CHAPTER

12

POLITICS IN IRAN

H. E. Chehabi and Arang Keshavarzian

Country Bio

IRAN

Population
72.4 million

Territory
636,296 square miles

Year of Independence
550 B.C.E.

Year of Current Constitution
1979, amended in 1989

Head of State
Ali Khamenei

Head of Government
Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

Languages
Persian, Azeri, Kurdish, and other regional languages

Religions
Twelver Shiite Muslim 90%, Sunni Muslim 10%, non-Muslims less than 1%

The Islamic Republic of Iran is the world's only **theocracy**, a form of government in which, ideally, all laws are grounded in religion and express the will of God, and a clergy exercises supreme power. While Islamic law has always been applied to varying degrees in Muslim states, it has almost always been complemented by some sort of nonreligious customary law. Moreover, various sultans, shahs, sheikhs, and, since the twentieth century, presidents or prime ministers have traditionally exercised political power in the Muslim world. Genuine theocracies have been very rare. Although the **ulema**, as religious scholars are called in the Muslim world, have sometimes been critical of rulers who strayed from the path of Islam, they almost never aspired to exercise power directly as they do in Iran today. Therefore, far from being a manifestation of Islamic conservatism, Iran's current theocratic regime constitutes a break with Muslim tradition.

The Islamic Republic of Iran was established in 1979, a few months after a popular revolution uniting poor with middle-class and religious with secular people overthrew **Mohammad-Reza Shah Pahlavi** (r. 1941–1979), the last ruler of the country's ancient monarchy. **Ruhollah Khomeini**, a charismatic clerical leader of Iran's majority Twelver Shiite community, who had authored a blueprint for theocratic government in the early 1970s, led the 1979 revolution. In this blueprint, Khomeini opposed democracy on religious grounds. Sovereignty, he argued, belongs to God alone. Divine law, known as the ***shari'a***, as interpreted and applied by the ulema, takes precedence over laws made by human legislators. In spite of Khomeini's preference for clerical dictatorship, the regime that was established and developed after the demise of the monarchy incorporated the ideals of a diverse revolutionary coalition including liberal nationalists, leftists of various proclivities, and lay Islamists, who imagined religious rule with only symbolic authority bestowed to clerics. Thus, the constitution enshrined some republican principles and rights, and consequently presidential, parliamentary, and local elections have offered citizens a choice of candidates advocating differing policies. The emergence of limited democratic

practices and institutions under a regime founded on the negation of democracy is only one of many paradoxes found in Iran.

CURRENT POLICY CHALLENGES

The rulers of the Islamic Republic have faced a fundamental predicament ever since they replaced the monarchy. How could they reconcile the demands of Khomeini and his confidants to establish a political, social, and economic order that would be consistent with their understanding of Islam and simultaneously maintain the principles of republican government that would ensure representation of and accountability to citizens? As discussed in this chapter, it has not been easy to reconcile these principles. Not only may "God's sovereignty," popular sovereignty, and state interests conflict, but the successes and failures of the Islamic Republic's policies have also created new expectations and demands as well as new social and political actors.

During the first decade of the Islamic Republic, some redistribution of wealth took place as the government expropriated much of the property of the old prerevolutionary elite. The new leadership came mostly from humble or middle-class backgrounds and adopted populist policies that somewhat bettered the lot of the poorest. For instance, the new regime invested heavily in rural development, including in health, women's education, and roads. However, the postrevolutionary reality is far from ideal, and poverty, inequality, and underemployment continue to be major public grievances. Possessing the world's second-largest oil and gas reserves, the people expect Iran's government to improve the lives of ordinary Iranians and establish the basis for long-term and sustainable development. However, transforming natural wealth into economic productivity and diversification has proven difficult. In the ideological climate of the Islamic Republic, industrial entrepreneurs are seen as exploiters, and so private investment tends to go into speculation and rent-seeking rather than long-term investment aimed at enhancing exports and creating sustainable development. Consequently, job creation has been inadequate.

The need to increase economic output to provide employment for a rapidly growing labor force is perhaps the greatest challenge facing the government. Iran's population grows by about 600,000 every year. Although the government has successfully brought down the birth rate, the effects of the lower population growth rate will not be felt for many years. Even under the best circumstances, it would be difficult to provide employment for the 800,000 men and women who enter the labor market every year, but Iran's anti-entrepreneurial outlook, as well as its unattractiveness to foreign investment, make the situation even worse. Regional conflicts and the continuing tension between Iran and the United States discourage both foreign and domestic investment. At the same time, a vastly expanded educational system means that many of the young unemployed hold academic degrees, which adds to their frustration and discontent. This discontent has produced massive migration. A 2006 IMF study of 90 countries ranked Iran as having the highest rate of brain drain with more than 150,000 Iranians with university degrees leaving per year.[1]

A new challenge concerns dissatisfaction with the status quo among some of Iran's ethnic minorities, especially those that are mostly Sunni, like the Kurds and Baluchis (see Figure 12.1).[2] Integrating these Iranian citizens into a national framework that is officially defined by its adherence to Twelver Shiism is increasingly difficult at a time when sectarian tensions are rising in the surrounding countries and fueled by complex geopolitical and regional rivalries.

Corruption makes matters even worse. The media increasingly report about corruption, and it is debated in Parliament and by politicians. As many Iranians struggle to find gainful employment and make ends meet, a new elite has made fortunes by exploiting personal connections to the officials who control access to hard currency, import licenses, and tax shelters. The relatives of former president **Ali-Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani** are often cited as examples of the wealth nourished by privileged access and information.

For all these reasons, the promises of the Islamic revolutionaries concerning a more just and more moral society ring hollow with many Iranians, half of whom are too young to recall the corruption, political repression, and inequality under the Shah. As a result, the theocratic model of government has suffered a massive loss of legitimacy. While the people may still be religious, the ulema no longer command their deference and respect. In addition, practicing Muslims and thinkers are developing Islam in new directions by questioning the right of the ulema to rule and exposing different interpretations of texts and opinions among the clergy.

Map of Iran's Ethnic Minorities

FIGURE 12.1

www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/iran_ethnoreligious_distribution_2009.jpg

While these social dynamics and tensions pose challenges to the regime, the political establishment also faces profound threats from within the ranks of the regime elite. Almost immediately after the establishment of the Islamic Republic, factions and fissures developed within the coalition of clerical and lay Islamists. During the 1980s, the war with Iraq, challenges from secular groups, and Khomeini's charisma and savvy politics helped unify the country's leadership. However, with the end of the war, Khomeini's death, and the massive challenges of normalizing revolutionary politics in the 1990s, disputes began to rage among the political elite. By the end of the regime's second decade, the political elite were divided into two broad camps—those who wanted to enhance republican institutions and popular participation, and those who wanted to strengthen the pillars of Islamist rule and the office of the Leader.

In 2009, elite conflict and social discontent merged into one after the results of the June presidential elections were announced. Officially, **Mahmoud Ahmadinejad** received 62 percent of the vote, with **Mir-Hossein Mousavi** trailing with less than 34 percent of the vote and Mohsen Rezaei and Mehdi Karroubi winning less than 2 percent each. Turnout was a staggering 85 percent and not challenged by any of the candidates or observers. As in 2005, Ahmadinejad had woven together support from core institutions of the Islamic republic, such as the office of the Leader (Ali Khamenei) and generals in the **Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)**, as well as urban middle-class and lower-middle-class people who were mobilized by his populist message of redistribution, nationalism, and religious moralism. Yet Ahmadinejad's election victory was challenged by the reformist candidates and political leaders (including Hashemi Rafsanjani and Muhammad Khatami, both former presidents) and by Iranians drawn into what is known as the **Green Movement** (see Box 12.1).

BOX 12.1

The Green Movement

During the 2009 presidential election campaign, former prime minister Mir-Hossein Mousavi's election team adopted the color green as their symbol. The selection was a savvy one. Green is associated with Islam and in particular *seyyeds*, or people who claim descent from the Prophet Muhammad. Thus, Mousavi, who is a *seyyed*, reminded religious Iranians of his pious background. In addition, in Iranian culture and literature, the color green symbolizes spring, rebirth, and joy. Thus, green reminded secular Iranians of Mousavi's reformist platform and his departure from Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. In the buildup to the election, Mousavi supporters publicly displayed their political allegiance by adopting and distributing green posters, bracelets, balloons, flags, and other campaign material. When the election results were announced on June 13 and large numbers of Iranians questioned irregularities in the election procedures and challenged the results, green became a unifying symbol for all those who challenged Ahmadinejad's reelection. In a series of rallies and other forms of civil disobedience, Iranians asked, "Where is my vote?" and called for a reelection, challenging the authority of the president and even the Leader; thus, Iran's "Green Movement" was born.

The Green Movement demands that unified these Iranians were associated with civil and political rights (e.g., right to assembly, greater government transparency, freedom of the press). Although initially focused on the election and its immediate aftermath, the aspirations of the participants in the movement have begun to diverge. Some "Greens," including Mousavi, Karroubi, and Khatami, call for strengthening the republican institutions and principles of the Islamic republic; others have broadened their goals and called for the eradication of the office of the Leader and the dismantling of the regime entirely. It is thus more precise to speak of different shades of green.

Source: Kaveh Ehsani, Arang Keshavarzian, and Norma Claire Moruzzi, "Tehran, June 2009," *Middle East Report Online*, June 28, 2009.

Who are Iran's so-called "Greens"? Given the harsh crackdown after the 2009 election, it is difficult to identify and analyze systematically the social backgrounds of supporters of the movement. Having said that, most active supporters seem to be urban, educated, under the age of forty, and drawn from those who voted for Mousavi or Karroubi. The movement is therefore sometimes referred to as a "middle-class movement." This is partially true, for members of the industrial working class (even union activists), the peasantry, and older Iranians have not joined these protests in large numbers. However, it is important to recall that urban, literate, and professional men and women comprise a significant portion of contemporary Iranian society (see demographic data pp. 556–7 and Table 12.2).

Thus, by responding to the Green Movement with massive violence and intimidation, the Ahmadinejad government and pillars of the regime have alienated a social constituency responsible for managing and running a functioning economy, society, and polity, while also angering key members of the Islamic Republic's political elite. Moreover, the brutal repression of the peaceful protests angered not only those citizens who were willing to accommodate themselves to the regime on account of its republican components, but also many pious Iranians who supported the Islamic Republic because they believed it represented a higher level of ethics and justice on the part of the rulers. The most immediate challenge faced by the Iranian government at the beginning of the new decade is therefore the heated debate within the political establishment and the regime's waning legitimacy in disparate segments of society.

HISTORICAL LEGACY

Iran, like China and Japan, is one of a handful of non-Western states that Europeans never formally colonized. Iran's borders were not drawn artificially by colonial powers but result from the historical balance of power between its shahs and their neighboring rulers. The Iranian state tradition is over twenty-five centuries old, but the current Iranian state was set up in the early sixteenth century by the Safavid dynasty. The dynasty's most lasting impact was the establishment of

Twelver Shiism as the official state religion and the conversion of most Iranians who had been **Sunnis** to Shiism. Historically, the shrine cities of Iraq had been the cradle of this branch of Islam, but with the establishment of a powerful Shiite state in Iran, Iran became the political center of the Shiite world.

Twelver Shiism

The split between Sunnis (who constitute about 90 percent of all Muslims) and the Shiites came about after the death of the founder of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad. Muhammad was not only the founder of a new religion but also a political leader. Therefore, after he died in 628 C.E., the nascent Muslim community had to find a leader to succeed him. A minority of believers, who later came to be known as *Shiites*, deemed the descendants of the Prophet to be his only rightful successors. Shiites call these hereditary successors to the Prophet *Imams*. Of particular importance is the Third Imam, Husayn, whose martyrdom in 680 C.E. symbolizes for Shiites the struggle of the just against the unjust. This event is still commemorated yearly in emotional processions that acquire a political dimension in times of political crisis.

While some Shiite sects believe in an unbroken line of Imams all the way to the present, the vast majority believe that the twelfth was the last of the Imams, hence their name. According to these Shiites, the twelfth Imam disappeared from view as a child in 874 C.E., but did not die. He is alive (rather like Elijah in the Jewish tradition) and will come forth and show himself to establish a just rule at the end of time. In other words, he is a messiah-like figure. From the moment the Twelfth Imam disappeared from public view, therefore, Twelver Shiite political thought faced a dilemma. The only figure who could exercise legitimate rule over the community of believers was not physically present, and no one knew when he would reveal himself. Most of the time, this dilemma did not matter in practice, because Shiites were a minority lacking political power, making their political theology inconsequential.

With the establishment of a Twelver Shiite state by the Safavid dynasty in the sixteenth century, the unavailability of the one truly legitimate ruler became an existential problem. In the absence of the Twelfth Imam, who had the right to rule in practice? Most ulema were willing to accord this right to the secular rulers, the shahs, so long as they ruled justly and in accordance with Islam. By the end of the seventeenth century, however, a minority of ulema argued that for the rule of a shah to be legitimate, he had to have the ulema's explicit endorsement. After the fall of the Safavids in 1722, Iran was in the grip of civil wars as various short-lived dynasties succeeded each other. The Qajar dynasty finally emerged victorious in 1796.

During the troubled eighteenth century, the ulema established themselves as an institution independent of the state. Since the state was in disarray much of the time, believers' tithes were increasingly paid to the ulema directly, assuring them of financial independence. Moreover, the center of Twelver Shiism, the city of Najaf, lay in Ottoman Iraq, outside the control of Iran's worldly authorities. Beginning in the nineteenth century, therefore, the ulema had greater social, political, and religious prominence in Iran than in the Sunni world. They had their own sources of income and were beyond the control of the state. Without this legacy, the establishment of a theocracy would not even have been conceivable in the 1970s.

In some ways, the role and function of the ulema resemble that of a clergy in Christian countries. However, while the Shiite ulema form a loose hierarchy, they are not organized in a pyramidal structure like the Roman Catholic Church. There is no equivalent of the pope, and no one leader can define dogma in a way that is binding for everyone else. Consequently, the ulema have often disagreed among themselves on political and even minor religious matters, a state of affairs that, as we will see, has not ended with the creation of an Islamic state.

A Multiethnic Nation

The population of Iran comprises a number of different ethnic groups defined by language. Persian speakers are the largest group and constitute roughly half the total population, the most important others being Azeri Turks, Kurds, Lurs, Baluchis, Arabs, and Turkmens (see again Figure 12.1). Historically, this ethnic variety did not pose a political problem. There are three main reasons for this. First, Iran's largest non-Persian population, the Azeri Turks, share the same religion with the Persians and have always been prominent among the country's elites. Second, the cultural prestige of the Persian language was such that non-Persian speakers acquiesced in its role as official

language. Finally, the Iranian nation was defined territorially rather than ethnically, in the sense that "Iranian" meant coming from the land of Iran, which is the ancient name of the area between the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf.

Under the influence of ethnically defined European nationalism, the prerevolutionary elites of Iran defined Iran as a *Persian* country, ignoring its ethnic diversity. After the revolution, Twelver Shiism came to be the defining trait of the nation in the eyes of its leaders. This means that in recent Iranian history, two visions of what constitutes Iranian identity have contended with each other; one ignores the cultural specificity of non-Persian-speaking citizens, while the other marginalizes non-Twelver Shiites, of whom Sunnis are the largest community (approximately 10 percent). Additionally, these linguistic and religious divisions have been politicized by minorities lacking access to state resources and having fewer socioeconomic opportunities in the geographic margins of the country where the majority of Kurds, Baluch, Arabs, and Turkmen live.

Constitutionalism in Iran

Iran's geographic location between the Russian empire in the north and the British empire in the south allowed it to survive the heyday of European imperialism as an independent state. Both empires allowed it to remain a neutral buffer between their respective domains. Nevertheless, educated Iranians recognized the fragility of their country's sovereignty. As they became more familiar with Europe in the nineteenth century, they became more aware of their own backwardness. As long as Iran was less developed than Europe, it would forever remain vulnerable to imperialist encroachment. Consequently, "catching up with the West" became the major goal of Iran's intellectual and political elite. They believed that the rule of law was the secret of European superiority, whereas arbitrary rule prevailed in Iran. They concluded that constitutional government had to be introduced to strengthen the nation. Japan's victory over Russia in the war of 1905 confirmed Iranian constitutionalists in their view. For the first time, an Asian power had vanquished a European one, and Iranians argued that this reversal of fortunes occurred because Japan was the only constitutional power in Asia while Russia was the only autocracy among the major European powers.

In 1905, widespread dissatisfaction with the way the country was governed led to a popular movement that wrested a constitution from the Shah in December 1906. Shiite ulema played a major role in the constitutionalist movement. Until a few years earlier, the Iranian state had been characterized by an implicit contract between worldly and spiritual authorities. The Shah upheld the official religion and the ulema legitimated the Shah's rule. But by the early twentieth century, many politically active ulema shared the views of merchants and Western-educated intellectuals: that the powers of the monarchy needed to be curtailed. They believed that the citizenry had the right to elect a representative parliament, that the Shah could name a prime minister only in agreement with parliament, and that parliament could hold the government accountable. These very European ideas were criticized by conservative ulema for being alien to Islam, but constitutionalist ulema found ways to justify them in Islamic terms. Most famously, Ayatollah Muhammad-Husayn Na'ini argued that a despotic shah violated the rights of the Twelfth Imam and those of the people, whereas rule by the people violated only the rights of the Twelfth Imam. He concluded that while neither form of government was ideal, the latter was the lesser evil and thus preferable to the former.[3] This argument implied the novel idea that as long as the Twelfth Imam chose to remain in hiding, the believers themselves were his deputies. This elegant formulation reconciled Shiism's core beliefs with modern notions of constitutionalism and is a legacy that the revolutionaries of 1979 could not ignore as they set out to create an Islamic state.

The Pahlavi Monarchy

The Constitution of 1906 did not bring the hoped-for progress, however. In a 1907 secret agreement, Britain and Russia divided Iran into two spheres of influence. During World War I, belligerents repeatedly violated Iran's neutrality and fought each other on Iranian territory, causing much hardship to the population. By the end of the war, local warlords were challenging the authority of the central government in peripheral regions.

In 1921, a *coup d'état* put an end to the rule of the old establishment. The commander of the troops, Reza Khan, lost no time in extending government control over rebellious provinces and began an ambitious

modernization program to develop and centralize state authority. By 1925, he ousted the ruling Qajar dynasty and had Parliament proclaim him the new ruler as Reza Shah Pahlavi. From his coronation in 1926 until his ouster by the British in the wake of the Allied occupation of Iran in 1941, he ruled as dictator, although he left the Constitution formally in place. Reza Khan initially enjoyed the support of most of the clergy. But in the 1930s, his relations with the ulema deteriorated after he implemented reforms that reduced their social functions and aimed at Westernizing the daily culture of Iranians, such as prohibiting women's veiling. With his departure into exile, politics opened up again. His twenty-one-year-old son and successor, Mohammad-Reza Shah Pahlavi, did not have the authority yet to continue his father's ways (see Figure 12.2).

Between 1941 and 1953, Iran's political system included three main camps. First, the pro-Western conservative establishment, including the Shah and the landlords, was supported tacitly by most of the ulema. Second was the pro-Soviet communist **Tudeh party**. Third was the neutralist National Front, which aimed at establishing the full rule of law within the country and consolidating its standing among nations. As the National Front saw it, the nation's sovereignty was compromised by British control over Iran's oil resources through the British-owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC). The Iranian government had no say in the company, not even the right to see its books. From 1945 to 1950, the total net profits of the AIOC were £250 million after deducting high British taxes, royalties, and exaggerated depreciation figures; at the same time, royalties paid to Iran for its oil amounted to merely £90 million.[4]

The leader of the National Front, **Mohammad Mossadegh**, advocated nationalizing the Iranian oil industry. This occurred in March 1951, and soon thereafter Mossadegh was elected prime minister by Parliament. Subsequent negotiations between the Iranian and British governments to resolve the oil dispute failed. Consequently, the British began plotting Mossadegh's overthrow, which was accomplished with the help of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in August 1953.[5]

Iran's political system reverted to royal autocracy as the second ruler of the Pahlavi dynasty increasingly asserted himself and took full control over the emerging **rentier state** (see Chapter 7). With the help of a steady stream of oil revenue and U.S. support, in 1963, the Shah launched a reform program known as the "White Revolution," which included land reform and granting suffrage to women. In the 1950s, the Shah had enjoyed the support of the clerical hierarchy, but by the early 1960s, his dictatorial methods and Westernizing policies elicited the anger of religious traditionalists. These traditionalists rioted in June 1963 in support of a new oppositional member of the ulema, Ruhollah Khomeini. The government suppressed the riots with bloodshed, and Khomeini was arrested and exiled. He finally settled in the Shiite shrine city of Najaf in Iraq. He remained there until

Year	Head of State	President	Prime Minister
1941	Shah: Mohammad-Reza Pahlavi	—	—Various cabinets
1951	—	—	Mohammad Mossadegh (51–53)
—	—	—	—Various cabinets
1965	—	—	Amir-Abbas Hoveyda
1977	—	—	Jamshid Amuzegar
1979	Leader: Ruhollah Khomeini	—	Mehdi Bazargan
1980	—	Abolhasan Banisadr	—
1981	—	Ali Rajai, Ali Khamenei	Mir-Hosein Musavi
1989	Ali Khamenei	Ali-Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani	Position abolished
1997	—	Mohammad Khatami	—
2005	—	Mahmud Ahmadinejad	—

Iranian Regimes

FIGURE 12.2

October 1978, when he was expelled by Saddam Hussein and sought refuge in Paris until his triumphant return to Iran on February 1, 1979.

