

Modern Iran

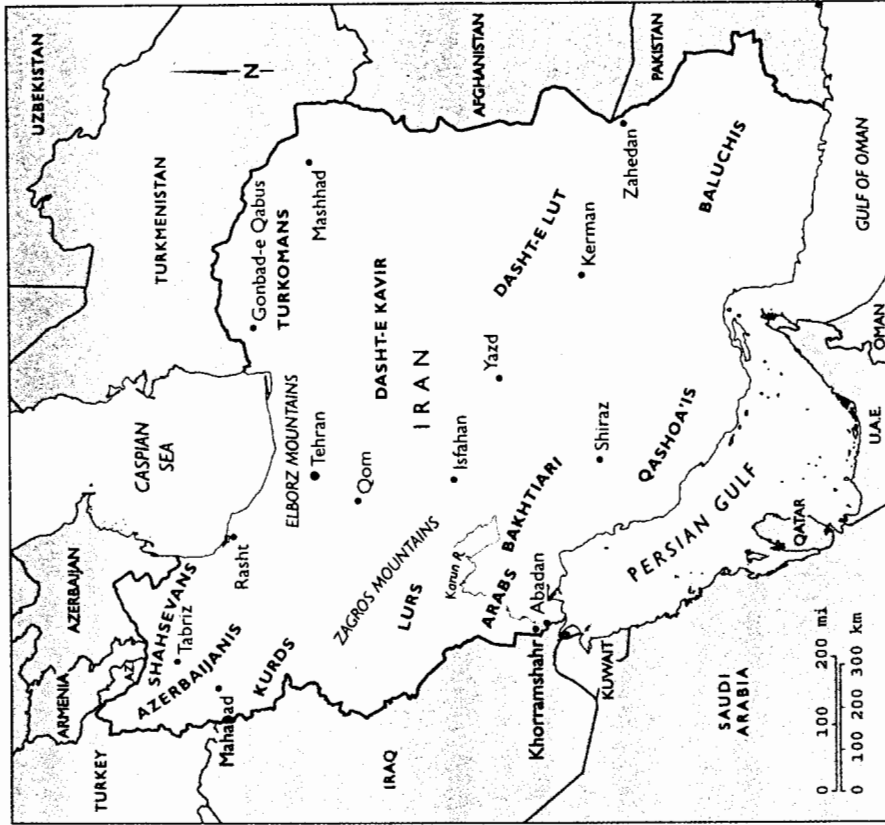
Roots and Results of Revolution

Nikki R. Keddie

with a section by Yann Richard



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To the people of Iran

2003—A year of major anniversaries

- 50 years since the coup overthrowing prime minister Mohammad Mosaddeq.
- 25 years since the main events of the 1978–79 revolution.
- 6 years since the landslide election of president Mohammad Khatami.

• The struggle continues

... could thou and I with Fate conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mold it nearer to the Heart's Desire!

An eleventh-century Iranian scientist

*Religious distress is at the same time the
expression of real distress and also the protest against
real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed
creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the
spirit of spiritless conditions. It is ...*

A nineteenth-century European socialist

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shocked when President George W. Bush in January 2002 linked Iran with Iraq and North Korea as part of an "axis of evil," based largely on its supposed pursuit of nuclear weapons, though there were also U.S. allegations of ties to terrorism. Iran says it is not pursuing nuclear weapons, is open to inspection, and is opposed to terrorism, and it has turned over al-Qaeda members to Saudi Arabia for trial. It regards Palestinian groups like Lebanon's Hizbollah as fighters against Israeli occupation of Palestinian land who are using the only weapons available to nongovernmental groups, not as terrorists.

Iran by early 2003 had limited cooperation with the United States, having allowed the Shi'i Iraqi group based in Iran to meet and cooperate with the Iraqi opposition abroad, and, in January 2003, allowing Iraqi exile oppositionists to come into Iran and meet with Iraqi oppositionists in Iran and with Khamene'i's people.²³ Iran, however, fears a further growth of U.S. power on its borders and believes it could be the next target of U.S. attack, supported by Israel. In late March, U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld warned Iran against allowing anti-Saddam Iraqis in Iran to fight. Hostile U.S. statements, including several by various prominent Americans, that the United States expects the current Iranian regime to fall soon have had the opposite effect from what they intended—they strengthen the hard-liners and create suspicion of those who want better relations with the United States. Even though polls indicate that most Iranians want such relations, too much should not be made of such sentiments. In the Muslim world today, as in Eastern Europe during the Cold War, Americans are most popular in countries where the United States has little or no presence. This popularity is unlikely to continue during or after an aggressive war or bombing of suspected nuclear facilities, or even after a long Iraq occupation. Nor is the Iranian government necessarily as close to collapse or fundamental change as either the United States or many Iranians wish. The situation is too complex for anyone reliably to predict its outcome, and continued U.S. sanctions, statements of support of those who want to overthrow the government, and new U.S. intervention are all likely to be unhelpful.²⁴ Many Iranians think that they are next on the U.S. attack list, and some statements by U.S. government figures give support to this idea.²⁵ Iranians should be allowed to work out their future for themselves, and both social and political developments suggest that in the long term popular forces will gain enough strength to bring about significant change.

I 2

Society, Gender, Culture, and Intellectual Life

Many social and cultural changes have taken place in Iran since the revolution, several of which have influenced or been influenced by the political and economic changes discussed in chapters 10 and 11. Some areas of society, culture, and gender relations contrast with the often negative picture of political and economic trends described in those chapters, though nearly all embody contradictions and do not mitigate disillusionment with the regime. These more positive developments have several aspects: some are due to largely successful government programs in rural development, health, family planning, and education, including the unanticipated consequences of such programs, while others owe more to struggles by women, young people, professionals, ethnic minorities, and some in the popular classes. In all areas change has been partial, and dissatisfaction continues and has even been fanned by change.

Society, Education, Health

Some important social changes have occurred in the largely successful efforts to improve the lives of rural populations through technology and health care and to expand all levels of education for both genders to the entire country. Two other major changes have been the rapid pace of urbanization, so that the great majority of the population now lives in a variety of urban areas, and an unusually dramatic demographic transition, changing from rapid population increase until the late 1980s to a dramatic lowering of birthrates since then. Urbanization and education, despite the religious limits on curricula, have

engendered wide dissatisfaction with the strict social controls posed by the clerical government, to which poor economic performance has also contributed. In recent years a cultural and intellectual explosion has given voice to many new ideas in the arts and in political and religious discourse. These trends have been felt to varying degrees in different areas, and here there will be less space than the topics deserve to deal with important differences, especially among nomadic tribes, among ethnic and religious minorities, and among social classes.

The social organization of the economy changed significantly after the revolution, and a few areas showed improvement. One resulted from a new emphasis on improving rural conditions. The Reconstruction Jihad (*jehad-e sazanegi*) began as a movement of volunteers to help with the 1979 harvest but soon took on a broader, more official role and carried out, with the help of local populations, programs that included road building, piped water, electrification, clinics, schools, and irrigation canals. The lack of radical land reform meant that few lands were distributed to the peasants, but in other ways rural life generally improved.

