

**The Reversal of Iran's Family Planning Program (from 2005 to present)**

**as a New Nationalist Project**

**MATTIA YAGHMAI**

**S1495801**

**Leiden University**

**MA Thesis in Middle Eastern Studies**

**Specialization: Persian Studies**

Supervisor: K.S. Batmanghelichi



In 2012 Iran's government issued this billboard, called *Khanevadeh-ye Irani* (Iranian Family). It depicts a puzzle-like illustration of an Iranian family that is missing 15 pieces. These pieces represent the main principles according to which the new policies on population control should be redefined.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>In: *Farhang News*, last accessed, 17/06/2015,  
<http://www.farhangnews.ir/sites/default/files/content/images/story/93-03/10/78234-233247-1401513791.jpg>.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b><u>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</u></b> .....	5
<b><u>INTRODUCTION</u></b> .....	6
Thesis Project: Anti-Imperialist Narrative, Economic Independence and the Reversal of <i>Tanzīm-i Khānavādah</i> (Family Planning Program).....	8
Thesis: Methodology and structure.....	12
Interwoven Terminology: Family and Nationalism.....	14
<b><u>CHAPTER ONE</u></b> .....	18
Literature Review.....	18
<b><u>CHAPTER TWO</u></b> .....	26
Efforts to Implement Family Planning Program from 1957 to 1979.....	26
Family Planning after the Establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran.....	28
Reimplementation of the Family Planning Program (1986-1994).....	29
<b><u>CHAPTER THREE</u></b> .....	35
The Beginning of the Reversal of the Family Planning Program.....	35

The Rhetoric of the Ahmadinejad’s ‘New Islamic Revolution’ .....	37
Economic and Political Strategies of the Reversal of the Family Planning Program .....	43
<b><u>CHAPTER FOUR</u></b> .....	48
Khamenei and Ahmadinejad Rift .....	49
Khamenei’s Call for the Reversal of <i>Tanzīm-i Khānavādah</i> .....	53
The Reversal of <i>Tanzīm-i Khānavādah</i> as a Reaction to International Sanctions .....	56
<b><u>CONCLUDING REMARKS: Dismantling the Family Planning Program</u></b> .....	62
<b><u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u></b> .....	66

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Kristin Soraya Batmanghelichi who helped and guided me during the whole process of the realization of this thesis. And more significantly, throughout this year she has taught me how essential it is to question those deep beliefs that one often tends to take for granted. If the way I look at things has now profoundly changed, I am aware that it is largely due to her positive influence in my studies.

I want to thank my dearest friend, Veronika Ronda who tirelessly encourages me and is always present in my life, through the good and bad times. This thesis would not have been possible without her hearty and constant support.

Furthermore, I owe my thanks to Alik Sofianou (classmate, flatmate and more importantly friend), İsmet Erdi Somuncuoğlu and Constanza Blengino. Undoubtedly, their friendship is for me the most precious thing I have gained from this experience at Leiden University.

A special acknowledgment goes also to Remzi Çağatay Çakırlar and Yvette Diamanti (the “Library Gang,” as I would like to remember them). Thanks to the fact that I discussed this thesis project with them many times, it gradually became more comprehensible to me as well. They also managed to cheer me up during the endless days in the library (with breaks, coffee and conversations).

Last but not least, I would like to thank my parents and relatives for the love they have never missed in showing me.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Since its establishment in 1979, one of the main concerns of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has been the country’s future population growth. According to the public declarations of former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Supreme Leader Seyed Ali Hoseyni Khamenei, there are explicit pronatalist stances and criticisms toward previous family planning policies, which were first implemented in 1993 by the administration of the former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani (1989-1997).<sup>2</sup> The former policy of *tanẓīm-i*

---

<sup>2</sup> Amir H. Mehryar, Farzaneh Roudi, Akbar Aghajanian, and Farzaneh Tajdini, “Repression and Revival of the

*khānavādah* (family planning) had been particularly successful in establishing a new trend, estimating an “ideal” family size by encouraging Iranian couples to reduce the number of children per family from four to two. This policy was made possible through a strategy coordinated by an interdepartmental commission headed by the Minister of Health and Medical Education, and included the cooperation of the Ministers of Education, Labor and Social Affairs, Culture & Islamic Guidance, Plan and Budget Office and the head of the Civil Registration Organization of the Ministry of Interior.<sup>3</sup>

Since the beginning of his presidency (2005-2013), Ahmadinejad has questioned the popular motto “*dū bachchah kāfī ast*” (two children are enough). On April 28, 2009, at an event marking the National Day of the Islamic Councils (*rūz-i millī -i shūrā-hā-yi islāmī*),<sup>4</sup> Ahmadinejad initiated what would become a major ideological rupture within the country’s previous family planning policies. Heralded internationally, these strategies had been successful in terms of building national consensus and inculcating family size norms. They also promoted a sense of responsibility for married couples towards the health and welfare of the nation.<sup>5</sup> Ahmadinejad questioned the state’s family planning policy, asking, “Why do you put laws and say that we cannot have more than two children? This is a materialistic thought [...] the West gave us the slogan, ‘two children are enough,’ but now you see in which conditions they are. Westerners have got problems. Because the growth of their population is negative, they are concerned that if our population increases, we will triumph over them.”<sup>6</sup>

---

Family Planning Program and its Impact on the Fertility Level and Demographic Transition In the Islamic Republic of Iran,” *Working Paper 2022* (2000): 11.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> “*Hashdār-i Ahmadinejad Nisbat bi ‘Khatar’-i Kuntrul-i Jam’iat*” (Ahmadinejad’s Warning Against the ‘Risks’ of the Population Control), *Tehran review*, last updated April 29, 2010, <http://tehranreview.net/articles/2281>.

<sup>5</sup> Homa Hoodfar, “Devices and Desires: Population Policy and Gender Roles in the Islamic Republic of Iran,” in *Middle East Report*, No. 190, Gender, Population, Environment (Sep. - Oct., 1994): 14-15.

<sup>6</sup> Said Peivandi, “*Chirā Ahmadinejad bi Dumbāl-i Afzāyish-i Jam’iat-i Īrān Ast?*” (Why Ahmadinejad is looking

Likewise, in an April 2010 interview broadcast on national television, he stated, “Two children per family are not enough. I am against this, if we continue to implement these policies, as a result our population will gradually become older and reduce in number.”<sup>7</sup> He also proposed that the government provide financial assistance for new families. In this new policy, each newborn would receive a sum of 950 dollars deposited in a government bank account. They would then continue to receive 95 dollars until the age of 18. Soon after this interview, advertisements proclaiming “More children for a happier life” covered the main streets of Tehran.<sup>8</sup> Also, the slogan “*dārīm pīr mī shīm*” (we are becoming old), and other slogans highlighting the population reduction were propagated in this last five years.<sup>9</sup>

More than one year later, public criticisms lobbed against *tanẓīm-i khānavādah* continued, with announcements that state funding would be directly impacted. In August 2011, Marzieh Vahid Dastjerdi, the Minister of Health during the Ahmadinejad administration, claimed, “The budget for the population control program has been fully eliminated and such a project no longer exists in the health ministry. The policy of population control does not exist as it did previously.”<sup>10</sup> She added, “The budget for family Planning is completely cancelled and a policy such as that of the past does not exist anymore.”

---

for Iran’s population growth?), *Radio farda*, last updated May 28, 2010, [http://www.radiofarda.com/content/F3\\_ahmadinejad\\_population\\_Iran/2054837.html](http://www.radiofarda.com/content/F3_ahmadinejad_population_Iran/2054837.html).

<sup>7</sup>“Ahmadinejad- Eve 24 of Farvardin,” *Youtube* video, posted on April 17, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4X-YuFfZLC4>.

<sup>8</sup> Mehrnaz Samimi, “Iran’s billboard Guide to Family Planning Teaches ‘the More, the Merrier,’” *Al-Monitor*, last updated 27 December, 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/12/iran-billboards-samimi.html#>.

<sup>9</sup> The ageing and the reduction of the population were common themes of posters and advertisements in Iran, see: “*Majmū’ah 88 (Īrān -Javān Nimāyishgah-ī)*” (Collection 88 ‘Exposition of Young Iranians’),” *Poster movement*, [http://postermovement.ir/poster.php?lang=fa&cat\\_id=159](http://postermovement.ir/poster.php?lang=fa&cat_id=159).

<sup>10</sup> “*Būdjah 13 Mīlīārdī Barā-yi Kuntrul-i Jam’iat*” (A Budget of 13 Billion *Tūmān* for Population Control), *Aftabnews*, last updated September 30, 2013, <http://aftabnews.ir/fa/news/212580/%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%AF%D8%AC%D9%87-%DB%B1%DB%B3-%D9%85%DB%8C%D9%84%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AF%DB%8C-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A7%DB%8C-%DA%A9%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%84-%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%B9%DB%8C%D8%AA>



Nevertheless, she clarified that a portion of the budget allocated for family planning (about US \$ 5.9 million) was redirected, from March 2012 to March 2013, “to maternal health, infant health, infertility treatments, proper child spacing, preventing [the rise of] one-child families and delayed marriages, and [investment in] related cultural activities in these areas.” Yet official data from the Ministry of Health reveals that the government restored the budget of the *tanẓīm-i khānavādah* to US\$ 4.8 million.<sup>11</sup> Hence the intent of Ahmadinejad and his administration to fully eliminate the family planning program was not easily translated into actual economic reform.

**Thesis Project: Anti-Imperialist Narrative, Economic Independence and the Reversal of *Tanẓīm-i Khānavādah* (Family Planning Program)**

This thesis contends that the government’s move to reverse its Family Planning Program is a consequence of both Ahmadinejad’s revival of the Islamic Republic’s revolutionary constitutional values during his two terms in office and the country’s financial crisis that was worsened by mismanagement and tough international sanctions. There are therefore three variables that were involved in the project of reversing the family planning program: first, the reinterpretation of revolutionary discourse that delegitimized the ideological foundation underpinning *tanẓīm-i khānavādah*; second, the increasing inflation rate and living costs that led to a decrease in marriage and birth rates and convinced the government to react with the implementation of pronatalist policies in order to counterbalance these trends; and third, the economic sanctions that triggered Iran to demonstrate its domestic power by promoting all the

---

<sup>11</sup> Amnesty International, *You Shall Procreate: Attacks On Women’s Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Iran* (London: Amnesty International Ltd, 2015), 11.

necessary resources to develop despite the sanctions' impact. To this end, it was argued that *tanzīm-i khānavādah* should be drastically changed to improve Iran's economic growth and ensure its independence from external sources.

The changes in Iran's family planning policy sought by both Ahmadinejad and Khamenei illustrate two main points, which this thesis intends to first analyze and then contextualize and nuance. First, Ahmadinejad sought to discredit the policies of population control in support of his pronatalist ideology because he claimed that *tanzīm-i khānavādah* was a product of a Western conspiracy whose aim was to reduce the Muslim population in the Middle East. Second, his administration argued that the ageing of Iran's population would lead to a decrease in its domestic labor force and subsequently a weakened economy.

These two points however cannot be analyzed without taking into account two other fundamental factors that have continued to inspire Iran's pronatalist policy: anti-imperialism and economic independence. They are considered by both scholars and politicians alike to be the cornerstones of the Islamic Republic's ideological foundation and constitutional framework.<sup>12</sup>

The roots of the anti-imperialist narrative developed almost a decade prior to the Revolution and were deeply inspired by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's ideas on Iran's independence, its rightful leadership, and the rule of the Islamic jurispudent.<sup>13</sup> In fact, according to Ervand

---

<sup>12</sup> Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, *Iran in World Politics: The Question of the Islamic Republic*, (London: Hurst Publisher Ltd, 2007), 57-58; the constitution itself also clearly includes, in Article 3, as one of the most important duties of the state, "the complete elimination of imperialism and the prevention of foreign influence." Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran," in *Alavi and Associates*, last accessed, 12/06/2015, <http://www.alaviandassociates.com/documents/constitution.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, *Iran in World Politics: The Question of the Islamic Republic*, (London: Hurst Publisher Ltd, 2007),53.

Abrahamian, anti-imperialism is one of the main traits that characterized the radical-populist rhetoric of Khomeini's political movement and ideology.<sup>14</sup> In line with this rhetoric, Iran was and continues to be perceived as a victim of the perpetual attempts by oppressive foreign powers (generally indicated as the United States, Europe and Israel) to establish a monopoly over natural, economic and cultural resources of the country. As Arshin Adib-Moghaddam maintains in *Iran in World Politics: the Question of the Islamic Republic*, "This revolutionary reality penetrated Iranian thinking to its core," and was codified as an historical narrative that still dominates Iran's national policies and foreign affairs more than thirty-five years later.<sup>15</sup> For instance, in several speeches, Ahmadinejad stressed Iran's antagonism against the West by recalling Ayatollah Khomeini's use of the rhetoric of "oppressed versus oppressors (*mustazaf'ān* and *mustakbarān*)." According to this paradigm, the world was divided into two groups of people and countries: the first group is one formed by the godless, or Satan-inspired, powers (meaning the United States, the state of Israel, and Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi); the second includes the righteous followers of the *sharī'ah* (Islamic law) –in this case the Islamic Republic of Iran in particular and the Shiites in general.<sup>16</sup> To some extent, the ongoing struggle between oppressed and oppressors remained a potent symbol in Iran and the use of this dichotomy has been persistent in Iranian foreign discourse of both Ahmadinejad and Ayatollah Khamenei.<sup>17</sup> In their speeches the "oppressors," which in recent years are referred to as "arrogant powers" (*qudrat-hā-yi istikbārī*), are accused of hindering

---

<sup>14</sup> Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 17.

<sup>15</sup> Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, *Iran in World Politics: The Question of the Islamic Republic*, (London: Hurst Publisher Ltd, 2007), 53.

<sup>16</sup> Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 47-49.

<sup>17</sup> Maaïke Warnaar, *Iranian Foreign Policy During Ahmadinejad: Ideology and Actions*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 82-84.

Iran's economic growth and technological development, for imposing sanctions and spreading propaganda and lies in order to delegitimize the establishment of the the Islamic Republic.<sup>18</sup>

The principle of economic independence is, to some extent, correlated to this anti-imperialist narrative. Iran's ruling elite, who has changed in accordance to the rise and fall of certain clerics and their powerbases, has resisted the pressures of the global market economy and has sought that Iran be less dependent on the flow of foreign capital. External investments are perceived as threatening interferences that would endanger the entire political and ideological establishment of the Islamic Republic.<sup>19</sup>

In this thesis I argue that the government's emphasis on population growth in official discourse demonstrates the flexing of its economic and ideological strength in the face of increasing international sanctions against Iran's nuclear program that were implemented in 2012 and had severely impacted its economy. I contend that Khamenei's juxtaposition of both "natural and human resources" is intentional and provides the link between the nuclear crisis and the intention of reversing the Family Planning Program. The Supreme Leader's mention of "natural resources" refers to the country's extensive gas reserves, which are necessary for the development of its nuclear program and are presented as a valuable opportunity to realize important technological advancements that would help the country reach the revolutionary goal of economic independence. In two speeches that I will analyze in the fourth chapter, Khamenei maintains that despite the increasing number of international sanctions, Iran's economy would grow because of its natural resources. However, population growth would be

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Evaleila Pesaran, *Iran's Struggle For Economic Independence: Reform and Counter-Reform In The Post-Revolutionary Era* (London: Routledge Political and Economy of the Middle East and North Africa, 2011), 2.

essential in providing an indispensable labor force that would prevent Iran from relying on external human resources in the future. For this to happen, a drastic change in the policies of *tanzim-e khanevadeh* is encouraged as it was currently looked upon as a main obstacle in compromising Iran's economic growth and self-sufficiency.

### **Thesis: Methodology and Structure**

In this thesis, I use critical discourse analysis to help interpret sources (such as political speeches and transcription of religious sermons but I also take into consideration newspaper excerpts, billboards issued by governmental agencies, and data of the Management and Planning Organization of Iran) and to understand the power relations involved in the construction and development of Iran's family planning program. By critical discourse analysis, I mean the methodology that assays how power relations, social categories and knowledge are shaped by discourse. If seen from a historical perspective, the vocabulary, the technical use of language, and the rhetoric employed in oral and written texts, are crucial since they serve to demonstrate how nationalist discourse in Iran changes according to the transformation of economic, political and ideological factors. The historical contextualization of *tanẓīm-i khānavādah* is important in achieving two objectives for this thesis: First, it explains which ideology has sustained hitherto the Family Planning Program; second, it shows how the constitutional values can be differently reinterpreted by nationalists according to the changing economic trends of the country. For this purpose I also work with sources in Persian.