Until 1963, opposition to royal autocracy was carried out in the name of the Constitution of 1906, which the two Pahlavi shahs were criticized for not respecting. Free elections were the opposition's main demand. After 1963, however, opponents of the Shah, increasingly driven underground or abroad, despaired of ever attaining constitutional rule by peaceful means and became radicalized. Gradually, the Constitution itself suffered a loss of legitimacy. Opponents of the Shah demanded the abolition of the monarchy and its replacement by a new regime. Given the Shah's suppression of civil society and of the secular opposition, mosques and religious circles became the only places where one could speak one's mind. Thus, religion became a more prominent political force, despite the secularist policies of the state. By the 1970s, Shiite activists, many of them university students or followers of Khomeini, were arguing about the shape of the ideal Islamic state.

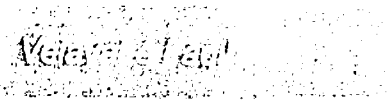
While the Shah's regime was increasingly contested at home, it continued to receive support from the West in general and the United States in particular. Since the Shah's rule had been made possible through the direct intervention of the CIA, his opponents thought of him as an U.S. puppet whose policies were designed to benefit the United States rather than Iran. Opposition to the Shah thus logically entailed opposition to the United States and Israel, with which the Shah had contracted a strategic alliance directed against radical Arab states, such as Egypt, Iraq, and Syria. In recent years, evidence has appeared suggesting that at the height of his power in the early 1970s, the Shah, far from being manipulated by the United States, was actually successful in manipulating U.S. policymakers to achieve his ends.[6]

Although Iran's first revolution failed to produce a constitutional state based on the rule of law, during the seven decades of its life, Iran acquired the trappings of a modern nation-state. The government acquired a monopoly on the use of force; introduced unified legal codes; developed a functioning civil service, including a territorial administration that extended the writ of the state into distant provinces; and secured the country's international borders. State-building having been accomplished, the Islamic state created in the aftermath of the revolution of 1979 became an Islamic *republic.*

The Islamic Revolution

In 1977, Jimmy Carter became president of the United States and U.S. foreign policy began emphasizing respect for human rights by U.S. allies.[7] Unbeknownst to the public, the Shah had terminal cancer. To ensure a smooth transition to his heir at a time when U.S. support could no longer be taken for granted, he began liberalizing aspects of Iran's political system and removing longtime advisors and cronies. But various dissident and social groups with grievances took advantage of this liberalization to push for greater reforms. From late 1977 to early 1979, the calls for greater liberalization snowballed into a call for the abolition of the monarchy. This opposition coalition consisted of intellectuals, university and high school students and teachers, bazaar merchants, politically active clerics and seminarians, industrial workers, and, in the final stage, state employees and white-collar workers.[8] The popular movement against the regime's despotism, corruption, and alliances with the United States and Israel united such diverse ideological factions as liberal adherents of the 1906 Constitution, Marxist-Leninist leftists, and **Islamists.** The latter comprised democrats whose reading of Islam was decidedly liberal and noncoercive, leftists who stressed the egalitarian aspects of Islam, and direct followers of Khomeini who championed an Islamic state supervised by clerics. These activists organized massive meetings, demonstrations, and strikes, and they distributed anti-regime pamphlets in a largely peaceful manner.[9] In his reaction, the Shah vacillated between repressing the movement and making belated concessions. The result was that the activists became ever more radicalized during 1978, finally driving him and his family into exile in January 1979.[10]

In the course of the revolutionary uprising and immediately after the departure of the Shah's family, Khomeini's followers were the best-organized and most united force, and they rapidly sidelined the nonclerical currents in their coalition. The organizational power of Khomeini and his followers was enhanced by their access to independent sources of revenue, as traditionally observant Shiites pay their tithes directly to the ulema. In 1970, Khomeini had revived the strain in Twelver Shiite thought that called for clerical oversight of government and carried it to its logical conclusion. In a treatise titled "Islamic Government," he argued that God had revealed His laws to humankind, not



BOX 12.2

Velayat-e faqih—the lynchpin of Iran's theocratic Constitution—is best translated as "guardianship of the jurisprudent." Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini described this while he was in exile in 1970 in Iraq. Khomeini argued that since God revealed the laws according to which Muslims should live and organize their community, Muslims should apply these laws in practice rather than just debating them theoretically. The most qualified people to supervise the application of these laws in the state, he wrote, are those who know them best (that is, the clerics who specialize in jurisprudence). He concluded that such a cleric must therefore be the head of state. In 1979, this principle was enshrined in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Khomeini himself became the ruling jurisprudent, referred to henceforth as "Leader." For the first time in Iranian history, religious and worldly authorities were fused. *Velayat-e faqih* is not strongly grounded in scripture, and most Twelver Shiite clerics disagree with the principle. They see the task of the Shiite clergy as that of guiding the believers and advising rulers, as can be seen in post-Saddam Iraq.

so that they would be ignored until the moment the Twelfth Imam revealed himself, but in order to apply them here and now. Khomeini further observed that the people most suited to rule in accordance with divine law are those who know it best, namely the ulema themselves. This principle came to be known as ***velayat-e faqih***, which is best translated as "guardianship of the jurisprudent"[11] (see Box 12.2).

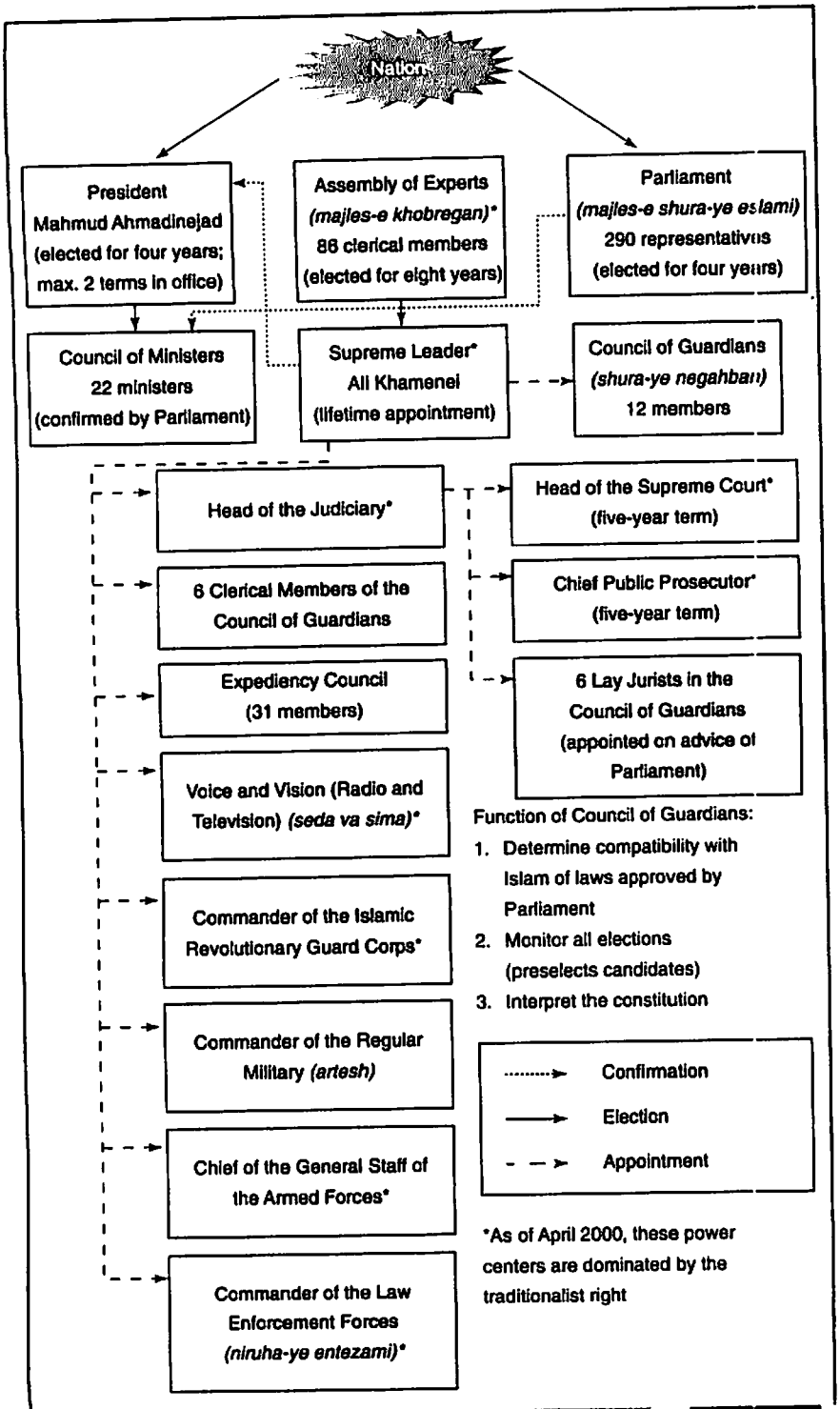
Given Khomeini's charismatic leadership of the revolution, his followers enshrined this principle in the new 1979 Iranian Constitution. However, in deference to the preexisting constitutional tradition and to placate the many non-Islamists and moderate Islamists who had participated in the revolution, the Constitution maintained a parliament elected by universal suffrage. The shah was replaced with an elected president. The Islamic Republic was thus born with a mixed political system that is informed by both a version of Twelver Shiite political doctrine and by Western notions of popular sovereignty and division of powers.[12]

From 1979 to June 1981, secular moderates, leftists, moderate Islamists, and radical Islamists inspired directly by Khomeini competed for power. As time went on, the confrontation between adherents of *velayat-e faqih* and their opponents became ever more implacable and violent. In fact, far more people were killed in confrontations among the revolutionaries than had died as a result of the Shah's efforts to suppress the revolutionary mass movement. By the summer of 1981, Khomeini's supporters gained the upper hand and began instituting Islamic law in all spheres of public life. Their suppression of all who opposed them was facilitated by the war that was now raging with neighboring Iraq.

Iran–Iraq War

Soon after the revolution, Khomeini began calling for the overthrow of the Iraqi president, Saddam Hussein. This provoked Saddam Hussein to attack Iran in September 1980. The war that ensued lasted until 1988 and ended in a stalemate.

Officially termed the "imposed war" or the "sacred defense" in Iran, the war was a major watershed. Over 2 million Iranians were mobilized, with approximately a quarter of a million killed and more than double injured, many due to Iraq's use of chemical weapons. The war enabled the revolutionary regime to consolidate its hold on power by calling for national unity in the face of a foreign invasion. The war became a means to suppress dissent and public debate. The conflict created a "war generation" of young men who were shaped as much by their experiences at the front as by the revolution. Now many of these soldiers and officers are in their forties and fifties, and some are demanding a bigger say in national and local politics. These veterans have tended to call for more "social order" and a greater state role in providing for the lower classes who volunteered and perished in the war in disproportionately large numbers.



Constitutional Structure
Formal Political Power Structure in Iran

FIGURE 12.3

Source: Adapted from Wilfried Buchta, *Who Rules Iran? The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic* (Washington, D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000). © Wilfried Buchta, Rat at 2000.

INSTITUTIONS OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC

Two types of institutions coexist in the political system of the Islamic Republic of Iran: appointed and elected offices. This dualism reflects the attempted *synthesis* between divine and popular sovereignty enshrined in the Constitution. The institutional structure of Iran is further complicated by the existence of what is known as **multiple power centers**, institutions created by the revolutionaries to supplement the activities of the traditional state institutions, with which they share overlapping responsibilities (see Figure 12.3).

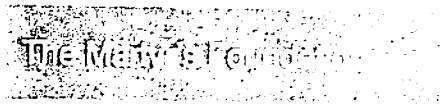
Leader

The highest authority in the Islamic Republic is the **Leader**, who combines religious and temporal authority in accordance with the theocratic principle of *velayat-e faqih*. The position was tailor-made for Khomeini himself, who was both a high-level member of the ulema and a charismatic political leader. For his succession, the Constitution provided for a popularly elected **Assembly of Experts**, consisting of ulema who would choose the Leader from among the most learned ulema. By 1989, however, none of the ulema who had the requisite learning shared his notions of theocratic rule. Consequently, in April 1989, Khomeini appointed an assembly to revise the Constitution to relax the religious requirements of the office. Khomeini

died on June 3, 1989. The Assembly of Experts chose **Ali Khamenei**, who had been president for eight years but was a low-level cleric, to be the new Leader. From the outset, much of the clerical hierarchy contested Khamenei's religious authority, reopening the split between state and "church" that the Islamic Republic had supposedly closed with its fusion of worldly and spiritual authorities. Additionally, unlike his predecessor, who avoided directly aligning with political factions or currents and instead maintained a position and status of mediator and arbiter, the current Leader has increasingly and publically sided with the hard-line conservative faction, which has dominated state institutions since the early 2000s. This was most dramatically and publically illustrated after the 2009 election, when Khamenei categorically supported Ahmadinejad and labeled the Green Movement as treasonous.

The Leader sets the overall policies of the state and appoints some of its key figures, such as the head of the Judiciary, half the members of the **Council of Guardians**, the members of the **Expediency Council**, the director of the state radio and television broadcasting monopoly, and the commanders of the IRGC. He also oversees the numerous parastatal economic foundations and organizations that were formed after the revolution out of the expropriated companies belonging to the previous economic elite. These organizations are ostensibly oriented toward charity and bear such names as the "Foundation of the Disinherited and War Injured" and the "Martyr's Foundation." In fact, they are major holding companies that benefit from state resources and subsidies without being accountable to or regulated by the elected government. Khamenei has used these "nonprofit" organizations as a means to distribute patronage[13] (see Box 12.3).

In theory, the Assembly of Experts, which is elected every ten years by universal suffrage, is more powerful than the Leader. It elects him and can dismiss him if he can no longer perform the responsibilities of his office or proves unworthy of it. However, candidacies to the Assembly of Experts are subject to the approval of the Council of Guardians, whose members are chosen by the Leader, who thus maintains his supremacy in practice.



BOX 12.3

Among the most powerful **parastatal foundations** is the Martyr's Foundation (Bonyad-e Shahid) established in 1979. Its original mandate was to provide for the needs of families of those who were martyred or disabled in the Islamic Revolution and the Iran–Iraq war. The foundation supports 188,000 people by giving aid, priority admission for education, in-kind transfers, housing services, and other benefits. These services are funded by assets formerly belonging to supporters of the Shah, allocations from the state budget and the office of the Leader, and profits from the foundation's various firms. In the mid-1980s, reports stated that the Martyr's Foundation owned $3.3 billion in capital reserves, including sixty-eight industrial factories, seventy-five commercial firms, twenty-one construction companies, and many farms and pieces of urban property.

To administer this large and diverse economic conglomerate, the foundation employs 30,000 people and has a host of subdivisions, such as the International Relations Office and the Marriage Bureau for Widows of Wartime Martyrs. The foundation also publishes a magazine that spreads revolutionary ideology. In 1993, the foundation established the Shahid Investment Company to pool the savings of surviving relatives of the martyrs and invest them. By 2000, shareholders were complaining that the investment company never disclosed its accounts to the shareholders. Mehdi Karroubi was the president of the foundation from 1980 to 1992 and was the speaker of the Sixth Parliament (2000–2004). He ran for president in 2005 on a pro-welfare and distribution platform and came in third only narrowly behind Hashemi Rafsanjani and Ahmadinejad in the first round. He ran again for the presidency in 2009 and has become a vocal supporter of the Green Movement and staunch critic of Ahmadinejad.

Sources: Ali Saeidi, "The Accountability of Para-Governmental Organizations (*bonyads*): The Case of Iranian Foundation," *Iranian Studies* 37 (2004): 488; and Wilfried Buchta, *Who Rules Iran? The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic* (Washington, D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), 75.

President

The president is elected by universal suffrage every four years. He must be a Twelver Shiite and male. However, a number of women have tried, always unsuccessfully, to become presidential candidates. Until 1989, the office was largely ceremonial and a prime minister chosen by Parliament headed the executive branch of the government. The 1989 constitutional revision abolished the office of prime minister, and the presidency became the chief executive. The president heads the executive branch except in matters reserved for the Leader, signs bills into law once they have been approved by the legislature, and appoints the members of the cabinet and provincial governors, subject to parliamentary approval. He can be impeached by Parliament, at which point the Leader can dismiss him. The president does not have to be a cleric, but between 1981 and 2005, three different members of the ulema held the office for two consecutive terms each, reflecting the hegemony of that group in the Islamic Republic. The June 2005 election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a lay (that is, a non-ulema) Islamist supported by the IRGC and Basij, heralded the partial replacement of the clergy by the "war generation," men who risked their lives in the revolution and the war and feel that it is time that they reap the benefits of their sacrifices.

Parliament

Iran's unicameral parliament, the **Majles**, comprises about 290 members elected by universal suffrage for four-year terms. Members have to be Muslims, but the Constitution provides for five MPs to represent Christians (three), Jews (one), and Zoroastrians (one).

The Majles has lawmaking powers, but its legislative output must not contravene the Constitution or Islam, as determined by the Council of Guardians (as we discuss shortly). It has the right to investigate affairs of state, to approve or reject the president's cabinet appointments, and to call ministers to account and subject them to votes of no confidence. Interestingly, even the Seventh and Eight Parliaments (2004 to present) that have been dominated by conservatives have often used these powers to challenge Ahmadinejad's cabinet choices and ministers.

In his treatise on Islamic government, Khomeini assigned little importance to Parliament, arguing that Islam had already laid down laws for most matters. A legislative assembly's task was to draw up rules and regulations for minor issues not dealt with in Islamic jurisprudence. Since 1979, however, the Majles has shown remarkable dynamism and initiative. For one, the traditional corpus of Islamic law proved to be woefully inadequate for governing a modern state, requiring Parliament to fill some of the gaps. Furthermore, the legislative deputies have vigorously debated state business and held government officials accountable, the office of the Leader excepted.

In the first Parliament of the Islamic Republic, almost half of all deputies were clerics. Under the Shah, no free elections had taken place, so few people had enough name recognition to be elected to Parliament. Consequently, in many places, voters chose the local cleric. The percentage of clerics in the Majles has declined over time, as seen in Table 12.1.

TABLE 12.1

Who Is in the Parliament?
The number of women is increasing and the number of clerics is decreasing.

	Female MPs	Clerical MPs	Total MPs
First Majles (1980–1984)	4	131	263
Second Majles (1984–1988)	4	122	269
Third Majles (1988–1992)	4	77	267
Fourth Majles (1992–1996)	9	65	270
Fifth Majles (1996–2000)	10	53	274
Sixth Majles (2000–2004)	13	35	278
Seventh Majles (2004–2008)	12	42	281
Eighth Majles (2008–2012)	8	44	285

Although the ulema had generally opposed female suffrage in 1963, the founders of the Islamic Republic maintained women's active and passive suffrage in spite of their patriarchal disposition. Since 1980, every legislature has included female deputies, who often speak out on women's rights. Table 12.1 shows the evolution of the number of women in Parliament.

