of the state, and very low levels of citizenship. The mandate of jurists and the veto of the Guardian Council are two dominant mechanisms for sustaining exclusion.

Even with the advent of the reform movement in 1997, only a limited level of rotation of the political elite happened. The Iranian political elite included reformists, who thought they would pass through the filters of the Guardian Council and take care of the exclusion. High-ranking Iranian governmental officials did not really believe that people were different from another in fundamental ways, and because of sedimentation of mass society theory during three decades of fighting against the Pahlavi dynasty, and one decade of war, did treat individuals as similar—as an unshaped and fluid mass that could accept any shape. They did not and possibly could not choose a democratizing strategy of the progressive inclusion of as many interests as possible in the polity and state. Harsh measures by the government against intellectuals and independent political activists were due to cracking the shell of polity because of the diversification of the social forces and change in the social foundations. In spite of this crack, public policies were not influenced by the marginal inclusion of some underrepresented groups.

Reform movements usually fight for inclusive membership in society with rights that are derived from it, the accountability of the government in this respect, and active and essentially public involvement in the civil society, not necessarily in the state. The Iranian reform movement mostly concentrated on a commitment to a pluralist rather than a statist stance. Some reformers, in particular nationalist-religious forces, had a nationalist-inclined conception of citizenship. The socialist democrat faction of the movement faced a substantive concern with participation and identity, rather than formally held rights and duties, or competition.

Inclusive political citizenship, in the reformers' view, could enhance the possibility of democratic politics. They did not reduce citizenship to a private and pre-political status. Citizenship, for them, was a way to inclusion and equality in the eyes of the law. Exclusion in Iran after the Revolution did not take the form of banishment from the geopolitical territory or subordination to non-citizen status, but the deprivation of political and cultural rights. In the reformist perspective, citizens who are equal in the eyes of the law increasingly come to be ostensibly equal in the public sphere as the domain between the private sphere and the political arena of the state or the interaction between the two.

The legal conception of citizenship is the core of Iranian reform activists' idea about political membership. They insist on citizenship as an essential factor in a democracy, not a way of identification. This phenomenon is shifting from identity to rights, similar to the shift in the focus of citizenship from national membership to constitutional rights in some Western societies. The idea of citizenship in terms of a market society or bourgeois conception of citizenship, which in late capitalism is involved in decentralization, deregulation, privatization and monetarism, is not as important as citizenship in terms of civic and political rights for these activists. Iranian activists were seeking cultural and political emancipation. Citizenship, for them, was not simply a ruling class strategy, as in the Marxist view that dismisses citizenship as a state-centered strategy of social control, but a product of centuries of popular mobilization leading to the winning of rights. On the opposite side, the authoritarian faction emphasizes social citizenship with respect to economic rights, although the state is not even capable of vindicating those rights.

Iranian reform activists politicized the idea of citizenship and gave it a substantive dimension. Their model of citizenship entails the policies of difference, equality and voice. They articulated their political and cultural problems by resorting to these concepts and its nuances. They were

following a path that leads to recognition of difference, the nullification of political privileges and the recognition of the right of communication and to the free flow of information.

The Persian word for citizen, "*shahrvand*", simply means the inhabitant of a town or city, and has not the ring of political, social and cultural rights entwined with it in European societies. The Arabic word, "*tābe*'," which was used in Persian before the Iranian Revolution means subordinate (of the state); it also does not have that ring. The reformers have given new meanings to *shahrvand* by using it in the context of political, social and civil rights. Their literal policy has created a new ring of meaning for this word and concept in Persian.

This policy is a complex of three different approaches to citizenship: liberal, communitarian and radical theories of citizenship (Delanty 2001: chs. 1, 2, 3). In the new literature of politics in Iran, "citizen" is applied to an individual who has political, social and civil rights. Iranian totalitarians and authoritarians do not use this word and other words that have civil and political liberties implications. Iranian authoritarian literature includes only terms and concepts that imply that individuals are ready to accept their condition as subordinate.

3.3 Leadership

Who led the reform movement in Iran after 1997? Was it political parties, pressure groups, interest groups, the media figures, journalists, political activists, political analysts, non-governmental organization directors, intellectuals, the president, members of parliament or perhaps the countermovement? My answer to this question is "no one". This movement was a leaderless one. If someone goes back to the literature of this movement in 1997, s/he will not see most of the names that were seen as political figures of the movement in 2001, in parliament, in newspapers and in the universities. A lot of people at different levels of political action represented this movement, but there was no special group of leaders directing movement at each step. The other fact is the rapid change in the figures that were salient at different stages of this movement. When some activists were killed, jailed, exiled or immigrated, others emerged and the same arguments were heard from them.

Some resistance movements are also leaderless, but the leaderlessness of Iran's reform movement is totally different from them. Radical movements consciously avoid hierarchical organizations to secure those organizations from collapse after the first attack by the states. These

include small affinity groups of isolated people who know and can trust each other, and this makes them impenetrable. Decentralized networks are extremely hard to penetrate because they work as organized, exclusive and scattered groups in the context of a greater movement.

The Iranian reform movement worked on the verge of transforming a mass and unorganized society into an organized and civil society. One of the main objects of this movement was to organize society in an independent and inclusive way. Thus, this movement could not be defined as a complex of small organized and exclusive groups. The measures of the authoritarian political faction supported by the leader of the Islamic Republic against reformers, such as putting activists in jail and killing people through the security system, were based on the assumption that dissidents were small and limited groups of reformers and if they were silenced, all Iranians would be quiet and tame.

Khatami, the politburo of the Participation Party, most of the members of parliament, and activist intellectuals and students could not be considered the leaders of this movement; they were only representatives that could accompany the movement or support it.

3.4 The Question of Stability

The reform movement in Iran has aimed to redefine the sets of social relations that presuppose state structures and the symbolic elements that justify them. This movement did not ignore the state and its structure; the reformers knew that how states are organized turns out to have major implications for the democratic vitality of civil society. The impetus of democratization began partly in what remained from the ruins of civil society (independent religious institutions, scientific institutions, and student organizations) about 100 years after the Constitutional Revolution centralized a state of authoritative modernization; therefore a degree of exclusion in the pattern of state representation was inescapable, if stability was to flourish. This is mostly true historically for other reform movements (Dryzek 1996: 482).

Non-violent movements do not destabilize the existing state, but delegitimize it. There are three possible fates for a delegitimized state in a world with broadly accepted popular sovereignty and "the people" as the source of the state's authority: to be toppled by radical movements (the Pahlavi dynasty, Afghanistan after the Soviet occupation, Nicaragua's Somoza); to be rationalized and accept democracy and recognize people's rights (Georgia, Ukraine and other Eastern European countries); and to

exist in a fragile situation of continuously suppressing people and instability (Iran and most other Middle Eastern countries). The third choice becomes harder and harder. During the movement, all three theses could be seen in Iran's polity. That part of the opposition who had lived abroad believed in toppling the religious state.

Some people inside the country who were pessimistic about the reforms claimed by the president and parliament accepted the thesis that the religious state could not be democratic and must be changed; that part of the opposition who lived inside the country were trying to reform the state on the assumption that Islam can be read on the basis of a belief in democracy and human rights. The appointed part of the government has been trying to suppress every individual and group that tries to democratize or humanize politics. It is not clear which thesis will be successful in the future, but most Iranians have voted for the second thesis as the most practical and least risky alternative.

The public demand to stop the violation of the Iranian people's rights was reflected in a reform movement and not a human rights movement because most of the reformers were thinking on a national level and were bound to Islamic ideological framework, and hence avoided recourse to a transnational discourse of rights. They saw human rights discourse as a non-religious or non-Iranian discourse that did not reflect the concerns of Iranian individuals. When the process of nation-state-building is not finished in a country and rights are understood in a pre-border world, activists cannot go beyond the limitations of borders and justify their cause by recourse to a transnational framework. Iranian activists could handle the people's demands only within a national framework.

Authoritarians treated the right to strike or the right to criticize the policies and decisions of the state as potentially destabilizing to the state.[21] On the contrary, the civil rights activists believed that these rights invigorated the foundations of the legitimacy of state and stabilized it in the long run. The reformers argued that, without reform, there would be more violence and brutality that would destabilize a fragile political regime such as Iran's authoritarian/semi-sultanistic regime in the 1990s.

3.5 The Question of Success

Did this movement attain gains in any of its steps? Movements that show signs of succeeding, either by getting their issues onto the public agenda or by influencing public policies, are the most likely to provoke a countermovement. The counter-movement in this case was supported by any

individual or group that would lose their interests with the progress of the movement, was nostalgic about the ideal utopia that had to be established or objectified in 1980s and wanted to keep the status quo as the only and best way of ruling a society at this level of development. The counter-movement's power was a good sign of the movement's power. The criterion of success is the (1) acquisition of some stable political resources that do not rely upon another party and are independent of external support, and (2) the institutionalization of the main ideas.

The level of permeability of the political system in Iran was very low during the previous movements; one led to a despotic regime, the Pahlavi dynasty; another to a coup d'état that was planned by the USA; and the third to the Revolution of 1979 and the establishment of an authoritarian Islamic regime.[22]

Although the Iranian reform movement was not successful in policy and legal changes, supporting political parties and non-governmental organizations, the normalization of the activities of a vast number of such organizations, or in a noticeable decrease in ideological pressures on young people and women, there have been some successes:

(a) *Exercise of participation*. One of the salient examples of this exercise is councils in high and middle schools. These councils were established in the 1998–1999 educational year. The participation rate in the elections of these councils that have been held each year on October has been 85%. The number of students that participated in year 2001 was six million across 30,000 schools. These councils elected 280 representatives[23] of a High School Students' Parliament.[24] The first session of this parliament was held on October 2001.

(b) *Institutionalizing representation of disadvantaged groups*. The election of municipality councils, which was held for the first time in 1998, led to the presence of about 200,000 people (120,000 as the main members and 80,000 as a reserve) in these councils. The Guardian Council had no right to veto the candidates of this election, as opposed to the presidential and parliamentary elections, and people of different ethnic, religious, and political backgrounds could be selected for them. In this event, representatives took into account multiple forms of political collectivity and provided a political space for citizens all over the country to deliberate on the effects of social structures on their lives and identities.

(c) *Counter-movement agreement to conversation*. The number of round-table talks increased during the period in question. The counter-movement leaders who believed in the absolute truth of their ideas and the absolute falseness of their rivals' ideas did not care about public opinions began to show up in these talks. These talks, although limited, were the key instruments of reformers and reform movement activists to publicize their concerns and were suitable ways to make people aware of their rights. The round-table talks format was not successful in the years after the Revolution and before the Iran–Iraq war because it led to riots and turbulence by some sides on the talks, but reformers' non-violent strategy was an obstacle to any kind of violent actions after these talks. These talks were one of the key mechanisms by which a single party or absolutist state could be peacefully transformed into a functioning pluralistic state. Most of these conversations usually held in universities were concentrated on the most important political devices: elections. Round-table talks were an important part of the democratization process in Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Elster et al. 1988: Ch. 3).

(d) *Reformists successful in finding ways of connecting particular interests to the national structure of power*. These interests broadened the conditions under which new groups could form and mount challenges to the authorities. These groups have been learning how to respond by means of concession bargains, co-optations and alliances, not repression.

(e) *Political discourse as a vector for the democratization of society dramatically changed in this period*. Competing factions usually accused each other of breaking the law, but not of breaching God's commandments, of destabilizing the state, but not of heresy or conversion, of actions against the national interest, but not of spying for foreign states, and of violation of civil and constitutional laws, but not of suppressing the deprived and revolutionaries. Before the challenges presented by the reform movement, terms such as "national interest" and "civil society" were not widely used in the Iranian public sphere.

(f) *Dramatic increase in members of non-governmental and independent groups and institutions*. In the period mentioned, 2400 university student organizations were established, and in 2001, about 100,000 students were members of university student organizations

and scientific societies.[25] In this period, hundreds of students were arrested by the judiciary and thousands of them were beaten severely by Ansār-e Hezbollāh and the police on different occasions: their joint attack on Tehran University Dormitories in 1999, Ansār's attack on Tabriz University in 1999, the meeting of the main university student organization, Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat-e Dāneshjooyān (The Student's Board of Strengthening Solidarity) in Khorram Ābād in 2000, and Ansār's attacks on any gathering of university students around the country. These attacks have not been successful in stopping students' activities.

3.6 Conclusion

The distinctiveness of the latest movement in Iran's contemporary history is due to the centrality of rights and to its preoccupation with the rule of law and civil society, or more accurately, with the definition of society and state in secular terms. This novelty is the result of the process of rationalization, the functional differentiation of religion from other institutions, the presentation of different reading from religious texts or the deconstruction of ideology and the end of charisma. This movement is totally different from the Islamic movements of the 1970s and 1980s. Their distinctiveness was due to Islamist ideology and was the result of processes of politicization, national integration and mobilization. The reform movement's distinctiveness was due to the processes of differentiation and rationalization.

The reform movement in Iran after 1997 is characterized by a heterogeneous network of informal interactions, loosely organized groups and cultural concerns. It is based on shared beliefs, such as the dignity of human beings and plurality of ideas and faiths, and acts outside the conservative institutional sphere and formally defined procedure of social life. It emphasizes inclusion and the right of difference in a non-violent manner.

Although the counter-movement tried to push the government to put in place harsh policies against non-governmental organizations, the relationship between them was more cooperative and less antagonistic. Such organizations insisted on their independence, voluntaristic membership and their freedom to pursue their own interests. During the years of the movement, some of the activists took some seats in the parliament and administration, but the movement was not absorbed in real and party

politics, because there were still many rights violated by authoritarian faction of the government on a daily basis. The reform movement mostly stabilized the state, although with some levels of delegitimization. This was done by increasing the rate of participation in elections and choosing the non-violent course of action.

It seems that there is somewhat of a discrepancy between my narrative, which emphasizes the formation of non-governmental organizations and a vibrant civil society, on the one hand, and the repressive nature of the state, forcing many of the reformist narratives underground, on the other. Most activists' demands were not reflected in the goals of such organizations; they only institutionalized what came to be accepted in the political discourse, not what they wanted to see in polity. The duality of political structure explains the political opportunity to establish non-governmental organizations in spite of the repressive nature of all appointed bodies of government.

The abuse of "legality" by Islamic totalitarianism and authoritarianism necessitated a new and rights-based conception of the rule of law; this included justifiable civil and human rights and specified mechanisms and institutional devices for safeguarding the rule of law. Although reform movement activists did not see inconsistencies between the transition to democracy and constitutionalism, the constitution itself was one of the foundations of the institutionalization of authoritarianism and autocracy.

There are other questions about this movement that must be answered in the future. What levels of violence were expected from authoritarians in this movement? Which aspects of society could this movement modify and how? What are the purposive and unintended effects and consequences that the mobilization of the reform movement produced? What are the social impacts of this social movement? What can be said about the scope, nature and conditions of these consequences? Are these similar to the consequences of reform movement in other societies? How did this movement relate to more general processes of social change—secularization, democratization and rationalization? Are the effects of this movement durable? What was the direction of the movement in different steps? Which strategies actually worked under different circumstances? These kinds of question concerning the nature and impact of this movement will have a series of conceptual, analytical, theoretical and empirical implications for the study of social movements.

Notes

1. There are some similarities in respect of demands between this movement and previous movements in Iran, but the emphasis in this movement is on civil and constitutional rights.
2. *Āftab-e Emrooz*, August 30, 2001.
3. The aim of these murders, as the killers said, was cleansing a religious society from sinners.
4. On the basis of authoritarian Islamic ideology, everything that makes people happy is forbidden. There is a long list of prohibited materials and actions: dance, music, parades, parties, make-up, colorful clothes, comic movies, satires, etc. In formal calendar of Iran, there are about 20 days of mourning, but no national day of parades and happiness.
5. The long list of Ansār's attack against any activities of dissidents and critics is the main reason for this fear and repression.
6. Before the Revolution of 1979, this movement was the main line of thought and action among religious youth. After the victory of the Revolution, former revolutionaries were divided first into the Islamic left and the Islamic right in the 1980s and then into two main branches: reformers (mostly with social democratic or liberal democratic approaches) and authoritarians (with anti-democracy and anti-liberalism approaches) in the 1990s.
7. They have their own prisons and special ways of punishment, which are totally different from what the judiciary officially has or does.
8. *Norooz*, May 29, 2001.
9. *Hayāt-e No*, August 9, 2001.
10. In spite of Calhoun's idea about new social movements (Calhoun 1993: 386), these phenomena are not solely makers of post-industrial or post-modern societies.
11. The most prominent figure who represents this idea is Mesbāh Yazdi. He teaches theology in Qom seminary.
12. The Islamic left was a constellation of groups that believed in social democracy and Islamic ideology, and held power between 1981 and 1989.
13. This is a heterogeneous group of writers and scholars that published *Kiān* magazine in the 1990s. They wrote most of the essays in this magazine. *Kiān* was closed and banned in 2001 by the judiciary, which was controlled by the leader of the Islamic Republic. They believe in religious pluralism, freedom of speech, and democracy.
14. Islamic nationalist groups that believe in civil rights, market economy and nationalism were in power from 1978 to 1979.
15. Socialist democrats, mostly scholars, writers, journalists and translators; these groups, after the repression of 1981, could not act under the name of a group.

16. Liberal secularist writers, journalists, artists, researchers and translators, who believe in freedom of speech, freedom to choose one's lifestyle and human rights.
17. This kind of politics was the main way of doing politics in Iran for the four decades from the 1950s to 1980s (Bayat 1997).
18. Reformers won all the elections (presidential, parliamentary, and municipal councils), except the election of Experts Assembly, who elect the next religious leader from experts in *shari'ah* in the mentioned period. Actually, only clerics were allowed to run for this assembly. In some provinces, the number of candidates and representatives were the same. They also won any election inside the professional groups (national medical doctors association, national urban and civil engineers association, bar association, trade association, cinematic associations, press association, etc.).
19. Akbar Ganji and Emāduddin Bāghi were members of this association. They were sentenced (in 2000) to six, and two and a half years of prison respectively. Their works were critical in providing alternative narratives of Iranian politics (Ganji 1999; Bāghi 2000).
20. An authoritarian approach to citizenship is established on exclusive political society. All political lectures of Mohammad Taqi Mesbāh Yazdi and Abdullāh Javādi Āmoli as two well-known authoritarian clerics explicitly explain this approach on the basis of Islamic doctrine. All authoritarian political parties—Jam'iyyat-e Mo'talefeh (Coalition Party), Jāme'eh-ye Modarresin-e Hozeh-ye `Elmieh-ye Qom (Qom Seminary Teachers Association), and Jāme'eh-ye Rowhaniyyat-e Mobārez-e Tehran (Combating Clergy of Tehran Association)—are behind this idea of citizenship.
21. Habibullāh Asgar 'Owlādi, secretary general of Mo'talefeh (Coalition Party), *Norooz*, December 12, 2001.
22. Iran's society had three periods of uprising before the reform movement. The first one was a constitutional movement during what is called the Constitutional Revolution of 1906–1907. The second was an independence movement against Britain and happened during the Nationalization of Oil Industry Movement, 1950–1953. The third was a political movement against the kingdom, 1977–1979, and led to the Revolution of 1979.
23. *Norooz*, September 15, 2001.
24. *Norooz*, October 20, 2001.
25. *Norooz*, January 3, 2002.

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CHAPTER 4

Opportunities Lost: The Iran Reform Movement and Human Rights

During the first three years of Khatami's presidency, 1997–1999, most of the violations of human rights in political areas were reported and analyzed by independent newspapers, but violations in cultural, social and economic domains were rarely reported and discussed. These areas were not discussed in the public debate. There were no non-governmental organizations that could combat organized violations of human rights by the government, especially the judiciary system, security, military forces and police. Even the Khatami administration did not issue licenses for this kind of organization. Nevertheless, non-governmental organizations in other areas were becoming more powerful, and they sometimes referred to human rights. The basic ideas of the philosophy of human rights and modern law systems were being publicized in reformists' journals and newspapers. The literature on human rights concerns was spreading widely and some of the main texts were translated into Persian. This was intended to have an impact in the long run.

The relation of the Iranian reform movement and the human rights subjects can be assessed from three different viewpoints: (1) views and perspectives; (2) institutions and organizations; and (3) strategies, policies, programs and regulations. Views and perspectives are usually discussed in the theoretical areas, but institutions and normative action are part of practical world; institutions and organizations are effective instruments for executing views and perspectives, while strategies, policies, programs and regulations determine directions, ends and practical limitations.

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This chapter aims to explain why the status of human rights hardly improved in Iran in that period while the reform movement was underway, reviewing the reform movement with respect to theoretical discussions, establishing institutions, policy-making, programming and lawmaking for development and change. This chapter can be evaluated as reform pathology with respect to Iranian people's rights—why the violations of rights, in spite of high demand of such rights, continued or in some areas increased.

4.1 Three Interpretations of Human Rights

The reform movement in Iran after 1997 addressed a vast spectrum of views and perspectives about different subjects such as violence, the necessities of modern state, legitimacy, political competence, tolerance, development, pluralism, participation, political culture, public sphere, liberty, justice and authority. The diversity of these views and perspectives is the reason for this movement's intellectual richness. There were also disagreements among reformists that made confrontation with authoritarians less difficult, but the dialogue between them was limited. The authoritarian camp could not set up a well-defined enemy to attack in a unified military and judiciary operation. The diversity in real politics frustrated reformists in their efforts and campaigns.

The most important subject to discuss with regard to the situation of human rights in Iran is the relationship between human rights and canonical or sacred law, *shari'ah*. In this case, three different views are distinguishable in reformists' ideas.

Human Rights in Sacred Law or the Shari'ah *Framework*

People who subscribe to this view (for example, members of Qom Seminary Researchers and Instructors Society, mostly disciples of Husayn Ali Montazeri) have strived to extract "human rights" from canonical, sacred or religious texts, while traditionalists and authoritarians have extracted "human duties" from these texts. Most articles of civil and constitutional rights, in their view, can be derived from traditional sacred law. Iranian civil law, which is the heritage of Constitutional Revolution, mainly regulated on the basis of sacred law, and if does not completely conform to it, there is no conflict between them.

A person who holds this view may strive to extract human rights from existing canonical or sacred law. For this group, canonical or sacred law is

the central idea and if they see some incompatibility between articles of human rights and canonical law decrees in some cases, they drop the human rights articles. They believe that God has spoken of everything concerning human beings' social life, including human rights, and religious scholars and researchers must explain them without eliminating or ignoring the canonical or sacred law. The manifesto of the Islamic Conference Organization about human rights is mainly influenced by this point of view. Iranian reformists have not declared their manifesto concerning human rights on the basis of their canonical views or their special reading of religious texts.

Reading Religious Texts While Not Denying Human Rights

Religious intellectuals as an important group among Iranian reformists (for example, Abdu l-Karim Soroush and the Kiān circle) believe in "independent endeavor" (*ejtehād*) not only to understand and explain divine law on matters of theology and law, but also to perceive and reconstruct principles of religion on matters of humanity and epistemology. They think that existing "independent endeavors" in Shi'i seminaries are insufficient to respond to new needs and expectations. From this point of view, they do not think that accepting the rational heritage of human beings, such the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is subject to canonical law.

They might accept this declaration if and only if they analyze it and consider its relation to existing religious beliefs. From their point of view, canonical or sacred law is an important part of the human tradition (as an accumulation of communal wisdom). They do not completely accept that declaration, referring this acceptance to the rational study of religion and the new ideas about human rights and historical interaction between these two traditions. In other words, they see Islamic canonical law as the product of Muslims' communal wisdom, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the product of Western communal wisdom. In contrast to authoritarians, who dwell only on human duties, they insist on human rights.

Reading Religious Texts While Accepting Human Rights

In the 1970s and 1980s the religious texts were mainly read on the basis of authoritarianism, totalitarianism, populism and socialism, but in the 1990s, some intellectuals began to read them with the foundations and principles of liberalism, pluralism, democracy, civil and human rights, and constitu-

tionalism in mind. Thus, some Iranian reformists (religious pluralists) reconstructed the Shi'i religion and established a new political ideology that would accept the philosophical and ethical foundations of human rights and liberties. This native ideology appeared as it were between the lines of political challenges and political factions, with the pressures of authoritarians accelerating its emergence. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights can form a part of this new native ideology.

4.2 Institutions and Organizations

Iranian reformists were successful in institutionalizing their ideas and methods and in organizing young people who were eager for reform. In the second half of the 1990s, they were able only to establish some newspapers and magazines, which were repeatedly banned and closed. They also set up two press associations: the Press Union in 1997, and the Society for Defending Press Liberties in 1999. These two associations were established after years of banning and closing tens of newspapers and magazines, and the killing, arrest and prosecution of tens of journalists and writers. Some political parties and organizations that were in the reformers' camp had licenses for their activities, but they only issued manifestations and statements, and did not have any programs for political education, increasing membership or workshops for policy-making. They were limited to a few active people and were mainly political clubs or partnerships, and not political parties. Many of these so-called parties have not declared their "aims" and "articles of association."

These organizations and parties were founded by political figures that had been part of the closed political caste and governmental positions for two decades. They were tolerated because most of their members were ideologically selected for those positions. The only institution with members outside the political caste and formally established in the second half of the 1990s was the Iranian Writers Society. This society was also a closed club of friends with a shared lifestyle and beliefs (60–80 members among more than 2,000 writers) and did not include Iranian writers with different lifestyles, perspectives and ideas. Nevertheless, the Iranian Writers Society usually defends the rights of all writers and does not limit itself to defending its members alone.

In this situation, establishing institutions and organizations that monitor violations of Iranian citizens' human rights in different areas was of the second or third order of importance. There were also strong limitations

on establishing institutions that have critical perspectives on current affairs and real politics. Parties, media and trade unions could only defend the limited rights of their members and not others' rights. The main duty of human rights institutions and organizations is to monitor society and detect violations of human rights, and then protect human rights without distinction of any kind (such as race, color, sex, language, religion, party affiliation, political or cultural opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other statuses).

These institutions may monitor what is going on but they do not have enough power to address their policies and programs and influence politicians to enforce them. Gathering and publishing information on human rights violation and transmitting this to the public are suitable means for preventing or decreasing cases of violation. These kinds of institution did not exist in Iran because the government expropriated the public sphere. Independent political organizations were also engaged directly in politics and could not limit themselves to a specific job.

There was an official Islamic Human Rights Committee that was established by the Iranian judiciary in the first half of the 1990s. This committee was a governmental organization, and the head of the judiciary system appointed its director. The function of this committee was to governmentalize and monopolize the monitoring of human rights violations to ensure the government's exclusive role in this regard and to justify what was done within the judiciary system on the basis of Islamic law. Since 1990, when all members of a human rights committee affiliated with the Liberation Movement Organization (Nehzat-e Azadi) were arrested by the Rafsanjani administration security apparatus, there has not been any independent and non-governmental organization whose main activity is concentrated in this realm.

Independent and non-governmental institutions and organizations related to human rights have not been established in Iran. There are several reasons for this.

Absence of Mechanisms for Galvanizing Public Opinion

The literacy rate increased in the 1980s and 1990s, from 47.1% in 1976 to 80% in 1996.[1] The urban population increased from 47% in 1976 to 61% in 1996.[2] Media coverage also increased: some radio channels from 85 to 99%, some TV channels from 60 to 85%,[3] video from 0 to 30%, and press from about 15 to 25% (the numbers of newspapers and magazines for

every 1,000 people was 53 in year 2000,[4] assuming that every copy was read by five people on average) between 1980 to 2000. Thus, most of Iranian society is informed about events and ideas. Nevertheless, the channels for reflecting the audiences' ideas are limited. Satellite TVs and the Internet in the 1990s spread very fast, but their coverage was below 10% of population.

Mass media such as TV and radio channels in Iran are not interactive and are mostly one-voiced. Independent newspapers and magazines are opened and closed repeatedly and do not have the opportunity to establish firm communications with their audiences. The most important poll organizations are governmental (dependent on the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, the Ministry of Intelligence, and the state-run TV & Radio Organization); they do not cover important events and subjects. Independent poll survey institutions, such as the Āyandeh Survey Center, that could reflect citizens' ideas all over the country and across all subject matters were rare and were all closed in the early 2000. Thus, channels for communicating information on violations of human rights were rare and ineffective.

Labeling

Iranian authoritarians label all their opponents and everyone who criticizes governmental behavior or the political structure as spies of Western countries or their hired agents. This has been their approach with the independent press. More than 100 political activists and intellectuals were arrested on the basis of this accusation in 2001.[5] This labeling is irrefutable, because the accused cannot have any evidence that they are not spies or hired agents. In this political-legal system, everyone is guilty unless proven innocent. These accusations are simpler in those cases in which individuals have been educated in foreign countries, have some relations and ties with foreign institutions or have been working on subjects that are important for Western institutions. The monitoring of human rights as the professional concern of an institution has no tradition in Iran. Thus, labeling human rights activists as spies or as being on the CIA or Mossad payroll is very simple and has no consequences for the government. In these situations, reformers have preferred to establish and work with institutions that are less risky. This labeling makes the costs of these activities outweigh their benefits.

Lack of Information

Any reaction against the disregard or contempt for human rights requires reliable information. Violations of rights and freedoms are mainly hidden from the Iranian public, and the media are prohibited from reporting these violations even if they have reliable sources. Mechanisms in the police, the Guard Corps and the judiciary system help this suppression of information. Everything in Iran can be kept secret, even the news reported by foreign news agencies and bulletins, which includes the texts of foreign radios' reports. These bulletins are published for high-ranking rulers and officials. Some of the hidden activities that reporters cannot report are trials in non-open courts, investigations and prosecutions without the presence of lawyers, searching people's houses without a warrant, ideological interviews with people who want to get jobs or study in public and governmental institutions or organizations. Reporters are not allowed to report that if someone complains about the questions in job interviews, s/he loses the opportunities. No reporter is free to write about torture aimed at extracting confession in the security, judiciary and police systems, and at compelling opponents to conduct TV interviews and confess their guilt.

In the decade up to 1997, 80 religious and political opponents were killed by the security system and the public was not aware of these events and the reasons of the perpetrators. There were some guesses about the reasons, such as accusations of heresy, conversion or blasphemy. International human rights organizations did not say anything about these cases because they did not know anything about what was going on. Iranian social and political spheres did not have enough capacity for revealing those violations. Thus, many people preferred or had to hide their cases, although some of them tried to reveal them and did not succeed. Even the political activists were not aware of their rights, because there was no public information in the educational system or media about civil, constitutional and human rights. In these situations, human rights organizations at a national level cannot function. For example, violations of prisoners' rights reported by committee of article 90 in the reformist parliament were very high, but the cases formally reported are rare.[6]

The Taint of Working Against National Security and the National Interest

Great powers in the international community are more influential in international organizations than other nations. Thus, the reformers who always considered their national interest had some hesitation about working with these organizations or engaging in dialogue on the basis of their perspectives. The behavioral inconsistencies of these organizations reinforce these doubts. The critique of independent intellectuals and writers in developing countries has not always been directed toward these inconsistencies but toward their freedom-based discourse and libertarian policies. A poor understanding of and sensitivity to native cultures and traditions has not aggravated these hesitations. Identity and nationalist politics are usually stronger than these sensitivities. The challenge between nations and international laws is one of the most important theoretical keys in these cases. The idea of competition and dialogue has not replaced the fear of great powers and their intentions, incitements and conspiracies. Great powers' interferences in other countries and their military bases in other countries are poor justification for these fears and ideas, which are based on xenophobia.

4.3 Strategies, Policies, Programs and Regulations

If a group of reformists wants to change the political, social and cultural situation of a society by legal and non-violent activities, it needs clear strategies for moving from an existing condition to a desired one. Some executive methods (policies) and programs are also needed to accomplish its goals. If these strategies, policies and programs run counter to regulations, and parliament is in the hands of reformists, it can change those regulations by passing alternative laws. There was a lack of clear ideas among Iranian reformers in these four areas. Some of them, such as atheist intellectuals, did not have any theoretical problems with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but they did not have any strategy, policy or program for establishing human rights in Iran.

The reform movement in Iran did not have enough capacity to articulate its normative objectives. The strategies for this aim might be written in a charter called the "Iranian Strategy for Vindication of Human Rights." The policies and programs could be arranged in workshops with the independent institutions' support. The programs could be executed by the people whose main concerns are human rights. The regulations should be

drafted by independent lawyers and political activists. Unfortunately, none of these things have happened.

Iranian reformers referred only to the national civil and constitutional laws in their political and cultural campaigns and refused to refer to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They did not go ahead to declare authoritarian behavior as criminal but only as bad or unsuitable defenses of Islamic values.

Iranian reformists mainly focused on the rights of inner-circle political activists, and did not insist on the rights of regular citizens. This is one of the results of ranked citizenship in Iran; reformers inside the government opposed ranked citizenship but in practice, they behaved like authoritarians with respect to this matter. Accordingly, people who believe in the formal ideology of the state are first-order citizens, and the others are second-order ones. In the lack of strategies, policies, programs and regulations, there were some activities that could lead to an organized and planned struggle for human rights. These activities were:

- *Monitoring political abuse of the judiciary.* The Committee for Monitoring Violations of Constitution (established by Khatami on November 29, 1997) could report abuse by the judiciary in every single case to the public. This abuse was one of the most important cases of violations of human rights by institutional definition. This committee claimed the constitutionality and legality of most judicial decisions, even against human rights, based on the independence of the judiciary in the law of the Iranian nation-state.
- *Removal of obstacles to the free flow of information.* What happened after the election of President Khatami in Iranian culture was a kind of opening-up of book publishing and press reporting. Every kind of information, except that countering religious dogma, could be published (for a short period of time before the press crackdown of 1999). The Khatami administration was slow in using the opportunity to hand more licenses to independent groups. Information and cultural products that could not legally be transformed were transformed easily and with the fewer consequences by informal ways.
- *Establishing Internet sites to record and disseminate information about violations of human rights in all spheres of life.* This information should not be limited to political cases. Every single violation, from questioning people who were driving at night to ideological discrimination in getting jobs, might be reported on these sites.

Notes

1. *Iranian Statistical Yearbook*, 1982, p. 99; *Iranian Statistical Yearbook*, 1998, p. 600.
2. *Iranian Statistical Yearbook*, 1998, p. 61.
3. *Soroush* weekly, special issue on religious leader's visit to Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, 1998.
4. *Āftāb e Yazd* daily, August 30, 2001.
5. *Āftab-e Yazd* daily, February–April 2001.
6. A committee in the Islamic Republic of Iran's assembly that is established by Articel 90 of the Constitution and its mission is to receive and investigate people's complains of the three branches of power.

PART III

A Movement of Movements

Check for updates

CHAPTER 5

The Iranian Reform Movement and the Iranian Women's Movement: Feminism Interacted

5.1 Historical Background

Iranian women have traditionally been deprived of many of their basic rights and have suffered from both male-centered ideologies and male dominance, which treats women as irrational, child-like and immature. They have also suffered from widespread discriminatory policies that affect their lives from birth to death. Women's fight for their civil, constitutional and human rights have been at the core of the women's movement in Iran for about a century, from the early twentieth century (Afary 1996; Najmabadi 1998; Nashat and Beck 2004; Sanasarian 1982; Moghadam 1995) to the beginning of the twenty-first century (Moghadam 1995). During the Iranian Revolution of 1979, Iranian women participated in massive numbers in street demonstrations and expedited the victory of the Revolution. Revolutionary leaders did not impose gender differences and gender expectations in the periods when they needed foot soldiers for their cause. A small number of liberal and democrat (including leftist) women had different and more egalitarian expectations of this massive social upheaval.

The revolutionary utopia, shaped and presented in the 1970s, was not ideologically, strategically and tactically gendered; gender issues were hidden under the guise of Islamic ideology, which was the framework of the subsequent regime. No one talked about it before its achieved its grip on power. There was a mass society and a few male revolutionary leaders. Iranian women were not organized as a gender group and their goals were

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not different from others'. Their participation gave them greater influence and power to the extent that religious leaders were persuaded to legitimize limited female participation in social and political processes in post-revolutionary Iran. This participation was limited to loyalists of high-ranking clerics.

Despite women's mass political participation, women's political and social roles have become less and less significant since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979. Changes in state politics, the ideology of the state, party politics, the socio-economic status of social groups, value systems and asset distribution did not work for women. By resorting to Islamic *shari'ah* and Iranian traditions, the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran successfully implemented a policy of unequal treatment of Iranian women under the law. From 1976 to 1986, women's employment decreased from 11.1 to 6.8%. Most of the women in the public service sector were fired because of their appearance and gender. The legal age for marriage for women dropped from sixteen to nine (the age of puberty according to Islamic law) (Abbasi et al. 2002) and the rate of female representation in parliament dropped from seven to 1.5%.[1]

The period did witness one somewhat positive trend: female primary school enrollment went up to about 50% of the enrollees,[2] but the overall quality of the education dropped under the new educational system. Women's representation in books went down dramatically and when women were portrayed in textbooks, it was only in the roles of a homemaker or a teacher.[3] At the university level, women's enrollment also increased, but women were limited in the fields they were allowed to study; women were excluded from 69 different fields of study (Moghadam 2004), mostly in agricultural and engineering majors. The education of Iranian women overseas was conditional on their marital status; women could and still can get a passport only with the permission of their fathers if they are unmarried and their husbands if they are.

Despite women's active participation and their resulting politicization, women's positions in Iranian society did not improve (Tabari 1982) and were always under debate (Ferdows 1983). Inspired by hopes for democracy, freedom, economic prosperity for all classes, gender equality and a leadership that would not allow Iranian culture to be swallowed up by Western values, many Iranian women joined the 1978–1979 rebellion against the rule of the shah. Iranian women from different strata came together to protest against sexist attitudes expressed by the shah, who declared women not equal to men in their capabilities,[4]

but their efforts came under the umbrella of an ambiguous Islamic ideology that transformed itself into an authoritarian and later totalitarian reading of Islam in post-revolutionary Iran.

In the face of authoritarian and totalitarian readings of Islam, women could not improve their legal situation. In the first decade after the Revolution, women had no organization to represent their causes and goals. Islamic ideology that was used as an instrument to delegitimize monarchy was also used by ruling clerics to execute *shari'ah* (Islamic canonical law) and revive the authoritarian system, this time in an Islamic guise. Islamic *shari'ah*, which was founded in pristine Islam, shaped by *'ulamā* during the golden age of Islamic civilization, and rigidified during the ages of civilizational decline, became the core of clerics' political agenda as the framework of Islamic revivalism.

The injunction to exectute Islamic *shari'ah* was totally absent in the Islamic insurgents' statements before the Iranian Revolution. In the framework of Iranian civil law, which was mostly in accordance with *shari'ah* after the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, sustained and invigorated after the Iranian Revolution of 1979, women were not legally equal to men. Although the social situation of religious men and women improved after the Revolution, their legal situation abated and this was worse for women. This is the social base of the increasing political schism in post-revolutionary Iranian society.

Even gender-sensitive Islamist women activists who attempted to present a different reading of Islam as a worldview and spiritual realm, and Islamic laws as changeable through time could not change the direction of the institutionalization of gender inequality (Kian 1997). The efforts of gender-sensitive Islamist women have been successful in changing the legal culture entwined with what activist women in both political factions were fighting for. Iran's clerical and Islamist rulers have always been preoccupied with setting limits on the rights and roles of women and have not neglected any measure and initiative to impose gender discrimination under the rubric of executing *shari'ah* or Islamic law (Afkhami and Friedl 1994; Paidar 1997).

The ideology of the Iranian Revolution was a combination of Islamic revivalism, socialism, nationalism, populism and authoritarianism. The art of Islamic ideologues was to color the mixture of these ideologies with Islam and present the recipe as something that was original. In post-revolutionary Iranian society, religious populists and authoritarians enforced the brutal aspects of certain laws based on their popular,

authoritarian and totalitarian reading of Islam and *shari'ah*. The harsh execution and enforcement of *shari'ah* law and certain policies of the government have pushed women activists to fight against the legal framework of the Islamic Republic.

Women activists have always criticized the restrictive nature of Islamic law as it was enforced by the Islamic regime and the ruling clerics. The governmental policies of different administrations have been unified in violation of women's civil, constitutional and human rights. Before 1997, there was no woman in the high-ranking governmental offices to represent women's voice in the policy-making process in the cabinet and high national councils.

The Islamic government developed its population policy and family planning after the end of the Iran–Iraq war and their gender role without women's participation. Hence, it did not introduce reforms in the areas of marriage, divorce and education and employment, and did not agitate for more improvement in women's legal and social positions (Hoodfar 1994). Although religious intellectual women and men have denounced both legal and real regimes as aberrant and even un-Islamic, the Islamic regime attributes the root of its legal system to Islamic law and the Islamic political tradition. Most experts in Islamic law and history share the same set of ideas about the role of women in the family, community and the whole society that ruling Islamic jurists have.

Social Discrimination

Iranian revolutionary leaders did not want to change traditional male-dominated society; they never claimed to do so for propaganda objectives or reasons of window-dressing. Since the Iranian Revolution, girls from early childhood are discouraged or prevented from venturing into fields and activities that are deemed "masculine," be these in sports, the arts, recreation or education. The policy of enforced *hejab* (the veil) and sexual segregation is used to limit women's access to the state's scarce education and recreation facilities and cultural compounds, and to institutionalize their confinement to the limited career and life opportunities available to them. By setting standards of modest dress for women, the Islamic state endorses the principle that women are responsible for the moral behavior of men. Spatial segregation is the logical next step to keep moral order.

The same policy follows them into adulthood and facilitates the objective of turning them into second-class citizens of the society. Women who do not believe in the dominant ideology of the state are in a doubled

second-order citizenship, something very similar to the status of black females in the United States before the 1960s. As they grow up, girls are driven more and more into a world dominated and manipulated by their male relatives. They can be given away in legal arranged marriages without their consent while still children. Most of the marriages in Iran are pre-arranged and the girls' choices are very limited. The process, in effect, paves the way for marrying off under-age girls in return for financial gain, mostly in rural areas.

In general, men can dress as they please, with the exception of short-sleeved shirts in governmental offices during summer and short pants in public, but women, including little girls, are required to wear long-sleeved, ankle-length dresses in special colors and styles and to cover their hair, even in schools.[5] Most of the rules and regulations are gender-biased. For example, sports overwhelmingly have a male nature. Women are prohibited by governmental regulations from watching soccer matches in the stadiums. Men have authority over their wives, daughters and sisters, and women are culturally and legally portrayed as weak, fragile and dependent. There are significant differences in the recruitment processes of males and females in the public and the private sectors. Iranian women's political participation is mostly erratic, informal and organized around men with whom they are connected in socially legitimized ways (Joseph 1986).

The plethora of discriminatory laws against women has created favorable conditions and a suitable environment for widespread abuse and atrocities practiced against women. Women have no effective recourse to the law if they are abused, beaten or raped.[6] Even many incidents of rape outside of marriage go unreported because of justifiable fears of the victim being "dishonored" and cursed or even murdered by members of her own family and friends.[7] In some cases, victims are prosecuted by the state and brutally punished by being lashed or stoned to death if they are unjustly judged by the court as being a willing partner.

A growing number of schools and high schools, not only in remote, small or religious cities but also in downtown Tehran, the capital, have forced their female students to wear the *chādor* (a long overall dress that covers women body from skull to foot, usually black). This is despite the fact that the official directive regarding school uniforms only defines the "style and color" of uniforms and does not mention anything about the *chādor* at all. The harsh rules regarding the color and style of female students' uniforms do not allow the girls to take the overall dress off upon arriving at school and walk freely inside the school yard, although schools for girls are shielded by

very tall walls. Most female students have been forced to wear the *chādor* even though they do not wish to wear it. No one knows exactly how many female students are forced to wear a black *chādor* in addition to their pants and long scarves (*maqna'eh*), or in which schools. On the other hand, no inspectors are sent to schools, and no disciplinary actions are executed against principals or their higher managers who refuse to follow the guidelines and enforce their own interpretation of school uniforms.

The government usually prevents release of the works of art and creative works such as movies, plays, paintings and books that address women's subjugation and forms of discrimination and abuse. Two good examples are famous movies—*10* (Abbas Kiarostami 2002) and the internationally praised film *The Circle* (*Ja'far Panahi* 1998). The government has always stated that such works are against the law of the Islamic Republic and are morally damaging, contain vulgar and ugly sections, chapters and scenes, and reflect no moral or educational values. The government usually prevents content and dialogue of films, plays, novels and books revealing violations of women's rights from being published, broadcast or shown to the general public.

Women are denied many basic opportunities and access to many positions in the religious, economic, political, cultural, judicial and military arenas. An assortment of supervisory social regulations regarding women's behavior in public areas has been designed to restrict women's participation in public life and further isolate and restrict their lives to the private domain of their homes. In an authoritarian and patriarchal reading of Islam, the best career for women is housekeeping and child-bearing and rearing. Women are denied many basic rights and are legally and illegally punished more severely than their male counterparts, with resort to *shari'ah* to justify the discrimination and punishments. The discriminatory laws regarding women's rights cover a wide range of areas in marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance, as well as anti-women labor laws and social policies. The Islamicization process usually targets women. These have had the devastating results of the economic deprivation and social isolation of women and their children.

Legal Discrimination

Women have always been looked on as second-tier members of the society and constituency, and rarely appreciated within the prevalent political and social structure in contemporary Iran. This means that women are subject

to many restrictions. These restrictions have been enacted more sharply since the victory of the Iranian Revolution of 1979. In this period, women's rights violation did not only occur in the private sphere of family life but also, and more harshly, in public. Some examples are as follows:

- The inability of women to work, divorce,[8] travel[9] or leave the house without the permission of their husbands, fathers or brothers;
- The denial of the right to obtain custody of their children from certain ages if divorced;
- Lowering the age of consent for marriage to nine immediately after the Revolution, increasing this to 13 years after two decades of women's struggles;
- Banning abortion, except in some emergency situations;
- Segregation of the sexes and gender apartheid stretched to every aspect of public life, and separation of all services for men and women, such as public buses, sport activities, educational institutions, and even some hospitals, health care and other medical facilities[10];
- A very strict and restrictive set of dress codes, including the enforcement of obligatory veiling (*hejab*) and the requirement on all women to wear dark and concealing uniforms;
- Banning female singers' voices from being broadcast on the radio and television and distributed through CDs and audiocassettes;
- Forbidding women employed by the armed forces from receiving military ranks and reducing their employment status to that of office employees (Mehrpour 2000: 38);
- Considering young girls of nine years of age (not boys) as having reached the age of criminal responsibility (Article 49, Islamic Punishment Law and Amendment 1 of Article 1210, Iranian Civil Law);
- Presenting laws that give men the right to divorce a woman without her consent. However, a woman can seek divorce only if her husband is a drug addict or impotent, which is almost always impossible for her to prove;
- Banning women from participating in the high-ranking judiciary or as working as administrative officials[11]; and above all,
- Equating the public role of women with corrupted morality and a lack of chastity.

Women in Iran enjoy a higher status compared with some other countries in the Muslim world, but under the country's Islamic laws, they still cannot legally run for the presidency or leadership and they cannot be

appointed as a judge (Mehrpour 2000: 320–356). They are discriminated against in inheritance law, which gives them at most half the share of their male counterparts. Iranian women cannot read what they want and cannot publish what they write without being censored. These limitations are imposed on women much more harshly than on their male counterparts. They cannot work where they want, study what they want, leave when they want, divorce when they want and gain custody of their children. Whereas a male witness' testimony to a crime of assassination or other instances is accepted, it takes two female witnesses to achieve the same credibility. The law provides for stoning women for adultery whereas men are only lashed for the same action; however, in 2002 the Iranian government temporarily suspended this practice under the pressure of European countries.[12]

The new policy concerning women continued to be the one implemented in a series of laws between 1981 and 1983 to enforce *shari'ah* law in a revolutionary and wartime situation. Women cannot speak out frankly because of the authoritarian and patriarchal political culture; there are some taboos just for women, such as talking about sex or the right to choose their partner. Based on law and custom, they usually do not have the opportunity to talk about these subjects and share their experiences with others in public. They are banned from sharing many public resources with their male counterparts, effectively reducing their access to these stretched and scarce resources.

The law of *hodud* and *qesās* (talion and physical punishments) treats women as half-human (or in some cases as animals or things), even in their power of honesty or observation. Even in death, a woman is valued as half of a man in terms of death dues; if a man kills a woman and is sentenced to death, he may be executed only if the victim's family pays the murderer half of his death dues or blood money. According to Article 6 of this law, the bereaved family has to pay to the murderer to get "justice" done.

The laws governing marriage are among the most discriminatory regulations against women. While males are allowed to marry up to four wives at a time in permanent marriage and an unlimited number of women in what is known as a "temporary" marriage (*sigheh*), strict monogamy is expected from women. Any married woman who deviates from this may be brutally and savagely punished by publicly being stoned to death—the officially sanctioned and frequently executed punishment for extra-marital affairs. While the law of *hodud* and *qesās* prescribes "equal" punishments for men and women in some cases, it is the women who suffer most from

its most barbaric measures. A married man having an affair with unmarried women can always claim that they were "temporarily married" (whether this is true or false) as there is no need to register temporary marriages. But a woman in a similar position would have no such defense and would be condemned to a torturous and humiliating death by stoning.

Inside marriage, the man is given almost a free hand in controlling his wife/wives. Rape inside marriage is sanctioned (as no consent is required for sexual relations inside marriage) and even wife-beating or wife-killing may be tolerated in the process (Mehrpour 2000: 215–218). The law gives very few (if any) rights to women in sharing decisions in married life. Moreover, there are no proper provisions in the law to prevent men from transgressing their rights and/or abusing the extensive power they have inside marriage.

The divorce law also inflicts huge financial and emotional blows on women. The woman has to forfeit almost all financial claims if she files for divorce. If the man initiates the divorce, the settlement she receives is still very limited. The emotional loss is much greater and more hurtful: the woman is deprived of the custody of her children (some as young as two), who are usually awarded to the man. Inside and outside marriage, even the father's father is given priority over the mother in custody matters.

The extent of discrimination against women in marriage goes further still. A virgin woman (whatever her age) has no right to marriage without the consent of her father (or her father's father, in the absence of the former) (Mehrpour 2000: 70). A divorced woman has to wait for a set period before re-marriage, while there is no waiting period for a divorced male.

Marriage licenses are not issued for Iranian women who want to marry foreigners, including Muslims (Mehrpour 2000: 86–95). They can only do this if the Interior Minister issues permission for the marriage of Iranian women to foreign men, while there is no restriction on the marriage of Iranian men to foreign women. Women are legally forced to live in a place chosen by their husband (unless otherwise stipulated in the marriage certificate) and they have to submit themselves to their husbands' sexual desires; they also legally need their permission to do anything, including leaving the house for shopping or visiting others or even going to mosques for prayer. In the real world, almost all these legal restrictions are ignored because of women's pressure on their husbands but whenever cases are brought to the courts, these are women who lose to the structural discrimination in place against women.

5.2 Iranian Feminism

Iranian women have continuously experienced systematic disadvantages, structural inequalities and institutionalized injustice in a male-dominated society for more than two millennia. These forms of injustice and exclusivism have restricted their opportunities and life prospects. These structural inequalities have their roots in essentialist philosophy and theology, despotism, authoritarian political culture, a tribal and patriarchal social system, a special mode of (Asian) agricultural production based on the hard work of digging aqueducts in an underground irrigation system (*qanāt*) by primitive tools and Islamic *shari'ah*.[13] These factors have been interwoven together. It has not been merely individuals' sexist or androcentric motivations, prejudices, beliefs or attitudes that have caused troubles for women. In addition, it has been the institutional and societal forms of sexism and androcentrism that have exerted the most powerful effects on the lives of women and men in Iranian society.

The institutional and societal forms of sexism and androcentrism in traditional perspective on women are mostly based on essentialism and less on biologism. Human knowledge from the Iranian perspective is mostly based on philosophical insights—revised eclectic Greek philosophy—rather than a scientific approach. From this viewpoint, "the evident differences between men and women are due to different external and internal, physical and spiritual, creational, habitual and sentimental aspects [of femininity and masculinity]" (Husayni-e Tehrani 1997: 34).

The essentialist and biologist view sees men as "tough, powerful, strong, not easily hurt or damaged, firm, stubborn, resolute, unyielding, and having rational mentality and sentiment proportionate to it, and women as fragile, delicate, easily damaged, and having harsh feeling and powerful sentiment and rationality proportionate to it, as opposed to men" (Husayni-e Tehrani 1997: 34). Based on this view, "this difference has been proven in physiology" (Husayni-e Tehrani 1997: 38). Biologism and essentialism in the Islamicized versions are strengthened by resort to the divine creation: "If you think about these characteristics that God has inscribed in men and women and what is expected in creation of world, you will see that a woman has a broad capacity to bear child, deliver, feed, and breed the baby" (Husayni-e Tehrani 1994: 35).

When Iranian women's rights were more violated and their bodies were more problematized after the Revolution by resort to these kinds of essentialism and biologism, and consequently by the enforcement of every

article of *shari'ah*, especially after the beginning of the Iran–Iraq war (1980–1988), female activism began to fight against that trend. The social structure of Iranian society in post-revolutionary era was not totally ready for the execution of a legal system that belonged to a tribal society 13 centuries ago. Iranian women's political participation, Islamic populism and some social justice policies pursued and executed by the revolutionary governments immediately after the Iranian Revolution helped women make their case.

Iranian feminism arose from both a secular and religious resistance against clerical authoritarian and later sultanistic regime when it ran out of mobilization power; then, new circles of religious intellectuals who had new readings of Islam emerged and presented less discriminatory interpretations of Islamic tradition. Iranian feminists, religious or secular, mostly come from academic and intellectual circles. Thus, gender and feminist studies were elevated to an academic and scholarly level, and journals and books on women's issues flourished. Iranian feminist scholars have concentrated on "woman" as a social category and have understood it as a powerless, disadvantaged and controlled phenomenon defined by men. In a global age, the growth of feminist political movement in other nation-states and the presence of Iranian women's non-governmental organizations in United Nations conferences on women have given Iranian feminist concerns an increasingly global perspective (Afkhami and Friedl 1997), and in some cases global leverage and presence. Issues such as women's human rights and equality and their expected advantages from economic development have raised questions about how institutionalized discrimination and disadvantage should be understood.

Iranian feminists represent the accumulated grievances and unfulfilled demands of Iranian women. Iranian women in the household framework have been powerless to change their conditions in life. They are mostly a silent majority. Most Iranian women incarcerated within the walls of their houses accept their lot in life without visible question; they have no choice. The plight of the women's movement is the plight of a select group of college-educated, middle and upper class, mostly married and employed women with a background of Shi'i religious belief.

Nevertheless, the women's movement in Iran was not begun by housewives, whose very condition of being in the modern world can create a sense of emptiness, non-existence and nothingness. Their agenda was not the political concern of the mass of men. The mass of women have been concerned about the economic survival of and ideological discriminations

against women. Iranian feminist had to fight in four different fronts: in the family, community, civil society and polity. The gender hierarchy in Iran manifests itself in state institutions and communities, in contrast to the degree to which each show up in the families or civil society institutions.

Feminism for many Iranian activist women has been a liberating ideology insofar as it can theoretically and ideologically open doors to other conceivable ways of representing oneself as something else other than an identity engraved on individuals by formal ideology and by redefining oneself in relation to sex. Feminism was expected to be an emancipatory ideology for some Iranian women who wanted to escape the harshness and discriminations of Islamic ideology. They have been campaigning against wearing obligatory veils, arranged marriage, spousal abuse, domestic violence, the gender division of labor, greater rates of unemployment for women, selling Iranian young girls to rich Arab sheikhs through human dealers in the south of the country, female-circumcision rites in some provinces and the judicial activism of hardliners relating to the prosecution of women. But it has not gone far enough to show that the traditional gender scheme falls short of the suitable way to adapt to the necessities of the transitional era of Iranian society. Iranian society has witnessed an ideal structure brought about by religious revivalism, nationalism, Islamism and anti-imperialism. These ideologies have presented definite performances of meaning that have non-negotiably imposed restrictions on Iranian life and on the structures of the Iranian life-world. These ideologies are still the ideological background of Iranian feminism.

Iranian activist women used to ask how to contest and put an end to cultural phenomena such as the patriarchal state, the covert rape culture, compulsory dressing, sexual segregation, men's superiority in the family and the gender division of labor. They have tried to explain all such concepts and disadvantages by means of gender relations, and to express patterns of causation in gendered socialization and politicization. These ideas can be found in the writings and reports of women who have been working for journals and magazines such as *Payām-e Hājar* (Hājar's Message), *Zanān* (Women) Monthly, *Farzāneh* (Learned) Journal and electronic newsletters such as *Bad Jens* (malicious, disreputable, bad-hearted),[14] *Zanān-e Iran-e Emrooz* (Iranian Women Today),[15] *Tribune-e Feministi-ye Zanān* (Women's Feminist Tribune),[16] and *Zanān-e Iran* (Women in Iran).[17]

They have also used economic relations, power relations and relations of cathexis to argue that those categories and concepts are constructed by social practice arising from within these structures. The Iranian feminist use of a gender category does not merely describe the life-world of Iranian

society as part of a research program, but it also inscribes it as a covering framework for transformation. When they denounce patriarchy, campaign against authoritarian religious and cultural regimes, and engage in dialogue with different groups, they have to present their view about the ideal world and the role of women in that realm.

