Iranian Women: Between Islamization and Globalization

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Iran in the past two decades has experienced two contradictory phenomena: Islamization and globalization. The Islamic revolution of 1979 reversed the Shah's modernization and set in motion a process of Islamization of the Iranian society. Islamization was meant to cleanse the country of decadent Western culture that had infected its body and soul. To the revolutionaries who toppled the Shah, he was a symbol of Western decadence and cultural imperialism. Islamization was meant to move Iran back to its roots, traditions, and culture — a culture, of course, limited to its Islamic past and not pre-Islamic one.

Around the time the Islamic revolution succeeded in establishing a theocratic state in Iran and closing its border to outside influence, another process was taking shape on the world stage, namely globalization. Globalization, as a social, political, economic, and cultural force has been able to penetrate the most isolated and closed-off areas of the world. There are few cultures and society not affected by this force. How then can the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) avoid the forces of globalization emanating from the West? What are the effects of these two contradictory processes on Iran and Iranian people, especially women?

This chapter discusses the concept of globalization and shows where Iran stands with regard to this phenomenon. It then deals with the growing participation of women in non- governmental organizations, public activities aimed to increase women's consciousness, and social groups established in order to protect women's rights. After demonstrating how Islamization has limited and localized women's involvement in education, employment, health services, and family planning, the chapter discusses women's demands for participation in the global processes of democratic developments and autonomous civil society. It discusses the developments that have empowered women to demand both a more meaningful share of decision-making in the society and a curb on state's ever-expanding interest in controlling women's lives. It will demonstrate that against the repressive and restrictive environment of the IRI, Iranian women have been able to gather enough support to express their dissatisfaction with the state policies concerning women and to show their desire for inclusion in the civil society. They have begun to articulate an interest in developing voluntary non-governmental organizations and social movements responsive to and reflective of their own interests and concerns -- interests and concerns for adapting to the global changes taking place in the modern world. Finally, the chapter will show how the struggle for a civil society in Iran is a necessary step for allowing Iranian women to join and benefit from the forces of globalization.

Globalization:

Globalization is an abstract concept which has gained currency since 1989, the year in which globalization became manifest. Generally speaking, it refers to a host of

social processes taking place beyond, but having serious impacts on, national boundaries. As a sociological concept, it has several meanings, depending on the discipline, paradigm, and perspective within which it is defined and embedded. To some, it refers to the expansion of communication and technology and divergence of societal structures; to others it means the expansion of the capitalist mode of production and the subordination of peripheral countries to the industrial capitalist core, [1] and still for some others it implies a combination of both of these processes which ultimately lead to promulgation of similar technologies but diverse values and attitudes about them. Some have equated the concept of globalization with internationalization, [2] some with Americanization, [3] others with transnationalization, and still others with privatization of economies through the multinational corporations and international financial agencies. [4]

 Western economists and political scientists often use the term with the following in mind: a worldwide economic integration through market economies and free trade, the expansion of communications and information, and a desire by people around the world for normative pluralism and political democracy.   However, such characterization is not shared by all social scientists. Political economists view globalization as a distinct phase in the world economy beginning in the 1970s and characterized by the increasing transactions and institutions outside of interstate relations. [5]

In this chapter, I use the concept more in line with Harvey's notion of time and space compression [6] and Giddens' notion of "time-space convergence." [7] As such, it refers to the expansion of technology, communication, and science around the world and fusion of markets, capitals, and labor. A major corollary of these processes is a global consciousness resulting from the universalization of basic rights through time and space compression. Universal forces and values are influencing more and more people around the world. More and more people desire to have material and non-material choices beyond those present in their own local communities. The logic of international forces and currents generate influences beyond and above its temporal and spatial domains. The structures it creates acquire logic of their own and generate reactions and relations much farther than their own times and places. Actors at all levels, be it individual, regional, national, or international, are impacted and feel compelled to relate and react to its forces. The movement of ideas, images, products, and patterns of social relationships operates above the limits and boundaries established by the dictatorial regimes and isolationist states. Even in the most isolationist countries, products imported from other countries bring with them images, patterns, and modalities that influence the local patterns and force the local actors to react to them either favorably or unfavorably. For instance, Islamic states like Iran, who are determined to stay away from Western influences, find themselves fighting not foreign armies and imperialist tanks and war machines but McDonald sandwiches, Hollywood movies and Disney images, and Western pop music icons. [8]

 Engineered, developed, and exported by the Western capitalist countries, communication, information, and industrial technologies have laid the groundwork for the expansion of individualization, consumerism, materialism, market deregulation, and a desire for autonomy and self-determination by individuals, groups, ethnicities, cultures, and local communities. As a result of these changes, the desire for democratic change and participation in social, political, and economic processes has been rising, especially in countries with non-democratic governments.

More and more people view democratic processes as a necessary consequence of participation in global markets, communities, and organizations.

Globalization has activated a host of processes that were either nonexistent or in a passive mode in the past. International, transnational, and non-governmental organizations have become the major conduits for generation and diffusion of global products, values, and processes. Of course, such development has been aided by the expansion of neo-liberal policies advocated by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank by encouraging the borrowing countries to privatize their state enterprises, liberalize their markets, and deregulate their economies. These processes have contributed to the development of local organizations, micro-communities, and small businesses in the developing countries, thus helping the processes of localization of global demands initiated by those international agencies.

Demands made by the international financial agencies require the state to give up some of its distributive functions, cut back welfare programs, and give up some of its traditional communal tasks by transferring them to the corporate and private entities. These demands force the state-run economies to transform themselves into market-oriented economies in which individual and corporate initiatives are rewarded and supported by the state. Along with such transformation, the state also gets transformed from a guardian of universal interest to a guardian of particularistic interests of capitalist forces within the market. The transfer of state responsibilities to the private groups and citizens provide these entities with an opportunity to expand their roles in society and polity, thus expanding the civil society. Civil society, as the ultimate representation of the local interest, comes to be aided by globalization forces emerging beyond the terrain of local communities.

As both Harvey and McGrew [9] have noted, globalization, as a universal phenomenon, gives rise to opposite forces of particularism and localization. While promoting universal values, standards, and processes, globalization provokes particularistic reactions along the lines of nationality, ethnicity, and religious faith, particularly against Western cultural influences. While the globalization process has been regarded as rational, the reaction has been more emotional and often based on traditional sources of authority and legitimacy. As will be argued in this chapter, the global forces affecting the Iranian society during the Pahlavi period (1925-1978) antagonized the traditional forces and structures, thus leading to the overthrow of that regime. Even after the establishment of the Islamic Republic, the global influences have come to problematize the traditional structure of family and gender relations advocated by the Islamic Republic. They have put pressures on local practices that limit the abilities of women to participate meaningfully in the social world.

 The two sets of processes of globalization and localization are tied together dialectically and work with and against each other at the same time. Localization channels the global energy, directs it to the appropriate destination, and customizes it to the formats of the indigenous structures. In a dialectical process of give and take, content and form of globalization shape each other to the local needs and demands. At the same time, the local demands and structures modify themselves to global processes and institutions appropriate to their growth and expansion. Global structures and changes then are integrated with local traditions and existing social structures.

Iran and Globalization

In 1962, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, the ruler of Iran at the time, launched his White Revolution as a precursor of raising Iranian society to a globally competitive country. In fact, he promised Iranian people to move them toward the Great Civilization (*Tamaddon-e Bozorg*) soon. [10] Though his reforms were regarded by some as a ploy to undermine the landed aristocracy and religious stronghold on the Iranian society, [11] they generally resulted in the concentration of political power in the court, [12] transformation of much of the feudal class to a modern and dependent bourgeoisie, [13] modernization of social relations of production, incorporation of women in the labor force, secularization of the Iranian society, and the expansion of modern educational system. All in all, this "revolution" was meant to increase Iranians' consciousness of modern values, push Iran forward towards a modern society, enfranchise Iranian women by allowing them to vote and participate in the political process, and encourage the development of a middle class. [14] Of course, all these developments were dependent on the money received from sale of the Iranian oil and the friendly political support of the United States.