Nonetheless, two features of the political system seriously limit the Majles's legislative role. First, many policies, rules, and regulations are set by unelected specialized bodies. Second, all its bills are subject to the veto of the Council of Guardians. Under the Islamic Republic, the Majles is a forum where policies are discussed and proposals aired, and where some state officials are taken to account.[14]

Council of Guardians

In order to forestall any possibility of compromising the Islamic character of the state, the 1979 Constitution instituted a separate body for ensuring the conformity of legislation with Islam: the Council of Guardians. The body consists of six members of the ulema and six lay Muslim lawyers. The Leader appoints the ulema; the lawyers are nominated by the head of the Judiciary (who is himself appointed by the Leader) but approved by Parliament. The compatibility of laws with Islam is determined by the six ulema members only, their compatibility with the Constitution by the entire council. Through the years, the Council of Guardians has rejected numerous bills because it interpreted them as violating the Constitution and/or Islamic law.

The Council of Guardians also "supervises" the elections to the Assembly of Experts, the presidency, and Parliament. It has interpreted this provision of the Constitution to signify that it can vet candidacies. It uses this self-ascribed power to limit citizens' choice at elections by not allowing candidates of whose views it disapproves. When in 1991 the Majles passed a law stripping the council of these powers, the latter, unsurprisingly, declared the law to be contrary to the Constitution.

Expediency Council

Disagreement between Parliament and the Council of Guardians has been endemic in the Islamic Republic, resulting in legislative gridlock. As long as Khomeini was alive, he was the ultimate arbiter when a protracted stalemate arose, as all involved deferred to him. In 1988, Khomeini established a new collective body to arbitrate such cases, and it was aptly called the "Council for the Determination of What Is in the Interest of the Regime," an unwitting admission that conformity to the teachings of Islam now took a backseat to political expedience. Indeed, official Iranian documents render the name of this body in English as the "Expediency Council." Its existence was anchored in the constitutional revision of 1989.

The Leader directly appoints over thirty members of this body, who are chosen mainly from among top government officials, key cabinet members and military leaders, the ulema members of the Council of Guardians, and ulema chosen for their personal prestige. In addition to arbitrating conflicts between the Majles and the Council of Guardians, the Expediency Council has the constitutional mandate of advising the Leader in formulating overall state policy.

An Honestly Undemocratic Constitution

As our discussion shows, the authority of the elective offices of the Islamic Republic, essentially the presidency and Parliament, is systematically circumscribed by unelected bodies. To be sure, the Leader is chosen by an elected body, the Assembly of Experts, but there is no limit on his term, making him for all intents and purposes an unremovable leader with vast powers. By appointing the head of the Judiciary and the commanders of the police, army, and IRGC, he, rather than the president and Parliament, controls the coercive apparatus of the state.

The limited authority of the president and Parliament became startlingly blatant when reformists bent on liberalizing Iranian politics and society won a string of elections in the late 1990s. They gained control of the presidency in 1997 and 2001 with the election of **Mohammad Khatami**, and of Parliament in 2000. However, Leader Ali Khamenei openly sided with antireformist conservatives, whom he chose as the head of the Judiciary and as the members of the Council of Guardians. When the lawyers proposed by the Judiciary to fill vacant seats on the Council of Guardians failed to gain the endorsement of the reformist Parliament in 2001, the Leader simply refused to schedule the swearing-in ceremony of the reformist president, who had just been reelected with

77.9 percent of the popular vote. In the end, the lawyers took their seats without gaining majority support in Parliament, after which the Leader consented to swear in the president.

Although the reformists tried to bring about change by legal and constitutional means, they were ultimately stymied by the Leader, the Council of Guardians, and the Judiciary, using powers granted to them by the Constitution. This shows that the Constitution is, if not liberal and democratic, at least honest; its provisions need not be violated to prevent democratic governance.

The same can be said for citizens' rights. Although freedom of speech and association, as well as the safety of the person, are guaranteed, these are usually qualified by the clause "within the criteria of Islam," leaving the authorities considerable leeway to abridge them. The same is true for the equality of citizens. Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Iranians are accorded some legal recognition and can practice their religion freely. However, Iran's largest non-Muslim minority, the adherents of the Baha'i faith, are considered heretics and systematically discriminated against; to this day, they may not attend university, for instance. Even Sunni Muslims, representing about 10 percent of the total population, are systematically discriminated against in the civil service and are not allowed to maintain a mosque of their own in Tehran. In the words of a prominent exiled Iranian human-rights lawyer, in the Islamic Republic, "the rights of the clerics do not equal those of nonclerics, the rights of Twelver Shiites do not equal those of non-Twelver Shiites, the rights of Shiites do not equal those of Sunnis, the rights of Muslims do not equal those of non-Muslims, the rights of 'recognized religious minorities' do not equal those of other 'minorities,' and the rights of men do not equal the rights of women."[15] The explicit denial of legal equality to citizens found throughout Iran's constitution and legal system stands in sharp contrast to the universalist language of many other Third World regimes.

Multiple Power Centers

When the revolutionaries took over the state in 1979, they inherited an administrative bureaucracy whose commitment to the new ideology they did not trust. Not content with purging state institutions of individuals they deemed counterrevolutionary, they built new ones whose competency overlapped with the old established ones. The idea was that the old institutions would more or less carry on with business as usual, while the new institutions would actively pursue the realization and defense of the new Islamic order (see again Figure 12.3). Examples include the Construction Jihad, which sent young people to rural areas to help develop them in parallel to the Ministry of Agriculture. The most important example is the IRGC. Their original function was to safeguard the revolution, but in time, they developed into a parallel army and even acquired an air force and a navy. These revolutionary institutions prevented the provisional government, which had taken over the Shah's administrative apparatus, from gaining control of the country.[16]

As Khomeini and his followers consolidated their rule in the mid-1980s, they attempted to merge state and revolutionary organizations. However, these attempts were mostly unsuccessful, and the revolutionary organizations are still active. In the late 1990s, as some state institutions came under the control of the reformists, conservatives created new parallel institutions under the aegis of the office of the Leader. Thus, when the Ministry of Information, as the secret police is called, came to be staffed mainly by reformists, the Judiciary, whose head is named by the Leader, proceeded to set up a parallel secret police (which even maintains a prison system for political prisoners). These multiple power centers complicate policymaking considerably.

ELECTIONS AND PARTIES

The Prerevolutionary Legacy

With the brief exception of the 1940s, between 1906 and 1979, competitive elections were rarely held in Iran. In 1963, the Shah gave women the active and passive suffrage. This action did not mean much in practice, because there were no free elections for the remainder of his reign, but it did establish standards that could not be undone. Although much of the ulema had vehemently opposed the extension of the suffrage to women in 1963, the mobilization of women in the course of the revolution was so important that it was not possible to deprive them of the right to vote again.

Under the monarchy, political parties were mostly weak and ephemeral. After World War II, two groupings

succeeded in establishing a lasting societal presence: the Communist Tudeh party and the nationalist National Front of Mohammad Mossadegh. These two were revived in the course of the revolution of 1978. However, they were overshadowed by more radical leftist or Islamist groups that had emerged from the armed struggle against the Shah, such as the Marxist-Leninist Fada'iyan-e Khalq and the leftist Islamist Mojahedin-e Khalq. Initially, the Liberation Movement of Iran (LMI), a moderate Islamist offshoot of the National Front founded in 1961, fared somewhat better. Its leaders largely staffed the provisional government of Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan that administered the country from February to November 1979, when they resigned in protest over radical students' seizure of U.S. diplomats as hostages. In 1981, the National Front, the Fada'iyan-e Khalq, and the Mojahedin-e Khalq were banned for advocating policies that contradicted the basic premise of the Islamic Republic. In 1983, the Tudeh party was disbanded and its leaders jailed for having spied for the Soviet Union. The LMI, for its part, has managed to maintain low-level activity within the country.

Postrevolutionary Parties

In early 1979, a group of Khomeini's loyal followers, including future President Rafsanjani and Leader Khamenei, founded a new party to work toward the realization of their version of an Islamic state: the Islamic Republican Party (IRP). Soon, however, separate factions crystallized within the IRP around different economic, social, and foreign policy agendas. Factionalism having rendered the party dysfunctional, Rafsanjani and Khamenei announced the dissolution of the IRP in a letter to Khomeini in June 1987. They said that the party had achieved its goal, the establishment of *velayat-e faqih*, and had thus ceased to have a *raison d'être*.

But the underlying reasons for the factionalism did not go away. Some regime figures advocated more state intervention in the economy on the grounds that Islam is the religion of social justice, and therefore an Islamic government must look after the interests of the poor. Others argued that Islam protects the sanctity of private property, and therefore more *laissez-faire* policies were in order as long as everybody adhered to the rules that Islamic jurisprudence established for economic activities. As the leaders of the Islamic Republic grappled with the problem of translating Islam into a political ideology that provides guidance for the solution to all problems, it became clear that divergent policy options could be derived from Islamic principles. In 1987, the Speaker of Parliament Rafsanjani admitted that there were "two powerful wings" within the Islamic Republic, adding that "basically they represent two unorganized parties. Indeed when they describe the positions they hold, they are two parties, not two wings."[17] The tensions came out into the open in 1988 when the Society of Militant Clergy, a pro-*velayat-e faqih* group, split in two as some less conservative members, including future president Mohammad Khatami, left to form the Association of Militant Clerics.

As long as Khomeini was alive, he acted as the ultimate arbiter among the factions. When government figures turned to him to break a factional deadlock over a policy, he would normally urge all to cooperate. But when pressed, Khomeini came out against the conservatives more often than not. After Khomeini's death in 1989, the fact that the leadership of the Islamic Republic included no high-ranking ulema combined with the rivalry of opinions among the ulema allowed many policy disagreements to remain unresolved. These disagreements were channeled into the political system and became the basis of electoral competition as different candidates espoused opposing views for which they sought people's votes. This factor has given Iranian elections a poignancy they lack in other nondemocratic states.

Ideological differences have become the basis of factional politics among three broad clusters in the political elite: conservatives, pragmatists, and reformers. The conservatives, who self-identify as "principlists," are clerics and lay politicians who favor stricter social rules (such as gender segregation in public places) and call for greater authority for the Leader at the expense of elected bodies, while simultaneously supporting freer, market-oriented economic policies.

Pragmatists, including Rafsanjani and many technocrats who staffed the ministries in the 1990s, are more accommodating on social issues and support economic liberalization and the privatization of state-owned and parastatal companies. Moreover, they toned down support for exporting the revolution and are somewhat more conciliatory regarding U.S.–Iranian relations. As their name suggests, depending on the

issue, they align themselves with either the conservatives or reformists.

Finally, the reformers emerged in the 1990s. Many of the key members of this group were thought of as radicals, or the younger Islamist revolutionaries and clerics who were influenced by leftist and anti-imperialist politics. In the 1980s, they called for increased state control of the economy to ensure greater social justice and were active in supporting Islamist struggles in the Middle East. In the course of the 1990s, many of the radicals of the 1980s had a change of heart and moderated their views and came to be self-identified as "reformists." Their evolution had a number of reasons. For one, their exclusion from Parliament in 1992 brought home the importance of fair elections and political pluralism. Furthermore, the

A Poster from Mir Hossein Mousavi's 2009 election campaign

This poster depicts former reformist president Khatami bestowing a Green scarf on Mir Hossein Mousavi as a symbol of their shared descent from the Prophet Muhammad. The slogan at the top reads: "The Iranian nation's struggle today is a struggle between green-thinking and black-thinking," where "green" refers to the reformist agenda of the Mousavi campaign and "black" to the Ahmadinejad camp and its policies.

collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe delegitimized the state-centric approach to social and political organization. At the same time, a group of Muslim intellectuals, some of them ulema themselves, challenged both the traditional jurisprudential approach to religion that led to the preeminence of the ulema and the survival of obsolete regulations and the ideologization of religion that led to the loss of spirituality and totalitarian government. As such, the reformists explicitly challenge the conservative faction in Iran. This more liberal approach to religion created a tentative connection between Islamic reformists and social groups that had hitherto not participated in politics, boosting participation rates at elections in the late 1990s and subsequently helping to forge the "Green Movement" in 2009.

As a result of the political liberalization linked to the election of Mohammad Khatami, a number of political parties appeared on the scene. With the possible exception of the Islamic Iran Participation Front, the leading component of the reformist coalition that backed Khatami's policies, most are vehicles for one man's political ambitions and lack any grassroots organization. Additionally, the politics, alliances, and membership of these factions tend to be quite fluid, making it difficult to predict definitively or explain the actions and positions of politicians and political organizations. Since strong parties are absent, journals, newspapers, and increasingly Web sites play a key role as vehicles for discussing, formulating, and disseminating ideological alternatives.

Presidential Elections

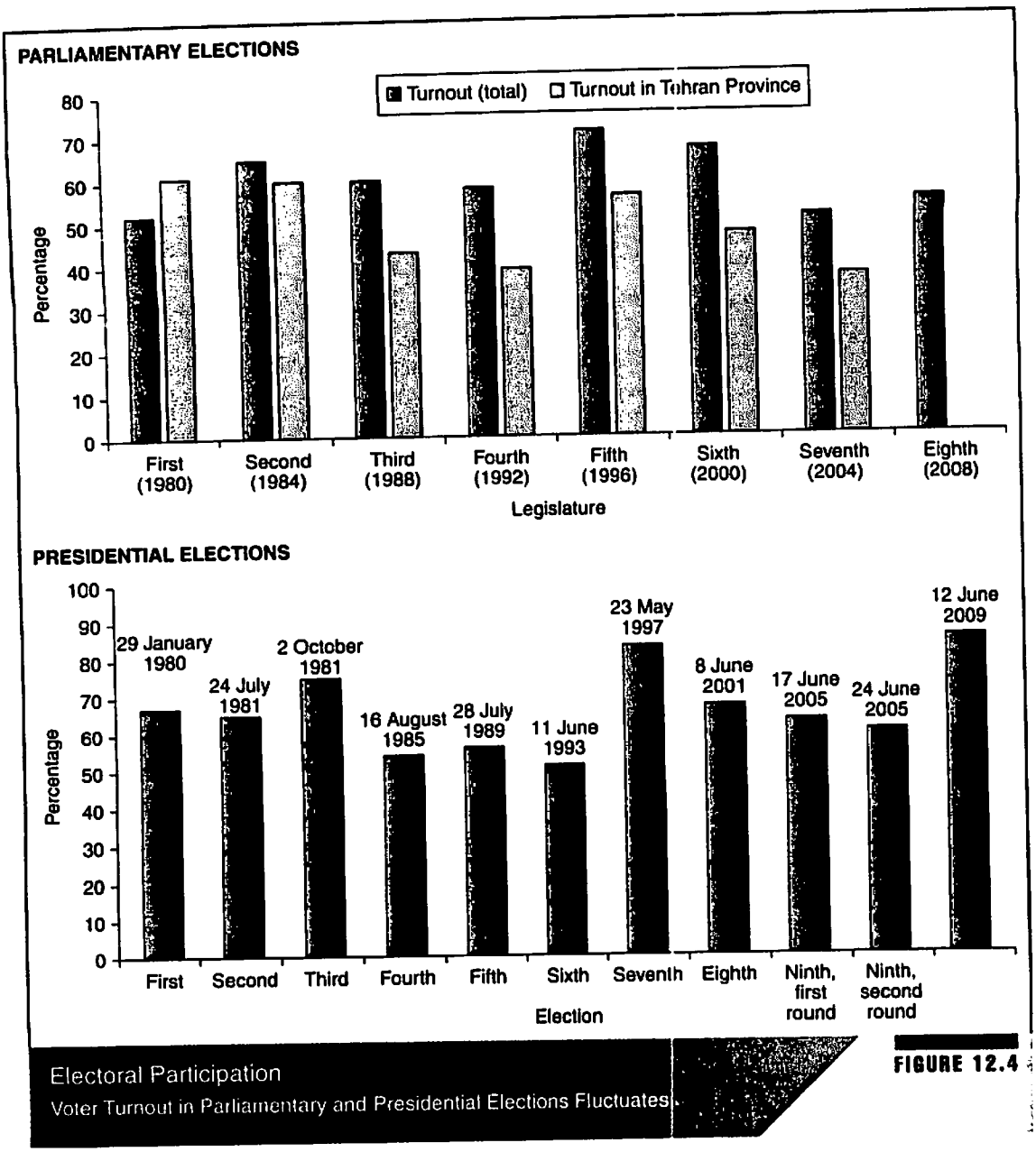
In January 1980, Iran held its first ever presidential election, resulting in the victory of a lay Islamist, Abolhasan Banisadr. But Banisadr was impeached by Parliament and deposed by Khomeini in June 1981. His more pliant successor and the prime minister were killed two months later by a bomb attack. The next four elections had predictable results, as close companions of Khomeini—Ali Khamenei in 1981 and 1985 and Ali-Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani in 1989 and 1993—easily won against minor challengers. Consequently, the voting participation rate went steadily down, as can be seen in Figure 12.4.

The pattern seemed to repeat itself in 1997. Although Rafsanjani would have liked to run again, he could not because the Constitution provides for only one immediate reelection. The mere fact that the term limit was respected shows to what extent constitutional norms had finally come to govern Iranian politics. The speaker of Parliament, conservative cleric Ali-Akbar Nateq Nuri, was endorsed by most of the government and the politically active ulema, including the Leader. Most observers expected him to win. Instead, Mohammad Khatami, a moderate cleric who had resigned as Minister of Culture in 1992 after conservatives gained control over Parliament, ran a modern and effective campaign by reaching out to university students and active members of the nascent civil society, many of whom were the product of the regime's expansive educational and social policies (see below). He won a landslide victory. As an "outsider," Khatami appealed to all those who had been humiliated by the regime: educated people who felt that the state discriminated against them in favor of less educated but ideologically reliable Islamic activists, women who resented the legal restrictions and discriminations to which they were subjected, and young people who were tired of daily harassment by the guardians of public morality. To all these groups, Khatami promised greater cultural openness, personal freedoms, and a more transparent and accountable government. Although his reforms dwindled in 1999, he was easily reelected in 2001.

For the first time since 1981, there was no official government candidate in the 2005 presidential elections. Three allies of Khatami, four conservatives, and Rafsanjani ran for the highest elective office. No candidate having gained a majority, for the first time, there was a second-round runoff election, pitting Rafsanjani against the archconservative and populist mayor of Tehran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. At around 60 percent, voter participation in the two rounds was lower than in the previous two elections. Ahmadinejad won an upset victory amidst allegations that IRGC and Basij commanders had illegally urged troops to vote for him, and perhaps even engaged in stuffing ballot boxes to increase his vote share in the first round, in which he placed second. In any event, Ahmadinejad's message appealed to the poor whose concerns had not been addressed by the cultural liberalization of the Khatami years (see Box 12.4).

Parliamentary Elections

For the purpose of parliamentary elections, Iran is divided into multimember constituencies, the largest being Tehran with thirty MPs. Each voter can write



Electoral Participation
Voter Turnout in Parliamentary and Presidential Elections Fluctuates

FIGURE 12.4

Source: Compiled by Arang Keshavarzian.

down the names of as many candidates as there are seats in a constituency. The top vote-getters in each constituency are elected, provided they receive over 50 percent of the total vote. If a constituency has more seats than candidates who passed the 50-percent barrier, a second round determines the remaining MPs from among the runners-up. In the second round, the number of candidates is twice that of the seats that remain to be filled. In the absence of organized political parties, candidacies tend to be endorsed by a number of different political, religious, and cultural associations. This factor makes it difficult to deduce accurate figures about the relative popularity of different political groupings from the election results.

In the first legislative elections of 1980, a few National Front, LMI, and regionalist candidates were elected to Parliament. Since 1984, only candidates unequivocally committed to *velayat-e faqih* have been allowed to run. Radicals formed the majority in the Second (1984–1988) and Third Parliaments

BOX 12.4

Iran's last two presidents—Mohammad Khatami (1997–2005) and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005–present)—illustrate the changing face of Iran's political elite, from an older generation formed by the struggle against the Shah and the revolution to a younger one shaped largely by the events of the postrevolutionary era. Moreover, the socioeconomic differences between Khatami and Ahmadinejad are telling.