What makes Iranian feminism different from other feminisms in the region or in Western countries? The religious state in Iran has generated at least three new areas of discussion (or "game" in Ortner's view (1996: 12–16)) that have relevance for questions of gender and have given Iranian feminism special characteristics. One is the game of religious authority, which we would call religious patriarchy in which the role of father, brother, husband and son are essentially moral; religious roles emerge via this game. Fathers, brothers, husbands and sons, in this game, are not only constructed as disciplined positions within a hierarchy, responsible as "heads of household," but also are constructed as moral and religious positions responsible to religious authority as "zealots." They are accorded tremendous power and authority over the subordinates within their household and communities—over their daughters, sisters, mothers, wives and even religious sisters.

The second area or game is that of the protection of female purity and virginity by the religious state. One of the duties of government in the eyes of religious authoritarians is the protection of women's purity, which must be reflected in the honor and status of their families, with the price of the violation of their privacy and putting women in the prison of a house. The state plays the role of the traditional father or brother in this respect. This special part of religious ideology is enforced by systematic and often quite severe control of women's bodies, social and especially sexual behavior and their intimate relationships. The religious government enforces the virginity of unmarried girls through the religious decree of "improvement of moral virtues and piety and the fight against all forms of vice,"[18] and through organizing a mobilized force—formal and informal—to impose the relevant regulations. It also enforces a very marked subordination of women by resorting to *shari'ah* as the justification.

The third is the new rite of passage for females—the celebration of reaching nine years old as a mark of adulthood, which then requires girls to wear the veil and observe religious duty for them. Therefore, the mark of adulthood is transferred from rational maturity or marriage to a special age. This celebration is one of the crucial cultural events sponsored by the government, and the leader himself usually attends these ceremonies.

Iranian feminist thought works across scientific borders and cuts cross the defined lines of traditional disciplinary configurations, borrowing, incorporating, deliberating and transforming the methodological approaches as well as the concrete subjects and concerns of the disciplines to explain the foundations and consequences of these three new areas of tyranny. Iranian feminist works are also attentive to factors such as ethnicity, class, religion (Afshar 1998; Moghissi 1999), ideology (Shahidian 2002; Gerami 1996) and sexual orientation, which configure the lives of different groups of men and women in four layers of societal institutions: family, community, civil society and state. These works cross local, national, regional and continental boundaries.

There are some fundamental ideas common in Iranian feminist thinking; most Iranian feminists consciously or unconsciously have these ideas in their mind, whether they speak about the foundations of their ideas, consciously hide those ideas in narratives and fictions or unconsciously use them to make their case. The first common thought is about the universality of the feminist movement. Gender categories, from their point of view, are universal and timeless and do not belong to Western societies. The only theoretical alternative, other than the current reading of Islamic culture, which is presented to Iranian women by generations of intellectuals, is the Western model. Having this idea in their mind, Iranian feminists have employed ideas and categories that are used in the women's movement in other parts of the world, mainly Western societies. Authoritarians and conservatives have always called women's agenda "imported," ignoring the roots of women's demands and needs.

The second common idea is also descriptive but has had a great normative ring. Iranian feminists believe that Iranian women are subordinated; they have always been subordinated in the family. They are also subordinated in civil society, political society and the polity, although some of the doors of governmental institutions are opening slightly to them.

The category "woman" (*zan*) is defined as opposed to "man" (*mard*). This opposition is the third common idea among Iranian feminists. Accepting this opposition as a contradiction, it will be believed that every demand and need of women is configured as opposed to men's needs and demand. The gender game is understood as zero-sum.

Iranian feminism assumes that: (1) women can be talked about as merely women; (2) women are abused and subjected as women, not humans—men are seen as superior to women; (3) women's situation can be contrasted with men's; and (4) relations between women and men can

be compared to relations between oppressed and oppressor. Iranian feminists share these assumptions. The fourth shared idea has been crucial to it; it means that gender can be isolated from other elements of identity that bear on one's social, economic and political positions, such as ethnicity or class.

The fifth shared idea is related to what women are supposed to fight for. Iranian feminists mostly believe that every woman ought to want to eliminate those kinds of structural inequality and discrimination against women because treating women as "others," or "objects," rather than as selves or citizens or even subjects, adversely affects all women; they believe too that the social context of mothering, that is, the economic dependence of mothers on husbands, must be changed.

Iranian feminists, unlike Connell (1987), do not describe gender as a reductionist process linking divergent social fields to sexual reproduction. They think this description does not adequately account for all the modes of injustice Iranian women experience. They, like Smith (1992), think that biological ground traps gender in the ideology of procreation, construing women in terms of an essential maternal role mandated by culture and nature. A good version of the ideology of procreation and construing women in terms of an essential maternal role can be found in Motahhari's books on women's status from an Islamic perspective (Motahhari 1978, 1988).

These books and another book written by Ali Shari'ati, *Fātemeh is Fātemeh*,[19] are the bibles of Islamists to mobilize women against the monarchy and the West while justifying the social and legal discrimination against women, because they justify such discriminations in an ostensibly gentle way. They use the terms "protection," "ascendance" and "eminence" for all of the spatial limitations, and an "instrument of fighting" for the veil, instead of a limitation and and imposed dress code, the deprivation of women of some kinds of jobs and relationship with others, and a violation of their rights. They also exalt doing domestic, mothering and caring role of women to justify keeping them at home and male domination in Islamic texts.[20]

Iranian feminists, following the ideas of Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan and Shulamith Firestone,[21] have described the conditions of women's liberation in terms that suggest the identification of woman with her body has been the source of their oppression, and that hence the source of their liberation lies in sundering that connection. From an Iranian feminist point of view, different meanings are attached to having certain characteristics, in different places and at different times and by different individuals;

these differences enormously affect the kinds of lives Iranian women lead or experience. Women's maltreatment has been linked to the meanings assigned to having a female body by male oppressors.

The main goal of Iranian feminists is women's liberation. They want to fight until a majority of men, as well as a majority of women, accept as plain common sense and the ordinary basis of civilized life the absolute equality of the sexes, the sharing of childcare and all other forms of work, limitations on sexual behavior out of marriage for men and forces other than males who are loyal to the formal ideology of the state. Rival schools of thought within Iranian feminism debate the universality of the patriarchy, the usefulness of psychoanalysis, the role of religion in transitional periods, the impact of capitalism and the significance of men's sexual violence.

The main Iranian feminists' argument relates to institutionalized inequality and oppression. They think that men's settled ways of thinking have to be disrupted. However, different groups of women have different thoughts, approaches and analytical explanations for their situation and agenda (see Table 5.1).

There are some flaws in Iranian feminist perspectives and in studies mostly carried out and incited by Iranian feminists. Iranian women are quite diverse in their religious beliefs (Muslim, including Shi'i and Sunni

Table 5.1 Different female groups engaged in the Iranian feminist movement and their characteristics

Active groups	*Female university students*	*Intellectual women*	*White collar women*
Analytical framework(s)	Class analysis/state analysis	Political pluralism	Functionalism
Main agenda	Systematic disadvantages in work place and society	Sexism and androcentrism, civil rights	Social rights
Gender defined as	Interrelated set of social structures	Culturally engineered meaning	Base for species survival
Goals	Social justice, equal share of power for women	Vindication of women's civil and human rights	Equal payment for equal work Equal share of employment Equal legal position for women

and Baha'i with different readings of Islam, Jewish, Zoroastrian, Christian and atheist), ethnicity (Kurd, Balooch, Turkman, Fars, Armenian, Asyrian, Turk, Lur and Arab), color (black to white[22]), ideology (Islamist, liberal, nationalist, populist and pragmatist) and social class (low, middle and high income). In most studies about Iranian women, they have been put in one monolithic category that takes away their diversity and feeds prejudices; even legal and academic studies (Kar 1999; Ebādi 1999) do not usually consider this diversity.

The process and history of the institutionalization of gender are relatively neglected. The historical and social aspects of gender discrimination are often not considered and discussed. The other flaw is a neglect of the dilemmas and strategic conflicts in sexual politics that are the foundations of gender theory. These dilemmas and conflicts are rarely considered in underfunded research and isolated policy-making in the area of gender issues.[23]

There are groups in the Iranian feminist camp that do not welcome male involvement in this kind of study and activism. This behavior is based on the categorization of "woman" as opposed to "man." There is also almost no public discussion about the strategies of feminist movement; even the literature that women's activists have produced does not reflect strategic thinking on the feminist movement. Iranian feminists are so engaged in praxis that they do not have enough time for thinking about the strategies and policies of the movement. The configuration of feminists' involvement in social activities does not open the doors for further thinking and elaborating the policies and strategies of this movement. There is not even a system and network for information-gathering and for monitoring the violations of women's rights in Iran.

Iranian feminists have not set forth questions about the construction of the forms of inequalities, kinds of identity and subject positions within the framework of the cultural, ideological or discursive formation of Iranian society. The interactions between kinship/marriage/sexual/inheritance patterns that are linked together are not mostly taken into account in feminist reports of women's situation in Iran. These patterns are associated not only with complex forms of stratification, but also with the foundations of the state's legitimacy.

Iranian feminists are paying too much attention to the universal dominance of men vis-à-vis women, and the differences between men and women rather than relations and networks. They are focused only on empirical work on the lives and experiences of women in their research and have ignored structures of social asymmetry other than gender.[24]

Studies about masculinity are completely forgotten in gender studies in Iran and have no role in the literature presented by feminists about the other sex.

Systematic analyses of patterns of women's participation in the reform movement of 1997 have not been provided. The main question about participation is why women cannot participate more, and not about what the main obstacles to participation are.

Iranian feminists mostly isolate gender from other elements of human identity, such as ethnicity and class, along with the parallel attempt to isolate sexism from other forms of oppression, such as classism, ideologism, Shi'ism and mono-ethnocentrism. Due to the evident role of ideologized religion in shaping Iranian society after the Iranian Revolution, they do not isolate gender from religion (Mir-Hosseini 1999) and are aware of ideologized religion as the most important form of oppression.

In spite of the growth of feminist political movements in Iran and their universalistic approach, this has not instigated feminists' concerns about a global presence. Iran's isolation from other parts of the world, including the developing and Muslim world, since the Revolution, still has its influence on feminist movement in that it is distanced from the world. The government pressure on dissidents not to be in contact with non-Iranians has an important role in this cultural and political isolation.[25] Iranian feminists are not actually engaged in the global discourse about women's rights, although a global discourse based on human rights has had an enormous effect on their agenda.

Iranian feminist conceptions of moral, religious and ideological discourse, at times, justify the exclusion of some people from particular dialogues, running counter to the ideal of free and open discussion. Every conservative group in Iran vies to engage itself in any discussion, even on the difficult question of who may participate in different dialogues and may share power. At the same time, they are eager to put limitations on participation in dialogues based on political background and ideology.

Although female writers have had a big stake in publishing novels since the Revolution,[26,27] they have not created a suitable language to facilitate the presentation of their thoughts, experiences and feelings to a larger body of audience. Women have published and sold far fewer copies than men. This is also true about the number of movies directed, the TV series made or the plays brought to the theater by women.

5.3 Feminism, Iranian-Style

While feminism may seem by definition to be dedicated to dismantling sex oppression and sexual segregation rather than any other form of oppression and segregation, the powerful emergence of Iranian women's movements since 1997 is linked historically and conceptually to civil and constitutional rights activities.[28] Though Iranian feminism shares concerns with other internal liberation movements, specifically university students and intellectuals, what distinguishes it is its central focus on sexism. The Iranian reform movement activists comprise three different circles of activist students, intellectuals and women who all are non-violent political activists, and their circles overlap one another.

During the 1990s, after the end of Iran–Iraq war and before the rise of the reform movement, demands for social reform increased. In this period, some developments from below started to take shape. The attitude of the young generation regarding pre-marital relations and divorce changed; the rate of divorce started to increase, from about eight divorces out of 100 marriages in 1988 to 12 divorces out of 100 marriages in 1996.[29] Increasingly, young women were demanding equal decision rights with their husbands in family affairs. In employment, women were still not at the level they were prior to the Revolution (13%) but got very close at 12%.

Women made up more than 50% of university students, although the authoritarian camp campaigned for a cap on the percentage of women in universities.[30] Access to the informal media has also had an impact on the attitudes of the younger generation. In this period, religious women put a lot of pressure on the government to change family laws.[31]

Is there really a women's movement? Iranian feminists are actively involved in a social movement; this movement emerged out of a populist mass movement, the Iranian Revolution, which instead of fulfilling their demands made the discrimination and inequality worse for women. The regime could build a wall around the society after the end of Iran–Iraq war and the demands emerged from every corner, even from the religious base of the government.

This movement was founded on cultural, political and social grievances and brings together people from different classes and from with ethnic, religious and ideological backgrounds who have one thing in common: toleration of others. They all have concerns about the overbearing rule of law, the rotation of elites, the free flow of information, civil society and civil, constitutional and human rights. This movement has no leader or a

small group of leaders, and when some of the activists are killed or jailed, others emerge. They do the same job of categorizing and transferring the grievances and demands of the majority of the people and organizing young people and the disenfranchised.

What is common among women's movement activists, as perceived by Iranian feminists? How do feminist activists define the reform movement? The women's movement has been a part of the reform movement since 1997 because the latter is a non-violent one fighting for the vindication of Iranians' civil and constitutional rights, irrespective of their religion, ethnicity, ideology, class, gender and social status. They both fight against cultural, social and political discrimination. The common ground of these two movements is the emphasis on civil society institutions as a pathway to organizing individuals to pursue their rights in society.

Women played a central role in the reform movement that then led to domination of the reformists in the Iranian parliament, municipalities and presidential office. How have Iranian women come to participate in the reform movement and identify with its issues and goals since 1997? This participation and identification has five dimensions: the networks of relationships; a kind of division of labor in politics; the amount of energy consumed on the non-governmental organizations that are not supported by any institutions outside Iran; women's pressure for more participation; and the role of ideological and ethnic oppression on gender oppression.

Numerous studies have established the importance of interpersonal networks for successful movement mobilization (Walsh and Warland 1983; Morris 1984; McAdam 1993; Gould 1993; Robnett 1996). These links and ties are mediated through pre-existing community institutions and organizations. Universities, independent media and public and private offices are mediators or social locations of interpersonal networks for the mobilization of Iranian women in the reform movement. Women have a considerable number in these three kinds of institutions: more than 50% in university students,[32] about 20–30% in the independent media (my guess) and about 30% in the governmental sector (Shādi Talab 2002: 170). Women's share of employment was 12% in 1996 (Shādi Talab 2002: 156). The unemployment rate for college-educated women increased from 4.7% to 22% in the period 1997–2002. The unemployment rate for the female population was 20% in 2001.[33] They function as bridges in work-based, education-based and entertainment/information-based networks.

Activist women have mostly concentrated on criticizing the social policies of the Islamic political regime, while their male counterparts have concentrated on cultural, political and economic issues and policies. Therefore, the reform movement in its heyday was not trapped in the areas of politics and economy. Activist women have been engaged in non-governmental organizations more than men. Iranian women have operated as bridge leaders who through frame bridging, amplification, extension and transformation initiated ties between the reform movement and the communities and families, between the public life of the movement and the private spheres of adherents and political constituents, and between pre-figurative strategies aimed at individual identity and consciousness and political strategies aimed at organizational tactics designed to challenge relationship with the state and political parties and organizations. Although there were significant gender differences in the recruitment process for male and female participants in the student organizations and independent media boards and committees, women's pressure for more participation has led to accepting them in many organizations, boards and committees, and even within the groups of decision-makers.

During the reform movement, Iranian feminists saw gender as an exclusionary construct shaping the substance, development, sustenance and outcome of the reform movement. As far as Iran's reform movement participants were not dichotomized as leaders or followers, activist women did not have to discuss the leadership issue from a gender perspective. This characteristic postponed the suppression of the movement in the short run; there was no concentrated leadership to be got rid of in a short period of time. The coercion machine of Iranian authoritarians and totalitarians had difficulty with locating a special group of Iranian activists as the core of this movement.

The participation of Iranian feminists in the reform movement opened a couple of windows to women's activism in Iran. These windows were not opened by the pressure of external forces, such as foreign states or international organizations, but by the pressure of internal forces, mostly women. The internal pressures worked mostly through non-governmental channels. Iranian women, because of their gender, were often channeled away from formal governmental positions and confined to the informal level of leadership. Obstacles facing the reform movement have shown Iranian women that ideological and ethnic subjection are influenced by and influence gender oppression.

Women's activism after the suppression of the Marxist and non-religious women's movement in the 1980s and before the beginning of reform movement was isolated, disorganized and mostly dependent on governmental institutions, as well as having a limited perspective. Women who participated in the reform movement found the power to organize themselves, build their own independent institutions, use their own power to lobby and claim their share in social power. They learned to negotiate on the basis of their resources and power in elections and other political campaigns. They also began to study the foundations of civil society and democracy.

The curriculum of women's study has moved further away from the family framework of 1980s and extended to the polity and civil society. What are still ignored in Iranian women studies are: (1) the historicity of gender explored at all levels of analysis; (2) the relation of bodies to the society through social structures, personalities and politics; (3) comparative studies about the similarities and differences between the Iranian women's movement and women's movements in societies in a similar social and political situation; and (4) causal and structural analysis of institutionalized discrimination and disadvantage.

Scholars and intellectuals have begun to criticize Iranian feminism. This can help activist women to engage in public debates about the goals and issues of the women's movement. Before the beginning of the reform movement, there was a silence about feminist ideology and the movement based on it in the mainstream media. Iranian feminism was then criticized by different groups and by resorting to different ideas and concerns. These criticisms are founded on the following different concerns and subjects.

(a) Some of the reformers believed "men are equally oppressed" and excluded from leadership and public initiative by a rentier and clientalist state, despotic government and authoritarian political culture. In their point of view, a social system based on kinship relationships, a long history of "patron–subject" relationship between the state and individuals, the politicization of the judiciary and the judicial activism of the authoritarians, pusillanimous representatives, and troglodyte religious leaders work equally against men and women. They rejected the idea that "men in general are advantaged by current social structure" and think it a myth. These reformers saw men and women as subjects constructed by and subject to the cultural and historical discourses within which they must operate. They accept that there are some little gender differences, but they are ignorable compared to other differences based on class, kinship, ideology and power;

(b) The denial of intentional subject and agency that in other societies "misreads and works against the intellectual and political interests of women, minorities, postcolonial and other subaltern subjects" (Ortner 1996: 8). This denial includes men who are not true believers in the Islamic ideology of the Iranian state since the Revolution of 1979;
(c) The reformers inside the government, in their inner circles, criticized Iranian feminists for focusing on issues that were not central for the movement. In their belief, activist women were concentrating on ideals that could not be pursued in the preliminary stages of the movement, putting gender discrimination at the center, while—according to them—it was not the main cause of all grievances. They were also criticized bringing the most challenging ideas to the fore, while less challenging problems have not been addressed.

The feminists' answer to these criticisms from the male reformists was that every problem relating to women in Iranian society is necessarily challenging because it involves *shari'ah* and traditional laws; women demanded more participation and rights to upset authoritarian government; and gender discrimination is as important as other kinds of discrimination. They criticized the male-dominated society that powerful conservatives from opposing factions wanted strongly to retain.

The reformist-led sixth parliament, elected in 2000, passed many Iranian feminists' drafts that were directed to vindicating women's rights and their status, all of them vetoed by the Guardian Council, which represents the interests and concerns of traditionalist and authoritarian clerics. As an example, Iranian feminists hailed a bill passed by the sixth parliament giving divorced mothers the same custody rights over boys as girls. This bill was a small step forward in removing existing discrimination against women. Iranian feminists have been trying to modify discriminatory laws, using the opinions of the more enlightened Islamic scholars. If approved by the Guardian Council, a conservative body that vets legislation, the bill would have granted women custody of both boys and girls until they reach the age of seven (instead of two for boys), when the court would decide on which parent should have custody.

Although some prominent religious scholars gave the bill their support, the Guardian Council rejected it. The council, dominated by orthodox and authoritarian Shi'i clerics, has in the past vetoed parliament's more progressive rulings on the grounds they were un-Islamic and unconstitutional. The council appointed by Khamenei added "against the decrees of the leader," "confronting the routines of appointed bodies" and "directed

toward the weakness of the appointed bodies" to the list of reasons for rejecting progressive bills, while these excuses could not legally lead to rejection of a bill. Any approval of these kinds of bill represents a great victory for Iranian feminists. We cannot forget that family law—including child custody—is only a small part of the tremendous discrimination Iranian women are facing.

New Islamic and secular feminists have joined forces because their shared experience has closed the gap between religious women who have a plural and democratic reading of Islam and supported the Islamic system in its establishing years, and secular women who opposed it. The ideas of civil society and civil rights for believers and non-believers are mostly methods for vindicating their rights, although the authoritarian camp presents these ideas as imported and hence as useless or dangerous.

The reform movement has helped the women's movement articulate a special political vision that is responsive to the political opportunities and perspectives of Iranian society. Institutional, societal and civilizational forms of sexism and androcentrism that have exerted the most powerful effects on women's and men's lives have been reinterpreted within the framework of this political vision.

5.4 The Reform Movement as Colored by Feminism

Iranian women have made a number of achievements during the reform movement. Some Muslim-Iranian women from different political factions and with different political agendas reinterpreted Islamic ideology to offer a female-friendly reading of theology and *shari'ah* law. Their discourse has emphasized the weaknesses of the male domination ideology. Women's issues gained a new significance and could no longer be ignored by politicians.

Although Islamic *shari'ah* does not prevent women from being leader of prayers for women, women could not traditionally and officially follow other women in their prayers. The employment of women as leaders of congregation prayers and as heads of other women during prayers held in schools constitutes a major development. The change in religious practice is a victory for the women's movements in Iran, where the traditional male privileges in politics and in the clergy are being challenged.

These are some of the developments in reform movement colored by feminist ideas and concerns:

(a) Hundreds of books about women's and feminist issues are published, including radical feminist books and biographies. Before the beginning of the movement, hundreds of books were on the black list of the Ministry of Culture because the censorship office readers considered those works corruptive and immoral. The re-interpretation movement has many voices in public sphere. The reformist groups who are questioning *shari'ah* and its compatibility with the everyday life of Iranians try to present new and different readings of Islam and *shari'ah*.

Muslims have never criticized the practices of historical Islam, nor has any Muslim community provided a safe environment where such re-thinking and reconstructing of Islamic believes and practices can be developed. Historically, all such movements have either been crushed or resulted in new religions with a similar level of intolerance and lack of adjustability compared to others such as Isma'ili and Baha'i. Iranian religious intellectuals, whose ideas are the ideological hardcore of the reform movement, have been re-reading Islamic doctrines and commands by resort to epistemological theories, and their ideas have been expanding even to seminaries and the traditional circles of mullahs.

Magazines such as *Kian* (published by male reformers) and *Zanan* (published by female reformers) have systematically criticized the legal code and formal interpretations of Islam and *shari'ah*. *Kian* was closed in 2001 by the judiciary. *Zanan* writers have always argued that gender equality may be considered Islamic; in their view, religious literature is misread and misappropriated by a misogynist-oriented male authority.

(b) Iran's Expediency Council approved a law to increase the age at which girls can legally get married to 13 from nine and for boys to 15 from 14.[34] Iran's Expediency Council ruling says girls below the age of 13 and boys younger than 15 need their parents' permission and the approval of a religious court to marry.

(c) A total of 297 women were elected to city and some 484 women to rural councils in municipality council elections held in 1999. In 56 cities, women topped the list of elected councilors in terms of votes received, and in another 58, they came second. All governments before the Khatami administration refused to hold municipality council elections while the law concerning the election was passed in 1980.

(d) During the first two years of the Khatami administration, nearly 1000 women rose to executive positions or retained their executive posts. Three women were appointed as presidential advisors, 16 women as advisors to ministers, 105 women as directors general or deputy directors in two-thirds of ministries, one woman as vice president and another as the deputy minister of guidance and Islamic culture. The debate about the absence of women in top-level posts has always been part of the female MPs' agenda.[35]

(e) The Iranian cabinet decided that the minimum wage for female state employees would be the same as that for male state employees.[36] Although the private sector does not usually follow these policies, this decision will increase the demand of women who work in the private sector for more equality-directed policies (Moghadam 1988).

(f) The number of women-run non-governmental organizations had growth of 320% between 1997 and 2000. In the same period, the number of women's professional training centers increased from 41 to 206.[37]

(g) Women have been successful in changing some of the unfair family laws by lobbying through their few representatives in the parliament. However, the promised equality of the revolutionary era only went so far as the limited perspective and reading of *shari'ah* allowed. In spite of rigid Islamic and ideological dress requirements for women, especially for women related to clerics and high-ranking officials and women in governmental offices, some female reformist members of parliament refused to be shrouded in *chādor* and schoolgirls were given the option of wearing Islamic regime dress in several colors in 2000.

(h) In spite of institutionalized oppression, women-run non-governmental organizations have been active in changing the social conditions. Sometimes, the official policies on women have wavered where restrictions were located on fault-lines. Pressure by women's non-governmental organizations on government has pushed it to re-adjust some discriminatory decisions, such as the abrogation of the pre-revolutionary Family Protection Act. The level of gender discrimination and segregation enforced completely varies with the locale, women's political power in the region and whether women's voices can be heard in those realms of restriction (Moghissi 1996; Milani 1992).

Iranian women are rarely given credit for their success in the West, including their candidacies in municipality, parliamentary and presidential elections, which they achieved thanks to their courage in demanding an end to discriminatory treatment in the 1980s and 1990s. During elections in 1990s, Iranian women voted en masse for candidates with the most liberal views on women, young people and children's issues. Discussions about women's participation in party politics and occupying governmental positions as an alternative to mass participation in demonstrations confirming governmental policies emerged before the election of the fifth parliament. During the national municipal elections in 1998, a considerable number of women, in small villages as well as big cities, stood for election—many successfully. Moreover, like many Middle Eastern countries, Iranian women's education levels are rising at a much faster rate than men's. The rate of literacy for women has been increasing since the 1980s.

How did these achievements come about? These developments can be explained in three different ways: (1) the reformers needed the vote of women and by responding to—and on some occasions fulfilling their demands—they actually increased the reformers' vote share; (2) women after 1997 had a clear voice in politics and could lobby for their causes in decision-making; and (3) women's non-governmental organizations and their representatives in the parliament and municipality councils pursued their objectives in the process of decision-making. They had also some members in high-ranking political factions that helped them negotiate and mobilize their resources, alongside other groups.

Women run many public and private institutions, yet they have had to defer to the decision-making authority of the exclusively male leadership group. Reformist male activists and leaders had the last say, but they needed women's vote and responded to women's demands as far as they did not contradict the hardcore of Islamic ideology. In this framework, a lot of women's demands have come to the front because they did not necessarily contradict with *shari'ah*.

What did women demand in this movement? In spite of the developments mentioned, there was still a big gap between men and women.[38] Iranian women fought for more choices and less pressure on women to stay out of public and public policies. They wanted to be in high-ranking administrative, legislative and judicial positions; in 2000, 97% of high-ranking positions have been in the hands of men (Shādi Talab 2002: 167). They wanted to put an end to discrimination in workplaces and schools; they wanted to stop more sexual segregation; they asked for more dignity

in the family and society; they needed more legal protection against domestic violence, rape and other forms of violence against women[39]; and they wanted to stop brutal punishments against women, such as stoning and amputation. Iranian women have been successful in transferring those demands to the reformers' agenda.

Iran's reformist groups whose solidarity does not emerge from a shared cultural and/or ethnic experience emphasize plural identities in their grievances. The source of their solidarity comes from experiencing an authoritarian and autocratic political regime. Women's ideas on plurality have been echoed in the ways civil rights activists deal with different subjects and obstacles. Thus, women's identity has not been limiting and problematic, and differences based upon class and gender are considered.

To understand the influence of Iranian feminism on the reform movement, four questions must be answered. (1) Where does this indigenized ideology have its roots? (2) What are the sources of the non-violence strategy of the movement? (3) What are the origins and goals of the reform movement? (4) Why has Iranian feminism not been successful in gaining its fair share of power in what reformers achieved in Iranian politics after 1997?

Iranian feminism and the reform movement do not have their theoretical roots in Islamic tradition; they both took their ideas and models of struggle from the West and have entwined these with ideologies that have most affinity with them: socialism and pluralism. Women have colored this movement with their high rate of participation in elections and non-governmental organizations. The low presence of women in the polity and the low achievement of the movement have the same cause: the deep roots of patrimonialism in Iranian political culture and the underdevelopment of social and economic institutions.

What did Iranian women consider the fundamental changes that needed to be made in the framework of the reform movement? They wanted to see five fundamental changes happen: (1) the end of any legal discrimination against women; (2) an equal share in the high-ranking official positions of the executive, legislative and judiciary branches of power; (3) a higher employment rate for women as compared to the status quo; (4) public support for women who are discriminated against or mistreated; and (5) the end of censorship on artworks and printed materials that show or explain Iranian women's unfortunate conditions.

5.5 "A Nation Under Me": Khamenei's Fully Fledged Police State

Introducing Ahmadinejad as the president was the crucial step for Khamenei to close the game of dual sovereignty in the Islamic Republic. The rigged election of Ahmadinejad was the Islamic government's strong and persistent signal to its subjects that autonomous political activism would not be tolerated. As a result, any political action in the public sphere, especially on the streets, became highly risky; those venturing to participate in events not welcome to the government enmeshed themselves in a web of troubles. The only groups that dared violate restrictions on assembly and came out without prior license were loosely organized women's groups. It is ironic that in a male-dominated culture where men are labeled "women" for not being brave enough to stand for their agenda and speak out, only women were gathering in the streets to express their political dissent. Iranian women were motivating reformist men to follow them in street demonstrations.

In March 2007, in an unusually political protest in Tehran, fewer than 100 women defied a government ban on gathering without the Interior Ministry's permission and assembled in front of a court building to protest against the trial of five women activists who had participated in a rally in June 2006. Authorities broke up the demonstration of June 2006 for leading a campaign to gain more legal rights for women and arrested 70 people. Any activist who took action against the government's discriminatory and limiting policies was usually charged with endangering national security, agitating against the government and taking part in illegal actions.

The attendees of the March 2007 rally decried the policies of the Islamic government to punish women activists for speaking out on their views on discrimination against Iranian women. Many of them were beaten by police and 33 were detained. Most of the detainees were writers and first signatories of "One Million Signatures Campaign," which pursues changing the discriminatory laws against Iranian women. This campaign aims to break the impasse for legal reform by popular appeal to a government that claims to be the representative of the people, giving the hope to women that they can do anything together. No other Islamic nation in the male-dominated region of the Middle East has witnessed a movement solely pursued and led by women to vindicate women's rights.

Iranian women played a central role in the reform movement of 1997–2000, whose goal was to liberate society from mono-lifestyle and monolithic thinking that the ruling clerics have inflicted on it. Women in this movement, as opposed to the Islamic Revolution of 1979, played their role as women, not as a part of an unformed mass that could be manipulated by charismatic or traditional leaders.

Opposed to Islam as a set of canonical laws, an important element of identity and a set of myths (an ideology), Iranian reformist women looked at Islam as a source of spirituality and mysticism that had nothing to do with political authority, discrimination against different social groups and civilizational conflicts. They have tried to present an alternative reading of Islam that is consistent with democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

By arresting peaceful advocates of women's rights, the government demonstrated its intolerance for any civil action. Authorities commonly denied permission to stage any street events to dissident groups, and participants were routinely harassed by militia. On the other side, militia loyal to Khamenei did not need any permission to have rallies whenever and wherever it desired.

Given the thinking in the security- and military-based government of Ahmadinejad, the tough-handedness of Khamenei against any dissidence, and the threats of foreign powers' military attacks especially from the USA, the government had enough motivation and excuse to suppress any dissidence and to deny other voices. The state media usually called the dissidents "mercenaries" of the CIA and Western governments. Women were not exceptions.

Iranian women activist groups mainly consist of writers, editors, bloggers, poets, journalists, publishers and university students. As opposed to women who participated in the Islamic Revolution of 1979, the new generation of activist women has been careful where they focus their efforts. Instead of a policy of "wait and hope" or "blaming other reformists for defeats" adopted by most of the male reformists, Iranian reformist women have decided to take action against tyranny and discrimination. They know what they want and have begun to think about how they can achieve their goals.

Other ways of expressing dissent are also clogged. While individuals may still exercise some levels of verbal dissent and some blogs and news websites still pursue independent positions—though they have been increasingly filtered and prosecuted—legislation has been repeatedly amended to broaden the government's authority to ban political media outlets.

The relative permissiveness regarding verbal expression—though not to the level that could be construed as criticizing the leader, the Guardian Council, the president or other appointed bodies of government—may be explained by the fact that the remaining media freedom exists at the mercy of the government. The Islamic government has ensured that most media outlets that are not state-owned are controlled by owners who are loyal to Khamenei. If the government decides that certain outlets are dangerously influencing public opinion, it has the leverage to tamper with the editorial line or close the outlet. According to a report published by the Association for Defending Press Freedom on March 12, 2007, 20 newspapers and magazines were closed in 2006.

Due to the brutalities of the government in the 1980s and 1990s, the Iranian public remains largely apathetic and indifferent to infringements of its political rights and freedoms. When all democratic channels of public participation or opposition clogged and political parties pushed to obey instructions from Khamenei's office, some defiance from women and university students was bound to emerge. At its core, women's activist groups consist of people who take to the streets because there is no other option for them to express their ideas. Some of its radical younger members simply enjoy defying the authorities, even if they end up beaten or jailed.

These groups and their leaders are not popular and are unlikely to generate a mass following. Even if these groups do not pose a real danger to the ruling clerics, the homogenized government of Khamenei is not taking any chances. The government does not tolerate autonomous political activism and direct challenges to the authoritarian camp, no matter how marginal the challenger. Such actions have come to be regarded as illegitimate and are deemed disloyal to the state and Islamic ideology.

There has been no TV coverage of women's protests on state-controlled media; the governmental press attempted to discredit participants and portray them as hired troublemakers. The Iranian people are not supposed to hear a different political point of view on radio and television. Resorting to severe suppression, such as prosecuting protest leaders and imprisoning participants has moved Iran closer toward being a fully fledged police state. Given the thinking in the security- and military-based government of Ahmadinejad, the police state during his term flourished and appeared very strong. The threats of foreign powers' military attacks, especially from the USA, gives enough justification to the government to suppress any dissent and deny any other voices.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the participation of women in social activities in both reform and women's movements in Iran to fight against the sexism found in the lives of women who are subject to various forms of discrimination, abuse, domination, cruelty or exploitation. Different aspects of Iranian women's participation in intellectual endeavors, social movements, collective action and acts of protest have been analyzed.

Women in the reform movement of 1997, as opposed to the Iranian Revolution of 1979, played their role as women, not as a part of an unshaped mass that would be manipulated by charismatic or traditional leaders. This was done mostly before the victory of the Revolution. Right after that victory, some sections of the women population, especially public employees, understood that the clergy's goal was to subordinate them and reduce them to second-class citizens. In fact, during the International Women's Day Celebration in Tehran on March 8, 1979, women succeeded in forcing the regime to state that the *hejab* was not obligatory. However, Khomeini and his supporters ultimately changed course and repressed feminists. During the reform movement, the women activists, before any power grab or power-sharing, knew what they wanted and began to think about how they could achieve their goals.

Achievements of this movement for women are more opportunities available for the education of women and their work due to special programs for part-time employment that have been put in place, especially for women with younger children. There are also many reports that say the regulations enforcing "modest dress" for women have been relaxed. Despite repression, women still have some access to higher education, and some have been able to take on low-level and a few women high-level governmental positions. Iranian religious leaders have lifted a ban on women leading prayers and they are able to lead congregations of women worshippers. Iranian women still demand more opportunities and access to key jobs and positions.

An intermediate layer of leadership that is critical to the micromobilization of women in a social movement is missing in Iran's reform movement of 1997 onward. This layer provides a bridge between potential female leaders and those already predisposed to social activities and exposes existing social movement organizations (mostly civil society institutions) to potential adherents and constituents.

There are many areas in social processes that simultaneously keep changing over time. This multiplicity of areas of social processes has multiple effects. On the one hand, it establishes limits on any single one of those processes. On the other hand, the sheer multiplicity of processes provides a sense of alternatives, a sense that there are other ways of changing the way of life, even if those alternatives are not immediately available or not subjectively desirable. The optimistic side of the story is that these processes exist and always prevent closure.

Iranian women who want equality, respect, and freedom and are struggling against sanctioned violation of their rights cannot wait for men to grant them for free. They need to work on five areas: engagement in national, regional and global dialogues; asking for intellectual and political support; micro-mobilization; institutionalization of their concerns and deeds; and development of strategies of change.

Notes

1. *Kārnāmeh-ye Dowreh-ye Avval-e Majles-e Showrā-e Eslāmi* (Parliamentary Report, First Term), (Tehran: *Ravābet-e 'Omoumi-ye Majles-e Showrā-e Eslāmi*, 1985).
2. worldbank.org/sp/childlabor/MENAfiles/Chang.pdf (accessed 5 February 2007).
3. From the names in the middle school textbooks, 97.8% in history, 91.1% in theology, 88.1% in Persian language and 75.8% in social science belong to men. From the pictures of the textbooks, 58.6% are of males females' textbook for professional training and 95.8% are of males in males' textbook for professional training (*Jahān-e Eslām*, 21 November 1998).
4. Mohammad Reza Shah in an interview with Oriana Fallaci, jonge-khabar.com/news/articlencat.php?id=319&mode=d (accessed 5 February 2007).
5. All primary, middle and high schools in Iran are same-sex schools.
6. Banafsheh Sām-Geese, "Why Are Wives Abused," *Khordād*, 27 December 1998.
7. In some parts of the country, such as Khouzestan and Lorestan, raped women are murdered by their male family members (Kar 2000: 64).
8. Women have the right to divorce in some situations; regulations promulgated in 1984 substantially broadened the grounds on which a woman may seek a divorce. However, a husband is not required to cite a reason for divorcing his wife. Iranian courts have taken a long time to approve a divorce request from women who were abused or tortured by their husbands. In 1986, the Government issued a 12-point "contract" to serve as

a model for marriage and divorce, which limits the privileges accorded to men by custom and traditional interpretations of Islamic law. The model contract that is published in all marriage registration and can be signed by both sides also recognizes a divorced woman's right to a share in the property that couples acquire during their marriage and to increased alimony rights, plus the right to select the place of residence and work outside home. Women who remarry are forced to give up custody of children from earlier marriages to the child's father. The law allows for the granting of custody of minor children to the mother in certain divorce cases in which the father is proven unfit to care for the child.

9. A married woman must obtain the written consent of her husband before she may apply for passport and travel outside the country. A single woman should obtain her father's written consent for a passport application.
10. The law passed by the fifth parliament provides for the segregation of the sexes in medical care.
11. In 2001, only 2.98% of women had administrative positions in Iran. From all female employees, only 17% have occupied administrative positions in the country (Women's Participation Center located in the Presidential Office, emrooz.com, accessed 29 December 2002).
12. A motion to remove stoning from Iran's penal code was introduced to the sixth parliament but it had no chance of being supported by the Guardian Council, a watchdog constitutional body. When no legislation had been drafted in the parliament, the judiciary officials decided to stop stoning (Islamic Republic News Agency, 29 December 2002). There were ongoing talks with some EU envoys before declaring the decision. This shows that authoritarians in Iran are totally against democratic procedures, and not the subject matter. If this was passed by the parliament, the Guardian Council would veto it, but when ruling clerics decide to stop execution of God's law, there is no problem.
13. In provinces near the Caspian Sea where there is no scarcity of water, the family and social structure is totally different from that in other parts of the country.
14. badjens.com.
15. zanan.iran-emrooz.net.
16. iftribune.com.
17. womeniniran.net.
18. This is considered one of the pillars of Shi'i faith.
19. *Fātemeh Fātemeh Ast*, translated by Laleh Bakhtiar (Tehran: Shari'ati Foundation and Hamdami Publishers, 1980).
20. This is the position of all members of the conservative and authoritarian camp: roozonline.com/archives/2007/02/002026.php (accessed 4 February 2007).

21. Most of de Beauvoir's works are popular among Iranian feminists.
22. Race is not as important an issue for Iranian society as ideology, class, religion and ethnicity.
23. A rare example of considering women's strategies is Mehrangiz Kar's article on the development of this issue in post-revolutionary Iran (2001).
24. Michelle Rosaldo first made these points in her reflections on feminism in the late 1970s (1980).
25. In January 27, 2007, three activist women were arrested at the airport when they were boarding on a plane to go to India to present at an educational press workshop: news.gooya.com/politics/archives/2007/01/056880.php (accessed 4 February 2007).
26. To name a few, Fahimeh Rahimi, Shahrnoush Pārsipur, Simin Dāneshvar, Fereshteh Sāri, Ghazāleh Alizādeh, Shivā Arastou'i and Fattāneh Hāj Seyyed Javādi.
27. This is also true about female novelists who live abroad. To name a few, Azar Nafisi, Firoozeh Dumas and Tara Bahrāmpour.
28. The emergence of women's movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the United States is also linked historically and conceptually to abolitionist and civil rights activities (Spellman 1988: 11).
29. Iran census results of 1996.
30. roozonline.com/archives/2007/01/001911.php (accessed 4 February 2007).
31. Some instances of such legal changes are: (1) the Family Planning Act, which is also a response to the rapid pace of population growth in the first decade after the 1979 Revolution; (2) the formation of family guidance and assistance units attached to special family courts; (3) placing a marriage contract in the marriage certificates, giving this opportunity to men to share some of their powers in the family with their wives regarding divorce, residence and other responsibilities, rights and obligations; and (4) amendment to the custody law, according to which the mother may, under certain conditions, demand the right of custody of the children of divorced parents and actually receive the right. It is hard to claim that government did much to revise those articles and notes to existing laws.
32. Sixty-two percent of freshman students accepted in Iranian universities in 2001 were women (*Entekhab* Daily, 6 April 2002). Against the policy of the Ahmadinejad administration to increase male attendance by gender discrimination and quotas for men, this majority has not changed in 2000s.
33. bbc.co.uk/Persian, 30 December 2002.
34. *Nourouz*, 22 June 2002.
35. This debate reached a climax in June 2002, when the parliamentary Women's Faction asked the Minister of Science, Research, and Technology, Mustafā Mo'in, why he had not given any managerial posts to women.

This same issue caused controversy in June 2001, when women sought positions in President Khatami's second cabinet and as lawyer members of the Guardian Council. See "RFE/RL Iran Report," 29 June 2001.

36. According to a state television broadcast of October 16, 2002.
37. *Women's Newsletter* (*Nāmeh ye Zan*), No. 2–3, 2002.
38. The gender-related development index of United Nations Development Program's "Human Development Report of 2002" compares female and male life expectancies at birth (69.8–68.0), literacy rate (69.3–83.2) and estimated earned income ($2524–$9088) in Iran. Women hold only 3.4% of the seats in parliament, and women make up 9.4% of ministerial-level officials in government.
39. The police and doctors do not take violence against women seriously and do not report cases. No safe shelter or hotline has been provided for women who are the victims of violence. There is also no project designed to fight against domestic violence, spouse abuse and suicide.

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CHAPTER 6

The Iranian Reform Movement and the Iranian Reformist Press: Survival and Development

Four developments led to the rise of a reformist press in the 1990s. The first was the death of Khomeini, pushing the Islamic left into the political wildness. They could no longer lean on a non-elected power center and had to find their own place in the Iranian polity. Getting involved in the press was one of their ideas. They could easily get licenses due to their connections and backgrounds.

The second development was the end of the Iran–Iraq war and the public thirst to rebuild society. Iranians were aware that without information and knowledge, this would not be possible. In about five years, press circulation almost doubled.

The third development was the boom in advertisements due to development projects. The money coming from the advertisement industry helped tens of semi-independent publications to be launched and survive. The fourth was the openness of the Rafsanjani administration to letting non-combatant technocrats and intellectuals have a share of the public sphere. The known representatives of these groups were able to receive licenses to publish professional magazines. What made this possible was the 1985 press code that was drafted during the third Majles. The Islamic left, which was closer to the educated and student movement, had a majority in this term. The 1985 press code guaranteed the publication of a licensed press without censorship; only the editor-in-chief of each publication was responsible in law. This encouraged more writers to participate and more intellectuals and writers to give interviews and express their ideas.

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6.1 The Legitimacy Crisis

After the end of Khomeini's charismatic era, the legitimacy crisis of the Iranian authoritarian state brought about by the independent press in the public sphere compelled the leader of Islamic Republic to respond.[1] As the independent press showed, the leadership of Islamic Republic was in crisis in all three alleged aspects of legitimacy: legal, traditional and charismatic. This crisis was due to a mismatch between the social and cultural spheres, on one hand, and the political sphere, on the other. The independent press, by naming him only "the leader of the Islamic Republic", and not "the leader of the Islamic Revolution"[2] or "the Grand Ayatollah"[3] and everyday criticism of illegal acts by the political bodies under his control, undermined the different sources of his legitimacy, previously assigned to his predecessor, Khomeini.

Recourse to the rule of law by the independent and reformist press was another way of declaring the end of the charismatic era. After Khomeini, the other sources of traditional legitimacy that were under attack by the security system found a voice in the independent press. They began to reprint interviews and addresses by Husayn Ali Montazeri, one of the greatest experts in Islamic law and religious authorities in Iran. He was also the most popular candidate for the leadership among supports of the Revolution and was the formal successor-designate of Khomeini before 1986. Because Montazeri's criticism was directed at the leader of Islamic Republic, he has been under house arrest since 1998. Therefore, closing the independent press was a temporary solution to the legitimacy crisis.

The legitimacy crisis is reflected in the statements of the leader of Islamic Republic and the judicial authorities,[4] who accused the reformist and independent press of "continuing to publish articles against the bases of the luminous ordinances of Islam and the sacred beliefs of the noble people of Iran and the pillars of the sacred regime of the Islamic Republic."[5] Judiciary authorities announced that the newspapers had been closed in order to "prevent them from committing new offences, from affecting society's opinions and arousing concern among the people." The basis of Islamic rule and the pillar of the sacred regime, in an authoritarian/semi-sultanistic reading of Islam,[6] is hierocracy or religious sultanism (this can be termed *saltanat-e faqih* by referring to the political program of the ruling clerics).[7] The most important impact of the independent press on public opinion, from the ruling clerics' point of view, is a reflection of the delegitimization of the charismatic leadership and publicizing alternatives to traditional authority.

In the second half of the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s, the Islamic leadership lost most of its legitimacy among its true believers due to the end of a sacred war that was intended to export the Iranian Revolution to the land of the Shi'i holy shrines—Iraq—and due to the death of the charismatic leader after the violent dismissal of his successor-designate from the polity, and among laymen due to the economic corruption of an oligarchic administration and the non-participatory policies put in place during the presidency of Hashemi Rafsanjani. In this period, the ruled and the rulers were going in two different directions: the latter toward the Islamization of the public sphere and the former toward a non-Islamic (though not necessarily anti-Islamic) ideological ethos.

What the ruling clerics and their allies understand by Islamization is a list of policies and measures. The more important ones are authoritarian and totalitarian: the execution of all Islamic rules such as separating men and women in the public sphere; monopolizing electronic media; purging all ancient Iranian traditions from the media and the public; banning decorations, painting, making sculptures, composing and broadcasting popular music and making movies; and censoring all books before publication and all press before release. To consolidate authoritarian power, they were eager to suppress lifestyles other than the clerics', recruit ideologically for the governmental staff and emphasize personal asceticism with taboos on drinking, promiscuity, and luxury. At the same time, most governmental officials were increasing their wealth and getting their university degrees through recourse to power. They treated others as instruments rather than brothers or friends,[8] basked in luxury and ease and used every religious belief to increase the influence and authority of the government.

The non-Islamic ideological ethos of the ruled defines different configurations of character, patterns of emotion and sets of dispositions. The ruled under the Islamic Republic have experienced, though in private, different lifestyles under governmental attack, stuck to ornamentation, gone to parties, enjoyed Western art and other sensuous forms that distracted from ultimate objectives, and avoided religious places and ceremonies that are used by the government to increase its traditional legitimacy. The independent press represented the second set of feelings, concerns and attitudes beside the rulers' approach to these behaviors, and therefore was not tolerated by the leadership and institutions under their control.

By forbidding any amendments and discussions about the press law by the new parliament, the leader of the Islamic Republic made it clear that the independent press was delegitimizing him; he had to tackle the

consequences of the legitimacy crisis. He wrote, "If the enemies infiltrate our press, this will be a big danger to the country's security and the people's religious beliefs. I do not deem it right to keep silent … The present press law has succeeded to a point to prevent this big plague. The (proposed amended) bill is not legitimate, nor is it in the interests of the system and the revolution."[9] Answering those deputies who criticized the speech, the speaker said, "Our constitution has elements of the absolute rule of the clerical leader and you all know this and have approved this. We are all duty-bound to abide by it."[10] This happened after the leader's loyalists experienced failure in the parliamentary elections and the authoritarian camp felt that if the semi-independent press continued its function, they would lose their grip over other institutions of power to the reformist camp.

The April crackdown was not merely the reaction of the authoritarians to the victory of the reformists in the parliamentary elections of 2000. Although given the absence or weakness of political parties, trade unions and non-governmental organizations, the press had played a very important role, the main political role of the independent press was not to help reformers to win in parliamentary elections. The religious intellectuals who had new ideas about religious experience and the relationship between religion and state controlled most of the popular press that appeared after the presidential election in 1997. Some of them gave space to non-religious political activists, liberal journalists and writers to expand their readership. Religious intellectuals put most of their efforts into reaching the people through the press.

6.2 A Phoenix Out of the Ashes

The reformist press was the engine of the reform movement and was able to mobilize the urban population during elections. In the absence of national political parties and organized unions of writers and artists, it was also the hub for the organized action of intellectuals and political activists. This power made them fragile; the government felt that by banning the press most of the mass mobilization would be suppressed—it was partly right.

However, the banning of independent/reformist press in Iran could not end the life of this phenomenon, though it did slow its momentum. The phoenix of a reformist press has always come out of the ashes of attacks, trials and convictions. What are the reasons or causes for this eternal rebirth?

Social Discrepancies

State officials in Iran are representatives of two different attitudes and interests: the first are representatives of the less than 10% of population that follow an authoritarian reading of Islamic tradition and the clerics' way of life; the second are the representatives of more than 60% of the population who seek a more open society and less control by the "truth and virtue ministry."[11] As the results of recent elections show, the former group represents fewer and fewer people and has nothing to do with the popular will. The so-called "appointive" (*entesābi*) political bodies cannot mobilize the population and only use their military force and access to the judiciary and financial networks to stay in power. The latter group is more diverse and tolerant, but still does not allow different lifestyles in people's private lives. In this situation, in spite of the years immediately after the Revolution, these two groups cannot agree on suppressing people's lifestyles and their different approaches to life and the world of ideas.

In 1981, all the independent media was closed and this had no effect on closed political caste, but after 1997, closing any newspaper, even a local one, had some political cost for authoritarians. Authoritarians lost about 20% of their votes in only five years. They have always been willing to suppress reformers and their media, but they do not have enough power to control the means to do this in their entirety. Having this in mind, they have refused to close all reformist press bodies and there has always therefore been some free space for this phenomenon.

Democratic Powers

In Iran's political structure, both the president as the head of the executive and the legislature is directly and periodically elected. Although the power of these branches is strictly limited by the leader of the Islamic Republic and the institutions under his control, the reformist press can lean on these elected powers and survive; this applies especially to the press aligned with factions that have considerable power in these two branches of the government. The democratic approach that is consolidated in the civil society sector always opens the door if anti-civility rhetoric and authoritarian suppression allow internalized developments to take place. The Islamic government has taken this mission seriously to limit the collective actions of Iranians organized in civil society institutions and reduce individuals to isolated atoms.

Divided Polity

The relationship between two powerful political factions is not clearly defined and neither faction recognizes the other's share of power. This tension has led to a dysfunctionality of government in all areas of policy-making and control, even in the suppression of dissidents. Closing all doors in this loosely structured and fragile political sphere is structurally impossible.

The Press Law and the Courts

Instituted legal procedures give journalists and editors no recourse either to a proper defense or a fair trial, permit secret searches, eavesdropping, and detention without limit, and allow military forces to abduct prisoners, detain them indefinitely and decide unilaterally whether or not they are political or press prisoners. Nevertheless, press law facilitates the issuance of a press license for individuals other than true believers and loyal supporters of authoritarian ideology. There is also no legal prohibition by the executive power on supporting the press economically and politically.

The Uncontrollable Flow of Information

Authoritarians have had to confront four uncontrolled channels of information: video (mostly in the 1990s), Persian-speaking radios broadcasting from abroad, satellite TV channels and the Internet. They have used every instrument, policy and regulation to limit their control, but any measure has led to more popularity of these information channels. A government that does not have enough power to stop vast underground use of these channels of information cannot close all the doors to domestic media because they are related to different political forces through social networks.

A Diversity of Ideas

The basic idea of authoritarian Shi'i ideology is obedience to religious authority. Authoritarians hate everything that makes people disobedient, such as modern city pleasures, home entertainment, moral laxity, different lifestyles, legal separation between the private and public, religious pluralism, civil, constitutional and human rights, and cultural, social, economic and political development. These are the main features of official ideology

and allegedly have their roots in rediscovering the original, pure and true Islam. From this point of view, disobedience has its roots in corruption, impurity of heart, narcissism, atheism, agnosticism, apostasy, any kind of independent relationship with foreigners and the provision of services to them. They want people around the world to understand Iran as a monolith of authoritarian clerical rule; they also try to silence the various voices and currents of opinions in this society or make them irrelevant.

At the same time, there is another reading of religion that tries to rationalize it and manipulate it to fit to the modern world. This religious reformism is totally different from the revivalism of the 1970s that led to the Iranian Revolution; it is founded on religious pluralism, secularism (referring to a separation of religious and governmental institutions, not religion and the state), epistemological relativism (not theological or ethical), redefining rituals, legalism and the spiritual meaning of the world. This reformism is a world-view without organization, directed toward the future, instead of the past, as in revivalism, inspired by rationalism and heralded by a few liberal democrat intellectuals. Religious authoritarianism as a counter-movement for religious reformism is blocked by the religious bureaucracies of governmental institutions and does not have enough intellectual capacity to compete with religious reformism.

The reform movement has brought new ideas such as religious pluralism and tolerance to political society since 1997. Iranian-style religious authoritarianism did not have enough intellectual power to confront religious reformism. Therefore, it has no other response than to close all doors for religious reformism as the frontline, including the press, which is under the control of religious intellectuals. The diversity of ideas, especially in religious reformist thought—scriptural, egalitarian, puritan, phenomenological, separatist (religion and philosophy, religion and politics) and hermeneutical—and the overlapping circles of their influence make it impossible to crack down on all the channels in which these ideas interact.

The Reformist Character

The authoritarian faction always analyzes the news based on conspiracy theories. They are skeptical about every disagreement, criticism and opposition. During four decades of charging critics, whether pluralists or reformists, with getting instructions and taking money from abroad, they have not found any evidence to prove these claims about political activists and intellectuals. All long-term solitary confinements and threats before

and during the investigations have not been successful in extracting confessions as evidence for these accusations. Most Iranian political activists, including journalists, are veterans of the revolutionary and war generation and their political activism is produced by the Iranian experience of revolution and war. No one in the country can believe that these people get their instructions from the USA or Israel.

The Iranian pluralist and pro-reformist press, which were always under attack, did not attempt to restructure national society in a fundamental way. They did not seek the destruction or fundamental transformation of political institutions. This approach reduced the volume of pressure in the short term. The Iranian independent press aimed at transforming, essentially fundamentally, the Iranian media's approach to the people's demands and how they get their information. They did not pursue a policy of changing the authoritarian political regime, but of changing the officials' point of view. They have been criticizing closed society, iron discipline, rigid hierarchies and unquestioning obedience, but not questioning the authority of the rulers or officials.

Social Networks

Social networks and interpersonal ties have had an important role in mobilization processes in Iran for four decades. There is no widespread political party in the country; instead of parties, there is a cluster of intertwined and overlapping networks of university students, intellectuals, book publishers, media editors, municipality members, members of parliament, governmental officials, non-profit organizations, local and ethnic groups and scholars. No one can sever the interrelation of these networks. Iran's reformist press works through these networks, which can reproduce its channels of communication when its formal media is closed.

No Permanent Social Status

In the 1980s, when most of the revolutionary forces were at war, no parochial entity was allowed a permanent status; even guilds and political organizations were weak or non-existent. In the 1990s, the economic base for powerful groups to build their permanent status was ready, but the social base was not. In this situation, the government could not close all windows for the propagation of different, even critical ideas. It still cannot do so. The independent press responded to increasing demand for social

involvement and social control. This led to more accountability of public institutions. While this demand was high, there was some supply by an independent press.

6.3 Seven Souls

There is a basic difference between the independent and the reformist press. In my view, an Iranian reformist press can be dependent or independent, and an Iranian independent press can be reformist or non-reformist. Iranian independent newspapers and magazines are not affiliated to the parties inside the government or the government itself and mostly have a non-authoritative ideology and policies. On the other side, some of the Iranian reformist newspapers are dependent on political factions that have a share in power and may have an authoritarian ideology; some of them are independent. After 2000, authoritarians could not continue to tolerate the independent press after losing three important elections—presidential (1997), municipal (1998) and parliamentary (2000)—but they had to tolerate a reformist press, because they had a majority in the parliament and presidential offices.[12]

Before April 2000, the difference between the independent and reformist press was unclear to the public, but there were many differences between them in managerial, organizational, editorial, communicational, thematic and communal aspects. These differences have been objectified in the Iranian press before and after this time. Before April 2000, most reformist press was semi-independent, even the press already affiliated to political factions inside the government, but when most of the reformist news outlets were closed, a reformist or dependent press emerged. What factors differentiate these two kinds of press? By looking at the developments of the Iranian non-authoritarian press, we can recognize the differences.

