

سپیدار حزب زنان ایران

**We are the Sepidar,
standing tall while our roots reach ever deeper.**

We become a sheltering canopy.

We endure both frost and scorching heat.

In mourning broken branches,

we do not bend in defeat;

instead, we rise again, renewed, and in bloom.

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The Collapse Puzzle: A Government That Still Wants to Appear Alive

By M.H. Labafbashi

The death of a government does not always begin with a flag being pulled down or a building collapsing. Sometimes, the first signs of collapse appear somewhere much more human: in families who have lost their loved ones and, after months of pressure, threats, forced silence, and helplessness, no longer have the strength to carry on. In recent days, the news of the suicide of Aida Heydari, the fiancée of the late Abolfazl Soleimani Alamouti, and Danial Karimi, the father of 19-year-old late Amir Mohammad Karimi, has once again drawn attention to the psychological condition of bereaved families seeking justice. These two cases alone do not prove that the security apparatus was directly responsible for these breakdowns; however, it is also an undeniable fact that the Islamic Republic and its security apparatus have subjected the families of those killed to pressure in recent years, to the point that these loved ones have seen death as their only way out. Amnesty International has also reported on the detention, intimidation, and attacks against victims' families in an effort to silence them.

This pressure is not merely a political issue; it is a war of psychological attrition. A family whose child has been killed, instead of being able to grieve, faces summonses, threats, restrictions on ceremonies, pressure to remain silent, and at times fabricated cases. Under such circumstances, even if there is still insufficient information about the precise causes of the recent suicides, the effect of the repressive environment cannot be ignored. Regarding claims such as the injection of substances or the deliberate creation of psychological disorders in these two cases, no credible and independent evidence has so far been found, and rumors should not be presented as truth. But this information gap is itself part of the problem: when the government prevents independent investigation, truth becomes a victim of fear and uncertainty.

At such a point, Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi's recent message takes on particular importance. He has called on Iranian psychologists, psychiatrists, and therapists to step forward to provide immediate, ongoing, and confidential support to the families of the fallen. This request should be viewed as more than a message of sympathy. The families of those killed are part of Iran's living collective memory, and if security pressure can drive them into silence, isolation, or psychological collapse, the government is not merely targeting one family; it is also attempting to wear down the witnesses to its crimes and the social memory surrounding them.

At the same time as this pressure from below, a strange picture has also emerged at the top of the government: the Islamic Republic is trying to show that it is still fully in control. Government officials speak of "resistance," "national unity," and the continued operation of state structures, while the economy is under unprecedented pressure, oil revenues have fallen sharply, and U.S. financial pressure has targeted the Islamic Republic's banking, oil, and commercial networks. Reuters has reported that Iran's oil exports fell from around 1.85 million barrels per day in the spring to around 255,000 barrels in August. At the same time, Washington is pursuing new sanctions against financial networks linked to the Islamic Republic, and Scott Bessent has stated that this process will continue as long as doing business with the Iranian government does not make economic sense for foreign parties.

This is where Scott Bessent's controversial statement takes on a particular meaning: "The snake's dead but it doesn't know it's dead"; in other words, in his assessment, the snake is dead but does not yet know that it is dead. Of course, this statement should not be understood as a medical report on the condition of the Islamic Republic; it is a very harsh political assessment of the government's situation. The reality is more complex. The Islamic Republic still has tools



of repression, security networks, limited financial resources, and channels for circumventing sanctions, and therefore "dead" does not mean completely collapsed. But the distance between a governmental structure being alive and being healthy is enormous.

The analyses of Morad Vaisi are also noteworthy at this point. In the second part of his September analysis, "Why Is Overthrowing the Islamic Republic the Most Logical Path?", he argues that the issue is not merely inefficiency; in his view, the Islamic Republic has transformed from a "problem-solving government" into a "problem-creating government," and the experience of the past several decades has shown that the existing structure is neither capable of reforming itself nor willing to step aside. In another analysis titled "America Moving Toward the Overthrow of the Islamic Republic," Vaisi points to the combination of economic pressure, the U.S. military presence, and attacks on IRGC positions, and raises the question of whether Washington, without officially declaring "regime change," has effectively entered a path whose outcome could be the overthrow of the Islamic Republic.

