

FAILURE OF POLITICAL ISLAM IN RESPONDING TO SOCIAL  
DEMANDS: THE CASE OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN, 1980-2020

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## ABSTRACT

### FAILURE OF POLITICAL ISLAM IN RESPONDING TO SOCIAL DEMANDS: THE CASE OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN, 1980-2020

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This thesis aims to analyze the failure of political Islam in not responding to the social demands of the Iranian people with the established system after the revolution. The Islamic regime claimed to create a democratic constitution with the Islamic rule (*Sharia*) and an equal economic system that prioritizes the oppressed people (*mustazafin*) and responds to society's real expectations, which the Pahlavi monarchy had not responded. However, eliminating revolutionary forces like the socialists, nationalists, liberals, even some oppositional clerics from the newly established system and consolidation of ulema paved the way for changing the form of revolution, power-balance, and the claims of the revolution. Khomeini's *Velayat-e Faqih (the Guardianship of Jurist)* concept, which provides religious leaders with supra power on the state institutions and ruling the state with the *Sharia*, makes the ulema leading authority on the whole state system, which also paves the way for the creation of more suppression on society, corruption in economy, and inequality between the gender and class in the country instead of creating the democratic ruling system, equal economic distribution and satisfied society with responding to social demands. These social demands include a democratic election system, gender equality in the public sphere, decreasing

unemployment rate, education, freedom of media, and prosperous living standard. However, the Islamic Republic of Iran could not be succesful in responding to society's demands from 1980 to 2020.

**Keywords:** Political Islam, Islamic Republic of Iran, Social Demands, Failure



## ÖZ

### SİYASAL İSLAM'IN TOPLUMSAL TALEPLERİ KARŞILAMADAKİ BAŞARISIZLIĞI; İRAN İSLAM CUMHURİYETİ, 1980-2020

AYVERDİ, Dilan

Yüksek Lisans, Orta Doğu Araştırmaları Bölümü

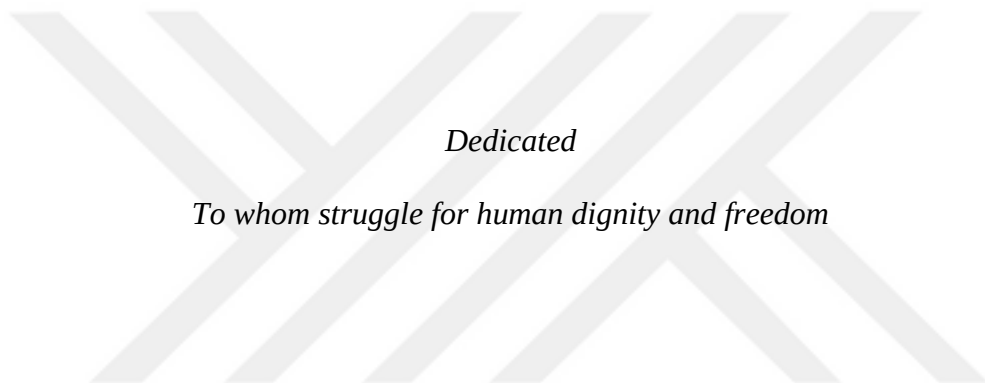
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Bu tez İslam devriminden sonra İran'da kurulan siyasal İslam rejimin toplumdaki gelen talepleri karşılamakta yaşadığı başarısızlıkları analiz etmektedir. Yeni kurulan İslam rejimi, Şeriat yasalarına dayandırılarak oluşturulan anayasanın demokratik, ekonominin eşitlikçi, mazlumları önceleyen ve dolayısıyla halkın gerçek taleplerine duyarsız kalan Pehlevi monarşisinden farklı bir rejimin kurulacağı iddiasında bulunmuştur. Ancak devrime katkı sunmuş olan bazı grupların; Sosyalistler, Milliyetçiler, Liberaller ve hatta muhalif olan dindarların devrim sonrası süreçte ihraç edilmiş olmaları ve İslamcı grupların yeni kurulan rejimde varlıklarının güçlenmesi, devrimin şekil değiştirmesine, güç dengelerinin farklılaşmasına ve İslamcılarının vaat ettikleri sistemi kuramamalarına neden olmuştur. Humeyni'nin dini lidere devlet sistemi içerisinde bütün gücü ve yetkiyi sağlayan *Velayat-e Faqih* teorisi, ulemaya da devletin bütün kurumlarında asıl güç ve otorite sahibi olmanın yolunu açmıştır. Dolayısıyla, kurulan İslam rejimi, ülkede demokratik yönetim sistemi, eşit gelir dağılımı ve toplumsal taleplerin karşılandığı bir sistem kurmak yerine, toplumu baskılayarak İslamileştirmeye çalışan, ekonomide eşit gelir dağılımını sağlayamayarak aşırı zengin grupların oluşmasına neden olan, toplumda cinsiyet eşitsizliğinin önünü açarak kadınların

daha fazla baskıya maruz bırakılmasına sebebiyet veren ve toplumsal taleplerin karşılanmadığı bir sistem olmuştur. Bu nedenle, İslam rejimi, kurulduğu günden bu yana; demokratik bir seçim sistemi, kamusal ve sosyal alanlarda cinsiyet eşitliği, ekonomik refah, özgür toplum, kadın ve medya, eğitim koşullarının iyileştirilmesi ve yaşam standartlarının yükseltilmesi gibi toplumdan gelen sosyal taleplerin karşılanamadığı bir rejim olmuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Siyasal İslam, İran İslam Cumhuriyeti, Toplumsal Talep, Başarısızlık



*Dedicated*

*To whom struggle for human dignity and freedom*

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

American President Jimmy Carter defined Iran as the island of stability when he visited the country in December 1977. This definition has continued to be used by the Shah of Iran, Mohammed Reza, to define the strength, viability and order of his country. However, less than two years, Iran, the island of stability, witnessed the last revolution of the 20th century. From 1977 to 1979, the Shah's island of stability experienced serious uprisings and demonstrations supported by various oppositional groups. Due to the oppressive policies of the Shah, almost all opposition groups, the leftists, Islamists, nationalists, middle classes, intellectuals, students, women, poor and more, participated in the demonstrations for overthrowing him. And they succeeded; the Shah had to leave Iran on January 16, 1979 and Ayatollah Khomeini, the religious leader of the revolution, arrived in Iran on February 1, 1979 only fifteen days after Shah's abandoning the country.

The world witnessed the establishment of the first Islamic state in modern history, which the Islamists have been dreaming of for a long time. Although the opposition of any kind in Iran, which created a common purpose for deporting the Shah did not initially aim to create an Islamic state, the revolution turned to be an Islamic revolution and provided the Islamists to establish an Islamic regime which has been ruled by the *ulema* with Sharia rules since 1979. Nevertheless, after 42 years of the revolution and establishment of the Islamic State, Iran has not been the island of stability for the society.

This thesis deals with the failure of political Islam in Iran. However, the failures will be analyzed in the context of social expectations and the failure of the Islamic regime in responding to these social demands. Since the Islamic Republic of Iran has continued to be an important actor both in the Middle East and the international

area, the thesis does not claim that the political structure collapsed, the state totally failed, or the bureaucratic order does not function properly. Indeed, taking a glimpse at Iran's politics in the latest elections in 2021, the ideological and military capabilities in the Middle East and its bargaining power in the international arena, one can claim that Iran is experiencing its zenith in the real politics in the region. However, the picture does not look like the same from inside, and Iranian society seems to get more weary of the Islamic regime's attitudes, politics, and economic difficulties in the country. This, indeed, constitutes the argument of the thesis. The Islamic regime failed to meet the ideological, political, economic, and social demands, and these failures deserve to be discussed within the framework of the social demands of the Iranian people from the regime.

The main research question of the thesis is how and why the Islamic regime failed to satisfy the society and in responding to their demands from 1979 to 2020. In order to answer the main question, there are also some sub-questions answered through the chapters. The second chapter aims to answer how the Islamists successfully consolidated their power in the Khomeini era (1979-1989). In order to clarify the question and find an answer, the thesis analyzes three significant events that occurred soon after the revolution and provided the Islamists an opportunity to consolidate the Islamic regime. The first one is the elimination of revolutionary groups from the newly established state system with pressure. The second is the hostage crisis which helped the Islamists to control the revolution with their radical actions. The third is the Iran-Iraq war that paved the way for creating a more nationalist and more religious society while also helped to eliminate revolutionary forces. Therefore, the first chapter aims at providing a frame for the Islamization process of the revolution step by step with the historical events.

The third chapter of the thesis tries to answer that subquestion how and why the Islamic regime failed to realize its claims with the implementation of its policies, ideology, economy. Although the Islamists claimed to establish a democratic system that was expected to consist of all different groups in the country, the

*Velayat-e Faqih* system and the implementation of *Sharia* provided the ulema with more privileges than the other groups. The other claim of the Islamic regime was to be the protector of all Muslims and was to unify the Muslims of the world, the *ummah*, however, their discourses and policies after a revolution, which emphasized the Iranian and Shiite identity, showed that the regime ideologically turned to a nationalist and sectarian more than the Islamist. The other significant failure of the Islamic regime was in the economy. Although it claimed to be a state of the oppressed people (*mustazafin*), the new economic system ended up with the creation of new wealthy groups within the *ulema*, *bazaari*, Islamic Republic Guardian Council (IRGC) members, which mostly control the oil and state revenues. Even their authority on the regime's economic policy prevented foreign investors from investing in the country, which also triggered economic problems that the oppressed have to be exposed to directly. The other critical fail of the regime was the suppression of society. Since the society has already lived under the Reza Shah autocratic regime and was exposed to the Shah's harsh policies in their social life, especially the oppositional groups were always tried to be controlled by SAVAK, the new regime was expected to be different from the Shah's oppressive regime. However, soon after the revolution, the new regime began to shape the society and sustained the Islamization of society not only in the public spheres but also in all parts of their social life. The first action of the regime was to implement the compulsory hijab for women while also the women started to be controlled by the regime forces in the streets. Furthermore, the regime's armed forces like the *Basiji* and *Pasdaran* became the tools for detecting and controlling oppositional groups in the country while also having the authority to interfere in people's lives directly. The new regime became more repressive than the Shah's autocratic regime, which most of the people did not expect and indeed had to accept. Therefore, the third chapter aimed to analyze the Islamic regime's failures in their ideological, political, economic, and social areas.

The fourth chapter tries to answer the most critical and comprehensive question of this thesis which is also the main research question, why the Islamic regime failed to satisfy society and respond to their social demands? In order to answer this question, the Islamic regime's political system, and its ideological bases need to

be analyzed first. The first reason for the failures of the regime's fragmented ideological/political system is that it does not provide the society with democratic participation, even not allowing the representation of different groups like the opposition, religious and ethnic minorities in the high level of state institutions while also directly prevent women from being a candidate for the presidency. Therefore, the regime's political system is quite away from satisfying society and responding to their demands of being represented in their country and requesting change through neither elections nor its policies.

The second reason for the regime's failure was the economic system which paved the way for the excessive richness of the Islamists and their circles. The unsuccessful privatization policies led the *ulema* partners like the *bazaari*, IRGC, and clergy members to become the leading actors who control almost all state revenue from oil income and tenders. These uncontrollable groups' existence in the state and economic system caused irregularity in the market, which the investors did not prefer, triggered the economic crisis that paved the way for decreasing national income while causing high inflation and high rates of unemployment. Moreover, the country's international relations with the US and the EU have caused harsh sanctions and embargo, which caused the deepening of economic crises in the country, become more strict, especially in the last ten years. The purchasing power of society has been decreasing gradually, and the regime was not successful in changing economic conditions and providing society with prosperity. That is why the regime has been confronted with uprisings based on the economic demands of society that have not been responded to successfully yet.

The third area in which the Islamic regime cannot successfully satisfy society and fails to respond to their demands is its social policies. The Islamic regimes' education system aimed to Islamize society, especially with the Cultural Revolution after establishing the new regime; however, it caused the regime to lose the well-educated class while also imposing Islam with the education system especially led the young generation to stay away from Islam and the Islamists. Although the literacy rate increased during the Islamic regime, especially women's

participation in education at the university level more than men's, the regime's education policies forced women to obey the regime's limitations. A gender-based quota system was implemented to prevent women from selecting some faculties which are thought more suitable for men. These implementations in education and generally in the country have caused a severe rate of brain drain, which does not only affect the loss of qualified workforce but also causes the long-term economic costs for Iran. In addition, women systematically have been exposed to the regime pressures in almost all spheres of their life with the gender-based policies of the Islamists. The Sharia laws paved the way for prioritizing men more than women in divorce, child custody, marriage, and heritage. Moreover, women still have been exposed to the regime's gender discrimination policies, even the suitability of their clothes are controlled by the *Basiji* in the public spheres. Therefore, women's resistance against the Islamic regime implementations and gender discriminative policies, which caused to restriction of their life, has continued since the revolution. Women have sustained their struggle with demonstrations and social media campaigns such as My Stealthy Freedom and One Million Signature Campaign against the regime. Therefore, the continuity of the women's struggle in Iran is crucial to understand that the regime cannot satisfy women with their policies and failed to create a gender equality system in which women demands are responded well. The media and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) issues are also essential to show the regime's suppressive policies in social areas. Media freedom is one of the essential elements of showing democracy and freedom of the countries. However, the suppression of media since the establishment of the Islamic regime has continued. Society has been deprived of the freedom of information with censorship and closing the oppositional press in Iran. Furthermore, NGOs cannot be an effective tool for society in Iran. Since, usually, the NGOs are supposed to be the organizations that are creating relations between the government and society in order to detect the social problems and demands, they need free workplaces. However, the Islamic regime has prevented the NGOs' activities in Iran, even the activists of these organizations who defend human rights, women rights and are opposed to the regime violation, labeled as spies of foreign countries and their members were jailed or tortured by the regime.

Therefore, the fourth chapter of this thesis aimed to analyze the Islamic regime's policies, which caused social dissatisfaction and became far away to respond to their demands in either with the ideological/political, economic, or with social policies.

### **1.1. Conceptual Debate**

It is important to draw the description of the failure or success of an ideology or state policies, especially when the context and criteria determine the states as strong or weak. One important contribution to this crucial debate has been done by B. Davidheiser's article, *Strong State, Weak States: the Role of the State in Revolution*, which measured the power of the state according to its 'depth of penetration', 'breadth of penetration' and 'permeability' in terms of social demands. According to him, strong states' depth of penetration and breath of penetration are high while the permeability of strong states is low. On the other hand, weak states have low depth and breath of penetration into social demands while also their permeability is high. Of course, he does not ignore the efficiency of the state institutions on the penetration.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, high penetration rate is an important factor in being a strong state with low permeability. The main factor that determines the state's strongness is the permeability of the state by society. Davidsher describes the concepts of penetration and permeability as follows: "The penetration of the state by society, or the state's permeability, provides a measure of the openness of policy institutions to societal interest."<sup>2</sup> In this context, states are strong as much as their permeability is low despite the high penetration rate. Since it paved the way for the institution's opening to social interest, the states were more open to responding to social demands and requests. However, the Islamic Republic of Iran, with its implementation and the restriction of society, can be accepted as a weak state. The definition of the weak state, strong state, or

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<sup>1</sup> Evenly B. Davidheiser, "Strong States, Weak States: The Role of the State in Revolution", *Comparative Politics*, (1992), Vol.24, No.4 p. 465

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

successful and failed state has changed through the years with the changing world order and social expectations, which can be different from society to society. Therefore, there is no particular definition to describe as state a strong or weak by specific criteria. As much as world order changes, societies and their demands from states change. That is why states and ideologies have to be adapted and harmonized with society's demands. The more states and ideologies respond to changing society demands, the more they succeed and sustain their presence.

The demands of Iranian society in the 1970 and 1980s from the Islamic Republic differed from their expectations of the last ten years. For example, although the presence of women or their demands were strong in the 1980s, it was not visible, effective, and as much as requesting equality with men in all areas of social life. In addition to the women, the LGBT+ member's struggle did not exist in Iran in the 1980s and 1990s; however, especially last ten years, the struggle for the right of these people has been more visible. Because of the changing world, conjuncture paved the way for the changing struggle and demands of Iran society as well.

This thesis claims that the Islamic Republic of Iran failed because of not responding to social demands like having a democratic state, living in good economic conditions, having the right to choose and be chosen, and provide women and men equality, media freedom, respecting the presence of minorities and LGBT+ member. However, the Islamic regime of Iran has not realized the demands of society with changing world conjuncture.

There are also many other important works that deal with the debates of strong and weak states, success and/or failures of states depending on criteria of states' permeability and depthness in terms of meeting various demands of societies.<sup>3</sup> The

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<sup>3</sup> For a detailed analysis of the conceptual debate on strong-weak states, please see; Joel S. Migdal, *Strong States and Weak States: State- Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988). Noam Chomsky, *Failed States: The Abuse of Power and the Assault on Democracy*, ( New York: Metropolitan Book, 2006). Jorrit de Jong and Gowher Rizvi (eds), *The State of Access: Success and Failure of Democracies to Create Equal Opportunities*, (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2008). Rosa Ehrenreich Brooks,

aim of this thesis is not to set such criteria to measure successes and failures of the Islamic regime in Iran or to compare what was offered in the Iranian revolution in the beginning with what has been done since; but rather to discuss in what areas the Islamic regime ignored the meeting of the demands of Iranian society, which developed in accordance with the requirements of the modern age for the past forty years. In other words, the thesis discusses how and in what way the Iranian state failed to permit, penetrate and meet the ideological, political, legal, social and cultural demands of the Iranian people, as it has been done in the following literature review with regard to various Islamic rules in the Middle East.

## **1.2. Literature Review**

The development of Islamic movements and especially the politicizing of Islam after the 1970s in the Middle East countries such as Egypt, Sudan, Algeria, Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran, led to intensifying studies on Islam and Islamic politics. The Islamic revolution of Iran became a turning point in this matter and the studies on the politics of religion started to be more intensified and framed on the ruling way of Islam and democracy in the 1990s. The emergence of such various Islamist movements as radical Islam, reformist Islam, moderate Islam and Islamic parties, starting from the deradicalization of the Muslim Brotherhood and the transformation of its offshoots caused the students of the field to pay more attention to the developments, successes and failures of political Islam in the Middle East. After the 9/11 Al-Qaida attacks and the emergence of ISIS during the Syrian Civil War, the researchers focused more on the international aspects of Islamic politics and the forms of the Islamist movements. Olive Roy became one of the first authorities to claim political Islam's failure in his book *the Failure of Political Islam*, in which he exemplified different types of Islamists in the Middle East such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria, the Jihadists in Afghanistan and the Islamic regime in Iran. According

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Failed States, or the State as Failure The University of Chicago Law Review 72, no. 4 (2005): 1159–96.

to Roy, political Islam failed because neither the Islamist ideology, the economic system, and the ruling way of Islam was not able to create a difference. On the contrary, the Islamist movements and the Islamic regimes maintained the existing political and economic systems and did not provide viable alternatives to the existing national and international orders.<sup>4</sup> Recep Boztemur analyzes the transformation of the Muslim Brotherhood and its cadres from the 1960s to 1990s depending on the opening of the political channels to Islamic movements in Egypt and on the aims of the movement at integrating into the country's political and economic systems. For Boztemur, the deradicalization of the Muslim Brotherhood was a necessity for the movement to make compromises with the regime and to give concessions from its ruling ideology in order to join more into the economic order.<sup>5</sup> The book edited by John L. Esposito, *Political Islam: Revolution, Radicalism or Reform* also includes the various Islamist movements within the countries they emerged. According to Esposito, political Islam should be evaluated within the countries' specific context because of not being a "monolithic reality" and their "rich diversity of leaders, organizations, strategies, and tactics".<sup>6</sup> Another important book which deeply analyzes Islamist movements in the Middle East was edited by Shahram Akbarzadeh, *the Routledge Handbook of Political Islam*. The book especially mentions the historical context of each Islamist organization like the Hamas in Palestine, Hizbullah in Lebanon, Hizb ut-Tahrir in Egypt, and even the Islamist movements in Central Asia and Indonesia in order to show the successes and failures of many different forms of political Islam.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Olivier Roy. *The Failure of Political Islam*, (Cambridge, Masschusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996), p.x.

<sup>5</sup> Recep Boztemur, "De-Radicalization of Political Islam in the Middle East: the Case of the Egyptian Brotherhood", *Journal of Oriental and African Studies*, (2003), Vol. 12, p. 147-169.

<sup>6</sup> John L. Esposito, (ed). *Political Islam: Revolution, Radicalism or Reform?*, (Boulder, Colorado: Lyenne Rienner Publisher, 1997), p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Shahram Akbarzadeh, (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Political Islam*, (New York: Routledge, 2012).

Since modern history witnessed the first Islamic revolution in Iran, which paved the way for establishing an Islamic regime and an Islamic republic, Iran's history, politics, and transformation of its society attracted the immediate attention of the students of religion and politics in the world. Therefore, Iran, revolution, the Islamic regime, and the political Islam as a ruling state in the Islamic Republic of Iran have been studied very intensely. Therefore, this thesis argues some of them which are directly related to the thesis of this study. First, there is a vast literature focused on the reasons and results of the revolution in the historical context and have deeply informed about Iranian history. Misagh Parsa primarily focused on the social reasons of the revolution and the backgrounds of society's dissidence while it also gives a detailed information about the groups that contributed to the revolution, the short outcomes of the regime change for society.<sup>8</sup> Nikki Keddi's book also mentions the 19th century Iran and Pahlavi Monarchy while also focusing on the revolution and the support of the opposition, and the secular, guerilla, and religious groups in the revolutionary process. She also focuses on the politics and economics under Khomeini and post-Khomeini Iran.<sup>9</sup>

Ervand Abrahamian focuses on Iran's ruling system from the Constitutional Revolution (1906) to the Islamic Revolution (1979). He especially analyzes the power of the Pahlavi monarchy and its ruling way, focusing on the Pahlavi monarchy's oppression on oppositional groups like the Tudeh, and the middle classes.<sup>10</sup> However, another book of Abrahamian emphasizes the consolidation of the Islamists and the system created under the Islamist power and the elimination

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<sup>8</sup> Misagh Parsa, *Social Origins of the Iranian Revolution*, (London: Rutgers University Press, 1989).

<sup>9</sup> Nikki R. Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

of oppositional forces, and the modern history of Iran since the Qajar Dynasty to the Islamic republic.<sup>11</sup>

Throughout this thesis, the literature that directly focuses on the changes in the Islamist discourse was analyzed to understand the consolidation of the Islamic regime, the change of the regime's characteristics, and its failure in meeting the Iranian people's demands. In this context, Behrooz Mozami indicates the Islamization of the revolution and the state institutions, he describes the emergence of the Islamic state as an invention of modern theocracy, which is actually incompatible with the traditional Shia belief. Therefore, he thinks that the contradiction between the implementation of *Velayat-e Faqih* and ruling a modern state system paved the way for an unstable situation. According to Moazami, although the Islamization of the revolution provides the Islamized state institutions and creates a holy constitution, it could not successfully create a homogeneous theocratic system.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, the literature mainly focusing on the post-revolutionary process is directly within the scope of this study in order to understand the transformation of the regime's ideology, policies, and economy. To illustrate, Hooshang Amirahmadi and Manoucher Parvin's edited book is important to have a deep understanding of the changing politics/ideology and the transformation of Islamist discourse to pragmatic policies and socioeconomics transformations of the country soon after the revolution.<sup>13</sup> The edition by Daniel Brumberg and Farideh Farhi also shows the factionalism of the Islamist groups, the social welfare of the new elite, and contention between them in the economic sphere. Moreover, the book

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<sup>11</sup> Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> Behrooz Moazami, *İran'da Devlet, Din ve Devrim: 1796'dan Günümüze*, translated by Bahar Bilgen (İstanbul: İletişim, 2018).p. 244.

<sup>13</sup> Hooshang, Amirahmadi and Manoucher Parvin (ed.), *Post-Revolutionary Iran*, (Boulder&London: Westview Press, 1988).

also emphasizes the Islamic state's challenges, especially after the reformist movement of Khatemi.<sup>14</sup>

Using the concept of post-Islamism, Asef Bayat describes the post-Khomeini period, which started with the Rafsanjani and his reconstruction period and intensified with Khatemi's reformist movement. According to Bayat, "[p]ost-Islamism sought to save Islam as a faith by undoing Islamism as politics".<sup>15</sup> For him, the Shi'i *ulema* gradually lost its independence with the Islamic state that has been ruled by a few clergy.<sup>16</sup> Farhad Khosrokhavar and Olivier Roy claim the established dual system (the sovereignty of God) and (popular sovereignty) in the constitution paved the way for the unsettling Islamic ideology of the state.<sup>17</sup>

Especially after the revolution, Iran became one of the most critical countries which have been studied regarding Islam, political Islam, and the Islamic regime. The studies generally focus on the Pahlavi monarchy and its social, political and economic policies to give the historical background of the revolution. Also, the revolutionary group's dissidence and their contribution to the revolution have been studied intensively, like their elimination from the revolution in the first years of the Islamic regime. The Islamization of the revolution and the challenges of the institutionalization of Islamic ideology created the economic system also studied through the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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<sup>14</sup> Daniel Brumberg and Farideh Farhi (eds.) *Power and Change in Iran: Politics of Contention and Conciliation*, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2016).

<sup>15</sup> Asef Bayat, (ed). *Post-Islamism: Changing Faces of Political Islam*, (Oxford,: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Farhad Khosrokhavar and Olivier Roy, *İran: Bir Devrimin Tükenişi*, Translated by İsmail Yerguz (İstanbul: Metis, 2013).

This study aims to handle political Islam as a state's ruling system in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Also, it emphasizes the unrealized claims of the Islamic state by attempting to display the ideological, political and economic failures of the revolutionary regime. Therefore, this study attempts at contributing to the literature of Iranian studies with an argument that political Islam in Iran failed in responding to people's demands and expectations, despite all its show of political strength and military power of Iran in the region and in the international arena.

To reiterate, this thesis tries to analyze the failure of political Islam in Iran which has been ruled by the Islamic regime since 1979. The contradictions between the regime's ideological/political premises and its economic and social policies and their effects on society, which have caused social movements and uprisings, prove that the Islamic regime could not legitimize its existence and is quite far from responding to social demands.

## CHAPTER 2

### ISLAMIZATION OF REVOLUTION (1979-1989)

The Islamic revolution in Iran occurred with the contribution of many different groups and organizations like the socialist Tudeh and its supporters, the nationalist front, large middle-class *bazaari* groups, the poor, workers, women, students, and the *ulema*, in other words, with the participation of all Iranian social classes and social segments. However, the form of revolution had started to change when Khomeini arrived in Iran on February 1, 1979, after 14 years of political exile. He was welcomed by millions of people who actively fought and struggled for the toppling of Mohammed Reza Shah, but no one knew the revolution they expected would take a shape they have never imagined. At this point, many scholars tried to find the answer to these essential questions: How did the Iranian revolution turn into an Islamic revolution? How did the *ulema* become the leader of mass mobilization? Some scholars explained the *ulema's* success with the traditional oppositional attitude in the Shiite tradition and quickly organizing of *ulema* within themselves, especially their network with the *bazaar* (market) and society. Even some of them especially underlined Khomeini's mysticism and charismatic leadership. On the other hand, some scholars tried to explain the revolution as the failure of the unprepared and less united socialist groups, and nationalists who have been under pressure by the Shah since the nationalization of Iranian oil by Musaddiq in 1951.<sup>18</sup> All answers have historical backgrounds, reasons and

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<sup>18</sup> According to Asef Bayat during the 25 years of the Shah's authoratic regime, the secular groups exposed pressure and eliminated totally while the ulema have religious centers like Husseiniehs, religious schools, hawzehs and association which provides connection between revolutionarist and also contribute the instututionalization of the Islamist. Bayat, *Ibid.* p. 36.

Bahrooz Moazami explains the Islamization process of the revolution with four factor; politics dominate culture in times of crises, "the method of successive elimination", the formation and identity in the results of shared experience and memories, and internationalization of acquired identities – He emphasises Khomeini mysticism and define this mysticism the main source of his personal stengt and character. Also he mentions the institutalization of ulema during the Pahlavi regime led to organizational expansion of the ulema. Moazami, *Ibid.* p. 118.

explanations,<sup>19</sup> but the *ulema* became the winner of the revolution in 1979 at the end of the day. However, radical social changes need a long time to be accepted by society, and sometimes chaos and fear are helpful for the consolidation of the new regimes. Iran has the last revolution of the 20th century, which paved the way for radical changes in society and the country that paid the price because of the consolidation of the new regime with chaos and fear. This chapter intends to explain the Islamization period of revolution during the Khomeini era (1979-1989). The period will be explained by some critical events like the elimination of revolutionary forces, the hostage crisis, and the Iran-Iraq War, which have occurred after the revolution and paved the way for the Islamic revolution's consolidation.

## 2.1. Elimination of Revolutionary Forces

Like the Jacobins in the French Revolution and the Mensheviks in the Soviet Socialist Revolution, the Iranian revolutionary forces started to be eliminated from the revolutionary stages after Khomeini returned to Iran. The elimination of revolutionary forces in Iran was realized step by step. However, the socialists, nationalists, and the general public who contributed to the revolution and who were against an Islamic State and *velayat-e faqih* idea could not be aware of their elimination from the revolution. Since Khomeini worked with the liberals, nationalists, and socialists before returning to Iran, he was already accepted as the revolution leader by all groups. Primarily, the appointment by Khomeini, of Mahdi Bazargan, a prominent figure of the nationalist front, as the prime minister

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Arjomand mentions the traditional shia resistance against the western power and the bazaar-clergy partnership and it is continuation in the Islamization process of the revolution in his article and the contribution of their relationship to the revolution. S. Arjomand, "Shi'ite Islam and the Revolution in Iran", *Government and Opposition*, 16(3), 1981, 293-316. Retrieved December 6, 2020, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44482256> p.315

<sup>19</sup> Mishag Parsa, mentions social origins of the Iranian revolution with historical backgrounds, economic changes, class structures, networks between the groups in details. Especially he details the relationship between economic policies and social conflicts and the effects of this relationship to the revolution. Parsa, *Ibid.* pp. 62-86.

on January 3, 1979, provided the continuation of secular, liberal, and nationalist support to the revolution. However, it cannot be said that all fractions of the revolution supported Bazargan and his line; for this reason, his opponents constituted an alternative council, *Sazeman-e Mojahedin-e Engelab-e Islami*. The council established Iran's Revolutionary Guard, who were going to be the members of Islamic Councils in a few months after the revolution. Although the Bazargan government was on the front in political affairs, the real power laid in the revolutionary committees and the Islamic council.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, Bazargan could not succeed in keeping the revolution on a democratic line.

The Iranians had a referendum for the Islamic Republic on April 1, 1979, which was accepted by the 99% of 20 million people. Although they were not aware of the importance of their decision on that day, the referendum was as critical as the revolution itself. Because after that day, with the new Islamic constitution, they started to understand what would happen in the country and what their revolution would turn to. However, it should be noted that the understanding of changing the regime did not come to light in a while; it took time for all groups. The draft constitution, which was presented to the Iranians did not include the *Velayat-e Faqih* principles initially, they were going to be added later. In fact, in the mid-1980s, Ayatollah Montazeri was accepted as a successor of Khomeini as a *Velayat-e Faqih* in the *ulema* circle. His religious and political background made him the best one for the *Velayat-e Faqih*. However, Montezari started to criticize *Velayat-e Faqih's* superiority on the created new state system in his explanation and he allowed his student to publish his lectures which he criticized the 'unilateral rights of the *Faqih*' which caused he expelled from the being successor of Khomeini.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Yadullah Shahibzadeh, *Islamism and Post-Islamism in Iran: An Intellectual History* [electronic resource], (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). p. 86.

<sup>21</sup> Homa Omid, *Islam and the Post-Revolutionary State in Iran* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), p. 145.

As Shahibzadeh stresses that "*Velayat-e Faqih* became the manifestation of Khomeini's political leadership to overcome the armed struggle waged by the opposition and the Iraqi aggression supported by Western powers."<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the opponents who did not want to accept Khomeini's superpowers started to show their reaction. Not only the leftists, liberals, and nationalists become the opponents of Khomeini's new regime, but also some ayatollahs like Shariatmadari, who was the second influential religious leader of the Islamic Republic, did not agree with the *Velayat-e Faqih* idea. Since, according to Shariatmadari, governing was the duty of the government, spiritual leaders should not have interfered with the government and its affairs directly.<sup>23</sup> But there was neither an atmosphere nor a ground for the people like Shariatmadari and Montezari, whose ideas were against the *Velayat-e Faqih* supreme authority, to express their ideas. Montezari's students published his lecture which he explained his point of view about the *Faqih* with the statement:

Valayateh Faqih does not mean that the Faqih alone and single-handed would do everything, rather it means that the Faqih is the core and anchor who delegates responsibility to the legislative and administrative organization, but keeps a keen supervisory eye to prevent carelessness, shortcomings, and failures. But in making important decisions, the Faqih consults with experts and the learned to ensure that his decisions are beneficial to society as a whole and do not incur irreparable damage to the social fabric of Muslim nations.<sup>24</sup>

This explanation and the general standpoint of Montezari about the supreme authority of the Faqih paved the way for his expelling from being second Faqih after the Khomeini, and like Shariatmadari, he was also excluded from the revolution which he was a significant contributor. Therefore, the elimination of revolutionary forces included all those who opposed the *Velayat- e Faqih* regime

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<sup>22</sup> Shahibzadeh, *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, p. 90.

<sup>24</sup> Omid, *Ibid.*, p. 146, cf. *Kayhan*, 25 January 1988.

and continued in political, cultural, religious, legal, educational, and economic spheres.

A year after the revolution, the Islamic regime started to issue and implement regulations to change society with the new constitution and rule. However, in order to implement these new regulations and rules, they needed now to eliminate the opposition groups. The *Mojahedin-e Khalq* became an essential opponent of the regime because of their Marxist thoughts, radical actions, and their boycott in the Islamic Republic's Referendum. When Abdolhassan Beni Sadr, who was known with his liberal attitude and was criticized because of his ideas on hostage crises by the *Mojahedin-e Khalq*, was chosen as the president in 1980, the tension between the *Mojahedin-e Khalq* and the Islamic regime increased.<sup>25</sup> Indeed this was not the only reason to increase tension between the two sides, the leader of the *Mojahedin-e Khalq*, Massoud Recavi, applied to become a member of the presidential election. However, because of his group's boycott in the referendum and the Islamic constitution, Khomeini did not accept his candidacy.

The power of the Islamic Republican Party, which consisted of Khomeini's supporters, increased with the parliament's election. This power provided them to make vital decisions in the government, shaping governmental policy. Although they had problems with President Bani Sadr because of his liberal attitude, they agreed on the Cultural Revolution in early 1980, which aimed to "expel the secular leftists and *Mojahedin-e Khalq* from universities"<sup>26</sup> and prevent them to get organized and to increase the reaction against the Islamic regime. Therefore, the Council of Revolution warned leftist parties to leave the universities in three days because the members of the Islamic Republican Party had already been aware that the universities have been used for organizing political opposition, actions, and rebellions. They came from these kinds of movements and organizations when

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<sup>25</sup> The application of Mesud Racavi, the leader of the Mojaheden-e Khalq, for the candidacy for PM office was not accepted since the group boycotted the referendum for the Islamic Republic. From then on, the regime increasingly excluded the Mojaheden-e Khalq from political affairs.

<sup>26</sup> Shahibzadeh, *Ibid.*, p. 90.

they rebelled against Mohammad Reza Shah from the universities. Thus, the elimination of revolutionary forces has started from the universities. After the Council of Revolution's ultimatum, the *Mojahedin-e Khalq* retreated from the universities, but it did not mean that they abandoned the resistance; on the contrary, they have continued to oppose the regime with the armed struggle.