Khatami was born in 1943 into a family of notable clerics and landowners. He is a cleric educated in the seminaries of Qom and holds a B.A. in philosophy from a secular university. He has authored several works on philosophy, is fluent in Arabic, and knows some German and English. After the revolution, he became the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance (1982–1992), which regulates and censors all media and publications. There he was known to support freedom of speech and the press. Khatami carved out some space for his cultural activities thanks to his close relationships with Khomeini and his son, as well as with journalists and students who later supported his presidency. Nonetheless, after growing pressure from hard-line conservatives, Khatami was forced to resign in 1992 and became the director of the National Library until he successfully ran for president.

Ahmadinejad was born in 1956 to a blacksmith and moved to Tehran at a young age. He is a product of the prerevolutionary secular education system and studied engineering. He participated in the Iran–Iraq war as a member of the IRGC. He later performed well during his three years as governor of the newly established Ardabil Province (1993–1996). In 1997, Ahmadinejad earned a Ph.D. from a technical university and continued to teach there. In 2003, he was part of the new conservative faction of younger politicians known as the "Alliance of Builders of Islamic Iran," which swept the Tehran city council elections, and he was elected as mayor.

What brings these disparate profiles and outlooks together is that both men were overwhelmingly elected president—against candidates favored by key elements of the establishment.

Sources: Wilfried Buchta, *Who Rules Iran? The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic* (Washington, D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), 30; www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/story/2005/08/050801_pm-mv-khatami-profile.shtml; www.mardomyar.com/aspx2/aboutme.aspx.

(1988–1992), but after Khomeini's death, the conservative-dominated Council of Guardians gave itself the right to vet candidacies and proceeded to invalidate the candidacies of most radicals. Consequently, conservatives dominated the Fourth (1992–1996) and Fifth Parliaments (1996–2000), with pragmatist supporters of Rafsanjani forming the minority. In the wake of Mohammad Khatami's surprise victory in the presidential election of 1997, however, a record number of reformists became candidates. Since they were unknown to the Council of Guardians, they were allowed to run for office in 2000. They swept the elections, gaining around 70 percent of the vote.

For the 2004 parliamentary elections, however, the Council of Guardians disallowed about 2,000 reformist candidates, including about eighty sitting MPs. This was unprecedented, and many reformist personalities and associations called for an electoral boycott. Although participation diminished, 50 percent of the population still went to the polls. The reason is that in many areas outside the main cities, voters do not judge candidates by their ideology but by what they can do (or have done) to further the interests of their constituents. Figure 12.4 shows that official turnout figures were again relatively high (55.3 percent) in 2008 despite the Guardian Council's vetting out a disproportionate number of reformist candidates.[18] Despite the conservative faction winning the vast majority of seats in the Eighth Parliament, new divisions have emerged among these self-proclaimed "principlists," with many of them becoming outspoken critics of Ahmadinejad's policies.

Local Elections

Although the Constitution of 1906 provided for elected local government councils, these bodies were never actually constituted. Similar provisions of the 1979 Constitution were first put into action in 1999, when Iranians for the first time went to the polls to elect city, town, and village councils.

Reformists won control over most councils, including Tehran. With the conservatives stymieing the reformist camp, apathy overtook voters. Voting came to be seen by many as a futile exercise, since ultimately, power rested with unelected bodies. In the second local elections in 2003, only 15 percent of the eligible voters in Tehran, mostly conservatives, bothered to vote, even though these were the freest elections in Iranian history. For the first time, the Council of Guardians had not vetted candidates, and even avowed secularists were allowed to run. Consequently, the nation's capital, home to about 15 percent of its total population, got a uniformly conservative city council, which elected as mayor the man who two years later used his position as a springboard for a successful bid for the presidency. Elsewhere in the country, however, campaigns were more centered on concrete problems and participation was thus higher, testifying to a relatively high level of civic engagement of the citizenry.[19] Participation sharply increased in the third local elections of December 2006, and supporters of President Ahmadinejad won only a few seats. As if to rebuke him for his incompetent management of the economy, his supporters won only three out of fifteen seats on Tehran's municipal council. They were led by his sister, Parvin Ahmadinejad. In 2010, the parliament voted to postpone municipal elections until 2013, rather than 2011.

POLITICAL CULTURE

To a large extent, Iran's political culture results from its place in the international system. Iran survived the age of imperialism as a nominally sovereign state, but this independence did not prevent outside powers, mainly Great Britain and Russia, from meddling in Iran's domestic affairs and controlling its economy.[20] Their country having been a long-standing member of the international society of nations, Iranians have tended to compare themselves more readily with the dominant countries of the West than with other Third World nations; nevertheless, transforming their country's formal independence into genuine sovereignty has always been a key concern of politically conscious Iranians.

One result of foreign meddling in Iranian affairs has been the Iranians' propensity to believe in conspiracies and to interpret politics in the light of conspiracy theories (that is, theories that purport to prove that politics is dominated by the ill-intentioned and conspiratorial machinations of small groups whose aims and values are profoundly opposed to those of the rest of society).[21] This was how the regime and some citizens reacted to the post-2009 presidential election events. In court cases, newspaper articles, Friday prayer sermons, and speeches by the Leader, the protests were dismissed; demonstrators were described as pawns of U.S., European, and Israeli secret services, and the Green Movement was described as a foreign-inspired group modeled after the revolutions that brought down regimes in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Belief in conspiracies as a motor force in history is common in the rest of the Middle East as well.[22] But in the Iranian case, the plausibility of such theories is enhanced by the fact that Iran *has* indeed been the victim of conspiracies, most recently in 1953 when the U.S. and British governments conspired with Iranian conservatives to install the Shah. The main reason why the seizure of the U.S. hostages in 1979 was so popular at the time was that it symbolically ended the era of foreign interference in Iranian affairs by allowing Iranians to occupy what most believed was the epicenter of all conspiracies: the U.S. embassy.

System Level

Iran is not a country whose borders and statehood are a bequest of European colonialism, which helps explain why the modern polity enjoys considerable historic legitimacy among Iranians, in spite of their ethnic diversity: Iranians with different mother tongues have lived with each other for centuries. The Iranian nationalism propagated by the Pahlavi shahs included pride in the glories of ancient Persia and in a continuous "national" history of 2,500 years. This history was interpreted as conferring upon Iranians an intrinsic nobility that neighboring peoples and states cannot match.

This intense national pride survived the revolution but changed garb. While the glories of pre-Islamic Iran are now much less emphasized than before, the new authorities and their supporters considered Iran to be the vanguard of the Islamic world's struggle against Western domination. This position fuses commitment to Islam with Iranian nationalism. In recent years, however, Pahlavi-type ethnic Persian nationalism has

been making a comeback among Iranians who are disenchanted with theocratic rule.

By the same token, ethnic nationalism has become stronger among Iran's non-Persian populations. This is particularly noticeable among the predominantly Sunni Kurds, who resent not only the poverty of the Kurdish areas but also discrimination on sectarian grounds. In the presidential election of 2005, for instance, a candidate who expressly addressed Sunni grievances carried the largely Sunni province of Sistan and Baluchestan. At the same time, an Azeri who emphasized his ethnicity carried the three largely Azeri-speaking provinces of northwestern Iran. In theory, there is no reason why this new ethnic assertiveness should not be compatible with a strong sense of Iranian civic nationalism, but that depends on how the central government will manage it. Repressive measures are likely to erode the identification with the Iranian state in the ethnic periphery.

One time-honored way governments shore up their legitimacy is by appealing to feelings of patriotism. In Iran, the government has recently hoped to unite Iranians around the issue of developing nuclear technology. The Iranian leaders' insistence that Iran has a "right" to develop nuclear energy has struck a sympathetic chord among ordinary Iranians, even among many of those who oppose Islamist rule. If Americans, Europeans, Chinese, Israelis, and even Indians and Pakistanis have nuclear weapons, many people ask, why should Iranians not have them too?

Process Level

One indisputable result of the Islamic revolution was the dramatic increase in the number of citizens who participated in politics. The millions of Iranians who poured into the streets to demand the departure of the Shah throughout 1978 refused to become mere subjects of a theocratic state after the revolution was over. The same cannot be said for those who opposed either the revolution or the Islamic state to which it ultimately gave rise. Many emigrated, and those who remained behind tended to consider the "Association of Militant Clerics" and the "Society of Militant Clergy" little more than Tweedledum and Tweedledee. It was these passive subjects of the Islamic Republic that Khatami had in mind when he repeatedly asserted that he wanted to be the president of *all* Iranians. They participated for the first time since the inception of the new regime, carrying electoral participation rates to new heights. In the elections of 2004 and 2005, however, many of them boycotted the elections, feeling that their participation had not brought the country nearer to a more republican and less theocratic form of government. However, in 2009, the efforts of Mousavi's savvy campaign team combined with strong feelings toward Ahmadinejad's policies encouraged 85 percent of Iranians to go to the polls. After electoral irregularities and the extreme crackdown on protesters, it is unclear what course of action Iranian citizens will take in future elections.

Another key feature of Iran's political culture is extreme individualism and lack of trust. Most observers impute this to the country's long history of despotism, which never developed a state of law that made life predictable and governed by rules rather than personal connections. The conspiracy belief mentioned earlier added to this absence of trust. Political opponents tend to accuse each other of being in league with foreign powers, making compromise (necessary for deliberative politics) very difficult, for one cannot compromise or negotiate with a "traitor." In the Islamic Republic, the fact that the revolutionary credentials of the leaders of the various factions are equally strong has led to a certain mutual tolerance among those political leaders who remain faithful to *velayat-e faqih*. But even now, dissidents who question the system itself are invariably accused of doing the bidding of foreign (read: hostile) powers. The most consistent victims of this propensity to believe in conspiracies are religious minorities, especially Baha'is, who have been widely presented as agents of "Zionism." This charge is motivated by the fact that the world center of the Baha'i faith is located in Israel, which is a historic accident.

Distrust not only permeates the political elite, but is also evident among citizens. Recent results of the World Values Survey suggest that Iranians, like Turks, do not trust government (see Figure 12.5).[23] Since television channels are state-run and much of the press is owned by the state or heavily monitored by it, the low levels of trust in these institutions also illustrate a lack of trust in government. Meanwhile, the relatively high level of trust in the "mosque" should be interpreted with caution. As we will soon see, "the mosque" is far from a homogeneous entity and does not necessarily reflect a particular political agenda or culture.

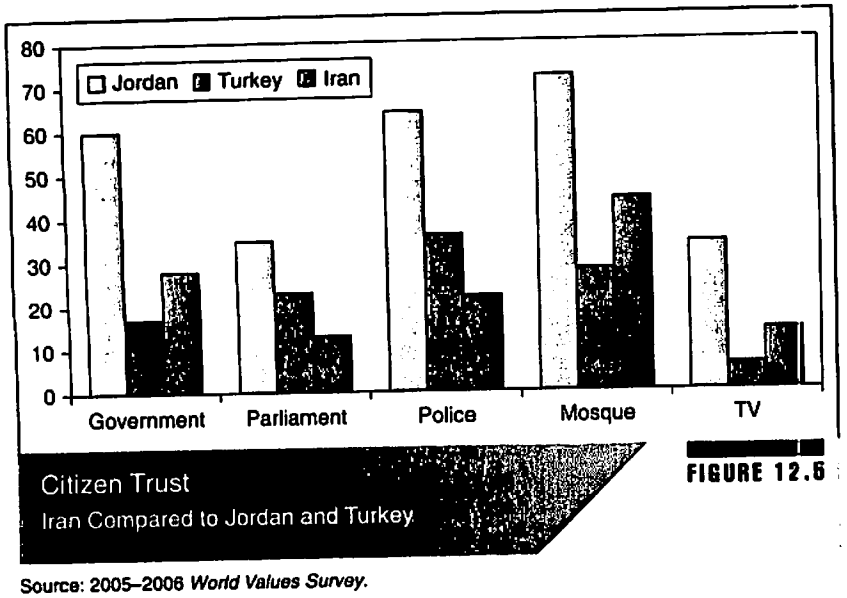


FIGURE 12.6

Source: 2005–2006 *World Values Survey*.

This individualism and lack of trust are underlying causes for the absence of true political parties and the constant splits that the few parties that did come into existence have undergone. While all Iranians bemoan their inability to cooperate, it is this very inability that saved Iran from becoming a totalitarian state in the 1980s. If the ulema had the discipline and centralist organization of either the Roman Catholic Church or a Communist party, it is likely that their rule would be far more totalitarian and monolithic, and factionalism would never have been institutionalized.

A final consequence of the individualism and conspiracy belief prevalent in Iran's political culture is the periodic appearance of charismatic leaders. These leaders embody the yearning of the citizenry for overcoming the current order and the source of all problems—imperialists and autocrats. Mohammad Mossadegh, Ayatollah Khomeini, and even (to a much lesser extent) Mohammad Khatami and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad exemplify this tendency. Some have argued that Twelver Shiism, with its expectation of the Twelfth Imam, predisposes Iranians to put their hopes in a charismatic savior figure.

Policy Level

Given the fact that the Iranian state derives most of its income from oil, Iranians have tended to expect the state to provide welfare and material well-being for everybody and alleviate the gap between rich and poor. In other words, they want their share of the oil wealth. Part of the delegitimation of the Shah's regime occurred because people thought that not enough wealth trickled down to the poorer strata.

Corruption has been endemic in Iran, and fighting it has been an aspiration of Iranians of all political persuasions. Its persistence has been blamed on the regime, which has thereby lost some legitimacy, just like the Pahlavi regime in the 1960s and 1970s.

A noteworthy feature of Iran's contemporary political culture is the suspicion of private enterprise in the industrial sector. Beginning under Reza Shah (r. 1925–1941), the state took a leading role in the development of industry. Under Reza Shah's son, this statism was supplemented by an emerging class of capitalists who contributed considerably to Iran's industrialization in the 1960s and 1970s. But they were closely connected to the Shah and his relatives, they cooperated with foreign companies whose activities were suspicious for the mere reason that they were foreign, and some of them were members of religious minorities. Consequently, both the Islamists and leftists who carried the revolutionary movement opposed them and the mode of economic development they represented, calling them "exploiters." The legacy of this opposition is visible in Iran's Constitution, which puts heavy limits on foreign investment.

The populism propagated by the revolutionaries has intensified opposition to conspicuous consumption and privately owned large-scale economic activity. This has not affected rich bazaar merchants, who engage mostly in trade rather than production. Their activity is less immediately visible than that of an industrialist, as a merchant can deal in millions armed with nothing but a cell phone and sitting behind a desk in a small shop in the bazaar. In contrast, the factory and offices of an industrialist attract immediate attention.[24] This general distrust of industrialists means that citizens expect the state to be the main purveyor of development and increased living standards. Ahmadinejad mobilized this sentiment in his 2005 and 2009 campaigns, which highlighted his close affinity with "ordinary" Iranians and their needs and values.

While many Iranians thus expect the state to alleviate poverty and unemployment, others expect the state to provide an environment in which individual talent and creativity can flourish. Collectivism and individualism are both present in Iranian society, and the result is that Iran's political culture is highly conflictual. The citizenry is sharply divided over the very essence of the regime, with many, especially among the more educated, considering Islamic theocracy, if not the Islamic Republic, to be an anachronistic form of government.

A Poster from Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's 2009 Election Campaign

This campaign poster shows how Ahmadinejad presents himself as the protector of the oppressed and downtrodden, represented by the young disabled boy and the crowd of people holding up the candidate's image. The caption reads: "Fellow citizens, I have come [to the fore], you come too . . . [On] the 22nd of Khordad [election day of June 12, 2009]; we will vote for Ahmadinejad. Support Doctor Mahmoud Mardomi-Nejad." Mardomi-Nejad, meaning "Cut from the people's cloth," is a play on the president's name that reinforces his populism; the title "Doctor" reminds voters that he holds a Ph.D. in engineering.

POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

The political socialization of citizens is a process simultaneously driven from above by state institutions and from below by social practices. In Iran, state-controlled institutions—such as the education system, television, and the military—transmit many of the basic political values and norms in society and establish the framework for debating their meaning. Meanwhile, through their everyday practices as members of their family, neighborhood, or social group, Iranians negotiate, challenge, and even sometimes undermine these norms.

As in many postrevolutionary and postcolonial regimes, state-sanctioned political socialization in Iran has aimed at generating national unity and masking political, ethnic, and socioeconomic cleavages. The Pahlavi monarchy championed national unity in a mission to create a modern, industrial, and Western society. This vision presented the nation as secular, classless, and thoroughly Persian in identity. The schools, for instance, educated the entire Iranian population in the official language of Persian, a critical method to distance the significant numbers of Azeri (roughly 25 percent), Kurdish (8 to 10 percent), and Arabic (2 to 5 percent) speakers from their local and ethnic loyalties. The calls for greater economic equality, ethnic inclusion, and religious observance during the Islamic revolution dramatically questioned both the notion of national homogeneity and the perception that the Iranian nation accepted this image of itself. Under the Islamic Republic, the content of the official discourse and normative agenda has changed. However, the methods of socialization and the overwhelming elite desire to limit input from citizens and ignore the pluralistic nature of society remain quite similar to the prerevolutionary regime.

Education System

The school system has been the principal agent of socialization for creating good Islamic citizens out of young Iranians. The school system was one of the first institutions to be Islamicized by the new regime. The government changed the school curricula to include a heavy dose of religious studies, yearly classes on the Islamic revolution, and more mandatory Arabic

language courses. Meanwhile, rewritten textbooks present a state-sanctioned history of Iran, which highlights the role of the clergy in all "popular uprisings," erases or distorts any role played by nonreligious forces (such as liberal nationalists or leftist parties), and presents the Pahlavi monarchy (and all monarchs) as equally and continually oppressive and immoral.

Textbooks also depict the state's image of the family. Unlike the prerevolutionary textbooks that showed Iranian women as unveiled, families eating around a table, and children with non-Arabic and nonreligious names, the postrevolutionary textbooks depict all women as veiled (even inside the home), families sitting cross-legged around a simple spread on the floor, and children with Islamic names.[25] Schoolchildren also receive revolutionary doctrine by reciting chants and poems praising the greatness of Khomeini and the regime, while denouncing Israel and "the imperialists," most commonly the United States.

The authorities initially emphasized the role of primary and secondary schools for creating loyal and mobilized supporters. However, a group of Islamist activists and scholars also led a charge to "cleanse" the universities of "counterrevolutionary" elements by reviewing both the faculty and the curriculum. This "Cultural Revolution" was headed by what is now known as the Supreme Council for the Cultural Revolution. University campuses being the epicenter of anti-regime activism, the Cultural Revolution closed all universities for three years (1980–1983) and worked to develop links between the universities and the religious seminaries. When the universities were reopened, strict entrance requirements were established, including religious examinations, to give greater opportunities to those the regime expected would be more supportive of its ambitions. In addition, war veterans and relatives of those killed in the revolution and the Iran–Iraq war were allotted special quotas in all universities.

The regime also established institutions to create a new set of technocrats and teachers to staff the ministries and the universities. Domestically producing engineers, scientists, economists, and other professionals was essential for ensuring the Islamic Republic's independence and withstanding the U.S. attempt to isolate Iran. For instance, Imam Sadeq University (ironically on the campus of a former business school affiliated with Harvard Business School) was fashioned to produce technocrats. Another new aspect of the university system was the establishment of the "Islamic Open University," with 400 separate campuses all over the country, including small towns. This university has offered higher education to Iranians living outside of the main population centers and provided opportunities for students who fail the highly competitive entrance examination for the elite national universities or whose families do not let them move to the larger cities.

The Islamic Republic transformed the content of higher education to promote and fund fields such as "Islamic Economics" and "Islamic Sciences" as ways to compete with what some viewed as the fundamentally distorted and anti-Islamic nature of Western academia. Over the years, the regime has also sponsored the establishment of pro-regime volunteer organizations (**Basij**) to monitor the political activities of students and faculty, and to mobilize students for pro-regime activities on the campuses.

The Islamic Republic's efforts to create obedient and loyal citizens out of the "children of the revolution" seem far from successful. Many of the investigative journalists exposing government abuses and incompetence or the staunchest supporters of reform and the burgeoning civil society (such as arts organizations and women's nongovernmental organizations) are products of the state school system and its post-Cultural Revolution higher-education establishments. In fact, the universities that the state tried so hard to control in the wake of the revolution are again full of students publishing political journals and declarations, organizing talks challenging the regime, and flaunting and mocking the social mores and the state's policies regarding gender relations. The large student demonstrations of 1999, 2003, and 2009 are indicative of the inability of the regime to manage this politicized space fully.

