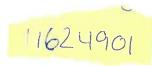Université de Montréal

The Rise and Fall of the Reform Movement in Iran:
A Systemic Analysis

Par
Afshin Hojati

Département de science politique
Faculté des arts et sciences

Mémoire présenté à la Faculté des études supérieures
En vue de l'obtention du grade de Maître ès science (M. sc.)

Janvier 2005

Université de Montréal

Faculté des études supérieures

Ce mémoire intitulé

**The Rise and Fall of the Reform Movement in Iran:
A Systemic Analysis**

Présenté par:

Afshin Hojati

A été évalué par un jury composé des personnes suivantes:

Charles Blattberg, président-rapporteur

Mamoudou Gazibo, directeur de recherche

Marie-Joelle Zahar, évaluatrice

Résumé

Depuis l'élection présidentielle du 23 Mai 1997, et la victoire du candidat réformateur Mohammad Khatami, les yeux du monde se sont à nouveau tournés vers la politique iranienne. La victoire des réformateurs est attribuée en grande partie au grand nombre d'électeurs, 85%, qui s'est présenté aux urnes. Le message électoral de Khatami était centré sur le besoin de réforme et son inévitabilité tout en soulignant des questions relatives à la société civile, à l'état de droits, au respect des droits et de la dignité des citoyens, ainsi que celle de la présence et de la participation des femmes dans la société. Ce discours prometteur raviva l'enthousiasme de la population en faveur d'une grande vague de réforme. Mais moins de deux ans plus tard, le mouvement réformateur se heurta à de graves obstacles, alimentés par les factions conservatrices de l'État. Cette tendance se poursuivit malgré les victoires successives des réformateurs aux élections de 1999, 2000, 2001. Finalement, à la fin de l'année 2003, le Conseil des Gardiens, contrôlé par les conservateurs, disqualifiait 3600 candidats aux élections législatives, mettant fin à l'initiative hiérarchique verticale de réforme.

Le présent mémoire utilise certains des concepts clés de l'analyse systémique de David Easton, notamment sa conception de système politique et de ses relations avec son environnement. En se basant sur les dynamiques socio-économiques et politiques internes de l'Iran, et en utilisant des concepts tels que 'inputs', 'outputs', 'retroaction', 'feedback', ainsi que 'output reaction', ce mémoire tente de décrire et d'expliquer l'émergence du mouvement réformateur d'un côté, et l'impasse à laquelle il s'est heurté de l'autre.

Mots clés : politiques Iranienne, société civile, démocratisation, processus de réforme, Mohammad Khatami, égalité des sexes, analyse systémique, relation État-société

Abstract

Ever since the presidential elections of May 23rd 1997, and the victory of reformist candidate Mohammad Khatami, the world's attention has once again focused on Iranian politics. The reformists' victory is mostly attributed to the astonishing voter turnout that amounted to 85% of the electorate. Khatami's campaign messages, which concentrated on the need for reform and focused on the important issues of *civil society*, *the rule of law*, *citizens' rights and dignity*, and *women's presence*, energized the populace and created a huge momentum for change. Less than two years after its initiation, the reform movement began to encounter important obstacles, mostly arising out of the conservative factions of the establishment. This continued despite successive reformist electoral victories in 1999, 2000, and 2001. Finally in late 2003 and in January 2004, the conservative-led Council of Guardians disqualified nearly 3,600 candidates to the legislative elections, putting an end to the top-down reform initiative.

In this thesis, key concepts associated with David Easton's systemic model such as the characterization of the state as political system, and that of the society at large, as its environment will be used. By focusing on Iran's internal socioeconomic and political dynamics (excluding the influences of the international environment), and through the use of concepts such as *inputs*, *outputs*, *retroaction*, *feedback*, and *output reaction*, this thesis attempts to describe and explain the emergence and the subsequent deadlock associated with the reform phenomenon. By also incorporating the internal divisions and the factionalism that is characteristic of post-revolutionary Iranian politics, such analyses would hopefully allow for a more complete and thorough investigation of the structural factors that led to the reform movement, and the political factors that prevented its maturation and further progression.

Key words: Iranian politics, civil society, democratization, the reform processes, Mohammad Khatami, gender equality, systemic analysis, state-society relations

Table of Contents

Dedications

I would like to humbly dedicate this work to my loving mother and father to whom I owe everything.

Acknowledgments

Introduction

The primary goal of this thesis is to both **describe** and **explain** the emergence and consequent deadlock of the Iranian reform movement. To do this, I will focus on the post-revolutionary period to explore the reasons underlying the adoption of the reform movement. I will conclude my analysis after presenting the legislative elections of February 2004. This is an important event in the history of the movement because during these elections the Guardian Council disqualified most reformist candidates, an act that is considered the *coup de grace* for the state-led reform movement.

Such a study requires a thorough investigation of the main causes and roots of the reform movement in the socioeconomic and political structures of state and society. Individual leaders have always played an important role in history's social and political upheavals, but regardless of personal power and charisma, from Cyrus the Great to Alexander, Gandhi and Khomeini, without the "appropriate" climate and the right structural conditions, their tasks (for better or for worse) would have been next to impossible to carry out.

It is mainly for this reason that I will adopt David Easton's systemic model, for it allows me to examine the socioeconomic forces (the environment) and the state and individual leaders (the political system). I chose to use this model because although it seems to over-generalize it leaves much room for interpretation and adaptation. Perhaps this quality is both its strength and its weakness. As I will argue in Chapter I, in which the theoretical model is described and my use of it set forth, no theory or model can explain everything. There are shortcomings in all schemes that aim to describe and explain complex social and political issues in an organized and complete manner. But the model has had its fair share of

contributions and successes, the least of which is our use, perhaps over-use, of the concept of "political systems." The Easton's model represents the social and scientific setting of a particular era in the evolution of political science as a discipline. Although by now the days of grand theories are mostly over (indefinitely of course), I have found Easton's model to be more than useful for my task of analyzing the emergence of the reform movement on the one hand, and its apparent deadlock on the other.

The model is important because it allows for an in-depth analysis of the political system as a whole, including the pressures from below (grassroots), from the middle (civil society institutions) and from the top (leading authorities and the elite). In other words, it allows for a synthesis of various social, economic and political forces at work. At the center of Easton's model is the notion of *adaptation* and the argument that those political systems that actually endure in the long term are those that adapt to the changing environments, both internal and external.

Therefore, quite naturally, the notion of adaptation is at the heart of the arguments made in this thesis. After introducing the basic realities of post-revolutionary Iran, I will begin by describing the economic conditions and acute problems that the state confronted after the end of the Iran-Iraq War. Following nearly ten years of violent and bloody revolution, the civil war in Kurdistan, eight years of devastating war with Iraq, and Khomeini's death, the regime sought to initiate a plan for economic revitalization. The regime's old excuses of foreign invasion and American imperialism could no longer be used and the state faced a number of chronic social and economic problems that needed urgent attention and action.

The second part of this thesis summarizes the eight years of Rafsanjani's presidency, his administration's initiatives, intense post-Khomeini factionalism, the problems associated

with the unification of the power structure and, most importantly, the authorities' failure to improve the standards of living for a population that had nearly doubled in 15 years. The state also needed to adapt to changing circumstances and the First Five-Year Plan implicitly acknowledged the necessity of tackling the issues that had been neglected for more than a decade. The mechanisms that propelled the rentier state[1] thus far could no longer be relied upon exclusively.

I have also expanded the focus of this study by taking into account the changing nature of Iranian society and by describing the system's inability to respond to the people's most basic needs. The government's overall failures in the economic sphere, coupled with the masses' disenchantment with the authorities and the regime—a point I will argue—constitute the growing crisis of legitimacy plaguing the Iranian political system. I chose to concentrate on the condition of women in post-revolutionary Iran because their plight, as the largest social group in Iran, clearly illustrates the system's ideological inconsistencies and its leaders' growing disconnection with the country's changing social and political realities. I also concentrate on other social groups within this environment in order to demonstrate the alarmingly diminishing level of support and legitimacy for both the regime and its leaders. Furthermore, by focusing on the intensification of factionalism and polarization among the leadership and the elite, and on the specific role played by the new Islamic Left and Center, I hope to clearly show the extent to which the system was pressured into the adoption of a new and more inclusive path.

---

[1] These states are generally understood as being over-reliant on revenues generated from "rents" (oil and gas in case of Iran), whereby the rent makes up a significant amount of the country's overall GDP. Such states normally lack economies based on production, and state revenue is therefore not based on the extraction of the domestic population's surplus production. For further comments, see Yasuyuki Mutsunaga, "lEtat rentier est-il refractaire a la democratie?", Critique internationale No.8 (July 2000), 46-58.

This thesis will then analyze the notion of a systemic response aimed at restoring popular support through Hojjatolislam Mohammad Khatami's candidacy, his campaign messages and agenda and, ultimately, his presidency. I will argue that despite ever-present factionalism the reform phenomenon personified by Mohammad Khatami was a calculated move by the leadership of the Islamic Republic with both objective and subjective considerations. I continue by arguing that Mr. Khatami's agendas, ambitions and plans were not to transform the basic foundations of the Islamic system and lead Iran toward a liberal democracy, but were rather a systemic attempt at a process of limited adaptation in order to cope with the challenges stemming from both within and without the system.

Finally, in the last part of this thesis, following a description of the kinds of socio-political openings the state has made, I demonstrate how the authorities began a campaign of selective elimination and silencing of those individuals and groups they deemed threatening. Such a trend reinforces the argument that from the state's perspective the reform phenomenon was to grant certain freedoms of expression and association, so long as these activities remained "constructive." However, the slow pace of the reforms and Khatami's inability or unwillingness to follow through forcefully and rapidly on the promises he had made during his campaign caused some media groups, intellectuals and student associations to intensify their pressure tactics. After the student demonstrations of July 1999—a watershed event in the reform era—and the legislative elections of February 2000, the conservative faction of the regime began a widespread campaign of repressing the most outspoken, active and influential members of the reformist camp. This silencing culminated in the disqualification of nearly 3,600 reformist candidates in the legislative elections of 2004, thereby eliminating the

reformists from the legislature, effectively suffocating the top-down reform initiative and taking the divisions among the leadership and the elite to another level.

By the **partial** application of the Easton model and the use of such terms as *inputs* (demand and support), *outputs* (systemic response), *retroaction/feedback* (the information coming back to the authorities with regards to the consequences of their decisions and actions), and *output reaction* (the follow-up systemic response, i.e., *coup de grace*), I try to analyze the underlying reasons for the emergence of the reform movement, and subsequently, the state's abandonment of the initiative.[2] It is imperative to state that in social and political life, a number of minor and major inputs, outputs, retroactions, feedback and output reactions take place simultaneously. Political systems and their respective environments are constantly engaged in such activities and it is not my intention to presume otherwise. What I hope to demonstrate by the partial application of Easton's model is that the reform movement and its subsequent deadlock can be explained by this model of reasoning and the explanatory power of its variables.

The partial use of Easton's model and its accompanying elements contributes enormously to making this work different from **some** of the analyses made on the question of reform in Iran. The political dynamics of the Islamic Republic (IR) appear to stem from a political system embodying factionalism; the origins of political events can or must be traced back to rivalry, factionalism and division among the authorities and influential members of the political system. This has led some analysts to view and investigate Iranian politics in the post-revolutionary era by studying the politics of competing power centers within the IR. In many instances, they have divided the political spectrum within the I.R into Left, Center and Right,

---

[2] All terminology used will be defined in due course.

and have put much emphasis on the factional nature of politics.[3] Analytically, such divisions help scholars better understand events (I too have used such criteria in this analysis). It is, however, of great importance to note that Iranian politics (or politics in general) are more complicated than the ideological orientations and tendencies of its ruling elite. Therefore, although this study does not refute the importance of factions in Iranian politics (and, in fact, the concept is used in this thesis), I will argue that the emergence of the reform movement went beyond mere Left-Right divisions. In my opinion, studies that have focused **entirely** on the internal divisions of the Iranian elite and on factionalism to explain the emergence of the reform movement can only go so far and, indeed, will leave some fundamental questions unanswered.

First, many studies rarely raise questions dealing with Khatami's official approval by the Council of Guardians. The mere fact that the Supreme Leader of the IR and the conservative-dominated Council of Guardians approved only 4 of 230 presidential candidates demonstrates the **fact** that only a very **privileged few** can run for office. If this is so, then why would the conservative faction give the green light to a candidate such as Mohammad Khatami?[4] After all, Khatami was relatively well-known to Iranian politics. He had been politically involved in the revolution and in its consolidation phase. He had occupied the sensitive position of the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance for ten years (present in the

---

[3] See Mathiew C. Wells, "Thermidor in the Islamic Republic of Iran: The Rise of Muhammad Khatami", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 26, 1 (May 1999), 27-39. Saeed Rahnema and Haideh Moghissi, "Clerical Oligarchy and the Question of 'Democracy' in Iran", Monthly Review (March 2001), 28-40. Mohsen M. Milani, "Reform and Resistance in the Islamic Republic of Iran", In John L. Esposito and R. K. Ramazani, Ed., *Iran at Crossroads* (New York: Palgrave, 2001),29-56. Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "The Conservative-Reformist Conflict Over Women's Rights in Iran", *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 16, 1 (Fall 2002), 37-53. Ali Banuazizi, "Iran's Revolutionary Impasse: Political Factionalism and Societal Resistance", *Middle East Report* No. 191 (Nov.-Dec. 1994), 2-8. William Samii, "Iran's Guardian Council as an Obstacle to Democracy", *Middle East Journal* 55, 4 (Autumn 2001), 643-662.
[4] We know that Khamenei refused to approve the candidacy of the left-leaning Mir Hussein Mousavi, the former Prime Minister of Iran before the revision of the Constitution, and the elimination of the position of prime ministership in 1989. See Mathew C.Wells, "Thermidor in the Islamic Republic of Iran: the Rise of Mohammad Khatami", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 26, 1 (1999), 27-39.

cabinet of Prime Minister Mousavi and later in that of President Rafsanjani until 1992), meanwhile serving as the head of the Republic's war-time office of propaganda.

As a mid-ranking clergy member (Hojjatolislam) and highly educated at both religious and secular universities, he occupied the leadership position of the Hamburg Islamic Center until 1980 before returning to Iran. While occupying these official positions, Khatami made a reputation for himself as a "moderate" and a "centrist," and published books and articles that outlined his political beliefs.[5] However, Khatami was by no means a liberal democrat and should not be characterized as one. He presided over the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance during a relatively dark period of Iranian history,[6] and has therefore proved himself as a reliable and "trustworthy" individual in the eyes of the Islamic Republic's leadership.

Second, it is common to read in various academic materials on Iran that the Khatami presidency was a **great surprise** to conservative members of the establishment who were certain their candidate, Nateq-Nuri, would win the 1997 presidential elections.[7] In my view, this is highly inaccurate. Khatami's campaign platform was based on a completely new vocabulary in Iranian political history. Some of the concepts he spoke about included civil society, the rule of law, citizens' rights and dignity, political participation and a greater role for women.[8] Considering the degree of dissatisfaction with the regime and its unprecedented low

---

[5] Khatami's published materials include: "Tradition, Modernization and Development," "Fear of Wave," "Islam, Liberty and Development", "From the World of Polis to the Polis of the World", "Faith and Thought Trapped by Despotism," and a number of articles.

[6] Except maybe for a brief period between 1989 and 1992.

[7] See Said Amir Arjoman, "Civil Society and the Rule of Law in the Constitutional Politics of Iran Under Khatami", *Social Research* 67, 2 (Summer 2000), 283-301. Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran Under New Management", *SAIS Review* 18, 1 (1998), 73-92, H. E. Chehabi, "The Political Regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Comparative Perspective", *Government and Opposition* (Spring 2000), 48-70. Mohsen M. Milani, "Reform and Resistance in the Islamic Republic of Iran", In John L. Esposito and R. K. Ramazani, Ed., *Iran at Crossroads* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "The Conservative-Reformist Conflict Over Women's Rights in Iran", *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 16, 1 (Fall 2002), 37-53, and Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "The Rise and Fall of Faezeh Hashemi: Women in Iranian Elections", *Middle East Report* 31, 18 (Spring 2001), 8-11.

[8] Ladan Boroumand and Roya Boroumand, "Illusion and Reality of civil Society in Iran: An Ideological Debate", *Social Research*, 67, 2 (Summer 2000): 303-343.

levels of support, it was not realistically possible for the conservative candidate to win the elections. On the one hand, people were confronted with the promise of reform and, on the other, with the promise of "more of the same," and they chose the former.

Third and lastly, some authors have portrayed the political reality in Iran as the battle between "good" and "bad." In a way, the current scholarly debate has mostly focused on a "good guy/bad guy" dialectic in order to interpret post-1997 Iranian politics.[9] There has been some tendency to analyze the Iranian political reality as an arena in which "reformists" and "conservatives" are battling hard for their respective agendas and ambitions.[10] The general focus, therefore, has been on a clear division within the ruling elite, which has led the system to a political transition away from authoritarianism and toward reform and eventually democratization. So far as such interpretations portray a zero-sum relationship between reformists and conservatives, I would challenge such assumptions by demonstrating that the reformist administration had no desire to push the movement to its "logical" conclusion, causing the fall of the Islamic Republic. At all times during the period studied here, reformists in the government have sided with conservatives at times when it seemed to really matter or when they perceived the threat to be overwhelming and dangerous to the system's stability.

---

[9] See Ian Urbina, "Ground Shifting Under Mullahs", *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (December 2002), 1-3. http://www.merip.org/newspaper_opeds/ground_shifting_mullahs.html. (Consulted on October 5, 2004). Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "The Conservative-Reformist Conflict over Women's Rights in Iran", *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 16, 1 (Fall 2002), 37-53, Saeed Rahnema and Haideh Mohgissi, "Clerical Oligarchy and the Question of 'Democracy' in Iran", *Monthly Review* (March 2001), 28-40, William A. Samii, "Iran's Guardian Council as an Obstacle to Democracy", *Middle East Journal* 55, 4 (Autumn 2001), 643-662, Azadeh Niknam, "The Islamization of Law in Iran: A Time of Disenchantment", *Middle East Report* 29, 212 (Fall 1999), 17-21, Geneive Abdo, "Days of Rage in Tehran", *Middle East Policy* 7, 1 (October 1999), 78-85, Jahangir Amuzegar, "Khatami and the Iranian Economy at Mid-Term", *Middle East Journal* 53, 4 (Autumn 1999), 534-552, H. Bakhash, "Iran's Remarkable Elections", *Journal of Democracy* 9, 1 (1998), 80-94, Sussan Siavoshi, "Cultural Policies and the Islamic Republic: Cinema and Book Publication", *International journal of Middle East Studies* 29, 4 (November 1997), 509-530.

[10] I have borrowed such characterization from Ladan and Roya Boroumand, "Illusion and Reality of Civil Society in Iran: An Ideological Debate", *Social Research*, 67, 2 (Summer 2000), 303-343.

In the end, it is important to note that this thesis focuses entirely on the **internal** dynamics of Iran, and would therefore exclude the external factors that might have, in varying degrees, contributed to the emergence of the reform phenomenon. This decision does not, in principle, downplay the importance of external factors in contributing to the establishment of an overall environment and circumstances that have, over time, provided Iran with an incentive for détente and reform. The aim is not to declare which factors (internal or external) are more or less influential and important. The decision is rather based on an **analytically motivated choice** to concentrate on the domestic conditions and factors in order to investigate and discover the underlying reasons that have led to the emergence of the reform phenomenon, and its eventual decline.

There is no question that the birth of the Islamic Republic through the 1979 Revolution greatly changed both Iran's domestic and external dynamics. Any thorough analyses of the revolution's causes and origins would also lead analysts to a complex investigation of both the internal and external circumstances. I am quite aware of fact that by concentrating only on the internal dynamics, some of the major elements associated with the reform movement would probably be ignored. Post-Revolutionary Iran—for the sake of analytical clarity—is divided into three interrelated periods, applicable to both the domestic as well as international aspects. The first era (1979-1989) emerged in the immediate aftermath of the revolution and was characterized by the radicalization of politics, and the adoption of a confrontational approach to foreign policy. With the end of the bloody Iran-Iraq War, Ayatollah Khomeini's death and Hashemi Rafsanjani's presidency in 1989, there emerged the second period that lasted until May 1997. The latter period confronted the system with immediate concerns regarding Iran's economic reconstruction and recovery.

Although, the transition from one period to another did not happen over night, the Rafsanjani presidency and the Iranian foreign policy took a clear turn toward a more conciliatory path. Iran began to move closer to a more "accepting" stance toward international and especially regional *status quo*. The system's gravitation toward a more "pragmatic" foreign policy began to reassure the Persian Gulf monarchies, and gradually, relations with the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) improved.[11] The disintegration of the Soviet Bloc also provided Iran with opportunities which it could use to expand its influence northward. In the meanwhile, in competition with American and Turkish interests in Central Asia, Iran and Russia entered into a pseudo strategic alliance, which ultimately led to much better relations between the two nations.[12]

Iran's desperate need to end its international isolation, the economic requirements of economic revitalization and foreign investment, and the need to harness better relations with Europe and the region received an immense boost with the Mohammad Khatami presidency. Because of the Salman Rushdie affair, the Kykonos trial[13], and Iran's dismal human rights record, Europeans had hitherto a very difficult task in restoring diplomatic ties with Iran. With Khatami's "Dialogue of Civilizations," reflecting an overt change in Iranian diplomacy and great economic and commercial opportunities, many European states favored the reestablishment of diplomatic ties with Tehran. These developments led to EU's shift in replacing the previously followed "Critical Dialogue" with that of "Constructive Dialogue" with Iran.[14]

---

[11] See Shah Alam, "The Changing Paradigm of Iranian Foreign Policy Under Khatami", *Strategic Analysis* 24, 9 (December 2000), 1-15.
[12] Robert O. Freedman, "Russian-Iranian Relationship in the 1990s", *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 4, 2 (June 2000), 65-80.
[13] This refers to the German government's and courts' investigation of the 1992 assassination of Iranian Kurdish leaders in Berlin's Mykonos restaurant.
[14] See Mahmoud Monshipouri, "Iran's Search for New Pragmatism", *Middle East Policy* 6, 2 (October 1998), 95-112. Ray Takyeh, "Pragmatic Theocracy: A Contradiction in Terms?", *The national Interest* (Spring 2000), 94-100.

The Iranian system's initiation of sociopolitical reforms internally, and its foreign policy of détente have immensely helped the regime cope with problems both at home and abroad,[15] even if short-lived. The gradual and "evolutionist" path toward pragmatism that began with the presidency of Rafsanjani, and then solidified by Khatami also represented Iran's need to bolster cooperation with as many countries in the world as possible except the U.S and Israel.[16] This tendency can also be explained by the regime's fears and insecurities vis-à-vis the U.S economic sanctions and military presence and threat.[17] The unwillingness to hold government-to-government talks with the U.S, however, has been maintained, especially by the Iranian side, despite numerous opportunities and the willingness by some influential members on both sides.[18]

Overall, the emergence of the reform movement and its decline is attributable to a complex web of interrelated social, economic, cultural, religious and political factors at both the national and international levels. Undoubtedly, change in domestic and/or foreign policy is dictated by the reality, the requirements and the pressures of various factors that cross frontiers and induce reform in various manners and forms. As mentioned earlier, however, the purpose of this thesis is to describe and explain the internal factors in initiating the reform movement and its eventual decline by applying the Estonian model of systems analysis. This decision is also warranted by the notion that the comprehension and explanation of state-behavior requires a nuanced, thorough and exhaustive understanding of the internal dynamics that dictate a plan of

---

[15] See Jahangir Amuzegar, "Khatami's Iran, One Year Later", *Middle East Policy* 16, 2 (October 1998), 76-94.
[16] For further comments on the concept of pragmatism, see R. K. Ramazani, "Ideology and Pragmatism in Iran's Foreign Policy", *Middle East Journal* 58, 4 (Autumn 2004), 549-559.
[17] See Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran's Crumbling Revolution", *Foreign Affairs* 82, 1 (January/February 2003), 44-57, and also "Adjusting to Sanctions", *Foreign Affairs* 76, 3 (May-June 197), 31-41.
[18] For more on both the opportunities and the problems associated with Iran-U.S relations see Charles Kurzman, "Soft on Satan: Challenges for Iranian-U.S. Relations", *Middle East Policy* 6, 1 (June 1998), 63-72. Geoffrey Kemp, "Iran: Can the United States Do a Deal?", *The Washington Quarterly* 24, 1 (Winter 2001), 109-124. James H. Noyes, "Fallacies, Smoke and Pipe Dreams: Forcing Change in Iran and Iraq", *Middle East Policy* 7, 3 (June 2000), 28-49. Michael L. O'Sullivan, "The Politics of Dismantling Containment", *The Washington Quarterly* 24, 1 (Winter 2001), 67-76. Marvin Zonis and Salman Farmanfarmaian, "All in the Timing: Renewing U.S-Iran Relations", *World Policy Journal* (Winter 1999/2000), 33-48.

action and behavior. The decision to focus on domestic environment was also motivated by the limitation, both in time and in terms of the length associated with a master's thesis. Although the international environment and its influences did not constitute the bases of analyses in this thesis, their effects on Iranian politics are nonetheless very important, and this thesis could serve further research and analyses enabling a worthy assessment of the international context's true impact.

This thesis is organized into four chapters:

Chapter I: The Theoretical Implications of the Systemic Model

Chapter II: The 1979 Revolution and the New Dynamics of Politics

Chapter III: The Reform Process as the System's Response to the Crisis of Legitimacy and Environmental Pressures

Chapter IV: From Euphoria to Apathy: The Deadlock of the Reform Movement

Chapter I: The Theoretical Implications of the Systemic Model

David Easton claims that the systemic model is a "way of unveiling the processes through which a political system, regardless of its generic or specific type, is able to persist as a system of behavior in a world either of stability or of change."[19] One of the important aspects of this model is that it does not restrict itself to any particular type of system and can therefore be applied to systems as diverse as democratic, dictatorial, bureaucratic, traditional, imperial, or otherwise. It is important to state that Easton's theory is behavioral and looks toward a science of politics modeled after the methodological assumptions of the natural sciences. He refers to his conceptual orientation as "systems analysis;" one that stems from the fundamental decision to view political life as a system of behavior, having the political system as its major unit.[20]

Such characterizations lead Easton to a process of differentiation and boundary-setting. This means that the political system—for analytical reasons—is separate from other social systems (social, economic, cultural, religious, etc.). Easton identifies political life as a set of social interactions on the part of individuals, therefore focusing on interactions as the basic unit of analysis. "What distinguishes political interactions from all other kinds of interactions is that they are predominantly oriented toward the authoritative allocation of values for a society."[21]

Easton recognizes that the authoritative allocation of values is not restricted to the political system alone, and is seen in various organizations and sub-groups (labeled as *parapolitical systems*). While recognizing such parallels, Easton asserts that "there are theoretically and empirically significant differences between the two. The political system is

---

[19] David Easton, *A Framework for Political Analysis* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965and 1979), X (preface).
[20] Ibid., 23.
[21] Ibid., 50.

perceived as the most inclusive unit under analysis and is in no way restricted to a given group or organization.

Easton maintains that the political system is surrounded by an environment (both social and physical) that lies outside the boundaries of the political system, but within the overall society. This is referred to as the intra-societal part of the environment, beyond which all else falls into the domain of extra-societal systems (or the international system). As stated earlier, however, I have chosen to ignore the international influences on the Iranian political system and instead will focus entirely on its internal dynamics.[22]

An important aspect of Easton's conception of the political system is that it is embedded in an environment and exposed to what takes place there, thus viewing the system as open to the influences emanating from its environment. The Easton model represents political life as a "responding system." It constitutes a set of behavior through which positive action may be taken to cope with the influences operating on the system.

The essential variables of a political system

"Political systems are defined as those patterns of interaction through which values are allocated for a society and these allocations are accepted as authoritative by most persons in the society most of the time."[23] Easton therefore establishes two variables essential in all political systems. The first is the ability to make and execute decisions for a society, while the second is the frequency with which these decisions are both accepted and respected by the society as a whole.[24] When disturbances from the environment are interpreted as posing a challenge to either of the two variables, the system may be perceived as experiencing **stress**. However, the

---

[22] Please see the reasons stated above.
[23] See David Easton, *A Framework for Political Analysis*, 97.
[24] Ibid., 97.

degree and extent of stress the environment poses are very important in determining the damage it might inflict on the system and the proportional response of this latter. Therefore, political systems are able to respond to the influences emanating from their environment. Their coping mechanisms help them transform their goals, practices and, if need be, the very structure of their internal organizations.[25] This thesis is based on this assumption and argues that the Iranian political system as a whole was under great stress from both its environment and factors within the state. The reform phenomenon of 1997 will therefore be presented as the system's coping response to the stress coming from the two sources mentioned above.

The inputs: demands and support

Inputs generally refer to the *demands* and *support* that is directed toward the political system from the environment. "Inputs serve as the summary variables that concentrate and mirror everything in the environment which may be relevant to political stress."[26] However, Easton limits his use of inputs from its broadest sense to an analytically useful tool by viewing the major environmental influences in the dual concepts of *demand* and *support*. "In this sense, they are key indicators of the way in which environmental influences and conditions modify and shape the operations of the political system."[27]

The input of demands

According to Easton, a demand may be defined as an expression of opinion that an authoritative allocation with regards to a particular subject should or should not be made by

---

[25] Ibid., 99-100.

[26] David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965and 1979), 26.

[27]Ibid., 27.

those responsible for doing so. It can be very clear-cut and specific, or it can be vague and general. The general direction of demands is vitally important and may be perceived as directed toward the authorities. Demands assume a political character when an effort is made to gain society's favor. In such cases, efforts to influence how values are allocated must ultimately be directed at those who hold positions of authority.[28]

In most cases, the initial stimulus encouraging an authoritative allocation emerges from experiences in non-political sectors of life. Events related to the non-political roles of members lead to changes in the things they want, expect, need, prefer, or believe in. Changes in social determinants of existence help induce and shape the expression of what members of society consider **politically desirable** or necessary. When such processes occur, resulting in members voicing a demand, we shall conceive that a demand has been "put into" the political system. This may be conceptualized as the starting point of the political process.[29] However, before demands actually find their way into the political process, an important conversion must first take place.

How wants are converted into demands

According to Easton, "wants" are rooted in such ideas and attitudes as expectations, opinions, motivations, ideologies, interests and preferences. They represent what members of a society may want in contrast to demands. Therefore, demands refer exclusively to those wants that members wish to see implemented through **political outputs**. According to Easton, wants must be converted into demands by way of the members of the system, and must find a voice to enter the political system. The extremely important task of regulating "want conversion" is

---

[28]Ibid., 37-39.
[29]Ibid., 53.

carried out by structural mechanisms. These structures may include political parties, interest groups, legislators, opinion leaders, administrators, executives, etc. "Perhaps the most appropriate way of characterizing these structural points in the system is to designate them as gateways regulating the flow along the demand channels."[30] In the case of Iran, however, the structural mechanisms that were to channel the input of demands were either non existent or co-opted by the state. This means that unlike more open and democratic systems in which political parties and civic institutions serve as the structural mechanisms that both filter and channel demands, in Iran, due to post-revolutionary trends and policies such mechanisms have been deliberately limited and/or eliminated.

