



Picture : Ayatollah Khamenei  
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## Country fact sheet

# Iran

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# INTRODUCTION

**Country context** : On September 28, 2025, the Snapback mechanism shattered the architecture of the JCPOA, formalizing the rift with Europe and plunging Iran back into a state of structural isolation that recenters power in the hands of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The economy has shifted into a mode of “resistance” survival, operating in near-autarky through rents, barter, and parallel networks that sustain the state but block any reform, accelerating poverty, brain drain, and the disillusionment of a young and connected society.

Regionally, Tehran relies on asymmetric deterrence — through missiles, drones, cyber operations, and non-state proxies within the “Axis of Resistance” — to compensate for its exclusion from the Western system. A recent pivot toward the SCO and the BRICS in the East provides temporary geo-economic relief, at the cost of greater dependence on China and Russia, turning its proclaimed autonomy into de facto tutelage

Domestically, security recentralization has sidelined reformists, while social demands (including from women), religious disengagement, and the digital sphere erode the regime’s symbolic authority. Confined to a blocking or obstructive role, Tehran remains unable to emerge from an authoritarian stagnation that prevents any lasting transformation — at a time when all possible scenarios (militarized hardening, pragmatic opening, or unstable transition) converge toward the same deadlock, as long as social modernity and political legitimacy remain irreconcilable.



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picture: Masoud Pezeshkian -  
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# INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT & SANCTIONS



The activation by the European “E3” (France, Germany, and the United Kingdom) of the UN automatic sanctions reimposition mechanism (**Snapback**) - September 28 - marked a major turning point since the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on July 14, 2015. **This measure effectively terminated the legal framework governing Iran’s nuclear program** [1] and symbolized the breakdown between Tehran and the Western multilateral order. It has plunged Iran into a logic of structural isolation, accelerated the internal reconfiguration of power, and **reinforced its strategic realignment toward Russia and China.**

Originally conceived as a guarantee for Western powers, the Snapback mechanism **allows for the automatic reinstatement of international sanctions in the event of a substantial violation by Iran.** The JCPOA was based on a principle of reciprocity: Tehran agreed to limit its nuclear program (enrichment capped at **3.67%**, **uranium stockpile limited to 300 kg** [2] and to **accept strengthened inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), while UN and U.S. economic sanctions were to be gradually lifted.** The fragility of this arrangement was undermined by the unilateral withdrawal of the United States in 2018, followed by a progressive erosion between 2019 and 2025. European attempts at re-engagement under the Biden administration failed to restore confidence. Meanwhile, **Tehran accelerated its uranium enrichment, reaching 20% in 2021 and 60% in 2022,** while U.S. secondary sanctions prevented the return of European investors. In May 2025, IAEA reports confirmed that Iran had accumulated over **400 kilograms of uranium enriched to 60%**[3], prompting the European trio (E3) to trigger the Snapback mechanism. This decision formalized the failure of nuclear multilateralism and repositioned the Iranian issue within a broader geopolitical confrontation dynamic [4].



## A Rift with Europe

**The Snapback has led to a rupture in diplomatic ties between Tehran and European capitals.** Aligned with Washington, these governments suspended economic exchanges, blocked the sale of conventional weapons, froze the assets of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), and halted scientific cooperation [5]. For Tehran, this sequence illustrates the **failure of a foreign policy that sought to balance confrontation and openness. Since 2021,** Iranian diplomacy had attempted to preserve a margin of autonomy [6] by multiplying bilateral agreements with Hungary and Greece, maintaining petrochemical exports to Italy, and participating in several European cultural forums.

However, these initiatives have now become obsolete, as European chancelleries, under pressure from public opinion outraged by the repression of the “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement (2022), have hardened their stance. They now link the issue of human rights to that of nuclear proliferation, further deepening mistrust toward Tehran. **The return of sanctions thus acts as a lock, cutting Iran off from its remaining Western diplomatic levers.** In response, official Iranian discourse denounces a “historic betrayal” [7] by Europe, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs promotes an “Asian turn”, presented as the country’s new strategic orientation toward the East.

## A Managed Economic Constriction

The Iranian economy remains largely state-controlled and dominated by para-state entities, notably the bonyads and the IRGC conglomerates (Khatam al-Anbia, Ghadir Investment, Ansar Bank), which control the strategic sectors of energy, infrastructure, telecommunications, and trade. The return of the Snapback further intensifies the country’s economic strangulation.