Two other areas in which the Islamic Republic has had an impressive record are education and public health. Achievements have been notable in rural and impoverished areas and have been especially felt by women and children. In the field of education, schools received substantial governmental funding, including school construction in villages and poor neighborhoods. The accessibility of schools made it easier for girls to attend, as did the enforcement of single-sex primary and secondary schools (which had been dominant even before) and religious leaders' endorsement of girls' education. Though education before university level remains mostly rote memorization and includes some religious emphasis, most of the curriculum remains secular. Under the new regime not only did literacy among young males and females approach universality, but also the percentage of females among university admissions continually rose, until they were about 66 percent by 2003. Possible explanations for girls' greater achievement are that girls have fewer permitted activities away from home and do more homework, and that low teacher salaries mean that women who teach in girls' schools are more qualified and motivated than the men who teach in boys' schools, as women have less access to higher-paying jobs.

Following an early period during which a few subjects were barred or had quotas, today nearly all university subjects are open to women. Almost every village has a school. Female literacy rose from 36 percent

in 1976 to 72 percent in 1996—a level comparable to Turkey and over double that in Pakistan—and is still rising. Although textbooks mostly show women in traditional family roles, there has been some reform in such depictions.¹ There is also an effective adult literacy program.

While universities were closed and purged for three years, with great losses of students, teachers, and intellectual life, they have in recent years gradually become freer, and some classes cover liberal Western thinkers and even Marx. At first, women were barred from several subjects, and men could not study gynecology, though existing male gynecologists continued to practice. The effective campaign to lift these restrictions in the late 1980s was spearheaded by Zahra Rahnavard, the wife of ex-prime minister Mir-Hosain Musavi. Al-Zahra University for women, based on a prerevolutionary institute, is now a serious university-level institution, led by the same Zahra Rahnavard. Despite great advances in university education, both male and female graduates face high levels of unemployment. Also, the shortage of facilities and teachers at all levels as well as low pay, which leads university teachers especially to hold several jobs, means that the quality of education has generally fallen. Ideological indoctrination has been largely unsuccessful, judging from surveys of high school and university students and from student protests.

At the time of the revolution, health care was a major problem and particularly affected women and children. Poverty, lack of services, and early and frequent childbearing contributed to high maternal and infant mortality rates. Successive governments channeled impressive resources into health programs, especially in remote, deprived areas. A key program was the creation of a grassroots primary health care network that has transformed access to health care in many areas. From 1985 to 1997 maternal mortality rates dropped from 140 deaths per 100,000 live births to 37.² Infant mortality rates were also slashed.

Regarding family planning the government did an amazing U-turn at the end of the 1980s. Although birth control was never outlawed, the emphasis of the Islamic Republic from 1979 to 1988 was on population growth. As mortality rates declined, however, population skyrocketed, with no employment in sight for many. There was an abrupt turnaround in policies in 1988–89 so that, by learning from other countries and adding the endorsement of most leading Muslim clergy, Iran developed one of the world's most effective programs. With the help of many involved in prerevolutionary family planning programs, the new program took off once Khomeini authorized it. Free family planning was

reintroduced, and shortly thereafter sterilization was again permitted. Benefits for children were cut off after the first three.

The government says every couple should attend premarital classes, in which men and women are separately counseled on family planning and other issues.³ Abortion is an emotional issue. Before the revolution it was allowed under certain conditions, but this was abolished. For the next twenty years it was allowed only if there was a risk to the mother's life, after which Khamene'i said it could be done if the unborn child had a severe disease. Illegal abortions continue, though their prevalence is unknown.

Iran's uniquely rapid success in lowering birthrates from the late 1980s had several causes: rapid urbanization always brings smaller families; health programs and lowered infant mortality meant couples knew most children would survive; the rise in female education contributed to rising marriage ages and greater women's initiative in family planning. Also important were the commitment of governmental and religious leaders; increasing economic difficulties that delay marriage and the desire to have children; and the preexistence of the primary health care networks providing a variety of services, to which the official birth control programs were wisely tied. In most villages health care began in the 1980s with a male and a female worker, usually a couple, who ran a health house. Both were trained for two years in care of mothers and children, family planning, and other health matters and then sent back to the village. By now most rural health clinics have trained doctors and nurses. All new doctors must repay their free medical education by serving for up to five years in village clinics before moving to a city. Pregnant women get free checkups. People know the doctors or health workers, who distribute condoms, pills, and even Norplant injections. They also visit schools and check children's health and record births, diseases, and deaths. Birthrates have fallen from among the highest in the Middle East to among the lowest. New births are slightly below replacement rates, while population growth, which reflects immigration and the babies born to earlier baby boom couples, is down to 1.2 percent.⁴ Iran should continue to experience population growth while the large group of people born in the 1980s have children, but population should then level off and decline if current trends continue.

A rural health worker, Zinat Darya'i, became the subject of a dramatized documentary. She is from the Persian Gulf island of Qeshm, a poor

and conservative region. She tells how her life changed when she abandoned the Gulf-Arab-style facemask, the *borqa* (the same word as the Afghan burqa, but a different garment). After working with foreign doctors as a girl, she went to Bandar Abbas to train. When she returned without a mask she was ostracized, but years later when she saved the life of a child she became a local heroine. Other stories of rural and urban health workers indicate similar evolutions from seclusion to health work and to public activity.⁵

While the urban primary health care system and that in remote rural areas have problems, Iran's primary health care system has numerous achievements. Every year the government mobilizes up to half a million volunteers in a mass immunization campaign. Less impressive are problems arising from drugs. While AIDS is a taboo subject, one doctor estimates the number of cases at twenty to thirty thousand. It is spread primarily among intravenous drug users, especially in jail. Authorities now include information about AIDS in their antidrug literature.

Drugs, from the traditional opium to processed heroin, are a major problem. In 1999 the government admitted there were more than a million addicts. Drug use is especially widespread among young people and is tied to the overall cynicism found among many who are not poor. According to researchers at the University of Tehran's Faculty of Social Science who have done extensive field research among drug users in Tehran, Qazvin, and Kerman, drugs are common among upper-class youth (who prefer the "recreational" drugs popular in Europe) and working-class youth (who prefer the traditional, cheaper opium), and less common among middle-class youth, whose parents are the most worried.⁶ Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), which have flourished since Khatami's election in 1997, have helped provide treatment and narcotics anonymous programs for a limited number of addicts.⁷ In recent years Iran has become more open about its drug problem and willing to learn from the experience of other countries in combating it.

The conservative majles, after Khatami's 1997 election, pushed through a controversial 1998 bill segregating all health services for men and women, and saying that women should not be treated by men. Thousands of doctors and medical students signed a petition against it, so it was changed to give women the right to demand female doctors where possible. The Guardian Council sent it back to parliament as too expensive, but after the Ministry of Health gave funds it was

passed. The students at an all-women's medical college in Qom protested against a segregation that meant they could have no male teachers, staff, or patients. Most of them transferred to coeducational medical schools elsewhere.

Important strides have thus been made in education and in primary health care. Improvements at grassroots level in water, sanitation, hygiene, and nutrition have especially helped the popular class and rural women and children. Nevertheless, continuing government support for laws and practices that institutionalize male supremacy, controls on the lives of women and young people, and continued economic crisis and hardship has made the positive changes in education and health only part of a less impressive total picture.