During half a century rule of Pahlavis, socio-economic status of women improved over the time, but within an apolitical framework in which they were to serve as token of modernity not as modern individuals with equal rights and equal participation in social, economic, and political arenas. Women's education and limited social participation were encouraged, but even the Shah opposed women's liberation from traditional roles. [15] Though Shah's sister became a spokesperson for women's affair and represented Iranian women in various international forums on women's status, she did little to oppose patriarchal attitudes present even in the court. Most women's organizations established in this period were devoted to charity and welfare activities. The most successful and effective elements of Pahlavi's modernization plan for women were in the areas of education, family planning, enfranchisement, and employment in the service sector. [16] This limited and managed "emancipation from above", though nominally effective in removing some barriers to improvement of women's status, somehow delayed active and meaningful participation of women in society and politics.

 One of the consequences of Shah's increasing alliance with the United States, and reliance on the Western form of modernization, was the alienation of religious forces, national bourgeoisie, and most of the modern educated classes. While the religious groups were alarmed by the increase in Shah's repressive power, affiliation with foreign governments, and his Westernized way of life, the secular intellectuals and educated middle classes could not tolerate his repressive politics and blind fascination with the Western values. As a result, the Shah found most of his "subjects," as he viewed them, opposed to his push toward what Iranians saw as Westernization of the Iranian society. [17]

For Ayatollah Khomeini, a high-ranking cleric opposed to the Shah's rule, the Shah was a local puppet of foreign forces, particularly the United States. His opposition and successful overthrow of the Pahlavi regime in 1979 was meant to free Iran from Shah's despotism and dependence on foreign powers. Once successful in getting ride of the Shah, Khomeini began his hidden agenda: Islamization of the Iranian society, establishment of a theocratic state, and eradication of all foreign influences in politics, economics, culture and society. The Iranian society was cut off from the international

community by redefining it as a religious society with a theocratic state whose mission in global context was not to coexist peacefully with other states, religions, and ideologies but to confront them with a new brand of Islamicism as the ideology of oppressed. Immediately after the overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty in Iran, Khomeini set himself to export his revolution, beginning a new globalization of the sort, i.e., an Islamic globalization.

With the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI), the process of globalization initiated by the Shah came to a temporary halt and a rough re-start. Since its inception, the IRI began a process of decoupling the Iranian consciousness from the globalizing values promulgated by the Pahlavi regime by reversing much of what the Shah had done in terms of integration of Iran into global social forces. Using Islam as a blueprint, the clerics dominating Iranian politics in the past two decades have done everything to move Iran away from the universal processes and values in favor of particularistic, religious, and local traditions. They have established an inward looking ideology defending their localistic values, rejecting universalistic and hegemonic Western values, and navigating the world with a puritanical gauge separating the right and the wrong.

 Women, who had a significant role in the opposition to and successful overthrow of the Shah, were the immediate losers in the newly established Islamic government. The movement against the dictatorship of the Pahlavi did not mean the liberation of women. During the revolution women were only used in revolutionary work, by all parties involved, [18] but not in revolutionary decision-making. In the development of the constitution of the newly established republic, women had no input. In the political institutions developed after the revolution, a few women were elected to the first parliament in a token ticket. Though in the first two parliaments these women initiated some legislation on women, by and large their presence in those early years, when the parliament was occupied with war issues, was inconsequential because they were basically "ya-sayer" to the male decision-makers. [19] The Islamic Republic treated women as recipients of state policies rather agents in the construction of the new state. Such a treatment left women out of the decision-making process regarding the new institutions, thus ignoring their needs and concerns at different levels of institution building and state formation.

 In the economic arena, failing to maintain the semi-industrial economy of the Pahlavi era and a stable currency, the Islamic Republic has created a crony capitalism marked by low productivity, high commercialism, high dependency on oil prices, and runaway inflation and currency devaluation. Early in 1980s, the IRI nationalized much of private industries and businesses as part of a drive to free Iran from dependent capitalism and to ensure social equity. From the start, these industries and businesses were plagued by mismanagement, corruption, and cronyism. Many state firms performed at a fraction of their capacity. With contradictory and often shortsighted economic policies, the IRI drove Iran's economy into the ground.

 After the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), the first five-year economic development plan was launched in which inefficient state firms were to be sold off. This effort also was marred by corrupt practices and many of these firms went to favorite members of the ruling elite, thus further contributing to the established clientalism. [20] Today, still over 80 percent of business and industry remains in government hands.

Privatization of the economy began in 1990 during the presidency of Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. After coming to power in August 1997, President Khatami's government took up the task of privatization again and around 4,000 state firms, many of them loss-making, were put up for sale or dissolution. In 1998, Khatami set out to salvage Iran's economy by improving conditions for foreign investment, increasing non-oil exports, accelerating privatization, and reducing red tape. In the same year, Iran's economy suffered from the reduction in oil prices in global markets, thus cutting around half Iran's total revenue and confronting the government with $6 billion revenue shortfall or one-third of its budget. As a result, most development projects were suspended and payment for foreign loans had to be rescheduled. [21]

 Its post-revolutionary crony capitalism has created an excellent opportunity for growth of parasitic institutions, groups, and individuals that utilize their access to the state for economic gains and exploit the economic vulnerability of the public for political gains. The Motallefeh Group (the rightist faction in the Islamic Republic representing the interests of Bazzari merchants and conservative Ayatollahs) are a typical example of these groups. Clerical groups and their functionaries controlling various foundations are another example. While the Iranian society in the past two decades has gained a new class of commercial elites as extremely wealthy nouveau rich (importers, traders, senior officials in various foundations, and middlemen of all kinds), the income of the majority of Iranians has declined drastically. The rising unemployment, the increasing number of youths, and a declining economy has caused serious challenges for the well being of the coming generations. Forced by the necessity of globalization and the demands of international agencies to cut public spending on the one hand, and the growing size of the poor on the other, the Iranian government has been seesawing between the rhetoric of monetary belt-tightening and actual increase in government size and public spending for war veterans and poor people.

 The third five-year economic development, to begin in March 2000, calls for greater foreign investment, reduction of red tape, boost in non-oil export, and less reliance on oil production as the source of state income. The IRI has had these goals since 1980 but has failed to progress much towards them. The IRI finds it politically difficult to move away from its revolutionary rhetoric, thus continuing to subsidize the economy in order to prevent social unrest among the general public and economic hardship for those who fought in the war with Iraq and continue to remain loyal to the regime. In the current Iranian year that started on March 21, 1999, the government set aside 7.548 trillion rials in subsidies for basic needs such as bread, milk, meat, and oil. [22]

 These conditions do not fit well into the structural requirement of modern global economy. The Iranian economy has lost its ability to provide jobs for its citizens, foreign exchange for production, and a decent standard of living for Iranians. [23] Iran continues to rely on oil for some 85 percent of its hard currency revenues and roughly half the state budget. Though most years the government has declared inflation between 15 and 20 percent, all experts and every Iranian knows that it has been between 40 and 60 percent annually. [24] Given the increase in population, from 35 million at the time of the revolution to 65 million now, Iran is facing serious crises of unemployment, drug use, and alienation among the youth. Official estimates of the number of drug addicts in the country are as many as 1.2 million, many below the age of 30. [25] Half of Iran's population is aged under 20, and 900,000 reach working age each year. Official estimates put the jobless rate at some 15 percent while unofficial

figures place the number closer to 25 percent. Today, half the population lives below the poverty line, with an income of less than $50 a month. [26] Some two million Afghans and tens of thousands of Iraqi refugees living in Iran worsen this already bleak scenario. While the Iranian currency continues to be devalued (from 70 rials for one dollar in 1979 to around 9000 rials in July 1999), foreign debt has also continued to increase to $22 billion or 21% of GNP (June 1998). These conditions have had devastating effects on the economy and the standard of living.