Nonetheless, this does not exclude the fact that demands have been put into the Iranian political system. As will be shown in Chapter III, by the beginning of the 1990s, the Islamic Left underwent a process of transformation and began advocating the imperative and great need for socio-political reform. Easton refers to this process by which the leading members of the system advocate change and make demands on the political system as *withinputs*. Although these demands are internally generated, "both inputs and withinputs press themselves in the same way upon members of the system as a possible agenda for discussion. Their implications for stress on the system are identical. We may therefore assimilate them both under one category that I am calling inputs."[31]

However, it is extremely important to note that not all wants actually get converted into demands, and not all demands actually are processed into outputs. One of the important characteristics of transmitting and regulating demands is the notion of *issue formation*. In reality, only some of the total number of demands can be treated as a basis for decision. These

---

[30] Ibid., 88.
[31] Ibid., 55-56.

are normally those demands that have become the subject of great controversy and are therefore called **issues**.[32]

The input of support

Easton maintains that numerous events, which have traditionally been considered as sources of disturbance, occur within the environment of a political system. Environmental disturbances may help to shape not only what the members want, but which sentiments they display toward the political system as a whole, its institutions and its leaders. *Support*, Easton argues, becomes the major overriding variable linking a system to its environment, in addition to the notion of *demand*. The diminishment of support may stress a system in one or all of the following scenarios:[33]

A) Without support for at least some of the *authorities*, demands can not be processed into outputs.

B) Without support, it is impossible to assure any kind of stable rules and structures, which are used to convert demands into outputs, an aspect that has been designed as the *regime*.

C) Support is vital to maintaining minimal cohesion within a membership, an aspect of the system referred to as the *political community*.

Easton emphasizes the importance of the authorities' ability to make decisions, to get them accepted as binding, and to put them into effect without the extensive use of coercion. Solidarity must be developed not only around some of the authorities themselves, but around

---

[32] Ibid., 141.
[33] Ibid., 157.

the major aspects of the system within which the authorities operate.[34] According to Easton, no system can persist without a minimal level of support.

Stress through the erosion of support

The model maintains that the persistence of a political system requires that the individuals that make up society show a minimal level of support in favor of each of three identified political objects (the political community, the regime and the authorities). Therefore, both the regulation of demands and the generation of support become the most important tasks of any political system.

So far, what we have seen falls into the category of inputs, consisting of demands and support, both of which possess the potential for stressing the political system. It must be emphasized that demand and support mostly have their origin in the environment of the political system. However, some fluctuations in the generation of demands and the maintenance of support nonetheless are rooted in the political system itself. A division in the ruling elite and/or the rise of the counter-elite is only two examples of cases that could challenge the system and cause stress to be generated from within.

The political system, however, possesses a number of options that can potentially reduce stress levels. According to Easton, there are three broad classes of responses open to a system and all systems can be expected to resort to them at one time or another, even perhaps simultaneously in varying degrees and proportions.[35] The first class of response is that of *outputs*. Improving the adequacy of outputs is the first, easiest and most direct response that can be taken to cope with a stress situation. This category or class of response is intended to

---

[34] Ibid., 158.
[35] Ibid., 275-277.

generate support by satisfying some members with specific satisfactions with respect to some of their specific demands. Where support is in this way a *quid pro quo* for the fulfillment of demands, it is referred to as *specific support.*[36]

The second class of response is that of *coercion.* According to Easton, the effect of coercion is to impose specific negative rewards or unfavorable sanctions for failure to comply. Members may not be willing to offer their support voluntarily, but under the threat of force they may be led to engage in activities that will subsequently reflect a low level of support.[37]

Finally, the third broad class of response is to seek to accumulate a high level of political goodwill or *diffuse support.* This is then analytically divided into three categories: those that seek to instill a deep sense of legitimacy in the members of the regime as a whole and for individuals who act on behalf of it; those that invoke symbols of common interest; and finally those that promote and strengthen the degree to which the members identify with the political community.[38] Easton maintains that if these three categories of diffuse support-generation operate ineffectually, a system would be thrown back on outputs and coercion as the major means of bolstering support. "Yet, outputs cannot help but provide a weak reed upon which a system might rest its full weight, and coercion tends to impose excessive costs, social and financial."[39]

Easton maintains that the inculcation of a sense of legitimacy is probably the most effective device[40] for regulating the flow of diffuse support in favor of the authorities and the regime. This is because the most stable kind of support will derive from the conviction on the

---

[36] Ibid., 268
[37] Ibid., 276.
[38] Ibid., 277.
[39] Ibid., 277.
[40] Easton also identifies the concepts of *common interest* and *identification with the political community* as other sources of diffuse support.

part of the member that it is right and proper for him/her to accept and obey the authorities and to abide by the requirements of the regime. It reflects the fact that in some vague or explicit way he/she sees these objects as conforming to his/her own moral principles, and his/her own sense of what is right and proper in the political sphere.[41]

Both the concepts of legitimacy and support become intertwined where the latter is dependent on the presence of the former. Support mobilized on behalf of the authorities and the regime may derive from several different sources: from underlying ideological principles, from attachment to the structure and norms of the regime, or from devotion to the actual authorities themselves because of their personal qualities (charismatic leadership).

When the reservoir of favorable attitudes and sense of goodwill diminishes because of an overall dissatisfaction with both the authorities and the regime, the political system will inevitably experience a great deal of stress. In most systems, as the occasion demands it, the authorities rely to some extent on persuasion, appeals to self-interest, tradition, or force to obtain the acceptance of their outputs and the structures through which they are produced (the regime). But in most systems, the effectiveness of outputs cannot be left exclusively or largely to chance, to accidental coincidence of interest between system and individual goals or to the diseconomies and indeterminacy of force. Especially in the case of large-scale systems, it is important to stabilize the relationships between those who are responsible for the day-to-day activities in the name of the system--the authorities--and the general membership.[42]

Under the conditions of diminishing support, the need for the establishment or re-establishment of a sense of legitimacy with respect to the authorities and the regime

---

[41] Ibid., 278.
[42] Ibid., 279.

becomes the authorities' priority. This is where the importance of outputs as regulators of specific support becomes clear.

Outputs as regulators of specific support

Outputs can be considered an important type of response by which the authorities, through their decisions and actions, seek to cope with eroding support. This response consists of a flow of outputs the consequences of which feed back into the system and may thereby add to (or subtract from) the level of support available to political objects. "Through various responses, the authorities may succeed in generating not the *diffuse* attachments associated with legitimacy, dedication to a common interest, or identification with a political community, but the favorable attitudes that stem from offering the members of a system some felt or perceived returns that accordingly appeal to their sense of self-interest."[43] Also according to Easton:

> The inputs summarize or mediate the disturbances and changes taking place in the environment. Thereby, they serve as a conceptual means for simplifying our understanding of the way in which these parametric activities are transmitted to the various parts of the system. In much the same way, but this time taking the system rather than the environment as the starting point, outputs serve to conceptualize the ways in which the system acts back upon the environment and indirectly, therefore, upon itself, by modifying, at times, succeeding inputs of support and demands. Outputs should therefore in no way be considered as terminal points. They are rather, part of a continuous chain of activities, called the *feedback loop*, in which inputs and outputs each directly or indirectly affect each other and together, the rest of the political system and its environment.[44]

---

[43] Ibid., 343.
[44] Ibid., 345.

Indeed, the system resembles a goal-oriented relationship pattern allowing members to adapt to their environment, using it as a source of physical, financial or human resources and, if necessary, for transforming the system itself.[45]

It is important, however, to understand what Easton implies by the characterization of a political system as *constructively adaptive* and *goal-oriented*. According to the model, the authorities are able to intervene positively during the course of events. They have the capacity to work constructively on demands or issues to recombine, reassess, assimilate or reject them. The authorities themselves may be able to sponsor entirely new demands, unthought-of by other members in the system. This is mostly done by taking present circumstances or future needs into account. In voicing their own demands or ideas of what ought to be done, the authorities may seek to direct or redirect the system members' energies into new paths and put emerging social groups to use.

Also, from a subjective point of view, authorities' outputs may appear limited to maintaining power in the face of the competition. Outputs may be viewed as an integral component in the struggle for power among politicians. Alternatively, outputs may appear to express authorities' genuine even rationally developed conceptions of what is best for the political system as a whole.[46]

Before turning to the concept of the feedback loop, we must note that not all outputs are directed toward environment in the form of boundary exchanges. Many important outputs that have been devised to generate a significant degree of specific support in the environment may be directed toward the political system itself. Outputs are considered as such when they

---

[45] Ibid., 345.
[46] Ibid., 347

actually emanate from authorities' behaviour, and they may at times be intended to reform the internal structure of the regime in the hopes of generating support.[47]

Retroaction, the feedback loop and output reaction

As stated earlier, outputs should not be considered as terminal points in terms of the transactions between the system and its environment. They are extremely important because of their supposed ability or potential to lead to an increase or to a decline in the level of support for political objects. Therefore, Easton characterizes them as having the ability to shape the **destiny** of a political system.[48] However, an important and decisive factor at work involves the kind of information that is fed back to the authorities about the impact and consequences of their decisions and actions.

Under general circumstances, the authorities' goal is to match outputs with demands. The effectiveness with which they succeed will be directly related to the amount, the kind and the accuracy of the information they have at their disposal regarding two kinds of matters. First, the information must describe the general state of the system and its environment. The authorities need as much relevant information as possible about these areas if they are to act intelligently in reacting to any potential loss of support. Second, they must also be very well informed about the kinds of effects that their decisions and actions could have on the environment (outcome). "Intelligence about existing conditions in the system and its environment is not enough; the authorities must be able to evaluate the consequences of whatever behavior they have already undertaken or are in the process of undertaking."[49] An important factor that concerns the authorities, regardless of the type of system, is the strong

---

[47] Ibid., 347
[48] Ibid., 363
[49] Ibid., 365

possibility of discrepancy between *outputs* and *outcomes*. This means that due to the complexities of socioeconomic, cultural, and political systems, the outputs do not always lead to the preferred "outcomes".

As in the case of the Iranian political system, worsening economic conditions coupled with the Islamic Republic's shortcomings in economic, social and political spheres, led the authorities to attempt a reform process under the presidency of Mohammad Khatami. In other words, diminishing support and legitimacy toward the authorities and the regime, in combination with the worsening of internal divisions within the state, forced the system to consider reform and change. However, the relative opening that was allowed soon proved to be too much for the state to handle. By the retroaction process (where the inputs and outputs actually interact) and the "fed-back information", the authorities eventually chose to block the reform process. Finally, through the process of *output reaction*, the more reactionary conservative elements of the regime resorted to a "quiet coup", and put an end to the reform movement indefinitely. In Chapter IV of this thesis, the importance of *retroaction*, information *feedback* and *output reaction* will be discussed with regards to the fall of the reform movement.

Critiques with regards to the model

As is generally the case with all political theories, models and conceptual frameworks, Easton's "political system" is not immune to critique. First, we must acknowledge that systems analysis finds it roots in the functionalist and behavioralist tendencies. One of the most significant problems associated with the behavioralist revolution was the notion of bringing

theory out of the equation and modeling the social sciences on pure sciences.[50] In the natural sciences, theory is expected to accomplish three things: it must describe, explain, and predict. In the social sciences, explanation and particularly prediction are tasks that are quite difficult to fulfill, testifying to the problematic nature of behavioralists' ambitions.

This led to the so-called post-behavioral revolution that was carried out by bringing theory back as an instrument of knowledge and by providing a dynamic dimension to the analysis of political processes. However, labeling this apparent shift a revolution is debatable at the very least. This is because post-behavioralists have not intended to go beyond the mode of empirical knowledge, but have rather tried to correct the insufficiencies and weaknesses of the approach.[51] In a way, systems analysis can be considered as the continuation of the positivist school, which maintains the existence of a natural order in social reality and that this can be found by applying the logical principles of scientific analysis, thus leading to the discovery of absolute knowledge. Easton's preoccupations with establishing a theory that could transcend time and space, and one that is applicable to all societies at all times, is an idealist attempt. This is because (according to Moniere) a political theory is conditioned by the nature and the state of the productive forces of its time. Therefore, the knowledge and theories generated can only address a particular setting in time, refuting the possibility of achieving and acquiring "absolute knowledge".[52]

It is also said that Easton's model is ahistorical, concentrating solely on how systems function and ignoring important historical dimensions. Political systems are therefore not explained in systemic analysis by their origin and their development, ignoring that they are the culmination of efforts of concrete human activities, a task that that is always under

---

[50] Denis Monière and Jean H. Guay, *Introduction aux théories politiques* (Montreal: Quebec/Amerique, 1987), 19.
[51] Ibid., 20.
[52] Ibid., 110.

construction. The model has also been criticized for being too conservative and static, favoring the status quo (at least implicitly) by emphasizing maintenance, adaptation, and consensus rather than conflict.[53] In Easton's theory, the system's capacity for auto-regulation of stress and its ability to adapt have been presented as a positive phenomenon. What this tendency ignores is the makeup of adaptation and, more precisely, the quality of change itself, thus ignoring the rationality and the ends that justify such changes.[54] The only "end" that is admitted by systems analysis is the technocratic end of "functioning". The theory does not take real human needs into account to determine whether interactions are positive or constructive. Instead, it concentrates on the mechanisms that ensure continued "functioning" of interactions in social systems. In other words, the ends justify the means, regardless of the nature of the latter. Therefore, this perspective tolerates repression, violence and use of force, all of which may be warranted so long as they contribute to the stability of the regime.[55]

Let us now turn away from epistemological concerns and toward other possible weaknesses in the Easton model. Jerone Stephens suggests that Easton's work is and should be considered functionalist. A systems analysis consists of discovering and verifying the fundamental functions and the typical modes of response which fulfill these functions. In most cases, it is the failure to establish the range within which the property, or properties, of social systems can vary and that leads the social scientist to believe that he/she is providing a functional explanation when he/she is not. The failure to specify range for a given property

---

[53] Victor H. Wiseman, *Politics: The Master Science* (London: Routeledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 63.
[54] Oran R. Young, *Systems of Political Science* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 45.
[55] See Monière and Guay, *Introduction aux théories politiques*, 165-166.

also results in puzzlement by political scientists as to why functional and systems analyses seem so plausible in thought but so difficult and elusive in application.[56]

The system's frontiers or borders are another problem associated with systems analysis. It seems that the incorporation of "political system" implies complicated delineation. What falls within or outside the system? Where does a system start and where does it end? What are the measurements we use? How do we measure the level of support and stress? What is the critical range below which a system may be characterized as being under stress? Last but not least, there is also a problem associated with the differentiation and the classification of inputs. Do all *inputs* have the same degree of importance as to the way in which they impact the political system? How can one differentiate between minor and major events and incidents?

To comment on some of the possible weaknesses of systems analysis, I must begin by noting that some of the problems associated with the behavioralist tendencies are self-evident. Taking a theory out of the equation in search of "facts" or the over-factualization of social inquiry has had its share of critiques, most of which may be said to be justified. However, Easton's model is the product of the post-behavioral era, and it argues explicitly for theory to guide social and scientific inquiry. The desire to make social sciences an "exact science" may be futile, but it is difficult to argue against the notion that *social sciences* have been very much inspired by the natural sciences and scientific methods of inquiry. I do not believe that Easton developed his model as an attempt at absolute Knowledge (one that transcends time and space), but rather to take a step in the direction of forming a grand theory.[57]

Secondly, systems analysis has been criticized for being ahistorical, ignoring the origins and the development of political systems. This may very well be true, but it is nonetheless

---

[56] Jerone Stephens, "The Logic of Functional and Systems Analyses in Political Science", *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, 13, 3 (August 1969), 367-394.

[57] The aim is to differentiate between "absolute knowledge" and "theory."

important to pay attention to what a given model or theory is trying to describe and explain. For Easton, the question was not how political systems emerge, but how they function and adapt when placed in an environment characterized by change. Had the topic of my research been on the origins of political systems and the political, social and economic factors that contribute to their generation, then I would not have chosen this model. Obviously, any given theory, regardless of its degree of complexity, cannot explain everything.

Third, Easton's model has been criticized for being too conservative, static and pro *status quo*. I see some validity to this point and cannot argue that Easton's conceptual framework, model, or theory falls within the category of critical theory. The question Easton raises is not aimed at who benefits the most or the least from a political system and its essential characteristics, but it does deal with the notion of change and how political systems adapt to new circumstances in search of balance and stability despite changes occurring within both the system and its environment.

Fourth, one of the shortcomings that I have found in studying Easton's political model has been his inattention to the issue of factionalism. Easton's systemic model, aside from mentioning the subject of withinputs, has not really dealt with the internal divisions that are characteristic of most political systems. In the case of Iran, as we shall see, the post-revolutionary state has been somehow plagued by the existence of competing factions— an important element in the country's political dynamics. However, this thesis focuses on the issue of internal divisions and factionalism when they are deemed relevant. Since its inception, the Islamic Republic has been divided into the Islamic Left, Center and Right, and, in due course, their essential characteristics, influences and contributions will be discussed. In fairness, I must say that my use of factionalism does not in any way contradict the basic tenets

of the Easton model. Furthermore, I have only used those concepts in the model that are relevant to the thesis and the case in point.[58] In no way has my intention been to take the systemic analysis in its entirety, but rather to borrow those elements deemed essential.

Lastly, I must critique that Easton's model does not set clear-cut ranges and measurements. In terms of inputs—as stated earlier—questions can be raised regarding the way in which various input of demands can be differentiated with regards to their respective importance and the impact they might have on the system. However, all systems have a process by which some of the more important *wants* get converted into *demands*, and those demands that become the subject of great controversies become *issues*. The latter, if ignored by the authorities for long, can cause a great deal of stress, therefore, costing the system dearly in terms of support and legitimacy. But as far as Easton's model is concerned, there is no precise formula to measure the importance of each input of demand, and the exact impact it might have on the authorities and the regime.

This apparent shortcoming, however, can be remedied by careful and nuanced considerations. In social life, there are a number of minor and major inputs, outputs, retroactions, feedback, and output reactions taking place simultaneously, dealing with a multitude of subjects. This study does not assume otherwise, but rather attempts to describe and hopefully explain the Iranian reform movement through the use of systemic analysis. This is a model that can be applied to a single case-study by way of qualitative methods of analysis. Through the macroscopic use of inputs (demands and support), outputs, retroaction, feedback, and output reaction, and by focusing on the most important issues and events that have shaped post-revolutionary Iran, I can probe into the reasons behind the emergence of the reform

---

[58] Hence, my insistence on the "partial" use and application of the model.

movement, culminating in the presidency of Mohammad Khatami in 1997, and investigate the

reasons for the apparent deadlock of the movement less than eight years later.

Chapter II: The 1979 Revolution and the New Dynamics of Politics

This chapter deals with the concept of inputs and how these affect and influence the political system. Through the use of inputs, we would find it possible to comprehend the effects of a variety of events and conditions in the environment as they relate to the persistence of a political system. The concept of inputs is made up of *demands* and *support*. These two elements allow for a vast range of changes in the environment to be channeled, reflected and summarized. This is why they are used as indicators of how environmental conditions and realities affect the operation of a political system.

A logical step would be to ponder about the nature of the input of demands. At this stage, it is important to note that demands may arise because of the experiences people undergo in both political and non-political sectors of society. This means that in many cases, the formulation of demands originates in various non-political spheres of social life.[59] Some parameters that induce the making of demands may be culture, the economy, social structure and so forth, all of which come from non-political spheres. However, there are also inputs that originate from within the political system's limits. Easton has pointed out that in some "transitional"[60] societies (however, not only limited to transitional societies), it is common to see a new counter-elite rise up out of an existing leadership and spawned by newly emerging social groups. He maintains that counter-elites voice their demands for the reform of existing political structures as a way of improving their chances of gaining power. Therefore, these demands come from individuals or groups within the political system. For this reason, Easton

---

[59] See David Easton, *A Framework for Political Analysis*, 53.
[60] "Transitional societies" refer to the Third-World or developing countries, deemed less stable than "mature" Western democracies.

labels such demands *withinputs*.[61] Let us note that both inputs and withinputs of demands entail the same implications for the political system as a whole, and they put equal amounts of stress on the system.

The other variable or category of inputs is that of support (aside from demands). Environmental disturbances or changes may help to shape not only what the members want (some of which may be converted into demands), but also the sentiments they display toward the political system as a whole. Support, Easton argues, becomes the major summary variable linking a system to its environment. It provides a unified and simple vocabulary for the transaction between a political system and its environment, in addition to that of demand.[62]

The argument continues: without support, demands cannot be processed into outputs by the authorities; it would be impossible to maintain stability in the rules and structures (the regime); and it would be immensely difficult to sustain a minimal cohesion between members of the political community. Support is generally conceived and directed toward the three notions of *authorities*, *regime* and *political community*. Easton argues that a decline in the inflow of support below a minimal point will threaten to separate members from these three central objects and cause stress to the system as a whole.[63]

The concepts of *regime* and *authorities* are clearly understood in the academic milieu and therefore do not require a definition here. However, it is important to clarify what Easton means by political community, though this term is used little in this thesis. Political community "refers to that aspect of a political system that consists of its members seen as a group of persons bound together by a political division of labor."[64] In other words, it is an analytical

---

[61] Ibid., 55.
[62] See David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*, 157.
[63] Ibid., 158.
[64] Ibid., 177.

concept that refers to the notion of "we-ness" and a sense of belonging, solidarity, and cohesion among a group of people who share a political structure and a political fate.

I will put less emphasis on the notion of political community than other concepts in this thesis because, in Iran, the post-revolutionary challenges circled more around regime and authorities than around political community. Aside from bloody, but short and intermittent, periods of conflict between the Kurdish autonomists-separatists and the central government, the political community as a whole has been able to remain in place uncontested.

As its title indicates, in this chapter we will explore the notion of inputs. To understand the events of post-1997 Iran, it is imperative to study and explain the genesis of the reformist movement. The reformist agenda, or outputs (the topic discussed in the second part of Chapter III), can be considered as a reaction to inputs, i.e. the demands placed upon the authorities and the regime, and the level of support they receive.

Inputs generally refer to the *demands* and *support* a political system receives from its environment. "Inputs serve as the summary variables that concentrate and mirror everything in the environment which may be relevant to political stress."[65] However, Easton limits his use of inputs to an analytically useful tool by viewing the major environmental influences in the dual concepts of *demand* and *support*. "In this sense, they are key indicators of the way in which environmental influences and conditions modify and shape the operations of the political system."[66]

The degree of support for political objects is not easily measurable if it is carried out quantitatively. However, it can be measured by qualitatively analyzing the political, cultural, social and economic conditions and circumstances surrounding the political system. In other

---

[65]Ibid., 26.
[66]Ibid., 27.

words, the demands and level of support (the inputs) can be assessed by analyzing the environmental conditions and realities in which the political system finds itself and is thus affected by (notwithstanding the notion that the political system affects its environment as well). Therefore, in order to grasp the reasons underlying the reform phenomenon, it is fundamentally important to study and analyze the authorities' and regime's performance following the 1979 revolution.

The 1979 revolution and the Islamization of social, economic and political life

Putting an end to the Pahlavi dynasty and nearly 2,500 years of monarchy in Iran, the Islamic Revolution of 1979 soon became an all-powerful engine for restructuring almost all aspects of economic, social, cultural and political life. The revolution was the result of many different groups with very different political views coming together. The "Islamists," led by the clergy, were one such group. Led by

the very charismatic figure Ayatollah Khomeini, the Islamists soon led the revolution and, after seizing power on February 11th, 1979, represented a mighty political front that enjoyed a huge popularity among ordinary citizens.

Khomeini and his followers soon found themselves in the position of transforming Iranian society when, in the referendum of April 1979, 98% of the participants voted in favor of the Islamic Republic. Soon after, the opposition parties, mainly made up of leftist and secular groupings that were disillusioned by Khomeini's agendas voiced their oppositions and grievances in a direct and confrontational manner. In consequence, the Islamic leadership forced them underground as early as August 1979.

The reign of terror began and the country was on the brink of civil war. Guerrilla tactics by leftist groups, political assassinations, acts of terrorism in Tehran and other major cities and an uprising in the province of Kurdistan had a destabilizing effect for the survival of the revolution. In response, the military, security and counter-intelligence forces stepped-up repressive measures. All political parties were banned (except for the state's own Islamic Republic Party) and universities were shut down in order to neutralize the vibrant student movement and to begin a so-called "Cultural Revolution." The free press that had come to exist after the Shah was closed down and all opponents of the regime were silenced, jailed, exiled or even executed.[67]

The Iran-Iraq War and the evaluation of socioeconomic costs

In September 1980, Iraqi forces invaded Iran starting a bloody war that was to last eight years. Although a serious challenge to Iranian sovereignty and to the regime that was emerging out of a turbulent revolutionary setting, the war also had noteworthy benefits for the consolidation of the Islamic Republic.[68] First, a great majority of Iranians thought (and rightfully so) that the war had been imposed on them by Iraq and its Western supporters. This notion greatly helped unite the country and convinced many opposition members to leave their differences aside and join the Islamic leadership. The war therefore created a sense of urgency that helped the regime consolidate its base and even gather the support of many of its opponents. Second, "for the sake of organizing the war effort," the state had the "green light" to further consolidate and increase its nationalization of large and important industries.

---

[67] This mostly refers to self-imposed exile, where the opponents had to flee the country in order to escape repression.

[68] Saeed Rahnema and Haideh Moghissi, "Clerical Oligarchy and the Question of 'Democracy' in Iran", *Monthly Review; Focus on Iran* (March 2001), 28-40.

Therefore, the anti-capitalist and revolutionary ideology of the regime's radical segment, generally known as the Islamic Left (the dominant faction at the time), coupled with the requirements of the war effort gradually put the Iranian state in charge of 80 to 85% of the national resources.[69] Third and lastly, the war gave state leadership the golden opportunity to wipe out the remainder (and the most vocal) of its opponents, and to use whatever means necessary to stifle all opposition to its policies by playing the "national security" or "expediency" card.

It is not within the realm of this thesis to enter into the Iran-Iraq War in any detail, since it is not the war that is of interest to the broader analysis. Nevertheless, it is important to note the impact the eight-year war has had on the political system, economy and society at large.

Some of the direct damages of the war are as follows: out of a population of 50.6 million,[70] there were some 300,000 casualties (deaths), 61,000 missing in action and 500,000 disabled or maimed. Moreover, some 2.5 million lost their homes, jobs or were displaced. The impact of the war on the country's human settlements, including population distribution, urban systems and rural areas in the war zones and the south, south-western parts of Iran have been equally devastating. A total of 52 cities were damaged, six of which were completely leveled, and another 15 have sustained 30-80% destruction. Also, the direct and indirect war economic damage of the war stands at $532.4 billion, and, at about $55 billion, the financial and budgetary damage of the war has been equally notable.[71]

Consequently, in the 1980s, the Iranian economy assumed the burden of an eight-year war that resulted in considerable sacrifice and financial hardship for the Iranian people. During

---

[69] Akbar Karbasian, "Islamic Revolution and the Management of the Iranian Economy", *Social Research* 67, 2 (2000), 621-640.

[70] This is according to Iranian government's 1986 census, taking place two years before the war's end.

[71] Hooshang Amirahmadi, "Economic Reconstruction of Iran: Costing the War Damage", *Third World Quarterly* 12, 1 (January 1990), 26-47.

this period, enormous payments for war-related expenditures and considerable fluctuations in oil revenue (Iran's most important source of income), ranging between $21 billion and $6 billion resulted in large government deficits. Since the post-revolutionary constitution had seriously limited the option of borrowing money from external sources, the deficits were financed entirely by loans from the Central Bank of Iran. This hugely accelerated liquidity and inflationary pressures on the economy.[72]

In 1988, the war came to an end, but the Iranian people had mixed feelings. There was no clear winner of the war and it seems that Iran would have been in a much better position— negotiating from a position of power—had leaders accepted the UN's proposal for a ceasefire in 1982.[73] In May of 1982, Iraqi forces had been driven out of most of the territories they had captured during the early stages of the war and the international community was very much in favor of putting an end to hostilities. At this point, Iran could have negotiated from a much stronger position, at a time when the Iraqis had already accepted the UN Resolution. At the end of the eight-year war, the only notable "advantage" was that, unlike Iraq, Iran had fought entirely with its own resources, a fact that had enabled the state to maintain its sense of achievement and independence. But, "with the country deeply scarred and castigated as an international pariah, the economy in shambles and the population exhausted and disillusioned, the peace that was finally achieved was a bitter one."[74]

Despite bitter feelings, the end of the war could also be characterized as the beginning of a new era in post-revolutionary Iranian politics. August 20th 1988 (the date Iran formally declared its acceptance of Resolution 598), marked the end of a revolutionary, over-zealot,

---

[72] For further comments, see M. R. Ghasimi, "The Iranian Economy after the Revolution: An Economic Appraisal of the Five-Year Plan", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24, 4 (November 1992), 599-614.

[73] This refers to the U.N. Security Council's Resolution 514, of July 12th, 1982.

[74] Kaveh Ehsani, "Tilt but don't spill: Iran's Development and Reconstruction Dilemma", *Middle East Report* No. 19; *Iran's Revolutionary Impasse* (Nov.-Dec. 1994), 16-21.

radical and overtly idealistic era: the authorities were obliged to confront the reality that the war could never have been won and that its continuation would have only been a direct threat to the survival of the Islamic Republic.

At the same time, the health of the Supreme Leader, the father of the revolution, the very charismatic Ayatollah Khomeini was deteriorating rapidly. Concerned about the possibility of problems associated with his succession, Khomeini had chosen his successor a few years before and had planned to turn over the future of the Islamic Republic to a trusted colleague and friend, Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri. This chosen successor was a high-ranking political and religious figure who had been instrumental in both the pre-revolutionary struggle and the post-revolutionary construction of the "new state." Khomeini had gone as far as identifying Montazeri as "the fruit of his life" and therefore as somebody with unquestionable respect and political and religious credentials.

However, once Khomeini accepted the terms of the ceasefire and, in his own words, "drank from a cup of poison," he ordered the hanging of thousands of political prisoners who had been among the most powerful and determined opponents of the Islamic Republic.[75] Montazeri wrote Khomeini a letter in response, expressing his revulsion and criticizing Khomeini for having permitted such a treatment. The letter sealed Montazeri's fate as the Supreme Leader's successor. By then, the leader of the revolution was gravely ill and had lost most of his critical faculties. "Instead, the circle around Khomeini took advantage of the situation, largely to improve their political prospects in the upcoming struggle for

---

[75] My intention is not to portray Khomeini as an irrational fanatic, but the war's sudden termination also had much to do with the MKO's (an armed opposition group based in Iraq) involvement in attacking the Iranian forces in the region of Kurdisatn. After the war, Khomeini agreed to the mass execution of MKO members and sympathizers that had been jailed as political prisoners. Also such executions were rampant in the post-revolutionary period.

succession."[76] Finally, in the fall of 1988, Khomeini wrote a very harsh letter to Montazeri, dismissing him from all his official duties and excluding him as his successor.