Meanwhile, revisiting Manook Khodabakhshian's view of the so-called 4H network is also interesting. In his analysis, Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and the Popular Mobilization Forces were not merely separate groups, but regional arms of a larger strategy; therefore, weakening this network could reduce the Islamic Republic's strategic depth. Today, this network has genuinely been damaged, but it has not yet been completely eliminated. Even in recent days, reports have emerged about the Houthis' continued activities and Iran's support for them. Therefore, if we want to translate Khodabakhshian's model into today's language, we should say: the connection between the 4H groups have not been severed, but parts of it have been severely damaged, and the Islamic Republic's capacity to transfer power and influence has declined.

On the other hand, Mark Levin approaches the same point from a different angle. In recent months, he has argued that the Islamic Republic will not disappear through negotiations alone and that real pressure must target the regime's ability to continue its existence; he has even explicitly spoken of the destruction of the Islamic Republic's structure. The difference between Levin, Vaisi, and Khodabakhshian lies in their methods of analysis, but their common point is that they no longer view the Islamic Republic merely through the lens of a "sanctioned state"; rather, they see it as a structure trapped in a multilayered crisis: a crisis of legitimacy, an economic crisis, a security crisis, a regional crisis, and a crisis of governing capacity.

And perhaps this is the most important point. Collapse does not necessarily begin when the last government building falls; it may begin when a government can no longer solve its own problems and all its energy is spent proving that it still has control. The Islamic Republic today must simultaneously find foreign currency, sell oil, preserve its financial networks, support its proxy forces, suppress society, control bereaved families seeking justice, manage external threats, and at the same time show the people that "everything is under control." This is the very contradiction that can wear a system down from within.

The signs still do not mean certain and immediate collapse. The government still has tools of repression and the capacity to survive. But when economic crisis, external pressure, the weakening of the regional network, domestic repression, and a crisis of legitimacy strike a structure simultaneously, the issue can no longer be regarded simply as "another crisis of the Islamic Republic." We may have entered a stage in which the main question is no longer whether the government will survive, but how long it can delay its collapse.

Under such circumstances, the role of Iranians abroad can be very specific and practical: they can be the documented voice of the people inside Iran. They should verify every piece of information before publishing it, record the names and stories of the victims, document the pressure on their families, deliver credible information to the media and human rights organizations, and not allow repression and executions to take place in silence. This may seem simple, but at a time when the government is even attempting to criminalize Iranians' communication with foreign media, maintaining an independent flow of information is itself an important battlefield.

And for the people inside Iran, the most important principle at this stage is to preserve life, preserve hope, and maintain contact with reliable sources. No one should act on the basis of rumors or anonymous messages in a way that puts their own life or the lives of others at risk. If Iran's political future enters a transitional phase, what will matter is the existence of a clear, coherent, and trustworthy path for the transition; a path that must ultimately lead to the free choice of the Iranian people regarding the future of their country. Perhaps the Islamic Republic is still standing; but the important question is no longer whether there are cracks in this building. The question is whether it still has the ability to repair them.



Analysis of the Ineffectiveness of the Islamic Republic's Exchange-Rate Policies in Containing the Dollar Surge

By Leila Fathali

The repeated and uncontrolled surges in Iran's exchange rate in recent years have gone far beyond being merely an economic issue. They have become one of the clearest indicators of the deepening political crisis and growing public distrust. Economic policymakers in the Islamic Republic have repeatedly attempted to contain market instability through measures such as promoting "de-dollarization" of trade and implementing policies aimed at administratively fixing or stabilizing the exchange rate. However, available evidence indicates that these measures have not only failed to prevent the continued depreciation of the national currency, but have also contributed to a form of "capital strike"—manifested in capital flight and the widespread conversion of rial-denominated assets into foreign currency and gold by the public. This article examines why the authorities' exchange-rate policies have failed and how the dollar has effectively become a barometer of public pessimism and loss of confidence.



Within Iran's economic structure, the dollar exchange rate is not merely an economic variable. It functions as one of the most comprehensive indicators of political stability, expectations about the future, and the level of confidence that society places in the governing system. The reaction of the free foreign-exchange market to international developments and domestic policy decisions reflects the degree of fear and optimism among both economic actors and ordinary citizens. In such an environment, attempts by the authorities to ignore, suppress, or marginalize the free market have repeatedly failed.

One of the strategies officially promoted by the authorities in recent years has been the removal of the dollar from regional trade and its replacement with bilateral currency arrangements. However, an assessment of the performance of this policy reveals several fundamental challenges. First is the structural dependence of Iran's exports, as a substantial share of the country's revenues depends on energy and petrochemical exports, whose international prices are denominated in U.S. dollars. Second is the limited quality and diversity of trade conducted through such arrangements. Bilateral currency agreements have often been established with countries

where settlement is complicated by trade imbalances or by the low liquidity and limited convertibility of national currencies such as the Russian ruble and Indian rupee, thereby increasing transaction costs. Finally, Iran's lack of integration into the global banking system, its continued placement on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) blacklist, and the restrictions imposed by international sanctions remain major obstacles to establishing efficient alternative payment and settlement mechanisms.