The failure of the Iranian economy is not just the result of mismanagement, war with Iraq, and foreign boycotts. Much of it is also due to the way in which the economy and society structured along the Islamic laws. Interest banking is forbidden, while interest bearing transactions continue to exist, albeit with ideological twists in definition of those transactions. Foreign investment has been non-existent due to the arbitrary conditions governing the investment, changing rules governing export/import, fear of and negative attitudes towards Western financial institutions, a constitutional law limiting foreign investment in certain activities and trades, unfavorable labor conditions, bureaucratic gridlock, widespread corruption, social and economic insecurity, and revolutionary rhetoric and factionalism affecting business activities.

After the revolution, Iran's tourist industry, where the local and global meet, collapsed as a result of the Islamization and the war with Iraq. Islamic codes have made it very difficult for foreign women and even men to have a normal traveling experience in Iran. To travel to Iran, women have to cover themselves with Islamic veil, completely avoid public physical interactions with both unrelated and closely related males. According to law, all shops, restaurants, cinemas, and government agencies must not serve women who violate the dress code. In the past two years, religious hard-liners have harassed foreign tourists visiting Iran by shouting anti-Western slogans. In August 1999, foreign females who traveled to the city of Isfahan to view the solar eclipse were attacked because they were in full compliance with Islamic codes of dress and conduct. In recent years, attempts to bring foreign visitors have had limited success, earning only several hundred thousand dollars a year despite Iran's wealth of historical sites and varied climates. Furthermore, constant high inflation, high unemployment and economic recession have given way in recent years to a mounting wave of kidnapping, attacks and armed robberies — a development that has kept foreign tourists and investors away from Iran. In the first part of 1999, several foreigners were taken hostage for economic gains. For the first time, these crimes have forced Khatami's administration to ask the parliament for legalization of private detectives, bodyguards, and private security companies.

Tensions between globalization and Islamization

There were two inherent tensions in the idea of Islamization proposed by the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran. The first was the tension between globalization and localization. Khomeini's Islamic ideology simultaneously advocated globalization of Islam outside of the country and localization of societal norms and values inside Iran. Rejecting modern influences and foreign cultural invasion, his ideology promoted indiginization of values and faith while pursuing the idea of "exporting Islamic revolution." He opposed Western influence on social, economic, and political aspects of Iranian life because they were "foreign" and "decadent." He localized Iranian social life by disallowing most modern attitudes and behaviors whose sources could

be traced to the West. The Family Protection Law of 1967, which had secularized marriage and put some limits on men's ability to divorce their wives willfully, was canceled immediately. Legal age for marriage, which had been raised to 18 by this law, was reduced to 14. Wearing ties and short sleeves by men were banned, Western music and films were disallowed to be played on the Iranian TV and radio, and women were discouraged to wear skirts and blue-jeans, even under the traditional veil. Even men were discouraged from wearing short-sleeves in public. Islamic ideology advocated by Khomeini as a universal ideology had little patience with and tolerance of other cultures, values, and norms. In April 1995, the parliament banned possession of satellite dishes as "satanic dishes" bringing "Western depravity" into Iranian homes.

The second tension was between nationalism and transnationalism. Ayatollah Khomeini launched his movement against the Shah and the West from inside Iran. His movement has continued to remain, despite of its broad influences around the world, localized in Iran. In early stages of his return to Iran, Khomeini advocated an Islamic globalization that was not dependent on the nationality and territoriality. He wanted to export his revolution to all Muslims around the world. He had no particular feeling about Iran as a national entity. [27] Once Iraq invaded Iran in 1980, Khomeini had no choice but to resort to nationalism as a means of mobilizing resistance to Iraqi intrusion. With prolongation of the war for eight years, Khomeini found himself forced to forego some of his ambitious dreams for becoming the leader of
Muslims around the world and accept Iranian nationalism as a necessary source of mobilization for the war. By the end of the war in 1989, Khomeini had failed on both fronts: in overthrowing Saddam Hussein in Iran and in exporting his revolution abroad. [28]

Iranian Women and the Islamization

The Islamic Republic claims that its approach to women's status in society represents one of the best global models present in the world. In fact, in 1995, then president, Ali Akbar Rafsanjai, claimed that women in Iran had the most progressive status in the world. [29] Other officials in the IRI, even females, have uttered similar statements. In 4 July 1999, Zahra Shojaie, the advisor to President Mohammad Khatami on women's affairs "stressed that Iranian women are considered as a model for other women throughout the globe." [30] The reality is, however, far different from this. It may be true that the status of devoted Muslim women in Iran is much better than their sisters in Arab countries in the area or women in Afghanistan and Pakistan. However, there are other Muslim countries, such as Tunisia, in which women generally enjoy many more social and economic rights. [31]

Since the late 1970s the world has been more and more affected by global forces and countries have experienced greater pressure to open their borders, enrich their intellectual horizons, and expand their cultural bonds to forces outside of their own domains. I contend that during the first decade of its existence, the Islamic Republic of Iran resisted these forces and attempted to disconnect Iran from some of the global forces that had previously shaped the social, cultural, political and economic aspects of that country. As far as Iranian women are concerned, a localization or nativization process that has limited their life chances and social choices has accompanied this religiously motivated process of deglobalization. They have been forced to abandon

their choice of clothing, employment, education, and life-style for a more localized normative system customized to the taste of clerical establishment.

 The establishment of a theocratic state in Iran was accompanied with the rise of numerous boundaries separating men and women in society: males and females were separated in higher education classes that were once coed, females were barred from some professions such as judiciary and singing, and female students were barred from certain disciplines in the universities like engineering and agriculture. A decree dismissed all women judges and barred female students from law schools. Women were forbidden to participate in some sports and disallowed to watch men in sports fields. Erection and maintenance of these boundaries and limitations became a major part of government's social policy and a permanent task of special forces within the state, both military and civilian. A female vigilante group (*dokhtar'an-e Zaynab*) was organized to maintain state codes of female appearances in public, and even some private, arenas.

 Using Papanek's words, [32] the Islamic Republic viewed women as the "carriers of traditions" whose existence was threatened by foreign forces of globalization. In the face of this assault, stability and survival of the Muslim family was in danger. To protect this family and its central element, i.e., women, they were to be shielded from these foreign forces and unwanted influences. To do this, it became necessary to keep a close eye on the women's body, sexuality, and social activities. Women's sexuality had to be limited to the their husbands, their bodies to the home, and their roles to a trustee of the family. This timeless and androcentric notion of family is very important to the Islamic ideology not only for its reproductive, social placement, and maintenance functions, but also for its role in localizing female identity through socialization of girls. Family is viewed as the natural arena through which gender identity is formed and operationalized, gender stratification is fortified, and women are protected from all that is deemed unnatural to them. This Shia vision of family is based on a nostalgic and idealistic notion of Imam Ali's family in which Fatima Zahra (the Prophet Mohammad's daughter) dedicated herself to both her husband and Islamic cause. Other role models for women often cited by the officials and ideologues of the IRI are Khadijah, the prophet Mohammad's wife, and Zaynab, daughter of the first Shi'i Imam Ali. In fact, the IRI replaced the universal Mother's Day with Fatima Zahar's birthday.