During that time, the resistance of the *Mojahedin-e Khalq* has continued intensively in the underground. They continued to organize radical demonstrations, radical actions, and armed struggle against the regime, especially the Islamic Republican Party. The *Hefte Tir* bombing, which occurred on June 28 of 1981, was a radical attack against the regime, while the leading members of the Islamic Republican Party were in the meeting in the party building. The Chief Justice Ayatollah Mohammad Beheshti, a founding member of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), four cabinet ministers, twenty-seven members of the *majlis* (the Assembly), seventy-three leading members of the Islamic Republican Party died in the bomb attack.<sup>27</sup> Although Khomeini blamed SAVAK and Iraq initially, two days later, he accused the *Mojahedin-e Khalq* of the attack. This suicide bombing attack deepened the hostility between the two sides and has continued until that day. According to Cleveland, the intense and massive bombing attack of *Mojahedin-e Khalq* during the second half of 1981 was "a wave of terrorist bombings carried out by the Mujahedin-i Khalq [that] killed dozens of religious and political leaders and threatened to destabilize the regime. The government responded to the Mujahedin attacks with mass arrests and executions of such intensity that they constituted a reign of terror."<sup>28</sup>

Not only the *Mojahedin-e Khalq* was resisting, but also the other parties, secular groups, insisted on staying in the universities and did not leave their positions.

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<sup>27</sup> Mohammad Djalili & Thierry Kellner, *İran'ın Son İki Yüzyıllık Tarihi*, trans. By Reşat Uzmen, (İstanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat Yayınları, 2011), p. 125.

<sup>28</sup> William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 435.

Bloody clashes between the students who supported the Islamic regime and those who rejected the new regime in all Iran universities ended up with the universities' closure.

The Cultural Revolution Committee has been established for the creation of Islamic sciences in the universities, with the motto of "the Islamization of universities and human and social sciences"<sup>29</sup>, and some prominent figures like Abdolkarim Soroush<sup>30</sup>, Jalaeddin Farsi<sup>31</sup>, Shams Al-e Ahmed<sup>32</sup> were appointed as the heads because of their philosophical ideas and Islamic intellectuality. When the universities reopened in 1983, the results of the clashes and the Cultural Revolution were not very much in favour of the higher education and the young generation. Not only thousands of lecturers and professors have been expelled from the universities, but also thousands of students had been fired, executed, and imprisoned because of the accusations of being un-Islamic.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the Islamic regime succeeded in eliminating an essential part of the crucial group that had the potential to create a new revolutionary movement in the country as they did before.

The universities, intellectuals, and secular parties were not the only eliminated groups. The regime suppressed some minorities like the Kurds, Baluchis, and Arabs who have initially supported the revolution and rebelled against the Shah. Notably, the Kurdish regions were influenced by the regime's oppression much

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<sup>29</sup> Shahibzadeh, *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>30</sup> After a while Abdolkarim Soroush wrote a letter excusing himself for taking place in such a committee then, and submitted his excuses to the Iranian people in his letter to Khamenei after the Green Movement.

<sup>31</sup> He was appointed because of his political experience and knowledge; he was the most radical member of the Committee, who would have liked to expel all un-Islamic elements from the universities.

<sup>32</sup> Jalal Al-e Ahmad's brother, who wrote *Garbzedeği* to show how western ideas intoxicate the eastern people and civilization.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* p. 92.

more. Their relations with the socialist front and their seeking for the Kurdistan region's independence were accepted by the regime a significant threat to the new Islamic state. This threat paved the way for the intense pressure of the regime on the Kurds. During the referendum for the Islamic state, many Kurdish uprisings occurred and these events prevented a valid election in the Kurdish region. Even the parliamentary elections were not held in some parts of Kurdistan, and the elected Kurdish deputies were not permitted to attend the parliament.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, the pressures on the Kurds have increasingly continued with the Iran- Iraq War.

On the other hand, some elected deputy members had been rejected from the parliament because they were found inappropriate by the registry committee that was under control of the Islamic Republican Party.<sup>35</sup> It can be said that the Islamization process of the revolution has started with the referendum but continued with the elimination of revolutionary forces step by step. Besides the domestic policies of the regime, the interferences of foreign powers with Iranian affairs eased the Islamization and consolidation of the new regime.

## 2.2. Hostage Crisis

The hostage crisis, which has determined the USA-Iran relations until today, started on November 4, 1979. After the deportation of the Shah, the USA embassy and its personnel continued their stay in Tehran. However, the Iranians' hostility has continued against the US from the coup d' état, which was done by the CIA in 1953 against PM Mohammad Mosaddiq after he nationalized Iran's oil. After the coup d'etat, the nationalization policy and nationalist movement were prevented and suppressed harshly. When Mohammed Reza Shah returned to the country with

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<sup>34</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, *Kürdistan Üzerine Yazılar*, trans. by Nevzat Kırac, Bülent Peker et al. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2016), p. 253.

<sup>35</sup> Michael Axworthy, *Devrimci İran - İslam Cumhuriyetinin Tarihi*, 1st ed., trans. by Ali Karatay, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2020), p. 228.

US support, he established a secret police service called the SAVAK. Even "with ties to and regular arrangements for exchanges of intelligence with the CIA and other American intelligence agencies, the British MI5 and the Israeli Mossad, SAVAK appeared well equipped, well informed fully in charged."<sup>36</sup> The Shah reign's pressure on the dissidents materialized with the SAVAK because their duty was the detection of the dissident groups, not only "Tudeh supporters, liberal nationalists, clergy, religious activists, and intellectuals but also all those who had repented and returned to the Pahlavi fold."<sup>37</sup> Although both the nationalists and Tudeh members became the primary targets for SAVAK during the 1960s and 1970s, the Tudeh members have been attacked, and its members were tortured by the SAVAK a very long time even after the Tudeh ceased to be a threat to the Pahlavi monarchy. Abrahamian gives two important events to show SAVAK cruelty against the Tudeh members: "In 1973, a medical student who had formed a party cell in the university was kidnapped and murdered in prison. Similarly, in 1974 a former air force lieutenant who was an alternate member of the Central Committee was tortured to death after serving nine years of his life sentence. The regime wanted it to be known that the cost of associating with the Tudeh remained very high."<sup>38</sup>

The US support to the Shah and his SAVAK paved the way for losing his legitimacy in society and his acceptance as an American puppet. Therefore, the regime's hostility against the US (Khomeini called America as the *Sheytan-e Bozorg* [the Great Satan]) became one of the fundamental reasons for the American Embassy's siege and taking of 52 American diplomats and embassy workers as hostages during 444 days.

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<sup>36</sup> Abbas Amanat, *Iran: A Modern History*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), p. 652.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 451.

A group of students called themselves as the Muslim Students Followed Imam Line (*Daneshjouyaan-e Khat-e Emam*) occupied the embassy. However, with the radical groups that also feared American interference in the revolution triumph, the siege turned into a mass demonstration to show their hostility against the US. Although the students planned the occupation for a few hours, Khomeini's support and reaction encouraged them to sustain the siege for a long time.

The acceptance of Mohammed Reza Shah to the US for cancer treatment on October 24 triggered suspicion about the possibility of a new coup d'etat against the new Islamic regime. Therefore, university students began to protests against the US with the slogan *Shah bayed bergerdend* (Shah must be returned). The protests started from the universities because the pro-Khomeini students had started to be effective and powerful in the universities much more. However, the *Mojahedin Khalq* and *Fedaiyan Khalq* were excluded from these groups because of their opposition to the new constitution. However, with massive participation, the protest turned to the embassy's attack and siege. According to the students' interview who attended the protest, the protest was not planned for taking the diplomats as hostage; it was an unexpected reaction of the masses. An interviewer Ebrahim Asgharzadeh from Sharif [Aryamehr] University, who attended the occupation explained their plan after thirty years with these words:

by going to their embassy and occupying it for several hours, our goal was to protest against the American government. Announcing our protest from within the occupied compound would have carried out our message to the world in a much more firm and effective way.<sup>39</sup>

The students demanded the Shah to return to Iran, and they warned the US unless the Shah did not come back to Iran, they would continue keeping the hostages in the embassy. Although the US President Carter tried to negotiate with the regime

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<sup>39</sup> Mohammad Sahimi, *The Hostige Crisis, 30 Years on* (Los Angeles, 2009) Retreated from <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2009/11/30-years-after-the-hostage-crisis.html>

initially, the students sustained the siege with Khomeini's green light.<sup>40</sup> Khomeini sent his son Ahmad to the embassy in order to show his support to the occupation. Furthermore, a day after the siege, Khomeini defined the embassy as a "nest of spies," where it should be controlled, and also Khomeini described the movement as a second revolution. He was aware that the occupation not only showed the changing of foreign policy, which proved the regime's power and independence, but also a chance for altering the power balance in domestic policy. Khomeini's following explanation showed his evolution and the importance of the hostage crises for the domestic policy as well:

This action [overrunning the embassy] has many benefits. ... It has united our people. Our opponents do not dare act against us. We can put the constitution to the people's vote without difficulty and carry out presidential and parliamentary elections.<sup>41</sup>

Two days after the embassy occupation, Mehdi Bazargan resigned from the interim government. Since he has tried to normalize the relations between Iran and the US, Khomeini's support of the occupation caused his effort to be wasted. He condemned the occupation and saw it unacceptable because Bazargan and the foreign minister of his government, Ibrahim Yezdi was carrying out the negotiations with the US about the Shah's situation in the Algeria meeting. However, although Algeria meetings sustained within the Khomeini knowledge, Bazargan and Yazidi and all liberals were accused of betraying the revolution. Even the documents seized from the embassy were shared with the public for proving the betrayal of Bazargan and the moderates. On the other hand, the

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<sup>40</sup> According to Ebrahim Yazdi, there is no evidence that Khomeini informed about the plan or not; however, after the worldwide reflection and effect of the crises, he shows his support to the students. retreated from <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2009/11/30-years-after-the-hostage-crisis.html>

<sup>41</sup> Mohammad Sahimi, *Ibid.*, Retrived from <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2009/11/30-years-after-the-hostage-crisis.html>

Islamic Republican Party members' correspondences with the US were hidden from the public.<sup>42</sup>

Bazargan resigned from the office on November 5, a day after starting the hostage crisis because his position could not stop the students and Khomeini's support. After Mahdi Bazargan, Abolhassan Bani-Sadr became the new president of the Islamic Republic on January 25, 1980, while Mohammed Ali Recai became the prime minister. Indeed Bani Sadr could not constitute his cabinet for a very long time because of the Islamists' pressure, therefore he had no other choice but to appoint a fundamentalist Islamist Recai as the prime minister. Therefore, Recai formed his cabinet with the Islamists. When the Iran-Iraq war started, Bani Sadr as the Chief Commander had to rule the army and the war, while prime minister Recai strengthened his power and the position of the Islamists in the administration system. That is the reason why the Recai cabinet and Bani Sadr had trouble administering the country. Since the Islamists accused Bani-Sadr of failing to lead the war and having relations with liberals and secular groups, Khomeini removed him from the army's Chief Commander position on June 10, 1981. Thus, Bani Sadr called for a radical protest against the Islamists, and his call was responded by the *Mojahedin-e Halq*. It caused the deposition of Bani- Sadr from the presidential office by Khomeini officially on June 21, 1981.<sup>43</sup> The clashes between the regime's power, especially the *Pasdaran* and opposition groups, increased day by day, and finally, it turned an elimination of revolutionary forces totally from the newly established regime.

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<sup>42</sup> Axworthy, *Ibid.*, p. 214.

<sup>43</sup> Djalili & Kellner, *Ibid.*, pp. 124-125.

### 2.3. Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988)

The war with Iraq not only was a chance for the Iranian leaders for the unification of society around the Islamist regime and for even more Islamization of society but also provided the rulers with another opportunity to eliminate the opposition leaders. As opposed to what is generally thought about the devastating effects of the war on the new Islamic regime, the war became a tool for the Islamists to be exploited to consolidate the rule of the Islamists.

The war started with Iraqi troops' invasion of Khorramshahr on September 22, 1980, then Abadan and Ahwaz were sieged; these were important industrial cities of Iran where the Arab population lives. The war was not only the longest war of the 20th century, but also it was a war without the winner, although it took eight years.

The war started with Saddam Hussein's allegation of border problems and the ending of the 1975 Algeria Agreement that had signed with the mediator role of Algeria's President Houari Boumediene between Mohammad Reza Shah and Saddam Hussein to solve problematic land and river borders issues between Iran and Iraq on Shat al-Arab and Khuzistan. Thanks to the new borderline, the border was changed from Shat al-Arab cost to the deepwater point, which established a connection between an important port city Khorramshahr and oil refinery Abadan and Iran sea directly.<sup>44</sup> Although the agreement's main reason was to prevent Iran from supporting rioting Barzani's KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party) forces against Iraq, the agreement decreased Iraq's efficiency on the borders. Therefore,

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<sup>44</sup> Gene R. Garthwaite, *İran tarihi: Pers İmparatorluğu'ndan Günümüze*, trans. by Fehmi Aytuna, (İstanbul: İnkılap Yayınevi, 2011), p. 243.

it included more benefits for Iran until the Islamic Revolution, which became the main excuse of Saddam Hussein to attack Iran's territory.<sup>45</sup>

Iran's idea of exporting the Islamic revolution was another reason for Iraq to invade Iran. The socialist, secular Baathist Iraqi regime could not have permitted Shiite Islamist Iran's export of her ideology to take control of the region. Since not only 60 percent of Iraq's population was Shiite, but also the other Gulf countries had a considerable Shiite population in case of exporting Islamic revolution in the other Gulf countries. Especially, eastern Saudi Arabia has high Shiite population, which consist of almost half of oilfield worker. Not only Saudi Arabia but also Kuwait, and the majority of Bahrain's population are Shiites. Therefore, Islamic Iran was perceived as a threat to become a superpower in the Gulf and a threat to the Gulf countries' security with interference to the "corrupted" status quo and exportation idea of the Islamic revolution.<sup>46</sup> These threats were the main reasons for Gulf countries to turn to Iraq and inevitable propaganda for Iraq and her president Saddam Hussein to legitimize Iranian territories' invasion and take the Gulf countries' support against Islamic Iran. According to Barry Rubin, "although the siege of Mecca on November 1979 was spontaneous, it showed the potential appeal of Iran's doctrine and example. There was understandable fear that Shi'ites - the majority in Bahrain and a significant minority in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait-might form a natural constituency for Iranian influence and rise up against the Sunni rulers."<sup>47</sup> The Gulf countries and Iraq thus used the siege of Mecca for legitimizing the Iraqi invasion of Iran.

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<sup>45</sup> Deniz Caner, *İran- Irak Yakınlaşmasında Cezayir Antlaşması Faktörü*, (15 March 2019) Retrieved Junary 2021 from <https://iramcenter.org/iran-irak-yakinlasmasinda-cezayir-anlasmasi-faktoru/>

Also see, The New York Times Archive, "Iraq and Iran Sign Accord To Settle Border Conflicts", (March 7, 1975) Retrieved January 2021 from <https://www.nytimes.com/1975/03/07/archives/iraq-and-iran-sign-accord-to-settle-border-conflicts-iraq-and-iran.html>

<sup>46</sup> Suroosh Irfani, "The Iran-Iraq War and Its Implications for the Region", *Strategic Studies*, 11(2), (1987), p. 44.

<sup>47</sup> Barry Rubin, "The Gulf States and the Iran-Iraq War", in *The Iran-Iraq War*, ed. by E. Karsh, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), p. 123.

The hostility of the Iranian people against the US used to stem from their belief that the US was giving great support to the Shah. The hostage crisis became another opportunity for Iraq since they knew that the US would support Iraq's army against Iran and would supply military equipment for them to stop the Islamist Iran that also had a deep hostility against the Shah's backing for the US. However, despite the attempts to legitimize Iraq's invasion and the hope for US support, not only the US support and aid but also the Gulf countries and the Arab countries in the region could not be successful in stopping and defeated Iran in the war. Since the Gulf countries did not have a powerful army to fight against Iran, as Sterner rightly points out, they "generally see Iraq as their first line of defense against Iranian subversion and, consequently, are committed to sustaining Iraq in the war."<sup>48</sup>

Although Iran had many difficulties and problems in its domestic affairs because of the new regime's consolidation and especially fighting with oppositional groups, as it was stressed out in the beginning of this chapter, Iraq's invasion became an opportunity that increased the Iranian people's nationalist and religious identities. It can be said that the war, also called the *Ceng-e Tahmili* (the imposed war), which Iran had to respond to, provided the new regime with opportunities to suppress the opponents and legitimize their oppression. Furthermore, besides increasing the people's national and religious identity, the war created patriotism in society; even the regime oppositions supported the regime when it turned into a threat to their homeland. Therefore, it also deepened the relationship between the regime and society.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Micheal Sterner, "The Iran-Iraq War", *Foreign Affairs* 63(1), (1984). pp. 128-143.

<sup>49</sup> Abrahamian, *Ibid.*, p. 228.

Creating a common enemy has always been used to make people more nationalists and dedicated to their national identity. Like all other politicians, Khomeini, too, knew how he could affect society and their national and religious identity with the creating of a common enemy. After Iraq's invasion, he declared to the Iranians that "you are fighting to protect Islam, and he (Saddam Hussein) is fighting to destroy it."<sup>50</sup> So, Khomeini conceptualized Iraq's invasion as the war against the enemy of Islam and Islamic Iran, whose purpose was to save humanity from corrupted systems and leaders. The concept of war against the enemies of Islam created a great motivation for the people who have succeeded in the Islamic revolution for the first time in history. Iraq, on the other hand, used the same Islamist discourse and ideological statements against Iran, despite all the regime claims of having so-called secular and socialist characteristics.<sup>51</sup>

Martyrdom was another concept used by the Iranian regime to mobilize people against the enemy of Islam during the war. However, the sensibility of the Iranian Shiite population to this concept especially stemmed from the Battle of Karbala, in which Hussein, the grandson of Mohammed and son of Ali, was tortured and martyred by the Umayyad Caliph Yazid in 680. According to the Shiite belief, Hussein was fighting for justice and Islam, and his death for Islam provided him with martyrdom. At the same time, the Iranians who have kept the Karbala event in their memory as cultural, religious heritage were made to believe that Saddam Hussein was the new Yazid since Karbala, the holy city was located within the Iraqi border. This religious heritage constituted a great part of the Iranian religious identity and increased the holiness of martyrdom. Therefore, the Islamic regime presented the war and martyrdom as a chance to walk on Hussein's path. This

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<sup>50</sup> R. Takeyh, "The Iran-Iraq War: A Reassessment", *Middle East Journal* 64(3), (2010), p.366 cf Shahram Chubin and Charles Tripp, *Iran and Iraq at War* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), p. 38.

<sup>51</sup> Recep Boztemur, "Irak Milliyetçiliği: Toplumsal Bütünleşmede Ordunun Rolü ve Devletin Meşruluk Temelleri", *Doğu Batı Düşünce Dergisi*, Vol.2 No.39(2006), p. 56-78.

attitude has been continuing in forty years of the Islamic Republic, and it seems that it will continue as long as the Islamic regime continues to exist.<sup>52</sup>

Creating a new parallel army against the Shah's regular army became an important issue for the Islamic regime. Although many effective and powerful general commanders of the Shah escaped or were killed after the Shah's deportation, the rest of the army was still having the power of advance information about the use of modern weapons. Therefore, the regime needed their support to use the military materials weapons. However, the regime also hesitated the counterrevolution which the regular army would support against the regime. That is why one of the first actions of the regime became the purge of the Shah's army. According to Rose, "The purges had three goals: (a) punish the military for its "sins" against the people during the course of the revolution; (b) remove all vestiges of Pahlavism and imperial culture; and (c) "Islamize" (create an ideological force) the military."<sup>53</sup> Therefore, the cleric constituted multiple security and intelligence services to keep the regular army under control. The regime also feared a possible collaborative counterrevolution by the regular army and opposition groups, especially with the regular army's nationalist support. For this reason, the new Army of Revolutionary Guard (*Sepah-e Pasdaran-e Enkelab-i Islami*), the Mobilization of the Oppressed (*Basij-e Mostazafen*) militias, which consisted of civilian volunteers, became a parallel organization of the Islamic regime in the army. Although the regular army showed its loyalty to the government, they had been under the suspicion of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Islamic regime for a long time, which caused conflicts between the two groups. For example, an "IRGC accused Bani-Sadr of trying to make the regular army "a tool in his own hands so that he could wield it as a powerful weapon against the

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<sup>52</sup> The assassination of Qasim Solumani in Iraq on January 3, 2021, mourning ceremonies during his funeral and the following statements by the Iranian authorities prove that the concept of martyrdom still keeps its importance for maintaining of social unification of the Iranian Shiites and levelling up the hatred against the common enemy.

<sup>53</sup> Gregory Rose, "The Post-Revolutionary Purge of Iran's Armed Forces: A Revisionist Assessment," *Iranian Studies*, V. 17, nos. 2-3 (Spring-Summer 1984), pp. 153-191.

Imam's Line."<sup>54</sup> Despite these kinds of conflicts between the two armies, Iran could begin the counterattack and took Abadan from Iraq in January 1981. Then the attacks of Iran on Iraq started; due to the reasons explained above, the Iran-Iraq war could not remain as a war between two countries.

Although Iraq troops had to retreat from Khorramshahr in 1982 and Iran had a victory to keep its territory from Iraq occupation, the war has continued with an offensive position of Iran. Since the Revolutionary Guard army and *Basiji* volunteer recaptured Khorramshahr and lost thousands of Iran's soldiers there, even after the war of Khorramshahr, the city dubbed "*Khuninshar*," (city of blood), they desired to have a great victory against Iraq and toppled Saddam Hussein like Mohammed Reza Shah.<sup>55</sup> After a year, both Iraq and Iran armies had a massive loss; at the end of 1983, 120,000 soldiers of Iran and 60,000 Iraqis had been killed in battle, which shows despite an enormous loss of the army, Iran would push ahead and would not stop to the fighting.<sup>56</sup> Here the important point is that Iraq's advantages came from the tremendous financial support from the Gulf countries, "Saudi Arabia contributed as much as US\$ 30 billion to Saddam's war chest, while Kuwait and the Arab Emirates contributed in excess of \$8 billion each. Moreover, the Iraqi army was supported with massive military hardware from the US, France, Britain, and West Germany."<sup>57</sup>

When Iran's defensive war turned into an offensive war in Iraq's territories, the number of deaths and loss of Iran increased. In addition to offensive war, the

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<sup>54</sup> Ahmed Salah Hashim, "Civil-Military Relations in Iran: Internal and External Pressure", *Middle East Policy*, 25(3), (2018), p.50 *fc* Political Office, Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, *A Glance at Two Years of War* (Tehran, n.d.), 33.

<sup>55</sup> Abbas Amanat, *Iran: A Modern History* (New Haven, USA: Yale University Press, 2019), p. 835.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

Iraqis began to use chemical weapons against the Iranian troops, limiting the troops' maneuvers in 1984. Later, chemical weapons were started to be used against the Kurds in northern Iraq, in the borders of Iran. Although Iran tried to reveal the war crime of Saddam Hussein by using chemical weapons and catch the attention of the west, Iran was not approved, and the west continued to support Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Even they continued to sell materials to Iraq for the production of chemical weapons. The use of chemical weapons and gas against the Kurds in Halabja city of Iraq in 1988, also known as the Anfal massacre, caused four thousand people to die and eight thousand men, women, and children to get seriously injured.<sup>58</sup>

Iran's threats to Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf countries because of their support to Iraq during the war paved the way for the internationalization of the Iran-Iraq war. In addition to sectarian division (the Gulf countries ruled by Sunni leaders), the Gulf countries' close relationship with the US prevented the new Iranian regime from building good relationships with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE. Therefore, Iran's policy against them has been built on aggression from the first years of the revolution today. In the early years of the revolution, President Bani Sadr's statement that "the Gulf Arab states imagine that we are a serious disease and that if they open their doors to us, then everybody will be infected"<sup>59</sup> clearly proved, from Iran's point of view, how the Islamic revolution seemed on a different path from the Gulf countries.

During the war with Iraq, Iran had to fight, therefore, in the Persian Gulf with Gulf countries too in order to block delivering their military aids to Iraq through Kuwait ports and especially to prevent the selling of Kuwaiti and Saudi Arabian oil for Iraq's benefit.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, "Iran bombed the targets in Kuwait on several

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Rubin, *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

occasions in 1980-1 and 1986; organized an abortive armed uprising in Bahrain in 1981; and launched terrorist attacks on the ground. Tehran also kept up the pressure on Saudi Arabia through organizing demonstrations during the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, culminating in the July 1987 riots and deaths of several hundred Iranians at the hands of Saudi police."<sup>61</sup> It can be said that the Persian Gulf has witnessed another war during the eight years (Tanker war) while Iran and Iraq are fighting against each other on the ground. Even Kuwait sought international protection for its tankers and used the US flags for her oil ships in the Persian Gulf because of protecting her oil ships and tankers from Iran's attacks.<sup>62</sup>

The war continued for eight years, and although Iran and the new regime had chances to end the war, they did not accept to retreat from the war for two reasons. The first one was to gain a victory against Saddam Hussein to prevent the interventions of other enemy countries against Iran and spread their Islamic revolution idea. Therefore, the slogans "War, War, Until Victory," "The Road to Jerusalem Goes Through Baghdad" were used during the war. The second one was to consolidate the new regime's institutions, economy, and power balance while society and opponents did not have enough power against the regime. The words of Rafsanjani two decades after the war showed the attitude of the new regime towards the war and Iran's need for regime stability:

At that time, we convened a meeting regarding the direction of the war, and the Imam commanded that no one should speak of a cease-fire and that the war must achieve its goals. It is not enough for us to say we were not defeated. We have to strengthen the revolution, and the interest of revolution is to win the war and spread its ideas.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>63</sup> Takeyh, *Ibid.*, p. 371.

The war was getting more internationalized, and both countries could not gain a confident victory on the battlefield over the years. It is not apparent that in which point the regime decided to end the war. However, preventing Iranian oil ships in the Gulf increased society's complaints of economic difficulties and prolonged war. Furthermore, the US attacked an Iranian passenger plane in Iran territory, which caused the deaths of 290 civilians in July 1988. The threat of Saddam Hussein's chemical bomb attacks on Tehran made the regime accept United Nations Resolution 598 effectively.<sup>64</sup>

The end of the war, which has been blessed and exalted for a long time, was announced to society with the following statement of Khomeini:

Today, this decision was more deadly than drinking hemlock. I submitted myself to God's will and drunk this drink to his satisfaction. To me, it would have been more bearable to accept death and martyrdom. Today's decision is based only on the interest of the Islamic Republic.<sup>65</sup>

Iran's ongoing war against Iraq ended with Khomeini's statement, but the war against the oppositions re-started, since the revolution was to continue during and after the Iran- Iraq war. Abrahamian provided the number of people who were executed during the war against the opposition:

Between February 1979 and June 1981 revolutionary courts had executed 497 political opponents as 'counter' revolutionaries and 'sowers of corruption on earth.' They included Hoveida, the former premier; 6 cabinet ministers- one of whom was accused of nourishing 'cultural imperialism'; 3 chiefs and 90 operatives of SAVAK; Bahais and 1 Jewish businessman accused of spying for Israel; 35 generals, 25 colonels, 20 majors, and 125 non-commissioned officers. In the next four years, from June 1981 until June 1985, revolutionary courts executed more than 8.000 opponents. Although they targeted mainly the Mojahedin, they also went after others – even some who opposed the Mojahedin. The victims included

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<sup>64</sup> Halabja, the Kurdish city of Iraq was bombed with chemicals attack by the Iraq army in March 1988, which was called the Anfal genocide and caused the deaths of almost 4.000 people and injuries and long term illness of 8.000 people. Therefore, the chemicals attack of Iraq increased the fear of Iran and helped to end the war. It can be said that Halabja was used as intimidation for Iran.

<sup>65</sup> Takeyh, *Ibid.*, p. 382.

Fedayins and Kurds as well as Tudeh, National Front, Shariatmadari supporters. Many – including Shariatmadari and Bazargan supporters, and Tudeh leaders – were forced to appear on television and recant their previous views. Thus, the toll taken among those who have participated in the revolution was far greater than that among royalists. This revolution, like others, had devoured its own children.<sup>66</sup>

However, the elimination of the revolutionary forces, which went hand in hand with the Islamization of revolution, continued. The main bloody slaughter came after the end of the Iran-Iraq war. Abrahamian described this with Khomeini's declaration: "Khomeini announced that he had no choice but to drink the 'poisoned chalice.'"<sup>67</sup> Then, special courts arranged to judge political prisoners, and the courts decided the execution of more than 2,800 prisoners in four weeks. Amnesty International identified them as the "prisoners of conscience. Their bodies were buried into an isolated area called Kafarestan (Land of the Unbelievers) and Lanatabad (Land of Damned)."<sup>68</sup>

The strong resistance of the Kurds in Iran after the revolution and especially during the Iran-Iraq war, caused Khomeini and the new regime to put intense pressure on the Kurdistan region. Since both Iran and Iraq supported each other's Kurds during the war<sup>69</sup>, they suppressed their Kurds after the war ended. That is why Iraq used chemical weapons in Halabja while Iran had sent his military forces to the Kurdistan region, even when the war with Iraq was continuing. The pressure of the new Islamic regime on the Kurds continued even after the war ended. Therefore, the leader of KDPI (Kurdistan Democratic Party-Iran), Abdul Rahman Qasimlo, was assassinated by the spies of the Islamic regime on July 13, 1989, in

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<sup>66</sup> Abrahamian, *Ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Michael M. Gunter, *The Kurds: A Divided Nation in Search of a State* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2019), p. 144.

Vienna while he had a meeting with the Islamic regime in order to negotiate the situation of the Kurds in the new Islamic Republic.<sup>70</sup>

To sum up, this chapter intended to explain how the Iran revolution gained an Islamic identity during the Khomeini reign. Also, it attempted to explain the basic factors that have helped the Islamists take the power of ruling the revolution and state. These internal and external factors were mentioned through three critical events, which also contributed to the shaping of the new state policies after the revolution became successful. The first event was the elimination of revolutionary forces step by step from the revolution when the state system started to establish. Khomeini's *Velayat-e Faqih* idea, which made Khomeini a superpower and gave him almost all authority for ruling the state, began to apply; the socialist, nationalist, and liberals criticized the changing form of the revolution and Khomeini's and his supporters' power. That is why they started to be eliminated from the revolution by the Islamists. Their elimination has continued very long and getting harsher day by day until all opposition groups were weakened or totally destroyed.

The second event which both contributed to the Islamization of revolution and eased the elimination of revolutionary forces was the hostage crisis. While the groups which called themselves the *Students of Imam Line* took American diplomats hostage, they paved the way for showing the radicalization of the Islamic revolution to the world. These crises deepened the hostility between the US and Iran, which has been continuing for forty years. However, it was not only affecting the character of the revolution and Islamists but also provides the new regime to show its power and ability to those who were against the Islamic revolution and the newly established Islamic state. On the other hand, the effects of the internal crises also provided strength to the Islamists because the liberal,

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<sup>70</sup> Hamit Bozarslan, "Abdurrahman Qasımlo: Kürt Sosyal Demokrasisinin Oluşumu", in Y. Çakmak & T. Şur (eds.), *Kürt Tarihi ve Siyasetinden Portreler* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2018), p.288

nationalist leader Bazargan did not support taking diplomats as hostages and had to resign from the presidency. His condemnation of hostage crises and resignation from the presidency ensured Khomeini supporters to blame the nationalists as the US collaborators and found a pretext for eliminating the liberals and nationalists from the revolution. At the same time, the socialists have already been eliminated because of not supporting the referendum for the Islamic state and to be against the power of Islamists in the state system.

The last event was the Iran-Iraq war, which took eight years and became the longest war of the 20th century and called a prolonged war. The war started with Iraqi attacks on Iran territory. Iran had to respond to the attacks, although the new Islamic state is already having conflicts inside the country due to opposition groups, minority uprisings, and the elimination of those groups. Even so, Iran's response to the Iraq's siege became rapid and efficient for saving her territory. In fact, the war became an efficient tool for legitimizing the Islamic regime on society and an important excuse to consolidate its power in the state system. The war provides the regime to unify society against the enemy of their territorial integrity, the enemy of Islam, and the Islamic state. Since the war was conceptualized as the war against the enemy of Islam and the Iranian nation, it contributed to increasing national unity and solidarity. The Islamic regime made propaganda and used this war as a threat to Iran's nation. So the war was not only against the Iraqi army; it was also against those supporting Iraq and seeing Iran and Islam as a threat to their own countries. This motivation enhanced society's patriotism and religious identity while also creating a great dedication to protecting their country from the enemies. Although the war did not have a winner and caused millions' deaths, the Islamic regime had the advantage of showing its invincibility both inside and outside because the war also helped the regime hold to eliminate opposition groups inside while the war has continued. Therefore, this chapter aimed to explain the Islamization process of the revolution within these three essential events framework.

## CHAPTER 3

### REVOLUTION AND STATE UNDER THE *ULEMA* LEADERSHIP

This chapter intends to explain how the state system of Iran changed under the *Ulema* control and leadership, which started in the early 1980s. Immediately after the revolution, the new ruling class started to change the state system pragmatically depending on the needs and requirements of the time. These changes will be analyzed in this chapter through the four main policies of the Islamic regime. The first one is changing the constitution and the state system with the *Velayat-e Faqih* idea, making Khomeini a superior power over and above the whole state system. Therefore, the regime turns into a totalitarian one, which tries to keep all state power on the one hand and control the people's private lives with Sharia rules (Islamic principles). It thus caused the regime to become more autocratic and totalitarian than the Shah's monarchy. The second one is the gradual change in the ideology and practice of the *ulema*. Because of the fact that one of the important purposes and claims of the Islamists under the control of the *ulema* was to create an Islamic regime that protects all Muslim societies from the corruption of Western Modernization from the beginning of revolutionary movements. However, after the Islamists usurped power, the state ideology changed and became more nationalist-Islamist, especially with the Iran-Iraq war, created patriotism and Iran nationalism become a more powerful ideology rather than Islamism and being the protector of the *ummah*.

The third and one other important point which displayed the *ulema's* power on changing the system was the change in economic structure and the shifts in the distribution of wealth. Although it was claimed to be a more equalitarian regime for all citizens initially, especially a regime of the *Mostaz'afin* (the disadvantaged groups), the *ulema's* increasing power in the state system paved the way for the Islamist circles to gain more advantages in the economic system. The last and more

inclusive changes which occurred under *ulema* power and leadership are social changes. The purpose of social changes, especially, was to create a more Islamic society in public life. For the Islamization of society, they established an organization like the *Basij* (*Sāzmān-e Basij-e Mostaz'afin*-the Mobilization Resistance Force), which worked under the *Sepâh-e Pâsdârân-e Enqelâb-e Eslâmi* (the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps- IRGC) as a part of military force. These organizations tried to control society in many different areas of their public lives. Therefore, the *ulema* gained more power after eliminating the opposition groups from the state and administrative system. This power became an essential tool to change and control the constitution, political institutions, economic system, and society at large.

### **3.1. Policy - From Republic Idea to the *Velayat-e Faqih* System**

After the revolution's success, an Islamic State was established in the history of political Islam for the first time, however, the Islamists could not be successful enough to prove political Islam's claims to the world. Since political Islam claimed to be opposite to the status quo, defended a different way from secular policies and worldview, and aimed to prevent society from westernization ideas, their practices in establishing an administrative system and institutionalization revealed that the Islamists were unable to implement their claims either in the political and economic or social systems they founded. The *Velayat-e Faqih* concept, its acceptance, and implementation with the Sharia law in the new Islamic state prove that the Islamic regime and the political Islam failed to realize the ruling systems they claimed.