In the sphere of culture and behavior, the regime has often tried to impose its image of an Islamic society, based largely on the practices and beliefs of its most puritanical followers. In the first years of the revolution many cinemas were burned or closed, Iranian and Western pop music was forbidden (though not Iranian or Western classical music or Iranian folk music), the sexes were rigidly separated in all public places, dress codes were applied to both men and women, with those on women far more strict and limiting, and censorship was applied rigorously. Schools were made to give a central place to religious instruction, with recognized religious minorities allowed to add their own religion. In the Cultural Revolution of 1980-83, in great part a war against Western culture, many professors were dismissed, students expelled, cultural and scientific figures publicly denounced, and Iranian radio and television broadcast only religious and official programs. The Cultural Revolution was one reason many teachers and trained persons left Iran. One part of the program was to unite the theological schools of Qom with the universities, making secular teachers go for a time to Qom. This experiment had the unexpected effect of opening many students in Qom to Western thought, and today one finds clerics and teachers of theology who know something of contemporary Western thought and philosophy. In general, however, the Cultural Revolution greatly weakened Iran in the science and technology needed for development. Only students judged ideologically sound were sent abroad during the Cultural Revolution. Families with money who did not emigrate often sent their children abroad to study, and most of them remained abroad, as most still do. When the universities were reopened, war veterans and others tied to official religious politics got priority admission.

In 1982, with Rafsanjani's encouragement, the private Islamic Free University was established. It tried to reconcile religious and scientific education and also spread higher education into many towns and cities; its branches covered many more areas than did the few state universities. This theoretically Islamic university, which paid better salaries than the state universities, became less ideological than the state universities and also more appealing to many students, especially young women whose families might not want them to travel far from their homes. State universities also spread. The level of instruction is often low, as teachers must have several jobs to make ends meet, and there is little time for research. In the pragmatic trend that followed the Iran-Iraq war, the government emphasized science and technology and supported the building of universities and also sent students abroad. Although large numbers of students continued to study abroad, many have not returned.⁸ Unemployment and unsuitable employment remain a major problem among the educated. Also, there are still to some extent "two cultures," the clerical and the modernized/westernized. The former is the domain of clerics, bazaaris, and some of the urban poor, and the latter of the growing educated middle and professional classes and most students. There is among the educated, however, more blending and compromise between the two than before, with many clerics studying Western thinkers and many reformers coming to terms with new interpretations of Islam.

Contrary to a widespread impression, young people are not much more numerous in Iran than in nearby countries, but they have a much more important political role, especially since voting rights begin at age fifteen. Partly because of the lack of recreational facilities, universities and also arts classes have taken the central place in the lives of many young people. There are more than 2 million annual applicants for the 150,000 places at the state universities. Private foreign language, arts, and computer courses are also very popular, as are many sports. Young people are often impatient and have many causes for despair with current conditions. Faced with this, the government has for the most part stopped cracking down hard on behavior: women can wear shorter coats and makeup and show more hair; boys and girls in big cities can be seen together, even holding hands. Certain gathering spots and walks in the mountains are places for the sexes to be together, while home parties and liquor can usually be managed with bribes. Intermittent crackdowns, however, create a climate of apprehension and discontent. Between

forbidden television satellites, widely available tapes of all kinds, and the Internet, people are acutely aware of the contrast between restrictions on their lives and the freedoms in many other countries.

Women and the Family

The situation of women shows all the contradictions of the revolution. It was central to the clerical revolutionaries, who abrogated the Family Protection Law before any other law and reestablished sharia law. Despite the great limits on women's rights enforced in the first years of the revolution, several factors led to a partial comeback. Women reacted against the annulment of prerevolutionary reforms and their loss of jobs, especially public sphere jobs. Many women went to work in the private sphere and some became entrepreneurs and professionals. Even Islamist women became conscious of the need to change people's thought and behavior if women were to have the most elementary rights. In the Iran-Iraq war the government called on women to contribute. The war showed up major contradictions. According to Islamic law, war widows had to give custody of their children to their husbands' families. Protests against such injustices became effective, and this law and some other legal practices were reformed. Groups that were formerly opposed have united around specific issues. Men and women, secular and Islamic, from both sides of the cultural divide have worked together to achieve several goals, many of them women-oriented.

The groups that cooperated in the 1978-79 revolution thought women's issues could soon be solved if their own party took power, without any need for separate feminist efforts. The active participation of women in revolutionary politics, however, awakened the consciousness of many popular-class women about their political potential, and middle-class women increasingly acted to promote women's rights. Khomeini and his associates insisted on women's political mobilization, encouraged girls' education, and also supported women's activities during the Iran-Iraq war. At the same time they enforced many laws and practices unfavorable to women, barred the judiciary to women, and dismissed many professional women from their government jobs. Many middle-class women responded by entering the private sphere in novel ways and by going into areas open to them, like teaching, medicine, and the arts.⁹

Increasingly vocal opposition to policies that sanctioned polygamy, temporary marriage, free divorce for men, and child custody to fathers

and their families came from women, especially in the women's press. Women majles deputies and others made similar arguments. For example, women produced Islamic arguments to limit polygamy strictly.

Women's magazines featured stories of the suffering women experienced under despotic husbands, such as wife-beatings, suicides, and loss of children. Publicity and activism brought some legal remedies in the 1980s, such as limits on a husband's right to stop his wife from taking a job. A new marriage contract was introduced that spelled out husbands' behavior that would give the wife the right to divorce. These and later changes moved in the direction of restoring aspects of the annulled Family Protection Law.¹⁰ The reformed provisions in marriage contracts were, however, valid only if the groom signed them. Judges became more sensitive to women's rights as a result of struggles, and when reforms did not make it through the legislative process the government tried to mitigate some injustices by instructions to the courts.

After struggles, a limited divorce reform bill passed parliament in 1989, saying divorcees had to have court permission before being registered, though studies suggest that male applications were almost never denied.¹¹ Sometimes provisions once denounced by clerics as secular heresies passed parliament as Islamic reforms, and even when reform was limited the climate of publicity and struggle favored better treatment of women.

A novel trend of women interpreting Islam in more gender-egalitarian ways became important with the entry of more religious women into the public sphere and the limitation of discourse to Islamic parameters. Many women felt the shock of being deprived of rights after the revocation of the Family Protection Law, and many were hurt by the imposition of severe controls and punishments regarding behavior. Some women mastered technical forms of Islamic argumentation after the government opened higher religious education to women. More girls were being educated, which made them more sensitive to their loss of rights. The few Islamist women elected to the first parliament were unable to get even timid proposals for women's rights passed. But there soon developed a new group of Islamist women, some related to major political figures, who pressed women's causes more effectively. Many women became successful entrepreneurs, and others entered highly visible professions. The women's press became both a profession and a rallying point.