 To implement its localization policy with regard to women, the IRI tried four concurrent strategies: First, it began to limit the global mobility of meanings associated with women's rights by branding the idea of women's rights as Western and un-Islamic, thus demanding they be left behind the borders. Books advocating feminist ideas were either totally banned or partially censored. Western educated women's access to public media was curtailed. Many female employees in the TV and radio stations were either simply fired due to their high-ranking positions in the organization or demoted to less visible and less influential position thus limiting their access to public opinion. Magazines advocating Western feminist ideas were compelled to discontinue their practices or risk being banned or censored. On several occasions after the desired purification of the media, the Islamically approved media found itself in the difficult and awkward position of defending the publication of an article or airing of an opinion found unfavorable to the Islamic ideologues. Even in the 1990's liberalized government of the President Khatami, ***Zanan***, a magazine devoted to women has been taken to court for publishing articles deemed favorable

towards Western feminism or offensive to conservative religious establishment. In April 6, 1999, the court banned ***Zan***, the only newspaper devoted to women and run by Faezeh Hashemi, the daughter of former President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, because it had published part of a New Year message by the Shah's widow. [33]

 Second, the state limited the spatial mobility of women, especially secular women. Women could not be in all places at all the times. Public theaters were separated into male and female sectors. University classes were divided into male and female parts. Buses also were divided into male and female sections. Females would risk encounter with moral police if ridding bicycles or driving alone at night or on unexpected roads. Several attempts were made to separate transportation according to gender — a policy in force in Saudi Arabia. In 1994, some 300 taxis were allocated for the transport of female passengers only. [34] However, the rising population, mushrooming urbanization, shortage of transportation, and popular opposition has made such attempts unsuccessful.

 Third, the state limited the interactional mobility of women by limiting and conditioning their interaction with male strangers, even young boys! Even as late as 1999, Khatami's liberal government is still expanding these limits. On April 4, the education ministry issued a statement forbidding "the presence of women teachers in classes with schoolboys over the age of 10." [35] Association with men outside marriage and marrying a non-Muslim are forbidden and punishable. If an unrelated man and woman are found interacting with each other in a secluded environment, they will be subjected to police interrogation and are forced to provide documents of marital or blood connection. In case of failure, both are taken to police station and punished for their immorality. Male and females students are not allowed to look at each other intimately or even exchange smiles in public places. According to a report by Agence France Presse (June 11, 1994), Iranian police warned women against "untimely" smiles to strangers and behavior that would provoke "satanic desires". In the same week, the ***Jomhouri Islami***, a conservative paper owned by the leader of the Islamic Republic, urged police to pressure "women and young girls to keep themselves covered "before looking out the window". The paper added: "…appearing without Islamic covering can arouse the covetous looks of the strangers and the satanic desires." It also warned women about "misplaced smiles" or behavior that could "expose them to corruption". The burden of these draconian rules become clear when one realizes that one cannot engage in these activities even in the absence of moral police. Often students are arrested unexpectedly on the ground that they have been secretly found smiling, interacting, or coming to touch with an unrelated member of the opposite sex. These encounters do not have to be real all the time. In many occasions religious forces use such accusation either to extort money from their victims or settle personal scores. Even the state has used male-female relationships as a means of control and punishment against its opposition. Many members of political oppositions (i.e. the writer Ali Akbar Sirjani and the editor Faraj Sarkouhi) were accused falsely of intimate relationships with unrelated women.

 Fourth, the Islamic state began to domesticate women by forcing many of them to give up their jobs and return home, thus limiting their occupational mobility. Domestication of women was a policy fit for the localization of female labor and its exploitation in non-wage activities at home. During the early years of the IRI employed women were specifically asked to give up their jobs in order to open up employment for their men. Domestication of female labor released both the

government and private sector of responsibility to provide for the welfare of female labor. At home, these women are left to care for their husbands or parents. They become a source of free labor for the society without any reproductive cost. At home, they are tied to antiquated customs and traditions that channel their energies into reproductive, emotional, and domestic work.

 Although in terms of their goals and substance the two processes of globalization and localization worked against each other, their implementation followed a tumultuous road that was neither direct nor continuous. The implementation of each process was riddled with conflict, tension, resistance, gains, and losses. The gains and losses were partially determined by the amount of repression the state used in enforcing its policies, partially by the degree of legitimacy the religious forces had established in overthrowing the Pahlavi dictatorship, and partially by the amount of resistance shown to these policies by local and international forces affected by such policies.

 In the first decade of the revolution, the impact of the IRI's localization policies towards women was mixed. For religious women, who were practically banned from public engagement by their husbands and/or religious authorities during the Pahlavi period, their veiled public presence, something that the government was also interested in, was a symbol of liberation from social and spatial isolation. To them, the chador is a form of protection against the unwanted and undignified looks of sinful men. Today, if they wish it, and their husbands/parents agree, they find it much easier to appear and engage in public life. That such a public life is limited and controlled by religious men bothers these women less than if it would have been a morally inappropriate one. [36]

 However, the suppression of ideologies and Islamization of the society resulted in the large out-migration of educated and skilled sector of the Iranian society, including many women either as singles or married accompanying their husbands/parents. These families could no longer bear the impacts of these policies and could afford to leave the country and launch a risky but possibly freer life in foreign lands. Those secular forces that could not leave the country bore the brunt of restrictions imposed the Islamic state. For Western-educated, middle-class women, these restrictions resulted in a loss of social status, meaningful employment, and individual autonomy. To them, wearing a chador (an overall cover leaving out only the face) against their will was an insult to their dignity. The chador represented imprisonment, imposition, backwardness, and immobility.

 Islamic policies applied to women have had devastating effects on lives of Iranian women in general, and secular women in particular. Religious courts have condemned hundreds of women to death by stoning for adultery. Hundreds of women have been executed in prisons for their political defiance to the IRI. Numerous female prisoners have been raped prior to their execution. Thousands of women have been tortured in prisons for their political activities. Women all over the country are routinely harassed, jailed, fined, and flogged for their violation of dress and behavioral codes. [37] The Islamization of culture has pumped new life into traditional patriarchy present in the Iranian society. Wealthy men have taken advantage of the new rule of temporary marriage (sigheh) and have extended their sexual harem beyond and against the wishes of their regular wives. [38] Finding the court on their side, abusive men feel they have freer hand in imposing their wishes on their wives and daughter. These policies and the restrictive environment they have

created, along with the activities of hard-line vigilantes as hidden arm of the state, have resulted in a sense of powerlessness among most women, resort to divorce by many others, [39] and suicide by those who cannot bear them anymore. A study found that from 1989 to 1993 the suicide rate in the country doubled. This increase occurred largely among women. Suicide rate has been especially high among women in the small towns and religiously charged areas where social restrictions on women are much higher and there is less room for escape from or defiance to these rules. For instance, according to this study, between 60 to 80 percent of people committing suicide in Turkemansahra, Ilam, and Lorestan are young women. Most of these women were illiterate and poor and suffered depression. [40] According to Zahra Shojaie, adviser on women's affairs to President Mohammad Khatami, a new government study had found young women in the city of Qum, the religious capital of Iran where moral restrictions are excessive, are more depressed than those in the more liberal capital Tehran. [41]

Women's Resistance to Islamization

 The first and widest women's reaction to localization of rules governing women's behavior was the widespread opposition to Ayatollah Khomeini's order for universal female veiling. On 8 March 1979, some hundreds of thousands of women took to the streets of Tehran and several other cities in opposition to this decree. Initially, the regime reacted mildly by softening the language of the decree and trying to put a positive spin on its implications. However, finding women unyielding, the regime began a campaign of suppression that basically whipped out any open and public opposition to veiling. By the summer of 1980, veiling became mandatory for women in all public institutions. Failure to comply with the strict codes was enough cause to lose one's employment or educational status for those registered in various levels of educational system. This development took place in a context in which secular courts were replaced by religious and revolutionary courts and women's testimony in the court was downgraded to half that of a man's.

 With the consolidation of power by the regime, especially in early years of war with Iraq, women had no choice but to turn to more subtle and quiet means of resistance. The first and most effective means of resistance was symbolic: how to present one's body in public. How women dressed and handled their bodies and gestures in public arenas became a battleground for both suppression and resistance. The state became sensitive to the color, size, shape, and thickness of the fabric used for veiling. The slightest hair left uncovered on a woman's head was subject to verbal and physical attack by Islamic vigilantes. The kind of stocking and shoes worn, the amount and color of lipstick used, and the tightness of clothing worn determined conformity or resistance to state policies. One of the remarkable achievements of women in confronting the constraints imposed on them by the IRI is self-discovery and self-affirmation. As put by Esfandiari, "through the dress code, the state endeavors to define and symbolically control the role of women. By flaunting the dress code, women not only seek to score points against the authorities; they also strive to assert autonomy over their own persons." [42] These tactics continue to remain effective means of defiance and opposition up until today.