1

Oil exports fall below one million barrels per day (from 1.4 million in the first half of 2025 to under one million by October 2025) [8].

2

Rial depreciated by more than 35% over three months, with inflation exceeding 45%.

3

Nearly 40% of the population has fallen into poverty.

The regime **relies on a so-called “resistance economy” (eqtesad-e moqâvemati)**, an official doctrine based on self-sufficiency, import substitution, and the regionalization of trade. This strategy **operates through complex parallel circuits, including front companies, semi-clandestine exports, and energy barter, primarily with China, India, Turkey, and certain Gulf countries.** While this model ensures macroeconomic survival, it severely constrains modernization, deepens dependence on a militarized form of capitalism, and concentrates rents in the hands of the IRGC and the clerical establishment.

Endemic corruption and the capture of revenues by paramilitary entities and so-called “charitable” organizations (bonyads) prevent any equitable redistribution. According to the World Bank, nearly 40% of the population now lives below the poverty line, compared with 27% in 2017 [9].

### **Political Instrumentalization of the Snapback**

The activation of the Snapback has strengthened the central role of the IRGC and security institutions within the regime.

**President Masoud Pezeshkian**, elected in 2024 on a platform of moderate reform, **has been marginalized by the dual oversight of the IRGC and the Guardian Council**. Effective power is now concentrated in the presidential security cell, controlled by the Pasdaran and the Ministry of Intelligence.

The Islamic Republic is thus undergoing a structural shift: the religious theocracy is gradually transforming into a militarized theocracy, where dogma serves to legitimize coercion and consolidate control over the economy and society [10]. This security centralization allows the regime to frame sanctions as acts of external hostility, reinforcing the narrative of national resistance and legitimizing the reconsolidation of executive power.

### **Possible Future Trajectories**

- **Authoritarian hardening and militarization:** strengthened role of the IRGC, marginalization of technocrats, resulting in negative stability but deepening impoverishment.

- **Pragmatic Opening:** limited negotiations aimed at easing economic pressure without challenging authoritarian centralization.
- **Unstable Transition:** a hypothetical scenario of institutional change, dependent on internal and social pressures.

# AUTARKY AS A GOVERNANCE MODEL



Picture : Drapeau de l'Iran - ©Canva

## Rentier economy under politico-military control

The Iranian economy remains largely state-run and rentier-based. The public sector dominates industry, energy, and infrastructure, while para-state entities — particularly the bonyads (religious or pseudo-charitable foundations) — play a central role in redistribution and social control.

Placed under the supervision of the Supreme Leader, these foundations operate as autonomous economic entities, exempt from taxation and any form of public auditing. They control between 30 and 40% of GDP [11], particularly in construction, agribusiness, and domestic trade. The bonyads and IRGC conglomerates (Khatam al-Anbia, Ghadir Investment, Ansar Bank) [12] dominate strategic sectors such as energy, telecommunications, finance, public works, and ports. **Oil rents, parallel import systems, and industrial monopolies serve to reproduce the political hierarchy, consolidating a form of militarized state capitalism.**

## Sanctions Evasion and Barter Trade

**Evasion mechanisms rely on front companies, offshore banks, and transactions in local currencies. Illegal oil trade and energy barter [13] — oil in exchange for Chinese goods, Russian grain, and Indian components — are essential to the state's financial survival.** The free zones of Kish, Qeshm, and Chabahar play a central role, providing vital foreign-currency inflows that sustain the military budget and food subsidies. Far from being marginal, this parallel economy has become a pillar of Iran's economic model. It enables **macroeconomic survival, but at the cost of structural informalization** — pervasive opacity, illicit financial circuits, and the erosion of fiscal oversight. The Iranian state thus operates in a paradoxical equilibrium: officially opposed to global capitalism, yet dependent on its shadow networks to preserve its own stability.

## The “Resistance Economy”

In response to **economic asphyxiation**, the Iranian leadership promotes a doctrine of national autonomy and resilience known as the “Resistance Economy”, formulated by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in 2014.

It rests on **three core principles** — self-sufficiency, import substitution, and endogenous development — but in practice serves primarily to justify the preservation of a closed and centralized model, emphasizing local ingenuity and rejection of external dependence. The Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine offered opportunities for the regime to demonstrate its implementation of this doctrine: the domestic production of vaccines, the rise of a semi-public pharmaceutical industry, and strengthened technical cooperation with Russia and China.

