International Relations and Diplomacy, Jan.-Feb. 2024, Vol. 12, No. 1, 1-17
doi: 10.17265/2328-2134/2024.01.001

State, Communal, and Individual Identities in Iran

Mehran Kamrava
Georgetown University in Qatar, Doha, Qatar

Cultural identity in Iran is comprised of four primary elements, each of which have proven to be highly resonant in the country political history. The vexing issue of modernity, and where individuals and collectivities are placed in relation to it, has been one of the most prominent of these elements of Iranian identity. A second constitutive factor has been the role of the state as a deliberate crafter of cultural, in turn directly influencing the salience, interpretation, extent, and direction of modernity, or its antithesis, in Iran. Equally defining has been the role and significance of religion, which has emerged as a marker of individual and collective, as well as political, identities. Nationalism, and its compelling impulse across Iranian society especially from the early 1900s and continuing until today, has also emerged as an integral and inseparable feature of Iranian identity. Together, these four elements—modernity, a culturally intrusive state, religion and religiosity, and nationalism—constitute fluid yet constant, sometimes complementary and sometimes competing, dimensions of Iranian identity.

Keywords: Iranian identity, nationalism, religiosity, modernity, social change

Introduction

This article sets for itself a goal that is all but impossible—to decipher some of the more dominant currents of Iranian culture. The article highlights four prominent aspects of Iranian culture. First, from the late nineteenth century onward, those who have viewed themselves as critiques and articulators of cultural values and trends, namely the country's thinkers, writers, and philosophers, have sought to understand and to grapple with what could best be described as the problematique of modernity. This is not to imply that modernity has been universally sought after; the very essence of the Islamic Republic has been antithetical to however it is that modernity may be conceptualized. Nevertheless, whatever that modernity stands for, and however it may be defined, has been a source of preoccupation for the country's cultural commentators. And, for society at large, navigating modernity and its antitheses has been a fact of life.

Second has been the role of the state as a crafter and influencer of culture. This universal function, which all states play, assumes special significance in developing countries, in which the state tends to more intimately involve itself in the nation-building process. Equally pervasive is the political impulse of authoritarian states to manipulate and tinker with cultural norms in order to enhance their legitimacy. In the Iranian case, compounding these is the fact that the Islamic Republic has been a decidedly ideological state, one with a highly pronounced cultural agenda. This is not a new phenomenon in Iran. The state's cultural intrusions actually predate the Islamic Republic by three quarters of a century, as the Pahlavis also sought to recraft Iranian culture to their political liking. Insofar as Iranian culture is concerned, the state has been a permanent presence since the early 1900s.

Mehran Kamrava, Ph.D., Professor of Government, Georgetown University in Qatar, Doha, Qatar.

Two other constants in Iranian culture have been religion and nationalism. Out of necessity, discussions of these two vast topics here have to be specific and focused. In examining the role of religion in Iranian culture, I will focus on the ways in which the use of religion as a political ideology by the Islamic Republic state has influenced religiosity among the state's subjects. How has popular Islam—that is, the Islam of the people, and not the Islam of the state—fared under the Islamic Republic? A similar question can be asked about nationalism, not so much as an ideology but more as a sense of national belonging and a rough guide to civic and political culture.

The compound outcome of these cultural traits has been a growing normative chasm between the culturally accented Islamic Republic state on the one hand and Iranian society on the other. To use an overused but nevertheless accurate cliché, Iranian society is highly complex and complicated, with multiple layers of identity that both overlap and contradict each other. It is a society that does not conform to the state's narrow conceptions of what Iranians ought to think and how they ought to behave. Not only is there great ethnic and linguistic diversity across the country, within the urban classes there are multiple conceptions of ideal identity, different ideas about what today and tomorrow ought to look like, and very different cultural frames of reference—all of which make it exceedingly difficult for an ideologically inflexible state to rule over society. The state is far from alone in its inability to fully grasp this multilayered complexity of society. Academics and others observing from the outside, as well as those experiencing its disorienting processes from within, also have difficulties understanding the country's dizzying social dynamics and explaining what they mean.

Modernity and the State

Is Iran a "modern" country? This deceptively simple question has consumed the attention of many of the social sciences in Iran over the last century. There is little consensus among Iran's cultural elites over a single answer. Most Iranian social scientists seem to agree, nevertheless, that the country's march toward modernity, steady at times and in spurts at others, has neither been complete nor universally welcomed. The sociologist Taqi Azadarmaki (b.1957), for example, maintains that societies like Iran go through three phases. The first phase is a primitive one, in which kinship is the basis of organization. While kinship solidifies the concentration of power among certain groups, the growth and expansions of private property change both the constitution of society and also the state, and therefore the basis of political power. In the second phase, such societies become subject to profound changes through the legal and political changes that the state initiates. The third phase is the age of modernity, when new social formations appear (Azadarmaki, 2012, pp. 438-440).

Iranian modernism is not a unison and uniform phenomenon, Azadarmaki claims. Its primary poles include religiosity and anti-religionism, Westernism and anti-Westernism. Iranian modernity is not a finished and completed project, and on-going developments continually change and influence it. It is therefore not an easy phenomenon to grasp. This modernity is made-up of a number of elements, at times contradictory, some of which include traditionalism, Westernism, Westoxication, economic dependence, marginalization, and the like (Azadarmaki, 2012, p. 340). Modernity exists because it exposes and explores various contradictions, especially in people's daily lives. As such it has had great salience, and it has elicited considerable discussion among cultural figures, poets, writers, academics, and even clerics. But politicians and policymakers have for the most part failed to grasp the depth and complexity of modernity, much less properly devise policies in relation to it (Azadarmaki, 2012, p. 344). Iranian culture and identity are complex and multilayered, a product of the country's complicated,

and at times tormented, political history (Azadarmaki, 2012, p. 475). Seldom do policymakers understand these complexities, much less know how to deal with them.

Equally instrumental in obstructing the comprehensiveness of modernity have been the forces of tradition, and, more specifically, those advocating traditionalist perspectives. Azadarmaki divides the advocates of traditionalist perspectives into traditionalist nationalists, religious and culturalist traditionalists, and culturalist indigenizers (Azadarmaki, 2012, p. 345). In its own ways, he argues, each of these groups promotes values that are antithetical to the very idea of modernity. But for Azadarmaki, one of the most important obstacles to modernity is an institution that is often overlooked, namely the family, especially when it is juxtaposition on political, religious, and economic networks (Azadarmaki, 2012, p. 489). If formal procedures are one important dimension of modernity, then the pervasiveness of kinship and family ties, which permeate all aspects of life in Iran, are deeply inimical to modernity. Paradoxically, Azadarmaki claims, the encroachment of modern society has only further expedited the expansion of familial ties. Every time someone enters formal social and political networks, he argues, they try to expand the presence of their own family (Azadarmaki, 2012, p. 490).

Interestingly, one of the most apparent arenas for family power is among the clergy, where family networks are particularly powerful (Azadarmaki, 2012, p. 492). The Islamic Republic has been a force against modernity in more ways than meets the eye.

Another social scientist, Ne‘matollah Fazeli (b.1964), argues that Iran’s march toward modernity has actually been a success. Over the course of the past hundred years, Fazeli argues, a form of native Iranian modernity has been emerging, and it continues to be in the process of formation. Iranian modernity began with the history of Iranians’ critical self-awareness of their identity and culture (Fazeli, 2008, p. 13). This modernity has not yet reached a level of maturity, and the country is still in the process of transitioning from tradition to modernity. Nevertheless, according to Fazeli, an “Iranian modernity” has indeed been reached, one which he defines as the ability to describe and analyze Iran’s realities. In this sense, modernity is a process rather than an outcome. This process has resulted in the critical self-awareness of the nation of its social predicaments, prompting it to employing that self-awareness for reform and improvement of its life (Fazeli, 2008, p. 8).