 In the second decade of the revolution, women's reactions to state policies and Islamic ideology were different. While in the first decade of the revolution Iranian women lost their ability to fight this regime openly, and the war with Iraq allowed the

regime to impose its universal control much easier, in the second decade of the revolution women have engaged in a new wave of resistance and demands that the IRI finds it harder to suppress. Demands for wider participation in society and the establishment of a civil society have been the hallmarks of the past decade, especially the last two years under President Mohammad Khatami.

After the war with Iraq ended, things began to change. Religious women who had accepted much of the rationales for their status in society offered by the religious elite and participated in various state-sponsored activities, including participation in the war for helping their brothers to fight an infidel Saddam, became impatient with the clerical establishment for several reasons. First of all, many of these women had given their lives, children, savings, and energy to a cause that they were told would succeed. The failure to win the war devastated many of these families and made them suspicious of the divine nature of commands issued by the clerical establishment. Secondly, a decade of war left most families poorer and demoralized. The economic decline had put extra pressure on women who bore the responsibility of caring for all family members. The economic failure of the regime to lift the status of the poor and eliminate poverty also proved to these Iranians that the religious leadership knew little about the economy and had no intention of yielding power to skilled individuals at the expense of their control. Thirdly, a decade of revolution had given the religious men a chance to prove their sincerity in what they preached: equality of men and women under the banner of Islam. In that they had failed. [43] It was not difficult for the religious women to see that much of what they were told as religion were told by religious men. Fourthly, a decade of division and suspicion between religious and secular women, often incited by religious leadership, began to wear thin. More understanding and compassion had developed between the two groups, especially as a result of discriminations and prejudices against the secular women who had continued to remain powerless and victimized.

Fifthly, a decade of isolation of secular intellectuals and secular forces had pushed them toward cultural and educational activities such as translation of feminist literature and the latest intellectuals' works in the West. Finally, the decade of 1980 came to an end at the time globalization and change were in full swing. Political changes and technological development around the world were having impacts on various social groups in almost all countries, especially women. Today, concepts like democracy, civil rights, women's rights, and citizenship are widely known and adhered to. Iran could not remain isolated from these developments, no matter how the clerical elite tried to prevent it. These developments laid the ground for re-emergence of women activism among both secular and religious women.

While the Islamic government's reaction to the globalization has been in the form of localization of identity, culture, traditions, and social norms, Iranian women's reactions have taken a course in between. Realizing the necessity of having access to the technological, scientific, and communicational skills of the globalized world, and working against a localized but totalizing religious ideology and state apparatus, Iranian women have begun to demand access to global resources but at a pace and in tune with their local needs and concerns. They have begun to connect their local conditions to global forces of patriarchy and social inequality. They have discovered the role of local agency and its impact on changing global structures. They are pressing against and going beyond the narrowly defined Islamic codes of femininity

imposed by the IRI. They are challenging the validity, universality, and generalizability of religious codes concerning female status within family and society.

 Realizing primacy of technology, science, and economic development, they are interested to learn and receive education in these resources but not at the expense of denying their own cultural identity and historical heritage. In response to government's demands for denial of their Iranian identity, they have emphasized their allegiance to their national symbols and cultural values. In response to its centralizing tendencies for power and control, they have turned to decentralization and diversification of women's participation in society, particularly in the form of non-governmental organizations.

Women and Civil Society

 One of the hallmarks of globalization is the increase in the role of civil society — families, tribes, neighborhoods, associations, guilds, etc. Globalization reduces the role of national governments and demands a more active participation of forces of civil society, individual citizens, media, organizations, and enterprises. As a crucial segment of the Iranian civil society, women have gained tremendous influence on government by promoting women's activism, stimulating politicians to react to women's needs, fighting against religious laws denying them career opportunities and the right to divorce, custody, and equal inheritance. Iranian women have learned how to eat the forbidden fruit, cross imposed lines, neutralize the effects of draconian laws affecting their lives, and erect a dam of resistance in the way of a reactionary flood threatening their existence. They are taking their traditional society further down the road toward sexual equality. They are changing their socialization practices by sending their daughters to school, allowing them to have careers, teaching them not to be shy, and asking them not to defer to men who do not defer to them.

 Since early 1990s, four forces have become the most vibrant aspects of the Iranian civil society challenging the clerical state: women, youth, intellectuals/writers, and the press. [44] Since Khatemi's election two years ago, press licenses have been granted much more liberally, spawning a proliferation of new magazines and raising the total of national daily newspapers to 26. The status of women in society has become a repeated theme of many of these newspapers and magazines. Twenty-nine of these publications are devoted solely to women, of which the following have longer history and wider circulation: ***Zanan***, ***Zane Rouz***, ***Payam Hajar***, ***Zan***, ***Payaam Zan***, ***Payam Haajar***, ***Jahaan Zan***, ***Kousar***, ***Neda***, ***Farzaaneh***, ***Al-Tahereh***, and ***Mahjoobeh***. [45] Among these magazines, ***Zanan*** has had a special role in advancing the gender discourse among both the religious and secular women. By reporting on various forms of discrimination against women and questioning much of laws affecting women's lives, ***Zanan*** has been able to generate lively discussion about gender issues both within and outside of the country. These discussions and dialogues, mostly carried out in print press, have created an empowering atmosphere in which Iranian women have been able to elevate their concerns for gender inequality to national issues.

 Women's support for Khatami's call to establish a "civil society" has been strong and steady. This support is indicative of women's desire for the establishment of an autonomous space in which they can regain responsibility for their social and physical well being. In this respect, the desired "civil society" is meant to secure a dignified

social space for various social groups, including women. The new energy and creativity women have brought to the Iranian civil society is fueled by their hope for freedom, equality, and democratic pluralism. By supporting Khatami's election, women have put enormous pressure on him and the IRI to confront the violence and indignities of Hezbollahis (vigilantes) against women in public and private spheres. Such pressures have forced the ruling cleric to distance themselves, at least publicly, from these street thugs whose physical attacks had been a major source of annoyance in women's lives.   Forced to deal with these groups, on 28 August 1999, the intelligence chief Ali Yunesi, after stating that most of these vigilantes are pious and motivated by religious values, admitted, "they are extreme, harsh, self-willed people headed for destruction." He finally acknowledged that "once, some of these people threw acid at the faces of women and deeply hurt the leader." Of course, the minister forgot to mention that at the time of this incident neither the leader acknowledged it nor did he do anything to prevent similar future acts against women. [46]

 Religious leaders often have used universalistic tone of some Quranic verses as evidence for inclusiveness of Islam and the universality of its message. Women activists, both religious and secular, have started to problematize the vagueness of these verses and question the fact that the interpretation of these texts has often been monopolized by male jurisprudence. In other words, female Islamic activists [47] have begun to deconstruct Islamic familism, the logic of gender separation, and meanings assigned to religious texts by ulama's androcentric interpretation. They have begun to expose the unequal division of labor, the widespread domestic violence, the dependency relations, and the inferior position assigned to women within the family in the Iranian Islamic family.   While these Islamic women accept the family as a natural unit for sexual satisfaction and reproduction, they question its organizational and exploitative biases against females. While accepting it as a natural shield against unwanted outside influences and as a protective unit generating meaningful religiously sanctioned relationships amongst its members, they point to the tensions, conflicts, and inequality hidden within the relationships within the Islamic family. These female Muslim activists have become so visible and demanding across the social and political spectrum, especially in media and politics, that they have forced Islamicists to come up with new strategies to limit their influences. They have been able to convince the Islamic clerics that gender does make a difference in the formation of public policy, especially as it relates to women's well-being vis-a-vis men.