At the same time, Iran has invested in petrochemicals, metallurgy, and military drone manufacturing, presented as showcases of national know-how under embargo. These partial successes feed the narrative of a resilient nation, capable of turning constraint into strategic advantage. However, the scope of this strategy remains limited: the resistance economy functions less as a genuine development project than as a political legitimization tool, framing poverty as a form of sacrifice for independence. **In a context of inflation above 40%, youth unemployment exceeding 25%, and massive capital flight, this discourse is losing traction among the population** [14]. According to the IMF, Iran’s growth reached 2.5% in 2024, but contracted by -1% in 2025 (and is expected to fall by -2% in 2026, according to a World Bank report published in May 2025) [15].

Mainly driven by undeclared energy exports and artificially sustained domestic consumption through subsidies, Iran’s economic growth remains fragile and uneven.

## Social Consequences of the Crisis: Control and Disengagement

Economic sanctions have profoundly reshaped Iran’s social structure, deepening **internal fractures and dependence on state power**. The wealthy classes, closely linked to the religious and military elites, continue to benefit from economic rents and privileged access to foreign currency. By contrast, **the middle classes face a lasting collapse in purchasing power and blocked social mobility, fueling growing political disaffection** — reflected in record abstention rates, exceeding 60% in the 2024 parliamentary elections [16]. The urban youth, more educated and digitally connected, increasingly turn away from state institutions, expressing discontent through social media, despite tightened cyber-surveillance by the IRGC.

This model enables micromanagement of vulnerable populations, but at a high political cost. By sacralizing scarcity as a symbol of sovereignty, the regime has entrenched a lasting divide between the revolutionary state and a modernized urban society. **Precarity, economic exile, and political cynicism** have become the three pillars of an inverted social contract, in which loyalty is no longer purchased through prosperity but coerced through survival.

## A Sustainable but Unsustainable Model

The Iranian economy has adapted so thoroughly to constraint that it has turned hardship into a structural norm. This institutionalized resilience explains the regime's longevity despite over four decades of sanctions and international isolation. However, this very capacity for adaptation has become a systemic limitation: **dependence on oil rents and the informal economy prevents any genuine modernization.** Technological advances achieved in military drones, civil nuclear energy [17], or the pharmaceutical industry cannot compensate for low productivity, the lack of transparent governance, or the long-term withdrawal of foreign investors. As a result, **the regime has learned how to finance its survival, but not how to build its future.**



# A FRUSTRATED REGIONAL POWER

For more than two decades, the regional policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran has been built on a **doctrine of strategic resistance, structured around asymmetric deterrence and support for non-state allies across the Arab world**. The reimposition of UN sanctions in 2025 has not weakened this orientation — it has consolidated it.

Deprived of any room for negotiation with the West, Tehran seeks to turn its isolation into a tool of influence, while reinforcing its regional depth. This strategy, conceived and directed by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), rests on **three main pillars**:

1. the strengthening of domestic military capabilities,
2. the projection of power through the “Axis of Resistance”, and
3. the diplomatic pivot toward the East.

## **Military Power: An Instrument of Deterrence Rather Than Conquest**

Iran’s military power relies less on technological parity or conventional superiority than on the ability to make any confrontation prohibitively costly for its adversaries.



Photo : 2019 Isfahan Sepah pasdaran commander inauguration 5  
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**Since the 1990s, Iran's doctrine has evolved into a hybrid mode** [18] combining conventional forces, ballistic capabilities, and asymmetric means: the Artesh (regular army) retains a defensive and institutional role for territorial protection, while the **IRGC embodies the ideological and offensive dimension, controlling the Aerospace Force, the Gulf navy, and the Quds Force, responsible for external operations.** This duality between institutionalization and revolution has become the cornerstone of Iran's military resilience. Iran today possesses one of the region's most substantial ballistic arsenals, with missiles reaching ranges of up to 2,000 km [19], produced domestically through reverse-engineering (Korean) followed by Russian technology transfers. In addition, Tehran has developed a significant armed-drone program (Shahed, Mohajer, Arash series), some of which have been used by Russia in Ukraine, and has rapidly expanded its cyberwarfare and electronic warfare capabilities, areas in which the IRGC has heavily invested since 2020 [20]. The preferred operational approach is saturation: multiplying strike vectors, dispersing launch sites, and integrating drones and missiles to negate an adversary's air superiority. **The nuclear dimension fits the same logic of latent deterrence. Officially civilian, the program has reached a technical level that would, in theory, allow Iran to approach the capacity to produce a weapon within a few weeks without publicly crossing a clear point of no return.**

This ambiguity surrounding Iran's nuclear intentions functions as a force multiplier, compelling adversaries to factor the risk of escalation into their strategic calculations.