When the uprisings against the Mohammad Reza Shah had continued, the first draft of the Islamic Republic's constitution, based on democratic and secular articles, was prepared by the exiled religious and secular intellectuals in Paris. The

prepared draft neither mentioned theocracy nor the concept of the *imamet*.<sup>71</sup> The main point of difference between Sunni and Shiite Islam did not exist in the draft.<sup>72</sup> The draft was initially planned based on the division of powers, in which the *ulema* had no privileges in the state system. It just offered that the country's President must be a Muslim, but it did not have any sectarian expression about being Shiite Muslim<sup>73</sup>.

Furthermore, the draft constitution included the possibility of women for presidential candidacy. Although the draft mentioned the guardian council, which would check the accordance of the codes of the parliament with the interpretations of the Sharia, the Council would have five *mujtahids* (those who had the authority to interpret the law), three constitution professors, and three judges who would have a soft power on the constitution, and there was no evidence about theocracy in the draft. Also, according to Moazami, in the first draft of the constitution, the Council would not have substantial authority to affect the codes of parliament.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, the existence of this kind of Council did not disturb the secularity of the draft. The Islamic state was then established as an Islamic Republic, which was expected to be a ruling system based on people's choices and democratic administration. However, as Keddie states, "the contradiction between clerical-authoritarian and the popular rule was, and remains, embedded in the constitution of the Islamic Republic."<sup>75</sup> The prepared draft was changed in August and accepted with the December 1979 constitutional referendum.<sup>76</sup> Accepting the

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<sup>71</sup> Behrouz Moazami, *İran'da Devlet, Din ve Devrim: 1796'dan Bugüne* trans. by Bahar Bilgen. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2018), p. 240.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248-249.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Nikkie R. Keddie & Y. Richard, *Modern Iran - Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven, USA: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 242.

<sup>76</sup> Moazami, *Ibid.*, p. 254.

*Velayat-e Faqih* principles, which established a ruling system of the most learned Islamic scholars, or the experts in classical Islamic jurisprudence, *fiqh*,<sup>77</sup> has changed people's expectations from the new regime. Based on the Sharia Law and the Shiite doctrine, these principles offer "all Muslims must choose a *Marj al-taqlid*, a model and source of emulation, from amongst the established *ulema*, whose opinions on Islamic Law are binding on their followers throughout their lifetime."<sup>78</sup> Although all *Marja* (the source) should be equal traditionally, Khomeini's supremacy changed the sharia law as well.

The Iranian religious order legitimized the adaption of the *Velayat-e Faqih* principles into the constitutional law with the Shiite understanding of Islam. According to Shiite religious doctrine, after Prophet Mohammed, Ali, the Prophet's son in law and his descendants, 11 Imam should rule and be followed by the Shiite Muslims. The occultation of the last imam, Mohammed el-Mahdi, in the 9<sup>th</sup> century paved the way for the *ulema* to resume the responsibility for the rule of the Muslims in his absence. However, the *Velayat-e Faqih* concept was used to provide Khomeini with the will of God on earth in Imam al Mahdi's absence. His supremacy thus prevented the multiplicity of the religious authority of the *ulema*.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, it can be said that the *Velayat-e Faqih* idea not only prevented the ruling of the state as a republic but also prevented the *ulema* class from resuming Mahdi's responsibility in his absence.

The following chart, prepared by Abrahamian, displays the role and status of the supreme leader, the guardian council, and the assembly of experts. In addition, the

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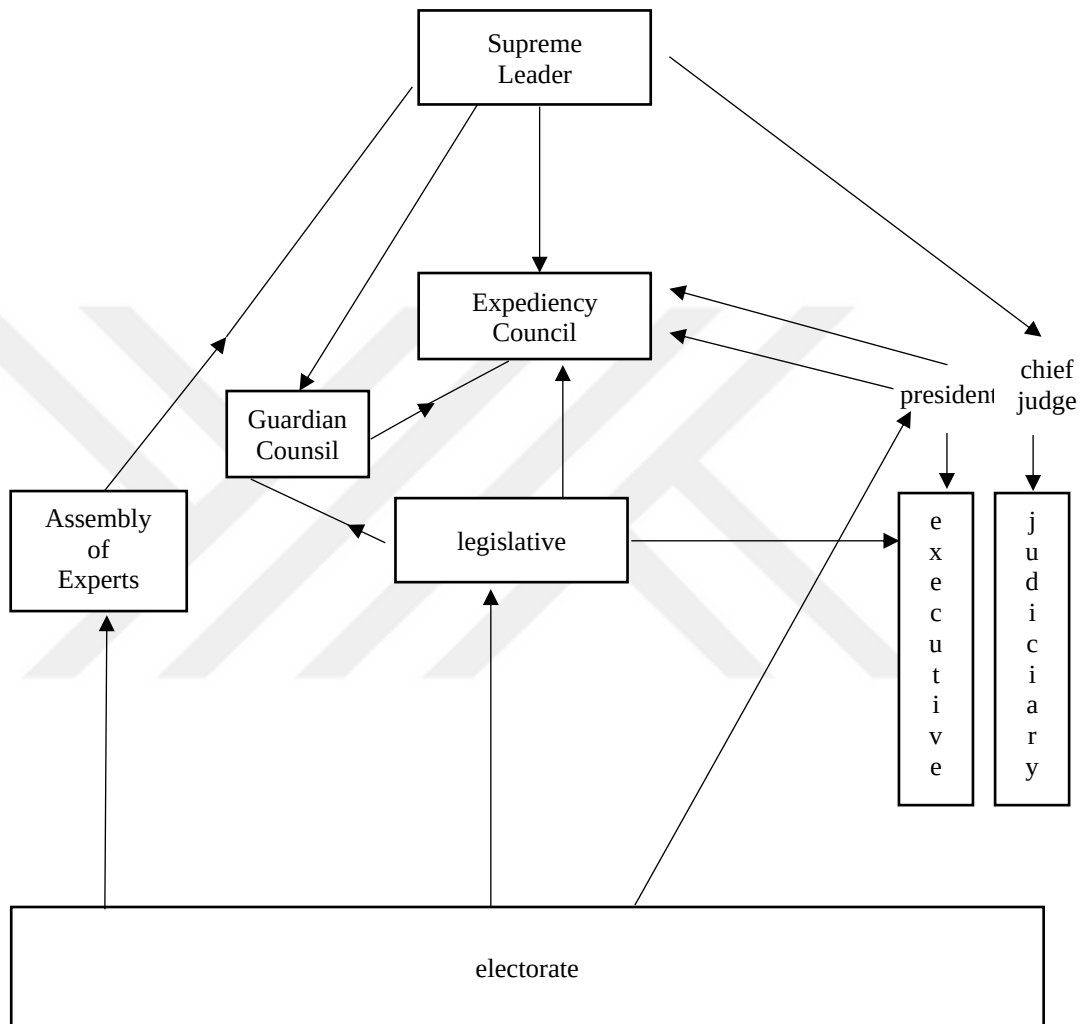
<sup>77</sup> Rebecca Barlow, Shahram Akbarzadeh "The Institutionalisation of Political Islam in Iran", in S. Akbarzadeh (edt.) *Routledge Handbook of Political Islam*, (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), p. 143.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

chart also shows the interrelations and connections of the Islamic regime institutions with each other.<sup>80</sup>

**Figure 1.** Figure of the Islamic Republic Constitution



The constitutional chart shows the hierarchy between the supreme leader and the other vital layers of the Islamic regime. Although there is an election for the President and *majlis* every four years, the presidential candidate had to be accepted by the Guardian Council, which the Supreme Leader directly chose. The Assembly of Experts who appoints the supreme leader was also chosen by-election. All Assembly of Expert members had to be Ayatollahs, who have authority in Islamic

<sup>80</sup> Abrahamian. *Ibid.*, p. 165.

law. The parliament and legislative do not have direct interaction with the Supreme leader. However, the Guardian Council, whose members are directly appointed by the supreme leader, controls the legislature regarding its appropriateness to the Sharia and Islamic order. The Expediency Council controls both the Guardian Council and the parliament and decides in the case of a dispute between the two. To illustrate, when the Guardian Council rejects a code approved in the parliament, the Expediency Council is responsible for deciding the best for the Islamic state. The Expediency Council is also responsible for controlling state institutions' appropriateness with Islamic rule.<sup>81</sup>

The constitution prepared after the Islamic Republic referendum on March 30, 1979, by the Assembly of Expert was more Islamic and provided more authority to the ulema than the first draft, which was prepared before and relatively similar to the 1906-1907 constitution.<sup>82</sup> It gives more power and specific authority to the *Velayat-e Faqih*. To illustrate, article 4 indicate that the *Faqih* has divine authority and is just answerable to God. At the same time, the articles of the new constitution also mentioned his authority in the state system, such as controlling the army, electing presidential candidates, and having the right to dissing the President when he was found insufficient. The new constitution also determined the authority of the Guardian council on *majlis* and in the state system. The existence of the Guardian Council restricted the effects of *majlis* because the Council has authority to kill the bill if they found the bill inappropriate with the Islamic rule.<sup>83</sup> The Council consists of twelve members, six clerics appointed by the Faqih directly, and six jurists chosen from the list prepared by the supreme judicial Council whose

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<sup>81</sup> Iran Chamber Society, *The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran*. Accessed August 13, 2021. [https://www.iranchamber.com/government/laws/constitution\\_ch08.php](https://www.iranchamber.com/government/laws/constitution_ch08.php).

<sup>82</sup> Keddie & Richard, *Ibid.*, pp. 247-248.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

members were appointed by the *Faqih*.<sup>84</sup> Although the list is presented to the *majlis* and *majlis* selects the six judicial members for the Guardian council, the system gives absolute supremacy to the *faqih*s and clerics and prevents the other elements from choosing, ruling, deciding any part of the system.

As the constitution was proclaimed with great authority to the *faqih*s, Bazargan and seven members of the Provisional Government sent a petition to Khomeini and asked the Assembly of Experts to be dissolved. Since the assembly was founded as a body to appoint the ruling jurists and oversee their activities, the government claimed that the constitution as such did not take care of popular sovereignty, neglected widespread consensus, and made the *ulema* a particular authority on the system. This system was, for the government, not only the creation of a clerical order but also undermining religion. This constitution and the *Velayat –e Faqih* system were going to create the accusations of the young generations of the regime, since the shortcomings of the political system were going to be considered the shortcomings of the Islamic rule. Bazargan and the government were against the Assembly of Experts and the adaption of the Sharia rules into the constitution, because they believed this constitution became "a revolution against the revolution ...."<sup>85</sup>

Khomeini's supremacy not only came from his spiritual power as a *Velayat-e Faqih*, but also his supremacy provided him to be the most critical power in ruling the administrative, military, and economic system of the state. His appointment as a *Velayat-e Faqih* also included a very critical position: the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. With this power, Khomeini became the sole authority to appoint the Chief of the Joint Staff, the Chief Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards and the six members of the 12-member Guardian Council. He was, therefore, put in a position to decide war and peace. He was also

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<sup>84</sup> Islamic Parliament of Iran, *Islamic Parliament of Iran - Constitution*. Accessed August 14, 2021. <https://en.parliran.ir/eng/en/Constitution>.

<sup>85</sup> Abrahamian, *Ibid.*, p. 168.

responsible for appointing the Supreme Judge and the head of radio and television networks of the Islamic Republic.<sup>86</sup> The Islamic Republic's Constitution created a system that ensured Khomeini's supremacy during his lifetime.

The constitution required the selection of the supreme leader, the head of the judiciary, six members of the Guardian Councils, the intelligence minister, and all eighty-six members of the Assembly of Experts from among the clerics.<sup>87</sup> All critical sections of the state have to be under the control of the clerics. From top to down, the whole ruling mechanism of state systems has to be in harmony with the Sharia rules in the constitution. For example, the 4th article of the new constitution declared that all civil, penal financial, economic, administrative, cultural, military, political, and other laws and regulations must be based on Islamic criteria.<sup>88</sup> These kinds of principles and restrictions were used for all the constitution articles. The Guardian Council was going to check the implementation of these articles within harmony with the Sharia. Article 24, the freedom of media, is another example of Islamization: Media and its activities would be free as long as these activities do not threaten Islam and public rights.<sup>89</sup> These examples show Islamic emphasis on the constitution, despite the constitution's "freedom" promise.

After Khomeini's death, this powerful position and strong authority of the *Velayat-e Faqih* and the clerics became a barrier for reformers. They continued to be an essential factor for preventing any debate on the new ideas and making changes in Iran. Since the opposition to the *Velayat-e Faqih* was equivalent to a challenge to

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<sup>86</sup> Akbarzadeh and Barlow, *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>87</sup> Mehdi Khalaji, "Iran's Regime of Religion", *Journal of International Affairs*, 65(1), (2011), p. 131.

<sup>88</sup> Mehran Tamadonfar, "Islam, Law, and Political Control in Contemporary Iran", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 40(2), (2001), p. 207.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

the Islamic regime, the submission of either the politicians or the people to the Iranian model was accepted as implementing the God's wisdom. Therefore, not only secular, socialist, or liberal but also Islamists who rejected to obey the *Velayat-e Faqih* system were strictly punished by the regime during the years.<sup>90</sup> Ayatollah Mohammed Kazem Shariatmadari was one of the critical figures opposing *Velayat-e Faqih* and Khomeini's supremacy. Shariatmadari thought that the *ulema* should act upon the Shiite tradition and stay away from the governmental positions and maintain their religious practices without being part of the policy.<sup>91</sup>

Furthermore, when the hostage crisis occurred, he denounced the action and criticized the students who took the USA diplomats as hostages. Therefore, Shariatmadari became a target for Khomeini's supporters as opposed to the Islamic regime and was accused of being a planner of bombing Khomeini's house. To suppress him and his supporters, Shariatmadari has been put under house arrest from 1982 until he died in 1986.<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, he was ordered to "defrock" from *Marja* by Khomeini, and "it was the first time of clerical Shi'ism that an institutional hierarchy was set with punitive repercussions for violating it."<sup>93</sup> However, his supporters continued the opposition to Khomeini's supremacy and the administrative way of the new Islamic regime. The other critical Ayatollah was Hussein Ali Montazeri. Although Montazeri supported Khomeini in the first years of the revolution and was thought to be Khomeini's successor, after Khomeini's unlimited authority with the *Velayat-e Faqih* and its close relations with controlling the policy, he started to criticize the *Velayat-e Faqih* position in the state. Since he had different expectations from *Velayat-e Faqih*'s role, he was

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<sup>90</sup> Amanat, *Ibid.*, pp. 807-808.

<sup>91</sup> Shahibzadeh, *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

<sup>92</sup> Amanat, *Ibid.*, pp. 807-808.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

suspended from being the successor to Khomeini and placed under house arrest until 2003.<sup>94</sup> It is also important to note that the most reputable Ayatollahs whose religious position was higher than Khomeini, like Ayatollah Abu al-Qasim al-Musawi al-Khoei, who lived in Iraq's Najaf city and was accepted as the most important religious man of the Shiites at that time, did not confirm the changes of the Sharia rule and the implementation of the *Velayat-e Faqih* concept in the state system.<sup>95</sup> Even the ayatollahs who challenged the regime and Khomeini's supremacy thought that the Sharia rules became ideological tools for political control.

According to Nikki Keddie, Khomeini's forces took power from the other revolutionary forces and created their system between 1979-1982. During the formative years of the Islamic regime, Khomeini acted with a conflicting strategy to establish his order. On the one hand, Khomeini appointed the liberals and a secular provisional government under Bazargan, but he enhanced the Islamic identity of the institutions and made them more effective in the state system on the other. Another example would be his appointment of Friday prayer leaders for each city. These appointments provided Khomeini to establish a close connection with society. At the same time, he used his power in party organizations and theological seminars within the clerical groups.<sup>96</sup>

After the revolution succeeded, the aims and claims of the revolution were changed, and the real expectations of society were not responded to well by the *ulema*, the new authority of the Islamic state. Although almost all social classes had supported Khomeini, he could not create a system demanded by society. The power he received from the people was used to create a clerical state, not a state for the people as a whole. The new constitution was powered by his *Velayat-e*

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<sup>94</sup> Garthwaite, *Ibid.*, p. 239.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> Keddie & Richard, *Ibid.*, pp. 141-142.

*Faqih* idea and Sharia rules, which prevented society from being part of the state system. The *Faqih* had superiority for controlling every state's mechanism from top to down with the new constitutional elements like the Guardian Councils and the Expediency Council, which he directly had the power of appointment. As Abrahamian said, even the Shahs did not have such superiority as Khomeini in their monarchical system.<sup>97</sup> Although oppositional groups criticized the system and the effects of clerics for implementing Shiite doctrines, Khomeini and his followers remained firm to put the Islamic Constitution into practice. Therefore, the revolution that offered democracy, freedom, elections and justice lost its meaning with the constitution created right after the revolution in 1979.

### **3.2. Ideology– From Islamism to Nationalism**

Although the demonstrations, riots, and uprisings started with the participation of different ideological groups such as the Marxists, nationalists, socialists, seculars, etc., the Iranian revolt against the Shah turned into an Islamic revolution in which the Islamists usurped the leading position in the movements. At the end of the day, the Islamists started to rule the state with the Islamic Constitution and Sharia law together. During the Islamization process, Islamic discourses and implementations were used in almost every part of Iran's state and social structure. Khomeini's first statements after the revolution generally referred to the *ummah* of the whole Muslim community in the world. His title was also the protector of all Muslim *ummah*. According to Menashri, Khomeini defined himself not as an "Iranian" but as a "Muslim" and regarded the revolution in Iran as only in the first stage of the "comprehensive Islamic revolution." The very concept of nationalism was alien to him, he was opposed to this ideology and viewed it as an "imperialist plot" to weaken Islam."<sup>98</sup> Khomeini's anti-American, anti-imperialist attitudes and his

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<sup>97</sup> Abrahamian, *Ibid.*, p. 215.

<sup>98</sup> David Menashri, "Shi'ite Leadership: In the Shadow of Conflicting Ideologies", *Iranian Studies*, 13(1/4), (1980), pp. 119-145. Retrieved October 23, 2020, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4310338> p. 129.

stand against the western powers strengthened his idea of creating a united Muslim world. Khomeini thought that the "Muslims are one family even if they live in regions remote from each other... This is an important and basic point, this is a strategy,"<sup>99</sup> and he continues with more radical words: "Our movement is for an Islamic goal not for Iran alone... Iran has only been a starting point, other Muslim societies should join the Muslim revolution."<sup>100</sup>

However, the idea of being the protector of all Muslims and the exportation of the Islamic revolution to Islamic countries changed after the state system was established.

Since ruling a state, creating new policy and system protection caused the new regime to act more functionalist and a pragmatist than ideological; they needed to be more rational than emotional for the new state's sake. Rasoul Namazi explains this situation with an event between the Ayatollahs: Khamenei explained a letter of Khomeini's in Friday prayer sermon and evaluated Khomeini's view about the government as Islamic law, which was considered much more crucial than the government. However, Khomeini sent another letter the next day, and Khamenei accepted his misunderstanding of Khomeini's thoughts about government and Islamic law. Since "Government", according to Khomeini, "is among the primary ordinances of Islam, and has precedence over all secondary ordinances, even over prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage."<sup>101</sup> The government is so fundamental to Islam. According to Khomeini, the Islamic government has the power to revoke any

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<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> David Menashri, *Ibid. cf. Radio Tehran*, May 7, 1979; DR, May 8, 1979.

<sup>101</sup> Rasoul Namazi, "Ayatollah Khomeini: From Islamic Government to Sovereign State", *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 52, Nos. 1-2 (2019), pp. 111-131; *cf.* Ruhollah Khomeini, *Sahifeh-ye Eimām*, (Tehran: Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 2008).

sharia agreement when those agreements are contrary to "the interests of the country or Islam."<sup>102</sup> The government can even act to prevent a religious act, such as the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, if the performance of that act runs counter to "the interest of Islam" or "the interests of an Islamic country."<sup>103</sup> Therefore, Khomeini changed his discourse and attitude after the Islamic state was established. His basic thoughts in which he claimed, "[t]he law of Islam, divine command, has absolute authority over all individuals and the Islamic government"<sup>104</sup> and "this authority "will remain so for all eternity"<sup>105</sup> radically changed after the revolution and in his new doctrine, he argued that the Shiite jurists ruling over the Islamic regime could abrogate the Islamic laws if the implementation of those laws was incompatible with the interests of Islam or the country. It is also highly significant that Khomeini considered the government and politics among the primary ordinances and superior over even traditional religious laws."<sup>106</sup>

Khomeini's changing attitude about the government and implementation of the Sharia rule can be described as manipulating Islam and Islamic law for political aims. This point of view became a general situation in state policies and was used whenever necessary to justify politics. That is why Khomeini's claim of being the protector of all Muslims turned to Iranian nationalism as Iran's state ideology during years. Significantly, the Iran-Iraq war became a turning point for increasing the regime's nationalist and patriot discourses, which manipulated and affected society towards a more Islamic and nationalist discourse. Since the war took eight

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, cf. Ruhollah Khomeini, *Governance of the Jurist: Islamic Government*, trans. by Hamid Algar, (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, n.d.)

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

years, they mobilized society to defend the country and sustained the mobilization by using patriotism with a foreign attack on Iran's national territory. It is important to note that Britain and Russia had ignored Iran's territorial integrity and national identity during their invasions and occupations in the 19th century, which caused the Iranian nation to become more sensitive about foreign intervention and more reactive.<sup>107</sup>

Moreover, the CIA *coup d'etat* against the nationalist leader Musaddiq after the attempts at the nationalization of oil was also seen as the intervention of foreign powers to Iranian national will, interests, and identity, which remained fresh in the Iranian memory. For these reasons, preventing the Iraqi invasion and taking the lost territory turned into a matter of honor for Iran's nation. As Samuel points out, a member of IRGC states:

Throughout Iran's contemporary history, every war has [involved] the separation of parts of [its] territory by foreigners ... But in the Iran-Iraq War, despite the backing of the great powers for the invasion, not one piece of Iranian land remained in the hands of Iraqi forces, and when Iraq again accepted the 1975 Algiers Agreement [which established the border between the countries] and the Secretary General of the United Nations declared Iraq as the aggressor, the rightfulness of the Islamic Republic of Iran was proven.<sup>108</sup>

Furthermore, the important strength for the Iran regime and nation during the war was to stay alone against the Iraqi invasion. Although Saddam Hussein's attack on Iran started the war, the United Nations did not take action against Saddam Hussein, even did not punish him for the war crimes after using chemical weapons. The US and Arab countries' support to Saddam Hussein caused the Iranians to feel alone against the whole world and became more patriot and religious. Moreover, during the Iran- Iraq war, the *ulema* wanted to legitimize the country's religious identity. The war against the Sunni Baath regime, and Gulf countries,

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<sup>107</sup> Annie Tracy-Samuel, "Guarding the Nation: The Iranian Revolutionary Guards, Nationalism and the Iran-Iraq War", in Meir Litvak (ed.) *Constructing Nationalism in Iran From the Qajars to the Islamic Republic* (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 256

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

even they had a significant Shiite population, and the US were automatically created as the enemies whose actions not only threatened the Iranian nation and its territorial integrity but also the Shiite identity. Thus, defending Iran's territorial integration and fighting against the Iraqi forces during the war both in Iran and Iraq's territory enhanced the national feelings and national unity against the enemies. Khomeini's words about Iranian territory and the Iranian nation after the Iran-Iraq war outbreak showed his changed attitudes. To illustrate in his *Majlis* speech with religious leaders in late September 1980, he said that "the honor and the glory of the homeland and the religion are dependent on this war", and he continued with "[h]omeland is expecting its sons to fight its enemy, and promised "[w]e shall fight the attackers of the soil of Iran for our beloved homeland until death."<sup>109</sup>

Furthermore, this changed attitude of the Iranian political-religious leaders from creating a united *ummah* to protect the Iranian nation and Iranian territory has continued from the days of the Iran-Iraq war to today. As a functionalist and pragmatist country, Iran's domestic, regional, and international politics were built on national identity like the other national countries. However, Iran's Shiite identity is also an essential factor in shaping the politics both inside and outside the country. Discourse on Iran's national identity has continued to take an essential place in state policy. Although there were different ideological fractions ruled the state in the post-Khomeini period like the reconstruction and pragmatist period of Hashami Rafsanjani (1989-1997), the reformist and more rapprochement period of Khatami (1997-2005), the more militarized and conservative Ahmadinejad (2005-2013), nationalist symbolism in state discourse on the Iranian nation (*Mellet-e Iran*) became their common point in the state policies.<sup>110</sup> Hooshang

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<sup>109</sup> David Menashri, *The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World*, Westview Special Studies on the Middle East, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1990), p. 48; cf. *Ettela'at*, 29 September 1980.

<sup>110</sup> Rasmus Christian Elling. "Matters of Authenticity: Nationalism, Islam, and Ethnic Diversity in Iran" in *Iran: From Theocracy to the Green Movement*, ed. by Negin Nabavi, (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 81.

Amirahmadi describes the changing political attitude and discourse from political Islam to secular nationalism for post-Khomeini years. He mentions an event from the Rafsanjani period with these words;

In early 1995, no less august a figure than Rafsanjani ordered the Islamic Republic News Agency to establish a newspaper called "Iran". Not Islamic Iran, just Iran. Large advertisements for the newspaper -- comprised of the three-color Iranian flag with no Islamic logos -- adorned Tehran's walls and billboards. In keeping with its name, the newspaper itself displays a similar pattern. It is telling that the first issues of Iran reached the stands at the same time the government banned Jahan-e-Islam (the world of Islam), a leading pan-Islamist newspaper.<sup>111</sup>

Thus the regime produced policies rather for the Iranian nation and the Shiite population than for the unity of all Muslims, in contrast to all claims and premises done at the beginning of the revolutionary process.

### **3.3. Economy- From Equality Discourse to Wealthy Ulema**

The economic situation of Iran under Mohammed Reza Shah was a critical reason for the uprisings against him. There were two important determinants in Iran's economy: oil revenues and the high inflation rates. These affected the country's economic system and the middle-class became rich day by day through the economic policies of the state, while the oil's increasing revenues were shared among the Shah's elite. It increased the gap between the rich and the poor economically, especially after the 1970s. Even Tehran started to show the effects of economic change and social differences with its neighborhoods. The new rich groups of society settled down in the new, highly modernized north part of Tehran, while the poor resided in the south, the poor side of the city. That is why the uprisings and revolts emerged in Tehran's south, where the poor, the student, and the slum-dweller resident.

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<sup>111</sup> H. Amirahmadi, "From Political Islam to Secular Nationalism" (January 11 1996), Retrieved on October 30, 2020, from <https://iranian.com/Jan96/Opinion/SecularNationalism.html?site=archive>

The highly expensive organization of the Shah has always been criticized and reacted by the ulema. The Shah's White Revolution in 1963 could not satisfy the rural as well as the urban poor. On the contrary, it gave much power to landowners and caused the peasants to leave their lands to migrate to the country's big cities. However, the Shah elites exploited the oil revenue and established a "modern", "secularized" state. In order to legitimize his secular, westernized monarchy, the Shah emphasized the historical roots of the country by referring to pre-Islamic empires of Iran like the Achaemenids and the Sasanids. His father, Reza Shah, used the title of *Shahansah* (the Shah of Shahs), a title, from the old imperial times, Mohammed Reza Shah used a new title *Aryamehr* (the light of Aryans).<sup>112</sup> Even he organized a showy celebration for the 2500 anniversary of the monarchy in the old capital of the Achaemenid Empire, Persepolis, in 1971, which he had a chance to invite foreign countries president, statesman, diplomats. The cost was 100 million dollar for the celebration, it was not only a demonstration of his monarchy's luxury to the world and to his people but also caused public resentment in the country.<sup>113</sup> Since the Pahlavi family and their bourgeoisie have already been criticized for their unnecessary expense by the unsatisfied society, especially by those who were the victims of the bad economic conditions and by the *ulema* who accepted the unnecessary expense and luxury as sin. This demonstration changed the tone of criticism of the *ulema* and society much more against the Shah. Especially, the oppositional position of society to the Shah's economic policy, the Pahlavi Family's westernized lifestyle with their bourgeoisie class, and the country's spending for their luxuries had been proved once again with the anniversary celebration.

Therefore one of the critical points for Khomeini was the unjust distribution of economic income and the highly unbalanced distribution of wealth among society. After the revolution, the Islamists established such foundations as the *Bonyad-e*

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<sup>112</sup> Cleveland, *Ibid.*, pp. 297-98.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

*Mostazafin* to seize Pahlavi Foundations' fortunes, which included many properties like 'hundreds of companies, factories, housing units, agricultural lands, and substantial holdings in the West'.<sup>114</sup> By taking over the properties of the Shah and his rich circles who now left the country, the Islamist regime started to establish a new economic order in which the capital and land were transferred to their supporters. It is important to note that the Shah's properties provided the creation of new Khomeinist elites and bourgeoisie classes. The *bonyads* were also used as one of the most beneficial tools for getting economic power and foundations that provided the Khomeinists to mobilize the lower classes to protect the new regime. Nikki Keddie points to this reality as well: "The Khomeinists used this massive economics unit to recruit popular class workers and loyal managers. The *Jehad –e Sazandegi* (Reconstruction Jihad) mobilized youth by sending them to rural areas to aid the poor with cheap or free housing and sanctioned some seizures of urban homes and rural lands by the poor".<sup>115</sup>

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), established by Khomeini in April 1979, became one of the important institutions for controlling the economic distributions of the new regime after their success in the Iran-Iraq war. The Organization for the Mobilization of the Oppressed consisted of volunteers who have been constituted for protecting the Islamic revolution and mainly came from the lower classes and disadvantaged groups. As a part of IRGC, they have been keeping economic properties, society, and even policy under their control. The IRGC favoritism and controlling financial, social, and political tools have increasingly continued day by day since the 1990s.<sup>116</sup> Their power in distributing financial resources on *bonyads* and the USA's threat during the Iraq invasion made

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<sup>114</sup> Keddie & Richard, *Ibid.*, p. 246.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> David E. Thaler, Alireza Nader, Shahram Chubin, Jerrold D. Green, Charlotte Lynch, and Frederic Wehrey, "Factionalism and the Primacy of Informal Networks", in *Mullahs, Guards, and Bonyads: An Exploration of Iranian Leadership Dynamics*, (RAND Corporation, 2010), pp. 37-74. Accessed August 12, 2021.

them more potent in the state structure. Especially in the 2003 election of councils, they controlled numerous city and town councils, which also shows that being useful in the policy would help them control the economy.<sup>117</sup> They wanted to be a part of the legislative system; that is why in the 2005 election, the Guardian Council confirmed six members' applications for the presidential election while there were 1010 candidates. Four confirmed candidates from the former IRGC commander, the other two from the *ulema*.<sup>118</sup> The elected President Ahmadinejad was also from the IRGC, and he had the organization's support during the election process. The critical point was that Rafsanjani was the rival of Ahmadinejad, and from the beginning of the Islamic regime, he had a vital position in the state system. However, the *Basij* and IRGC's support to Ahmadinejad, one of their former members and Mayor of Tehran, prevented Rafsanjani from winning the 2005 presidential election. After a day, Rafsanjani made a speech and complained about the illegal way of the election; he referred to the *Basij*'s financial support for the Ahmadinejad election campaign. Rafsanjani claimed that the *Basij* organization had spent tens of millions of Tومans to support Ahmadinejad. On the other hand, two defeated candidates directly "proclaimed that Ahmadinejad's victory in the election was backed illegally by well-financed regime elements, including members of Imam Charity Commodity (ICC), which also one of the richest foundation, *bonyads* of Iran, and the *Basij*."<sup>119</sup> After the election, Ahmedinejad approved ten men from the IRGC background and former commanders in his cabinet.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Kazem Alamdari, "The Power Structure of the Islamic Republic of Iran: Transition from Populism to Clientelism, and Militarization of the Government", *Third World Quarterly*, 26(8), (2005), p. 1285.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

In addition to the IRGC, the *Bazaaris* were the other essential groups that benefitted from the Islamic regime opportunities after the revolution's success. Since their opposition to the Shah was based on his economic policies, which attempted to develop the economy with the import of foreign products, the Bazaar middle classes lost their economic power, advantages, and effectiveness in economic and political systems.<sup>121</sup>

When the agrarian reform of the Shah failed, the industrialization process of the country started. This industrialization grew very fast between 1963- 1972, at that time, the manufacturing industry has grown at a very high rate when compared with other countries.' The credits for industrialists, which most of them granted to trade and imports sectors, increased at 289% between the years 1973-1975.<sup>122</sup> The investments made by foreign firms have increased with the supporting policy of the state to the industrial and private sectors, and credits grew by 45%.<sup>123</sup> The state support to the industrial and private sectors increased the financial investment of the foreign companies. Since the foreign exchange controls were abolished for improving and growing the private sector in 1974, the number of private companies in Tehran increased from 1700 in 1973 to 2700 in 1975.<sup>124</sup>

Oil revenues helped to create a robust private sector in the last decade of the Shah; however, it consisted of the "oil bourgeois" who had close relations with the Shah and his elite classes. According to Mozaffari, "[t]his bourgeoisie embraced some 150 families, most of whom had their origins in the landed aristocracy or the big merchant families with a few 'parvenus.' This bourgeoisie owned 67% of the financial establishment, and industrial enterprises belonged to ten families."<sup>125</sup> On

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<sup>121</sup> Mehdi Mozaffari, "Why the Bazaar Rebels", *Journal of Peace Research*, 28 (1991), p. 384.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 384, *cf.*, Hossein Bashiriyeh, *The State and Revolution in Iran* (London: Croom Helm, 1984).

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

the other hand, the *Baazari* was exposed to the Shah regime's strict and harsh measurement for trade. Arbitrary and artificial price-fixing, supplementary taxation, and legal prosecution prevented the *bazaar* merchants from trading and getting power in the Shah's Iran while also creating a powerful opposition group for his empire.

The *bazaar* merchants and the *ulema* had close relations. These relations came from the physical closeness of the bazaar with the mosque while also depended on their religious identity, family connections, and spatial relationships.<sup>126</sup> For these reasons, the *bazaar* groups played a significant role in promoting the *ulema* against the Shah, mobilizing society for the uprisings, and making Khomeini propaganda with his cassettes while he was in exile. That is why the *bazaari* merchants were accepted as important figures of the revolution and post-revolution process. Their support to the *ulema* brought economic power and vital positions for them, while the *ulema* seized the state's political power. To illustrate, the new Islamic Banks, founded after three months of the revolution, consisted of 52 members from the *bazaari*.<sup>127</sup> They became the most advantageous group who have benefitted from the bank credits besides managing the country's import/export process. They became the new bourgeois class of the Islamic regime.