With this thesis I seek to contribute to Iranians for two reasons. First, it covers a period of time (2005 to present) in which many changes have been made regarding *tanẓīm-i khānavādah*, which scholars have yet to thoroughly take into account. Second, I approach this subject by considering the correlation between nationalism, international relations and population control policies.

In order to show how the reversal of the family planning program in Iran is correlated with the reinterpretation of the nationalist ideology of the Islamic Republic and the worsening of the international relations, this thesis is organized in four chapters.

The first chapter provides a review of the scholarship on Iran's family planning program highlighting three main issues upon which the scholars focused: gender, clerical contribution and demographic studies. This section discusses how population policies in Iran, Tunisia and Egypt were introduced in the context of modernization reforms and towards the end of the colonial presence in the second half of the twentieth century.

The second chapter focuses on the historical conditions of Iran's own family planning program known as *tanẓīm-i khānavādah*, focusing on the nationalist discourse of the period right after the conclusion of the Iraq-Iran war (1981-1988). Delving into the historical context is both necessary and important in understanding how the country's economic realities have affected both national ideology and population policies.

The third chapter examines Ahmadinejad's political ideology and the rhetoric used by the so-called "principalist" faction (*āṣūlgarāyān*). They claim the complete loyalty to the principles of the revolution and the revival of the constitutional values. Soon after his 2005 election win, Ahmadinejad declared the arrival of a "new Islamic Revolution," suggesting his

intention to resurrect the spirit of the 1979 revolution. By examining Ahmadinejad's speeches, newspaper excerpts and economic reforms (from 2005-2013) will highlight the main features of this revivalist ideology: anti-imperialism and economic independence. Subsequently, I show how these two points are used as rhetorical devices by Ahmadinejad and pronatalists to discredit and thus radically change *tanẓīm-i khānavādah*'s policies.

In the fourth chapter I shift to a discussion of the Supreme Leader Khamenei's promotion of reversing the previous family planning program after he judged it to be a mistake and a result of a Western conspiracy. I focus on two key speeches on family planning he gave in 2012 whereby he attacked the ideology of the West, the falsity of its propaganda and the uselessness of the international sanctions. These declarations clearly point to a policy shift that celebrates Iran's natural and human resources as pivotal to Iran's national pride and independence through the joining of domestic family issues with the state's nuclear program. I argue that the much of this discourse is rooted in the early ideology of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, when Iran's clerical authority criticized the Pahlavi regime for selling its precious natural resources to Western countries and thus humiliating Iran. "Restoring" Iran's pride through one, bolstering its nuclear program on an international level and two, reversing its family planning policies on a domestic level were key parallel strategies of the Iranian government to assert its national identity and independence and reject its humiliation in the face of Western hegemony. I contend that Khamenei's speeches resemble the pronatalist stances of Ahmadinejad in their rhetorical usage of anti-imperialism and emphasis of the principle of economic independence. The 2012 campaign against *tanẓīm-i khānavādah* represented an effort to respond to the growing domestic and international crisis of legitimacy

due to the worsening of Iran's economy.

The thesis will then conclude with a summary of the main points outlined throughout this project and then offer potential future scenarios for Iran's population control policies.

### **Interwoven Terminology: Family and Nationalism**

Before delving into Iran's family planning policies, it is first necessary to explain the links between Iran's family policies and its nationalist discourse; as such, I will briefly discuss how the correlation between "nationalism" and "family" is understood and applied in this thesis.

Generally, national communities have the tendency to represent themselves as being part of one big family,<sup>20</sup> and familial terminologies are often employed while one speaks for example of the nation as "motherland" or "fatherland."<sup>21</sup> However, the correlation between nationalism and family may still be difficult to identify. One of the reasons may be that, as Benedict Anderson argues, "The family has traditionally been conceived as the domain of disinterested love and solidarity."<sup>22</sup> And yet, family matters are never neither politically nor ideologically neutral. According to Anne MacClintock, the "family" provides, in most nationalist narratives, an indispensable metaphoric figure by which hierarchical national hierarchy are sanctioned.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, as McClintock explains, the "family as an institution" is historically decontextualized, figuring "as existing, by natural decree, beyond

---

<sup>20</sup> Etienne Balibar, "The Nation Form: History and Ideology," In *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous identities*, ed. by Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, translated by Chris Turner, (London: Verso Books, 1991), 88

<sup>21</sup> Anne McClintock, "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family," in *Feminist Review* No 44 (1993), 63.

<sup>22</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1991), 144.

<sup>23</sup> Anne McClintock, "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family," in *Feminist Review* No 44 (1993), 64.



the commodity market, beyond politics, and beyond history proper.”<sup>24</sup> Hence, “family” is presented as a timeless or natural institution pre-existing the nation-state while in actuality is regulated and constituted, with a precise set of norms and hierarchies, by the state, for example through law and other economic, administrative, educational and health institutions.

25

Patricia Hill Collins has also observed that,

The power of the traditional family ideal lies in its dual function as an ideological construction and as a fundamental principle of social organization... If the nation-state is conceptualized as a national family with the traditional family ideal providing ideas about family, then the standards used to assess the contributions of family members in heterosexual, married-couple households with children become foundational for assessing group contributions to overall national well-being.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, in national discourse, this “traditional family” represents the only legit “institution” that produces citizens of a given nation and that has the duty to create and sustain its population.<sup>27</sup> This also explains why in countries such as Iran, population control policies targeted primarily families, limiting, for instance, the access to contraceptive methods and reproductive health care (the family planning program) to this unit with the consequent exclusion of unmarried persons.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, “It’s All In The Family: Intersections of Gender, Race and Nation,” *Hypatia*, Vol.13 (1998):2-5.

<sup>27</sup> Etienne Balibar, “The Nation Form: History and Ideology,” In *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous identities*,93-94.

<sup>28</sup> Amir H. Mehryar, Shirin Ahmad-Nia and Shahla Kazemipour, “Reproductive Health in Iran: Pragmatic

Family planning programs aim at reducing or at regulating the population size which is another crucial concern for the national well-being and sustenance. As Nira Yuval-Davis argues, in most of the developing countries policies of population control have been predominated by the Malthusian discourse, namely the belief that an unchecked continuous growth of the population might bring a national disaster.<sup>29</sup> In fact, the population tends to grow faster than food resources causing a dangerous destabilization of the global economic and political system.<sup>30</sup> An uncontrollable population growth would gradually threaten the balance between the supply and demand for food and other basic needs. According to Yuval-Davis, Malthusian discourse has become a cornerstone for the population control policies of many developing countries as a major strategy to solve economic and social problems.<sup>31</sup>

However, the scholar explains that the “future of the nation” in ideological discourses can sometimes also depend on its continuous growth.<sup>32</sup> The need for “new people” can be for a variety of nationalist purpose, such as the need of workers, settlers or soldiers.<sup>33</sup> The encouragement for the increase of the population number is, as in the case of the Malthusian discourse, is always linked to the “welfare of the nation.”<sup>34</sup> For example, for the Iranian pronatalists under the Ahmadinejad administration, a population growth is needed to counterbalance labor shortage and to boost the economy of the country. What is worth noting

---

Achievements, Unmet Needs, and Ethical Challenges in a Theocratic System,” *Studies in Family Planning*, Vol.38, No.4 (2007): 58.

<sup>29</sup> Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*, (London: Sage Publication: 2007), 33.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Nira Yuval-Davis, “Nationalist Project and Gender Relation,” *Working paper 130* (2003):12-13.

<sup>33</sup> Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*, (London: Sage Publication: 2007,) 29

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

regarding population control in Iran is how rapidly the alternation between pronatalist and Malthusian discourse took place in this last three decades, showing how the “power of the people” can be manipulated through nationalist policies and stances according to different changing social, economic, political and religious interests.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

Both the inception of *tanẓīm-i khānavādah* in Iran and its recent developments are part of a networking of different mechanisms. Since 1993, the emergence of norms for specific family size and public awareness on issues such as birth control and sexual education (or behaviors)

were made possible by the simultaneous interaction of different religious, political, medical, cultural and economic institutions and variables. In particular, power relations, namely the interactions and the struggles between different Iran's political forces and political actors, have played important roles in the development of the country's family planning policies. Changing economic trends happening domestically (including reforms, the inflationary rates and the currency values) are also significant inasmuch as they contribute in shifting the political and ideological interests of the government. This chapter examines the scholarship concerning Iran's family planning program, highlighting three main issues upon which the scholars focused the most: gender, clerical contribution and demographic studies.

### **Literature Review**

Fundamental to this thesis is Ervand Abrahamian's *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic*, which provides a unique analysis of the ideology of the Islamic Republic and historically contextualizes the formation of the post-revolutionary Iranian national identity. In this work, Abrahamian debunks the notion that the Islamic revolution, headed by Ayatollah Khomeini, was rooted in "fundamentalist" Islam.<sup>35</sup> As a matter of fact, the term "fundamentalism" would imply, for example, that the first supreme leader endorsed a strict and inflexible adherence to the Quranic tradition and the complete rejection of the nation-state concept and of modern society.<sup>36</sup> And yet, the scholar argues that all these characteristics did not appear in the Khomeini's political movement. Rather, Ervand Abrahamian uses the term "populism" in order to delineate the Khomeini's prerevolutionary ideology, defining it as "a

---

<sup>35</sup> Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 13-17.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

movement of the propertied middle class that mobilizes the lower classes, especially the urban poor, with radical rhetoric directed against imperialism, foreign capitalism, and the political establishment. In mobilizing the "common people," populist movements use charismatic figures and symbols, imagery, and language that have potent value in the mass culture. Populist movements promise to drastically raise the standard of living and make the country fully independent of outside powers.”<sup>37</sup> *Khomeinism* is essential in this thesis because many of the traits of the Ahmadinejad’s ideology, that I will analyze in detail in the third chapter, draw on the populist and anti-imperialist rhetoric of 1979 Iranian Revolution.

To map out the Ahmadinejad’s ideology and political views and to understand to what extent the former Iranian president succeed in reviving the constitutional and revolutionary values, as he promised to bring about a “new Islamic Revolution,” I mainly used the works of two scholars, Maaike Warnaar and Ali Ansari.

In *Iranian Foreign Policy During Ahmadinejad*, Maaike Warnaar gives an account of of Iran’s ideology during the Mahmud Ahmadinejad presidency and more specifically examines its troubled relations with the United States and Europe. As Warnaar argues “foreign policy discourse does not develop overnight: it is historically constructed and refers to other, earlier discourses.”<sup>38</sup> As a matter of fact, on the basis of official statements by President Ahmadinejad and Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, the scholar analyses how “the ideological context (from 2005 to 2013) was characterized by a revival of revolutionary discourse”<sup>39</sup> arguing that this ideology gained a particular importance as “the Iranian regime

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>38</sup> Maaike Warnaar, *Iranian Foreign Policy During Ahmadinejad: Ideology and Actions*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 5.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 81.

was experiencing a growing crisis of legitimacy both domestically and internationally.”<sup>40</sup>

Ali Ansari in *Confronting Iran: The Failure of American Foreign Policy and the Roots of Mistrust* analyzes the political style of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, which is arguably populist in nature. Ansari analyses the diplomatic relationship between Iran and United States and the major reasons for the “mutual incomprehension” between the two countries. The scholar suggests that one of the reasons for the “incomprehension” between the US and Iran hinges on the mythic construction and an overemphasis of the threatening image of the “Other.”<sup>41</sup> For instance, from the American side, the nature and the identity of Islamic republic of Iran is associated with Islamic fundamentalism and as a sponsor state of terrorism,<sup>42</sup> especially after 9/11 and the inclusion of Iran in the “axis of evil” by president George W. Bush. From the Iranian side, the powerful “myth of victimization,” which fuels the belief that Iran is constantly attacked and isolated by the Western super powers, is used as a political means that “empowers through the removal of moral responsibility,” and obstacles the establishment of a more constructive international cooperation.<sup>43</sup>

Particularly relevant for this research is Ansari’s consideration of the period (until 2006) when both Ahmadinejad and former US president George W. Bush were in power and the Iranian Nuclear crisis. Ansari describes the Iranian government’s resoluteness in not compromising with the international community over its nuclear program.<sup>44</sup> In fact, he argues that Ahmadinejad “was not interested in whether the West conceded anything. On the

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ali Ansari, *Confronting Iran: the Failure of American Foreign Policy and the Roots of Mistrust* (London: Hurst, 2006), 6.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>44</sup> Ali Ansari, *Confronting Iran: the Failure of American Foreign Policy and the Roots of Mistrust* (London: Hurst, 2006), 197-232.

contrary, a state of continued tension and confrontation was desirable, and the criticism of the West was to be actively sought. This was a return to the early glory days of the revolution, when Iran had stood alone and America could not do a damned thing.”<sup>45</sup>

If the works of Abrahamian, Warnaar and Ansari were relevant to delineate and contextualize the Iran’s regime ideology, the scholarship that I will review in the following paragraph was fundamental for this thesis because it concerns directly with the main subject of this thesis, namely the policies of *tanẓīm-i khānavādah*.

Hitherto, the scholarship that focuses on the Iranian family planning (and on politics of population control) engaged mostly with three main issues-- namely, gender, the clerical contribution to *tanẓīm-i khānavādah*, and demography. There is much scholarship that focuses on how gender roles were affected by the implementations of such population control policies, emphasizing how women's rights, responsibilities, and social participation were challenged and transformed since the inception of the *tanẓīm-i khānavādah*. Anthropologist Homa Hoodfar discusses reproductive health policies and their implications on women's lives. In essays such as “Health as a Context for Social and Gender Activism,” and “Device and Desires, Population Policy and Gender Roles in the Islamic Republic,” for example, Hoodfar discusses how women’s involvement in voluntary activities help spreading information on population control methods, coupled with the abovementioned enhancement of women's literacy level, led to their increased participation in public life.<sup>46</sup> Yet despite countrywide improvements in health services and literacy rates of women (especially after the release of

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 230.

<sup>46</sup> Homa Hoodfar, “Health as a Context for Social and Gender Activism: Female Volunteer Health Workers in Iran,” *Population and Development Review* Vol. 36 No. 3 (2010):487-510.

the family planning policies) cultural and religious discourses continued to make distinct categories for gender roles, restricting women's roles to the domestic domain.<sup>47</sup> In fact, according to the scholar, "The government envisages gender roles that do not correspond with those of Islamist women activists. In their view, much of what is presented is nothing but patriarchy in 'Islamic' costume."<sup>48</sup>

Another prominent area of discussion within the scholarship on Iran's family planning program is the clerical authority's role in shaping the public opinion toward the acceptance of population control methods (for instance, contraceptive use) through their issuing of *fatāwā* and re-interpreting *sharī'ah*. Amir H. Mehryar, Farzaneh Roudi, Akbar Aghajanian, and Farzaneh Tajdini discuss the enormous political effort put in the first decade after the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran (1979-1989) to introduce new family planning policies based on several *fatāwā* issued by Khomeini and other influential Shi'a clerics. Moreover, with their researches, these scholars try to debunk the "The general impression given by most foreign commentators on the IRI, that the Shiite clergy leading the Islamic revolution were vehemently against family planning, and that all Family Planning services were suspended after the revolution."<sup>49</sup> The scholars argue that the implementation of pronatalist policies immediately after the triumph of the revolution in 1979 was due mainly because of two reasons. First, the underestimation of overpopulation as a major social problem of immediate relevance.<sup>50</sup> Second, an increase in population number was perceived

---

<sup>47</sup> Homa Hoodfar, "Devices and Desires: Population Policy and Gender Roles in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Middle East Report*, No. 190, Gender, Population, Environment (Sep. - Oct., 1994), 15.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>49</sup> Amir H. Mehryar, Farzaneh Roudi, Akbar Aghajanian, and Farzaneh Tajdini, "Repression and Revival of the Family Planning Program and its Impact on the Fertility Level and Demographic Transition In the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Working Paper 2022* (2000), 6.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.



as a “comparative advantage” by the Iranian leadership in power and encouraged soon after the beginning of the Iraq-Iran war in 1981.<sup>51</sup> The importance of the clerical authority’s role in the implementation of *tanẓīm-i khānavādah* policies represents a central argument in the works of Homa Hoodfar and Farzaneh Roudi Fahimi. They argue that Iranian policymakers who advocated the reintroduction of *tanẓīm-i khānavādah* were fully aware of the fact that clerics would play a fundamental role in building the national consensus of population control policies.<sup>52</sup> In fact, both Hodfar and Fahimi describe how religious leaders succeeded in raising general knowledge and understanding of population questions by participating in public debates in nationally televised speeches, in Friday sermons or in scientific seminars focused on the birth control topic.<sup>53</sup>

Scholars such as Yaghoo Foroutan and Mohammad Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi have found a correlation between social and cultural factors impacting fertility rates and the population growth. For example, Foroutan discusses the association between religion and fertility rate, stating that, generally speaking, in traditional environments, the fertility rate is higher than in others.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, after the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979, as Foroutan contends, an increase in literacy rates, urbanization, and the improvement of health facilities were largely responsible for demographic trends of decreases in family size and birth rate.<sup>55</sup> The result of this study explains that the changes in family formation characteristics and the

---

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>52</sup> Homa Hoodfar, “Devices and Desires: Population Policy and Gender Roles in the Islamic Republic of Iran,” *Middle East Report*, No. 190, Gender, Population, Environment (Sep. - Oct., 1994), 12-14. ; Farzaneh Roudi Fahimi, “Iran’s Family Planning Program: Responding to a Nation’s Need,” in *Mena Policy Brief* (Population Reference Bureau, 2002), 2.