### **Geographical Projection of the "Axis of Resistance"**

**Iran's regional presence is structured around a network of armed and political partners forming the so-called "Axis of Resistance."** Originating in the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq War, this architecture now extends from the Levant to the Arabian Peninsula. It rests on a combination of sectarian, economic, and military alliances that grant Tehran an unprecedented strategic depth without the need for direct domination

- **Lebanon** : Hezbollah represents the most advanced model of this indirect projection, combining autonomous military power with national political influence
- **Syria** : IRGC and Quds Force intervention proved decisive for the survival of the Assad regime, securing for Tehran a logistical and military corridor to the Mediterranean.
- **Iraq**: Iranian influence operates through the coordination of Shia militias within the Hashd al-Shaabi, positioned at the boundary between state apparatus and pro-Iranian proxies.
- **Yemen**: Support for the Houthis has turned a local conflict into a strategic deterrence tool against Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, both exposed to drone strikes from the peninsula.

- **Palestine:** During the Gaza war (2024–2025), Tehran intensified its support for Hamas and Islamic Jihad, while carefully avoiding direct escalation with Israel.

This **regional network constitutes an architecture of deterrence rather than an imperial project**. The goal is not territorial expansion, but the neutralization of Western or Arab containment efforts. However, this regional centrality comes at a significant cost: it absorbs considerable resources, fuels sectarian rivalries, and feeds perceptions of Shia hegemonism, a narrative exploited by Riyadh and Tel Aviv to justify their strategic rapprochement

### **The Ambivalence of the Rapprochement with Riyadh**

The **reconciliation agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia, concluded in March 2023 under Chinese mediation**, initially raised hopes for regional de-escalation. Two years later, the outcome remains limited and ambiguous. Diplomatic channels have been reopened, and economic exchanges are slowly resuming, particularly in the fields of pilgrimage coordination, maritime security, and energy cooperation [21]. However, **the rapprochement remains tactical rather than strategic**: Riyadh's priority is to contain the Houthi threat and safeguard its Vision 2030 projects, while Tehran views the agreement as a tool for international legitimacy. No genuine strategic convergence has emerged. The two powers continue to confront each other through proxies, and structural mistrust remains intact.

**The Gaza war exposed the fragility of this détente:** while Riyadh maintained a façade of dialogue, Iran's increased involvement with Hamas revived Saudi red lines. Ultimately, the China-mediated reconciliation did not end the historic rivalry between the two countries; it merely reframed it as a competition for legitimacy within the Muslim world.

### **The “Eastern Pivot”**

Confronted with a Western diplomatic blockade, **Iran has accelerated its Eurasian realignment, seeking to diversify its economic and diplomatic partnerships.**

Its accession to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2023 and to the BRICS in 2024 illustrates this shift toward a so-called “post-Western” order [22], grounded in the principles of sovereignty and non-interference. In practice, however, this orientation has mainly produced greater dependence on China and, to a lesser extent, on Russia. **The 25-year China-Iran strategic partnership agreement, signed in 2021 and accelerated since 2025**, provides for massive Chinese investments in the energy, mining, and port sectors. In return, Tehran grants Beijing privileged access to its oil resources and transport infrastructure, including the port of Chabahar, a key link between the North-South corridor and the Maritime Silk Roads.

This cooperation gives China structural influence over Iran's economy, while Tehran views it as a lifeline in the face of Western isolation.

However, the relationship remains asymmetrical: **Beijing acts as a transactional partner rather than a political ally, carefully avoiding any direct military engagement that would place it in open confrontation with Washington.** Russia–Iran cooperation follows a similar logic. Tehran supplies Moscow with drones, munitions, and equipment in exchange for diplomatic support and technological transfers, particularly in air defense [23]. **Energy trade between the two countries has expanded, yet competition in Asian markets limits the depth of this alliance.** Iran thus occupies a subordinate position — that of a useful but replaceable partner, whose energy dependence both strengthens and constrains its influence. Meanwhile, outreach to India and Central Asia, centered on energy and transport corridors, remains hindered by regional caution in the face of Western sanctions.