Fazeli, Azadarmaki, and practically all other Iranian observers agree that the outcomes of the clash of modernity and tradition have been nothing less than disorienting. One outcome of this clash has been the appearance of multiple chasms and incongruities within Iranian culture and civilization, itself a composite of three civilizational layers: ancient Iranian culture and civilization, which on occasion manifests itself; Islamic culture and civilization, which is at times more pronounced than others; and Western culture and civilization, which over the last couple of centuries has deeply influenced some aspects of Iran’s culture and civilization (Bashiriyeh, 2003, p. 27). One of the consequences of the resulting mélange has been a reinforcing of patrimonial tendencies in Iranian society, particularly in light of continued restrictions that have made political participation at best problematic and at worst risky (Bashiriyeh, 2003, p. 30).

At the same time, concepts and values such as freedom, political participation, civic equality, and limits on political power have all been present and prevalent in Iran for well over a century. Since the days of the Constitutional Revolution, and even before, Iranian society has been in a process of transition from tradition to modernity. This transitional permanence has had two notable consequences. First, being in continuous transition has hindered the ability of Iranians to look critically at themselves and their society (Moradi, 2016, pp. 22-23). Second, endless transition has directly led to a frequency of historical ruptures and critical junctures. Transitions

have led to, and have been reproduced through, four separate historical episodes, namely the Constitutional Revolution, Mosaddeq's nationalist movement, the republican dimensions of the 1978-1979 revolution, and the 1997 reform movement (Salehabadi, 2017, p. 166). The net result has been a crisis of identity between traditionalism and modernity deep across all layers of Iranian society. Even in the remotest and "most pristine" of Iranian villages, traces of modernism are easily found (Nadoosh, 2017, p. 261).

Iran's entanglement with modernity has been intimately tied to its encounter with the West in general and that of its early travelers and intellectuals in particular. The earliest proponents of modernity were late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries travelers who recorded their observations in travel logs and journals. They were among the first Iranians who witnessed the country's relative backwardness close up. Travelers such as Abdollatif Moussavi Shushtari (1801), Mirza Abolhassan Shirazi (1809), and Sultanolva'ezin (1816) learned about and published on Iran's backwardness compared to the West either indirectly through India or directly though England. The records and journals of these travelers later formed the early corpus of Iran's modernist literatures. In many ways, by experiencing and learning about the West, these writers also learned more about Iran and Iranian identity. For them and for subsequent generations of Iranian writers and thinkers, the idea of Iran and of Iranian identity became inextricably intertwined with that of the West, Western civilization, and Western identity (Akbar, 2016, p. 45). Initially, most of these travel logs were made-up of superficial descriptions and contained scattered observations that described in awe what aspects of life and technology in the West were like. Only gradually, with time, did some delve deeper into the reasons for the West's development and Iran's underdevelopment (Akbar, 2016, pp. 50-51).

From the very beginning, in its encounter with the West, Iranian modernist thinking has lacked depth and adequate understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of Western thought. Most of the texts and essays that either expressed admiration for the West or condemned its privations remained descriptive and superficial. Many early thinkers saw the differences between progress, which was commonly associated with the West, and backwardness, which they blamed on tradition, as a mechanical phenomenon, paying insufficient attention to the rule of law, value systems, and personal rights (Ghaninezhad, 2018, p. 91).

From the very beginning, the production of Iranian national identity has always been a transnational process. What the early modernists did not realize is that for Iran and its geographic vicinity, "Islamism and secularism form a false and irrelevant binary, while 'tradition versus modernity' is an even more falsifying choice." (Dabashi, 2016a, p. 10). As Hamid Dabashi argues, countries like Iran should be viewed within the "wider regional and historical parameters of their origin and destination," and, especially since the early nineteenth century, "far beyond their persistent nativist nationalism." (Dabashi, 2016b, p. 4).

Perhaps it is this lack of in-depth understanding, whether as a subject of admiration or revulsion, that has turned the West into something of a behemoth against which most Iranian thinkers, but by no means all, have taken measure of Iranian identity. Writing before the revolution, the historian and literary critic Abdolhossein Zarrinkoob (1923-1999) complained that "preoccupation with what the West thinks of us, and what consequences that has for us, robs us of our creativity and sacrifices us to Westerners and to those who worship the West."[1] (Zarrinkoob, 2017, p. 165). "The West has produced and emotional complex," Zarrinkoob lamented, "in which

[1] Abdolhossein Zarrinkoob, "Na Sharqi, Na Gharbi: Ensani" (Neither Eastern Nor Western: Humanitarian), in *Irani Bodan va Irani-e Behtari Shodan* (Being Iranian and Becoming a Better Iranian), Mehran Afshari, ed., (Tehran: Jahan-e Ketab, 1396/2017), p. 165. Zarrinkoob's chapter is an excerpt from a book by the same title published in Tehran in 1972.

the individual is constantly seeking to legitimize and validate himself in reaction to it." (Zarrinkoob, 2017, p. 165).

However gradations of modernity and its antitheses have influenced Iranian national identity, one of the biggest influencing factors has been the state. Iranian national identity is both a product of a slow historical evolution of a pre-modern, common heritage, and also a product of deliberate reinforcements by the state—a pre-existing identity that has been socially reinforced, and, on the margins, constructed by the state (Ahmadi, 2011, pp. 110-113). Whatever epoch of Iranian history we examine, the cultural role of the state, when a state has existed, has been of critical importance. Safavid rule, for example, succeeded in creating a collective identity among Iranians that was based primarily on religion. By the time of Reza Shah's reign, beginning in 1925, the seeds of nation-building, originally lain by the Safavids, began to reap rewards, and an Iranian nation was born (Ghobadzadeh, 2002, pp. 56-57). In the years following the Constitutional Revolution and especially during Reza Shah's period, another trend developed, one that saw Iranian and Islamic identities as contradictory. The two Pahlavi monarchs did not—could not—try to eradicate Islam from Iranian identity, the son, Mohammad Reza, more reluctant to embark on such an undertaking than the father. But the state's consistent preference for a non-Islamic Iranian identity was unmistakable. The apparent contradiction between these two sources of identity was revived by leaders of the theocratic system that emerged after the 1978-1979 revolution (Ahmadi, 2001, p. 82). This time the state's preferences shifted, privileging Islam, one of courses that was conducive to the state's goals, over other dimensions of identity.

Pahlavi era identity narratives had elements of glorification of Iran's pre-Islamic past, glorified Zoroastrianism, and were largely anti-Islamic. The constitution of the Islamic Republic, by contrast, is based on the values and worldviews of Islam, and, therefore, emphasizes the idea of the *umma*, the Muslim community, in preference over that of national identity. Drafters of the constitution sought to articulate a composite of the idea of a national government and Islamic nation. While paying attention to Iran and its specific conditions, they were guided by the ideals of universal humanitarian and Islamic values (Rezaei & Jokar, 2009, p. 54). This worldview has continued to inform the perspective of the Islamic Republic's Khomeinists, and it was particularly prevalent in the early years after the revolution. Influenced mostly by the views of the Egyptian Islamist Sayyid Qutb, the early leaders of the Islamic Republic, many of whom had spent years in exile in countries such as Lebanon and Iraq, espoused pan-Islamist ideas and de-emphasized the country's Iranian identity. Islam was turned into an ideological instrument of identity for purposes of power consolidation at the expense of other aspects of Iranian identity (Ahmadi, 2004, pp. 86-88).