<sup>53</sup> Homa Hoodfar, “Devices and Desires: Population Policy and Gender Roles in the Islamic Republic of Iran,” *Middle East Report*, No. 190, Gender, Population, Environment (Sep. - Oct., 1994), 12.

<sup>54</sup> Yaghoob Foroutan, “Social Change and Demographic Response in Iran (1956-2006),” in *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (2014), 221-222.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 226.

fall of the birth rate are strictly related to the changes of socio-economic factors. Similarly, Abbasi-Shavazi argues that government policies such as rural development, health improvement and the rise of literacy paved the way for a successful family planning program. However, the scholar also suggests that factors such as economic depression, experienced in Iran after the war with Iraq, high unemployment rate and high living costs played a major role in lowering the birth rate in the country in the last three decades.<sup>56</sup>

Missing within these three aspects often highlighted in the literature is the interlocking relations of *tanẓīm-i khānavādah*, nationalism and international relations and how population control policies are subject to changing dynamics of power. This discussion is however found in the disciplines of history and anthropology. Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet's *Conceiving Citizens: Women and Politics of Motherhood in Iran* discusses how women's emancipation, the evolution of hygiene and politics of birth control intersected with modernity and the development of the concept of nationhood in Iran from the Qajar and Pahlavi periods.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, anthropologist Rhoda Ann Kanaaneh, who studies Israeli population policies impacting Israeli Arabs in *Birthing the Nation: Strategies of Palestinian Women in Israel*, argues that Israel's population control policies sought to limit Palestinian population growth given their fears of demographic shifts in favor of the Arabs.<sup>58</sup> Similar to tactics and policies of other governments, primarily in Euro-America, "population" became a primary concern for formation of the nation-state and its export to Middle East was made possible through

---

<sup>56</sup> Mohammad Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi, "Recent Changes and the Future of Fertility in Iran," publication of the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population division (2002), 429.

<sup>57</sup> Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, *Conceiving Citizens: Women and the Politics of Motherhood in Iran* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>58</sup> Rhoda Ann Kanaaneh, *Birthing the Nation Strategies of Palestinian Women in Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 61-62.

colonialism and political intervention from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries.<sup>59</sup>

There are also plentiful examples of efforts by states within the modern Middle East to maintain population policies in the face of rising nationalist sentiment. Birth control for instance became a serious issue in Egypt in the late 1950s, especially after Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918-1970) came to power in 1956. In 1962, Egypt's own *tanzīm al-Uṣra* (family planning) was founded and four years later, the country's national family planning program was launched. These population control policies sought to limit the growth of the fertility rate and were also part of Nasser's revolutionary regime commitment to social transformation and "modernization" of the country.<sup>60</sup> In the same period, in Tunisia, debates in family law were taking place that highlighted issues such as colonialism, nationalism and Islamic identity. From 1930 to 1950 (when the most violent struggles against the French colonial state took place), Tunisian nationalist discourse emphasized the importance of the traditional family and women's subordination to men. Policymakers also regulated family matter according to *sharī'ah*. However, a few months after the Declaration of Independence in 1956, the government headed by the nationalist president Habib Bourguiba (1903-2000) implemented the Code of Personal Status that reformed marriage, divorce, children custody, and inheritance curbing the legitimacy of the Islamic Law. This code promoted an ideal "modern family," which was necessary, according to Bourguiba and his administration, to the development of modern Tunisia.<sup>61</sup> Conversely, in Iran the population growth issue became an urgent concern

---

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 57-58.

<sup>60</sup> Laura Bier, "From Birth Control to Family Planning: Population, Gender, and Politics of Reproduction in Egypt," *Family in the Middle East: Ideational Change in Egypt, Iran and Tunisia*, ed. by Kathryn M. Yount and Hoda Rashad (London: Routledge, 2008), 60-64.

<sup>61</sup> Mourina M. Charrad, "From Nationalism to Feminism: Family Law in Tunisia," *Family in the Middle East: Ideational Change in Egypt, Iran and Tunisia*, ed. by Kathryn M. Yount and Hoda Rashad (London: Routledge, 2008), 114-120.

relatively late in comparison to the Egyptian and Tunisian cases. As discussed in the next chapter, the establishment of the Ministry of Health's Family Planning Commission in 1967 was also part of the country's modernization process under Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (1940-1979).<sup>62</sup> Moreover, like Egypt and Tunisia, "modernization" and the introduction of concepts such as the "welfare state" entailed a reformulation of the national identity and ideology.<sup>63</sup>

## CHAPTER TWO

This chapter examines the three most important historical phases concerning the introduction in Iran of *tanẓīm-i khānavādah* and the implementation of population control policies. The first phase comprises of the period of time (from 1958 to 1979) when, under Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, the Department of Health and Family Planning was established. Conversely, during the second phase (from 1979 to 1986), the Khomeini-led Islamic Republic dismantled

---

<sup>62</sup> Homa Hoodfar, "Family Law and Family Planning Policy in Pre- and Post-Revolutionary Iran," *Family in the Middle East: Ideational Change in Egypt, Iran and Tunisia*, ed. by Kathryn M. Yount and Hoda Rashad (London: Routledge, 2008), 81.

<sup>63</sup> For more see: Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, *Conceiving Citizens: Women and the Politics of Motherhood in Iran* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Homa Hoodfar, "Family Law and Family Planning Policy in Pre- and Post-Revolutionary Iran," *Family in the Middle East: Ideational Change in Egypt, Iran and Tunisia*, ed. by Kathryn M. Yount and Hoda Rashad (London: Routledge, 2008).

the country's family planning program. The third phase (from 1986 to 1993) is marked by the rising debates about population control policies and the reintroduction of *tanzīm-i khānavādah* that became critical issues for the Islamic Republic's government.

### **Efforts to Implement Family planning program from 1957 to 1979**

According to Sattareh Farman Farmaian (1921-2012), the debate about birth control policies in Iran began in 1958 when the first school of "social work" was opened in Tehran.<sup>64</sup> Farman Farmaian, the founder of the school, contends that the main purpose of this private institution was to educate the population on family management and birth control devices.

Population growth was the most important social problem of Iran in that decade, yet the easy introduction of the program was impeded by the revered culture of childbearing in Iran. As a matter of fact, giving birth to a large number of children was a source of pride and social prestige; for rural families in particular, it was a form of economic security.<sup>65</sup> Early marriage was a widespread custom and considered a formidable way to reduce the infertility level among women.<sup>66</sup>

Nonetheless, the result of the 1966 national census, which determined that the country's population growth rate had increased from 2.5 to 3 percent in the decade, convinced the Shah and his government to develop a family planning program and implement population policies.

<sup>67</sup>One year later, the Department of Health and Family Planning was established within the

---

<sup>64</sup> Sattareh Farman Farmaian, "Broadening Muslim Tradition: Bringing Family Planning to Iran," in *Courageous Pioneers: Celebrating 50 years of Pathfinder International and 80 Years of Pioneering Work in Family Planning and Reproductive Health Around the World*, (Watertown: Pathfinder International, 2007), 27.

<sup>65</sup> Amir H. Mehryar, Farzaneh Roudi, Akbar Aghajanian, and Farzaneh Tajdini, "Repression and Revival of the Family Planning Program and its Impact on the Fertility Level and Demographic Transition in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Working Paper 2022* (2000):1.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, *Conceiving Citizens: Women and the Politics of Motherhood in Iran* (Oxford: Oxford

Ministry of Health, headed by Amir Mansour Sardari.<sup>68</sup> Committees of council on technical, educational, social, communication were also formed in order to cooperate with governmental, quasi-governmental and voluntary institutions, which aimed to promote the family planning program across Iran, placing a particular emphasis on rural areas.<sup>69</sup> The Pahlavi government promoted the family program policy to its citizens to raise the overall economic status of the family and for a more sustainable economic welfare system.<sup>70</sup>

Yet what was generally underestimated in the family planning program of the Pahlavi reforms was the importance of clerical support. No effort was made to obtain a formal *fatwā* regarding the usage of contraceptive methods that would have served as religious legitimization of the family planning measures.<sup>71</sup> The Shah showed more interest in building strategic political alliances than in dealing with the clergy, who in that period were opposed to government reforms.

Nonetheless, from 1967 to 1979 the population control policies succeeded in decreasing the population growth rate from 3.17 to 2.7%, and in this period the estimated number of contraceptive users reached 1,358,000 of which 67% used government family planning services.<sup>72</sup>

### **Family Planning after the 1979 Establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran**

After 1979, the population growth was not initially considered an urgent problem. The new

---

University Press, 2011), 192.

<sup>68</sup> Mehdi Amani and Nancy Hatch Dupree, "Family Planning," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, last modified 24/01/2012, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/family-planning>.

<sup>69</sup> Mehryar, Roudi, Aghajanian, and Tajdini, "Repression and Revival of the Family Planning Program," 3.

<sup>70</sup> Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, *Conceiving Citizens: Women and the Politics of Motherhood in Iran* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 193.

<sup>71</sup> Mehryar, Roudi, Aghajanian, and Tajdini, "Repression and Revival of the Family Planning Program," 2.

<sup>72</sup> Mehryar, Roudi, Aghajanian, and Tajdini, "Repression and Revival of the Family Planning Program," 2.

government (the first administration was led by President Abolhassan Banisadr from 1980 to 1981) was primarily concerned with how to disentangle Iran from Western influence in order to enable independent technological development and economic growth.<sup>73</sup> In this regard, the family planning program was suspended due to its close identification with the Shah (and with his twin sister, Princess Ashraf, who also head of the Iranian Women's Organization). Western-trained technocrats —now deemed traitors—were also isolated and rendered redundant.<sup>74</sup>

As soon as the Iran-Iraq war (1981-1988) began, the need for a population growth started to be explicitly promoted by Khomeini and many influential politicians (including the Prime Minister Mir-Hossein Mousavi and the speaker of the parliament and later president Hashemi Rafsanjani). An increase in the population number was perceived as a “comparative advantage” and as a way to balance the number of casualties caused by the war (the Iran's estimated number of losses was about 300000).<sup>75</sup> Thus, the administration of newly formed Islamic Republic, from 1979 to 1986, adopted a pronatalist position. In 1982, they amended the civil code, re-introducing early marriage by lowering the legal minimum age to 13 and 15 (from 15 and 18) for boys and girls, respectively.<sup>76</sup> The government also introduced a “Universal Rational Program” that provided economic incentives for families.<sup>77</sup> The bigger the size of a family was the more the program would cover their basic needs (including modern consumer goods as televisions and washing machines). Consequently, having a new

---

<sup>73</sup> Concern that is reflected in the Islamic Republic of Iran Constitution in the Articles 80, 81, 82: “Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” in *Alavi and Associates*, last accessed, 12/06/2015, <http://www.alaviandassociates.com/documents/constitution.pdf>.

<sup>74</sup> Kashani-Sabet, *Conceiving Citizens*, 56.

<sup>75</sup> “Iran-Iraq War (1981-1988),” *Global Security*, last accessed 12/06/2015, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/iran-iraq.htm>.

<sup>76</sup> Sen McGlinn, *Family Law in Iran* (Leiden: Leiden university, 2002), 34.

<sup>77</sup> Mehryar, Roudi, Aghajanian, and Tajdini, “Repression and Revival of the Family Planning Program,” 8.

child for a household meant having access to an additional part of the rationed goods.<sup>78</sup>

The demand for a population growth was also based on the will of enhancing the Iranian military power of Iran. In fact, these initiatives were reflective of Ayatollah Khomeini's vision for Iran as a future Islamic state composed of a "Twenty Million Man Army" that was able to defend the homeland against foreign aggressors and infidels.<sup>79</sup>

### **Reimplementation of the Family Planning Program (1986-1994)**

According to the 1986 national census, from 1976 to 1986, the population growth rate raised of 3.9% per year reaching the number of 49 million.<sup>80</sup> At first, this result was enthusiastically received and regarded as a gift sent by God for the prime minister of that time, Mir Hossein Mousavi.<sup>81</sup> Nonetheless, the government soon realized that an uncontrollable population growth would endanger the future of the country. As a matter of fact, the costs of the Iran-Iraq war, together with massive immigration from the war zones to major cities and the financial consequences of the American embargos (the first sanctions were applied in 1979 and year by year intensified during the war), led to a dramatic economic crisis.<sup>82</sup>

The Plan and Budget Organization (PBO), the agency which is responsible for monitoring the government funds and expenditures, highlighted the fact that national resources could not sufficiently sustain the welfare services promised in the constitution.<sup>83</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>79</sup> Peter Martonosi, "The Basij: A Major Factor in Iranian Security," *AARMS: Academic & Applied Research in Military Science*, Vol. 11, Issue 1 (2012): 28.

<sup>80</sup> Mehryar, Roudi, Aghajanian, and Tajdini, "Repression and Revival of the Family Planning Program," 10.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>82</sup> Homa Hoodfar, "Devices and Desires: Population Policy and Gender Roles in the Islamic Republic," in *Middle East Report* no. 190 (1994):12.

<sup>83</sup> The importance of the creation and protection of full-fledged welfare state is stated in Article 29 of the constitution: "It is a universal right to enjoy social security and have benefits with respect to retirement, unemployment, old age, workers' compensation, lack of guardianship, and



Moreover, ministers directly responsible for the provision of basic services as health, education, agriculture started becoming more and more aware of the dangerous implications of the high rate of the population growth on the already vulnerable economic condition of the country.<sup>84</sup> The demographic data collected by the PBO was used to convince prominent political leaders that the implementation of population policies were fundamental for the country. The advocates of the family planning program were also aware that the clergy would have played a fundamental role in public acceptance of new family planning policies. Clerics were believed to rightfully hold not just high political positions but they were also the cultural vehicles through which national consensus could have been built.<sup>85</sup> Although some influential religious leading figures continued to have persisting doubts regarding the religious permissibility of contraceptive use and distribution as well as other methods of birth control, others started to debate the importance of these population policies in weekly sermons; they also participated in scientific seminars focused on the topic, such as those on “population and development” held in 1988 Mashhad and also in Isfahan a year later, however on “Islam and Family Planning”.<sup>86</sup>

Yet in this process, Ayatollah Khomeini’s contribution to the content, direction, and scope of *tanzīm-i khānavādah* (such as the legitimacy of contraceptives according to Islam) has been underestimated. The Program was only accepted by the government after the health

---

destitution. In case of accidents and emergencies, everyone has the right to health and medical treatments through insurance or other means. In accordance with the law, the government is obliged to use the proceeds from the national income and public contributions to provide the abovementioned services and financial support for each and every one of the citizens”, “Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” <http://www.alaviandassociates.com/documents/constitution.pdf>.

<sup>84</sup> Farzaneh Roudi Fahimi, “Iran’s Family Planning Program: Responding to a Nation’s Need,” 2.

<sup>85</sup> Homa Hoodfar, “Devices and Desires: Population Policy and Gender Roles in the Islamic Republic of Iran,” *Middle East Report*, No. 190, Gender, Population, Environment (Sep. - Oct., 1994), 12-14

<sup>86</sup> Mehryar, Roudi, Aghajanian, and Tajdini, “Repression and Revival of the Family Planning,” 10.

minister Kazem Sami (1938-1988), who was aware of the deleterious consequences of a high population growth rate, succeeded in obtaining in June 1979 a *fatwā* from Khomeini, which legitimized the use of contraceptive methods. The *fatwā* stated, “If the use of these methods does not expose women to any health problem (or harm) and it is also approved by her husband, [their use] to solve the problems [mentioned in the report] is religiously permissible.”<sup>87</sup> Other fatwas were issued by the Supreme Leader in 1980 but due to the challenges of the Iran-Iraq war beginning in 1981, the family planning program was deprioritized in the political and religious agenda.