The Military and Veterans

Military conscription has been another fundamental mechanism for creating national unity, at least for young men. The shared experience of basic training and interacting with the military bureaucracy was augmented by the experience of the long war with Iraq. With approximately 4 to 5 million Iranians serving in the armed forces during the eight-year war, it directly affected a very large percentage of Iranian families.[26] Various public commemorations and war murals, as well as stories in cinema and fiction, act to foster emotional bonds between the war generation and those who preceded and followed it.

Politically, however, the war has been divisive, with part of the ruling establishment questioning the

continuation of the war even after the Iraqi army was driven off Iranian soil in 1982.[27] Moreover, Iran's military includes the IRGC and the Basij, which have become distinct institutions with growing political influence. These latter institutions are under the direct supervision of the Leader and were integrated into a single hierarchy in early 2009. In the parliamentary election of 2004, over a hundred former members of the Revolutionary Guards won seats. In 2005, Ahmadinejad, himself a former member of the IRGC, ushered the way for several members to enter his cabinet. The IRGC's political relevance reflects their significant and growing role in construction projects, manufacturing (including the oil sector), communications, trade, and banking since the 1990s and increasingly so since Ahmadinejad's presidency. This goes a long way in explaining the IRGC leaderships' overt support for the incumbent in 2009.

Religion and Religious Institutions

While most Iranians consider themselves religious and consider religious matters and practices as important aspects of their lives, results from the 2000 to 2001 World Values Survey project suggest a more nuanced view.[28] Figure 12.6 shows that many Iranians believe religion is very important in life and participate in religious services, but at lower rates than in Jordan and Egypt. Moreover, while surveyed Iranians more often characterize themselves as "above all a Muslim" than as "above all a nationalist," about a third put nationalism first, far more than in either Egypt or Jordan.

Notwithstanding these aggregate findings, under the Islamic Republic, religion and religious practice have played a more divisive than unifying role. On the surface, religion permeates daily life. Official speeches and pronouncements are peppered with religious expressions and quotations, the calendar is full of religious holidays, and religious observance is often public and conspicuous. Shiite Islam plays a central role both in official discourse and as a means to regulate who can gain high office in the state. Friday congregational prayers and commemorations of religious anniversaries are state-regulated events that bring people from all walks of life together at neighborhood public spaces. As if to underline the emasculation of

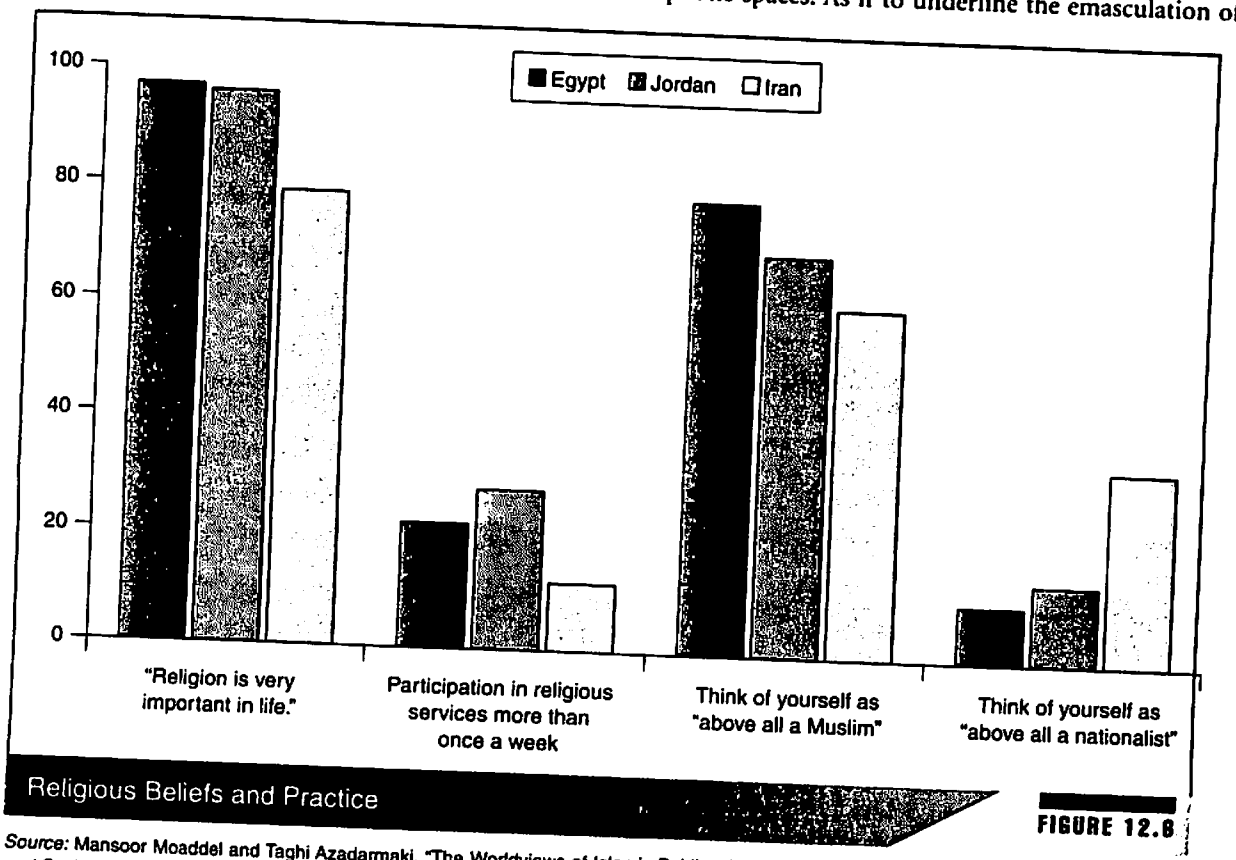


FIGURE 12.6

Source: Mansoor Moaddel and Taghi Azadarmaki, "The Worldviews of Islamic Publics: The Case of Egypt, Iran, and Jordan," in *Human Values and Social Change: Findings from the Values Survey*, ed. Ronald Inglehart (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2003): 75.

Tehran University as the center of secular opposition to the Islamic regime, Tehran's official Friday congregational prayers are held on what used to be the campus's soccer field. On these occasions, leading members of the government give sermons in which they passionately weave together religious and moral issues and the pressing political problems of the day.

In staging these public and mass religious meetings, the state consciously attempts to mobilize citizens in support of the regime and also to transmit political messages. These events and state-owned radio and television are dominated by the well-versed and symbolic Shiite language of martyrdom and self-sacrifice, as exemplified by the Third Imam, in the name of justice and standing up to the great powers who usurp the rights of the innocent and faithful.

It is difficult, however, to monopolize the symbols, interpretations, and ephemeral beliefs that make up a religion. Over the years, the Islamic Republic has had difficulty controlling members of the political elite and clergy, let alone the hearts and minds of its citizens. Given the absence of a Shiite "pope," Iran's theocratic state has never fully imposed its politicized vision of Shiite Islam within Iran, let alone across the Shiite world. With the death of Khomeini and the appointment of the less religiously erudite and charismatic Khamenei, fundamental disagreements have emerged over the meaning of Islamic government and the role of religion in public life. For instance, the "reformist" political faction stresses the republican dimensions of the Constitution and the revolution. In contrast, the conservatives highlight the centrality of clerical authority and its right of oversight over the popular will. Meanwhile, lay religious intellectuals (such as Abdol-Karim Soroush) and clerics (such as Hasan Eshkevari) have called for a reformulation of the relationships among God, the individual, and political authority that explicitly challenges the basic assumptions of the current interpretation of *velayat-e faqih*. These debates not only percolate in the intellectual environments of the universities, seminaries, and magazines, but also shape more public discussions regarding the relationship between religion and politics, and resonate with the philosophical and political debates of ordinary Iranians.[29]

Finally, in more organizational terms, religious observance has always had a localized flavor. Numerous neighborhood and guild-based Koranic reading groups and religious associations cater to the spiritual needs of men and women of different regional, ethnic, and class backgrounds. These informal meetings act as grassroots and independent forums for religious practice, which by definition escape the watchful eye of those clerics who are affiliated with the regime. Sometimes escaping the attention of observers is the tension between the clerical state and the seminaries in the cities of Qom and Mashhad. With the vast majority of clergy historically shying away from politics and the seminary system historically maintaining financial independence, Khomeini's political innovation of clerical-led government has reconfigured "church"–state relations. For instance, job opportunities and income are available for clerics in the judicial system, in the ministries, and as Friday prayer leaders, the last being appointed by the office of the Leader. While the ulema, especially former students of Khomeini, have been prominent in the higher reaches of the regime, the actual running of the state has never been dominated by seminary graduates, and their presence has declined over the last quarter century. One indication is the decline in the number of clerics in the Parliament. In the very first Majles, almost half of the MPs were clerics, but by the late 1990s, clerics constituted less than 20 percent of MPs.

For the vast majority of clerics—who remain in the seminaries to teach, study, and interpret religious texts—the regime has in fact been intrusive. The authorities in Tehran have tried to monitor teaching in the seminaries by dictating curricula and identifying texts to be taught in Qom. In addition, the Leader has used his office and funds to support seminaries and teachers who are deemed to be "militant" and sympathetic to the regime's interpretations of Islam. But with the ascendancy of the IRGC after 2005 and especially after 2009, pro-regime clerics now find themselves increasingly marginalized, and their relationship with Ahmadinejad is an increasingly distant one. The most outspoken of his rival candidates in the 2009 elections, Mehdi Karroubi, is himself a cleric. Khomeini's grandson Hasan Khomeini's sympathy with the president's political opponents is so well-known that he was heckled by Ahmadinejad's followers on the anniversary of his grandfather's death in 2010.

The upshot is that mosque and state remain distinct entities despite the infusion of religion and seminarians into the constitution of the state.

Mass Media

The media play both a unifying and a divisive role in socializing Iranians. Radio and television are monopolized by the state and are one of the major means to transmit the official doctrine and to mobilize Iranians for elections and rallies across the country. Since the head of the Radio and Television Organization is directly appointed by the Leader, in recent years, it has reflected the interests of the conservative wing of the regime. The strong bias of state television was clearly demonstrated during the presidency of Mohammad Khatami (1997–2005) and the coverage of the 2009 presidential election and Green Movement, when news broadcasts either ignored or misrepresented many of the raging political debates.

In recent years, as satellite television has grown and the dishes have become less expensive, anti-regime Persian language programming from abroad and foreign news outlets (CNN and BBC) provide greater diversity for the viewing public. In response, the state has repeatedly tried to jam channels and outlaw private use of satellite dishes, although the law has not been applied consistently. The dishes can be seen on rooftops in major cities and even small towns.

The printed press has been the most diverse and fascinating form of media in postrevolutionary Iran. In the first decade of the revolution, newspapers and journals became increasingly uniform in their coverage. But as the regime began to feel more consolidated and elite competition became more open after the passing away of Khomeini, a growing number of independent newspapers and magazines appeared on the scene. These newspapers and magazines reflected specific schools of thought and critical views from intellectuals on the right and left, as well as the more republican and the more authoritarian wings of the regime. A flourishing nonstate press and burgeoning investigative journalism constituted the backbone of Khatami's surprising election victory in 1997 and underpinned the enormous popularity of the reformist movement in his first term. The critics of the government (many of whom were part of the revolutionary establishment) and the many young journalists writing critical articles presented a new political language of accountability, civil society, and participation to the educated, urban, and young population of Iran. In doing so, these newspapers both reflected and produced deep cleavages among the ruling establishment.

During the authoritarian backlash against the reformist movement since 2000, the conservative-controlled Judiciary has clamped down on the most vibrant aspects of this press. Currently, journalists have turned to the Internet to distribute their reports and publish their commentaries in online newspapers or in the mushrooming collection of blogs and even Facebook pages. Today, Persian is one of the most widely used languages on the Internet and in the "blogosphere." Politicians, political dissidents, journalists, poets, students, and others inside and outside of Iran use blogging as a means to do everything from expressing opinions to documenting events and human-rights violations. The Internet has been one of the battlegrounds between pro-Ahmadinejad and pro-Green Movement activists since the 2009 presidential election. Today, journalists and newspaper editors, some of whom have been imprisoned or physically attacked, have become the new political heroes of many of the youth.

The Family and Social Groups

Political socialization takes place in the private sphere as well as in the public sphere. This is particularly the case in more authoritarian contexts. In Iran, both under the monarchy and the Islamic Republic, the home has been a relatively free place to discuss politics by recounting the unofficial history of the country or debate current events with family members and friends. While patriarchy (and sometimes matriarchy) does prohibit unfettered debate in the family setting, the memory of key political episodes—such as the 1953 coup or the events leading up to the overthrow of the Shah in 1979—is transmitted in these settings. By retelling stories from earlier eras or speculating about the conspiracies behind them, older family members indoctrinate the family's younger generation in a political memory and culture that are at variance with the official story, as contained in school textbooks and official rhetoric.

As greater numbers of Iranians complete high school and attend universities, the family dynamic appears to have changed. Young men and women now have a certain authority, as they are the first generation in their families to graduate from high school and university. They interpret politics for their relatives by explaining differences between political factions and bringing campus politics into their homes. Over the

last ten years, greater political freedoms, or at least a less fearful setting, allows for many of these types of discussions to take place while one waits for oven-fresh bread outside the local bakery, peruses headlines at the newspaper kiosk, or shares a collective taxi with total strangers. These ritualistic acts of resistance prevent the state from fully dominating politics, but at the same time, they do not challenge regime power.

In short, political socialization under the Islamic Republic has shifted from being solely the domain of the state to one that is contested by counterelite and popular voices. The early revolutionary message of unity and mobilization in the name of revolutionary Islam once taught in school textbooks and recounted in Friday sermons and newspaper pages has given way to greater pluralism and contestation, intriguingly by many of the same people who read those school texts and wrote those newspaper articles in the 1980s. The challenge today for the regime is either to accommodate and represent pluralistic discourse or to impose the single voice of unity. Their decision and capacity in this regard will determine whether Iran will move toward more democratic politics or authoritarianism.

RECRUITING THE POLITICAL ELITE

What kinds of people govern Iran? Under the Shah, the small class of educated and secular Iranians who could demonstrate personal loyalty to the monarch gained access to political offices. Many of the ministers came from landowning families and attended Western high schools and universities.[30] The Shah, however, carefully monitored his court to prevent the rise of potential competitors with strong personalities or independent bases of support. This policy produced a highly dependent inner circle whose members were unwilling to challenge the Shah and preferred to censor information and opinions in order not to offend His Imperial Majesty. This passive and dependent nature of the political elite prevented the Shah from acting in a timely and decisive manner as the revolts and political challenges of 1977 and 1978 snowballed into the revolution.[31]

Under the Islamic Republic, personalism also plays an important role, but in a broader sense. In the early years, political elites came from various backgrounds, but their most fundamental credentials were their revolutionary pedigrees. Those who could point to active participation in the Islamic revolution, and in particular the various groups associated with Khomeini and his students, leveraged this past experience into positions in ministries, the parastatal economic foundations, the IRGC, and various other institutions with access to state revenue. Thus, the new political elite that came to power immediately after the revolution was younger and less cosmopolitan; they were from more middle-class and lower-middle-class backgrounds, often hailing from the provinces rather than the capital.

In general, the state has expanded since the revolution. From 1976 to 1986, the number of employees in the public sector more than doubled, reaching more than 30 percent of all employed Iranians. In the 1980s, four-fifths of all new jobs created were in the public sector.[32] This expansion was due to a number of reasons, including the requisites of the war effort, the state-led economic development program, and the revolutionary agenda to restructure and Islamicize society from above.

Initially, the clergy who were recruited into the state were trained in the seminaries in Najaf and Qom, where Khomeini and his students taught during the 1960s and 1970s. The Fayziyeh Seminary in Qom was the principal seminary producing these new judges and ministers. Over time, the Haqqani Seminary in Qom has grown in importance, partially because many of its alumni include staunch conservatives who have dominated the Judiciary, the Council of Guardians, and the security apparatus. The head of the seminary, Ayatollah Mohammad-Taqi Mesbah Yazdi, is the leading hard-line cleric of the Islamic Republic, to the point where he advocates abolishing its republican components. The graduates of this seminary, known as the Haqqani circle, included important figures in the conservative backlash against Khatami's attempts to institutionalize political reform. Since then, it has cooperated with hard-line elements in the IRGC to ensure that hard-line candidates win in elections, including Ahmadinejad—who regards Mesbah Yazdi as his spiritual mentor—in 2005 and 2009.

Nonclerical parliamentarians and ministers tend to emerge from educational and military institutions. Many have attended the new Islamic universities. In the 1990s, think tanks and research centers were important in recruiting and producing political elites. Many of the reformists who dominated the Sixth

Parliament and supported President Khatami were based in the Center for Strategic Studies. These younger members of the elite often are too young to have significant revolutionary credentials, but their studies in these universities and institutes give them technical know-how, intellectual credentials, and the social networks to gain access to various government and state institutions.

More recently, many of the new elite have come from the ranks of the IRGC and the Basij. The current president, Ahmadinejad, the mayor of Tehran, Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf, and many of the ministers were military figures from these corps or worked for the research institutes connected to the IRGC. It is worth noting that the regular army, navy, and air force have not had much influence in politics. This growing militarization of politics is a new phenomenon in modern Iranian history. Unlike neighboring Pakistan, Turkey, and Iraq, which have had numerous military coups and governments headed by generals, the Iranian political establishment was overwhelmingly civilian throughout the twentieth century.

Kinship ties are commonly used to gain political and economic power. Many of the sons and brothers, and on some rare occasions, daughters and sisters, of government officials use their family ties to gain access to the state. Often, their contacts are used as means for rent-seeking (receiving subsidized hard currency or special import licenses, or securing subsidized loans) and personal enrichment. In addition, marriage is used as a powerful way to cement political alliances and create bonds between prominent families.

INTEREST ARTICULATION AND AGGREGATION

The mix of electoral politics and authoritarian powers generates multiple and competing forms of interest articulation and aggregation under the Islamic Republic. The most institutionalized forms are regular presidential, parliamentary, and local elections. The least institutionalized, but probably the most prevalent and effective, is the use of personalistic ties and patron-client relations. As a consequence, representation under the Islamic Republic is highly fragmented, fluid, and contentious, although not fully pluralistic, competitive, and democratic.

Noninstitutional Forms of Interest Articulation and Aggregation

The principal means of interest aggregation in contemporary Iran is clientelism and the forging of relationships between political figures and citizens through patron-client networks. Given the state's access to external sources of revenue from the world oil market, Iranian political figures have exchanged political loyalty and support for access to such resources as subsidies, hard currency, subcontracts, and secure government jobs. This system of patronage can take a very direct form, where parliamentarians, ministers, or bureaucrats dole out these resources to kin, schoolmates, and people from the same city or province. Special access to powerful figures in the office of the Leader, state-owned banks, and economic foundations benefit these clients, while ensuring their dependence, if not loyalty, to the political system that plays more of a distributive, rather than an extractive, role. Since patron-client relations are based on the goods that the patron provides the client, if the patron loses power, so do his clients.

In a less targeted manner, the Islamic Republic distributes large subsidies as a social welfare net and to ensure the loyalty of large portions of the population. Food and medicine are subsidized at an annual rate of about $2 billion and particularly to benefit the urban poor. By contrast, the annual $10 billion energy subsidy for gasoline and electricity is quite regressive because it benefits the middle and upper classes that own automobiles, homes, and electrical equipment. This form of political aggregation undermines pretensions of institutional impartiality and meritocracy that are essential principles behind equal citizenship and participation.

Institutionalized Forms of Interest Articulation and Aggregation: Voting

Elections are regularized political events, but they do not provide complete pluralism nor necessarily entail a shift in power and policies, since the powers of the representative institutions are quite limited. Elections tend to function more as an act and measurement of regime legitimacy, and only secondarily as a means for citizens to express their interests by selecting among diverse sets of candidates with specified policy positions. Thus, except for the most recent elections, there

has been more discussion about election turnout than candidates. The turnout in the ten presidential and eight parliamentary elections averaged about 60 percent (see again Figure 12.4).