The identity-centered ideological discourse of the Islamic Republic can be divided into several periods. Shifts in the state's ideological preferences from one administration to another result in tangible cultural changes in society (Peyvasteh, 2015, p. 172). In the early years of the revolution, lasting about a decade, the state sought to establish a unified Islamic identity based on ideological means. Once the war with Iraq ended, a deliberate decision was made to now combat the social and cultural wars that were being waged against the country and the revolution by the West and to ensure moral policing (Bajoghli, 2019, p. 60). At the same time, from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, slight modifications to the earlier ideological phase opened the space for social and cultural expressions. This in turn paved the way for another phase, starting in 1997, when Islamic identity in its ideological manifestation faced serious crisis. Several non-ideological identities emerged as a result (Bashiriyeh, 2001, p. 127). One of the main dimensions of the reform movement was the recognition of multiple identities

and its opposition to efforts to forge a uniform, ideologically-inspired identity. What followed was a proliferation of generational self-conceptions that are no longer ideological but are based on profession, gender, locale, cultural orientation, and other characteristics (Bashiriyeh, 2001, pp. 129-131).

Just as the state was reawakening to its impulse of controlling cultural trends after war, changes in society were transforming social institutions and giving rise to new social currents. When in the 1990s public opinion surveys and fieldwork started being permitted, researchers were able to empirically show that the values prevalent among the middle classes and the political elite had started to diverge. Autocratic power structures continue to dominate and to rely on personal relations. They therefore weaken institutions and result in an adverse rise in the powers of informal, personal relations (Bashiriyeh, 2003, p. 105). Nevertheless, survey research indicates that considerably fewer people were buying into the collectivist rhetoric of the state as compared to the early years of the revolution, instead preferring norms and values that revolved around the individual and individualistic needs and preferences (Abdi & Godarzi, 1999, p. 2). In particular, surveys carried out in the 1990s demonstrated the extent to which even the most central of social institutions, the family, was being transformed. The Iranian family is becoming more contractual in its relations, more private, and more atomized. It is also becoming less unequal in terms of decision-making between husband and wife, employment, and salary. Family violence was also on the decline (Abdi & Godarzi, 1999, pp. 52-53).

Feeling culturally besieged and ideologically hollow, the state in the meanwhile deploys the full range of its coercive and ideological resources to fight what it sees as the West's "soft war" against the country's Islamic system (Sreberny, 2017, p. 7). The Islamic Republic has responded in a variety of ways, one of the most robust being what is best described as a "war culture". War culture has normalized conflict and has militarized the cultural field. This has taken the form of literally sacralizing the war with Iraq, called the "sacred defense" in the state's official lexicon, and through its literature, state-connected media, and patronage of the cinema industry (Bajoghli, 2019, pp. 58-59).

Despite the state's heavy restrictions on the arts and production of culture, or perhaps because of them, there is remarkable creativity in Iran's artistic and cultural fields in spheres not fully controlled by the state. For Iranian civil society, the arts embody a unique space in which autonomy and relatively unfettered expression are possible. Iranian cinema and theater, for example, has experienced a revival of sorts in recent years, especially as women are not allowed to sing in public (Anjo, 2017, pp. 81-82). Iran's highly successful and critically acclaimed cinema industry, making its biggest impact in the late 1990s and the early 2000s, was successful because it often reflected, and was a product of, the rich and often conflicted nature of life to which the Islamic Republic had given birth. The 2011 drama *A Separation*, a global hit, represented this phenomenon (Zabihi, Ghadiri, & Rasekh, 2015, p. 117). As Hamid Dabashi has commented, the Islamic Republic's expulsion of artists, musicians, filmmakers, writers, philosophers, scholars, poets, lawyers, and journalists, has been nothing less than "a futile attempt at a slow and torturous murdering of the creative soul of a nation." (Dabashi, 2016, p. 120).

Besides the state, another source of cultural transformation—though more through critique rather than proactive change— has been Iran's crop of intellectuals. In the lead-up to the reform movement, Iranian public intellectuals found space, and importantly audience, in the country's vibrant print media, which, as we saw earlier, acted as surrogate for civil society. The crushing of the reform movement pushed most intellectuals out of the public arena and into university lecture halls and the academia. Over the last 30 years, there has actually been an academic flourishing in Iran, with growth in the number of universities, and quantitative and qualitative growth in the academic disciplines. But this has not meant that the science of sociology has been able to freely address

social problems and issues. This is due to two obstacles, one structural and institutional, the other hermeneutical (Yusufi, 2011, p. 4). To start, despite the growing prevalence of survey research in recent years, many topics still remain taboo or politically too sensitive to be openly discussed and debated. Even if topics are not formally censored, most academics prefer staying away from sensitive topics in order to avoid potential risks. As an example, the religious establishment and the seminaries openly discuss and often attack the discipline of sociology, whereas the academy is usually not allowed to critically examine the sociology of clerical establishment (Rezaei, 2011, p. 59). Censorship, by the state or voluntary, has direct consequences on hermeneutics. If a corpus of knowledge is scant or skewed in order to keep it sanitized and safe, examining and deconstructing it is all but impossible.

This is not to imply that learned reflections on Iran's predicament have stayed the same over time. In fact, today's intellectual currents have undergone qualitative changes compared to their earlier iterations. Some of the intellectuals whose arguments and views are most widely discussed in the postrevolutionary period include Abdolkarim Soroush, Sadegh Zibakalam, Reza Bahrampour, and Javad Tabatabai (Akbar, 2016, p. 203). Many of these postrevolutionary thinkers looked for the causes of Iran's political and economic predicament within the country itself—its economic development and evolution, the avarice of political elites, the limitations and flaws of its political system, and the priorities of its social actors—rather than in developments such as the ravages wrought on the country by the Arab invasion or Western colonialism (Akbar, 2016, p. 251). Bahrampour, for example, point to cultural norms prevalent among Iranians as one of the main causes of the country's social, economic, and political ills (Bahrampour, 2018). When these intellectuals discuss religion, as Soroush does, they do not argue over its positive or negative consequences for the country, focusing instead on its hermeneutics and its accumulated knowledge (Akbar, 2016, pp. 253-254).

Zibakalam (b.1948), a political scientist, is one of the few public intellectuals who has continually found the space to write and to speak his mind in the Islamic Republic. He maintains that Iran's predicament is largely a product of what Iranians have done to themselves. The blame for Iran's underdevelopment, for its condition whether good or bad, is not that of the West, or colonialism, or freemasons, or multinational corporations, but that of Iranians themselves. Zibakalam calls on his compatriots to analyze and understand the roots of their hostility toward the West. This can be done by developing a comprehensive discourse that explains what Iranians have done to themselves in the course of their history to result in their current predicament. "We cannot," he states emphatically, "point an accusatory finger at anyone other than ourselves." (Zibakalam, 2017, pp. 20-21).

As other, similar examples indicate, the common denominator to postrevolutionary intellectual currents in Iran has been their self-reflective character[2] (Kamrava, 2008). The economist Musa Ghaninezhad (b.1951), for example, blames the prevalence of traditional, collectivist currents for impeding the rule of law in the country (Ghaninezhad, 2018, p. 91). Kazem Alamdari, and also Zibakalam, have pointed to local geography and topographic circumstances, such as aridity, as one of the main reasons for the country's relative underdevelopment (Akbar, 2016, pp. 268-269). Reza Davari Ardakani (b.1933), one of contemporary Iran's most renowned thinkers and generally considered a philosophers of the right, also critiques Iranians and sees them as responsible for their predicament. Iranians are trapped in "a condition of underdevelopment," according to Davari Ardakani, because of their inability to engage in self-criticism. They are ideological and dogmatic, he claims, are

[2] I have explored postrevolutionary intellectual currents in Iran elsewhere in Kamrava, M. (2008). *Iran's Intellectual Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

neither traditional nor modern, have faced limited choices and opportunities, and are victims of history and historical circumstances (Ardakani, 2016, pp. 40-49). Unlike Zibakalam, Davari Ardakani is more of a philosopher and less of a public intellectual, and his arguments are therefore less popularly accessible in mainstream media and journals.