Managerial Change

The reform movement simply does not possess sufficient leverage or the hegemony within civil society necessary to take advantage of or create its own political opportunities. In this situation, authoritarian power has been reconsolidated by recourse to paramilitary and violent groups, such as Ansār-e Hezbollāh, that eschew any significant transformation of the state or society. This reconsolidation does not let any independent press released.[13] Within this framework, Iranian non-governmental organizations cannot have their own news outlets.

Organizational Change

Shifts in the organizational structure of the press has narrowed fields of attention, centralized decision-making in newsrooms and editorials, and rigidified the forms of presenting media materials. Since April 2000, there has been more limitations on editors and journalists. Iranian editors are usually summoned to the Attorney General's office for questioning and receiving instructions. They are not allowed to do investigative journalism especially on companies and institutions under the leader's office. For this reason, editors prefer to avoid controversial topics.

Editorial Change

Authoritarians are sensitive to liberalism, rationalism, humanism, individualism, democracy, feminism and secularism, especially if religion is interpreted on the basis of these ideas and ideologies. From their point of view, subjects (not citizens) have no mind and feeling apart from the will of *velayat-e faqih* (the rule of Islamic jurist) and their individual selves must be merged with the leader of the Islamic Republic. If people act according to the mentality of *vali-ye faqih* (jurist guardian), they can realize their true nature and attain the moral ideal. If they do not, they will fall into sin, decadence and corruption. Therefore, a reformist press cannot be open to liberal and non-religious journalists unless they put alias, fictitious or metaphorical names on their essays and reports. After April 2000, the number of these fictitious or alias names increased.

Communicational Change

The circulation of all newspapers increased on average from 1.2 million copies per day in 1997 to 3 million copies per day in 2000. The closing down of the semi-independent press in April 2000 was an abrupt development interrupting the smooth increase of the circulation in the 1990s, but the new reformist press was able to compensate for part of the decrease in two years. In spite of the closures, in the period 1997–2002, 1,170 press licenses were issued. In 2001, 340 licenses (14 for dailies) were issued.[14]

Thematic Change

After April 2000, investigative journalism was stopped. The most sensitive subject for authoritarians was the serial killing of intellectuals and political activists and the structure and functions of the appointive political bodies.

Under pressure of the press, the Ministry of Information was forced to admit that "rogue" elements from within the Information Ministry (Iran's security system) were responsible for the killings. Journalists who were writing about this subject were accused of having "disclosed confidential information" and were tried.[15] *Sobh-e Emruz* and *Khordād* were closed down, mainly because they published articles about "serial political murders" within Iran; most of their editors, reporters and columnists are currently in jail, under arrest or under investigation. On the basis of corroborated evidence, during the second decade of the Islamic Republic, more than 80 dissidents and intellectuals disappeared or were murdered at home or in the street, including two distinguished political dissidents and three famous writers.

Iranian religious authoritarianism is based on three fundamental ideas: (1) presupposing a cultural invasion of the West; (2) the political division of the Iranian people into intimates and strangers, "us" and "them" (strangers or "them" are deprived of political rights); and (3) the possibility of violating the rule of law for religious authorities. These ideas respectively justify a limitation on the free flow of information and communication, the negation of the political and cultural rights of people who are considered "strangers" and non-accountability of governmental officials. The manifesto of independent journalists who were working for *Jāme'eh*, *Toos*, *Neshāt* and *Asr-e Āzādegn*, which all closed one after another, criticized these ideas. This group could not publish other newspapers after April 2000. Critical and investigative journalism, which focused on the main ideas of authoritarianism, was completely laid aside.

One of the main issues of the independent press in the 1990s was the publication of discussions about acts of repression, frustrations, grievances, stresses and resulting pathologies that flowed from the Islamization of public life. These discussions were stopped after April 2000. The reformist press could not release reports or essays about the paranoid insistence on systematizing reality into ideologized order, a neurotic repression of sexuality, the obsessive-compulsive precision of scheduling the Islamic curriculum of schools, or the neurotic or psychotic syndromes of exertion of authoritarian Islamic ideology.

This press reflected the consequences of non-participatory policies, the limitations on the free flow of information and economic corruption, the interaction of underground and formal cultures, social and political holes, legal loopholes, and demands for civil, constitutional and human rights. The new wave of reformist press is limited only by challenges among political factions and does not consciously touch on sensitive subjects—subjects that could be used by prosecutors for press trials.

The reformist press, after April 2000, behaves as if it has accepted the supremacy of the high-ranking clerics and the existing chaotic semi-legal order. There are only limited discussions on a series of subject matter such as the ambiguities of constitutional articles, the roles, duties, responsibilities and functions of political bodies, especially appointive ones and the government's political strategies and programs. People who dared talk about foreign policies and different readings of religious texts had to pay a price. This kind of press never criticizes the trends or events of the first decade of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Communal Change

The authoritarians expect the print media to be an isolated phenomenon without a social base that can easily be closed or put on trial. Any membership of a community or independent group is considered hazardous for them. The reformist press that was able to get a license and continue work after April 2000 is published by groups who are in some way inside the government and have a share of power: for example, *Nowrooz* and *Aftab-e Yazd* belong to the Mosharekat Front and the Combatant Clerics Assembly of Tehran, respectively. Most of these groups' members are members of parliament or governmental officials,[16] while the independent press before April 2000 had more of a connection with independent groups.

6.4 The Khatami Administration's Divorce from the Press

How did President Khatami and the members of his cabinet manage to keep reporters at a distance? How did that relationship affect the public? Iranian presidents do not complain about the press; they just do not answer their questions. However, Iranian officials love the foreign press and answer their questions, if they see these as appropriate. Some of them try to intimidate the press and some try to buy them. Ahmadinejad did both.

The Khatami administration was more open to the press when compared to the Rafsanjani administration. All Iranian officials reject an assumption embraced by most reporters that they are neutral and represent the public interest. Rather, they see the press as another special interest. Khamenei runs his office like the head of a tribe and demands loyalty and obedience. This is a cohesive leader's office (*bait*) staff, dominated by people whose first loyalty is to the unaccountable leader, who is above the

law. In fact, during Khamenei's reign, talking to the press off the record is generally frowned upon and is equated with leaking, which is a deadly sin in the leader's office. The staff members of the leader's office are not smart enough to leak manufactured news to advance the leader's agenda.

The members of the leader's office and appointed bodies of government do not complain about the Iranian press because the reporters are too liberal and too biased. They complain that the reformist journalists are on the payroll of foreign powers. Unfortunately, there are no press surveys in a scientific term than many conservative critics say they are. While some of the appointed officials think there is a liberal bias in the press, the reporters do not believe this is particularly important. The reformist press is critical of every appointed or elected official, not just the authoritarians.

The members of Khamenei's family never speak off the record to reporters. Someone in such a position in Iran does not have any obligation to be available, because s/he is not a family member of an elected leader who has to be accountable to the public and media. In a non-democratic system, as in Iran, questioning of the leader is not supposed to come from the press, usually in the form of press conferences. Khamenei has never held solo press conferences, considering himself as someone who is not elected by the people and is not required to answer their questions. He only gives advice and receives it. Khatami has only held fewer than ten solo press conferences in more than six years of presidency, which is less than President Bush, who held 11 in his first three years. This is fewer than almost any modern President of the United States. George Bush held 71 and Bill Clinton 38 in their first three years of presidency. Khatami has named his administration "the accountable administration," but the bulk of his administrations' answers come from the handful of questions allowed a couple of times in a year, and from joint press conferences, where the Iranian president receives only one-quarter the number of questions and no follow-up questions are permitted.

Presidential reporters used to see themselves in an adversarial relationship with Khatami and every other administration, even though they may have voted for them. It is clear that the press did not scrutinize the Khatami administration's policies as they should have done. The authoritarian press—most prominently *Kayhan* and *Resālat*—did not criticize Khatami's

policies based on a policy-orientation approach. They did criticize reformists based on security issues and called them a threat to national security.

The reformist press treated dissent toward Khatami in the reformist camp as radicalism. The leader's office also tried to be extremely proactive and generate its own message. It has a say on anything published about Khamenei in the press; if anyone breaches its unspoken rules, s/he will face court trials. This office has been successful on any issue it wants to have controlled.

Khamenei was very successful in selling despair to the Iranian public during first term of the Khatami administration. Politicians inside and outside the Khatami administration had enough reason to fear the brutality of Khamenei because they had seen it in serial killings of intellectuals and political activists, the attacking of Tehran University dorms, and the torture of anybody who has been active in criticizing the appointed bodies or who has been arrested by the judiciary.

The Khatami administration did two things that the press could have probed more deeply. First, it adopted the budgeting obedience scenario, leaving the budgets requested by the appointed bodies untouched. The budgets of appointed bodies such as the Guardian Council, the judiciary and a totally state-run radio and TV have been repeatedly increased so that they are now ten times greater than they used to be. That is a cautious posture often adopted by reformers in the executive branch in order to decrease the pressure of appointed bodies on them. When reporters do not carefully inspect and question the evidence, or when they ignore dissenting opinions and so-called facts, they are not defensible. Khatami was clearly wrong in criticizing forerunner journalists who were then in prison.

The job of reporters is to report on what is really going on but they did not always do this during Khatami administration. Because of this, presidential correspondence is less important today, even when compared to that of the Rafsanjani administration. This is partly because the journalists are less interested in reporting on elected bodies, unless they are making statements against appointed bodies. It is also partly because ambitious reporters are turned off by the stenographic aspects of the editors beat added to permanent pressure of press court.

The way that political factions and their circles treat reporters and journalists most influence journalism. Authoritarians always make reporters worry about their lives and freedom. The regulatory goals of journalists' factional parents (party leaders who run the media and have influence on editorials) are protecting the interests of the faction and not pursuing the truth by investigative journalism. Most Iranian investigative journalists

are now in prison or live outside the country. Boosting circulation or ratings and profits does not matter for the factional parents of these newspapers because the money comes from the rents allocated by government to their protectorates. This reality leads news outlets to offer more "gotcha" stories, more infotainment and no reports about the economy or education in the country—more about Mahdavi Kia (a soccer player) and less about the Guardian Council.

In the leader's office, to which access is severely limited, those who talk get even more leverage. The difference between reformers and authoritarian officials is that when reformers see a room of reporters, they rush out to woo them by telling stories about the brutality of authoritarian faction, which are usually true, while authoritarians keep a distance from journalists who are not their own and are more disciplined about punishing miscreants. It takes a very open public sphere to stand up to a parental authority.

People in the authoritarian faction do not believe that the press has a checks and balances function. One of the reasons Iranians do not have freedom of speech, association, media and religion is that the founding fathers of the Islamic Republic did not understand the need for checks and balances—three coequal branches of government and, eventually, a Fourth Estate: the press. Iranians do not have a parliamentary system to make the executive power and the office of the leader accountable. As a result, the press, which should have access to public officials, should ask questions. It does not. All branches of government and the mechanisms of policy-making and execution can be run without answering to the media.

6.5 Conclusion

The obligatory developments of the reformist press, which mostly arise across the semi-independent to dependent media, reflect the authoritarians' concerns about the media in general and press more specifically. It is now clear what they cannot tolerate in media and public sphere:

(a) Reflecting the ideas of traditionally legitimate and popular alternatives to the leadership of the Islamic Republic;
(b) Criticizing the basic ideas of religious authoritarianism or a religious state;
(c) Criticizing the leader of the Islamic Republic and the appointed members of institutions under the control of the leader of the Islamic Republic;

(d) Bringing about other interpretations or readings of religious texts;
(e) Pursuing investigative journalism focused on security, police, judiciary, military, and all other institutions under the control of the leader of the Islamic Republic; or
(f) Focusing on ways of life or thinking other than the authoritarian clergy's.

These are red all lines for journalism in post-revolutionary Iran.

The banned semi-independent press had a great influence on the direction and appearance of the Iranian press. All authoritarian publications have been qualitatively influenced by the newspapers that they criticized: their numbers have increased; they put the names of the op-ed writers above the columns; there is a shift from office journalism to field journalism; colorful pages have been added to black and white pages (then extended from two pages to the whole newspaper) to make the papers more attractive; and new sections with different audiences in mind have been established.

The semi-independent press is looking for new audiences among women and young people by reporting national and international sporting events and arts from all over the world. They are using the same tactics that reformists used two decades ago and were blamed for the consequences by authoritarians. The authoritarians now allow more openness in the economic domain, but still insist on a closed and exclusive polity and a propaganda-oriented cultural sphere.

Notes

1. On April 20, 2000, the leader of Islamic Republic of Iran, Seyyed Ali Khamenei, ordered a mass attack on the press in a speech. He said, "There are 10 to 15 papers writing as if they are directed from one center undermining Islamic and revolutionary principles, insulting constitutional bodies and creating tension and discord in society. […] Unfortunately, the same enemy who wants to overthrow the [regime] has found a base in the country. […] Some of the press have become the base of the enemy." He announced that he would not tolerate this situation any longer (*Asr-e Āzādegān* Daily, April 21, 2000).
2. This title has a charismatic ring in post-revolutionary Iran. Weber calls charismatic authority "revolutionary in the sense of not being bound to the existing order" (*From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, tr. by H.H. Gerth & C. Wright Mills, London: Routledge, 1991, p. 296).

3. This title has a ring of traditional authority between traditional Shi'i.
4. He said in a speech that his authority was indisputable, apparently rejecting criticism from reformists who said he is not above the law (persianoutpost.com, January 26, 2000).
5. *Iran Daily*, April 27, 2000.
6. Iran's political regime in the second decade after the Revolution was a mixture of authoritarianism and sultanism, while it was authoritarian/semi-totalitarian in the first decade. If we consider leadership (a leader exercises power within formally ill-defined norms) and level of plurality (limited, non-responsible pluralism), its prevailing face resembles authoritarian regimes; if we consider its ideology (highly arbitrary manipulation of symbols and no guiding ideology) and level of mobilization (low but occasional manipulative mobilization of a ceremonial type by coercive or clientalistic methods without permanent organization and periodic mobilization of para-state groups which employ violence against groups targeted by sultan or *vali-ye faqih*), it resembles sultanistic regimes. In the first decade, its ideology (the guiding ideology that was supposed to articulate a reachable utopia) and levels of plurality (no significant economic, social or political pluralism) and mobilization (extensive mobilization into a vast array of regime-created obligatory organizations) were similar to totalitarian regimes and its leadership (a leader exercises power within formally ill-defined norms) was similar to authoritarian regimes (for types of political regime, see Linz, Juan J. & Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, pp. 44–45).
7. Weber's *Economy and Society* presents sultanism as an extreme case of patrimonialism, a form of traditional legitimation of authority; see Chehabi, H.E. & Juan J. Linz (ed), *Sultanistic Regimes*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.
8. Religious brotherhood and sisterhood was the model for relationships among revolutionary people in the first decade after the Revolution.
9. Islamic Republic News Agency, August 6, 2000.
10. Ibid.
11. These percentages are reflected in the votes of different candidates in presidential, parliamentary and municipality elections in 1997–2000.
12. *Norouz* is published in spite of the verdict issued by press court jury (chosen by the authoritarians), while *Bonyān* was closed with no trial.
13. Of three main reformist dailies (*Norouz*, *Āftāb-e Yazd* and *Hayāt-e No*) that have been publishing after April 2000, one belongs to the Participation Party (*Jebheh ye Moshārekat*, the main group among the groups holding the majority in parliament), another is managed by the Assembly of Tehran's Combatant Clerics and the editor-in-chief of the third one is a member of

later group. All independent dailies that began to be published after April 2000 have been closed (*Bahār*, *Dowrān*, *Nousāzy*, *Mellat*, *Bonyān*, etc.).

14. *Āftāb e Yazd* Daily, February 14, 2002.
15. Akbar Ganji and Emaduddin Bāghi, two investigative journalists who helped expose the perpetrators of assassinations of Iranian intellectuals and political activists after the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979, were tried on charges of acting against the national security of the country and sentenced to long prison terms in 2000.
16. President Khatami is a member of the later group.

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CHAPTER 7

The Iranian Reform Movement and the Iranian Student Movement

7.1 Fighting for Different Goals

The Challenge

Iranian university students have been challenging the authoritarian Islamic regime for about four decades, in particular after the death of Khomeini in 1988. That is why all universities and colleges were closed for more than two years in the name of "cultural revolution" by the government. Thousands of university students were detained, imprisoned and killed, and thousands were expelled from the universities in the first three years of the Islamic Republic.

The judiciary, the security forces of the Islamic Republic Guards Corp, the Intelligence Ministry and the police detained most of the leading figures of the pro-reform student movement. Iranian students had a great role in the rise of Khatami as a reformist president. Heightening the struggle between authoritarians and reformists, the ruling clerics always accused Iranian students of plotting to overthrow the Islamic regime, being on the payroll of the USA and consequently detained and deprived them of their basic political and human rights.

The attack on a student dormitory in Tehran University in July 1999 sparked six days of demonstrations and rioting. During riots on July 9, 1999, thousands of students were whipped, tear gassed and detained.[1] Larger numbers mobilized at rallies and street barricades. Many students were injured and several others arrested as pro-reform students clashed

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with militant hardliners in the Iranian city of Khorram Ābād in 2001.[2] The authoritarian camp did not let the reformist students have their convention in the city. The central office of the Unity Consolidation Bureau in Tehran was sealed after police raided the building and detained many reformist student leaders in February 2001.[3] Iranian students protested against the death sentence imposed on a reformist scholar found guilty of apostasy in November 2002.[4] The student demonstrations that started in Tehran on June 10, 2003 spread across Iran and continued for 10 days.[5] Calls against regime heads and in support of democracy and regime change were voiced during the demonstrations, as were demands for the resignation of Iranian President Mohammad Khatami.

The reaction of the authoritarian regime was to try to contain the students in every event while at the same time restricting the domestic and foreign media's access to them. The forces of the Basij (the paramilitary militia loyal to the leader) and the Ansār-e Hezbollah (a violent organization loyal to the totalitarian faction of the establishment), who have always attacked the students in their demonstrations, meetings, rallies and gatherings, burst into student dormitories in different campuses (Tehran University, Tabriz University, 'Allāmeh Tabātabā'i University) and attacked students in their beds.

The policy of the judiciary, with the help of the secret police of Islamic Republic Guards Corp and the Intelligence Ministry, jailed hundreds and in some cases thousands of students, kidnapping their leaders in the streets to inflict fear, and arresting intellectuals who have influence upon university students and speak out against the authoritarian faction. The reformists have always expressed understanding for the student protests but have repeatedly called on the students to abide by the law or voice their arguments in subtler ways.[6]

As a result of despair and disappointment, a growing number of campus activists wanted to promote "civil disobedience" after 2000. That would include strikes at universities aimed at forcing a confrontation with the security and paramilitary or vigilante forces, something President Khatami tried to prevent. Except in very limited situations,[7] the reformist students did not try that strategy.

The Nature of the Student Movement

The Iranian student movement is characterized by its democratic leadership, rapid expansion and contraction, loose organization, geographical

concentration, and lack of strong commitment to the leadership. This movement has been an open, non-violent, heterogeneous (including nationalist, Islamist, Marxist and liberal) and loosely cohesive movement. The Iranian student movement is not merely concerned with an individual institution or a group of high-ranking officials; its agendas go beyond its members' concerns, and its issues are not directly relevant to students' campus lives. This is the reason why this movement does not arise spontaneously and does not have its membership spread out evenly on campuses all over the country.

When issues directly relevant to polity and society are the main concerns, Iranian students from many colleges and universities cooperate with one another. The Unity Consolidation Bureau was founded to promote this cooperation in 1979. Political disputes of a broader-than-educational significance have always been the central concern of Iranian activist students. This is the main reason for their cooperation with non-student organizations such as political parties and other civil society institutions.

Prevailing analyses of Iranian student politics focus upon non-institutionalized modes of political behavior and upon the socio-psychological attributes of the participants. This approach tends to ignore the importance of structural links between the political system and the universities, and between institutionalized and non-institutionalized student politics. The major forms in which institutionalized student politics appear in different nations are closely linked to the attributes of the political and educational systems of each nation. The major systematic linkages that determine these forms are government control over university structure and financing, and the recruitment to political careers through party sponsorship of aspiring university students.

The prevailing form of institutionalized student politics where both of these links are present is factional competition among political party branches. Where both are absent, university student government prevails. Where recruitment is low and government control is strong, national student unions predominate and, where the reverse condition exists, political party branches and clubs dominate.

The Dynamics of the Student Movement

A multi-factored model of social movement formation is advanced, emphasizing resources, organization and political opportunities, in addition to traditional discontent hypotheses. Recruitment and commitment

in protests organized by the Iranian student movement are best explained by analyzing group-level political processes such as consciousness-raising, collective empowerment, polarization and collective decision-making. Such processes increase protesters' political solidarity—their commitment to the cause and their belief in the non-institutional tactics that further that cause. Other frameworks, such as the rational choice and collective behavior approaches, are less adequate in accounting for recruitment and commitment in the Iranian student movement.

Rational choice perspectives neglect group processes by suggesting that decisions about whether to join a protest are based largely on isolated individual cost/benefit calculations. Iranian society is not at a sufficient stage of rationalization to educate its members to make rational decisions when they are young. The collective behavior view—that protests are spawned by confused and insecure individuals in situations of social unrest—cannot be reconciled with the fact that most protests in Iranian society originate among close-knit groups of politically committed activists using carefully planned strategies and tactics.

The existence of a massive student movement—embodying common attitudes, lifestyles and orientations toward religious and secular life—is widely related to the schisms in political society. A greater degree of functional interdependence among attitudes and opinions existed among Iranian university students during the reform movement due to the schism in the polity and competing readings of Islam within society. In fact, the pluralistic structure of attitudes among Iranian students in the post-charismatic era appears to be more approximate to that of the general population than to widespread contemporary assumptions on which "youth culture," "student movement" and "generation gap" hypotheses are based.

The main changes were a diminished traditional religious commitment, liberalization of beliefs, diminished religious behavior, more and earlier reported religious questioning during adolescence, and fewer designations of religious preference. With respect to religion and ideology, Iranian students changed more than did their parents at the same age. The lessening traditional religious commitment seems related to the decreasing politicization and increasing secularization of Iranian students from the early 1950s onwards.

How did political and religious socialization, social psychological orientations and class origins affect the likelihood that an individual would become involved in the student protests of the 1990s? I systematically examine the interrelationships between social class, gender,

social psychological orientations, and political and religious socialization to discern their effects on social movement participation. Socialization processes and social psychological dispositions are strongly linked to participation in the protests; social class spurs protest both directly and through its effects on these factors. We also find that gender differences in social movement participation are largely a function of socialization, social psychological differences and women's quotas in college attendance. To lower the rates of female college attendance, the Iranian government enforces these quotas. In just ten years, from 2007 to 2017, the percentage of female college attendance decreased from 60 to 45%.

Conventional accounts of protest cycles posit a demonstration effect, while successful protests incite other constituencies to activism. Immediately after the students' protest against Ahmadinejad's remarks in Amir Kabir University in December 2006, Shiraz University students protested against his Interior Minister, Mostafā Poor-Mohammadi.

An enduring organizational niche and political allies in power are necessary for protests to spread beyond single movements and create protest opportunities for other challengers.

The Outlook of the Student Movement

The movement's reformist outlook in the post-charismatic era can be explained by three structural conditions, all involving state–society relations. In comparison with administrations during earlier student movements, the government had a lesser capacity for repression in the 1990s. Iranian students did not tend to hide their real demands and goals behind safer and culturally more congenial forms of action. Second, Iran in the 1990s, compared to the 1980s, enjoyed comparatively stronger independent civil organizations. The movements were poorly organized, but the duality of the government did not allow it to suppress the movements easily. What determined the efficacy of these activities were the actors' intentions and less the perception of those who were observing the movements. The delegitimization of the state also helped the movements to be widely heard. During the 1990s, most Iranians saw that the government's legitimacy was decreasing because of demoralization and the embrace by the clerics of all aspects of power. Therefore, people were more receptive to critically charged activities of the movement.

Unlike in pre-revolutionary conditions, most of the students did not lose the integrative bonds that formerly attached them to their families and

communities. There are few foci for developing student subcultures and they have been in a state of transformation, like other strata of the society. The cultural style that has dominated the life of society has been that of middle class intellectuals and technocrats, absolutely not the clerics'.

Gradual radicalization and gradual de-Islamicization are found in post-war Iranian student movements. The greater power of the counter-clerical rule and the shortened distance between students and the mass are accompanied by more powerful student movements.

Controlling for the factors that predict participation in protests, we may explore the influence of student activism on: (1) politics; (2) status attainment; (3) religion; and (4) the family. Controlling for factors that predict protest participation, we find that the typical activists are significantly different from their non-activist counterparts. Specifically, former protesters hold more liberal political orientations and are more aligned with liberal parties and actions; select occupations in the "new class" are more educated, hold less traditional religious orientations and are less attached to religious organizations; they marry later and are less likely to have children.

7.2 Four Approaches to the Reform Movement

Historical Background

Iranian students have been struggling for democracy, justice and freedom for over half a century. Political activism has been a non-separable part of Iranian university campus life, though with ups and downs. After the successful overthrow by coup d'état of Dr. Mohammad Mossadeq's democratically elected government in Iran on August 18, 1953, three university students were shot dead by commandos in the Shah of Iran's army on December 7, 1954. At the time, student protests had flared up as a result of President Nixon's unpopular visit to Iran.

Fighting against imperialism was the main agenda of students—whether nationalist, Islamist or Marxist—in the 1960s and 1970s. This came to an end with the consolidation of the Islamic regime. This transformation was due to three developments: (1) the overthrow of the Pahlavi regime, which was working fully under the regional strategic regime of the USA and was an ally of the West; (2) the extensive use of conspiracy theories by the Islamic regime to suppress any opposition and of rhetoric seeking to link dissidents to foreign plots and discredit exiled opposition groups; and

the (3) monopolization of power in the hands of clerics, which revealed to the democratic forces of the country that the main political problem had been and still was despotism and not the intervention and hegemony of foreign powers.

The Shah's November 1978 assault on Tehran University was a turning point. On the first anniversary of the Tehran University assault, Islamist students stormed the US Embassy and took hostages to put pressure on the US administration to send the last Shah back to Iran. In hindsight, the act, apart from determining the premises of the Islamic Republic's foreign policy for the next four decades, was the main catalyst for the consolidation of the theocratic/authoritarian system and for the elimination of domestic opposition—that is, the left and nationalist forces.

After a two-year closure, justified by the so-called "cultural revolution," Iranian universities reopened in 1982, ushering in a new chapter in student politics. The main student body, the Unity Consolidation Bureau, which was set up in 1979, was a supra-organizational entity representing dozens of student Islamic associations and organizations all over the country. In spite of this office's critical role in purging universities of non-Islamist forces and its loyalty to Khomeini, it was never a rubber stamp for the interests and agendas of the ruling clerics in the universities and elsewhere. From the outset, it was a decentralized and became an autonomous body based on voluntaristic activities and membership. The council of the member groups was usually elected by the student members.

For about a decade between 1980 and 1989, Islamist students loyal to Khomeini were the only political forces in the universities who were licensed to have any say in public and to participate in the political process. These students were organized throughout the whole country under the name of the Unity Consolidation Bureau. Khomeini's death expedited the rise of rival Islamist student groups, all clients of the new leader, Khamenei, and the president, Rafsanjāni. The new groups totally ignored the democratic process and never represented university students, while councils of Islamic Students Associations, as members of the Unity Consolidation Bureau, were directly elected by the students, Islamist or non-Islamist.

The influence of the Unity Consolidation Bureau went beyond Iran's universities. Many of its founders and leaders played pivotal roles in the Islamic Republic's security and political apparatus. Some of them were elected as members of parliament; they were appointed to high-ranking positions, up to deputy minister, in the 1980s and 1990s.

The Unity Consolidation Bureau's decline began just after the "cultural revolution", which led to the purging of the universities and deprived activist Marxist and Islamic socialist students, who were not loyal to Khomeini, of a university education. The sidelining of the Islamic left by a coalition of developmentalist and statist authoritarians further intensified this decline. In the early 1990s, a number of state-created organizations, such as the Islamic Society of Students and Graduates (*Anjoman-e Eslāmi-ye Dāneshjouyān va Fāregh ut-Tahsilān*) and the Islamic Students Society (*Jāme'eh-ye Eslāmi-ye Dāneshjouyān*), arose, all clients of the Islamic authoritarians. The "Construction Era" (referring to ex-president Rafsanjāni's tenure), which came right after the years of Iran–Iraq war, and its high level of political closure and corruption, increased the level of anger and frustration, even among the members of the governmentally created student organizations.

The Reform Movement and Party Politics

The May 1997 election of President Mohammad Khatami and the beginning of the reformist offensive provided a massive boost to the student movement. Students who had to contend with eight years of relentless low-level political and cultural activities during the Rafsanjāni era used the opportunity to establish hundreds of student newspapers and open forums. They had to be involved in activities which the authoritarian camp was less sensitive to such as social justice oriented propaganda and religious ceremonies.

Due to its full, clear and active involvement in the political campaigns, the student movement is not comparable to a pressure group in this era. The universities were the strongholds of the reform movement, and the duality of the government allowed new ideas and actions to flourish.

The midnight attacks on Tehran University student dorms in July 9, 1999 were critical for a handful of students—mostly religious ones—to be disillusioned with regards to their total optimism toward the reform movement. This turning point had a critical effect on students' confrontation with the administration of President Khatami, which had their total support. After these horrific attacks, students gradually transferred from a party politics approach to a civil society one—they became active in articulating grievances, in political education and in organizing dissidents. These attacks were a reminder of the attacks of December 7, 1953, when the police attacked students at Tehran University.

The dreadful sequence of events and brutalities of Khamenei's loyalists during and after the attacks, such as kidnapping and torturing students in illegal prisons, had a long-standing effect on students' mindsets. The attacks,

repeated in two other universities, Tabriz University in the same year and ʻAllāmeh Tabātabāʼi University four years later, proved to students that they were not safe in their dorms even if they wanted to have a reform agenda. Hunger strikes and sit-ins did not help students stop kidnapping, torture and solitary confinements.

A Paradigm Shift

In the 1960s and 1970s, students usually rushed to the streets and faced government brutality. After street fighting during the consolidation of power by clerics and the bloodshed of the Iran–Iraq war, when the age of street politics was over, the university students played a major role in shaping the public's social and political opinion, this time with a non-violent approach. In this new era, students were among the leaders of the struggle for the rule of law, freedom of speech and democracy.

The Iranian students' nationwide movement in successive 1997, 1998 and 2000 presidential, municipality and parliamentary elections made civil liberties and constitutional rights for the nation as their first priority. This was a deeply contemplated policy adopted by the students. In a nation that has not experienced legitimate civil freedoms and civil rights, fighting against despotism became the main agenda, rather than fighting against the neo-colonialism and hegemonic tendencies that shaped the Iranian student movement before the Revolution. In this era, the commitment toward Islam as an ideology was almost over, at least in their literature and rhetoric.

During the party politics phase, student organizations tried to work in coalition with women's groups, intellectuals, lawyers, journalists and the nationalist religious groups. They pursued different plans and strategies based on a coalition of party politics. These strategies were mostly based on factional politics, non-violent campaigns and the rule of law, and were less focused on strengthening civil society institutions and non-governmental organizations. Their power resided in publicizing new ideas about the possibility of new and different readings of Islam, tradition and religious texts. The un-elected institutions also lacked the resources and the popular mandate to decisively halt the inexorable drive toward transparent and accountable governance in Iran.

Civil Society Activism

Disillusioned students, Khatami's major base of support in both the 1997 and 2001 presidential elections, could no longer stay on a party politics track when most of the routes to reform were closed, both legally and

practically. When, hindered by the judiciary, the military and the media, which was controlled by non-elected bodies of government, their calls for the release of political prisoners and for the end of police brutality, the suppression of dissent and vigilante justice went unanswered, the students revised their strategies and policies to adjust to the new demands of the reform movement. This led to a shift from party politics to civil society activism, at least among the liberal democrat sections of the movement.

The main public agendas for the student movement, based on the civil society approach, was to establish a student parliament, a body to foster democracy, and to call for a national referendum in 2004 to ask the people whether or not they still stood behind the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In this era, the unity among students was the most important inter-organizational concern. The "Student Parliament" and the Office for Fostering Democracy were ideas to end the student movement's disunity. The latter was a liberal democrat version of the Unity Consolidation Bureau and the former would have been all-inclusive and nationwide; both of them were relatively unsuccessful. There was also talk about civil disobedience as the next phase but this was not realized in action. The pressure of the government was so high that it made this shift particularly difficult.

About 50% of the Iranian population was under 30 years of age in the early 2000s. This section of the population had no experience of the Iranian Revolution and hence could not understand the necessities and the logic of the ideologized *shari'ah* and Islamism in the modern world and their implications. Party politics within the framework of this ideology for the student movement was not able to function for a long time. The previous generation of university students, even the religious ones, had no idea about *shari'ah*. They mostly understood the riots after the consolidation of power as part of the clerics' agenda to implement their ordinances. There was generally no sign of ambitions by students to overthrow the regime in the 1990s; the probable reasons for this were the regime's coercive and sometimes brutal actions, public apathy, an absence of organization and leadership among the activist students, and a lack of a vision of an alternative. This attitude changed significantly after the fraudulent elections of 2009.

After 2002 there was no longer a single student movement. The Unity Consolidation Bureau split into two wings in 2002. The majority 'Allameh wing wanted to withdraw from the mainstream party politics of the reform movement, while the smaller Shiraz wing preferred to move closer to the

authoritarian faction and support the leader while working with more conservative groups among the reformers. Developments in the Unity Consolidation Bureau are noteworthy because this is one of the country's biggest student organizations and because it played a key role in Khatami's 1997 election victory. Nevertheless, there are other organizations that have advocated more radical action against the regime. After repeatedly branching out among authoritarian-supported student groups, the Basij students (a branch of the paramilitary) and the Islamic Students Society (an affiliate of the Islamic Mo'talefeh or Coalition Party) were two arms of the authoritarian faction functioning in universities in the 2000s.

Despair and Passivism

The decisive break in the political process occurred in the February 2003 local council elections, during which reformers suffered their first electoral defeat since May 1997. The Unity Consolidation Bureau officially withdrew from the reformist front, the main reformist-coordinating forum to go back to its intellectually oriented activities.

After the attacks on university dorms in 1999 and the political failures of Khatami administration, the language in the student movement was one of despair. This was a good sign of the disappointment that was widespread among the majority of university students. Due to the bitterness of two bloody experiences in the near past—the Revolution and the Iran–Iraq war—the dangers of radicalization and widespread violence were very low.

The disturbances of June 2003 were reactions to the stalemate of the reform movement. The sluggish pace at which government reformers pushed for social change did not satisfy most of the students. Some students turned their outrage over increased tuition fees into a demonstration against the Iranian regime's restrictions on political and social freedoms; they also expressed their dissatisfaction with Iran's failing economy, in which unemployment among university graduates had reached nearly 40%. Another section of the students chose to disengage with politics, avoid government suppression and have fun.

Active students expressed their frustration with the failure of Iran's reform movement in Khatami's last public meeting with the students in December 2004. Disappointed students who had paid a heavy price for supporting Khatami heckled him during his speech in Tehran University and blamed him for the reform movement's failure.

There were other factors that were critical to decrease the level of student political activism. The age gap between the leaders of the Unity Consolidation Bureau and the average university student precluded the easy creation of a relationship. The intellectuals leading the students conceptually and philosophically ran out of intellectual energy and were not ready to produce new ideas to articulate suitable strategies and policies for the new situation. The level of organization in the movement was also low compared to the organizational instruments in the hands of authoritarians. The authoritarian success has been due to a combination of timidity and a lack of self-confidence and imagination on the part of the reformists.

Possibilities for a Civil Disobedience Approach

Iranian students, activist or non-activist, have become increasingly dissatisfied with economic stagnation, double-digit unemployment rates, political subjection, lack of civil rights and liberties and political accountability and transparency, and restrictions on social and cultural freedoms. This dissatisfaction lies with the youth of Iran, disillusioned by an Iranian Revolution they barely remember; in a country of about 66 million in 2004, 50% of Iran's population was under 26; in 2016, by which population had grown to 80 millions, 48% were under 30.[8] The recent evidence of passivism—for example, a non-participatory policy in the parliamentary election of 2004 and the presidential election of 2005—was an indication of mounting frustration. Although the participation slowly increased across the 2012, 2014 and 2016 elections, youth participation has not been significant.

The liberal democrat sections of the student movement have been explicitly distancing themselves from the leadership and agendas of the reform movement since 2001. The leadership of the country has been focused on the threat of foreign hegemony, which the reformists see as mostly an imagined danger. In their view, the imagined dangers were coming from the increasingly hollow perspectives of ruling clerics toward the West.

The Office of Unity Consolidation's increasing independence from political parties, and that of the broader student movement in general, will be helpful for articulating a civil disobedience strategy. While other approaches are still at work, civil disobedience will be the only choice for groups that insist on their rights and liberties in the framework of an increasingly totalitarian regime. Totalitarian policies will exert real pressures on reformists to adopt a bolder strategy vis-à-vis authoritarian and totalitarian policies.

7.3 Students' Politics in the Framework of the Iranian Reform Movement: A Discourse Analysis

Iranian university students had a long history of political campaigns in the second half of the twentieth century (Bāghi 2000; Karimiān 2002; Mohammadi 1999). Iranian student participation has been crucial in all social and political movements in Iran during this period. They fought against tyranny, despotism, authoritarianism, poverty and injustice inside and outside the country from the 1950s, when most of the modern universities were established in the country, to the 1990s, when universities became the bastions of the reform movement (Hajjāriān 1999).[9] In the second half of the 1990s most of the activist students, conservative or reformist, were pursuing the path of party politics in the framework of Islamic Republic of Iran's theocratic regime, although the majority were not formally affiliated with any political party.

Reformist students adopted a thoroughly contemplated policy when they chose civil liberties and constitutional rights for the nation under Iran's theocratic regime as the first priority of the nationwide Iranian reformist students' movement in the successive presidential, municipality and parliamentary elections of 1997, 1998 and 2000. Beginning with the election of President Khatami, Iranian reformist students saw an opportunity to reform the political system and make it more democratic, transparent and accountable. The reform movement agenda was democracy and promoting the rule of law through increasing the power of elected bodies and making the appointed governing bodies more accountable and transparent. Almost all laws passed by the sixth parliament to pursue this agenda were vetoed by the Guardian Council, which is charged with overseeing the implementation of the Constitution and Islamic jurisprudence.

Almost all independent newspapers and magazines that were established in this period were banned. The reformist students were harshly brutalized in attacks against Tehran and Tabriz University dorms in 1999. Even after the failure of the reform movement to pursue its agenda through the president's office and the parliament, university students, alongside women, workers and intellectuals, have been the most active and vocal group highlighting the deteriorating situation of the democratization process and human rights in Iran in the 2000s.[10]

Disillusioned reformist students could no longer stay on the party and factional politics track when they discovered that most of the routes to

reform were legally and practically closed, and they could no longer rely on the capacity of the country for reform, given its Constitution and political schism. The schism between two main political camps and the high degree of conflict between them lowered the pressure exerted by the security and disciplinary forces and let reformist students and other independent groups use the ideological challenges to justify spreading their own different ideas. Reformist political parties were running out of steam for promoting democracy and human rights and were busy capturing public positions.

After the 1999 attacks on the university dorms and the reformists' political failures, the spread of the language of political disengagement in the student movement was a telling sign of the despair and hopelessness felt by the majority of university students. Although party and factional politics still had their advocates among students who pursued a more realistic perspective, Iranian reformist students who were increasingly dissatisfied with the status quo left party politics to become more active in the arena of civil society. They were concerned about economic stagnation, the double-digit unemployment rate, political abuse, the lack of civil rights, liberties, political accountability and transparency, and restrictions on social and cultural freedoms.

As a result of the ideological and strategic schism among reformist students, the body most representative of the student movement in Iran, the Unity Consolidation Bureau, split into two branches, one for and the other against active political participation, especially in national elections. These branches were called the "Unity Consolidation Bureau, Shiraz Spectrum" and the "Unity Consolidation Bureau, 'Allāmeh Spectrum". The main cause of the split was the level of commitment to democracy promotion in the country. The 'Allāmeh Spectrum was more committed to democracy promotion and when the appointed bodies of government and the leader himself stood against democratic reform, the students in this spectrum did not see any reason for participation in national elections.

On the other side, the Shiraz Spectrum was more committed to the promotion of social justice, and gaining power was critical to pursuing its agenda. Although the 'Allāmeh Spectrum first advocated more involvement in civil society arenas, later, in reaction to tyranny and the violations of political and social rights, its members inclined toward promoting civil disobedience. It also broke into three different factions: Modern, National Democratic (*Democracy-khāh-e Melli*) and Enlightenment (*Rowshangari*).

Advocacy of passivism and ethical hedonism has also been popular among students who did not consider themselves believers in any religion and students who introduce themselves as secular. The size of each of these tendencies has varied over time. Some sections of the reformist camp have blamed this orientation for the rise of the military- and security-oriented politicians in the seventh parliament, elected in 2004, and the ninth presidential election in 2005. According to their argument, so-called passive students should be blamed for the rise of the ninth administration, due to their advocacy of boycotting the national elections.

Noticeable numbers of Iranians do not participate in national elections; the figures are more than 50% in the country as a whole,[11] and 77% in Tehran.[12] In this situation, the authoritarian camp, which has about 10 to 15% of the potential votes, wins the elections. Iranian students who advocate non-participation in national elections argue that due to the domination by authoritarians of the appointed bodies of government in Iran, even achieving some seats in the cabinet, parliament and municipality councils would not help democracy and human rights activists achieve their goals.

Socio-Political Processes and Schisms

The analysis of the transformation and shaping of these five discourses underscores five socio-political processes in contemporary Iranian society and its polity as the contexts of change and transformation. These processes are crucial to shaping the schisms and gaps among different political factions and student groups, and in some stages, the links and bridges among them. Modern Iranian modern culture and social organization have been changing under the pressure of the dynamics of these processes. Iranian political groups and political identities form and reform as a result of them.

The first process is the personalization of power in the hands of a jurist who is unaccountable, above the law and not liable to checks and balances enforced by the elected bodies. The experts assembly, by law, should oversee the leader but it does not or cannot perform this constitutional duty due to the disqualification process for candidates who observe the necessity of this duty. According to Article 111 of the Constitution, "whenever the Leader becomes incapable of fulfilling his constitutional duties, or loses one of the qualifications mentioned in Articles 5 and 109, or it becomes known that he did not possess some of the qualifications initially, he will be dismissed."

The authority of determination in this matter is vested in the experts specified in Article 108, while Article 99 limits this authority by handing over the power to disqualify those nominated for the Assembly to the Guardian Council. The six jurist members of this council are directly appointed by the leader and the other six members are appointed by the head of the judiciary, who is appointed by the leader. Based on Article 99, "the Guardian Council has the responsibility of supervising the elections of the Experts Assembly for Leadership, the President of the Republic, the Islamic Consultative Assembly, and the direct recourse to popular opinion and referenda."

The Iranian monarchy was highly personalized and many of its features have survived into the Islamic Republic. The most obvious change has been the presence of a cleric, rather than a king, at the top of the pyramid; this individual merely takes care of the self-serving governing elite. The most powerful cleric, the *vali-ye faqih* or guardian jurist, did not have monopolized power in the first years of the Islamic Republic of Iran, but this gradually grew to an absolute power during last years of Khomeini's rule and throughout the whole Khamenei era. The end of monarchy in Iran in 1979 was the beginning of this process of personalization of power by the clerics, which is personified in the guardian jurist.

This process has strengthened the appointed bodies of government and sidelined the elected ones, in contrast to the immediate years after the victory of the Revolution and during the Khatami administration. During his administration, the elected bodies were in the position to challenge the appointed ones. Due to the complex political structure of Iran, which is far from monolithic and has elected and appointed centers of power, this challenge was not an easy one. Iranian Shi'i clerics have successfully monopolized political power by presenting themselves as the only messengers and interpreters of God's rule in any age.[13] There are still some conflicts over benefits and political controls that all loyalists to the ruling clerics should have, while they have the same ideology and are all loyal to the establishment and the Constitution where it vests absolute power in clerics, the guardianship of the jurist and the leadership of Khamenei.

The second process is social differentiation, which has led to a powerful appeal for pluralism and toleration toward different lifestyles (*degarbāshi*) and ideas (*degarandishi*). The political groups in the polity, authoritarians and reformists are feeling the threat of losing their monopoly over the benefits and privileges of being in power. Increases in the literacy rate, urbanization and increased access to domestic and international media

have pushed this process through. The literacy rate increased from 20% in the 1960s to more than 60% in the 1990s.[14] The share of the population in urban areas increased from 20% in the 1960s to about 60% in the 1990s,[15] and 75% in 2016.[16]

The third process is the transformation of Shi'i authority from a pluralistic structure before the Iranian Revolution to an almost monopolistic one under the power of the ruling jurist. The political and social authority of *marāje' taqleed* (sources of emulation: Islamic jurists whom true believers follow with respect to religious behaviors) has been in decline and the sources who are able to freely teach and engage actively in society are rentiers of the government. Those who do not agree with the government are not able to freely teach and preach; they have thus lost their communication channels with the public. By funneling billions of dollars to Shi'i seminaries and oppressing dissident voices among the clerics through the use of the Special Court for Clerics, Khamenei has monopolized his religious authority. The Shi'i clerics have traded an open and non-hierarchical organization for absolute political power.

The Iranian Shi'i clergy's social and political authority structure before the Iranian Revolution of 1979 was founded on three principles: knowledge of the Islamic texts; the trust of their followers; and receipt of financial support from them. This structure led to a non-monopolized system of religious authority that allowed believers to follow different sources of emulation. This structure could help the religious authority keep its distance from despotic kings and pretend to be independent while cooperating with the government in some areas, such as suppressing communists and socialists. The ruling clergy worked hard to incorporate this organization into the government after the Revolution. There is no independent clerical institution left in Shi'i seminaries that does not receive funds from the government and has an independent decision-making process. Even the Qom Seminary Directing Council has a line in the governmental budget and has its board members appointed by the leader.[17]

The fourth process is the highly limited process of political competition, confined to the struggle for more access to state rents and subsidies, which even extended to President Ahmadinejad's homogeneous military- and security-based administration, unlike those under Prime Minister Husayn Mousavi. Only insiders can compete for these resources. Although Presidents Rafsanjāni and Khatami also distributed state rents and subsidies to a limited group of the political elite, they were more open to political competition. The political factions competed for access to financial resources and other lucrative privileges in a bulging economy with dizzying

figures of the order of hundreds of thousands of billions of rials (one US dollar was worth around 9000 rials in the 1990s). As an example, the Tehran municipality officials who took over from Ahmadinejad's staff when he left for the presidential office in 2005 spoke of three trillion rials apparently "spent" without proper documentation. The money, together with many other sums, must have gone into the loyalists' coffers and election expenses, the opposition charges imply.[18]

This process of limited political competition assigns individuals positions in the political division of labor as well as in the social structure. Sustained conflict is written into this system of competition; there is no regulation to fix the ruling class's status, which has been damaged by illegitimacy crises and corruption. The ruling clerics, who have become increasingly homogeneous during Khamenei's rule, have been trying to subordinate all other social strata by monopolizing access to oil revenues, the import of goods and the interpretation of Islam.[19] Reformist university students and intellectuals as the forerunners of the modern social strata have been resisting this distinctive mark of clerical authority.

The fifth process is Islamicization, whether *shari'ah*-oriented, populist, totalitarian or authoritarian. In the *shari'ah*-oriented Islamicization process, some sections of the government put all of their efforts into implementing the ordinances of Islam, as set out in canonical textbooks. In the popular Islamicization process, the populist elements of the government pick only those ordinances of Islam whose enforcement would be popular. In the totalitarian Islamicization process, Iranian people are made to accept one reading of Islam and copy one lifestyle—that of the clerics—in their private and public lives.

What has been important in the authoritarian Islamicization process is strengthening the power of the jurist who has absolute power in the country. Islamicization as the ideological aspect of totalitarianism relates to universities from four different aspects: the Islamicization of sciences, especially social sciences and humanities; the Islamicization of faculty and staff; the Islamicization of students; and the Islamicization of academic environment. The authoritarian and totalitarian factions have focused more on Iranian universities than any other institution with regard to this process. They have tried their best to Islamicize these institutions through political action based on various readings of Islamism.

Four social gaps have evolved out of these processes:

1. Increasing poverty on one side and wealth on the other, keeping the social justice discourse alive (caused by personalization of power and political competition);
2. Increasing tensions between secularists and Islamists, caused by social differentiation, Islamicization and the transformation of Shi'i authority;
3. Increasing cultural and social discrimination, leading to Islamic totalitarianism and a cry for zero-tolerance toward heterodoxy on the one side and a cry for tolerance on the other, differentiating pluralists and cultural monopolists, as caused by Islamicization and transformation of Shi'i authority; and
4. Political discrimination that motivates authoritarian and democratic factions to campaign for despotism and democratization, respectively, as caused by the personalization of power, limited political competition, transformation of Shi'i authority and Islamicization.

The activist students have grouped along the contours of these deep social and political fractures in the society. The articulation of these processes and schisms in the context of the challenges and failures of the Iranian reform movement after 1997 has shaped the characteristics and main discourses of the university students' body, which has loosely organized itself for political and social action.

Discourses

Iran offers a particularly interesting model for examining the role of the student movement in the context of greater political actions in society. Iranian university students' long tradition of political activism has built up a sizable and diverse activism in generation after generation. Their role has been crucial in spreading different ideologies and courses of action in the country. This movement is a clear representative of the overall political process in contemporary Iran and can be used to predict future political developments.

The close relationship between this movement with the most active sections of the women's and labor movements and intellectuals gives it this capacity to be the interlocutor of political activism in Iran.[20] The student movement has been the most vocal force against the absolute power of the jurist and his loyalists in the ninth administration since the Iranian Revolution.[21] The transformations in the student movement mirror some of the important changes that have taken place in the political discourse of Iranian political society and its polity (Fig. 7.1).

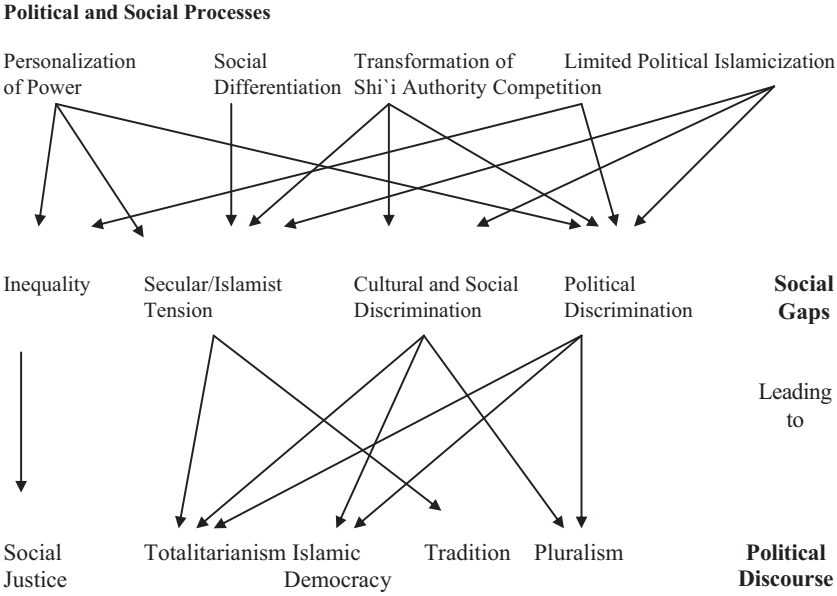

Fig. 7.1 Political discourses addressing social gaps caused by social and political processes

The long struggle against Pahlavi despotism (Matin-Asgari 2002) and later on against clerical autocracy, interaction with reference groups—clerics, intellectuals, university faculty members and scholars, and school teachers—and the fertile ground of universities for producing ideas and ideologies provided an opportunity for Iranian students to become deeply involved in the shaping and reshaping of different political discourses.[22] The negative attitudes of consecutive administrations toward political parties have weakened their stances and shifted the political focus to the universities. The political struggle went through a number of significant stages in the twentieth century and ended with the non-violent movement of the late 1990s. The Iranian student movement was concerned with national identity and independence, social justice, democratization, economic development, human and civil rights, the rule of law and pluralism in the twentieth century.

Affirmative action in favor of militia and paramilitary forces in the 1990s and 2000s to increase the number of Basij (militia loyal to the leader) in universities has led to the establishment of a group in Iranian

universities, Basij-e Dāneshjoo'i, which favors authoritarianism and totalitarianism, something that had no precedent in Iranian universities before the Iranian Revolution of 1979. The monopolization of power in the hands of the ruling clerics and their loyalists has pushed authoritarianism and totalitarianism onto the agenda of these groups of students. Unlike in other countries, including the USA, which have also had preferential university admission policies for war veterans, Basij students in Iranian universities have mostly been used to oppress and pacify other student groups.

Looking at the slogans, discussions and statements of different student groups, from the Unity Consolidation Bureau to the student organization branch of Basij, especially during national elections, we can find five main discourses after the suppression of the reform movement and its demise in 2000. These discourses reflect the overall discourses in the Iranian polity, with some modifications and deliberations by student movement leaders and activists.

Despite the differences in discourse and ideology, almost all of the student groups that have licenses to be active in the polity share an anti-West discourse. Students who do not share this discourse are not allowed to be formally active. Although Iran did not experience colonization, the Qājār and Pahlavi dynasties were completely under the influence of European and American powers, and the CIA-supported coup of 1953 that led to the overthrow of the Mosaddeq administration has had a long-lasting influence on the student body.

Patriotic and anti-domination discourse is also very strong, even among secular and dissident students. The anti-Western position is not only meant to keep the licensed student groups on the safe side, but also reflects the deep influence of the colonial era in the late nineteenth century and post-WWII USA in Iran and some other countries in the Middle East. Even one of the factions of the most open groups, Daftar-e Tahkim, 'Allāmeh Spectrum, could not accept any interactions with high-ranking American politicians.[23] Nevertheless, the authoritarian camp has always accused any dissident voice of being on the payroll of the CIA, Mossad or other Western agencies.[24]

Independence, even interpreted as having no relations with the USA and some European countries and ignoring the benefits of multi-lateral ties and alliances, is still a major concern of some sections of the student movement in Iran.[25] After two decades of extensive criticism of anti-imperialism and conspiracy theories, the remnants of the anti-imperialist discourse of the 1970s and 1980s still exist.

Despite some discussions and questions from a few liberal democratic students, licensed activist Iranian students from different groups in general identify themselves as Muslims and bring their religiosity into politics.[26] Otherwise, they would not be able to be active in the universities and in society. Almost all student groups have "Islamic" as a part of their official names. Other than Islamic identity and anti-West posture (mild or severe, against the West as a whole or American foreign policy, past colonialism or present imperialism), every issue bears the stamp of controversy.

Social justice and democracy discourses are more popular among Iranian university students, while tradition and absolute *velāyat* (guardianship) are pushed into the public discourse by resorting to governmental resources and the pressure of security and military forces (Table 7.1). The nationalist discourse was sidelined during the 1980s and 1990s but came back to the scene on the shoulder of democratic discourse; it is still not a part of the mainstream discourses. The nationalist discourse used

Table 7.1 Five main political discourses of the Iranian student movement

Discourse	*Student group*	*Party affiliation*	*Political camp/ideology*
Social justice	Dafter-e Tahkim, Shiraz	None	Authoritarian/ Islamo-socialism
Religious democracy	Daftar-eTahkim, 'Allāmeh (before 2001)	Moshārekat	Reformism/Islamism
	Daftar-e Tahkim, 'Allāmeh (enlightenment faction)[a] (since 2001)	None	None/Islamism
	Daftar-e Tahkim, 'Allāmeh (National Democratic Faction) (since 2001)	None	None/nationalism
Traditionalism	Jāme'eh-e Eslāmi Dāneshjooyān	Mo'talefeh	Authoritarianism/ economic liberalism + political authoritarianism
Totalitarianism	Basij-e Dāneshjoo'e	Ābādgarān/ Eesārgarān	Authoritarian/totalitarian militarism
Pluralism, democracy, human rights	Daftar-e Tahkim, 'Allāmeh (modern faction) (since 2001)	None	None/political liberalism

[a]isna.ir/Main/NewsView.aspx?ID=News-661921

the opportunity brought about by the tension between the former Islamic left and the Islamic right, now the reformist and authoritarian camps, to return to the public sphere. This tension decreased the pressure of security forces on the nationalist forces.

Between 1997 and 2005, political parties were reasonably influential in the student community, and students provided strong support for them during national elections. These parties used Iranian students as foot soldiers in political campaigns and elections that had both advantages and disadvantages for student activists. The hunger for political power in some sections of the student groups and the high possibility of being elected to public office for the student activists motivated Iranian reformist students to work with political parties that did not think about anything other than political power. This situation changed after the end of the reform movement.