 Women's demands for increasing presence in civil society has been in line with the demands by the general population for greater emphasis on environmental protection, sustainable economic development, gender equality, human and citizenry rights, rule of law, and non- violence. Both group interests and the general repressive conditions present in the IRI have caused women to support these values and treat them as women's issues. Women have discovered that their biggest enemy is ignorance caused by lack of education. Access to education and information has become the primary concern of parents, especially mothers. More women are realizing that education gives them independence and they are entitled to make choices. Therefore, more women are obtaining an education. Female enrollment in educational system has increased at all levels. Last year close to half of medical students and slightly over fifty percent of students entering universities were women. [48] Based on official statistics, from 1976 to 1995, literacy rates among urban women increased 160 percent, while for men this increase was 120 percent. [49]

Alienated from a state which divides its citizens to "we/insider" (*Khodi*) and "them/outsider" (*Ghayre Khodi*), a common distinction made by the religious elites, secular women and religious women who do not share the ideology of the state have to look somewhere outside of the state for a sense of belonging and identity. When the concept of "nation" is usurped by the ruling elite as a community of only "insiders" and the rest of society are characterized as "outsiders" and denied access to political processes, those outsiders have no choice but the develop their own communities/groups of "insiders" in order to gain a sense of identity and collective presence. Non-governmental organizations, social clubs, local associations become important sources of social identity. The number of these organizations has been increased dramatically. A government report in 1998 cites 46 registered NGOs. [50] Most of these groups and organizations are partially or totally tied to and/or dependent on the government. Their institutional ties to the state often cripple them in serving their constituency's interests. If engaged in serving their constituency, they have to be careful not to offend the state or run against its ideology and interests. Still, the mere proliferation of these groups has increased women's confidence and determination in gaining control of their own lives. Even the clerical officials in Iran have recognized the importance of non-governmental organizations for facilitating women's participation in the social and political arena. In a speech on August 11, 1999, Khatami called for women to take a greater political role in Iran, insisting that the sexes are equal under Islam. He called for the establishment of more civic and non-governmental organizations to benefit Iran's women. He insisted that "even if women are engaged as homemakers and don't take on outside responsibilities, facilities should be institutionalized for their active presence in the political and social arena." [51]

What is amazing is that despite the economic hardships which have reduced the lot of all Iranians and increased women's domestic and occupational tasks, women still find the time and energy to engage in collective activities of consciousness raising, political rallies, meetings, and social events. Women's demand for meaningful political participation has been present since the beginning of the revolution. Even religious women have been able to stretch the career limits established by the IRI. The number of women in the Islamic Consultative Assembly (majles or parliament) has increased to 11, out of the total of 270. Today, a female religious jurisprudents also sits on The Council of Experts, a body responsible for selection and supervision of the Leader of the IRI. Women, whose number of eligible voters is four percent lower than eligible male voters, make up 40 percent of votes in most elections. In the last presidential election in 1997, Azam Taleghani, a religious woman and daughter of one of the close allies of Ayatollah Khomeini during the revolution, nominated herself for presidency. The Guardian Council, responsible for vetting candidates and insuring the compatibility of all legislation with Islam, rejected her candidacy. Taleghani's candidacy opened up a can of worm that the IRI had difficulty closing. Women across the political and ideological spectrums and several male religious leaders have argued that there is not religious decree barring women from the presidency. These demands, plus women's support for his presidency, forced President Khatami to appoint a woman to his cabinet and appoint several more as municipal administrators.

Unfortunately, much of the gains by these women has remained at an advisory level and has not resulted in actual control at the decision-making level. Representation at

even these levels is both inadequate and skewed. First of all, there are not that many offices in which women are promoted to higher ranks. Second, many of the cases are really token positions established to appease women and give an outward impression of participation, although this tokenism will still have some positive effect in the long run. Third, most women appointed to high administrative positions are religiously conformist and politically committed to the ideology of the state and its view of women's rights. Many subscribe to misogynist ideology of the state and often show friendly reaction to policies that are blatantly against women's interests. For example, in 1998, two laws harmful to women's social and physical well being were passed in the parliament without effective opposition by female representative in that body: a press law forbidding instrumental use of female pictures in the press [52] and another separating male and female medical facilities with the stipulation that women have to be treated by female doctors, unless authorized by their husbands. Fourth, nationalist, leftist, secularist, modernist women, who either are against or indifferent to the ideology of the IRI, are excluded from any meaningful occupation in society and position in the government.

 Still, the presence of these women, even though mostly religious, in various layers of the government is an advancement over the early months of the 1990s when these women were thrown out of these positions. We should not forget that women's employment, particularly in the industrial sector, experienced a serious setback from 1980 to 1986. While it did improve to some extent by 1991, it never reached the level it had achieved in the late Pahlavi period. The presence of these women in various government and social occupations has brought women's issues to the heart of the system. The views and concerns demonstrated by these religious women increasingly resemble some of the basic concerns and views of secular women. These achievements, of course, remain still limited and constantly under threat by the Islamic state. In the most favorable scenario, when these efforts come to fruition, the state often undermines them by political clientalism, corruption, and co-optation. In the least favorable scenario, if found subversive to the state power and antithetical to its ideology, they are folded quickly and eliminated all together. Iranian women still lack the organizational infrastructure for a sustainable civil society.

 Recent participation of the Iranian women in the election of local councils in February 1999, was the latest front for independent women to demonstrate their desire for social and political empowerment. Nationally, there were 5,000 women among 330,000 candidates running for almost 200,000 seats. Many women, including President Khatami's eldest sister, age 61 and a mother of six, from the central desert town of Ardakan won seats on these councils. In a country in which women constitute only 0.3 percent of government managers, [53] women's presence in these councils can make a big difference in removing barriers to women's social and political participation.   These municipal councils are new vehicles of social participation and Empowerment for both men and women. Though provision for these councils had been made in the constitution, they were not implemented until early 1999 when Khatami decided to put this promise into action. A major goal of these local councils is to decentralize political power and empower local politics where individuals and groups might have a better chance of participation and involvement -- a strategy well suited to the new women's movement in Iran.

Post-revolutionary women's activism in Iran

The post Cold War international atmosphere has been highly saturated with the discussion of women's rights, human rights, environment, ethnic violence, civil society, citizenship, and democratization. These global themes have become so commonplace that it is hard to find any national setting not influenced by them. These themes have created opportunity structures for the emergence of social movements across the globe. Given vast opportunities and promises created around the world by globalization, Iranian women find themselves positioned by the IRI on a shaky ground. To demand those opportunities in the midst of a repressive and misogynist state, Iranian women find themselves forced to be more concern with their basic rights, security against the unyielding forces of fanaticism, and dignity in face of two decades of assaults on their identity and status. In their battles with the structures of domination present in their daily routines at home, in the markets and factories, in the street and offices, and on buses and planes, Iranian women find themselves oscillating between two contradictory tendencies: between the desire to defy and to survive, between liberation and destruction, and between achieving peace of freedom and dealing with fear of violence.