This changed in 1988 when the Guardian Council, a 12-member institution in charge of ensuring the “compatibility of the legislation passed by the Islamic Consultative Assembly with the laws of Islam,”<sup>88</sup> affirmed “there is no Islamic objection (or legal barrier) to family planning.” This allowed the government to put into practice and to legislate freely for the reintroduction of population policy in Iran. In 1991 a “Family Planning Program Committee” was established within the Ministry of Health and Medical Education headed by the minister of health. The commission included the ministers from Education, Higher Education, Labor and Social Affairs, Culture and Islamic Guidance, and Planning and Budget, as well as the head of the Civil Registration Organization of the Ministry of Interior.<sup>89</sup> The preparation of a new Family Planning Bill was made possible and effective by the simultaneous interactions of religious, political, medical, cultural and economic institutions. The tasks that the committee

---

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.,6.

<sup>88</sup> Article 96 of the Islamic Republic Constitution: “Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” <http://www.alaviandassociates.com/documents/constitution.pdf>.

<sup>89</sup> Mehryar, Roudi, Aghajanian, and Tajdini, “Repression and Revival of the Family Planning Program,” 11.

planned to pursue are summarized in the Ministry of Planning and Budget's first Socioeconomic Development Plan in 1989.<sup>90</sup>

In this very plan, three important points concerning population control policies are discussed in the introduction: 1) encouragement in the adoption of all the appropriate measures in order to limit the population growth; 2) promotion of public health in order to limit maternal mortality; 3) encouragement of including women in social, economic and cultural fields.<sup>91</sup> Interestingly, *tanẓīm-i khānavādah* was not meant purely as a means to reduce the population but as a basis for supporting individual choices of families with health and educational services provided for both couples who had difficulties conceiving children as well as for those who desired to limit their family size.

The Family Planning Bill was finally ratified by the parliament in 1993. According to the first article, the law affirmed that all the social benefits given to families according to the numbers of their children would not include the fourth and later children born one year after the passage of the bill. The second article entrusted the ministries of education, culture, higher education, health and medical education, and Islamic culture and guidance with different tasks. Firstly, the ministry of education would be obliged with incorporating educational material on population and mother and child health care in school curriculum. Secondly, the ministries of culture and higher education and health and medical education were required to add the subject of family planning in all educational levels, including the universities. Thirdly, the ministry of Islamic culture and guidance would have to ensure the active cooperation with

---

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>91</sup> "Appendix I." in *The First Plan of Economic, Social and Cultural Development of the Islamic Republic of Iran (1989-1993) Bill* (Tehran, Iran: Plan and Budget Press, 1989).

journalists, film-makers and artists in *tanzīm-i khānavādah* in order to increase the general public awareness on the subject.

Lastly, the third article of the Family Planning Bill demanded to the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) develop broadcast radio and television programs with the intention of increasing public awareness about children's and women's health care.<sup>92</sup> This law was implemented in order to achieve the following three goals outlined by the family planning committee in 1991: encouraging a spacing of three or four years between pregnancies; discouraging teenage pregnancy; establishing a new trend in the estimate Iranian's family size by encouraging couples to reduce the number of children per family to three.<sup>93</sup>

Despite these positive and encouraging efforts, there were points in the newly reformed *tanzīm-i khānavādah* open to criticism. The most significant one is that the family planning program mainly targeted married couples but did not take in account the needs of unmarried persons who represented a large proportion of the total population. As a consequence, their inaccessibility to the health and educational services has since led to a lack of awareness on contraceptive use; this has resulted in heightened risks of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections.<sup>94</sup>

Still, the achievements of *tanzīm-i khānavādah* in the period from 1986 to 2006 exceeded the government's expectations. In fact, the fertility rate dropped from 6 children per woman in 1986 to 2 in 2006. This result is consistent with other socio-economic changes

---

<sup>92</sup> Mehryar, Roudi, Aghajanian, and Tajdini, "Repression and Revival of the Family Planning Program," 12.

<sup>93</sup> Farzaneh Roudi, "Iran Reverses Family Planning, Calls for More Children," In *Iran Primer*, last modified, 29/08/2012, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2012/aug/29/iran-reverses-family-planning-calls-more-children-0>.

<sup>94</sup> Amir H. Mehryar, Shirin Ahmad-Nia and Shahla Kazemipour, "Reproductive Health in Iran: Pragmatic Achievements, Unmet Needs, and Ethical Challenges in a Theocratic System," *Studies in Family Planning*, Vol.38, No.4 (2007): 58.

occurred to the Iranian population in these years, such as: the increase in the literacy rate for women; the improvement and development of new health care services across Iran; and a significant decrease in infant mortality rate.<sup>95</sup> Moreover, these policies, together with the cultural and religious support, succeeded in creating new values regarding family size and norms. According to academic and demographic studies (studied by Homa Hoodfar, Yagoob Fourutan and Amir H. Mehryar, Farzaneh Roudi, to name but a few), most Iranians now consider two children as the ideal number of children per family; this would ensure the parents' economic ease.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, social prestige was no longer based, generally speaking, on the quantity of children per family but rather on quality of life (namely how healthy and educated they are).<sup>97</sup>

The success of *tanẓīm-i khānavādah*, from 1993 to 2006, was based on government success in adapting population control policies according to the demands of each period; this necessarily involved pragmatically revisiting religious and ideological values, which were first propagated soon after the revolution, and altering them in accordance to the country's changing economic realities.<sup>98</sup>

And yet, a rupture in the national consensus of the family planning program was evident in 2006, when Ahmadinejad spoke about reforming this program altogether in official speeches and instituting economic reforms. As I argue in the following chapter, Ahmadinejad did so with the purposes of returning to the Islamic Republic's constitutional values and

---

<sup>95</sup> Hoodfar "Devices and Desires,"14.

<sup>96</sup> Farzaneh Roudi, "Iran Reverses Family Planning, Calls for More Children," In *Iran Primer*, last modified, 29/08/2012, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2012/aug/29/iran-reverses-family-planning-calls-more-children-0>

<sup>97</sup> Yagoob Foroutan, "Social Change and Demographic Response in Iran (1956–2006)," in *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.41, No.2 (2014):225.

<sup>98</sup> Homa Hoodfar and Saman Assadpour, "The Politics of Population Policy in the Islamic Republic of Iran," in *Studies in Family Planning*, Vol .31, No. 1 (2000):31.

especially in a political context within which Iran's international relations with Europe and America were worsened.

### **CHAPTER THREE**

This chapter examines how Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, during his presidency (2005-2013), began to promote Iran's population growth and to propose the reversal of its population control policies. I argue that Ahmadinejad employed certain strategies to paint a skeptical picture of the state's family planning program—some of which include questioning its legitimacy by inserting it into an anti-imperialist narrative. Second, I discuss how he highlighted the potential economic dangers that an under-populated country would face in the future and, at the same time, his administration implemented incentives and prizes in order to boost population growth. Lastly, Ahmadinejad successfully managed to link the perspective of these “economic dangers” with a more impressive threat: the end of Iran's economic

independence. Finally, I contend that the reversal of the family planning program is consistent with the reinforcement of nationalist tendencies of the last decade, which is framed in one, an alleged return of the revolutionary and two, in the economic independence from the “imperialist powers.”

### **The Beginning of the Reversal of the Family Planning Program**

On April 28, 2006 at a conference held marking the occasion of the National Day of the Islamic councils (*rūz-i millī -i shūrā-hā-yi islāmī*), Ahmadinejad spoke publicly for the first time against the policies of *tanẓīm-i khānavādah*, declaring: “Why should we put laws or say that we cannot afford to have more than two children, this is a materialistic thought [...] the West gave us the slogan, ‘two children are enough’, but now you see in which conditions they are. Westerners have problems. Because the growth of their population is negative, they are concerned that if our population increases, we will eventually triumph over them.”<sup>99</sup> Four years later, in an April 2010 interview broadcast on national television, the president foretold of significant and dangerous consequence that the continuing of these policies on population control would bear on Iran’s future.<sup>100</sup> The risks would entail a huge burden on state social security funds due to the reduction in the elderly population and the exponential rise in the number of pensioners. Along this line of thinking, an ageing population would gradually lead to a decrease in the labor force and a subsequent economic depression. The government would eventually be unable to sustain the demand of a large and unproductive part of the population

---

<sup>99</sup> Said Peivandi, “*Chirā Ahmadinejad bi Dumbāl-i Afzāyish-i Jam ‘āt-i Īrān Ast ?*” (Why Ahmadinejad is looking for Iran’s population growth?), *Radiofarda*, last modified May 28, 2010, [http://www.radiofarda.com/content/F3\\_ahmadinejad\\_population\\_Iran/2054837.html](http://www.radiofarda.com/content/F3_ahmadinejad_population_Iran/2054837.html).

<sup>100</sup> “Ahmadinejad- Eve 24 of Farvardin” *Youtube video*, posted on April 17, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4X-YuFfZLC4> (my translation).

and would be obliged to rely on immigrants. Hence, Iran's coveted economic independence would be compromised.

Clearly, the rhetoric that the former president used in this conference is not new and has its roots in the powerful narrative of anti-imperialism that has shaped Iran's post-revolutionary regime identity.<sup>101</sup> Similar criticisms on *tanẓīm-i khānavādah* already began to appear once the administration sought to implement it in 1988.<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, this time in 2012 Ahmadinejad effectively managed to draw the attention of the press, political establishment, and finally Supreme Leader Khamenei, therefore, rendering the policies of population control a contentious national issue. What Ahmadinejad provoked with such declarations was a major ideological rupture with the politics of *tanẓīm-i khānavādah*, hitherto heralded both inside Iran and internationally.

The rising importance of *tanẓīm-i khānavādah* for the Ahmadinejad administration during both his mandates (from 2005 to 2013) can be understood only if one recognizes that for the Iranian government, family matters are never ideologically and politically neutral. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the intentions of the family planning program were not only limited to decreasing the size of the Iranian population, but they also included the enhancement of health services and the distribution of contraceptives. The program involved all the apparatuses of the state (such as the religious, political and economic sectors) toward three specific goals: first and foremost, the creation of a sustainable welfare system according to the constitution, impossible to obtain in an overpopulated country; secondly, the

---

<sup>101</sup> Evaleila Pesaran, *Iran's Struggle For Economic Independence: Reform and Counter-Reform In The Post-Revolutionary Era* (London: Routledge Political and Economy of the Middle East and North Africa, 2011), 2.

<sup>102</sup> This thesis, 29.



enhancement of the quality of life and of the standards of the society (and therefore more accessibility to health services and education for all the social strata and particularly to women); lastly and more importantly, that this social and economic development should occur in conformity with the parallel reinforcement of Islamic values and norms.<sup>103</sup> In other words, *tanzīm-i khānavādah* was, and continues to be, highly politicized and wrapped in the cultural and economic conditions of the country.

### **The Rhetoric of the Ahmadinejad's "New Islamic Revolution"**

Ahmadinejad's victory in the March 2005 presidential election represented the rise to power of the so-called "principalists" (*āṣūlgarāyān*) faction, which emphasizes the necessity of returning to the revolutionary values propagated by Ayatollah Khomeini, especially the need for Iran's economic independence from foreign powers.<sup>104</sup> In fact, in the fifth chapter of Iran's Constitution (specifically Articles 43-55), it is made clear that one of the aims of the state is the "prevention of foreign economic domination over the country's economy."<sup>105</sup> According to the *āṣūlgarāyān*, the previous government of President Khatami had moved away from this principle by implementing laws that allowed the flow of foreign investments into Iran. The 2002 Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Act, endorsed by the Manager and Planning Organization of Iran (MPO) and drafted to attract capital from outside Iran in order to obtain new technologies and aid the industrial development, was criticized as pro-western.

<sup>106</sup> Conservatives maintained that, first of all, the law was anti-constitutional since it put no

---

<sup>103</sup> This thesis, p.30-31; see also, Homa Hoodfar, "Devices and Desires: Population Policy and Gender Roles in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Middle East Report*, No. 190, Gender, Population, Environment (Sep. - Oct., 1994)

<sup>104</sup> Pesaran, *Iran's Struggle For Economic Independence*, 7.

<sup>105</sup> See "Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran,"

<http://www.alaviandassociates.com/documents/constitution.pdf>.

<sup>106</sup> Pesaran, *Iran's Struggle For Economic Independence*, 137-142.

limits on the share that a foreign investor could hold.<sup>107</sup> Secondly, the potential participation of Iran in the global market was seen as a threat inasmuch as it put in jeopardy the economic independence of the Islamic Republic.

The reaction of the principalists to Khatami's reforms shaped what constituted the dominant discourse of the Ahmadinejad government. The "New Islamic Revolution," as Ahmadinejad defined his 2005 victory, meant for the conservatives mostly three factors: more social equality in the country; economic independence and technological development; and the reinforcement of the revolutionary values as established in the Constitution.<sup>108</sup> Many important features of this ideology, which gradually constructed the identity of the post-revolutionary Iran, were outlined by two intellectuals, Jalal al-e Ahmad (d.1969) and Ali Shariati (d.1977). The former developed, in one his most famous works from 1962 *Gharbzadigī* (translated as "Westoxification" or "Occidentosis"), a complex description of a cultural and identity decadence in Iranian society during the Pahlavi period. *Gharbzadigī* is defined as a sort of parasite that destroys the body which occupies from within. According to Al-e Ahmad, this crisis is due to the ideological influence and aggressive economic exploitation over the Iranian territory by imperialist powers, namely the United States and Europe.<sup>109</sup> What is worse is that many Iranians seem to have unhesitatingly embraced this intrusion, therefore giving form to a grotesque and enslaved nation. This work served as wake-up call and as an intellectual support for the revolutionary generation which not only

---

<sup>107</sup> Article 81 of the Constitution: "The granting of concessions to foreigners for the formation of companies or institutions dealing with commerce, industry, agriculture, services or mineral extraction, is absolutely forbidden."

<sup>108</sup> Pesaran, *Iran's Struggle For Economic Independence*, 168-169.

<sup>109</sup> Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Gharbzadeghi* (Westoxification), available online at:

<http://mohsen.l.banan.bynome.net/content/republished/doc.public/politics/iran/gharbzadegi/restoration/main.pdf>

wanted to depose the Shah (the most infamous *Gharbzidah*) but also to rid Iran of intrusive western elements. The ideology of *Gharbzadigī* generated a multitude of simplistic dichotomies. It basically splits the world in two distinct groups: the exploiters (the pro-westerners are included) and the exploited.<sup>110</sup>

Public intellectual and sociologist Ali Shariati gave a more sophisticated and detailed vision of Iranian identity in his public and university lectures, and specified which values Iran must struggle to embrace and reject. Shariati argued that the application of either the capitalistic or communist systems in Iran was completely inadequate. To him, capitalism favors social inequality and exploitation and transforms people into mere consumers. Shariati also harshly criticized communism because of its complete lack of spirituality, which he thought was an integral and necessary part of a human being.<sup>111</sup> Instead of these two systems, Iranians should find their unique identity grounded in Shia Islamic values, providing that they were thoroughly aware of how tradition could be variously misinterpreted. This “Islamic revivalism,” if applied on a large scale, would lead to joining social equality with religiosity. Moreover, Shariati provided for the post-revolutionary discourse a significant dichotomy similar to that of al-e Ahmad’s. In the former’s version, the social classes are polarized and divided into two categories: *mustazaf’ān* and *mustakbarān* (oppressed and oppressors, respectively). However, Shariati promoted a significant way to overcome this class struggle --namely sacrifice, recalling the Husain’s martyrdom in Karbala. The true believer would have the moral duty to perpetuate the social struggle and include sacrifice in his daily life against the oppressors. Shariati’s works as well as those of al-e Ahmad had a great impact on

---

<sup>110</sup> Hanson, “The ‘Westoxication’ of Iran: Depictions and Reactions of Behrangī, al-e Ahmad, and Shariati,” 7-12.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

the revolutionary ideology of the Islamic Republic. For instance, the sentence “Every place should be turned into Karbala, every month into Moharram, and every day into Ashura” became a slogan during the Iran-Iraq War,<sup>112</sup> and the *mustazaf’ān* and *mustakbarān* rhetoric is often used to identify the enemy and, for contrast, the Iranian *self*. Hence, the oppressors are the “godless,” or “satanic” inspired powers (the United States, Europe and Israel); the oppressed, the righteous followers of the *sharī’ah*, Islamic law (in this case, the Islamic Republic of Iran in particular and the Shiites in general).<sup>113</sup>

This anti-imperialist ideology served as one of the fundamental backbones upon which the constitution was conceived. For instance, Article 3 includes, as one of the most important duties of the state, “the complete elimination of imperialism and the prevention of foreign influence.”<sup>114</sup> The rejection of the economic, political and cultural influence of oppressive powers is repeated and emphasized throughout all the constitutional text and in Article 154 there is a clear reference of the ongoing struggle between oppressors and oppressed.<sup>115</sup> In fact, the article states that “accordingly [the Islamic Republic of Iran] while scrupulously refraining from all forms of interference in the internal affairs of other nations, it supports the just struggles of the *mustazaf’ān* against the *mustakbarān* in every corner of the globe.”<sup>116</sup>

---

<sup>112</sup> Abrahamian, *Khomeinism*, 30.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-48.