The Eastern pivot therefore appears as a case of forced integration rather than sovereign choice: Tehran joins Eurasian structures to survive, not to shape their direction.

### **A Power of Deterrence, Not Domination**

**Iran today finds itself in a paradoxical position: indispensable to any regional balance,** yet isolated within its alliances. Its capacity for disruption grants it geopolitical weight, but its authoritarian and rentier model continues to limit its normative influence.

Iran’s power rests more on prevention than on construction — on avoiding containment, marginalization, or internal erosion of the regime. Its military apparatus and regional network ensure a form of negative stability, grounded in deterrence rather than cooperation. Yet this posture is reaching its limits: the militarization of diplomacy, dependence on oil rents, and international isolation constitute the three pillars of a constrained power — capable of blocking, yet incapable of transforming.

In the post-Snapback context, **Iran remains a power of resistance rather than an ascending power.** Its survival depends on its ability to maintain a fragile balance between strategic autonomy and structural dependence, within a framework of defensive resilience rather than expansion.



Picture: Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and his Saudi counterpart, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud after signing a joint statement on the restoration of diplomatic relations, with Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang in the background.  
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# IRANIAN SOCIETY



Photo : Iranian protestors on the Keshavrz Boulevard - Darafsh for  
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## Demography, Education, and Generational Divide

With nearly **92 million** inhabitants in 2025 and a median age of around 32, Iran remains a **young society, yet one undergoing a rapid demographic transition**. The fertility rate, which has fallen to 1.7 children per woman [24], places the country at the threshold of non-renewal of generations — a major turning point for an Islamic Republic long founded on the valorization of natality. **This decline reflects the disillusionment of young households facing economic crisis and social precarity**: marriage rates are declining, graduate unemployment exceeds 25%, and internal migration is intensifying toward major cities such as Tehran, Isfahan, and Mashhad. With a literacy rate above 90% [25], Iran has produced a highly educated society that remains poorly integrated into national institutions. Iranian universities, both numerous and competitive, graduate thousands of engineers and researchers each year — far more than the saturated labor market can absorb. This mismatch fuels a brain drain, with **more than 1.5 million skilled Iranians living abroad, forming one of the largest scientific diasporas in the Middle East**.

The relationship between this diaspora and the homeland is ambivalent: it provides financial and technological support, yet also carries a critical cultural influence toward the regime. The generational divide is equally visible in cultural practices. Urban **youth, connected to the internet despite censorship, embrace the codes of a globalized modernity, far removed from the official culture**. **State television, religious sermons, and revolutionary rhetoric now occupy only a marginal place in their collective imagination**. This disjunction between lived culture and imposed culture undermines the symbolic authority of the regime: the “Internet generation” (Gen Z) no longer identifies with the values of martyrdom, resistance, or moral purity that underpin the post-revolutionary narrative.

## The Role of Women: From Contesting the Periphery to the Core of Political Legitimacy

Women have become one of the main drivers of politicization in contemporary Iran. Since the 2022 protests, united under the slogan “Zan, Zendegi, Azadi” (Woman, Life, Freedom), the female question has shifted from the moral sphere to the very core of political legitimacy. This mobilization fits within a historical continuum: it extends the long-standing struggles for access to education, employment, and political representation, while now linking them to demands for individual dignity and bodily autonomy. The regime has responded with repression: stricter dress-code enforcement, enhanced digital surveillance, and a surge in arrests for “non-compliance with the hijab”[26].

Yet, everyday resistance persists — unveiled presence in semi-public spaces, creation of solidarity networks, and the use of digital platforms as arenas of self-expression. Largely driven by urban middle-class women, this diffuse disobedience has profoundly altered social relations without toppling the regime, by exposing the gap between state-imposed norms and lived realities.

The feminization of dissent has also produced a generational ripple effect: in universities and cultural circles, women now stand at the forefront of civic and associative mobilizations, weaving together social, ecological, and political demands.

This has given rise to a feminism of resistance in Iran — not ideological but existential — that delegitimizes the patriarchal domination at the core of the revolutionary narrative. Although it has not yet produced a structured political alternative, the movement has already redefined the boundaries of the public sphere: the individual act of disobedience has become the new form of political expression in Iran.

## The Digital Sphere: Space of Emancipation and Surveillance

The rise of digital technology has profoundly transformed Iranian society.