The new women's press, begun in the 1980s, developed and flourished especially in the 1990s, as an important part of press liberalization. The

prerevolutionary magazine *Zan-e Ruz*, which changed its tone after the revolution, became a platform for opposing family laws and practices with new interpretations of Islam and included discussion of several women's demands. Following a disagreement with others in *Zan-e Ruz*, editor Shahla Sherkat quit it and launched the monthly *Zanan* in February 1992, which became notable for its gender-egalitarian stance and for including articles by men and women, Islamic and secular, including secular Iranian women living abroad. The prominent secular lawyer Mehrangiz Kar was a frequent contributor. It also carried articles by the reformist cleric Hojjat ol-Islam Saidzadeh. Many of the arguments in *Zanan* included reinterpretations of Islam. They stressed the egalitarian spirit of those Quranic verses that address both men and women and interpreted inequalitarian verses, such as those allowing polygamy, as due to temporary circumstances. They say authentic Islam is gender-egalitarian, and inequalitarian laws are deviations caused by prejudice.

Articles in *Zanan* defending women's right to be judges were followed by some doing the same on other grounds in the more conservative journal of the Islamic Center in Qom, *Payam-e Zan*. Despite a press and political campaign, women cannot be regular judges, but a 1995 modification of the law allows them to be consulting judges, especially in matters regarding the family and minors, and in practice they often make judicial decisions.

Advancement of women's causes, primarily due to cooperation between secular and Islamic women, has also seen the growing involvement both of secular men and of reformist clerics. They are a minority and must choose their words carefully in a clerical context still dominated by conservatism. These current allies have compromised in order to work together. As stated in an interview by the prominent secular lawyer Mehrangiz Kar in 1996, "The revolution gave women confidence in themselves. With all the sacrifices they made, Iranian women know how much their current and future rulers owe them and that egalitarian rights are part of what is due to them. This demand is no longer that of a group of women; it is a nationwide one. The Islamic government cannot escape it without risking a brutal separation of the state and religion."¹²

Reformist interpretations of Islam are not new in the Muslim world, but in the Middle East they have not hitherto been adopted by so many traditionally educated clerics or by so many women from a great variety of social backgrounds. Combined with the salience of reform leaders in Iran's government and public sphere, the Iranian women's movement is

beginning to have an impact beyond Iran's borders in addition to the transformations it is bringing to Iran. There has been unprecedented gender solidarity among Islamic and secular activists, with, for example, secularists like Mehrangiz Kar, the jurist Shirin Ebadi, and the film director Tahmineh Milani contributing to women's magazines with a theoretically Islamic orientation.¹³

Iran's census, like many in the Global South, seriously undercounts women's work. Its low figures for women's work in rural and nomadic contexts have little meaning. Nomadic women usually work more than men—this includes caring for animals and plants, gathering food, and doing all the weaving of knotted carpets and flat weave items, many of which are sold and contribute to family income. In Gilan and Mazandaran rural women work in the fields, and elsewhere do important work in or close to home; in many areas they take part in harvesting. Rural and tribal women are usually not counted as part of the labor force. In urban areas small commodity producers and both male and female workers who are employed by medium or small private enterprises are often not declared as being in the workforce, in order to evade paying tax and insurance.¹⁴

Cultural attitudes and home workloads still limit the number of working-class women who work in a now-predominantly urban Iran. In the years right after 1979 many factories closed and the number of working-class women declined, but in recent years economic pressures and the growth of consumerism have intensified the felt need for two incomes, and increasing numbers of men have accepted a working wife. Many middle- and upper-class women work. Women who lost jobs or found themselves shut out after the revolution were often more resourceful than men in carving out new working lives. They went in unprecedented numbers into business and the professions, including medicine and law and also into writing and the arts, including a significant presence in filmmaking. The proportion of women employed is higher than the figures in the low teens that are often cited. A women-endorsed measure to allow part-time work without loss of benefits has encouraged this trend.

With the continued rapid growth of female education and urbanization, two factors that correlate dramatically with falling birthrates worldwide, birthrates can be expected to fall even further, and low birthrates may ease burdens on women and bring more into the labor force. In the meantime, however, the current large number of children and

the easing of censorship rules and the expansion of Iranian cinema. Although cinema is only one of the many arts that have flourished in recent years, it is the best known and is studied worldwide and hence will be emphasized here. The trends seen in film, toward increasing freedom and sophistication, are also found in the other arts.

Cinema in Iran has a history going back to the early twentieth century, but the first "world-class" films are generally considered to be two 1969 works by New Wave directors, Dariush Mehrju'i's *The Cow* and Mas'ud Kimia'i's *Qeisar*. There were other good films in this realistic genre until the mid-1970s. There was also much clerical and religious hostility to cinema, which resulted in many theaters being closed or even burned down in the revolutionary period. From 1979 to 1982 most existing Iranian and foreign films were banned, and there was almost no support for new films. To support a revival of filmmaking with approved content, the cabinet in June 1982 issued new regulations, charging the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (MCIG) to carry them out. All films and videos needed an exhibition permit. Among the grounds for denying a permit were various forms of insult to Islam, to other recognized religions, and to the Islamic Republic; encouraging prostitution, addiction, or bad behavior like smuggling; negating people's equality regardless of color, language, and belief; hurting Iran in the interest of foreigners; or showing details of violence and torture. Women were to be chaste, good mothers, but also have a useful social role and not used to arouse sexual desire.¹⁹ They also had to be "Islamically" dressed, even in the home.

Until 1989 all film ideas had to undergo five stages at the MCIG to be shown: it reviewed the synopsis, approved the screenplay, issued a production permit, reviewed the completed film, and then issued the permit. Many scripts were disallowed, and many films were made but not released. In December 1987 Khomeini lightened morality codes, in April 1989 some previously banned films were released, and then approval for screenplays was dropped. From the mid-1980s various measures improved the financing of film. Films were produced by a variety of public, semipublic, and private institutions. Ideologically approved films, often with social content and stressing ethics, were made by several groups, including the Foundation for the Dispossessed and the Jihad (later Ministry) for Reconstruction. Many women entered the film industry in all capacities, including numerous directors.

The first important films dealing with real people and, as became common, without any religious themes were Amir Naderi's *The Runner* (1986), Mehrju'i's *The Tenants* (1986), and Bahram Beyza'i's, *Bashu, The Little Stranger* (1988). Mehrju'i's film was a popular social satire, while the other two films had elements that typified many later Iranian art films—children as leading characters and locations and persons far from Tehran, sometimes featuring non-Persian ethnic groups. Children were partly chosen as their lives could be treated holistically, without the restrictions on intergender contact or adult discourse that limited realistic depiction of adults. Adult themes played an increasing role, however.

Iranian films began to appear at international festivals, win numerous prizes, and become earners of needed hard currency.²⁰ Though the serious films known abroad were less popular at home than more commercial films or than the foreign films that entered in various legal and illegal ways, they remained important to Iranian cultural and intellectual discourse. As Richard Tapper notes, many questions dealt with in contemporary film are core questions of modern Iranian identity:

Iran as homeland and Persian as dominant language and culture, modernity . . . and Shi'a Islam . . . In the twentieth century, extreme versions of all three original elements of *iranianity* have been tried and have failed: Iranian nationalism/Persian chauvinism; westernization/top-down modernization; Islamic fundamentalism. There is now a widely perceived imperative to negotiate an acceptable balance . . . together with a strong movement, massively supported by the youth and women . . . to reject the traditional politics of monopolization of power, control, secrecy and violence, in favour of democracy, transparency and political, religious and ethnic pluralism.