<sup>114</sup> “Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” in *Alavi and Associates*, last accessed, 12/06/2015, <http://www.alaviandassociates.com/documents/constitution.pdf>

<sup>115</sup> Said Amir Arjomand, “The Constitution of the Islamic Republic,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, last updated October 2011, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/constitution-of-the-islamic-republic>.

<sup>116</sup> “Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” in *Alavi and Associates*, last accessed, 12/06/2015, <http://www.alaviandassociates.com/documents/constitution.pdf>

Likewise, the struggle between oppressed and oppressors has been incorporated inside the hegemonic political narrative of the state and has been reproduced almost systematically: as an immediate example, in the management of the Iran's diplomatic relationships.

As Maaïke Warnaar argues, "The world view communicated by Iran's leaders during Ahmadinejad's presidency was one that draws on the historical experiences, primarily the experiences with what has been perceived as meddling West, and the continuous attempts by Western powers to undermine the interests of the Iranian people."<sup>117</sup>

In fact, if the domestic policies under Ahmadinejad were primarily oriented toward achieving Iran's economic independence, international affairs were entirely dominated by a general mistrust and anti-western sentiment.<sup>118</sup> The Iranian foreign policy and domestic discourse is permeated by what Abrahamian has described the "paranoid style" in Iranian politics, meaning the conspiratorial interpretations of history and politics or the belief that someone (the "enemy" forces of the United States, Europe and Israel) tries constantly to manipulate the Iran's domestic affair.

If it is true that conspiracy theories are an universal phenomenon, what makes the Iranian case unique is that, as Houchang E. Chehabi argues, they resonates also in the works of well-known and influential Iranian historians.<sup>119</sup> According to the scholar, Iranian historical narratives, infused by conspiracy theories, can be divided in two main groups: particularistic and universalistic. While in the first group Western powers are accused to compete for

---

<sup>117</sup> Maaïke Warnaar, *Iranian Foreign Policy During Ahmadinejad: Ideology and Actions*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 82.

<sup>118</sup> Pesaran, *Iran's Struggle For Economic Independence*, 186.

<sup>119</sup> Houchang E. Chehabi, "The Paranoid Style in Iranian Historiography," in Touraj Atabaki, ed. *Iran in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Historiography and Political Culture* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 156.

influence in Iran, in the second global forces are constantly at work to prevent the country from attaining its political, cultural, military and religious superiority.<sup>120</sup>

The “paranoid style” has remained persistent in Iranian politics and it is used instrumentally to keep the country in a state of constant alertness to outside threat. As Ahmad Ashraf maintains, conspiracy theories are even more appealing and effective as a defense mechanism during period of powerlessness, defeat and turmoil because it gives the responsibility of domestic socio-economic failure to external and hostile powers.<sup>121</sup>

The advocates of pronatalist line of thinking made full use of the conspiratorial argument in order to destabilize the population control policies. For instance, a 2012 billboard issued by the government, *khānivādah Īranī* (Iranian Family), depicts a puzzle-like picture of an Iranian family with 15 missing pieces.<sup>122</sup> These pieces are the main principles according to which the new policies on population control must be redefined (such as, the reinforcement of the Iranian identity, the respect of elders, and the protection of young couples). Under the title is written: “For the enemies the best thing is that Iran becomes a country with a population of twenty or thirty millions, and that the half of it composed by elders, middle aged people and pensioners. This is for them the best thing to do. And for this purpose, they make plans and spend money on them. We have to change our trend in opposition to that trend (*the western one*). A trend that has to be right, logical and wise.”<sup>123</sup> Here, the Western influence on the population control policies and the danger of an ageing nation have become the two main

---

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>121</sup> Ahmad Ashraf, “Conspiracy Theories,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, last updated October 28, 2011, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/conspiracy-theories>.

<sup>122</sup> See cover page of this thesis, 2.

<sup>123</sup> The picture of the billboard *khanevadeh Iran-i* (see cover page, 2.) can be found online in: “*Khanevadeh Iran-i*” (Iranian Family), *Farhangnews*, last accessed, 17/06/2015, <http://www.farhangnews.ir/sites/default/files/content/images/story/93-03/10/78234-233247-1401513791.jpg>.

points that pronatalists emphasize in the media. As an example, on the 22th of August 2012, the newspaper *Risālāt* dedicated an entire page to the topic of decreasing the fertility rate in the article, “The Influence of the Western Lifestyle in the Country’s Population” (*Tāsīr-i Sabk-i Zindigī-i Gharbī dar Vaz’yāt-i Jam’iat -i Kishvar*). According to the article: “For the Iranian, Islamic culture, having only one child per family is not praiseworthy. This shows that the -only child trend- has roots in a foreign culture. For this reason, some experts are convinced that the influence of the western lifestyle caused the decrease in the fertility rate.” A second article, entitled “*Pīrī, Tahdīdi Barāyi Jam’iat -i Irānī*” (Old Age, a threat for the Iranian Society) made similar claims: “The populations in many of the European countries are old. As a consequence they need to entrust their labor force to immigration policies and integration....the crisis of the decreasing population in Iran is a serious issue. And if the population control policies do not change, in the future we will face plenty of political and social problems.”<sup>124</sup>

### **Economic and Political Strategies of the Reversal of the Family Planning Program**

The Ahmadinejad administration tried to launch in the *Majlis* two economic reforms that are arguably pronatalist. Although they did not in content and form affect the policies of the family planning program, they did promote a top-down initiative to encourage marriage among its population. In fact, soon after his election, Ahmadinejad submitted in October 2005 the bill for the *ṣandūq-i mihr-i imām rezā* (Imam Reza Love Fund), which aimed to provide

---

<sup>124</sup> Both the articles “*Tāsīr-i Sabk-i Zindigī-i Gharbī dar Vaz’yāt-i Jam’iat -i Kishvar*” (The Influence of the Western Lifestyle in the Country’s Population) and “*Pīrī, Tahdīdi Barāyi Jam’iat -i Irānī*” (Old Age, a threat for the Iranian Society), can be found in the newspaper *Risālāt* dated 22 August 2012 on page 7, available also online, <http://www.magiran.com/ppdf/nppdf/2829/p0282976190071.pdf>.

loans for younger generations in order to help them with finding employment and alleviating high marriage costs and housing expenses.<sup>125</sup> The bill in its initial draft was not accepted since there was wide political opposition and skepticism towards it, especially from the Budget and Planning Organization (as a semi-independent institution). As a matter of fact, the establishment of the fund was supposed to be financed from Iran's foreign exchange reserves (30 % of it) but with little information on how this amount of money would be allocated and monitored. Despite these significant obstacles, Ahmadinejad managed to form an alternative fund involving institutions completely independent from the government and under the responsibility of small group of trusted advisors.<sup>126</sup> Clearly, the decision of naming the fund after the eighth Shiite Imam shows this pronatalist program intended to be connoted with a religious framing. (However, it is worth mentioning that the president of Iran's Central Bank in February 2015 finally succeeded in changing the name of the fund to *ṣandūq -i Kārāfarīn*, maintaining that the name of one of the holiest Shiite Imams was not appropriate for a financial institution.)<sup>127</sup>

The second reform was introduced by the parliament in 2012, the last year of Ahmadinejad's presidency. This time the name of the bill was *ṣandūq -i atīah farzandān* (Fund for the Future of the Children), which intended to allocate 950 dollars for each newborn in a government bank account. Children would receive 95 dollars each year until they reached the age of 18 when they could access this money for marital or educational purposes.<sup>128</sup> The

---

<sup>125</sup> Pesaran, *Iran's Struggle For Economic Independence*, 172.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 172-173.

<sup>127</sup> "Nam-i mihr-i imām rezā 'avaz shod" (Name of the Imam Reza Love Fund Has Changed), *Isna*, last updated 10/02/2015, <http://www.isna.ir/fa/news/93112111745/%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%B5%D9%86%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%82-%D9%85%D9%87%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%B1%D8%B6%D8%A7-%D8%B9-%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%B6-%D8%B4%D8%AF>.

<sup>128</sup> "One Million Toman for Each Newborn' Has its Roots in a Historical Perspective for Ahmadinejad," *Asiran*, last updated, 10/04/2010,



parliament did not approve this plan, which again was criticized for its lack of certainty and clarity on how the fund would be financed. Apparently, Ahmadinejad faced the most challenges from state institutions and analysts that handled management and economic related issues.<sup>129</sup> The president could not entirely consolidate his own influence within this sphere, although he succeeded in dissolving the Management and Planning Organization in 2007 (re-established again in 2013) and chose to trust small groups of personal advisors for budgetary issues.<sup>130</sup>

The government's move to promote marriage among Iranian youth can be viewed as a reaction to the dramatic fall in marriage rates of the 2000s. As a matter of fact, demographic studies demonstrate that the average age of marriage increased from 23.8 to 26.8 for men and 19.6 to 23.6 for women from 1986 to 2013.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, according to Iran's National Organization for Civil Registration, 48% of women and 46 % of men are at their marriage age cannot afford to marry yet.<sup>132</sup> In a country where the 55% of the population is under the age of 30, this data is undoubtedly alarming. Although conservative members of the parliament often point out that one of the main reasons for this crisis is due to the influence of the western and

---

<http://www.asriran.com/fa/news/107413/%D9%87%D8%B1-%D9%86%D9%88%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%AF-%DB%8C%DA%A9-%D9%85%DB%8C%D9%84%DB%8C%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%B4%D9%87-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%AF%DA%AF%D8%A7%D9%87-%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%AE%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%AF%DB%8C-%D9%86%DA%98%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AF-%D8%A2%DB%8C%D8%A7-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D9%86-%D8%B7%D8%B1%D8%AD-%D8%AF%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%BE%D8%AE%D8%AA-%D9%85%D8%B1%DA%A9%D8%B2-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%B1%D8%B3%DB%8C-%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA%DA%98%DB%8C%DA%A9-%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA-%D8%AC%D9%85%D9%87%D9%88%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%9F>

<sup>129</sup> Pesaran, *Iran's Struggle For Economic Independence*, 172-173.

<sup>130</sup> Pesaran, *Iran's Struggle For Economic Independence*, 173.

<sup>131</sup> Mohammad Reza Farzanegan and Hassan Gholipour Fereidouni, "Marriage Crisis and Housing Costs: Empirical Evidence from Provinces of Iran," in *Joint Discussion Paper Series in Economics* (2014): 3-4.

<sup>132</sup> Mohammad Reza Farzanegan and Hassan Gholipour Fereidouni, "Marriage Crisis and Housing Costs: Empirical Evidence from Provinces of Iran," in *Joint Discussion Paper Series in Economics* (2014): 1-2.

“corrupted ideology” in Iran, a closer look at economic data reveals that marriage and financial crises are interrelated. For example, during both Ahmadinejad mandates, the inflation rate experienced an average of 17% every year, exceeding of 20% in 2011 and 2012.

<sup>133</sup> As a chain reaction, the housing prices grew exponentially, shifting from an average annual rent of 10000 riyals in 2000 to 80000 riyals per square meter (respectively 0.34 and 2.78 US\$) in 2011 in Tehran.<sup>134</sup> Moreover, the high unemployment rate in addition to the high dowry price set for a marriage, have certainly prevented and/or discouraged young couples from marrying.

The marriage crisis represents one inevitable consequence of the economic depression that hit Iran during this last decade, caused also by the increasing number of economic sanctions imposed by the U.S and Europe. Unfortunately, the strategies employed by Ahmadinejad to gain public support by promoting social equality and also to consolidate Iran’s coveted economic independence were ultimately unsuccessful. Both the *şandūq-i mihr-i imām rezā* and the *şandūq -i atīah farzandān* were rejected. Although the former was created under a different non-governmental form, it did not yield the expected results. As a matter of fact, the population growth has remained constant: in 2005, it was 1.2% ; in 2013, 1.3%.<sup>135</sup> Moreover, unmarried couples do not seem willing to marry given such unstable economic conditions.<sup>136</sup>

---

<sup>133</sup> Nader Habibi, “The Economic Legacy of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad,” *Crown Center for Middle East studies* No.74 (2013): 6.

<sup>134</sup> Farzanegan and Fereidouni, “Marriage Crisis and Housing Costs,” 4.

<sup>135</sup> Statistic chart of the Population Graph in Iran, from 2005 to 2013: “Population Growth,” World bank, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.GROW/countries/IR?display=graph>.

<sup>136</sup> Farzaneh Roudi, “Iran Reverses Family Planning, Calls for More Children,” In *Iran Primer*, last modified, 29/08/2012, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2012/aug/29/iran-reverses-family-planning-calls-more-children-0>.

In August 2011, Marzieh Vahid Dastjerdi, the Minister of Health during the second Ahmadinejad administration (2009-2011), claimed, “The budget for the population control program has been fully eliminated and such a project no longer exists in the health ministry. The policy of population control does not exist as it did previously.”<sup>137</sup> Her statement illustrated the government’s intention to terminate *tanẓīm-i khānavādah* policies; it also expressed some confidence that the administration had the effective power to do so. And yet, according to the official data published by the Ministry of Health, it appears that the budget allocated for those expenditures was restored to US\$ 4.8 million in 2013.<sup>138</sup> As a matter of fact, the government could not ban altogether the *tanẓīm-i khānavādah* fund, firstly because a large part of the maternal health care was still based on it. Secondly, some of the activities of the family planning, such as sex education in schools and in health care centers as well as the distribution of contraceptives, had been extended to cover issues related to sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS.<sup>139</sup>

Surprisingly, Khamenei and the most prominent members of the clerical establishment did not announce their religious and political opinions on Ahmadinejad’s intentions of reversing the *tanẓīm-i khānavādah* until 2012.

As will be investigated in the following chapter, the reason why Khamenei’s speech was held in that year is not a mere coincidence. As a matter of fact, one must take into account

---

<sup>137</sup>“*Būdjah 13 Mīlīārdī Barā-yi Kuntrul-i Jam’iat*” (A Budget of 13 Billion *Tūmān* for Population Control), *Aftabnews*, last modified September 30, 2013, <http://aftabnews.ir/fa/news/212580/%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%AF%D8%AC%D9%87-%DB%B1%DB%B3-%D9%85%DB%8C%D9%84%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AF%DB%8C-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A7%DB%8C-%DA%A9%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%84-%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%B9%DB%8C%D8%AA>

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Amnesty International, *You Shall Procreate: Attacks On Women’s Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Iran* (London: Amnesty International Ltd, 2015), 10-11.

two important events that occurred in Iran in 2012: the application of the EU sanctions against Iran in response to its nuclear activities, and the end of the political tug-of-war between Ahmadinejad and Khamenei in favor of the latter. The tension that emerged between the two political leaders is important since it reveals not only that there was a deep ideological divergence within the right-wing, but also that the political system was losing its stability. This coupled with the worsening of the country's economic condition during the second mandate of President Ahmadinejad (2009-2013) resulted in a loss of government credibility and popular support. Therefore, I argue that the Khamenei's call for a population growth can be read as a demonstration of strength during a period of domestic and international crisis.

#### **CHAPTER FOUR**

In the last two years of the Ahmadinejad administration, the Iranian regime was experiencing a growing crisis of legitimacy both domestically and internationally. The failure of the former

president's economic reforms together with the increase of financial, economic, and military sanctions, imposed by the international community, culminated in a major financial crisis. The credibility of the government was also negatively affected after the revelation of the 2011 Iranian embezzlement scandal,<sup>140</sup> in which Ahmadinejad's office was said to be involved. In this chapter I argue that Ayatollah Khamenei's endorsement to reverse the family planning program and to encourage Iran's population growth represents the regime's effort to communicate both to Iranians and to the international community that Iran could still attain its revolutionary goal of self-sufficiency and economic independency.