Furthermore, *Bazaari*'s close ties with the *ulema* provided them with a chance to appoint the general director of *Bonyad-e Mustazafen* (The Foundation of Deprived), which was founded with the holdings of the Pahlavi Foundation and foundations such as the Foundation of the Prophets (*Bonyad-e Nabowat*) and the Martyr Foundation (*Bonyad-e Shahid*). The *bazaar* power was not only restricted by economic space; they also received the *ulema* support to be a parliament member and minister, which they have never experienced during the Shah's era. Of course, their parliament's existence has extended their positions, relations,

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<sup>126</sup> Ahmad Ashref "Bazaar and Mosque in Iran's Revolution", *Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP)*, (1983); <https://merip.org/1983/03/bazaar-and-mosque-in-irans-revolution/>

<sup>127</sup> Mehdi Mozaffari, "Why the Bazaar rebels", *Journal of Peace Research*, 28 (1991), p. 386.

roles, and authority in the state's different institutions. Their position in the state system was reinforced when some of them took critical positions in policy 1990s. For example, the head of the Commander of chief Pasdaran Mohsen Rezai and former Ministry of Pasdaran Mohsen Rafiq Doust came from the *bazaar* circle.<sup>128</sup>

That is why Mozzaffari remarks that the established system after the revolution was triangular. According to Mozzaffari, political power was taken by the *ulema*, the military authority occupied by the Pasdaran (Revolutionary Guards), and economic affairs conducted by the *bazaari*<sup>129</sup>. Keddie also points out the same idea as follows:

Increasingly in the post-revolution period, political and economic power was concentrated in the hands of the Khomeinist clergy and the bazaar bourgeoisie. Soon after the revolution, there were land seizures by peasants in some regions, and factory strikes and workers committees set up in urban areas, but the authorities, whether by compromising, persuasion, or force, gradually brought such movements under control.<sup>130</sup>

Although the revolution was called the *musta'zafin* revolution after its success, the created system served the *ulema*, *bazaari*, and the IRGC much more than the *musta'zafin*. The emergence of a multilayer state system contributed to the constitution of different powerful groups who benefited from the country's economic distribution. The new networks between these groups provided them to benefit and manage the economic system. Kazem Alemdari described these relationships with the concept of clientelism. He used a 52 years old Iran citizen, Faramarz Etmadi's words to show society's dissident from the distribution of their country's economic wealth and clientelism;

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<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 288.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> Keddie & Richard, *Ibid.*, pp. 255-256.

Business is no good unless you enjoy a government rent or not, the son of a cleric's said Faramarz Etemadi, 52, peddling black fabric for women's veil a stall in Tehran's vast bazaar. 'We have one Shah, and now we have thousands.'<sup>131</sup>

Therefore, the created system paved the way for the richness of some specific groups which had close relationships with the ulema. The bazaar circle in this context became one of the important partners of the *ulema* and had some economic advantages within the state system. Their support to the ulema during the revolution uprisings provides them with some advantages on Bonyads and control the critical amount of state income. For example, Habiballah Asgarawladi-Musalman was from the Society of Islamic Coalition (Jamiyyat-i Mutalifih-i Islami), which supported the religious identity of the revolution during uprisings. He was appointed to the office of the supreme leader's representative at the Imam Relief Fund Committee and has served as a member of the Central Council of the Bonyad-e 15th Khordad.<sup>132</sup> Like Asgarawladi, Alinaqi Khamooshi was also from the bazaar circle, who then was chosen as the director of one of the most critical bonyads, *Bonyad-e Mostaza'fin*.<sup>133</sup> The richness and commercialization of Bonyads have especially started to increase from 1980 and has continued to today. Sune Engin mentions the increasing income of the Bonyads with these examples;

Bonyad-e Shahid owned 150 companies in the agriculture, mining, construction, and trade, as the resources allocated to the foundation by the government, increased annually by 29.3%, from 11.4 billion riyals in 1981 to 115 billion riyals in 1990. At the end of the decade, it is claimed that Bonyads' budget has reached nearly half of the government's national budget. However, such numbers do not

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<sup>131</sup> Kazem Alamdari. "The Power Structure of the Islamic Republic of Iran: Transition from Populism to Clientelism, and Militarization of the Government", *Third World Quarterly*, 26(8), (2005), p. 1291.

<sup>132</sup> Arang Keshavarzian, "Regime Loyalty and Bazari Representation under the Islamic Republic of Iran: Dilemmas of the Society of Islamic Coalition", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 41, No.2 (May 2009), p. 232.

<sup>133</sup> Engin Sune, "The Role of Para-Governmental and Paramilitary Organizations in the International Political Economy of Iran", *Journal of Gazi Academic View* 12 (24), (2019), p. 14; cf Saeidi, "The Accountability of Para-Governmental Organizations", p. 488.

go beyond estimation as the total assets of the bonyads are not public and only accountable to the Faqih.<sup>134</sup>

In addition to the bazaar circle benefit and richness via the Bonyads, the excessive richness of the IRGC, which is based on the regime's economic distribution, is also crucial to understand the unbalanced income distribution between the new elite. The IRGC's influence on the Bonyads and industrial and public projects, especially during the Rafsanjani period, was enlarged with the Ahmedinejad support to them during his presidency (2005-2009) and (2009-2013).<sup>135</sup> Through the Ahmedinejad reign, they got more power and created strategic relations, which provided them to be an effective actor in the oil and gas sector. For example, from 2005 to 2011, they were awarded 25 billion-dollar contracts in the oil and gas sector of the country.<sup>136</sup> Furthermore, this powerful existence of the IRGC on the economy is not only limited to the oil and gas sector; they started to engage in the finance and banking systems with the privatization edict of the Supreme leader in 2005.<sup>137</sup> Furthermore, the effects of the *Bonyads*, *Bazaar*, and the IRGC on the economic distribution of the country have increasingly continued and caused the deepening of economic interest and corruption between these groups.

To sum up, the *ulema* and the *bazaari* relations, especially with the *bazaar's* uprisings against the Shah, made the *bazaari* one of *ulema's* critical partners for the country's economic distribution after the revolution. While also, the increasing power of IRGC's both inside and outside of the country paved the way for them to create a strong network with the *bazaari* and the *ulema*, which helped them get advantages from economic distribution. The IRGC's economic power started to be

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<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> Forozan Hesam and Shahi Afshin, "The Military and the State in Iran : The Economic Rise of the Revolutionary Guards" *Middle East Journal*, 71 (1), (2017), pp. 67–86.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77 *cf.* Ali Alfoneh, "Eternal Rivals? The Artesh and the IRGC", *The Middle East Institute*, November 15, 2011.

<sup>137</sup> Hesam and Afshin, *Ibid.*, p. 77.

more influential on Iran's policy in recent years. The distribution of the country's wealth between specific groups caused the corruption of the economic system and created new Islamic elites of the new Islamic state, and was criticized by society from the first years of revolution to today. Although the Islamists criticized the Shah's elite and the unfair economic distribution of the country, their established economic system shows that they have new groups sharing the country's economic incomes between themselves like the Shah's elites.

### **3.4. Society- From Pahlavi Monarchy's Suppression to the Islamic Regime Suppression**

One of the critical reasons for the uprising against the Pahlavi monarchy was the suppression of society. The Reza Shah's modernization movements from 1925 until his withdrawal from the throne have continued by his son Mohammed Reza Shah. These modernization movements and reforms have been imposed on society from top to down. While the reforms were imposed, the military power and intelligence services were used as useful tools, and social sanctions were implemented very harshly. Like all modernization movements, the westernization of women became a symbol for showing the modernity of the Iranian monarchy. Therefore, the women unveiling policy of Reza Shah in 1936, which prevented women from covering their heads and wearing the *chador* (veil) was forbidden. The police forces were ordered to remove the *chador* of women in the streets forcibly. This ban prevented the lower and middle-class women from wearing *chador* and going outside of their homes.<sup>138</sup> According to Tajuddin, under Reza Shah's dictatorial rule, social modernization rather than westernization was imposed on Iran in the form of 'oriental despotism.' The secularization of education and Tehran University's opening for women in 1935 paved the way for higher-class women to be part of education and encourage women to be active in

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<sup>138</sup> Mohammed Tajuddin, "The Role and Status of Women in Modern Iran: An Overview", *Jadavpur Journal of International Relations*, 5(1), (2000), p. 160.

public life. However, the secularization policy of Reza Shah, especially his unveiling policy, increased the opposition of the *ulema* and religious people toward the Pahlavi monarchy. After the abdication of Reza Shah, the *ulema* insisted on showing their reaction against the prohibition of wearing *chador*. Then, the veiling policy was changed, and it became optional in 1944, but the women wearing *chador* were still prevented in some areas of public life. To illustrate, high-class hotels and restaurants did not allow women in *chador*. Also, wearing *chador* in schools and colleges was discouraged.<sup>139</sup>

The modernization movements of father Pahlavi were continued by his son Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi. The Shah's White Revolution included women's empowerment, which also caused Khomeini and the *ulema* criticism of the Shah. Six women deputies were elected for the *Majlis* in September 1963 for the first time<sup>140</sup>. Especially the Family Protection Law in 1967, which was modified to favor women much more in the 1970s, prevented polygamy and give fundamental rights to women after divorce.<sup>141</sup> Therefore, it can be said that Mohammed Reza Shah's modernization movement provided women be more active in being part of Iran's political life.

After the active participation of women in education and labor life increased women's existence in social and political action during the revolution's uprisings, even women became the face of revolution with their support and endorsement. Many educated, secular women wore the black *chador* to show their reaction to the Shah and his policies. Even the non-religious Muslim women wore the *chador*

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<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

to express their hostility towards the anti-religious and despotic Mohammad Reza Shah.<sup>142</sup>

After the revolution, one of Khomeini's first steps was to make *chador* necessary for women outside their homes. However, his attempt created a critical reaction from the Iranian women, which started a massive demonstration on March 8, 1979, on International Women Day. Thus, Khomeini had to refrain from making *chador* compulsory; however, the *chador* gradually became a vital tool to suppress women.

The *chador* was accepted as a success of the revolution by the regime; even the slogans 'my sister, your hijab is more combative than my blood' 'your hijab turned into a fatal fire, burning the infidel enemy's heart' was used to show the importance of hijab and how it turns to a political tool by the new regime.<sup>143</sup>

Therefore, wearing a *chador* became compulsive for government employees in June 1980, and the women who did not accept wearing a *chador* were dismissed from their job. Not only secular women who refused to wear *chador* but also the religious minorities of Iran had to wear *chador* after the veiling became compulsive. Karen L Pliskin states that "the chador became a symbol of their [the Jews] fear that the past's prosecutions would be renewed in the present".<sup>144</sup>

Although the new constitution included articles about women, these articles were shaped according to the Sharia law and restricted women's rights and actions with the rules and procedures of Islam. As Pliskin points out that the article 21 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic guarantees the rights of women in all respects by observing the principles of Islam.<sup>145</sup> The post-revolutionary regime expected

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<sup>142</sup> Karen L. Pliskin, "The Chador as a Symbol of Fear during Khomeini's Insurrection", *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues*, 18, (2009). p. 125.

<sup>143</sup> Tajuddin, *Ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>144</sup> Pliskin, *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

women to act in both modern and traditional ways. A woman should be a devoted mother, daughter, and wife at home as well as active and educated in political, cultural, and social life. Furthermore, all of these were expected to be implemented as long as Sharia laws allow.

Moreover, the regime suppression has increased during the years, and it has controlled women's actions and dress suitability with the Sharia law from 1980 to today. The regime's Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) became responsible for controlling not only women but also the people whose behaviors and actions were not appropriate to Islamic rules.

The new regime had to found a new army against the regular army of the dethroned Shah. Although they had eliminated and de-activated the leading army members from the Shah's regular army, they still feared a counter-revolution for the new Islamic state. They had to create a new army, which depended on the Islamic revolution and Islamic state principles. Therefore, the clerics created IRGC, also called the *Sepah* or *Pasdaran-e Enqelab-e Islami* as their parallel military force in May 1979. Their duties were to protect the revolution, maintain domestic law and order; fight dissident movements, and balance the regular armed forces.<sup>146</sup> Thus, the *Pasdaran* was used as a useful tool to suppress the dissident movements after the revolution, especially for eliminating the opponent groups from the revolution; they became the important state security actors. Furthermore, they also had a strong performance to suppress the minority uprising in rural areas like Kurdistan and Turkoman provinces.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Ahmad Salah Hashim, "Civil-Military Relations in Iran: Internal and External Pressures", *Middle East Policy*, 25(3), (2018), p. 49.

<sup>147</sup> Bayram Sinkaya, *The Revolutionary Guards in Iranian Politics: Elites and Shifting Relations*, (London, New York: Routledge, 2016), p.117; cf. Behrami Ghodratollah, "Nakshe Sepah dar Mobaraza ba Dzedde Enghelab," *Husun*, no. 16 (Tabeston 1387).

Most importantly, *Pasdaran* also became a part of the new regime's central security forces after the success and took responsibility for protecting Iran's border and territories after the assault of Saddam Hussein. In the beginning, 'the IRGC consisted of 6,000 men who had fought against the Shah's regime, and they ethnically belonged to the Persian and Azeri identity whose ages were between 17 and 28.<sup>148</sup> Here the important point is that almost all of them came from the low or religious socio-economic strata, which Khomeini called the *mostaz'afin*. The Mobilization Resistance Force (*Sāzmān-e Basij-e Mostaz'afin*), also known as the *Basiji*, became a part of the IRGC in 1981. The *Basij* consisted of the volunteer young and older men who wanted to fight for Iran in the Iran-Iraq war and guard the revolution. They became another tool of enforcing state control over society, regulating society, policing public morals, and suppressing dissidents.

However, the duties and responsibilities of IRGC have changed over the years in different periods of the Islamic republic. After the Khomeini period, their power and existence started to be felt in the economic and political areas. Their strong relations with the *bazaar* and *ulema* made them one of the critical parts of Iran's state systems. Because of their military privileges, their relations with the tradesmen and *bazaaris* turned into a beneficial source for them in the economic area. The IRGC's strong Islamic identity and dependence on the Islamic regime provided them benefits with the *ulema* during the years. Therefore, their conservative attitude for Islamic identity and their relationship based on a mutual interest in Iran's economic system with the reconstruction period of Rafsanjani made IRGC members more politicized in Iran's internal affairs<sup>149</sup>. Although religious leaders, both Khomeini and Khamenei, tried to keep IRGC away from the country's political circumstances, their power and effect on policy increased over the years. Khomeini made a speech when he met with the army commander

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<sup>148</sup> Hashim, *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

in 1981, he warned the army commanders about their interference of the policy as follows:

It is the duty of every single garrison to see to it that political issues do not reign there, for once a soldier becomes involved in political matters, then he is no longer a soldier. The soldier who is preoccupied with who is to lead, who is to stay behind or what ought to take place; the soldier who is preoccupied with this or that group, is no longer a soldier; he is then turned into a politician who has usurped a soldier's helmet. ... Entering politics would ruin the reputation of the armed forces.... Just as heroin destroys the human body, politics in the armed forces destroys its nature. I command army commanders to stop discussing political issues in the army. If politicians wish to speak to the army, they must be stopped.<sup>150</sup>

However, it was not easy to keep IRGC members from the social sphere and political activities; they started to be a useful tool in the streets to shape society according to moral code. The *Pasdaran* and *Basiji*'s existence in the streets and urban areas helped the regime implement the new Islamic rules on society. To illustrate, the *Basij* increased dominance during the Cultural Revolution, which implemented the Islamization of education and universities. The university closure for three years increased the power of the *Basij* and *Pasdaran* groups to suppress and eliminate the opponent groups from the universities. The *Basiji* and *Pasdaran* played their roles in the universities in detecting and preventing the possible uprisings of students against the regime because, as Asaf Bayat stresses out;

They acted on campuses as an agent of the regime, mobilization for war efforts or the Construction Crusade (institution of rural development), using surveillance to drive nonconformist into hiding jail, or into apathy and demoralization.<sup>151</sup>

*Basiji* numbers and authority had increased much more in the 1990s. There were 300,000 full-time members with the other one million part-timers in reserve, and

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<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> Asef Bayat, *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn*, (California: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 67.

the *Basiji* budget significantly increased over the years.<sup>152</sup> The members were provided with such benefits that they would never step back to implement to enforce and suppress society. Their privilege assured their dependence on the regime. The Islamization of the state and the reflection of the Islamization process were implemented in public spaces and society by the *Basiji*'s. Therefore, controlling and observing people in the street meant creating and protecting the public virtue. It caused gender segregation in the public space because "men and women prevented from mixing in the libraries, refectories, and sports centers as *Basiji* and top personnel systematically humiliated women for 'improper' dress or behavior".<sup>153</sup> The suppression of society in a different part of their living areas led to two important points. The first one is that both men and women, especially the young generation, refrained from the public area and created alternative ways of life within their environment. The second is creating more robust and active political participants with their alternative lifestyle and finding a way to oblige the regime to soften the implementation of the Sharia rule in the country resulted in the moving of the regime from the starting points of the Islamic Revolution.

To sum up, this chapter intends to analyze the revolution and the newly created state structure under the *ulema*'s leadership. The primary purpose was to show some crucial changes which emerged after the revolution's success. Since the *ulema*'s positions and attitudes before and after the revolution were different, the starting point of their promise and their changed attitude needs to be clarified. The changes they claimed for the state system at the beginning of the revolution and their promises to society under the Islamic rules were given within four sub-titles.

The first one is the political way of ruling the state as the Islamic Republic but its transformation into the *Velayat-e Faqih* administrative system. Since years before the revolution, Khomeini had talked about the Islamic Republic as a state system,

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<sup>152</sup> Hashim, *Ibid.*, p.55 cf. Andrew Rathmell, "Khamenei Strengthens His Grip", *Jane's Intelligence Review* (October 1995), p. 450.

<sup>153</sup> Bayat, *Ibid.*, p. 67.

a social life; and the people who became part of the revolution waited for a republic, in which they would be part of ruling the state in democratic ways. However, the attitude of *ulema*, their actions, and their implementations changed when they took the leadership of the victorious revolution. The *ulema* started to rule the system, and the other revolutionary groups were eliminated from the political processes. Khomeini and his *Velayat-e Fakihi* administration system in which he had the right to decide the appointment of critical positions in the state system like the Chief of the Joint Staff, the Chief Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards, the members of the Guardian Council and the Supreme Judge provided him with the supremacy, and power to keep the system in his hands. Therefore, at the end, the new system prevented society from being part of a democratic state.

The second important point to show the new regime's failure is its ideological claims. Although Khomeini had started with the ideology of Islamism and described himself as the protector of all *ummah* in the first years of the revolution, during the consolidation period of the state and power, his discourse on Iran's nation and territories changed. Khomeini had never emphasized Iran's nation and nationality; in contrast, he had given a point to Islam and Muslim identity. However, after Iraq's assault on Iran territories, his ideological discourse turned to a nationalist character more than Islamist. In order to mobilize society and increase their motivation for a long war, he started to focus on the importance of Iranian territories and Iran's nation and national unity. Thus, Khomeini himself could not successfully implement the initial Islamic claims of revolution, which suggested protecting all *ummah* and bringing all Muslims under the roof of Islam.

Furthermore, the new regime used sectarian differences between the Shiite and Sunni Muslims to motivate the Shiite Iranian society by putting more stress on the Shiite Islamic characteristics and discourse, especially during the war. The regime also used separatist policies between the Shiite and Sunni Muslims more than creating the unity between all Iranian Muslims. Saddam Hussein and the Baath Party's Sunni-Islam identity were always emphasized in Khomeini's discourses,

which used to motivate and increase the war's holiness in society's eye as a Shiite war against the Sunni enemies.

These nationalist and sectarian attitudes still determine Iran's domestic, regional, and international relationships. The nationalist and sectarian policies that started with the Khomeini's discourse were increasingly continued by the country's post-Khomeini leaders. That is why the title claimed the regime ideologically turned from Islamism to more nationalism and could not implement its claim to unify the Muslim world.

This chapter's third title tried to show inequalities in economic distribution between the *ulema* and their partners like the *bazaari* and the IRGC members. Although the *ulema* have criticized the unfair economic distribution of the Shah between the foreign investors and his own elites, who prioritized taking the oil and industrial sector incomes, they could not extinguish Iran's economic corruption. The Islamic regime claimed to change this unfair economic distribution by sharing its income with the *mustaz'afin* (the poor and nonprivileged groups) and establishing a more equalitarian and fair economic system. However, the regime could not provide society with oil incomes and economic benefits. The *bazaar* merchants who have close relationships with the *ulema* and critical opposition against the Shah became the country's new elites with their economic privilege. The regime provided the *bazaari* with the opportunities to manage the country's trade, industry, and oil sectors in which they received high amounts of income and turned one of the advantageous groups in the economic distribution. Besides the *bazaari*, the IRGC member's position in the state system had changed after the Iran-Iraq war. Although their duty was to protect the Islamic revolution and regime, their close relations and connections with the *ulema* and the *bazaaris* made them a shareholder in the economic distribution. The authority to rule the important *Bonyads* (the Foundations) was granted either to the *bazaaris* or to the members of IRGC. This economic domination and force of IRGC and the middle and large merchants on the critical foundation properties together and keeping economic income in their hands became one of Iran's most critical economic

problems. Since economic power meant not only the control of the public economy but also it meant that the internal and international relations, policies, trade, and income distribution were controlled by the IRGC and the merchant groups, which made them essential actors in the country. This means today that the regime can not to prove its initial claims as it did to found a fair and equal economic system in which Iranian society has the right to access the country's economic benefits.

The fourth and last title of this chapter is intended to show the suppression of the Islamic regime on society. Since the people against the Reza Shah monarchy demanded a freer state system where they would have more rights and be out of political suppression, the new regime claimed to establish a more participatory political system and promised them to annihilate the suppression. However, instead of decreasing suppression on society, the established state system increased oppression with stricter implementation of Islamic rules, which paved the way for people, especially women, to become more exposed to state control and suppression. The new Islamic Constitution abolished women's rights provided by the Shah's Family Protection Laws, which provided women with divorce rights and child custody after divorce. In addition to these changes, the veiling of women became gradually compulsive. Gender segregation policies implemented in public spaces caused men and women to have different living places and separate from each other, like restaurants, libraries, universities, etc. Also, the implementation of the Sharia rules for creating an Islamized society created the more suppressive regime that tried to control public virtue with the revolutionary forces, the *Basijis* and *Pasdarans*. It can be said that the new regime forces, the *Pasdaran* and *Basiji*, substituted the Shah's intelligence service SAVAK whose duties were to control society, determine the opponents and dissident groups of the Shah, and suppress them with fear. The *Basiji* and *Pasdaran's* presence in the streets to implement "moral principles" became an essential way of the regime's suppression and fear. Therefore, the Islamic regime could not ensure society to live free in public space; instead, their suppression and intimidation for creating Muslim society were

harsher than the Shah's regime's suppression for creating a modern and westernized society.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE FAILURE OF POLITICAL ISLAM IN RESPONDING TO SOCIAL DEMANDS**

This chapter intends to explain the failure of political Islam in Iran by examining three vital areas that determine the system's legitimacy for society. Therefore, this chapter will handle some crucial problems in Iran, which paved the way to strengthening political Islam's failure from society's perspective and how the crated system is not responding to the social demands. Since society's demands have not been responded to thoroughly by the regime or political Islam could not have the potential to satisfy these demands, social movements, economic crises, corruptions, high rates of migration, human rights violations and demonstrations and riots have occurred in Iran in the past 40 years. The first area of the failure is the political and ideological failures of political Islam in the election system, which prevented society from a free election, although the regime has an election system. Also, the women and minority's position and their prevention to be elected as a president is important evidence of fail of the regime to establish democratic election system.

The second is the failure of the economic system, especially after the revolution. Some groups' excessive richness has caused economic corruption and clientelism that also became a reason for creating an uncontrollable class in Iran. This class affected the country's unequal economic distribution and started to control the political elections, international relations, and the power balance in the country. Therefore, Islamic Iran has witnessed many uprisings due to economic reasons and the demands of society.

The third and most comprehensive failures of political Islam have been revealed in the social field. The restrictions in cultural life prevented people from producing

and contributing to cinema, theatre, arts and literature, and music. Besides, the suppression of the Islamic regime on women and LGBT members has caused to block their lives in society; even the implemented policies for LGBT members caused for them to choose to hide, migrate, or death but not the right to live in Iran. The other significant handicap of political Islam is in the education of women. Although the number of women is high enough in the universities, their salaries, positions, and existence are not equal to men either in the social, political, or economic areas. That is why women's struggle against the Islamic regime has continued in forty years both inside the country and diaspora. The Islamic state's suppression has also affected media freedom while also preventing the powerful non-governmental organization's existence. All of these preventions and suppressions in the social area have shown that political Islam is quite away from administering the system and responding to people's demands.

#### **4.1. Political/ Ideological Failures**

##### **4.1.1. Political Failures**

Although the new Islamic state was established with the Islamic ideology and the state constitution was based on Sharia rules, it can be seen in the years following the revolution that the policies of the regime changed, and the power of the state became more important than the existence of the Islamic identity of the regime. The Islamic identity of the state has been determined according to state benefits. It started with the Khomeini discourse about the *Velayat-e Faqih*,

There were six recognized Shia *marjas* of equal status in the world and individual Shii communities could choose to follow a particular *marja* based on their knowledge of his teachings and relevance they had to the individual, the Shii Iran proclaimed the validity of only one *marja* for political authority which all Shia should be allegiance of.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Povey, *Ibid.*, p. 74.

Therefore, the discussion between the other Shii *marjas* who live in different countries and Iran has continued with Khomeini's interpretation of the Islamic state's importance, especially while he gave primacy to the Islamic state than Islam itself. As Oliver Roy and Khosrokhavar indicate that Khomeini acted very clearly about giving priority to what is political. In this context, Khomeini's explanation of the Islamic States and Islam can be an important indicator of understanding his standpoint. Khomeini used these words: "The Iranian state is an Islamic state, so anything that consolidates this state is for the benefit of Islam, even if sometimes it needs to ignore *Sharia* and Islam itself."<sup>155</sup>

After his statement and implication, the state's Islamic ideology and identity started to be questioned: "whether the state should be for the benefit of Islam, as it claimed, or Islam was being deployed to the benefit of the state."<sup>156</sup>

The other meaningful discussion about the acceptance of *Velayat-e Faqih* authority by the other Shii religious authorities was revealed after the death of Khomeini. Although Ayatollah Montezari was determined as the successor of Khomeini because of being the only candidate as a *marja*, his oppositional position to the Islamic regime policies had caused his resignation in 1989. Therefore, the Assembly of Expert, which consists of religious authorities, and can appoint a supreme leader, chose Ali Khamenei as the new supreme leader of Iran. However, Khamenei did not have enough qualifications, which a supreme leader must have to be a religious leader of the Shiites. This situation caused the rewriting of the Constitution that offers the Faqih has to be qualified with a *Marja*, the country's highest religious man.<sup>157</sup> Before Khomeini's death, the Constitution was amended in 1989 due to Khamenei's situation. According to the new

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<sup>155</sup> Farhad Khosrokhavar and Olivier Roy, *Iran: Bir Devrimin Tükenişİ*, (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2013), p. 45.

<sup>156</sup> Povey, *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74; cf. Shahrough Akhavi, "Contending Discourses in Shici Law on the Doctrine of Wilayat Al-Faqih", *Iranian Studies*, 29 (3-4), (1996), p. 267.

arrangement of the Constitution, the requirement that one has to be a *marja* for the membership to the *Velayat-e Faqih* was abolished, and it became sufficient to have political power and ability to rule a state in order to become a candidate for the elections of the *Faqih* institution. Therefore, Khamenei was chosen not because of his religious authority but because of his political position since he was not even an Ayatollah when he became *Velayat-e Faqih*.<sup>158</sup> Of course, this change paved the way for decreasing the new system's reliability and acceptability both inside and outside of the Shia community and by the real Shii *Marja*. This contradiction and changes in *Velayat-e Faqih* principles were considered a weakness of the newly established system as an Islamic state. Mainly, the criticism against the supreme leadership of Khamenei arose from the Shii leader of Lebanon, Fadlallah, and Ayatollah Sistani, the highest Shii leader of Iraq outside of the country<sup>159</sup>, while critiques about his inadequacy according to the Shii theology continued in the country and Montezari is one of the most known of them.<sup>160</sup>

On the other hand, Ayatollah Montezari and his students have criticized the Guardian Council's anti-democratic nature and Islamic government practices in society. Montazeri's student Mohsen Kadivar criticized the Islamic regime policies and their contradiction with the revolutionary principles in terms of republicanism and human equality. Also, he emphasized that the system "made clergy appear as self-perpetuating political elites."<sup>161</sup> Thus, the Shiite ideology, which wanted to be adapted to the *Velayat-e Faqih* concept of Khomeini could not be successful in comprising all Shiite communities and legitimize itself as a strong Islamist ideology.

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<sup>158</sup> Khosrokhavar and Roy, *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>159</sup> Povey, *Ibid.*, p. 74 cf. Said Amir. Arjomand, "Constitutional Implications of Current Political Debates in Iran", *Contemporary Iran*, (2009) p. 249

<sup>160</sup> Khosrokhavar and Roy, *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>161</sup> Povey, *Ibid.*, p. 81.

The other critical failure of ideology in the Islamic State is losing the idealism of the revolution. Since the Islamists defended the unity of all Muslim society (ummah) and thought that the Western-rooted national states and republics are a tool for preventing ummah's unity, they reject accepting and applying it as a state system. However, the new state was established as the Iranian Islamic Republic, which had to compromise its idealistic thought and be more realistic. Even Islam itself started to be changed for the new state system. Of course, the *Velayat-e Faqih* idea, which was not accepted by the Shiite authorities because of not fitting the Shia doctrine<sup>162</sup>, became the most powerful basement in the new state system. "Khomeini himself started to defend the *raison d'etat* of the new state more than Islam and its practices."<sup>163</sup> Instead of creating a united Islamic world and being the protector of all ummah and Islam, the Islamic Republic policies, especially with the Iran-Iraq War, deepened the country's nationalist "Iranian" identity while also paved the way for increasing sectarianism in the region. Like all modern states that the Islamists are against, the Iranian Islamic Republic had to accept realism as a state policy and compromised their idealistic claims in forty-two years of the revolution, which also supports this thesis' idea of ideological failure of political Islam in Iran.

#### 4.1.2. Failures of Election System

The Islamic Republic of Iran's election system became one of Iran's most critical and problematic issues in terms of the principles of "democratic elections". Since the election system cannot be explained as a democratic system in which people have an option to choose their candidate freely, it has been called a sham election system.

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<sup>162</sup> Povey, *Ibid.*, p.73 cf. Arjomand, *Ibid.*, p. 249.

<sup>163</sup> He said the pilgrimage could be prevented in case of the interests of the country is at stake, and he even said in a Friday sermon the the national interests could be prioritized to the Islamic rules. Also, Rasoul Namazi "Ayatollah Khomeini: From Islamic Government to Sovereign State", *Iranian Studies*, 52:1-2, (2019), pp. 111-131.

When the Islamic state was established, a new constitution was created based on the Sharia (the Islamic rule), and the Majles had to make laws according to the principles of Islam. The laws have to protect the integrity of Islam with the Constitution.<sup>164</sup> However, in order to ensure the integrity of the law and Islamic principles, the Guardian Council, which controls the parliament (legislate), was also established. The position of Guardian Council was explained in article 91 of the Constitution;

The Guardian Council shall be established with a view to safeguard the rules of Islam and the Constitution and to see that the approval of the Majlis are [sic] not inconsistent with them.<sup>165</sup>

The authority and responsibility of the Guardian Council were determined in the Constitution in the article 4th:

All civil, penal, financial economic, administrative, cultural, military, political and other laws and regulations must be based on Islamic criteria. This principle applies absolutely and generally to all articles of the Constitution as well as to all other laws and regulations and the Guardian Council are judges in this matter.<sup>166</sup>

It means that even the Majlis approves a law, the Guardian Council has the authority to veto the approved law. Therefore, the Expediency Discernment Council (Mecme' Teşhis-i Maslahat-i Nizam) was established in 1988 by Khomeini. The Council took constitutional status with the 1989 constitution to extinguish the contradictions between the Majlis and Guardian Council if an agreement cannot be reached between them.<sup>167</sup> However, the Expediency

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<sup>164</sup> Mandana Naini, "Iran's Second Chamber? The Guardian Council", *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 12(2), (2006), p. 200.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> Mehmet Koç, "İran'da Devlet Yapısı ve Temel Kurumlar-I: Devrim Rehberliği", (25 November 2017) Retrieved April 04, 2021, from <https://www.iramcenter.org/iranda-devlet-yapisi-ve-temel-kurumlar-i-devrim-rehberligi/>

Discernment Council is also responsible for protecting the state orders and detecting the problematic issues for the state's benefit. It also shows that the law's context that legislates in the parliament is not essential than the state's benefit. Khosrokhavar&Roy accept the Expediency Council's existence as proof of the priority of politics to the juridical.<sup>168</sup>

The given authorities both to the Guardian Council and the Expediency Council caused the legislation process to be prevented and not an effective way to change some problematic issues in the Majlis. Because while the bill is decided in the Majlis and sent to the Guardian Council, they are generally killed, especially if it comes from the reformist side. The Majlis has the right to regulate the bill and send the Guardian Council again, but generally, it is not working. Therefore, the bill directly can transmit to the Expediency Council if the Guardian council rejects it once. The Expediency Council have three options:

Passed the bill as law (siding with the I.C.A. if not making its own legislation); rejected the I.C.A.'s decision (thus killing the bill and siding with the Guardian Council); or kept the bill unanswered (delayed). The Expediency Council uses delay as an alternative for blocking a bill, and in some cases this has had the same effect as killing a bill.<sup>169</sup>

Under Khatemi's presidency (1997-2001), the six *majles* had witnessed these kinds of struggles with the Guardian Council and the Expediency Council, especially in social issues like preventing discrimination against women; the bills were not accepted or rejected by the Expediency Council.<sup>170</sup> These complexities in the election and legislation systems paved the way for society to not rely on the system and not believe that the changes would come through the election. That is why the participation of society in the election decreased for the seventh *majles*.

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<sup>168</sup> Khosrokhavar and Roy, *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>169</sup> Naini, *Ibid.*, p. 212.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

The elections of the seventh Majlis had the lowest turnout in its post-revolutionary history. According to the data released by the country's Ministry of the Interior, the average rate of participation in the past six elections was 62.12 percent, the lowest being the first I.C.A. elections (52 percent) and the highest being the fifth I.C.A. (71 per cent). The ministry figures show participation in the seventh Majlis at 50 per cent (urban and rural population).<sup>171</sup>

The presidential elections are held on every four years, and the president as the head of government, the *majles*, and the Assembly of Experts, choose the people to elect the Supreme leader. However, the problem is based on the existence of the Guardian Council, which was established to control the parliament. Since the presidential candidates are not able to be a candidate without the approbation of the Guardian Council, the election cannot be described as a free or democratic election. The candidates have to be elected by the Guardian Council first, and then society can vote for the approved candidates. Therefore, it cannot be said that the people directly can choose their candidates. Instead, they have to choose the chosen one. That is why "most Iranians thought that the Islamic regime elections are just choosing between worse and bad"<sup>172</sup> because all chosen candidates have already stemmed from the same deciding institution, and those "unsuitable" ones, who seem to be a threat for the Islamic State and the *Velayat-e Faqih*, cannot find any chance to be in the election or any position in the state system.

The 1997 presidential election revealed how the Guardian Council directly affects the election system and blocks candidates from participating in the election. In the 1997 election, 238 candidates applied for presidential candidacy, but just four could find a chance to be a candidate; the Guardian Council directly rejected the others' applications.<sup>173</sup> Although the candidates were rejected because of being inexperienced in politics and not found Islamist enough, the main reason prevented the candidates who have a relative oppositional position, of course not

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<sup>171</sup> Naini, *Ibid.*, p. 216.

<sup>172</sup> Yassamine Mather, "Iran's Political and Economic Crises", *Critique*, 38:3, (2010), p. 503.

<sup>173</sup> Khosrokhavar and Roy, *Ibid.*, p. 34.

to the regime itself but some implementations of the system. It also shows the supremacy of the religious leader, the *Velayat-e Faqih*, who appoints the six members of the 12 Guardian Council from the ulema. Therefore, the supreme leader's absolute power can affect the system, although it does not seem to be directly involved.