Other than the social justice and anti-West discourses that are supported by the authoritarian camps and the voices that reflect these discourses in the universities, most student activists have denied any affiliation to political parties since 2000. The most powerful factions have refused to take sides in any election since 2001.[27] The students alleged to be in some way connected to the Basij militia (being on its payroll and/or having been pushed through the entrance exams thanks to the sizable quota reserved for veterans and other loyalists) tend to deny their putative affiliations, though they do seem to back the authoritarian camp in the national elections.

Even in the heyday of the reform movement, there were other trends in the students' movement than those loyal to the two important political camps of the authoritarians and the reformists. These trends had a critical approach to both camps, believing that the Islamic regime did not have the capacity for positive change and the political system as a whole had to be rejected by the students.

The democracy discourse of reformists was irrationally optimistic about the democratization process during the period 1997–2001. It was pursuing a very clear strategy: to use the maximum potential of the Constitution and the optimistic mood of the constituency to democratize the government. The failure of the reform movement changed the mood to one of pessimism. Some Iranian reformist students came to conclude that electoral democracy alone was very limited. They understood that while electoral processes are critical in setting the broader terms of discourse, they have limitations in ensuring good governance.

What reformists wanted was to broaden the democratic base to include checks and balances beyond the mandate of the ballot box and to revive non-governmental institutions and vitalize alternatives beyond political parties. They believed that open societies need constant vigil to maintain openness. Nevertheless, some sections of the Iranian students' movement continued to pursue the democratization route within the framework of the Islamic Republic of Iran and cooperated within the political parties loyal to the Constitution, though this was not a widely accepted approach among the students and the public.

The anti-West discourse demonizes every individual or group who believes in interaction and communication with the West, be it with Western politicians, journalists, artists or academics. When they talk about in-group members (insiders and loyalists to the leader—for example, Basij members), they are all positively described as angels and people with good intentions, even if they do something that is not accepted within the framework of the dominant ideology. This group's argumentation is always based on the authority of the absolute power of the jurist and traditional readings of *shari'ah* that are not widely accepted in Iran. The standard authoritarian argument is that ideas are not measured by a set of standards that are above the ideologies and party lines but are measured in accordance with the religious authority now in power.[28]

Basij-e Dāneshjoo'I, or the "student mobilization", as the student arm of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps at universities is focused on limited anti-corruption and distributive justice policies, while endorsing the absolute power of clerics and campaigning to close down the independent press and dissident political parties.[29] Its anti-corruption approach only addresses corruption by its political opponents. Totally supported by the leader, the Intelligence Ministry and the police, this group's purpose is to silence any voice other than the official voice of the ruling clerics.[30] Its mission is completely different from organizations such as Reserve Officer Training Corps program of the United States Army in colleges that recruit and educate commissioned officers.[31] In the USA, the program recruits receive their education independently of it; for example, Reserve Officer Training Corps program students at Duke and Princeton learn from Duke and Princeton professors and they are separate and independent from the government. Basij students are not to be recruited by the Islamic Republic Guards Corp and are not open to any student without a certain religious or ideological background.

It is largely through these discourses that political ideologies are acquired, expressed, learned, propagated and contested in Iranian society. These political discourses make ideologies observable; they have their own special lexical items, syntactic structures such as actives and passives, pronouns such as *us* and *them*, metaphors, arguments, implications and many other properties of a discourse.[32]

One of the standard arguments of social justice discourse is that any kind of wealth is built upon the deprivation of some strata (win-lose game). This position has been a cover to monopolize economic activities, public subsidies and state rents in the hands of a few who are ready to pay for the authoritarian camp's political campaigns and are loyal to the ruling clerics. Like social status and power, this camp believes that wealth should only be in the hands of true believers. Understandably, this strain of Iranian students in the previous generation almost never spoke out or protested against the massive confiscation of individuals' properties. The new generation of this strand of Iranian students have never spoken against public subsidies and state rents for their allies in the authoritarian camp.

In the totalitarian discourse, all social groups are internally and unconsciously divided into false and genuine, to disqualify and delegitimize dissident groups from running for public offices and being active in the political sphere. This usually gives enough reason to the Guardian Council to disqualify the so-called "outsiders" from running for any public office. Terms such as *dāneshjoo namā* ("pseudo-student") or *rowhāni namā* ("pseudo-cleric") are the creations of this discourse in Iran. Totalitarian ideology tends to categorize people, especially when "others" are to be excluded from the polity and deprived of their rights. Totalitarian comparisons that tend toward argumentation are typically intended to negatively compare out-groups with supposedly loathsome enemies (Western governments, Zionists). Another tactic of totalitarian discourse is to use consensus as a political strategy to negate and suppress political parties.

This discourse insists on cross-party or national consensus while emphasizing the threat from other countries. Emigration is often seen as such a threat since it builds Iranian communities around the world that maintain their relationship with the homeland. This relationship is seen as a threat due to its potential to introduce Western and non-Islamic ideas and lifestyles into Iranian society. From the totalitarian point of view, the emigration of high-ranking officials and their siblings and children to European and North American countries is seen as scandalous. A very good example was Mohsen Rezā'i's son emigration to the USA in the 1990s, which was

presented as shameful for the father, who was the former Islamic Republic Guards Corp commander-in-chief. The authoritarian press usually presents the Iranian exile community abroad as traitors.[33]

Counterfactuals are often used by the democratic discourse in order to suggest that the authoritarian discourse tries to imagine what it would be like to be in the position of the ruled rather than the ruler, a persuasive argumentative move that is also is related to the move of asking for empathy. Lacking any media and resource to present their ideas and having the sword of disqualification hanging over their heads, liberal democrats have not been able to reach out to groups outside universities.

Iranian totalitarians and authoritarians use disclaimers to save face not by mentioning their positive characteristics, but by focusing exclusively on their rivals' negative attributes. This discourse is always in an apparent denial of political, social and cultural realities of the society. Due to this characteristic, it is very rare to see statistics and the results of public surveys in authoritarian and totalitarian political literature. This literature is mostly based on references to the golden past, the plans of the enemy (the USA and its European allies) and those social values and mores that may be used to justify the monopolization of power and the oppression of dissidents.

Euphemism plays an important role in talk about rights in Iran. Within the broader framework of the strategy of positive self-presentation, groups who still believe in the Islamic Republic of Iran's Constitution and *velāyat-e faqih* totally ignore the totalitarian grip on most of the policies of the government, policies related to dress codes, the press, recruitment by the government and education. Thus, totalitarianism in the insider reformists' literature is typically mitigated as "unequal treatment". Like their spiritual leaders and sponsors, Basij students in their debate on human rights issues use the word "Western" in order to refer to the foreign and exotic nature of rights for the Iranian public and downplay the government's anti-democratic and anti-rights policies, thus undermining the actions of the civil society and dissident political parties.

Social justice and totalitarian discourses disregard plausibility, objectivity and reliability: claims or points of view in these discourses are not backed up by evidence or proof. They even do not bother themselves to enhance credibility by moves that emphasize objectivity, such as referring to numbers and statistics, the results of survey polls, quoting the exact phrases and briefing the media—the primary means in modern culture to persuasively display objectivity.

This disregard for facts and objectivity happens by reference to political and religious authority figures or institutions, or by various forms of evidentiality: their sources of information are the state-run media. Especially in debates on rights, in which negative beliefs about activists may be heard as biased, evidence is important in conveying credibility. These discourses do not present examples for their arguments; they make them. The security forces are responsible for making cases by subjecting the dissidents to torture and solitary confinement to make them confess in front of TV cameras to working for foreign government and working against national security.[34] Generalization, implicitness and self-glorification are usually used as means to convey meanings whose explicit expression could be interpreted as totalitarian and monopolistic.

Additionally, Islamist ideologies may be combined with nationalist ideologies. This kind of nationalist rhetoric is not the same in all discourses based on Islamism. The Islamic nationalist ideology of the late 1970s was focused on fighting for independence and a constitutional monarchy, which is what Mehdi Bāzargān and Yadullāh Sahābi were advocating, while the Islamic nationalist ideology of late 1990s emphasized democracy, freedom of speech and some other human rights. The representatives of the new brand of Islamic nationalism in Iran are Ezatullāh Sahābi, Taqi Rahmāni and Rezā ʻAlijāni. Members of the Nationalist Democratic Faction of the Unity Consolidation Bureau, ʻAllāmeh Spectrum" are ideologically under the influence of the new brand of Islamic nationalism.

The authoritarian discourse is strongly normative and decries liberal, socialist and feminist policies in explicit norm-statements about what "we" (as a nation) should or should not do. Islamic authoritarians claim to sit in the seat of God and issue orders regarding every aspect of their subjects' lives. They have this authority simply by having monopolized power in their hands. The main function of students who are loyal to the ruling clerics is to watch others and enforce the ordinances of the authoritarian reading of Islam in Iranian universities.

The reformist students' anti-polarization strategy was expressed in the slogan "Iran for all Iranians". Although this slogan was more prevalent than the expression of polarized ideas, it could not capture the hearts and minds of the authoritarian camp, which had the upper hand; as a result, the categorical division of people into in-group (us) and out-group (them) survived. This suggests that talking about Iranian authoritarian political culture is strongly supported by the underlying social representations (attitudes, ideologies) of groups, rather than by models of unique events and individual people.

One of the dominant overall strategies of totalitarian and authoritarian talk on social justice is that of populism. There are several variants and moves comprising this strategy. The basic approach is to claim that "the people" (or "everybody") do not support further democratization or vindication of rights, which is also a well-known argumentative fallacy. More specifically in this debate, the populist strategy is combined with some topoi relating to security and the burden of morality: ordinary people have to pay a price for democracy and human rights. Social justice and totalitarian discourses usually use vague expressions, such as "few", "a few", "a lot" (qualifiers), "very" (adverbs), "low", "widespread" and "high" (adjectives) to bypass the normative constraints on their biased speech.

Together with dramatization and polarization, victimization is a critical section of the human rights and democratization discourse. In order to emphasize the "bad" nature of totalitarians and authoritarians, democrat and liberal students may tell horrible stories, usually true, about victims of the regime. The literature of reformist and dissident groups and media depicts this kind of storytelling.[35]

Accommodation, Assimilation and Compromise

Accommodation and assimilation have not been on the agenda in contemporary Iran. This has made the prediction of future political events almost impossible.[36] There is no primary, quarter-final and semi-final in Iranian political games to give a sense of the results in advance. By looking at the experience of the rise and super-ordination of clerics, every social group perceives the monopolization of power to be an easy task. While the system of the allocation of status and power and the relations of superordinate to subordinate have not been temporally fixed and are not controlled through the laws and the mores, the everlasting conflict generates further antagonism and hostility. More homogenization of the polity after the 2005 presidential election, which was widely said to have been rigged,[37] has made the situation more volatile.[38] Hence, the adjustment that could hold the antagonistic forces in balance has failed. Accommodation that is fragile and easily sidelined cannot be reached in a situation where every group is ready to get rid of others—a veritable circle of wolves.

The authoritarian camp also killed off the hope of assimilation that was supposed to be based on interpenetration and re-reading traditions and ideologies. This camp does not care about social fusion, in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments and attitudes of other

persons and groups. They can be incorporated into a common culture by sharing their experience and history. By shutting down the independent press, the authoritarian camp closed the public sphere and public discussion. As a result, the incorporation of ethnic, religious and non-religious groups into the wider society through assuming the common Iranian cultural heritage was interrupted. The results were the branching out of student organizations into more subdivisions and factions, the depoliticization of a large section of students and the extensive suppression of the Islamic student associations by the government; these are direct effects of the personalization and monopolization of power in Iran.

Compromise is almost absent from the Iranian polity. Each discourse is sealed off and the only interaction pursued by the authoritarian and totalitarian discourse is war. Islamic-democratic and liberal democratic students are not even allowed to invite activists and politicians to universities and have discussions in university halls. The leader has a representative in each university whose function is to control the students and faculty members and instigate propaganda. These representatives usually veto any activity that is not in accordance with the dominant ideology of the government. They usually close and ban Islamic student associations that choose their leaders democratically and have a democratic agenda, appointing loyal students to establish new associations under the same name.

The overall result is a cauldron of ideas and opinions that cannot coexist in mutual tolerance. Totalitarians are driving a vehicle without a steering wheel in the wrong direction, endangering everyone in the country.[39] As a result, Iran has been top of the list of countries that export scientists and scholars to the West. The number of students who committed suicide rose in the 1995–2005 period.[40] Most of the political prisoners are university students. Dialogue is scarce in Iranian universities. Pseudoscience and scientific misconduct are on the rise and supported by the state-run media,[41] and dissident students are not allowed to continue their education.[42]

7.4 Conclusion

In spite of the diversity of groups, ideologies and discourses in Iranian student movements and the involvement of Iranian students in every aspect of Iranian politics, the outlook for Iranian student activism is not clear. Due to violations of any “rules of the game” by the authoritarian government and its loyalists in the universities, the existing discourses are not allowed to interact and communicate, which would help the student

movement ripen and create a genuine democratic movement in Iran. The strong resistance of the regime to democratization has led the reformist student groups to fall somewhere between adopting a civil disobedience strategy and passivism.

Due to the failure of the Ahmadinejad administration to deliver social justice, student groups loyal to the authoritarian camp are suspended between absorption into the governmental offices and a state of despair that could lead to radicalism against the political establishment. The pressure on dissident groups has been increasing and may result in a shift from non-violent strategy to a violent one by reformist students. The process of secularization in Iran has attained some degree of success in the universities: the Islamist discourse is losing ground and liberal democracy is receiving some support. The nationalist discourse is not increasing but it has enough support to prevent it from being dislodged.

Notes

1. news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/390790.stm.
2. news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/1021392.stm.
3. isna.ir/Main/NewsView.aspx?ID=News-661921.
4. abc.net.au/pm/stories/s727133.htm.
5. payvand.com/news/03/jun/1068.html.
6. In late June 2003, a letter signed by 166 MPs decried "the brutal behavior towards the students" by the Basij and Ansār-e Hezbollah, but nonetheless warned students to be wary of suspicious elements infiltrating their ranks. The letter also stated that the demonstrations were the result of the absence of channels for criticism of the political system and of the regime's failure to pay attention to the people's democratic demands.
7. After demolishing the office of Muslim Student Association by the President of Amir Kabir University, the students did not let the Minister of Higher Education to enter the classroom to teach on December 2, 2006 (iranews.org/Default_view.asp?@=47502&T=%25).
8. *Donya-ye Eqtesad*, March 16, 2017.
9. Hamid Showkat, interviewed by *Roozonline*, November 7, 2005, roozonline.com/08interview/012319.shtml; Mohammad Ghā'ed, interviewed by *Roozonline*, November 7, 2005, roozonline.com/08interview/012318.shtml (both accessed January 17, 2007).
10. UCBAS's statement on the beginning of the academic year 2005–2006, jomhouri.com/a/06ann/004442.php; UCBAS's statement on the arrest of hundreds of public bus drivers in Tehran, sufnews.blogfa.com/8411.aspx; The Committee for Following the Starred Students' Cases (students

who were deprived of registration because of their political opinions and political affiliations) asked all Iranian students to sign a petition: h-advar.com/advar/1385/09/post_2.php (all accessed January 17, 2007).

11. According to government statistics, which are always manipulated, only 46% of the population participated in the ninth parliamentary election in 2008: balatarin.com/permlink/2008/4/13/1272887.
12. In the second municipality council elections in 2002, 49.96% of the whole population of the country and 23.87% of Tehranians participated in the election: moi.ir/Portal/Home/ShowPage.aspx?Object=Event&CategoryID=832a711b-95fe-4505-8aa3-38f5e17309c9&LayoutID=1dc2d9d3-a0bc-4104-a90a-e8cf4a94441a&ID=4a7f7d56-d21b-4ecd-8111-93abec-839020. The turnover for the seventh parliament and ninth presidential elections were 51.21 and 59.76% for the whole country, respectively. moi.ir/Portal/Home/ShowPage.aspx?Object=Event&CategoryID=832a711b-95fe-4505-8aa3-38f5e17309c9&LayoutID=1dc2d9d3-a0bc-4104-a90a-e8cf4a94441a&ID=0ad76c80-7a53-4c36-beef-426ab4f4f6c0 (both accessed January 18, 2007).
13. According to Articles 5 of the Constitution, "during the occultation of the *Vali-e Asr* [leader of the age] the leadership of the *ummah* [nation of Islam] devolve upon the just and pious person, who is fully aware of the circumstances of his age, courageous, resourceful, and possessed of administrative ability, will assume the responsibilities of this office in accordance with Article 107." Article 107 makes the mechanism for the selection of the leader clear: "The experts [all of them clerics] will review and consult among themselves concerning all the religious men possessing the qualifications specified in Articles 5 and 109. In the event they find one of them better versed in Islamic regulations or in political and social issues, or possessing general popularity or special prominence for any of the qualifications mentioned in Article 109, they shall elect him as the Leader. Otherwise, in the absence of such a superiority, they shall elect and declare one of them as the Leader." Article 109 describes the essential qualifications and conditions for the leader: "a. Scholarship, as required for performing the functions of religious leader in different fields, b. Justice and piety, as required for the leadership of the Islamic *ummah*, c. Right political and social perspicacity, prudence, courage, administrative facilities, and adequate capability for leadership."
14. The Iranian national censuses of 1956, 1966, 1976, 1986, 1991 and 1996, *Sālnāmeh-ye Āmāri-ye Keshvar* (National Statistical Yearbook), 1976 and *Sālnāmeh-ye Āmāri-ye Keshvar* (National Statistical Yearbook), 1996.
15. The Iranian national censuses of 1956, 1966, 1976, 1986, 1991, and 1996, *Sālnāmeh-ye Āmāri-ye Keshvar* (National Statistical Yearbook), 1976 and *Sālnāmeh-ye Āmāri-ye Keshvar* (National Statistical Yearbook), 1996.

16. *Donya-ye Eghtesad*, March 16, 2017.
17. Almost all religious institutions have a line in the governmental budget: mporg.ir/ghanon-85/jadavel%20kalan/A02.html (accessed January 17, 2007).
18. Nāder Shari'atmadār, a Tehran council member who is in the same political camp as Ahmadinejad, *Roozonline*, November 3, 2005, roozonline.com/08interview/016375.shtml (accessed January 17, 2007).
19. According to reliable sources in the government, each section of the ruling clerics benefits from lucrative importing businesses relating to basic goods: sugar, rice, tire, electronics, tea, cigarette and cooking oil. The foreign trade is monopolized in the hands of the government by the constitution and the government delegates this task to high-ranking clerics and their loyalists through a licensing procedure that is not transparent and open to the public.
20. Some recent evidence for this claim are the statements of Students' Unity Consolidation Bureau on the detention of tens of bus drivers in Tehran including Mansour Osānlu, the secretary of the Tehran's Bus Drivers Syndicate news.gooya.com/politics/archives/043339.php and the oppression of a women's demonstration on June 12, 2006 news.gooya.com/politics/archives/049486.php (both accessed January 17, 2007).
21. On December 12, 2006, Iranian students staged a rare demonstration against President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, burning pictures of him as he delivered a speech at Amir Kabir University. It was the first time after the end of the reform movement that a group of dissidents standing in front of a president backed by the military and intelligence expressed their protest against the trends in the country. The protesting students interrupted Ahmadinejad's speech with slogans, including "Death to the Dictator," "Get lost Basij"—a reference to the horde of right-wing students who support the government and had been bussed in from Pasdārān Guards centers—"Get lost liars"—referring to the state-run press and TV channel reporters—"Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, agent of corruption and discrimination," and "Political prisoners must be freed." The students slogans of "Down with the Dictator" were not referring to Ahmadinejad as a dictator but intended to refer to the leader of the country 1384.gooya.com/politics/archives/2006/12/055657.php (accessed January 17, 2007). On December 13, 2006, Shiraz University students protested against the Minister of Interior, Mostafā Poor-Mohammadi, during his address, which was supposed to be for like-minded students and university officials roozna.com (accessed January 17, 2007). The Islamic Republic of Iran says that these protests demonstrate freedom of expression in Iran, but this is not true. All dissidents who have spoken out have later paid a price by being prosecuted, jailed and tortured by the militia or the intelligence ministry agents.

22. Afshin Matin-Asgari, Confederation of Iranian Students, National Union iranica.com/newsite/articles/v6f2/v6f2a003.html (accessed January 17, 2007).
23. The Nationalist Democratic faction of Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat, 'Allāmeh Spectrum, strongly criticized Ali Afshāri and Akbar 'Atri's participation in a panel discussion of the US Senate on Iran in March 2006 (mellimazhabi.org/news/032006news/0603tahkim.htm). The statement proclaims that despite the challenges the students face, the participants should have exercised discretion and not joined "two of the most right-wing politicians in the US" with a certain agenda. The statement contends that the Iranian student movement in its 50-year history has always relied on the internal dynamics of the democratic process, and has never appealed to foreign interests to interfere in its political developments. This criticism is totally understandable in view of the Iranian students' long anti-West tradition. The nationalist Democratic and Enlightenment factions believe in Islam as their guide and see religious intellectualism as a way to address different readings of Islam in the student movement, while the modern faction has no ideological limitation on its membership (isna.ir/Main/NewsXML.aspx?ID=661921, accessed January 17, 2007). The modern faction was open to secularists as well as students who believed in religious intellectualism.
24. Ahmadinejad accused the students who interrupted his lecture at Amir Kabir University of being on the payroll of the USA (advarnews.us/university/3448.aspx); Mohammad Taqi Mesbāh Yazdi has repeatedly talked about a suitcase full of dollar bills, once 20 million and at another time 500 million, for Iranian journalists and dissidents from CIA, sharghnewspaper.com/sal2/html/view.htm; irankhabar.com/headlines/Detailed/13675.html; jomhouri.com/a/03art/004061.php (accessed January 17, 2007).
25. Basij-e Dāneshjoo'e has welcomed any opportunity to ask for cutting diplomatic relationship between Iran and Great Britain, sharghnewspaper.com/830909/html/law.htm (accessed January 18, 2007). The Iran–USA diplomatic relationship is a taboo for this organization.
26. 'Abdollāh Mo'meni: "Religious Identity Should not be Used as a Labeling Gun" advarnews.org/idea/664.aspx (accessed January 17, 2007); Maryam 'Abbāsi, Right to Identity, *Sharq*, June 26, 2006; Mehdi Shirzād, Ignorance upon Ignorance, *Sharq*, May 31, 2006; Hamid Jalāeepour, It's a Mistake to Ignore Religious Identity, *Sharq*, May 17, 2006.
27. The secretary of UCBAS, Gooya, quoting ISNA news.gooya.eu/politics/archives/2006/11/055221.php (accessed January 17, 2007).
28. Mesbāh believes that even the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran is credible because the ruling jurist has confirmed it: namir.info/pdf/akbar_rooz5/mesbah.htm, accessed January 17, 2007.

29. This policy could be seen in a letter from this organization to the head of the judiciary, Mahmud Shāhrudi regarding its delay in prosecuting corrupted individuals and making decisions about those cases ilna.ir/shownews.asp?code=321736&code1=1 (accessed January 17, 2007).
30. This group has a long history of attacking gatherings and demonstrations by reformist student groups. In any event that is not sponsored by the authoritarian camp, this group is present to prevent or interfere.
31. The Reserve Officers' Training Corps is an elective part of the college curriculum and interested students can enroll for the same. They are later absorbed into the United States Army.
32. Teun A. van Dijk, Politics, Ideology and Discourse discourse-in-society.org/Politics,%20ideology%20and%20discourse%20(ELL).htm (accessed January 17, 2007).
33. *Kayhān*, August 13, 2006; *Kayhān*, February 28, 2006.
34. Iranian journalists, bloggers, political activists and writers who have been arrested have been under pressure to confess in front of state-run TV cameras, hrw.org/persian/docs/2006/12/12/iran14825.htm; bbc.co.uk/go/wsy/pub/rss/1.0/-/persian/pressreview/story/2005/01/050106_la-press.shtml (both accessed January 17, 2007). There are some books that depict this procedure in detail: Behbahāni and Dāvaran (2003). Ghaffāri (1998) and Kāzemiān (2004) give an extensive report of the authors' experiences in prison.
35. For some examples of these stories, see the following websites: baran.st/contents/en-uk/Chand%20nokte%20Massood%20Mafan%20Baran%208&9%20Filtrerad.htm; khateratezendan.blogspot.com; zarezadeh.blogfa.com/cat-4.aspx; news.gooya.eu/politics/archives/2007/01/056572.php#more (all accessed January 14, 2007).
36. Independent survey research institutions are banned to work in Iran; only those institutions that are loyal to the authoritarian camp are licensed to carry out surveys and they are no way to evaluate the results of these.
37. There are four reasons for unreliability of the ninth presidential election results: about 300,000 monitors, most of them from Basij, in polling stations all recruited by the Guardian Council, which takes sides in any election; the high percentage of turnover in some provinces, up to 95%, which had no precedent in Iran; turnovers higher than the population in some provinces; and irregularities in counting procedures, news.gooya.com/president84/archives/032027.php; news.gooya.com/president84/archives/032181.php; news.gooya.com/president84/archives/031899.php (all accessed January 15, 2007). Mehdi Karroubi and Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani as the most prominent candidates of this election questioned the results by referring to the irregularities. In a letter to Khamenei, Karroubi protests against the change of the results in the last hours of counting

in the Interior Ministry: mag.gooya.com/president84/archives/031422.php; in a report on Islamic Republic Guards Corp members' interference in the election, Hātef News posted dozens of cases where the military personnel took a position against Rafsanjani and launched negative advertising against him: mag.gooya.com/president84/archives/031871.php (both accessed January 19, 2007).

38. In about a year since the beginning of the Ahmadinejad administration, 57 university students' magazines and 35 student organizations were banned, closed or disrupted; about 300 verdicts were issued for university students who have been critical of the administration; and 53 faculty members from one university alone, 'Elm va San'at (Science and Technology) University, were pushed to retire: news.gooya.eu/politics/archives/2007/01/056521.php; 1384.gooya.com/politics/archives/2006/11/055304.php (both accessed January 15, 2007).
39. Husayn Shari'atmadāri, *Kayhān* editor and the most vocal representative of Khamenei's opinions in the press, used this parable to explain the strategy of totalitarian camp against the reformists in his column in *Kayhān* in the 1990s.
40. The Ministry of Higher Education officials reported 28 suicides by university students in four months in 2006, news.gooya.eu/politics/archives/2007/01/056521.php (accessed January 14, 2007).
41. The news on scientific progress of Iran posted by the authoritarian media is focused on cloning and proliferation; no independent media has ever confirmed such news, qudsdaily.com/archive/1385/html/1/1385-01-24/page9.html; kayhannews.ir/850529/12.htm (both accessed January 13, 2007).
42. khabarnameh.gooya.com/ (12, 05. 2006); as an example, Matin Meshkin, a PhD student expelled from Amir Kabir University, iran-emrooz.net/index.php?/news2/11623/ (accessed January 14, 2007).

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PART IV

Contextual Framework and Influential Forces

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CHAPTER 8

The Dual Military System and the Framework for the Counter-Movement

Just as the Internet is the engine for building networks and developing the flow of information for social change in Iran in the 2000s and 2010s (which I discuss in the next chapter), the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps is the machine to stop it. Without the Revolutionary Guards, the Islamist regime would have never survived the post-2009 election uprising. The Revolutionary Guards are now running the country's security system, the police, the militia, the communications structure and the nuclear program. Without understanding the nature and function of the Revolutionary Guards, every study about Iran under the mullahs is incomplete and misleading.

This chapter reviews the reasons, mechanisms and the outcomes of founding another military organization alongside the regular military. This review covers two different aspects: the military history of Iran and the sociology of Iranian society, in addition to the sociology of the Iranian Revolution of 1979. The second part establishes why the mullahs wanted the Revolutionary Guards and why they strengthened them to the point that they are now more powerful than the regular army.

The main function of the Revolutionary Guards is not to protect Iran's border or "guard the independence and territorial integrity of the country" (Article 143 of the Constitution), but to protect the Islamist regime: "The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, organized in the early days of the triumph of the Revolution, is to be maintained so that it may continue in its role of guarding the Revolution and its achievements" (Article 150 of

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M. Mohammadi, *The Iranian Reform Movement*,
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the Constitution). The protection of the regime is intertwined with actions against any independent movement in the country.

The sociological literature on modern Iran has totally neglected the importance of military organizations in Iranian society. Although military activities do not dominate state functions in post-Revolutionary Iran, as they did in eighteenth- and nineteenth- century European states (Mann 1993, Vol. II: 402), or the Iranian state in the 1920s and 1930s under Reza Shah,[1] the military has been one of the main sources of social power in the country.[2] In contrast to the military in Turkey and Pakistan, the military in Iran has rarely been the main institution for educating the elite. Before the Iranian Revolution, most of the political elite came from the technocrat stratum; since the Revolution, the ruling elite have come from seminaries and universities loyal to the clergy and have no experience in politics, except fighting against the Pahlavi regime. The new elite had to establish its own military but it could not dismantle the regular army. The new army had to deal with the realities of the old regime.

There is always competition among the different forces inside an army; for example, there was competition between the US navy and air force before the World War II (Spector 1985: 14–17), or the competition between the Japanese navy and ground troops in the same period (Clayton 1986: 718). From a sociological and political point of view, a dual military system is totally different from competition inside an army. Competition inside an army and a dual military system reflect two different sets of social and political structures.

Military history, besides reviewing battles, warfare, leadership, strategic doctrines, generalship, tactics, weapon systems and war ethics, is also the study of military institutions (Keegan 1976: 29) and their changes. The sociology of Iranian Revolution could not be written without probing the development of the revolutionary organizations and their interactions with the organizations from the old regime.

There are many sociological and political questions about Iranian military organizations that must be answered in different studies. These questions refer to the foundations and the impact of political and sociological structures on military forces. There are questions that refer to the political aspects of this duality. Who controls the dual military system? What is the relationship between the military and the state? Are military systems institutionally autonomous from all external controls? How are they controlled? Are they monopolized by the state? Other questions refer to the sociological aspect of this issue. How are military organizations internally

organized? What functions do they serve? How is the military influenced by the public sphere and public opinion? What are the internal processes of military systems? To what level are military systems bureaucratized and professionalized?

8.1 The Theoretical Point of View

Sociologists have always been interested in war and have written extensively about it. The consequences of war or civil war and influence of military organizations on society have also attracted the attention of some social scientists (Weber 1957; Mosca 1939; Andreski 1968). They are interested in war because, as the execution of organized violence, it creates social problems. Some of them are also interested in the influence of a military organization on society because they want to understand the impact of exercising naked power on social organizations and society as a whole (Mosca 1939). In this chapter, I intend to review the impact of a revolutionary society on its military system, and vice versa. These aspects are mostly ignored in sociological studies of the military and war.

Military organizations are part of the whole structure of society and must function within it. At times, there are discrepancies in the structure of society, but this does not mean that every element can act in an independent or anarchic way. For example, if democracy, theocracy or the opposition to aristocracy is the main discourse of the political sphere in society, its military force cannot be incompatible with the selected way of ruling and managing the polity. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 brought anti-aristocratic and mass society perspectives into the realm of Iranian politics; these perspectives were immediately translated into a new mass organizational management in military and civil organizations. The revolutionary leaders needed to rely on an armed force of their own rather than on the monarchy's armed forces, which were believed to be ideologically suspect.

French revolutionary government used the idea of a mass army for the first time to provide sufficient help for the protection of the Revolution. This type of army harmonized with the idea of a "new society" (Andreski 1968: 38). Russian and Chinese revolutionaries also founded the Red and People's Army, respectively, as mass armies immediately after the victory of their revolutions. They could not work with tsar's or emperor's armies, which had been based and established on different ideologies. Iranian revolutionaries did not disband the royal army, because they were confronting foreign threats and were not sufficiently sure of their power immediately

after the Revolution to replace the old army with a new mass organization. At the same time, they needed a mass army to bolster the Islamic movement and consolidate the fragile new regime.

The military strategy of the royal army, as Iran's arms production, trade and domestic defense policies during the time of Mohammad Reza Shah show, was to emphasize offensive rather than defensive strategies. The vulnerability of civilians during the Iran–Iraq war in the 1980s proved that this strategy had priority under the Pahlavi dynasty. The country was not ready to defend itself against any kind of attack. During the first five years of war, there were no shelters, even in governmental buildings, to protect people from air raids. The predominance of an offensive over a defensive policy in the military strategy of an army in any society, including a revolutionary one, decreases the number of people who can receive military education and promotes the concentration of political and military power in the hands of a few.

Mass armies have five characteristics:

1. When revolutionaries achieve power, all citizens of the country (loyal to the leadership) can bear arms. This idea is characterized by minimum bureaucratization to easily cover everybody and to strive for most efficiency, with the aim of showing that there is no alternative to a mass army. From the revolutionaries' point of view, bureaucratization cannot mesh with inclusion, although revolutions always inflate bureaucracies. An inclusive army is the translation of utopia into the realm of organized violence.
2. The armies' ranks are not necessarily professionalized. Commanders can be laymen and can have no military training background.
3. Revolutionary or charismatic leaders are the commanders of armed forces.
4. There is no difference between wartime and peacetime with respect to military policies and military training; the mass army must be ready all the time as anti-revolutionary forces—internal or external—are always looking for an opportunity to overthrow the revolutionary or charismatic leaders.
5. There is a direct relationship between being active in the mass army and being entitled to political privileges and political positions. Political participation and competition are dependent on a revolutionary and military background added to loyalty to the leaders. Ordinary people are entitled to vote for candidates that are vetted by the ruling group but they cannot be candidates themselves.

Individuals who are not engaged in a mass army do not usually have the privilege of being elected to political bodies; political activists without a military background have almost no opportunity to attain power as they have to bear more pressure from the government. Getting involved in the army militia is a pathway to getting close to ruling clerics' family members and political circles. Individuals who have participated in the militia are more tolerated if they make political challenges. In political and press trials, the veterans of militia receive less condemnation and fewer convictions and sentences than others.

The paradox of mass armies is that they are a phenomenon of developing countries in the early stages of nation-state building and, at the same time, they cannot adequately respond to the participatory demand of the lower classes, who have been activated and mobilized. They are loyal to the state and expect it to extend privileges and benefits to them. The Revolutionary Guards enlisted about three million people during the Iran–Iraq war[3]—and militarily trained millions of others—by resort to the idea of mass army, but the political structure could not adapt to the consequences of this idea. Hundreds of journalists, political activists, writers and intellectuals who were detained for their critical ideas after 1997 (the beginning of the reform movement in Iran) were former members of the Revolutionary Guards or the Resistance Forces (*Basij*). This political activism is the result of the politicization of the lower middle class and the continuing involvement of previous members of the Revolutionary Guards or *Basij* in politics.

The *Basij* was founded immediately after the beginning of the war to train and organize volunteers and mobilize people with military training. The Revolutionary Guards' mission was twofold: to attack so-called non-Islamic regimes (the allies of the West) and to help other resistance movement in the region, with the goal of exporting revolution to other Muslim majority societies. At the same time, they had to combat anti-revolutionaries aiming at toppling the new regime in the first four years after the Revolution; this included attack on any kind of opposition, militarily or intellectually, during the war, and also, in particular, defense against Iraqi troops during the war.

The continuation of the priority given to an offensive over a defensive strategy in transferring from a sultanic monarchy to Islamic theocracy (authoritarian or the *velāyat-e faqih*), in spite of segregation and differentiation in polity, did not help the country's political society change the policy of government to diminish the number of independent political

parties and groups within a given area and to widen the areas of control. The offensive policy of the army in non-democratic or partially democratic regimes usually justifies pressure on independent groups, while if there is a defensive policy, society needs all of its resources for successful defense.

For an effective defensive-oriented policy, a regime should consider the collective aspects of human resources. The participation of different communities all over the country can facilitate the promotion of a defensive policy by nationalist forces and decrease the emphasis on an offensive one, which is mostly the policy of authoritarian regimes. Just as the duality of military system is not an obstacle to an offensive policy in a new political regime, the duality of the political domain does not disturb the concentration of power.

As an organization gets larger, its hierarchic traits will become more prominent. The Revolutionary Guards, as a future mass army, tried to avoid a hierarchical system in the first decade of its life, but as it became larger and attained a regular army has, from ammunitions to garrisons, it copied the organizational form of the royal army (using different names), including military uniforms and other bureaucratic forms of large organizations. The Revolutionary Guards resisted becoming a bureaucratized army in the first decade of its life because bureaucratization in a developing country is usually considered to be an obstacle to an inclusive policy after a massive revolution. But as the Revolutionary Guards were expanding, bureaucratization encroached step by step; the new force could not be both massive and yet non-bureaucratized.

The main causes of the dual military system in Iran is the 1979 Revolution and its implications, which have their roots in the suppression of political beliefs in Pahlavi era; the ideologization of religion and revival of political Islam was a reaction to this suppression. As a result, the ideological demand of the lower middle class for applying all Islamic rules by the public soared. Nevertheless, the duality of the political system arising from dual social and cultural structures (traditional and modern, secularized and sacramentalized, open and closed, inclusive and exclusive, insiders and outsiders), leaving no room for constitutional politics, enabled this new military force to survive. The instability of the political regime and the pressure of radical Islamic groups on the new government to organize them in military forces, are just some of the proximate causes of the duality of the military system in post-Revolutionary Iran.

8.2 Why Another Military Force?

What were the reasons and causes of establishing and sustaining a parallel army? Was it Islamic ideology, the revolutionary leadership of the country or the Guard Corps at the time of its establishment, Iran's political structure since 1979, its social structure, geo-political concerns or the Iran–Iraq war (1980–1988)? Why did the Islamic Republic of Iran Army and the Guards Corps not merge, when the police, revolutionary committees and gendarmerie merged (after the death of Khomeini in 1989) or when Guards Corps, like the Islamic Republic of Iran Army, were bureaucratized and semi-professionalized? These questions have sociological answers that can be elucidated within the frameworks for explaining the reasons and causes of this phenomenon. In the frameworks of reasons, I will discuss the ideas, attitudes, and understandings of the revolutionaries who founded the Revolutionary Guards, and in the framework of causes, I will discuss social demands, manifest or latent, political necessities, and the societal and structural bases for the founding of this military organization.

Reasons

Loyalty, Solidarity and Organization

Superior political organizations are actually based on a mixture of ideological, military, economic and social forces. The new political order—an Islamic state—which was not party-democratic and was not based on constitutional institutions and mechanisms, needed its very own military system, just as it required its own economic might. It was impossible and totally irrational to dissolve and disorganize a well-equipped and well-trained army (the royal army), which had about 415,000 personnel (a ground force of 285,000, an air force of 100,000 and a navy of 30,000) (Zabih 1988: 118), although most of the high-ranking commanders escaped, were executed, resigned, or were forced to flee. Many were purged and dismissed (36,480).

As a means of countering the threats posed by either leftist and Marxist guerrillas or the royal army officers suspected of continued loyalty to the shah, the Revolutionary Guards were designated the guardians of the Islamic Republic. There were alternative options for dissolving the royal army and founding a new armed force—a revolutionary army that was

under the control of the revolutionary leaders, as happened in revolutionary Russia and China. Due to the loyalty of some officers to Khomeini and the mass escape of soldiers during the Revolution, foreign threats and the low level of military experience of revolutionaries, the idea of disbanding the army was dismissed.

The ruling clerics tried to Islamicize the regular army by appointing political-ideological commissars for every force, barrack, regiment and unit. These commissars performed the same function as the Communist Commission of the Red Army and similar commissions in other mass armies. The main function of this option was to control the personnel and change members' ideas and behavior to make them adaptable to Islamic theology, Islamic values and Islamic law or *shari'ah*. They were not completely successful, because the members of the regular army had been trained in a different situation, and some of them had been educated abroad, especially in the USA and countries of Western Europe.

The new revolutionary army was under-organized and under-trained in the first years of its establishment but was totally loyal to the ruling clerics.[4] The Revolutionary Guards, along with its political counterpart, the Crusade for Reconstruction, brought a new order to Iran. The Revolutionary Guards and the Crusade for Reconstruction enjoyed their own separate ministers in the cabinet immediately after the consolidation of the ruling clerics' power. Later they were merged with other ministries, the former after one decade and the latter after two. Most ministers and members of parliament have had Revolutionary Guards backgrounds in different administrations.

By the end of Iran–Iraq war in 1988, the Revolutionary Guards consisted of more than 400,000 personnel organized into battalion-size units that operated either independently or in accordance with the units of the regular armed forces. In 1984, the Revolutionary Guards acquired small naval and air elements. By 1988, up to three million volunteers (organized under the control of the Revolutionary Guards as *Basij* units) were trained, organized and mobilized. After the war, this number decreased because people began to go back to their normal lives and the ruling clergy only used such units to control internal dissatisfaction and protests, strengthen one political faction over another and quell civil disorder.

The *Basij* gradually changed from a defensive force combatting foreign armies to a unit for policing the population and suppressing dissidents and "others" (people who did not follow the totalitarian lifestyle of the political caste). The *Basij* also monitored the activities of citizens and harassed and arrested women and men who infringed *shari'ah* laws relating to the

dress code, the separation of men and women in public and private life and prohibition on listening to Western music, dancing, going to parties, watching American movies and satellite TV channels, whether those codes were approved by the parliament or originating only in some books of religious instruction. The *Basij* function was reduced to compelling conformity in the post-war era.

The main drivers for establishing the Revolutionary Guards and *Basij* did not include the policing of society and providing a security system. When these forces were strong enough to combat the threats of counter-revolutionaries (who might have mounted a military coup) and invasion by a foreign country, the ruling clergy misused the situation to justify policing through the Revolutionary Guards, although this did not conform to the law. Thus, the Revolutionary Guards and its younger brother, the *Basij*, were primarily military forces that were sometimes used as moral and anti-riot police, not as a police force with military functions.

One of the main ideological reasons of establishing the Revolutionary Guards was "the intensity of feeling of group solidarity, and intensity of the feeling of hostility towards outsiders,"[5] during and immediately after the Iranian Revolution. The feeling of intense group solidarity was necessary for impelling individuals to sacrifice their lives when the revolutionary leaders did not yet have absolute power in their hands. The first years of the revolutionary regime were a time of harsh struggle for the interwoven goals of wealth, power and prestige that are usually the main reasons for war and the expansion of military systems.

In these years, the revolutionary leaders believed that the years immediately after the victory of the Revolution were the best time to use Islamic tenets to institutionalize and strengthen their power by ensuring that there was an ideological/military force behind their political faction. Ideology is an effective instrument for activating and organizing the forces of deprived people at the least cost. Iranian revolutionary leaders have always denied the material motives behind their political and social activities, in spite of their political and economic corruption, but the way they have acted proves their material incentives. There is a long list of these actions: monopolizing power, facilitating the issue of university titles for revolutionary leaders, the censorship of the print media, the monopoly of the electronic media, vetoing candidates other than loyalists according to the doctrine of religious leadership, the promotion of soldiers and even non-military staff to high-ranking military positions, increasing the salaries and bonuses of governmental officials and confiscating the wealth of the rich.

Revolutionaries without any military training who wanted to volunteer to fight against anti-revolutionary groups, the competing communist wing, ethnic militants and foreign armies could not be organized as a classic army. The weak, post-revolutionary state could not organize revolutionaries who did not believe in an organized army. It necessitated a new mass army, something more than a militia, without the well-defined duties and responsibilities of a regular army. An army which expected to fight for at least 20 years could not do its job by recruiting a small number of people.[6]

Enlistees and volunteers who wanted to retain their regular relationships (neighborhood, kinships, comradeships, and professional, educational and guild connections) in the fighting regiments could not tolerate an organized, regulated and bureaucratized army. They were not permanent military personnel or professional soldiers but civilian-soldiers and wanted to continue as civilians after the end of the emergency situation. They did not accept regular ranks, and believed that more virtuous people ought to be in higher ranks. Many of these individuals left the Revolutionary Guards when it began to transform itself into a regular army with ranks and bureaucracy.

The main agenda for organizing the loyal masses was a show of force. Punishment in Iranian society has not been transformed from an authoritative, open, punitive, spectacular and violent action to a diffuse, hidden, routinized, restitutive, disciplinary and internalized one (Foucault 1979). The disciplinary power in Iranian society has not been routinized, and in this situation Iranian society does not witness a major transformation of military power—from a dual function (defense/repression) to a singular one (defense). In the new regime, organized armed forces (the Revolutionary Guards) and militias (the *Basij*) would usually be called in if violence escalates to riots requiring a show of force; because of this, the Guards Corps stationed garrisons and barracks in all large and medium-sized towns and in some villages around the country. At the same time, the regular military garrisons were moved out of town.

The Revolutionary Guards faced considerable resistance against the municipalities, who wanted to transfer their barracks to non-urban areas. This prevented the members of the Revolutionary Guards from being insulated from the civilian population. The political behavior of the low-ranking members of the Guards was very similar to the political behavior of the whole population before the militarization of power by the ruling clerics from 2004. Some of the forces were also trained to intervene in civil matters, and commanders had the right to intervene arbitrarily, without

being asked to by the civilian authorities. In most previous cases, the Revolutionary Guards and Basij had normally acted together.

In the Tehran University dormitory case (July, 9, 1999), the police, intelligence, some *Basij* forces and a band of hardliners (*Ansār-e Hezbollah*,[7] run informally by Iran's religious leader, Khamenei, and mostly organized within the framework of the *Basij*) raided the student dorms while students were protesting against the banning of a newspaper (*Salaam*) by the judiciary; later a local colonel was put on trial, but was later acquitted and many of students were detained and prosecuted.

In spite of four social movements—the Constitutional Revolution (1906–1907), the Nationalization of Oil Movement (1950–1953), the Iranian Revolution (1978–1979) and the Reform Movement (1997–)—political and social citizenship had not been achieved in most political and social realms of Iranian society by the beginning of the twenty-first century. This explains why military might still points inward. Whenever the demand for citizenship benefits and rights escalate and government does not want to respond legally, reliable military forces, for example, the Revolutionary Guards, are called in to suppress the people who represent those demands in the political sphere.

A Two-Tiered Society, A Two-Tiered Polity

An army's duty (at least on paper) in a democratic society is the only defense against foreign invasion, not: (1) policing and holding people in custody, when the police and security system are not capable of maintaining the social order; (2) repression of any kind of demonstration, exchange of violence and maintaining the domestic order; and (3) full-scale military suppression. In a two-tiered society where one tier inclines to democracy and another to authoritarianism, the constitution cannot be one sided. In this situation, the constitution cannot be the framework of compromise and solve the tensions between these tiers; it itself is the product of that tension.

According to the constitution, the regular army is responsible only for defense against foreign attack. Ignoring the role of the Revolutionary Guards, this was written for a democratic state and, at the same time, reflects the role of the army staff as well as the members of the defeated middle classes of the 1960s and the 1970s. This wording belongs to a time when the regular army was weak enough to be used by revolutionaries in internal affairs. Those who drew up the constitution also confirmed another armed force to protect the power of new ruling class, that is, the clerics and revolutionary leaders. Thus, two different social classes found their own voices in the armed forces.

In non-democratic and mass societies, such as post-revolutionary Iran, there is no border between the army, the police and the security system. The new and unstable political regime in Iran needed a new controlling instrument, formed by the loyal, the young and the revolutionary. The Iranian state had not reached a level of development that could maintain political and social order only by conciliation, arbitration and persuasion. From the outset, the Revolutionary Guards were necessary for generalized demobilization, although repression indirectly stimulated collective non-violent action that led to noticeable votes of conservatives and authoritarians in successive elections in the 1980s and first half of the 1990s. The lessons that the new regime learned from the Pahlavi regime led it to mobilize (1978–1979) and then demobilize (1980–1981) the masses, and consequently increase the risks of any dissident collective action.

The Revolutionary Guards as a revolutionary army was not professional in the 1980s but later received sophisticated training and armaments so that it could become involved in special operations. They can be engaged in any kind of measures on the basis of any strategy or duty, including social control and domestic repression. The Iran–Iraq war for the Revolutionary Guards bore similarities with domestic repression. During the war, the Revolutionary Guards tried to have their own air force and navy, but its extended strategies and vast duties prevented the organization from expanding and differentiating itself.

A two-tiered society translates the polity into a dual political structure. From an organizational point of view, when a political structure is completely dual, the military system cannot continue to be unitary. When every governmental body is political and wants the military to become involved in domestic politics, it is very difficult for the military forces not to do so. In a political context of weak state and a single military system, the military force will incline toward supporting one wing or faction, split or spark the establishment of another army.

Post-revolutionary Iranian society has a leader who is the representative of the traditional strata (part of the traditional *bāzār* and clerics) and embraces authoritarian or totalitarian ideas; depending on the level of fairness and freedom of elections, the president may be the representative of new and different strata and classes (labors, bureaucrats, technocrats, intellectuals, professionals and university students). The authoritarian faction needs some forces to resist public opinion and manipulate the balance of power when it is defeated in national elections. According to the 1979 Constitution, the religious leader is the commander-in-chief and all armed

forces are under his command. While the army's duty to protect the national borders and provide national defense, the Guards Corps' duty is, in reality, though not legally, protecting the power of the religious establishment and the Islamic regime against individuals and groups who do not believe in it.

After the abolishment of the office of prime minister in the revised Constitution (1989), all the executive power was concentrated in the hands of the president (Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani), who had also security, state-run radio and TV, part of the police force and part of the Revolutionary Guards under his control. In this situation, Khamenei could not let the Revolutionary Guards merge with the regular army; he needed a military force totally under his control to lean on in power struggle. After dismissing all the commanders who were loyal to others (Khomeini, Rafsanjani or Montazeri), Khamenei altered the balance of power between himself and other political figures.

The authoritarian faction of the Iranian polity subscribes to the idea that labor unions, political parties and student movements should be suppressed by military might, but the reformers who came to the scene in the second half of the 1990s do not. For example, the authoritarian faction has not recognized the right to strike of the labor force; if workers strike, in most cases it uses military force to suppress them. The authoritarians have used police to suppress students, the judiciary to suppress intellectuals and journalists, and the military to suppress the unorganized riots of ordinary people. This has widened the power gap between the rulers and the ruled.

On dozens of occasions in the 1980s and 1990s, thousands of people seized public spaces and held them against the police force, the *Basij* and the Guards Corps for hours and damaged public and governmental buildings. This is what happened in Shiraz, Arāk, Qazvin, Eslam Shahr, Mash-had, Khalkhāl and Sabzevār. For the most part, there is no possibility of negotiation between the people and the government, because there is no organization or institution that represents the people.

Islamic Internationalism and Exporting Revolution

The founding of the Revolutionary Guards for the revolutionary leaders was a kind of return to or revival of the glorious past of Islam or pristine Islam. The Royal Army was defined as serving as the armed force of a nation-state, modern Iran, and its ideology was nationalism, but the Revolution brought about a kind of Islamic internationalism that was mostly limited to Shi'i internationalism. The regular army was not intended

to help Islamic movements in Lebanon, Afghanistan, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Iraq, or Muslims in Bosnia, the Philippines and Palestine. The new Islamic regime needed an armed force to put pressure on the political regimes of the Islamic world and help Shi'i people who were under pressure in majority Sunni and non-Islamic political regimes.

The modern Royal Army was initially a US gendarme in the Persian Gulf region. The military and national strategies of Iran were formed as the basis for the adaptation of Iran so that it would be a US ally in the Middle East during the Cold War era.[8] Therefore, its strategy was not deterring other regional powers from attacking Iran but supporting the USA's regional and Iran's national interests. The conditions for becoming involved in military conflicts were distinguished and determined by the USA and its European allies, such as revolt in Zofar, Oman, in the 1970s, which led to Iran's attack on the militant opposition.

After the Revolution, both the national and military strategies changed from being a US ally to an independent power in the region propagating alleged anti-American expansionism and its allies. Therefore, the strategy of the Revolutionary Guards was not only to deter others from attacking the homeland, but also to export the Revolution to other countries in the region. After the Revolution, the army was ready to play the role of deterrence, not regional interference. The powerful forces of the Revolution could not limit their expectations that the Revolutionary Guards would be an instrument for ideological expansion.

Immediately after the Revolution of 1979, revolutionary leaders declared that they wanted to export their revolution to every society in the world. This idea later changed to overthrowing dictatorship regimes in other Islamic societies and then supporting every Shi'i group around the world—in Lebanon, Iraq, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Afghanistan. It is obvious that the Royal Army in the Pahlavi period or the army in the Islamic regime could not undertake this mission. One of the Revolutionary Guards' defined duties is to pursue this duty. It was quite active in south Lebanon during the invasion and occupation by Israel. By the summer of 1982, shortly after the second Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the Revolutionary Guards had nearly 1000 personnel deployed in the predominantly Shi'a Biqa' Valley.

From its headquarters near Ba'albek, the Revolutionary Guards provided consistent support to Islamic 'Amal. This group was a breakaway faction of the mainstream 'Amal organization, then Hezbollah. It first contemplated the establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon but later

began to act as a party in the multi-faceted political domain of the country. The Revolutionary Guards' support was crucial in preparing and helping Hezbollah resist Israel's heavy-handed attack on Lebanon in July–August 2006.

Iran's support was also crucial in creating a northern front composed of Uzbeks, Tajiks and Shi'a Hazarahs to counter the Taliban, a radical Sunni movement. The Iranian intelligence service and Revolutionary Guards helped Afghans forge a new opposition. Iranians pushed for the early liberation of Herat in western Afghanistan to ensure greater freedom of movement for Iranian-backed opposition forces and their supplies from Iran. The Revolutionary Guards, with a special militant cadre within the complexity of the Iranian security apparatus, were given the main operational responsibility for Iran's involvement in Afghanistan.[9] The regular army is not defined or organized to run these kinds of operation.

Causes

Demand for Mass Ideological-Military Training and More Troops

After the 1979 Revolution, there was a great demand for military education, in particular in conducting operations in guerilla wars. The regular army could not completely respond to this demand, although it tried in the first years of war. In this market, other suppliers could enter the scene. The Revolutionary Guards had access to almost all mosques and other Islamic religious centers; this facilitated their presence and activity in the military education of civilians. Only three years after the establishment of the Revolutionary Guards, the duty of civilian military education was given over to the Resistance Forces (*Nirou-haye Moqavemat*), a branch of the Revolutionary Guards.

Iranians witnessed consecutive defeats of their armed forces against Iraq's army in the first year of the Iran–Iraq war. In the years immediately after the Iranian Revolution and the heyday of political Islam, it was natural that most people attributed those defeats to a lack of faith and belief in God's providence and heaven, and therefore morale, in the regular army. Within the framework of political religion, people believed that religion could play the role of a prime mover, an ideology and cementing force in creating cohesive and effective fighting units;[10] most people underestimated the role of a higher rate of pay, better equipment, well-defined strategies and more effective military leadership.

One of the main theoretical challenges in that period was related to the priority of the "commitment to ideology" or "Islamism" over "professionalism." In the second decade of the Islamic Republic, this was changed to the challenge between meritocracy and kinship relationships in politics. Religion in this period was presented as an ideology for fighting against enemies, not a cultural device for the protection of traditions or rituals or a spiritual phenomenon.

Revolutionary leaders believed that an army needs spiritual guidance, and in this respect there was no difference between soldiers, officers and commanders. They believed that this guidance could change the war's outcome. Therefore, it was important for them to create a new volunteer, as opposed to a professional or conscripted army, under the influence of the rhetorical zeal of leadership, where praying before battle and the recitation of scripture characterized service and religious motives predominated in war and peace. This so-called God's army was oriented toward martyrdom, not success in battle. Its objective was not necessarily to defeat an enemy, but to do what God asked believers to do.

This ideological character is the most important factor explaining the "dual military system" in Iran. This character can be seen armies established by Cromwell, Lenin, Mao, and Khomeini and arises from the type of political regime which is built on the ruins of a previous one. The regular army could be dismantled in favor of the Revolutionary Guards, but the internal and ethnic unrest and the threats from foreign countries made the remaining parts of the armed forces, although now socially and politically neutralized, a necessity. The new regime, which previously incorporated the armed forces into its power structure, left the infrastructure of the existing military intact. The Iran–Iraq war acted as a catalyst to give the IRIA a sense of cohesion and identity.

Guarding the Ruling Clerics

In time, the Revolutionary Guards would rival the police, security system and the judiciary in terms of its functions. During the suppression of the leftists and the *Mujāhedin-e Khalq* in the 1980s and the reformists and the reform movement of 1997–, the Revolutionary Guards played the role of a security and police force for Khomeini and Khamenei.[11] It would even challenge the performance of the regular armed forces on the battlefield. There are a many cases of challenge and conflict between the Revolutionary Guards and the regular army during and after the Iran-Iraq war.[12]

The Revolutionary Guards was planned as an organization that would be directly subordinate to the ruling clergy of the Islamic state. The Constitution of Iran, after 1980, charged the military with the duty of guarding Iran's territorial integrity and political independence. Thus, the Revolutionary Guards could only have the responsibility of guarding the Revolution; if the protection of the borders and the Islamic Republic could be translated as guarding the clergy and religious leaders—that is, on an authoritarian reading of the Constitution—they could be part of the Revolutionary Guards' duties to overthrow any critical approach to religious leadership and ruling clerics.

In the authoritarian's view, the Iranian Revolution is not an event that happened in 1979, but a continuing conflict that must be nurtured by a religious ideology and a religious state. Involvement in politics is part of the Revolutionary Guards' mission to defend Islamic authority and to ensure the continuation of the Revolution. Despite differences, the Revolutionary Guards and the regular armed forces have been cooperating on military matters related to the protection of borders.