However, with the exclusion of Montazeri, the leadership was confronted with the challenge of finding a suitable candidate. Someone who they could indeed trust (trust not to "rock the boat") and also match both Montazeri's religious and political credentials. Since this proved to be an almost impossible task, the ruling elite pressured Khomeini to change the core requirements for choosing the future leader. The Constitution was revised and the religious credentials of the candidate lowered so as to fit the newly chosen candidate, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The very tight group surrounding Khomeini knew that the new leader couldn't match the influence and charisma of Khomeini to settle difficult matters and neutralize tensions. They therefore pushed through a measure that would make the office of the Supreme Leader, and his position as *faqih*[77], **absolute**.

We must note that the position of the Supreme Leader is central to the very concept of the Islamic Republic. At the heart of this position lies the very controversial doctrine of *velayat-e faqih* (Khomeini's own radical interpretation of Shi'a Islam), which literally means "the guardianship of the jurisconsult." The doctrine is to ensure the Islamic nature of the society by subjecting all key matters to review by a supreme clerical leader, the *vali-e faqih* (a position filled for the first time by Khomeini and then by his successor, Khamenei).[78] On June 3rd, 1989, not even a year after the end of the war, Ayatollah Khomeini died, and with his death, the first post-revolutionary era came to an end.

---

[76] Geneive Abdo, "Re-Thinking the Islamic Republic: A 'Conversation' with Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri", *The Middle East Journal* 55, 1 (Winter 2001), 1-15.
[77] *Faqih* refers to the religious jurisconsult. It is the term used to justify the regency of the jurisconsult.
[78] See Geneive Abdo, "Re-Thinking the Islamic Republic: A 'Conversation' with Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri", 2.

The Reconstruction Era

In June 1989, and after the passing away of Ayatollah Khomeini, the Assembly of Experts[79] voted 60 to 14 in favor of appointing Seyyed Ali Khamenei, as the new *faqih* and the Supreme Leader of Iran. Khamenei had served as the president of the Republic during two four-year terms. In August of the same year, the former Speaker of the Majlis, Hashemi Rafsanjani, was elected to the presidency with 94.5% of the votes cast (receiving 15,537,000 votes).[80] Also, the revised Constitution—having eliminated the position of the prime ministership—gave the President greater powers for initiative and action.

It is not at all surprising that Rafsanjani came to power with such a considerable popular mandate. This is mainly due to the reputation he built as a pragmatist politician who was not driven by pure dogmatic and ideological jargon and over-zealot revolutionary tendencies. Ayatollah Rafsanjani had also built a reputation of being a "shrewd capitalist."[81] During the war years, the Iranian political and economic spheres were dominated by left-wing and sometimes radical elements of the clergy who displayed populist tendencies. The rise of Ayatollah Khamenei to the position of Supreme Leader and of Ayatollah Rafsanjani to the presidency shifted the balance of power toward the Center (faction headed by Rafsanjani) and to the Right. Rafsanjani and Khamenei, who had been friends since the 1960s through their opposition to the Pahlavi regime, quickly formed an alliance and began to exercise power in distinct domains, careful not to conspire against each other. "Rafsanjani focused on the economy, while the *faqih* concentrated on building his network, both inside and outside of the

---

[79] The Assembly of Experts is an "elected" body with exclusively clerical membership, made up of 74 clerics with the task of selecting the supreme leader.
[80] Mohsen M.Milani, "Reform and Resistance in the Islamic Republic of Iran", In John L. Esposito and R. K.Ramazani, Ed., *Iran at Crossroads*, (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 29-56.
[81] See Saeed Rahnema and Haideh Moghissi, "Clerical Oligarchy and the Question of 'Democracy' in Iran", 32.

government by increasing his religious legitimacy within the clerical establishment. After all, the *faqih* was in need of recognition and acceptance, having been elevated from the rank of Hojjatolislam to the higher rank of Ayatollah."[82]

However, the new president had a formidable task ahead of him, a task complicated by the difficult post-revolutionary era and the consequences of the eight-year war. The political system as a whole had to find its way toward the future without the same sense of urgency the war had created and especially without the unifying figure of Ayatollah Khomeini.

Authorities could no longer use the excuse of the war for not delivering their most basic promises. Therefore, steps had to be taken that would generate solid results. Rafsanjani labeled his mandate and undertakings as the "Reconstruction Era." His main plan was twofold: economic revitalization and reconstruction, and the "unification of the power structure".

Unification of the power structure

After the victory of the revolutionary forces, the founding fathers of the new state did not decide to do away and destroy governmental institutions that were in place. Instead, they opted to purge those elements and members that were not trustworthy or deemed anti-revolutionary. They did, however, create new, parallel and revolutionary institutions duplicating most critical and strategic tasks: The Revolutionary Guards duplicated the army, the Construction Jihad, with the task of rural development, rivalling the Ministry of Agriculture, The Comités competed with the police, local prayer leaders checked and controlled local governors, and the appointed Guardian Council was set up to check the

---

[82] See Mohsen M. Milani, "Reform and Resistance in the Islamic republic of Iran", 32, and Farideh Farhi, "On the Reconfiguration of the Public Sphere and the Changing Political Landscape of Post-Revolutionary Iran", In John L. Esposito and R. K. Ramazani, Ed., *Iran at Crossroads* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 57-74.

legislations of the elected Parliament: Majlis.[83] Therefore, "the old state was used but not trusted. It was purged and weakened, but continued to be utilized as the main instrument of governance."[84]

Gradually however, the negative effects of the "Dual State" became more obvious. Aside from their normal tendencies of acting as competing power centers, they also became arenas for factional infighting, overlapping responsibilities and conflicting policies. Hence, one of Rafsanjani's priorities was to eliminate some and consolidate others into more established and bureaucratic agencies. The post-war era was seen as an ideal opportunity to normalize state bureaucracy or to further bureaucratize the state. Hence another paradox was born. Although the advocates of an interventionist state had been successful in moulding the Constitution in the name of expediency, by now they had come to understand that codified law, bureaucratic rules, and standard operating procedures can be binding and are necessary for a certain degree of order and efficiency within the state apparatus.[85]

Despite the rhetoric and the willingness to unify the power structure, in reality, the Rafsanjani administration proved unable to make any significant progress. Aside from the reform of the internal security forces, the report card seems quite bleak. This is mostly because the bureaucratic/revolutionary institutions resisted losing their autonomy and privileges. An important argument can be made that not only was the President and his administration unable

---

[83] Kaveh Ehsani, "Change and Continuity in Central-Local Power Structures in Contemporary Iran", Workshop on Uses and Abuses of Civil Society in Iran; Woodrow Wilson Center, Fall 2002.
[84] *Ibid.*, 3.
[85] Mehrsad Boroujerdi, "The Paradoxes of Politics in Postrevolutionary Iran", In John L. Esposito and R. K. Ramazani, Ed., *Iran at Crossroad* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 13-27.

to implement their unification scheme, the economic opportunities that the Reconstruction caused actually strengthened these revolutionary institutions.[86]

The unification initiative, although considered very important in Rafsanjani's planning, failed miserably because the president possessed neither the political capital nor the enormous support that such an immense initiative required. The administration's failure in this regard can be viewed as a failure for the political system as a whole. The lack of progress associated with factional infighting and the inherent problems characteristic of the multiple centers of decision-making meant that no one specific group or institution could set the agenda and work toward realizing the established goals. This is important because it lent weight to popular dissatisfaction with the authorities and the regime. In other words, its failure, along with other failures in other spheres, cost the political system dearly in popularity and support.

As hinted at earlier, the 1989 presidential elections and the victory of Hashemi Rafsanjani was an important step toward the beginning of a new era. The ascendance of the "Pragmatists" (as the President and his supporters were called) reflected deep changes in the country's social and political landscape. The Iranian people had gone through a violent revolution, eight years of war and a quite noticeable decline in their standards of living. Rafsanjani correctly understood the dominant mood, and campaigned on the promise of reconstruction and a reversal of the economic policies of the Étatist Left that had until now dominated the political and economic scenes. The new era was also characterized by the Rafsanjani administration's intent of adopting a much more conciliatory foreign policy and taking concrete steps to diffuse tensions between Iran and the international community,

---

[86] Kaveh Ehsani, "Prospects for Democratization in Iran", Concordia University's Peace and Conflict Resolution, [On Line]. (October 2004), 1-16. http://www.peace.concordia.ca/events/event33.shtml (Consulted on 15 November, 2004).

especially aiming to improve relations with neighboring countries. Iran's neutrality during the first Gulf War is a clear illustration of this new trend and the path the Rafsanjani administration chose. Therefore, overall, the commencing of the new era was accompanied by a sense of hope and excitement for most Iranians, who were expecting the gradual normalization of socio-economic and political life.

The economic aspects of the reconstruction era

Rafsanjani's plan to revitalize the economy began at a time when the population growth and the high costs of the war had devastated the economy. From 1979 to 1989, the per capita income of Iranians dropped by 50%.[87] As mentioned earlier, due to the deprivatization scheme of 1980s, the government had been forced to run approximately 3,000 companies and businesses, effectively putting 80-85% of the national resources in the hands of the state.[88] The Islamic state, dominated by the more radical segment of the revolutionaries, had developed socialist tendencies that were based on its revolutionary promise of social justice, and almost destroyed the country's private sector and the principle of free enterprise.

Rafsanjani's economic plan broke away from the post-revolutionary trend, and the new economic orientation made a substantial turn toward the new global paradigm. Iran adopted the Five Year Plan model of economic planning that dates back to the 1950s. The first post-revolutionary plan (1989-1993) promised a whole restructuring of the economy: increased fiscal discipline, reduction of consumer subsidies, attraction of private foreign investment, greater budgetary control over the parastatal public foundations, government decontrol in terms of trade and business deregulation, privatization of loss-making public enterprises, exchange

---

[87] Akbar Karbassian, "Islamic Revolution and the Management of the Iranian Economy", *Social Research* 67, 2 (Summer 2000), 621.640.
[88] *Ibid.*, 621.

unification, tax reform, banking system reorganization and cost-price adjustment .[89] The new economic orientation was very much in line with the Structural Adjustment Policy that the IMF encouraged in many developing countries around the world. Paradoxically enough, however, the initiative to liberalize would be entrenched in a centrally-driven Five Year Plan. This is not surprising considering that the state had to set up a well-established economic formula that would determine the framework of the economic and development policy and attempt to introduce a medium-term consistency in the overall policy. Secondly, since the state was in charge of 80-85% of the national resources, no other entity could determine a plan of such magnitude and then proceed to liberalize.

The outcome and results

Although the first Five Year Plan did bring about some modest improvements, the first plan's privatization objectives, as well as its exchange and trade liberalization goals, were not effectively implemented. Such factors as low returns on public investment projects, rapidly rising aggregate demands, reliance of the budget on domestic bank financing, dwindling foreign exchange reserves and mounting short-term foreign debt gave rise to inflationary pressures lasting well into the 1990s.[90] The political system as a whole, and the economic foundations more particularly, were boosted by factors such as the release of a large and unused industrial capacity that had idled during the war, the sharp rise in oil prices (especially around the first Gulf War), large increases in imports, which had been kept at a minimum during the war, and the government's plan to take advantage of the availability of international

---

[89] Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran's Post-Revolution Planning: The Second Try", *Middle East Policy* 8, 1 (March 2001), 25-42, and Akbar Karbassian, "Islamic Revolution, and the Management of the Iranian Economy", 625.
[90] See Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran's Post-Revolutionary Planning: The Second Try", 26.

short-term commercial credit. Overall, the economy's performance during the plan's five-year period was the best since the revolution. The plan succeeded in achieving an average GDP growth rate of about 7% and in showing marked improvements in some social indicators.[91]

However, post-revolutionary economic planning in Iran has generally been unsuccessful, mainly because projections of major macroeconomic variables are unrealistic and include a set of qualitative objectives with less quantifiable goals, which usually add more pressure to the state's already struggling and underdeveloped administrative capabilities. The first post-revolutionary five-year plan (1989-1993) was too ambiguous and unrealistic when assessed in the context of pre- and post-revolutionary developments and trends in the Iranian economy.[92] Taken together, the painstakingly prepared plan failed to reach many of its quantitative targets and experienced significant shortfalls in many of its ambitious goals.

The plan was also not well received by the Majlis (the Iranian parliament), which at the time was in full control of the Islamic Left. The growth during the first plan was mainly generated by the release of unused industrial capacity and a concerted effort by the government and by heavy borrowing from domestic and foreign sources. "Consequently, it is valid to say that the growth between 1989 and 1994 was mainly financed through the accumulation of some $30 billion in foreign debt."[93]

In terms of the privatization and deregulation of trade and business, the Rafsanjani administration made very little, if any, progress. Despite the rhetoric, the private sector remained distrustful of the state's real intentions, especially in the light of the problems encountered by some members of the private business community in buying former state-run

---

[91] *Ibid.*, 26.
[92] M.R.Ghassimi, "The Iranian Economy after the Revolution: An Economic Appraisal of the Five-Year Plan", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24, 4 (November 1992), 599-614.
[93] Bijan Khajehpour, "Iran's Economy: Twenty Years after the Islamic Revolution", 98.

companies. First, there was no real consensus among authorities and elite with regards to the privatization scheme. Second, the labor laws were so inflexible and rigid that they made employee layoffs or redundancies almost impossible.

Also, during the first plan, the government and the Central Bank decided to devalue the Iranian currency (Rial) and introduce a single exchange rate (adopting a unified exchange system as opposed to the complex and inefficient multiple exchange rate system). The monetary shock of this decision was enormous, especially when the entire national oil income was suddenly converted into Rials at a rate almost 25 times greater than previously. The inflationary pressures were obvious: the average official inflation rate in the five-year period reached 18.7%.[94] Also, the new currency reunification program, which took place in March 1993, crippled the fledging industries that had up until now enjoyed subsidized credit. The combination of falling oil revenues (after the normalization of oil prices following the first Gulf War), currency devaluation and reduced credit subsidies increased costs to industries anywhere between 25 to 100%,[95] and had devastating effects on the private sector. The overall situation had obviously made life extremely difficult for ordinary citizens. An official inflation rate of 18-24%[96] far exceeded the increase in wages and salaries paid to the employees. For the majority of people, the cost of daily living had often necessitated holding two or more jobs,[97] putting extreme pressure on average Iranians.

In terms of production, the gap between government rhetoric and reality was immense. During the war and because of the war effort, the production of goods and services were reduced. It was only after 1989 that the level of production began to increase, but not

---

[94] *Ibid.*, 98.

[95] See Kaveh Ehsani, "Tilt but don't Spill": Iran's Development and Reconstruction Dilemma", 20.

[96] Some figures put the average of the annual inflation rate for the first five-year plan as high as 24%.

[97] Ali Banuazizi, "Iran's Revolutionary Impasse: Political Factionalism and Societal Resistance", *Middle East Report* No.191; Iran's Revolutionary Impasse (Nov.-Dec. 1994), 2-8.

significantly enough to increase the per capita income of Iranians. For the first time in 1993, real GDP rose to the pre-revolutionary level of 1976. Per capita income, however, fell steadily and in 1994, the per capita GDP was about 57% of its 1976 level.[98] In terms of investment, the situation was quite critical. Despite the rhetoric and the plan for attracting domestic and foreign private investments, both the public and private sectors invested lower percentages of the GDP in construction and machinery every year. In 1993, private investment in machinery and construction fell to 1.1% of the GDP, while the government investment dropped to less than 1%.[99]

During the first five-year plan and under the Rafsanjani administration, the state regulation of prices and markets has not diminished. It could be argued that the problems associated with economic revitalization and growth is structural and that Rafsanjani could not have delivered on his promises without spending a great deal of political capital. However one desires to perceive the matters at hand, the fact that Iran's economic growth has been blocked by a combination of serious misjudgments, inadequate information and inherent contradictions in the government's monetarist and industrialization policies cannot be avoided. This was the result of a development strategy that emphasized growth over employment, and export-oriented, government-owned industry over a privately-owned, grassroots national industrial base.[100] The outcome of the plan can be summarized by stating that the government failed to achieve, and fell short of reaching almost all of its quantitative objectives.

---

[98] Hamid Zanganeh, "The Post-Revolutionary Iranian Economy: A Policy Appraisal", *Middle East Policy* 7, 2 (October 1998), 113-129.
[99] *Ibid.*, 120.
[100] See Kaveh Ehsani, "Tilt but Don't Spill: Iran's Development and Reconstruction Dilemma", 19.

The second try

Before the first five-year plan could come to an end, the Majlis underwent a great transformation. At the time when the so-called pragmatists were ascending to power during the presidential elections of 1989, the Islamic leftists were still the dominant force in the Majlis. Obviously, Rafsanjani's efforts to re-direct the state's economic policies toward a more liberal and deregulated path was met with opposition. The Left, disillusioned with the Rafsanjani-Khamenei alliance and their intentions, went as far as declaring allegiance to Ayatollah Montazeri, the cleric that was to succeed Khomeini at first. This of course was a direct threat to the position and supremacy of the new *faqih*, Ayatollah Khamenei. The alliance between the *faqih* and Rafsanjani was a marriage of convenience since they both needed to consolidate their base and project their will. In retaliation to the Left's opposition, the Council of Guardians (dominated by the conservatives) along with the Ministry of Interior (in the hands of Rafsanjani) disqualified several leftist candidates (some 800 candidates out of a total of 3,733 were disqualified, mostly from the Left), openly declaring that only those who would support and obey Khamenei were fit to hold office.[101] Aside from the disqualifications that greatly hurt the Left, their political stands with respect to the economy was no longer well perceived by the population at large who desired change and equated the Left with radical agenda-setting and the disastrous post-revolutionary decade.

The 1992 Majlis elections were won be a conservative landslide with more than two-thirds of the deputies entering the Majlis for the first time. The Left saw its share of seats diminish from 40% to a mere 15% (40 deputies out of a total of 270).[102] Contrary to all expectations however, the new Majlis was no longer willing to rally behind Rafsanjani's

[101] See Mohsen M. Milani, "Reform and Resistance in the Islamic Republic of Iran", 33.
[102] See Ali Banuazizi, "Iran's Revolutionary Impasse: Political Factionalism and Societal Resistance", 4.

reform programs than were the previous, leftist Majlis. In control of the Majlis and supported by the Supreme Leader, the conservatives (also known as the hardliners) became more aggressive in pursuit of their economic and political agendas.

Therefore, in 1993, when the Rafsanjani administration sent the second five-year plan to the Majlis for approval, it became the centerpiece of a factional confrontation. The commencement of the plan was postponed from March 1994 to March 1995, giving all parties ample time to iron out their differences. As for Rafsanjani, he won his second presidential term in the elections of 1993 but with a huge drop at the polls. (He received 63.2% of the votes in 1993, compared to 94.5% in 1989).[103] This drop of more than 30% in the number of votes received by the President can be explained by the huge gap that existed between his rhetoric and promises on the one hand, and what he actually delivered during his first term in office on the other.

On the economic front, the performance of the Second Economic, Social, and Cultural Plan of the Islamic Republic of Iran (1995-1999), "as the blue print was formally called, is complicated by the fact that the document was really no more than a list of popular slogans to be served by certain budgetary allocation under some guiding policy positions."[104] However, in the second five-year plan, some of the shortcomings of the first plan were actually taken into account, hence a more "practical" and "balanced" approach was put forward. The most notable change was the government's setting much more modest quantitative goals and objectives.

Most of the planned objectives made sense even on an international standard. "Some Iranian economists even commented that the key stated objectives of the second Five-Year

---

[103] See Mohsen M. Milani, "Reform and Resistance in the Islamic Republic of Iran", 53.
[104] See Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran's Post-Revolutionary Planning: The Second Try", 29.

Plan could have been drafted by the IMF or the World Bank."[105] In a way, a paradox lies in such statement, especially when it is the centerpiece of the country's economic policy. If the first plan proved anything, it was that both political and structural obstacles had made economic liberalization and deregulation almost impossible. But, as Mehrzad Boroujerdi put it: "to understand the subtlety, specificity, and the seemingly contradictory intellectual heritage of contemporary Iran, one needs to develop an ear for the whisperings of irony and eye for the nuances of paradox which have baptized Iran's revolution over the last two decades."[106] At this stage, I will not go into detail about the second plan, since doing so would entail tedious repetition because of the similar objectives in both plans and similar nature of the obstacles that faced such undertakings. I would, however, elaborate on the points and aspects I find relevant or that have supported and stressed the political system as a whole.

The Second Plan, aside from its various qualitative objectives such as the promotion of social justice, elevating the society's cultural standards to Islamic morality, guiding youth in religion, native culture, creativity, and participation in social, cultural, economic and political activities, etc.—all of which bear the signs of a conservative-dominated Majlis—also had measurable quantitative objectives. This consisted of projections in terms of annual GDP growth rates, domestic investments—both private and public—, government consumption, private consumption, inflation, the encouragement of and an increase in non-oil exports, etc.[107]

However, the inconsistencies associated with the Plan were numerous and none of the reform measures were tied to any specific objective. Nor was any policy option linked to any kind of reform. Still further, the implications of the proposed reforms and the side-effects of

---

[105] See Bijan Khajehpour, "Iran's Economy: Twenty Years after the Islamic Revolution", 101.

[106] Mehrzad Boroujerdi, "The Paradoxes of Politics in Postrevolutionary Iran", 13.

[107] For a complete view of the Second Plan, refer to "The Law of the Second Economic, Social and Cultural Plan of the Islamic Republic of Iran (1994-1999), (Tehran: Plan and Budget Organization, 1995) For further information, see http://www.salamiran.org/

the adjustment policies were not even mentioned.[108] This does not mean that the government had failed 100% in all its undertakings. The Rafsanjani administration was successful in implementing initiatives, such as the introduction of bank interests (the Islamic, interest-free banking system had proved inefficient and almost impossible to maintain, but political capital was needed to reform the system), the introduction of municipality bonds and the activation of the Tehran Stock Exchange.

The major problems, however, are caused by the regime's inability to bring about the reforms and the revitalization that would provide ordinary citizens with the feeling that their livelihoods have been bettered and that their sacrifices of the previous decade were not in vain. After all, it is difficult to dispute that the authorities and the elite were hoping that under Rafsanjani a fast economic growth period would be created to calm the damaging effects of the previous decade. But all the economic optimism and euphoria that had been generated in the start of the Rafsanjani administration proved hollow.

Structural causes of the economic ills and their consequences

Some of the most important factors that have hurt the Iranian economy and also made the economic recovery so difficult mostly find their root causes in the policies adopted in the aftermath of the 1979 revolution. These include unfulfilled promises to enhance social welfare programs, confiscation and nationalization of properties that, according to the revolutionary courts, had been illegitimately acquired by their owners. Forced sale of some agricultural lands to the people that used to work them (without the proper programs, training, support and coordination), nationalization of the banks and the establishment of "Islamic banking," monetization of government deficits (printing money), a foreign exchange rate system

---

[108] Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran's Post-Revolutionary Planning: The Second Try", 32.

characterized by too many initiatives and policy reversals, sudden and frequent economic reversals in general, absence of a uniform application of laws and regulations, widespread corruption plaguing the entire country, extreme reliance on oil as the most important source of revenue (which makes the overall economy vulnerable to fluctuations in the international economic system and the oil market) and, finally, the burden brought about by the massive immigration of refugees from Afghanistan and Iraq, making Iran the largest recipient of refugees in the world[109] during the 1980s and early 1990s.

The government as a whole had been irresolute and the Second Plan, "a plan conceived essentially as a free-market oriented blue-print, in keeping with the government's declared "liberalization" stand, changed its mission once the initial (and inevitable) costs of the reform began to pinch. The plan never really got out of its "planning mode." An in-house evaluation candidly acknowledged the plan's underlying structural weakness: an almost total disconnect between its basic components."[110]

The government's constant flip-flopping has created a huge sense of uncertainty among the private sector investors, and the public sector itself has not shown much interest in investing in the economic development of the country (diminishing levels of investment showed earlier).[111] Overall, the economic difficulties of the country have worsened since 1993 (the end of the first five-year plan). In 1994, the annual inflation rate reached 49.66%,[112] and it has since hovered around 20% to 30% per year. Poor political and economic leadership and

---

[109] According to the United Nations, Iran was the world's largest recipient of refugees in the 1980s, and remained so until the mid 1990s.

[110] See Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran's Post-Revolutionary Planning: The Second Try", 32 and Bijan Khajehpour, "Domestic Political Reforms and Private Sector Activity in Iran", *Social Research* 67, 2 (Summer 2000), 577-598.

[111] Hamid Zangeneh, "The post-Revolutionary Iranian Economy: A Policy Appraisal", 120
[111]

[112] Ibid., 121.

management, and a lack of willingness to implement meaningful political and structural reforms have led the political system and the society to an impasse.

One of the main problems associated with the economic ills of the country and the rise in inflation has been correctly identified as liquidity growth. In response, the government set an annual growth (in liquidity) of 12.5% per year. That the money supply grew by almost 30% annually in the first three years of the plan underlines the government's inability to implement its own plans.[113] As mentioned earlier, this is mainly because in Iran , a unified power structure does not exist. This means that there is a multiplicity of economic decision-makers.[114] Economic policy in Iran is not the product of an authoritative decision-making body or institution that sets the target and then implements policies accordingly. The government or, in fact, the Plan and Budget Organization (PBO), which used to be the powerful arm of the government in planning and budgeting, has lost its authority in post-revolutionary Iran.[115]

I have already mentioned the problems associated with the creation of a dual-state and revolutionary institutions after the 1979 Revolution. Some of the institutions that actually mingle around Iran's economic policies and are responsible for many of the inefficiencies are the High Council of Economy, revolutionary and religious foundations that are accountable solely to the Supreme Leader, the Parliament and the traditional merchant associations. The money supply provides an example: the Central Bank of Iran defines the number of loans that banks are permitted to offer to the public and private sectors. When the large public sector and foundations face financial strains, however, they pressure the state-owned banks to extend

[113] See Bijan Khajehpour, "Iran's Economy: Twenty Years after the Islamic Revolution", 104.
[114] The influences of these competing power centers are not limited to economic decision-making. They are quite influential on social and political matters as well.
[115] See Bijan Khajehpour, "Iran's Economy: Twenty Years after the Islamic Revolution", 108.

more funds. Eventually, the banking system under political pressure from various power centers overextends its limits, causing the money supply to explode.

If the five-year plans were to succeed in their objectives, some of the most important structural obstacles had to be removed. The Rafsanjani administration was finally unable to create a competitive environment, help establish legal and political stability, encourage the creation of civil society institutions, help to restructure the present distorted market structures, remove legal barriers for investment and growth and help bring more transparency in the public sector.[116] The ultimate success of the Second Plan in the economic arena depended on the Plan's ability to achieve five fundamental goals:[117] the reduction of poverty and the promotion of social justice (although the notion of social justice and its meaning varies from one group to another); the downsizing of the government bureaucracy through privatization; the reduction of youth unemployment through increased labor-intensive investments; lowering dependence on oil through the expansion of non-oil exports; and, finally, making agriculture the pivot of economic development to establish a better balance among the country's basic sectors. Information supplied by official sources point out considerable setbacks in reaching all of these goals. One of the most important aspect of the plan, and the one that would most affect the younger population, was the availability of jobs. The plan's projection was to create 600,000 new jobs a year, while the maximum number of new jobs created never exceeded 300,000. Furthermore, for the 270,000 students graduating from college there were only 75,000

---

[116] See Bijan Khajehpour, "Domestic Political Reforms and Private Sector Activity in Iran", *Social Research* 67, 2 (Summer 2000), 577-598.
[117] *Ibid.*, 35, Also see Akbar Karbassian, "Islamic Revolution and the Management of the Iranian Economy", Hamid Zanganeh, "The Post-Revolutionary Iranian Economy: A Policy Appraisal", Kaveh Ehsani" ,"Tilt but Don't Spill: Iran's Development and Reconstruction Dilemma", And Bijan Khajehpour, "Iran's Economy: Twenty Years after the Islamic Republic",.

suitable jobs available, leading the rest to join the vocal and threatening army of disgruntled unemployed.[118]

Far from encouraging a national reconciliation, after the eventful and polarizing decade of the 1980s and the disappointing failures of the 1990s, the regime's policies led to an ever-increasing degree of misery among the population, accelerating a process of delegitimization of the revolutionary regime that claims to represent the interests of the dispossessed and of ordinary citizens.[119] During the Rafsanjani era, the Iranian society has become increasingly divided between isolated clerical elite, entrenched within state institutions, and an increasingly disaffected population. For many, the survival of the regime depended on its ability in rationalizing the economy and improving the living standards of ordinary citizens. Rafsanjani's rise to power was meant to do just that. Eight years later, however, the Iranian people were still struggling intensely just to make ends meet and the country's overall financial situation had gotten much worse. The Rafsanjani era represents another lost opportunity for both the Iranian people and a political system in desperate need of legitimacy.

The historical background presented and its analysis in this chapter deals with the concept of *inputs*. Referring to both demands and support, inputs serve as the summary variable that concentrate and mirror everything in the environment that is relevant to political stress. The dual concepts of demand and support then act as indicators of the way in which environmental influences and conditions modify and shape the operations of the political system. As stated earlier in the chapter, through the analysis of both support and demand, one can comprehend the variety of events and conditions as they relate to the persistence of any given political system. These, however, can arise out of experiences that individuals go

---

[118] Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran's Post-Revolutionary Planning: The Second Try", 37.
[119] See Kaveh Ehsani, "Tilt but Don't Spill: Iran's Development and Reconstruction Dilemma", 18, and Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran's Post-Revolutionary Planning: The Second Try", 35-36.

through in both political and non-political spheres of life. The brief introduction on the revolution and its aftermath, allows for a degree of familiarization with the overall realities and circumstances that have contributed to the emergence of a new political configuration led by a new group of elite. The revolution, the civil war and the eight-year war with Iraq exhausted the Iranian population, which at the end of the war, expected ameliorations in the socio-economic aspects of life. This chapter illustrated the system's need to cope with the challenges of post-war and post-Khomeini era by revitalizing the economy and unifying the power structure, thereby securing a reasonable level of public support for the regime and the authorities. As demonstrated, however, the regime has been unable to break the vicious circle that has plagued its power structure and the nation's economy ever since the revolution. It has subsequently lost much of the support and the legitimacy it once enjoyed.