In this chapter I hypothesize first that the reason why the Supreme Leader did not publicly support Ahmadinejad's pronatalist stance before 2012 was because of an ideological conflict that emerged between the two leaders. In subsequent sections, I conduct a discourse analysis of two Khamenei speeches in which he defines the policies of *tanzīm-i khānavādah* as a political mistake of the past and as a western conspiracy. In the last section I argue that these claims can be read as a response to the 2012 worsening of the Iranian nuclear crisis that led the country to political isolation and an economic asphyxiation.

## **Khamenei and Ahmadinejad Rift**

---

<sup>140</sup> The embezzlement in 2011 (of approximately 2.6/3 billion of *tūmān*) involved primarily the financial conglomerate of Amir Mansour Arya Investment Development Company headed by Amir Mansour Khosravi (executed in 2014). Allegedly, the Arya group after having falsified letters of credit from at least seven Iranian state and private banks, used them in order to acquire other financial assets and to purchase state owned companies. Reportedly, Melli Bank and other banks issued loans to the Arya group without checking the validity of the letters and the Central Bank failed to monitor these transactions. More significantly, the scandal revealed also high level of corruption within the government and involved Ahmadinejad and his closest political ally and former president's chief of staff, Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei. Accusations began to appear that the Money and Credit Council was filled with Mashaei associates that were either lax in oversight or supportive of the loans. See, Keven Harris, "Iran's massive Banking scandal," in *The Iran Primer*, posted in October 16, 2011, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2011/oct/16/iran%E2%80%99s-massive-banking-scandal>; Arash Karami, "Ahmadinejad's chief of staff accused of links to embezzlement" in *Al-Monitor*, Posted August 6, 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/08/mashaei-embezzlement-ahmadinejad.html>.

From the day of the Ahmadinejad's speech in 2006 on *rūz-i millī -i shūrā-hā-yi islāmī*, until the 24<sup>th</sup> of July 2012, when Khamenei addressed a speech on the occasion of the Ramadan, the Supreme Leader and the most prominent members of the clergy did not claim whether they agreed or disagreed with the president's intentions for *tanẓīm-i khānavādah*. Clearly, Ahmadinejad's harsh criticism against it had daringly touched upon a contentious political and religious issue. After all, one of the fundamental keys that successfully led the parliament to approve the Family Planning Law in 1993 was the clerical contribution.

Accordingly, when Ahmadinejad questioned the validity of the family planning establishment, he implicitly questioned its religious legitimacy. Perhaps the president's cumbersome interference with religious issues and his insubordination towards the clerical hierarchies, which happened during his second and last mandate (2009-2013) may have led the Supreme Leader and the clergy not to pronounce themselves on the on the topic of the reversal of the family planning. As a matter of fact, after the second victory of the *ābādgārān* party in the 2009 election, it initiated a political rift between both men that ultimately revealed deep ideological differences in the conservative wing of Iranian politics.

To begin with, as soon as Ahmadinejad was elected, he appointed as his vice-president Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei, a controversial politician and close ally who had always been accused of being a secular nationalist and anti-establishment thinker.<sup>141</sup> Ayatollah Khamenei publicly demanded that the President remove Mashaei from this position, but for the first time in the history of the Islamic Republic, Ahmadinejad ignored the request of the Supreme Leader and resisted implementing the order for a week.<sup>142</sup> However, the

---

<sup>141</sup> "Banker executed in Iran, message for Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei?" in *Crescent Shift*, posted May 24, 2014, <https://crescentshift.wordpress.com/2014/05/24/iran-protest-on-february-14-largest-in-year/>

<sup>142</sup> "Chronology of Controversy: Who is Esfandiar Mashaei," *Payvand*, last modified 23/01/2011, <http://www.payvand.com/news/11/jan/1222.html>.

Mashaei-Ahmadinejad alliance did not terminate after his dismissal from the cabinet. Indeed, Mashaei began to articulate a new version of Iranian nationalist ideology that he called *Maktab-i Īrānī* (Iranian School of Thought), a concept that was later adopted also by the president himself.

At a ceremony and gathering of Iranian expatriates on 5 August 2010, Mashaei explained the notion of the *Maktab-i Īrānī*, stating: “From now on we must introduce the world to the Iranian school of thought. Iran is the place in which faith has appeared; the history of Iran is filled with faith; the land of Iran has always been a place in which faith has appeared; Why? Because it has always been the site in which science and knowledge were manifest.”<sup>143</sup> Endorsing this ideology, Ahmadinejad protected Mashaei from the accusations of secular nationalism during a press conference held a day later, explaining: “ ‘Iranian School of Thought’ is not based on nationalism because today, Iran is not a single geography, a nation, a people or a tribe; rather it is a school of thought a path...Iran means justice, worship of God, freedom, and the road to freedom.”<sup>144</sup> Nonetheless, the clergy, including significant members such as Ayatollah Ka’bi and Ahmad Khatami, denounced these claims and rejected the *Maktab-i Īrānī* altogether.

The reasoning for this ideological rejection, as Ahmad Khatami recalled during a Friday sermon, that Ayatollah Khomeini denounced nationalism as against Islam, God’s law and the *qur’ān*.<sup>145</sup> Secondly, even though both Ahmadinejad and Mashaei emphasize faith and

---

<sup>143</sup> Kamran Scott Aghaian, “Islamic-Iranian Nationalism and Its Implications for the Study of Political Islam and Religious Nationalism,” in *Rethinking Iranian Nationalism and Modernity*, ed. by Kamran Scot Aghaie and Afshin Marashi (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), 192.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>145</sup> Kamran Scott Aghaian, “Islamic-Iranian Nationalism and Its Implications for the Study of Political Islam and Religious Nationalism,” in *Rethinking Iranian Nationalism and Modernity*, ed. by Kamran Scot Aghaie and Afshin Marashi (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), 193

Islam as fundamental to their ideological positions, they *de facto* relegate Islam to a secondary position after the Iranian nation. According to Ayatollah Ka’bi, “People who seek an Iranian Islam, their ideas are deviant. We seek an Iran which is devoted to Islam not an Islam that is at service of Iran.”<sup>146</sup>

Consequently, the right and conservative wing party split into two factions: the Khamenei supporters led by Ali Larijani, Speaker of the *Majlis*, and the neo-principalists referred by the former as belonging to “the deviant current” (or *jaryān-i inhirāft*).<sup>147</sup> In addition, Ahmadinejad, Mashaei and their inner circle launched another daring provocation in their speeches by invoking the *Mahdī*, the Twelfth Imam who is believed to have disappeared in 873 A.D.<sup>148</sup> This was a very risky claim to make, considering that one of the fundamental notions upon which the Constitution of the Islamic Republic is based, is the *Vilāyat-i faqih* (Mandate of the Jurists). According to this precept, Islamic jurists are religiously legitimized to govern during the *Ghaibat* (Occultation or Absence) of the *Mahdī* as his vicars. Ayatollah Khomeini developed this Shiite doctrine in order to legitimize what the scholar Said Amir Arjomand calls the “sovereignty of the jurists” or the viceregency of the clerical establishment during the occultation period. The Supreme Leader and the clergy must guide and interpret the Islamic law emanated by God until the return of the *Mahdī* on earth who, according to the Twelver Shi’ite tradition, will restore a perfect Islamic society.<sup>149</sup>

---

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 193-194.

<sup>147</sup> Oliver Borsizik, “International Sanctions Against Iran Under President Ahmadinejad: Explaining Regime Persistence,” Hamburg: German Institute of Global and Area Studies (2014): 18.

<sup>148</sup> Muhammad Sahimi, “Ahmadinejad-Khamenei’s Rift Deepens Into Abyss,” in *Pbs*, last updated, 07/05/2011, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2011/05/opinion-ahmadinejad-khamenei-rift-deepens-to-an-abyss.html>.

<sup>149</sup> Said Amir Arjomand, “Constitution of the Islamic Republic,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, last updated October 2011, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/constitution-of-the-islamic-republic>.



However Ahmadinejad repeatedly affirmed in his speeches that the moment of the *Mahdī*'s return was coming. On September 24, 2010 in a television interview broadcast on Fox News, when the reporter Eric Shawn asked the president whether he believed that the Mahdi would return on Earth, the latter answered, "Sooner than what you think."<sup>150</sup> These claims enraged both clerics and Khamenei's supporters, firstly because according to them, Ahmadinejad did not possess any kind of spiritual and religious credibility that would give him the right to utter such a significant prediction. Secondly, these claims were seen as a strategy carried out by the "deviant current" to de-emphasize the role and importance of Ayatollah Khamenei.<sup>151</sup>

This ideological and political struggle within the conservative groups ended in the last two years of the second mandate of the President in favor of Khamenei. As a matter of fact, Ahmadinejad lacked broad political support in this confrontation. More importantly, all the military and intelligence officials publicly supported the Supreme Leader. Consequently, on May 2011, 25 people associated with the inner circle of the "deviant current" were arrested, including the prayer leader of the previous President and head of the Presidential Cultural Committee, Hojatoleslam Abbas Amirifar, after he produced a film called *Zuhūr Bisyr* *Nazdik Ast* (the Appearance is Near).<sup>152</sup>

In view of these considerations, Ahmadinejad's attack against *tanẓīm-i khānavādah* may have been interpreted by the clerical authority as just another interference of the

---

<sup>150</sup> "Who is Imam Mahdi, Let's Ask Ahmadinejad" posted on Youtube 04/02/2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vyPP1PkaTT0>.

<sup>151</sup> Muhammad Sahimi, "Ahmadinejad-Khamenei's Rift Deepens into Abyss," in *Pbs*, last updated, 07/05/2011, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2011/05/opinion-ahmadinejad-khamenei-rift-deepens-to-an-abyss.html>.

<sup>152</sup> Press Roundup, selected summary of news from the Farsi and Arabic press: "The Moslehi Blowback: Ahmadinejad Allies Arrested," *Pbs*, last modified May 2011, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2011/05/the-moslehi-blowback-ahmadinejad-allies-arrested-top-aides-targeted.html>.

President in a political decision that had been religiously legitimized two decades earlier. Nonetheless, Khamenei, on October 10, 2012 in Bojnord, the capital city of the Northern Khorasan province, stated the following: “If we can protect this young generation, the generation that we have today, for the future ten-twenty years and for the future periods and phases of this country, they will be able to solve all the problems/difficulties of the country.”

153

Although Khamenei remains unclear in the speech on what exactly are those problems or difficulties that only a young generation can solve, he suggests (here and in other speeches) that the reversal of *tanẓīm-i khānavādah* and a population growth are necessary for the country’s economic development.

### **Khamenei’s Call for the Reversal of *Tanẓīm-i Khānavādah***<sup>154</sup>

Herein I compare and analyze two of Khamenei’s public pronouncements on the reversal of the family planning policies from two different occasions. The first speech took place during the month of Ramadan on July 24, 2012, when he spoke before members of the army, and Majlis; the second is the aforementioned Bojnard. In the former, after having emphasized the importance of the Ramadan as a time for self-reflection, Khamenei launched into a criticism against foreign powers: the United States, Israel and Europe. Using a rhetoric of anti-imperialism and anti-western propaganda, Khamenei followed by stating, “I want to

---

<sup>153</sup> From the script of the Khamenei’s speeches held on the 24/07/2012: “*Biyānāt dar ijtemā’-i Mardum-i Bojnord*” (Speech to the Community of Bojnord), *FarsiKhamenei*, last updated on 24/07/2012 <http://farsi.khamenei.ir/speech-content?id=21126>.

<sup>154</sup> The script of the Khamenei’s speeches held on the 24/07/2012 and on 10/10/2012 are available respectively at: 1) “*Biyānāt dar Dīdār-i Kārgazārān-i Nizam*” (Speech During the Visit to the Kargarzaran-e Nezam), *FarsiKhamenei*, last modified 24/07/2012, <http://farsi.khamenei.ir/speech-content?id=20534> ; 2) *Biyānāt dar ijtemā’-i Mardum-i Bojnord* (Speech to the Community of Bojnord), *Farsi Khamenei*, last updated on 10/10/2012, <http://farsi.khamenei.ir/speech-content?id=21126>.

discuss some of the certain facts of our nation. If we do not take into account these realities, we will surely commit error of judgment. Moreover, we will make mistakes in the choice of the path. We must see these realities. Undoubtedly, none of the realities that I will present are results of analysis. All of the evident realities are in front of us.” He then listed the *vāq’ītat* (facts or realities), *laghziṣh* (error or mistake) and *durūgh* (lie) concerning Iran.

According to Khamenei, the *vāq’ītat* connoted both the “real” economic situation in Iran and the “real” intentions of the western powers. The *durūgh* meant the infamous propaganda spread by the West to denigrate Iran and to spread lies about the aims of its nuclear program—one of such being the development of weapons of mass destruction. He also criticized how the international public was being misled about the ideology and policies of the Islamic Republic.

First and foremost, ayatollah Khamenei argues that the “enemy” (*dushman*) always tries to convince the public opinion that the implementation of restrictive sanctions successfully conducted Iran into an economic dead-end street –*bun bast*. Rather, the reality, according to the Supreme Leader is that the Islamic Republic of Iran is making achievements both in ideological (the pursuit and the application of the greatest Islamic values in a government) and in economic terms. In fact Iran is quickly economically and technologically progressing within its borders thanks to its resources, thus emphasizing, the fact that the country’s survival does not need to rely on the world market. These resources are basically two: the natural and the human.

Khamenei is clearly affirming Iran’s prominence: “From the point of view of natural resources we occupy a high position in world ranks, and regarding some of these resources, we are the firsts.” Herein, the Supreme Leader is stressing the importance of natural resources

because of their connection with the Iran's nuclear program which is perceived as a fundamental element in order to achieve the objective of economic independence. The message that ayatollah Khamenei wants to convey to the public opinion is that the strength of Iran's economy is in the country itself, underneath its rich soil, and this is something which the "enemy" does not have the power to control, no matter how many sanctions they can impose. However, as I will show in the following paragraphs, in this speech the population (herein indicated with the term "human resources") is considered as another key factor for the country's economic self-sustenance and independence. "We have a population of seventy-five million people; this population number is very important. A young, joyous, educated and intelligent population, today is one of the important element for the progress of the country. In the statistics, you can see the pattern of the educated, wide-awake (sic), joyful and strong youngsters. For this reason we must revise *-tajdīd nazar kardan-* the policies of the limitation of the offspring (sic)(limitation of the births)."

In the following part of his argument, Khamenei recognizes the significance and effectiveness that the family planning program had for the first period after its implementation. However, it was a mistake that the government was not able to adapt this policy according to the necessities of different periods (particularly, from the year 2002 onward). Without a proper revision of family planning, the future of the population would be in jeopardy.

Following this line of thought, if the birth rate remained as it currently was, the youth population would decrease, and once they aged, Iran's total population would progressively reduce. Consequently, Khamenei encouraged the cooperation among the political and cultural institutions toward the implementations of new pro-natalist policies and measures in order to

“expel from the country this trend that we have today ‘one child, two child’; the first imam [he refers to Ayatollah Khomeini] said that the number of the population must be one hundred and fifty or two hundred millions –and he was right. We have to reach that number! [the double of the present population].”

The same intentions are expressed four months later in the Bonjird speech, however a different vocabulary and linguistic register were used.

Addressing a huge mass of people in the main square, Khamenei used a populist language and followed a similar sequence. Interestingly, he repeated the same formula of the previous speech: he began by attacking the ideology of the West, the falsity of its propaganda, and the uselessness of the economic sanctions to the celebration of the natural and human resources. On the whole, not much had changed from one speech to the other, except for some slightly different nuances in the meaning of the sentences. If on the 24th of July the Supreme Leader pointed out that the policies of population control in Iran failed to change *taghīr kardan* according to the needs and to the developing trends of the Iran’s economy, in Bonjird he claimed that *tanzīm-i khānavādah* has always been a mistake (*ishtibāh*) since its very inception in 1993. Therefore, according to Ayatollah Khamenei, the solution to this problem can be only that of blocking once for all the policies of the family planning program.

Khamenei’s call for an increase in the population was based on his confidence in the country’s capacity to be financially self-sufficient. This was related to the main objective of constitutional economic independence. However, this principle hinges on —and is constantly shaped by—Iran’s interactions and/or confrontations with the international community.

### **The Reversal of *Tanzīm-i Khānavādah* as a Reaction to International Sanctions**

Iran's nuclear program has been probably one of the most controversial and debated issue in in the diplomatic interaction between Iran and international community.