Parallel intelligence was a method to guard the Islamic regime. The Revolutionary Guards has maintained an intelligence branch to monitor the regime's domestic adversaries and to participate in their arrests and trials. Khomeini implied that the Revolutionary Guards' involvement in intelligence when he congratulated it on the arrest of the Iranian Tudeh (communist) Party leaders. Not only did it function, and has been functioning, as an intelligence organization, both within and outside the country, but it also exerted considerable influence on government policies through its intelligence capacity. The Revolutionary Guards was very active in prosecuting, detaining and investigating "national-religious groups" in 2001, because conservatives and authoritarians lost the ministry of security after serial killing of intellectuals and political activists in 1998–1999 and did not have enough access to the security system.

8.3 How Did It Happen?

There are three major reasons for the huge increase in the number of members recruited in the Revolutionary Guards, their garrisons and their budgets. The first is the ethnic, ideological and political challenges experienced all over the country between 1978 and 1980. There were ethnic challenges in Kurdestan, Turkeman Sahra, Baluchestan and Khouzestan,

as well as ideological challenges between Islamic revivalism and social democracy, as reflected in the clash between the Republic Islamic Party and Bani Sadr, the first president of the country. They were also tensions between Islamism and Marxism, and between Islamism and nationalism. *Mujāhedin-e Khalq*, communist parties and organizations created political challenges reflected in riots and turbulence. The Revolutionary Guards' exercises and successful actions to quell the rebellion proved the necessity of a new army consisting of true believers in Islam who were revolutionary and loyal to Khomeini.

The second and main reason took place during the Iran–Iraq war that mainly determined the Revolutionary Guards' social structure. The social core of organization seems to be mainly comprised of the urban lower middle class.[13] The Revolutionary Guards' acceptance of conscription during the war notably increased the members of these forces and facilitated the emergence of a new military elite in society. The appearance of volunteers in the ranks of combat units increased hazing in training and brought about a kind of multiculturalism that made the Revolutionary Guards attractive to young people from different ethnic and religious origins and backgrounds during the war. The Revolutionary Guards' policy during the war was the inclusion of any ethnic and religious group (such as Sunni people from different parts of the country) because it needed more members. This policy was mainly brought to an end after the war.

The third reason for the effectiveness of the Revolutionary Guards as a vehicle for upward mobility in the unstable social structure during the years after the Revolution. An important part of the political and bureaucratic elite had already been in the Revolutionary Guards for some years. War, in proportion to its severity, also promoted inter-strata mobility within the armed forces.

Why did the number of Revolutionary Guard members not decrease when ethnic, ideological and political riots and turbulence, the Iran–Iraq war, and the high possibility of upward mobility in an unstable social structure were over? Were there any other threats to the Islamic regime or country from outside or inside after a single decade?

The victory of the people in a massive movement strengthened the idea that idealism, faith and personal self-respect can conquer a well-organized and well-equipped army. The idea that the technological factor cannot replace the human factor was very popular among revolutionaries. The meaning of the victory of the Revolution against a modern army for revolutionaries represented the weakness and demise of technological

determinism. They were thinking about the efficiency of other means and methods: new ways for organizing groups and motivating soldiers by following an ideology, religion and moral thesis; obeying charismatic leadership; heroism, glory and fair play between gentlemen; individual courage and self-identification; doing one's duty and comradeship; and new doctrines such as widening the battlefield as alternatives to technology. A reliance on technology alone, in their view, was a kind of dehumanization and de-glamorization of battle.

The realization of a new world order on the basis of the priority of faith over weaponry, similar to every new or utopian idea that revolutionaries try to objectify after a revolution, seemed tempting. The attempts to realize it did not necessarily follow the rationalized accounting of costs and benefits. The idea of the priority of faith over weaponry was embodied in the new army organization—the Revolutionary Guards. This effort was, in effect, swimming against the mainstream of military strategy in the second half of the twentieth century. In this period of time, the quality of a country's weaponry and the capacity of its industrial output increasingly became the determinants of success, rather than any will to win born of idealism, faith and personal self-respect (Ellis 1986: 180).

The prevailing idea among revolutionaries about the regular army and its effectiveness was the general belief that an army is the sum of its human parts rather than its weapons and that its effectiveness is the consummation of human factors, organization and technology. The implicit consequence of this idea for the state, in spite of the value of human factors in this doctrine, was that it did not regard the individual soldier as a very precious commodity. In those years, Iranian society was not on a level of social and cultural development to cause individualism to become an important idea. Revolutions need collective conscious and action, not individualism and humanism.

Military organizations are essentially authoritative and "concentrated-coercive" (Mann 1993, Vol. II: 9) entities. The military provides disciplined and routinized coercion in modern society and no one who is armed can escape from it. It has also been monopolized and restricted by states, although military elites retain considerable autonomy inside states, impacting considerably on society and social structures. After the Revolution of 1979, those who did not want to go into the army, as a non-revolutionary institution, and who wanted to avoid its discipline and authoritarianism, were eager to join a non-classic and quite loose army organization. The Revolutionary Guards was a good choice for them.

The organization's commanders were not thinking about influencing the state in a regulative way and behaving like a military elite in the first years after the Revolution.

Most of the Revolutionary Guards' actions in the first decade of the organization's life were motivated by Islamic ideology as a collection of ideas that are turned into a social and political movement. For example, they interfered in riots that were opposed to Islamic ideology or against groups that were trying to topple the new Islamic state, but in the second and third decades of the regime, they have been interfering in domestic riots and illegal behavior related to de-authorizing or illegitimating religious leadership. Fighting the drug traffic is not the Revolutionary Guards' duty, but arresting people for violating dress code and moral policing are. These duties are mostly on the shoulders of the *Basij*. This motivation is an important reason for the resistance to professionalization and bureaucratization of the new armed forces.

The Revolutionary Guards was developed in an unprofessionalized and unbureaucratized manner, and this army could not be merged into a professionalized and bureaucratized one. The lack of professionalism may help explain why several instances of Revolutionary Guard interference in politics have been confused with factionalism (Katzman 1993: 158). While the political structure is divided into factions, the Revolutionary Guards feel an ideological duty to protect the unity of the system. Other than that, factionalism is indispensable for the survival of the Revolutionary Guards in a dual political structure, one marked by intense factionalism.

The Revolutionary Guards were able to absorb the impact of weak and non-revolutionary social groupings and adapted quickly to the transitory condition of society, but this adaptability decreased the intensity of ideological decisions and behaviors inside their garrisons and operations. They also accepted training from the regular military and allowed some revolutionary and non-revolutionary military officers to direct selected Revolutionary Guard units in specific major offenses. The Revolutionary Guards was more flexible, adaptable and grew in the first decade after the Revolution but became rigid in the second and third.

The Revolutionary Guards' posts were often located inside cities, towns and villages, and their members had no special accommodation complexes in the first decade after the Revolution; most of its members were active in religious centers located in the most crowded centers of the cities and towns. Therefore, its members were not isolated from their communities. Isolation began in the second decade when the Revolutionary Guards

increased in size, almost equal in personnel to the regular army. Allocating public land and loans for building special housing complexes for the Revolutionary Guards all over the country made social isolation possible. This happened to the Royal Army in the decades before the 1979 Revolution, especially in the 1970s.

The transition from charismatic leadership (Khomeini) to a traditional-despotic and authoritarian leadership (Khamenei) in the political structure is another reason for the social isolation of the Revolutionary Guards in the second, third and fourth decade. The new leader did not need popular and revolutionary armed forces, but nevertheless they were completely loyal to him and could protect him from opposition and criticism. In only half a decade, 1988–1993, most of the high-ranking commanders of the Revolutionary Guards and other armed forces were replaced by members who expressed loyalty only to the new leader. In the second decade of Islamic Republic, the Revolutionary Guards was a society unto itself, demanding total commitment to the leader of the Islamic Republic across its high-ranking positions. Therefore, commitment to the Revolutionary Guards' principal doctrines and its declared values was not a necessary condition for promotion. They were considering only a selective section of the veteran community for selective jobs, although those without a revolutionary background, to influence the attitude of the newcomers.

Revolutionary Guard commanders picked by Khamenei do not represent the rank and file, although they are able to impose their will upon them. Due to changes in personnel and structure during the 1990s, the Revolutionary Guards was transformed from a guerilla-like army to one with a more traditional form. Now the force is totally under the command of the commander-in-chief and the political allegiances of its commanders are directed toward Khamenei. The Revolutionary Guards' military, economic and political interests have created alliances with the authoritarian camp due to their ideological and political similarities.

As opposed to the regular army, military chiefs in the Revolutionary Guards have informal contacts and relationships among themselves. Most of them behave collectively as a constellation of cronies.[14] Their effective joint coordination prevented any effort to merge their organization into the regular army (Roberts 1996: 55). Even in the first years of the Revolutionary Guards' life, it was impossible for opponents of this organization to prevent its expansion. The consequence of being against this organization could be the end of a political career for a politician because of the solidarity and unity among its members. The first nucleus of the

Revolutionary Guards was formed by underground militant groups fighting against the Pahlavi regime inside the country and some militants who were anti-regime and active in Lebanon and Libya. They had sufficient solidarity to establish a military force and had enough power to expand it by absorbing their previous political sympathizers.

There are some elements of populism in the Revolutionary Guards as well as in the lower ranks of the military before the Revolution and across the high-ranking positions of the regular army after that event. Therefore, the Revolutionary Guards was more flexible with respect to recruitment and organizational policy in the first decade of its life than the regular army, but in the second and third decades it was unclear clear whether this institution had been more flexible from the other side of the duality under discussion.

The ethnic and religious configuration of the Revolutionary Guards was very similar to the ethnic and religious configuration of the country in the first decade.[15] This facilitated the establishment of barracks and garrisons, and squads and platoons in every city and certain villages of the country. The traditionalism of the Revolutionary Guards' members helped this force expand their branches to every town and village in every province.

The growth of membership in the armed forces may be due to the natural growth of the population, the expansion of the boundaries of the state, the extension of military service (Andreski 1968: 97), changes in the political regime, the creation of new functions for the military, or any combination of these factors. The rapid expansion of the Royal Army in 1970s was stopped in the 1980s and the purging and emigration of high-ranking commanders decreased the number of new army members. The Revolutionary Guards filled the gap and used the Iran–Iraq war to cement a position as a new army for the country. The difference was ideological criteria for recruitment; the revolutionary regime changed the secular recruitment policy of the Royal Army and absorbed only loyalist members.

As the expansion of the Royal Army stopped, the number of Revolutionary Guard members rapidly increased. After two decades, as the population of Iran doubled, the number of members reached parity with that of the army. Thus, the military participation rate, which is the proportion of militarily utilized individuals in the total population, was been approximately constant in the 1980s and 1990s. The Revolutionary Guards could not easily impose its will on the rest of the population and another military force because it was proportionately numerous. The same policy was underway in the areas in which the two different military organizations—revolutionary and regular—were active with the same function.

What prevented political officials from merging the Revolutionary Guards with the regular army or vice versa? A country that has not dramatically promoted industrialization, literacy and urbanization, has not solved its representative crystallization (no rotation of political elite), and has suffered from the consequences of revolution and war, cannot have a cohesive, well-organized and harmonious military force. As new revolutionary and religious institutions in every aspect of life were being established, with the same duties of secular and governmental institutions, armed forces could not be exempt. The continuation of the Islamic regime, leaning on traditional and charismatic legitimacy, necessitated the survival of the Revolutionary Guards to protect the institutions that represent traditions in the modern world and were therefore vulnerable. On the other side, nationalist concerns functioned as a deterrent for dissolving the regular army.

The Revolutionary Guards has developed from a low or restricted professional, poorly organized and deeply ideological force characterized by a low military participation rate, high subordination and high cohesion in its early years before the Iran–Iraq war to a conscripted, less ideological and better organized force characterized by a higher military participation rate, high subordination and high cohesion. This happened in European states between 1750 and 1950 due to the pressure of warfare (Andreski 1968: 151). This type of transition promoted the change from royal autocracy to religious autocracy and extended the sphere of governmental regulation and control. In the second decade of its life, the Revolutionary Guards adopted a feudal policy of militarization characterized by a lower military participation rate, a low degree of subordination and a low degree of cohesion. This transition did not happen in consequence of a conquest or optimization of the participation rate, but rather due to the end of a bloody war,[16] a lack of resources, and the rapid increase in the population. The regime could not continuously afford the expansion of its military forces. In its third decade, the Revolutionary Guards has transferred to a more technology-based army with ambitions to have nuclear arms and long-range ballistic missiles.

8.4 Military and Political Dualism

The structure of Iranian polity has been dual since 1979. This duality can be traced to different sections of Iranian political system:

1. There is a leader who is the representative of authoritarian and traditionalist clerics' interests and concerns, and a president who is supposed to be the representative of the people.
2. In the legislative branch, the parliament is elected and the Guardian Council and Expediency Assembly are appointed and have the right of veto over the parliament's approvals; the leader also interferes in the legislative process by issuing executive orders to the parliament to stop drafting and reviewing specific bills.
3. The Intelligence Ministry, which is accountable to the parliament and the security offices of the police, the Revolutionary Guards and the judiciary appointed by the leader are not accountable in the security domain.
4. The elected parliament and a number of appointed bodies and councils, such as the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, are appointed and legislate in many areas.
5. The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance which controls and subsidizes culture on one hand, the Islamic Propaganda Organization (with offices all over the country) and the Islamic Propaganda Office in Qom (the center for Islamic seminaries of Iran) do almost the same thing; both are under the control of the leader.
6. The social security system as a part of executive power, and the Imam Khomeini Committee for helping poor people, which is under the control of religious leader.
7. There are both regular and revolutionary courts.

As can be seen, there is an alternative for most of the elected and secular public offices and powers (executive and legislative, as even the judiciary is totally under the control of the leader, who represents the authoritarian faction). All of these appointed and religious alternatives unanimously act as opponents of the rule of law, democracy, freedom of speech and inclusion. They have the upper hand in any aspect of the function of government.

In defense and military policy-making, the upper hand is given to the Revolutionary Guards, which has become the center of any military/security doctrine for defending the Islamic Regime and its sovereignty. A significant part of the Armed Forces Chief of Staff managerial activities has migrated to the Revolutionary Guards.[17]

In this structure, no one expects to find a unified and cohesive organization of armed forces that cover all of the functions of modern armies. Secular, rationalized, democratic and modern sections of the state necessitate their

own forces for preventing violence and defending the country, while the religious, non-public interest-concentrated, traditional and authoritarian sections of the state (mostly established and institutionalized before the Iranian Revolution and invigorated after this event) necessitate their own armed forces to support their authoritative ideology and monopolistic power.

A dual military system reflects the deep duality in the political structure of the society, which has its roots in social and cultural dualities: urban versus rural; literate versus illiterate; secular versus religious; traditional versus modern; civil society versus mass society; punitive versus restitutive; participatory versus obligatory; elected versus appointed; and duty versus rights.

On the basis of this duality, the Revolutionary Guards are expected to issue statements against the elected bodies of the government, such as the parliament, the president[18] and civil society institutions.[19] They write letters to local executive and judiciary officials to prevent political demonstrations of students and other dissidents,[20] prevent physicians from visiting people who are under house arrest, such as Montazeri, who was in this situation for five years,[21] and put pressure on courts to review cases after it was reviewed in the courts of appeal and the defendant was exonerated (the Revolutionary Guards versus Zohreh Horri, Mohammad Montazeri's wife and Husayn Ali Montazeri's daughter in law[22]). The Revolutionary Guards use their ports and jetties for smuggling goods into the country to support their expensive projects. The commanders seem to be immune from investigation and discipline, presumably because of their loyalty to the leader, the members of the Guardian Council and high-ranking judiciary officials.

The duality leaves enough space for Revolutionary Guard commanders to intervene in foreign policy issues. The seizure in 2007 of the British boats and the capture of the British sailors had a high cost for the reformist government of Mohammad Khatami. Benefiting from sanctions, the high commanders of the Revolutionary Guards have always been against the routinization of Iran–USA relations.

A significantly larger number of the seventh (some 90 out of 290) and eighth Majles deputies, second-round city and village council members, and the ninth president's cabinet members (about 70%) have a Revolutionary Guard background. Many politically active figures with different political tendencies, including reformists, have a Revolutionary Guard background. This is a sign of militarization of Iranian politics and shows that the leadership of the Revolutionary Guards desires a more direct voice in the politics of the country. This voice has been facilitated by the mass disqualification of

candidates by the Guardian Council. The Guardian Council actions are intended to cultivate an ideologically correct, obedient political class that serves the ruling clerics.

Some other groups and individuals, such as political parties[23] and MPs,[24] have issued statements against the IRGC's political statements and its engagement in politics and have asked the defense minister to respond to questions from members of parliament about these subjects. After the ninth presidential election, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Mehdi Karroubi and the reformist camp denounced the Revolutionary Guards and *Basij* interference in the election in favor of authoritarian candidates,[25] which is at odds both with the Constitution and with Khomeini's dictum that the military should stay out of politics.

8.5 Consequences for Social and Political Structure

The Revolutionary Guards and the regular army have suffered and benefitted from the consequences of the political duality. In a dual political structure, a dual military system goes hand in hand with factional politics, which are in turn supported by the armed forces. Iran's regular army is neutral in political challenges by definition, but traditionalist and authoritarian groups have been using the Revolutionary Guards in political campaigns, especially during elections to put pressure on reformers and secular forces. Revolutionary Guard interference has changed the results of many elections, such as presidential elections of 2005 and 2009.

The Revolutionary Guards have also been used as a security service to put pressure on intellectuals and political activists. The part that the Revolutionary Guards have played in politics has been serious due to the resources and influence of the commanders on governmental organizations, especially the judiciary and the police. Even if reformers did not resort to violence and there was no justification for extremists in the Revolutionary Guards to resort to violence against reformers, this force has not been neutral in political conflicts. Fearful of losing authority, the ruling clerics used the Revolutionary Guards' members and resources in monitoring and funding elections;[26] this changed the results in favor of the authoritarian camp in parliamentary elections after 1999.

There are no reliable figures about the resources allocated to the Revolutionary Guards, but it receives much more than the regular army. This means that a country eager for sustainable, symmetrical, encompassing

and inclusive development pays for two armies instead of one. This is an organizational inflation, although there is only one ministry of defense. The Revolutionary Guards do not limit themselves to governmental budgets; during the Rafsanjani administration, they began bidding for huge public projects such as constructing roads and piers.

During the Khatami administration, they pushed for more lucrative projects. This was the main source of conflict between the administration and the IRGC; the Imam Khomeini Airport crisis, which led to the closing of the airport, was the result of this conflict. The Guards and the militia, the *Basij*, were the main power base for President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Under his administration, the Revolutionary Guards moved increasingly into commercial operations, earning profits and extending their influence in Iran in areas involving big government contracts—building airports and other infrastructures, oil production and export, and importing cell phones.[27]

Dualism in the military force signifies a weakness of the military in the polity because in a dual organizational situation, resources and efforts are divided and threats of military coups are not effective. This makes the militarization of politics in Iran totally different from that of Turkey. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Revolutionary Guards, while some of its members were eager to powerfully influence government, was not able to impose its will on the political sphere, although it was still able to possess extensive public property,[28] and its members did use their status to receive governmental licenses for high-income importing-exporting businesses.

To keep their interests and privileges intact, the Revolutionary Guards' high commanders have **always warned pro-reform leaders and writers during the reform movement (1997–) that any attempt to undermine the country's Islamic ideology would be met with "Islamic violence."** The strongly worded statements of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps conform to the increasingly strident tone taken by the authoritarians against reformists, who swept all elections from 1997 to 2001. "We hope the time doesn't come for this, but if it does, Islamic violence will be employed without any hesitation to defend truth and justice. Then, it will be too late for them to learn any lessons," the Revolutionary Guards' statement said.[29] **These threats were not realized at the time because of the non-violent policy of reformers and the balance of power between reformist and authoritarian factions in the government. If students resorted to violence,** the Revolutionary Guards **and militia would intensify their existing violence against them. Another part of the explanation for this inability lies in the characteristic the Iranian state**

shares with other developing nation-states: lower- and middle-level officials are recruited from the lower class and paid insufficient salaries, without enough eagerness and excitement to suppress others like them.[30]

This situation changed in 2004, when the authoritarian camp seized a majority in parliament. The Revolutionary Guards **received one third of the members of parliament in a rigged election and was no longer worried about the elimination of the Islamic authoritarian ideology in the Iranian polity. But it did not enjoy the upper hand due to its submission to the ruling clerics. Khamenei preferred these obedient generals to be in parliament rather than traditionalists who did not believe in his religious authority.**

The authoritarians that have governed Iran for almost four decades have control over the most vital sectors of Iranian society, but the military is not more important than others in this contest. Unlike in Turkey, whoever controls the military in Iran does not control the entire country. Reformists did not resort to violence to govern the country in any condition. Therefore, a civil war could not break out, with the result that the reformers could be crushed with impunity.

The Revolutionary Guards have not been able to prevent the formation of a cabinet of which it disapproves,[31] force the dissolution of an existing government, especially Khatami's administration, which some of the powerful high-ranking commanders of the Revolutionary Guards opposed, highjack the state to its own ends, and gain the upper hand on all domestic and foreign policies of the country.[32] There is no sign or possibility of any attempt at a military coup in the situation of challenge between the political factions in the country. Iran's armed forces are subordinate to the civilian leadership; rogue operations are rare to non-existent.

Military interventions (plots, attempts and successful seizures) are possible in societies that are confronted with ethnic antagonism (Kposowa and Jenkins 1994), where there is: support for the army from abroad and unregulated political competition within an army allocated an important part of the gross national product; a politically factionalized or segregated polity without institutionalized constitutionalism; and military and political elite rivalries resulting from a lack of common norms and values. Most of these factors are all but absent in Iranian society. The nature of security decision-making in Iran is chaotic but not anarchic (Byman et al. 2001: xii–xiii).

Iranian society is very far from the praetorianism of some ordinary members of the Revolutionary Guards, who are supported by the leader of the Islamic Republic. The hardline members cannot be professional soldiers, who are the driving force of praetorian insurrections because they want or have to play several roles at the same time: security agent, police, military force, and sometimes journalist, university student and whatever role the leader asks them to play. The leader of the Islamic Republic is at the same time the commander-in-chief of the regular army, which is not supposed to suppress intellectuals, university students and journalists; he must play the role of the commander of a group of professional soldiers who want to serve the country on the basis of the Constitution.

Most of the officers of the Revolutionary Guards come from the lower middle class and the poor. Most of their barracks and garrisons are located in rural and urban lower middle class regions. Some of its officers are the sons of low-level governmental officials, some the sons of petty landowners and some the sons of small shopkeepers.[33] Membership of the Revolutionary Guards represents a good opportunity to take some share of economic and political advantages. There is a new class of wealthy businessmen who have been in the Revolutionary Guards for some years. Former members are now in the high ranks of governmental personnel, media and parliament.

The ideological over-expansionism that was clearly laid claim to in the first decade after the Revolution was abandoned when the Revolutionary Guards was bureaucratized and became a more standard military force (alongside the regular army). This over-expansionism was intentionally and erroneously interpreted as land over-expansionism by Iraq's leaders to justify their invasion in the 1980s and also by some of the Persian Gulf governments that supported them.[34] The process of the bureaucratization of the Revolutionary Guards was expedited when its members tried to act consciously in a dual military system and gain a bigger slice of the resources allocated to the military. When the Revolutionary Guards tried to copy all the organizational, weapon-related and logistic dimensions of other armies, it began to negotiate with the other revolutionary parts of the government, which were already routinized. Revolutionary people who tried to Islamicize the institutions under their control could not secularize them without recourse to secular institutions.

Although Iran was not on the victorious side of the war, she was also not the territorial loser, and Iranian soldiers and members of the Revolutionary Guards were honored for their services during the war. The

idea of a powerful Revolutionary Guard force after the war led to the direct and indirect allocation of more wealth and status to the high ranks of this force. The lower ranks also profited from different programs of veteran benefits. The ideological status of the veterans helped them use their status to win more resources and establish new institutions. Veterans could easily register in public universities (while others had to work hard to win places) and receive licenses for any kind of economic and cultural activity, which could then be rented. The government and members of the military forces wanted these forces to be more powerful to change existing the social stratification.

The revolutionary institutions and organizations that are under the control of the leader and clerics reveal the behavior of economic and political rentiers. Rents that come from oil revenues are the main source by which the wealthy have abused power, both before and after the Iranian Revolution. High- and medium-rank members of the Revolutionary Guards, like other members of the ideological institutions, have used these rents to build a new part of upper middle class, which has its own clubs, restaurants, way of life (mostly influenced by the clerical way of life) and customs.

8.6 Conclusion

In terms of the influence of political and social change within Iranian society after the Iranian Revolution of 1979 on military organizations, the Revolutionary Guards has been the most powerful revolutionary institution established since the Iranian Revolution on the basis of ideas of a mass society and a mass army. There are political, ideological, social and strategic reasons for founding this force beside the regular army, which was inherited by the revolutionary leaders. The Revolutionary Guards, in turn, as a massive army, invigorated traditional and appointed political bodies after self-purging everyone who could not adapt to the settled authoritative political regime (so-called infiltrated, *nofuzi*, mostly in the second decade of the Revolution's life).

The Revolutionary Guards, as the armed force of political Islam, in an era when people believed that religion could play the role of a prime mover, an ideology and a cementing force in creating cohesive and effective fighting units, supported the process of the mass politicization of society and is paying its price in the third decade of the revolutionary regime. The Revolutionary Guards is responsible for prosecuting its former

members and suppressing people who have political concerns, as reflected in their demonstrations and uprisings. This force is politically powerful, but is always in the shadow of ruling clerics, which makes them different and politically vulnerable in comparison to university students and intellectuals. If it has not been merged into the regular army, this is because of the instrumental view of the political clerics of this force; if the regular army has not been merged with the Revolutionary Guards, it is because the Revolutionary Guards, as an unprofessionalized army, did not offer enough protection of a theocracy and the ideology of a nation-state and its territory in the last decades of twentieth century.

The Revolutionary Guards, based on its own legal mission, has been crucial in cracking down on every movement. It has been used as a shield for the ruling clerics when confronted with uprisings and demonstrations. Without this organization, the clerics would not have been able to consolidate their power. During the Khamenei era, the Revolutionary Guards has been the only force in the country which has protected the religious establishment. The guardian jurist has been increasingly dependent on this force to deal with the rising demands of young people, women and minorities.

Notes

1. In this period, the officers of military held the governorship of most of the provinces. They, beside the interior ministry, constituted an important element of the political elite. The Law of Conscription, passed in May 1925, facilitated the army's access to human resources and stabilized its power in the provinces.
2. In the Pahlavi era, the king was the commander-in-chief, not as a civilian, but as a member of the military personnel. In that era, "no military chief's prestige in the army was equal to that of the Shah who was cherished by the rank and file" (Arfa 1964: 436).
3. The main idea was a mass army with 20 million volunteers (almost everyone over 16 in a country that had a population of 35 million in 1979) and the name of this force was "the Army of 20 Millions", then changed to "the Force of Resistance" or *Basij*.
4. The same phenomenon happened when the Nazi regime came to power in Germany. In 1933, the Schutzstaffel organized a full-time armed branch called the *SS-Verfügungstruppen* (SS-VT). These units were placed at Hitler's disposal, and were intended to be special purpose troops for such duties as putting down counter-revolutions and strikes, conducting purges and quelling riots. By 1939, the size of the SS-VT had been expanded to

four regiments (*Standarten*), due to the usefulness of having combat units outside the control of the German military. These soldiers were carefully selected, and the requirements for joining were very strict. Himmler desired to have a military force that rivaled that of the German army and equipped these troops with the most modern weapons and vehicles. The *Waffen-SS* continued to expand their numbers, but competed for recruits with all the other military services. The strict requirements for membership decreased the pool of potential recruits even further. In an attempt to bolster their numbers, the *Waffen-SS* began recruiting from non-German, "nordic" peoples who lived outside the German border. This gave the *Waffen-SS* an advantage over the army, who were prevented by law from recruiting from conquered territories (waffen-ss.com/history).

5. These are some of the main Shi'i tenets: *tavallā* and *tabarrā* as the ninth and tenth secondary tenets of Twelver Shi'ism.
6. Khomeini repeatedly spoke about a possible 20 years of the Iran–Iran war (this could definitely have been phrased better) (*Script of Light (Sahife ye Noor*), 1999) and the necessity of the expansion of the military through mobilization.
7. A militant group that is supported by the religious authoritarian leaders, especially by the leader of the Islamic Republic, and its duty has been suppressing intellectuals and dissident political activists and oppressing other ways of life that are not compatible with the clerics' way of life. A long list of this group's operations over a period of five years is presented in *Iran*, July 29, 2002.
8. For the difference between national and military strategies, see Clayton 1986: 703.
9. *New York Times*, December 31, 2001.
10. This situation could be compared to New Model Army: Gentles 1992; Wilson 1985; Kishlansky 1979; Burns 1967.
11. Reformists have been jailed in the Revolutionary Guards' illegal detention centers (such as Prison No. 59 and Prison 66). Some of the political activists, students and journalists were in solitary confinement for three to nine months in this prison.
12. The last happened between these forces in Shiraz, where they were fighting to take possession of disputed land between the barracks of the regular army and the Revolutionary Guards.
13. This is my observation when I was a volunteer during the Iran–Iraq war. As I know, no survey has been carried out about the social stratification of the Revolutionary Guards' members and its social structure.
14. For example, the reader can look at the letter of 24 high-ranking commanders of the Revolutionary Guards to President Khatami: *Kayhān*, July 19, 1999.
15. Iran's population is not divided by any racial configuration.

16. These are the latest official numbers of Iran's casualties of the Iran–Iraq war:

    Killed in battle: 172,056
    Killed in cities by bombardments, missiles and canon shells: 15,959
    Died later because of injuries: 30,852
    The whole number of killed because of war: 218,867
    Injured: 386,653 (including 48,420 that still are suffering from exposure to chemical weapons).

    From the injured, the number of people who

    are blind: 6310
    are amputated: 30,804
    have brain injuries: 15,800
    have spinal cord injuries: 1919
    and are mentally ill: 22,229.

    For more details, see: sharghnewspaper.com/830630/societ.htm#s112668 (accessed on September 21, 2004).
17. *Bāztāb* news website, July 27, 2005.
18. See the letter of the Revolutionary Guards' 24 high-ranking officials to President Khatami, *Iran*, July 19, 1999.
19. See the IRGC's statement against the reformers, *Iran*, July 21, 2002.
20. *Basij* of Isfahan as the mobilization force of the Revolutionary Guards wrote a letter to Isfahan's supervisor and condemned university students' demonstration in November 2002, asking city officials to prevent such events: *Qods*, January 14, 2003.
21. Emrooz.com, January 23, 2003.
22. Emrooz.com, January 17 & 19, 2003.
23. The statement of Militants of Islamic Republic Organization condemns the Revolutionary Guards' statement against reformers, *Hayāt-e Nou*, July 29, 2002.
24. Ninety members of parliament questioned the defense minister, Shamkhāni, about the Revolutionary Guards' statement of July 21, 2002, *Iran*, July 22, 2002. Some 151 members of parliament in a letter on August 5, 2002 warned against a series of attempts that they said would lead the country to the "downhill road to disappointment, pessimism and discontent." It expressed disgust at the closure of 85 publications in a period of three years, a political statement issued by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, the court ruling against Mohsen Mirdāmādi, the chairman of the Majles National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, and the sentences issued on 41 members of the Freedom Movement of Iran; 84 members of parliament questioned the defense minister about the Revolutionary Guards' statement of December 2002 against the reformers.
25. Two Revolutionary Guard generals have been accused by Mazandaran province judiciary of electoral fraud. Their files were sent to Tehran for

further investigation and action. Provinces do not have ability to prosecute Revolutionary Guard commanders (*Baztab* news site, July 27, 2005). As usual, no further action was taken.

26. The Guardian Council put almost 300,000 loyal monitors, all from the authoritarian camp, in polling stations in the seventh parliamentary and ninth presidential elections, most of them members of the Revolutionary Guards and *Basij*.
27. nytimes.com/2007/01/02/world/middleeast/02sanctions.html?hp&ex=1167800400&en=a7db97aaa0d8c883&ei=5094&partner=homepage.
28. IRGC has illegally possessed much preserved land for building houses for its members (*Hayāt-e Nou* Daily, December 1, and December 12, 2002).
29. Fox News, April 19, 2000.
30. Some groups do not reject the possibility of a coup by the Revolutionary Guards. The Mujāhedin of the Islamic Revolution Organization (not to be confused with the Iraqi-based military group known as the Mujāhedin Khalq Organization) has been predicting a hardline coup, state-of-emergency or martial law since at least the spring of 2000. At that time, the Mujāhedin of the Islamic Revolution Organization said that the closure of the newspapers and the attempt to kill Sa'id Hajjāriān (a key member in the President's advisory team and one of the high-ranking members of Participation Front Party) by authoritarians was a move in a hardline coup. It referred to the April 2000 IRGC warning, "if necessary, our enemies, be they small or large, will feel the reverberating impact of the hammer of the Islamic Revolution on their skulls and the impact will be so strong that they will never be able to engage in hatching plots or committing crimes" as Statement Number Zero. In their view, Statement Number One would be the announcement of a coup. The Revolutionary Guards have worried observers on other occasions. One memorable occurrence took place in 1998 when Revolutionary Guards' chief commander Yahyā Rahim-Safavi threatened to "cut the necks and tongues" of political opponents. In July 1999, Revolutionary Guard commanders sent a letter to President Khatami in which they warned him that he was responsible for the atmosphere that had led to the riots and demonstrations, and if he did not act to contain them then the Revolutionary Guards would do so. In early 2002, the legislature expressed its anger when Revolutionary Guards' deputy commander Mohammad Bāqer Zolqadr threatened to set the Persian Gulf ablaze, and the deputies summoned the defense minister. They also expressed their unhappiness that military officials were making political statements. After President George W. Bush's State of the Union Address, putting Iran in the "axis of evil," Iranian reformers were worried about the state-of-emergency and cracking down the reform movement by Khamenei and his cronies in the Revolutionary Guards. One cannot dismiss out of hand statements about cultural erosion and the need for military prepared-

ness from the minister of defense and armed forces logistics, Ali Shamkhāni, from Safavi or from Zolqadr. The occasional threats from reformist lawmakers and from President Khatami to quit the government indicate heightened sensitivities, too. Iran is not on the brink of a civil war, even if all bills proposed by the president and passed by parliament are not ratified. The probability of the president and members of parliament resigning then calling in the Revolutionary Guards to stop the ensuing civil strife is negligible. Iranian reformers did not exit the system when Khatami's interior and culture ministers were interpellated, about 90 newspapers and magazines were closed between 2000 and 2002, when police and paramilitary forces raided Tehran University dorms, and when more than 100 political activists, journalists and intellectuals were tried for their ideas and speeches. The "American threat," on the other hand, may become a pretext for the Revolutionary Guards to step in and create a military junta similar to the Pakistani regime. The state of emergency in Iran has little to do with internal political jockeying; rather, it is due to the fear from American plans for invading Middle East countries and its likely impact on Iran.

31. There is a difference between the Revolutionary Guards' rank and its file with respect to political affiliation. Based on figures from the Ministry of Islamic Guidance and Culture, "a poll conducted by moderate parliament members indicated that 80% of IRGC [Revolutionary Guards] members favored Khatami […]. Reportedly, 73% of the IRGC and 70% of the Basij's members voted for Khatami [in 1997]" (Byman et al. 2001: 49). The undying loyalty toward Khamenei may be true for the top brass of the Revolutionary Guards, but the younger generation is far more cynical when it comes to revolutionary and religious indoctrination.
32. This is totally different from the political situation in a society such as Japan before World War II (Snyder 1993: 150; Spector 1985: 33). When deputy commander of the Revolutionary Guards, Brigadier Mohammad Bāqer Zolqadr, was questioned by some Iranian members of parliament about his threatening to attack Persian Gulf oil infrastructure in the event of a US attack on Iran, he denied (IRNA, March 1, 2002).
33. Cf. note 4.
34. The Revolutionary Guards were an armed force of about 10,000 members equipped mostly with AK-47s and Kalashnikovs in the period 1979–1981.

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CHAPTER 9

The Internet and the Treasure House of Information

In Iranian political culture, which has been subject to despotism, sultanism and authoritarianism for more than two centuries, information has always been considered a precious gem that must be kept from the hands of "outsiders," whether foreigners, those who are contrarian, the ideological other, or members of ethnic and religious minorities, even though they may all be subjects of the state. In this type of culture, only intimate, closed circles of privileged groups, and members of the ruling clique have had access to information. Cutting tongues and breaking pens, and exalting subservience, cajolery and flattery, commonplace in the traditional state of nineteenth-century Iran, has been replaced by the censorship of books, movies and plays, by the widespread ban on newspapers and satellite receivers, by the monopolization of TV and radio channels on the part of the government, by the everyday harassing of journalists and political activists, and by the control of the licenses needed to publish any information about the modern nation-state.

The study of the Internet in contemporary Iran is important for several reasons. First, it shows that different types of authoritarian regimes may be able to control and profit from the Internet, notwithstanding its threat to authoritarianism. Second, it shows how introducing the Internet restructures the public sphere and how this new technology changes or reconstructs public debates and discourses. Third, it may shed light on other authoritarian regimes' strategies for Internet development, and it may help to develop generalizable conclusions about the impact of the Internet on authoritarian regimes or authoritarian factions in a pseudo-, defective,

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or restricted democracy, or in dual sovereignty states (that is, states with two recognized authorities, one appointed and the other elected).

There are several questions that I wish to address in this chapter. How is the Internet being used in Iran? Can the Internet challenge the views of authoritarian regimes of information as a treasure that needs to be guarded by state officials and institutions? What are the consequences of the Internet for these regimes? I will also discuss the weaknesses in the point of view that maintains that the Internet can help technocrats, activists and intellectuals remove some of the limitations imposed on the free flow of information. In my analysis of the impact of the Internet on the Iranian public sphere, I will raise other relevant questions. How is the Internet used and for what purposes? What kinds of debates and forces have found their way onto the Internet, how do these debates and forces challenge the state and how does the state respond? And, finally, does the authoritarian state proactively participate in the debates or does it try to put an end to challenges of this nature?

9.1 Opening the Door

It is widely believed that the Internet poses an insurmountable threat to closed societies. However, the Internet, like any other means of communication and information flow, simply opens the doors of a treasure house of information. When this takes place in authoritarian regimes, it does not necessarily mean the establishment of an open society and an immediate direct threat to the regimes because authoritarian rulers always find ways to control and counter the political impact of new information and communication technologies. In 1979, the Iranian Revolution opened a closed political society and allowed for the emergence of various political forces: religious totalitarian, religious moderate, secular and liberal democratic. Because of a lack of communication and interaction, these political forces did not understand each other's exact positions on different social and cultural policies, and the media could not fill the gap. In all likelihood, the Internet will not destroy the authoritarian regime of Iran but instead bring every idea about it to the public sphere, where different discourses will be "turfed out."

On the question of telecommunications, the silence of the "transition literature" in authoritarian regimes is deafening (Lynch 1999: 227). The potential impact of new technologies, especially on developing societies, goes largely ignored (Schwartz 1996). A handful of cross-regional analyses

from different fields, combined with various case studies of the Internet in authoritarian regimes, do provide an initial basis for reviewing the Internet's impact on the democratization process in authoritarian regimes (Kedzie 1997); there is no specific study of the impact of the Internet on these regimes' public spheres.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, authoritarian regimes are finding ways to control and counter the political impact of Internet use, although they cannot control the impact of the Internet on the public sphere. Some of the authoritarian regimes (for example, Singapore) are implementing an ambitious yet carefully planned information and communication technologies strategy that uses a combination of legal, technical and social measures to shape the development of Internet use (Rodan 1998: 63–89). Iran exercises dual sovereignty over many of its emigrants living abroad, but this does not let the authoritarians curtail dissident communication by preventing popular access to the Internet and forbidding the use of other communication technologies, such as fax machines.

The use of satellite dishes to receive TV signals is forbidden, however, as is the case in the military regime of Burma (Kalathil 2001)—and was the case in Saddam Hussain's Iraq. The authoritarian faction in the current regime in Iran controls the political and social impact of the Internet through ambitious censorship schemes similar to those devised by the authoritarian regimes of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (Human Rights Watch 1999). But unlike Iran, Burma, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates do not have a large number of exiles in the West. Therefore, in terms of the information and communication technologies, they are not greatly influenced by an exile community.

As access to the Internet in Iran increases, or other variables allowing for expanded exploitation evolve over time, Internet use may indeed play a greater role in challenging the closure of or constraints on the public sphere. It is likely that state strategies for control will continue to be viable in the short and medium term. Authoritarian regimes translate a long and successful history of control over communication technologies into strong control of Internet development within their borders. Potential challenges to the state may arise from Internet use in several areas: mass culture, elite culture, civil society, the political society, the public sphere, transnational non-governmental organizations and the international community. Below I will examine the potential challenges that arise from Internet use in the public sphere in five of the seven domains that are most salient.

Mass Culture

As posited by scholars of democratization analyzing the impact of television broadcasts in Eastern Europe, public access to information and communication technologies may facilitate a "demonstration effect" whereby exposure to outside ideas, or to images of transitions in other countries, spurs a revolution of rising expectations and the eventual overthrow of authoritarian regimes (Huntington 1991). Alternatively, the use of email, Internet chat rooms, weblogs, bulletin boards and websites may contribute to "ideational pluralism" and a more gradual liberalization of the public sphere in authoritarian countries (Taubman 1998: 255, 272).

Elite Culture

Self-representation that was once totally absent or culturally banned in the mainstream media has found its way onto the Internet through blogs. In Iran, the public sphere will be challenged by what the intellectual elite *feel* in addition to what they think. The religious pluralism of Iranian elite culture is suppressed by the authoritarians in the current regime even more harshly than cultural or political pluralism. Notwithstanding his house arrest in Qom, which lasted five years, Husayn Ali Montazeri continued to issue his own rulings on religious matters, and to reply to theological questions posed by his followers, mostly via the Internet. He posted a long memoir on the Internet that was immediately denounced by the authoritarian establishment. Approximately a dozen of his supporters were arrested for helping him to prepare and post it. When books are banned, newspapers and publishing houses closed, and political meetings attacked, the Internet may be the only way to communicate diverse ideas and news reports at a mass level.

Civil Society

Civil society institutions may use the Internet to support their activities in a variety of ways, including through logistical organization and the public dissemination of information. In many cases, such institutions play a crucial role in opening the public sphere, either by pressing for open debate on policy issues or by triggering debates and discussions that delegitimize authoritarian rule. Likewise, civil society institutions may rise to overwhelm a controlled process of top-down liberalization after an initial

opening has been permitted (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986). Chat rooms, list serves and some websites have facilitated the establishment of e-civil society institutions in Iran.[1] These institutions do not have to follow the complex and sometimes dead-end process of getting licenses from the government.

Political Society

Almost all Iranian reformist groups and parties are prevented from having their own print media. Before being subjected to filtering, their Internet websites compensated for this lack of access to the public. Reformist websites such as *Emrooz*, *Rouydād*, *Bamdad*, *Akunews*, *Mellimazhabi*, *Tahkimdemocracy* and *Womeniniran* disseminated reformist ideas and debates that are considered poisonous to religious authoritarianism.[2] These websites were filtered in different waves.[3] The Iranian government has responded harshly to these potential challenges to its rule with a series of technological measures, restrictive laws and well-publicized crackdowns.[4] Similarly, the state moved quickly to arrest key Iranian bloggers in 2003 and key website editors in 2004, using traditional punitive and deterrent measures to stop what was in part an Internet-enabled challenge. The authoritarian factions in the current regime have also established different websites (for example, *Daricheh*, *Baztab* and *Yek Khabar*) to attack the reformist websites, or proxies that are easily mistaken for reformist sites (for example, *Gooyaa*, as opposed to *Gooya*). Almost every state media outlet is in the hands of the authoritarians.

International Community

Transnational advocacy networks of civil society organizations, social movements, traditional mass print and broadcast media, and other actors outside the target country often play a key role in mounting campaigns for opening up the public sphere, and the use of the Internet is often crucial to the success of their activities (Keck and Sikkink 1998). The Iranian exiled community in Europe and the USA usually plays a crucial role in this regard. The Internet is now the most important way for connecting Iranian activists to international advocacy networks and Iranian exile communities all over the world. The largest share of Iran-related political information on the Internet emanates not from domestic sources but from foreign-based websites trying to influence Iranian politics.

Iranian exile groups call for political change on their websites; human rights organizations post critical reports online; and sites such as *Gooya*, *Iran-e Emrouz*, *Peik Net* and *Akhbar-e Rouz* publish news and stories from independent Iranian journalists. Iranian authoritarians who have most of the state power in their hands consider all of these activities to be an unwelcome and potentially subversive intrusion into the internal affairs of state. However, the current regime has no control over Internet use outside of the country. Moreover, this type of international Internet use has arguably strengthened the position of the regime's hardliners with respect to the Internet and encouraged a stronger reactive response to the medium. Crackdowns on independent journalists and newspapers, and the jamming of most of the US-based Iranian TV channels, will place much greater restrictions on anything that the regime considers a tool of US aggression.

9.2 Rapid Extension of the Internet

Despite various technical problems and limitations of the infrastructure, and past and present strategic mistakes by the government, the Internet is expanding very rapidly in Iran. In the period 1992–2003, domestic Internet connections grew at a rate that at times placed Iran among the top developing countries in terms of growth rate for Internet access.[5] The Iranian Internet scene, more than one decade after the original connection, was a very dynamic one, with tens of thousands of academic users, millions of regular users,[6] and more than one hundred providers. Networks, websites, weblogs, and bulletin boards were expanding everywhere on a daily basis.

The history of the importation of Internet technologies to Iran is marked by an initial slowness (1992–1996), followed by a much more rapid wave of adaptation of technology, use and privatization (1996–2000), and the rapid reaction of the government (2000–2004). Problems of technological adaptation to the existing infrastructure persist, given the economic and political context within which Internet development must proceed. Initial Internet access was provided through a single line connecting the Institute for Theoretical Physics and Mathematics in Tehran to the BITNET system, by way of Iran's membership in the Trans-European Research and Educational Networking Association in 1992. In 1997, the system was expanded through a 128-kbyte/s link to Milan (Arabshahi 1998). The initial development of the Internet in Iran was thus primarily for academic use and was sponsored by the government.

In the late 1990s, the Iranian government began to implement its plans for public access to a national Intranet, but this plan was not successful. The initial impetus for Internet development in Iran came largely from outside the government in the second half of the 1990s. During this period, the country's first international email connection was established through satellite dishes at the behest of the private sector, although the government soon came to realize that this new medium presented potential threats as well as benefits, and these needed to be addressed. Internet service provisions for private users were greatly expanded. The first was the Data Communication Company of Iran, an organ of the Ministry of Post, Telephone, and Telegraph.[7]

The Data Communication Company continues to be the most dominant of the Internet service providers. Others in various stages of development include Neda Rayaneh, which is actually owned by the Tehran Municipality; IRNET, the first private service, which began as a Bulletin Board System; Virayeshgar Corporation; Apadana; and Pars (Arabshahi 1998; *New York Times*, October 8, 1999: 8). Alongside the expansion and privatization of Internet service provision from 1994 to 1999, the number of users dramatically increased, from less than 10,000 users, primarily academics and government officials, to hundreds of thousands, many of whom are private subscribers.

The average increase in Internet use in the country in this period was about 300%. From the late 1990s to the early 2000s, the number of users rose from the hundreds of thousands to the millions (ISNA, May 12, 2003). This dramatic increase took place in a society in which only 60% of the population had access to telephone lines. In 1997, the Internet in Iran enjoyed a speed range of 4.5–5 megabytes per minute (by comparison, in the same year, one of the backbone Internet sites in Russia enjoyed a speed range of 625 megabytes per minute). There are no exact figures available about Internet speed range in the country in the first decade of its launch, but a total of 30 megabytes per minute seems most likely, although this is "unbalanced," that is to say, a great part of that range was used to receive data and only a small part was employed to relay data. The demand for more access provided growth opportunities for the more than 100 Internet service providers (there were 30 in 1999)[8] and many Internet cafés (more than 1600 were operating in 2003).

The diffusion of the Internet in Iran has been limited by a number of factors, including the country's precarious economic situation, the US embargo, and the regime's strategy of controlling the Internet by imposing

self-censorship, limiting public use, and filtering. Without a major change in any of these variables, the Internet in Iran is likely to continue a steady pattern of growth but one that is slow compared to demand. There is the argument that as the technology develops in Iran, costs will decrease and public use will increase, thus achieving the "global village" goal of equal democratic participation.[9] However, this is based on an exaggerated sense of optimism with respect to future developments.

In the 1990s, some of the factors preventing the full development of Internet technologies were more infrastructural than governmental or external (that is, emanating from abroad). Sluggish rates of economic development, lack of modern communications technology use in Iranian industry and the uneven level of technological development in different parts of the country were some of the obstacles to the rapid growth of Internet access. This situation dramatically changed in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The government is now the most prominent obstacle to Internet development. Leaving aside the bureaucratic and political questions, the prospects for further growth appear to be quite good. The basic telecommunications infrastructure is being expanded and up-graded rapidly; it already has the highest compound annual growth rate in the Middle East. The surging popularity of the Internet is giving Iranians new ways to communicate with the outside world and is forcing an authoritarian regime to revise its approach to telecommunications.

The current uses of the Internet may be divided according to academic, public-governmental, economic and entertainment purposes. Academic and research-oriented purposes, as stated above, were initially the most significant, and they continue to be noteworthy. But the commercial sector appears eager to gain more access and become a major user. Insufficient funding for leased lines is responsible for a current bottleneck in Internet service provision, although the lack of funds for computers and networking equipment is also a factor that inhibits Internet use. In the absence of harsh restrictive government regulation between 1997 and 2001, growth in the commercial sector was rapid and extensive, both among end-users and resellers (Internet service providers).

There has also been considerable interest in the Internet in governmental and religious quarters, although, as noted previously, opposition from these sectors is also significant. Public-governmental uses greatly expanded between 1997 and 2004. Khatami, who himself has been reported to be an Internet enthusiast, was the first presidential candidate in Iran to campaign through his own website (www.khatami.com). The Iranian parliament also has its own web site (majles.org). Furthermore,

the clerics within the government increasingly view the Internet as a way of broadcasting their ideology to a transnational audience, applying perspectives grounded in authoritarian Shi'i thought and using the religious center of Iran, the city of Qom, as their base.

9.3 Three Waves of Enforcing Limitations

Relying on the ongoing tensions between the two principal components of the government—the appointed and elected bodies—and on the authoritarians' lack of familiarity with the Internet and its consequences in the first years, Iran's public as well as private sectors started to open up the Internet to popular use in the late 1990s. Up until 2001, except for the case of Internet cafés, it was reserved primarily for the elite and for university and government cultural institutions. As a result, the Iranian government could not initially act like most authoritarian regimes, which usually dominate the Internet from its beginnings and shape its growth and diffusion. However, when some of the consequences of Internet use in the public sphere were understood, waves of governmental restrictions ensued.

Firewalls and Censorship: 1997–2001

Iran's experience with Internet usage from 1997 to 2001 exemplifies the experience of those states (especially in Africa, the Middle East and Asia) that perceive the adaptation of the technology as a potential social and political problem. Iran's executive and legislative branches of government encouraged the use of the Internet provided that the users did not engage in any activities of a profane or immoral nature, as understood by the authoritarian clerics' reading of Islam. Some political sites, such as that of the *Mujāheddin-e Khalq*, were also prohibited, but the majority of sources for political news, including foreign ones such as the BBC Persian website, were accessible.

The private Internet service providers were not as closely regulated by the government as the Data Communication Company was. The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance oversaw their operations, but strict regulations were not imposed. All private and public companies, even though they were not forcefully required to do so, installed their own firewalls; these, following the example set by the government, filtered out sites deemed pornographic or immoral. In this sense, they participated in "self-censorship," in which they agreed with the unpredictable but looming interventions of state government in the background. This policy also

required service providers to block some sites and bar access to the web for persons under 18. The policy was undertaken after the senior clerics' warnings of the Internet's potential threat to Islamic morals.

Closing the Internet Cafés: 2001–2002

In 2001, the appointed bodies of government in Iran decided that they would engage with the Internet. Upon making this decision, they took firm control of the new medium, extending its reach through a combination of proactive and reactive strategies that focused on control of Internet access. The Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution passed a resolution in August 2001 that governed Iran's connection to the Internet. The resolution stated that access would be selective and granted in a regulated manner. It gave priority to the entities and institutions most relevant to the country's values and ideology. As a direct consequence, the Iranian police closed down more than 450 Internet cafés in Tehran in May 2001. Owners were required to obtain licenses in order to stay in business. It has been estimated that there were approximately 1500 Internet cafés in the capital, and dozens in other major cities. The cafés proved to be popular with the young, who comprise the overwhelming majority of Iran's population.

The authoritarians tightly control the media that target them. Although the government may not have been filtering Internet content coming into Iran in the 1990s, this was largely because of the technical challenges involved. The closure of 450 cafés in mid-May 2001, just before Iran's presidential election, affected mostly those with high-speed access to the Internet. Crackdowns on Internet cafés encouraged the owners to keep a close eye on web surfers. They also prompted café users to patrol their own activities. Café owners established a gild association to prevent ignorant and mischievous people from entering the trade, and to improve the quality of Internet service.

Filtering: 2003 Onwards

The next step of containment, once the previous two proved successful in keeping the public sphere closed, was filtering most of the websites (about 15,000 in May 2003) and almost all blogs (about 25,000, with 20,000 on persianblog and the remaining 5000 on blogspot, in July 2003).[10] This was undertaken on the pretext of protecting the public from "subversive ideas" or defending "national security and unity." Filtering began with limiting profane or immoral transmissions, but it immediately extended to censoring

(to one degree or another) almost all independent channels of information flow other than the media outlets run by the authoritarians.[11] This should not be surprising. The principal tenet of authoritarian discourse is to limit discourse by cracking down on any new mode of communication.[12]

Capping the Speed: 2006 Onwards

To stifle domestic political dissent and combat the influence of Western culture, the Khamenei and Ahmadinejad administration banned high-speed Internet links in 2006. Iran's service providers were told to restrict online speeds to 128 kilobits per second and not offer fast broadband packages.[13] This made it more difficult to download foreign music, films and television programs, which the authorities blame for undermining Islamic culture among the younger generation.

9.4 Dualities Directed at a Paradigm Shift

Monopoly vs. Oligopoly

Internet and satellite TV channels in Iran in the second half of the 1990s, like videocassette recorders in the 1980s, have been effective methods for breaking the monopoly of the Iranian state over channels of communication and the flow of information. These information technologies and channels of communication have made more extreme limitations on public discourse, not to mention the total closing of discourse in the public sphere, impossible. The Iranian government has not been able to root out non-governmental sources of information flow. Competition still exists. Currently it might appear that the state is trying to establish monopolistic control of the data services market, especially Internet services. However, this could be less a function of government policy than a decision on the part of the Ministry of Post, Telegraph, and Telephone to maintain complete control over all telecommunications services, despite legislation that authorizes competition in every area except the provision of basic services (for example, fixed-line switched voice).

Social Control vs. Totalistic Political Control

The Internet is more controversial in Iran than any other country because it might delegitimize the ruling regime. The appointed bodies of government are so concerned about the control of domestic and international

information flows that they cannot tolerate any independent media outlet. Both the appointed bodies and the religious community (the leading clerics) have spoken out against the Internet, but both have also endorsed the use of the Internet if it is within strict limits and for specific approved purposes. The major stated concerns are the availability of pornography and general Western "cultural imperialism," while the potential benefits include the availability of foreign information that can be used to support domestic political agendas, and the use of the Internet for Iran's own cultural and religious propaganda.

The pro-Internet arguments are tempered by the more pessimistic, and common, belief that the West controls the Internet. There is no specific Iranian law to control material on the Internet, and before 2003, the majority of Iranian Internet companies were themselves controlling their data within the framework of an acknowledged need for social control. This was not enough for the authoritarians; filtering was the only acceptable means to meet their demand that the public sphere supported by the Internet be closed.

Regulation vs. Deregulation

Although the idea of the global village assumes that media consumption will produce a democratic and open global society for all individuals and non-governmental organizations, and that it will efface the need for mediating political bodies such as the state, current political debates and concerns over the adoption of media technologies reveal the continued significance of the state apparatus as a regulatory force. In particular, questions of how the Internet should be regulated, or if it should be regulated, and how Iranians can and should represent themselves in nationalist terms, figure very strongly in these political conflicts. The regulation of the media in the Iranian legislative context usually means more limitation and less multiplicity and diversity.

The Center vs. the Margin

The location of access to the Internet is a fundamental enabling or limiting force that shapes how people can and will use the technology. The physical nodes of access affect who has access to the Internet and in what particular ways. The enabling or limiting aspects of these spaces, then, have a significant impact upon how the Internet can be used as a mechanism for the formation or strengthening of a public sphere. This argument

requires giving consideration to the social implications of Internet use, and the daily processes and spaces within which people use it. The central questions are what kinds of political identities are being produced through the use of the Internet within differential spaces of access, and what the possibilities are for the formation of a democratic and open public sphere (including the center and the margin) through these spatially contingent uses. Both centralization and decentralization are tendencies in the struggle to determine how the Iranian state should reconfigure itself through the adoption of Internet technology. The Khatami administration has attempted to reconcile these divergent tendencies by arguing for representation of Iran on the Internet.