With more than 70 million Internet users and a smartphone penetration rate exceeding 85%, Iran is now one of the most connected countries in the Middle East [27].

Initially perceived as a threat, this expansion has gradually been turned by the regime into a tool of systemic surveillance.

The IRGC has built a comprehensive algorithmic control infrastructure, combining network filtering, transaction tracking, and public opinion manipulation.

Yet, this militarization of cyberspace has not eliminated dissenting uses — on the contrary, it has fostered the emergence of a parallel, fluid, and deterritorialized public sphere through VPN, where critical discourse, political satire, and solidarity networks continue to thrive.

**The Iranian cyberspace thus embodies the country's duality: it is both an instrument of oppression and a space of emancipation.** It has replaced the street as the main political arena, enabling the survival of civic debate despite authoritarian constraints. This digital resilience, supported by the diaspora, sustains a collective memory of dissent that the regime — despite censorship — still struggles to erase.

### **Identities, Religion, and Ideological Disenchantment**

One of the most profound transformations in Iran concerns the erosion of institutional religiosity. **Twelver Shiism, long the ideological pillar of the Islamic Republic, retains its institutional weight** [28] but is gradually losing its cultural influence. According to several independent Iranian surveys, a majority of young people no longer identify with a specific confession, and nearly one-third declare themselves non-practicing. This evolution does not reflect a Western-style secularization, but rather a retreat of religion into the private sphere and a rejection of the state's moral discourse, widely perceived as saturated and hypocritical. **The clergy, once a central social actor and indispensable mediator, now appears as an economic and political elite disconnected** from society. Its bureaucratization, coupled with corruption scandals, has severely undermined its credibility and moral authority.

At the same time, a cultural patriotism of Persian inspiration is gaining ground against the Islamic frame of reference, reflecting a broader shift from ideological legitimacy to civil and cultural identity. Classical literature, linguistic pride, and pre-Islamic memory have become alternative identity markers — tolerated by the state yet carrying a subversive charge. **This identity shift does not signify an open rupture with the Islamic Republic, but it undermines its ideological foundation: the state can no longer claim to embody a unified spiritual nation.** The 1979 consensus, built on the alliance between nationalism and religion, has gradually eroded, giving way to a coexistence of fragmented loyalties — national, ethnic, generational, and economic — which the regime now seeks to maintain through coercion rather than consent.

### **A Society Under Strain: Resilience and Individual Survival**

The defining feature of contemporary Iranian society is its capacity for adaptation without participation. **Confronted with inflation, censorship, and surveillance, Iranians have developed individual survival strategies: reliance on the informal economy, community-based solidarity, temporary emigration, and digital circumvention.** This form of social resilience, far from weakening the regime, paradoxically prolongs its durability — it prevents collapse without restoring political legitimacy.

The state thus maintains its administrative and security control, but governs a disenchanted society that no longer believes in it.

This profound disconnection produces a form of negative stability, sustained by fear, fatigue, and withdrawal.

In this configuration, Iranian society mirrors the regime in reverse: young, plural, and inventive, yet deprived of a collective horizon. The regime, for its part, relies on this dispersion to preserve its authority, while recognizing that its future depends on managing this vitality without extinguishing it. **The fundamental issue is no longer revolt, but silent disengagement — a gradual erosion of political belief that, if it continues, may prove more corrosive to the Islamic Republic than any open opposition.**

## Conclusion

In the short term, the most likely scenario remains that of a variable-geometry authoritarian stagnation: a regime hardened in its structures, adaptive in its methods, and capable of enduring without transforming.

Iran will continue to invoke the rhetoric of resistance to justify political closure, while selectively negotiating with adversaries to avoid total asphyxiation. This balancing act — repression at home, deterrence abroad, and selective dialogue with the East and the Global South — will likely extend the regime's lifespan, without providing a viable or sustainable path forward.

The Islamic Republic is thus entering a phase of authoritarian preservation, in which the maintenance of order takes precedence over any ambition for power.

Ultimately, Iran's future will depend less on regional power dynamics than on its ability to redefine the very nature of its power.

The Islamic Republic has survived every form of isolation by turning constraint into doctrine.

Yet this political economy of resistance is now reaching its limits: resilience ceases to be a sign of strength when it becomes merely a condition of survival. Without a reconciliation between social modernity and political legitimacy, between sovereignty and openness, Iran will remain trapped in its founding contradiction — that of a revolutionary state condemned to govern a post-revolutionary society.

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