The Ahmadinejad administration presented the national nuclear program as one of the most representative element for the Iran's self-determination and independence.<sup>155</sup> In fact, it covers two of the goals of the former governmental agenda described in the third chapter: the creation of a sustainable welfare system (the nuclear program can provide energy and more employment to the country); and the enhancement of the Iran's economic development (with its technological advancement the country can indeed challenge the global market).

One might say that the national nuclear program, has been taken, in the last three decades, as a symbolic effort of the Islamic Republic to gain its international legitimacy. Also Khatami emphasized in 2004 the need for Iran to develop its own nuclear program by making analogies to the history of Imam Hussein whose deeds must be taught to the population in order to "safeguard our dignity and freedom."<sup>156</sup> In addition, both the Khatami and Ahmadinejad administrations considered the nuclear program as essential to achieve Iran's economic independence. For instance, Ali Larijani, the secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, during the first mandate of Ahmadinejad, stated the following: "It is possible that other countries will one day decide to stop supplying nuclear fuel to Iran and we should therefore be capable of producing it ourselves as a manifestation of our national dignity and independence."<sup>157</sup>

---

<sup>155</sup> Maaïke Warnaar, *Iranian Foreign Policy During Ahmadinejad: Ideology and Actions*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 139.

<sup>156</sup> Bahman Baktiari, "Seeking International Legitimacy: Understanding the Dynamics of Nuclear Nationalism in Iran," in *Middle East Strategic Perspectives*, No. 1 (2010):23.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

In fact, the nuclear program has been perceived as a great opportunity for the Islamic Republic to advance technologically, to provide energy across the country without relying on oil imports, and to increase job opportunities.

However, the Iranian government has often affirmed that the nuclear program has peaceful purposes and it tries to prove it by reminding to the international press to have signed and ratified the Non-Proliferation Treaty.<sup>158</sup> Moreover, Ayatollah Khamenei issued a number of legal opinions that clarifies the incompatibility of the nuclear weapons with the *sharī'ah*. One of the most recent *fatwā* regarding weapons of mass destruction, was formulated by Khamenei in 2006 that states, “We consider the application of nuclear weapons as contradictory to Islamic commandments. [...] We don't have the hegemonic intentions in the world like the Americans, who want to exert global tyranny and require a nuclear bomb; our nuclear bomb and our explosive power is our faith.”<sup>159</sup>

Nonetheless, the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005 and his decision to aggressively defend the Iran's right to develop its own nuclear energy regardless of the international limitations imposed by the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency), convinced the US Congress to increase the number of economic sanctions against Iran.

In fact, the Ahmadinejad administration in 2006 reopened the activities in the nuclear basis of Natanz (previously sealed by the IAEA) and announced the resumption of the uranium enrichment.<sup>160</sup> The following year a new 50000 *riyāl* banknote was issued depicting

---

<sup>158</sup> “The NPT is a landmark international treaty whose objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament”: “Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT),” *UN*, last accessed, 12/06/2015, <http://www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Nuclear/NPT.shtml>.

<sup>159</sup> “Khamenei, address during the ceremony marking the seventeenth anniversary of Imam Khomeini's death,” *Farsi Khamenei*, Last modified, 4 June 2006, <http://farsi.khamenei.ir/speech-content?id=3341>.

<sup>160</sup> Oliver Borsizik, “International Sanctions Against Iran Under President Ahmadinejad: Explaining Regime Persistence,” Hamburg: German Institute of Global and Area Studies (2014): 8.

on one side the image of electrons orbiting around an atom.<sup>161</sup> The figure clearly conveys both within the country and to the world how meaningful the nuclear program is for the pride of the Iranian nation.

Therefore, the US, in order to curtail the danger of a nuclear advancement in Iran, initiate to impose stricter economic sanctions, this time with the intention to force a large number of states to participate together in these resolutions.

To begin with, the US Congress signed in September 2006 the Iranian Freedom Support Act (IFSA) which basically included the sanctioning of third states, in case they would support financially and with technical assistance Iranian individuals or institutions related to the nuclear program.<sup>162</sup> Additionally, in December 2006, the United Nation Security Council (UNSC), adopted for the first resolution on sanctions against Iran, Resolution 1737. It called all UN member states to implement multilateral economic sanctions to prevent the Iranian nuclear activities. The international community was prohibited from providing any nuclear-related assistance in Iran. They were prevented from admitting Iranians to study in any discipline relevant to nuclear expertise, and they imposed asset freezes on any individuals involved in the nuclear program.<sup>163</sup> For the first time this resolution seriously involved the EU to activate coercive actions against Iran. As a matter of fact, many European states (as Germany, Italy, Greece and Spain) had always maintained trade partnerships with Iran and were the main importers of Iranian crude oil.

---

<sup>161</sup> The picture of the 50000 Ryal banknote: "Iran Issue New 50000-Rial Note Featuring Nuclear Insignia," *Bank note news*, last updated, 12/03/2007, <http://www.banknotenews.com/files/09ce34c23a12c080019c3d66b71938d7-105.php>.

<sup>162</sup> Borsizik, "International Sanctions Against Iran Under President Ahmadinejad," 8.

<sup>163</sup> "Security Council Imposes Sanctions on Iran for Failure to Halt Uranium Enrichment, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1737 (2006)," *UN*, last updated 26/12/2006, <http://www.un.org/press/en/2006/sc8928.doc.htm>.



However, Ahmadinejad's Holocaust denial and the violent repression of the green movement supporters in 2009, convinced EU members to cooperate with the US Congress.

Therefore in January 2012, the year when both of Khamenei's speeches took place, the Council of the European Union decided to ban new contracts for importing oil from Iran, implementing the first European oil embargo. Moreover, the Brussels-based SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication) cut off all monetary transactions coming from Iranian banks, rendering the import-export of oil and other commodities more difficult to obtain. These non-UN sanctions intensified the pressure on Iran's economic system, already affected by the unilateral US financial embargo, in order to force Iran to surrender its nuclear program.<sup>164</sup>

Both Ahmadinejad and Ayatollah Khamenei tended to dismiss the entity and the impact of the sanctions in their speeches and continued to maintain a confrontational behavior toward the international community. For instance, In march 2007, Khamenei stated the following: "Sanctions cannot deal a blow to us. Didn't they sanction us until today? We acquired nuclear energy under sanctions; we achieved scientific progress under sanctions; we achieved the country's broad reconstruction under sanctions. It is even possible that under certain conditions sanctions work to our advantage; from this perspective they can increase our ambition." Indeed, in addition to the fact that the sanctions policy has been counter-productive, it actually succeeded to maintain a discreet political intra-elite cohesion in the Iranian government.<sup>165</sup>

---

<sup>164</sup> Jamal Ibrahim Haidar, "Sanctions and Exports Deflection: Evidence from Iran," (Ph.D Thesis Papers, Paris: Paris School of Economics), University of Paris 1 Pantheon Sorbonne, Mimeo (2015): 8.

<sup>165</sup> Borsizik, "International Sanctions Against Iran Under President Ahmadinejad," 11

According to the ruling elite, the aim of the sanctions was not only related to limit the development of the nuclear program but also to finally overthrowing the Islamic Republic's establishment. As Ayatollah Khamenei pointed out, "They (*the international community*) assumed that they could place a burden on the Iranian nation with the instrument of sanctions and tighten the noose on the Iranian nation so much that it would protest against the system and the Islamic Republic. This was their aim."<sup>166</sup> Also, if sanctions were aimed at destabilizing Iran financially, the UN condemn of the Iranian violation of human rights were perceived as a propagandistic strategy to humiliate and deprecate Iran in front of the world popular opinion.<sup>167</sup>

From what I have highlighted it seems that the numerous pressures and sanctions that the U.S and Europe from 1979 to present had placed, instead of obtaining a submission, repeatedly met an intransigent resistance of the Iranian government.<sup>168</sup> Rather, embargoes and economic restrictions fortified the anti-imperialist anti-western narrative of the Islamic Republic and gave sense and consistency to the "paranoid style" of the Iranian politics and propaganda.

Additionally, the sanction policy of the international community actually succeeded to maintain a discreet political intra-elite cohesion in the Iranian government.<sup>169</sup>

As a matter of fact, one has to take into account that most of the problems related to the nuclear program in Iran, as Mohammad el-Baradei (the former head of the AIEA) also

---

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Maaïke Warnaar, *Iranian Foreign Policy During Ahmadinejad: Ideology and Actions*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 106-107

<sup>168</sup> Baktiari, "Seeking International Legitimacy," 19-20.

<sup>169</sup> Borsizik, "International Sanctions Against Iran Under President Ahmadinejad, 11.

stated, have always been related to the ideological and psychological nature,<sup>170</sup> or to what Ali Ansari calls “Myth of Victimization.”<sup>171</sup>

This myth has deeply shaped the evolution of the international relationships and represents probably the most incisive psychological traits present in the narrative of the political reactions to the economic sanctions. According to the “Myth of Victimization,” the imperialist Western powers always act in a way that seeks to delegitimize Iran as an independent country.

As Bahman Baktiari argues in the article “Seeking International Legitimacy: Understanding the Dynamics of Nuclear Nationalism in Iran,” “Most Iranians perceive their nation as a great civilization that has been deprived of its rightful status as a regional superpower by foreign intervention, including that of tsarist Russia, Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States.”<sup>172</sup> Consequently, all the foreign interferences and interventions, from “Operation Ajax”<sup>173</sup> to the recent economic sanctions, are perceived as humiliating and delegitimizing campaigns against Iran.<sup>174</sup> The confrontational attitude towards the international community in the aforementioned speeches reflect the intention to demonstrate

---

<sup>170</sup> Baktiari, “Seeking International Legitimacy”,21.

<sup>171</sup> Ansari, *Confronting Iran*,5.

<sup>172</sup> Baktiari, “Seeking International Legitimacy,”21.

<sup>173</sup> Already in 1951 the nationalization of the oil industry, carried out by the Iranian prime minister of that time Mohammad Mossadegh (1882-1967), unified the country and the popular opinion in defending the national sovereignty and legitimacy to benefit from its own natural resources. Mossadegh succeeded in abolishing all the oil concessions of the AIOC (Anglo-Iranian Oil Company) , considered as a form of exploitation, through a parliamentary vote. Subsequently, the British government imposed an economic embargo and threatened Iran with a naval force in the Persian Gulf.

Although the oil nationalization was considered as legit by the International Court of Justice in den Haag in 1952, the Great Britain’s foreign secretary Anthony Eden (1897-1977) convinced the U.S administration of President Dwight David Eisenhower to overthrow Mossadegh with a coup, known as ‘operation Ajax’ in 1953. Lisa M. Farhami, “Iranian Nationalism,” *The Public Purpose Journal*, Vol.5(2006): 21-25.

<sup>174</sup> Baktiari, “Seeking International Legitimacy,” 24-25.

the willingness to restore Iran's national honor that according to the Iranian imagination is constantly endangered by the international powers.

In the light of this evidence, I contend that Khamenei's public demand for the reversal of the family planning program in order to boost a population growth, can also be read as an additional reaction to underestimate the real impact of the 2012 sanctions. In fact, if Iran, as Ayatollah Khamenei claimed, has the potential and the resources to double its population number, it means that the economic restrictions implemented by the international community have not gravely impacted the Iran's economy.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS:**

#### **Dismantling the Family Planning Program**

The implementation of the Family Planning Law in 1993 was made possible thanks to the joint cooperation of health, educational, and economic institutions. Moreover, the implementation of *tanẓīm-i khānavādah* policies were sustained by the clerical approval of birth control methods along with the political implementation of the values of the Iran's constitution. More precisely, policy makers, clinical and demographic experts together with the clergy have succeeded in giving coherence to the policies of population control within the

ideological framework of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Nonetheless, this ideological framework has never been homogeneous and inflexible; it could be reinterpreted and reformulated throughout time according to specific changing factors, chiefly the country's economy and the international relations. Therefore, as the analysis of the history of *tanẓīm-i khānavādah* demonstrates, this dynamic clearly manifested through several periods of state intervention.

As the second chapter of this thesis examines, I explained how after the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979, the debate around the family planning program developed in two phases. In the first phase (1981-1986) *tanẓīm-i khānavādah*, implemented in Iran in 1967 was dismantled because of its association with the Shah and of its identification with the Western birth control methods by using a powerful anti-imperialist narrative. Additionally, a population growth was promoted also as a way to replace the numerous casualties of the Iran-Iraq war (1981-1988). Conversely, in the second phase (1986-1993) the family planning program was re-implemented after the financial crisis occurred in Iran because of two main reasons: the US sanctions and economic loss caused by the war. This time, the ideological discourse moved towards the constitutional principle of economic independence. In fact, an uncontrolled population growth endangered the creation of a welfare state (as envisioned by the founders of the Republic)<sup>175</sup> and would have forced Iran to rely on other countries to supply basic needs to the population.

Furthermore, I chose to focus on the recent political project of reversing the family planning program, initiated by the former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005, because

---

<sup>175</sup> See this thesis, 30.

it marked another historical rupture with the ideological discourse in favor of population control policies. Consequently, through the analysis of this “rupture,” I was able to uncover the mechanisms of power, the economic factors and the reformulation of the ideological discourse involved in the project of reversing the family planning program. Accordingly, the pronatalist line of thinking of Ahmadinejad and the *āṣūlgarāyān* was consistent with their intention to re-emphasize the revolutionary values propagated by Ayatollah Khomeini (the so-called “New Islamic Revolution”). Hence, the former president succeeded in employing the well-known anti-imperialist rhetoric in order to discredit the ideology underpinning *tanẓīm-i khānavādah* and in associating the decrease of the population number with the danger of losing the coveted economic independency. The same ideological discourse was used by Ayatollah Khamenei in 2012 when he endorsed the reversal of the Family Planning and promoted a substantial population growth. Considerably, I argued in the third and fourth chapter of this thesis that, factors such as the Iran’s financial crisis (worsened during the second Ahmadinejad mandate, 2009-2013<sup>176</sup>) and the onerous economic sanctions implemented by the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN) in 2012, affected decisively the ideology of the “New Islamic Revolution” and as a consequence, the population control policies.<sup>177</sup>

The 2013 victory of the reformist Hassan Rouhani elected with 50.72 % of votes, reflected the political moderate intention to favor a more conciliatory interaction with the international community without discarding important issues, such as the national nuclear

---

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 61.

program.<sup>178</sup> However, the project of reversing the family planning program and the encouragement of a population growth is still in the current governmental agenda.

As a matter of fact, in 2014 Khamenei outlined a 14 point plan (addressed to all the governmental and non-governmental institutions) which served as a significant framework for the socio-economic decisions aiming at increasing the population number. Herein I report the entire text that Khamenei wrote after having consulted the Expediency Discernment Council.

<sup>179</sup> The introduction of the 14 point plan, states the following:

“Considering the importance of the topic (the population size) in sovereignty might; and with particular attention to the grade of research, development and youth of the current republic; and in consideration of compensating the decreasing rates of the population growth and fertility in the last years, this notification is delivered to all the policies of the republic. In view of the outline of positive factors for the development of the country, it is necessary to conceive comprehensive plans for the economic, social and cultural growth pertinent to the politics of population control. Accordingly, it is necessary, with the cohesion and division of work among the branches of the government and institutions relevant in this field, to take rigorous, quick and vigorous steps and to report the results of the monitoring of the execution of such policies.”

---

<sup>178</sup> Steven Ditto, *Reading Rouhani: The promise and Perils of Iran's New President* (Washington: The Washington Institute for Near East Studies, 2013,) 59-70.

<sup>179</sup> “*Ablāgh-i Siyāsāt-hā-yi Kull-i Jam' Tat*” (Notification to the General Population Politics,) *Farsi Khamenei*, last modified 20/05/2014, <http://farsi.khamenei.ir/news-content?id=26440>.

These 14 points mainly convey two messages to different branches of government, namely that new bills and reforms must be drafted with the intention of: incrementing the population number and propagating Iranian and Islamic values. Regarding the method, Khamenei clarifies that the education, health and economic sectors of the government must cooperate in order to achieve these two goals. As the history of the post-revolutionary family planning teaches, a coordinated interplay among the mechanisms of state power is necessary to see efficient and rapid results. Khamenei's 14 points represented a turning point for the politics of population control in Iran given the influence that the Supreme Leader exerts in government.