Religion

Alongside modernity and its antitheses, religion has played a prominent role in Iranian society. It remains one of the most powerful and pervasive of social institutions. Life under the Islamic Republic has invariably affected Islam, the state, and the nation, especially the middle classes. If statistical surveys have any indication, the establishment of the Islamic Republic appears to have had a complicating effect on the role of religion in Iranian society. For those politically supportive of the state, levels of religiosity appear to remain high. Statistical surveys consistently reveal that religious respondents tend to register greater levels of satisfaction with the state's performance and with levels of democracy in Iran. Religious individuals tend also to be more supportive of the ruling ideology (Tezcür, Azadarmaki, Bahar, & Nayebi, 2012, p. 243). Among Tehran residents, higher levels of religiosity are significantly and positively associated with support for the Islamic Republic (Tezcür & Azadarmaki, 2008, p. 214). There is no reason to believe that in this respect Tehran residents are unique. A study of university students in Isfahan in 2009-2010 also found a positive relationship between higher levels of religiosity and political participation, with students who identified themselves as more religious more likely to take part in the political process (Emamjome'hzadeh, 2010, pp. 8, 28). The anthropologist Fariba Adelkhah has also observed that among the middle classes with pro-state ties or sympathies, practices such as religious gatherings—*jalaseh* for women and *hey'at* for men—have become commonplace (Adelkhah, 2016, p. 27).

Among most others, however, since the late 1980s there has been a precipitous decline in outward demonstrations of religiosity. For many, spiritual and nonmaterial values have been replaced by material ones. Emphasis on simple living and humility has given way to ostentatious displays of wealth. Fewer people attend Friday Prayers, and, revealingly, during *iftar* Tehran's streets are busier compared to Cairo, Peshawar, and even the cities of ostensibly secular Turkey (Ghobadzadeh, 2002, pp. 79-80). Especially among the youth, new, alternative, nonpolitical, and nonideological conceptions of religion are spreading through a variety of means such as social media, various information networks, and cyberspace (Rezaei, 2015, p. 103).

These observations are supported by numerous statistical surveys carried out by Iranian academics. According to one survey, for example, whereas the average urban family spent 187.5 percent more on religion in 1997 compared to 1989, their expenses on cosmetics during the same period went up by 641 percent and on leisurely activities by 1671 percent. The same trend was seen in rural families, whose religious expenditures went up by 249 percent but expenditure on cosmetics went up by 752 percent and leisure expenditure rose by 1998 percent (Ghobadzadeh, 2002, p. 81). Despite state backing, religious publications also saw declines in the same period, with religious titles growing by 124 percent between 1989-1997 while those on literature and language grew by 210 percent (Ghobadzadeh, 2002, p. 84).

Significantly, overall belief in religion and the tenets of Islam have not declined. Among those disconnected from or nonsuppurative of the state, what has declined are the rites and rituals associated with Islam, many of which the state has politicized. But in terms of private belief in religion, Iranians have been consistently registering deep religious beliefs. In a 2003 survey, 93 percent of youth in Tehran declared a belief in God's existence, 93 percent said they believe that the Quran is God's words, 86 percent believe in the Hidden Imam,

80 percent believe in angels, and 78 percent believe in the existence of Satan. Between 50 to 60 percent of those surveyed said they prayed regularly (Rezaei, n.d., pp. 99, 103). These results were supported by a nationwide poll on the same topic two years later. In a 2005 poll of nearly 5,000 Iranians, more than 98 percent expressed belief in God, and nearly 94 percent said they have strong belief in religious teachings. More than 66 percent said they always prayed, 19.6 percent said they prayed often, and 9.2 percent said prayed on occasion (Iranian Students' Polling Agency, 2016, p. 11).

These finding were again supported in another poll of nearly 5,000 Iranians, this one in 2010 and conducted by a state polling agency. Again, more than 98 percent of those polled expressed belief in God, and 96.5 percent considered the Quran as Prophet Muhammad's miracle. More than 91 percent expressed pride in being Muslim. Reflecting the country's Shi'i identity, approximately 95 percent agreed with the belief that Imam Mahdi will appear at the end of time and establish peace and justice (Iranian Students' Polling Agency, 2016, p. 15). According to most reliable polls, between the years 1974-2016, consistently 90 percent of Iranians believe in the primary principles of religion such as God, the Prophet Mohammad, heaven and hell, Resurrection, and the like. In fact, there are far more similarities in people's religious beliefs in these 42 years than there are differences. In 2016, more than 75 percent of those polled felt a personal closeness to God, up from 63 percent in 2009. In 2016, 85.5 percent of those polled expressed disgust toward those insulting Prophet Muhammad or the Quran, a figure that was slightly down from 92.5 in 2009 (Bahabadi, 2020).

While belief in Islam in general remains intact among the population, attendance in mosques and communal prayers, as well as to religious passion plays, seem to be on the decline. Historically, mosques in Iran have been centers of religious socialization and political mobilization. With the growing bureaucratization of mosques that had occurred during the first decade of the revolution, however, the younger generation has become less attracted to mosques, and the demography of mosque-goers has changed (Fazeli, 2016, p. 140). The second decade, during the reform era, saw some criticism of this bureaucratization, but the trend itself was not reversed. There are no statistical data on the mosque-goer population in terms of age, levels of education, employment, and class. But all evidence indicates an overall decline in the number of people regularly attending mosques (Fazeli, 2016, pp. 140-144). In a 2001 survey, respondents listed as some of the main reasons for their infrequent mosque attendance as a uniformity of programs and lack of diversity in what mosques offer; lack of information about the mosques may offer other than weekly sermons; the presence of radial and extremist individuals on mosque grounds; dry and archaic interpretations of issues by mosque imams; incongruence between mosque sermons and life's realities; and the repetitive nature of sermons (Fazeli, 2016, pp. 145-146). Declines in mosque attendance are in line with observable declines in other collective religious obligations, such as attendance to Friday Prayers, communal prayer sessions, and fasting. Overall, the attraction of "official religion" has witnessed a precipitous decline, whereas overall levels of religiosity and religious belief among people appear to remain pervasive (Fazeli, 2016, pp. 151-152).

Overall, participation in collective religious activities has declined noticeably in recent decades, whereas individual, private religious views appear not to have changed. As compared to the rest of the country, participation in collective religious activities is a lot less in Tehran (Rezaei, p. 99, 102). In one survey, between 2009 and 2016, the percentage of those who regularly or always pray declined from 83 percent to 76.8 percent. Between 2000 and 2016, on average only 22 percent of Iranians attended Friday communal prayers. During the same period, consistently about 75 percent often or occasionally attended religious ceremonies, including those held in private homes (Bahabadi, 2020).