Nationalism vs. Trans-nationalism

The prevailing idea about the Internet and identity in contemporary Iran is that nationalist identities can be maintained in transnational activities, through the use of the Internet and the fusion of Iran and the Western world. One example of such a fusion has occurred through the invention of "Farglisi." Farglisi, also called Penglish, is the email language that has evolved from people transliterating Persian using the Roman alphabet. (Such a writing system is not simply and easily achieved, but it has its supporters, especially the young.) However, many in Iran are against transnationalization that amounts to the "Farglisization" of "Iranian" culture through Internet consumption. The basic concern is that the use of the Internet may cause young Iranians to forget their own culture as they become increasingly engulfed by the culture of the global mass media.

Civil vs. Mass Society

The purpose of the Internet café is to provide an environment for sociability and education and to operate as an advertisement for Internet products and services. The very first such café in Tehran was a non-permanent booth sponsored by the Internet Service Provider Neda Rayaneh during the 1998 Annual Book and Media Technology Fair. The first permanent cyber-café was called *Rah-e Ayandeh* ("Way of the Future"). As a space for information access, leisure and correspondence, Iranian cybercafés operate much as British coffee-houses did in the Enlightenment era. They are socially differentiated spaces of political and social exchange (Habermas 1989).

Access to this public sphere is limited. It requires the ability to afford the costs of a personal computer and a monthly subscription rate, a basic level of computer know-how, and ample leisure time. Because of these challenges, while the Apadana Intranet service is an example of a viable socio-political virtual space for gathering, it has limited potential for consensus building. Some newly emerging Internet service providers are alleviating the public sphere limitations by offering more public space for Internet cafés.

9.5 Reactive and Proactive Policies

In cases where Internet use appears threatening, authoritarian states will respond to and even try to preempt these challenges, seeking to maintain control over it, as they have done with other media in the past. These responses are likely to involve a combination of two types of strategies: reactive and proactive. Reactive strategies are the most visible. They involve direct efforts to counter or circumscribe the potential challenges by clamping down on Internet access and use. Included in this category are strategies such as limiting access to networked computers, filtering content or blocking websites with software tools, sending viruses through emails to writers and intellectuals, monitoring users' online behavior, pressing users (through legal and illegal actions) to self-censor their ideas and stories, and even prohibiting Internet usage entirely. Proactive strategies for maintaining and extending centralized control of the Internet amount to guiding the development of the medium to promote the state's interests and priorities.

Through a combination of reactive and proactive strategies, an authoritarian regime such as Iran under the *'ulamā* can capably counter the challenge posed by Internet access and use in the public sphere. While reactive strategies *respond* to existing or potential challenges of Internet access and use and their consequences, proactive strategies aim to *develop* an Internet that is free from such challenges altogether, while at the same time consolidating or extending state control. These strategies may involve efforts to distribute propaganda on the Internet, both domestically and internationally, to build state-controlled national Intranets that serve as a substitute for the global Internet, and to implement e-government services that increase citizen satisfaction with the government; they can even strengthen state power on an international scale through information warfare, such as hacking into websites and spreading viruses.

In addition, governments may harness the Internet to serve economic development goals, with an understanding that economic growth and a general increase in the standard of living may also help shore up public support for the current regime. A variety of different types of authoritarian regime, each facing unique challenges posed by its population's Internet access and use, may still be able to maintain control over the Internet through different combinations of the above strategies.

There are two extremes of authoritarian Internet control. One seeks to limit the medium's political effects by carefully circumscribing access to the Internet, while the other promotes widespread access and relies on content filtering, monitoring, deterrence and self-censorship. The Iranian government has tried both strategies, but thus far it has been unsuccessful in both. Government authorities face a number of internal challenges to Internet governance. There is a multiplicity of governmental branches and organizations considering themselves bureaucratically and ideologically responsible for postings on the Internet, and the power struggles and turf-grabbing by various ministries have curtailed effective governance. Second, there is a lack of communication among bureaus. In part, the state's response to its own internal divisions and inefficiencies has been a reactive one, as the top leadership seeks to consolidate ministries and curtail elected bodies' decision-making powers.

In response to potentially challenging uses of the Internet, the state has developed a variety of restrictive measures for control and containment, including a limitation on individual public access and filtering. It has tried to limit the medium's potential challenges to its authority through a combination of blocking websites and blogs, monitoring chat rooms and online content, carrying out selective arrests and crackdowns, promoting self-censorship and filtering for content. The penetration of unacceptable ideas is most hampered by a simple logistical reality: most of the Internet's content is still in English, rendering it inaccessible to the vast majority of the public. Regardless, the government has also developed a proactive strategy that includes very limited e-government measures and an increased online propaganda effort.

Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979, the Iranian state has maintained a strong, if fluctuating, degree of control over information and communication technologies through monitoring, deterring and filtering. For a short period of time, the Iranian state even controlled Xerox machines and portable printers. The Internet may differ radically from past forms of mass media, but it can also be situated within a wider history of state control of the media and tools of communication.

In the command economy of the Mousavi and Hashemi era, the media's functions were to serve state interests and impose ideological hegemony on society. The Islamic regime is characterized by vertical control of communication, necessitating a top-down media system. This has been complemented by a telecommunications network that focuses on the elite, discouraging horizontal communication among the mass public. With the advent of the Khatami administration, the state loosened its grip on information and communication technologies. Yet it remained very much involved in the control and dissemination of official ideology, as well as in the strategic deployment of telecommunications networks. As a consequence of this control, the development of the Internet in Iran has been largely a product of state initiative.

In the second half of the 1990s and the early years of 2000s, the Internet began to expand in a somewhat undirected manner, but the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution illegally imposed controls on organizations involved with its development. According to Iran's Constitution, only the parliament has the right to pass laws. In 2003, amid disagreement between the main governmental actors—the Ministry of Post, Telegraph and Telephone, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, and the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (state-run radio and TV)—over who was to control the Internet, the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution set up a committee to coordinate filtering Internet websites and blogs.[14] One of the first things the committee did was to establish conclusively which websites and blogs had to be blocked and filtered. (China has taken the same approach in order to coordinate the different governmental institutions involved in Internet policy-making; Foster and Goodman 2000.)

Because the Iranian state has been far from monolithic, it has faced built-in internal challenges that may hamper top-down control of the Internet and other mass media, at least on occasion and with respect to some policies. The Internet is a mass communications tool as well as an outgrowth of the telecommunications network, and, as such, it does not fit neatly into either the state's propaganda apparatus or its telecommunications branch, which were vertically controlled and separate from each other. Many different bureaucratic organs demanded control over lucrative and/or political strategy components of Internet development through policy-making and the execution of the existing policies.

These organs include, but are not limited to, the Telecommunication Company as part of the Ministry of Post, Telegraph and Telephone, the

Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, the Ministry of Intelligence, the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, the Expediency Council, the Supreme Council of Informatics, the judiciary, the parliament, the Guardian Council and Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting. The state is attempting to increase top-level oversight and control of its bureaucracy, in part by using the Internet itself. Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting considers itself to be in charge of the Internet because it has always believed that it is the only audio-visual media policy maker and executor. On the other hand, the Telecommunication Company, the Ministry of Culture, and the Islamic Guidance as well as the Intelligence Ministry believe themselves to be solely responsible for the Internet, although none of these institutions has the power to support or control it.

Most of the speculation about the Internet's political effects in Iran concerns its impact on the public sphere. Because it allows access to multiple sources of images, graphics, news and ideas, some believe that the Internet can challenge state hegemony over the distribution of information and ideology (Taubman 1998). As more and more of Iran's educated, urban young people gain access to the Internet, they are becoming increasingly aware of both foreign and Iranian culture, of different political norms and values, and of the diverse conditions of other peoples around the world. They are becoming more familiar with the ideas and concerns of Iranian intellectuals and political activists. Moreover, in chat rooms focusing on political and social themes, users are learning how to circulate news of recent incidents in Iran (for example, the riots of university students all over the country in June 2003, and the stories about political and ideological serial killings in Tehran, Mash-had and Kerman).

In response to the challenge coming from political activists and dissidents, Iranian authorities have adopted the two-pronged strategy of promoting self-censorship but at the same time filtering material as deemed necessary. Web sites and blogs deemed politically sensitive, including those of foreign news media and human rights organizations, are routinely blocked. A profusion of regulations makes clear that views considered subversive—including those promoting secularization and democratization, or highlighting prominent political figures, such as Montazeri—will not be tolerated.

As is the case in other authoritarian regimes, dissidents and activists outside the country have initiated some of the large-scale and well-publicized web activities dealing with Iran, from information-gathering and dissemination to overt calls for political action. Groups such as Human Rights

Watch, Reporters without Borders and the Iranian Republicans' Coalition post news of arrests and human rights violations, circulate online petitions and maintain email databases of Iranian dissidents and other activists.

Iran's reactive methods of controlling the Internet have received international attention, but the leadership has also developed a limited number of small proactive strategies designed to leverage the Internet in order to strengthen the Iranian state's position in the international arena. Filtering, closing down Internet cafes, and arresting bloggers are some examples of reactive methods. Proactive strategies such as "informatization" of government, reviving the idea of a national Intranet as a substitute for the global Internet, the promotion of Internet development in the hope that with economic modernization the regime's popularity and political legitimacy will increase, and the promotion of Internet-driven economic development by creating high-technology websites are totally absent in Iran.

The Iranian government is mostly focused on propaganda-oriented use of the Internet. Ideas such as social informatics, cyber-civics, e-administration, e-public services, web self-service in the public sector, digital libraries, e-development, computer-mediated communications, informatics for education, computer-mediated education, e-government, inter-governmental informatics, web-enabled government and local e-government are totally absent in Iranian official literature. Using the Internet for political communications, for telematics aimed at development and social change, and for online campaigning, are mostly ignored in Iranian political society. Concepts such as e-communities, digital cities, e-public sphere, e-democracy and e-participation have not yet appeared in mainstream media. Networking schools, universities and communities, online polling and political advertising, and the e-literate society are very much in the early stages of development.

Like most authoritarian regimes, Iran has had a long history of exercising state control over information and communication technologies. In the almost four decades since the onset of the Iranian Revolution, the state's efforts have been motivated by a number of different concerns, but the defense of Iran's sovereignty and national security has not been chief among these. Iranian dissidents abroad have routinely sought to foment internal opposition to the Iranian government through radio and television broadcasts. Government authorities have adopted a defensive posture in response, pouring extensive resources into the jamming of unwelcome radio and television signals. The authorities have reacted strongly against any attempts to communicate outside of official channels. Independent journalists are routinely harassed and arrested, even though their stories rarely reach large numbers of Iranians.

Other political as well as economic concerns have played a role in Iran's motivations for insisting on state control of information and communication technologies. Internationally, the ruling regime has attempted to harness such technology for propagandistic purposes within the framework of vehicles such as Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, which includes World Services, Sahar TV and Press TV in English and *al-'Alam* TV in Arabic. Domestically, state control has allowed the regime to use the mass media for extensive top-down political mobilization and legitimization, important functions since the early days of the Iranian Revolution. In addition, the Iranian leadership has long professed the belief that only state-guided development of media and information technology can extend social benefits to the population as a whole, and it has historically placed an emphasis on extending the telephone network into rural areas. However, as the regime faced mounting economic difficulties during the 1980s and 1990s, shrinking budgets increasingly came to play a role in its centralized control of information and communication technology development.

Internet use by a mass public with diverse interests and concerns poses an especially worrisome challenge to the current regime. Like China and Cuba, the Iranian government is concerned about "ideational pluralism" and the potential for its citizens to access a wide range of information that the government disapproves of on the Internet. This concern extends to other forms of media. Iran pours enormous resources into blocking US-based Iranian radio and television broadcasts, and it quickly banned the homemade satellite dishes that began to proliferate in the early 1990s. In the case of the Internet, therefore, Iran's strategy of access restriction seeks in part to minimize the potential threat of widespread use among the public. However, access restriction, which obviates the need to maintain an elaborate, centralized system of blocking websites and tracking emails (such as is in place in Cuba), has not worked well; when more than one million people have access to the Internet in their homes, enforcing regulations is not easy.

The peak of demand for the Internet in Iran happened in the era of dual sovereignty, when the authoritarians in the government could not react easily and quickly to the increasing access to the Internet. The peak of demand for the satellite TV channels took place during the Rafsanjani administration, at the time of the fifth parliament, which was ruled by an authoritarian majority. Access to satellite TV channels was totally banned for most Iranians. The relative few who were granted access to satellite dishes were recognized as being generally sympathetic to the regime's ideology, and their use of the medium posed little threat to state authority.

State-sponsored propaganda has become increasingly important on the Internet. Since the establishment of reformers' websites such as *Emrooz* (representing religious intellectuals) and *Rouydād* (the official website of the Islamic Participation Front, one of the most important political parties of a coalition that had the majority in the sixth parliament), the current regime's authoritarians have taken a keen interest in using the Internet to counter the negative images of the regime presented on reformers' websites. News websites such as *Daricheh*, *Baztab* and *Yek Khabar* have been established in reaction to reformers' news websites. Various government-affiliated portals offer official perspectives on current events. A number of state publications are available online, including all the state-run newspapers and state-run radio and TV.

The Iranian government, unlike the Cuban and Chinese governments, has not attempted to leverage the capabilities of the Internet in order to improve the socio-economic conditions of the Iranian people. Iran has introduced economic reform only where absolutely necessary. Economic reform is embraced in those areas that help the regime to retain a closed, authoritarian political system. The country has not enthusiastically instituted market reforms throughout its economy. As a regime that is not committed to the development of a market-oriented information economy, it has been willing to forego the potential economic benefits of widespread Internet access and adopt a more defensive measure of control.

A number of externally based Iranian dissidents, human rights organizations, and others have used the Internet to press for political change in Iran and an end to authoritarian rule. The ruling regime does not have any real control over Internet use outside of its borders, so it has been forced to accept the reality of this opposition, although it has occasionally tried to disable foreign websites with hacker attacks. Internet use for international pressure on authoritarian regimes is often effective only in a roundabout way—through its impact on the policy of governments that are concerned but that are not the main target of the Internet pressure. It is still unclear whether such pressure can significantly influence an authoritarian state's policy decisions.

The diffusion of the Internet in Iran does not necessarily spell the demise of authoritarian rule, but it will open a treasure chest of information and crack the shell of cultural authoritarianism. This opening up will happen not only at the hands of dissidents and opponents to the government but also at the hands of the government itself. The Iranian government has begun to promote widespread Internet access even as it remains even more resolved than the Chinese to censor the content available on the web.

9.6 Uses and Accessibility

The politics of Internet use in Iran, particularly in regard to the potential for the formation of a democratic and pluralistic public sphere through Internet use, revolve around questions of use, control, representation and accessibility. For this very new technology, to which few people currently have access (less than 5% of the population in 2003, and about 7% in 2004), questions of use and utility are of the utmost political importance, because arguments of use can determine whose interests Internet use will serve. The utility or usefulness of the Internet is also socially constructed. Different political factions with different political objectives have used the Internet in different ways. Issues of control and censorship are highly significant, as they are tied to central issues of authoritarianism and democratization.

The government wants to keep the door of the information house closed but at the same time use the house as a means for propaganda and development. The question of access, determined in part by the politics of use and control, brings the *spatial* politics of Internet use to the foreground. Given that Internet access exists differentially in a range of public to private spaces, from university campuses to cyber-cafés to the space of the home, it is crucial to examine how the Internet is used in different kinds of spaces, if we are to grasp its political significance. Although access increasingly exists in various urban centers in Iran, it is also important to stress that access is much greater in Tehran, the capital, than in any other urban center. In this sense, Tehran's urban dominance over media technologies continues with respect to Internet use and access.

The spatial politics of Internet use as the new domain of Iranian atmosphere, and most importantly as it pertains to accessibility, significantly redefines and redraws the political significance of Internet use. The politics of use and control are affected by the social factor of accessibility. Use and utility are restricted by the types of use people can have in different kinds of spaces and, more generally, the types of people who have access to different kinds of uses. Public environments such as universities primarily enable academic uses of the Internet, while the cyber-cafés and home personal computers enable more personal entertainment, information and leisure-oriented practices. The fact that there is a division not only between those who have access and those who do not, but also between the types of space in which people have access, significantly colors how the technology can be used. Leisure uses are much more limited, even within the middle class.

The politics of control are also redefined through this exclusive upper-middle class type of leisure use. The types of use officially sanctioned by the state—primarily academic, religious and business—are challenged by this other kind of use with its own developing independent social institutions, such as running polls, chat rooms and cyber-cafés. In this sense, what is a matter of leisure-time activity also becomes a political force, because it provides the bases from which a new democratic public sphere is being formed. At the same time, this is a highly limited form of public sphere, to which access is bounded according to social class and age. Constructions of gendered difference appear to be much less a source of limitation, as no gender-specific patterns in use or access can be established. In this sense, the new electronic public sphere being formed holds some potential for gender-based equalization.

It may seem unusual to argue that leisure-time activities are such a pivotal force in the politics of Internet use and the politics of public sphere formation. Nonetheless, given the normative political potential of some of the types of leisure-time use, they must be recognized as a political force of growing significance. Chat rooms and running polls, for example, are both highly interactive media forms and hold the potential for a kind of political, cultural and social consensus-building process that has not existed in recent Iranian history.

In light of the political control over cultural forms (such as various print and broadcast media) in twentieth-century Iran, it is reasonable to conclude that this type of leisure-time activity is a form of subversive resistance to state-sanctioned ideas of media use. This leisure dimension of Internet use is politically important for the ways in which it is almost exclusively performed by an upper-middle class. As the Internet comes more into general use, it could become more socially inclusive. As it is being used now, however, it is the base from which a new, simultaneously nationalist and transnational political public sphere, bound to specific upper-middle-class identity, is being formed.

9.7 Conclusion: Problems and Prospects

The Internet is not an inherently democratizing and emancipating technology because many authoritarian regimes have transferred a long and successful history of control over previous information and communication technologies to effective control of the Internet. Through reactive strategies that range from the restriction of access to the promotion of

self-censorship, authoritarian regimes can successfully restrain the potential challenges posed by various types of Internet use directed toward the public sphere. In addition, these governments can proactively guide the development of the Internet so that the medium extends and consolidates state power. Nevertheless, authoritarian regimes will have to continually adapt their measures of control if they want to counter effectively the challenges of future variations in such technologies.

The outlook for the further diffusion of the Internet in Iran is uncertain. The principal reason for this uncertainty is the current inability of the government to establish a consistent regulatory environment and clear policies, and unambiguously to assign responsibilities.[15] The Internet, like the remainder of the telecommunications sector and the Iranian government at large, is presently most affected by competing interests and power centers. Factors relating to academic and/or commercial potential, national security, legality and operational efficiency are not as important. It would be a insightful research project to illustrate comprehensively how authoritarian states can counter the many challenges posed by Internet development.

Much is different about the history and current state of the Internet in each state, and about various regimes' reactive strategies for controlling Internet use and development. Nonetheless, these regimes also have much in common, principally in the proactive strategies that they have employed for guiding Internet development to serve state interests. Comparing and contrasting their experiences can help us understand the Internet's impact on the public sphere in different types of authoritarian regimes—a particularly relevant exercise when one considers the number of authoritarian countries, in Asia, the Middle East and elsewhere, that are engaged with this technology.

Notes

1. Some examples are Greenpen and Digital Freedom Network.
2. Some other news websites that have the same characteristics are: alliran.com, daftartahkimnews.persianblog.com, daneshjoo.org, daneshjooyan.org, emrooz.org, hammihan.com, iran-azad.de, jebhemelliiran.org, manshoor.org, mehr.org, mellimazhabi.org, mihan.net, nehzat.org, nehzateazadi.org, newsgooya.com, noandishan.org, parspejvak.com, peiknet.com, peykeiran.com, radiofarda.com, roshangari.com, rouydad.com, saanei.com, tahkimdemocracy.com, voanews.com/persian and 7sang.com.

3. The last one was in August 2004. *Rouydad*, *Emrouz* and *Bamdad* were filtered at this time.
4. The authorities moved quickly in 2003 to suppress the dissidents' web use within the country, shutting down most of the Iranian websites and blogs and blocking public access to about 15,000 websites overseas. In August 2001, the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution issued a series of regulations forbidding the dissemination of vice and politically sensitive material on the Internet (a-listonline.com/iran/html/article212.html).
5. Internet users increased 90% in one year alone: 2002 (khabarnameh.gooya.com/technology/archives/008729.php).
6. The number of people who have access to the Internet is said to be between 3.5 and 6.5 million in 2004 (news.iran-emrooz.de/more.php?id=8102_0_21_0_M).
7. Bogert, C., Chat Rooms and Chadors, *Newsweek* 126(8), 1996: 36.
8. meria.idc.ac.il/journal/1999/issue4/jv3n4a1.html.
9. *Iran*, November 1, 1999: 13.
10. radiofarda.com/transcripts/culture/2003/07/20030711_1730_1040_1450_FA.asp.
11. In another wave of filtering in August 2004, *Rouydad*, *Emrouz* and *Bamdad*, three independent media outlets that were run by the Islamic reformists, were terminated and some of their editors and electronic journalists arrested.
12. In August 2003, Persian language blogs (29,559), preceded by English, Portuguese and Polish, held the fourth rank in the list of blog numbers by different languages (blogcensus.net/?page=lang).
13. guardian.co.uk/technology/2006/oct/18/news.iran.
14. emrooz.org/pages/date/8204/20/news02.htm; europemedia.net/shownews.asp?ArticleID=15314.
15. According to an administrative circular, approved by the Iranian cabinet members on August 20, 2006 (daneshafza.com/main/news.php?item.41.13), all websites and blogs had to apply for a license to the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. All activities of non-licensed websites and blogs would be considered illegal. Chapter 3 of this circular presents a long list of not-to-do for websites and weblogs, very much similar to the Iranian press code. This circular reminds Iranian cultural and media historians of a similar procedure for having Xerox and fax machines in the early 1980s.

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PART V

A New Era of Protests

CHAPTER 10

Prelude to the Green Movement

The Islamic regime has experienced three confrontations with the reform movement in Iran. In the beginning, it tried to live with it, especially after the election of President Khatami in a landslide in 1997. For about a year, the authoritarian faction, which is organized around the leader's office, was in shock and tried to understand what had happened. It then began to collect and organize its failed forces. In the second round, the appointed bodies, all listening to Khamenei, launched a heavy propaganda campaign against journalists and the semi-independent press. At the same time, the leader's loyalists in the Ministry of Intelligence began to kill independent writers and political activists, something that was later called the "serial killings of dissidents." This round ended with a massive closing of the semi-independent press and arrests of intellectuals and journalists. The third round happened at the end of the sixth Majles through the disqualification of almost all independent and reformist candidates in the seventh parliamentary lection. After this rigged and unfair election, the Khatami administration in its second term was totally crippled.

10.1 A Brutal Regime and a Nation Sick of Violence

The Iranian reform movement of the 1990s was for Iranians a clear sign of transition from a violent to a non-violent political mood. After experiencing a revolution and war, Iranians did not want to see more bloodshed in

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M. Mohammadi, *The Iranian Reform Movement*,
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exchange for ambiguous results. Other than a small group of clerics in power and their loyalists, the whole country did not see violence as a solution, rather as a problem.

In the four decades since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, other than killing some members of the Iranian exile community, Iranian ruling clerics and their loyalists have not been able to carry out terrorist attacks in other parts of the world directly. Other than providing logistic and training support, Iranian individuals have not been involved in Lebanese Hezbollah's military actions. There is no evidence that even the most brutal members of the Islamic Republic Guards Corp or Basij have been involved in terrorist attacks outside Iran against foreign nationals. Even for killing Iranians in Europe, Lebanese operatives were hired to do the dirty work (for example, Anis Naqqash, a Lebanese citizen, was involved in the failed assassination attempt in France against the former Iranian prime minister under the shah, Shahpour Bakhtiar). In the weeks following the assassinations of Iranian dissidents in the Mikonos restaurant, several people were arrested, among them one Iranian and four Lebanese citizens. In cases such as the 1996 Khobar Tower bombing or the 1994 bombing of a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, Iran has been mainly accused to have been involved in backing, planning and providing logistics, but no Iranian individual has been proven to be involved. Why is this so?

The Fall of Iranian Political Islam

Political Islam is no longer a vibrant and energetic ideology among independent groups in Iranian society. It is supported only by the ruling clerics as the official ideology of the state, and people have many motivations, including economic benefits and governmental positions, to pretend to believe in this ideology. In contrast to among Iranian students abroad before the Revolution, there is no longer a vibrant Iranian Islamic student movement outside the country. In Islamic ceremonies in American universities, the most absent groups are Iranian students. Iranians are in fact non-existent in grassroots Islamic activism in Europe and North America. This is due to the brutal policies of the Islamic government in enforcing *shari'ah* law, suppressing the Iranian public, and introducing the clerics' will as Islamic ordinances. Ordinary people who have lived under clerical rule have no motivation to be part of an Islamic community. Most Iranians who step outside the country rid themselves of the symbols of Islam that are enforced by the clerical regime. The Islamic state and political sphere are no longer a political ideal for Iranians; they are nightmares.

The provocative themes promoted by the state-run media, all radio and TV channels, all news agencies, and most of the press may attract the attention of the West. However, it goes little noticed inside the country. The gallery which was running the "Holocaust International Cartoon Contest" show was virtually empty. While sympathizing with Palestinians and other Muslim nations and angry at Israel and the USA, the Iranian people are mostly tired of the misuse of these causes by the clerics to strengthen their authority and silence Iranian dissidents. All anti-Western protests are organized by the government. Islamists do not feel the necessity of working within the framework of non-governmental organizations while they have the government resources in their disposal. This makes the mobilization process and especially involvement of the youth very difficult for them.

No Iranian Closed Community Abroad

Iranians in the USA and Europe do not share a grievance-based identity, unlike most Muslim people in Europe. Those Muslims. Algerians in France and Pakistanis in the UK, come from countries which experienced colonization. Other than the individualistic approach of Iranians, which means they disperse across the whole society, they are not in dire need of being with their fellow Iranians. This makes the possibility of building an Iranian community or ghetto abroad, unlike those that the Chinese, Pakistanis or Algerians have established in Europe and the USA, very slim. No community and no ethnicity-based neighborhood mean easier assimilation and less possibility for identification with a common nationality-based cause and hence less possibility for grievances based on ethnicity and race.

In contrast to most true believers of Islam or Judaism in the West, Iranians are not culturally isolated; they are economically and socially assimilated into Western societies and no government or radical group could use them as a target group for planting and executing violence.

Well-Off Iranians Abroad

Most Iranian immigrants in Europe and USA are members of the middle class and desire to better themselves. They mostly come from educated families in Iran that belong to the lower class; US economic growth provides enough opportunity for these people. There are two main roots of terrorism: discrimination and poverty; socio-economic grievances are necessary but not a sufficient condition for a resort to violence.

No Ideological Grievances

The Palestinian–Israeli conflict and the US occupation of Iraq are not critical for Iranian communities abroad. Although some Iranians criticize Israel from a moral standpoint, they believe that this conflict continues due to a lack of an even-handed approach by the US government. Homegrown terrorism in Europe has its roots in the colonial background of Muslim communities in Europe and the low status of these groups in the UK, Germany and France.

The main difference between Iranian and non-Iranian immigrants in the UK, Europe and America is the presence of preachers and "Muslim community leaders" who preach violence in non-Iranian communities and the total absence of this phenomenon among Iranians who do not like to see these people when they are living outside their country. Mesbah Yazdi, the mastermind of terror and violence in Iran, offered to the Iranian government to send 5000 preachers to the USA in 2005 but there is no Iranian herd for these shepherds in the USA if they get there. They can count on Pakistani, Lebanese, Iraqi, Bahraini, Saudi and Afghani Shi'is, not Iranian.

America is a nation of immigrants, and people who are eager to assimilate and integrate, such as Iranians, do not need their dense communities in the USA. While "political correctness" in the USA and the official policy of "multi-culturalism" pushed Muslim isolation into "cultural ghettos" and created "cultural apartheid," Iranian communities have their own small cultural gatherings and ceremonies that have nothing to do with identity politics. Once Muslims are isolated culturally, it is easier for those preachers to "demonize" non-Muslims and justify violence against them. Iranians who are tired of demonizing others are not interested in this culture of hatred.

Emancipated Immigrants

Different waves of Iranian immigrants who live in the West belong to an emancipated group; these previously disenfranchised people have freed themselves from authoritarian clerical rule and separated themselves from an artificially homogenized society into fields with different potentialities for personal development. Although having some concern about their homeland and keeping some traditions alive, these emancipated individuals do not want to go back.

10.2 Fraudulent Regime

The totalitarian rule of the Shi'i clergy in Iran has survived the past four decades through pretensions to sacredness and by creating enemies, playing the role of the victim, creating embarrassing scenes, psychological projection, fraud, mendacity, corruption, suppression and terror. These fraudulent behaviors are an inseparable part of the rule of the clergy because this regime, which is not in power through the votes of the people but which holds itself to be the earthly representative of God, has no choice but to resort to fraud in order to survive. Although the history of the fraudulent ways of authoritarian regimes is as old as the social life of humanity and despite the fact that the literature of political opposition is replete with references to the regime's lies, the fraudulent methods and tactics of those at the very summit of power in the Islamic Republic have rarely been discussed.

The unspoken ideological Machiavellianism of the totalitarian "rule of the jursiprudent," falls somewhere in the area between morality and politics. In final analysis, all principles in this regime have been reduced to a single one: the preservation of the interests and preferences of the ruling clergy within the framework of a totalitarian regime. As a result, nothing is beneath the clergy's standards of conduct and any principle or rule is open to violation. Law, morality and even Shi'i religious law would not curb the clergy's fraudulent ways. The ruling clerics have even used the survival instinct and external threats as an excuse for continuing their rule.

In Iran, fraud is not committed by the clergy alone; it is, in fact, an inseparable part of the social fabric of Iranians' lives. Among Iranians, those who have or desire to have a larger share of power, wealth and social standing naturally commit more fraud, especially by shutting down or undermining establishments or apparatuses that can measure fraud, such as the independent media, institutions with oversight or civil institutions. Tolerance, on a daily basis, of the clergy's fraudulent ways itself results from the people's awareness that they themselves behave in the same way in their daily lives. However, the ruling clergy has raised the commitment or incidence of fraud to unexpected, complex and unbelievable proportions. That is why it is necessary to analyze this phenomenon.

There are two questions we must ask. First, is this the fraudulent *modus operandi* of the clerical establishment and others dependent upon a time-limited phenomenon that is part and parcel of the period of rule of the Islamic Republic, or is it related to the culture and tradition of the Shi'i clergy? Second, how do these fraudulent deeds take place and how are new and innovative are the methods used in perpetrating them?

Institutionalized Fraud

Fraud consists of hiding the truth or turning it upside down with the goal of misleading people, through trickery, hypocrisy, deception, entrapment and cheating. The Shi'i clergy has never announced that it is telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. The clergy's goal has been to carry out Islamic religious orders, and it considers every tool that can be used to do so as acceptable. On the basis of fundamental principles in Shi'i jurisprudence and religious teachings such as *taqiyeh,*[1] expediency, hardship and distress, any action is acceptable for self-preservation as well as for the preservation of the "realm of Islam." Thus fraud, in all its dimensions and variety, is extremely prevalent in Shi'ite culture.

The main occupation of the Shi'i clergy is the "propagation" or production and dissemination of propaganda. When propaganda tools are combined with the goal of gaining absolute power, wealth and high social standing in society, the result is the claim of being in possession of the absolute truth. Propaganda is directed toward hiding the truth, spinning lies and committing fraud. In reality, altering the truth by putting an emphasis on the desired goals, remaining silent on unpleasant points, choosing information or news for dissemination on the basis of ideological considerations and with the goal of provoking certain feelings among the people; these are among the principles of any type of propaganda, be it political, commercial or religious. When rumors are combined with turning a blind eye to the truth or actively hiding it, then fraud comes about.

There are certain situations in which social and psychological grounds for fraud by the rulers flourish: the difficulty of discerning what is corrupt from what is not corrupt by a large sector of the public; the necessity of trusting one another for the purposes of the survival of social life; and inclination of many human beings to being taken in or duped, especially under difficult living conditions (when a blind eye is turned to lies). In Iranian society, the trust placed by the religious public on the clerical leaders has made the ground even more fertile for the commission of fraud by the ruling clergy.

Manifestations or Models of Fraud

The fraudulent activities of the regime of the Islamic Republic can be observed clearly in several of its behavioral models or manifestations. The first such model or manifestation is "doctoring" and the alteration of numbers, statistics and indices. For example, the Ahmadinejad administration

first tried to claim that the unemployment statistics were lower than they truly were. When this was criticized by experts, his administration sought to make the level of unemployment lower by altering the very definition of unemployment. Based on the new definition of unemployment put forth by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in connection with the fall in unemployment statistics, every person who works for even as little as one hour per week is considered employed.[2]

In the course of every election, based on their different ideals and goals, the concerned organizations within the Islamic Republic have presented contradictory information about the country's population. The statistics on the country's population are increased and decreased in accordance with the need, respectively, of making the number of participants in elections and the votes cast by supporters of authoritarianism appear higher, and the votes cast by the regime's critic—if their candidates are approved by the Council of Guardians—lower.

During the rule of Khamenei/Ahmadinejad, on a monthly, as well as annual basis, every governmental organization would announce a specific inflation rate, based on its own specific definition of inflation. For example, the statistics presented by the Central Bank were different from those announced by the Ministry of Economy and Finance, as well as from those announced by the speaker of the government. Instead of striving to lower inflation itself, the government officials lower the inflation "rate" by altering and eliminating from the equation certain goods and then present the "doctored" rate as the official rate to the public.

The debate on privatization is another such example. From 2005 to 2008, officials in the Ahmadinejad administration presented three different sets of numbers of transfers from the public to the private sector in the Hashemi and Khatami governments. The first such occasion was on February 24, 2007, when the newspaper *Iran*, quoting the president, announced that the total amount of transfers in the years 1991–2005 was 3500 billion Toumans ($3.6 billion USD). Less than two years after these clear statements from the president, on December 21, 2008, Ahmadinejad's Minister of Economy and Finance announced the total amount of transfers by the "construction and reform governments" in the years 1991–2005 to have been 2750 billion Toumans ($2.8 billion USD). Only four days later, in Qom, by deducting 2000 billion Toumans ($206 million USD), Ahmadinejad claimed that, in the previous governments, as he announced himself in the period from February 24 through March 20, only 52,500 billion Toumans ($54.25 million USD) had been transferred from the public sector to the private sector.[3]

The second such manifestation or model concerns the engineering of information and news. On the one hand, the regime has monopolized the media. On the other, the information and the news it presents are only items that confirm the regime's ideology and suppress its opponents.

The regime of the Islamic Republic has reduced the dissemination of news and information to propaganda and this system is used in all print and electronic media. In the regime's policy toward the media, which is based not on belief but on a set of directives, news or reports are not presented to society without major structural, expressive and even grammatical alterations. For example, one of these directives is that negative news related to the West, especially the USA, and positive news about Iranian society should be presented in every news segment. Thus, Iranian citizens do not become familiar with the positive achievements of Western societies in the social, cultural and scientific arenas.

Yet another such manifestation or model is labeling or choosing names. In choosing names, all positive titles belong to the regime and all negative ones belong to the regime's opponents. Those who support the regime and ruling clergy are called "fundamentalists," even though they do not believe in any fundamental principle other than their own interests and there is no law or rule in the country which they have not violated. However, the regime's opponents are labeled "hooligans" and "extremists." The *Keyhan* newspaper, as the mouthpiece of the leader (Khamenei) and his establishment, portrays all persons who do not directly follow Khamanei's orders and those around him as anti-revolutionaries, spies, hypocrites, drug addicts, womanizers, cowards and materialist.

The fourth manifestation or model involves the re-making of existing concepts and the use of new and misleading concepts that legitimize repression and denigrate democracy. Examples of these, as used in the Iranian leaders' speech and literature, are: *ta'zir* ("punishment"), the new name for torture; confession, the new name for an "admission" under duress; the "leadership of the world of Islam," the new title for the leaders of the Islamic Republic regime; "parliamentary *coup d'état*," the new name for winning an election inside the country; and "overthrow," the new name for any type of domestic political opposition. The clerical leaders consider the regime's capital, Tehran, the most important metropolis in the entire Islamic world and their own rule as the rule of justice. From their perspective, Iran under the absolute rule of the clergy is the freest country and the best democracy in the world—even though this regime ranks at the top of every chart for violating human rights and the fundamental tenets of democracy.

Plagiarism constitutes the fifth manifestation or model of this fraud. This means that the leaders of the Islamic Republic give themselves and their rule credit for all national achievements, even if they played no role in achieving them. It is not enough for the political leaders to hold on to absolute power and a large part of society's wealth. They want to get credit for all scientific and cultural achievements and terminology as well. For example, Gholam 'Ali Haddad 'Adel, the former leader of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, referred to Khamenei as the "Father of Encyclopedias" in Iran, solely because, in that year, Khamenei had noted the importance of encyclopedias.[4]

In this process, the leaders appear to have completely ignored the fact that, in addition to Avicenna's *Daneshnameh 'Alaï* ("*Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*"), Imam Fakhr Razi's *Jame'-ol-'Olum* ("*Compendium of Sciences*"), Ghotboddin Shirazi's *Dorrat-o-Taj* ("*Pearl of the Crown*") and the encyclopedias produced during the rule of Nassereddin Shah Qajar, such encyclopedias were produced in the period immediately preceding the Revolution as well. The *Encyclopedia Iranica* and *Encyclopedia Islamica* projects began in 1975 under the direction of Dr. Ehsan Yarshater and a major Persian Dictionary project began in 1966 under the direction of Gholam-Hossein Mosaheb and Reza Aqsa. Normally, a title such as the "Father of Encyclopedias" should be bestowed upon those who have dedicated their lives to science, not upon a political leader who, in his meetings with various groups, makes some general comments.

"Innovations"

None of the above-mentioned manifestations or models can be considered "innovations." Rather, they, through some novel ideas and doctoring, have been Islamicized and Iranianized. All these models have been used by previous authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, and Iran's current leaders have learned much from those who came before them. The new struggle against imperialism and political liberalism has quickly placed Iran's ruling clergy among the ranks of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, such as those in Eastern Europe before the fall of Communism. Iran's leading clerics imitated the Eastern European leaders' models, adding to them Iranian techniques with an Islamic bend.

In re-making them, Iranian officials have made good use of Islamic ideology, the political literature of fascist, communist and military ("Junta"-style) regimes throughout the world, as well as of the psychology

of political and commercial propaganda in the West, all of which have been presented within a "native" (Iranian) and religious framework.

The clergy's ideological apparatus, which, after the Revolution, could not justify the revolutionary movement and the overthrow of monarchical rule, has been utilized to justify the absolute rule of the clergy and devise tactics for ensuring its survival. The Islamic regime's propaganda machine has constantly formed and updated the models listed, which have been rendered more complex through social change.

A list of important innovations of the Islamic Republic's propaganda machine would include the following: (1) portraying imperialism and "global dominance" as "Satanic" and applying Quranic concepts on the basis of such ideas, (2) calling the free flow of information a "cultural raid," (3) calling the "cleansing" of university professors and students a "cultural revolution," (4) using Islamic legal concepts, such as *ta'zir* and "confession," to refer to torture and the admission to facts under duress, (5) applying all the qualities of a sultan to the "jurisprudent" in Iranian political literature, and (6) using negative Quranic interpretations to label opponents and critics.

10.3 Iran's Fraudulent Elections: New Alignments and Old Ideologies

The Islamic Republic of Iran's parliamentary, municipality and presidential elections have been the scenes for the shaping of new coalitions inside the polity. The reformist camp, during the third municipality and ninth parliamentary election, unified behind Khatami, Karroubi and Rafsanjani as the trustees of about 20 reformist, pragmatist and leftist parties and associations. Khatami had the trust of progressive reformist groups such as the Participation Front and the Islamic Revolution's Mujahedin Organization; Karroubi led leftist Islamist groups such as the National Trust Party, and Rafsanjani had the trust of authoritarian developmentalist groups such as the Construction Agents Party. The authoritarian developmentalists stood between conservative and reformist camps. The meeting of these three leading clerics focusing on the parliamentary election was a sign of reformists' readiness to form a new alliance; this was partially successful in the municipality election of December 2006.

The developments in the authoritarian camp were negative for the ruling faction. On the one hand, the gap between Ahmadinejad and non-military authoritarians, whether traditionalists or developmentalists—the

Mo'talefeh (Coalition) Party and Ābādgarān—was widening; on the other hand, authoritarian developmentalists who supported Ahmadinejad in the 2005 presidential election were now aligning themselves with developmentalists in the reformist camp. The array of political forces in the new municipality council of Tehran were telling signs of the coalitions in the upcoming parliamentary election. The authoritarian developmentalists who supported Qālibāf for the mayoralty of Tehran did not show any signs of allying themselves with Ahmadinejad supporters, who had a quarter of the votes in the council. However, there was some cooperation between Qālibāf supporters and the reformists, who also had a quarter of the votes in Tehran's municipality council.

With the increase of inflation, unemployment rates and corruption during the 2005–2009 period, Ahmadinejad and his military-security alliance could no longer use a social justice agenda to motivate the poor to rally behind them. Traditionalists in the authoritarian camp who submitted almost all executive and member of parliament positions to the military-security alliance around Ahmadinejad to defeat the reformists in 2004 and 2005 parliamentary and presidential elections were disappointed and no longer thought that this alliance could deliver.

Nevertheless, the new coalitions did not show any progress in manipulating the existing ideologies and policies, and the processes of legislating and policy-making in the country. In this respect, the authoritarian camp was successful in limiting the prospect of political progress and reform in the country. The political society was confined to the agendas defined by the ruling clerics. This is exactly what the ruling clerics wanted to see in the country: a dwarf politics fitting a dwarf political leadership. The nuclear issue and the (failed) war on poverty helped the government freeze public discourse and close the public sphere.

When most leading intellectuals and writers left the country in the early 2000s, the public debate started to stagnate. The emigration of Iranian reformists and religious intellectuals to Europe and North America was the most significant human displacement in the post-Islamic revolution era since the emigration after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. The harsh censorship on intellectual production by the administration played a crucial role. Hence, the production of new ideas and presentation of new theories to explain the religious, social and political status quo and finding ways toward the future became sluggish compared to the late 1990s. Now the reformists in the country were running short of theories and ideas that were usually the driving force for change.

Using the backdrop of US threats and the disloyalty of some candidates to the *velayat-e faqih*, the Guardian Council slaughtered independent and famous reformist candidates in every election. Having learned the lessons of 1997 and 1999, when the Council qualified some reformist candidates, who were mostly elected, it did not see any reason to make the same mistake again. In response, the reformist and pragmatist parties nominated candidates who were less well-known to political society and the reformist camp was able to agree upon these. The downside of this procedure was that the low-profile and technocrat candidates were more vulnerable to the dictates of the leader and his loyalists in the Islamic Republic Guards Corp and the security system.

The agendas of candidates who passed the Guardian Council hurdle was to focus on inflation, unemployment, skyrocketing housing prices, poverty and corruption in domestic issues and the US threat and sanctions in the international arena. Additionally, they avoided talking about two sets of issues: foreign relation issues, especially nuclear proliferation; and human rights. The first was considered to be the leader's prerogative, and intimidated candidates were not brave enough to become involved in this problematic issue. The second one was the Achilles' heel of the ruling clerics; anybody who promoted human rights issues would be confronted with the cancellation of the election in her/his district even if s/he were elected.

Although 2007–2008 was called "the year for national solidarity" by the leader, there were enough signs put out by the security and military officials that no dissidence would be tolerated. For this reason, the Intelligence Minister, Mohseni Eje'i, attributed all demonstrations of teachers, workers and women as "the measures of [the] enemy's fifth column."

While the independent entities such as civil society institutions, labor unions and student associations were under pressure and had no voice in the domestic media, it was expected that they would silently boycott most of the elections unless they felt that some opening was available to challenge the government through participation. No candidate able to pass the narrow funnel of the Guardian Council has been able to represent the demands and concerns of the dissident groups. This has widened the gap between the government and the people that narrowed during the Khatami administration.

Iran's electoral politics in the post-revolutionary era reflects the sense of effectiveness and the hope for change, and the same time the sense of ideological discrimination and embarrassment. While elected bodies are not the most important institutions of political power in Iran, elections are

not meaningless either because political activists are rational enough to understand that change is unlikely to occur at the top of the political pyramid and they should seek the change at the lower levels. Iran's irregular or peculiar form of election politics—the product of electoral manipulation and the disqualification of legitimately nominated and elected candidates—has led the partial democracy system implemented in the Constitution to a sultanistic rule by a few. The fact that the elections have not been fair is less important than understanding the election process, voting patterns and electoral politics in the country, especially in the post-reform movement era.

There is a direct relationship between the level and harshness of disqualifications and the real power of the social and political forces in Iranian society. By "real power," I mean the power to organize and mobilize sections of the society as a political group sees necessary. In the post-reform movement era, the disqualifications intensified due to the banning of hundreds of reformist media outlets by the judiciary. Voter apathy usually emboldens the Guardian Council members to disqualify their opponents; the decision on the part of the political players to engage or disengage, which has delegitimizing effects, also emboldens or weakens the Guardian Council members in their decisions.

There are also statistical discrepancies in every election: for example, in the 2008 parliamentary election, the government officials claimed that as many as 65% of Iran's 44 million eligible voters took part, trumpeting this as a victory over foreign plots to undermine the Islamic Revolution. Yet the Ministry of the Interior's own figures indicated a national turnout of 52%, and no more than 30% in Tehran, close to the official tally in the most recent election in 2004, which many Iranians boycotted after a similar mass disqualification of reformists.[5] The number of eligible voters according to the Iran's Center of Statistics was 47.7 million in 2008, while the Guardian Council's figure was 43.6 million.[6] In spite of the stuffing of ballot boxes and rigged counts, the government has not been able to present higher turnout percentages.

Whenever political competition is directed toward social issues and public agenda, the turnout is relatively high. The voter turnout for the municipal election of 2006 throughout the country was well over 60%, but it is the reported 47% turnout in Tehran that stands out. This is almost four times higher than the elections for the second municipal council in Tehran and even higher than the elections for the first municipal council in Tehran. Whenever a group feels strong, it does not enter a coalition and

loses the election. Ahmadinejad supporters came up with separate lists in the third municipality election and lost. The reformists came up with separate lists in the second municipality election and lost, but they united in the third and fared better. The reformist and authoritarian camp learned that they must be united against the other side if they wanted to achieve results in the elections. The second and third municipality elections taught both sides that any group in each camp need others to be successful too. After every victory, the reformist and authoritarian camps fought one another alike; they were divided into multiple factions and hence weakened themselves. The reformers won about 40% of seats in major cities in the third municipality election. They also had different candidates in ninth presidential election and the eighth parliamentary elections and did worse.

Wherever women are given the chance to campaign and their names have been on the candidate lists, they have been successful in winning votes. This is more the case in municipality elections rather than parliamentary and presidential ones. Women have been top vote winners in several major cities in municipality elections. This is a major accomplishment given their double limitations imposed in terms of advertising, funding and electoral manipulation. Though the Guardian Council filter the files of both male and female candidates alike, the files of the women candidates are scrutinized regarding hijab, makeup, and not mingling with men in the public.

The presence of athletes in winning lists in some cities means a success for the authoritarian camp to depoliticize municipality councils, which should be an element of the political process: now instead of individuals such as Hajjarian, Mr. Sa'i (an Iranian gold medal winner in martial arts in the Olympics) should be the ace of the reformist camp. Due to the authoritarian election policies, athletes and artists are making more space in political seats for themselves. Political factions in Iranian politics have put athletes and artists' names on the ballot to make their lists more appealing to people who are not affiliated with factional politics and to decrease the possibility of their candidates being disqualified.

The economy is the important factor in elections when there is no hope for political, social or cultural change. Khatami was re-elected in the eighth presidential election while his first term left the economy in dismal shape with high unemployment and inflation, seething labor unrest and a widespread perception that things are not improving. In the ninth presidential election, some sections of the society voted for a populist faction that preached bringing oil revenues to every Iranian household. In that period, there was not a real sense that the results of the elections could lead to a change of direction in the country; the population had lost hope for political, social and cultural change.

With the decrease of participants in elections, the necessary percentage of the ballots cast to win a seat in the first round has been legally decreased. The percentage was 50 in the 1980s; it was deceased to one third in the 1990s; most recently, it was decreased to a quarter in 2007. In every election, almost all dissident groups are confronted with the same question: which action will support the regime—sanctions or participation? Due to insider competition, elections are unpredictable. Iranian people do not know which insider will be elected but they are sure that it will be one of the members of the ruling caste.

It seems that the limited competition in Iranian political society fits a two-party polity. On the one hand, Iranian political parties, even those in the same camp, are not ready to compromise and tolerate a multi-party system like those of Europe. On the other, a one-party system does not work due to the differences among political actors in terms of ideology and their interpretation of Islam.

"Get them ready for death and they will be content with fever." This Persian proverb is the authoritarian camp's tactic in any election. The authoritarians press hard on the throats of reformists and get a result: the reformists (Kargozaran and Etemad-e Melli) nominated the most notorious clerics, such as Ali Razini and Qorbān Ali Dorri Najabābadi, for the Experts Assembly in 2014. The reformists were happy just because Rafsanjani got the highest vote in Tehran; he was one of the pillars of the ruling clerics and very influential in marginalizing reformers.

The most important figures on the reformist list in the third municipality election were the most neutral politicians in the three decades of the Islamic Republic. Ahmad Masjed Jāmei, an *aqazadeh* (born into a clerical family), has been deputy minister and minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance in any kind of administration, reformist and authoritarian. Ma'soumeh Ebtekār was silent about almost everything in the country, even the environment during her tenure as the deputy of the President of Environmental Protection Agency for eight years.

Iranians had some choices to make in these elections: between Rafsanjani and Mesbah (both highly corrupt, both authoritarian and both true believers of hierocracy), between Mehdi Chamrān and Masjed Jāme'i, and between Ahmadinejad and Rafsanjani. Is there a meaningful difference between them? The sad aspect of these elections was the evaporation of the possibility of a different platform and agenda to run the country differently or a set of ideas to run the cities and villages. The reformist camp has not presented anything new after 2000 and just came to the scene with old names and old tactics. The authoritarians were again successful in making

the elections nothing to do with the choice between ideas and ideologies, that is, an open or closed society, democracy and authoritarianism.

Top of the list for the Tehran municipality was usually a marker of the popularity of the administration in charge. Rafsanjani's daughter and Khatami's brother were top of Tehran's winner lists for the fifth and sixth parliaments. The gang of Ahmadinejad in the Interior Ministry tried to increase Parvin Ahmadinejad's (his sister) votes to put her above the list. On the fourth day of the election, five new ballot boxes had been sent to the counting sites, all from mosques which were supervised by the authoritarian organizations with the goal of changing the results. In the end, she could not be crowned the highest vote receiver.

Why does every group claim victory after every election? The first reason is that the results change during the days after the election; even the number of votes for specific candidates has changed, and in some cases decreased (for example, Rafsanjani).[7] For turnout in Tehran, the officials presented three different numbers in three days: 2.2, 1.8, and 1.2 million. The second reason is the limited number of choices. People had almost no choice in the Experts Assembly elections. Due to the low number of candidates (161 for 86 seats in the 2007 Experts Assembly election), about 80% of candidates were common in different lists. The third reason is the relative meaning of winning: truth is in the eyes of the beholder in the framework of Iranian politics. For reformists, victory means having a handful of their members in the municipality council or the parliament; for authoritarians, it means having control over all of them. Therefore, both sides are winners.

It has shown to be a norm that before every election, some newspapers and magazines which could be effective in the reformist section of the population are closed and banned. Suburban and rural voters, like those in the inner cities, are angry at powerful citizens who are getting a better deal than they are.

Another factor that is manipulated in different elections is the voting age. If the ruling camp feels that the time is ripe for them to win and more participation is helpful, it decreases the voting age, but if it feels that that more participation is harmful, the voting age is increased. For this reason, there was a drop in the number of eligible voters in the 2007 municipality election, resulting from the increase in the voting age from 15 to 18 years old.

Twenty-four% of the parliamentary elections candidates were disqualified (less than the average of 28.9% of disqualifications in previous Majles elections, and far above the 8% of 1999). While some of the eligibility criteria (including the new requirement for having a master's degree) were

justified, many other government-imposed restrictions were arbitrary. The number of candidates willing to run for election is high. In spite of the high probability of being disqualified, thousands of people nominate themselves. They goal is to gain a share in power, benefit from the privileges of an office that has no checks and balances, prevent the solidification of the incumbent conservative bloc and undermine the conservatives' radical policies.

There is also a difference between big cities and small cities and rural parts of the country. In rural areas and small cities, ethnic divides and tribal allegiances are more effective compared to political divides. People in rural areas and small towns usually vote for candidates that bring more projects to their areas; they less care about social and political issues. Due to the electoral behavior of metropolitan areas—that is, voting for the lists—clerics show a better performance in these areas. Women usually do better in urban areas because of the higher level of education and the positive attitude of men toward them.

10.4 The End of the Khatami Era: A Dyadic to Triadic Polity

The presidential election of 2005, for the authoritarian camp, was an opportunity to conquer the last reformist ground in the government. For reformers, it was another pseudo-test to see what percentage of the population were still optimistic about the reforms promised by politicians who believed in the foundations of Islamic Republic and its Constitution. The reformists lost the parliament in 2004.

The end of the Khatami era involved the transformation of a mainly dyadic polity of insiders to a mostly triadic one of loyalists. This was a shift from a "religious democrat-authoritarian" polity to a "militarist-pragmatist-clerical" authoritarian polity, and from a reformist-conservative political society to a "liberal democrat-Islamic democrat-authoritarian" three-way combination. The differentiation of authoritarians into two camps, totalitarians and non-totalitarians, stimulating hope in the reformist camp that this would be a crack in the homogeneous administration of the so-called Leaders' Party (Ābādgarān, construction workers), was not a new development. Rafsanjani and his two satellite groups of Kargozārān-e Sāzandegi (Construction Agents) and E'tedāl va Towse'eh (Moderation and Development) Party were representatives of non-totalitarian authoritarianism in the country; both groups were founded in the 1990s. All of

the cliques around Khamenei were ideologically totalitarian. Since they are not capable of organizing all their loyalists in an iron-fist-like party, we can call the regime "crippled totalitarianism."

From five potential and most probable candidates for the presidential election of 2005—Hasan Rowhāni, Iran's chief nuclear negotiator and secretary-general of the Supreme National Security Council, Ali Lārijāni, the former head of Iran's state television and radio broadcast monopoly, Mahmood Ahmadinejād, Tehran's mayor, selected by a city council which had only 2% of Tehrani's votes, Mostafā Mo'in, former minister of higher education, and Mohsen Reza'i, former Revolutionary Guards chief (most of them non-clerics)—only Mo'in represented the religious democrat faction. Seyyed Reza Zavārei, a member of the Guardian Council, was again a decorative candidate meant to superficially increase the number of candidates qualified by the Guardian Council. Mehdi Karroubi, the former Parliament Speaker and Seyyed Hādi Khamenei, a former member of parliament and the leader's brother, had no chance of a candidacy by reformist groups and parties. While the authoritarians thought only about a non-cleric candidate, it was very improbable that reformists would come to the campaign with one.

Some of the former members the Rafsanjani administration spoke about his candidacy; although it was less probable in early periods of the campaign, it became a reality later. One survey showed that he had no chance of being elected again.[8] Khamenei did not want to see him in that position again. He was thinking about one of his trusted operational agents for this position, someone with no independent political career. Lārijāni and Ahmadinejad completely represented the authoritarian/totalitarian approach. The aggressive policies of Ahmadinejad and Lārijāni left very little chance for Ali Akbar Velāyati, Khamenei's foreign affairs advisor and former Foreign Minister, to be a good candidate for totalitarian camp; Rowhāni and Reza'i represented the authoritarian/non-totalitarian approach, both with security issues as their priorities. The news website sponsored by Reza'i—Baztab—attacked Rowhāni for the policies pursued regularly by the National Security Council. The suicide of Rowhāni's son and the immigration of Reza'i's son to the USA were two negative points on the resumés of authoritarian candidates in the eyes of totalitarian groups.

No candidates represented the liberal democrat faction, who were increasingly differentiating themselves from the Islamic democrats; they were sure that the Guardian Council would disqualify their candidate. Therefore, the president was elected by the votes of only 10–15% of the population in an election with a 25–35% turnout: 10–15% loyalists to

authoritarians and totalitarians, 5–10% to moderates who would not make their ideologies and plans clear, and at most, 10% to Islamic democrats. The government used to manipulate the turnout to at least 50% to make a show of its legitimacy. Usually before any election, Khamenei asks the Interior Ministry to ensure a turnout of at least 50% of the population.

The silent majority did not participate in negatively and passively saying no to the establishment. The municipality election of 2003 and the parliamentary election of 2004 had already shown this trend. The electorate's periodical displeasure with their elected representatives over their unfulfilled promises consistently kept the turnout low. In spite of common concerns, the liberal democrats could not represent this silent majority due to disconnection, a lack of organization and the harsh policies of the establishment enacted against them.

Even during the Khatami presidency, whose administration included some factions of economic liberals as well as Islamic democrats, the liberal democrats could not have any representatives in the parliament or administration. This helped them build new coalitions and make their agendas clearer. The Moshārekat (Participation) Party, which included some of the shy liberal democrats, compared to any other group of reformists, had already stated its differences with the Militant Clergy Association and other Islamists of 2nd Khordād Front (the date is equivalent to May 22, the day of the seventh presidential election). While this party did not boycott the election, it was not active until its nominee was approved by the Guardian Council. Its candidate, Mustafā Mo'in, could only represent the Islamic democrat section of this party.