It is therefore fundamentally important to study and analyze the performance of the authorities and the regime following the 1979 revolution in order to understand the reasons underlying the reform phenomenon. By qualitatively analyzing the political, cultural, social and economic conditions and circumstances that surround the political system, one can assess the demands and the level of support (the inputs), which together serve as valuable indicators of environmental conditions and realities surrounding and affecting the political system (notwithstanding the notion that the political system constantly affects its environment as well.). This chapter mostly engaged the economic aspects of the Reconstruction Eras, but also served to illustrate the political economy of a system that, over the years, has experienced an ever diminishing degree of popular support for its regime and authorities. After all, the initial stimulus for the generation of inputs (both demand and support) emerges from the people's experiences in non-political sectors of life.

However, despite the importance of economic factors in determining the long-term fate and survival of a political system, the emergence of the reform movement cannot be understood and explained solely in relation to the economic sphere. In the following chapter, the effects of the socio-political factors will be analyzed, and as I shall argue, a combination of economic, social, political and cultural problems have led to a crisis of governability, forcing the political system to attempt a process it hoped would develop a program for the integration of the population into a more viable social and political system.

Chapter III: The Reform Process as the System's Response to the Crisis of Legitimacy and Environmental Pressures

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first part continues with the analysis of the political system's environment and the demands made from within the political system. The second part deals with the systemic output or the system's "grand strategy" in response to demands and as a mechanism to cope with the stress generated by internal and external forces.[120]

In the last chapter, due emphasis was put on the economic aspects of post-war Iran, demonstrating that the regime's "grand plan"[121] of economic revitalization and reconstruction was an overall failure. Mounting economic problems alone, however major, cannot explain the reasons behind the system's attempts at greater opening and reform. To shed light on the stress and pressures exerted on the system by diminishing support and the rise in demands for reform, we must analyze the changes in Iran's social, political and cultural settings. To do this, I have chosen to concentrate on both the inputs of demands and the declining level of support for the system. Because of the relatively closed nature of the political system in Iran, the possibility to make demands in an organized and systematic manner has been extensively limited. Because political parties were banned after the revolution and the institutions of civil society are either weak or co-opted by the state, the input of organized demands from the environment to the political system has become quite problematic. In this situation, we must look at the input of support (either positive or negative) to measure the relative degree of legitimacy of and satisfaction with the regime and the authorities. Because the environment's economic aspects were sufficiently covered in the previous chapter, this chapter will focus on analyzing the

---

[120] This does not refer to the international system. It is rather the issues emerging from the susyems and its environment.

[121] Referring to the Five-Year Plans.

status and circumstances of diverse and important social groups (such as women, youth, students, intellectuals, etc.) to better understand the problems and challenges the system faces vis-à-vis its environment. However, we will also analyze the demands for change and reform coming from within the system itself (*withinputs*) by investigating the important role played by the factions and groups that, together, make up the leadership and the elite of the Iranian political system.

Withinputs

In analyzing the emergence of the reform movement or the reform era in Iran, the question of *withinputs* is very important, for it is a pillar to the reform movement itself. These demands generated from within the political system represent the voices of those influential members who were skeptical about the "centrist-conservative" connection, which took place after Khomeini's death, and who, from early on, opposed some of the Reconstruction Era's so-called "liberal" policies..

The polycephalic nature of Shi'a Islam and the inherent divisions among the clergy

To understand the importance of withinputs and their pertinence in the emergence of the reform movement, it is necessary to describe their gradual gain in importance within the context of a historical process. In order to do this, we must briefly study the polycephalic nature of Shi'a Islam and its impact on clergy circles after the 1979 revolution. In Shi'a Islam the Ayatollahs enjoy huge discretionary powers to offer different and sometimes contradictory (with regards to other dominant clergy) interpretations of both Islamic and political issues. After the revolution of 1979, it did not take long before the clergy split into two main camps:

the "radical" Left, and the "conservative" Right. The conservatives mainly tend to be pro-free enterprise, rigid in their interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence and greatly in favor of a stiff implementation of the Islamic code of morality. The leftists were generally younger, had strong populist tendencies, favored the nationalization of major industries and believed mostly in a "dynamic" Islamic jurisprudence, which was thought to be more compatible with the needs of modern times.[122]

By the second half of the 1980s, another faction started to emerge headed by Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, also referred to as the Zhou Enlai[123] of the Iranian Revolution, a pragmatist politician who often crossed the usual ideological lines.[124] Although fewer in numbers and mostly made up of bureaucrats and technocrats, the new "centrist" faction soon began to enjoy a greater degree of popularity among the modern middle-class, certain elements of the business community and ordinary citizens.

Standing above those factions was the charismatic Ayatollah Khomeini whose decisive leadership no faction dared to challenge. He kept the factions competitive, never allowing one to dominate or eliminate the others. This balancing act was essential in maintaining the equilibrium of the Islamic coalition he had so successfully forged to defeat his opponents. This situation changed nonetheless after Khomeini's death, and as already mentioned, the centrist Rafsanjani and the conservative Khamenei joined forces to form a coalition that would soon run the leftists out of the Majlis and other important centers of power.

---

[122] For more on this issue refer to Mehrdad Boroujerdi, "The Paradoxes of Politics in Postrevolutionary Iran", Mohsen Milani, "Reform and Resistance in the Islamic Republic of Iran", and Ali Banuazizi, "Iran's Revolutionary Impasse: Political Factionalism and Social Resistance", *Middle East Report* No.191 (Nov.-Dec. 1998), 2-8.
[123] Zhou Enlai was a Chinese revolutionary who developed a reputation as a pragmatist and a moderate, especially with regards to the excesses of the Chinese Cultural Revolution.
[124] Mohsen M.Milani, "Reform and Resistance in the Islamic Republic of Iran", 32.

We must say that the Left was not simply the victim of a conservative plot. The leftists' gradual "expulsion" from sensitive positions partially reflected the level of their political support among the Iranian people. In the 1980s, the Left had been responsible for many radical acts[125] and, after the war the leftist strategists seemed to have lost touch with the public's needs and wishes.

It is important to note that political factions and factionalism exist in many different political systems, ranging from very open ones to highly authoritarian ones.[126] Political systems represent arenas in which different system components are in constant interaction with one another and with their environment. My understanding of Easton's model does not exclude "pluralism" within the system itself, even though at times, different components are at odds with one another. Therefore, the overall characteristics of a system may be said to represent a synthesis of the various tendencies associated with various components and factions, which together form the political system as a whole.

The Left, having been excluded from the political "game", began a process of self-transformation. Perceiving that it was out of touch with the needs and priorities of most Iranians, the traditional Left had to re-evaluate its intellectual foundations and its overall worldview. Having lost almost all of sensitive positions to more conservative factions, they were forced to adopt more "democratic" and populist tendencies (not necessarily radical populist tendencies). This brought the Left closer to centrist and other disgruntled elements within the Islamic Republic. The Left's new slogans spoke of the delicate issues of freedom,

---

[125] The American hostage crisis was the mostly the product of the Islamic Left. The Left also constituted the most fervent anti-Western segment of the regime. Furthermore, their disastrous economic policies had led to a huge decline in their support-base.

[126] Such tendencies that exemplify pluralism or rather factionalism exist, for example, in the American and the British systems on the one hand, and the Chinese and the ex-Soviet systems on the other.

personal liberties and pluralism of thought.[127] The new leftist trend created a new breed of Muslim intellectuals who were primarily concerned with reforming the Islamic Republic. Within the ranks of the new Left, many younger Muslim activists appeared who in the 1980s had been very involved in the hostage crisis and made up the active personnel of the repressive Islamic Guards Corps, the Ministry of Information, secret police and the regime's ideological apparatus.

Pushed aside by conservative elements, many of the younger Islamists went back to school in Iran and abroad in pursuit of intellectual sophistication. Very much disgruntled by the economic and political situation and recognizing the population's ever-growing dissatisfaction and frustration, these Islamists became concerned about the future of the Islamic Republic they had fought so hard to establish. By becoming more active in the grassroots revolutionary institutions (the "civil society")[128] and by participating in different layers of the society, the new Left understood that the Islamic Republic was in desperate need of reform. "Many turned to journalism to mobilize support for their cause. Their knowledge of the inner workings of the system and their bold criticism of the conservative leadership made them popular."[129]

As mentioned earlier, Rafsanjani's plans were first and foremost to revitalize the Iranian economy and improve the country's relations with the outside world. At the same time, efforts were being made to promote the idea of a more tolerant society by easing restrictions on the cultural spheres and lifestyles (particularly with regards to young people). Despite continuous pressure exerted by the conservative Right, the Iranian society experienced a mushrooming of

---

[127] Mohsen M.Milani, "Reform and Resistance in the Islamic Republic", 34.

[128] Many civil society organizations had been penetrated and co-opted by the state and its representatives, and the Left had, since the beginning of the revolution, been quite strong in such organizations and institutions. This put them at a strategic advantage since these institutions acted as both official and unofficial bridges between the state and the society.

[129] Saeed Rahnema and Haideh Moghissi, "Clerical Oligarchy and the Question of "Democracy" in Iran", 37.

publications, a booming translation industry and a thriving cinema scene. These were mostly supported and/or headed by the Center and the new Left, which drew the implicit support of the President.[130]

The conservative domination: political polarization within the state

In 1992 however, the conservatives who by now also controlled the Majlis found the relative cultural openness intolerable and forced the moderate Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Mohammad Khatami, to resign. Having secured a parliamentary majority, the conservatives began to deny Rafsanjani (their ally up until now) the support he needed to implement his "pragmatist" policies and relentlessly pushed for the adoption of their "own" policies. By 1993 and Rafsanjani's second presidential campaign, the coalition of the "pragmatists/conservatives" was showing clear signs of trouble. Conservatives presented their own candidate to run against Rafsanjani, but the latter won the elections with 63% of the vote. This was an important event, which eventually put an end to the 1989 coalition.[131]

Disillusioned with the conservatives, Rafsanjani officially broke away with the Right in 1995 and, interestingly enough, became increasingly friendly with forces on the Left.[132] By now, the Left had taken a much more conciliatory stance toward the centrists. This had allowed for the creation of an opposition coalition that included groups and individuals that spun from the moderate Right all the way to the radical Left.

An important figure was Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri who had long been considered as part of the conservative faction of the post-revolutionary clerical elite and was

---

[130] Mehrzad Boroujerdi, "The Paradoxes of Politics in Postrevolutionary Iran", 20.
[131] As mentioned before, the 1989 alliance had brought together the Center and the Right, effectively marginalizing the Left.
[132] Mathew C. Wells, "Thermidor in the Islamic Republic of Iran: The Rise of Mohammad Khatami", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 26, 1 (May 1999), 27-39.

once thought to be the successor to Khomeini. Marginalized by Khomeini (as explained in Chapter II), Montazeri gradually joined the "dissident" movement and, thanks to his great stature and the following he commanded, proved to be an important player in the movement. Both disillusioned and aware of the problems associated with the Islamic Republic (which he had helped establish), Montazeri's "critiques lie in a profound opposition to the absolute nature of clerical rule as practiced in post-Khomeini era, deploring what he sees as a deviation from the intent of the drafters of the 1979 Constitution, a document he was instrumental in creating, and finally, acknowledges the need for serious structural reform."[133] Having been inside the regime, Montazeri's position as an Ayatollah and his impeccable revolutionary and religious credentials made him an opponent the regime could not ignore. Finally in 1997, he was placed under house arrest for explicitly and formally calling for limits to supreme clerical rule.

Montazeri was by no means the only high-ranking clergy who criticized the regime and itsauthorities. Voices calling for reform have been heard in both political and apolitical clergy circles in seminaries and in the political system. Abdolkarim Soroush provides an excellent illustration of what was taking place in Iran in the mid-1990s. This figure is considered to be one of the main religious ideologues of post-revolutionary Iran. Also disillusioned with the instrumentalization of religion by the conservatives, Soroush, a highly respected figure in the Islamic Republic, joined with the voices demanding reform from within the system. He continues to be an active force in the struggle for change.[134]

By 1996, the conservative-dominated power structure in Iran had managed to alienate many powerful individuals and groups in the Center and on the Left of the Iranian political

---

[133] Geneive Abdo, "Re-Thinking the Islamic Republic: A "Conversation" with Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri", 2.
[134] Azadeh Kian-Thiébaut, "Les stratégies des intellectuels religieux et clercs iranienne face à la modernité occidentale", *Revue française de science politique* 47, 6 (December 1997), 776-797.

spectrum. Although conservatives managed to gain most of the sensitive and powerful positions within the power structure, they indirectly provided the grounds for building an alliance that brought together major players from the Center and Left. The transformation process within the Left—also partly attributable to the conservative take over of power—led to the formation of an alliance that was impressive in scope and included influential members from a wide range of backgrounds who mobilized support for their cause and exposed, using various methods, the inherent weaknesses and inefficiencies of the system being led by the Islamic Right.

Important debates therefore had begun to take place within the system itself. Groups from within the state questioned the Islamic Republic's past, its place in the world and what lay ahead.[135] The new "grand alliance" consisting of the new Left and the moderates became increasingly critical of the system's direction and the conservatives' hard-line reactionary policies. "Opposition" members were gradually gaining ground and their ideas were well received by ordinary citizens. The withinputs or the pressures exerted, the demands made and the support withdrawn by important members of the political system forced open the grip of the powerful Right. This, coupled with the major setbacks in the social, cultural, and economic spheres, confronted the whole political system with extremely serious issues that needed to be acted upon quickly.

The Islamic Republic and the "Women's Question"

When assessing the environment of a political system in order to determine whether there exists widespread dissatisfaction, disenchantment and lack of legitimacy, one must analyze the

---

[135] Behzad Yaghmaian, *Social Change in Iran: An Eyewitness Account of Dissent, Defiance, and New Movements for Rights* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 7.

realities faced by important social groups and their overall status in society. In the following pages of this chapter, different social groups and conditions would be studied, referred to and analyzed, but more time and space has been afforded the women's question because they makeup the largest social group, and the one most affected by the 1979 Revolution. Although the women's question does not take center stage following the 1997 period, it has nonetheless contributed greatly to the emergence of the reform movement, and arguably poses one of the most important challenges to the Islamic Republic's social and political policies.

I have already written about the radicalization of post-revolutionary politics in Iran and do not intend to repeat the notions that have been previously discussed. What is of importance here is the idea that the revolutionary movement soon began to alienate important segments of the Iranian population. Had it not been for the war, the destabilizing effects caused by loss of support would have become evident much sooner. Somehow the war kept the country together temporarily, despite the fact that the new regime had polarized the Iranian society quite extensively.

The status of women under the monarchy

Women make up the segment of the population whose lives were most drastically changed by the revolution. The status of women had improved immensely under the monarchy and, on the eve of the revolution, women were working in large numbers (relatively speaking) in both the private and public sectors. They worked as lawyers and judges and taught in schools and in universities. In the government, the number of women in decision-making

positions was gradually increasing. There were women cabinet ministers[136], under secretaries, executives, department heads, mayors and diplomats. Women not only voted in elections but were also elected to both houses of parliament and to local councils. Women served as traffic police officers and were trained as pilots. The number of girls in schools, universities and adult literacy classes was increasing rapidly.[137] The Family Protection Law of 1967 and 1975 and the establishment of Family Protection Courts, designed to settle family disputes, brought about important gains in legal rights. Abortion was legalized, family planning centers were set up and women were encouraged to take precautionary birth-control measures.[138]

When the anti-government protests began in late 1970s, women from all socio-economic classes and age-groups actively took part, aspiring to a new regime based on social and economic justice and political freedoms. But the post-revolutionary dream (at least for most women) did not materialize. "This is because the clerics who came to power imagined women primarily as "housewives and mothers, modest of dress, demeanor, pious, dutiful, committed to raising children and ministering to the needs and heeding the wise guidance of husbands, fathers, and brothers."[139] Women's socio-economic status changed drastically after the revolution. The Family Protection Law was deemed un-Islamic and was thus abrogated. Limitations were imposed on women in both the public and private realms. Islamic dress code was applied and wearing the veil became compulsory. Women encountered important regressions in terms of divorce and child custody, and the minimum age of marriage for girls was lowered from 18 to just 9.

---

[136] In 1968, Farrokhrou Parsa, the first woman to be appointed to the cabinet, was named as Minister of Education. She was executed in December of 1979 after a revolutionary court found her guilty of "corrupting" young girls.

[137] Haleh Esfandiari, "The Politics of the "Women's Question" in the Islamic Republic: 1979-1999", In John L. Esposito and R. K. Ramazani, Ed., *In Iran at Crossroads* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 75-92.

[138] *Ibid.*, 78.

[139] *Ibid.*, 75.

Women and the quest for gender equality

At first, in response to these imposed and drastic changes, women were generally divided. It had been mostly women from middle and upper-middle classes who had first protested against the regime's intentions. For the most part, less educated women and those from the lower classes did not take part in early post-revolutionary demonstrations. This apparent division among women as a group played to the advantage of revolutionary leaders.

The division was not to last long, however. First of all, although the application of "Islamic Law" caused women to lose their civil rights, paradoxically, they maintained their political rights. While the civil code and the penal laws promote gender inequality, men and women continued to have equal political rights.[140] This window of opportunity provided women with possibility of running for parliamentary positions and, consequently, there have been women parliamentarians ever since the first post-revolutionary Parliament session.[141] As previously mentionned, during the war opposition to the regime and the authorities was not tolerated. Women, despite enduring severe difficulties, generally abstained from opposition and confrontation.

After the war, during the implementation of the Reconstruction Era plans, the state had to attract a large pool of professionals. Many professional women who had been made redundant were called back to their postions. But unlike in social and economic spheres where specialization constituted sufficient reason for women's participation, involvement in the political sphere necessitated the allegiance to the regime and to its leadership. It was the wives and daughters of clerics and powerful officials who became the first women deputies in the Majlis, and ran government sponsored charity organizations and hospitals. The "regime

---

[140] Azadeh Kian, "Women and Politics in Post-Islamist Iran: The Gender Conscious Drive to Change", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 24, 1 (1997), 75-96.
[141] Four Women were elected to the First post-revolutionary Majlis (1979-1983).

women,"[142] as these are called, have proven to be as ambitious as their counterparts under the monarchy. They too, have aspired to office, senior bureaucratic posts, as well paying jobs, and power.

An argument is made that the chador and hejab[143] have helped to unify women of all backgrounds and socio-economic classes, as there is no longer a gap in their public appearance.[144] In the post-1989 Iran, eventually the groups that were once culturally and politically at opposite poles have come to unite around specific issues.

Women's solidarity has also much to with the relative intellectual opening that was created during the Rafsanjani era or at least the first half of it.[145] Due to the presence of Mohammad Khatami, a liberal-minded Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance[146] (who was forced by the Majlis to resign in 1992), and the more tolerant mood he created several hundred new journals and magazines, including those for women, began to be published. This led to a widening of the scope in debates over the condition of women. Conferences started to be organized on various aspects of women's and family issues. The publishing of women's press, because of its importance, cannot be ignored. These new Islamist women's magazines, especially *Zanan* and *Farzaneh*,[147] became arenas to which secular women also began to contribute. Through their writings and interviews, secular lawyers, economists, sociologists, artists, historians, novelists, movie directors, etc, who were hitherto denied the right to publish,

---

[142] Haleh Esfandiari, "The Politics of the "Women's Question" in the Islamic Republic: 1979-1999", 76. Also see Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "The Rise and Fall of Faezeh Hashemi: Women in Iranian Elections", *Middle East Report* 31, 218 (Spring 2001), 8-11.

[143] Chador and hejab refer to the dress code for women that are supposedly in line with Islamic norms and code of morality.

[144] Nikki R. Kiddie, "Women in Iran since 1979", *Social Research* 67, 2 (Summer 2000), 404-438.

[145] As mentioned previously, in 1992, the conservatives took the majority of the Majlis and tightened the relatively small intellectual space that the Reconstruction Era had allowed.

[146] Hojjatol-Islam Mohammad Khatami was the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance (which also included the task of war-time propaganda in the war years) between 1982-1992.

[147] *Zanan* and *Farzaneh* are both journals dealing with women's issues.

seized the opportunity and presented their opinions and works in order to raise demands for equal rights in both the private and public spheres.[148]

Despite the traditionalists'[149] attempts to "contain" women's awareness, both the secular and Islamist women reject institutionalized inequalities and demand a dynamic and adapted interpretation of Islam. Although secular women do not have access to the political sphere, vocal Islamist women, increasingly backed by civil society, are determined to implement conscious change through their involvement in politics. The conscious move toward equality and improving women's socio-economic and political life, coupled with a higher degree of unity among women, led to their unprecedented mobilization in the March-April 1996 parliamentary elections for the Fifth Majlis.[150] Many of the women candidates (considered "Islamist women") were known in women's circles for defending women's rights and promoting the status of women. By doing so, they were responding to the demands aired by the female population seeking change in the civil code, better access of women to employment opportunities, better employment legislation, and the reform of laws in order to improve women's status.[151]

Women's literature, coupled with new social realities also changed after the Islamic revolution. Women's pre-revolutionary literature under the sway of the dominant literary discourse did not give rise to a feminist literary movement, because the dominant discourse emphasized socio-political issues over specific gender issues. Women's literary paradigms

---

[148] Azadeh Kian, "Women and Politics in Post-Islamist Iran: the Gender Conscious Drive to change", and Homa Hoodfar, "Women and Personal status Law in Iran: An Interview with Mehranguiz Kar", *Middle East Report* No.198: *Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East* (Jan.-Mar., 1996), 36-38.

[149] Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "The Conservative-Reformist Conflict over Women's Rights in Iran", *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 16, 1 (Fall 2002), 37-52.

[150] Over all, 14 women were elected to the Parliament (a record thus far), and Faezeh Hasehmi received the second highest number of votes in the elections. See Elham Gheytanchi, "Appendix: Chronology of Events Regarding Women in Iran since the 1979 Revolution", *Social Research* 67, 2 (Summer 2000), 439-445.

[151] Azadeh Kian, "Women and Politics in Post-Islamist Iran: The Gender Conscious Drive to Change", 86.

before and after the revolution thus represent two different literary discourses, with the Iranian revolution of 1979 acting as the major historical event separating the two. The veil (and other socio-economic disadvantages) provided a fresh outlook on the past and a point of initiation for new feminine thought.[152] Kamran Talattof notes:

> These writings combine feminist consciousness based on experience, feminist politics, and strands of thoughts informed by Western feminism. Also, critical to this development and motivational in overcoming these obstacles is the fact that female writers have found a voracious audience: other women. The presence of such a great readership and the popularity of female authors are reflected in the frequent reprinting of these works. The themes of these works indicate that women are paying attention to all aspects of their social and private lives, including women's issues, women's lives in the past, women's poverty, patriarchy, criticism of marriage traditions, and feminist-oriented politics. In short, most of such works challenge the state ideology bringing to the fore the agony of living under an institutionalized form of male supremacy.[153]

In general, women were very resilient during the post-revolutionary period and, in fact, have forced the regime to reconsider some of its policies. Among other feats, women have won the battle over child custody for martyrs' widows and brought about amendments to family law that grant a woman limited divorce rights in the event that her husband takes a second wife. They have also fought for the equal division of property accumulated during marriage and introduced "wages for housework," which protects women from arbitrary divorce.[154]

However, women in most areas now have fewer socio-economic rights than they did under the monarchy. To achieve equality and legitimize their cause, women continue their struggle despite the frequent constraints the framework of the Iranian constitution imposes and work towards spreading a more liberal interpretation of Islam. Their participation in the political system has taught women that there are inherent contradictions within the circle of

---

[152] Kamran Talattof, "Iranian Women's Literature: From Pre-Revolutionary Social Discourse to Post Revolutionary Feminism", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29, 4 (Nov. 1997), 531558.
[153] *Ibid.*, 543.
[154] See Homa Hoodfar, "Women and Personal Status Law in Iran: An Interview with Mehranguiz Kar", 37.

clergy and in the constitution itself that leave much room for interpretation. Also, as the regime and the authorities have unwillingly proved, no law or regulation seems to be written in stone; legislation is therefore open to debate and, ultimately, to reform. A perfect example of this is found in how the regime has handled Iran's fertility rate and population growth. Right after the revolution, Khomeini encouraged Iranians to have large families. In consequence, in the 1980s, Iran experienced a large baby boom with an annual growth rate of 5%. The 1986 census showed that in just a decade, the Iranian population had increased by 15 million. In 1989, despite the pro-birth traditions taught by Islam and Iranian culture, the government advocated family planning and birth control. "The development of a population policy in Iran indicates that, contrary to its image in the West, the Islamic Republic has demonstrated much resilience and adaptability in the face of a rather harsh socioeconomic reality."[155]

Iranian women are inspired by their achievements (despite the very long way yet to go) and their unfortunate position of inferiority in society makes them even more determined for the work left to do. Overall, women's participation in the socio-economic and political spheres undermines the idea of a theocratic and male-dominated society. It subverts the notion of clearly defined sexual roles and a rigid gender-based social division of labor. On the whole, the position of women in society and their resilience in the face of oppression has made them a very important group the political system must deal with. Today, Iranian women are perhaps more organized and more vocal than ever before in Iranian history. The pressures that they exert on the status quo and the support they receive from civil society and moderate clergy members and leaders has caused the system a great deal of stress. As stated earlier, the Reconstruction Era began with a great sense of hope —almost euphoria—shared by great many Iranians. Though the government chose an overtly optimistic and ambitious plan, leaders were

---

[155] Homa Hoodfar, "Devices and Desires: Population Policy and Gender Roles in the Islamic Republic", 15.

not willing to take the necessary steps to reform the political system, even as it became obvious that economic revitalization and privatization had to be complemented by steady reform of the social and political spheres.

Pressure from below: grassroots disenchantment and a crisis of legitimacy

The regime's failure to improve the economic conditions of ordinary citizens demonstrated their inability to remedy the serious problems faced by the nation as a whole. After nearly two decades in power and despite the fact that the Islamic Republic had consolidated power, the Iranian society was still divided by the old post-revolutionary "insider-outsider" dichotomy. On the one hand, the insider group consisted of individuals who took an active role in establishing and consolidating the Islamic regime. These individuals, their family members and connections run the state, its institutions, and the powerful parastatal foundations. They are also in charge of state-dominated and state-led civic organizations that limit opposition to the regime, and try to build a general "consensus" in various social institutions. These institutions include various labor unions, syndicates, co-ops, etc., extending their reach to almost all walks of organized social life.

The outsiders on the other hand, include the rest of the society that makes up the huge majority of the Iranian people. These individuals are not trusted by the leaders of the political system and are mostly filtered out from reaching important and sensitive positions.[156] This tendency of differentiating between individuals—prioritizing ideology over expertise—for the most important positions in the political and economic spheres has cost the nation dearly. In the early 1990s, Rafsanjani admitted that this problem caused huge inefficiency. But "the best

---

[156] For some important comments about the "insider vs. outsider" dichotomy in the Islamic Republic, see Geneive Abdo, "Iran's Generation of Outsiders", *The Washington Quarterly* (Autumn 2001), 163-171.

Rafsanjani's administration was capable of was to ask the state managers to "re-educate" themselves—a process that has had little real effect on management realities."[157]

The system's Islamization policies and societal resistance

The Islamic Republic also failed in one of its most important objectives: turning Iran into an Islamic society and establishing civil society institutions and organizations that would encourage and perpetuate the ideals of the Islamic Republic. An example of this failure is illustrated by the regime's treatment of the student population. The student movement has historically played an important part in the struggle for change. This is why the Islamic Republic, when faced with the mushrooming of student associations and political parties[158] on university campuses, resorted to a number of drastic and repressive measures, ordering government forces to invade campuses. This led to a shut down of all universities in Iran for three years. The underlying reason behind university closures was the regime's attempts at a "Cultural Revolution." After the re-opening of the universities in 1983, the OCU (Office for Consolidation and Unity) continued to be the sole representative of the state on campuses. Its major functions were propaganda, political control and ideological challenge of any opposition.[159] Furthermore, the regime established a highly selective, ideology-based screening mechanism on the university admission process, making the admission of non-religious students almost impossible (ideology was put ahead of merit and expertise).

---

[157] See Bijan Khajehpour, "Iran's Economy: Twenty Years after the Revolution," 110.
[158] The overwhelming majority of student associations and political parties formed were secular with progressive and/or Marxist-Leninist tendencies, except for the Office for the Consolidation of Unity, a student association of hard-line Islamists, liked to the regime.
[159] Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "The Revival of the Student Movement in Post-Revolutionary Iran", *International journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 15, 2 (Winter 2001), 283-313.

This systematic exclusion successfully filtered the student body of those that could instigate opposition to the regime and its policies. But the Islamist students who made up the majority of the student body were highly politicized and very much in line with the then dominant, radical Left of the Islamists. Their revolutionary zeal and their commitment to the legacy of Ayatollah Khomeini, however, led the students to diverge politically from the new post-Khomeini leadership that was more conservative. Therefore, students gradually began to form new intellectual and political circles referred to as the "religious intellectuals," gathered around influential intellectuals such as Abdolkarim Soroush (whom we have already referred to) and Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari, and began publishing their more "liberal" views in several newspapers and journals as early as 1990.[160]

The exclusion of the Left from important power positions in early 1990s and its transformation process (shifting to the center) also had its parallels on university campuses and among the student body. After 1992 and the strengthening of the conservatives, the latter group tried to counter the influence of OCU by creating "conservative" student organizations, the most important of which was the Islamic Association of Students (IAS) headed by Heshmatollah Tabarzadi. However, the latter organization gradually shifted its political stance vis-à-vis the establishment and grew more critical of the Rafsanjani-Khamenei alliance.

By 1995, OCU and IAS activities were becoming more and more alienated from the state's policies that had mainly been shaped by the leading conservatives. The regime responded by encouraging the reactionary conservative organization to violently disrupt student activities and, by 1996, political and cultural repression was widespread.[161] Such tactics, although they caused much suffering in the student body in general, could not undo the

---

[160] *Ibid.*, 294.
[161] *Ibid.*, 295.

social and political transformation that had already taken place in universities. Before the revolution, universities were few in number and were concentrated in a few major cities (a total of 26 universities in all of Iran in 1979). By 1996, however, there were 87 state universities and private universities were estimated at about 122 (thanks in part to Rafsanjani's efforts). This meant that almost all major urban centers had some institution of higher education. The old mechanisms available to the regime after the Cultural Revolution could no longer effectively filter out those individuals who were deemed "unworthy" or "anti-revolutionary" since dissent was emerging from within the "trusted" circles. The dissident movement was not unIslamic or anti Islam and the revolution, but reflected a new trend fueled by individuals who had become disillusioned and distrustful of the authorities. The Islamic Republic's Cultural Revolution had thus failed and the student movements that had been dormant for more than a decade were gaining momentum and demanding change.