Despite the best efforts of the Islamic Republic to Islamize Iranian society, between 1979 and 2003, the percentage of Iranians who regularly performed daily prayers went from 70 to 60 percent, those considering themselves devout from 40 to 20 percent, and those attending congregational prayers from 50 to 10 percent (Kazemipur & Goodarzi, 2009, pp. 170-171). During the same period, the percentage of those always fasting during Ramadan did increase, nevertheless, from 60 to 84 percent, though the increase appears to be more a result of the celebratory breaking-of the-fast *iftar* meal rather than increased religiosity (Kazemipur & Goodarzi, 2009, pp. 174). In another national poll conducted in 2015 during the month of Ramadan, only 55 percent of Iranians claimed they were fasting. In 2018, 52 percent on a national sample claimed they were fasting, while only 41 percent of Tehran residents made the same claim. In 2019 and 2020, the number of Tehranis claiming to be fasting was no more than 40 percent (Bahabadi, n.d.). In terms of observing certain state-mandated restrictions based on religious precepts, in 2009, 54 percent of respondents declared they listen to the kind of music they like regardless of government restrictions, while another 22 percent declined to answer. By 2014, the percentage of those admitting to ignoring government restrictions on music had gone up to 70 (Bahabadi, n.d.).

Even outward demonstrations of religiosity cannot be trusted as genuine displays of faith. Emad Afrough, former Majles deputy and one of the theoreticians of the Principlist current, claims that there has been an increase in pretensions of religiosity and piety, as well as excessive mourning (Afrough, 2013, p. 407). Superstition has also become commonplace, such as belief in the impending return of Imam Mahdi, a direct product of pronouncements by Ahmadinejad and members of his cabinet. Public displays of religiosity have become showy and increasingly devoid of substance. Intense and dramatic mourning ceremonies of Ashura, every year mounted more grandly than the year before, focus on the graphic details of Imam Hussein's massacre and not on the philosophy behind his fight against Yezid (Haghighat, 2015, p. 173). Panegyrists have become popular, and many of them exceedingly wealthy, not because of the contents of their message but the rhythm of their lyrics and the appeal of their voice (Bastani, 2019). Along similar lines, state efforts to Islamize the country's universities have not met with much success (Kamrava, 2022, pp. 261-263). An analysis of the various studies of Iranian university students and their approach toward Islamization of universities shows that while religiosity and religious beliefs remain strong among students, they have little tolerance for official religiosity and for the role of ideological religion in collective social and political life. Instead, they see religion as something personal and private (Farasatkhah & Absalan, 2017, p. 476).

It should come as no surprise that since 2017, some of the protests against the government have featured anti-religious slogans (Golkar & Sawhney, 2020). There are a number of other indicators that the state's efforts at Islamization of Iranian society have been less than successful. Some indications of this failure, or at best partial success, can be seen in the growth in the number of Sufi and mystical orders in recent years, which are invariably suppressed as soon as they gain some popularity among their devotees. There are also said to be a number of conversions away from Islam and a growth in the number of home churches. Choices in entertainment and artistic and cultural consumption also reflect the popularity of nonreligious cultural themes and norms. Most starkly, there has been a trend toward non-Islamic names for newborns and names that sound either old Persian or are Kurdish, Turkic, or even Western-sounding (Golkar, 2018, p. 6).

Aware that its Islamization of society has been less than successful, in parts of the country, and especially in Tehran and Qom, the state is encouraging the establishment of enclave spaces for ultra conservative traditionalists, complete with their own schools, banks, restaurants, and other amenities and services, in which residents can feel culturally comfortable and physically secure. Examples of such neighborhoods include the

Talaiyyeh and Hoveyzeh complexes in northeastern and eastern Tehran respectively, and the Pardisan and Mahdiyeh housing complexes for clerics in Qom (Pargoo, 2019).

The clergy, meanwhile, show no signs of loosening their hold on the state, although visibly their numbers in key state institutions has declined compared to the early years of the revolution. In the First Majles, for example, which was inaugurated in 1980, there were no less than 164 clerical deputies. In subsequent Majleses, the number of clerical deputies continually declined, hitting a low of only 17 in the Tenth Majles in 2016 and then going back up to 34 in the Eleventh Majles in 2020.[3] But a reduction in the clergy's presence in the political process has not necessarily translated into reductions in their political influence, especially when it comes to state policies in the political as well as the cultural realms (Seifzadeh, 2016, p. 261). More than four decades after its establishment, the Islamic Republic continues to remain robustly Islamic in many of its policies and its ideological positions. Far from fostering social uniformity and cohesion, the outcome has been rather divisive. Religiosity has emerged as a primary social cleavage in Iran, with more religious Iranians supporting the state, and less religious ones mostly not supportive of the state. This points to social polarization along religious lines (Tezcür, Azadarmaki, Bahar, & Nayebi, 2006, p. 245). Even if polarization has not occurred, there is at least a schism in Iranian society, whereby many continue to adhere to the state's austere moral and cultural strictures, while others have embraced moral and cultural relativism (Golkar, 2018, p. 2).

Significantly, having captured the highest echelons of the state after the revolution, the clergy have not accumulated wealth themselves as a major social class. But they are in charge of the means and the institutions that give them access to that wealth. For example, all the confiscated wealth belonging to the ancient regime today belongs to the *velayat-e faqih*. To the extent possible, endowments have been revived, and a new form of captured endowment is appearing that is giving the clergy control over investments and institutions for purposes of religious propagation (Bahrani, 2009, p. 120). Islam has been a source of ascent and political success of those who had been kept on the margins under the old order (Adelkhah, 2015, p. 27). For those who hold skeptical attitude toward the state anyway, the state's abuse and instrumentalization of religion has added insult to injury.

Nationalism

Equally pervasive in the national narrative has been nationalism. Iranians with very diverse ideological persuasions, religious or secular, have been active participants in the construction of a nationalist discourse. Authors, academics, and thinkers may disagree over the role of the monarchy's centrality to national identity, or Iran's role in the post-colonial era, its relations with the West, and the role of religion versus secularism in national identity. But no one doubts Iran's existence as a national entity, and the importance of its national interests (Aghaie, 2015, pp. 187-188). Nationalism, simply defined as attachment to and glorification of the motherland, has been a preoccupation of the country's intellectuals and policymakers alike. That the political system has lent itself to putting personal interests before national ones should not detract from nationalism as a compelling force in both the public and the private spheres.

Similar to the idea of modernity, which was first agitated among Iranians with their contact with the West, Iranian nationalist sentiments were also first awakened as Iran unhappily encountered the West from positions of material and military weakness. Reflecting on the Qajar era, the historian Ali Ansari makes the following observation: "Social and political change, imposed and defined by the West, was to result in a hardening of

[3] Data collected by author.

ideological perspectives as political factions competed to define the idea of Iran." (Ansari, 2012, p. 29). While Ansari was reflecting on Iran of the early 1900s, his observation is not too far off the mark when it comes to the Iran of the early twenty-first century.

Although nationalism *per se* existed in Iran in the mid- to the late-1800s, its genesis is generally traced to the start of the Constitutional Revolution in 1905. Revolutionary mobilization, and the articulation of demands for political representation and accountability, were instrumental in deepening feelings of nationalism, which were in turn reinforced by the emergence of new forms of literary expression and revolutionary poetry. The First World War further deepened the foundations of secular Iranian nationalism, fueled by a widespread perception that Islam was unable to defend Muslim lands (Merhavy, 2019, p. 26). The decade from 1924 to 1934, when new and ostensibly "modern" state institutions were established, and when the arts and especially literature underwent significant changes, was seen by constitutionalists as the highpoint of what they saw as "enlightened nationalism" (Ansari, 2012, p. 110). This period lasted into the early 1960s, when the Shah initiated a series of reforms and called them the White Revolution.