The campaign agendas for the authoritarian camp were the homogenization of power and its concentration in the hands of totalitarians, the demolition of the last redoubts of the reformists in the executive branch of government, and the monopolization of rents and privileges in the hands of Khamenei's loyalists. Islamic democrats advocated the slate ideas of religious democracy and the rule of Islamic law, which less and less people are ready to buy. Liberal democrats, though with no candidate, talked more about republicanism, human rights and civil society, not the rule of law as it is drafted, passed and enforced in the Islamic Republic of Iran or reform within the framework of the existing Constitution.

The silent majority of the electorate—the poor, people from provincial towns and the countryside, and the disenfranchised—usually remain outside the concerns of political discourse. The majority of voters no longer saw the procedure of voting as an established routine for registering one's

participation and satisfying one's religious and national duty; they believed no one was capable of reforming the system. As surveys, elections and op-eds showed, most of the people, even reformists, thought that the reform movement was over. Yet the authoritarians hoped that a combination of public apathy, low participation and heavy vetting of potential candidates would help them to win the presidential election, as had happened in the municipality and parliamentary elections of 2003 and 2004, respectively. They thought about the strong possibility of capturing the presidential office and did so. They won in another rigged and flawed voting process. This was another step in the roll-back of the already partially relaxed socio-cultural restrictions during the Khatami era.

10.5 Foreign Policy: A Backdrop for the Crackdown

Foreign policy has always been a backdrop to limit Iranian's basic rights and break social movements down. The idea of a satanic "enemy" is entwined in the theoretical and ideological foundation of the Islamic Republic. Due to this strategy, foreign policy is both a continuation of domestic policy and, at the same time, a defining factor in marginalizing dissidence and protest. From Khomeini and Khamenei's point of view, the USA and its allies are behind everything that could threaten the survival of the regime. Any dissident is labeled America's agent.

Exporting its Islamic Revolution was the dominant focus of Iranian foreign policy in the 1980s, with Tehran supporting Shi'a movements in Afghanistan, Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait and Lebanon, and Islamic movements in Eritrea, Philippines and Palestine. At the same time, the student movement, the women's movement and the intellectual movement were crashed. According to Article 3 of the Iranian Constitution, the country's foreign policy should be framed on the basis of "Islamic criteria, fraternal commitment to all Muslims, and unsparing support to the freedom fighters of the world." This article counts "the complete elimination of imperialism and the prevention of foreign influence" as one of the main goals of the state. According to Article 154 of the Constitution, Iran "supports the rightful struggle of the freedom fighters against the oppressors in every corner of the globe."

Iran's foreign policy under Khamenei is the extension of its foreign policy under Khomeini. Any administration after Khomeini had to deal with the consequences of an eight-year war with Iraq, Khomeini's *fatwa* on Salman Rushdie and the occupation of the US embassy in Tehran by Muslim

students. The end of the Iran–Iraq war in 1988 gave the opportunity to Iranian leaders to mend their relationship with the Arab states. Saudi Arabia was no longer worse than Saddam's Iraq, as stated by Khomeini after the massacre of Iranian pilgrims by the Saudi state in 1985.

The Islamic Republic does not marginalize ideologically driven leftist politicians, be they Islamic democrats, Islamist authoritarians, clientalists or globalists. Every administration, developmentalist, reformist or mahdavist (who believe in the rise of Shi'i 12th Imam at the end of time), despite its mission to implement sweeping managerial changes, has faced a bureaucratic machine full of overlapping institutions and competing interests. This pushes the administrations to take the side of pragmatism. Far from being the work of a coordinated, unified foreign policy, the divergent actions of Iranian factions are mainly a product of the domestic political scene in the Islamic Republic. These factions have very different notions of what constitutes Iran's national interest, due in part to the fact that the concept itself is not well developed within Iran.

In the Khomeini era, Iran's political, economic and diplomatic policies were aimed at fomenting revolution abroad.

Rafsanjani: Regional Confidence-Building

By the end of the Iran–Iraq war, Tehran had recognized that the export-of-the-revolution policy had alienated it from the international community. This ideological perspective slowly gave way to pragmatism, and factors such as the national interest and national security became crucial in policy-making. This meant that in the 1990s, Iran improved relations with its neighbors across the Persian Gulf, did not make a substantive effort to influence political developments in Central Asia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, despite the power vacuum in the region, and kept silent on the Chechen conflict.

The Rafsanjani administration attempted to stimulate economic development. In foreign policy, pragmatism became an important tool. While never abandoning the policy of the export of the revolution, his administration initiated a limited dialogue with some of Iran's neighbors and ideological foes.

Khatami: Détente

Iran, during the Khatami administration, pursued the policy of confidence-building and détente in various regional and global fora. His was the result of a powerful reform movement that needed less tension in international

arena to pursue its domestic agenda. The reform movement was mainly focused on the internal dynamics of despotism, backwardness and underdevelopment. The reformists had almost rejected conspiracy theories and stopped blaming foreign powers for internal challenges and problems.

This administration believed that the problems of the Middle East should be resolved through wisdom and the removal of misunderstandings between nations. In this period, Iran continued pursuing nuclear technology with patience while insisting on the legitimate rights of the Iranian nation to benefit from such technology. Using the softly spoken and wise-man style of President Khatami, Iran took the initiative and voluntarily suspended its uranium enrichment process, entering into negotiations with the three major European powers: the UK, Germany and France. Furthermore, Iran not only allowed the unfettered inspection of its nuclear facilities by the International Atomic Energy Agency, but also unofficially agreed to the agency's demand for an Additional Protocol that permits it to carry out intrusive inspections of all recognized sites without prior warning.

Suggesting the idea of dialogue among civilizations as a means to remove existing hurdles in the international system, Khatami called for measures to confront groups which promote sectarianism and depict Islam negatively to the world, such as the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Khatami's foreign policy stance was characterized by a desire for dialogue in the place of conflict. Iran's generally quietist and unobtrusive stance vis-à-vis the US invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq during his administration illustrated its unwillingness to play a rogue state role and suffer the economic, if not military, repercussions.

Upon entering office, Khatami announced a policy of engagement and normalization with all the countries of the world, except Israel. In an interview with the CNN network, Khatami half-apologized to the American people for the hostage-taking incident in 1979 and regretted the excesses done in the name of the Revolution.[9] In a number of major policy statements, Khatami called for the establishment of an international order based on international law and aimed at the avoidance of war and conflict.

It was during Khatami's tenure that Iran normalized relations with the European community and the Persian Gulf states. When Khatami assumed the presidency in 1997, there were almost no European Union ambassadors in Tehran. The European policy of "critical engagement" had turned much more critical after the death sentence imposed on Salman Rushdie in 1989 and the sporadic killing of Iranian dissidents.

Beyond Europe, Khatami instituted a significant shift in Iran's Persian Gulf policy. In a reversal of two decades of animosity, Khatami managed to reconcile the country with the House of Saud shortly after assuming power. During his tenure, Khatami ushered in a foreign policy that focused on expanding trade, cooperative security measures and diplomatic dialogue with Iran's neighbors. In the reformists' perspective, ideological dogma and the propagation of revolutionary Islam were seen as of limited use in an age of globalization. Despite some important successes, such as the restoration of ties with the European Union and a general improvement of relations with Arab countries, he was not able to decrease tensions between Iran and the USA.

Based on the discourse that prevailed during the seventh presidential election, the concept of having national interests guided the shaping of foreign policy. Even the authoritarian faction implicitly expressed the idea that national security and the national interest is secular.

Ahmadinejad: Isolationism and Aggression

Ahmadinejad believed that détente and the confidence-building policy offered nothing to Iran.[10] In his view, this policy led to a distancing from revolutionary ideals, alienation from revolutionary goals and a decrease in the dynamism of the Islamic world. His statements about wiping out Israel from the map of the world[11] and the denial of the Holocaust[12] deliberately[13] pointed to this policy change.

Ahmadinejad mobilized his conservative base with the help of the security-military apparatus. He was able to combine his loyalty to Khamenei and his staunch social conservatism with a populist anti-corruption message and a promise to bring oil revenue into every Iranian household. He explicitly revealed the less-cooperative and more-unpredictable nature of the Islamic Republic.

Rouhani: Back to Fake Moderation

Rouhani administration was a return to Khatami's foreign policy of partial normalization while Islamic Republic was militarily active in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen. In domestic politics, Rouhani completely ignored the reformist agenda for democratization and pluralization. Rouhani's mission was to decrease the pressures of sanctions and calm the young population. He was able to do that in his first term but right after the beginning of his second term, December 2017 uprisings in more than 100 cities all around the country showed that the earthquake is imminent.

Conclusion

There are three revealing characteristics specifying the basics of Iran's foreign policy-making process:

1. The complicated network of intermarriage and seminary education, military service and university education links the clerics and their loyalists together and builds the ruling class who run the country. This mechanism has implications for foreign policy-making. The domestic factional politics with its mixture of formal and informal connections includes a range of ideas and attitudes, from totally isolationist to interventionist.
2. Iran's leadership fears the USA.
3. Due to the different interests and policies of different factions of Iranian polity, Iranian actions can seem to cancel each other out in foreign policy.

None of these factors is helpful for any social movement in the country. The second factor is especially important in the agenda of any countermovement. The usual propaganda of the government is based on introducing any protest as supported and organized by the USA.

10.6 Non-transparent Presidential Campaign Expenditure

To understand the scope of campaign expenditure in Iran's tenth presidential election, three categories of resources should be considered:

1. Salary increases for the government's employees and retirees, the payment of deferred salaries and distributing public money orders by the president in the weeks right before the election or in campaign rallies, such as distributing 400 million dollars to about five million people the week before the election, the payment of bonuses and traveler's checks to some of the public employees, sending gold coins to the staff of one of the hospitals in Tehran, and sending $50 checks to needy families and seminary students (*Roozonline* news site, May 11, 2009; *E`temad*, May 21, 2009; *Tabnak* news site, May 12, 2009; *Jomhurriyat* news site, May 26, 2009). These expenses should be counted as part of Ahmadinejad's campaign expenditures. According to some sources, he put about five billion dollars aside to distribute in the weeks before the election.

2. Illegal use of governmental resources for election campaigns, such as public news website, newspapers (*Iran, Kayhan, Vatan-e Emrooz*), news agencies (the Islamic Republic News Agency, the National Youth Organization News Agency) and state-run radio and TV stations to promote just one candidate, recruiting the Islamic Republic Guards Corp's capacities to stop other candidates' websites working, and sending government's personnel, and military and paramilitary forces to Ahmadinejad's rallies and gatherings (*Shahab News* website, June 20, 2009). The official letters to the personnel to attend those rallies were published but denied by the governmental organizations. Some workers in governmental plants were sent to Ahmadinejad's rallies using government-owned buses; public arenas were used by the president's campaign without compensation; governmental offices were used for meetings and organizing the campaign by the president's campaign staff; and the president used the government jet for traveling to provinces for campaign rallies and meetings (*Bazyab*, June 19, 2009).
3. All campaign ads and related expenses, whether the nominee himself has provided the resources or others have paid for him. If a nominee such as Ahmadinejad claims that he is not going to spend anything on his campaign ads, this does not mean that his affiliates have not paid for ads and other expenses.

For the third category we should look at the expenditures of all four candidates separately, but the political campaigns in Iran are not transparent and the public is not informed about the numbers and statistics. Therefore one could just read between the lines of newspapers and guess based on observations and indirect information.

Where Is the Money Coming From?

No regular individual pays for campaign expenditure in Iran. There is no fundraising event or website to collect donations. Nobody pays his/her money that is earned through work or as a salary for political campaigns; considering the low wages of workers and public employees, nobody can afford to do this. In contrast to the years of revolution in the late 1970s, people are not ready to sacrifice their own bread and butter for an ideology and social movement. Contrary to the 1980s, when people worked

for political campaigns for free, now nothing is free or cheap in the country. Even people who work in the polling stations are paid by the government (they are paid between 100 and 150 dollars for a full day).

As a political activist for the last 40 years, I have never witnessed direct donations of regular people to political campaigns. Since 1981, I have never heard a declared bank account for donations for political parties and campaigns. Other than offering time on radio and TV channels for confirmed candidates, there are no public budgets for political campaign expenditures.

The only way that remains for providing resources in political competitions is non-transparent deals between special interests and political campaigns. The person who pays more will have access to lucrative no-bid contracts and public projects. The officials of the Islamic Republic have always criticized the close relationship between capital and power in the West but they have the worst form of this relationship in their own country.

Of course, the Iranian people are the ones who indirectly pay for the political campaigns. The state-run radio and TV channels give prime time to the candidates who are considered as insiders and are loyal to the Islamic Republic, its Constitution, the theory of the guardianship of the jurist and the leader of the country. The candidate who is the favorite for the leader's office receives more of this time.

Another financing method for the political campaigns is decreasing and then increasing the tariffs for exports and imports. For example, the Ahmadinejad administration played with the tariffs of sugar and cell phones and machinery and sent billions of dollars to their acolytes' pockets, and they paid back during the election. Mir Husein Mousavi mentioned these deals during his TV debate with Ahmadinejad.

Another route for financing the campaigns is bailing out companies and organizations by using public funds and resources to receive their shares during the elections. The government has also conveyed public lands, plants, properties and forests to people who give back in different ways, including support for a certain candidate. Non-profit organizations, which never present their transactions and deals to the public, usually benefit from these deals. According to Karroubi, Azad University, which is a non-profit organization, financed Mousavi's campaign in the presidential election (*Tabnak* news website, June 20, 2009).

These methods of financing the advertisements and related expenses clearly explain the non-transparent campaign financing in the country. Campaign financing is an explicit example of corruption and its impact on

day-to-day politics. The monopoly of power and wealth is the main reason for the continuation of despotism and authoritarianism in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The press is not allowed to do investigative reporting on this issue and other issues related to corruption; corruption is just a pretext for political competition, not a matter of morality and good governance. There is no law in Iran to force candidates to present their sources to the public or to put a limit on donations and funds from individuals. When a government treats its citizens as minors, the citizens do not deserve to expect the rule of law and be informed about how the country is run.

Notes

1. According to the principle of *taqiyeh*, when expedient, dissimulation and lying is allowed. For example, when admitting to an enemy that one is a Shi'ite Muslim would mean that one could be killed, in such a circumstance, it is acceptable to lie.
2. *Tabnak*, December 21, 2008.
3. *Aftab-e Yazd*, December 27, 2008.
4. *Keyhan* [newspaper], December 25, 2008.
5. *Economist*: Iran's election, Back to first principles: economist.com/world/africa/displaystory.cfm?story_id=10881418&CFID=9281434&-CFTOKEN=b9f15ae6ea9df85d-D1CEB7C2-B27C-BB00-0143A0942CDB4AFD (accessed March 21, 2008).
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CHAPTER 11

The Green Movement and the Ordeal of Democracy

11.1 Green Activists: Revolutionaries in Substance, Reformists in Method

The Green Movement reshaped Iranian political factions both inside and outside the country. Immediately after uprisings and crackdowns that lasted for a year, it was clear that there were two different tendencies both inside the country and abroad. One section of the movement pursued its goals within the framework of the existing regime and its Constitution, while the other did not believe the regime capable of reform and aimed to overthrow it through a series of non-violent actions. This duality does not have distinct and predefined sides, such as reformist/revolutionary (monarchists and Mujahedin-e Khalq) and religious/non-religious dualities, as it did in the 1990s. Both secularist and Islamist dissidents have supporters among different groups and different political parties.

Disagreement on the Substance of an Alternative Regime

Despite agreement within the Green Movement on the method of political campaigning and struggle against the regime, secularists and Islamists dream of two very different future political regimes. This is the reason behind most existing disagreements about the slogans and approaches to current developments. For example, although they both reject the existing administration, one side still believes in an Iranian Republic while the other side does not.

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The reformists view slogans against the foundations of the regime and unconstructive ideas as deviations; they believe they hold the measure of right and wrong in their hands. They also believe that Mir Husayn Mousavi and Mehdi Karrubi are the only leaders of the movement, and do not deny the basis of the Islamists' rule. The section that is reformist in method and revolutionary in substance believes that "Mousavi and Karrubi are just two members of the movement," or, in a more extreme version, "Mousavi and Karrubi are good excuses; the target is the whole regime."[1]

The regime's reaction to the protests was essential in revealing the revolutionary demands of the secularists. This harsh repression brought the oppositions' desire to topple the state structure into the light, but when there were no police or plainclothes attacks (June 15, 2009), the protesters rallied in silence and when police was involved they shouted the minimum of their political demands.

Revolutionary in Substance

Political groups who have turned their backs on Islamism as an authoritarian and totalitarian ideology have no common ground with the regime. If the secularist groups were silent in some periods, it was not because of their satisfaction but because they were living under a brutal dictatorship. These groups are looking for a democracy without any reservations or conditions. The Rafsanjani and Khatami administrations, which came to power with many promises of reform, proved to be disappointments. Even unseating Ahmadinejad or Khamenei is not enough for them: the secularists want regime change.

There is no sign in all the protesters' slogans that shows they want the continuation of the existing regime; slogans against this, however, are numerous. The reformist leaders who were aware of this demand for fundamental change asked the protesters to be silent in rallies, and not to provide an excuse for the police and plainclothes men to use violence against them.

To Reform the Existing Regime

Islamists believe in "the presence of religion in the public sphere," that is, enforcing religious ordinances such as the *hejab* or prohibiting intimate relationships between individuals based on free choice. They believe that the government has to enforce *shari'ah* law and should not be neutral with respect to different ideologies and religions. Islamists who take the side of

the Green Movement are completely against overthrowing the existing regime, not because it is not practically possible but because they want to maintain an authority (such as the *velayat-e faqih*, the guardianship of the jurist, Iran's theocratic head of state) to enforce Islamic law. They are against is the jurist in charge (Mohsen Kadivar, Rahesabz, October 26, 2009), not the guardianship of jurists in general.

The Shi'i Islamist opposition has also criticized the notion of absolute guardianship of jurists.[2] They want the jurists to act according to the law and to ask for the extension of checks and balances to the so-called leader's office through the Assembly of Experts.[3] Islamists do not believe that the Islamic regime is responsible for the misery of the Iranian people. They consider Khamenei's regime to be a deviation from the original idea of the Islamic Republic. From the Islamists' point of view, the Green Movement's agenda should not be to topple the Islamic regime.

According to the Islamist opposition, those who are against the Islamic Republic or the *velayat-e faqih* are not considered to be Green Movement activists: "From the outset of the victory of revolution, there were people who were against the revolution, the Islamic Republic, the late Imam Khomeini, [and] the clergy. There is no problem. They have opposed [the system] for thirty years. They can continue their opposition but cannot be a part of the Green Movement."[4]

The Irreformable Regime

Iranian secularists who are participating in the Green Movement have brought some questions to the attention of the Islamist section of the movement:

1. What else must this regime do to be disqualified or denied by the Shi'i Islamists, and not simply labeled as a deviation?
2. How is it possible to remove an Islamist party—democratically or non-democratically elected—from power and stop it from repressing others and enforcing *shari'ah* law by resorting to coercion?
3. Iranian Islamists call all the Islamic regime's crimes against humanity and repressions mistakes (Kadivar's letter to Hasan Khomeini, June 16, 2010). What are the theoretical foundations of these mistakes? Do they just stem from misinterpreting Islamic doctrines and ordinances or have the culprits been following Islamic rules?

Islamists Claim the Leadership of the Movement

Secularist activists want to know why the Islamists want religion to be active in individuals' private and public lives, civil society, politics and the state. Is it because they want to enforce *shari'ah* law by resorting to the power of the state or is it because they want to monopolize wealth and social status in the hands of a few? If the religious rulers are to follow wisdom and expertise in leading society, and *shari'ah* law is not to be the main source of regulations and policies, why does a nation need to have Islamists in power?

Islamists not only want the government in Iran, but also claim the lead in any social movement against the Islamist regime. From the Islamists' perspective, the leadership of the Green Movement is in line with them (Mosen Kadivar, Rahesabz, October 26, 2009).

Iranian secularists demand real change in the substance of the regime. Their actions truly present this inclination. During the "men in *hejab*" campaign, Islamists' opposition media outlets kept their silence, while secularist men wore the *hejab* to show solidarity with an arrested university student, Majid Tavakoli. This campaign was launched after the detention of Tavakoli, who claimed to be in *hejab* when arrested. The Islamists' silence was in line with their other positions of support for the Islamic regime and its Constitution, which obligates the government to enforce Islamic ordinances. This is a very clear sign of degrading women and totalitarian control of the state over women's bodies. Islamism in this case is an obstacle for some of the regime's opponents to speak out against denigrating a political prisoner.

In any Islamist regime, even those different from Khamenei's, Islamic ordinances will be enforced in the public sphere. Islamist websites located abroad still publish women's photos in a *hejab* although they publicly show their hair.

Reformist in Method

In contrast to the Islamic Revolution of 1979, the Green Movement is not a violent one. Both Islamist and secularist members of the movement avoid violence even when confronted by the regime's brutality. They have shown their self-control and self-preservation in different circumstances, including at press fairs, university campuses, Friday prayers, labor protests, funerals and other public gatherings while under attack by the regime's militia and police.

The regime was not able to accuse any of the movement's activists of armed protests or the killing of the police, but the regime has no shame when it comes to accusing dissidents baselessly. The names of the Basijis whom the regime claimed were killed by protesters have never been disclosed.

Green Movement or Green Revolution?

From a non-Islamist point of view, this movement may lead to a Green revolution but Islamists insist on calling it simply a movement to strip it of the revolutionary aspect.[5] It seems that the Islamist and secularist tendencies will remain active in the movement until one side or the other receives majority support. Only in a referendum can people decide which side they prefer. Another scenario would be the domination of one group over the other by force, as happened in 1979. There is no way to predict the situation in the aftermath of the Islamic regime.

11.2 The Labor Movement at the Heart of the Green Movement

The Iranian government-funded media, some foreign media, and some Iranian and non-Iranian reformist forces have broadcast a myth about the Green Movement. According to these sources, the activists of the Green Movement are the wealthiest Iranians, those who reside in northern part of Tehran, and the demands of the Green Movement belong only to them. Also, they have claimed that the workers and those on lower income living in the suburbs, small cities and villages are not involved with the Green Movement. Leftist reporters of foreign media have always claimed that the lower income Iranians support the government. The misconceptions are due to their lack of awareness of the deceptive tricks used by government forces during trips to the provinces to draw crowds (often from poorer families) to meet the governors.

Residents of the less-crowded rural and urban regions have attended the street protests in smaller numbers in comparison to those living in larger cities because they have been afraid of being easily identified. However, this should not be interpreted to mean that they are satisfied with the current conditions. Lower-class Iranians cannot be satisfied with the government and its agenda since the hidden unemployment rate is over 30% and 50% are outside the workforce, and since almost 48 million

of the population whose income is believed to be seven to eight million Toumans per year (equivalent to seven or eight hundred US dollars before 2012) live below the poverty line, a difficulty compounded by the inflation rate, which is usually more than 20 percent. The Iranian government has been distributing subsidized goods to 7 percent of the population who have been identified as poor.

Trans-Movement

The Green Movement is not restricted to geographical borders, level of income, ideology, ethnicities, generations or religion. From the beginning, many have tried to cast it as a religious movement belonging to the wealthy, middle-income city residents, the young or special political and religious groups. Such a depiction was intended to ease suppression by the government. Also, it could be used by some opposition leaders to highjack the movement. However, numerous appearances of the Green Movement in opposition protests, social disobedience, signs, slogans and artworks have resisted the pressure, which was meant to weaken the movement. The Green Movement is seen at all public gatherings and presents Iran in all its diversity.

Movement of the Movements

The Green Movement is the sum of the movements representing many different groups; it includes students, women, workers, teachers, ethnicities and religious minorities. Some reformists intend to weaken the Green Movement by directing it toward a war on power from inside the movement, and consequently radicalizing its non-violent process. Presenting the demands of the low-income Iranian workers as requests for a higher salary rather than asking for more freedom and democracy will trap the reformists in the same basic net which was used by the uncompromising religious forces and armed militia to bring in the vote of part of the low-income families.

The Green Movement was not suddenly born after the tenth presidential election. Its identity can be traced. It is the continuation of all national, anti-dictatorship movements of Iranians, especially the reformist movement in the 1990s that reflected the demands of all classes of society, such as students, women, workers, teachers and the young. The elimination of injustice, the governing power of people based on law, the freedom of the media

and political parties, ensuring fair competition for different governmental positions instead of connections, which was proposed during the reforms, cannot be restricted to small segments of society since their demands were not related to specific associations, groups or classes of society. These demands have been added and are presented by the Green Movement.

Green Labor

To show that the movement of workers is a part of the Green Movement we can consider four aspects. First, two to three million people who attended the silent opposition protest on June 17, 2009 in Tehran could not be part of one or a few social classes. The middle classes of Iranian society who reside in northern Tehran cannot bring together two to three million people in one day. Protesters from all social classes and groups attended the protest although they were aware of the possibility of a crackdown by governmental forces.

Second, the demands of the workers are seen clearly as part of the requests proposed by the movement. The students ask for their independent committees in the same way as the Iranian workers demand a syndicate independent of the government to push forward their rights. Women need the media in order to stop the tyranny and injustice against them, using the same approach as the workers' call for freedom of speech to express their problems. The removal of the military government and the reduction of corruption will benefit all parts of the Iranian society. The reformists' demands were the common denominator of demands of all parts of Iranian society.

Third, the presence of the workers in protests has continuously and constantly strengthened the Green Movement's position that workers do not support the government. The laborers have expressed their problems during Ahmadinejad's and Rouhani's provincial trips, grievances such as not being paid on time, transferring state factories to government-like organizations that purchase the factories to strip assets instead of privatizing and creating jobs, and a low minimum wage. Government forces have not been successful in preventing workers from bringing placards and signs with anti-government slogans. The presence of workers clearly indicates that the Green Movement is following their demands.

Fourth, some victims of the opposition protests have been workers. Victims of governmental violence have been women, students, the young and workers. There are workers among the thousands who were arrested

as well. However, the labor union members, like other groups, did not attend the protests carrying signs that would distinguish them from others. Given the unprecedented violence carried out by the regime against the organized and identified activities, one should not expect groups and associations to attend the street protests while holding signs identifying them as teachers, workers or Green Movement students.

Minimum Demands

Workers are one of the groups whose rights have been disregarded by the Islamic Republic. The workers have never benefited from the theocracy and have been repeatedly suppressed by the religious rulers. But the workers, in contrast with other Green Movement activists, have clear demands and are not protesting to attain impractical political goals. They are demanding the right to organize independent organizations as well as to protest for an increase in the minimum wage, in line with the annual inflation rate, clean and safe working environments, unemployment insurance with respect to the cost of living, and a general freedom of activities to attain a decent standard of living.

The workers have always protested during the rule of the Islamic Republic to achieve their minimal demands but were suppressed severely during the Ahmadinejad period. Worker demonstrations and strikes, which are the only way the labor movement can protest, grew in number during the Green Movement. Although the workers have only protested on issues related to labor unions, the government has always responded aggressively.

The right to protest has never been recognized by the Islamic Republic. Workers who have not been paid for months are not permitted to demand a higher salary and other benefits. They are also prevented from stating their problems in a peaceful manner. In response, the labor movement as well as the Green Movement will insist on its demands being met.

11.3 Civil Policy Taken to the Streets

How did the Islamic Republic come to a juncture where millions of people took to the streets to protest against election rigging? How did the policies in Iran evolve so that they left no choice for the people but to pour out into the streets to voice their objection to the election rigging, and left no avenue for the regime but to oppress the protesters through intimidation

and violence? What happens when a government that declares itself to be God's representative on Earth, and claims righteousness to the world in the loudest way, has to resort to opening fire on a defenseless crowd of protesters in the middle of the day and to mowing them down mercilessly? Can a government with hundreds of billions of dollars in annual revenue not purchase riot control vehicles and other tools, and give proper training to its security forces to enable them to disperse the protesters rather than injuring and killing them?

It does not matter what we call Iran's June 2009 moment—coup, power struggle, rebellion or revolution. What happened in Iran was an uprising, a rebellion or a revolution on the people's side to limit the power of the ruling caste. How the events and developments unfolded and the direction both sides of the story took set the scene for street protests. Immediately after the government declared the election results, the opposition inside and outside the country called it a coup. They did so for three different reasons: the fully fledged interference of the Islamic Republic Guards Corp in the election; the irregularities in polling stations that were monitored by the Basijis; and the mass arrests of the journalists and political activists right after the elections. Whatever the perception of government's actions, the reaction was a mass non-violent movement taken to the streets.

In the absence of nationally accredited reconciliatory organizations and independent media to let the voice of the protesters be heard, the reform movement members and protesters had no choice but to take their politics and objections to the streets (while being well aware of the risks). The government, at the same time, in its struggle to maintain its authority and its monopoly on power, has no other way but to engage in a crackdown and cover its hands in blood.

It is conceivable that the goal of the legislators of the Constitution, in creating an entity called the Guardian Council and entrusting it with the duty of overseeing the election, was mainly for this entity to operate as a bipartisan and non-factional entity (with the image they had of a just jurisprudence and especially the role of Majles in electing its legal experts, which has unfortunately been stripped from it), and become a safe haven for people to bring their complaints regarding elections. Other than this Council, the judiciary should have also been engaged in investigating this controversy. Also securing freedoms of the press in the third chapter of the Constitution, which was overlooked and violated by the leader, was probably established to eliminate the need for another revolution by the people.

But when all the appointed and elected elements in Iran during the autocratic rule of Khamenei are working together, the Guardian Council acts like a political party in and of itself; it eliminates opponents from the political stage, vetoes laws that safeguard people's rights and freedom, and represents only a small minority of the society with a certain lifestyle and ideology. In this situation, no one would think of having recourse to this entity at a time of dispute. In an environment where justice is politicized, the executive body can interfere in judicial decrees, and judicial positions are given to the interrogators and those in charge of executing those decrees, the judiciary will become a useless entity capable only of imposing incarceration and confinement on the dying body of human rights and liberty. By identifying the critics, dissidents and non-conformists as being influenced by foreigners, no room is left for the liberty and rights of people inside the political society of Iran. By setting the stage in this way, to whom should those who believe the election was rigged, based on undeniable evidence, take their grievances?

A government that neither wants the streets to become a place to make decisions nor wants to change its policies under political pressure must not shut all the channels of protest and criticism available to its people and must not transform the overseeing organizations and reconciliatory entities into its own instruments. The judiciary under *Velayat-e-Faqih* (Islamist leadership) has no independence and is controlled directly by the leader. For example, someone convicted by the judiciary of espionage and sentenced to eight years' imprisonment can suddenly be released a few days later and leave the country (Roxana Saberi). In all the cases sent to the courts for violations of rights, those murdered, beaten stripped out of their property and tormented are those condemned. *Velayat-e-Faqih* has one of the worst records of violating human rights and the absence of legal protection in cases brought before the judiciary.

The Guardian Council and the Expediency Council have both favored irresponsible, powerful and uncontrollable individuals and entities; as witnessed in the tenth presidential election, out of 12 members of the Guardian Council, seven openly supported Ahmadinejad. In such circumstances, how can one expect the public and political activists to take their grievances to government authorities? If some do not believe that taking their complaints to God to secure their rights can produce a result, do they have any other option except to take it to the public court of the streets, in the same way many other political activists in Iran have done in the past? The streets as a public domain are open to all complaints and petitions, and no government can turn them into its own private property.

In the absence of independent media and independent reconciliatory entities, the only possible way at hand was to take your grievances to the public. The law cannot set limitations on complaints and protests, since such limitations are a breach of the intention of the legislators to facilitate the submission of disagreements to independent judges and arbitrators. A lawful governing system must not oppose the right to peaceful protest against the policies and decisions of the governing body. In a country where such a right is not recognized by its legal system, the blame lies on the legislature. When all the channels of civil objections are blocked, no one can accept the regime's argument by saying: "How can we solve the problem of an election by invading the streets?" (Mohammad Javad Larijani, Farsi BBC, June 23, 2009).

A government that transform all the reconciliatory organizations into its own instruments cannot complain: "If in any election those who have lost can invade the streets and in order to respond those who have won bring their own supporters to the streets, why are we bothering to have an election?" (Ali Khamenei, Tehran's Friday Prayers on June 19, 2009). This statement is valid only when the elections are free, just and accurate, and the government leaves the information channels open. If the government bodies in charge of election administration and supervision are themselves supporters of one of the candidates, the claim that the elections are rigged is believable.

11.4 Green Movement: Islamist or Secularist?

The reported interviews and the statements issued by the Green Movement's leaders within Iran and statements which have been made by the Islamic regime's critics and adversaries abroad show two major tendencies: Islamist and secularist. Both tendencies can be observed inside and outside the country. There are religious and non-religious forces within the secularist tendency. Some of the religious forces were vacillating between an Islamist or a secularist approach during this period, depending on the circumstances. When they are more optimistic about the collapse of the regime, they tend toward secularism; however, when they do not believe it will collapse, they grow closer to Islamism, and continue to act within the confines of the Islamic Republic, and its current legal framework. Some of the adherents of these tendencies claim that the majority of the opponents, the Green Movement's supporters, and Iranian people are among their advocates. To what extent are these claims realistic?

The Composition of the Movement's Forces

There is no exact clue or statistic about the composition and size of the forces involved in the Green Movement. Among the protesters who have come to the streets, and also among the political activists, the number of those who believe in the incorrigibility of the religious regime, and consequently are secular and convinced of the need for the elimination of the leader, exceeds the number of the Islamists for three reasons.

First, among the political activists, mostly students, even prior to the last presidential election, the dominant idea was that the Islamic system was incorrigible. The consequent post-election repression must have increased the number of adherents of this idea. These activists supported Mousavi and Karrubi to the extent to which these two leaders stood against Khamenei and the guardianship of the jurist system of rule. For about three decades, political activists in Iran have voted for reformist candidates, following the strategy of choosing between bad and worse, not between ideal and bad. The majority of student activists supporting Mousavi and Karrubi were at first merely taking refuge under the umbrella of that part of the polity that was being denied by the ruling class, and then aimed to expand the domain of the opposition; the second reason for the support for reformist candidates, especially for liberals and leftists, was to increase the tension between the two groups of the Islamic Republic's supporters to accelerate the government's collapse.

Secondly, the slogans of those who participated in street demonstrations, despite the demands of the Islamists (who operate within the framework of dialogue with the Islamic state), often include rejections of the current political system and dialogue. The slogan "Death to the Dictator" refers to the leader, and among some groups, to the legitimacy of the leader, rather than Ahmadinejad. In spite of the desire of the Islamist opponents, the slogans were at a remove from Islamist discourse, and were turned into "neither Gaza nor Lebanon, Sacrifice my Soul for Iran", or "Neither East Nor West, Iranian Republic". Islamists advocates of the Islamic regime opposed the idea of an "Iranian Republic" and struggled to marginalize it, which did not offer any meaning other than negating the "Islamic Republic". The Islamists replaced it with "Neither East Nor West, National Green Government" in order not to allow the Green Movement's goal to go beyond the removal of the executive branch. The Islamists believe that "the Green Movement is fond of

change yet preserves the Leader […] the slogan to dismiss Khamenei does not belong to the Muslim forces of the Green Movement but it is mainly heard from some marginal forces of the Movement, such as monarchists, Marxists, and Mujahedin-e Khalq" ('Ata'ollah Mohajerani's interview with Al-Watan Al-Arabi, 6 April 2010). This claim is very similar to the government's assertion that the opposition is limited to a few groups with very few supporters.

Thirdly, the religious forces active in the Green Movement are divided into two groups: secularists, or believers in the separation of religion from the state, or more accurately, the separation of religious institutions from governmental institutions (which is unachievable within the Islamic Republic according to the current Constitution), on the one hand; and Islamists, on the other. The evidence indicates that the secularists are in the majority. Only some of the former government officials (and not even their family members) who are more vocal think within the Islamic Republic's discourse, which cannot be anything but Islamist. Those who still believe in religion assume religion should be separate from government (not politics). Equating secularism with anti-religious attitudes is as unfounded as perceiving democracy to be anti-religious.

Remarks such as "this Movement, like its original society believes in religion and religious teachings and values" (the manifesto of Sazman-e Mojahedin-e Enqelab-e Eslami—the Organization of the Religious Warriors of the Islamic Revolution, January 3, 2010) are justifiable only if they aim to challenge the state and neutralize its propaganda, which accuses the Green Movement of being anti-religious; otherwise, they do not represent the attitudes of the movement's many activists. Speculations such as that half the Iranian people advocate the "Islamic Republic as represented in the Draft Constitution" are not based upon any statistical data, survey or referendum.[6] These claims reflect the speaker's personal opinion and bias.

The state's propaganda focused on the tearing down of the Quran and the desecration of Ashura ceremony by protesters, which was exploited to make the movement's activists back down from their demands regarding the dissolution of the principle of jurist guardianship. These claims led the religious and Islamist forces of the movement to present themselves as the movement's spokesmen and portray the protesters as religious or as believers in the legitimacy of jurist guardianship.

Secularism in the Islamist State

Religious and non-religious secularists ask the opposition Islamists how those who have seen the discrimination, violence, corruption and lies of the Islamic state for three decades can endanger themselves by going to the streets simply to demand the setting up of the same system and its Constitution. How can one ignore slogans such as "Khamenei is a murderer, his leadership is invalid" and interpret the Green Movement's demands as the continuation of his dominance?[7] How can one usurp the slogan, which has been uttered against the Islamic Republic, as being in favor of the state? Religious opposition websites which believe in the Islamic Republic have performed such usurpation several times such as the claim that the Iranian Republic, as expressed in slogans, is the same as the Islamic Republic.[8]

By calling slogans they disapprove of "deviant," the Green Movement's Islamists, who are aware of the regime's excessive violence, and feel they do not dominate the movement, took the same direction as their predecessors did during the 1979 Revolution. The secularists asked how a group, no matter how large and real, has the right to call the slogans it disapproves of "deviant"? Such a word is reminiscent of the principles of supervisory approval or ideological censorship (key elements of the Islamic Republic). Would it be acceptable for secularists to call religious slogans "deviant"? To call for silence in order not to stimulate and fuel the state's police forces is a tactic to decrease the violence; calling some of slogans "deviant" is a strategy to exploit the movement for political deals and bargaining.

The religious reformists were at the center stage in the 1990s, and secular forces were acting at the margins. During the 2000s, despite Mohsen Armin[9] and Mohsen Kedivar's views[10] and those of some other religious reformists, Islamist forces opposed to Khamenei and Ahmadinejad, who believed in the Islamic Republic and its Constitution, were at the margins, while secularists were center stage. In the post-presidential election era, reformists do not control the press and governmental facilities and so do not have access to state privileges to advance their political aims. Karrubi and Mousavi have to use YouTube and the foreign media to communicate their messages; the religious reformist parties administer their websites outside the country. The gravity and significance of these forces can be measured to some extent by the number of visitors to their exclusive websites compared to those of the secularists. Today, the secular forces do not have to take refuge in the reformist camp, which is close to the government; it is mostly the religious reformists (including Mousavi) who try not to hurt secularists through their statements.

Religious reformists claim that people "demand free elections, respect civil rights, welfare and acceptable living standards in which human respect and dignity can be preserved." But do the same people claim that Ahmadinejad's rule is their sole problem (Mohsen Armin, November 26, 2009)? The majority of dissidents go further and target the guardianship of jurists, their supervisory approval and the privileges of the mullahs and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps.

Reformist or Revolutionary?

The Islamist faction of the Green Movement is reformist, both in its goal and tactics, or in the methods to achieve that goal. The secular faction of the movement agrees on methods and tactics with the Islamists, but it rejects the Islamic Republic and all its agents and institutions. From the Islamists' perspective, the aim is to dismiss Ahmadinejad and to limit Khamenei's power, and at most to dismiss Khamenei, but they are satisfied with the guardianship of the jurist, the Guardian Council and the Islamic Republic, and its extensive privileges for mullahs and those within their circles.

From the secularists' perspective, the current Constitution does not have any capacity to enforce citizens' rights and demands. The articles of the third section of the Constitution, which regulate citizens' rights, all obey the constraint of conforming to the laws of Islam, which means that, in practice, they are suspended.

The experience of the Khatami presidency proved that even being in control of the executive and legislative branches is insufficient to enforce the suspended articles of the Constitution. Secularists believe that Universal Declaration of Human Rights has much more capacity for enforcement in Iran. Concerning the state's commitment, those who run the country have shown that they are not committed to any laws, neither Iran's Constitution nor the Universal Declaration.

The 1979 revolutionaries were merely revolutionary in method; in content, they merely caused the collapse of one regime and replaced it with another dictator. Khomeini's competitors, who intent on grasping power, resembled him in denying the participation of other groups. However, Green secularists are willing to reject Islamism as the sole contender in the public arena; it does not satisfy them just to displace those in power or even Khamenei. They consider the Islamic Republic to be the Islamists' realized goal.

The religious reformists' misconception in understanding the Green Movement is that they have not differentiated between the method and the content. They assume that reformism in method equates accepting the Islamic Republic and its Constitution:

> the opposition abroad and all those who had already kept some boundaries with the Islamic Republic use the opportunity to be heard, and say their words in the Green Movement's format. But, I think those who have political understanding and insight, and comprehend contemporary history, are well aware that escalating the demands, and proposing radical and antagonistic goals, and encouraging violence not only will not help the movement to progress, but will also create hesitation in a large part of society that is accompanying the movement, and provide grounds for the collapse and repression of the movement. Today, if some people want to use this approach, they should know that they will not have a better position than the Tudeh [Communist] Party had in people's eyes in the 1960s. (Mohsen Armin, Norouz, November 26, 2009)

Differentiating Between Method and Content

In addition to not differentiating reformism in terms of method and content, this attitude poses four more problems. First, it attributes the will to overthrow the regime completely to opposition forces outside the country—but this is not the case. There are reformist and revolutionary tendencies both inside and outside of the country. Second, by resorting to non-violent solutions, the dilemma of providing grounds for repression because of violent actions has already been solved; there is no difference between the two factions in this regard. It is not be possible to attribute the repression of the government to the movement's method while everyone agrees not to resort to violence. Thirdly, comparing the secular forces inside and outside of the country with the communist Tudeh Party is an invalid analogy: Tudeh supporters did not demand the collapse of the regime; while they merely struggled for harmony with the Soviet bloc, the secularists, regardless of the desires of foreign countries, are seeking to overthrow the regime. Fourth, after four decades of secularists being repressed by the Islamic state, the reformists, as if still living in 1979, promise that "there will inevitably be the possibility of political life for all groups within the legal framework because it is a possibility which no one can deprive others of."[11] It was 2010 and the regime was way past the time for being tested. It is time for evaluation, not for more promises.

11.5 The Green Movement's Perspectives and Demands

After the suppression of protesters on Ashura, the Green Movement's future perspectives and its practical and realistic plans for the next stages assumed a new importance for both the movement's activists and the media. To curb the recent unrestrained violence against the protesters, the movement also made efforts to open a space for negotiation with the regime. Mir Husayn Mousavi's five-point solution—implicitly endorsed by both Mehdi Karrubi and Mohammad Khatami—and the ten-point solution by five expatriate religious intellectuals are valuable in terms of creating an opportunity for dialogue about these perspectives and practical plans.

The Legal Regime: Grand Schemes and Perspectives

Seven months after the inception of the Green Movement, it is now clear that, in addition to those who approve or disapprove of the *velayat-e faqih* (rule of the jurisprudent), a wide spectrum of religious and non-religious, liberal and non-liberal, and republican and monarchist forces, all with their diverse ideologies, participate in this movement. What unites them is their rejection of Ahmadinejad's government and the religious despotism which is based on the absolute rule of *velayat-e faqih*, especially under Ali Khamenei's leadership. But the statements, letters, slogans and interviews of Green Movement's activists (either as tactical maneuvers or strategic moves) provide an opportunity for gauging the nature of this movement and the political views held by its supporters.

Currently, two grand schemes compete with one another in the Green Movement: one supports the formation of a secular republic and the other wishes to preserve the Islamic Republic. However, there are also four distinct perspectives within these two grand schemes:

1. A secular republic which is administered democratically and observes human rights: the separation of the state from religious institutions and a non-ideological identity are the main attributes of a secular republic. While rejecting special privileges for clerics and other segments in power within an ideological system, a secular republic gives priority to human rights over constitutional and civil rights.

2. An Islamic Republic whose Islamic character is guaranteed by the supervision of a jurist; this jurist is elected by people and not appointed by a small faction within the structure of power (the late Husayn Ali Montazeri defended this system, which involves a committed and engineered democracy).
3. An Islamic Republic minus the *velayat-e faqih*, which retains the Council of Guardians with its veto powers over non-Islamic laws (in effect, this is a constitutional system without the shah).
4. The Islamic Republic, as established by Khomeini in its original form (this view does not discard the concept of *velayat-e faqih*, but rejects its absolute rule or limits its power by the Constitution).

Mousavi's five-point solution (in his statement number 17) and previous statements adheres to the fourth perspective. Ahmad Sadr Haj Seyyed Javadi's proposed plan and the position of many other national religious forces advance the third. In many ways, the third perspective resembles the tentative draft of the Islamic Republic's Constitution, which had been approved by Khomeini before the formation of the Assembly of Experts. The proposed solution of the five religious intellectuals stands somewhere between the second and third perspectives; it does not reject the *velayat-e faqih* outright (the third perspective), but makes it an accountable, periodic and elective position (the second perspective).

The individual views of signatories to the ten-point solution (Abdolkarim Soroush, Mohsen Kadivar, Akbar Ganji, Abdolali Bazargan, 'Ata'ollah Mohajerani) range from a total rejection of *velayat-e faqih* (as is articulated in the first perspective) to the acceptance of the Islamic Republic within the framework of the current Constitution (which is virtually identical with the fourth perspective). Apparently, in their attempt to reach common ground, each member of this group put his personal preferences aside.

The Real Regime: Demands and Reforms

The objectives expressed in the statements by Mousavi and the five religious intellectuals do not speak to the legal structure of an ideal regime; instead, they voice clear and concrete demands that aim to reform the existing legal regime. The demand for the non-interference of government and military and paramilitary forces in the affairs of universities, the observation of seminaries' independence, the trial of perpetrators of recent crimes against protesters (in the statements of religious intellectuals), the change of the system of elections, the government's accountability (in

Mousavi's statement and Khatami's latest speech), the freedom of political parties, media and gatherings, the removal of military forces from the sphere of the economy, politics and culture, and the freedom of political prisoners (in both statements) are some of these specific and tangible demands. In this respect, the statement of religious intellectuals expresses neither the minimum nor the maximum demands of the movement.

The demands that are formulated in Mousavi's statement number 17 were consistent with its legal perspective, but the statement of religious intellectuals was obscure on this point and failed to establish a cogent relationship between the legal perspective and the demands it puts forward.

Functions

In the circumstances, these statements could have four specific functions:

1. Preventing the dissipation of protesters and rallying them around a particular agenda; this was a particularly crucial task because the regime's violence may have caused the disintegration of these forces.
2. Opening a space for negotiation with the regime, especially if this effort was initiated by the political leaders inside the country; a political force which does not have activists on the streets cannot force its demands on the regime effectively or drag it to the negotiating table. The acceptance of these demands depends on the pressures that the movement's forces on the streets exert on the regime. If the regime wishes to deal with the crisis rationally, it cannot afford to disregard these forces.
3. Admonishing the regime's leaders and providing the movement's activists with an outlook to reduce costs on both sides; if the regime intended to come safely through this crisis and avoid disintegration, it had to accept and fulfill these demands. Any statement can incorporate this function if it is congruent with the demands of activists on the streets. The demands and limitations of Mousavi in statement number 17 were completely tangible and comprehensible to those who were addressed inside the country.
4. Overtaking other forces in the domain of political competition and giving direction to the movement's outlook and demands; no one objects to outstripping other forces in the political field, but the political atmosphere inside the country, especially among non-religious forces, lacks this quality. In the last four decades, religious forces inside Iran have taken advantage of a monopolized media and organizational privileges, while secular forces have been utterly deprived of them.

In the sphere of perspectives and demands, the only media that the rivals of reformists and religious intellectuals can use are the slogans they chant. These reveal a direction that runs counter to the views of religious intellectuals. That is why the religious forces inside and outside the country, while regarding the Green Movement as a religious uprising, describe these slogans as deviations. The takeover of the Green Movement by religious forces recalls the 1979 Revolution, which was hijacked by the clergy and its allies.

Thus, the statement issued by the five religious intellectuals lacks the second function. While political activists on the streets still chant the slogan of "Ya Husayn, Mir Husayn" (a reference to both Imam Husayn and Mir Husayn Mousavi), no organic relationship joins these five intellectuals with the protesters on streets. As to the fourth function, the religious intellectuals' statement makes them liable to this accusation. Mousavi, on the other hand, acquits himself of this charge by declaring himself a follower of Green Movement. The first function is also missing in the statement of religious intellectuals because they represent only one or a handful of viewpoints that exist in the movement; therefore, they cannot assume the movement's moral and political leadership for the forces that are active inside the country. However, both statements partake equally in the third function.

11.6 The Green Movement's Grand Strategies

The Green Movement activists were operating in a post-ideology era and did not seek a charismatic leader. Looking for democracy and human rights, they have flexible strategies to reach these goals. After the crackdowns of June and July 2009, the movement has lacked field organizers and leaders; in this situation, a specific group is not able to draft the movement's strategies. Activists' positions and actions reflect these strategies. Through participation in dialogue on the Internet and small meetings, the activists have reached an agreement to redirect their actions based on these strategies.

The Green Movement involves a series of non-violent campaigns but this does not mean that there is not a battle between the government and the Green Movement activists. At one end, there are the military commanders and security directors sitting in their war rooms and planning for terror, persecution and crackdowns. At the other end, the Green Movement activists are not sitting idle; they have resorted to a series of media and political strategies in different contexts to challenge the other side. The common sense and collective wisdom of the movement have pushed it down difficult paths, and now the movement is waiting for strategic mistakes of the military rule so that it can use them for its own purposes.

The movement leaders have focused on maintaining the plurality, integrity, morale and hope of the participants, as well as supporting the victims and their families. To win the political, media and operational battles and demoralize the government forces, the Green Movement activists adopted ten strategies in the months after the election. These strategies were as follows.

Media Strategies

Clarifying the Government's Internal Disagreements

To limit the regime's ability to combat the protests, it was vital to expose the internal struggles and differences in the ruling class. The government and ruling clergy claim unity and solidarity for its forces. Any analysis that debases this claim is poisonous for the entire regime. The movement's analytical explanations have successfully questioned the regime's unity in the public arena.

The government's social base works against democracy and human rights, but groups in this base differ on how to distribute power and wealth and on how to exploit government-given and ideological privileges. One example of these explanations is the ideological variance, such as developmentalist, traditionalist and militarist authoritarianism inside the ruling faction.

Informing the Public About Departing Forces

The media close to the movement agenda have encouraged people who have left government positions and affiliations to speak out. They are asked to explain why they are no longer loyal to the government. If there are such explanations in the blogosphere, the alternative media highlights them. Due to the tolerance of the movement's forces, the departed individuals began to talk about their past. Nevertheless, to avoid accusations of working for the regime, they are not willing to go into detail. This process of publishing and posting information on members of the ruling caste and their family members sheds light on the fragility of the entire regime.

Whistle Blowing

For three decades before the Green Movement, the government's policy was to interfere in people's private lives. In the post-presidential elections era, this was the people's turn to interfere in the public and private lives of the rulers. Green Movement activists believe that every citizen should

monitor the lives and actions of the rulers. They want to know how much their rulers make and own, how they spend their vacations, how many wives they have, what their children do, whom they are related to, and in what economic sectors they are involved. Some of the reformists who have this information are opening up. Having uncorrupted and austere leaders in a society where the media is not free is a myth. By unraveling this myth to the Iranians, the legitimacy of the regime is evaporating.

Comparing the Government with Its Enemies

The most effective comparisons are with Israel, the UK and the USA. Analysts of the Green Movement have shown that the violations of human rights in Iran are beyond those of other countries.[12] This strategy is to show critics of the Western countries inside Iran how to transfer from political nihilism to an ethical and political balance.

This strategy also focuses on analyzing the friends of the Islamic Republic in the region and the rest of the world. Green Movement activists have shown that the closest friends of this regime are the most authoritarian (Russia, China and North Korea), the most corrupt (Zimbabwe and Syria) and the most violent (Lebanese Hezbollah and Palestinian Hamas) countries and groups in the world.

Production and Reproduction of Information

Totalitarian regimes get their strength through disassociation from reality. The propaganda machine of the Islamic regime presents an imaginary world to the public. By spreading information in the post-presidential era, the Green Movement activists have delegitimized this propaganda machine. The government's only way to stop this trend is to limit the flow of information by filtering the Internet, jamming satellite TV signals and censoring the press.

Political Strategies

Let Them Shoot Themselves

Many of the government's repressive actions were similar to shooting oneself, such as Khamenei's fatwa forbidding Chahar Shanbeh Suri, an Iranian festival of fire before the Iranian New Year. The Green Movement activists' advice to other countries is to stay away and let the government dig its own grave. Any military attack on Iran would be a God-given gift to the regime.

Supporting Former Regime Loyalists Who Join the Movement
Green Movement activists have shown the regime's loyalists that their arms are open to them if they join the movement. They have established funds and associations to support these former regime loyalists and immigrants. Reporters without Borders support Iranian immigrant journalists, even if they have been working for authoritarian-led media and news agencies. Almost everyone in the opposition has supported Mohammad Nourizad, the former writer for the newspaper *Kayhan* and then in prison, and Mohammad Heydari, the former Iranian diplomat to Norway.

Dishonoring the Officials
High-ranking Iranian officials no longer feel that being appointed to a position by the leader entitles them to a high social status. There is pressure on individuals not to accept governmental positions, and not to compete for them. Most of the famous filmmakers refused to be a member of the jury in the 2009 Fajr film festival. Protesters dishonor individuals who attend ceremonies in Khamenei and Ahmadinejad's offices (such as the coach of Iran's national soccer team and some actors) in public. The official positions are downgraded and not the persons.

Public Protest Strategies

Decreasing the Human Cost
After months of street protests and the ensuing government crackdown, Green Movement activists decided not to become involved in face-to-face engagement with military and paramilitary forces. They later adopted three tactics:

No to Governmental Ceremonies
In the early phase of the movement, protesters aimed to hijack the regime's formal ceremonies but gradually the military and disciplinary commanders learned how to control the crowds. After the demonstrations of February 11, the 31st anniversary celebrations of the 1979 Revolution, Green Movement activists decided to have their own events (such as Chahar Shanbeh Suri) based on national and non-governmental occasions.

Prudent Action
Declaring the time and place of protests provided the government with the opportunity to plan its crackdowns. The protest at the Hafezieh

(Iranian poet Hafez's mausoleum in Shiraz) on the eve of the Iranian New Year proved that the Green Movement activists should be prudent in dealing with possible attacks from governmental forces.

Scattered Protests

The government confronted any and all protests with an iron fist. For this reason, Green Movement activists decided to scatter their protests across different neighborhoods. After the unsuccessful collective protests that took place on Ashura and February 11, 2010, the failure of the government to stop the ceremony of Chahar Shanbeh Suri encouraged the movement's activists.

Increasing the Cost of the Government's Survival

The government had to pay a high price to repress such a massive movement, which involved millions of people. The movement has pushed the ruling caste to expend public funds on its repressive operations instead of plundering them for its own benefit. In the first 12 months after the elections, the bonuses and overtime payments for military, disciplinary and security forces have increased exponentially. This is a huge burden on the government in the long process of oppression.

Green Movement activists are operating in a post-ideology era and do not seek a charismatic leader. Looking for democracy and human rights, they have flexible strategies to reach these goals. After the crackdowns of June and July 2009, the movement lacks field organizers and leaders; in this situation, a specific group is not able to draft the movement's strategies. Activist positions and actions reflect these strategies. Through participation in dialogues on the Internet and in small meetings, they have reached an agreement to redirect their actions based on these strategies.

11.7 Green Movement Strategies

In comparison with other democracy-seeking movements of the past half-century, the Green Movement has got off to a brilliant start. This movement against religious totalitarianism grew out of a legal election campaign. The people of Iran faced off against a police state and threw themselves behind one designated member of that state who seemed to be more intelligent, more ethical and more experienced, and wrapped the green shawl of the movement around his shoulders. During the run-up to the elections, the country was swept up in a kind of campaign fever, which for this movement was filled with fun and merriment, exuberance and all-night activities.

The Green Movement of Hope, whose non-violent charter was unable to traverse the rocky slope of religious despotism, could not win a victory in the field of elections. The police-security caste, which dubs any democratic move a "soft coup d'état," won the election through extensive and pre-organized rigging to perpetuate its own authoritarian system, and not the Islamic Republic. However, the Green Movement, as it stood, was unable to respond calmly and men who had become empowered by this movement, despite connections with the totalitarian regime, could not bring themselves to accept the deception. The Green Movement activists did not allow their own leaders, Mohammad Khatami, Mehdi Karrubi and Mir Hossein Mousavi, who were on their side prior to this, to settle the dispute by compromise. Despite ambiguous statements by Khatami and Mousavi, a great march against despotism was created on June 15, 2009.[13]

As a next step, the totalitarian religious regime saw no other alternative except firing on and attacking dissidents. Therefore it covered its hand with blood in Tehran, Shiraz, Tabirz and Kermanshah, as well as other Iranian cities. In the government's imagination, the serious protesters against the regime and the critics of the election—in other words, those willing to pay a price—would amount to no more than two or three thousand individuals, who would be made to retreat after a few killings. However, the Green Movement did not balk at spilling their blood and returned to the ring even more powerful and poised.