Cinema has become a major focus and arena for these discussions and debates.²¹

Continuing censorship means that political questions are usually broached in films only implicitly and symbolically, but many films show realistically the problems of women, of the poor, and of remote regions and ethnic minorities.

Many directors have made important films, only a few of which can be mentioned. The best-known internationally is Abbas Kiarostami, whose films include three about a region of northern Iran made before and soon after a major earthquake: *Where Is the Friend's House?* (1987), about a small boy's struggle to return a school homework notebook to a

friend; *Life and Nothing Else*, which shows the devastating effects of the earthquake, and *Through the Olive Trees* (1994), about casting a film in the region; it depicts a cross-class relationship between teenagers and the active role of women in filmmaking. His *The Taste of Cherry* (1997), about a Tehran man who picks up men from various classes and ethnic groups to help him in a planned suicide, won the highest prize at the Cannes Film Festival. His new *Ten* concerns a divorcee and the passengers she picks up while driving around Tehran. Kiarostami is known for apparently simple, realistic stories with humanistic themes.

Also well known is Mohsen Makhmalbaf, who started as a fiercely committed Islamist but later changed his views and made a wide variety of films, among them *The Cyclist* (1989), about a poor man who must exhaust himself by riding a bicycle in circles for twenty-four hours to feed himself and his small daughter, and *Gabbah* (1995), a lyrical, romantic, and visually spectacular view of the Qashqa'i nomads. Makhmalbaf also formed a kind of home film school, and his young daughter Samireh Makhmalbaf has directed *The Apple* (1998) from a true story of young girls who were literally never allowed outside the house, and *Blackboards* (1999), which won the jury prize at Cannes. Makhmalbaf's wife, Marzieh Meshkini, directed the imaginative three-episode film, *The Day I Became a Woman* (2000), set in the Gulf island Qeshm, with its many African-Iranian inhabitants.

Other important women directors include Rakhshan Bani-Etemad and Tahmineh Milani, whose strongly feminist and critical *Two Women* (1999) created much controversy. Popular directors especially of films featuring children include Majid Majidi, with *Children of Heaven* (1997) and *The Color of Paradise* (1999), and Jafar Panahi, with *The White Balloon* (1995).

There have also been several important documentaries and films that combine documentary footage with reenactments. One documentary is *Divorce Iranian Style* (1998) by the London-based Ziba Mir-Hosseini and the British filmmaker Kim Longinotto. It shows the efforts of several determined and articulate Iranian women in court to try to get divorces. Although one woman had a good legal case she had to compromise by giving up the delayed dower due her under Islamic law in return for a quick divorce, while another's efforts to circumvent the Islamic law giving fathers custody of even young children in the event of his ex-wife's remarriage were futile.

Despite bans since 1994 on television satellites they remain common, and every sort of video is easily available, as is every kind of recorded music. After Khatami's election some previously banned films were released. Among them Davud Mirbaqeri's *The Snowman*, which dealt with banned themes like transvestism, unveiled women, homosexuality, and drinking, brought physical attacks on the theaters showing it. In Khatami's presidential years some previous film taboos were broken. *Under the Moonlight* (2001) by Seyyed Reza Mir-Karimi, which won the Critics' Week Prize at Cannes, deals with a young cleric-in-training who, during a crisis of faith, joins homeless men living under a bridge in Tehran and encounters poverty, prostitution, and drugs. Ebrahim Hatamikia's *Low Heights* (2002) shows a reality-based story of a jobless man from war-ravaged Khuzistan who hijacks a plane in the hope of getting employment outside Iran. Hatamikia is known for films depicting the Iran-Iraq war's impact on Iran.

A filmmaker who began work in the 1970s New Wave with films including *Prince Ehtejab* is Bahman Farmanara, whose 1978 film *Tall Shadows in the Wind* was banned under both the shah and Khomeini. When the censors finally relented regarding his proposed films in 2000 he triumphed with the prizewinning *Smell of Camphor*, *Fragrance of Jasmine*, a black comedy in which he plays a filmmaker obsessed with making a documentary about his own funeral. His *A House Built on Water* (2002), showing a drunken doctor who deals with young drug addicts and seekers of abortion and restored virginity, has played internationally but, as of early 2003, had not been approved for Iranian release.

Iranian cinema has ironically benefited as well as suffered from government controls because if foreign films were allowed in freely Iranian films could lose much of their domestic audience. Also, in many parts of the world, such as China, pre-1990 Eastern Europe, and Iran, where censorship limits the direct expression of ideas, film becomes a center for the best minds, themes, and ideas.

Long sections could equally have been presented here about several other arts. There has been a flowering, especially in the past decade, of novels, short stories, and poetry, many of them, as in prerevolutionary years, written by women and often, like films, expressing views of contemporary problems. Many young people are studying the fine arts and music, and this has resulted in significant production. In the early post-revolutionary years visual art was mostly a clerical version of "socialist

realism," but now it has a great range of styles, from re-creations of traditional miniatures and calligraphy, to paintings and sculpture that use traditional elements in new ways or combined with modern ones, to varieties of modern art. Often far more of a woman is shown in pictures or sculptures than can be seen on the street. Restrictions on music have been relaxed and at least in big cities there are many concerts of traditional art and folk music, both Persian and of other ethnic groups, and of Western classical music, many of them of high quality.²² Western pop music is available on cassettes and influences music played in homes and in some concerts.

Intellectual Trends: Lay and Clerical

In recent years there has been a flowering of new religious and political ideas. There are many who hold largely secular views and combine in different degrees various forms of nationalism, feminism, and social democracy; these views cannot always be safely expressed in their entirety in print and are often rather similar to their Western counterparts, although many secularists may feel it more necessary to speak of Islam than most secularists do of Christianity in today's West.

Although it is critics of the political and religious status quo and governing system who get the most attention in discussions of Iranian intellectual life (including those in this volume), there are other intellectual developments, some supported by the government, that contribute to the spread of knowledge and debate. Great attention, for example, is given to serious studies of history, notably the history of the Qajar period, with countless memoirs and travelogues from that period being edited and published. Documents from the Pahlavi and earlier periods have been gathered and made available to scholars. Regional and local history is also stressed, with local histories written for almost every town. There are numerous high quality academic journals on topics including architecture, Iran's cultural heritage, and history and regional interests. The government promotes and subsidizes such projects, as it does many international conferences, and even offers book prizes to foreign works on Iranian topics. While this may in part be seen as propaganda (as is also true of many government-supported cultural efforts in other countries) it is notable in welcoming international, chiefly Western, contributions to the study of Iran more than they were welcomed

before the revolution or than such studies are welcomed in many other countries. Cooperative research projects, especially in the social sciences, with French and other European and Japanese scholars, have resulted in important publications. This all reflects changes in governmental and nongovernmental attitudes toward the West, which had focused overwhelmingly on damages caused by imperialism, and toward Iranian history, which in the 1980s and beyond had been overwhelmingly manipulated to create a past in which clerics were almost the only positive leaders.²³ This change is also seen in university and even seminary teaching of modern Western philosophers, including many with views far distant from those of Iran's rulers. Numerous books about Iran with views far from official clericalism are quickly translated and published and often become the focus of discussion, while books and articles published in Iran continue to raise critical arguments.²⁴

Regarding more critical trends, the press, whose women's branch was discussed above, has been a major force in intellectual and political development, especially since 1989, and in many ways took the place of political parties and their platforms and debates. Some semi-oppositional periodicals began even before Khatami's opening of the press, and many more newspapers and periodicals followed. They published a variety of critical views and discussed with extensive freedom and originality most of the important social, cultural, and intellectual issues of the day. Serious crackdowns on the press began after the government's attack on reformists following the spring 2000 conference in Berlin. For a time, however, once a newspaper was closed it could open again with a new name and the same staff and profile. As noted in chapter 11, the conservatives who controlled the majles until the spring of 2000 amended the press law to say that banned periodicals could no longer reappear with different names. The press court closed most reformist newspapers, and several journalists have been arrested, though critical press articles, periodicals, and newspapers have not been completely quashed.