The 1997, 2005, and 2009 presidential elections, however, indicated that under certain conditions, elections can be moments of interest articulation and offer information regarding the preferences of citizens. In 1997, it was quite clear that the regime candidate was Ali-Akbar Nateq Nuri, the sitting speaker of the Parliament and close confidant of the Leader. However, thanks in part to the burgeoning civil society and his low government profile, Mohammad Khatami, as "the outsider" and "nonregime" candidate, swept to victory with a surprising 70 percent of the vote. In somewhat similar fashion, although with a very different political agenda and significance, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad surprised many pundits by defeating Ali-Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who has been one of the cornerstones of the Islamic Republic since its establishment. These surprising outcomes indicate that in spite of the limited nature of elections in the Islamic Republic, voters are able to express their views, and these preferences can matter even when they go against the wishes of the ruling establishment or the expectations of political experts. The most recent elections exposed the divisions with the political establishment, clerics, and society at large. Rather than processing these disputes through political forums and debates, the Leader and the neoconservatives turned the matter into a security issue and sought to silence the interests and views of a significant portion of society and even the regime's political establishment.

Given the weakness of party organizations, as mentioned earlier, political parties play no major role. The factions that contend for power and influence in Iran have not formed a clearly defined party system that would act as a mechanism for representing and aggregating the interests of constituents. Parties and political associations, such as the Society of Combatant Clergy or the Islamic Iran Participation Front, are groupings of members of the political elite that become active during elections. Yet until now, they have been unable to maintain party discipline with direct and formalized links to the citizenry. The inchoate structure of the popular protests following the 2009 elections testifies to the weakness of political parties.

Institutional Groups and Professional Organizations

While political parties are less developed, groups based in state organizations have a more corporate identity and a greater ability to shape policy, in much the same manner as controlled interest-group systems. The IRGC and the volunteer mobilization corps (Basij), consisting of 120,000 and 90,000 men, respectively,[33] are two of the most prominent arms of the state. They directly represent the state's interests in various policymaking areas, although they were established to mobilize support for the regime. These ostensibly military and security forces also play a role in the economy through their business subsidiaries, which are involved in large-scale construction projects as well as allegedly importing consumer goods. Since the 2003 local council elections, the IRCG and Basij have taken a more visible role in politics. A number of their high-ranking figures have run for local offices, Parliament, and the presidency. Finally, since they are in direct communication with the Leader, they have the ability to influence policy and coordinate actions beyond the oversight of the parliament.

Iran does have a host of associations representing the interests of labor, business, professional groups, and industrial sectors. However, the House of Labor or the Iranian Chamber of Commerce, Industries, and Mines, and other such organizations, operate more as a means for state officials to manage these corporate entities rather than as vehicles to represent specific interest and shape policymaking. Only in very recent elections have professional organizations endorsed different candidates, which may signal the emergence of an independent role for these corporate groups in political competition.

In the course of the struggle against the Shah and in the years following his overthrow, neighborhood councils and guild associations sprang up all over the country as grassroots initiatives to address ordinary citizens' needs during the revolution and the war years. Over time, they have become integrated into the patron-client system, and today, they are either mere appendages of state officials or means for the state to penetrate society.[34] Hence, there is no clear separation between interest groups and government officials. Moreover, since the revolution, the government has encouraged workers, merchants, and students to establish Islamic associations in universities, factories,

and guilds as the principal means of aggregating the interests of these groups.

Nonetheless, in the 1990s and especially during the relatively less repressive administration of President Khatami, a large number of genuinely autonomous associations representing strata of society that had been largely sidelined by the revolutionary regime emerged. For instance, various women's organizations of both secular and reformist Islamist persuasion formed and started initiatives seeking to change discriminatory laws, provide services, and raise general consciousness regarding women's issues. Most notable is the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize winner, **Shirin Ebadi**. She was the first woman to become a judge under the Shah, but she lost her job when women were barred from that position following the revolution. Ebadi was active in a host of legal organizations championing and defending the rights of women, children, and political dissidents. Simultaneously, students and secular intellectuals took advantage of these opportunities to establish or reactivate associations and publications that were independently minded and represented alternative visions of politics. These organizations have been the backbone of the Green Movement as well as the target of repression by conservatives in the state apparatus.

Nonassociational Social Groups

Many social strata in Iran exist without independent associations aggregating and representing their interests. Among the historically and politically important social groups without corporate representation, it is worth mentioning the bazaari merchants. Among the more recent social groups, war veterans and the relatives of those killed in the war (referred to as "martyrs") stand out as well.

Bazaari merchants based in the historic covered bazaars of Iran, ranging from retailers and brokers to wholesalers and even international traders, have played a central role in various political episodes from the Constitutional Revolution (1905–1911) to the Oil Nationalization Movement (1951–1953) to the Islamic Revolution. Even though important differences exist among bazaaris in terms of socioeconomic status, political persuasion, and position in the international and national economies, they have a sense of solidarity because of the well-defined and vibrant physical space of the bazaar, which ensures socially embedded and crosscutting relations. Their political significance is enhanced both by their economic power and their close relationship with the ulema. Since the revolution, bazaari economic interests have been threatened by the state's domination of the economy, while the homogeneity of bazaari interests has been undermined by key pro-Khomeini bazaari families being coopted by the new regime.[35]

War veterans, the families of the martyrs, and those disabled in the Iran–Iraq war make up a large and politically important social group. They are ostensibly represented by various organizations and political groups, such as the Martyr's Foundation, the Foundation of the Disinherited, the Society of the Devotees of the Islamic Republic, and the Headquarters of the POWs. But these organizations have proved unable to address adequately the everyday demands of many of their constituents, and they have moved away from their original mandate of providing services to war veterans and their families. The state also supports this important constituency by setting up all kinds of affirmative action schemes (ranging from easier access to higher education to priority in flight reservations) and subsidizing consumer goods for veterans and relatives of both veterans and "martyrs" in order to enhance their socioeconomic standing. Yet these measures have not always worked adequately both to address the needs of this social group and to suppress challenges. Some prominent war veterans and former members of the IRGC have aligned themselves with the reformist faction, calling for greater political participation and freedoms. Others have accused the regime of turning its back on the wartime principles of self-sacrifice and justice. For much of the postwar era, there have been growing complaints by some war veterans that the memory of the war and respect for the sacrifices of the war generation have faded, while the veterans and relatives of the martyrs have not been sufficiently provided for. This position was given voice by some ultraconservative newspapers, certain filmmakers engaged in producing war films, and outspoken figures of a group called Ansar-e Hezbollah (Partisans of the Party of God), who took it upon themselves to combat moral, political, and economic corruption.

Demonstrations and Public Protests

Given the closed nature of institutional interest representation and aggregation, many social groups and political tendencies have turned to civil disobedience

to express their grievances. The relatively fresh memory of the demonstrations and strikes that constituted the revolution of 1978 and 1979 are a model for workers, students, activist women, and the urban poor to use public collective action to make their claims. Throughout the 1990s, industrial workers, for instance, protested against privatization policies, the selling of state-owned factories, and nonpayment of their wages. One high-profile tactic has workers blocking the main expressway connecting Tehran to the industrial satellite city of Karaj. On several occasions, these protesters blocked the selling of state-owned factories to private business interests they suspected of planning to lay off workers. Teachers, bus drivers, sugarcane workers, and government pensioners in recent years have protested in front of Parliament to draw attention to their inadequate income. Women's groups also increasingly organize protests against the male bias enshrined in the Constitution. Ethnic political groups, especially Kurdish and Arab activists on the Iran–Iraq border, have vocally called for greater distribution of wealth and local authority in their provinces.

The most dramatic protests, however, have been based in the universities and spearheaded by students. During the summers of 1999, 2003, and 2009, student organizations staged sit-ins and demonstrations to protest against authoritarian measures by the regime. In the first case, they challenged the closure of a prominent reformist newspaper, and in the second case, the sentencing of an outspoken intellectual who had questioned clerical rule. These protests were originally based in Tehran University, but they spread to other cities and university campuses and persisted for several days. With little support or protection from reformist parties and other social groups (such as workers, bazaaris, and teachers), the volunteer forces (Basij) and police violently suppressed the demonstrators and prevented the movement from escalating. Yet in the aftermath of the 2009 elections, students and student organizations again were critical in coordinating actions and turning universities into sites of political dissent.

Although these and other events demonstrate that Iranian society is not completely passive in the face of government policies, the inability of these disparate groups to unite or coordinate their localized organizational capabilities is an indication of the overwhelming social atomization in contemporary Iran. Given the pervasive use of patron-client relations and lack of trust among Iranians, collective action and alliance-building is particularly difficult. Moreover, these noninstitutional forms of politics reflect the lack of efficacy of institutional politics and the belief in the part of many Iranians that their political voice cannot be heard unless it is in this form.

POLICY FORMULATION

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, state policy is set by a number of bodies, some of them explicitly mentioned in the Constitution, some not. Given the mixed nature of the political system, overlaps, duplications, and even contradictions abound, and it is not rare for different policymaking bodies to work at cross-purposes.

State Institutions Mentioned in the Constitution

As befits a theocracy in which, at least in theory, no state policy may contradict Islam, those who determine what does and does not contradict Islam have a preponderant voice in setting policy. In the Islamic Republic, this means first and foremost the Leader. The first Leader, Ruhollah Khomeini, on numerous occasions used his authority to determine state policy by issuing religious edicts (*fatwas*). On a few occasions, these edicts broke with established religious tradition, which is not astonishing given the charismatic nature of his leadership.[36] One of the earliest examples was his ruling on caviar. According to Shiite (and Jewish) dietary laws, a fish can be eaten only if it has scales. The sturgeon, however, has no scales, and traditionally, its meat and by extension its roe (caviar) were not deemed permissible. But caviar is one of Iran's main exports, and so the matter was revisited. A specially appointed state commission concluded that the sturgeon does indeed have scales, but that they are of a peculiar shape. Taking note of this finding, in 1983, Khomeini issued a *fatwa* declaring that caviar could be eaten. In 1988, he broke with other time-honored legal traditions by authorizing the playing of chess, provided no bets were made on the outcome, betting and gambling being forbidden in Islam. He also liberalized the early republic's stifling cultural life by relaxing the rules pertaining to music and television programming.[37]

Khomeini's interventions in the state's policymaking were often made necessary by continued

deadlock between Parliament and the Council of Guardians, as mentioned earlier. To avoid paralysis, in 1988, Khomeini amended his doctrine of *velayat-e faqih*, guardianship of the jurisprudent, by issuing an edict that gave the state, as embodied by its Leader, authority to override religious law when that is expedient. This "absolute dominion of the jurisprudent" (*velayat-e motlaqeh-ye faqih*), he stated, was the "most important of divine commandments and has priority over all derivative divine commandments . . . even over prayer, fasting, and the pilgrimage to Mecca."[38] This reinterpretation of the theocratic principle was enshrined in the 1989 revised Constitution.

Needless to say, most traditional Muslims and most members of the ulema were horrified by this subordination of religion to reason of state. The whole purpose of an Islamic state was the exact opposite. Moreover, no person other than Khomeini could conceivably get away with disregarding religion when it was expedient for the state to do so. As a result, shortly before his death, Khomeini invested the newly established Expediency Council with the authority to advise the Leader on invoking the absolute authority. As president (1981–1989), Khamenei had been a member of the conservative faction, but as Leader he initially tried to give the impression of remaining above the fray. However, with the onset of the Khatami presidency in 1997, he abandoned all pretense of neutrality and became the de facto leader of the conservatives who did their best to stymie the reformist zeal of the elected officials.

The Expediency Council is the institution that decides the most vital policies of the nation. For instance, in Iran's international negotiations about its nuclear program, the top Iranian negotiator, Hasan Rowhani, did not come from the foreign ministry or the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, but is an engineer-turned-cleric who was the secretary of the National Security Council and as such a member of the Expediency Council. Politically identified with Hashemi Rafsanjani, he resigned from his position as chief negotiator after the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to the presidency in June 2005. With Ahmadinejad's election, the old establishment became apprehensive about the new president's ultraconservative and populist policies, policies that threaten not only the domestic status quo but also Iran's security.[39] And so, in 2005, the chairman of the Expediency Council since 1997, none other than Ali-Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, extracted a letter from the Leader that granted the Expediency Council broad supervisory powers over all three branches of government. Despite the presidency's and Parliament's being dominated by conservatives since 2005, the combination of institutional checks and balances and various intrafactional disputes have limited the ability of Ahmadinejad and his supporters to make sweeping changes, although he has used his executive powers to direct state funds to key supporters.

In the course of the 1988 revision of the Constitution, a body formed some years earlier was added to the official institutional structure: the National Security Council, whose members include the heads of the three branches of government, top military commanders, the Foreign Minister, the Minister of Information (that is, intelligence), and a few other figures named by the Leader. It is the nation's highest policymaking body in matters of foreign and security policy, which, in the case of the Islamic Republic, includes the struggle against what is officially called "Western cultural aggression."

The Council of Guardians does not have a direct role in policymaking, but its six lay members are present in Parliament when it is in session and have at times attempted to work with sympathetic MPs to introduce legislation. As for Parliament itself, it has been largely emasculated as a policymaking body by the unelected bodies mentioned earlier. Legislative proposals come before it either from the cabinet or from a minimum of twenty-five MPs, and while successive Parliaments have tried to create frameworks for conducting economic policies and changing the penal and civil codes, much of their activity has been stymied by the Council of Guardians.

The executive branch of government and Parliament have had an impact on policies of setting the state budget, providing and regulating social and welfare services, and handling territorial administration, which includes redrawing provincial borders. Beginning in the mid-1980s, for instance, the MPs of the northwestern city of Ardabil campaigned for the creation of a new province around their city. Young men from Ardabil having died in disproportionate numbers in the Iran–Iraq war, the people of the city used the moral leverage that their sacrifices gave them to renew their demands with greater fervor after the war ended in 1988. All sorts of civic associations mobilized for the demand, which was expressed inside

Parliament by the MPs. In the end, the administration of President Hashemi Rafsanjani introduced a bill in Parliament providing for the new province. The bill was hotly debated, and it finally passed in a secret vote in early 1993.[40]

The extensive powers of the Leader and the existence of such unelected decision-making bodies as the Council of Guardians, the Expediency Council, and the National Security Council severely limit the policymaking role of the elected officials: the president, the individual cabinet members named by him and approved by Parliament, and Parliament itself. Popular sovereignty is thus severely undermined.

State Institutions Not Mentioned in the Constitution

The role of elected officials is further limited by councils that are not mentioned expressly in the Constitution and that were established for the express purpose of formulating state policy in a particular field. The most prominent of these is the Supreme Council for the Cultural Revolution, which was set up by order of Khomeini in 1986 to perpetuate the policies unleashed during the Cultural Revolution of the early 1980s that purged universities of leftists and secularists. Its tasks include determining not only state policies in the realms of culture, education, and research, but also "the spread and reinforcement of the influence of Islamic culture in all areas of society." Its supremacy over Parliament is seen from the fact that the Council of Guardians has at times vetoed legislation on the grounds that it contradicted policies determined by the Supreme Council for the Cultural Revolution, the latter having the approval of the Leader.

Power Centers and the Difficulty of Policy Coordination

Given the existence of multiple power centers, policies are often not coordinated, as some state institutions make and implement their own policies independently of the relevant ministries. This includes the Judiciary, which does not limit itself to implementing the law but in fact takes it into its own hands, and the Revolutionary Guards, who wage their own struggle against dissent and pursue a foreign policy independent of that of the foreign ministry and even the National Security Council.

The impact of these inconsistencies became particularly apparent under President Khatami, when the dispute between reformists and conservatives added an ideological dimension to the diffuse, ill-defined, and overlapping competencies of many state bodies. A few examples will illustrate this.

Under Khatami, the Ministry of Culture, which controls censorship and issues licenses for newspapers and journals, adopted more liberal policies, inaugurating a period of press freedom and diversity. But the Judiciary, headed by a conservative ally of the Leader, used its powers to close down newspapers and indict and jail reformist journalists and editors who had incurred the displeasure of conservatives. For every newspaper that was closed down, the Ministry of Culture would issue a new license and the newspaper would appear under a new name.[41] But by 2000, the most critical voices had been silenced by the Judiciary and its allies in the armed forces.

Another example comes from the security apparatus. In late 1998, six months after the commander of the Revolutionary Guards had threatened violence against opponents of the regime, a number of opposition politicians, journalists, and writers were killed in what became known as the "chain murders." Khatami insisted on an investigation and persuaded Khamenei to give his consent. Soon, it became clear that members of the Ministry of Information had carried out the murders. This led to a purge in the ministry, which operates under the authority of the president and of Parliament.[12] While the Ministry of Information subsequently became more tolerant of dissent and respectful of the law, the Revolutionary Guards and the Judiciary set up their own parallel intelligence organizations, replete with prosecutors and prisons, to pursue the conservatives' agenda of suppressing dissent.[43]

A final example is from foreign policy. Beginning at the end of the 1980s, a number of Foreign Ministry officials began calling for a policy that would privilege Iran's national interest in light of *realpolitik* rather than the pursuit of worldwide revolution. Tirelessly arguing their case and demonstrating the cost for Iran of remaining on the margins of world diplomacy, they managed to inflect foreign policy with a number of countries, except the United States and Israel. But while government officials engaged in diplomacy denied that Iran meddled in the internal affairs of other countries, various state or parastatal institutions pursued separate activist foreign-policy agendas.

Thus, when in 1998 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reached an agreement with Britain to the effect that Iran would do nothing to carry out the death penalty imposed by Khomeini in 1988 on British author Salman Rushdie, the parastatal Second of Khordad Foundation immediately increased the $2 million bounty it had put on the author's head in 1989. These inconsistencies have seriously damaged Iran's credibility on the international scene, as Iranian negotiators seem unable to deliver on their commitments.

The result of the multiplicity of policymaking bodies is frequent incoherence and sometimes paralysis. On a positive note, this incoherence has prevented the system from becoming totalitarian, as the overlapping spheres of activity of various state institutions have made centralized control of public life well nigh impossible.

Economic Policymaking

One of the most contentious topics in the postrevolutionary era is economic policymaking. From the very outset, the founders of the Islamic Republic and the new elite in the ministries and parastatal organizations had fundamentally differing views on the best approach to foster economic development. Those who favored a more state-centered approach to development initially dominated policymaking through the Parliament, ministries, and such institutions as the Construction Jihad. In the 1980s, the state played a critical role in rationing hard currency, setting prices for consumer goods, and using the public banking system to distribute loans to key sectors of the economy. The logic of state control found support at the time in large part due to the requirements of war, the political necessity of redistributing the assets of the numerous industrialists who had been forced into exile, and the fact that international investment had come to a standstill.

A liberal approach to development that placed greater emphasis on the private sector and market mechanisms began to dominate policymaking circles in the late 1980s. This was encouraged by the conclusion of the Iran–Iraq war and the global rise of neoliberal development agendas in the wake of the Soviet Union's demise. The major impetus to redirect economic policies, however, was the poor performance of the economy (see Figure 12.7 and discussion later in this chapter). Thus, both the Rafsanjani and Khatami administrations tried to restructure Iran's economy by selling state-owned assets, lifting trade restrictions, and encouraging private and foreign investment. These policy initiatives had mixed results. Iran liberalized its trade regime, with ministries and procurement boards now playing a less pronounced role. Furthermore, private banks and industries take advantage of incentives to export goods. Nonetheless, the deregulation of the economy also led to hardship and has therefore faced opposition. On the one hand, many state employees and those who rely on state subsidies have been hurt by economic insecurity and inflation. On the other hand, the government's attempt to reform the economy has challenged the economic powers and vested interests of the large economic foundations that control large portions of Iran's commercial, industrial, and agricultural sectors, and that are largely unaccountable to the Parliament, the central bank, and development policymaking bodies. Khatami's and the reformists' attempt to introduce greater transparency and competition into the economy was limited by the economic foundations' and parastatal organizations' autonomous and privileged access to resources and markets. Thus, any attempt to reform the economy, boost productivity, or direct investment toward exports must address the inequality and inconsistencies of the parallel economy controlled by these organizations.