The state failed to subjugate Iranian women (as discussed previously), and also failed in its institutionalization of the Islamic identity by overshadowing the Iranian pre-Islamic identity. The latter was an extremely challenging endeavor facing the ruling clerics and elite who were hoping to "purify" Iranian culture from both its pre-Islamic identity and its non Islamic traits. Much indicates that these leaders failed in their social and cultural engineering.[162]

In terms of nationalism and Iranian identity, the clerics soon found out that diluting the richness of Persian culture was not an easy task and, therefore, they somewhat relented their cultural/Islamic offensive against Iranian cultural traditions. Although it crosses socio-economic boundaries, the resistance to the clerical rule was most evident among Iran's stoic

---

[162] See Mehrzad Boroujerdi, "The paradoxes of Politcs in Post-Revolutionary Iran", Hooshang Amirahmadi, "Emerging Civil Society in Iran", and Saeed Rahnema and Haideh Moghissi, "Clerical Oligarchy and the Question of 'Democracy' in Iran",.

and predominantly secular middle class. Despite their diminishing socioeconomic capital and status, they have nonetheless become quite defensive with regards to their *habitus* in general. [163] The middle class's oppositional behavior is a form of resistance to a state that is driven by a "Islamic ideology" aimed at transforming the cultural foundations of the society. Meanwhile, because the regime did not destroy pre-revolutionary institutions, the increasing rate of urbanization, literacy and bureaucratization of state power has meant that the middle class has been able to perpetuate itself.

Overall, a substantial part of society has learned how to separate the public domain from the private one. In the company of family, friends and trustworthy acquaintances, people enjoy a semblance of freedom and peace of mind. In the public domain, however, individuals must endure the ever-present pious injunctions of the state and carry on the uphill struggle of making ends meet. But Iranian society, despite the severe pressures and limitations that it endures, has remained extremely resilient. A perfect example of this resiliency is found in Iran's intellectual and artistic milieu.

Regardless of the government's censorship and harassments, there is a vibrant intellectual life in the capital and in other major cities. Artistic, intellectual, scholarly and professional publications thrive despite formidable financial constraints and official pressures. The track record of the press corps demonstrates that they have played a crucial role in shaping public opinion, producing ideas different from that of the state, making the citizenry conscious of their rights, and enabling people to express their views within the established boundaries.[164] The intelligentsia, including some members of the clergy, plays a crucial role in informing the public, analyzing the issues critically, and offering alternative views. But the costs associated

---

[163] Mehrzard Boroujerdi, "The Paradoxes of Politics in Post-Revolutionary Iran," 18.
[164] *Ibid.*, 20.

with intellectual dissent is extremely high (an aspect that will become clearer in the next chapter), especially for those who transgress the established boundaries. These boundaries, in a country like Iran, shift frequently and suddenly, especially after the 1992 forced resignation of Mohammad Khatami, then Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, under the pressure of the conservative forces dominating the Majlis. The already difficult environment for writers, intellectuals, artists, and scholars worsened after 1992 and such individuals began to feel much more censorship, limitations and pressures. The particular evolutionary path of the regime has only at times made possible the relative but inconsistent openness of the polity. This has resulted in an atmosphere of insecurity and distrust on the part of the creators of cultural products, therefore reducing the possibility of maintaining a genuine support for the system as a whole.[165]

On the whole, the post-war years have brought to the fore the real weaknesses of the Islamic Republic in dealing with the immensely serious problems facing Iran. By mid 1990s, it had become clear that the Islamic regime failed in most of its initiatives and had run out of options in dealing with the ills of the society. In the mid-1990s, 70% of Iran's population was under the age of 30 and the regime was facing a severe challenge because of the country's demographic structure. Although after 1989, the introduction of birth-control did have a significant effect in lowering the growth rate, such a demographic reality has nevertheless meant that special attention was needed in the creation of schools, educational and vocational facilities and most importantly, jobs.

---

[165] Sussan Siavosshi, "Cultural Policies and the Islamic Republic: Cinema and Book Publication", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29, 4 (Nov. 1997), 509-530.

The government has had some success in dealing with the basic needs of students and the number of school pupils per year[166] increased by 6.2%, and that of university students by 19.4%.[167] However, the expansion of the universities has mostly been in the form of "private universities" (privately funded as opposed to public universities), and the tuition fees for attending such universities have been extremely high, and thus not very accessible. The main problem, however, is that the Iranian economy does not have the capacity to generate sufficient number of jobs, regardless of the individuals' educational attainment. With unemployment rate exceeding 20%, the Rafsanjani administration had to generate around 600,000 to 700,000 jobs a year in order to reduce the unemployment rate. The regime was not only increasingly out of touch with the youth's wishes and ideals, but also unable to provide the desperately needed number of jobs.

Deep-seated structural imperatives for reform

The ever-diminishing level of support for the existing regime, and the overall demands made for change and reform reflect the relatively deep changes that have actually taken place in the Iranian society in post-revolutionary era. Kaveh Ehsani argues that the First Five-Year Development Plan (1989-1994), formulated in the wake of Rafsanjani's first-term presidency, is filled with alarming statistics about over-population and insufficient infrastructure, housing scarcity and the lack of welfare measures needed to integrate the country's growing population in the absence of both Khomeini's charisma and the war's mobilizing force. "By drafting this plan, technocrats were implicitly acknowledging a crisis of governmentality and the end of the rentier state's golden age. Dwindling revenues, enormous war costs and a mushrooming

---

[166] For the years of the fisrt five-year plan (1989-1994)
[167] Bijan Khajehpour, "Iran' Economy: Twenty Years after the Islamic Revolution", 99.

population rendered unstable the centralized and the authoritarian state as well as the practice of monopolizing and redistributing financial revenues from petroleum."[168] This meant that the state could no longer rely exclusively on the traditional methods by which to integrate the population, and therefore illustrating the gradual imperative of developing a more open system that would be based more on popular legitimacy rather than petroleum dollars alone. The Islamic ideology that was to serve as the foundation of socioeconomic, cultural and political life was by now challenged from both within and outside. "Iran's Islamization project has failed. It has been reduced to an authoritarian imposition of external restraints on behavior that bypasses social justice, economic reforms or new configurations of social relations."[169]

The structural changes that have taken place during the post-revolutionary period are the direct results of the Islamic Republic's modernization policies. Modernization policies in the rural areas have made drastic changes in the "traditional ways of life," and have narrowed the differences between the town and country.[170] Because of rural to urban migrations "the norms and values of new urbanites, which are exposed to a modernizing, middle-class lifestyle, are no longer shaped by reference to traditional values."[171] Much better access to higher education, made possible through the Islamic Republic's "affirmative action" process has given rise to the professionalization of youths from more traditional and religious backgrounds.[172] The regime's attempts at Islamization of the universities led to the merging of some universities with religious schools. The latter process has actually exposed theology students to secular curricula

---

[168] Kaveh Ehsani, "Municipal Matters: The Urbanization of Consciousness and Political Change in Tehran", *Middle East Report* No.212; Pushing the Limits: Iran's Islamic Revolution at 20 (Fall 1999), 22-27.

[169] Olivier Roy, "Tensions in Iran: The Future of the Islamic Revolution", *Middle East Report* No.207 (Summer 1998), 38-41.

[170] See Azadeh Kian, "Political and Social Transformations in Post-Islamist Iran", *Middle East Report* 29, 212 (Fall 1999), 12-16.

[171] *Ibid.*, 13.

[172] See Oliver Roy, "Tensions in Iran: The future of the Islamic Revolution", 38.

and contemporary Western philosophy, therefore contributing to the present state of disenchantment with regards to the status quo.

This relative lack of legitimacy has been aggravated by economic, social, political, cultural problems and corruption, and has on the whole proved quite difficult to accept by the young generation of Iranians, mostly born after the revolution.[173] The Islamic system has drastically failed in its attempts at the Islamization of the youth and the latter have become increasingly alienated from cultural and political Islamization. The youth, constituting the majority of the Iranian population is a giant political force through the electoral process. Since the minimum age required to vote is 16, the malcontented youth, if presented with the chance, can play a major role in the country's political process.

Furthermore, these conditions have strengthen such concepts as human rights, republicanism, political representation, freedom of expression and thought, legal equality between the sexes, and the separation of church and state. By the end of Rafsanjani's second term, it was apparent that the Iranians' disenchantment with their theocracy had reached explosive levels.[174] The more perceptive members of the Islamic system have come to realize that the appeal and credibility of Iran's Islamic ideals have become severely tarnished. As the popular resentment and opposition have risen, the political elite have been left to choose between initiating reforms and granting concessions for greater freedoms, therefore taking a risk of losing their grip and monopoly on power, or to press even harder with repressive tactics, hoping to violently crush people's aspirations.

---

[173] See Azadeh Kian, "Les stratégies des intellectuels religieux et clerc iranienne face à la modernité occidentale", 785.
[174] Ann Elizabeth Mayer, "The Universality of Human Rights: Lessons from the Islamic Republic", *Social Research* 67, 2 (Summer 2000), 519-536.

In a country where political parties are banned and civil society institutions are either co-opted by the state or when relatively free, are very weak, it is by means of studying the regime's achievements and what goes on in the society that one can establish whether the system is under stress and suffers from a lack of support or not. My analysis has shown that by mid 1990s, the regime found itself under extraordinary stress both because of the quality and the quantity of demands, and also due to extremely low levels of support directed to it from its environment. It was therefore clear that the time had come to initiate a transition. But the most important question remained; a transition to what?

Systemic output

In the previous pages, I have tried to continue the arguments made in the last chapter with regards to the inputs emanating from the environment and directed toward the political system. The main arguments highlight that diffuse support has long been on the wane and therefore the authorities and the regime were faced with a great loss of legitimacy. The issue became more destabilizing as the division within the regime and the authorities widened, confronting the system with an imperative for action. Now that the concerns with regards to the input of support and demand have been clearly addressed, and the sources of conflict and disenchantment described, it is time to turn to the decisions and actions through which the system sought to respond to such challenges.

Systemic output: theoretical considerations

According to Easton, when the strategies to generate diffuse support fail (a mechanism which takes years both to develop and also to lose), according to Easton, there is a second

major kind of response by which a system, through the actions of its authorities may seek to cope with the erosion of support. This response consists of a flow of outputs which, through their consequences feedback into the system and may thereby add to (or subtract from) the level of support available to the political objects.[175]

Easton perceives the outputs, **not** as a terminal point in an internal process but rather a transaction between the political system and its environment:

> The inputs, it will be recalled, summarize or mediate the disturbances and changes taking place in the environment. Thereby, they serve as a conceptual means for simplifying our understanding of the way in which these parametric activities are transmitted to the various parts of the system. In much the same way, but this time taking the system rather than the environment as the starting point, outputs serve to conceptualize the ways in which the system acts back upon the environment and indirectly, therefore, upon itself, by modifying, at times, succeeding inputs of support and demands. For this reason there is little validity for continuing to consider the outputs as terminal points. They are rather, part of a continuous chain of activities... in which inputs and outputs each directly or indirectly affect each other and together, the rest of the political system and its environment. Indeed, the system resembles a goal-oriented pattern of relationships through which the members are capable of adapting to their environment, using it as a source of resources, physical, financial or human, and, if necessary, transforming the system itself.[176]

The outputs can be interpreted both subjectively and objectively. The authorities' decisions and actions may be thought of as instruments through which their parochial interests are served. On the other hand, outputs may appear to be expressing genuine, even rationally developed concepts held by authorities in terms of what would be best for the system as a whole. Also, not all outputs are directed toward the environment and are not limited solely to the various forms of boundary exchanges. There are those outputs that are significant in the encouragement of specific support (as opposed to diffuse, but can become so, over time) and are directed toward objects within the political system itself. Therefore at times (when

---

[175] See David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life,* 343.
[176] Ibid., 345.

warranted), outputs may be intended toward **reforming** the internal structure of the regime or producing change within the authorities in order to generate specific/diffuse support.

However, it is important to differentiate between the *outputs* on the one hand, and the *outcomes* on the other. The actual decisions (made by the authorities) and the implementing actions that follow are referred to as outputs, but the consequences traceable to them, however long the discernible chain of causation, are referred to as the outcomes.[177]

The Transition

I mentioned earlier that the authorities had two options open to them. The first was to initiate reform and grant grater freedoms, therefore, risking to lose their monopoly on power. The second was to press even harder with repressive measures and tactics, hoping to violently crush people's aspirations in the hope of short-term gains and maintaining the status quo. In 1996 however, one year before the 1997 presidential elections, there were rumors that Rafsanjani and his coalition, known as the Reconstruction Party would try to push for the revision of the Constitution, allowing him to run for a third term. But in mid1996, Rafsanjani publicly announced his intention to step down at the end of his second four-year term, thus ending all speculations and rumors about a possible revision of the Constitution.[178] Whether the President had real intentions about running for a third term is not clearly known, but one way or another, this possibility was ruled out by the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei at the opening of the Majlis in June 1996.[179]

What happens at this stage is of great importance because by mid1996, the regime seems to have been heavily divided into three camps; the conservatives, the centrists, and the

---

[177] Ibid., 351.
[178] Mohsen M.Milani, "Reform and Resistance in the Islamic Republic of Iran", 35.
[179] Mathew C. Wells, "Thermidor in the Islamic Republic of Iran: The Rise of Mohammad Khatami", 36.

new leftists, each wishing to introduce their own presidential candidate. There seems to have been an irreconcilable division among the authorities to a point unseen in post-revolutionary Iran, and to a level that seemed extremely dangerous for the survival of the regime. The *faqih* however (himself a conservative) intervened and rearranged the members of the Exigency Council, and by so doing, forced the centrists and the Left to come up with a single candidate that would be acceptable to both the *Faqih* and the two factions. By the end of 1996, there emerged four contenders for the office. The Islamic Right was represented by Ayatollah Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri; the Speaker of the Majlis, and the Islamic Center and Left, by Hojjatolislam Mohammad Khatami; formerly the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance.[180] The two other and much less known candidates were Reza Zavarei; the deputy head of the judiciary, and Mohammad Mohammadi Rayshahri; former Minister of Interior. In total, only four out of a total of 230 candidates were officially approved by the Council of Guardians to run for the 1997 Presidential elections.[181]

The Khatami phenomenon as a systemic response

I contend that Mohammad Khatami's candidacy, in coordination and consultation among the new Left and Center, coupled with both the Faqhi's and the Council of Guardian's (both conservative) approval of his candidacy point to an orchestrated **systemic response**. The latter response can thus be perceived as the political system's output, aimed at the generation of specific and diffuse support both within the system, and much more so, its environment.

As the previous chapters have shown, by 1996, the Islamic Republic had seen its share of diffuse support diminish to an unprecedented level. Both the regime's founding ideology

---

[180] "Ayatollah" and "Hojjatolislam" refer to various elements of shi'a clergy's system of hierarchy and ranking.
[181] Mohsen M..Milani, "Reform and Resistance in the Islamic Republic of Iran", 54.

and its overall legitimacy had suffered dramatically, and the authorities had to take measures to boost the level of diffuse support. The strategy adopted by the authorities, or at least the most influential members of the authorities and the political system was to adopt a measure that would enable the system to produce outputs that would be *specific* in nature, but also act as an engine for the generation and encouragement of *diffuse* support. As already mentioned, this response (in the form of specific support) consists of a flow of outputs which, through their consequences, feed back into the system and may thereby add to (or subtract from) the level of support available to the political objects.[182]

At this stage, two clarifications must be made. First, specific support is generated by systemic responses made with respect to specific demand(s) that the members (both within the system, and its environment) make. Where support is in this way a *quid pro quo* for the fulfillments of demands, it is called *specific* support. This needed clarification refers to the notions that while the *inputs* and *withinputs* made by the environment and some influential members of the system were "global" in nature, the response made by the political system was specific. This means that although the ordinary citizens had withdrawn their support for the system because of hardships and dissatisfaction with the economic, social, cultural, political, and even religious aspects of the system (which amounts to more than a few specific demands), the response made by the system was to enact a calculated "reform" for the sake of ensuring "support" (*quid pro quo*). The latter response is therefore specific in nature, but its outcome was supposed to generate a much greater level of diffuse support (or a reservoir of favorable attitudes and goodwill directed at the three political objects, especially the regime and the authorities).

---

[182] Political objects refer to the regime, the authorities, and the political community.

The second clarification refers to the notion that the systemic responses that I have referred to so far may lead the reader see the Iranian reform movement as a ploy by the authorities to fool the masses and maybe buy desperately needed time (and support, I might add) to a "crumbling" revolution and regime. This thesis refuses to assume and/or acknowledge that attempts at reform solely have their origins in such characterizations. Although difficult to empirically determine, it is safe to claim that the reform movement should be analyzed both objectively and subjectively. There is little reason to doubt that most individuals in power are prone to take measures that would prolong and ensure their continued hold on power. However, it wouldn't be wrong to state that a great majority of authorities, academics and analysts, and ordinary citizens knew that the Islamic Republic was in desperate need of reform. By 1996, something had to be done and the choice was between reform and further repression. As stated earlier, Easton maintains that the inculcation of legitimacy is probably the single most effective device for regulating the flow of diffuse support of both the authorities and the regime. The restoration of a reasonable and moderate degree of legitimacy is vital to maintaining any political regime in the mid or long term. The stabilization of relationships between the authorities and general membership is of great importance for any regime that wishes not to resort solely to the use of force and coercion. This requires the legitimization of the regime, the authorities and their actions, and it is seems that it is exactly such legitimacy that the reform movement was supposed to restore.

Khatami's 1997 campaign and the Presidential elections

Hojjatolislam Mohammad Khatami began his presidential campaign by promising to establish an Islamic government whose legitimacy emanates from a free people. His insistence

and emphasis on rational thinking, peaceful coexistence and dialogue rather than on dogmatism, violence and aggression and confrontation as the basis of the Iranian political system hugely energized the masses.[183] Contrary to Khatami, whose platform was national in scope and offered new ideas, Nateq-Nuri's *status quo* platform was attractive to the hardcore Islamists and it primarily addressed some of the nation's economic needs (the old rhetoric regarding further and deeper economic privatization and liberalization). When the "conservative" candidate was speaking about complete and unconditional obedience to the *faqih*, Khatami's campaign aimed at respect for and obedience to the Constitution and the rule of law. When Nateq-Nuri warned about Western cultural imperialism, the reformist candidate was arguing that Iran and Islam could learn a great deal from the West.[184] When Nateq-Nuri was preaching the need for economic liberalization, Khatami maintained that without political development, Iran could have neither liberty nor economic prosperity.[185]

Khatami's message glorified the students, youth and women in the future development of Iran. During his one hundred-day campaign tour of the country, he delivered most of his speeches either on college campuses or in mosques.[186] The locations the Khatami campaign chose for delivering his message represents what the candidate really stood for. In this case, college campuses and mosques may represent the harmonious marriage of Islam and modernity, pointing to a new direction and underlying the notion that Iran can and should become a **modern Islamic** state. Khatami's "break" with the past and replacement of the ideological jargon of the post-revolutionary era by a new vocabulary centering on such

---

[183] For some of Khatami's campaign platforms, see Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran Under New Management", *SAIS Review*, 18.1, (1998), 73-92.

[184] The idea of Western civilization, political philosophy, and modernity, and what Iran can or should learn from them constitute a delicate matter, and for Khatami, such learning must be done selectively, and in a manner that is compatible with Islam.

[185] See Mohsen M. Milani, "Reform and Resistance in the Islamic Republic of Iran", 41.

[186] Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "The Revival of the Student Movement in Post-Revolutionary Iran", 297.

concepts as the *empowerment of the people, civil society, the rule of law* and *obedience to the Constitution, Citizens' rights* and *dignity, political participation*, and *women's presence* meant that by March 1997 all indications pointed to an upcoming victory for the reformist candidate. This development attracted a series of negative campaign attacks by the conservative[187] groups and newspapers, and at times rumors circulated regarding the intervention of the *faqih* or the disruption and tampering of electoral results. Those rumors ended, however, when the Supreme Leader publicly and firmly announced that the candidate with the most votes would become the next president.[188]

During his campaign, Khatami emphasized that the most important objective of his government would be "the realization of the people's most fundamental right; the right to determine their own destiny." As Khatami put it: "the overall policies of the Executive branch would be based on institutionalizing the rule of law; vigorous pursuit of justice; promoting and consolidating the principle of accountability; empowering the people to achieve and ensure an everlasting level of their discerning participation."[189] This new tendency can be rightfully considered as the output of the political system in response to the direct and indirect input of demands and the significant reduction of support directed at the regime and the authorities.

This thesis does not acknowledge that the reform movement is solely the product of an internal division and factionalism among the political elite, but more as a systemic response (output) emerging from a consensus among political leaders within the system. Once again, the regime had a choice to make. On the one hand, if the regime was to loosen its grip, dissatisfied Iranians fed up with political suppression, social degradation and economic decline would

---

[187] Negative campaign attacks as a strategy was adopted by both sides however.

[188] Mohsen M.Milani, "Reform and Resistance in the Islamic Republic of Iran", 40. Also see Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "The Revival of the Student Movement in Post-Revolutionary Iran", 298.

[189] Saïd Amir Arjomand, "Civil Society and the Rule of Law in the Constitutional Politics of Iran under Khatami," *Social Research* 67, 2 (Summer 2000), 283-301.

become bolder and put forth more radical demands. On the other hand, if it did not choose the strategy of reform, the people's dissatisfaction might reach an explosive level and challenge the Islamic Republic in its entirety. What united the authorities and influential members and enabled them to reach a "consensus" can be characterized as the combination of both **fear** and **necessity**. The fear of the "worse-case scenario" first pushed the regime toward change and then later, as we shall see, led to halting the reform movement.

According to Easton, political systems plagued by a lack of support and legitimacy try to relive popular discontentment by providing outputs that directly or indirectly cut to the center of the people's dissatisfaction.[190] As a systemic output, the reform movement and the Khatami phenomenon can be characterized as the ultimate form of conciliation the regime offered the people of Iran. The "empowerment of civil society," therefore, points to the system's willingness to absorb the modernity of Iran, which up to now had been deliberately marginalized, while **adapting** it to the regime's requirements and ideals.[191] This willingness to absorb and adapt and the plan of extending the circle of "insiders" to all those who accept and submit to the underlying principles of the regime was quite new. However, this novel approach did not mean that the regime would officially retreat in the face of opposition, but that it was making a gesture of goodwill to demonstrate the regime's readiness to open the system to those who were willing to accept its ideological foundations and. more importantly, the absolute power of the Supreme Leader. According to Easton, perception is a notion upon which depends the fate of those outputs generated to boost support. Therefore, the authorities felt that they must try to convince the public that they are doing much to resolve issues. In other words, they

---

[190] See David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political life*, 385.
[191] See Ladan and Roya Boroumand, "Illusion and Reality of Civil Society in Iran: An Ideological Debate",
309.

must use every chance and opportunity at their disposal in interpreting the outputs and their respective policies to maximize their interests.[192]

Central to Khatami's campaign and the reformist political agenda was the "empowerment of civil society." Borrowing Antonio Gramsci's conception of civil society, this empowerment can be considered a vehicle *par excellence* for promoting ethical values among the populace through the exercise of ideological and cultural hegemony. If the political society (state) embodies force, the civil society manufactures consent. Gramsci argued that legitimate consent as the predominant means of political control was normal within all societies. This means that at some point, societal complexities no longer allow the state to rely on coercion alone in order to restrain conflicts, especially when their consensual basis is weak.[193] Accordingly, as social processes grow in complexity, an ever greater degree of state regulation is needed for the state and civil society to increasingly permeate one another. When such "permeation" reaches its peak, it allows for the combination of "force and consent in such a way as to ensure that force will always appear to be based on the consent of majority, expressed in the so-called organs of public opinion."[194] In the case of Iran, the problems associated with the lack of legitimacy and support were to be resolved by encouraging the creation of a "semi-autonomous" and, more importantly, a "co-optable" civil society that would help generate consent, legitimacy and support for the political system as a whole.

In summary, in this the chapter, the first part continued with the concept of *inputs*, embodied by the dual notions of *demands* and *support*. While the previous chapter focused

---

[192] See David Easton, *A Syatems Analysis of Political life*, 387.
[193] Walter L. Adamson, *Hegemony and Revolution. A Study of Antonio Gramsci's Political and Cultural Theory* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), 168.
[194] Richard Bellamy and Darrow Schecter, *Gramsci and the Italian State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press: 1993), 123.

more thoroughly on the political economy of post-revolutionary and especially post-Khomeini era, the first part of this chapter concentrated more on the social, cultural and political aspects of the case under study.

By examining the polarization of the political sphere and the important players, the intensification of internal division among the clergy and the conservative domination of the state, this chapter examined the notion of *withinputs* or demands coming from within the political system. These internally generated demands reflected a deep sense of dissatisfaction with the structure of the political system and its overall direction under the exclusive leadership of the conservative faction. This chapter then focused on issues relating to women, who make up the single largest social group in the country. The analysis showed the significant role played by women in depriving the regime and authorities of an important source of support and legitimacy, and pointed to their demands—both explicit and implicit—in pushing for the imperative of reform.

The aim of the first part of this chapter was to clearly demonstrate the gradual transformation taking place in Iranian society by examining important social and political players and processes (the political and religious leaders, women, students, youth, intellectuals etc.). In this thesis, much time and attention has been paid to best choose the factors, socioeconomic, and political groups that would best represent the state of the Iranian political system and its environment. This has been done to demonstrate three important issues. First, the overall shortcomings and failures of the political system in effectively implementing its policies in the social, economic, cultural and political arenas led to a significant drop in levels of popular support and state legitimacy. Second, such failures actually led to a political polarization within the political system up until now unseen in post-revolutionary Iran. Such

tendencies then allowed for the transformation of the new Left and its socio-political realignment with the centrists and, ultimately, the masses. Third, the necessity and urgency of structural reforms, the **demands** (both implicit and explicit) made by socio-political forces, and the obvious decline in the level of **support** (both overt and covert), led to the eventual rise of the reform movement as a systemic response to high levels of stress emanating from both within and from the environment of the political system.

In the second part of this chapter, the very low levels of support, accompanied by the making of reform-oriented demands, "forced" the system to respond by providing **outputs** that would go to the very heart of the "problem." The response was **systemic** because a high degree of consensus among governing factions and the major players was reached regarding the choice of candidates representing the Left, Center and the Right. The outcome of this consensus gave way to the running of two major candidates, offering the masses a clear choice between the "old" and the "new." Khatami's "new" vocabulary and campaign messages, centered around such concepts as the empowerment of the people, civil society, the rule of law and obedience to the Constitution, Citizens' rights and dignity, political participation and women's presence, were clearly aimed at energizing disenchanted citizens and generating a high degree of support, which, as we shall see in the following chapter, was able to achieve exactly that.

Chapter IV: From Euphoria to Apathy: The Deadlock of the Reform Movement

Outputs are able to affect the persistence[195] or change[196] of a system through their influence on levels of support. If various outputs are able to contribute toan increased or decreased level of support and if major system disturbances and stress originate in fluctuations of support, means that outputs, through the processes of retroaction will help to shape the destiny of a system.[197] Retroaction refers to the dynamics of interacting or colliding of inputs and outputs or to the effects that outputs may have on the environment as a whole and, indirectly, on the political system. Thus, any change that occurs within the environment directly and indirectly influences the system. At this juncture, the kind of information that is fed back to the system and authorities regarding the nature and consequences of their decisions and actions is vitally important. The actual function of the information the authorities receive generally enables them to assess and match outputs to inputs. If the authorities are to be able to produce outputs that are in accordance with the demands and to contribute to the generation and stabilization of the level of support, first, they must be able to acquire information on the general state of the political system and its environment and, second, be able to inquire into and evaluate the consequences of whatever behaviour they have already taken or are in the process of taking.

---

[195] Easton has spent much time describing what he has meant by the notion of "persistence," and in a nutshell, it refers to the ability of a system to remain intact without undergoing severe and fundamental changes. In relative terms however, persistence and change are not mutually exclusive. Refer to David Easton, *A Framework for Political analysis*, 77-90.

[196] By change, it is meant relatively radical change.

[197] See David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*, 363.

Theoretical clarifications and terminologies used

The aim of this thesis is not to incorporate all of Easton's definitions, characterizations, and adaptations of *retroaction, feed back* and *output reaction*. My use of these notions is characterized by the need to connect systemic *outputs* with *outcomes* in order to both describe their discrepancies and explain the major obstacles the reform movement in Iran faced. Simply put, feedback consists of information conveyed to the authorities with respect to input-output retroaction, allowing them to assess the impact of their previous outputs on the system and the environment. If needed, based on such feed back, authorities can correct the decisions and actions they previously made and respond with another set of outputs aimed at reducing tensions and stabilizing the system and its environment.

In the case of Iran and the emergence of the reform movement, feedback refers to the information regarding the retroaction or effects and consequences of the Khatami campaign and his presidency. But has the systemic output (the Khatami phenomenon) had the desired effect on the level of support for the political objects? Feed back, therefore, refers to the information about either the "marriage" or the "clash" between the environmental inputs and the systemic outputs. In the case of Iran—as argued in this thesis—the reform initiative "failed" (in a sustainable manner) to generate the support and legitimacy the regime and the authorities desperately needed. Consequently, assessments of the overall situation that were "fed back" to the authorities were negative enough to spark a backlash against the state's reformist agenda. This backlash is what is referred to as *output reaction*:[198] the decisions and actions the authorities have carried out to cope with stress caused by the environment that were based on the information they received as to the processes of retroaction.

---

[198] Easton has consecrated two chapters on the definition, importance, and variations of "output reaction". See David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*, Chapters 27 and 28.

The "honeymoon:" the rise of the reform movement

The electoral victory of President Khatami was followed by a period that may be referred to as the "honeymoon."[199] The magnitude and sheer degree of popular participation during the 1997 Presidential elections were by all means unique in Iranian history. The turnout was unprecedented, with 85% of the electorate[200] taking part in the elections and Khatami receiving nearly 21 million votes or over 70% of the votes cast (leaving Nateq-Nuri with less than 30%),[201] giving the President-elect and his team an undisputed and solid mandate. Interestingly enough however, "the highest rate of participation and support for Khatami came from border provinces populated by ethnic and religious minorities, with the western Kurdish provinces showing the highest rate of participation. Even 70% of the armed forces, including the Revolutionary Guards voted for Khatami's election."[202] Since the presidential elections of 1981, popular participation had hovered around 52 to 60%,[203] yet the 1997 elections managed to attract another 30%[204] of the electorate who, up until then, had been alienated by a system and regime from which they felt excluded.

However, the overwhelming majority of those enthusiastically supporting Khatami's candidacy knew relatively little about him and his policies, except that he had been a more moderate Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance for some time.[205] In a way, Khatami's grand victory represented the coming together of a spontaneous coalition of disparate social

---

[199] The term is borrowed from Jahangir Amuzegar, "Khatami's Iran, One Year Later", *Middle East Policy*, 6, 2 (October 1998), 76-94.

[200] In Iran, the minimum age required to vote is 16. See M.Milani, "Refrom and Resistance in the Islamic Republic," 53.

[201] Nearly 30 Million people took part in the elections. See Kaveh Ehsani, "Prospects for Democratization in Iran", 5 and Mohsen M. Milan, "Refrom and Resistance in the Islamic Republic", 53.

[202] Kaveh Ehsani, "Prospects for Democratization in Iran", 5.