From this point forward, the Green Movement, like other non-violent movements, such as those of Gandhi or Nelson Mandela, has been able to continue efforts to put an end to the Islamic regime's ideological apartheid and totalitarian way of thinking. This movement, having learned lessons from recent social movements, can, by adopting the strategies below, first force the leadership to declare the elections void and in this way push the religious totalitarians back.

Continued Protests

The members of this movement believed that the continuation of protest marches and public rallies would cause rifts in the body of the regime. From the perspective of the protesters, the order by Leader Khamenei to the Guardian Council to investigate claims of rigging in elections after waves of protests was too little, too late; in addition, Mousavi, during the June 15 protest march, had in fact said that it would not be clear whether such action would have any results. The possibility of a leadership and

Guardian Council retreat coming about without some sort of pressure applied from below is practically zero. "Colorful" or "Velvet" Movements have only been able to bring self-serving dictatorships to their knees through sustained protests. As was expected from the arrangements made among people in protest marches following the elections, protests continued.

Civil Disobedience

The set of laws sanctioned by a despotic regime, for example, the necessity to obtain permission for the smallest action and undertaking, such as a demonstration or expressing opinions or protest gatherings, may be broken in any situation, especially at the time of a widespread movement. These laws were passed by parliaments which were formed by non-democratic means and whose ratification in fact was that of an absolutist government based upon the discretion of the individual at the head of the absolutist government. The chief concern of Iranian parliaments, formed under expedient supervision, is to guard against anything that might be disadvantageous to the regime. Elections for the regime are held under the supervision of the Council of Guardians and thereby have absolutely no legitimacy.

Being bound to the letter of the law in Iran means silence toward all acts of the ruling power and toward the violation of all social and individual rights. As a result, protesters against the election continued with their protest marches without obtaining permits from the Interior Ministry. To topple a totalitarian regime, any act not involving violence or violating the rights of other citizens and human and fundamental rights is permitted. Therefore, citizens can bring the totalitarian government down by refusing to pay taxes or public utility bills.

Prevention of Violence and Bloodshed

Despite the non-violent approach of this movement, the government resorted to intensive oppression on the first two days following the election of June 12, 2009. The government entered a new phase of suppression by murder on June 15. According to reports from various sources, by June 17, at least 15 people and by June 18, at least 32 people had been killed in nationwide attacks on the people by plainclothesmen and Basij volunteers. However, demonstrators were careful as possible to avoid situ-

ations in which violence was likely to erupt. In the demonstration on Wednesday, protesters were told to disperse before dark to avoid being attacked by pro-government forces. Demonstrations consisted mainly of silent marches and no slogans, so as not to provoke the opposition.

Khamenei, in the days following the attack on the University of Tehran dormitory complex in 1999, in a meeting with his commanders said that they could slaughter up to as many as one million citizens for the sake of the survival of the "system". Apparently, because critics and opponents of the regime know about this and the endless cruelty of the regime, they want to prevent further bloodshed while pressing their demands.

Fall in the Number of Forces Loyal to the Regime

Continuing with the protests and the violent measures taken by the regime will result in a reduction in the ranks loyal to the regime. The resignation of the dean of Shiraz University, who was himself appointed by Ahmadinejad's Ministry of Culture and Sciences, and the letter in protest against the bloody attack on the dormitory of Tehran University on the night of June 14, 2009, written by the head of the university, who was himself a security operative of the ruling power, marked the onset of this fall.

As demonstrations intensified and Ahmadinejad insulted the opposition, whom he called "trash" (*khas-o khaashaak*), some of the conservative authoritarians, such as Ahmad Tavakkoli, Habibollah Asgaroladi and Maryam Behruzi, chastised the government by criticizing Ahmadinejad's tone of speech. It seems as if the Green Movement will, in its future career, separate the loyal but anti-murderous forces from the main body of the regime. Even Ali Larijani, the speaker of Majles, who was himself a main figure in the suppression of the "2nd of Khordad Reformist Movement," wanted to break away from the Ahmadinejad administration by sending an investigation team to the university dorm complex when five students were killed. This falling-off started even before the election, to such an extent that those who believe in religious fascism such as Dr. Reza Davari broke away from Ahmadinejad.

Using Virtual Social Networks

The government closed down major components of the "mainstream media," such as newspapers and magazines as well as Internet websites, and caused disruption in popular means of communication, such as text

message services; however, it was not able to disrupt the communication network of the Green Movement. Finding ways to skirt government filters, Twitter, Facebook and Yahoo Messenger served as the means of communication of this movement. These have served both as organizational tools and as tools to transmit news to the international media.

General Strike by Government Employees and Shopkeepers

If the general protest makes its way through students and intellectuals, teachers and workers to shopkeepers, who constitute the right-wing conservative social base and who have looked suspiciously upon the military and security administration of Ahmadinejad in this election, the ruling power will no longer be able to ignore it. A Twitter message, which resounded extensively throughout the demonstration of June 15, said: "We will all together go on national strike on Tuesday. Government offices, universities, educational and urban transportation centers, and all members of society are ready for a strike. All markets will be closed."

During the demonstrations of June 17 and 18, in addition to young people, senior citizens and people from all social classes were present. Members of the Green Movement wanted to help these non-violent demonstrations continue so that they would lead to a general strike by shopkeepers and government employees. The Pahlavi regime did not give way until general strikes reached shopkeepers and government employees. The continuation of the crackdown on the Green Movement and the continuation of general protests will at some point make government employees and shopkeepers join the movement. The announcement of the resignation of Sharif University and University of Tehran professors marks the onset for the movement's extension to reach the body of government employees and then shopkeepers.

11.8 Seven Traits of the Green Movement's Islamists

Islamists rail against the legitimacy of the current leader, but not the office of *velayat-e faqih* itself. They believe that the current leader must be removed, not because he has shepherded his Islamic flock unjustly, but that a more qualified replacement would be able to do so. The Islamists are not concerned with the "how" of governance but with "who" should

govern. Consequently, their brand of analysis insists on addressing issues in terms of binaries, such as just versus unjust jurisprudent and Hossein-like versus Yazid-like acts, and so on.

During the course of the Green Movement, an array of forces, both religious and secular, refrained from the unconditional support of Mousavi, Karrubi, Khatami and Islamist reformists in general. These forces opposed a number of reformist statements and positions. The root of this dissent lies in a fear of the "hijacking" of the Green Movement by Islamist reformists and forces who believe in political Islam and the Islamic Republic of Iran—the same fear that haunted leftist, liberal and secular forces after the Islamists' monopolization of power following Iran's 1979 Revolution. Secular forces did not agree with the subsequent designation of it as an "Islamic Revolution" by the religious revolutionaries who founded the clerical regime. Is this a realistic fear to harbor in present conditions? What criteria can we consider to distinguish Islamist reformists from the current proponents of political Islam?

Green Islamists

Opposition Islamists are an undeniable reality of post-election Iran's political landscape. "Green Islamists"—reformists who support the opposition Green Movement—like all Islamists, believe that political power should be implemented in accordance with their interpretation of Islam and that Islamic values must govern the public sphere. The feature that distinguishes Green Islamists from the hardliner Islamists in power is their different reading of Islam—an interpretation that is not necessarily moderate, humanitarian or pro-peace, and is not grounded in democracy and civil rights. The Green Islamists are wholly opposed to consigning religion to the private sphere and to the separation of religion and state. They continue to endorse the idea that society must be governed by the values they deem "Islamic."

Islamists severely oppose free relations between men and women, gay rights, the freedom of individuals to choose what to wear and eat (that is, the *hejab* dress code and the ban on alcohol and pork), and the freedom to criticize religion publicly. They oppose the full elimination of censorship and the unconditional freedom of press, and favor granting special media privileges to the "faithful."

The Islamist statements released by the movement's nominal leaders inside the country have sparked less concern than the alarming positions taken up by Islamists based outside Iran. The support for the Islamic

Republic and its Constitution found in Mousavi and Karrubi's statements are less likely to be interpreted as non-moderate stances, given their circumstances inside the country and their encouragement of political pluralism within the movement. But the position of Islamists based abroad, who are unburdened by political pressure and are free to speak their minds, is less understandable.

Monopolizing the Movement

A primary trait of the Green Islamists is their "Islamizing" of Iran's opposition movement, delineating it within a religious course by identifying the "majority" of Green supporters as opposed to secularism. A number of reformist figures promote this notion by nominating themselves the movement's "think tank" or claiming to have insight into the "collective will" of the movement's grassroots base. Despite the silence of most Shi'i leading clerics and the support of many of them for the system of governance by a theocratic head of state, the Green Islamists include Shi'i sources of emulation in the movement's leadership ring.

The timing and the rhetoric of the statement jointly signed by five religious intellectuals created the impression among Green activists that a group of Islamists outside Iran wished to gain the upper hand over the secular groups that also constitute a part of the Green Movement. The statement was released without consultation with any other diaspora of opposition forces, and the aggressive tone of some of its signatories toward secular groups reinforced this negative impression. In a free society, public figures can state their positions individually or jointly, but those they address are likewise free to interpret these stances within the context of former records and statements.

Revolution and social movements, like parliamentary democracy, republicanism, civil society and other political and social concepts, are not about being "Islamic" or "un-Islamic." It is only in the framework of the Islamist ideology of the 1979 Revolution that everything must be coated with an Islamic veneer. Identifying the Green Movement as Islamic in nature is yet another step toward Islamizing its power politics; it thus cannot be viewed as merely an innocuous label.

The Islamists who oppose the existing ruling bloc are not pursing the establishment of democracy in Iran, but rather desire the transfer of power from one religious faction to another. They denounce the current leader as "unworthy" of rule and aim to replace him with a "worthy" successor wielding the same status and authority.

It is usually said that wherever Islamists have been allowed to run for office in Muslim countries, they have tended to win almost as many seats as their respective governments have let them contest. In the absence of political transparency and free flow of information in Muslim majority nations, it is hard to make these claims, but as Marxist, nationalist and liberal movements are marginalized and silenced, Islamist movements in their various incarnations—from moderate to radical—are easily the fastest-growing and most vital in the Muslim world.

In the absence of liberal and secular movements, the path to democratization in the Middle East is paved with Islamist movements and the subsequent backlashes to these. These societies, save for Iran and Afghanistan, have not experienced their own Middle Ages. They are not ready to jump into the twenty-first century. To know a phenomenon is more than reading about it in the books. People can only learn about some phenomena first hand; some examples of this kind of subject are war, torture, love and brutality, to name a few. Passing the experience of a brutal Islamic government will give believers an opportunity to unite transcendence with a heightened rather than a diminished sense of individuality.

Opposing Challenges to the Status Quo

Since reformists share the regime's mentality that "whoever is not with us is against us," any criticism of the regime's founding principles is portrayed as efforts toward "regime overthrow" or as challenging the status quo. As such, Green supporters cannot draw a clear line between their slogans and symbols that call the current status quo into question. The protesters who shoulder the heavy toll of turning out for demonstrations (at times paying for this with their lives) come to the streets to express their beliefs and opinions, not to parrot the beliefs and opinions that others dictate to them. Religious reformists who do not want to be identified inside the country as proponents of regime change (a tactic that has always backfired) when attending various protests and events staged by the Greens constantly worry about protesters targeting the heart of the matter—the leader and the Islamic Republic itself.

No individual has the right to command others to chant or not chant certain slogans. Those who are opposed to a certain slogan can only warn of its consequences. Protesters pose these weighty questions to persons who see themselves as exemplars of truth and vision: if they oppose the government, why are they incapable of calling for a referendum on the

tenets of the regime's structure? What more must this regime do for protesters to earn the right to criticize or reject it? Who has the right to designate certain slogans as "appropriate" and others as "misguided"?

The ruling faction inside Iran defines the present status quo as the only possible order and the only acceptable norm, and condemns dissent on this issue as "norm-shattering." The opposition resents this monopolized determination of values and norms. In these circumstances, it was the Green grassroots and the climate they generated that had the power to define the values that govern the movement and their future society. Islamists who believe themselves to be the movement's guiding voices and as such are busy ferreting out "misguided" moves made by movement supporters are more concerned with their own interests and their political future than with the course of the Green Movement.

Sending Messages to the Regime

Opposition Islamists often implicitly address their words to the rulers of the Islamic Republic instead of the public, in an attempt to affirm the "brotherly" bonds between "regime insiders" while disavowing that they are proponents of "regime change." The slamming of other opposition groups' statements is unmistakably intended to signal to the regime messages such as "we are different from these dissidents," "we want to return to power under your system," "we do not want to overthrow you; treat us differently."

Just as the filmmakers who, in accepting the Crystal Simorgh award (a film award given at Iran's annual Fajr national film festival) at the 28th Fajr film festival, send the regime—and not the public—the message "tolerate us, we are your eyes and ears," so too by attacking the secular opposition Green Islamists tell the regime that "compared to these proponents of regime change, you are better off working with us."

Regression to Populist Islamism

Islamists are deeply convinced that pro-secular forces are a minority in Iranian society. This estimation may have been true at the height of Islamism in 1979, despite the lack of research or surveys on political opinion during various periods of post-revolutionary Iran. To bolster their claim that power belongs in their hands, Islamists base their argument on the assumption that Iran's society is a religious one, though they fail to cite any data that clarifies the extent to which Iranians support the marriage of religion and government.

Their second argument is that "Muslims place their confidence in Muslims" and thus for a movement to succeed in Iran, leadership must be entrusted to clerics and religious intellectuals. The third argument Islamists derive from the first two is that "the path to reform is bound to religion." According to this logic, religious teachers and guides must seize the reins of public affairs. They also hold that "the masses trust the clergy more than religious intellectuals." They therefore conclude that for the movement to succeed, it must have a religious tenor and be spearheaded by clerics.

All of these presuppositions are debatable and none are grounded in hard data. In fact, Islamists paint a picture that the "majority" of clerics are in opposition, despite Qom's telling silence. Almost all Shii clerics are benefitted from the Islamic government in Iran and support the regime. The reformists also include figures in the movement's leadership who for three decades repressed dissent. Just as Khomeini and his followers constituted a slim minority before the 1979 Revolution but announced the clergy's opposition to the shah to rally other opposition forces under his banner, Green Islamists too want to use this tactic to claim the silent clergy as part of their ranks.

Discriminatory Rhetoric

Islamists still employ the Islamic Republic's rhetoric of intolerance for dissidence, a rhetoric that broadcasts and promotes discrimination and violates the rights of individuals. They continue to label homosexuals as "queers," atheists as "heretics," the secular as "misguided" and their opponents as "naïve" or "uninformed." Language has an impact and should be taken seriously.

Like the leader and his fans, opposition Islamists portray their perspective and lifestyle as "valid" and other schools of thought and lifestyles as "invalid." The so-called "Islamic values" that Islamists allegedly champion lay the foundations of discrimination in an Islamic regime. If those who believe in these values take hold of power and are accorded veto rights and privileges, we end up with another version of the same Islamic Republic.

Sole Voice

The exclusivity of the voice of the Islamists is visible in their media, the list of slogans they propose for demonstrations and their attacks on secular media and slogans. Islamists want to endorse themselves as the sole "voice

of the Greens," and as the movement's leaders, while slamming other opposition forces as "marginal" and "out of touch." They accuse their opponents of being spies or being backed by foreign powers. They are not even in power and yet they are already repeating the acts of the regime they are fighting.

11.9 Khamenei's Big Gamble: Squandering Legitimacy for the Atomic Bomb

At the end of 2000s, Khamenei had around 50 years of political experience: activism in two social movements (the 1963 uprising and 1979 Revolution), the presidency during a long bloody war between Iran and Iraq (1980–1988) and the leadership for two decades, working with three presidents, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Mohammad Khatami and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. He had been able to deal with many domestic and international crises, being helped by clever and experienced advisors such as Rafsanjani and Khatami. Despite his rhetoric on conspiracy theory and making decisions based on Islamist ideology, he is a pragmatist and weighs the benefits and costs of a decision when it affects national security.

If this is the case, why did he allow the Ahmadinejad administration to commit huge fraud in the election and order his military and paramilitary forces to shoot the protesters in front of cell phone cameras and to torture and kill them in prisons? Why did he risk losing the support of his most experienced advisors? Was he aware of the possible cracks in the establishment and splits among the ruling caste, high-ranking clerics, reference groups and political factions inside the regime? What was more precious than the legitimacy of the Islamic regime from his perspective?

In the aftermath of the unrest and repression, there are five schisms that are widening, intensifying and shaking the pillars of the Islamic Republic of Iran: (1) between the nation and the government; (2) between clerical and popular authority; (3) between republican and Islamist clerics; (4) between authoritarian and democracy-oriented political factions; and (5) between totalitarian ideologues who support the regime and human rights advocates who are now the social and cultural elite. Khamenei knew that these gaps were active and would be widened if allowed Ahmadinejad into office through fraud. Against the popularity of Mir Husayn Mousavi

and a huge turnout at the rallies, Khamenei sided with Ahmadinejad in his first Friday prayer sermon after the election and warned the protesters to go home.

What were the risks of having Mousavi as president? The former prime minister of the country for eight years was a member of the Expediency Council, totally in support of the proliferation program, and a true believer in the foundations of the Islamic Republic. He gave priority to government efficiency rather than democracy and civil society promotions in his presidential campaign program. From Mousavi's point of view, he wanted to be considered as an "insider" and a "principalist."

Although Mousavi was confirmed by the Guardian Council, Khamenei could not trust him and his team while pursuing his nuclear program. If Mousavi was going to be the president, he would be the head of the National Security Council, the main diplomat implementing foreign policies, and the second most powerful person in the country; he would have access to all information about the nuclear and missile programs. Khamenei and his military-security team did not want to share this information with "outsiders."

Although Mousavi was critical of the direction of the country and the actions of military-clerical establishment, Khamenei and his clique were able to control him. They were able to control and contain the Khatami administration during his two terms and repress his supporters. Dealing with Mousavi was not more difficult considering the dissipating powers of the reformist camp and the consolidation of the economic and political power in the hands of military forces during the first term of the Ahmadinejad administration. In addition, Mousavi administration could bring the legitimacy and public trust that the government greatly needed after four years of deception and lies.

According to Western intelligence agencies, Iran at the time was capable of producing and testing an atomic bomb in near future, within one to four years. Iran had mastered the enrichment technology necessary to make a bomb and had enough centrifuges to make weaponized uranium. The production phase was going to happen during the next four years. Khamenei wanted to make sure that this would happen and nothing would interfere with this process.

He was ready to lose legitimacy and public trust and appear as a brutal leader in public just to make the bomb and, from his point of view, make the Islamic regime eternal. According to Khamenei's inner circles, most of

them military and security personnel, the only way to ensure the survival of the regime in the threatening atmosphere of the region was to acquire a nuclear weapon. After all, of the three countries of the "Axis of Evil," Iraq was attacked and North Korea was not. From Khamenei and his loyalists' perspective, the best deterrence was to have the magic bomb.

Khamenei made three mistakes in this big gamble. The nuclear bomb will not be protection for an authoritarian regime in the age of information, in a country with an 85% literacy rate, 3.5 million university students and an urban population figure of more than 70 percent. The Soviet Union collapsed while the country had one of the largest stockpiles of nuclear weapons in existence. The second mistake was to play with the bases of legitimacy. When these bases are ruined, it is very difficult to rebuild them. The Islamic regime was not the same regime before and after the June 12th presidential election. The third mistake was to ignore the power of the urban and literate middle class; pumping money into the hands of villagers and suburban poor for a short period of time is not going to save the regime. These groups have not been active in the public arena and are only able to provide personnel for the military and paramilitary forces. The regime is not able to survive by leaning toward coercive forces in the long run. The Green Movement is still alive after months of harsh repressions.

11.10 The Leaders of Green Movement

Karrubi, a Politician Who Walked on a Tightrope

The Iranian authoritarian faction's media policy is to keep the Green Movement's leaders silent and to strip them of public trust. The main strategy is to discredit them by showing double standards or hypocrisy in the movement leaders' actions and statements. The ideological and intellectual developments in their positions give this opportunity to the authoritarian and totalitarian factions to use these statements against them. The government-run media have focused on this strategy to show the contradictions in the reformists' positions in the last three decades.

An interesting case is the succession of three pictures of meetings at Karrubi's house with his supporters. These pictures were posted on a blog (Ali Ashgar Shafi'ian, quoted in *Alef*, June 22, 2010). The authoritarian media used these pictures in a row (below) to show that Karrubi no longer

believes in *velayat-e faqih* (guardianship of jurist), while he praises Khomeini in his statements. In these three pictures, we see Karrubi with a picture of Khomeini alone, Khomeni and Khamenei paired together, and with no picture.

There is also an alternative reading of these three pictures. They could be read as a sign of Karrubi's readiness to take risks and change in spite of his seniority. What has been the direction of his change?

Politicians Do Not Make Pacts Signed in Blood

The change in the pictures is not only a sign of rapid political change in Iran but a token of Karrubi's bravery and awareness. Karrubi, as a revolutionary politician and close ally of Khomeini, cannot deny his past, while he is eager to move ahead based on the necessities of the time. Karrubi could no longer recognize Khamenei as a legitimate leader because Khamenei confirmed a fraudulent election, and Karrubi's votes counted as less than void votes. If Khomeini's public figure, as it is used by the government, is to drive a wedge between a politician such as Karrubi and his constituents, the politician takes the people's side and not that of the buried leader.

The 1980s, One Criterion for Criticizing the Status Quo

As an experienced politician and a Khomeini follower in the 1980s, Karrubi has never talked about returning to the Khomeini era. His statements about Khomeini are aimed at challenging Khamenei's legitimacy compared to the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Karrubi does not owe his political character to Khomeini and does not define himself just by taking the founder's side. By keeping silent about what happened in the 1980s (atrocities and massive violations of human rights), Karrubi as one of the high-ranking officials in that era shows that he is not willing to criticize or appraise that decade for political, not ideological, reasons.

Taking Risks

The main difference between Karrubi on one side and other members of the Militant Clerics Association (such as Mohammad Khatami, Mohammad Musavi Kho'iniha and Majid Ansari) and the leaders of reformist parties, on the other, is his openness to taking risks. In his recent positions, such as defending the religious and civil rights of Baha'is, and disclosing rapes

in Iranian prisons and detention centers, Karrubi broke taboos in the Iranian official public sphere. As a former presidential candidate, he made the government pay a huge price for mistreating political prisoners. After declaring the rapes in detention centers, he was in a very difficult position but even as he was walking on a tightrope he scored heavily against the military and security establishment. Due to his ability to take risks, the regime's propaganda machine has been insulting, slandering him as "ignorant, arrogant and being a chatterbox" (*Alef*, June 23, 2010).

The Shi'i clergy agenda has been to eliminate the Baha'is completely. They do not even have the right to a cemetery to bury their loved ones. When Karrubi talked about Baha'is' civil rights during his campaign, he actually rejected the discrimination against religious minorities and emphasized religious freedom. Among Shi'i clerics, only Husein Ali Montazeri had defended Baha'is' civil rights before Karrubi. Montazeri defended the minorities when he was outside official political society but Karrubi was a presidential candidate when he stated his position on this issue. Karrubi supported the grievances of Iranian dervishes' when nobody in Shi'i clergy circles was ready to support them. This is also a clear sign of his ability to take risks. For this reason, the majority of dervishes voted for him, votes that were never counted.

His trips to Qom and Qazvin and attending public ceremonies in the 12 months after the election of 2009 are clear indications of the bravery of this 73-year-old man, while the militia has the mission to attack him wherever he goes at any time. Even before the beginning of the Green Movement in 2009, Karrubi used to write very critical open letters to the ruling clergy, aware of their ability to use the militia against him and his family.

An Up-to-Date Politician

Karrubi's move to establish a satellite TV channel inside or outside the country after the 2006 presidential election proved him to be a modern politician. Other opposition leaders did not dare to bring up this suggestion. *E'temad Melli* (Karrubi's party official newspaper), compared to *Aftab-e Yazd* (the official newspaper of the Militant Clergy Association) or *Salam* (Musavi Kho'iniha's newspaper), was more up-to-date and projected Karrubi's understanding of his time. *E'temad Melli* was under more pressure working under the Ahmadinejad administration compared to the others, which were published during the Khatami and Rafsanjani administrations.

Serious Challenges

Karrubi has challenged the regime and its leader in many cases. When Khamenei called the regime "[Noah's] rescue ship," Karrubi called it a "rescue boat." This term was to signify the small political caste that is now ruling the country. Karrubi has always compared Khomeini's understanding of *velayat-e faqi* and how it is depicted in the Constitution to Khamenei's. According to him, Khamenei is playing at God's rule on Earth (Sahamnews, June 20, 2010).

In spite of sparking a crisis every nine days during his presidency, Khatami never challenged Khamenei, who was behind all these crises. He even kept silence when Kayhan was profiling against him and he was denied a trip overseas after the 2009 election. After their trials and indictment, Abdullah Nuri and Mohammad Musavi Kho'iniha kept their silence.

Karrubi also challenged the regime in picking his advisors during the campaign. Most of his team members (such as Emaduddin Baqi, Gholam Husein Karbaschi and Abbas Abdi) had been political prisoners during Khamenei's rule. Mousavi's campaign was not even ready to work with the reformist parties who supported him and they had their independent campaign offices.

Crossing the Government's Red Lines

Karrubi considers himself an opposition leader, while Mir Husein Mousavi presents himself as somebody who is worried about the direction that the nation is taking. For this reason, Karrubi, in addition to his own news site (Sahamnews), gives interviews to the foreign media. Mousavi publishes his statements only on his own website. Accusing Karrubi of being an agent of Americans and Israelis has not changed his political behavior. He does not take these accusations and labels seriously.

In contrast to some other opposition clerics, he does not talk to make the government happy and regain power. In his interviews with the foreign media, Karrubi does not try to compete with other opposition forces or to send signals to the government as the Green Movement leader. He does not try to present himself as a moderate politician to satisfy both the government and the opposition. Indeed, his main audience is the people, not the rulers.

Karrubi does not copy the ruling clerics' positions to generate political capital. He does not change the protesters' slogans to pretend to be an anti-Israeli leader. He does not insult the foreign media and their hosts by pretending to be independent. He does not proclaim anti-imperialist

slogans to justify his conversations with foreign media correspondents or avoid pro-Israeli accusations. Fifty years of political activism and a political career have taught him to make his points without insulting his allies and losing point to his enemies.

Mousavi, Awakened But Still in Denial

One who is not aware of Iranian history over the last four decades, and reads Mousavi's statements, will see only Mousavi and Ahmadinejad confronting each other, while the leader sides with the latter. In his 18 statements issued so far, Mousavi has presumed that Khamenei's way of rule and the march of the Islamic Republic Guards Corp commanders to power began in 2009. For him, the starting-point for social movements during the Islamic Republic is the Green Movement. He not only lacks any critical approach to Khomeini's era, but also maintains a silence about the Rafsanjani and Khatami policies during their 16 years of administration.

Twenty Years of Political Hibernation

The huge fraud in the tenth presidential election and its consequential suffering for Mousavi, such as his nephew's assassination and the imprisonment of his family members, close friends and advisors, awakened him from 20 years of political hibernation. Even if we put Khomeini's era in parentheses, the killing of dissidents inside the country and abroad, torture, the banning of the independent press and institutionalized violations against human rights did not begin in 2009. Nevertheless, due to his decency, truthfulness and cultural life, he has made a long journey in just one year. He has made up for his long silence with explicit opposition to hypocrisy, lies, fraud, ignorance, superstition, corruption, terror and torture in this period. When he says, "now is the anniversary of the unique Green Movement and during this time period its activists have had a long journey in the path of hope" (Mousavi's statement number 18) he is describing himself.

Iranian individuals who suffered in the last three or four decades do welcome the awakening of religious reformists and appreciate the extension of the opposition movement. Nevertheless, they expect the regime's defectors not to focus merely on recent events but to look for the roots and foundations of oppression and crackdowns in the Islamic Republic. This will help the nation not to repeat the mistake it made immediately after the 1979 Revolution. The Green Movement activists do not want to go back in history; they look forward to a brighter future.

Mousavi explicitly calls the existing regime totalitarian, secretive and a violator of human rights. In the 12 months after receiving Khamenei and his commanders' strike, Mousavi has gradually shifted toward a democratic discourse. In his statement number 18, he uses key terms of democratic literature, such as popular sovereignty, the rule of law, good governance, collective dialogue, rationality (as choosing between bad and worse), transparency, avoiding obligating individuals to an ideology or religion, fighting against the misuse of religion and maintaining the independence of religious and clerical institutions from the government. In this statement, he refers to the criteria of an open society, such as the free flow of information, a strong civil society, plurality and respect for fundamental human rights without distinction of any kind such as ideology, religion, gender, ethnicity or social status.

Criticizing the Existing Guardian Jurist, Not the Guardian Jurist Theory

The government's repression has only made Mousavi more aware of the darkness and evil of the existing jurist's actions, not the autocratic foundations of the guardian jurist's rule and the Constitution, and their contradictions with basic human rights. The central pillar of the Islamic Republic is discrimination against women, Sunnis, non-Muslims (Baha'is, Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians), non-Persian language speakers and non-loyalists to the government. Mousavi owes the eight years of his premiership to the "old man of Jamaran" (a village north of Tehran, Khomeini's residence), not the democratic process in an open and free society. Therefore, he cannot be expected to extend his criticism to Khomeini's era.

Mousavi and other followers of Khomeini still dream of a time when they took refuge under Khomeini's mantle to enforce the Constitution's articles one by one. This dream did not happen during Khomeini's leadership and the Iran–Iraq war. The dream was derailed because of political struggles between the loyalists to the regime. The 20-year problem of Khomeini's followers was to be politically disenfranchised during Khamenei's rule, and to be looked upon as "outsiders." Unfortunately, the dream was not even inclusive; they did not want to extend the polity to every Iranian individual but wanted to limit political competition to those in power in the 1980s.

Nostalgia for the Cozy Guardian Jurist

Mousavi's remark about Seyyed Hasan Khomeini, Ruhullah Khomeini's grandson on June 11, 2010, is evidence of his nostalgia for working under the mantle of a cozy guardian jurist such as his grandfather. His remarks are an indication of the religious reformists' hope of seeing someone from Khomeini's family in the position of the guardian jurist in the future:

> the people know Haj Seyyed Hasan as a knowledgeable, heartbroken, modest man, and a people's person. These events (not letting him to speak in the anniversary of Khomeini and heckling at him) made people to know him better. He is an intelligent man. He has his roots in the seminaries and will be a hope for our people by the side of clergy. (Musavi and Karrubi press conference, June 11, 2010)

Although this is not what most of the dissidents are looking for in their fight against the regime, the plan for an experienced Iranian politician such as Mousavi is more viable compared to a referendum or simply rejecting the rule of the jurist.

As Khamenei's loyalists in the Islamic Republic Guards Corp and the Intelligence Ministry will not share their power without a serious popular uprising, the religious reformists will not share their power with secular forces, including Marxists, monarchists and republicans. Religious reformists believe that if they could go back to the cozy jurist and the old man from Jamaran era, there will be no need to become involved in tough political competition with a diverse set of political forces in an open society. The reformist parties, supported Musavi and Karrubi, operate in this kind of political space; they have not shown any inclination toward the rotation of the political elite in Iran. The political parties loyal to the Islamic Republic have not expressed any desire to enter into dialogue with political forces who are against the Islamic Republic.

Some Are Less Equal

When religious reformists such as Mousavi and reformist political parties talk about free elections, they have never made it clear whether solutions for key disagreements on the Islamic regime could be referred to the people. They have never expressed their agreement with the participation of Iranian monarchist and republican parties, and social groups such as homosexuals, Sunnis, Baha'is and non-insider movie actors or singers in the political process. If they do not even mention these groups, how are

they going to include them in the polity and enable them to participate in the political process? The rejection of a qualifying process for the benefits of the religious reformists is not enough.

"Monotheistic Collective Wisdom"

This term in Mousavi's statement number 18 puts two Mousavis right beside each other: the Green Movement Mousavi who emphasizes rationality, transparency and a government above the social classes and ideologies, and another Musavi who still thinks within the framework of monotheism and polytheism. This duality may help some people to fight against despotism due to the rejection of obedience to anyone other than God, but it has three negative consequences: (1) the interference of religion in the policy and decision-making process of the society (which led to the Islamicization of everything after the domination of monotheistic ideology); (2) a decrease in the level of tolerance and the exclusion of individuals who do not believe in God; and (3) giving privileges to monotheistic ideologues, which leads to discrimination against people who do not believe in one God.

Tactic or Belief?

If Mousavi and other Khomeini followers use terms such as "old man of Jamaran" or the "bright Imam's era" to use his era as a shield and reduce Khamenei's brutality and violence, delegitimize him, and to push the regime toward collapse, these are rational and admirable tactics. If they believe in these terms, other dissidents are entitled to criticize the content of these beliefs. Based on the actions of Mousavi and other Khomeini followers, belief in "the old man of Jamaran" is real. Even their critical approach to the 1980s is to criticize the politicians, not the leader of the country. (This approach is reflected in Mostafa Tajzadeh's letter of apology to the Iranian nation.)

Mousavi has repeatedly uttered the possibility of change in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic. He believes that "the statutes and constitution of the country are not eternal and non-changeable but does not make clear that this position is a temporary campaign tactic or a permanent belief." Mousavi has never talked or written about the extent and phases of this change. People who want to enforce all the articles of the Constitution are aware that any change in it is requires the leader's decision (Article 175). Does Mousavi's perspective on the change in the

Constitution include this article? If it does, people who are able to make the leader declare a referendum are able to make him resign too.

For Green Movement activists, Mousavi is both an asset and a liability. He is persistent in his fight against corruption, fraud and law-breaking, while he is still loyal to the fundamentals of the Islamic Republic. This makes him a good leader for the transition period. The regime is not able to arrest or kill him because he is loyal to the core of the Islamic Republic and he can control the opposition. The opposition is not able to deny him due to his role as a representative for a huge number of Muslims who are changing. Now both sides need him for different goals and purposes.

11.11 The Iranian Clergy Was Silent on the Green Movement

In the days after what has become known as the fraudulent or stolen election, "defeated" candidates alongside families of political prisoners, political parties and others began appealing to senior members of the country's clergy, asking for their help in stopping government repression. Many reformists expected the clerics to step in after the mass demonstrations, arrests of political activists and street killings. Yet the only high-ranking leader who clearly condemned the government's repression was Husein Ali Montazeri, who was once seen as a possible successor to Ayatollah Khomeni but who fell out with the leader shortly before his death because of a divergence in his opinion on human rights. Grand Ayatollah Yousef Sane'i, who famously issued a fatwa declaring suicide bombings to be "acts of terrorism," and Abdulkarim Musavi Ardebili, who is also close to the reformist camp, merely asked the authorities to review the protesters' accusations, while sending condolences to the families of those killed during the protests.

Other high-ranking clerics were either silent in the wake of the clampdown—such as Abdullah Javadi Amoli, Musa Shobairi Zanjani and Husein Vahid Khorasani—else they officially supported the government's actions—such as Husein Nouri Hamedani. Others—such as Naser Makkarem—sought to persuade protesters to accept the vote and "move on." Lutfullah Safi Golpayagani meanwhile urged the two sides to try and find a middle way. A delegation of protesters visited Qom to speak to the clerics (Iranian Labor News Agency, June 19, 2009), but only Yousef Sane'i agreed to see them.

The Assembly of Militant Clergy and the Researchers and Lecturers Association of Qom Seminary both supported the stance of the opposition candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi from the beginning to the end of first month's street protests. Yet these two bodies only represent a small fraction of the clerics in the country. Two powerful clerical bodies of the authoritarian camp—the Society of Militant Clergy and the Society of Lecturers of Qom Seminary—both of which declined to support President Mohammed Ahmadinejad's candidacy in either presidential election, chose to keep silent when demonstrators came out onto the streets. It is suspected that an attack leveled by Ahmadinejad's on Akbar Hasheni Rafsanjani, Speaker of the Expert Assembly and the head of the Expediency Council—accusing him and his family of corruption—was crucial in ensuring that these two groups kept quiet.

Before the election, two conservative clerical associations in Tabriz and Isfahan supported Mousavi. Such support was in fact unusual in cities and villages beyond Tehran, given the heavy hand of the security system against independent clerics who criticize the government. Once again, these two bodies failed to make any comment when Mousavi dismissed the results.

The level of public support Mousavi received after June 12th was a clear sign for clerics to be concerned over the current power and reach of Ahmadinejad's administration. While the clergy was completely dependent on the state, with highest-ranking members benefiting from a rentier government and its affiliated privileges, they do not wish to lose the respect, if not the adulation, of the population. Traditionally, since the Islamic Revolution, the clerics have been sensitive to developments in society and have been careful to try and reflect moods and trends. They have long been essentially fearful of an administration shaped by military and security forces and its policies, which would benefit senior military and security ranks more than the traditionalist strata.

To understand the Shi'ite clergy's behavior before and after June's 12th presidential election, it is best to try and divide them into three groups: seminary students and lecturers; mosque and Friday prayer leaders; and clerics in government employment as judges, teachers, managers and ideological instructors. Although there is some overlap between each of these groups, all are dependent on the leader's office to make a living—and Khamenei quite plainly prefers the status quo given he has long seen Ahmadinejad as a natural ally.

The Shi'ite clergy in Iran no longer lives on religious taxes that are paid by regular people, and its economic independence from the state is just a

myth. The seminary students are naturally more supportive of President Ahmadinejad because of their ambition to fill governmental positions that will fall vacant with the ousting of the older generation of clerics. It is also worth noting that the government's aid for seminaries increased substantially during Ahmadinejad's first administration.

The second group, mosque and prayer leaders, is more traditional and conservative compared to the seminary students, who are themselves effectively tied to the government through their ambitions. Prayer leaders, however, do not fully trust in the president given his spiritual idiosyncrasies. They are also traditionally more attentive to people on a daily basis, meeting and listening to people's complaints about the government's policies and actions. Even more than the seminary students and lecturers, the third group, follow the direction pursued by the leader and his office.

During Khamenei's rule, clerics who are high-ranking have been essentially made so by the government-run media. Their positions and statements are invariably given far more authority and weight than those clerics who are critical of the government and are therefore dismissed as being "low-level." The state-run portrayal of Husein Ali Montazeri is a case in point.

Given this state of clerical affairs, it is not rational to expect the Shi'ite clerics to show any kind of support to the protesters; some observers believe the letters sent to these clerics were more of a cry to the people at large rather than an appeal to the clerics themselves. The letters sent and the silence they were received in, may be construed as a sign that some people at least are losing confidence in a clerical establishment which has traded in its long-held social authority for the near absolute power of an increasingly authoritarian government that is able to control so much by pure and simple patronage.

11.12 Kahrizak, Iran's Abu Ghraib

In the aftermath of the huge unrest in June and July 2009 instigated by the fraudulent presidential election, the Iranian regime reacted harshly. It set up detention centers with no facilities to imprison thousands of detained protesters. Evin, the notorious prison in the north of Tehran, did not have enough space for this huge number of detainees. The new detention centers included confiscated houses, warehouses, temporary campsites and workshops.

Unofficial Detention Centers

The Kahrizak detention center is a campsite in southwest Tehran. This temporary campsite was built for incarcerating non-conforming youth as well as thugs and drug addicts to punish them before sending them to regular camps and prisons. Building this campsite was part of a program called "social safety," the purpose of which was mainly to punish youth for so-called non-Islamic behaviors and categorize them as thugs and drug addicts.

There was no access to water, restrooms, first aid or food in this detention center. The detainees had to relieve themselves in front of other inmates and had no way to get rid of the waste. In this detention center, the political detainees were beaten to death by the thugs that were in custody themselves and were ordered to do this job. According to the officials, at least four political detainees were killed in this facility: Mohsen Rouhulamini, Mohammad Kamrani, Amir Javadifar and Ramin Aqazadeh Qahremani. This was officially revealed two months after the incidents, when everybody knew about the brutalities.

The trigger for making this facility and its stories public was not the pressure of the media or political groups. One of the detainees, Mohsen Rouhulamani, killed in this facility, was the son of a governmental official, the head of the Pasteur Institute, a governmental agency that produces vaccines in Tehran. Another individual, an insider, who was detained and sent to this facility, was Saeed Sadeghi, a photographer who had close ties to the leader's office. When he was freed, he reported the situation to the public.

According to some official reports, 145 protesters and 25 street thugs were detained in an area of 700 square feet. Unofficial reports mention more than 270 detainees.

After Khamenei ordered the closure of this facility in late July, the detainees were piled up in vans, even though some had serious infections due to the beatings and torture; they were left to die. Even after disclosing the names of the deceased by the media and some members of parliament, the police officials denied any killing in this facility. The only official statement about the reason for closing this facility down was that "it was not standard."

Copycat Torture Techniques

To intimidate and degrade the youth who were active in the street protests, the police, the Islamic Republic Guard Corps and paramilitary forces copied the same tactics that were used in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo, as

if they were dealing with foreign terrorists. The detainees were urinated upon, piled up on each other, intimidated by animals, hooded, forced to be naked in front of other detainees, curse each other and insult one another's sisters and mothers, and have sex with each other. The detainees were repeatedly beaten with electric batons, and their wounded body parts were continuously pounded.

Some of the detainees in this facility and other detention centers were raped with glass bottles and human genitals. The "plainclothes" paramilitary forces made pyramids of prisoners very similar to what we saw in pictures from Abu Ghraib.

Accounts of physical, psychological and sexual abuse, including torture, rape, sodomy and homicide of prisoners held in these secret detention centers came to public attention through pieces posted on blogs, the statements of reformist leaders and the reports of reformist news websites. Some of the stories that have been narrated by the detainees remind us of what happened in other secret prisons around the world, even worse. At least two victims of rape, Maryam Sabri and Ebrahim Sharifi, have told their stories to the media abroad after fleeing the country. To this point, no one has been publicly charged by the officials for these crimes against humanity, while the leader of the country has condemned what happened in Kahrizak and Tehran University dorms.

The Ripple Effect

Although Iran has a long history of authoritarian rule and torture, some of these actions have no precedent in modern Iranian political history. In these events, we can see the ripple effects of abuse and torture used by authoritarian states globally to intimidate the public. Disclosing information about torture from Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib has had a double function: raising awareness in democratic societies about the behaviors of their governments and motivating authoritarian governments to use those methods against their subjects. As nations learn positive ways of dealing with their problems from other nations, authoritarian governments are focused on negative ways to deal with their crises of legitimacy and security issues.

Deleting the Evidence

Among a dozen cases of atrocities, Kahrizak was the only one that Khamenei ordered to be investigated. The only incident in the aftermaths of killings and torture is the ambiguous suicide of the facility's physician,

the 26-year-old Ramin Pourandarjani. He was accused of neglect while Tehran's public attorney, Saeed Mortazavi, and the deputy of Tehran's police chief, who were directly responsible for this case, were never accused. The news given by the officials to his family was that he died of heart attack in his sleep (Nowrooz, November 16, 2009). No autopsy is said to have been allowed. Ramin appears to have been a potential witness in the perfunctory investigations that are reportedly being conducted into allegations of torture and the rape of male and female prisoners while in detention.

Similar End of Story

As in Abu Ghraib, no official was charged with the tortures and murders in Kahrizak. Following months of denials, the Iranian authorities acknowledged that at least three protesters had been beaten to death in Kahrizak after the disputed presidential election in June and that 12 prison officials had been charged with murder and other crimes. The military court did not even name the defendants.

The 12 people charged all are lower-rank workers. Three are accused of murder, charged in the killings of Ruholamini, Javadifar and Kamrani. The coroner's office rejected meningitis as the cause of death, confirming repeated beatings to the bodies, and concluded that those injuries were the cause of death. The charges against the other nine defendants include abuse, negligence and depriving prisoners of their legal rights.

11.13 The Iranian Green Movement and the Nuclear Issue

The Geneva negotiations between Iran and p 5+1 in early October 2009 opened a window for compromise and weakened the prospect of a military attack and international sanctions against Iran. Iran's agreement to open its newly revealed uranium enrichment plant near Qum to international inspection and to send most of its openly declared lightly enriched uranium (3.5 percent) to Russia and France to be turned into nuclear fuel (enriched to 19.75 percent) was received as a step toward confidence-building that led to the p 5+1 implicit agreement to let Iran to enrich against the United Nation Security Council's resolutions. Iran later rejected this solution, which was suggested by her own diplomats.

While Iran is buying time through a two-steps-forward, one-step-back game, the international community will have enough leverage to put pressure on Iran to postpone its atomic program to the time when a democratic government can come to power in Iran.

The Demand for Democracy

Declaring the second site for proliferation (Fordu in Qom province) and the missile tests by Iran before the negotiations were to strongly enter into the talks and to divert attentions from the Green Movement in the international scene. Nuclear proliferation has always been used to marginalize Iranians' demand for democracy and human rights and to buy legitimacy for the regime. If the negotiations continue, the threats or imagined threats will fade and the national context will be more accepting for the democracy movement. Obama's policy to negotiate with Iran was a fertile pretext for this movement.

Sanctions Are Not the Solution

Sanctions will not deter Iran from pursuing its nuclear program. Iran will find ways to get over the limitations, as it has done it for 30 years. Thirty years' experience of ineffective sanctions against Iran is evidence that sanctions alone will not alter Iran's long-term behavior. China and Russia have been reluctant to impose crippling new sanctions on Iran, and without their cooperation and international consensus, sanctions will not be enforced.

Economic sanctions which may lead to war will function against the Green Movement for four different reasons; they will weaken the national economy and deepen the misery of ordinary people, while the Islamic Republic Guards Corp commanders who have the grip on smuggling routes will benefit from them; they will decrease the degree of transparency in the functions of governments; the government will continue blaming others for its ineffective decision-making processes and actions; and a new wave of military personnel will be sent to middle-range bureaucratic positions, further militarizing the governmental institutions.

For the same reasons, the leaders of the Green Movement are against any sanctions. Mousavi's statement 13 (issued on September 28, 2009) makes this clear:

> Sanctions would not actually act against the government—rather, they would only inflict grave distress against a people who have experienced enough disaster in their own melancholic statesmen. We are opposed to any types of sanctions against our nation. This is what living the Green Path means.

The Interests of the Country, the Interests of the Regime

Since the June 12th presidential election and the repression in its aftermath, the Iranian regime's interests have been totally different from the Iranian national interest. The fraudulent election has pushed the regime into closer ties with authoritarian regimes while the movement is inclined toward the free world. The Iranian nuclear program and sanctions will increase this gap. The Green Movement is both against sanctions and the nuclear program as it has been managed by the government.

Greens Do Not Want the Bomb

The Green Movement is a non-violent movement and rejects any arms race in the region. One of the spiritual leaders of the movement, Husein Ali Montazeri, prohibits investment in or the production, stockpiling and use of atomic energy for nuclear weapons and, in general, the use of weapons of mass destruction: "Humanity is heading toward prohibition of WMDs [weapons of mass destruction] all over the world" (Gooynews, October 16, 2009).

Green Movement activists reject the double standards in dealing with nuclear stockpiles and proliferation in the international and regional arena. They want a world without nuclear weapons. From their point of view, nuclear proliferation, even for peaceful purposes, is the people's choice, not the government's right. They are suspicious about the government's agenda on the nuclear issue due to its policy of concealment and fraud in every aspect of the public administration.

Democracy Is the Solution

The Green Movement activists believe that the only solution for Iran's nuclear issue is its transition to democracy. They emphasize four different channels of international support for this transition: breaking the propaganda machine of the government by supporting alternative media;

stopping the government's actions to interfere in social networking activities; lowering the oil price through cooperation with oil-exporting countries in the region; and sending Iran's file regarding crimes against humanity to the International Court of Justice through the Security Council.

According to the Green Movement's leaders, instead of military threats and sanctions against the country, the international community should support the Green Movement, not only to promote human rights and democracy, but in their own national and security interests.

11.14 Iran's Presidential Election and the Silent Arab World

Though politically and socially diverse, Arab states, the proverbial Arab "street" and Arab intellectuals were almost uniformly silent in the wake of the Iranian protests against the so-called stolen election of June 12.

Self-interest largely dictated the response—or rather the lack of it. Arab states and the Arab street are concerned about the danger of nuclear nonproliferation and the destabilizing impact a nuclear-armed Iran would have on the region. Yet that is not nearly enough to cause people to come out on the side of the protesters, who are presumably more inclined to give up the quest for nuclear weapons than their hardline president.

It is equally simplistic and wrong to see President Ahmadinejad's views on Israel as the key a reason for their being so quiet. The region remains highly conservative and just as Russia's leaders were deeply suspicious of those who led the "colored" revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe in recent years, so there is a significant regional degree of distrust and wariness around those inside Iran now seen to be demanding their rights.

The word "democracy" has, of course, never been popular in the presidential palaces of the Middle East, while the word is equally and inextricably linked to the kind of US foreign policy championed by the neo-conservatism of the Bush era by many of those on the Arab street. Some familiar Arab figures well known in the Iranian press—such as Mohammad Hassanein Heikal (*Kayhan*, June 30, 2009) and Sheikh Mohammad Husein Fazlullah (*Mehr* News Agency, July 2, 2009)—went so far as to blame the West for the street protests.

While most Arab governments did not have the warmest of relations with President Ahmadinejad, several leaders did send their congratulations within days of his "victory." As well as traditional allies, such as Syria, these included Lebanon's President, Michel Suleiman, and Kuwait's Prince,

Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. The latter, ironically, had something of a reformist record, being more supportive of women's rights and a freer media than his predecessors.

Swift congratulations from the Hamas leadership surprised few—nor did the message of goodwill sent by Amr Moussa, secretary general of the Arab League, whose role as the Arab's regional representative was to be diplomat-in-chief and keep strong lines of communication open.

Given their very longstanding regional rivalries and Iran's nuclear ambitions, Moussa's former boss, Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, and other leaders were keen to see a regime in Iran committed to negotiation and compromise with the West—and so there was no major rush by others to congratulate Ahmadinejad. At the same time, the Arab presidents and emirs were obviously keen to ensure stability—and Ahmadinejad provides a strong degree of that in the short run. The regional leaders want clarity in Iran: they wish to have somebody clearly in charge so they know who they are dealing with—something which has not always been clear in the Islamic Republic. So there was no great enthusiasm shown for the protesters either. Some neighboring states and those states politically closer to Iran even deliberately undercounted the number of those who were protesting. Iraq's National Security Advisor, Mowaffaq al-Rabi'i, was one such high-ranking official who was quoted in *Tabnak* on June 29 as downplaying the demonstrations.

Ahmadinejad is more popular in the Arab street than in the region's presidential palaces. He is a populist, not urbane or high-born, and his base demonization of Israel plays to the fundamentalist crowd—even though it makes their stability-minded leaders quite wary. Wrapping himself up in a pro-Palestinian banner has helped Ahmadinejad disguise the growing disenchantment among Iranians themselves in the minds of many ordinary Arabs, who will always be more focused on the Palestinian question than on an internal Iranian one. Meantime, Arab intellectuals and activists who receive Iranian support and aid will always prefer Ahmadinejad because of his hardline views on Israel and the USA alike.

While one might have expected those among the nascent civil society community in the Middle East to come out clearly in support of the street protests inside Iran, the leftists among them had traditionally ignored the reformist camp since the 1980s precisely because of the regime's anti-imperialist policies. Consequently, some Arab intellectuals and fundamentalists prefer Iranian Islamic authoritarianism to nationalistic authoritarianism in their own countries. They see Iran's "Green" protest movement as little

more than a Western-inspired revolution. Ingrained suspicion, if not hatred, of the West has blinded some to the repression of the theocratic regime in Tehran.

11.15 Enthusiasm and Shock: How the Western Media Coverage of Elections Quickly Soured

Perhaps not unexpectedly given the results, there were two distinct narratives running through the Western media coverage of the Iranian elections. The first ran for a week or thereabouts up until election day on Friday, June 12: the majority of the international correspondents had arrived in Tehran and were filing stories by then that pointed to the Iranian people's passion and enthusiasm for different candidates—and to the government's own warm welcome for the foreign media.

The Iranian authorities presumably wanted to try and prove there was such a thing as a "theocratic democracy." It wanted a strong turnout and extensive media coverage in order to demonstrate its legitimacy—while demonstrating the electorate's strong support for the government's policies and its hardline stance against the West.

For their part, foreign reporters and their outlets were excited to have the opportunity to report from inside the Islamic Republic and see their stereotypical images of Iran and Iranians so challenged. Iran was not just Ahmadinejad and correspondents instead conveyed a hopeful mood in a country of diverse opinions: for the first time in more than a decade, Iran was given a human face.

There were no complaints then about the role of foreign media; nor were there any reports that foreign governments were trying to interfere with the vote or the political campaigns. The trouble began when Ahmadinejad was declared the winner the following day by a huge margin, and opposition candidates started alleging huge irregularities and fraud. The results had been announced in huge blocks of votes and in percentages, as opposed to being announced region by region, as in previous elections. Protests began and grew on the streets after Mousavi asked the Guardian Council to declare the result invalid. Foreign reporters who were expecting a close-run vote were shocked instead to find themselves reporting on rallies and demonstrations. Mass arrests alongside a state-led media and cellphone blackout simply added to the heightened sense of concern.

The Iranian government wanted to pretend that about 40 million people who had participated in the election all supported the regime. It did not want to see a mass protest action on the streets of Tehran about stolen elections beamed around the world by the visiting press corps. According to Tehran's mayor (an ex-military officer and a member of the authoritarian camp), Baqer Qalibaf, up to three million people came out onto the streets of Tehran on Sunday, June 14.

The authorities were taken by surprise and ordered the foreign press corps to stay in their hotels and to make plans to leave as soon as possible. As a result, the international media's collective narrative changed—and it did so precisely as official Iranian thinking resorted to the claim that the protests were neither spontaneous nor homegrown. They claimed that they were in fact led by the West, and by the United States and Britain in particular. Forced to remain in their hotels and ousted from the country, the Western media were left reliant on so-called citizen journalism and the likes of Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and other social networking sites. In this situation, verification was a constant problem.

Despite huge and immediate demand for images and clips, there was no easy or quick way to check sources or verify information, and media outlets were left broadcasting things as they came in. Equally, Internet chat rooms and bloggers were awash with claims that a state-published picture taken at a pro-Ahmadinejad rally had been photoshopped to make the crowds look bigger than they had been.

The softly-softly approach taken by Western leaders all too aware of how their early intervention in the dispute would only play into the hands of the hardliners and help undermine the protesters meant that the media soon became overly reliant upon unverifiable information and other chatter to fill their schedules. Yet this was until the mainstream media had spent the first few days after the election projecting different sides of the story. Some media outlets in the USA and Europe questioned the claims of opposition candidates and when there were protests against Western-based Persian language media outlets, such as BBC Persian TV, the protesters were given time to air their concerns.

Some Persian language media outlets in the West were slow to suggest Iran's most senior religious leaders were complicit in dismissing, if not covering up, the alleged election fraud. The BBC Persian Service did not directly focus on the leader, Khamenei, or his office until Friday prayers of June 19, 2009, when he warned protesters to stay off the streets and held opposition candidates responsible for any violence.

As it is the case in the Iranian state-run media, Khamenei was hitherto presented as the most powerful person in the country but as lacking any responsibility. It seemed as if nobody wanted to suggest that the leader had any role or responsibility for the election results or what happened in their wake.

Yet this did not stop the authorities from accusing the BBC and VOA (voice of America) Persian Services of interfering with Iran's internal affairs: Even with the opposition press banned, journalists arrested, websites filtered, text messaging blocked, cell phones shut down and foreign reporters ordered out, the Iranian government was blaming the Western media for the unrest—as if it was some kind of advance unit working on behalf of some giant international conspiracy.

Notes

1. This was one of the protesters' slogans in the streets of Tehran.
2. Kadivar, Velayat-e Faqih and Democracy, on his personal website, July 10, 2010: he changed his position with respect to this issue many times in just twelve months.
3. 'Ata'oullah Mohajerani, Alvatan al-Arabi, April 6, 2010.
4. 'Ata'ollah Mohajerani in a lecture in London, June 26, 2010.
5. Sabzineh webzine, no. 16.
6. Mohsen Kedivar, Jaras, January 7, 2010.
7. "The Green Movement does not demand Khamenei's dismissal," 'Ata'ollah Mohajerani's interview with Al Watan Al Arabi daily news, April 6, 2010.
8. Rahesabz.net, November 2, 2009.
9. *Norouz*, November 26, 2009.
10. In his lecture in commemoration of Ahmad Borghani held in Toronto, February 6, 2010.
11. Mohsen Armin, *Norouz*, November 26, 2009.
12. See: "Mohammad al-Dourah, Caspian and Similarities of Conflicting Poles" by Amin Bozorgian, Radio Zamaneh, March 26, 2010.
13. In the open meeting of the Majles, one of the representatives and a member of the fundamentalist faction unofficially announced that a report was submitted from the office of Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, mayor of Tehran, concerning the size and volume of the crowds supporting Mousavi in Freedom (Azadi) Square, stating that at least three million protesters were present (Etemad-e-Melli Party—National Trust or National Confidence Party—June 18, 2009).

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