Remarkably, the "restoration" and the reinforcement of the post-revolutionary Iranian national identity is also an urgent concern under the current Rouhani administration. And again, one of the vehicles of the government to disseminate this ideological framework is the "family". Indeed, in these last two years (2014-present), the mere "intention" of reversing the family planning program is rapidly turning into a concrete perspective.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

**Abbasi-Shavazi**, Mohammad Jalal. “Recent Changes and the Future of Fertility in Iran,” publication of the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs ,Population division (2002),

**Adib-Moghaddam**, Arshin. *Iran in World Politics: The Question of the Islamic Republic*. (London: Hurst Publisher Ltd, 2007)

**Aftabnews**. “*Budjeh 13 Miliardi Baro-ye Kontrol-e Jamyat*” (A Budget of 13 Billion Tuman for Population Control). Last updated 30/09/2013.

<http://aftabnews.ir/fa/news/212580/%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%AF%D8%AC%D9%87-%DB%B1%DB%B3-%D9%85%DB%8C%D9%84%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AF%DB%8C-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A7%DB%8C-%DA%A9%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%84-%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%B9%DB%8C%D8%AA>.

**Alavi and Associates**. “Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran.” Last accessed 12/06/2015. <http://www.alaviandassociates.com/documents/constitution.pdf>.

**Amani**, Elahe. “Widespread Opposition to Iran’s Family Protection Bill: From Bad to Worse and Beyond.” In *Iran-Women-Solidarity*. Last updated, 15/08/2008. <http://www.iran-women-solidarity.net/spip.php?article430>.

**Amani**, Mehdi and Nancy Hatch Dupree. "Family Planning." in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. Last modified, 24/01/2012. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/family-planning>.

**Amnesty International**. "Iran Women Fight Controversial Polygamy Bill." Last updated, 30/11/2011. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/articles/news/2011/11/iranian-women-fight-controversial-polygamy-bill/>.

**Amnesty International**. *You Shall Procreate: Attacks On Women's Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Iran*. London: Amnesty International Ltd, 2015

**Anderson**, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1991.

**Ansari**, Ali. *Confronting Iran: The Failure of American Foreign Policy and the Roots of Mistrust*. London: Hurst, 2006.

**Ansari**, Ali. "The Myth of White Revolution: Mohammad Reza Shah, 'Modernization' and the Consolidation of Power." *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 37 No. 3 (2001):1-24.

**Arjomand**, Said Amir. "Constitution of the Islamic Republic." In *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. Last updated October 2011. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/constitution-of-the-islamic-republic>.

**Asad**, Talal. "Religion, Nation-state, Secularism." In *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia*. ed. Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann, 178-196. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

**Ashraf**, Ahmad. "Conspiracy Theories." In *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. Last updated October 28,

2011. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/conspiracy-theories>.

**Asiran.** “ ‘One Million of Tuman for each new born’ has is rooted in a historical perspective for Ahmadinejad.” Last updated, 10/04/2010.

<http://www.asriran.com/fa/news/107413/%D9%87%D8%B1-%D9%86%D9%88%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%AF-%DB%8C%DA%A9-%D9%85%DB%8C%D9%84%DB%8C%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%B4%D9%87-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%AF%DA%AF%D8%A7%D9%87-%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%AE%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%AF%DB%8C-%D9%86%DA%98%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AF-%D8%A2%DB%8C%D8%A7-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D9%86-%D8%B7%D8%B1%D8%AD-%D8%AF%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%BE%D8%AE%D8%AA-%D9%85%D8%B1%DA%A9%D8%B2-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%B1%D8%B3%DB%8C-%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA%DA%98%DB%8C%DA%A9-%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA-%D8%AC%D9%85%D9%87%D9%88%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%9F>

**Bahgat,** Gawdat. “Nuclear proliferation: The Islamic Republic of Iran.” *International Studies Perspectives* Vol.7 (2006):307-327.

**Baktiari,** Bahman. “Seeking International Legitimacy: Understanding the Dynamics of Nuclear Nationalism in Iran.” In *Middle East Strategic Perspectives*, No. 1(2010):19-33.

**Balibar,** Etienne. “The Nation Form: History and Ideology.” In *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous identities*, ed. by Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, translated by Chris Turner, 86-104. London: Verso Books, 1991.

**Banknote news.** “Iran Issue New 50000-Rial Note Featuring Nuclear Insignia.” Last modified, 12/03/2007.

<http://www.banknotenews.com/files/09ce34c23a12c080019c3d66b71938d7-105.php>

**Bier, Laura.** “From Birth Control to Family Planning: Population, Gender, and Politics of Reproduction in Egypt.” *Family in the Middle East: Ideational Change in Egypt, Iran and Tunisia*, ed. by Kathryn M. Yount and Hoda Rashad, 52-73. London: Routledge, 2008.

**Borzik, Oliver.** “International Sanctions Against Iran Under President Ahmadinejad: Explaining Regime Persistence.” Hamburg: German Institute of Global and Area Studies (2014):4-21.

**Charrad, Mourina M.** “From Nationalism to Feminism: Family Law in Tunisia.” *Family in the Middle East: Ideational Change in Egypt, Iran and Tunisia*, ed. by Kathryn M. Yount and Hoda Rashad, 111-138. London: Routledge, 2008.

**Chehabi, Houchang E.** “The Paranoid Style in Iranian Historiography,” in *Iran in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Historiography and Political Culture*, ed. by Touraj Atabaki, 155-176. London: I.B. Tauris, 2009.

**Collins, Patricia Hill.** “It’s All In The Family: Intersections of Gender, Race and Nation.” *Hypatia*, Vol.13 (1998): 62-82.

**Ditto, Steven.** *Reading Rouhani: The promise and Perils of Iran’s New President.* Washington: The Washington Institute for Near East Studies, 2013.

**Erdbrink, Thomas and Kay Armin Serjoie.** “In Iran, Increases in Price of Natural Gas Stirring Anger.” In *The Washington Post*. Last updated 12 April 2012,

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/in-iran-anger-builds-over-natural-gas-price-hikes/2011/04/12/AFoE5DRD\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/in-iran-anger-builds-over-natural-gas-price-hikes/2011/04/12/AFoE5DRD_story.html).

**Farhami**, Lisa M. "Iranian Nationalism," *The Public Purpose Journal*, Vol.5(2006):20-30.

**Farhang News**. "*Khanevade-ye Iran-i*" (Iranian Family). Last updated, 24/12/2014.  
<http://www.farhangnews.ir/sites/default/files/content/images/story/93-03/10/78234-233247-1401513791.jpg>.

**Farhi**, Farideh and Saideh Lotfian. "Iranian Foreign Policy After the Election: Realists and Islamic Idealists Face Off." In *Foreign Affairs*. Last modified June 13,2013.  
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iran/2013-06-13/iranian-foreign-policy-after-election>.

**Farmaian**, Sattareh Farman. "Broadening Muslim Tradition: Bringing Family Planning to Iran." in *Courageous Pioneers: Celebrating 50 years of Pathfinder International and 80 Years of Pioneering Work in Family Planning and Reproductive Health Around the World*, 27-31. Watertown: Pathfinder International,2007.

**Farsi Khamenei**. "*Ablagh Siyasatah-ye Koll-I Jamiyat*" (Notification to the General Population Politics). Last modified 20/05/2014.  
<http://farsi.khamenei.ir/news-content?id=26440>.

**Farsi Khamenei**. "*Biyanat dar Didar-e Kargazaran-e Nezam*" (Speech During the Visit to Kargarzaran-e Nezam). Last modified 24/07/2012.  
<http://farsi.khamenei.ir/speech-content?id=20534>

**Farsi Khamenei**. "*Biyanat dar Ejtema'-e Mardom-e Bojnord*" (Speech to the Community of Bojnord). Last modified on 24/07/2012 <http://farsi.khamenei.ir/speech-content?id=21126>.

**Farzanegan**, Mohammad Reza and Hassan Gholipour Fereidouni. "Marriage Crisis and Housing Costs: Empirical Evidence from Provinces of Iran." In *Joint Discussion Paper Series in Economics* (2014):1-26.

**Foroutan**, Yaghoob. "Social Change and Demographic Response in Iran (1956-2006)." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (2014):219-229.

**Friedland**, Roger. "Religious Nationalism and the Problem of Collective Representation." *Annual Review of Sociology* (2001):125-152.

**Global Security**. "Iran-Iraq War (1981-1988)." Last accessed 12/06/2015.  
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/iran-iraq.htm>.

**Habibi**, Nader. "The Economic Legacy of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad." *Crown Center for Middle East studies* No.74, (2013):1-9.

**Haidar**, Jamal Ibrahim. "Sanctions and Exports Deflection: Evidence from Iran." (Ph.D Thesis Papers, Paris: Paris School of Economics), University of Paris 1 Pantheon Sorbonne, Mimeo (2015): 1-41.

**Hanson**, Brad. "The 'Westoxication' of Iran: Depictions and Reactions of Behrangi, al-e Ahmad, and Shariati." In *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (1993):1-23.

**Harris**, Keven. "Iran's massive Banking scandal." In *The Iran Primer*. Posted in October 16,2011.  
<http://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2011/oct/16/iran%E2%80%99s-massive-banking-scandal>

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

**Hoodfar**, Homa. "Family Law and Family Planning Policy in Pre- and Post-Revolutionary Iran." In *Family in the Middle East: Ideational Change in Egypt, Iran and Tunisia*, ed. by Kathryn M. Yount and Hoda Rashad, 80-106. London: Routledge, 2008.

**Hoodfar**, Homa and Samad Assadpour. "The Politics of Population Policy in the Islamic Republic of Iran." In *Studies in Family Planning*, Vol. 31 No. 1 (2000):19-34.

**Isna**. "Nam-e Sandawq-e Mehr-e Reza Avaz Shod" (The Name of the Imam Reza Love Fund Has Changed). Last updated 10/02/2015.

<http://www.isna.ir/fa/news/93112111745/%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%B5%D9%86%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%82-%D9%85%D9%87%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%B1%D8%B6%D8%A7-%D8%B9-%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%B6-%D8%B4%D8%AF>

**Kanaaneh**, Rhoda Ann. *Birthing the Nation Strategies of Palestinian Women in Israel*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

**Karami** Arash. "Ahmadinejad's chief of staff accused of links to embezzlement." In *Al-Monitor*. Posted August 6, 2015.  
<http://www.almonitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/08/mashaei-embezzlement-ahmadinejad.html>

**Kashani-Sabet**, Firoozeh. *Conceiving Citizens: Women and the Politics of Motherhood in Iran*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

**Martonosi**, Peter. "The Basij: A Major Factor in Iranian Security." In *AARMS: Academic & Applied Research in Military Science*, Vol.11, Issue 1 (2012):27-38.

**McClintock**, Anne. "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family," in *Feminist Review* No 44 (1993),

**McGlenn**, Sen. *Family Law in Iran*. Leiden: Leiden University, 2002.

**Mehryar**, Amir H., Farzaneh Roudi, Akbar Aghajanian, and Farzaneh Tajdini. "Repression and Revival of the Family Planning Program and its Impact on the Fertility Level and Demographic Transition in the Islamic Republic of Iran." *Working Paper 2022* (2000):1-30.

**Mehryar**, Mir H., Shirin Ahmad-Nia and Shahla Kazemipour. "Reproductive Health in Iran: Pragmatic Achievements, Unmet Needs, and Ethical Challenges in a Theocratic System." *Studies in Family Planning*, Vol.38, No.4 (2007): 352-361.

**Moeinifar**, Hashmat Sadat. "Religious Leaders and Family Planning in Iran." *Iran & the Caucasus* Brill edition, Vol.11 No.2 (2007):299-313.

**Parsine**. "*Matn-e Kamel Tarh-e Jam'-e Jamiyat va Ta'ali-ye Khanevadeh*" (The Comprehensive Population and Family Excellence Plan, Full Text). Last modified 14 June 2013.

<http://www.parsine.com/fa/news/120221/%D9%85%D8%AA%D9%86-%DA%A9%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%84-%D8%B7%D8%B1%D8%AD-%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B9-%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%B9%DB%8C%D8%AA-%D9%88-%D8%AA%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%84%DB%8C-%D8%AE%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%87>

**Payvand**. "Chronology of Controversy: Who is Esfandiar Mashaei." Last modified 23/01/2011. <http://www.payvand.com/news/11/jan/1222.html>.



**Peivandi**, Said. “*Chera Ahmadinejad be Dombal-e Afzayesh-e Jamiyat-e Iran Ast?*” (Why Ahmadinejad is looking for Iran’s population growth?). *Radiofard*. Last modified May 28, 2010. [http://www.radiofarda.com/content/F3\\_ahmadinejad\\_population\\_Iran/2054837.html](http://www.radiofarda.com/content/F3_ahmadinejad_population_Iran/2054837.html).

**Pesaran**, Evaleila. *Iran’s Struggle For Economic Independence: Reform and Counter-Reform In The Post-Revolutionary Era*. London: Routledge Political and Economy of the Middle East and North Africa, 2011.

**Pezeshk**. “*Matn-e Kamel Laiheh Hamiyat-e Khanevadeh*” (Family Protection Bill: Full Text). Last modified September 2008. <http://www.pezeshk.us/?p=13530>.

**Poster Movement**. “Collection 88 (Exposition of Young Iranians).” Last accessed, 12/06/2015. [http://postermovement.ir/poster.php?lang=fa&cat\\_id=159](http://postermovement.ir/poster.php?lang=fa&cat_id=159).

**Press Roundup**. “The Moslehi Blowback: Ahmadinejad Allies Arrested.” In *Pbs*. Last modified May 2011.  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2011/05/the-moslehi-blowback-ahmadinejad-allies-arrested-top-aides-targeted.html>.

**Roudi**, Farzaneh. “Iran Reverses Family Planning, Calls for More Children.” In *Iran Primer*. Last modified, 29/08/2012.  
<http://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2012/aug/29/iran-reverses-family-planning-calls-more-children-0>.

**Sahimi**, Muhammad. “Ahmadinejad-Khamenei’s Rift Deepens Into Abyss.” In *Pbs*. Last modified, 07/05/2011.  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2011/05/opinion-ahmadinejad-khamenei-rift-deepens-to-an-abyss.html>.

**Samimi, Mehrnaz.** “Iran’s Billboard Guide to Family Planning Teaches ‘the More, the Merrier.’” *Al-Monitor*. Last modified 27 december, 2013.

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/12/iran-billboards-samimi.html#>

**Scott Aghaian, Kamran.** “Islamic-Iranian Nationalism and its Implications for the Study of Political Islam and Religious Nationalism.” in *Rethinking Iranian Nationalism and Modernity*, ed. by Kamran Scot Aghaie and Afshin Marashi, 181-200. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014.

**Seantel, Anaïs.** “Genealogy and critical discourse analysis in conversation: texts, discourse, critique.” *Critical Discourse Studies* Vol.10 (2013):123-135.

**Shahrokni, Nazanin.** “All President’s Women.” in *MER253: Middle-East Research and Information Project*. Last accessed 12/06/2015.

<http://www.merip.org/mer/mer253/all-presidents-women>.

**Shora-Rc.** “The Bill to Increase Fertility Rates and Prevent Population Decline in the Guardian.” *Shora-Rc*. Last modified 20/11/2014.

<http://www.shora-rc.ir/portal/Home/ShowPage.aspx?Object=NEWS&CategoryID=b965dae5-85e8-4331-9523-6f1725050fe7&WebPartID=9ea150fe-8748-4c09-b054-8f74126f9db8&ID=21e9a69e-33b3-4789-8224-334dd3cdbbd>.

**Tehran review .** “*Hashdar-e Ahmadinejad Nesbat be ‘Khatar’-e Kontrol-e Jamiyat*” (Ahmadinejad’s Warning Against the ‘Risks’ of the Population Control). Last modified April 29, 2010. <http://tehranreview.net/articles/2281>.

**Thornton, Arland.** “The Developmental Paradigm, Reading History Sideways, and Family Change.” In *Demography*, Vol.38, No.4 (2001):449-465.

UN. “Security Council Imposes Sanctions on Iran for Failure to Halt Uranium Enrichment, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1737 (2006).” Last modified 26/12/2006.

<http://www.un.org/press/en/2006/sc8928.doc.htm>.

UN. “Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).” Last accessed, 12/06/2015. <http://www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Nuclear/NPT.shtml>.

**Warnaar**, Maaïke. *Iranian Foreign Policy During Ahmadinejad: Ideology and Actions*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

**YouTube video**. “Ahmadinejad- Eve 24 of Farvardin.” Posted on April 17, 2010.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4X-YuFfZLC4>.

**Yuval-Davis**, Nira. “Nationalist Project and Gender Relation.” *Working Paper 130* (London: University of Greenwich, 2003): 9-36.