Some journalists voiced views similar to those of the main clerical and nonclerical writers of books and treatises containing theoretical critiques of Iran's religio-political system, and some journalists went further. Notable is the journalist Akbar Ganji, who in a 1997 lecture called conservative advocates of totalitarian Islam fascists and explicated that term. The lecture's publication brought his arrest. Several of his articles were published in January 2000 as a book titled *The Fascist Interpretation of Religion and Government: Pathology of Transition to the Democratic*

and *Development-Oriented State*. Its preface favored rationalist and mystic readings of Islam and not "the reduction of religion to its husk and to dry customs, and the violent imposition of the jurisprudential reading on humankind." Ganji also alleged that high-ranking clerics were involved in the murders of about one hundred dissidents during 1989–97. He was twice imprisoned—first for a year and then, in 2002, on a six-year sentence—but his book continued to be reprinted and widely discussed.²⁵ His latest treatise, known as the "Manifesto of Republicanism" (2002), written in prison, criticizes even Khomeini and also the ineffectiveness of governmental reformers. He calls for a separation of religion and state and for liberal democracy.

Serious intellectual writings and discussions involving secularists, religious liberals, and reformist clerics have grown since the early 1990s, and even when their outlets in the periodical press were restricted, books and treatises could still be published. Lively and passionate debates cover a variety of issues, only a few of which can be dealt with here. Thinkers who have written since 1990 are generally more sophisticated and more knowledgeable about a variety of Western and Islamic sources than were their intellectual predecessors. These predecessors, like their contemporaries in many parts of the world, if they were politically oriented, tended to have ideological views that emphasized one factor as central to solving Iran's problems—whether class, economics, and socialism for the Marxists, science, nationalism, or racism for many modernizers, or varying interpretations of Islam for both Islamic modernists and Islamic conservatives. (Similar simplifications were also characteristic of many intellectuals elsewhere.) Nearly all tended to stress foreign imperialist evils far more than internal reasons for Iran's problems. Reformists who stressed Islam usually took the path known as Islamic modernism—basically the claim that all the positive values they had seen in the West—science, representative government, a better position for women, and so forth—were found in Islam if it were rightly understood. The Mojahedin-e Khalq, Shariati, and Khomeini had different views of Islam, but all were ideological and convinced that their path would solve the problems of the world. The popularity in the Pahlavi period of ideological views, especially Marxism-Leninism and nationalism, helped encourage competing political-ideological constructions of Islam, the most influential being those of Shariati and Khomeini (see chapter 8). Thinkers of the 1990s were more complex and sophisticated; they broke with ideologies that implied that ideological correctness could bring about an ideal society.

They also considered Western ideas to be complex and varied, not a solution to all problems (as had some earlier Iranian nationalists), not simple extensions of ideas already present in Islam or Iran, and not, alternatively, simply dangerous aspects of imperialism. Several of the new thinkers are well acquainted with both Western and Islamic thought, and, unlike many of their ideological predecessors, do not think huge social advances can be attained suddenly if people act in favor of a particular ideology. There has been a new stress on freedom of thought, including of religion, which earlier thinkers had tended to subordinate to anti-imperialism or other values, and also on the importance of democracy, greater gender equality, and new and fair laws. There have also been a variety of strong criticisms of clerical rule.

Probably the most influential thinker of the past decade is Abdolkarim Soroush, a lay professional with an extensive knowledge of both Islamic and Western thought. Born in 1945 in Tehran, he attended a religious secondary school, Tehran University, and the University of London, where he apparently did not finish his doctorate in pharmacology. In the immediate postrevolution years he was seen as a proregime ideologist, writing against Marxism and becoming a member of the High Council of the Cultural Revolution in the early 1980s. Sources differ on how responsible he was for Cultural Revolution policies, but this history is still held against him by some intellectuals. Many of Iran's leading reformers, however, have emerged from similar backgrounds, having been transformed from young enthusiasts of the revolution to effective opponents of policies and politics of the postrevolution regime.

When, soon after Khomeini's death, various new periodicals opened the door to debate on public issues, the bimonthly *Kiyan*, launched in 1991 and featuring lead articles by Soroush, was especially significant. It translated articles by a variety of Western thinkers. Soroush stood out by his intelligence, command of Western and Islamic knowledge, and ability to write and speak on either a popular or elite level. Though his writings, which, like those of Shariati, are often transcribed lectures, include contradictions and differences over time, a few summary points may be made about them. Among Islamic thinkers he early favored mystics like the poet Rumi and Persian philosophers who combined rationalism and mysticism, like the Safavid philosopher Molla Sadra, thus differentiating himself from the legalist interpretation and from current clerical emphasis on external behavior. Later he stressed the centrality of science and wrote against both mysticism and relativist postmodernism.

According to Afshin Matin-asgari, "This focus on rational and critical philosophy, as opposed to metaphysics, mysticism, and nihilistic relativism, is central to Soroush's contribution to the secularization of Islamic thought and a significant step toward bridging the gap between religious and secular intellectuals."²⁶ As against Shariati, he argued that Islam is open to different interpretations and should not be made ideological.

Entering more directly political ground, by 1995 Soroush endorsed as key features of Western development tolerance, free expression, women's rights, and democracy. He argues that the separation of church and state protects religion by freeing it from political interests. He criticizes the West for hedonism and imperialism but also notes that Iranian attacks on the West are oversimplified and confused. Soroush argues for a "democratic religious government" but rejects any single interpretation of religion or privileged role for a clergy. Central to his view of religion in government and society is his repeated insistence that although a true Islam exists, it is unknowable by humans, whose interpretation of religion necessarily changes with historical and other circumstances. Therefore, no one interpretation of religion should be enforced. Although some think his democratic religious government is a contradiction in terms, it may be compared to contemporary European Christian Democracy, in which Christian Democratic governments generally make no attempt to enforce Catholic doctrines not accepted by a majority of the population.