[203] See the statistics regarding post-revolutionary participation of the electorate in Siamak Namazi, "Iran's Upcoming Parliamentary Elections Up for Grabs", *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (November 23, 2003), 1-9. http://www.merip.org/mero111203.html (Consulted on 5 December, 2004).

[204] See Kaveh Ehsani, "Prospects for Democratization in Iran", 7.

[205] See Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran Under New Management", *SAIS Review* 18, 1 (1998), 73-92.

groups including intellectuals, women, youth, ethnic minorities, the poor, the secular and religious middle class, the working class and all those groups that were united by their opposition to the status quo. As already stated, however, Khatami's electoral victory should also be seen as a victory for the Islamic Republic as a whole. The massive turnout at the polls— some 30 million citizens participated (a rate of between 80 to 88%, depending on the information source)—was characterized by the Supreme Leader as "a reaffirmation of the masses' unwavering faith in the Islamic regime." He called the unprecedented popular participation, despite the enemies' call for a boycott, "a great gift from God and an exhilarating national experience signifying a sense of unalloyed glory for the Islamic order and the people of Iran."[206] The President-elect himself echoed the establishment's phrase by continuing to place the Islamic Republic on three fundamental pivots: Islam, Velayet-e faqih[207] and the people.[208] This confirmed his continuing devotion to the concept of Islamic theocracy.[209] Although such statements may arise from a sense of realism on Khatami's part, they do not negate the fact that he has been a proponent of theocratic continuity rather than an agent of radical change toward secular democracy.

President Khatami's proposed cabinet—although controversial because of his nomination of two "liberal-minded"[210] ministers for the sensitive posts of Minister of Interior and Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance—was approved with no eliminations. This event is more noteworthy because the Fifth Majlis (1996-2000) was dominated by the conservative

---

[206] *Ibid.*, 75.

[207] "Velayet-e faqih" refers to the supreme rule of the clerical jurisprudence, or the regency of the jurisconsulte. This was mainly Khomeini's new and radical interpretation of Shi'a Islam, with regards to political Islam, and established the foundations of the Iranian Constitution.

[208] During the Pahlavi dynasty the regime was also based on three pivots: God, the Shah, and the Nation, in that order. See S. Amir Arjomand, *The turban for the Crown: The Islamic Revolution in Iran* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988)

[209] Ibid., 76.

[210] Both Abdollah Nouri and Ata'ollah Mohajerani had impeccable revolutionary credentials, but were deemed liberal by the conservatives because of their moderate stance on social and political matters.

Right who enjoyed a solid majority in Parliament. In a gesture of goodwill and in order to respect some of the promises he had made to women—who had contributed immensely to his electoral victory—the new president appointed a woman as vice president[211] and nominated another as the head of the Environmental Protection Agency. This, however, fell short of his campaign promise to nominate at least one woman as head of a ministry.

Amid an atmosphere of euphoria that swept the nation following the elections, the Supreme Leader broke with post-revolutionary era traditions. Because of the sensitive nature of the system's new undertakings—i.e. the reform phenomenon—,he did not grant the new president the customary title of Tehran's "Substitute Friday Imam" and therefore stripped the reformist president of an important customary forum for delivering weekly politico-religious sermons. Abdollah Nouri, Khatami's Minister of Interior, was also denied the command authority over law enforcement agencies—a power that all his predecessors enjoyed and that the Supreme Leader routinely assigned to the Interior Minister.[212] These developments clearly show the leadership's anxieties over the reform initiative and underline its commitment to retain controllability.

However, overall, the reform movement was off to a relatively good start. Ata'ollah Mohajerani, the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, did not shy away from issuing permits and the turn of events that followed can be considered historic in terms of the number of publications and their content. Indeed, the new trend contributed to a rapid growth in general cultural and publishing industries, especially in the media. The press blossomed with a variety of daily newspapers and printing materials that had hitherto been taboo, including murders, scandals, police misconduct, public protest and opinion, public appeals to rulers, and polemical

---

[211] There is more than one vice president in the Iranian Executive, and their position does not require a Parliamentary approval.

[212] Jahangir Amuzegar, "Khatami's Iran, One Year Later", 79.

debates between Iran's different factions were now available. "With the exception of attacks on the concept of *velayat-e faqih* and the role of the Guide Ayatollah Khamenei, many previously forbidden things have now been printed."[213] The press thus became the instrument of Islamist reformism, so far as it allowed and encouraged a dialogue between state and society. Following the elections, a real sense of genuine dialogue emerged in these multiplying and censor-defying newspapers and periodicals. A host of editors, columnists, writers and ordinary citizens took advantage of this new-found freedom to voice their grievances and concerns, from nepotism, corruption, injustice, unemployment and the housing shortage to restriction of recreation and entertainment issues.[214]

The revival of the student movement and intellectual activities

In the previous chapter, I argued that by mid-1996, before the emergence of the Khatami phenomenon, the student movement that had up until now been co-opted and neutralized by the regime was undergoing a deep transformation. Khatami's campaign energized and inspired a large number of students, many of whom had been inactive until then. His campaign agenda not only inspired organized student associations, but also the "silent majority" of the student body who did not necessarily share the "Islamist intellectuals'" point of view and had until then stayed away from taking part in campus political activity or national politics for that matter. In a way, Khatami's messages mobilized that large segment of students who had been "forced" into indifference due to the increasingly out of touch state rhetoric and ideology.

---

[213] Oliver Roy, "Tensions in Iran: The Future of the Islamic Republic", *Middle East Report* No. 207 (Summer 1998), 38-41.
[214] See Jahangir Amuzegar, "Khatami's Iran, One Year Later", 79.

Khatami's agenda, based on the notions of political development, civil society, and the rule of law, clearly and greatly attracted those sectors of society that, despite their socio-economic differences and political orientations, favored change. Students have historically played a significant part in social and political transformation of contemporary Iranian history (mostly in the aftermath of WWII). The emergence of the reform movement was no different. "Student activism in its organized, semi-organized and sporadic forms clearly picked up after February 1997"[215] (three months before the presidential elections). Mehrdad Mashayekhi maintains that the student contribution to the seventh presidential campaign (of 1997) should be analyzed from three different perspectives. First, *as voters*; second, *as activists*; and third as *a reference group*. He goes on to state that during the elections, there were 1.2 million students in all of Iran's institutions of higher learning. According to the polls taken on college campuses, between 93 to 95% of students declared their readiness to vote for one of the four presidential candidates and a vast majority of those students are thought to have voted for Khatami.[216] Therefore, "it would be safe to estimate that approximately 1.1 million college students voted, and approximately 1 million cast their ballots for Khatami (out of the total of 20 million votes he received)."[217]As activists, almost 5,000 students (or more) were officially involved at the various campaign headquarters around the nation and many more formed informal networks that helped the Khatami campaign both on and off campuses.

As a reference group however, students and universities[218] have played and continue to play a much more vital role for the reform movement. Ever since 1989 and the rapid increase of both state and private universities across the country, the social and political status of

---

[215] Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "The Revival of the Student Movement in Post-Revolutionary Iran", 296.
[216] *Ibid.*, 297.
[217] *Ibid.*, 297.
[218] By universities, it is meant students, professors, and intellectuals associated with the university milieu.

students has changed. As previously mentioned, in a society where opposition political parties are banned and where a deep mistrust and lack of confidence exists in the state-run media, students play a major part in shaping public opinion. According to a poll taken after the 1997 elections, individuals associated with universities, i.e. students and professors, "were 2.4 times more important to the voters as a political reference group compared to the clergy, the traditional group of reference."[219]

After the May 23rd elections, students greatly contributed to the momentum that had been created during the earlier months. The emergence of better opportunities made the surge in formal and informal student activism to be expected. Under the new (post-Khatami) Ministry of Interior, run by moderate Islamists, some of the old restrictions limiting campus activism were removed, permitting "recognized"[220] student groups to engage in peaceful demonstrations on and off campus. Between May 24,1997 and January 11,1999, 104 cases of student associations, demonstrations and confrontations occurred in the University of Tehran alone.[221] This trend was accompanied by a sharp rise in the number of student journals and publications, airing both political and socio-economic demands.

The government's reformist agenda provided students with the space and opportunity required to revitalize the student movement and expand its reach. After 1997, the first independent student organizations were formed and although they were much smaller than organizations such as OCU, they had agendas and aspirations that tended to be more liberal and secularist in nature. Some student movement organizations even became affiliated with

---

[219] See Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "The Revival of the Student Movement in Post-Revolutionary Iran", 297.
[220] Recognized refers to organizations whose agenda and leadership are deemed trustworthy and not in direct contrast to state ideology.
[221] Source : The Revolutionary Guard Report, 1999, See Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "The Revival of the Student Movement in Post-Revolutionary Iran", 298.

semi-legal, more nationalist and secular "political parties" and were active up until the massive 1999 student protests.

The opening created and tolerated by the reform movement also allowed intellectuals to come out of the relative isolation they had endured for years and provided them with the space, the means and the audience to resume their intellectual activities. Those members of the intelligentsia who up until this point had been confined to the small and isolated university settings or contributed to the very few and unknown "intellectual" journals could now "openly"[222] speak and publish their works and views. This opening provided would allow intellectuals and the general population to establish an indirect, but nevertheless important and sensitive, connection through their own publications, talks and the media. In a country like Iran, committed intellectuals can be conceived as agents of social change. "Twice in the last century Iranian intellectuals acted as catalysts of cataclysmic revolutionary change—during the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1909 and the Islamic Revolution of 1978. Thus, it is not surprising that intellectuals (in the general sense of producers and synthesizers of ideas) have spearheaded the process of reform once again during the Islamic Republic."[223]

The Khatami phenomenon: a second revolution?

Taken in its entirety, what has been mentioned so far of the Khatami candidacy and campaign platform, the incredible rate of voter participation, the huge electoral victory, the people's sense of optimism bordering on euphoria, freedom of the press, the invitation to and tolerance of intellectualism and the revival of the student movement could point to the Khatami

---

[222] One must keep in mind that this opening must be understood in relative terms.
[223] One must differentiate between reform from below and that from above. In the Iranian case, the initiation comes from both, nonetheless, as we shall see, the role of intellectuals is of great importance. Ahmad Sadri, "The Varieties of Religious Reform: Public Intelligentsia in Iran", *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 15, 2 (Winter 2001), 271-282.

era as the "Second Revolution." However, a careful look at post-1997 events and their analysis—as we shall see—point to a different reality.[224]

First and foremost, Khatami's supporters must be understood as diverse groups that include young people born after the revolution, women who had suffered from extensive gender discrimination, the urban poor, secular intellectuals and middle-class professionals who found him to be the least objectionable choice.[225] The "coalition" was made up of a wide variety of groups from all walks of Iranian society, united in their disenchantment with the post-revolutioary era, and in their lack of trust in the clerics' ability to deal with Iran's problems.[226] In terms of political affiliations, they consist of a precarious alliance between the radical/statists on the Left and the free-marketeers and free privatizers in the Center and Center-Right who had bitterly accused each other before the elections for having caused Iran's severe economic failures. However, the greatest challenge Khatami faced after his victory was dealing with the expanding rifts between the 18 political groups and factions that together made up the reformist block.[227] As Djavad Salehi-Isfahani has interestingly remarked, "political alliances in Iran are formed more on common enemies and less on common visions and programs for the future."[228]Characterized by constant zigzagging between statist and free-market initiatives, Khatami's economic agenda reinforces the validity behind such assumptions and testifies to the presence of contradictory and irreconcilable differences within Khatami's

---

[224] See Geneive Abdo, "The Fragility of Khatami's Revolution", *The Washington Quarterly* 23, 4 (Autumn 2000), 55-62.

[225] See Jahangir Amuzegar, "Khatami's Iran, One Year Later", 76.

[226] See Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran's Crumbling Revolution", *Foreign Affairs* 82, 1 (January/February 2003), 44-57.

[227] For more on this topic see Siamak Namazi, "Iran's Upcoming Parliamentary Elections Up for Grabs", *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (November 23rd 2003), 1-9. http://www.merip.org/mero111203.html (Consulted on 15 November, 2004). And Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran Under New Management", *SAIS Review* 18, 1 (1998), 73-92.

[228] Djavad Salehi-Isfahani, "Rafsanjani's Gambit", *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (February 15, 2000), 1-4. http://www.merip.org/mero021500.html (Consulted on 15 November, 2004).

camp.[229] The presence of such a wide range of groups, factions and visions in the reformist camp did not work in the reform movement's best interest. One can even presume that the conservative Right perceived such vast "ideological" diversity within the reformist camp as incapable of posing real and solid threat, given that these reformist groups could never agree on the most fundamental aspects of clear and concrete change, let alone true reform. The reformists' diversity in vision and ideology—present both among the authorities and their supporters—can be seen as the movement's great strength and a great weakness at the same time.

Crisis of legitimacy and the civil society

According to Easton, political systems plagued by a lack of support and legitimacy try to relieve some of the popular discontentment by providing outputs that directly or indirectly cut to the heart of the people's dissatisfaction.[230] As a systemic output, the reform movement and the Khatami phenomenon can be characterized as the ultimate form of conciliation the regime has offered the people of Iran. The "empowerment of civil society" therefore points to the system's willingness to accept the modernity of Iran—an aspect which up until this point had been deliberately marginalized—while **adapting** it to the regime's requirements and ideals.[231] This willingness to absorb and adapt and extending the circle of "insiders" to all those who accept and submit to the underlying principles of the regime was quite new. However, this novel approach did not mean that the regime would officially retreat in the face of opposition.

---

[229] For more on Khatami's economic planning see Sohrab Behdad, "Khatami and his Reformist Economic (Non-)Agenda", *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (May 21st 2001), 1-6. http://www.merip.org/mero/mero052101.html (Consulted on 5 November 2004).

[230] See David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*, 385-87.

[231] See Ladan and Roya Boroumand, "Illusion and Reality of Civil Society in Iran: An Ideological Debate", 310-311.

It was nonetheless more an attempt or gesture of goodwill to demonstrate the regime's readiness to open its system to those who would be willing to accept its ideological foundation and, more importantly, the absolute power of the Supreme Leader. According to Easton, the fate of the outputs generated to boost support depends on the notion of perception. Therefore, the authorities must convince the public that they are doing much to resolve the issues. In other words, they must use every chance at their disposal to interpret the outputs and their respective policies in order to maximize their interests.[232]

The importance of groups such as student organizations and associations, intellectuals and the press lies in their ability to affect citizens' perceptions about what the government or the regime does (or doesn't do). According to Easton, all individuals subjectively measure their experiences vis-à-vis the public sphere, and if the discrepancy between what they expect from the political system and the outputs it produces is widened, this disparity adds to their discontent. However, in most complex societies, Easton argues, the increasingly sophisticated matters of governing mean that there is little likelihood that an ordinary citizen will have either the time or the interest or the resources to follow each output as it occurs. This means that individuals may lean on one another to mediate the interpretation of outputs. Therefore, they are driven to rely on trusted leaders and experts to broker the perception of outputs. In systems where there are competitive appeals to the membership (the citizens) about the appropriate interpretation of outputs, the dialectic of perception frees the member's (individual's) mind for independent judgment and evaluation.[233] In a country like Iran, where political parties, interest groups and civil society have been banned or co-opted, the mediation of perceptions had, up until 1997, been solely the domain of the state. But following the 1997 elections and the

---

[232]See David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political life*, 387.
[233] Easton has dedicated a good part of Chapter 24 to such matters. See David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*, Chapter 24.

relative opening that they provided, the critical press, the intelligentsia and student associations—all of which command greater respect than the state mechanism in interpreting events and influencing public perception—have undermined the state's capacity to set the socio-political tone.

When autonomous from the state, the press, the intellectual community and student associations form the backbone of an emerging civil society. The momentum created by the 1997 presidential elections activated these groups more than any other civic institution. This is mainly because the students had already been organized in to very few national associations. Also, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance issued permits to the press and intellectuals to freely voice their opinions and publish their material. With official permission and the apparent backing of the Khatami administration's agenda to promote "free speech" and "freedom of association," not only did these three groups become the most vocal proponents of change, they very rapidly became the most effective means of influencing popular perceptions with regards to the state, the cultural, and socio-economic concerns of the people.

Yet, the paradox lies in keeping with Iranian tradition: the systemic output of establishing a "vibrant civil society" must be understood within the context of a so-called "Islamic civil society" and its prime use to the system would be found in civil society's capacity to generate consensus and consent, **not dissent**. Such a claim inadvertently borders on—if it is not entirely modeled on—the Gramscian conception of civil society, in which the latter is a vehicle *par excellence* for promoting ethical values among the people through the exercise of ideological and cultural hegemony. If the political society (state) embodies force, the civil society

represent consent.[234] In the case of Iran, the problems associated with the lack of legitimacy and support were thus to be cured by encouraging the creation of a **"semi-autonomous"** and, more importantly, a **"co-optable"** and **"Islamic"** civil society that would help generate consent, legitimacy and support for the political system as a whole.

The rise of dissent and the conservative backlash

The reasons behind the backlash to the reform agenda are undoubtedly complex, but one of the main reasons—probably the most important—is that the press, intellectuals and student associations were able to form a triangle of resistance and dissent. The more intellectuals and the press attacked the system, the more they gained in popularity and readership. The ordinary citizen, who had been shunned for so long, now had the impression —at least symbolically—of getting back at the system. These attacks and the great extent to which they represented the wishes of the public and the **threats** they posed to the system, forced the authorities to gradually[235] change course. What threatened the regime even further, however, was that many of theses "dissidents" were in fact regime "insiders" who were highly respected and possessed impeccable religious and revolutionary credentials. This is indeed a testament to the existence of groups and individuals with a wide range of visions, approaches, ideologies and goals in the "reformist coalition" and constitutes one of the main obstacles in preventing them from the adoption of a single and unique strategy and plan of action.

The same condition of pluralism of thought also applies to the conservative Right, in which alliances were formed around the opposition to a particular view or group and less

---

[234] See Walter L. Adamson, *Hegemony and Revolution. A Study of Antonio Gramsci's Political and Cultural Theory* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980) and also Richard Bellamy and Darrow Schecter, *Gramsci and the Italian State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press: 1993), 123.

[235] Gradual in the sense that the authorities avoided a general, sudden and massive crackdown.

around a consensus on vision and long-term goals. The conservative Right also includes radical individuals and groups that are extreme in their political leanings and religious interpretations. Regardless of ideological orientations, however, be it Left, Center or Right, the system does not tolerate secularism or secular activists. The degree of reactionary attitudes toward secular intellectuals and groups, however, may vary from Left to Right. After the relative opening granted to the freedom of expression, several secular intellectuals and groups began publishing materials, giving interviews to domestic and international journalists, and setting up small meetings. In 1998, five leading and respected secular intellectuals were brutally murdered by a few "rogue" elements within the Ministry of Information associated with the radical Right (this came to be known later and caused the "reformist" Minister of Information to resign).[236]

The debates that have taken place in Iran over the reform process have mostly been carried out by the clergy, religious intellectuals and religious associations (including students with the OCU). The whole of the public sphere can thus be characterized as Islamic and both the reform and the dissent must somehow be associated with Islam. After his victory, Khatami felt the need to slightly change the language he used to encourage the reform process. Therefore, he changed his message of establishing and strengthening of civil society to *Islamic civil society* and that of encouraging democracy gradually changed to *Islamic democracy*.[237]

The intensification of opposition: the clergy and intellectuals

Despite the regime's best efforts to keep the reform movement and its initiatives "Islamic" and within the trusted circle of insiders and those close to the regime, their efforts

---

[236] See Ladan and Roya Boroumand, "Illusion and Reality of Civil Society in Iran: an Ideological Debate", 326-327.
[237] See Jahangir Amuzegar, "Khatami's First-Term Presidency: An Outsider's Assessment," *SAIS Review* 22, 1 (2002), 1-21.

were in vain. This is because much of the dissent and critiques were coming out from individuals who were, in fact, insiders. The group of Islamic intellectuals that I have referred to so far included high-ranking members of the clergy and the regime's ideologues. By the second year of the reform movement, all fundamental aspects of the regime were under scrutiny by ordinary citizens, the press, intellectuals and students. Ayatollah Montazeri, once designated as Ayatollah Khomeini's heir, directly attacked the Velayat-e faqih establishment and the Supreme Leader in a lecture in Qom[238] in November of 1997:

> You {Khamenei} are not of the rank and stature of a *marja*[239][…]The Shi'a marja'iyat was an independent spiritual authority. Do not try to break the independence of the marja'iyat and turn the seminary circles into government employees. This is harmful to the future of Islam and Shi'ism. Whatever your supporters may claim, you give no evidence of filling the scholarly position of Imam {Khomeini}, may God have mercy upon him. Do not allow the sanctity and spirituality of seminary to become mixed up with political work of government agencies.[240]

Because and despite of his religious and political stature and his great number of followers, Ayatollah Montazeri was forced into house-arrest until 2000. But many other religious figures of various ranks had begun to promote social and political reforms. In June 1998, Hojjatolislam Mohsen Saidzadeh, an enlightened and moderate cleric who championed the cause of gender equality was arrested and imprisoned on charges of having compared the proposed legislation barring male doctors from treating female patients[241] with Taliban policies in Afghanistan.[242] The Islamic political system devised a special court, referred to as the

---

[238] The holy city of Qom is Shi'a Islam's center of seminary studies in Iran.

[239] Marja refers to the title of a clergy who reaches the high position of being a source of emulation on religious matters, and also permitted to issue religious edicts, or fatwa. Unlike Ayatollah Khomeini, and Ayatollah Montazeri, Khamenei, indeed does not have the rank of Marja.

[240] Charles Kurzman, "Critics Within: Islamic Scholars' Protests Against the Islamic State in Iran", *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 15, 2 (Winter 2001), 341-359.

[241] This law was never actually enforced because of its obvious problems in terms of implementation.

[242] Charles Kurzman, "Critics Within: Islamic Scholars' Protests Against The Islamic State in Iran", 348.

Special Clergy Court, to deal with offences carried out by clergy members. Conservative forces have used such mechanisms to silence an increasingly vocal and critical clergy.

As the debate around the notion of reform got hotter, several other Islamic thinkers and intellectuals were harassed, arrested and imprisoned. Although not a cleric, Abdolkarim Soroush was a professor of theology at the University of Tehran and is recognized as one of the most prominent figures and most prolific and respected intellectual dissident in contemporary Iran. He was the most eloquent intellectual of the nascent Islamic republic and later became one of the most ebullient and learned critics of clerical rule in Iran. His views and published materials regarding the separation of *religion per se* from *religious knowledge* have gained him many enemies among the conservative Right which professes a very rigid interpretation of Islam. "The clergy who have dealt with such quandaries in their professional circles do not object to Soroush's discussions as such. They are, however, outraged by Soroush's recklessness for exposing the laity to such sensitive subjects."[243] For his views and opinions, Soroush has been barred from teaching. Other such thinkers include Mojtahed Shabestari and Mohsen Kadivar, both of whom high-ranking members of the clergy, and both are criticizing the Islamic Republic based on religious grounds, more specifically religious knowledge. For Shabestari, such knowledge (religious) is quite limited and, for Kadivar, religious knowledge has a multiple nature and is quite open to various interpretations. These three intellectuals "represent the maturing of the dialogue of the Iranian-Islamic thought with Western social and political philosophy, and as the coming of the indigenous Islamic political theology reclaiming

---

[243] Mahmoud Sadri, "Sacral Defence of Secularism: The Political Theologies of Soroush, Shabestari, and Kadivar", *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 15, 2 (Winter 2001), 257-270.

its pluralistic and democratic elements."[244] For expressing his thoughts Kadivar was sentenced to 18 months in prison and was unrepentant upon release.[245]

Ayatollah Abdollah Nuri and Hojjatolislam HassanYusefi-Eshkevari are considered to be champions of reformism and both have been very active in their quest for change. Ayatollah Nuri is without a doubt one of the most influential figures in contemporary Iran. He was one of Khatami's key strategists in the 1997 presidential campaigns and was appointed as Minister of Interior by the new president. He was impeached by the conservative-dominated Majlis in under a year from the time he first took office, but was appointed as vice-president by Khatami. However, he was convicted and sentenced to six years in jail in November 1999 for allegedly allowing his newspaper to report the opinions of liberal oppositionists. "His defense statement—most of which he was not allowed to present to the court—was published as a book within weeks of his conviction, and the initial press run of 10,000 copies was sold in a single day."[246] Hojjatolislam Eshkevari's fate is thought to be even worse[247] since he was charged with insulting the regime, its leader and with the more serious accusations of apostasy and war against Islam. This was because, along with several other Islamic and **secular** intellectuals, he had taken part in a conference in 2000 in Berlin, financed by Germany's Green Party and set up for a discussion on the future of democracy in Iran.[248] The conference turned ugly when individuals associated with the opposition in exile ridiculed and disrupted the peace and some women took their clothes off as to protest women's compulsory wearing of *hejab* in Iran.[249]

---

[244] *Ibid.*, 257.
[245] See Charles Kurzman, "Critics Within: Islamic Scholars' Protests Against the Islamic State in Iran", *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, 15.2 (Winter 2001), 341-359.
[246] *Ibid.*, 350.
[247] He was actually sentenced to death, but the ruling would most certainly be reversed due to public and clerical pressure.
[248] Ahmad Ashraf and Ali Banuazizi, "Iran's Tortuous Path Toward 'Islamic Liberalism", *International journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 15, 2 (Winter 2001), 237-256.
[249] I happened to watch the Conference on satellite T.V.

Overall, the debate over the reform process, both its means and its ends has met many obstacles. The authorities and leadership have not had the kind of support, or at least, the soft-core critiques they wished to get from Iran's Islamic intellectuals, the press and the Islamic student associations in which the system had invested enormously. In the post-1997 era, the most trusted members of the clergy, for whom democracy and human rights had become a priority, have been united in their quest in separating religion and religious institutions from the state. This is in direct contrast to the foundations of the Islamic regime and is leading to a domain that promotes relativism in religious thought and interpretation.[250] What has frightened the conservative Right is the political implications of what essentially has been a release of pent-up demand for cultural and social normalization after 20 years of permanent revolution. If competing versions of Islam were allowed in the name of expanded freedom, then the role of the clerical oligarchy could be called into question.[251]

The intensification of opposition: the press

The press after the May 1997 elections has not faired much better than the intellectuals. During the first two years of the Khatami presidency, despite the ever-present political and financial pressures, a dramatic increase occurred in the number, quality and editorial independence of newspapers, magazines, journals and books. Writers, editors and investigative journalists like Abbas Abdi, Akbar Ganji, Saeed Hajjarian, Mashallah Shamsolvaezin, Morad Saghafi and many others have drastically changed the landscape of the Iranian media, causing quite a stir. They do not all subscribe to the same religious and political views and it is this

---

[250] Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Shirin Ebadi's Nobel Peace Prize Highlights Tensions in Iran", *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (October 27th 2003), 1-7. http://www.merip.org/mero/mero102703.html (Consulted on 10 November, 2004).
[251] Geneive Abdo, "Days of Rage in Tehran", *Middle East Policy* 7, 1 (October 1999), 78-85.

very diversity of their thoughts and styles that has attracted the attention of millions of Iranians. Akbar Ganji, an Islamic intellectual and a prominent investigative journalist, identified the ideology and tactics of the religious Right with fascism.[252] He began a series of investigative reports on the "dirty war" the right-wing had waged against dissidents. He pieced together the vast conspiracy and subsequent operations to murder dissidents. More importantly, he discovered crucial links that connected the operations to the reigning right-wing clergymen (Fallahian, Mohseni-Egeay and Mesbah-Yazdi) who had issued the *fatwas* that had legitimized the assassinations.[253] Ganji's campaign of attack on the authorities also targeted the former president, Hashemi Rafsanjani, both for his culpability in the "dirty war," and of his family's involvement in Iran's crony capitalism. "This had the predictable result of a crushing defeat for Rafsanjani in the parliamentary elections of 2000 and inspired his boundless wrath against Ganji and the reform movement."[254] During the Majlis elections of 2000, the attacks Ganji and some other reformist media made on Rafsanjani proved devastatingly successful and apparently the number of votes he received placed him 50th on the list of candidates from Tehran. Since only the first 30 get a seat in the Majlis, Rafsanjani was defeated. But the system could not afford such humiliation for a "grand" figure like Rafsanjani and he was "promoted" to the 20th place. However, the story was leaked (by radical reformists in the Ministry of Interior) to some of the reformist media and the whole controversy forced Rafsanjani to voluntarily retrieve his candidacy.[255]

---

[252] Such characterizations of the Islamic Republic in the media, and published material inside of Iran were unthinkable before Khatami's electoral victory.

[253] Ahmad Sadri, "The Varieties of Religious Reform: Public Intelligentsia in Iran", *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 15, 2 (Winter 2001), 271-282.

[254] *Ibid.*, 277.

[255] Ladan Boroumand, and Roya Boroumand, "Is Iran Democratizing? Reform At An Impasse", *Journal of Democracy* 11, 4 (October 2000), 114-128.

Thus far, the conservative Right and Khatami's reformist administration had been met with a great surprise. The retroaction processes had demonstrated that the outcome of the systemic output (reform) was very different than anticipated. Support for the system had been generated without any doubt,[256] but the momentum the reform phenomenon and the high degree of expectations created meant that, in order to remain in control, the regime had to devise a strategy that would limit the most radical and demanding aspects of the reform movement. It now seemed like the conservatives were no longer willing to let the reformists dominate and lead a "glasnost" they couldn't control.

Output reaction: conservative backlash

The conservatives however, who had from the start been very suspicious of the reform movement and equated fast change with the downfall of the regime, could no longer afford to "appease" the public opinion by remaining "neutral."[257] What has baffled many analysts dealing with Iranian politics is the existence of yet another paradox. The question that comes to mind is why the reformists, despite a number of solid and decisive electoral victories, have not been able to match their electoral successes with any significant and tangible reforms. One of Khatami's campaign promises dealt with the establishment of Local Councils that, although they were included in the 1979 Constitution, had not yet been realized. Khatami did deliver on his promise and, in 1999, Local Council elections were held and the reformists won with a clear and solid majority. Continued popular participation in support of the reformists also gave

---

[256] The generation of support must be understood in the context that great many Iranians were quite optimistic regarding the possibility of a peaceful transition toward popular democracy. The reform movement once again engaged the citizens in national politics.

[257] The systemic repression gained momentum with time, and was more gradual than sudden.

them a solid majority during the legislative elections of February 2000 by securing 200 out of the 290 Majlis seats.[258]

How can one explain the inability of the reform movement to establish and implement change while controlling both the Legislative and the Executive branches of government and, more importantly, enjoying the overwhelming support of a great majority of Iranian citizens? I believe the answer to this question can be found in assessing how the reform movement was perceived by the political leadership, especially the conservative Right and in their strategy of **selective elimination** of threats. As stated earlier, the reform movement was introduced as a solution to the regime and the authorities' ever-growing lack of legitimacy during a time when the state was adopting a new direction more in tune with the changed/changing patterns of Iranian society and as a systemic response to a crisis of governability. However, the authorities had not counted on such a massive response from the public and had not appreciated the extent of popular dissatisfaction. As far as the authorities were concerned, reform and change were welcomed so long as it was **gradual, controlled** and **co-optable**. However, what the authorities, especially the conservatives, got was a direct challenge to the foundations of the regime and to their positions of authority.