From the 1960s until 1991, when the Cold War ended, Iran experienced a highly ideological "age of extremes". In Ansari's articulation, "this was the apogee of the *myth of the saviour*: the omniscient, omnipotent, and sagacious leader who could—with some divine inspiration and assistance – solve the nation's problems and lead into an earthly utopia." (Ansari, 2012, p. 34). At one extreme was the state's conception of nationalism. Both Pahlavi monarchs encouraged a narrative of Iranian nationalism that heavily emphasized the country's pre-Islamic past. Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's narrative differed from that of his father in that for the son, the role of the crown was much more of a central feature of Iranian nationalism (Merhavy, 2019, p. 38). The ruins of Persepolis, *Takht-e Jamshid*, the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenids, came to closely symbolize the reign of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, with the monarch also using the place to emphasize the historic legitimacy of his reign (Merhavy, 2019, p. 109). This "Persian nationalism" formed the basis of the Pahlavi ideological legitimacy and often identified Iran's Arab invasion and forcible conversion to Islam as a dark stain on the country's history (Mashayekhi, 1992, p. 86).

At another extreme were a variety of nationalisms that saw Pahlavi rule and policies as actually inimical to Iran's national interests. Of these, three varieties of nationalism held particular sway among the literati. They were liberal nationalism, Islamic nationalism, and socialist nationalism. The most pronounced manifestation of liberal nationalism was the oil nationalization movement in the early 1950s as spearheaded by the National Front. The political triumph of monarchical absolutism after 1953, thanks to a CIA-sponsored coup, did little to extinguish the draw that liberal nationalism had among liberal-minded Iranians. In fact, the coup also deepened the allure of socialist nationalism, which found expression in the Third Worldism of the 1960s and the 1970s. The writings of the celebrated novelist Ali-Akbar Dehkhoda, represented, in as much as the censors allowed, this strand of thought. Finally, Islamic nationalism saw religion as a basis for unity and mobilization against subjugation by the West (Mashayekhi, 1992, p. 86).

Soon after the revolution's success, the stewards of the Islamic Republic learned quickly that they could not be ruled by the force of Islam alone and that ignoring Iranian nationalism could have perilous consequences. The two Pahlavi monarchs had sought to frame Iranian nationalism squarely within a secular framework, Reza Shah through brute force and his son somewhat more mildly. The Islamic Republic, by contrast, perhaps reluctantly, has been forced to deepen the marriage between Shiism and Iranian nationalism (Abedin, 2019, p. 23). Initially viewing nationalism as innately ill-disposed to the goals and ideals of Islam, beginning in the 1990s profound

shifts in state policy resulted in the reintroduction of nationalism into the state narrative as an integral part of Iranian heritage and history. This was reflected in the 1991 publication of a document by the Supreme Committee on Cultural Revolution, *Principles of the Cultural Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, which was distributed to all state institutions dealing in cultural matters. Subsequently, the dominant discourse of the state became one of "Islamic nationalism". Cultural references were framed as belonging to an "Iranian and Islamic civilization", "religious and national identity", and the importance of "Persian language and literature" (Fazeli, 2016, pp. 307-308).

Interestingly, Khamenei, who often makes a point of letting his preferences known for things Islamic over Iranian, has praised Iranianness and has called for the preservation of Iranian identity, which he views as Islamic, Iranian, modern, and revolutionary (Aghaie, 2014, p. 189). For leaders of the Islamic Republic, from Khamenei to Khatami and shades in-between, "Islamic-Iranian identity" has remained at the center of the political discourse (Aghaie, 2014, p. 189). Ahmadinejad, along with his chief of staff and close ally Esfandiar Rahim Mashai, even went so far as to talk about "Iranian Islam" and an "Iranian school of Islam", provoking angry retorts from senior conservative clerics such as Ayatollah Mesba-Yazdi, once considered Ahmadinejad's mentor (Jahanpour, 2012, pp. 204-205). Today, despite the best efforts of the Islamic Republic, or perhaps because of them, "the Islamist identity has been Iranianized" and is subject to nationalist interpretations. A new "religionational culture" has emerged in today's Iran (Merhavy, 2019, p. 178).

As with nationalism, the Islamic Republic has had to learn that cultural currents in Iran are not as linear and binary as it would like to assume, and therefore are difficult to control. Most observers of Iranian politics, for example, believe that the country's political culture does not lend itself to political participation (Zibakalam, Kowsari, & Etemadi, 2013, p. 87). But Iran's political arena is actually participatory and is in fact quite active. Through their consistent, serious material and ethical critique of courtiers, armies, and even aristocrats, Iranians have held the powerful accountable and have brought about an active civil society and a vibrant political arena (Zibakalam, Kowsari, & Etemadi, 2013, p. 103). The revolution has fostered a measure of political maturity among the populace that did not exist before. It has bridged most gaps between the elites and the masses, it ended foreign interference in domestic affairs, and it has raised consciousness regarding secularism, pluralism, and popular sovereignty (Farhang, 1992, p. 13). The state today has a harder time manipulating, or even simply suppressing, its subjects than it did before the revolution.

Iranian political culture is still some ways away from what Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba famously called "civic culture"[4] (Almond & Verba, 1989, p. 6). In Iran, state policies have consistently blocked or at best undermined the emergence of a civic culture. The educational system, to take one example, has historically emphasized moderation, orderliness, conformism, and conservatism over rebelliousness. It has emphasized tradition over innovation, uniformity over diversity, rote learning over critical thinking, and dignity over knowledge (Adib, 1995, pp. 53-54). For its part, each system of rule has depleted, bled dry, or altogether destroyed the aristocracy that existed before and has replaced with a new aristocracy of its own (Moradi, 2018, p. 24). The rapaciousness of the state across historical epochs has reduced trust toward political institutions and has instead led to the continued strength of personal and familial ties in social and political relations (Sariolghalam, 2010, p. 53). There are widespread perceptions among all social classes that attaining justice is

[4] In Almond and Verba's formulation, civic culture is "a pluralistic culture based on communication and persuasion, a culture of consensus and diversity, a culture that permitted change but moderated it." Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Newberry Park, CA: Sage, 1989), p. 6.

difficult or altogether impossible. In a 2011 survey in which people self-identified their economic standing, 66 percent of the well-off, 70 percent of the middle class, and 65 percent of the lower class believed there is widespread absence of legal justice in Iran (Rezaei, n.d., p. 142).

Moreover, urban marginalization, pervasive social anomy, and historical and political reasons have resulted in low social capital[5] (Coleman, 1988). According to a nationwide survey conducted in 2017, based on the responses given in the various dimensions of civic relations, civic mindedness, and civic participation, 75 percent displayed low or medium levels of social capital. Interestingly, smaller cities ranked the highest in terms of social capital—Zahedan ranked first, followed by Ahvaz, Ardebil, Ilam, and Yasuj—while megacieis ranked last, with Esfahan ranking last and Tehran ranking 26 out of 30 cities (Mousavi, 2017, pp. 147-148).

Similar to subjects in all other authoritarian polities, Iranians have developed their own means of navigating the political system. Social capital may be uneven in its prevalence or even scarce, but the values of evading censors, expressing political preferences, and understanding and seeing through manipulative state efforts are quite commonplace. The nationalist impulse has been a persistent feature of Iran's political life, from the perspective of the state and its leaders as well as their opponents. Glorification of the motherland and advocating its interests have been part and parcel of the Iranian narrative regardless of the ideological accent through which it has been articulated—socialist, secular, or Islamist.