Most controversially, in 1995 Soroush proposed that interpreters of religion should not be paid but should have to make their living in other ways, an idea attacked by Khamene'i. This led to disruptions of his lectures and a physical attack, followed by his defenders' leading the largest demonstration at Tehran University since the first years of the revolution. From 1996 on, however, Soroush was forbidden to teach, and, like a number of reformers, has been abroad in recent years. Despite this and the closing of *Kiyan*, his influence continues strong, though there are now other similarly influential thinkers, some of them clerics and others more unequivocal secularizers than Soroush.²⁷

Unique to Iran—as the only state that has embodied clerical rule with populist republican elements, full of contradictions that soon came to be widely felt—are numerous writings by clerics that try to deal with the contradictions. Some clerical writers come down on the conservative side of most questions, but more original are clerical thinkers who adopt

novel views, the best known of whom are Mohammad Shabestari and Mohsen Kadivar.

Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari's long career started before the revolution. Now a professor of theology at Tehran University, he was born in Tabriz in 1936, spent the 1970s at the Islamic Center in Hamburg, and knows German intellectual writings and theories. His work stresses interpretation, including interpretations that are not derived only from the Quran and tradition. In his books and articles he says that only general principles are eternal, while specific rules and practices must change. For contemporary life the general principles of the sharia must be supplemented by the human and social sciences, which have wrongly been left out of seminaries. He cites the diversity of approaches to Islam of Ash'arites, Mu'tazilites, Islamic philosophers, and mystics in arguing for freedom of thought and free will. He stresses that the spiritual support religion can provide during modernization is totally different from having religion manage society, though he avoids overt polemics with the conservatives.

Shabestari distinguishes himself both from those who say people must adapt completely to the Quran and *sunna* and those who reject any such adaptation, and says that only the general values of government and society are tied to religion. Implicitly, unlike Khomeini and many Islamists who believe what is passed by parliaments is not truly legislation but only an extension of Islamic law, Shabestari alludes subtly to human legislation. His God is a font of ethical principles, while laws are not sacred. He in effect leaves open to humans the regulation of the family, social relations, politics, the state, the judiciary, and punishments. He says external critics of religion like Marx and Feuerbach can help the faithful to refine their concepts. He says there must be institutional guarantees of freedom; and, in what seems a veiled criticism of velayat-e faqih, he says Islam has no single form of polity; and that faith flourishes in states with institutional guarantees of freedom, checks and balances, a means for peaceful transitions of power; and a good parliament, judiciary, and economy. He denies that only the ulama are capable of knowing if a polity is compatible with Islam. He indicates that political institutions are civil, not religious. He does, however, retain conservative views on some personal matters and, unlike Kadivar and some others, does not directly criticize velayat-e faqih.²⁸

Among clerical writers, a critique of velayat-e faqih is found especially

in Mohsen Kadivar. Born in 1959, he received his early education in Shiraz. When the revolution came, he switched from engineering at Shiraz University to a seminary. In 1981 he went to a seminary in Qom, while concurrently doing university study aimed at a doctorate. He began writing, and in 1999 was sentenced to prison for his writings by the Special Court for the Clergy. Ironically, his arrest and eighteen-month prison term resulted in the dissemination of the writings and ideas of this previously little-known cleric.

Kadivar's writings make their points via exegesis of Shi'i thinkers, especially those who expounded Mu'tazilite theology or philosophers like Mulla Sadra, to support a view of the harmony of reason and revelation. He says if the externals of religion seem to contradict reason the externals need reinterpretation. Jurisprudence, *fiqh*, is in need of revision, which requires profound knowledge both of *fiqh* and of contemporary natural and human sciences. We must distinguish between universal principles and those meant for particular times and places. Like Shabestari, he concludes that humans may derive from religion general principles and values, but practical affairs are more in the domain of human experience (which implies secular norms). Different political and economic systems are needed in different periods, and complex industrial society is very different from past societies.

In talks Kadivar deals with other issues central to democracy. One of them, after analysis of Islamic sources, concludes, "Even though the popular interpretation of Islam in many cases does not reflect the freedom of religion and belief yet the other interpretation of Islam that is based on the original rules of Islam is in concord with the freedom of religion and belief that has been mentioned in the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights."²⁹

In his two books Kadivar sees velayat-e faqih as a main problem. The first analyzes and criticizes different relevant Shi'i views. The second, *Hokumat-e velayi*, also discusses different views and indicates the lack of Quranic or rational need for velayat-e faqih, and the lack of evidence to support it in the Traditions of the infallible imams. He notes that Shi'i theology does not discuss what type of government there should be in the absence of imams. Velayat (guardianship) in Islam is over those who are not fully competent to make decisions, while in *fiqh* the principle is that everyone manages their own affairs, disposes of their property, determines whom and whether to marry, what to wear, where to live, and how to behave. He tries to demonstrate that neither the Quran, the

Prophet, Shi'i Tradition, nor rational inquiry supports velayat-e faqih. He contrasts velayat with republicanism, saying that in a republican state people are equal and considered competent, and leaders must heed the views of their constituency. He believes democracy and velayat-e faqih are irreconcilable; there must either be a faqih appointed by God or an elected leadership. In his view, God has delegated political management to the people, who should elect leaders and have a constitution compatible with religion. In his first book his arguments are often implicit, coming from the examination of theories of other thinkers, such as Montazeri, who has become increasingly critical of seeing the faqih as a ruler and who notes that in Shi'i theory, divine appointment of rulers is suspended pending the return of the Hidden Imam. Montazeri is cited as saying that today rule must be based on popular elections. In his second book Kadivar declares his positions more directly. Like Shabestari, Kadivar stresses that Islamic elements should be restricted to general principles and values, while practical issues and social programming should be based on current human experience.³⁰

In a talk in the United States in 2002, Kadivar tied rejection of velayat-e faqih to endorsement of democracy:

Velayat-e faqih has no credible foundation in Islamic jurisprudence. It is a notion that is formed in the minds of a group of honorable jurists through a specific reading of a handful of Islamic passages. Refuting velayat-e faqih does not in any way undermine any of the Islamic teachings, requirements or obligations. I believe democracy is the least erroneous approach to the politics of the world. (Please note that least erroneous does not mean perfect, or even error free.) Democracy is a product of reason, and the fact that it has first been put to use in the West does not preclude its utility in other cultures—reason extends beyond geographical boundaries. One must adopt a correct approach, regardless of who came up with the idea; "look into what is being said, not at who says it."³¹

In January 2003 Kadivar left the United States in the middle of a Harvard fellowship and returned to Iran to join the current struggle. He immediately began making a number of important speeches in Iran calling for reform and predicting the downfall of the regime if reform is blocked. He called on Khatami to fulfill his pledge to resign if the two major reform bills are blocked. He also said the separation of religion and state is inevitable and a must.³²

In today's climate, when large numbers of Iranians are pressing for

human rights, the discourses of Soroush, Shabestari, and Kadiivar have been important in pointing a way to reconcile democratic government with a liberal view of religion that endorses essentially secular politics. As is the case with theorists who concentrate on the position of women, there are also secular thinkers who do not discuss Islam, and both groups have often cooperated in many ways—in the press, in the majles, and in demonstrations. A number of clerics have taken strongly reformist or democratic positions, with some attacking any privileged political position for the clergy, and among nonclerics appeals for secular government are increasing even more.