Student protests and state repression

In July 1999, *Salam*, a very popular pro-reform newspaper, was closed-down by an order from the Press Court (for having published a story on the killings of dissident on an order coming from the higher echelons of power). To protest the closure, students organized a peaceful demonstration on the University of Tehran campus. In response, the paramilitary

---

[258] The rate of popular participation was 69%. See Siamak Namazi, "Iran's Upcoming Parliamentary Elections Up for Grabs", 3.

forces and militia entered student dormitories and brutally attacked students, killing at least four. The dormitory incident ignited a series of protest demonstrations over the next several days in Tehran and other major cities throughout the country. The incident soon escalated into full-scale riots when the demonstrators (no longer confined to university campuses) were attacked by militia and members of the paramilitary. "The civil unrest resulting from the student protests was the most serious since the revolution and unprecedented in the participants' blatant use of anti-regime slogans and the involvement of thousands of non-students as active participants."[259] The July unrest was a first since the creation of the Islamic Republic in terms of size, intensity, the openness of defiance and the emphasis on freedom, justice and democracy. Some of the students' slogans included: "Death to dictators!" "Death to despots!" "Khamenei, shame on you!" "Rahbar, resign." The students also included Khatami in their slogans, mostly because he didn't protect the very students who had so greatly helped get him elected and because of his shortcomings on issues of change and reform. [260]

Understanding the severity of the issue, both Khamenei and Khatami rushed to appeal for calm on all sides. They both condemned the security forces and the paramilitary groups for their "ugly and unacceptable" actions and characterized the whole thing as "an extremely bitter and intolerable incident." To appease the students and the public opinion, the government ordered the dismissal of the two senior police commanders responsible for the incident and turned them over to the judiciary for prosecution.[261] "At the height of the chaos, when no one knew who actually ruled the streets of Tehran, the regime's leadership faced its severest crisis

---

[259] Ahmad Ashraf and Ali Banuazizi, "Intellectuals in Post-Revolutionary Iran: Iran's Tortuous Path Toward "Islamic Liberalism", *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, Vol.15, No.2, Winter 2001, 237-256.
[260] See Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran' Future: Civil Society or Civil Unrest", *Middle East Policy* 7, 1 (October 1999), 86-100. And Geneive Abdo, "Days of Rage in Tehran", Middle East Policy, Vol.7, No.1, October 1999, 78-85.
[261] See Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran's Future: Civil Society or Civil Unrest", 89.

of confidence…and the government had never come so close to losing its nerve. In a hurried reaction to the fast-deteriorating situation, the leadership seemed clearly unnerved."[262] Amuzegar notes that for several long hours in the early phase of the outbreak, a frighteningly powerful social vacuum emerged at a time when neither the President nor the Supreme Leader was able to control extremists on either end of the spectrum.[263]

The student demonstration and riots that followed throughout the country are a turning point in the post-1997 era. First, the leadership, whether conservative or reformist, realized that the situation was explosive and if left alone might have become uncontrollable. Second, for reformists, especially those from the mainstream, moderate factions that included Khatami and his administration, it became evident that some student groups and radical members of the Left had broken rank and now wanted to pursue a strategy of exerting pressure from outside the "official" and institutional channels, effectively creating a volatility that could endanger the reform process altogether. When Khatami ran for office, his conservative rivals had warned that his presidency would spark civil unrest and Khatami tried hard not to give credence to hardliners' predictions that his own supporters were defying his call for law and order. However, with the riots of July 1999, the students have become the "wild card" in the political game played in the Islamic Republic.[264] The conflict between the reformist government and the proponents and supporters of change had become clear. For many, including students, women, young professionals, a small remnant of the former middle-class modernists, some young clerics and seminarians, the glacial speed with which the government was pursuing reform was almost unacceptable. "For every inch of advancement in socio-political liberalization that he

---

[262] *Ibid.*, 89.
[263] *Ibid.*, 95.
[264] Geneive Abdo, "Days of Rage in Tehran," 83.

(Khatami)) could proudly point to during his short tenure, his impatient reminders would remind him of the many miles that he still had to go to deliver on his election promises."[265]

The Right and the strategy of selective elimination

As noted earlier, the conservative Right still had not decided on a massive and large-scale crackdown on the reformist government and public. Although the parliamentary elections of 2000 clearly favored the reformists, they were not met by a large conservative attempt at disqualifying candidates; the international media generally described the Majlis elections as free and democratic.[266] This, however, does not mean that there were no disqualifications, and the characterization of the elections as free and democratic must be taken with a grain of salt.[267] The Council of Guardians actually "disqualified 569 candidates, many of them prominent figures in Iranian politics, but the exclusions were not across the board and were fewer than in the past."[268] However, before handing down the legislative powers to the reformists, the conservative-dominated Fifth Majlis impeached the "liberal-minded" Abdullah Nuri, the Minister of the Interior, and Ata'ollah Mohajerani, Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance[269]. They expanded the powers of the Council of Guardians[270] over all phases of the election processes (This would later prove extremely useful to the conservatives) and in its last session the Fifth Majlis passed a law that significantly curbed the freedom of the press. Such

---

[265] Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran's Future: Civil Society or Civil Unrest," 88.

[266]The actual characterization of the lections as free and democratic by the international media is highly questionable. For further comments see Ladan Boroumand and Roya Boroumand, "Is Iran Democratizing? Reform at an Impasse," Journal of Democracy, Vol.11, No.4, October 2000. 114-128.

[267] For press comments on the 2000 Parliamentary elections, see "Is Iran Democratizing? Voices From within: Selections from the Iranian Press", *Journal of Democracy* 11, 4 (October 2000), 139-146.

[268] Haleh Esfandiari, "Is Iran Democratizing? Observation on Election Day", *Journal of Democracy* 11, 4 (October 2000), 108-113.

[269] See Charles Kurzman, "Critics Within: Islamic Scholars' Protests Against the Islamic State in Iran", *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 15, 2 (Winter 2001), 341-359.

[270] William A. Samii "Iran's Guardians Council as an obstacle to Democracy", *Middle East Policy* 55, 4 (Autumn 2001), 643-662.

moves testify to the Right's belief that the reformers would be the dominant force in the Sixth Majlis and, responding with coordinated tactics and actions, the conservatives made sure to strengthen their oversight powers and also limit onslaught from reformist media.[271]

There are a number of arguments that could explain the unwillingness of the system (or at least of the conservative elements) to suppress the reform movement in its entirety. First, the reform movement and its leaders still enjoyed a remarkable degree of popularity among the masses. Second, Khatami was a centrist and a moderate reformer with impeccable revolutionary and religious credentials and a very strong advocate of the Islamic Republic's core foundations. The president's insistence on respect for the rule of law and the Constitution and his promise to attempt reform from within the institutions of the system comforted important players among the conservatives. For example, the president and his team never involved the Iranian people as a pressure tactic in their political bargaining with the conservatives. During the student protests and riots, Khatami soon dissociated himself and the reform movement from what he perceived to be demagogic, provocative and socially divisive elements. After the end of the 1999 civil unrest, Khatami took great pains to reconfirm his loyalty to the leader and to Islamic values, and to refute rumors about any factional schisms in the leadership. The same can be said for Khamenei and his repeated insistence on their cordial relationship. On July 30th, 1999, for example, he stated during the Friday Prayer session that "I support the respected President and the job he is doing 100%.[272] In other words, although Khatami and his administration belonged to the opposite camp, they were nonetheless still considered "trusted insiders." Despite the internal divisions and the factionalism that is

---

[271] See Persheng Vaziri, "Caught in the Middle: Women and Press Freedom in Iran", *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (February 16th 2001), 1-5. http://www.merip.org/mero/mero021601.html (Consulted on 15 October 2001). Also see Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran's Future: Civil Society or Civil Unrest?" *Middle East Policy* .7, 1 (October 1999), 86-100.

[272] Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran's Future: Civil Society or Civil Unrest", 95

characteristic of Iranian politics, conservatives still perceived Khatami as both politically relevant and useful. After all, the two leaders—Khamenei and Khatami—share "very similar views, not only on basic Islamic tenants, but also on the need for the limitation of political freedoms."[273]

The reformists' participation in the Majlis elections of 2000 was not prevented because the leading conservatives were not prepared to dismiss Khatami's presidency or block his attempts for re-election in the upcoming presidential elections of May 2001. It was still too soon after the riots of July 1999 and concerned with the outcome of such a radical move, the conservatives did not wish to begin a widespread crackdown. The Right also counted on its ability to maintain a firm control on the legislative ability of the Majlis through the instrument of the Council of Guardians, which constitutionally can object to the bills ratified by the Majlis.[274] The Council, firmly in the hands of the conservative faction would always end up having the last word. Another major reason for the lack of widespread disqualifications of reformist candidates is the importance of popular participation in national elections. The system clearly felt that high voter turnout would send an important signal to the regime's opponents both in and outside of Iran regarding the system's legitimacy. Though close to the Supreme Leader, Taha Hashemi, the editor of a moderate conservative newspaper *Entekhab*,[275] said: "If the world faces a regime who's most important elections—the parliamentary elections—has little public backing, it will make all efforts to settle its scores with that regime."[276] The Supreme Leader acknowledged the importance of mass participation: "What is important to me in the first place is the people's presence in the elections, who

---

[273] Both leaders are against the extent and the level of press freedom in the West. *Ibid.*, 97.
[274] See Keyvan Tabari, "The Rule of Law and the Politics of Reform in Post-Revolutionary Iran", *International Sociology* 18, 1(March 2003), 96-113.
[275] Entekhab literally translated means "choice."
[276] Siamak Namazi, "Iran's Upcoming Elections Up for Grabs," 5.

{actually} makes it to the parliament is in second place."[277] Furthermore, over the years the importance of public opinion has become an important element in Iran's domestic politics, and conservatives have gradually come to appreciate the enormous political advantages and disadvantages vis-à-vis public opinion. The reform movement as a systemic output of the Islamic Republic was partially because of such appreciation, and in response to the growing importance of public opinion in both the post-war and post-Khomeini era.[278] What the conservatives were counting on was a strategy of selective repression; a policy of blocking those reformist agendas and policies they deemed disadvantageous.

In May 2001, despite the difficulties associated with the reform movement and the extremely slow moving change, the electorate gave Khatami another solid mandate during the presidential elections of May 2001. Although turn out had decreased by about 10%, Khatami still managed to receive 70%[279] of the votes, pointing to the notion that while many Iranians were dissatisfied with the achievements of the reformist government, they refused to return to pre-1997 era leadership.[280]

The coup de grace: the conservative takeover of the state

The more electoral victories the reformist camp won, the greater the obstacles the reform movement faced. The willingness to reform at the Local, Legislative and Executive branches of government was simply not enough to implement the promised reforms. The more the

---

[277] *Ibid.*, 5.
[278] For more on the importance of public opinion in Iranian politics see Arang Keshavarzian, "Iran's Conservatives Face the Electorate", *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (February 1st 2001), 1-5. http://www.merip.org/mero/mero020101.html (Consulted on 10 November, 2004).
[279] Siamak Namazi, "Iran's Upcoming Elections Up for Grabs", 3.
[280] For more on public resistance to reinstate conservatives to the Executive, especially among young women professionals, see Persheng Vaziri, "Caught in the Middle: Women and Press Freedom in Iran", *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (February 16th 2001), 1-5. http://www.merip.org/mero/mero021601.html

conservatives suffered humiliating defeats in the hands of the electorate, the more repressive their tactics became. This in turn fuelled direct attacks by reformist media, intellectuals and students on the conservative elements within the establishment. The apparent radicalization on both sides led to the creation of a vicious circle that threatened both the reform movement and the overall political system.

Widespread silencing of the reform movement

By April of 2000, less than two months after the parliamentary elections that gave a solid majority to the reformists, the conservative-dominated judiciary began a campaign of intimidation against the press. More than forty[281] pro-reform newspapers and magazines were forcibly closed because of their alleged "denigration of Islam and the religious elements of the Islamic revolution." Open season was thus announced on the most ardent proponents of reform and these heavily-targeted the journalists and the editors. Akbar Ganji, the investigative journalist who had linked the serial killings of the dissidents to some of the leaders of the Right, was sentenced to 10 years in jail (then reduced to 6 years). This coupled with the imprisonment of two dozen other well-known journalists won Iran the dubious distinction of being called the "largest prison for journalists in the world" by the Paris-based *Reporters sans frontiers.*"[282] This period also coincided with the arrest of scores of student protestors, religious activists and nationalists who were detained in solitary confinement for months. Impeachments, censures, physical assaults and even assassination attempts muted many of the president's close allies.[283]

---

[281] This figures, representing media closure is over one hundred by February of 2004.

[282] Ahmad Ashraf and Ali Banuazizi, "Intellectuals in Post-Revolutionary Iran: Iran's Tortuous Path Toward 'Islamic Liberalism'", 252.

[283] See Jahangir Amuzegar, "Khatami's First-Term Presidency: An Outsider's Assessment", 5-6.

The reformist-dominated Majlis has also experienced much difficulty converting bills into law because of the vetoes of the Council of Guardians. The latter rejected 111 of the 295 bills, or more than one third of mostly progressive pieces of legislation passed by the Majlis.[284] When it attempted to amend a law passed in the last session of the Fifth Majlis, a law which had effectively restricted the freedom of the press, the sixth Majlis, dominated by the reformists, was blocked by the special power of the Supreme Leader. He intervened to stop the change even before the Majlis started debating the issue.[285] Khatami also has failed to reverse the ruling and has only occasionally objected to overall newspaper closings. However, in order to break the standoff with the conservative-dominated Judiciary and Council of Guardians, Khatami introduced two bills to the Majlis to weaken the fundamentalist judges. These would limit the judges' ability to conduct extra-constitutional trials of journalists and political dissidents and would amend the electoral laws in order to reduce the Council of Guardian's authority to vet (eliminate) candidates. Another important bill sought to increase the president's powers (called the *Presidential Powers Bill*) to issue warnings against violations of the constitution. The bill would have given him the authority to take those cases to independent courts. All of these were vetoed by the Council of Guardians. Other important and progressive bills passed by the Majlis but vetoed by the Council of Guardians included bills to abolish discrimination against women and to set legal penalties for those who commit torture in prisons.

The overall situation after the July unrest and the impotence of the reformist-dominated Majlis, further fractured the already-tenuous reformist alliance. Both the intellectuals and students began to seek an alternative. Overall, the reform movement in Iran has begun to show

---

[284] See Kaveh Ehsani, "Round 12 for Iran's Reformists", *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (January 29th 2004), 1-7. http://www.merip.org/mero/mero012904.html (Consulted on 5 October, 2004).
[285] See Persheng Vaziri, "Caught In the Middle: Women and Press in Iran", 1.

signs of fatigue. The same young people who brought Khatami to power have grown frustrated by his failures. "Within 18 months of his second electoral victory, young demonstrators were urging him to step down. With Khatami's relevance waning, the focus of the struggle for civil liberties and human rights shifted from the presidency to the chambers of Parliament and the offices of the reformist journals."[286] The public perceived the failure of the parliament to enact legislation as the Council of Guardian's unwillingness to relent. But Khatami's persistent **appeasement strategy** vis-à-vis the conservatives has seriously undermined public confidence. Within the OCU (the main left-leaning nation-wide student association), there has developed a growing rift between the conservative-reformists and liberal-reformists. "The liberal-reformists have recently become more critical of defensive and passive approaches such as the strategy of 'active quietism' and the unconditional support for President Khatami adopted by their leadership in the face of both legal and illegal methods of systematic onslaught employed by the authoritarian faction."[287]

Some student activists and leaders began to see the direct links between the OCU and the Islamic Left as a liability that prevented students from developing and pursuing their own medium- and long-term interests. The OCU's lack of willingness to seek dialogue and cooperation with secularist student associations has been identified as demonstrating its continued reliance and acceptance of the establishment's insider/outsider dichotomy.[288] What has taken place in and around universities ever since the riots of July 1999 has been quite worrisome for the regime. The events that followed in the pursuing months and years have

---

[286] Ramin Jahanbegloo, "Pressures From Below", *Journal of Democracy* 14, 1 (2003), 128.
[287] See Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "The Revival of Student Movement in Post-Revolutionary Iran", 307. Also see Naghmeh Sohrabi and Arang Keshavarzian, "On the Eve of Iran's Presidential Elections: Report from Tehran", *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (June 7th 2001), 1-4. http://www.merip.otg/mero/mero060701.html (Consulted on 5 November, 2004).
[288] *Ibid.*, 308. Also see Geneive Abdo, "Days of Rage in Tehran", 80.

shown a greater coordination among the student bodies with regards to the protests. Numerous protests ranging from the anniversary of the May 23rd victory to the anniversary of July 1999 "uprisings" and spontaneous demonstrations over social and political issues have rendered the student body quite vocal, dynamic, and most of all, threatening. These were troublesome to the government because of their size and because their degree of coordination was gradually increasing. In December 7th 2002, for example, security forces attacked a crowd of more than 10,000 demonstrating outside of Tehran University in solidarity with the students (Smaller crowds in various cities also demonstrated.). The demonstrations, lasting about two weeks, had been sparked by the judiciary's sentencing Hashem Aghajari, a history professor, to death because of his comments about the clerical establishment.[289] The 2003 Local Council elections also served as an important indicator of public support. The reformist front lost all its seats in the councils of large cities including the capital Worrisome also was that few people voted—expressing people's apathy toward political reform from within. In Tehran, only 12% of the electorate voted.[290] Such trends were indicative of the general political atmosphere in Iran.

In an interview with one of the main student leaders, Saeed Razavi-Faqih, it became clear the students were no longer willing to accept working within the framework of the reformist movement.[291] Many of the students have concluded that some of the reformers in the government are sincerely committed to change but are powerless. "Their presence in the

---

[289] See Bijan Khajehpour, "Protest and Regime Resilience in Iran", *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (December 11, 2002), 1-6. http://www.merip.org/mero/mero111202.html (Consulted on 5 November, 2004).
[290] Kaveh Ehsani, "Prospects For Democratization In Iran", 7.
[291] Kaveh Ehsani, "Our Letter to Khatami Was a Farewell: An Interview with Saeed Razavi-Faqih", *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (July 15th 2003), 1-9. http://www.merip.org/mero/mero150702.html (Consulted on 5 November, 2004).

government only prolongs the life of a system that is incapable of reform."[292] The student

leader continued;

> "It is true that the institutions of civil society in the Islamic Republic are dysfunctional. The press, political parties, trade unions—no autonomous organization has been spared the pressure and restraints of the regime. The OCU is no exception. The result has been a serious organizational and institutional vacuum. We are weak in terms of theory and political and organizational experiences. But I am hopeful that through the political experiences that the students have been gaining in recent years, and especially over the past few months, a consolidation of opinions and a willingness to collaborate has been emerging. What the student movement has come to realize in recent years is that it is incapable of changing the situation by itself. The student movement needs to align itself with other social actors.[293]"

For the reformers, the need to mobilize the base and to create a broader coalition that

could better iterate a specific path toward reform is vitally important. The dissident

intellectuals have tried to promote the creation of such alliances. But, the great dilemma in the

democratic Islamists' political strategy is that they still are not ready to collaborate with

individuals or currents that are not avowedly Islamist. Morad Saghafi, a distinguished

intellectual and the editor of Goft-o-Gu[294] (Dialogue), has insisted that Khatami was able to go

beyond the boundaries to attract the masses of people who had hitherto been excluded from

political life in Iran. "Today, one can say with certainty that there is a very significant source of

power lying outside the traditional networks of political mobilization. The democratic Islamists

have to be aware of the real danger that this force could be mobilized by other, unsavory,

political currents if they continue to focus on the factional rivalry with the conservative

opponents within the regime."[295]

---

[292] *Ibid.*, 2.
[293] *Ibid.*, 4.
[294] Launched in 1992, the journal aimed to open channels of constructive dialogue between Iran's disparate political and intellectual currents.
[295] Kaveh Ehsani, "Pushing the Limits: Iran's Islamic Revolution at Twenty. The Temptation of Democracy, A Conversation with Morad Saghafi", *Middle East Report* No.212 (Fall 1999), 1-7.

The shortcomings of the reformist administration

Having stated all of the above, the Khatami administration and its allies share much of the blame for not having been able to push through the reform initiatives that they had promised. A major mistake by the left was to humiliate Hashemi Rafsanjani in the Majlis elections of 2000. Rafsanjani, a former student of Ayatollah Khomeini, held several of the state's highest offices in the past 25 years. He was an architect of the revolution, a speaker of the Majlis, the Commander in Chief of the armed forces, President of the Republic for 8 years, and the head of the Expediency Council. At the time of the elections, he was head of the Expediency Council, one of whose task was to oversee and resolve conflicts between the Majlis and the Council of Guardians. Had he been elected to the Majlis, he could have been an important player and have, through his vital role in the Expediency Council, aided the reformist camp. After all, Rafsanjani was one of the powerbrokers behind Khatami's candidacy. The Left had become so confident of its 20 million-vote mandate that it decided to eliminate Rafsanjani by the force of sheer humiliation.[296]

The way the reform movement progressed and the resistance of the conservative forces created a division within its coalition. Some of the groups associated with the reform movement pushed for a much more aggressive strategy. This tendency was, of course, the exact opposite of what Khatami and his administration had in mind. Ever since the July 1999 unrest, some reformist groups have perceived Khatami as having sold-out the pro-democracy movement in order to stay in power. His loyal supporters, however, have persistently maintained that he had little choice if he wanted to avoid a constitutional crisis or even a coup.

---

[296] I have already pointed to this aspect briefly. For more on this, see Ladan Boroumand and Roya Boroumand, "Is Iran Democratizing? Reform at an Impasse", *Journal of Democracy* 11, 4 (October 2000), 114-128. And, Djavid Salehi-Isfahani, "Rafsanjani's Gambit", *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (February 15th 2000), 1-4. http://www.merip.org/mero/mero150200html (Consulted on 5 November, 2004).

The threat of a coup refers to a letter sent to Khatami by some 24 commanders of the Revolutionary Guards, politely warning that the president's "too liberal" policies have endangered the system." [297] Fiercely loyal to the principles of *velayat-e faqih* and the 1979 Constitution, Khatami's promised democracy was a utopian model under which an enlightened interpretation of the Koran, through a strengthened culture of tolerance, protected the people's basic rights, a free press, and civil institutions. But one of the greatest mistakes attributed to the reformists in the government has been identified as their lack of confidence and deep distrust of popular social movements. This is the fear associated with spontaneous gatherings and independent institutions which they cannot control.[298] They have been generally fearful of openly working with other reformers—especially the secular forces—outside the regime for fear of violent backlash from the conservatives. This has seriously undermined their support and has limited their base. Asked by a journalist why the reformers have failed to firm up a base in political parties and labor unions, Behzad Nabavi, deputy speaker of the Majlis, replied that "popular support should be limited to people showing up regularly to cast their votes."[299] The reformists, especially those in power, did not do enough to shore up support and never attempted to attract the moderate conservatives to broaden their base Moderate conservatives included the lower and the middle ranks of the Revolutionary Guards, who might not side with their right-wing leaders.[300] The "shocking" July 1999 events, in a way, really demonstrated the Khatami administration's priorities. Khatami's immediate turnaround after the riots showed that he would do almost anything not to become Iran's Gorbachev. Instead of pressuring the

---

[297] Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran's Future: Civil Society or Civil Unrest", 95-96.

[298] Kaveh Ehsani, "Round 12 for Iran's Reformists", 2.

[299] *Ibid.*, 4.

[300] See Ali Mudara, "Iran's Reform Dilemma: Within and Against the State", *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (September 12th 2000), 1-5. http://www.merip.org/mero/mero120900html (Consulted on 5 November, 2004).

conservatives who were in shock into serious bargaining, Khatami, began to move closer to the conservatives' position. He and his administration, trying to avoid a confrontation with the conservatives, positioned themselves to fighting two wars at the same time. On the one front, they "battled" the conservatives, and on the other, they pressured their supporters first into submission and then apathy.

The demand of women for equality and gender justice had been an integral part of the reformist movement, but it was not aggressively pursued. Shirin Ebadi, Mehrangiz Kar and others have tried to reconcile Islam with democratic discourse and human rights. But Khatami has not been able to capitalize on opportunities and frequently, when faced with standing his ground or giving-in to the conservatives, he has adopted giving in. The Nobel Peace Prize of Shirin Ebadi is an excellent illustration. The emerging split between the impatient reformists and Khatami, with his gradualist strategy of "parliamentary manoeuvre," was underlined when the president described Ebadi's Nobel award as "not very important," following the conservatives' line of reasoning.[301]

Even when it had become apparent that reform was impossible under the present constitution and a constitutional revision was needed, Khatami called such remarks as treasonous.[302] At that stage while the Local, Legislative, and Executive branches were dominated by the reformists, they were deadlocked because of conservatives' pressures. A change in strategy was in order. Two main strategies were discussed, but the reformists could never agree on a clear plan of action. First, there was Akbar Ganji's Republican Manifesto which argued that intellectuals must set aside religious interpretations and the quest to see which one interpretation is more in tune with democracy. The task of intellectuals is to push for

---

[301] Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Shirin Ebadi's Nobel Peace Prize Highlights Tensions in Iran", 5.
[302] Ahmad Sadri, "The Varieties of Religious Reform: Public Intelligentsia in Iran", 275.

democracy as a program that regulates interactions in politics. The democratic project, therefore, should be advanced independently of religion and a referendum should be held. [303]

The second plan was that of Abbas Abdi's "Exodus from the State."A well known and prominent political activist and social researcher, Abdi's thesis concentrates on the notion of lack of balance or equilibrium between power and responsibility in the power structure of Iran. The unelected parts of the power: the Supreme Leader, the Council of Guardians, The Expediency Council, etc., have concentrated all powers under their control without being directly accountable for their decisions and actions. Since only force can change the current balance and since the reformists do not wish to resort to violence, the only way out of the current impasse is to resign "en masse" from all government responsibilities and let the conservatives run the country entirely. [304]

The first plan was in direct contrast to the position of Khatami and his administration and was therefore more appealing to reformists outside the system. The second plan, however, was for a brief period considered by the reformists, especially when the *coup de grace* was delivered by the Guardian Council which decided to disqualify half of the 8000 candidates for the 2004 Majlis elections. In the end, Khatami's decision, predictably, was to serve until the end of his second term.

The conservative takeover: a calculated strategy

The clear signals of danger that confronted the political system after the May 1997 elections—a good deal of which was created by the conservative forces—persuaded the

---

[303] For more on Abbas Abdi and Akbar Ganji, see Ahmad Sadri, "The Varieties of Religious Reforms: Public Intelligentsia in Iran", *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 15, .2 (Winter 2001), 271-282.
[304] *Ibid.*, 275.

conservatives that continued deadlock in the system caused by factional infighting and the clear opposition within the environment were deemed sufficiently threatening, encouraging the conservatives to act. They perceived continued polarization to be excessively dangerous, with consequences that could not be predicted or controlled. A series of reasons were behind their "cold" calculations. First, the conservatives knew that by disqualifying 3600 out of 8200 people seeking candidacy (most of whom were reformists) the rejected candidates would not break with the past by objecting in a manner that would jeopardize the system. Knowing full well both the reformers and the conservatives are "cut from the same cloth" and both camps are byproducts of the same revolution,"[305] the conservatives counted on the reformers only responding in a passive manner. After all, the Guardian Council had the constitutional right to eliminate candidates it deems unworthy. Even more interesting was that nearly 90 of the sitting MPs were barred from running for the 2004 Majlis elections. The conservatives had calculated right —in protest, the Majlis deputies only led a sit-in in the Majlis building. Khatami and Ayatollah Karrubi, the Majlis Speaker, issued a joint statement demanding a full review of the candidate screening. Even the Supreme Leader, in a gesture of goodwill, asked the Guardian Council to reconsider its decisions. Overall, nearly 500 out of the 3600 candidates were reinstated. This put the reformists in a politically hot situation. If they bargained with the conservatives to get their leadership candidates reinstated (including the president's brother) at the cost of lesser known candidates, they would forfeit what legitimacy remained to them. If they didn't press to have their leaders reinstated the less prestigious and experienced candidates would not have the political clout or acumen to impose a "common agenda" for reform.

---

[305] The idea borrowed from Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran's Crumbling Revolution", *Foreign Affairs* 82,1 (January/February 2003), 44-57.

Overall, although resignation *en masse* could have been used as a pressure tactic, it was never given much attention. Most of the national and the provincial governors and of the senior ministerial functionaries as well as hundreds of deputy ministers wanted to resign but only stayed on at the urging of Khatami.[306] Fortunately for the reformers, they did not pursue to negotiate with the conservatives with regards to their prominent candidates, and therefore won themselves some credibility in the public eye. Protesting the mass disqualification of their candidates, reformist deputies staged a 26-day sit-in, and in an open letter to the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, asked for a postponement of the elections. They warned him of the grave consequences of undermining the "republican" element in the Islamic Republic. Finally, 124 of the reformist deputies announced their resignations. All of it was to no avail: Student groups and the general public had showed little interest in the protesting MPs; the Guardian Council had not budged; and reformist groups in the Majlis and government had failed to agree on a complete election boycott. In an open letter of February 14, the O.C.U. (Iran's largest student organization) had already announced an election boycott, asking for a referendum on the Islamic Republic. The Participation Front and the Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution, the two radical reformist groups that had borne the brunt of the Guardian Council's bans, had withdrawn from the elections.

In an analysis of what happened, we have to consider factors external to Iran. September 11th, , 2001, the "Axis of Evil" speech, the rhetoric, the invasion of Iraq and the notion of a "free and democratic Middle East" have all been interpreted both by the reformists and the conservatives as a sign of things to come. Once again, for many, the choice between foreign domination and domestic despotism became an important component of the bottom line.

---

[306] Kaveh Ehsani, "Prospects for Democratization in Iran", 11.

Second, the conservatives knew the existing weaknesses in the organization and leadership of the student movements. After a number of riots broke out in many parts of Iran, and were suppressed by the authorities, it became clear that the students' resources, their ability to mobilize, and the public's weak support were no match for the establishment's levers of power.[307] Also, at stated earlier, the student organizations had become divided and those who were more radical in pursuing reforms had already lost faith in Khatami and his administration.

Third and probably most importantly, is the Iranian public's wish not to have a direct confrontation with the regime. The Iranian citizens, who in 1997 made reformism happen through their great participation, have become more and more depoliticized, disillusioned and disinclined to remain active in the country's political dynamics. The majority of the Iranian middle-class—the group Western observers normally expect to spearhead social change—has a direct interest in political stability.[308] Despite its apparent dissatisfaction with the slow pace of reform, Iranian society does not seem ready or eager to force change at this time, favoring instead a gradual process.[309] In other words, after having gone through two years of a bloody revolution and civil war, eight years of an exhausting and fruitless war with Iraq, and ten long years of economic austerity, the public is not ready for another bloody insurrection, especially when the alternative to the *status quo*, as has been demonstrated, is vague and unclear.