The same problem occurred in 2004, and the reformists claimed that the Guardian Council rejected their 3000 candidates' application for president election.<sup>174</sup> Both candidates and society criticized the determining power of the Guardian Council on the election and legislation process. Therefore, the reformists boycotted the 2004 elections to show their dissidence to the regime. That is why the participation rate in the 2004 election decreased thirty percent in Tehran while fifty percent in general. Nevertheless, the other important point is that the numbers of participants were seventy percent in the previous election to support Khatemi's second term of presidency.<sup>175</sup> The Guardian Council's blocking the reformists during the legislation and their candidacy process paved the way for losing their hope for changes to come with the election. Even the candidacy of the head of parliament's national security and foreign commission, Mohsen Mirdami, was rejected by the Council, and he described the situation in his explanation not as an election but the selection:

They have barred certain individuals in every electoral constituency in order to clear the way for their favorite candidates, By doing so, they have practically specified the make-up of the seventh parliament from now, and this is not an election, but a selection.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Naini, *Ibid.*, pp. 198-222.

<sup>175</sup> William O. Beeman, "Elections and Governmental Structure in Iran: Reform Lurks under the Flaws", *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 11(1), (2004), p. 60.

<sup>176</sup> "Iran reformists' Protest Continues", (January 12, 2004). Retrieved April 08, 2021, from <http://edition.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/meast/01/12/iran.walkout/>

While students protest the same situation with the slogan "Jannati is the enemy of the nation", Jannati was the head of the Guardian Council.<sup>177</sup>

The Islamic regime has been criticized due to the election system since the system was established in 1979. Although some changes have been made in the Constitution, and the Councils' authorities were changed during the years, the same point stays certain: the established system has been far away to satisfy society's demands and be reliable for them. As long as the opposition and the reformists are not considered to be qualified to represent different parts of society, the circles outside the governing elite see the system as not able to reflect democratic requests of the people. The position of women and both religious and ethnic minorities in the election system also show the election system is quite away to create a floor for representation of the different groups and why these underrepresented groups of society have boycotted the elections throughout the years.

#### **4.1.2.1. Positions of Minorities in the Election System**

Iran is one of the critical countries with an important religious and ethnic minority population in the Middle East. Having different minorities, both religious and ethnic has been a problematic issue for the country, especially from the Reza Shah period with his harsh centralization and Persianism policies. Reza Shah and his successor, Muhammad Reza Pahlavi's pressures on the ethnic minorities for the state's unification and enforcing the Persian language caused non-Persian societies to experience severe problems in Iran.<sup>178</sup> Therefore, while the revolutionary uprisings began, the minorities' grievances against these discriminative policies became a critical fuel for the base of uprisings in the many parts of the country.

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<sup>177</sup> Pouya Alimagham, "On the Streets and Beyond: Crowd Action and the Symbolic Appropriation of the Past", in *Contesting the Iranian Revolution: The Green Uprisings*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 112.

<sup>178</sup> Kerim Yıldız & Tayşi Tanyel, "Iranian State Policy and the Kurds: Politics and Human Rights", in *The Kurds in Iran: the Past, Present and Future*, (London: Pluto Press, 2007), p. 34.

However, the support of minorities for deposing the Shah from the throne could not become a useful tool or did not open a new way for the living conditions of the minorities.

Furthermore, it can be said that the establishment of the Islamic Republic deepened the discrimination against the minorities, even though the 13th article of the Islamic Republic Constitution mentions the recognition of religious minorities like Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians.<sup>179</sup> The recognition is just limited to these three religions; Bahai and the Sunni minorities and other religions are totally out of credit and acceptance. In addition to the recognition of religious minorities above, there is also a clear indication of a sect in article 12, which underlined the official religion as Islam and "*Ithna Ashari*" (Twelve Imam- Shia Sect):

The official religion of Iran shall be Islam and faith Jafari Athna Ashari, and this article shall be eternal and immutable. Other Islamic faith, such as the Hanefi, Shafei, Maleki, Hanbali, and Zaidi, shall enjoy full respect. The followers of these faiths are free to carry out their religious rites according to their own Fegh their religious education and training, personal status(marriage, divorce, inheritance and will) and lawsuit related thereto shall be officially recognized by courts of law. In any region where the followers of these faiths have a majority, the local rules and regulations, within the scope of authorities of councils, shall be in conformity with these faiths, by reserving the right of followers of other faiths.<sup>180</sup>

Therefore, the fact that the Shii Sect is officially recognized in the Iranian Constitution directly affects the Sunni minority positions in the Islamic Republic. Although article 12 promised them to be free to live their faith in the country, it has not been implemented in the political system. The regime neither recognized religious minorities as part of the country nor actively made Islamic sects part of the Islamic regime. Since the regime has prevented these groups from participating in politics, they could not be a part of the ruling class or get a high and influential

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<sup>179</sup> Islamic Parliament of Iran. (n.d.). Retrieved April 15, 2021, from <https://en.parliran.ir/eng/en/Constitution>

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

position in the state system. The Sunni parliamentarians have criticized this sectarian strife besides "they complained about the low numbers of Sunnis in high government position as well as academia, and have criticized the failure of authorities to recognize the rights granted to other practitioners of Islam under the article of the constitution."<sup>181</sup>

Although there are Kurdish deputies in the parliament, they do not have freedom of expression and cannot go beyond the framework drawn by the regime.<sup>182</sup> On the one hand, these deputies have to act as much as the regime allowed them; otherwise, their existence in the parliament would not be possible. On the other, acting in accordance with the regime does not mean anything for the minorities since their grievances cannot be reflected or changed in the parliament. So, being represented in the parliament under the regime's limitations does not provide any achievements or free representation for the minorities. It is not going beyond sham democracy that mentions different groups' names and their existence in the country, parliament, and Constitution but not giving any right to express freely. In this context, there is no democratic platform for expressing and criticizing the regime's problematic attitude to the Kurds or other minority groups mentioned in the Constitution.

Since the parliament and elections do not respond to minority demands, the minorities have boycotted the elections many times. Although Khatemi tried to change the discrimination against the minorities in the political sphere, he was prevented by the hardline conservatives. When he won the election in 1997, he appointed Abdollah Ramazanzadeh as the first Kurdish governor of Iran Kurdistan. Although he was a Shiite, it was the first time a Kurdish was appointed to this position. And Khatemi appointed many Sunnis to the critical position in the government. The pressure of the conservatives on the reformists and their deputies

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<sup>181</sup> James Ciment, "The Kurds: State and Minority in Turkey, Iraq, and Iran", *The Kurds in Iran: the Past, Present and Future*, (New York: Pluto Press, 1996), p. 49.

<sup>182</sup> Yildiz & Tanyel, *Ibid.*, p. 32.

in the second term of Khatemi's reign paved the way for the reformists to slow down the Sunni and Kurds' position in the government, which also caused the Kurdish deputies and representatives to resign and boycotted the 2004 election by 70 percent.<sup>183</sup>

There are many religious and ethnic minority groups in Iran like the Kurds, Azeris, Turcomans, Belucis, Arabs, Armenians, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, Bahais, Assyrians, and Luris. A wide ethnic classification shows that 51 percent of the population is Persian, 24 percent is Azeri and 7 percent is Kurd.<sup>184</sup> Although all of these groups have a problematic relationship with the Islamic regime, some of them, like the Arabs, Baluchis, and Kurds, have been under the harsher pressure of the Islamic regime than the others for two reasons. The first one is that the Arabs, Belucci's, and Kurds as non- Persian groups have a higher population living in the country's borders and close relationships with their ethnic peoples across borders. The Arabs share the same border with Iraq's Arabs, and the Baluchis in the East are closer with the Belucis of Afghanistan and Pakistan. At the same time, the Kurds have close relations with the Kurds of Iraq, Turkey, and Syria in the West part of Iran. Because of sharing the same ethnic identity with their border neighbors, they have been perceived as a threat to the territorial unity of Iran.<sup>185</sup> The second reason is that these are directly "double minority" groups in the country. That means that they are minorities both religiously and ethnically, separating them from the Azeris because Iran's Azeris have a Shia identity. It indeed provides these single identity groups with different advantages in the regime in which the Shiite identity is officially recognized as its religion. Although the Azeri population is high enough as a non-Persian group, they are not perceived as a secessionist group like the Kurds and Belucis.<sup>186</sup> That is why their positions

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<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>184</sup> Eliz Sanasarian, *Religious Minorities in Iran*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 9.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

in the Islamic regime are better off than the Kurds and Belucis. They can get high positions in the state if they are not against *Velayat-e Faqih*'s idea and the regime's implementations. This means that being a Shii is more important than having a different ethnic identity for the Islamic regime. The religious leader, Khamenei, is a vital example in this context since Khamenei himself came from the Azeri ethnic identity.

#### **4.1.2.2. Women in the Political and Election System**

Women questions of Iran and their struggle with the regime have been an important issue since the establishment of the Islamic Republic, which will be given with more details in the following section under the women's situation in education and social area. This sub-section, however, includes the women's position in the election system and their struggle to be a part of the country's elections, which has also been used as an effective tool to keep women from having crucial positions in the state system.

Although the Islamic Republic constitution does not include any direct law that prevents women from being in a high position in the system, the implementations of Sharia in practice directly affect women's existence in the system and institutionalizes gender inequality in Iran. The banning of women from being president of the country and banning them from judge positions (women judges partially allowed for family courts after 1990), and determining gender-based jobs<sup>187</sup> can be examples of how women are restricted with the implementations of the Islamic regime.

The article 115 of the English version of the Iran constitution referred to "him" when it defines the qualities that the president of Iran should have.

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<sup>187</sup> Azadeh Kian, "Gendered Citizenship and the Women's Movement in Iran", (February 09, 2012), Retrieved April 30, 2021, from <https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/iran-revolutionary-republic-transition>

He shall be Iranian origins, have Iranian citizenship, be efficient and prudent, have a record of good reputation, honesty and piety and be true and faithful to the essentials of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the official Faith of the country.<sup>188</sup>

Therefore, it can be said that by referring to "he", the regime directly annihilates the possibility of the women's presidency. Because of the interpretation of the word "he" which used as "rejaal" (An Arabic word that means men) in the Persian version of the Constitution, the issue is controversial in the country.<sup>189</sup> Some interpreters claim that it does not refer to the specific gender, but still, women cannot be candidates for the presidency.<sup>190</sup> At the same time, the article also emphasizes the country's official faith, which also prevents non-Shii members from being president.

The Guardian Council's power on the election system and the presidential candidates becomes apparent again when the women apply for the presidential elections. Like the reformist candidates' applications in the 2009 election, the Guardian Council rejected 42 women's candidacies for the presidential election.<sup>191</sup> A former reformist parliamentary Elaheh Koolaee, also mentions the Guardian Council's effects on the decision about the changing of women status in her article:

The reformist parliament tried to change women's legal status by focusing laws related to issues such as inheritance, divorce, child custody, and insurance. The reformist government ratified and the parliament approved the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

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<sup>188</sup> Islamic Parliament of Iran. (n.d.). Retrieved April 15, 2021, from <https://en.parliran.ir/eng/en/Constitution>

<sup>189</sup> Delaram Farzaneh, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back: A Brief History of Legal Discriminations against Women in Iran and the Violations of International Human Rights", *Annual Survey of International and Comparative Law*, 20, (2014), p. 229.

<sup>190</sup> Anulekha Nandi, "Women in Iran", (August 2015), Retrieved May 01, 2021, from [https://www.academia.edu/16703158/Women\\_in\\_Iran](https://www.academia.edu/16703158/Women_in_Iran)

<sup>191</sup> Iranonline, *Islamic Republic of Iran Constitution, Powers and Authority of the Islamic Consultative Assembly*, from <http://www.iranonline.com/iran/iran-info/government/constitution-6-2.html>, retrieved 2 May 2021.

However, the Guardian Council rejected CEDAW, interpreting it as in contradiction with Islamic values.<sup>192</sup>

However, women have continued to put their candidacy for the presidency despite the rejection of the Guardian Council. It can be evaluated as some kind of women's resistance against the regime and their system. It also shows the women's resistance to recognizing the regime's and the constitution's attitude. That is why women do not abandon being candidates. A member of the Guardian Council, Mohammad Yazdi, had to explain the rejection of women's application for candidacy when 30 women were rejected for the 2013 presidential election again. He explained the refusals with "law does not approve of women in presidency and women on the ballot is not allowed."<sup>193</sup>

Women's political participation and representation in the parliament are also crucial for understanding women's limited existence in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Even though the number of women in the parliament has increased over the years, it is still far from reflecting and representing Iranian women's demands and grievances against the regime.

Four women were elected in the first parliament of the Islamic Republic in 1980. Masoumeh Ebtekar, the first women vice-president, was appointed after fifteen years during the Khatemi presidency in 1995. This was the highest political position a woman has accessed.<sup>194</sup> However, Masoumeh Ebtekar was a woman who actively supported the Islamic regime from the beginning of the revolutionary uprisings and took a critical position during the revolution process. She was the spokeswomen when the Muslim Students Following Imam Line occupied the U.S.

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<sup>192</sup> Elahah Koolae, "New Challenges for Iranian Women", (January 29, 2009), Retrieved May 03, 2021, from <https://www.mei.edu/publications/new-challenges-iranian-women>

<sup>193</sup> Nandi, *Ibid.*, cf BBC News, "Iran election: Cleric Rules Out Women Candidates", (16 May 2013), <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middleeast-22560976>, accessed 02 May 2021

<sup>194</sup> Nandi, *Ibid.*, p. 13, from [https://www.academia.edu/16703158/Women\\_in\\_Iran](https://www.academia.edu/16703158/Women_in_Iran)

embassy, and the American diplomats were held hostage for 444 days in Tehran.<sup>195</sup> Therefore, women who have high positions in the parliament and the other crucial points in the state system came from the same background and have not changed the regime's discriminative policies in women issues.

When Ahmedinejad became president after the mass protests of the 2009 election, he became the first president who appointed a woman as a minister, Marzieh Vahid-Dastjerdi, to the Minister of Health and Medical Education in the thirty years of the Islamic Republic of Iran<sup>196</sup>. It was probably because of the high participation of women in the 2009 election protests, also known as the Green Movement against Ahmedinejad. Therefore, participating in demonstrations and uprisings provided women to continue to be effective in different areas of the country despite all restrictions on women's existence. Thus, the numbers of women in the different spheres of crucial positions have slowly been increasing over the years. To illustrate, Rouhani appointed four women as vice-president and three women as governor of the small towns in 2013.<sup>197</sup> The new term women deputies and vice presidents were relatively more sensitive to women's problems than the first terms women in the parliament. Shahindokht Mollaverdi, the vice-president for the Women and Family Affairs in Rouhani's cabinet, expressed her ideas about the Sixth Development Plan, which did not include any response to the women problems with the following words:

This plan was supposed to have an innovative and comprehensive outlook on all of the issues facing Iranian society. The initial impression was that women would have their own specific portion, but after the items of this plan became known, it became clear that the initial impression of active females in the body of the

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<sup>195</sup> For details, Masoumeh Ebtekar, "Takeover in Tehran: The Inside Story of the 1979 U.S. Embassy Capture", (Vancouver, BC: Talonbooks, 2000).

<sup>196</sup> Nandi, *Ibid.*, p. 13, cf, Mohammad H. Nayyeri, 'Gender inequality and discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', March 2013, <http://iranhrdc.org/english/publications/legal-commentary/1000000261-gender-inequality-and-discrimination-the-caseof-iranian-women.html>, Iran Human Rights Documentation Center, accessed 20 August 2015.

<sup>197</sup> Haleh Esfandiari, "Hassan Rouhani's Women's Rights Conundrum," *Wilson Center*, (November 17, 2015), <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/hassan-rouhanis-womens-rights-conundrum>

administration was wrong ... We hope that the Management and Planning Organization creates positive changes for the position, dignity and status of women in society.<sup>198</sup>

The numbers and percentage of women in the parliament are still very limited (The current parliament consists of just 16 woman deputies while the number of men is 286 )<sup>199</sup> to change women's situation. Women have to overcome multiple layers of barriers, like their position in the Sharia, unchangeable constitutional articles on women, and the institutionalized conservatives in the state system. However, the high participation of women in the elections as presidential candidates, deputy candidates, and voting for the election has shown that women do not give up on struggling against the regime and the gender discrimination of the election system. Furthermore, they continue to be an important actor in protests, uprisings, and social movements as they proved it with their existence in the Green Movement, the mass protests against the 2009 election, and the election system of the regime.

#### **4.1.3. The Green Movement (2009)**

The Green Movement, which started after the presidential election in 2009, is a crucial cornerstone because it was the most crowded protest, the unrest which shows the reactions and dissidence of Iranian society to the Islamic regime since the Islamic Revolution.<sup>200</sup> The movement started with the people's reactions who voted for reformist candidates, Mir Hussein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi to the election results. Since before the election, the reformist candidates had great support from society, and both candidates and their supporters were sure that the

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<sup>198</sup> Arash Karami, "Rouhani VP Voices Frustration with Administration", (February 6, 2015); Retrieved May 02, 2021, from <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/02/shahindokht-molaverdi-iran-hassan-rouhani-women-affairs.html>

<sup>199</sup> [https://data.ipu.org/content/iran-islamic-republic?chamber\\_id=13421](https://data.ipu.org/content/iran-islamic-republic?chamber_id=13421)

<sup>200</sup> Fatemeh Haghighatjoo, "The Green Movement and Political Change in Iran", in D. Brumberg & F. Farhi (eds.), *Power and Change in Iran: Politics of Contention and Conciliation*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), p. 225.

election would be won by reformists. However, after a few hours of ending the votes' count, the election results were announced contrary to expectations. The conservative leader Ahmedinejad was declared the winner of the 2009 presidential election of Iran. Neither the reformist candidates nor society was expecting this result, and they refused to accept and claimed the votes of reformists were not counted or somehow were stolen. The protests began on June 13 in Tehran streets, and protesters demanded to recount their votes with a straightforward slogan: "*Rey-e Men Koca Est?*" (Where is my vote).<sup>201</sup>

Although the protests started with peaceful demonstrations in silence wearing or carrying green color, which was also used in the Mosevi campaign and then became the sign of the protest, the regime's harsh interference increased the tension between protesters and pro-regime forces *Basiji*. As it is known, the *Basiji* is a part of IRGC, and the close relations between Ahmedinejad and the IRGC have already been criticized by society since his first term of presidency. The IRGC's support of Ahmedinejad as the presidential candidate caused extreme pressure against the demonstrators in Tehran Street. *Basiji* forces shot even a young woman, Neda Agha Soltan, during a non-violent demonstration of the Green movement.<sup>202</sup> The whole world witnessed her death moment with a video that became viral on social media. Therefore, the regime's overreaction to the peaceful protests paved the way for increasing demonstrators' reaction, and the movement turned out to be a civil disobedience a few days later. During the protests, thousands of protesters were beaten, hundreds were arrested, and dozens were killed by the regime forces.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Povey, *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>202</sup> Ali M. Ansari, *Crisis of Authority: Iran's 2009 Presidential Election* (London, UK: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2010), p. 62.

<sup>203</sup> Muhammad Sahimi, "Martyrs of the Green Movement", (June 19, 2010); Retrieved February 21, 2021, from <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2010/06/martyrs-of-the-green-movement.html>

The Green Movement cannot be evaluated as a simple reaction of society for the election fraud; it should be evaluated and handled with a background of social grievances. It resulted from the Islamic regime's pressure, the undemocratic election system, economic crises, discrimination against women, minorities, and LGBT members, and the ongoing problems that society has been exposed to but not found a chance to express since the establishment of the Islamic Republic. On the other hand, it cannot be evaluated as an organized direct uprising that targeted the Islamic regime or the *Velayat-e Faqih*. Even the reformist leader Mousavi himself came from the Islamic regime's core and had an influential position in the Islamic Republic in the first years of the revolution. Furthermore, it was also known that Mousavi himself became an important figure for the elimination of opponents who upraised against the Islamic regime in the first years of the revolution.<sup>204</sup> Therefore, it can be said that the movement was not against the Islamic regime or the *Velayat-e Faqih* directly. Mousavi spent significant effort to keep the demonstrations in peace and far away from violence and underline the demonstrations' purpose by warning the crowd to keep them away from radical slogans against the regime during the demonstrations.<sup>205</sup>

Iranian society has some important reasons to show their grievance to the regime via election uprisings, especially not accepting Ahmedinejad's presidency one more term. Since the conservative Ahmedinejad reign brought many problems to Iran society, which had experienced a relatively freer term in the Mohammed Khatemi reign from 1997 to 2005 before him, the strict conservative attitude of Ahmedinejad was not be tolerated by society once again. As Slater Bakhtavar pointed out:

Iran human right record has reached new lows, the security and intelligence services controlled by his administration have led an ever-expanding crackdown

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<sup>204</sup> Mather, *Ibid.*, p. 510.

<sup>205</sup> Haghighatjoo, *Ibid.*, pp. 228-229.

against the peaceful activist, women, dissidents. In addition to the prosecution and imprisonment of peaceful activists, Ahmedinejad's presidency has also created an intense atmosphere of fear and intimidation across most sectors of the country's once vibrant and growing civil society.<sup>206</sup>

Moreover, society's dissidence came from not only the suppression of their social life but also the severe economic crisis that opened a road to many uprisings from teachers, bus drivers, and the other worker classes. Ahmedinejad was not able to put the oil money to the tables of poor as he claimed <sup>207</sup>; on the contrary, as Asef Bayat states, economic life collapsed in Iran:

Under Ahmedinejad's government, subsidies were cut, privatization reached new heights( an eighteen-fold increase from 2001-3) and 25 percent of the inflation rate brought low-income people to their knees. Ahmedinejad's 2005 campaign focused on fighting corruption, generating jobs and redistributing oil money. But under his government, cronyism and corruption exploded and there was a 13 percent increase in people living below the poverty.<sup>208</sup>

Furthermore, the pressure on women reached a peak during Ahmedinejad's first term of presidency. His most aggressive policy was Social Security Plan (Tarh-e Amniyat-e Ejtemai) against women; this plan targeted "improperly-veiled" women and paved the way for women to be exposed to the *Basiji* attacks on the streets just because of their veiling. <sup>209</sup>Also, there were more restricted implementations on women and youth during the first presidency reign of Ahmedinejad. With the Plan to Promote Public Chastity, he tried to force all institutions to compel women to dress codes and restricted women and men relations in workplaces, universities, and many other public spaces. Moreover, the universities launched a gender quota system to decrease the number of female

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<sup>206</sup> Bakhtavar Slater, *Iran: The Green Movement*, ( Irving, Texas: Parsa Enterprises, 2009).

<sup>207</sup> Povey, *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>208</sup> Asef Bayat, "A Wave for Life and Liberty: The Green Movement and Iran's Incomplete Revolution", in N. Hashemi and D. Postel (eds.), *The People Reloaded: The Green Movement and the Struggle for Iran's Future*, (New York: Melville House, 2011), p. 50.

<sup>209</sup> Farzaneh, *Ibid.*, pp. 219-220.

students by favoring those of men.<sup>210</sup> Since the numbers of female students were higher than men, the quota system seemed to be a solution for keeping women at home and making them more obedient to their husbands. Therefore, it can be said that the participation and support of the women in the Green Movement became the symbol of the movement have reasons and backgrounds. Unlike Ahmedinajad's conservative lines, Mousavi stood at a relatively liberal point that the Iranian youth, students, women, activists, and reformists have been demanding since the Islamic Republic's establishment. Also, Mousavi was supported by Mohammed Khatemi, the predecessor of Ahmedinejad. Khatemi has been accepted as the more liberal, reformist, and moderate president of the Islamic Republic who tried to create a more liberal atmosphere for society, especially in terms of women, human rights, freedom of media, and supporting non-governmental organizations.<sup>211</sup> That is why the movement, to some extent, was evaluated as the continuation of the reform movements of Khatemi's reign.<sup>212</sup> The Green Movement turned to a tool for expressing society's demands for freedom, gender equality, human rights, and economic crisis for society. However, neither the movement nor the demands of society found a positive response by the Islamic state. In contrast, the movement was crushed, society was pressured, the protestors were arrested very harshly, and their demands and requests from the Islamic regime were ignored once again. While the Green Movement leaders have been kept in house arrest, thousands of journalists, and reformists, students have also been the target of the regime and accused of being associated with demonstrations between 2009-2010.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Azadeh Kian, "Gendered Citizenship and the Women's Movement in Iran", (February 09, 2012), Retrieved April 30, 2021, from <https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/iran-revolutionary-republic-transition>

<sup>211</sup> Omid Payrov Shabani, "The Green's Non-Violent Ethos: The Roots of Non-Violence in the Iranian Democratic Movement", *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory*, 20(2), (2013). pp. 350-351.

<sup>212</sup> Haghighatjoo, *Ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>213</sup> Povey, *Ibid.*, p. 92.

The Green Movement was important not only because of being a strong floor to reveal society's grievances against the state but also because it revealed one of the most critical issues, the IRGC power, both on election results and keeping society under control. Since Khamenei used IRGC forces *Basiji* to suppress the uprisings, their power in the political sphere increased, although they had enough wealth and power in the economic system, they also started to be more effective in political system. Ali Alfoneh states the increasing IRGC influence on politics "weakened Khamenei and his clerical regime and paved the way for the rise of officers class of the IRGC as the new masters of Islamic Regime."<sup>214</sup> Furthermore, according to Alfoneh, Khamenei calls IRGC to incorporate into the political issues provide him with an opportunity to suppress the movement. However, it would cause the Islamic Republic's transformation into a military dictatorship by the IRGC in the long term.<sup>215</sup>

Safhekan and Sabet think that the Khatemi period also became an opportunity for growing IRGC power in two ways. Their role was cemented as the premier regime security institution, and they were used as an effective tool to block the reformist movements in the system since the conservatives needed them to be supported while the conflicts occurred between the two sides.<sup>216</sup> According to them;

It arrayed itself in parallel to Reformist-controlled security and intelligence bodies including the IRI Armed Forces (IRIAF), the National Security Force (N.S.F.), and the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MoIS). IRGC Intelligence and the Basij in particular began usurping the role played by the MoIS and N.S.F.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Ali Alfoneh, "All the Guard's Men: Iran's Silent Revolution", *World Affairs*, 173 (3), (2010), p. 73.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> Roozbeh Safshekan & Farzan Sabet, "The Ayatollah's Praetorians: The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the 2009 Election Crisis", *The Middle East Journal*, 64 (4), (2010), p. 548.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

On the other hand, Ahmedinejad's cabinet in Majlis in both 2005 and 2009 shows that many cabinet members were the IRGC members, twelve out of twenty-one ministers were former IRGC members, and this number was the highest in the Islamic Republic history.<sup>218</sup> Ahmedinejad himself was a former IRGC officer and the first president out of the cleric groups. Therefore, the support of IRGC to Ahmedinejad in the 2009 election and his support to the IRGC members in his cabinet and reign created a mutual advantage. However, on the other side, it paved the way for deepening dissidence and society's grievances, particularly for elections, generally for the state system. More importantly, it revealed the unprevented class who control the economy, society, and policy; therefore, their powerful existence was apparent much more in recent years, especially they became one of the most critical groups who have tried to prevent president Rouhani from establishing a dialog with the U.S.A. and E.U.<sup>219</sup>

#### **4.2. Economic Failures**

Iran's economic problems have been one of the Islamic regime's critical issues from the beginning of the Islamic Republic to today. It has continued to be the most important point of critique in society against the regime. Although the country has one of the most significant oil and natural gas reserves, which has the second-largest natural gas reserve in the world, it is just holding 1% of the world gas market; even the regime developed 23 gas fields from 50 research areas.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Alfoneh, *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>219</sup> Mohammad Hossein Ziya, "The Fall or Rise of the IRGC?" (April 24, 2019); Retrieved February 25, 2021, from <https://www.mei.edu/publications/fall-or-rise-irgc> Also, R. Farzam, "İran Dış Politikasında Devrim Muhafızları Ordusunun Artan Etkisi", (August 21, 2020); Retrieved February 25, 2021, from <https://iramcenter.org/iran-dis-politikasinda-devrim-muhafizlari-ordusunun-artan-etkisi/>

<sup>220</sup> Mahnaz Zahirinejad, "The Economic Effects of Sanctions and the Iranian Middle Class", in *Iran in the International System: Between Great Powers and Great Ideas*, (London: Routledge, 2019), p. 117.

Being an Islamic regime and determining a radical policy against the West and East with "neither West nor East" policies and understanding brought strict isolation from the world economic system in the Republic's first years. Then the sanctions become the primary tool for the foreign countries with problematic relationships with the Islamic Republic; the U.S.A. has become the pioneer to implement strict isolation and embargo programs against the regime. In addition to being sentenced to harsh economic isolation, the Iran-Iraq war, which occurred immediately after the revolution, paved the way for spending considerable money on military power and the war.

The war's economic outcomes were not limited to the battlefield; spreading the war to the cities also caused the spending of a serious amount of money to rebuild them. Therefore, after a prolonged war that took eight years, the regime had to initiate a reconstruction period with President Rafsanjani. This period comprised the privatization of the state enterprises and the establishment of a free economic system, which led to creating a new class that would control Iran's economy, and the election and political system besides their military power in recent years, IRGC. The new economic system constituted the new elites in the regime who have shared the country's income while the masses have been exposed to the high inflation and the embargos' effects. For these reasons, the regime failed to become the state of the *mustazafin* and keep society out of economic hardships and poverty, which also became one of the fundamental reasons for society to rise and be against the regime. Mohammad Hossein Panahi's words directly reflect society's expectation from the new administration when they upraised against the shah regime:

The population of Iran, due to high level of dissatisfaction with the shah's regime and its cultural disposition, wanted to set up a new regime, which they named the Islamic Republic, in order to achieve political freedom, essentials rights, and political independence and this way to establish Islam and Islamic cultural values in society and create an Islamic government so that there would not be poverty and economic deprivation.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Hamidreza Jalaeipour, "Iran's Islamic Revolution: Achievements and Failures", *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, 15 iii, (2006), p. 210.

Therefore, it can be said that the regime was not successful enough to respond to society's requests and expectations with the economic system. The financial crises and the uprisings that have stemmed from society's economic conditions are among the biggest challenges for the regime. The current economic situation of the state and the economic uprisings in 2018-2019 showed that the regime is still not capable of solving financial problems. This problem has real potential to reveal society's dissatisfaction with the Islamic regime.

#### **4.2.1. Rafsanjani's Privatization Era**

Following the end of the prolonged Iran- Iraq war after eight years in 1988, the new regime found itself under worsened economic conditions which the war have caused. Since the war not only caused the "death of 350,000 people, the damaged of 52 cities in total while the six cities were totally destroyed and more than 14 cities suffered 50 percent. 4,000 villages were damaged or partly destroyed,"<sup>222</sup> but also it was estimated that the war cost 592 billion dollars to Iran.<sup>223</sup> Furthermore, the decreasing oil prices from 1986 and the war damage on oil reserves and substructures paved the way for the decline of oil revenues, exports, and gross national product (G.N.P.). Even it was claimed that the G.N.P. of the country in 1988 was 54 % decreased than G.N.P. of 1976.<sup>224</sup> During the war with the nationalist policies, the increasing birth rate was encouraged by the regime. The rapidly increasing population led to a high rate of youth unemployment during the years followed. It was estimated that half of the population was under 25 years

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<sup>222</sup> Eva Patricia Rakel, "Factional Rivalries And Economic Policies", in *Power, Islam, and Political Elite in Iran: A Study on the Iranian Political Elite from Khomeini to Ahmadinejad*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2009), p. 80.

<sup>223</sup> Rakel, *Ibid.*, p.80, cf. Amiremahdi, *Revolution and Economic Transition: The Iranian Experience*, (N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1990) p. 84.

<sup>224</sup> Axworthy, *Ibid.*, p. 370.

old in 1990. According to independent sources, the unemployment rate of the country was 26 % in that year.<sup>225</sup> The other important factor that triggered the bad economy was the exile and migration of the qualified working class after the revolution; simultaneously, a considerable amount of capital went out of the country with the migrated people. According to Tehran Times, it was 120 billion dollars that the country lost because of the people who abandoned the country.<sup>226</sup>

When Rafsanjani became the country's president in 1989, he had to determine a new economic policy to deal with these financial problems and enhance society's economic situation. Therefore, the Rafsanjani period was also called the "reconstruction period," and this period included not only the reconstruction of the economy but also it included the reconstruction of destroyed cities through the war. In order to create an effective reconstruction period, the country needed intense foreign investments. However, the established economic system of the Islamic regime in the first decade prevented foreign investors from investing in the economy and became part of the country's financial system. Since the radical left faction opposed the neoliberal economic policies, redistribution of wealth, free trade, and privatization, they did not want to support Rafsanjani's reconstruction policies. The radical left defended the state's control and intervention into the economy, and they had great support from Khamenei when he was alive<sup>227</sup>. On the other hand, the right also called the pragmatists faction, supporting Rafsanjani and calling him commander of reconstruction (*Serdar-e Sazandegi*), promoting the free market and a capitalist economy and less state intervention.<sup>228</sup> Therefore,

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<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>227</sup> Eva Rakel, *Power, Islam, and Political Elite in Iran. A Study on the Iranian Political Elite from Khomeini to Ahmadinejad*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2009), p. 80.

<sup>228</sup> Payam Mohseni, "Factionalism, Privatization and the Political Economy of Regime Transformation", in D. Brumberg & F. Farhi (eds), *Power and Change in Iran: Politics of Contention and Conciliation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), p. 43.

Rafsanjani's socio-economic reform program aimed to change and succeed in four problematic areas:

1. Address the financial constraints of the first ten years after the revolution with economic reform to meet the needs of a growing population; 2.. End the political and economic isolation of Iran and restore the relations with the U.S.; 3 Address the growing demands of the Iranian population for greater political participation; 4. Reform the political system of IRI and redistribute power among the supreme leader, the president, the parliament, and judiciary.<sup>229</sup>

Rafsanjani started the First Five-Years Economic Plan (1989-1993/4), especially introducing the I.M.F. Economic Adjustment Program to Iran. The main point of the Adjustment Program was the privatization of large parts of the economy, which the state and religious foundations controlled, especially the foundation of the Oppressed and the Disabled and Martyrs' Foundation, which was established after the revolution to support the oppressed and the martyrs family.

Rafsanjani first tried to regulate 800 factories and some small business places, which the state took and gave control of the religious foundations (*Bonyads*) and regulated their privatization process<sup>230</sup>. However, these foundations became the leading institutions against the privatization process, and still, they have the real power to control the country's finance.<sup>231</sup> Although some foundations initially accepted the privatization process and admitted to selling part of their assets to the private sector, worth 62.2 billion Rials.<sup>232</sup> Their opponents against the privatization and enthusiasm for keeping the revenues and power in their hands prevented the effective privatization process and a secure atmosphere for foreign

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<sup>229</sup> Rakel, *Ibid.*, p. 81 *cf.* A Gheissari and V. Nasr, "Iran's Democracy Debate," *Middle East Policy*, 11(2). (2004)p. 95.

<sup>230</sup> Axworthy, *Ibid.*, pp. 387-388.

<sup>231</sup> Rakel, *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*

investment. Furthermore, they could change the legislation about the privatization process with the pressure on the *Majles*. The fourth Majles (1992-1996) passed a law that allowed the state enterprises were sold to the people who devoted themselves to the war, were prisoners of the war, and lost their family or relatives in the war. Since the mentioned people lacked this kind of financial power to buy the government enterprises, the law allowed the religious foundations (*Bonyads*) to purchase these enterprises as their representatives.<sup>233</sup> Thus, instead of privatizing the state enterprises, preventing state control on the economy, and creating a liberal economic atmosphere in the country, the law led to the process turn into the foundations' benefit, increased their economic and political existence, and monopolized the economy, which would be more visible in the following years.

The Second Development Plan continued in the same way under the Rafsanjani administration. However, it cannot be accepted as a successful economic plan capable of changing the country's economic problems. Although the First Plan was accepted as a watershed after the Iran-Iraq War, the Second Development plan led to "... stagnation growth, high inflation, high unemployment, a weakened national currency, a widening income gap between rich and poor, and uncertain future."<sup>234</sup> Therefore, the country's economic problems were still far from satisfying society when the Second Development plan ended in 2000.