Conclusion

This article has identified four primary features of Iran's cultural identity. The first has been a tormented entanglement with the idea of modernity. This entanglement has occurred along multiple dimensions—political, cultural, and economic—but its one constant has been the idea and the reality of the West. The entanglement's outcomes have been nearly infinite, everything from unabashed embrace of whatever modernity is supposed to be, to its polar opposite and everything in between. Important in shaping outcomes and processes has been the state, always imposing its own cultural preferences with determination and zeal. Before 1979, these preferences for the most part excluded religion; after 1979 they were overwhelmingly religious. The state has had its own religious preferences, and the people have their own. In the Islamic Republic, people more supportive of the state tend to be more observant of religious rites and rituals. Otherwise, among the bulk of the population, outward indications of religiosity have declined even if core beliefs about God and the Prophet have stayed the same. Outwardly religious or not, Iranians remain deeply nationalistic, both at the level of the state and in the public sphere. Seldom have state and popular conceptions of nationalism corresponded closely, as they did in the early phases of the war with Iraq, with popular nationalism often in fact a catalyst for political opposition and instability.

Societies are never static, although the depth and the pace at which they experience change differs from case to another. With its modernizing state under the Pahlavis, and its revolutionary state under the Islamic Republic, Iranian society has experienced change at different levels and in different forms. As the Iranian political scientist Mohammad Reza Tajik has observed, Iran has been transitioning from a populist society to a pluralist one, and from a traditional society based on the rule of a ruler to a panopticon society (Tajik, 2002, p. 19). These fundamental and deep-seated changes have created multiple insecurities in society. So long as the state cannot

[5] Social capital, originally introduced by James Coleman, denotes conditions in which goodwill, in the form of sympathy, trust, and forgiveness, is at the core of social relations, and becomes a valuable resource. This goodwill is offered voluntarily, and, as such, generates few returns on investment. James S. Coleman, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 94, (1988), pp. S95-S120.

ameliorate, or at least accommodate, the deleterious consequences of these changes, social unease is bound to express itself in the form of eruptions of popular anger and protest. For the time being, the Islamic Republic has not demonstrated an aptitude for addressing social and cultural sources of discontent. And, as long as it remains incapable or unwilling to so, it faces the possibility of unrest.

References

Abdi, A., & Godarzi, M. (1999). *Tahavvolat-e Farhangi dar Iran* (Cultural transformations in Iran). Teheran: Ravesh.

Abedin, M. (2019). *Iran resurgent: The rise and rise of the Shia State*. London: Hurst.

Adelkhah, F. (2016). *The thousand and one borders of Iran: Travel and identity*. (A. Brown, Trans). London: Routledge.

Adib, M. H. (1995). *Jame'hshenasi-e Iran* (Sociology of Iran). Tehran: Hasht Behesht.

Afrough, E. (2013). *Ma Ghal wa Man Ghal, Vol. 1* (What was said and who said it, Vol. 1). Tehran: Hamshahri.

Aghaie, K. S. (2014). Islamic-Iranian nationalism and its implications for the study of political Islam and religious nationalism. In *Rethinking Iranian nationalism and modernity* (p. 189). Austin: University of Texas Press.

Ahmadi, H. (2001). Din va Melliyyat dar Iran: Hamyari ya Keshmakesh? (Religion and nationality in Iran: Collaboration or conflict?). In H. Ahmadi (ed.), *Iran: Hoviyyat, Meliyyat, Ghomiyyat* (Iran: Identity, nationality, ethnicity) (p. 82). Tehran: Mo'asseseh-e Tahghighat va Tose'eh 'Olum-e Ensani.

Ahmadi, H. (2011). *Bonyad-haye Hoviyyat-e Melli-ye Iran* (Foundations of Iranian national identity). Tehran: Pazhoheshkade-ye Motale'at-e Farhangi va Ejtema'i.

Akbar. (2016). *Gofteman-e 'Aghabmandegi Nazd-e Roshanfekran-e Irani* (Discourse of backwardness among Iranian intellectuals). Tehran: Farzan.

Almond, G., & Verba, S. (1989). *The civic culture: Political attitudes and democracy in five nations*. Newberry Park, CA: Sage.

Anjo, L. (2017). Contemporary Iranian theater: The emergence of an autonomous space. In A. Sreberny and M. Torfeh (eds.), *Cultural revolution in Iran: Contemporary political culture in the Islamic Republic* (pp. 81-82). London: I.B. Tauris.

Ansari. (2012). *The politics of nationalism in modern Iran*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ardakani, R. D. (2016). *Kherad-e Siyasi dar Zaman-e Tose'h-nayaftegi* (Political knowledge at a time of underdevelopment). Tehran: Sokhan.

Azadarmaki, T. (2012). *Bonyanha-ye Fekri-e Nazariyeh-e Jame'eh-e Irani* (Theoretical foundations of thought in Iranian society). (Tehran: Elm.

Bahabadi, M. R. (2020). Shakhes-haye Dindari-e Jame'h Iran beh Kodam Samt-o So Miravand? (Which direction are religious indicators in Iranian society headed?). *Iranian Students Polling Agency*. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3miq1uF

Bahrampour, R. (2018). *Az Mast ke Bar Mast: Naghdi bar Raftar-e 'Ejtema'i-e ma Iranian* (We did this unto ourselves: A critique of the social behavior of us Iranians). Tehran: Teysa.

Bahrani, M. H. (2009). *Tabagheh-ye Motevasset: Va Tahavollat-e Siyasi-ye Iran-e Mo'aser* (The middle class and political changes in contemporary Iran). Tehran: Agah.

Bajoghli, N. (2019). *Iran reframed: Anxieties of power in the Islamic Republic*. Redwood City: Stanford University Press.

Bashiriyeh, H. (2001). Ideolozhi-e Siyasi va Hoviyyat-e Ejtema'i dar Iran (Ideology and social identity in Iran). In H. Ahmadi (ed.), *Iran: Hoviyyat, Meliyyat, Ghomiyyat* (Iran: Identity, nationality, ethnicity) (p. 127). Tehran: Mo'asseseh-e Tahghighat va Tose'eh 'Olum-e Ensani.

Bashiriyeh, H. (2003). *Mavan'e Touse'eh Siyasi dar Iran* (Obstacles to political development in Iran). Tehran: Gam-e No.

Bastani, H. (2019). Hey'at-haye 'Azadari; Mas'aleh-e Amniyat-e Melli (Mourning processions; A question of national security). *BBC Persian.* Retrieved from https://bbc.in/3lEARMA

Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology, 94*, S95-S120.

Dabashi, H. (2016a). *Iran without borders: Towards a critique of the postcolonial nation*. London: Verso.

Dabashi, H. (2016b). *Iran, The rebirth of a nation*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Emamjome'hzadeh, J., Mahmoodoghli, R., & Isanezhad, O. (2010). Barresi-ye Rabeteh Miyan-e Dindari va Mosharekat-e Siyasi-e Daneshjoyan-e Daneshgah-e Esfahan (An analysis of the relationship between religiosity and political participation of students of Isfahan University). *Pazhoheshnameh-e 'Olum-e Siyasi, 6*(1), 8-28.

Farasatkhah, M., & Absalan, S. (2017). Eslamishodan-e Daneshgah dar Iran bad az Enqelab: Faratahlili az pazhohesh-ha (Islamization of Universities in Iran after the revolution: A meta-analysis of research). *Faslnameh-e Motale'at-e Ma'refati dar Daneshgah-e Eslami, 21*(4), 476.

Farhang, M. (1992). Forward: Iran and the prism of popular culture. In S. Farsoun and M. Mashayekhi (eds.), *Iran: Political culture in the Islamic Republic* (p. 13). London: Routledge.

Fazeli, N. (2008). *Modern ya Emrozi Shodan-e Farhang-e Iran* (Iranian culture's modernization or becoming contemporary). Tehran: Pazhouheshkadeh-e Motale'at-e Farhangi va Ejtema'i.