In summary, this chapter continued with an assessment of the systemic outputs introduced in the last part of chapter III. Through outputs, the political leaders are able to

---

[307] See Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran's Future: Civil Society or Civil Unrest", 94.
[308] This is not a fact however, only an opinion. It is not known to what extent is the status quo more beneficial to the middle class than radical reform and change.
[309] See Bijan Khajehpour, "Protest and Regime Resilience in Iran", *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (December 11th, 2002), 1-6. http://www.merip.org/mero/mero111202html (Consulted on 5 November, 2004).

intervene positively in events and to work constructively on the *demands*, the *issues* and the level of *support* available to the political objects.[310] By taking into account present circumstances or future needs, the authorities normally voice their own demands and ideas of what needs to be done. These outputs may express the authorities' genuine and rationally-developed concept of what could be best for the political system. At times, these demands and ideas may be focused on reforming the internal structure of the regime to generate support.[311]

In continuing with the model's concepts, Chapter IV began by illustrating the content of the systemic output and its immediate impact upon the environment. The Khatami phenomenon (output), and the extent to which it energized the masses, the revitalization of the semi-dormant student movement, the revival of the media, the press and publications, the cinema industry, women's literature and the rise of feminism, the great opening allowed in terms of freedom of expression, limited peaceful demonstrations, the rise of intellectualism, the creation of democratically elected municipal councils, etc., were all factors that hugely affected the system's environment. The chapter then proceeded with a careful examination of the *retroaction* processes, or the very dynamics that are normally associated with the interaction or the collision between the inputs and the systemic outputs.

Despite the reformist "honeymoon," the intent of these openings seem to have been to remain quite limited in scope and to possess controllability at all times (or "conservative reformism"). The overall plan seems to have been to let the system absorb some of Iran's modernity, hitherto marginalized, while adapting it to the regime's fundamental requirements and ideals. This tendency is somewhat explained by the regime's ever-present recourse to

---

[310] Political objects refer to the regime, the authorities and the political community.
[311] See David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*, 347.

selective discrimination and silencing of those opponents who either did not subscribe to the system's ideological foundations or crossed the fine line of "constructive criticism."

Continued analysis of the *retroaction* processes focused on the important role played by the press, the intellectuals and the student associations. These served as the backbone of the reform movement and an engine propelling the grassroots-civil society struggle for change. Whereas the state dominated peoples' perceptions about the regime, the authorities, and their actions in the pre-1997 era, the relative opening provided by the reform phenomenon drastically changed this equation. In the aftermath of the 1997 elections, the critical press, the intelligentsia, and the student associations, all benefited from the much greater respect they received from the public than did the state machinery as a source of reference. People trusted how these groups interpreted events and were willing to let their perception of events in Iran be influenced by them. This undermined the state's capacity to set the tone and remain in charge.

As demonstrated, however, the overall lack of progress of the Khatami administration in instituting meaningful reform, the president's unwillingness or inability to challenge the conservative leadership, his fear of capitalizing on overt popular support, the gradual discouragement and the splitting of the already tenuous reformist block, the intensification of reformist attacks on the conservative factions and their abuse of power, the heavy-handed and outright violent response from the reactionary forces allied to the Right, and the violent street demonstrations and riots in the university campuses and the streets, all led to an extremely volatile social and political atmosphere. The information *feedback* reaching the authorities, especially the conservative Right which was in command of the most powerful institutions, about the consequences of their previous outputs were, however, enough to spark an *output*

reaction in the form of massive repression and the disqualification of almost all of the reformist parliamentary election candidates.

The Khatami phenomenon and the reformist agenda, as a systemic output, designed to generate massive popular support and legitimacy for a political system in crisis, proved to be much more than what the authorities both desired or could handle without fundamentally altering the foundations of the regime. The disintegration of the reform movement did not only manage to create a sense of political apathy among the majority of the Iranian people with regards to the Islamic Republic, it also cost the political system the invaluable support and participation of the most progressive and dynamic individuals and groups. The old choice between further repression and further reform has once again come to the forefront. But this time, it is the former that has gained the upper hand.

Conclusion

In the introduction of this thesis, I set the goal of **describing and explaining** the reasons underlying the emergence of the reform phenomenon in 1997 and its subsequent dead-end less than seven years later. The first chapter described the theoretical model, its critique, and its eventual use in this thesis as well as the issues that this thesis raises with regard to some unanswered questions in studying and analyzing the reform movement in Iran. The second chapter presented a brief account of post-1979 Iran for the sake of clarity and familiarity. It then focused on the economic imperatives faced by the Rafsanjani administration and his "marriage of convenience" with Iran's Supreme Leader and his conservative supporters, in response to desperate economic and political needs (faced by Rafsanjani and Khamenei both). By the end of the chapter, it became clear that both in terms of unifying the power structure and achieving economic revitalization, the regime met with a number of great failures.

Following the same logic, but concentrating on socio-political spheres this time, the fist part of Chapter III set forth the growing popular dissatisfaction and disenchantment with the regime and the authorities by illustrating the social and political shortcomings of the Islamic Republic. The apparent worsening of the crisis of legitimacy and pressures exerted on the system from both inside and outside, (the political system and its environment) forced the authorities to adopt a new direction that would bolster support and legitimacy in the short-run and lead to a more inclusive, stable and legitimate system in the medium and long term.

Once Khatami was elected however, the authorities, especially the more reactionary factions, realized that unless the reform movement was "controlled," the fate of the Islamic Republic could be at stake. Despite the differences in vision and approach, the reformist administration would not pursue the reform initiative with rigor, concerned about crossing the

line of no return. The slow pace with which the reform was taking place and the fact that the more electoral victories the reformists had, the more repressive the conservative became, discouraged many ardent reformists from following Khatami and intensified their criticism and their attacks on the authorities and the regime. This new tendency, coupled with student protests that engulfed most major urban centers provided the conservatives with a "solid reason" to move from selective silencing to a widespread and across-the-board elimination of both the moderate and the "radical" reformists. This last "coup de force" resulted in the disqualification of 3600 legislative candidates in the elections of February 2004, thereby repressing not only those individuals and groups outside the state, but attacking at the heart of the system and eliminating the entire Islamic Left and Center from the political process.

In this thesis, some important aspects of the Eastonian model have been applied to Iranian scenario in order to demonstrate that the reform phenomenon was a systemic response from a political system in deep crisis of legitimacy and engulfed in an unprecedented degree of internal polarization. Both Chapter II and the first part of Chapter III summarized and clarified this condition. In the last part of Chapter III, the focus was on the systemic output in terms of the reform phenomenon, characterized by Mohammad Khatami, and in response to the wants and demands of society on the one hand, and demands made by the Islamic Left and Center, on the other. However, as shown in Chapter IV, there appeared to be a large discrepancy between the grassroots expectations, fueled by the triangle of dissent (the press, intellectuals and students), and president Khatami, his administration and close supporters, in terms of what they could offer and pursue.

Gradually however, the leadership, be it reformist or conservative, could not deal with either the quality or the quantity of "raw" demands coming from the environment. The lack of political parties and civil institutions capable of filtering and channeling the demands soon began to take its toll on the system. Ali Rezaei, in a presentation made at Concordia University's Peace and Conflict Resolution noted that the "reformists prayed for rain, and instead came the flood." This statement summarizes the regime's inability to control the momentum created by its promises. As Saeed Hajjarian, a prominent player in the reform movement, stated: "We had 20 million people voting for the May 23rd movement.[312] Existing political vessels cannot contain the reform movement."[313] Iran suffers from structural problems that will not be easily solved, and one of the goals of the reform process was to advance the cause of civil institutions, and the eventual creation of political parties that can actually aggregate and filter the wants of their members and supporters into realistic demands.

The reform initiative was a process by which both the state and society could narrow their gap, allowing the system to recognize and tackle the most important social, economic, and political issues instead of ignoring them. This is why in a great number of articles, scholarly materials, and interviews with prominent players in the political arena, the theme that resurfaced was the notion that Khatami and his reform initiative represented the **last chance** for a peaceful, and effective transition from within the Islamic Republic toward a legitimate and meaningful consolidation.

Despite such arguments however, as this work has shown, Iranian political leadership is anything but united. From diversity of views to the diversity of power centers and decision-making institutions and circles, post-Khomeini Iran has suffered from a great deal of

---

[312] Reformists refer to the date Khatami was elected to presidency (May 23rd).
[313] Kaveh Ehsani, "A Conversation With Saeed Hajjarian, Existing Political Vessels Cannot Contain the Reform Movement", *Middle East Report* 29, 212 (Spring 1999), 40-42.

instability. The unique mix of theocracy and democracy within the Iranian Constitution has created a deadlock that cannot be easily settled. Ever since the 1997 presidential elections, we have witnessed a sort of competition between the popularly elected branches of government and the unelected decision-making and power-wielding institutions under the supposed sole leadership of the *faqih*. In 1992, as pointed to in Chapters II and III, the conservative Right in coalition with the Center attempted an elimination strategy by trying to eliminate the Left from the political power centers. It failed because the coalition did not last and the economic, social, and political problems began to mount rapidly, forcing the conservatives to back down. This time, however, it seems that the conservative Right has plans for unifying the power structure under its command in order to proceed to rule without the factional infighting that has characterized and maybe even "plagued" the decision-making process.

The Right however, faces a number of important issues in its plans to proceed alone. First, as already noted, public opinion has become an important force in Iran, and despite the Right's bold willingness to vet (eliminate) almost all of the leftist and reformist candidates, it must find a way of coping with the pressure of public opinion. As the conservative backlash was gaining momentum, signs of a split had already become visible among the conservatives. The most important problem, according to some leading conservative members, has been the Right's inability to reconstruct itself intellectually or respond to new intellectual developments. Such tendency only leaves violence as an option to fall back upon.[314]

The most difficult task ahead for the conservative Right is the changes that have taken place within the last 7 years. First, as has been shown, political apathy has emerged among the

---

[314] See Arang Keshavarzian, "Iran's Conservatives Face the Electorate", [On Line]. (February 1st, 2001), 1-5. http://www.merip.org/mero/mero020101html (Consulted on 5 November, 2004). And see Siamak Namazi, "Iran's Upcoming Parliamentary Elections Up for Grabs", [On Line]. (November 23rd 2003), 1-9. http://www.merip.org/mero/mero112303html (Consulted on 5 November, 2004).

Iranian people with regards to reform. Although damaging, this trend cannot last for very long because the people identify their socioeconomic problems as being rooted in the political management of Iran. Sooner or later, political activism will surge once more. In the short run, the state has to content with explosive local riots that were not uncommon before the rise of Khatami. These have their causes mostly in widespread discontents that sometimes ignite spontaneously. The limiting of people's representation with the rise to power of conservatives will indeed lead to more such riots. The structural reasons that gave the rise of the reform phenomenon have not changed much, and there is no reason to assume that diverse social groups would stop in their quest for freedom, equality, and economic improvements.

As Kaveh Ehsani has interestingly pointed out, the May 23rd movement and project succeeded in transforming the Iranian political scene by rejecting violence and coercion as a political tool and by remaining committed to its tenets. "In the spheres where elected government has been in charge, a degree of accountability and respect for the rules of the political game have been established which is unprecedented in any period of Iranian history."[315] But the most important contribution—aside from all the legislation that the reformists have passed or attempted to pass—has been in the reform movement's fundamental transformation of the public discourse in Iran. Very few topics, if any, have remained out of public deliberation and scrutiny by the press (both women's magazines and newspapers or otherwise), the intellectuals, and the student activists. This has led to the *de-facto* secularization of political Islam and can be considered as the most important achievement of the reformist initiative. Despite the widespread repressions, there were 22% more licensed publications in 2003 than in 1998. Some 3,700 electronic newspapers have been added to the insatiable intellectual environment in Iran. The conservatives have had much trouble silencing

---

[315] Kaveh Ehsani, "Prospects for Democratization in Iran," 6.

these.[316] The repressive strategy of the Right has indirectly pushed the populace to demand a constitutional revision of a constitution that has allowed such decisions and actions, putting the fate of the nation in the hands of a few reactionaries.

However, the changes brought about by reform and the conservative comeback through repression does not point to a specific direction for the Islamic Republic. Do the conservatives have what it takes to rule without the rest of the state and the great majority of society? I think not. Although the conservatives control the most powerful centers of power, their strategy to block the reform initiative and their supposed "ability" in doing so, somewhat depends on the presence of the reformists in government institutions. Despite controlling the security forces and great economic resources, they have no significant popular base (estimates range between a low of 7% to a maximum, but extremely unlikely, 17% of the electorate). This is indeed the greatest problem of the Right. Not only does it suffer from a deep lack of legitimacy among the populace, it also lacks any significant backing among the clerical and intellectual hierarchy in Qom.[317] In short, it can neither count on popular legitimacy to keep itself afloat nor can it rely on clerical backing and support.

The Right, aside from the internal divisions that it will experience when it is in full control of the state, does not seem able to rule without its other, more progressive half. It would be interesting to see what the Left and Center are planning for the May 2005 presidential elections and if the Right would disqualify their eventual candidate(s) or not. During the past 25 years, Iran has never been this much divided and polarized in its state apparatus and society, pointing to an uncertain future for the Islamic Republic. Whether the events of February 2004 have signaled the definitive end of the "state-led" reform movement is

---

[316] Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran's Theocracy Under Siege", 143, and Amuzegar, "Iran's Crumbling Revolution", 53.
[317] The center of Shi'a religious and seminary life in Iran.

not yet clear and only time can tell. In 21st century Iran however, time does not seem to be on the conservatives' side.

Bibliography

Abdo, Geneive. 2001. "Iran's Generation of Outsiders", *The Washington Quarterly* Vol. 24 (No: 4):163-171

Abdo, Geneive. 2000. "Rethinking the Islamic Republic: A Conversation with Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri", *Middle East Journal* Vol.55 (No: 1): 1-15.

Abdo, Geneive. 2000. "The Fragility of Khatami's Revolution", The Washington Quarterly Vol. 23 (No: 4): 55-62.

Abdo, Geneive. 1999. "Days of Rage in Tehran", *Middle East Policy* Vol.7 (No: 1): 78-85

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

Afshar, Haleh. 1997. "Women and work in Iran", *Political Studies* Vol.XLV 755-767

Aliabadi, S Youssef. 2000. "The Idea of Civil Liberties and the Problem of Institutional government in Iran", *Social Research* ol.67 (No: 2): 345-375

Amirahmadi, Hooshang. 1996. "Emerging Civil Society in Iran", *SAIS Review* Vol.16 (No: 2): 87-107

Amirahmadi, Hooshang. 1990. "Economic Reconstruction of Iran: Costing the War Damage", *Third World Quarterly* Vol.12 (No: 1): 26-47

Amuzegar, Jahangir. 2003. "Iran's Crumbling Revolution", *Foreign Affairs* Vol.82 (No: 1): 44-57

Amuzegar, Jahangir. 2003. "Iran's Theocracy Under Siege", *Middle East Policy* Vol.10 (No: 1): 135-153

Amuzegar, Jahangir. 2001. "Iran's Post-Revolution Planning: The Second Try", Middle East Policy Vol. VIII (No: 1): 25-42

Amuzegar, Jahangir.2002. "Khatami's First-Term Presidency: An Outsider's Assessment", *SAIS Review* Vol.22 (No: 1): 1-21

Amuzegar, Jahangir. 1999. "Iran's Future: Civil Society or Civil Unrest", *Middle East Policy* Vol.7 (No: 1): 86-100

Amuzegar, Jahangir. 1999. "Khatami and the Iranian Economy At Mid-Term", *Middle East Journal* Vol.53 (No: 4): 534-552

Amuzegar, Jahangir. 1998. "Iran Under New Management", *SAIS Review* Vol.18 (No: 1): 79-92

Amuzegar, Jahangir. 1998. "Khatami's Iran, One Year Later", *Middle East Policy* Vol.6 (No: 2): 76-94

Amuzegar, Jahangir. 1997. "Adjusting to Sanctions", *Foreign Affairs* Vol.76 (No: 3): 31-41

Arjomand, Said Amir. 2000. "Civil Society and the Rule of Law in the Constitutional Politics of Iran Under Khatami", Social Research Vol.67 (No: 2): 283-301

Ashraf, Ahmad and Ali Banuazizi. 2001. Intellectuals in Post-Revolutionary Iran: Iran's Tortuous Path Toward "Islamic Liberalism", *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* Vol.15 (No: 2): 237-256

Bakhash, H. 1998. "Iran's Remarkable Elections", *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 9 (No:1): 80-94.

Banuazizi, Ali. 1994. "Iran's Revolutionary Impasse: Political Factionalism and Societal Resistance", *Middle East Report* (No: 191): 2-8

Behdad, Sohrab. "Khatami and His Reformist Economic (Non-)Agenda". *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (May 21, 2001), 1-6. http://www.merip.org/mero/mero052101html (Consulted on November 10th, 2004).

Boroumand, Ladan and Roya Boroumand. 2000. "Is Iran Democratizing: Reform at an Impasse", *Journal of Democracy* Vol.11 (No: 4): 114-128

Brumberg, Daniel. 2000. "Is Iran democratizing? A Comparativist's Perspective", *Journal of Democracy* Vol.11 (No: 4): 129-134

Chehabi, H E. 2001. "The Political Regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Comparative Perspective", *Government and Opposition* Vol. 36 (No:1): 28-40

Dabash, Hamid. 2000. "The End of Islamic Ideology", *Social Research* Vol.67 (No: 2): 475-518

Easton, David. 1965. *A Framework for Political Analysis*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Easton. David. 1965. *A systems Analysis of Political Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Easton, David. 1957. "Empirical Conceptualizations: An Approach to the Analysis of Political Systems", World Politics Vol. IX (No:3): 148-164

Ehsani, Kaveh.2004. "Prospects for Democratization in Iran". Concordia University's Peace and Conflict Resolution, [On Line]. http://www.peace.concordia.ca/events/event33.shtml. (Consulted on November 15th, 2004).

Ehsani, Kaveh. "Round 12 for Iran's Reformists". *Middle East Policy Online* [On Line]. (January 29th, 2004), 1-7. http://www.merip.org/mero/mero012904.html (Consulted on November 10th, 2004).

Ehsani, Kaveh. "Our Letter to Khatami was a Farewell: An Interview with Saeed Razavi-Faqih". *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (July 15th, 2003), 1-9. http://www.merip.org/mero/mero071503.html (Consulted on November 15th, 2004).

Ehsani, Kaveh. 1999. "Pushing the Limits: Iran's Islamic Revolution at Twenty. A Conversation with Morad Saghafi", *Middle East Report* Vol.29 (No: 212): 1-7

Ehsani, Kaveh. 1999. "Municipal Matters: The Urbanization of Consciousness and Political Change in Tehran", *Middle East Report* Vol.29 (No: 212): 22-27.

Ehsani, Kaveh. 1999. "Existing Political Vessels Cannot Contain the Reform Movement: A Conversation with Saeed Hajjarian", *Middle East Report* Vol.29 (No: 29): 40-42.

Ehsani, Kaveh. 1999. "Pushing the Limits: Iran's Islamic Revolution at Twenty. Do-e Khordad and the Specter of Democracy", *Middle East Report*, Vol.29 (No: 212): 1-4

Ehsani, Kaveh. 1994. "Tilt But Don't Spill: Iran's Development and Reconstruction Dilemma", *Middle East Report* (No: 191): 16-21

Esfandiari, Haleh. 2000. "Is Iran Democratizing? Observations on Election Day", *Journal of Democracy* Vol.11 (No: 4): 108-113

Esfandiari, Haleh. 2001. "The Politics of the "Women's Question" in the Islamic Republic", In John L Esposito and R.K. Ramazani, dir., *Iran at Crossroads*. New York: Palgrave, 75-92

Ferdows, K Adele. 1983. "Women and the Islamic Revolution", *International journal of Middle East Studies* Vol. 15 (No: 2): 283-298

Ghasimi, M.R. 1992. "The Iranian Economy after the Revolution: an Economic appraisal of the Five-Year Plan", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* Vol.24 (No: 4): 599-614

Gheytanchi, Elham. 2000. "Appendix: Chronology of Events Regarding Women in Iran Since the Revolution of 1979", Social Research Vol.67 (No: 2): 439-452

Hoodfar, Homa. 1994. "Devices and Desires: Population Policy and Gender Roles in the Islamic Republic", *Middle East Report* (No: 190): 11-17

"Is Iran Democratizing? Voices From Within: Selections from the Iranian Press", *Journal of Democracy* Vol.11 (No: 4) 139-146

Jahanbegloo, Ramin. 2003. "Pressures from Below", *Journal of Democracy* Vol.14 (No: 1): 126-131

Kamali, Masoud. 2001. "Civil Society and Islam: A Sociological Perspective", *Arch.europ.social.*, XLII, (No: 3): 457-482

Karbassian, Akbar. 2000. "Islamic Revolution and the Management of the Iranian Economy", *Social Research* Vol.67 (No: 2): 621-640

Katouzian, Homa. 1997. "Arbitrary Rule: A Comparative Theory of State, Politics and Society in Iran", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* Vol.24 (No: 1): 49-73

Katouzian, Homa. 1995. "Problems of Political Development in Iran: Democracy, Dictatorship or Arbitrary Government?", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 22 (No: 1/2): 5-20

Keshavarzian, Arang. "Iran's Conservatives Face the Electorate". *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (February 1st, 2001), 1-5. http://www.merip.org/mero/mero020101.html (Consulted on November 10th, 2004).

Keddie, R Nikki. 2000. "Women in Iran since 1979", *Social Research* Vol. 67 (No: 2): 405-438

Kemp, Geoffrey. 2001. "Iran: Can the United States Do a Deal?", *The Washington Quarterly* Vol.24 (No: 1): 109-124.

Khajehpour, Bijan. "Protest and Regime Resilience in Iran". *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (December 11th, 2002), 1-6. http://www.merip.org/mero/mero121102.html (Consulted on November 10th, 2004).

Khajehpour, Bijan. 2001. "Iran's Economy: Twenty Years after the Islamic Revolution", In John L Esposito and R.K. Ramazani, dir., *Iran at Crossroads*. New York: Palgrave, 93-122

Khajehpour, Bijan. 2000. "Domestic Political Reforms and Private Sector Activity in Iran", *Social Research* Vol67 (No: 2): 577-598

Khatami, Mohammad. 1998. *Islam, Liberty, and Development*. Binghamton, New York: Golbal Publications and State University of New York.

Kian-Thiébaut, Azadeh. 1999. "Political and Social Transformations in Post-Islamist Iran", *Middle East Report* Vol.29 (No: 212): 12-17

Kian, Azadeh. 1997. "Women and Politics in Post-Islamist Iran: The Gender Conscious Drive to Change", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* Vol.24 (No: 1): 75-96

Kian-Thiebaut, Azadeh. 1997. «Les stratégies des intellectuels religieux et clercs iraniens face à la modernité occidentale» *Revue française de science politique* Vol.47 (No: 6) : 776-797

Kian, Azadeh. 1995. "Gendered Occupation and Women's Status in Post-Revolutionary Iran", *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol.31 (No: 3): 407-421

Kurzman, Charles. 2001. "Critics within: Islamic Scholars' Protests Against the Islamic State in Iran", *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* Vol.15 (No: 2): 341-359

Kurzman, Charles. 1998. "Soft on Satan: Challenges for Iranian-U.S. Relations", *Middles East Policy* Vol. VI (No: 1): 63-72

Mashayekhi, Mehrdad. 2001. "The Revival of the Student Movement in Post-Revolutionary Iran", *International journal of Politics, Culture and Society* Vol.15 (No: 2): 283-313

Mayer, Anne Elizabeth. 2000. "The Universality of Human Rights: Lessons From the Islamic Republic", *Social Research* Vol.67 (No: 2): 519-536

Merat, Zarir. 1999. "Pushing Back the Limits of the Possible: The Press in Iran", Middle East Report Vol.29 32-35

Milani, M Mohsen. 2001. "Reform and Resistance in the Islamic Republic of Iran." In John L Esposito and R.K. Ramazani, dir., *Iran at Crossroads*. New York: Palgrave, 29-56

Mir-Hosseini, Ziba. "Shirin Ebadi's Nobel Peace Prize Highlights Tensions in Iran". *Middle East Policy Online* [On Line]. (October 27th, 2003), 1-7. http://www.merip.org/mero/mero102703.html (Consulted on November 10th, 2004).

Mir-Hosseini, Ziba. 2002. "The Conservative-Reformist Conflict Over Women's Rights in Iran", International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society Vol.16 (No: 1): 37-53

Mir-Hosseini, Ziba. 2001. Iranian Cinema: Art, Society and the State", Middle East Report Vol.31 (No: 219): 26-29

Mir-Hosseini, Ziba. 2001. "The Rise and Fall of Faezeh Hashemi: Women in Iranian Elections", Middle East Report Vol.31 (No: 218): 811

Monshipouri, Mahmoud. 1998. "Iran's Search for New Pragmatism", *Middle East Policy*, Vol.7 (No: 2): 95-112

Mudara, Ali. 2000. "Iran's Reform Dilemma: Within and Against the State", *Middle East Report Online* September 12

Namazi, Siamak. "Iran's Upcoming Parliamentary Elections Up for Grabs". *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (November 23rd, 2000), 1-5. http://wwwmerip.org/mero/mero112300.html (Consulted on November 15th, 2004).

Niknam, Azadeh. 1999. "The Islamization of Law in Iran: A Time of Disenchantment", *Middle East Report* Vol.29 (No: 212): 17-21

Noyes, H. James. 2000. "Fallacies, Smoke and Pipe Dreams: Forcing Change in Iran and Iraq", *Middle East Policy* Vol.7 (No: 3):28-49.

O'Sullivan L. Meghan. 2001. "The Politics of Dismantling Containment", *The Washington Quarterly* Vol.24 (No: 1): 67-76.

Pesaran, M Hashem. 1992. "The Iranian foreign Exchange Policy and the Black Market for Dollars", *International Journal of middle East Studies* Vol.24 (No: 1): 101-125

Rahnema, Saeed and Haideh Moghissi. 2001. "Clerical Oligarchy and the Question of "Democracy" in Iran," *Monthly Review*: 28-40.

Ramazani, R. K. 2004. "Ideology and Pragmatism in Iran's Foreign Policy", *Middle East Journal* Vol.48 (No: 4): 549-559.

Razavi-Faqih, Saeed and Ian Urbina. "The Fight For Iran's Democratic Ideals". *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (December 2002), 1-2. http://www.merip.org/newspaper_opeds/fight_for_iran_democratic.html (Consulted on November 10th, 2004).

Roy, Olivier. 1998. "Tensions in Iran: The Future of the Islamic Revolution", *Middle East Report* (No: 207): 38-41

Sadri, Ahmad. 2001. "The Varieties of Religious Reform: Public Intelligentsia in Iran", *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* Vol.15 (No: 2): 271-282

Sadri, Mahmoud. 2001. Sacral defense of Secularism: The Political theologies of Soroush, Shabestari, and Kadivar", *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* Vol.15 (No: 2): 257-270

Salehi-Isfahani, Djavid. "Rafsanjani's Gambit". *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (February 15th, 2000), 1-7. http://www.merip.org/mero/mero021500.html (Consulted on November 15th, 2004).

Salehi-Isfahani, Djavid. 2000. "Demographic Factors in Iran's Economic Development", *Social Research* Vol.67 (No: 2): 599-620

Samii, A Wiliam. 2001. "Iran's Guardian Council as an Obstacle to Democracy", *Middle East Journal* Vol.55 (No: 4): 643-662

Siavoshi, Sussan. 1997. "Cultural Policies and the Islamic Republic: Cinema and Book Publication", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* Vol.29 (No: 4): 509-529

Sohrabi, Naghmeh, and Arang Keshavarzian. "On the Eve of Iran's Presidential Elections: Report From Tehran". *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (June 7th, 2001), 1-4. http://www.merip.org/mero/mero060701.html (Consulted on November 10th, 2004).

Tabari, Keyvan. 2003. "The rule of Law and the Politics of Reform in Post-Revolutionary Iran", *International Sociology* Vol.18 (No: 1): 96-113

Takeyh, Ray. 2000. "Pragmatic Theocracy: A Contradiction in terms?", *The National Interest* 94-100

Talattof, Kamran. 1997. "Iranian Women's Literature: From Pre-Revolutionary social Discourse to Post-Revolutionary Feminism", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* Vol.29 (No: 4): 531-558

Urbina, Ian. "Grounds shifting Under Mullahs". *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (December 2002), 1-3. http://www.merip.org/newspaper_upeds/ground_shifting_mullahs.html (Consulted on November 10th, 2004).

Val Moghadam. 1988. "Women, Work, and Ideology in the Islamic Republic", *International journal of Middle East Studies* Vol.20 (No: 2): 221-243

Vaziri, Haleh. "Deja VuAll Over Again? Twenty Years Later, Iranian Demonstrations Surprise the U.S.". *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (July 20th, 1999), 1-3. http://www.merip.org/mero/mero070299.html (Consulted on November 10th, 2004).

Vaziri, Pershang. "Caught in the Middle: Women and Press Freedom in Iran". *Middle East Report Online* [On Line]. (February 16th, 2001), 1-5. http://www.merip.org/mero/mero021601.html (Consulted on November 15th, 2004).

Wells, C Mathew. 1999. "Thermidor in the Islamic Republic of Iran: The Rise of Mohammad Khatami", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* Vol.26 (No: 1): 27-39

Yaghmaian, Behzad. 2002. *Social Change in Iran: An Eyewitness Account of Dissent, Defiance, and New Movements for Rights.* New York: State University of New York Press.

Zangeneh, Hamid. 1998. "The Post-revolutionary Iranian Economy: A Policy Appraisal", *Middle East Policy* Vol. VI (No: 2): 113-129

Zonis, Marvin and Salman Farmanfarmaian. 1999-2000. "All in the Timing: Renewing U.S.-Iran Relations", *World Policy Journal* Vol.16 (No: 4): 33-48.

Newspaper articles

Dareini, Ali-Akbar, "Hard-Line Loyalists Gain Upper Hand in Iran", The Gazette (Montreal), February 24 2004, A17

Dareini, Ali-Akbar, "Iran's Governors Threaten to Bar Vote", The Gazette (Montreal), February 4 2004, A24

Fathi, Nazila. "Iran's Main Reformist Party to Boycott Elections this Month", The Gazette (Montreal), February 3 2004, A16

Murphy, Brian. "Iranian Reformists Accuse Ayatollah of Rigging Vote", The Gazette (Montreal), February 18 2004, A22

Sarhaddi Nelson, Soraya. "Iran's Reformist President Expected to Step Down" The Gazette (Montreal), February 4 2004, A15