#### **4.2.2. Economy under Khatemi Administration**

The third Development Plan was continued under the Khatemi reign (1997-2005); like his predecessor, President Rafsanjani, Khatemi was also aware of the vital importance of the economy and gave some promise to fix the dire economic conditions. Even he explained that the number one priority for his government

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<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.* p. 85.

would be working on the country's economic situation.<sup>235</sup> Rakei explains Khatemi's point of view with the following words:

The Iranian economic structure was "sick" in production, distribution, and regulation. He criticized the great dependence of the oil sector, called for a reduction of the public sector and state monopolies, and complained about income disparities.<sup>236</sup>

The economic recovery was not the only promise that Khatemi gave to society, his explanation on civil society and social justice targeted the youth and especially women attraction through his election campaign. He emphasized the importance of the country's youth and women problems and promised to act to solve these problems. Therefore, when he became the winner of the 1997 election with taking almost 20 million votes of 30 million Iranian voters, he gained unexpected power in the parliament<sup>237</sup>. Although the elected institutions came from his reformist camp, the unelected institutions like the Guardian Council and the Council of Expedience were still controlled by the conservatives, who also became the main actors that prevented Khatemi from creating a strong civil society and expanding individual liberties and normalize the foreign relationships of Iran.

Khatemi's positive attitude in the international arena and his "dialogue of civilization" policy mainly aimed to end the isolation of Iran from the world economic system. Application to the World Trade Organization (W.T.O.) for integrating Iran into the world economic system became a practical step for the country's economy because the country's youth needed job opportunities, and it was not possible without foreign investment.<sup>238</sup> This policy particularly

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<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.* p. 89; cf. Jehl, 5 February, 1999.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89; cf. *Iran Focus*, 1998.

<sup>237</sup> Behrooz, *Ibid.*, p. 381.

<sup>238</sup> Zahirinejad, *Ibid.*, p. 113.

succeeded; the diplomatic and economic interaction between European Union and Iran improved during his presidency.<sup>239</sup> For example, in 2004 the produced oil in the country was 4.1 million barrel oil per day of which consist of 3.9 billion crude oil and 2.5 million was exported to the Europe and the Asia countries like Japan, China, Taiwan and South Korea.<sup>240</sup>

#### **4.2.3. The Sanctions and Nuclear Deal**

The U.S. sanctions, which started with the hostage crises in 1979, have continued throughout modern Iran history. Moreover, the U.S. started to add new sanctions not only to Iran but also to the foreign companies that wanted to invest in Iran petroleum in 1996.<sup>241</sup> While these sanctions were generally applied to oil production in the first years of the revolution, as Iran's political existence and aggression in the region increased, the areas for sanctions enlarged. The development of the Nuclear Program in 2005 after the Khatemi reign and the aggressive discourses of new conservative leader Ahmedinejad against the West and Israel intensified the U.S. sanctions against Iran. Therefore, U.N. sanctions started to include nuclear-related materials, technology transfer, and an arms embargo that started to prevent the Islamic regime from developing nuclear power. Although the E.U. trade relations with Iran were crucial for Iran's economy to some extent, the E.U.'s participation in sanctions against Iran in 2012 deepened the country's economic problems.<sup>242</sup>

The appointment of Rostam Ghasemi, a senior IRGC officer as oil minister in 2011-2013 with the support of conservative president Ahmedinejad, became

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<sup>239</sup> Behrooz, *Ibid.*, p. 383.

<sup>240</sup> Zahirinejad, *Ibid.*, p. 113; cf. OPEC's Annual Statistical Bulletin 2004.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>242</sup> Mahdi Ghodsi, *Iran's Endogenous Role in the International Economic System. In Iran in the International System Between Great Powers and Great Ideas*, (London : Routledge, 2019), pp.87-88.

another reason that triggered the financial sanctions and oil and gas exportation of Iran by the U.S. and the international community. It was also led to the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) expelled 30 financial institutions, even the Central Bank of Iran from international business.<sup>243</sup> All of these sanctions paved the way for the consolidation of IRGC members in the oil exportation and became not only the authority in the economy but also took the political power to some extent depending on the richness they had with oil money. At the same time, these sanctions and the high inflation have widened the gap between the rich and poor.<sup>244</sup> Especially after the 2009 Ahmadianaj presidency, the GDP growth decreased from 2.3 to 1, which also affected the increase of the inflation rate from 10.8 to 12.4 in a year. Furthermore, the decrease of the GDP growth continued till 2013; even after the 2012 sanctions, oil revenue decreased from 114 to 69, and it directly affected the decreasing of GDP growth -3.9 from -6, which have already decreased enough at the same time the inflation rate has access 21.2 to 30.8 between 2012-2013 years. These dire economic conditions have continued to affect the purchasing power of society and caused dissidence from the public.

**Table 1.** The oil revenues and economic conditions 2004-2011

| Year | Oil revenues, \$ billion | GDP growth real, % | Inflation rate |
|------|--------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| 2004 | 35.776                   | 5.1                | 15             |
| 2005 | 53.82                    | 3.3                | 12.1           |
| 2006 | 62                       | 5.7                | 12.9           |
| 2007 | 81                       | 6.4                | 18             |
| 2008 | 82                       | 1.5                | 25.3           |
| 2009 | 66                       | 2.3                | 10.8           |
| 2010 | 81                       | 1                  | 12.4           |
| 2011 | 114                      | -3.9               | 21.2           |
| 2012 | 69                       | -6                 | 30.8           |
| 2013 | 61                       | -1.9               | 34.7           |
| 2014 | 53                       | 4.2                | 15.6           |
| 2015 | 18                       | -1.6               | 11.9           |
| 2016 | 40                       | 6.5                | 9              |

<sup>243</sup> Zahirinejad, *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>244</sup> The table shows the oil revenues and economic conditions in 2004-2011. The table was taken from Zahirinejad, *Ibid.*, p. 114.

Mahnaz Zahirinejad explained the 2012 sanctions results as follows:

As a result of these sanctions, oil income declined and government deficits increased. The government was not able to sell the oil so the Revolutionary Guard and the private sector – including independent individuals or those operating within organisations – started to do this job for the government. Thousands of private oil companies registered at this time. These companies were not involved in oil production, just in the selling of oil. These harsh sanctions expanded the role of the IRGC and its business subsidiaries in the production and marketing of oil.<sup>245</sup>

Obviously, the international relations of Iran with the U.S., to some extent, determined the country's political atmosphere and became an effective tool in the political sphere. The changing world order and technology has increased the young generation aware about the world and life standard of the rest of the world population. Therefore, the bad economy and high unemployment rates with the restriction of freedom and lifestyle have turned powerful reactions and dissidents against the regime. That is why society has insisted on electing the reformists, the moderates, instead of hardliners and conservatives.

While moderate Hassan Rouhani was elected in 2013, society was living under serious economic conditions, and the country had an enormous inflation rate because of 2012 sanctions. (Inflation rate 34.7, GDP-1.9). Therefore, Rouhani had to take measures against economic problems and improved foreign relations with the U.S again. One of his first actions became the exclusion of private companies from the oil sector. As mentioned before, some foundations like *Bonyads* took responsibility to sell the oil, although they were not private companies, while the sanctions prevented the foreign companies from investing in Iran oil. Rouhani's new oil sector regulations caused conflicts between his

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<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, She also referred to Francis Ghiles, “Tehran Cracking down on IRGC’s Business Networks”, *The Arab Weekly*, January 28, 2018, <https://the arabweekly.com/tehran-cracking-down-irgcsbusiness-networks>.

government and IRGC because IRGC did not want to lose its advantages over the oil sector and its exports.<sup>246</sup>

Therefore the last five years, Iranian society has witnessed conflicts between IRGC, the conservatives supporting the Guard, and the Rouhani government. The hardliner's criticisms of Rouhani and his government mainly occurred when the government wanted to create better economic and diplomatic relations with the West and the U.S. Even religious leader Khamenei had to warn the IRGC and conservatives who had harsh criticism against Rouhani.<sup>247248</sup>

However, Rouhani's and his moderate cabinet attitude with the E.U. and request to deal with the U.S. for peaceful nuclear activities brought changes to Iran's relations with the West. After the long-term negotiations with the P5+1 countries (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States + Germany), a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action ( JCPOA) which also known as the Nuclear Deal Agreement, was signed in Vienna on July 14, 2015, and was implemented on January 16, 2016.<sup>249</sup>

The implementation of the JCPOA positively affected the economy in a short time as Mahdi Ghodsi indicates:

Exports to Iran from the EU-28 bounced back slightly in 2016 after the JCPOA was implemented, and in 2017 they reached around 21% of Iran's total imports of

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<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>247</sup> Radyo Farda, "Iranians Demand President Rouhani's Execution", (October 18, 2020); MP Says. RFE/RL. <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/iranians-demand-president-rouhani-s-execution-mp-says-/30899550.html>

<sup>248</sup> Radyo Farda, "Khamenei Accuses Rouhani's Critics Of Being 'Unfair'" (October 25, 2020). RFE/RL. <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/khamenei-accuses-rouhani-s-critics-of-being-unfair-/30911757.html>

<sup>249</sup> Ghodsi, *Ibid.*, p. 88.

goods. The JCPOA removed the nuclear-related sanctions against Iran, enabling companies to do business with the country. Exports from the EU-28 to Iran increased from US\$7 billion in 2015 to US\$10 billion in 2017 (still very low, compared to the figure of US\$14.6 billion in 2011). Moreover, Iran's exports to the EU-28 increased from US\$1.4 billion in 2015 to US\$8.6 billion in 2017.<sup>250</sup>

In addition to the possible changes of the economy that improved after implementing the JCPOA, negotiations and creating good relations with the West were great achievements for the Iranian people, especially those who supported the reformist and moderate wings. Because of the fact that the people hoped that the relations with the West would bring the possibility of ending isolation and pressure not only in the economy but also in their social life. That is why Iran streets witnessed many celebrations when the JCPOA negotiations ended positively.<sup>251</sup>

However, the positive development and relations experienced due to this agreement have changed with the Trump administration's decision to withdraw unilaterally from the agreement on May 8, 2018. It was one of the election pledges of Trump and continued when he became the president of the U.S. The other important reason for the withdrawal was the U.S. regional alliance with Saudi Arabia and Israel, especially Netanyahu, which was crucial in preventing cooperation and the nuclear deal.<sup>252</sup> As a result, economically powerful Iran would become more dangerous for Israel's existence in the Middle East.

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<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>251</sup> Nasser Karimi, "Tehran is Erupting in Celebration over the Iran Nuclear Deal", (July 14, 2015), *Business Insider*, <https://www.businessinsider.com/tehran-is-erupting-in-celebration-over-the-iran-nuclear-deal-2015-7>

W. Chan, "Iranians Erupt with Excitement after Nuclear Deal", (April 3, 2015), CNN, <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/04/03/middleeast/iran-celebrations-nuclear-deal/index.html>.

<sup>252</sup> Shireen T. Hunter, "Iran's Relations with the United States; Current Conditions in Historical Perspective", in *Iran in the International System Between Great Powers and Great Ideas* (ed.H Gärtner, M.Shahmoradi), (London: Routledge, 2019), p. 26.

The 2018 sanctions have become the toughest sanctions ever imposed throughout the history of the Islamic regime. It was "targeting energy, shipping and shipbuilding, and the financial sector. This was part of a campaign of "maximum pressure" on Iran and sought to isolate the country's economy from the international economy, and thereby to minimize Iran's foreign revenues through exports in general, and oil in particular. Since these new sanctions came into force, E.U. banks have not accepted any transactions from Iranian lenders, and E.U. energy companies have not taken imports from Iran."<sup>253</sup> Although the E.U. insisted on keeping Iran at the table and maintained their economic and diplomatic relations with Iran, the Trump administration warned the E.U. and the companies, which tried to breach the sanctions on Iran.<sup>254</sup>

The 2021 U.S. presidential election has started to change American policy towards Iran once more, at least for the JCPOA. The new U.S. President Biden and his administration have a new dialogue with Iran for returning the JCPOA agreement, and the E.U. again became a vital part of this dialogue. As a result, the nuclear deal meeting started in April 2021 again.

It is important to note that the U.S. policies towards Iran have determined Iran's internal policies and the rivalry between the reformist and conservative as well. The "dialogue of civilization" policies of Khatemi ended when the Bush administration decided to invade Iraq in 2003. His speech described Iran as an "axis of evil " that paved the way for the conservative reaction and harsh criticism against Khatemi's foreign policies, which provided advantages to them and caused the reformist to lose the 2004 election to conservative leader Ahmedinejad.<sup>255</sup> The same situation occurred when the Trump administration withdrew from the

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<sup>253</sup> Ghodsi, *Ibid.*

<sup>254</sup> Bernard Hourcade, *Iran and Europe: The Never-Ending Hope for Strong and Efficient Relations in Iran in the International System; Between Great Powers and Great Ideas*, (ed.H Gärtner, M.Shahmoradi), (London : Routledge. 2019), p. 139.

<sup>255</sup> Hunter, *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

JCPOA in 2018; this withdrawal led to Iran's ongoing economic crises deepen while another reformist has tried to change the foreign relations and economy of the country with the West.

The June 2021 presidential election showed that this economic crisis also caused significant uprisings, especially during the 2018-2019 period. Furthermore, it became one of the critical reasons why the reformists and the middle class boycotted the election, which opened the way for the important hardliner candidate Ebrahim Raisi to become the country's new president in June 2021.<sup>256</sup>

#### **4.2.4. Economic Uprisings**

The long-term sanctions on Iran have affected the economy of the country, as stated above. The long-standing sanctions and the isolation of the Iranian economy from the world economy and trade have deteriorated day by day. To this extent, the regime had been confronted with many uprisings in the urban areas, especially in 1992-1995, which had originated from "over economic grievances among marginalized and poverty-stricken masses."<sup>257</sup> The regime has witnessed these kinds of demonstrations, uprisings, and riots throughout the history of the Islamic Republic. However, the Green Movement became one of the most challenging situations in the regime's history.

Although the Green Movement was not directly about the dire economic conditions, it could not be handled as a simple reaction of masses to the election system. It is important to note that the uprisings from the beginning of the revolution to today cannot be based on a reason, although each has different

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<sup>256</sup> Anelise Borges, "Hardliner Ebrahim Raisi Comfortably Wins Iran Presidential Election", ( June 20, 2021), *Euronews*. <https://www.euronews.com/2021/06/19/iran-moderate-candidate-concedes-win-by-hardliner-judiciary-chief>

<sup>257</sup> Afshin Shahi & Ehsan Abdoh-Tabrizi, "Iran's 2019-2020 Demonstrations: The Changing Dynamics of Political Protests in Iran", *Asian Affairs*, 51(1), (2020), p. 4.

output. Generally, one event becomes the spark of the uprisings, but many reasons stem from the long-term grievances.

Significantly, the dire economic conditions, high inflation, high unemployment rate, the impoverishment of urban and middle class, and the enrichment of a small group that has become vital grievances of society in the last years have increased the tension between state and society. Therefore, the 2017-2018-2019 economic uprisings and demonstrations can be evaluated within this framework.

Yassamine Mather used the following words to show the economic reasons which are behind and provide the continuation of the uprising of the Green Movement in urban areas:

On the issue of social justice, even though the previous regime's downfall had a lot to do with class inequality, the Islamic version of capitalism has brought about much harsher conditions for the working class and the poor and a constant growth in the gap between rich and poor. The impoverishment of the middle classes, the abject poverty of the working class and hunger of the shanty town-dwellers are all reasons why the current protests continue in urban areas.<sup>258</sup>

To this extent, the Green Movement was evaluated from different perspectives by some scholars. Some of them emphasized the movement as urban-middle class uprisings when some of them were against this description.<sup>259</sup> Nevertheless, the protests cannot be accepted as a middle-urban class and reformist uprisings since the continuation of the uprisings through the last ten years had a basement in the

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<sup>258</sup> Mather, *Ibid.*, p. 516.

<sup>259</sup> Abbas Amanat, *The New York Times*, June 16, 2009, and Slavoj Žižek “Berlusconi in Tehran” (p.71) described the movement as a middle class and their youth uprisings while Farhad Khosrokhavar *The Green Movement. Social Innovation in an Authoritarian Regime* (p.23) accept the movement as a essentially as youth movement the core of which consist of students. On the other hand, Ervand Abrahamian *I Am Not a Speck of Dirt, I Am a Retired Teacher* (p.60) and Hamid Dabashi *Iran's Green Movement as a Civil Rights Movement* (p.22) object to this idea with showing the population rate of rural area who did not support to Ahmedinejad and also the rate of unemployment and poor student who cannot be accepted as a middle class but support the Green Movement.

rural areas like Ahvaz, Benbehān, Mahsahr, Omidiyeh.<sup>260</sup> The first uprising after the Green Movement occurred in December 2017 in Mashad, the second most populated city of Iran, known for its religious identity due to Imam Reza's tomb, an important figure of Shia.

The fuel of demonstrations was triggered by the increasing egg prices and spread to 150 small towns and cities in the different provinces.<sup>261</sup> However, it was the last straw for the people to be exposed to the high price of primary consumption goods in recent years. The demonstrations took two weeks, and it turned into a fierce rebellion against the regime. The slogans like *merg ber Khamenei*" (death to Khamenei) and *merg ber dectator*" (death to the dictator) were used through the riots.<sup>262</sup> Even the reformist president Rouhani accepted the reasons behind the riots and rebellions as follows:

It would be a misrepresentation (of events) and also an insult to Iranian people to say they only had economic demands... People had economic, political and social demands.<sup>263</sup>

The uprisings continued for two weeks, and the people again confronted the extreme violence of the IRGC and *Basiji* militia, which caused the death of 22 protestors and two *Basiji*. According to Amnesty International, more than a thousand people were arrested and detained and prevented from accessing their

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<sup>260</sup> Radio Farda, "Protests Over Fuel Prices In Iran Spread To Multiple Cities", (15 November 2019)

<sup>261</sup> Shahi & Abdoh-Tabrizi, *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>262</sup> Marva Eltagouri, "Tens of Thousands of People have Protested in Iran. Here's Why", (February 25, 2018), *The Washington Post*, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/01/03/tens-of-thousands-of-people-protested-in-iran-this-week-heres-why/>

<sup>263</sup> Bozorgmehr Sharafedin, "In Jab at Rivals, Rouhani Says Iran Protests about more than Economy", (January 8, 2018), *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-rallies-rouhani/in-jab-at-hardliners-rouhani-says-iran-protests-were-not-only-economic-idUSKBN1EX0S9>

families and lawyer.<sup>264</sup> Although the protests were suppressed with the extreme violence of the regime again, the economic hardships that led to dissidents of society have continued and forced society to be confronted with the regime in the streets just one year later.

The November 2019 uprisings, also known as a "Bloody November," occurred after the government announced a 50 percent hike in oil prices; hundreds of thousands of people came to the streets and protested government decisions. It was not only the reaction of increasing petrol price, but it was also the grievances on long-term bad economic conditions and political atmosphere in the country.<sup>265</sup> The November uprising also showed that the rural areas had the same grievances against the regime, and the low-income Iranians, "underprivileged social strata" which the regime called the *Mustazafin* (the oppressed) in the rural areas, had significant potential to uprising due to the economic problems.<sup>266</sup> The minority regions especially the Kurds and Ahwazi Arabs, which have been exposed to harsh economic conditions and are known as poor ethnic minorities, participated in the uprisings. The massive participation in the protests both in rural and urban areas and in the minority regions was also important to showing the reflection of different classes, regions, and ethnicities to the political and economic situation of the country.

The other significant outcome of the protests was the youth's existence, support, and reaction through the protests in the streets. Especially in the November Uprisings, many young protesters under 17-18 age have been witnessed to participate.<sup>267</sup> The slogans were shouted through the demonstrations and showed

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<sup>264</sup> "Iran: Stop Increasingly Ruthless Crackdown and Investigate Deaths of Protesters", *Amnesty International*, (January 4, 2018). <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/01/iran-stop-increasingly-ruthless-crackdown-and-investigate-deaths-of-protesters/>

<sup>265</sup> Shahi & Abdoh-Tabrizi, *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.* p. 14.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*

the anger and tiredness of the people from the regime. The chant “death to Khamenei” had already been used in the 2017’s demonstrations, chants like “merg ber diktator” (Death to Dictator) were also used in the November protest. However, the intensifying of the chant of masses has evolved more radical in 2019 protests. For the first time, the protesters chanted for the Shah like *Reza Shah roohet shad* (Reza Shah, blessings for your soul) when they also directly criticized Islamic regime to use Islam as a tool of pressure with *Islam-u pole kerdend, merdum-u zulm kerden* (they have brought up Islam, but trampled the people). Furthermore, during the protests, demonstrators criticized the regime's policy for spending oil money to Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria with these chants *pul-e neft gom shode, herc-i Felistin shode* (oil money has been lost, it has all been spent on Palestine), *ne Gaza ne Lobnan, canem fedaye Iran* (neither Gaza nor Lebanon, my life for Iran), *Suriye ra reha kon, fikr-i be hal-e ma kon* (leave Syria, concern about our situation).<sup>268</sup>

The regime has been faced with many different uprisings and demonstrations for forty-two years of the revolution. However, after the Green Movement, the demonstrations intensified and became more violent for both sides. 2017-2019 economic demonstrations and the regime's interference show that as the demonstrators became radicalized, the violence and pressure of the regime increased. Furthermore, the last economic demonstrations proved that the dire economic conditions affected all classes of society and paved the way for the

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<sup>268</sup> *Gosteresh-i Eterazha Der sherhha-i Īran; Goshte Şoden Piş Ez Deh Megteraz* (Aban,1398). Retrieved from <https://iranintl.com/%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86/%DA%AF%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%B4-%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B6%E2%80%8C%D9%87%D8%A7-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%B1%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%9B-%DA%A9%D8%B4%D8%AA%D9%87%E2%80%8C%D8%B4%D8%AF%D9%86-%D8%A8%DB%8C%D8%B4-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%DB%B1%DB%B0-%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%B6>

Also see, Radio Farda, *Yek Mah Ez Eterazha-i Aban Gozesth; Henoz Amar Keshteha Ve Bazdasht Shodgan Eglam Neshode Est*, (Azar,1398). Retrived from [https://www.radiofarda.com/a/iran\\_protest\\_anti\\_government\\_one\\_month\\_later/30326768.html](https://www.radiofarda.com/a/iran_protest_anti_government_one_month_later/30326768.html) [https://twitter.com/AlirezaNader/status/1195763350426279938?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1195763350426279938%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1\\_&ref\\_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.israel365news.com%2F140061%2Fmass-protests-erupt-throughout-iran-burn-down-central-bank%2F](https://twitter.com/AlirezaNader/status/1195763350426279938?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1195763350426279938%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.israel365news.com%2F140061%2Fmass-protests-erupt-throughout-iran-burn-down-central-bank%2F)

emergence of a more mobilized and radicalized society against the regime and its domestic and international policies.

#### **4.3. Social Failures**

The social area has been used as an essential part of the changing society from the beginning of the revolution. Since the regime needed to create an Islamic society with a strong Islamist identity, they needed to integrate Islam into society's daily life and daily practice. Therefore, in order to create Islamist culture and keep the Islamist state strong, the Islamization process had to begin within society. Like the Islamization of institutions, economy, administration system, society also started to be part of the Islamization policies of the regime. Education became one of the important tools which helped the regime to impose a new Islamic identity. The child has been grown up with the regime ideology from the schools. However, it has not been enough to transform society to support neither the Islamic identity desired by the regime nor the Islamic state. Although the regime's education system increased the rate of literacy and the number of university students, it could not successfully create a supportive youth to the regime. In contrast, the educated people became the strongest class, which the state has been confronted through the demonstrations and protests against the regime.

The women struggle against the regime's Islamization policies in social areas and daily life can also be taken to prove the regime's failure in the same field. The women's resistance to the regime has continued from the first month of the Islamic state to today. The compulsory implementation of veiling and the gender discriminative policies of the regime in almost all areas of their social life led to strong and sustained women's struggle. The gender-based discrimination stemming from Sharia's implementation has been the effect the existence of LGBT+ members whose actions and existence were rejected by the Islamic government, even exposed to the death penalty just because of their sexual choices. Therefore, the social failure of the regime to respond to grievances and creating equal living standards for the women and LGBT+ members are turning

into a big challenge for the Islamic regime. The regime interventions of the women's lifestyle and the women's response and resistance to the regime become more visible with the spreading of social media and the Internet. One Million Signature Campaign and the White Wednesday movement proved the continued women's resistance against the Islamization policies and the regime's pressures. The internet allows women to mobilize and provides them a beneficial tool for their resistance when making them more visible both inside and outside the country.

The media also has been under the pressure of the regime during the years. Since media is an area where society's social demands and dissatisfaction are expressed and reflected, it has also been subject to censorship by the regime for a long time. The censorship and pressure on media prevent society from having the correct information about what happens to the country. The regime has prevented not only the local media but also the foreign media activities in Iran. Many local and foreign journalists have been arrested, getting accused of spying and being opponents to the Islamic regime through the years.

On the other hand, the regime used the media to impose their propaganda and transform society. Media and press activities were relatively free when Khatemi became the president in 1997-2005; his reformist attitude changed both media and non-governmental organizations. These organizations demanded freedom in all areas of social life and struggled for democracy, human and women's rights activities in Iran. However, the powerful presence of conservatives in the state system was a significant obstacle to create free media and efficient non-governmental organizations. Therefore, the 1999 Student Movement, which took six days, can be evaluated as a general reaction to the regime's media pressure. Because of the fact that the demonstration occurred when a reformist *Salam* newspaper closed, demonstrations began with the reaction of reformist students and then spread to the other cities.

The regime's Islamization methods on social areas and daily lives of society could not find a basement. On the contrary, the applied obligations for Islamization have been confronted with the strong resistance of society. This resistance has occurred in very different parts of society, including educated people, women, LGBT+ members, the students, the people who supported free media, human rights, democracy. Therefore, it can be said that, like the political/ideological and the economic failure, the Islamic regime cannot be successful enough to transform society into an Islamic way of life with its social policies.

#### **4.3.1. Education**

Education is one of the most effective ways of changing society. That is why the changing system or regime also needs to change the education system first and the educational institutions known as a major subsystem of ideological apparatus.<sup>269</sup> Therefore, the education and educational systems are practical tools to impose the state ideology. Almost all newly established state systems need to create their society to legitimate their existence and continuity.

Iran's education system started to be modernized with Reza Shah's education policies. His son Mohammed Reza Shah also tried to modernize the education system by supporting women's education and increasing the number of the educated people by establishing new schools. Mohammed Reza Shah promised to construct 2,500 schools when he celebrated 2,500 years of Persian Monarchy.<sup>270</sup> Of course, the textbooks were used in elementary schools turned into practical propaganda tools with the Shah and his family pictures and imposing Persian culture and pre-Islamic identity of Iran.<sup>271</sup> The Islamic regime also applied the

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<sup>269</sup> Rasool Nafisi, "Education and the Culture of Politics in the Islamic Republic of Iran", in S. Farsoun & M. Mashayekhi (eds), *Iran: Political Culture in the Islamic Republic*, (New York : Routledge, 1992), p. 161.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.* p. 163.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.* p. 166.

same method, but instead of referring to the pre-Islamic identity of Iran, the regime textbooks emphasized Islamic faith and *Allah*.<sup>272</sup> Even all textbooks and educated materials changed or updated to prevent any conflicts with the Sharia rules.<sup>273</sup> Also, after the revolution, the gender segregation system was applied in all schools. The gender segregation and Islamic-based school systems increased the number of girls in schools, primarily providing girls from conservative families with education.<sup>274</sup> Furthermore, the number of women in the education system and women's literacy increased after the Islamic revolution. As Arani, Kakia and Karimi states,

In 1998, the freshman class in Iranian universities contain more women than men. Between 1987 and 1994, the ratio of female students to total students in the educational system, as a whole, rose from 38 to 45.8 percent. Women's literacy has also shown significant improvement, rising from 25.5 percent in 1976 to 72.4 percent in 1996...At present more than 60 percent of university student are girls.<sup>275</sup>

However, the regime had confronted significant challenges in education programs when the education system was established in the first years after the revolution. Since the universities were still resistant to the Islamization process, mainly the leftist student, the conflicts and uprisings continued. Therefore, the Cultural Revolution aimed to Islamicize the universities and succeeded in the *Islamization of Science*.<sup>276</sup> That is why it started from the universities and continued with the other layers of society in 1980. The outcome of the Islamization of universities

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<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.* p. 173.

<sup>273</sup> Abbas Madandar Arani, Lida Kakia & Vajeha Karimi, "Assessment in Education in Iran", *Assessment SA-eDUC Journal*, Vol. 9, N. 2 (September 2012), p. [1]

<sup>274</sup> Axworthy, *Ibid.*, p. 393.

<sup>275</sup> Arani, Kakia & Karimi, *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>276</sup> Shahibzadeh, *Ibid.*, p. 92.

paved the way for closing the universities three years and the discharge of thousands of lecturers, professors, and students from the universities with the accusation of being un-Islamic.<sup>277</sup> Even "Sadeq Zibakalam, who have been active supporters of the Cultural Revolution, claims that the whole idea of Cultural Revolution was unrealistic and wrong and the whole project was a big mistake."<sup>278</sup> And the Islamists were aware that there was neither Islamic human or social science nor Western or Marxist science.<sup>279</sup> Although the emphasis on faith and Islam in the education system has continued in the country, the strict attitude had to be changed in order to be capable of competing with the West as a modern nation.<sup>280</sup> However, the well-educated and highly qualified secular professors and students left the country.<sup>281</sup> The newly established Islamic regime was not aware that the loss of qualified people would cause long-term adverse outcomes and the cost of brain drain.

The privatization policies of Rafsanjani affected the education system as well and private universities (*Daneshgah-e Azadi*) were also established in the country. Rafsanjani supported private universities in order to decrease the state and state institutions' influence on education.<sup>282</sup> In 2011, almost half of 3,5 million university students were enrolled in these universities.<sup>283</sup> Although these

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<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92-93, cf. Sadeq Zibakalam, *Daneshgah va enqelab: revayat-e bimehri 'ha-ye enqelab beh daneshgah* (Tehran: Ruzaneh, 2001), p. 87.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>280</sup> Arani, Kakia & Karimi, *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>281</sup> Akbar Torbat, "The Brain Drain from Iran to the United States", *Middle East Journal*, 56(2), (2002), p. 275. Retrieved July 21, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4329755>

<sup>282</sup> Axworthy, *Ibid.*, p. 393.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*

universities had made a significant contribution to the number of university graduates, the graduated students could not find appropriate positions and jobs because of the economic policies and corruption.

#### **4.3.1.1. Women in Education System**

According to the Minister of Science, Research and Technology of the Islamic Republic, the university student numbers were approximately 3,375,000 in 2019, while the number was approximately 175,675 in 1980. There is almost 20 times growth in 39 years.<sup>284</sup> According to 2006 data, the female enrollment rate of women to the universities is %63.<sup>285</sup>

The growth rate of women in education was also crucial for the Islamic regime, but the regime, especially when the conservatives took power, tried to apply a quota system to prevent women from enrolling in the universities and even determined some faculties based on gender. Therefore women could not enroll in these faculties, and they had to choose faculties that seem more appropriate for female students. Shahla Haeri explains the barrier which women had confronted through the Ahmedinejad reign in education as follows:

Iran adopted a quota system in 2010 to boost men's attendance in college and restrict women's participation. To discourage young women from attending universities in major cities, particularly in Tehran, the authorities changed one of the Konkur's most fundamental rules. Previously, the highest-ranking students – men or women – automatically would be placed in the best universities, which are in Tehran and a few other big cities. In 2011 women were unceremoniously barred from majoring in some seventy disciplines and fields.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Statistics- 2019, *Ministry of Science Research and Technology*, (n.d.).  
<https://www.msrt.ir/en/page/20/statistics-2019#us2015>

<sup>285</sup> Goli M. Rezai-Rashti & V. M. Moghadam, "Women and Higher Education in Iran: What are the Implications for Employment and the 'Marriage Market'?" *International Review of Education*, 57 (3-4), (2011), p. 421.

<sup>286</sup> Shahla Haeri, "No End in Sight: Politics, Paradox, and Gender Policies in Iran", *Boston University Law Review*, 93(3), (2013), p. 1061.

Therefore, even though the literacy rate of women and female university students increased during the Islamic regime, especially women who cannot find a place to be part of business life and remain at home are significant problems of the Islamic regime.<sup>287</sup> Even if women could find a job, they are not given a salary as high as men's. Therefore, the gender discrimination of the regime has continued for women after their education life.

#### **4.3.1.2. Brain Drain**

Iran is one of the countries which has significantly been confronted with a serious brain drain rate. Especially after the Islamic revolution, the regime has incrementally faced the migration of well-educated and elites from Iran to the developed countries. For example, Around 700,000 individuals born in Iran have attended foreign universities. The number of Iranian students enrolled in foreign universities has steadily increased since the early 2000s and has reached about 130,000 today.<sup>288</sup>

Losing educated and skilled people who provide the country to sustain economic development causes long-term adverse outcomes not only in the economy but also in social areas.<sup>289</sup> According to studies that mentioned the brain drain effects on Iran, especially those who have migrated to the U.S.A. highly costed to the country: "Iranians are one of the high-status immigrant groups, whose educational

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<sup>287</sup> Arani, Kakia & Karimi, *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>288</sup> Pooya Azadi, Matin Mirramezani, Mohsen B. Mesgaran, *Migration and Brain Drain from Iran*, Working Paper 9, Stanford, Iran 2040 Project, (Stanford University, 2020), p. 22.

<sup>289</sup> Torbat, *Ibid.*, p. 272.

achievements are significantly higher than those of other immigrants."<sup>290</sup> In addition, "a sociological study of the Iranian immigrants in the U.S indicates that the Iranians are one of the most educated foreign-born groups in the U.S. who have achieved rapid success."<sup>291</sup>

In addition to the U.S., the highly educated population, including professionals, technocrats, elites, and wealthy entrepreneurs of Iran, lives in Europe. After the two decades of the revolution, the estimated Iranian population living abroad is estimated as 1.5 to 2.5 million.<sup>292</sup> However, the migration rate and the numbers have continued to increase dramatically based on the country's political atmosphere. According to the 2019 statistics, 3.1 million Iranian immigrants are living abroad.<sup>293</sup>

According to the table published by the Stanford Iran 2040 project,<sup>294</sup> the main drivers of brain drain from Iran are listed as follows:

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<sup>290</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 273; cf. Mehdi Bozorgmehr, and Georges Sabagh, "High Status Immigrants: A Statistical Profile of Iranians in the United States", *Iranian Studies*, Vol. XXI, No. 3-4, (1988), pp. 5-36.

<sup>291</sup> Torbat, *Ibid.*, cf. Ansari Maboud, *The Making of the Iranian Community in America*, (New York, NY: Pardis Press, 1992)

<sup>292</sup> Torbat, *Ibid.*, p. 276.

<sup>293</sup> Azadi, Mirramezani and Mesgaran, *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>294</sup> Retrieved from Azadi, P., Mirramezani, M., Mesgaran, M. B. Migration and Brain Drain from Iran, Working Paper 9, Stanford Iran 2040 Project, California: Stanford University, 2020

**Table 2.** The main drivers of brain drain from Iran

| Category                                            | Drivers of Migration                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Predisposing</b><br>(evolve over very long term) | Lower per capita income compared to advanced economies<br>Social and political repression, violation of human rights, and religious persecution<br>Low quality of education compared to the developed countries<br>Rise of labor mobility, urbanization, individualism, and secularism                                                                                             |
| <b>Proximate</b><br>(evolve over long term)         | Economic stagnation, chronic unemployment, and bleak economic outlook<br>Decay of the government institutions (state, the rule of law, and accountability)<br>Loss of social capital, prevalence of endemic corruption and crime<br>Environmental challenges in large cities, particularly air pollution                                                                           |
| <b>Precipitating</b><br>(events)                    | Iran-Iraq war, 1980-1988<br>Academic cleansing program (officially cultural revolution) of 1980-1983<br>Government crackdown on dissent in protests of 1999, 2009, 2017-2018, and 2019<br>Major economic sanctions imposed in 2012 and 2018<br>State's poor responses to natural disasters in recent years<br>Monetary shocks (bouts of currency devaluation, very high inflation) |
| <b>Mediating</b><br>(catalysts)                     | Increase in internet penetration<br>Increase in number of friends and family abroad                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

Therefore, as the above table shows, many reasons have triggered the brain drain from Iran. However, the economic stagnation, chronic unemployment, and especially the extreme government pressure on the people after the protests and social movements have been more effective in triggering the brain drain in the last years.