A major aspect of Iranian women's desire for and participation in civil society is the dynamic by which these wishes are expressed and fulfilled. While there is no homogeneous women's movement in the country, there has been a rise in a number of organized women's groups in Iran. Since the death of Khomeini in 1989 and the presidency of Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafasanjani in the same year, there have been concerted efforts by individual women in various professions, especially the film industry and journalism, and public arenas in Iran. All groups of women, Islamicist or secular, skilled or unskilled, educated or uneducated, and old or young have begun to show a higher level of awareness to their conditions and to demand more control over the processes of their daily living, their relations with their parents, husbands, children, and men outside of their kin. This awareness, and its subsequent activism, are aimed at ameliorating women's social conditions, denouncing violence against women, resisting repressive policies of the state, and opposing discriminatory laws affecting women's lives. These women, working in different arenas and with varied voices and tactics are questioning power structures that engender inequalities between men and women. The importance of women's role in social and political change in Iran has caused some analysts to see them as the main source of the next revolution. Here are the comments of a CIA analyst:

"What is the strongest group in Iran from which the revolution could spring? That's an easy one: the women. They are a very vibrant group, very strong and they are influential within Iranian society. The women also hold one of the two last banners of the Islamic revolution by - excuse the expression - the balls: the chador [the black robe worn by devout Muslim women]. The other banner is hatred of the United States and Israel. The chador is the way in which the revolution is manifested in every square, on every street. Through the chador you create the feeling of an Islamic revolution in motion. Take it away, and bye-bye ayatollahs." [54]

While the strategy of women's groups in earlier periods was based on mass movement against the state, as expressed in anti-government demonstrations in the 1970s and early 1980s, the current strategy is to move in diffused directions, focus on incremental gains, empower local groups, and aim for smaller but sustainable changes. They are concern with tangible issues affecting their lives, such as the right of divorce, child custody, and inheritance. Suspicious of "vanguardism" and

"practical rigidity" of leftist and nationalist movements of earlier periods, [55] the post-revolutionary women's activism has a "self-reflective" dimension through which these women become active agents of their own lives by recurring and reinterpreting the imposed structures and relationships. Women are less committed to totalizing ideologies, grand theories, and broad organizations. Instead, they devote more of their political energies to localization of global values which remove parochial obstacles to their growth, preserve their identity and dignity against the assaults by the totalitarian gender policies of the state, and prepare a taller stand from which they will make their next move.

The post-revolutionary women's activism is marked by much greater individualism than ever observed in the past century, albeit not as individualistic as the one found in the West. Certainly, the new individualism is reinforced by globalizing forces of modernity weighing heavily on a country pushed away from those forces for the past two decades. This new individualism balances between individual, social, and global identities by emphasizing autonomy, nationalism, and globalization at the same time. It balances the emotional and rational, faith and reason, traditional and modern, and culture and civilization. The new culture of this activism can be best described by what Lubbers [56] has called a "we-culture" against the Western "me-culture."

Two decades of ideological and political works by the IRI to force a collectivist identity on the Iranian women not only have failed to produce the desired outcome but actually have given rise to a desire to strike a balance between the extremes of Western individualism and Islamic collectivism. Women have become less concerned about political power, revolution, and ideologies. They are more concerned about control of their own lives within political, social, and economic institutions, whatever the ideological configurations of those institutions. Interestingly, in the same way that the IRI has targeted their bodies as an ideological battleground for control, women have also put an important emphasis on the control over their body. Their body has become the battlefield with the IRI. The government demands these women to hide their physical and social identities. Women, in turn, are asserting their identities by peeling off layers of physical and ideological covers imposed on them. As one Iranian woman has observed, "lipstick is not just lipstick in Iran. It transmits political message. It is a weapon." [57]

The new Iranian women's movements have been able to articulate a more nuanced perspective of women's interests and concerns. These concerns include a greater awareness of human rights, individual rights, individual autonomy within marriage, family independence within the kinship network, and a form of national consciousness against the global diffusion of Western values. Their support for and desire to participate in celebration of the Iranian soccer success in the 1998 World Cup is one example of this nationalist consciousness. Large participation of female activists and even ordinary women in the funeral of the victims of state-sponsored terrors, nationalist activists Dariush and Parvaneh Forouhar, and writers Majid Sharif, Mohammd Mokhtari, and Jafar Poyandeh, is another example.

The Iranian women's post-revolutionary activism can be best characterized as what Melucci has termed "collective action without actors." [58] In these movements, actors retransmit the domination of the movement's own contradictions by reversing its imposed codes of meanings, subjecting its boundaries to pressures and inevitably contraction, and exposing its nature by personal declaration of its cruelty through

various mediums available to actors. It also can be argued that very much like what Rowbotham described years ago in regard to the feminist movement in a different context, these activities are without direction, leadership, and structure. [59] These features can be both negative and positive, depending on what kind of politics is involved, what kind of goals a movement has, and how it produces the conditions of its own exhaustion.

 While it is true that there is little coordination between women's activism in different sectors of the society, thus little predictability associated with them, it would be wrong to underestimate their gradual and evolutionary effects on both women and the Islamic state. On the government's part, this social awakening/activism, accompanied by a high level of defensive self-activity, has increased the cost of social control for the Islamic state enormously. As a result, not only social control requires higher energy and social investment by the state, at the same time it has become less effective in gaining compliance from citizens. It has also reduced the internalization effects of the dominant ideology and has increased the necessity of resorting to external means of violence as a means of insuring compliance with state regulations and ideological stipulations. Many legitimization tools used by the Islamic government in the earlier periods have lost their validity and become ineffective, thus forcing it to react to any transgression more lethally. Furthermore, high activity, high visibility, and widespread presence of women in social contexts will open greater space for them, thus reducing the patriarchal space.

 On women's part, their higher self-consciousness and self-activity have resulted in a creeping change in the public attitudes towards them, especially within the government and media. Women's activism and their higher level of awareness have put tremendous pressure on the Islamic state to ease up on its control and restrictions. Of course, technology and globalization have been important contributors to this situation. The speed with which information has flown into the country, despite enormous efforts by the Islamic state to block it, has made it hard for the government to hide its corrupt practices and repressive measures.

 Another feature of new female activism in Iran is its reliance on women as the source of change. Learning from the unsuccessful past experiences, where women's emancipation would have come naturally and automatically with the success of national struggle against dictatorship and imperialism, Iranian women have begun to form their own organizations, forums, and groups, away and separate from men's organizations. These organizations, groupings, and collective endeavors allow them to discuss universal and national issues from their own particularistic perspective so that their specific concerns receive focused attention. Though these all-women organizations often help to promote the separatist policies of the IRI, they do have positive sides as well. In a traditional society where there is high sensitivity to male-female interactions, these new all-women organizations reduce traditional male sensitivity to women's participation in organized activities outside of the home. This was an important factor among religious and traditional families during the Pahlavi era, whose women were not allowed to be an active participant in public arenas due to male presence.

 A major weakness of the emerging women activism in contemporary Iran is its weak link with the international women's movement structure. Some Iranian women's organizations have participated in the Nairobi and Beijing conferences on women and

have been involved with the UN commissions on woman's rights. However, these organizations are either the extension of state or controlled by it indirectly. The Islamic Republic has screened the participation and agenda of all the groups present in these international forums. None represented secular women who are working outside the confines of the state. NGO's participating in these conferences enjoyed either the blessing of the Islamic state or had to make sure their words and actions in these foreign forums do not trigger Islamic sensitivity at home.

To be successful, women activists need to go beyond their current efforts and open a dialogue with labor, political factions, economic institutions, and international human rights groups in order to inform them of women's concerns and needs and point out the androcentric aspects of Islamic policies and positions. Dialogue among women's groups, solidarity with women's organizations within and outside the region, and interaction with various agencies representing the interests of women are necessary steps in strengthening and expanding the scope of these women's efforts.

Endnotes

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17. Nikki R. Keddie with Richard Yann. ***Roots of Revolution***. New Heaven, Conn.: Yale University Press.

18. See Haideh Moghissi, ***Populism and Feminism in Iran; Women's Struggle in a Male-Defined Revolutionary Movement***. New York: St. Martin's Press. 1994.

19. For a review of developments in this period, see Parvin Paidar. ***Women and the Political Process in Twentieth-Century Iran***. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. 1995.

20. See Hussein Saffaar Harandi, "Economic Security from Three Perspectives" ***Kayhan***, 7 Shahrivar. 1378 (August 29, 1999).

21. See "Iran's Economy: Ailing, Still." ***The Economist***, August 14, 1999. U.S. Edition.

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25. See Colin Barraclough. "Iran Confronts a Long-Hidden Problem: Drugs." *New York Times*, August 29, 1999.

26. See Eric Rouleau. "Iran: an Economy in Need of Reform." *Middle East Economic Survey*, Vol. XLII, No. 27. July 5, 1999.

27. On an Air France jet to Iran in February 1979, a reporter asked Ayatollah Khomeini how he felt about going back to Iran after 16 years of exile. His response then shocked keen Iranians who were wary of his political intentions, and later many Iranians who blamed themselves for not being able to read such an obvious sign early enough.