Under Ahmadinejad, economic policymaking has combined populist rhetoric of redistribution and various forms of highly publicized handouts with the simultaneous privatizing of state firms and functions.[44] While the language of social justice and attacking "the corrupt" aimed at shoring up a social base of support, privatization of manufacturing and allocating construction contracts aimed at rewarding Ahmadinejad's key political allies. For instance, under Ahmadinejad, key contracts in the oil and gas sector and telecommunications were given to companies affiliated with the IRGC. While for decades there has been domestic debate and international pressure from lending agencies such as the IMF and World Bank for Iran to reduce and remove its generous energy and consumer subsidies, ironically, it was Ahmadinejad in 2010 who took the first concrete steps in removing subsidies that act as a social welfare net. Thus, these IMF-lauded policies threaten to exacerbate inequalities and create a new class of oligarchs, as was the case in Russia. Moreover, the transformation of the subsidy system may become a highly contentious issue for the many Iranians from middle and working class

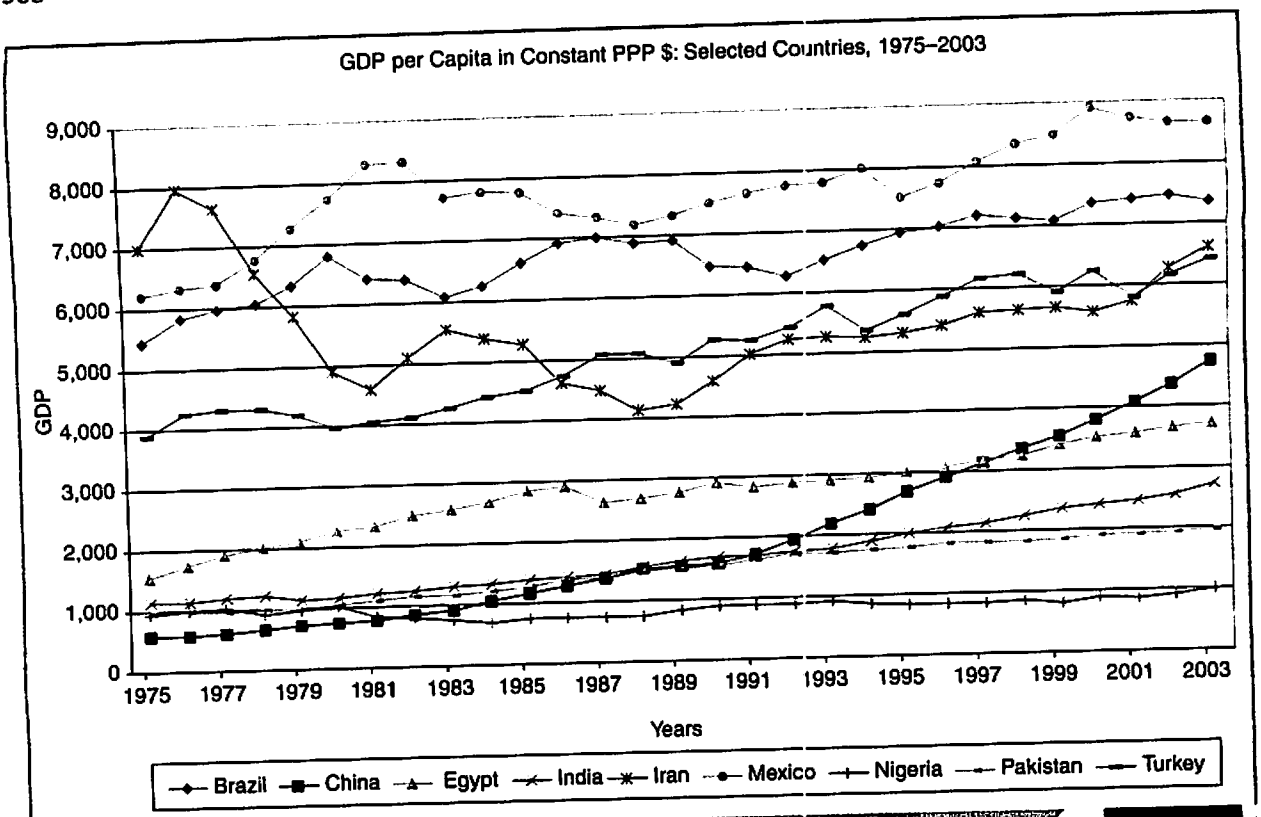


FIGURE 12.7 Growth Rates
Iran Has Mixed Record in Comparison to Other Late-Developing Economies

Source: Based on data from Massoud Karshenas and Hassan Hakimian, "Oil, Economic Diversification, and the Democratic Process in Iran," *Iranian Studies* 38, no. 1 (March 2005): 67–90.

backgrounds who survive economically thanks to the robust welfare system provided by the regime.

POLICY OUTCOMES

Spreading Progress and Prosperity

The chief complaint of the revolutionaries had been that the Shah's policies failed to benefit the majority of Iranians. While succeeding administrations in the Islamic Republic have been on the whole indifferent to the interests of the educated upper-middle class, they have tried to adopt policies that will improve the lot of the poor.

The state educational system is astonishingly good, given the limitations imposed by the political system. Iranian students regularly win medals at international science olympiads, and literacy rates have continued rising, reaching 89 percent for men and 80 percent for women by 2006, while the gap between sexes has narrowed from 1976 levels, when 59 percent of men were literate compared to only 35 percent of women.[45]

After pronatalist policies in the 1980s, the government realized that birth rates had to be brought down, and it inaugurated a multifaceted policy of facilitating birth control. All forms of contraception are widely distributed and subsidized both in cities and in villages, everywhere clinics offer free sterilization to men and women, and the state actively encourages couples to have "only two children, be they boys or girls." All over Iran, couples do indeed have fewer children than their parents' generation. But for the foreseeable future, Iran's population will keep rising, as the very numerous Iranians born in the 1980s are beginning to have children of their own. The current growth rate of the Iranian population is approximately 1 percent, one of the lowest in the Middle East.

Health care is another area of considerable progress. Small clinics staffed by paramedics serve many

villages, and there is no shortage of physicians. While the quality of medical care may not always be very high, it has astutely emphasized prevention and its availability to the general population is respectable even when compared with rich Western countries. These rural social and economic development programs are successful partly because they are spearheaded by the local communities rather than by experts from distant urban areas who typically are unaware of the local needs or social and cultural conditions.[46]

Much effort has gone into improvements in the countryside. Paved roads now connect all towns and many villages, and many villages have clean water and electricity. In spite of the state's efforts to create a welfare state financed by oil income, most Iranians struggle to make ends meet. To some extent, this is because the middle class has grown tremendously. People whose parents were illiterate and poor peasants now aspire to a middle-class lifestyle; they expect to eat meat every day, send their children to good schools, and have decent housing. Table 12.2 compares some basic human development indicators for Iran for 2007 with those of a few comparable countries.[47]

The provision of basic services to the general population has been quite successful. Obviously, more than three decades of steady oil income have made a difference. In many ways, the indicators for Iran are closer to those of Turkey than to those of Egypt or Pakistan. However, many Iranians are unwilling to credit the government for this, and impute it to the natural development of a country with a large oil income. It is often argued that with better planning, more competent management, and an acceptance of Saddam Hussein's offer to end the Iran–Iraq war in 1982, the situation might be much better still. Moreover, as Figure 12.7 reveals, over the last three decades, Iran's overall macroeconomic performance has fallen behind the newly developing countries in Latin America or East Asia. The per capita growth rates have not kept pace with the emerging economic powers of China and India.[48] In fact, Iran's growth indicators have been quite volatile, with a rather extended period of depression in the 1980s due to war, sanctions, high birth rates, and deficient industrial policies. Even with the gradual improvement in per capita GDP since the early 1990s, which was largely due to the rise in oil prices, unemployment remains the number-one worry for young people, and the growth rate of the economy is not nearly enough to absorb the growing population. In fact, youth unemployment increased from 14.8 percent in 1996 to 27.5 percent in 2001.[49]

Islamicization of Society

Another motivation of much policymaking is the desire to roll back secularism and spread Islamic moral values among the population. Since the early 1980s, alcohol consumption is banned except for the

Iran Compared: Iranian Social Conditions Compared to Other Developing Nations TABLE 12.2

Country	Population 2007	Annual Population Growth 2005–2010 (%)	Life Expectancy 2007 (years)	Percentage of Population Not Using an Improved Water Source (%)	Literacy/ Men Aged 15 and Above (%)	Literacy/ Women Aged 15 and Above (%)	GDP/ PPP* $
Iran	72.4 million	1.3	71.2	6	87.3	77.2	10,955
Turkey	73.0 million	1.2	71.7	3	96.2	81.3	12,955
Egypt	80.1 million	1.9	69.9	2	74.6	57.8	5,349
Pakistan	173.2 million	2.3	66.2	10	67.7	39.6	2,496
India	1.16 billion	1.4	63.4	11	76.9	54.5	2,753
China	1.32 billion	0.7	72.9	12	96.5	90.0	5,383
Mexico	107.5 million	1.4	76	5	94.5	91.4	14,104
Nigeria	147.7 million	2.4	47.7	53	80.1	64.1	1,969

*PPP: purchasing power parity

Source: UNDP *Human Development Report*, 2009.

non-Muslim minorities, veiling is enforced in public spaces, the state is in theory committed to minimizing contact between unrelated men and women, the religious content of education is vastly expanded, and gruesome physical punishments chastise adulterers, homosexuals, and other offenders of religious morality.[50] Divine law, as interpreted by the state, also allows capital punishment. In 2008, the number of death penalties carried out in Iran (at least 346) was second only to China (at least 1,718), and more than in the United States (at least 111) and Saudi Arabia (at least 102), which were the next two highest practitioners of the death penalty.[51]

Outwardly, the Islamicization of society has been a success. Women cover their hair in public, people are in general more familiar with religious doctrine than before the revolution, the country has more mosques, Friday congregational prayers are routine in towns and cities, and all flights of Iran Air (the national airline) begin with a prayer. Even the best hotels serve no alcohol, even to foreign guests. Underneath the surface, however, the situation is more complicated. Prostitution is rife, driven by poverty. Over 2 million Iranians are drug addicts. Bootlegging flourishes, often with the connivance of the forces of order, who get a cut. As education has become longer and the marriage age has gone up, young people are much more likely to have premarital sex than their parents' generation, at least in Tehran. Corruption operates at almost all levels, from the petty official who will do his job only if he is paid a bribe to the relatives of the top leaders who have enriched themselves by controlling economic life.

All of this should not be construed to mean that Iranians have become irreligious. But religious practice has become more private, as the influence of clerics over religious life has declined. One study, comparing data gathered in 1975 and in 2001, demonstrates that while levels of personal religiosity (such as frequency of prayer) have remained relatively constant, participation in organized religion (such as attendance of congregational Friday prayers) has declined, reflecting a growing ambivalence toward state-sponsored public religious practices.[52]

Iranian Islam has always contained an anticlerical strain, as believers have always criticized clerics for their greed and hypocrisy. The ulema's assumption of power in the Islamic Republic has given a new fillip to this tendency. Taxi drivers are known not to stop for clerics, many of whom have taken to wearing civilian clothes in public. Foreign observers are often astonished by how few turbaned clerics one sees in the streets of Tehran.

The rise of anticlericalism has led some of the more thoughtful members of the Shiite clergy to revisit the relations between "church" and state and to call for a separation of the two. They do so not because they advocate secularism, but out of concern for the collective reputation of the ulema. In the Muslim world, advocates of the separation of "church" and state had always been secularists. In Iran, for the first time, *religious* arguments are being made for that separation on the grounds that coercively imposed religion harms spirituality.[53] One may even wonder whether some of the pious people who voted for Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the 2005 and 2009 presidential election did so in order to rebuke the ulema, many of whom—such as the 2005 losing candidate, Hashemi Rafsanjani—have joined the country's ruling class and are seen to have been corrupted by power. Moreover, during his tenure in office, Ahmadinejad has often confronted staunch criticism from the traditional clerical establishment for his sometimes unorthodox and messianic understanding of Shiism. This relationship reached an all-time low in the aftermath of the 2009 elections, when only one of the top clerics congratulated him on his "victory."

Gender Relations

One of the key reproaches that Islamists addressed to the Shah's regime before the revolution was that its promotion of Western lifestyles turned women into sex objects and was generally conducive to moral corruption and sexual depravity—hence the effort to reorder gender relations and place them on an authentic Islamic footing.

Looked at from a Western perspective, the legal status of women improved under the Pahlavi monarchy, whereas the majority of society remained more conservative than the laws governing it. After the revolution, much of the legislation that reduced the gender gap was repealed. According to the Islamic penal code introduced in 1981, the value of a woman's life is half that of a man's, in the sense that the law of the talion ("an eye for an eye") instituted by that code explicitly states that the blood-money of a woman is half of that

of a man.[54] In practice, this means that if a man kills another man, the relatives of the victim can either ask for the execution of the murderer or accept a legally fixed amount of blood-money. But if a man kills a woman, her relatives can ask for the murderer's execution only if they pay half a man's blood-money. By the same token, in courts of law, the testimony of one man is worth that of two women. In some cases (such as adultery or murder), a woman's testimony does not count at all. A man can easily divorce his wife, whereas in principle a woman can initiate divorce proceedings only under exceptional circumstances; polygamy is recognized under the law. To travel abroad, a wife needs the formal permission of her husband, but the latter can leave the country as he pleases. The foreign wife of an Iranian man can easily acquire Iranian citizenship, whereas an Iranian woman cannot obtain Iranian citizenship for her foreign husband and her children from that husband.[55]

In addition to these legal restrictions on women's rights, the Islamic Republic has instituted all sorts of ad hoc discriminations. In the early years of the Islamic Republic, many fields of study, such as agronomy and mining engineering, were closed to female students at the universities on the assumption that they were too rough for women. Women's sports were severely restricted because the attire worn by female athletes is incompatible with veiling. This differential treatment of men and women is in stark violation of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, an international treaty that prohibits discrimination on religious and gender grounds. Iran acceded to the Convention in 1975 and remains a party after its regime changed. But from the point of view of theocracy, divine law obviously supersedes obligations incurred under international law.

Despite *and* because of these legal restrictions, Iranian women have continuously increased their participation in public life and their presence in the public sphere since strict Islamic law began to be enforced in the early 1980s.[56] At the same time, they have challenged the logic of patriarchy. There are a number of reasons for this seemingly paradoxical development. The widespread participation of women in the mass anti-Shah demonstrations of 1978 made it unlikely that their interest in public affairs would end once the revolution was over. During the Iran–Iraq war, millions of men were serving at the front, and this forced many women to do jobs hitherto performed by men. Many women became their families' main breadwinners. Furthermore, the aspiration to a middle-class existence awakened by the revolution, coupled with the slow growth of the economy, has meant that women increasingly supplement their husbands' income by joining the labor force. Given the strictly enforced rules on veiling and gender interaction in the public sphere, more traditional women feel more at ease entering the public sphere. In addition, more traditional men are less reluctant to let their wives, daughters, or sisters work outside the house. Restrictions that are offensive and limiting to nontraditional women have thus had a liberating effect on religiously observant women—and these constitute, after all, a majority of the female population.

The relative strength of the antitraditional attitude toward women's roles in society is reflected in the comparative results of the World Values Survey. For instance, while only 4 percent of Egyptians and 12 percent of Jordanians disagree with the statement that "marriage has become an outdated institution," 17 percent of surveyed Iranians agree.[57] A plurality of surveyed Iranians disagree with the statement that "women need to have children in order to feel satisfied," whereas only 12 percent of Egyptians and 9 percent of Jordanians disagree with it.[58] Finally, 40 percent of Iranians agreed with the statement that "a working mother can develop intimate relationships with her children just like a nonworking mother," a rate that is double that of surveyed Egyptians and Jordanians.[59] Thus, despite the regime's initial attempts to inculcate a traditional image and role for women in the family and society, Iranian men and women seem to hold a less narrow view of women.

The visitor to today's Iran encounters women everywhere; they staff government agencies, work in offices, sell goods in shops, and own and run businesses. Most dramatically, women now constitute over 60 percent of the student body at the universities, restrictions on what they can study having been gradually lifted throughout the 1990s to the point where none remain. In Persian literature, the traditional emphasis on poetry has given way to a boom in the writing of novels—and most novelists are women. In sports, a daughter of then-president Hashemi Rafsanjani took over women's sports in the early 1990s. Using her father's clout, she instituted a system

whereby women compete under international rules and in normal athletic gear but at locations to which no men are admitted. This change led, incidentally, to many more women becoming coaches, referees, paramedics, and state sports officials.[60] Even veiling is now enforced less strictly, and the partial covering of the head that hard-liners call "mal-veiling" has spread. None other than Khomeini's granddaughter complained in an interview with a U.S. journalist about the state's intrusiveness in this regard.[61]

The widening gap between women's growing participation in public life and the legal system governing their society, and the many-voiced debates about this discrepancy, have had repercussions for Islam itself in Iran. Given the impossibility of criticizing any state of affairs from a secular perspective, feminists couch their arguments in Islamic terms. This has led to the emergence of "Islamic feminism," which is espoused both by truly observant Muslim women and by secular women who have no other way of articulating their demands. Given the continued religiosity of Iranians in general, Islamic feminism has been arguably more effective in raising the gender consciousness of the average woman than secular feminism would have been. These Islamic feminists are discreetly supported by a few sympathetic clerics who have helped them to contest discriminatory policies or laws by proposing ways to circumvent them or even suggesting alternative readings of the relevant scriptural passages and legal principles. Small gains have thus been made. Take the issue of divorce: According to Islamic law, marriage is a contract whose clauses have to be agreed on freely by both husband and wife. A woman has always had the right to ask that her marriage contract include a clause giving her the right to initiate divorce proceedings, but this clause had to be added on to the standard contract issued by the state. Very few bridegrooms consented to it. Since the early 1980s, however, the standard contract includes the clause, meaning that for the woman not to have the right to divorce, bride and bridegroom have to ask for its removal—to which, nowadays, few educated women consent. Since Ahmadinejad's ascendancy, there has been greater cooperation between secular and religious women's activists. This new solidarity may be a model for other opposition groups that have been divided by secular/religious disputes.

The greater success of women in higher education and the fact that the vast majority of Iranian drug addicts are men, coupled with the continued existence of domestic violence against women, have led Shirin Ebadi, the woman who more than any other personifies women's struggles and occasional successes, to quip that Iran has not a "women's question" but a "men's question."

Foreign Policy

Like the French, Russian, Chinese, and Cuban revolutionaries before them, Iran's Islamic revolutionaries saw themselves as the vanguard of a vast revolutionary wave that would also encompass other countries. According to the preamble of the Constitution of 1979, the role of the army and the IRGC is not limited to "securing the borders" of the country but includes "struggling to spread the rule of divine law in the world." Managing the inherent tension between an ideological commitment to help overthrow or weaken other governments on the one hand, and dealing with these governments on a daily basis on the other, poses a tremendous challenge.

Beginning in the early 1990s, "national interest" rather than "export of the revolution" dominated the foreign policy agenda. The best example is the discreet support Iran gave to Christian Armenia in its conflict with Muslim (and predominantly Shiite) Azerbaijan in the war that followed the breakup of the Soviet Union. But, as elsewhere in the world, there is little consensus as to what constitutes a nation's national interest. Many Iranians argue that the national interest demands the solidification of its ties with the rest of the Islamic world.

Ultimately, the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic is driven by a "Third Worldist" desire to escape the hegemony of the Western world. In the parlance of Iran's leaders, Western hegemony is referred to as "world arrogance." In its struggle against "world arrogance," Iran has sought alliances, and these can be conceptualized in terms of three concentric circles. The outermost circle consists of Third World nations, the middle circle is made up of Muslim countries and movements, and the innermost one is constituted by the Shiites in West and South Asia (Lebanon, Iraq, Bahrain, Afghanistan, and Pakistan).

Iran's regional foreign policy enjoys an economic dimension related to the movement of people and goods. Iran now trades a greater share of goods and

services with countries in the Middle East and the rest of Asia than it previously did. Some of this is driven by the economic growth of East Asian economies, and it reflects the desire of Iranian leaders to participate in the world economy without being dependent on Western economies, as was the case under the Pahlavi monarchy. Additionally, Iran has forged formal and informal commercial relations with Dubai's entrepôt economy and the war economies of Iraq and Afghanistan. Alongside this trade, weapons, drugs, and humans are trafficked to, from, and through Iran. Conflicts in neighboring countries also resulted in Iran's becoming home to one of the largest refugee populations in the world. Finally, ordinary Iranian citizens have turned to new destinations for tourism and pilgrimage. Given tight visa restrictions for travel to Western Europe and North America, Dubai, Syria, Turkey, China, Malaysia, and Indonesia are now places where vacationers and pilgrims increasingly head, only to encounter Iranian businessmen and politicians on their voyages. Contemporary Iran's economy and society, hence, are far more integrated and engaged with regional dynamics than was the case during the Pahlavi era.