Although education was used as a primary tool to impose the Islamic identity of the regime and the regime has tried to transform society by emphasizing Islamic materials in education, it cannot be said that the methods became successful. On the contrary, the educated people became the most effective dissident class who contributed to the demonstration against the regime. Furthermore, the migration of educated people to the West caused a severe brain drain rate, affecting the country's economic and social development while also paved the way for establishing an anti-regime strong diaspora in Western countries. Therefore, the education system of the Islamic regime has failed to create an Islamic society while also failing to keep the educated class in the country as a part of the Islamic regime.

### 4.3.2. Women, Youth, and LGBT+ Members Situation

#### 4.3.2.1. Women and Youth

One of the most influential parts of the Islamic revolution was the high participation of women in the uprisings and demonstrations against the Shah with black *chador* (veil). Women's support to the uprisings was not because of the supporting an Islamic regime; it was based on the political repression of the Shah on the public in general. However, it was a fact that the Shah's reform movement, which also called the White Revolution period of 1960-1963, provided women to vote. At the same time, women's legal rights increased in marriage, divorce, and child custody. The reform movement has continued and provided women with advantages against the men by Family Protection Law (FPL) in 1967, which was also strengthened women's legal rights in 1975.<sup>295</sup> To illustrate, "[t]hese laws increased the grounds for divorce for women, put limits on male divorce and polygamy and allowed child custody to go to mothers and fathers, with all to be decided by secular court... Minimum marriage ages were raised in 1967 to fifteen and in 1975 to eighteen for women and 1967 to eighteen, and 1975 to twenty for men."<sup>296</sup> However, these rights were restricted one by one by the regime, and men gained the unilateral right to divorce and polygamy. Khomeini's first step for women came from compulsory veiling, which protested with the massive participation of women on 8 March, International Women's Day. Even it was the "largest spontaneous women demonstrations" in Iran history.<sup>297</sup>

The women's resistance and reaction to the changing of FPL could not stop the implementation of new laws of the Islamic regime based on Sharia law, and the

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<sup>295</sup> Nikkie Keddie, "Iranian Women's Status and Struggles since 1979", *Journal of International Affairs*, 60(2), (2007), p. 21.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>297</sup> Homa Hoodfar, Shadi Sadr, "Islamic Politics and Women's Quest for Gender Equality in Iran", *Third World Quarterly*, 31 (6), (2010), p. 891.

Sharia-based rules caused women to lose their rights in many areas of their social life.<sup>298</sup> For example, the marriage age was decreased after the establishment of the Islamic regime. Article 1041 of the civil code was amended in 1982, and the Sharia was used as a basement for determining the minimum marriage age, which is “9 lunar years (8 years and nine months) for girls and 15 lunar years (14 years and seven months) for boys.” Also, the laws allowed natural guardians (father, mother) to be responsible for their child's marriage even before lunar age.<sup>299</sup> The uncertain situations of law in marriage age caused the family to take responsibility and married their children under eight years old, which have caused to increase of child marriage in the country. Although the marriage age was revised with 2002 law and the marriage of girls before 13 and the boys 15 years old needed to be approved by the relevant court first, the number of child marriages has increased much more.<sup>300</sup> According to UN Reports for child marriages, used in 2015 by Anulekha Nandi:

The number of girls married has risen steadily in the past five years, reaching a record level in 2013-2014. 66 48,580 girls aged 10-14 were married in 2011 out of whom 48,567 are reported to have had their first child before they reached the age of 15. 40,635 marriages were registered in 2012-2013 out of whom 8000 were reported to have been married to men who were at least 10 years older. In 2012 1,537 marriages of girls were registered who were under the age of 10, a rise of more than double from the 2011 figure of 716.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> Nayereh Tohidi, “The Women’s Movement and Feminism in Iran; Revisiting a “Glocal” Perspective”, in A. Basu (Ed.), *Women's Movements in the Global era: The Power of Local Feminisms* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 401.

<sup>299</sup> Mohammad Hossein Nayyeri, “Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women”, (March 08, 2019); Retrieved August 03, 2021, from <https://iranhrdc.org/gender-inequality-and-discrimination-the-case-of-iranian-women/>

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>301</sup> Nandi, *Ibid.*, cf. UN Report (A/69/356), “Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran”, para. 41, 27 August 2014. Retrieved from [https://www.academia.edu/16703158/Women\\_in\\_Iran](https://www.academia.edu/16703158/Women_in_Iran).

Furthermore, the number of child marriages has increased day by day. According to the National Statistic Center of Iran, 130.000 child marriages under 14 years had been recorded between 2016 to 2019, which means 43.300 marriages under 14 years in a year. From April to June 2020, 7000 girls under 14 age have married while the number of 10-14 years old girls was 7,323.<sup>302</sup> Of course, these marriages caused physical and psychological problems for the child and created problematic relationships that would affect society in general.

In addition, these kinds of problematic laws not only existed in the marriage issue; many laws caused gender discrimination and prevented women and men's equality in the social area. The divorce laws also created challenges for women when they wanted to separate from their husbands; women must have proved their situation like "threaten her lives and safety," while men did not have to do the same.<sup>303</sup> Child custody after the divorce also is an important challenge for women when they divorce. Although the priority of custody is given to the mother until the age of 7, the law does not accept women as natural guardianship of the child. Even if the father dies, natural guardianship is given to the paternal grandfathers.<sup>304</sup> The supporting polygamy and the temporary marriage laws for men also show the regime's disdain, unrespectful attitude against women.

Women have been subjected to these kinds of challenges since the establishment of the Islamic regime and the implementation of the Sharia rules. These challenges prevented the equality and existence of women in all spheres of their lives. The gender discrimination against women and the priority of the men in the country paved the way for increasing women's reactions and grievances against the Islamic

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<sup>302</sup> NCRI Women Committee. (2020, December 3). *Child marriages in Iran – over 7,000 girls under -14 got married in 3 months*. <https://women.ncr-iran.org/2020/12/02/child-marriages-in-iran-over-7000-girls-under-14-got-married-in-3-months/>.

<sup>303</sup> Nandi, *Ibid.*, cf. UN Report (A/69/356), 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', para. 41, 27 August 2014. Retrieved from [https://www.academia.edu/16703158/Women\\_in\\_Iran](https://www.academia.edu/16703158/Women_in_Iran).

<sup>304</sup> Nandi, *Ibid.*, p. 11.

regime day by day. Therefore the regime could not be successful in being supported by women through the years. On the contrary, women struggle and reactions against the regime's political, economic, and social failures, which have directly affected their lives, increasing day by day. Especially, women's high participation and contribution of social movements, protests, and demonstrations prove the highly organized dissident women movements in Iran.

#### 4.3.2.2. LGBT+ Members Situation

Women are not the only disadvantaged groups exposed to the pressure of the Islamic regime with the law and Sharia rules. The LGBT members, i.e. gays, bisexuals, and lesbians, are exposed to the extreme pressure of the regime with the laws. Because the Sharia laws ban sexual relationships between the same gender, gays and lesbians are not protected by the regime's laws. On the contrary, these kinds of relations are confronted with "corporal punishment such as flogging." However, if they repeat the same "crime," they would be sentenced or stoned to death.<sup>305</sup> In addition, extreme pressure does not only come from the regime itself. Many gay, lesbian, and bisexual people have also been confronted with the pressure of their families and society, forcing them to hide or escape from the country. According to the Middle East director of Human Rights Watch, "The laws are stacked against them (*LGBT+members*); the state openly discriminates against them; and they are vulnerable to harassment, abuse, and violence because their perpetrators feel they can target them with impunity."<sup>306</sup> Even the violence of the *Basiji* and the regime policies on these people could be very extreme not only in the streets when they were suspicious of the people being gay, but also the

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<sup>305</sup> Kameel Ahmady, "LGBT in Iran- The Homophobic Law and Social System in Iran", *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* , 6 (1), (2020), p. 16. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344580404\\_LGBT\\_in\\_Iran\\_The\\_Homophobic\\_Law\\_and\\_Social\\_System\\_in\\_Iran/stats](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344580404_LGBT_in_Iran_The_Homophobic_Law_and_Social_System_in_Iran/stats)

<sup>306</sup> *Iran: Discrimination and violence against sexual minorities*. Human Rights Watch. (2020, October 28). <https://www.hrw.org/news/2010/12/15/iran-discrimination-and-violence-against-sexual-minorities>.

regime forces try to detect these people by “raiding their homes” and “monitoring internet sites.”<sup>307</sup> Therefore these people cannot live safely because of the discriminative laws and the fear of being exposed to the regime's violence.

The women, sexual and ethnic minorities who have been exposed to the Islamic regime's discrimination and feel the regime pressure in many areas of their lives cannot find any basis to feel free. Of course, they and most of the Iranians demand their fundamental human rights from the Islamic regime. That is why the struggle and opposition of women, LGBT members, students, youth, and the people who belong to different classes of society have continued to show their grievances, dissidence, and demands from the Islamic regime. The Iranians still seek different ways to express their request to be administered without pressure and with democracy even after forty years of the revolution.

#### **4.3.3. Social Movements**

##### **4.3.3.1. My Stealthy Freedom Campaign in White Wednesdays (*Charshenbe-i Sefid*)**

The *Charshenbe-i Sefid* movement was started in 2017 by Masih Alinejad, an Iranian activist in the UK, to protest the compulsory hijab rule of the Islamic regime. The women took photos and videos without their headscarves, wore white dresses, and posted their protests online in different countries. They have shared their photos or videos to the My Stealthy Freedom platform and published them with the #whitewednesdays hashtag. The movement is also known as the White Wednesday Movement (*Charshenbe-i Sefid*). The campaign's social media accounts have reached 3.5 million followers, and %80 of the followers live in Iran.<sup>308</sup> After three years of the campaign, the 3000 different women sent their pictures and videos to show their support to the campaign and their resistance to

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<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>308</sup> Masih Alinejad, “Our Story”, (August 22, 2019); Retrieved August 02, 2021, from <https://www.mystealthyfreedom.org/our-story/>

the regime.<sup>309</sup> The movement is very crucial in two ways; firstly, even after 40 years of regime pressure, the women are still resisting the mandatory hijab and not accepting the regime restrictions on their lifestyle while also not stepping back to show their resistance even if they would be punished and jailed if they get caught without a headscarf in streets. Secondly, the movement is important to show the power of social media to organize these kinds of movements under an autocratic regime like Iran. Furthermore, it also paved the way for the movement to turn into a global movement supported by the women of different countries like Saudi Arabia, where women also have been forced to wear hijab.<sup>310</sup>

#### **4.3.3.2. One Million Signature Campaign**

As it has been mentioned before, the women's struggle in Iran has been actively continued from the beginning of the 19th century to today. Although the form of struggle with the authorities changed according to the period and time, the women's struggle has continued to exist and has challenged the authorities.

With the developments of technology, the ways and methods of struggle and resistance started to change. The spreading of the internet has also changed the emergence and effects of social movements and women's struggles. The Arab uprisings were crucial to be an example for showing the effects and contribution of social media to be a tool for organizing and spreading social movements in the last decade. In this context, the one million signature campaign started in June 2006 in order to collect one million signatures for a petition to show their grievances against the discriminative laws against women. In addition to this mission, the campaign was purposed to raise public awareness, unify the different dissident groups, and demand equality between men and women and document

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<sup>309</sup> Nassim Hatam, "Why Iranian Women are Wearing White on Wednesdays", (June 13, 2017); Retrieved August 02, 2021, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-40218711>

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*

their demands for submitting to the Iranian government.<sup>311</sup> Moreover, according to Fatemeh Haghighatjoo, the campaign aimed much more:

It aims to collect one million signatures to request the amendment of laws that discriminate against women, including, but not limited to: marriage, divorce, polygyny, the age of criminal responsibility, citizenship, diyeh (blood money), inheritance, honor killings, bearing witness, compulsory dress code and social security. Also, the campaign's stated goals include: Promotion of collaboration and cooperation for social change; Identification of women's needs and priorities; Amplification women's voices; Increasing knowledge; Promoting democratic action; Bottom-up reform; Paying our dues; The power of numbers.<sup>312</sup>

Although the campaign had started as a face-to-face meeting, public seminars, and conferences,<sup>313</sup> the spread of it using the Internet provided the campaign with support from the 20 different cities of Iran while it also led to the spreading of the campaign in the different countries.<sup>314</sup> Especially after two years of the campaign, it started to be supported by America, the European, and Middle East countries and their feminist movements. The campaign website "Change for Equality" included the petition, articles about the women's rights stories about women experience, photos, interviews, and links to different human rights groups worldwide in several languages such as English, Persian, French, and German Italian and Spanish.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> Majid Rafizadeh, "The Unrecognized Social Movements: The One Million Signature Campaign and the Islamist State of Iran", *Ahfad Journal*, 31(2), (2014), p. 55.

<sup>312</sup> Fatemeh Haghighatjoo, "The One Million Signatures Campaign and its Impact on Legislators and Legislative Policy in Iran", in E. Hooglund, L. Stenberg (ed) *Navigating Contemporary Iran: Challenging Economic, Social and Political Perceptions*, (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 75-76.

<sup>313</sup> Rafizadeh, *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>315</sup> Catherine Sameh, "Discourses of Equality, Rights and Islam in the One Million Signatures Campaign in Iran", *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 12 (3-4), (2010), p.448.

The activists of the Campaign were exposed to regime repression, pressure, and harassment. Many were subjected to the regime's violence, jailed, and sentenced to prison.<sup>316</sup> The website of the campaign confirmed the purpose of the campaign with the following explanation:

[T]he Campaign is not an opposition group or opposed to the government. It seeks to work within the existing system to create change and to express the demands of a major segment of the Iranian population to the government. The Campaign's petition directly addresses the Iranian public and the Iranian legislature (parliament).<sup>317</sup>

Nevertheless, this explanation was not enough for the government since the Iranian women and the activists in the campaign were identified as a threat to the regime while the hundreds of activists were sentenced to prison and jailed.<sup>318</sup>

Even if the campaign did not reach its aim for collecting one million signatures against the discriminative laws of the regime because of the government interference. It succeeded in increasing public awareness against gender discrimination, unifying women organizations, showing women resistance, demands, and struggle to the regime and the world. Moreover, it provided women's activism and resistance to gender equality and rights to be much more powerful and more visible in the later years.

#### **4.3.4. The Pressure on Media and Non-Governmental Organizations**

##### **4.3.4.1. Media and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's)**

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<sup>316</sup> Rafizadeh, Ibid., p. 56

<sup>317</sup> Haghighatjoo, Ibid., p. 76

<sup>318</sup> Fariba Parsa, *The Role of Women in Building Iran's Future*. (Middle East Institute: 2020) <https://www.mei.edu/publications/role-women-building-irans-future>

Media and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are the crucial tools to link the state and civil society. Especially the media has emerged as an effective tool to convert society from top to down in the modernization period of many countries.<sup>319</sup> The relationship between media and authoritarian regimes can be manipulative to this extent, and Iran is a good example of showing this relation. Since the cost of print media is high, the domination and control of the state become easy while the private sector stays away from taking a risk in the undemocratic countries for press media; the authoritarian state just supported the pro-state media.<sup>320</sup> That is why the pro-state media can be converted and manipulative tool for society. In the Iranian case, the Islamic regime supports the four dailies:

Four major and bestselling dailies, Keyhan, Ettela'at (both regarded as "public property" and their managing directors are appointed by the supreme leader), Hamshahri(owned by Tehran Town Hall) and Iran (owned by the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA)) swallow up more than 60 percent of foreign exchange subsidies. All have massive financial, technical, and transport facilities, and the two biggest (but not the bestselling) dailies Keyhan and Ettela'at (the longest-running newspapers in Iran) have their own modern printing press.<sup>321</sup>

Therefore, the state sources for media have mostly been spent for pro-state publishing, which also paved the way for strong state propaganda. However, it is not just a particular case for Iran. Generally, the authoritarian regimes followed the same way to make their propaganda with the pro-state press while the anti-regime or opponent publications are prevented and suppressed. Nevertheless, it does not mean that different newspapers are not published in Iran. The different political factions of the country have their own press media, which have served to express their point of view to the public. To illustrate, the Traditional Right (*Rast*

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<sup>319</sup> Gholam Khiabany, "The Iranian Press, State and Civil Society", in M. Semati (Ed.), *Media, Culture and Society in Iran: Living with Globalization and the Islamic State*, (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), p. 24.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.* p. 24.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*

*e Sonati*) dominated by the *Bazari* class, has daily newspaper *Resalat*, and monthly *Shoma*, while the Modern Right has *Hamshahri* and *Iran* newspapers. The Traditional Left, who supports “the total Islamization of public and private life,” has *Keyhan* and *Enghelab-e Eslami*<sup>322</sup> and the Modern Left with the reformist press like *Kiyan*, *Sela*, and *Asr-e Ma*, *Sobh-e Emrouz*, *Khordad* and *Mosharekat*.<sup>323</sup> However, it should be noted that as the country's political factions, these publications cannot be accepted as totally regime opponents and totally free press. Thus, these publications have not been accepted as much reliable or trustable for society. According to the report, the *Sharq* newspaper, which is a reformist newspaper, was accepted as highly trustable due to being “objective and professional” while trusting the conservative newspapers were much lower (20.3 percent and 14.4 percent of respondents chose *Kayhan* and *Resalat* to be highly or very highly trustable)”<sup>324</sup>

The rise of the public press and newspapers significantly increased during the presidency of Khatemi (1997-2005). The relatively free atmosphere of the Khatemi reign paved the way for the existence of different publications in the country's press media while also increasing the number of NGOs. To illustrate, in the first year of Khatemi's reign (1997-1998), the rate of accepted application for publication licensed was 18.9 % while the previous year, the number was 7.8 %. One year later the Khatemi victory, the number of publications that took the license has become 1.055.<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>322</sup> Traditional left is in the same line with religious leader and supports to the *Velayat-e Faqih* and the Islamization of the state. Therefore, their publications have state support.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.* p. 30.

<sup>324</sup> Kavous Seyed Emami, “Youth, Politics, and Media Habits in Iran”, Semati, *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>325</sup> Gholam Khiabany, “The Iranian Press, State and Civil Society”, Semati, *Ibid.*, p. 23.

Asaf Bayat describes the Khatemi reign as post-Islamism and explains the developments in civil society, press, and NGOs with these words:

Once in power, he drew many of the post-Islamist intellectuals into the new government as ministers, deputy ministers, advisers, and parliamentary deputies. The government strategy was to empower civil society from below... At the base, meanwhile, civil society institutions expanded and free press, associational life, and social movement activism (among students, youth, women, NGOs) assumed unprecedented energy... Never before in Iranian political history did such fundamental concepts as democracy, pluralism, accountability, the rule of law and tolerance become so pervasive, and all this in a political culture that nurtured seniority and patronage.<sup>326</sup>

Although the relatively free atmosphere of the Khatemi reign and the attempts for creating a civil society, free media, and influential NGOs become successful and positively changed society for a short time, the struggle between the reformist and conservatives who had been consolidated the unelected part of state institutions continued, and the Khatemi government could not be successful enough to carry out the reform movement to some extent. However, the atmosphere had contributed to the consistency of the public demonstrations against the pressure of the regime. The student movement which emerged in 1999 originated from this atmosphere. Since the conservatives prevented Khatemi's "free press" policy by closing down the reformist newspaper *Salam*, the students showed their reaction with demonstrations for free media.

The atmosphere created in Khatemi's reign could not continue, his predecessor's conservative Ahmedinejad's reign and the general policies of the Islamic regime have kept the state pressure on media and NGOs. Although the spread of the internet allows society to access the different media organs from all over the world, the journalist, media members, and activists have still been living under the pressure of the Islamic regime, arrested, and tortured. Iran ranks 174 out of 180

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<sup>326</sup> Asef Bayat, "The Making of Post-Islamist Iran", in A. Bayat (Ed.), *Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 59-60.

countries in the 2021 world press freedom index and is among “one of the most oppressive countries” in media freedom.<sup>327</sup>

According to the website of the Reporters without Borders (RSF), which is “the world’s biggest NGO to defend media freedom”<sup>328</sup>,

Iran is still one of the world’s most repressive countries for journalists, subjecting news and information to relentless control. At least 860 journalists and citizen-journalists have been prosecuted, arrested, imprisoned and in some cases executed since the 1979 revolution... Iran’s journalists are still constantly subjected to intimidation, arbitrary arrest and long jail sentences imposed by revolutionary courts at the end of unfair trials. The authorities also wage their fight against the freedom to inform beyond the country’s borders, putting a great deal of pressure on Iranian journalists working for international media outlets. And they continue to harass the relatives of imprisoned journalists by threatening them and even arresting them and sentencing them to long prison sentences...<sup>329</sup>

Thus, the regime pressure on the media and NGOs is an important indicator of how the regime keeps society under control and tries to keep society away from the country’s reality. Furthermore, the regime is preventing the right to demand information with the pressure of media. Of course, the regime has aimed to prevent society from organizing, showing their reaction, and creating common grievances with the pressure of media and NGOs. Despite the fact that the spreading of internet and common usage of social media provided the spreading of information for society and opened the floor of creating public awareness and togetherness against the Islamic regime. Significantly, the uprisings and the demonstrations of the last ten years have shown that the regime could not be successful in keeping society from the right to demand accurate information.

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<sup>327</sup> *Iran : One of the most oppressive countries: Reporters without borders.* RSF. (n.d.). <https://rsf.org/en/iran>

<sup>328</sup> *Our values: Reporters without borders.* RSF. (2017, January 31). <https://rsf.org/en/our-values>.

<sup>329</sup> *Iran : One of the most oppressive countries: Reporters without borders.* RSF. (n.d.). <https://rsf.org/en/iran>

#### 4.3.4.2. Student Movements in 1999

Like the other countries, the student movements have converted effects in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Great student participation in the revolutionary uprisings and demonstrations has already been mentioned above. Furthermore, after the revolution, the mobilization of the students became more apparent with hostage crises when they took the American diplomats as hostages for 444 days. Even Khomeini named their action as a "second revolution" to show the importance of their action, which strengthened the conservative cleric position in the ruling system and the influence of the Islamic Students Association in university campuses.<sup>330</sup> However, this title includes one of the most influential student movements which occurred in post-revolutionary Iran in 1999.

The consolidation of the new Islamic regime, Cultural Revolution, and the Iran-Iraq war paved the way for eliminating the mobilized opponent students both from the country and universities. Although small groups of students had tried to show their dissidence to the suppression and pressure of the new regime, they could not get the support of society and spread their mobilization out of the small student groups. However, the end of the war in 1988, the reconstruction period of Rafsanjani presidency (1989-1997), and the presidential campaign of Khatemi had contributed to the revival of the student movements after 20 years of the Islamic revolution.

The widespread political and cultural pressure on society by the right conservatives fraction through the twenty years of revolution caused the left conservatives to seek a different candidate for the 1997 presidency election. Khatemi became their candidate because he resigned from the Ministry of Cultural and Islamic Guidance in Rafsanjani cabinets (1989-1992) with the letter which included his "complaint of 'stagnant and retrograde' climate that threatens to

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<sup>330</sup> Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "The Revival of the Student Movement in Post-Revolutionary Iran", *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 15 (2), (2001), p. 291.

condemn the nation's intellectual, artists and even faithful friends of the revolution indifference."<sup>331</sup>

Therefore, especially the intellectuals and student organizations supported Khatemi's campaign on "civil society," "rule of law," and "political development" themes.<sup>332</sup> Even Mehrard Mashayeki evaluated the student contribution to the Khatemi campaign with the following words:

The student contributions to the seventh presidential elections should be analyzed from three different dimensions. First, as voters; second, as activists', and, third as a new reference group. During the elections there were approximately 1.2 million students in all institutions of higher education. Most analysts are in accord that the vast majority of these students participated in the elections and voted for Khatami.<sup>333</sup>

The student activism and mobilization have increased with the relatively free atmosphere of Khatemi's reign. Khatemi emphasized civil society, which included "professional associations, student organizations, trade unions, charitable associations, the media, research, scholars, and experts to supervise his mandate and work and voice their demands."<sup>334</sup> Therefore, the created relatively free civil society and liberal atmosphere paved the way for increasing the number of opponent press media. However, the conservative line of the regime closed the reformist newspaper *Salam* which had published the confession of an intelligence service officer who mentioned the murders of Iranian intellectuals and political activists by the regime a few days ago. Also, the majlis approved a new law to prevent the press media on 7 July 1999.<sup>335</sup> The protest started on the Tehran

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<sup>331</sup> Mashayekhi, *Ibid.*, p.296 cf. Iran Times International. 1997. No. 11:2.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 297.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>334</sup> Paola Rivetti & Francesca Cavatorta, "The Importance of being Civil Society: Student Politics and the Reformist Movement in Khatami's Iran", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 49 (4), (2013), p. 649.

<sup>335</sup> Ali Akbar Mahdi, "The Student Movement in the Islamic Republic of Iran", *Journal of Iranian Research and Analysis*, 15 (2), (1999), pp. 52-53.

University campus and dormitory after the oppressive actions of conservatives on the media by the law and closing the newspaper.

The fraction rivalry between the conservatives and reformists spread to the student uprisings and the pro-regime students confronted with the pro-Khatemi students on the Tehran University campus. The regime forces attacked the student dormitories on the night of 9 July 1999, and *Ansar-e Hezbollah*, a regime-backed group, was suspicious initially; however, the different magazines showed the different groups responsible for the attack. Even Special Forces Following the Supreme Leader, which has trained for the special operations, was claimed to be a group that attacked the student dormitories.<sup>336</sup>

The dormitory attack caused the death of five students while hundreds were beaten and tortured. The attackers damaged 800 rooms and ten buildings.<sup>337</sup> The dormitory attacked paved the way for massive anti-regime demonstrations in different cities like Isfahan, Shiraz, and Tabriz.<sup>338</sup> The spreading of the student movements and society's support and participation in these demonstrations once again showed that society found a base to reflect their dissidence against the regime's pressure on society, media, and freedom of expression with the emergence of the student movement. Therefore, the student movement in 1999 was crucial for the Islamic Republic's history because of being the first severe challenge that confronted the regime, which unified different student groups and classes' grievances and demands after the 20 years of revolution.

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<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>338</sup> Axworthy, *Ibid.*, p. 435.

To conclude, this chapter intended to explain the failures of political Islam in responding to social demands in three main areas, which directly affect people's lives. Furthermore, these failures paved the way for the emergence of society's dissidence and grievances from the Islamic regime in its forty years of reign. The first one is the ideological failure of the regime because of not creating the democratic system after the revolution, especially with the acceptance of the principle of *Velayat-e Faqih*, the supreme authority was given to the *ulama* and clergy. Although the state was created as an Islamic state that aimed at implementing the Sharia rules, the regime had to make concessions to be able to exist in the world system. Therefore, the regime ideologically had to change its point of view from idealism to realism and pragmatism, which caused Islam and the Sharia to be a tool for ruling the state instead of establishing a state for the sake of Islam. Also, the regime failed to create a democratic election system that provides the people with the right to representation. Significantly, the women and ethnic/religious minorities' restriction in the election system, which does not allow them to be the presidential candidate and be in a high position in the state system, is important to show the failure of the political system, newly and ambitiously created for the Iranian people. It is not responding to people's demands for a democratic, equalitarian and representative election system. Uprisings in the Green Movement, in 2009, which occurred after the triumph of Ahmedinejad that claimed to the possibility of fraud, indicates the dissidence, distrust, tiredness of society from the election system of the regime. Furthermore, the gradual decrease of the voting rates for the elections also shows the regime started to lose reliability and legitimacy for society. Especially the last presidential election, which was held in 2021, has witnessed the lowest voting participation rate since the establishment of the Islamic Republic.

The second failure of the Islamic regime is the economy. Although the Islamic regime was established as a regime of the oppressed people, the *mustazafin*, against the elites of the Shah Monarchy, the Islamic regime's economic system led to the creation of new excessive wealthy groups in the *ulema*, *bazaari*, and IRGC circles. Despite the privatization movement in the economy throughout the Rafsanjani reign, the strict conditions of the state to control the economy prevented

the privatization and investment in the country's economic system. On the contrary, the regime's economic policy restrained the foreign investment while prioritizing *bonyads* (foundations ) which the *bazaari* and IRGC members have administered. Therefore, state tender, oil industry, oil-producing, and exports have been controlled by these groups and provided them to be the main actors not only in the economy but also in the economic policies of the state. The more economic power and wealth meant the more political effectiveness and authority in the Islamic regime, which also caused clientelism while society has been exposed to dire economic conditions, high inflation, and the increasing unemployment rate besides the suppression and pressure of the regime.

Moreover, the harsh economic sanctions and embargo, mainly led by the US and indirectly by the UN, paved the way for society's confrontation with high inflation and difficult economic conditions, which triggered economic uprisings, especially in recent years. Although the Islamic regime has witnessed many riots, occurred with economic reasons, the 2017-2019 uprisings, which stemmed from the increasing price of the basic needs, are important to understand the grassroots of society against the Islamic regime. Since the slogans like *merg ber diktator* (death to the dictator), which referred to religious leader Khamenei, were chanted for the first time. It shows how society became radicalized and how the religious authority and the state lost their legitimacy because of not responding to society's expectations.

The third is social failures of the Islamic regime which directly stemmed from the social policies of the regime. The education system, for example, became one of the tools for Islamicizing society; however, using education as a tool of imposing the Islamic ideology is not unique for Iran. Nevertheless, Islamicization of education, especially in the first decade of the revolution with the Cultural Revolution, caused the emergence of the idea of the Islamicization of Science, thus the Islamization of universities caused the loss of highly qualified educated people from the education system. Although the rate of literacy highly increased and the women's participation in universities is now more than that of men, the

regime has tried to implement a gender quota system. The women are prevented from choosing the profession that is considered more suitable for men, and women are less likely to get a job than men, even though they have higher and better education than men while also women salary are lower than men, even if they have the same positions. These unequal social conditions with ideological pressure and economic difficulties led to increasing brain drain, which also costed high for the regime. The social organization and policies of the Islamic regime enhanced, rather than diminished the gender discrimination, inequality of opportunity, lack of freedom, and violation of fundamental human rights. These policies affected not only women and youth but also LGBT+ members whose existence and right to live are almost totally ignored by the Islamic regime. Nevertheless, the struggle of women, youth, and LGBT+ members with the other oppositions that do not accept to be ruled and lived under the Islamic regime state system, has continued in different ways. My Stealthy Freedom Campaign and One Million Signature Campaign of women and opposition groups against the mandatory veiling, gender discrimination, and abusing human rights policies of the Islamic regime are crucial to be aware of society's dissatisfaction and ongoing resistance and struggle. Although non-governmental organizations and the activists that have continued to struggle for human rights, women rights and human rights both in inside and outside the country, have tried to provide the connection between society and the regime in order to transmit society's demands and expectations, the regime approach to the activist cannot go beyond labeling them as a "foreign spies". To this extent, the regime makes NGOs nonfunctional tools for society and fails to enhance better relations through the NGOs.

The developments of technology and the changing form of media with the internet and wide range of social media have created different spheres of resistance for society. Although the regime had used the media as an effective tool for the imposition of Islamic ideology and policies through pro-state media organs and prevented society's right to demand information, which also showed the failure, the spread of the Internet usage led to decreasing regime authority in managing the information. Nevertheless, the student movement in 1999, which occurred

after the closing of reformist newspaper *Salam* was one of the basic examples to indicate unchanging pressure of regime on media and unrestrainable struggle of the society against the regime.



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Although American President Jimmy Carter described Mohammad Reza Shah's Iran as the *island of stability* in the Middle East when he visited Iran in December 1977, and his words repeated by the Shah in his international interview, the truth was different from the Shah's perception of his country. Since the country has witnessed many uprisings against the Shah and his oppressive monarchy, almost all classes of the country had a common point; the dethroning of Mohammed Reza Shah and brought down his kingdom.

The leftists, Islamists, nationalists, members of the middle classes, labour and peasants, small and middle shop owners, intellectuals, students, women and poor, almost all social group's opposition and uprisings against the Shah in order to create a free, democratic, and equalitarian system has therefore been continuing since 1977. When they succeeded in overthrowing the Shah's kingdom with the revolution after two years of struggle, the revolutionary forces expected to create a better system for their country and people. However, the Islamists became the winner of the revolution, the reasons of which are out of the context of this thesis. The revolution ended up the creation of an Islamic regime. The Islamist ideology and policies soon revealed that it was not what society expected from the revolution and the newly established system. Although the Islamist claimed to create a democratic, equal, and different kind of state which would be better from the "modern state" of the West, they have not realized their claim yet with the established political, ideological, economic, and social policies since 1979. Still, the Islamic regime could not satisfy Iran society while also failing to respond to their demands.

This dissertation has analyzed the failure of political Islam in Iran after the Islamists carried on their Islamist ideology and established a regime with Sharia rules. This study aims to show that the newly established Islamic regime cannot be successful in creating a democratic, equalitarian state that respects people's demands and satisfies people with the Islamic policies. In order to show the Islamic regime's failures, firstly, the Islamization of the revolution and state institutions were given in historical context. Therefore, the policies and implications during the Khomeini's reign between 1979 and 1989 were explained for the consolidation of the regime and establishment of order in Iran on the one hand. On the other hand, the thesis analyzes one of the most important policies that is followed by the Islamists, which is the elimination of revolutionary forces who gave great support to the realization of Shah's overthrow from power, and the crucial events which contributed to ease both the elimination of revolutionary forces and be helpful to the Islamist to take control of the revolution. The first of these crucial events is the hostage crisis, which was realized by the group known as *the Muslim Students Following the Imam Line* occurred soon after the revolution and known as the first radical action of the Islamist students to show the power of the new regime to both oppositional groups in the country and to whom against the Islamic Republic of Iran. The second event was the Iran- Iraq War (1980-1988) which took eight years and provided the Islamists a great chance to consolidate their power while society focused on the fear and chaos of war. Therefore, these events were helpful in both eliminating revolutionary forces and consolidating the Islamists in the newly established state.

In order to explain the failure of the regime, the second chapter of this thesis aims to show the unrealized Islamist claims with their ideological, political, economic and social implementations when they captured absolute power and started to rule the Islamic Republic of Iran with their Islamic administration. Since the *Velayet-e Faqih* administration system and implementation of *Sharia* within the new Constitution and creation of new institutions like the Guardian Council and the Expediency Council, which paved the way for the increasing Islamist, and the *ulema* authority in the system, the regime failed to realize their claim on creating

a democratic system that provides equal participation in ruling the state. Also, the claim of being a state of the oppressed people was not realized when the regime contribute to the emergence of new wealthy groups that have close relations with the ulema, like the *baazaris*, *bonyads*, and the members of the Islamic Republic Revolutionary Guards. The regime's support to these groups and its contribution to their wealth with the state tenders and sharing oil revenues led to economic crises, which affects most the poor and the oppressed and indicates the unrealized claims of revolution in the economy. Furthermore, the Islamic regime also failed to realize the claim of being a state that respects people's demands and satisfies society, unlike the Shah regime. However, the Islamic regime's restrictions of people's lives, especially women with the compulsory hijab and gender discriminative policies became a crucial indicator that the regime's social policies were far away to create a regime that respects society. Moreover, the restriction of women in the public sphere and controlling the oppositional groups and all society by the regime forces, the *Basiji* and *Pasdaran* also show how the Islamic regime respond to social expectations of having freedom, fundamental human rights, having right to be ruled under the democratic Constitution which is not shaping their life with the gender-based discrimination and more.