Fazeli, N. (2016). *Ab'ad-e Siyasi-e Farhang dr Iran* (Political dimensions of culture in Iran). Tehran: Sabzan.

Ghaninezhad, M. (2018). *Tajaddod-Talabi va Tose'eh dar Iran-e Mo'aser* (Modernity-seeking and development in contemporary Iran). Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz.

Ghobadzadeh, N. (2002). *Ravayat-i Asib-shenakhti az Gosast-e Nezam va Mardom* (A study of the pathology of the divide between the people and the system). Tehran: Farhang-e Gofteman.

Golkar, S., & Sawhney, A. (2020). *Dictators and civilizational thinking in Iran: From the great civilization to Islamic civilization.* Washington, DC: Middle East Institute. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3D4JOV6

Golkar. (2018). *Cultural heterogeneity in post-revolutionary Iran*. Washington: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

Haghighat, B. R. (2015). *Dowran-e Aghaye Re'is Jomhur in Shekli Bood* (It was like this during Mr. President's time). Tehran: Ghatreh.

Iranian Students' Polling Agency. (2016). *Gozideh-e Asar-e Melli-e ISPA* (Selections from national works of ISPA). Tehran: ISPAS.

Jahanpour, F. (2012). Iran can't reform itself. In W. Kristianasen (ed.), *The best of Le Monde Diplomatique 2012* (pp. 204-205). London: Pluto Press.

Kamrava, M. (2008). *Iran's intellectual revolution.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kamrava, M. (2022). *Triumph and despair: In search of Iran's Islamic Republic*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Kazemipur, A., & Goodarzi, M. (2009). Iranian youth and religion: An empirical study. *Middle East Critique, 16*(2), 170-171.

Mashayekhi, M. (1992). The politics of nationalism and political culture. In S. Farsoun and M. Mashayekhi (eds.), *Iran: Political culture in the Islamic Republic* (p. 86). London: Routledge.

Merhavy. (2019). *National symbols in modern Iran: Identity, ethnicity, and collective memory*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Moradi, H. G. (2016). *Estebdad dar Iran* (Autocracy in Iran). Tehran: Akhtaran.

Moradi, H. G. (2018). *Dar Piramoun-e Khodmadari-e Iranian* (Concerning Iranians' self-centeredness). Tehran: Akhtaran.

Mousavi, M. T. (2017). Hashiyehneshini va Eskan-e Gheir-e Rasmi: Chalesh-e hezareh-ye Sevvom-e Iran va Jahan (Marginalization and informal dwelling: Challenge for Iran's and the world's third millenium). In Z. Eskandari et al. (eds.), *Jame'eh-e Armani, Jame'eh-e Bohrani* (Ideal society, crisis society) (pp. 147-148). Tehran: Ketab-e Parseh.

Nadoosh, M. A. E. (2017). Hoviyat-e Irani dar Dowran-e Ba'd az Eslam (Iranian identity in the period after Islam). In M. Afshari (ed.), *Irani Bodan va Irani-e Behtari Shodan* (Being Iranian and becoming a better Iranian) (p. 261). Tehran: Jahan-e Ketab.

Pargoo, M. (2019). Separate and parallel: Why are Iranian conservatives creating "safe havens"? *Al-Monitor*. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3osn9xQ

Peyvasteh, S. (2015). Olgoee Baraye Barresi-ye Naqsh-e Dowlat dar Tahavollat-e Siyasi va Ejtema'i-e Iran pas az Enqelab-e Eslami (A model for examining the role of the state in social and political transformations in Iran after the Islamic Revolution). *Jame'hshenasi-ye Tarikhi, 7*(2), 172.

Rezaei, M. (2011). Doshvari-ye Kar-e Jame'hshenasi dar Iran. (Difficulties of sociological work in Iran). In Z. Hashemi and M. S. Mousavi (eds.), *'Olum-e Ejtema'i dar Iran va Chemandaz-e Ayandeh-e An* (Social sciences in Iran and its future prospects) (p. 59). Tehran: Pazhouheshgah-e 'Olum-e Ensani va Motale'at-e Farhangi.

Rezaei, M. (2015). *Shekaf-haye Jame'eh Irani* (Fissures in Iranian society). Tehran: Agah.

Rezaei, M., & Jokar, M. S. (2009). Bazshenasi-e Hoviyat-e Melli dar Qanun-e Asasi-e Jomhuri-e Eslami-e Iran (Reconsidering national identity in the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran). *Faslnameh-e Motale'at-e Siyasi, 10*(4), 54.

Rezaei. (n.d.). *Shekaf-haye Jame'eh Irani* (Fissures in Iranian society).

Salehabadi, E. (2017). *Manteq-e Jame'eshenasan-e Siyasi-e Iran* (The logic of Iran's political sociologists). Tehran: Kavir.

Sariolghalam, M. (2010). *Farhang-e Siyasi-e Iran* (Iran's political culture). Tehran: Farzan.

Seifzadeh, H. (2016). Negah-i Jame'hshenakhti beh Sakht-e Dowlat dar Jomhuri-e Eslami Iran (A sociological examination of the structure of state in the Islamic Republic of Iran). In R. Afzali (ed.), *Dowlat-e Modern dar Iran* (Modern government in Iran) (p. 261). Qom: Mofid University Press.

Sreberny, A. (2017). Thirty plus years of the Iranian revolution: Culture in contestation. In A. Sreberny and M. Torfeh (eds.), *Cultural revolution in Iran: Contemporary political culture in the Islamic Republic*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Tajik, M. R. (2002). *Moqadameh-i bar Estratezhi-haye Amniyati-e Melli-e J.E.I* (An introduction to the national security strategy of IRI). Tehran: Farhang-e Gofteman.

Tezcür, G. M., & Azadarmaki, T. (2008). Religiosity and Islamic rule in Iran. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 47*(2), 214.

Tezcür, G. M., Azadarmaki, T., Bahar, M., & Nayebi, H. (2012). Support for democracy in Iran. *Political Research Quarterly, 65*(2), 235-247.

Yusufi, A. (2011). Negahi Enteqadi beh ‘Olum-e Ejtema‘i; Naqd-e Daruni va Bironi (A critical look at the social sciences: Criticism from within and without). In Z. Hashemi and M. Sadat Mousavi (eds.), *‘Olum-e Ejtema‘i dar Iran va Chemandaz-e Ayandeh-e An* (Social sciences in Iran and its future prospects). Tehran: Pazhouheshgah-e ‘Olum-e Ensani va Motale‘at-e Farhangi.

Zabihi, R., Ghadiri, M., & Rasekh, A. E. (2015). A separation, an ideological rift in Iranian society and culture: Media, discourse and ideology. *International Journal of Society, Culture and Language, 3*(1), 117.

Zarrinkoob, A. (2017). Na Sharqi, Na Gharbi: Ensani (Neither eastern nor western: Humanitarian). In M. Afshari (ed.), *Irani Bodan va Irani-e Behtari Shodan* (Being Iranian and becoming a better Iranian). Tehran: Jahan-e Ketab.

Zibakalam, S. (2017). *Veda‘ ba Dovvom-e Khordad* (Farewell to the second of Khordad). Tehran: Rowzaheh.

Zibakalam, S., Kowsari, S., & Etemadi, M. (2013). Nazariyeh Payeh Jahat-e Touse‘h-e Mosharekat-e Siyasi dar Iran (Foundation theory concerning expanding political participation in Iran). *Faslnameh-e Motale‘at-e Siyasi, 6*(21), 87.