28. See Oliver Roy. *The failure of Political Islam*. London: I.B. Tauris. 1994; Fred Halliday, "The politics of Islamic fundamentalism: Iran, Tunisia, and the Challenge of the secular state." in Akbar Ahmed and H. Donnan (eds.). *Islam, Globalization and Postmodernity*. London: Routledge 1994. It should be noted that historically Shiism has been a nationalist reaction to Arab's domination of Iran. Khomeini's political Islam, while de-emphasizing the division between Shia and Sunni, grounded itself in a Shii interpretation of politics in Islam. In the past two years, President Mohammad Khatami has tried more effectively to move this religious nationalism towards a more modern and secular direction. He has attempted to justify his call for an Islamic civil society by an appeal to the secular conception of nationalism advocated by the nationalist Premier, Dr. Mohammad Mossadeq.

29. Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), Tehran, March 8, 1995.

30. IRNA, August 4, 1999.

31. Valentine M. Moghadam. *Modernizing Women : Gender and Social Change in the Middle East*. Lynne Rienner Publishers. 1993.

32. Hanna Papanek, "The Woman and the Ideal Society: Control and Autonomy in the Construction of Identity," in Valentine Moghadam, *Identity Politics and Women: Cultural Reassertion and Feminism in the International Perspective*, Oxford: Westview Press, 1994. Pp. 42-75.

33. Early in the 1980s, when Ayatollah Khomeini was alive, the Iranian Radio and TV found itself in the position of angering him by airing an Iranian woman's honest opinion about her choice of a role model. In a call-in show, a woman named Usha, a self-sacrificing and hard working woman character in a Japanese TV serial aired at the time, as a better representation of the Iranian woman than Fatemeh Zahra, the daughter of Prophet Mohammad. The Ayatollah happened to listen this comment. To cool his anger, the manager of the program was sacked and efforts were made to keep the identity of the woman secret because in Ayatollah's view her words had qualified her for a death penalty.

34. Jomhouri Islami, February 6, 1994.

35. Agence France Presse, April 4, 1994.

36. See Ali Akbar Mahdi. "Reconstructing Gender in Post-Revolutionary Iran: Transcending the Revolution?" *Middle East Insight*, Vol. XI, No. 5, July-August 1995.

37. A simply indication of the number of these arrest can be found in a statement by the European Parliament indicating that in one year (9/91-9/92) some 113,000 women were arrested in Iran for violation of dress code. See *Iran Times*, 4 Mehr 1371 (September 1992).

38. See Shahla Haeri, *Law of Desire; Temporary Marriage in Shi'i Iran*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press. 1989.

39. According to a report by the conservative newspaper, Resalat (August 25, 1999), in the first quarter of this calendar year (March 21-June 21, 1999), more than 11,200 cases of divorce were registered, up 16 percent year on year.

40. Somayeh Askari. "Women, Main Victims of Suicide in Iran." *Farhang-e Tose'e*. A monthly Cultural, Social, Political & Economic journal published in Tehran (banned in 1999). February 21-March 20, 1998.

41. Reuters News, Tehran, August 29, 1999.

42. Haleh Esfandiari, *Reconstructed Lives; Women & Iran's Islamic Revolution*. Washington, D.C.: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press and The Johns Hopkins University Press. 1997. Page 133.

43. For some testimonies from Iranian women expressing their dissatisfaction with the revolution see Haleh Esfandiari, Reconstructed Lives; Women & Iran's Islamic Revolution. Washington, D.C.: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press and The Johns Hopkins University Press. 1997.

44. See Ali Akbar Mahdi, *Farhang-e Irani, J'ame'eh-ye Madani, va Daghdaghe-ye Demokr'asi (Iranian Culture, Civil Society, and Concern for Democracy)*, Toronto: Javan Publications, 1998. See especially chapters 9 and 13.

45. See "Majallaate Zanaan dar iran," *Payaam Hajar*, No. 225, Autumn 1375 (Fall, 1997). In a conference in Washington D.C. As reported by the Associated Press on March 18, 1999, Ms. Zahra Shojaie, President Khatami's advisor on women's affairs claimed that today "there are 70 magazines and other publications for women" in Iran.

46. Reuters News, Tehran, Aug 28, 1999.

47. I have avoided using the label "Islamic feminist" for these women. We have to be careful in labeling all Iranian women's social and political activism as "feminism," either Islamic or non-Islamic because many of these women themselves disavow the

label even though their cause and demands are nothing short of feminist causes and demands.

48. *Zanan*, No. 51, Farvardin 1378 (March 1999).

49. *Tehran Times*. December 12, 1995.

50. These organizations are Women's Solidarity Society (date of registration = 1991), Society of Iranian Women for Sustainable Development (1993), Association of Women against Environmental Pollution (1993), Society of Women Church Supporters (1961), Society of Women Church Supporters (1961), Armenian Women's Charitable Society (Under the supervision of the Supreme Council of Armenian Vicarage (1961), Assyrian Women's Society (1992), Society of Charitable Women (1981), Hazrat-e Khadijeh Foundation (1980), Hazrat-e Zeinab Foundation (1979), Hazrat-e Fatemeh Foundation (1993), Women Researchers Advisory Co-operative (not officially registered), Islamic Women's Institute of Iran (1978), Zeinab Society (1986), Women's Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran (1986), Women's Research and Study Centre (1986), Women's Baseej (Mobilization Unit) (1980), Women's Unit of the Labor House (1980), Yasaman Charitable Society (1983), Sajjadieh Noor Charitable Society, Zahedan Narjes Islamic Science Centre (1966), Midwifery Society of Iran (1990), The Islamic Society of physicians Women's Branch, Fatemieh Islamic Science School, Women's Charitable Society of Isfahan province, Women's Esmatieh Institute of Ahvaz, Narjes Sabzevar School, Women's Social and Cultural Institute of Hamadan, Women's Islamic Science Centre of Hamadan, Jewish Women's Society, Sharif university Alumnae Association, Qum Fatemieh College for Women, Society of Zoroastrian Women, Domestic and International Marketing Centre for Women's Production, Theatrical Centre for Women (1985), Society of Women Graduates of Al-Zahra University, Twelfth of Farvardin Foundation, Raad Charitable Women's Group (1994), Rural Women's Co-operatives (1992), Research and Engineering Society of Women (1993), Jewish Women's Representative Office, Shah-e Cheragh Cultural Foundation, Iran and Bosnia Women's Friendship Society (1994), Sisters unit of Co-ordinating Activities of Mosques, Banoo Publishing Institute (1994), and Society of Nurses. Source: A government report of the status of women located on the internet at: http://www.salamiran.org/Women.

51. Agence France Presse, August 11, 1999.

52. The law states that," commercial use of women's image and texts declaring women's issues, humiliation, insult, propagation of formality, use of ornaments, and defending women's beyond the bounds of legal and religious law is forbidden." This law goes beyond a 1993 ban on the use of women in advertising. Women's picture is not allowed on trademarks of any product.

53. Zahra Shojaei, Iran's advisor, gave this figure to president in women's affair, in a lecture in Zahedan, as reported by IRNA on 27, August, 1999.

54. Words of Reuel Gerecht, a.k.a. Edward Shirley, the CIA's top expert on Iran, "Their man in Iran." *Ha'aretz Magazine*, August 20, 1999.

55. See Haideh Moghissi, *Populism and Feminism in Iran; Women's Struggle in a Male-Defined Revolutionary Movement*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

1994.

56. R.F.M. Lubbers, "Globalization: an Exploration", *Nijenrode Management Review*, no.1, November 1996.

57. Quoted by Farzaneh Milani in "Lipstick Politics in Iran." *New York Times*. August 19, 1999.

58. Melucci, Alberto. *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society*. London: Hutchinson Radius. 1989. Pp. 75-8.

59. Sheila Rowbotham. *Beyond the Fragments : Feminism and the Making of Socialism*. London: Merlin Press. 1979.