The third and last chapter of this thesis explores and deeply analyzes how the failures of the Islamic regime with the political-ideological, economic and social policies affect society and not responding to their demands. In order to clarify and give examples of social dissatisfaction, the election system of the regime prevents the participation of different groups like the opposition, women, and religious and ethnic minorities in the *majlis* with the authority of the Guardian Council and Islamic Constitution. The Green Movement (2009), which occurred after the 2009 election fraud, became the most significant evidence of society's dissatisfaction. Since society did not accept the election results, which they thought the reformist candidate Musavi votes were stolen by the pro-regime conservatives, the demonstration sustained for months to show their reaction to the election system. Therefore, the participation rate of society in the election has decreased especially in recent years. Because of the fact that the people do not believe their votes have

the power to change the system, which already has lost its legitimacy with the ongoing election system.

In addition to the political failures of the regime, there are also economic problems that directly paved the way for society's dissatisfaction with the regime. The excessive richness of the *ulema* and their circles, consisting of the *bazaari*, *bonyads*, and IRGC members, and the ineffective economic policies that are not providing foreign investor involvement of the market paved the way for increasing unemployment rate and clientelism. Furthermore, the US and EU sanctions and embargo that the Islamic regime has exposed, which started with the hostage crises and sustained severe, harsh sanctions, became quite influential on the rising inflation and purchasing rate in recent years. Therefore, the regime has witnessed the crowded uprisings stemming from society's economic problems, especially in recent years. 2017 and 2019 November uprisings, which emerged both in the rural and urban areas and supported by mass with the critical chants, can be evidence of society's dissatisfaction with an ongoing dire economy of the regime.

Besides the Islamic regime's political/ideological and economic failure, the implementation of the Shari rules and restriction of society has triggered and sustained society dissatisfaction, grievances, and dissidence in the social area against the regime. Although the education policies have contributed to the increasing literacy rate and women's participation in education, the discriminative gender policies caused women unemployment while also paved the way for women faculty and job choices. The general suppression, political situation and the education policies of the regime caused the high rate of brain drain. Even, the Islamic Republic of Iran has reached one of the highest rates of brain drain in the world. On the other hand, the general increase of youth's unemployment rate and suppression of the regime in all areas led to common grievances and dissatisfaction. Gender-based discrimination, based on the Islamic Constitution, prioritizes men in heritage, custody, marriage, and divorce issues more than women, caused women to become more vulnerable in the Islamic Republic of Iran. However, LGBT+ members are also the most vulnerable groups who could directly face the

Sharia rules in the country and death penalty because of their sexual choices. However, women have struggled against the regime for their rights, freedom and abolishing gender-based discrimination since the first years of the Islamic state. The women's struggle and resistance against the regime's pressures always find a way to show the women's dissatisfaction with the regime. The media development in this regard provides women to organize and carry out campaigns against the gender violations and discrimination of the Islamic regime. My Stealthy Freedom Campaign against the compulsory hijab and One Million Signature Campaign for showing women grievances against the discriminative laws of the Islamic regime is an indicator of women resistance and dissatisfaction with the regime.

Furthermore, the suppression on the press and media and censorship are also crucial to understand the pressure of the Islamic regime on people and their right to access information via the press and media. While also, the regime continues to suppress the activists in general but specifically those whose purpose is to transmit society demands to the state institutions through the non-governmental organizations.

After forty-two years of its establishment, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic regime could not create a state system that satisfies society neither by ideological/political, economic, nor social implementations. Although the Islamic Republic of Iran has continued to be an important country in the Middle East and the international area, the regime failed to respond to the demands of the Iranians and create a satisfied society. So, Iran is still quite far away from being the island of stability. Furthermore, it seems that Iran will continue to be confronted with society's reactions, as long as the state fails to respond society's demands and sustain the imposition of Islamic ideology with the ignored expectations of society that harmonized with the modern world like the other Islamists in the region.

The existence and influence of Islamist movements have started to increase in the Middle East, especially after the Arab uprising, which started as mass reactions to the autocratic leaders in the region. However, the movements paved the way for

the Islamists somehow to find a base to be an influential actor in the political arena after the uprisings. The rising of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt with Mohammed Morsi, Ennahda in Tunisia under the leadership of Rashid Gannushi, and the Justice and Development Party in Morocco with Abdelilah Benkirane can be examples to show the power of the Islamists after the long term autocratic regimes. However, these parties could not be successful in keeping society's support and sustain their efficiency on society after they gained power. Morsi lost his popular support and his legitimization in a short time when he started to Islamize state institutions. Then he was jailed with the coup d'etat and the power of the Muslim Brotherhood was destroyed by the military in Egypt. Although Ennahda in Tunisia received a high number of votes in 2011-2014, they have tried to act more secularly and not to use their Islamist ideology at the beginning of their power. However, Tunisian society has become dissatisfied with their Islamist discourse and economic hardship in the last years. Therefore, the Tunisian president, Kais Saeid, interfered with the parliament and frozen the executive power of the Islamists. Now, in September 2021 a woman was appointed as a new prime minister for the first time in Tunisian history and the Arab world. Moreover, the Islamist Justice and Development Party has started to lose its power in Morocco after its powerful ten years. The party lost its 113 seats in the general election of 2021.

The changing world order paved the way for changing society's expectations from the states and their ruling way in the Middle East as well. Not only the Islamic regime in Iran but also in the countries in which the Islamists gained power in the last years show that the Islamist ideology could not create a system that society desires in the modern world. Social expectations from the state have continued to change with the requirements of the new world, and peoples' concerns have changed. Since humans are not stable, and as much as the people change, societies change, and the demands from the states also change. Therefore, the state's ideology must keep up with the changing world order, changing society's expectations. Otherwise, it will not be able to keep society's support and sustain its power

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## APPENDICES

### A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TRKE ZET

Amerikan bařkanı Jimmy Carter, 1977 yılının Aralık ayında İran'a yaptığı ziyaret sırasında, lkeyi istikrar adası (*Island of Stability*) olarak tanımlamıř ve bu sylem lkenin řahı Muhammed Rıza tarafından da İran'ı tanımlarken kullanılmaya devam etmiřtir. Ancak, bu tanımlamanın zerinden iki sene gemeden, istikrar adası olarak tanımlanan İran iki yıl sren kaos ve karmařanın ardından 1979 yılında 20. yzyılın son devrimine řahitlik etmiř ve hem devrim ncesi hem devrim sonrası srete ađır bedeller demek zorunda kalarak "istikrar" kelimesinden olduka uzaklařmıřtır.

Uzun sredir řah'ın baskı rejiminden, kt giden ekonomik ve sosyal problemlerden dolayı lke'deki neredeyse btn gruplar İslamcılar, solcular, milliyetiler, entelekteller, đrenciler, kadınlar ve daha birođu, Muhammed Rıza řah'ın devrilmesi iin yapılan gsterilere katılmıřlardır. řah istikrar adası olarak nitelendirdiđi lkesindeki bu ayaklanmaları ve kaos ortamını daha fazla ynetemeyeceđini anlayınca lkesini terk etmiř ve řah'ın, Ortadođu'nun en donanımlı ordusuna sahip olan krallıđı, halk ayaklanmasına dayanamayarak, hi beklenmedik bir řekilde son bulmuřtur.

Ayaklanmalar srecinde řah'ın krallıđını yıkmak iin ortak paydada buluřan bu farklı gruplar, řah devrildikten sonra lkeyi yine ortak bir payda oluřturarak ynetebileceklerini dřnmř olsalar da devrimin ne kısa vadeli ne de uzun vadeli sonuları dřndkleri gibi olmamıřtır. Gnn sonunda kazanan sadece İslamcılar olmuř ve tarih ilk defa, İslamcıların uzun sredir hayalini kurdukları İslami bir devletin kurulduđuna řahitlik etmiřtir.

Bu tez, 1979 yılında İran'da gerçekleştirilen devrim sonrasında İslamcılar tarafından siyasal İslam ideolojisi ile kurulan İran İslam Cumhuriyeti'nin, kurulan yeni rejimle toplumun ideolojik, ekonomik ve sosyal taleplerini karşılamadaki başarısızlıklarını tahlil etmektedir.

Tezin birinci bölümünde devrimin lideri olarak kabul edilen dini lider Humeyni döneminde, 1979-1989 yılları arasında devrimin nasıl İslamileştirildiği ve İslami düzenin kurulmasında etkili olan içsel ve dışsal faktörler anlatılmaktadır. Bunlardan ilkinde, kurulan yeni rejimde İslamcılarının adım adım devrime katkı sunmuş olan diğer devrimci güçleri; solcular, milliyetçiler, kadınlar, hatta ulemanın siyasetteki aşırı etkinliğini eleştiren önde gelen İslamcı isimlerinin bile saf dışı bırakılarak, devrimin İslamcılarının tekeline nasıl alındığı anlatılmaktadır. İkinci olarak, devrimin ilk yılında Tahran'da yer alan Amerikan Büyükelçiliği'nin kendilerini İmam'ın Çizgisinin Takipçileri (*Muslim Students Followers of the Imam's Line*) olarak adlandıran öğrenciler tarafından kuşatılması ve elçilikte bulunan Amerikan diplomatların 444 gün boyunca rehin olarak tutulması anlatılmaktadır. Bu kuşatma hem ülke içerisindeki muhalif güçlere hem de İslam devletine karşı olan dış güçlere, İslamcılarının gücünü ve bundan sonra yapabileceklerini göstermekte önemli bir fırsat sağlamıştır. Bu olaya karşı çıkan Mehdi Bazargan gibi seküler ve liberallerin yani İslamcı olmayan muhaliflerin de suçlanarak yönetimden uzaklaştırılmasını kolaylaştıracak bir zemin hazırlanmıştır. Devrimin daha kolay bir şekilde İslamileşmesini sağlayan üçüncü olay ise, devrimin üzerinden henüz bir yıl geçmeden ve ülke içerisindeki konsolidasyon sağlanmadan, Baasçı Irak'ın lideri Saddam Hüseyin'in İran'a savaş açmasıdır. Saddam Hüseyin, İran'ın İslam devriminin ihracı söylemleri üzerine kendi ülkesindeki Şiiilerin de ayaklanacağını düşünerek, henüz yönetimi tam olarak ele alamamış ve içeride ciddi bir karmaşa yaşayan, ordusu dağılmış olan İslami İran'ı, rehine krizi sonrasında Amerika'nın ve dahası Şii nüfusa sahip olan ve ülkelerindeki Şiiilerin de bu devrimden etkilenmesinden korkan Körfez ülkelerinin de desteğiyle yenebileceğini düşünmüştür. Ancak, ciddi bir mücadeleden sonra devrimi gerçekteştirmiş İran halkını mağlup etmek mümkün olmamıştır. Humeyni, bu savaşın İslam'a karşı olduğunu ve kendilerinin de

İslam'ın askerleri olduğunu söyleyerek, savaşmanın kutsal olduğunu ve savaşta ölmenin şehitlik mertebesine ulaştıracağını söyleyerek, kitlelerin İslamı ve İslami devleti korumak adına akın akın savaşa katılmalarını sağlamış ve 8 yıllık bir mücadele ile İran'ın Saddam'ın düşündüğü gibi kolay bir şekilde boyun eğmeyeceğini göstermiştir.

Sınırdaki Irak ile savaş devam ederken ve halk savaşa odaklanmışken, içeride İslamcılar, birçok grup tarafından yapılan bu devrimin tek sahibi olmak için çalışmalara ve devlet mekanizmalarında yer alan muhalifleri teker teker tasfiye etmeye devam etmiştir. Savaş sırasında hükümet başkanlığı ver ordu komutanlığı yapan ve aynı zamanda milliyetçiler tarafından desteklenen Beni-Sadr, orduyu yönetememekle suçlanarak görevden alınırken, devrime ciddi şekilde destek vermiş ancak ulemanın tek otorite olmasını kabul etmeyen azınlık gruplar da ayaklanmışlardır. Kürtler, savaşta Irak'a destek verdikleri iddia edilerek, Irak ile savaş sürerken İslamcı rejimin ordusu tarafından bastırılmaya çalışılmıştır. Dolayısıyla devrim sonrası Humeyni döneminde (1979-1989), devrimi gerçekleştiren güçlerin devrimden teker teker uzaklaştırılması ile başlayan süreç, Amerika ile rehine krizini yaratılması, yapılan devrimin radikalliğini ve İslamcılarının yapabileceklerini, güçlerini hem ülke içerisindeki, hem ülke dışındaki muhalif güçlere gösterilmesi için fırsat sağlamıştır. Buna karşı çıkanları hain olarak adlandırıp tasfiye edilmesi ile devam etmiştir. İran-Irak savaşı ise İslamcı İran'a ve dolayısıyla İslam'a açılan savaş söylemleri ile halkın dini duyguları üzerinden ve savaşın yarattığı korku ve kargaşa ortamından yararlanarak kendi sistemlerini kurmalarını sağlamıştır.

Bu tezin ikinci kısmında, ulema liderliğinde devrimin ve kurulan yeni rejimin nasıl şekillendiği tahlil edilmektedir. İlk olarak, ulemanın siyasi olarak nasıl kurumsallaştırıldığından bahsedilmektedir. Kurulan yeni devlet, İran İslam Cumhuriyeti olarak adlandırıldığından, yeni rejimden beklenen Cumhuriyet ve dolayısıyla demokratik bir şekilde farklı grupların da yer alacağı bir sistemin olmasıydı. Ancak devrimin dini lideri olan Humeyni'nin *Velayeti Fakih*, İslami hukuk olan Fikh'da yetkinliği olan dini alimlerin devlet yönetimine vekillik

etmelerini savunan teorinin devlet yönetimine uygulanması beklenilenin gerçekleşmeyeceğini göstermiştir. Şiilik mezhebine göre gaybda olan 12. İmam Mehdi'nin yokluğunda topluma rehberlik etmesi meşru olan kişiler bu fakihlerdir. Dolayısıyla *Velayeti Fakih* olarak lider kabul edilen ve neredeyse devlet yönetimindeki bütün yetkileri elinde bulunduran Humeyni, hem ulemanın sistem içerisinde en önemli pozisyonları ellerine almalarını sağlamış hem de demokratik katılımın olacağı bir sistemin kurulacağına dair beklentileri boşa çıkarmıştır. Devrim sonrası yapılan yeni anayasada şariat kurallarının yer alması da yine devletin demokratik bir anayasaya sahip olmak yerine, toplumun bu şariat kurallarına göre şekillendirilmesini amaçlayan bir hukuk sistemi altında yönetilmesine sebebiyet vermiştir. İkinci olarak, devrim sonrası süreçte kurulacak olan devletin ideolojisini İslami söylem üzerine inşa eden ve İslam devleti kurarak sadece İran halkının değil, bütün Müslümanların yani ümmetin de koruyuculuğunu yapacağını iddia eden Humeyni ve ülkenin bütün sistemlerini elinde bulunduran ulemanın ideolojik söylemdeki değişimleri anlatılmaktadır. Özellikle İran-Irak savaşı boyunca İran milletine ve İran topraklarına olan vurgu, toplumdaki bu milliyetçilik duygularının da hat safhalara ulaşmasını sağlamıştır. Kurulan rejimin devamını sağlamak için, yapılan savaşın İran milletine ve hatta Şiilere yapıldığının vurgusu aslında kurulan yeni rejimin, ümmeti birleştirmekten ziyade Şii mezhebini öne çıkaracak politikaları benimseyeceğini yani İslam âleminin koruyuculuğu şiarını gerçekleştirmekten uzak olduğunu göstermektedir. Dolayısıyla, rejimin İslamcı ideolojiden çok İran milliyetçiliği ve Şii mezhepçiliğinin önünü açan ideolojik bir değişim geçirdiği görülmektedir. Üçüncü kısımda, ulema liderliğinde kurulan devletin ekonomik sistemi ve bu sistemin vaat edildiği gibi ezilen, yoksul halkın yanında olmak yerine onların zaman içerisinde daha fazla yoksullaşmasına sebebiyet verdiği anlatılmaktadır. Ülkenin petrol gelirlerini elinde bulundurarak oldukça müreffeh bir yaşam sürdüren Şah ve elit çevresi, ülkedeki birçok muhalif grubun ki bunların en önemlilerinden biri de ulema sınıfıydı, eleştirilerinin hedefi halindeydi. Bu yüzden kurulan devletin *Mustazafin* (ezilenler, yoksullar) ülkesi olacağı ulema tarafından iddia edilmişti. Ancak yeni rejimin de zaman içerisinde kendine yakın gruplarla (Ulema, Bazaariler, Devrim Muhafızları Ordusu üyeleri ve bu grup üyelerinin

yöneticiliğini yaptıkları *Bonyadlar*, Vakıflar) kurmuş olduğu ilişkiler ağının, petrol gelirleri, ithalat, ihracat, üretim vb. ekonomik getirisi olan alanlarda etkili olduğu ve bütün bu gelirlerin bu ağ içerisinde paylaştırıldığı bir ekonomik sistem oluşturulmuştur. Bu grupların dışında kalan kişiler ise bu ilişki ağının sebebiyet verdiği kayırmacılık, işsizlik ve yoksulluğun yarattığı ezilenler olarak var olmaya devam etmektedirler. Dolayısıyla ulema, Şah'ın ülke gelirlerini elinde bulunduran elit sınıfını eleştirirken, ulema, devrim muhafızları ve bazarilerden oluşan kendi yeni zenginlerini yaratmıştır.

Tezin ikinci bölümünün son kısmında ise yeni kurulan İslami devletin toplum üzerindeki etkisi anlatılmaktadır. İslam devleti kurulduktan hemen sonra toplumun İslamileştirilmesi ve şeriat kurallarına göre yaşanması, toplumsal düzenin İslami şartlara göre yeniden düzenlenmesi gerektiğinden, ilk olarak kadınlara örtünme zorunluluğu getirilmiş, bu zorunluluğu yerine getirmeyen kadınlar devlet kurumlarındaki işlerinden olmuşlardır. Toplum yavaş yavaş İslami kurullara göre şekillendirilmeye başlanmıştır. Karma eğitime son verilerek erkek ve kız çocuklarının birlikte eğitim görmeleri yasaklanmış, restoranlarda, otobüslerde ve hatta halka açık yerlerde kadın ve erkeklerin birlikte oturmalarına müsaade edilmemiştir. Yeterince Müslüman bulunmayan hocalar ve öğrenciler ki bunlar özellikle sol ideolojiye sahip olan kişiler, üniversitelerden ihraç edilmiştir. Kadınlar sadece toplumsal hayatlarında değil, hukuken de sahip oldukları birçok hakkı kaybetmek zorunda kalmışlardır. Çünkü yeni anayasa eşitlikçi bir sistem kurmak yerine, erkeklerin, evlenme, boşanma, miras vb. birçok konuda öncelendiği bir sistem yaratılmasına sebebiyet vermiştir. Toplumu neredeyse her alanda İslamileştirmeye çalışan bu yeni rejim, şeriat yasalarına toplumun uyup uymadığını kontrol etmek için ordunun bir parçası olan *Basiji ve Pasdaranları* kullanmıştır. Bu güçler aynı zamanda uzun süre muhalif tavır ve eylemlerde bulunan grupların bastırılmasında, yok edilmesinde önemli rol oynamışlardır. Ahlak Muhafızları olarak nitelendirilen ve sokaklarda devriye gezen polisler toplumun “ahlak” kurallarına ne kadar uygun davrandıklarını ve giyindiklerini kontrol etmişlerdir. Şah'ın muhalifleri baskılamak için kullandığı gizli servis olan SAVAK'ın topluma, muhaliflere yaptığı baskıya, işkenceye ve şiddete maruz

kalmamak için devrim yapan halk, kısa bir süre sonra dindarlar tarafından kurulan yeni rejimin SAVAK'ı aratmayan eylemlerine ve baskılarına maruz kalmıştır.

Tezin son bölümünde ise toplumsal taleplerin, ne ideolojik/politik, ne ekonomik ne de sosyal alanda karşılanamadığı ve Siyasal İslam'ın toplum taleplerine, beklentilerine cevap vermekte yeterince başarılı olamadığı tahlil edilmektedir. Bu nedenle ilk olarak, kurulan yeni devlet sisteminde yaratılan kurumların Anayasayı Koruma Konseyi (*Guardian Council*), Düzenin Maslahatını Teşhis Konseyi (*Expediency Discernment Council*) ve uygulanan seçim sisteminin demokratik ve çoğulcu temsil hakkının olmasını isteyen toplumun beklentisinin tam aksi yönde uygulamalarda bulunarak toplum taleplerinin göz ardı edilmesine neden olduğu anlatılmaktadır. Ülkede dört yılda bir gerçekleştirilen cumhurbaşkanlığı ve milletvekilliği seçimleri olsa da adayların ilk olarak Anayasayı Koruma Konseyi tarafından onaylanarak halkın seçimine sunulması halkın seçilmiş olan adaylar arasında seçim yapmak zorunda bırakılması anlamına gelmektedir. Genel olarak muhalif olan herhangi bir adayın aday olarak seçilmesi daha en baştan bu kurum tarafından engellenmektedir. Kadınların, etnik ya da dini azınlık gruplarından olan adayların cumhurbaşkanlığı adaylıkları bu konsey tarafından hiçbir şekilde onaylanmamaktadır. Bu da aslında kurulmuş olan sistemde azınlıklara ve kadınlara temsiliyet hakkının verilmediğinin önemli bir göstergesi olmaktadır. Konseyin bu yetkisi, genelde muhafazakârların kendi siyasetlerini ve düşüncelerini benimseyen adayların önünü açmasını sağlamaktadır. Meclis içerisinde yasama halk tarafından seçilen adaylar tarafından yapılıyor olsa da Anayasayı Koruma Konseyi bu yapılan yasaları veto etme hakkına sahip, veto edilen yasalar, meclisin talebi üzerine Düzenin Maslahatını Teşhis Konseyi'nin kararına sunulabilmektedir. Ancak bu konseyin bütün üyelerinin dini lider tarafından seçiliyor olması, verilen kararın onun iradesi dışında olmamasına ve dolayısıyla meclisin kendi iradesini, kararlarını gerçekleştirememesine neden olmaktadır. Bu nedenle seçim sisteminin varlığı, toplumsal iradenin ne yasamada ne yürütmede ne de yargıda bir karşılığının olmadığını göstermektedir. Anayasa Koruma Konseyi'nin son yıllarda seçim sistemindeki ağırlığı gittikçe daha fazla hissedilmektedir. Özellikle reformist adayların, aday olamadan elenmeleri, halkın

tepkisine neden olmaktadır. Seçim sistemindeki bu durum, halkı temsil edilme hakkından mahrum ettiği için yapılan seçimler uzun süredir farklı gruplar tarafından boykot edilmektedir. 2009 yılında Reformistlerin adayı Musevi'nin seçimi kazanmasına kesin gözü ile bakılırken, oy sayımı bitmeden muhafazakârların aday olan Ahmedinejad'ın dini lider Hamaney tarafından cumhurbaşkanı ilan edilmesi, ülke içerisinde aylarca süren gösterilerin devam etmesine, gösterilere katılanların Besiciler tarafından gösterilerde öldürülmesine, binlerce insanın tutuklanmasına ve işkence görmesine neden olmuştur. Reformistlerin 2009 seçimlerinde yaşadıkları bu hayal kırıklığı ve maruz kaldıkları seçim mimarlığı, toplumun değişimin seçimle gelebileceğine olan inancının zedelenmesinde de önemli rol oynamıştır. Bu bağlamda, özellikle 2021 yılında yapılan cumhurbaşkanlığı seçimlerine boykot nedeniyle katılım oranı %48.2 olması seçim sistemine toplum tarafından riayet edilmediğini göstermektedir. Son seçim, İran İslam Cumhuriyeti devleti kurulduğundan bu güne katılım oranının en düşük olduğu seçim olmuştur.

Toplumsal taleplerinin ve beklentilerinin ekonomik anlamda karşılanmadığını gösteren bir diğer bölümde ise özellikle Cumhurbaşkanı Rafsancani döneminde başlayan ve ondan sonraki Cumhurbaşkanı olan Hatemi döneminde devam ettirilen özelleştirme politikasından bahsedilmektedir. Özelleştirme politikası ile devletin yabancı yatırımcıların önünü açması beklenen politika içerisinde muhafazakârlar tarafından yeterince desteklenmemiş ve ülke içerisinde ekonomik çıkarlarından feragat etmek istemeyen grupların baskısı nedeniyle başarıya ulaşamamıştır. Rafsancani döneminde başlayan ve savaş sonrasında ülkenin yeniden inşasını hedefleyen politikası (*Reconstruction Period*), ülke içerisinde ekonomik kaynakları ve gelirleri elinde bulunduran vakıfların ki çoğunun lideri Devrim Muhafızları Ordusu üyelerinden oluşmaktadır, başlatılan süreçte önemli devlet ihaleleri almalarını sağlamıştır. Bu da bu grupların devlet yatırımlarını tekellerine almalarına sebebiyet vererek daha da güçlenmelerini sağlamıştır. Bu güçlenme siyasi alandaki varlıklarını da etkileyerek, özellikle Ahmedinejad'ın 2009 seçiminde cumhurbaşkanı olması için maddi olarak desteklemişlerdir, bu durum ülkenin hem iç hem dış politikasında önemli bir aktör haline gelmelerinin

önünü açmıştır. Bu grupların ekonomi ve siyasetteki etkin rolleri yabancı yatırımcıların ülke ekonomisinde kendilerine yer bulamamalarına ve haliyle toplumun da gelir kaynaklarından yoksun kalmasına, ülke ekonomisinin yönetilemiyor olmasından kaynaklanan yüksek enflasyon ve zamlara maruz kalmasına sebebiyet vermektedir. Özellikle işsiz genç oranının giderek artması, işe alımlarda kayırmacılığın yapıyor olması, gençlerin rejime karşı memnuniyetsizliklerini had safhaya taşımaktadır. Buna ek olarak rejimin özellikle batı ülkeleri ile olan ilişkisinden kaynaklanan, uzun süredir hem Amerika hem de Avrupa ülkeleri tarafından ambargo ve ekonomik yaptırımlara maruz kalması, ithalat ve ihracatta problemlerle karlı karşıya kalmasına ve toplumun temel ihtiyaçlarını karşılamada bile ciddi sıkıntılar yaşamasına neden olmaktadır. Özellikle 2012 yılında Amerikan yaptırımlarının artmasıyla ülkenin enflasyon oranının 34,7'ye yükselmiş olması ve buna bağlı olarak devam eden ekonomik krizin yarattığı toplumsal memnuniyetsizlik devam etmektedir. Bu bağlamda, 2017- 2019' da sadece şehir merkezlerinde değil, kırsal alanlarda yaşayan halkın da yapılan zamlara tepki göstermek için sokağa döküldüğü ekonomi nedeni ayaklanmalar gerçekleşmiştir. Bu durum içinde bulunulan ekonomik koşulların halk nezdinde ciddi memnuniyetsizlik yarattığını göstermektedir. Kötü giden ekonomi yönetimi bu anlamda halkı öfkeliendiren ve uzun vadede rejimi en çok zora sokacak durum olarak görünmektedir. Dolayısıyla rejim, ekonomik anlamda da halkın müreffeh yaşam talebini karşılamakta başarısız olmuş, günden güne yoksullaşan bir toplum yaratmıştır.

Tezin son bölümünde ise İslam rejiminin sosyal alanlarda toplumun talep ve beklentilerini karşılamakta yaşadığı başarısızlıklara yer verilmektedir. Bunlardan ilki eğitim alanındadır. Yeni rejim kurulduğundan bu yana ülkedeki okuma yazma oranı, üniversite mezunu sayısı artmış olmasına rağmen, eğitimin devrimin ilk yıllarında yapılan Kültür Devrimi aracılığıyla İslamileştirilmeye ve hem eğitim kurumlarının hem müfredatın İslami ideolojiyi dayatarak İslami bir neslin yetişmesini sağlamaya çalışması, gençlerin ciddi anlamda İslam'dan uzaklaşmasına neden olmuştur. Yine eğitim sisteminde özellikle üniversitelerde kadın öğrenci oranının erkeklerden yüksek olması, üniversitelere cinsiyet kotası

uygulamasının getirilmesine ve kadınların mühendislik ve fen bilimleri bölümlerine, erkeklere daha uygun olduğu düşünülen, kayıt yaptırmaları kota sistemi ile azaltılmaya çalışılmaktadır. Ülkenin içinde bulunduğu sosyal, siyasal ve ekonomik konjonktür, özellikle eğitilmiş sınıfta, ülkeyi terk etmesine ve buna bağlı olarak beyin göçü oranının artmasına neden olmaktadır. İran İslam Cumhuriyeti'kurulduktan sonra en çok beyin göçü vermiş ülkelerin başında gelmektedir. Bu durum ülkeye ekonomik anlamda zarar vermesinin yanı sıra ülkenin toplumsal olarak kalkınmasının da önünde büyük bir problem olarak durmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, eğitim sistemi nitelikli iş gücü yaratıyor olsa bile rejim bu insanların ülkede kalmasını sağlamakta ciddi başarısızlık yaşamaktadır. Yine aynı şekilde özellikle kadınların hem giyim hem yaşam tarzlarının sokaklarda ahlak polisleri tarafından kontrol edilmesi, özgür yaşam hakkından mahrum ediliyor olmaları, yasalarla korunan erkek egemenliği ve maruz kaldıkları cinsiyet eşitsizliğinin devamını sağlayan politikaların varlığı, kadınların İslam rejimine karşıtlığını ve memnuniyetsizliklerinin güçlenerek, kadın hareketinin ciddi bir muhalefete dönüşmesini sağlamaktadır. Cinsiyet ayrımcılığına kadınlardan daha fazla maruz kalan bir diğer grup ise LGBT+ bireyleridir. Şeriatla bağlı olarak yönetilen İslam devletinde aynı cinsler arasında yaşanan cinsel ilişki ölüm cezasına çarptırılmalarına neden olacağı için bu bireylerin toplumsal alanda gerçek cinsel kimlikleri ile var olmaları mümkün değildir. Ahlak polisleri bu bireylerin farkına varması durumunda çok ciddi işkencelere maruz kaldıkları bilinmektedir. Rejimin bu bireyleri hiçbir şekilde koruyacak yasalara sahip olmaması ve tam tersi rejim tarafından ahlaksız olarak tanımlanmaları, bu bireylerin toplumun ve hatta en çok aile bireylerinin şiddetine maruz kalmalarına sebebiyet vermektedir. Bu nedenle, kadınların cinsiyet eşitliği, kadın özgürlüğü, insan hakları arayışlarına bu bireyler de destek vermektedir. Rejimin kadınlara karşı izlediği bu politikalar ve kadınların maruz kaldığı bu yaptırımlar kadınları rejime karşı mücadeleden alıkoymamış, aksine devrimin ilk günlerinden beri alanlarda, protesto gösterilerinde ön saflarda olmalarını sağlamıştır. Bu bağlamda, kadınların rejime karşı olan mücadelesi form değiştirerek devam etmektedir. İnternet ve sosyal medya olanaklarının artması ile birlikte kadınların rejimin uygulamalarına olan isyanları, hak arayışları bu alanlar üzerinden dünya geneline

yayılmakta ve destek görmektedir. 2006 yılında kadınlar tarafından başlatılan ve İslami rejim yasalarının sebep olduğu mağduriyetin giderilmesi için 1 milyon imza toplanmasını amaçlayan “1 Milyon İmza Hareketi” (*One Million Signatures Campaign*) kadınların insan haklarına aykırı olan bu durumun giderilmesi için rejime karşı direnişlerinin göstergesi olmuştur. Yine İranlı bir kadın aktivist olan Masih Alinejad’ın rejimin başörtüsü takma zorunluluğuna karşı başlatmış olduğu “Benim Gizli Özgürlük Hareketim” (*My Stealthy Freedom Campaign*) hem İran’da hem de diğer ülkelerde yaşayan kadınlar tarafından sahiplenilmiş ve dünya genelinde kadınların rejime karşı yürüttüğü bu mücadeleyi görünür kılmıştır.

İslam rejiminin kurulduğu günden bu yana baskılamaya çalıştığı ve toplumun doğru bilgiye ulaşmasını engellediği alan olarak basın ve medyadaki gelişmeler rejimin bu alanda halkın haber alma hakkını ve talebini yerine getirmekteki başarısızlığına dair önemli bir örnek teşkil etmektedir. Devrimin ilk yıllarından bu yana yüzlerce yayın organının kapatılması ve devlet gelirlerinin rejim destekçisi olan kanallara, gazetelere aktarılması muhalif olan yayınların varlığına son verilmesi rejimin toplumu baskılamasına ve kendi istedikleri doğrultuda yönlendirmeye çalışmasına dair önemli bir gösterge olmaktadır. Bu da toplumun ülkedeki gelişmelerden doğru olarak haberdar olmamasına neden olmuştur. Ancak internet kullanımındaki yaygınlık ve sosyal medyanın toplumsal gelişmelerde neredeyse en önemli örgütlenme aracı olarak kullanılması, özellikle 2009’dan beri İran’daki protesto gösterilerinin organize edilmesinde oldukça etkili olmaktadır. Her ne kadar rejim ülkedeki internet hızını yavaşlatmaya ve özellikle sosyal hareketlerde internet erişimini tamamen engellemeye çalışıyor olsa da insanlar internet ve sosyal medya üzerinden maruz kaldıkları baskıları ve gösterilerdeki rejim şiddetini dünyaya duyurmakta başarılı olmaya devam etmektedir.

Yine tezin son bölümünde rejimin başarısızlıklarından biri olarak, rejimin Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları (*Non-Governmental Organizations*) ile ilişkileri tahlil edilmektedir. Toplum ve devlet arasındaki ilişkilerin geliştirilmesi ve iyileştirilmesi için aracılık görevi gören Sivil Toplum Kuruluşlarının, İran’da devlet tarafından desteklenmiyor hatta tam aksine insan hakları, kadın hakları,

evre sorunları gibi alanlarda mcadele eden aktivistlerin rejim dřmanı ve yabancı glerin ajanları olarak nitelendiriliyor olması, bu kurumların toplumsal problemleri ve sorunları devlet kurumlarına iletmekte ciddi engellerle karřılařmalarına sebep olmaktadır. Bu anlamda bu kurumların devlet sistemi ierisindeki eksiklikleri ve hatta neredeyse var olmamaları, devletin toplumsal taleplerden, toplumun problemlerinden bihaber olmasına ve dolayısıyla toplumun yararına olacak olan devlet destekli faaliyetlerin hayata geirilmemesine neden olmaktadır.

Sonuç olarak, İřlam rejiminin yukarıda bahsedilen ideolojik, siyasi, ekonomik ve en nemlisi toplumsal bařarısızlıkları, İřan halkının hayatının her alanında ciddi sorunlarla karřı karřıya kalmasına sebep olmaktadır. Bu anlamda siyasi İřlam ideolojisi ne demokratik ve eřitliki bir dzen kurabilmiř, ne topluma ekonomik olarak mreffe bir yařam sunabilmiř, ne de toplumun řah rejiminden kalan memnuniyetsizliklerini giderebilmiřtir. İřan, İřlam rejimi kurulduėu gnden bu yana, toplamsal taleplerin karřılanamadıėı, halkın memnuniyetinin saėlanamadıėı ve 42 yıl gemiř olmasına raėmen istikrar adası olarak nitelendirilmekten uzak bir lke olmaya devam etmektedir.

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