Many Third World countries greeted the revolution of 1979 with sympathy. However, the subsequent triumph of hard-line Islamists put a damper on pro-Iranian sympathies in non-Muslim nations. In recent years, President Ahmadinejad's defiance of the United States, which is perceived as an arrogant "bully" by many people in the Third World, has made Iran popular in a number of countries, especially in Latin American states with strong populist movements. Consequently, political cooperation and trade links with such countries such as Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, and even Brazil have grown substantially.

Sunni Islamists, for their part, were divided over support for revolutionary Iran. As the *Shiite* nature of the *Islamic* Republic became ever more apparent, and as Khomeini refused to accept Saddam Hussein's offer to end the Iran–Iraq war, thus causing continued intra-Muslim bloodshed, most Sunni Islamists turned away from Iran. This estrangement was encouraged by Saudi Arabia, because its Wahhabi version of Sunni Islam is hostile to Shiism. With U.S. connivance, Saudi money helped create a Sunni *cordon sanitaire* around Iran to contain the spread of revolutionary Shiism in such countries as Afghanistan and Pakistan; the Taliban operation in these two countries was an unanticipated consequence of that policy. Today, Iran maintains very few client movements among Sunnis, most notably the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

This leaves Twelver Shiites as the only group among which Iranian efforts to spread the revolution have been somewhat successful. The founding of Lebanon's Hezbollah in the early 1980s was facilitated by Iran, and Iran continues to support the party and its social-welfare activities financially. Iran also sponsored formation in Iran of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution of Iraq (SCIRI). The party, ironically, played a major role in Iraq after the ouster of the Saddam Hussein regime in the wake of the U.S. intervention of 2003, which resulted in Twelver Shiites becoming the politically dominant community in Iraq.

While increasing Iran's influence in the Middle East, Saddam Hussein's ouster also affected Iran's domestic politics. The consolidation of a semi-independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq has emboldened the Kurds of Iran, some of whom now regard it as an alternative to Iran that they would like to emulate or join. Likewise, the Arabs in Iran's Khuzistan province, until now loyal to the Iranian state because they are mostly Shiites, may become less certain of their national affiliation now that their kith and kin rule in Iraq. All of Iran's ethnic minorities straddle the country's borders with neighboring states (see again Figure 12.1). Until recently, this did not matter much, since they constituted minorities on the other side as well. But the events in Iraq and the breakup of the Soviet Union, which resulted in the emergence of an independent Azerbaijan that exerts a certain attraction on Azeris in Iran, has changed the situation. Iran's relations with its neighbors are now inextricably intertwined with its domestic ethnic politics.

In its relations with the West and the Soviet Bloc, the early Islamic Republic had as its motto "Neither East nor West." Iran was a U.S. ally under the Shah, but after the revolution, it joined the nonaligned movement. In practice, however, Iran's foreign policy in the first decade of the Islamic Republic, like that of many other Third World "nonaligned" countries, was far more anti-Western than anti-Soviet. In the case of the Islamic Republic, this stance reflected the revolutionaries' mistrust of a West that had supported the

hated Shah, and the geographic proximity of the Soviet Union, whose occupation of neighboring Afghanistan in December 1979 was a constant reminder of the need for caution. Today the Islamic Republic maintains cordial relations with Russia, but Iran has not had diplomatic relations with the United States since the United States severed them in response to the seizure of U.S. diplomats as hostages in 1979. Iranians have paid a heavy price for their government's hostility to the West. In the last stages of the war against Iraq, most Western powers discreetly assisted the Iraqi side. The United States maintains an economic embargo on Iran. For instance, Iranian airlines have difficulty purchasing a sufficient number of modern passenger aircraft and adequate spare parts for the old ones, forcing them to keep flying old Russian planes or Boeing jets purchased before the revolution. As a result, "Iran's civil aviation sector suffers from one of the world's highest rates of accidents and incidents."[62]

After Khomeini's death, Presidents Hashemi Rafsanjani and Khatami tried to lessen Iran's diplomatic isolation. Relations with Arab countries, most of which had supported Iraq in the war, improved, and Iran made an effort to mend its ties with Europe and Japan. In the 1990s, the EU embarked on a policy of "critical dialogue" with Iran, which offered Iran concessions in exchange for improvement in the field of human rights. During the Khatami years, the policies of the government did indeed become less repressive, but given the overall control of unelected bodies, none of these liberalizing measures could be institutionalized.

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, Iran found itself surrounded by U.S.-installed governments in Afghanistan and Iraq, and by U.S. troops and military bases in the countries to the north and south. This partially explains the anti-Western belligerence of the Ahmadinejad administration and its attempts to forge alliances with such countries as Russia and China.

The main issue confronting current Iranian diplomacy in its relations with the West is Iran's nuclear program. Since the days of the Shah, successive Iranian governments have declared that they are not interested in developing nuclear weapons. The official line of the government of the Islamic Republic is that all weapons of mass destruction are contrary to Islamic ethics. Iran is a signatory of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, whose Article IV grants its signatories the "inalienable right" to "research, develop, produce, and utilize" nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. On that basis, the Iranian government embarked on a vast program to develop a self-sufficient nuclear industry by mastering the fuel cycle in which uranium is enriched to produce the fuel needed to power reactors. Western countries worry that this knowledge will allow Iran to produce highly enriched uranium or plutonium that could be used for nuclear weapons. What lends this worry a certain plausibility is Iran's development of long-distance missiles to which nuclear warheads could be fitted, and the fact that some nuclear facilities and experiments were kept secret. To allay Western fears, the Khatami administration agreed to negotiate with France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, while temporarily suspending the enrichment program and allowing international inspectors greater access to Iran's nuclear facilities. When these negotiations failed, Iran resumed the enrichment program in 2004. Given President Ahmadinejad's virulent verbal attacks on the West and on Israel, not to mention his questioning of the veracity of the holocaust, the Iranian government's claim that its nuclear program is of an entirely peaceful nature has met with widespread skepticism in the West. While inspectors of the **International Atomic Energy Agency** have regularly visited Iranian installations, the government's cooperation has not been deemed satisfactory either by the agency or by Western governments. The U.S. military commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan having made a preemptive attack on these installations impractical, the United States has pursued a policy of ever-tightening sanctions against Iran, both unilaterally and within the UN Security Council. Most recently, on June 9, 2010, the Security Council imposed a wide-reaching set of economic sanctions on Iran, which the Ahmadinejad administration immediately dismissed as irrelevant.

While the sanctions imposed on Iran have hurt Iranian businesses and made life more difficult for ordinary Iranians, the relative high price of oil has enabled the government to withstand the pressure. Foreign trade has been largely redirected to Asian countries, especially China, which in 2008 surpassed Germany as Iran's largest trade partner.

Western sanctions against Iran have thus had the paradoxical result of globalizing Iran's foreign policy ambitions by inducing it to find alternative trading partners.

CONCLUSION

Iranian politics in the twentieth century were tumultuous. The century started with a constitutionalist movement seeking to make a monarchy more accountable, and ended with a reformist movement striving to make a theocracy more republican. Between these two bookends, nationalist, religious, secular, and Marxist ideologies competed for followers, while social relations were restructured by processes associated with modernization. The Pahlavi monarchy promised to usher Iran into the modern industrial age, and because of both its successes and failures in doing so, the Shah was overthrown by a revolution that established a republic, but one that, unlike other revolutionary regimes, incorporated the clergy.

To manage the many objectives of the revolutionaries, the Islamic Republic has created a bewildering set of institutions and organizations, many of which compete with one another and occasionally work at cross-purposes. The regime has been in continuous conflict with the United States and some regional powers, such as Israel. It has provided social welfare to many of its citizens, which has resulted in outcomes that were unintended by the establishment, whose authority has been challenged by the increasingly educated, urban, and individualist society. By the admission of many of its own leaders, "the economy is sick" and "social pathologies" tarnish all layers of society. Unlike most other states in the region, which have almost completely muzzled dissent, contestation is pervasive and sometimes public even among state officials. The Islamic republic is an authoritarian regime that circumscribes participation and contestation, but because it was born out of a mass revolution has sustained a norm of public participation and engagement.

How has a regime that faces so many challenges and contradictions survived for over three decades, and what are the prospects for significant change? The irony is that the same institutions that have created contestation and allowed a degree of pluralism in Iran have also contributed to the regime's survival and ability to withstand opposition.[63] The fragmented nature of the state enables differences to emerge and persist, but it is this very fragmentation that prevents the aggregation of interests and demands of a dynamic society. Thus, even though many of the founders of the Islamic Republic have defected from the regime or called for quite fundamental changes, they have not had the leverage to restructure the regime, which continues to enjoy a robust coercive apparatus, is financially solvent due to oil revenue, and enjoys the ideological sympathies of some citizens. Elite politics in Iran today is factional politics, not party politics encompassing debates over specific policies and specified platforms and visions of the future.

Meanwhile, a myriad of patron-client networks, in conjunction with a coercive apparatus and an individualist political culture, creates a fragmented state with divisions at all levels of society. Corporate and associational interests are ill-defined and undermined by personalism, and even ideologically similar groups often battle one another over access to assets. State-society relations as they are constituted now hinder coordination and trust between citizens and rulers as well as ultimately preventing the emergence of public deliberation and consensus-building.

The problems faced by the Islamic Republic have reopened the debate on the proper relation between religion and politics in Iran. Going farther than revisiting Islamic law, some reformist Muslims are questioning whether religious law is as central to Islam as, say, ethics or personal experience of transcendence. These reformers impute the current preoccupation with Islamic law in Muslim governance to the prominence of the ulema in Muslim society, pointing out that the ulema are, after all, merely legal scholars.

As we said at the beginning of this chapter, Iran was the first state in which Islamists were able to exercise political power. The problems they have faced, the forces they have unleashed, and the responses they have elicited from society could have profound implications for political Islam in the rest of the world. In practice, however, Iran's experience remains of limited relevance to Islamists elsewhere. The experience of both the rulers and the ruled in the Islamic Republic is shaped more by Iran's historical trajectory, socioeconomic conditions, cultural configurations, and geopolitical context than a static religious doctrine and uniform model of political Islam.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

- How do the republican components of Iran's institutional structure interact with the Islamic ones? Has their relative importance changed over time?
- How does Iran's prerevolutionary legacy of constitutionalism affect its current politics?
- *Theocracy* literally means "government by God." Since God does not rule directly, how is the idea of divine government implemented in practice in Iran?
- What is meant by elite politics being factional politics? What are these factions, what issues divide the elite, and how are their rivalries managed?
- Which social groups participated in the revolution of 1978 and 1979, and why? What factors led to the overthrow of the Pahlavi monarchy and support for Ayatollah Khomeini?
- The founders of the Islamic republic sought to create an Islamic society composed of Islamist citizens. How did they seek to do this, and how successful were they?

KEY TERMS

Ahmadinejad, Mahmoud
Assembly of Experts
Basij
Council of Guardians
Ebadi, Shirin
Expediency Council
Green Movement
Hashemi Rafsanjani, Ali-Akbar
International Atomic Energy Agency
Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)
Islamists
Khamenei, Ali
Khatami, Mohammad
Khomeini, Ruhollah
Leader
Majles
Mossadegh, Mohammad
Mousavi, Mir-Hossein
multiple power centers
Pahlavi, Mohammad-Reza Shah
parastatal foundations
rentier state
shari'a
Sunnis
theocracy
Tudeh party
Twelver Shiism
ulema
velayat-e faqih

SUGGESTED READINGS

Abrahamian, Ervand. *A History of Modern Iran.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Adelkhah, Fariba. *Being Modern in Iran.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

Amir Arjomand, Saïd. *After Khomeini: Iran under His Successors.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Asadi, Houshang. *Letters to My Torturer: Love, Revolution, and Imprisonment in Iran.* Oxford: Oneworld, 2010.

Atabaki, Touraj. *Azerbaijan: Ethnicity and Autonomy in Twentieth-Century Iran.* London: British Academic Press, 1993.

Azimi, Fakhreddin. *Iran: The Crisis of Democracy, 1941–1953.* New York: St. Martin's, 1989.

Bayat, Assef. *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007.

Chehabi, H. E. "Religion and Politics in Iran: How Theocratic Is the Islamic Republic?" *Daedalus* 120 (Summer 1991): 69–91.

Gasiorowski, Mark. *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Shah: Building a Client State in Iran.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991.

Gheissari, Ali, ed. *Contemporary Iran: Economy, Society, Politics.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Keshavarzian, Arang. *Bazaar and State in Iran: The Politics of the Tehran Marketplace.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Kurzman, Charles. *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

Martin, Vanessa. *Islam and Modernism: The Persian Revolution of 1906.* London: I. B. Tauris, 1988.

Moin, Baqer. *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah.* London: I. B. Tauris, 1999.

Moslem, Mehdi. *Factional Politics in Post-Revolutionary Iran.* Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2002.

Mottahedeh, Roy. *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran.* Oxford: Oneworld, 2000.

Paidar, Parvin. *Women and the Political Process in Twentieth-Century Iran.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Sanasarian, Eliz. *Religious Minorities in Iran.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Tajbakhsh, Kian. "Political Decentralization and the Creation of Local Government in Iran: Consolidation or Transformation of the Theocratic State?" *Social Research* 67 (2000): 377–404.

Vahdat, Farzin. *God and Juggernaut: Iran's Intellectual Encounter with Modernity.* Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2002.


Caspian Sea
Tabriz
Ardebil
Orumiyeh
Lake Urmia
Zanjan
Rasht
Sari
Tehrān
Semnan
Mashhad
Sanandaj
Hamadan
Bakhtaran
Qom
Arak
Ilam
Esfahan
Shahr-e Kord
Ahvaz
Yazd
Kerman
Shirāz
Zahedan
Bandar-e 'Abbās
Persian Gulf
Gulf of Oman
N
IRAN
0 100 200 300 Miles
0 100 200 300 Kilometers

The PRI-controlled Congress later ordered the ballots stored in its basement to be burned, thereby eliminating any possibility of challenging the election outcome. Study of the partial, publicly released results and preelection polling data has led most analysts to conclude that Salinas probably did win but that his margin of victory over Cárdenas was much smaller than the nineteen-point spread indicated by the official results.

3. According to statistics of the IFE, Zedillo won 50.18 percent of the valid votes (i.e., excluding "spoiled" ballots and write-in votes cast for unregistered candidates). However, if the calculation is based on total votes cast (including those annulled by electoral authorities), his share of the vote declines to 48.77 percent.
4. See Roderic A. Camp, *Citizen Views of Democracy in Latin America* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001).
5. James A. McCann and Chappell Lawson, "An Electorate Adrift?—Public Opinion and the Quality of Democracy in Mexico," *Latin American Research Review* 38, no. 3 (2003): 60–81; and Francisco Flores-Macías and Chappell Lawson, "Mexican Democracy and Its Discontents," *Review of Policy Research* 23, no. 2 (2006): 287–94.
6. McCann and Lawson, "An Electorate Adrift?"; and Jorge I. Domínguez and Chappell Lawson, eds., *Mexico's Pivotal Democratic Election* (Stanford, CA, and La Jolla, CA: Stanford University Press/Center for U.S.–Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 2003).
7. Joseph L. Klesner, "Who Participates?—Determinants of Political Action in Mexico," *Latin American Politics and Society* 51, no. 2 (2009): 59–90. As used here, the term "social capital" derives from the work of Robert D. Putnam. See Putnam, "Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 28, no. 4 (1995): 664–83.
8. See Alan Knight, "Historical Continuities in Social Movements," in *Popular Movements and Political Change in Mexico*, ed. Joe Foweraker and Ann L. Craig (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1990), 78–102; Jeffrey W. Rubin, *Decentering the Regime: Ethnicity, Radicalism, and Democracy in Juchitán, Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); and Wayne A. Cornelius, Todd Eisenstadt, and Jane Hindley, eds., *Subnational Politics and Democratization in Mexico* (La Jolla: Center for U.S.–Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1999).
9. Alberto Díaz-Cayeros, *Federalism, Fiscal Authority, and Centralization in Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 8, 143–47.
10. See Victoria E. Rodríguez, *Decentralization in Mexico: From Reforma Municipal to Solidaridad to Nuevo Federalismo* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997); and Peter M. Ward and Victoria E. Rodríguez, *Bringing the States Back In: New Federalism and State Government in Mexico* (Austin: Lyndon Baines Johnson School of Public Affairs, University of Texas, Austin, 1999).
11. For a recent discussion of mixed-member electoral systems in general, and comparisons between Mexico's electoral regime with similar systems, see Matthew Soberg Shugart and Martin P. Wattenberg, eds., *Mixed-Member Electoral Systems: The Best of Both Worlds?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
12. See Jeffrey A. Weldon, "Political Sources of *Presidencialismo* in Mexico," in *Presidentialism and Democracy in Latin America*, ed. Scott Mainwaring and Matthew Soberg Shugart (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 225–58.
13. For a conventional interpretation of the powers of the Mexican president, see Luis Javier Garrido, "The Crisis of *Presidencialismo*," in *Mexico's Alternative Political Futures*, ed. Wayne A. Cornelius, Judith Gentleman, and Peter H. Smith (La Jolla: Center for U.S.–Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1989), 417–34.
14. The purported rationale for this principle, applied to the president in the 1917 Constitution and extended to members of Congress in 1933, was to ensure freedom from self-perpetuating, dictatorial rule in the Porfirio Díaz style. However, the real reason for prohibiting the consecutive reelection of deputies and senators was probably to cut the ties between local political bosses and their federal legislators, at a time that the ruling party was seeking greater centralization of authority.
15. See Weldon, "The Political Sources of *Presidencialismo* in Mexico."
16. David A. Shirk, *Mexico's New Politics: The PAN and Democratic Change* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), 191–94.
17. Unpublished data from Roderic A. Camp. See also Roderic A. Camp, "Family Relationships in Mexican Politics," *Journal of Politics* 44 (August 1982): 848–62; and Peter H. Smith, *Labyrinths of Power: Political Recruitment in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 307–10.
18. Shirk, *Mexico's New Politics*, 181.
19. Joseph L. Klesner, "Electoral Competition and the New Party System in Mexico," *Latin American Politics and Society* 47, no. 2 (2005): 103–42; and Klesner, "Social and Regional Factors in the 2006 Presidential Election," unpublished paper, Dept. of Political Science, Kenyon College, August 2006.
20. Alejandro Moreno, *El Votante Mexicano* (México, DF: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2003).
21. As Joseph Klesner has shown, both the PAN and the PRD now exhibit catch-all characteristics, driven by the dealignment of the electorate from the PRI and the desire of its rivals to broaden their constituencies by capturing these "delinked" voters. Klesner, "Electoral Competition and the New Party System."
22. Chappell Lawson, "Blue States and Yellow States: Preliminary Findings from the Mexico 2006 Panel Study," unpublished paper, Dept. of Political Science, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, July 27, 2006.
23. Nora Lustig, "Poverty, Inequality, and the New Left of Latin America," Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Latin American Program, *Democratic Governance and the New Left* series, no. 5, Washington, D.C., October 2009, p. 10.
24. A wealth of statistical data demonstrating these trends can be found in Enrique Dussel Peters, *Polarizing Development: The Impact of Liberalization Strategy* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000).
25. Guillermo Zepeda Lecuona, "Criminal Investigation and the Subversion of the Principles of the Justice System in Mexico," in *Reforming the Administration of Justice in Mexico*, ed. Wayne A. Cornelius and David A. Shirk (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997).
26. Sara Schatz, "A Neo-Weberian Approach to Constitutional Courts in the Transition from Authoritarian Rule: The Mexican Case, 1994–1997," *International Journal of the Sociology of Law* 26 (1998): 217–44.
27. Andrés Villarreal, "Structural Determinants of Homicide in Mexico," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, January 5, 1999.
28. Zepeda Lecuona, "Criminal Investigation."
29. Jeffrey S. Passel, "Mexican Immigrants in the United States," Fact Sheet, Pew Hispanic Center, Washington, D.C., April 2009.