While Shabestari and other clerical reformers are clearly influenced by Western thought, we should take seriously their references to different trends within Islam. The Mu'tazilites, Islamic philosophers, and Sufis were, in different ways, more open to ideas like free will, natural law, and less strict observance of externalities of the law than were the strict legists, and even within the legal tradition there is much more difference and flexibility than is often thought. The formerly important Akhbari school of Shi'ism said that each individual could interpret the Traditions of the Prophet and imams, without need of an ulama. More recently, most of the top ayatollahs in Iran have either rejected velayat-e faqih as currently practiced, most strongly in the case of Montazeri, or stood aloof from politics, as did many of their predecessors. In part, contemporary clerical reformers are drawing on traditions that were strong in Iran or are following clerics who are outside the official sphere.³³

By 2002–03 dissatisfaction with clerical rule had spread even among clerics, at every level from clerical student through ayatollah. In the summer of 2002 Ayatollah Jalal ed-Din Taheri, the Friday prayer leader in Isfahan, resigned with a scathing statement attacking the clerical government,³⁴ and some months later he called on clerics to join one hundred majles deputies and others in defending Ayatollah Montazeri from house arrest and other indignities. His letter appeared on several reformist Internet news sites, which have become substitutes for about ninety publications that have been shut down.³⁵ Audio cassettes by Montazeri and other critical clerics circulate widely. Another grand ayatollah, Yusef Sane'i, has issued enlightened fatwas especially on women's rights and also on human rights and ethnic and sexual discrimination;³⁶ Hojjat ol-Islam Yusefi Eshkevari is still in prison owing to his participation in the Berlin Conference and to his liberal statements on Islam, especially those opposing mandatory veiling. Clerics of all levels are reacting to a grow-

ing public disaffection that is increasingly reflected in hostility toward them, from the well-known refusal of most taxi drivers to pick them up to the hostile reception they get if they speak at universities. More clerics are listening to the arguments of religious reformers, many of whom were students of Montazeri. Some note that Shi'i leaders before Khomeini did not advocate clerical rule. Some favor the separation of religion from politics and are open to an Islam that incorporates some modern ideas and behavior patterns regarding gender and other questions. Open expression of such views can bring arrests and punishment by the special court for the clergy, but some are letting their views be publicly known.³⁷

Growing Internet use generally and especially by the opposition parallels previous use of contemporary communications technology for oppositional purposes—the telegraph was central in the tobacco protest and the constitutional revolution, and audio cassettes in the 1978–79 revolution. The Internet and satellite television keep many Iranians, even those who only hear about them, aware of international developments, especially those that concern Iran, and the Internet is also used for international dissident communication.

Minority Populations

The situation of religious and ethnic minorities in Iran is a highly controversial subject on which not nearly enough research has been done and on which scholars and observers inside and outside Iran have very different opinions, often based on few locally verifiable facts. Hence, much of what is said below is tentative. It is not surprising that minority questions are controversial: As elsewhere, those who identify with minority demands for change tend to stress grievances, whereas those more concerned with Iran's territorial integrity or with its national or Shi'i identity often play down such grievances. There is concern that not only neighboring states and ethnic groups but also the United States could be using ethnic and religious grievances to undermine the unity and territorial integrity of Iran, and this concern goes beyond supporters of the Islamic Republic. In recent years there has been increasing recognition by the government that some grievances are genuine, and that it is in Iran's interest to try to address them.

While the constitution guarantees equal rights to ethnic minorities and recognized religions, including rights to worship and to use local languages, these rights are not always fully realized in practice. The

majority in the capital city, Zahedan. Iran has also taken in, at its own expense, some two million Afghan refugees, partly Sunnis, some of whom have gone home, but others remain in Iran.

To the Shi'i Arabs of Khuzistan province there now must be added a large and rapidly reproducing number of Shi'i Arab refugees from Iraq, who the Iranians hope will go home, as a number of them did during and after the United States war with Iraq. While the local Arabs identify as Iranians, the refugees do not, even though many want to stay in Iran.⁴²

The largest non-Persian ethnic group by far is the Azerbaijani Turks, who comprise about a quarter of the total population and are numerous in Tehran and elsewhere outside Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijanis mostly occupy the plateau, have close economic and cultural ties with Persian-speakers, and, perhaps most important, are Shi'is. Hence, despite past autonomist movements centering on greater local power and use of Azerbaijani Turkish, it seems most unlikely that they will break with Iran, despite propaganda in this direction from some Iranian Azerbaijanis abroad and from the ex-Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan. As before the revolution, some Azerbaijanis identify mainly as Iranian or Shi'i Muslim, some as mainly Azerbaijani, and some as two or all three of the above. Antiseparatist Azerbaijanis have included not only several prominent early Iranian nationalists like Taqizadeh and Kasravi, recent dissidents like Ayatollah Shariatmadari, Mehdi Bazargan, and some leaders of the left, but also several pillars of the regime, including Khamene'i. Many Azerbaijanis may be feeling increased ethnic identity, as well as resentment of Persian stereotypes of "Turks" as being dull or having other undesirable qualities.⁴³

Other important ethnic minorities include the major inland tribal confederations, notably the Turkic Qashqa'i and Shahsevan and the Luri Bakhtiari and Lurs, all in the west. Only a minority of these groups continues their annual migrations, while most have followed the trend toward settlement. The border ethnic regions also include nomadic or recently nomadic tribes. Although tribal peoples have been subject to religious restrictions on things like dress, music, and dancing, the major changes in the lifestyles of nomadic or formerly nomadic rural people have been more due to socioeconomic trends than to religious controls.⁴⁴ The central government has publicized economic and other measures for the tribes, but the resources devoted to them have been small.

Some of Khatami's supporters distributed election materials in the

Azerbaijani and Kurdish languages in 1997, and Khatami has continued to appeal both to ethnic and local groups through his work for two provisions in the Iranian constitution, for elected local councils and for increased recognition of free linguistic rights of minorities. The Iranian state has some genuine concerns regarding foreign exploitation of minority grievances and, regarding some Kurds and a few Azerbaijanis, having separatist ideas. Governments of whatever ideology are fearful and react strongly regarding separatism. Yet, failing to carry further than has been done to date programs to meet the cultural and economic grievances of minorities can only add to their disaffection and to the potential of separatist feelings and movements. It is wrong, however, to discount current governmental efforts regarding ethnic minorities, which have been significant.

Overall, most of the demands put forth by minorities are congruent with more general reformist demands for greater democracy, local control, economic progress and reform, and an end to clerical controls over law and behavior. Although there are disagreements within the all-Iranian reform movement, and also between the views of some minority reformers and some in Tehran, such divergences may not be insuperable if efforts to enforce Shi'i Islam are abandoned and the government grants more autonomy, targeted economic programs, and freer use of local languages than Iran has seen to date.

On balance the question of minorities, like many social, intellectual, and cultural questions, is one that has seen important changes since the revolution—changes that in recent years have gone some way to meeting minorities' demands. In nearly all these areas, Iran today appears to be in a period of transition, where trends toward urbanization, education, and some modernization of the economy and society have contributed to the spread of ideas and demands that are in conflict with vested governmental and clerical-bazaar interests.

Conclusion

Iran since the revolution is a prime example of a country whose political and social policies had unforeseen consequences, some of them undesired by those who initiated the policies. The increase in public health and encouragement of births in the revolution's first decade brought a fall in the death rate and a population explosion of those now aged thirteen to twenty-three. This is the very group who are feeling