Alongside these challenges, the Central Bank's management under successive administrations has frequently relied on administrative and coercive instruments. On the one hand, a multi-tiered exchange-rate system and the creation of various official rates and platforms—including the NIMA system and preferential rates for essential goods—have contributed to rent-seeking, preferential access to foreign currency, and structural corruption. On the other hand, the criminalization or administrative restriction of free-market currency transactions and pressure on exchange brokers and market traders have been pursued instead of addressing the underlying causes of inflation and persistent budget deficits. The result has been the migration of a substantial portion of genuine foreign-currency demand away from official channels and toward the informal market—a market whose exchange rate plays a decisive role in shaping inflation expectations throughout society.

From the perspective of political economy, when uncertainty about the political and economic future rises sharply, both major investors and ordinary households adopt defensive financial behavior. This phenomenon can be observed in the emergence of a capital strike, manifested in two principal forms: the transfer of foreign currency and capital out of the country toward financial markets and real-estate markets in neighboring and Western countries; and, among ordinary citizens, the conversion of rials into dollars, gold, and other liquid or inflation-resistant assets in an attempt to preserve purchasing power. This process is, in effect, a defensive response by society to the government's monetary and economic policies. It reduces the supply of foreign currency while simultaneously increasing demand, thereby contributing to subsequent exchange-rate surges.

Regardless of psychological and political factors, the principal underlying driver of the exchange rate remains structural inflation and the persistent growth of the money supply. The government's chronic budget deficit, which is largely financed through borrowing from the Central Bank and the banking system, expands the monetary base and weakens the rial's purchasing power and exchange value. Unless fundamental imbalances in the fiscal and banking systems are addressed, no exchange-rate policy can prevent the continued erosion of the national currency's value.

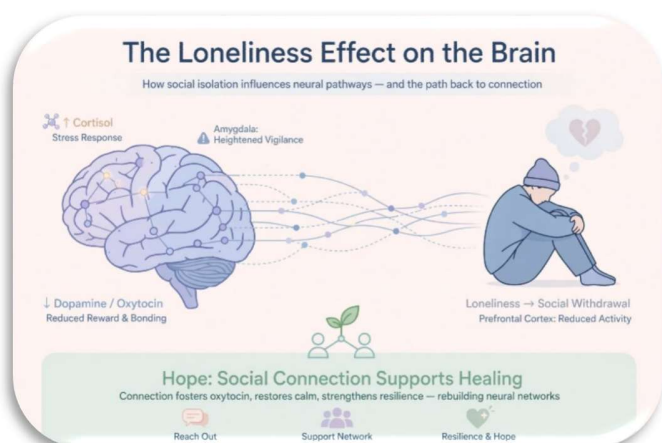
Ultimately, the failure of Iran's exchange-rate policies and the ineffectiveness of initiatives such as de-dollarization stem from the authorities' failure to address the fundamental roots of the crisis: international sanctions, diplomatic and financial isolation, structural budget deficits, and the severe erosion of public confidence. The repeated surges in the dollar's value in Iran are not simply the result of external manipulation or speculation by a handful of currency traders. Rather, they reflect the broader phenomenon of a capital strike by a society that sees little prospect for a stable economic future. Unless fundamental reforms are undertaken in foreign policy and economic governance, the dollar will continue to serve as one of the most powerful indicators of public pessimism, economic instability, and political uncertainty.



The Lonely Brain: What Chronic Loneliness Does to Us

By Leila Fathali, Health and Wealth Department

Humans are inherently social beings. From an evolutionary perspective, belonging to a group meant survival. But the modern world has created a strange paradox; although we are constantly connected through social media, we have never felt so lonely. In 2023, the World Health Organization declared loneliness a serious threat to global health, stating that its destructive effect on the body is as harmful as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. The important point is that loneliness is different from being alone. Being alone is an objective state, but loneliness is a subjective, inner feeling. You can be in the middle of a crowded party and still feel deeply lonely, and that is exactly what makes the brain sick.



When loneliness becomes chronic, it puts our brain in a constant state of threat. Brain imaging studies have shown that the amygdala, the brain's fear processing center, is hyperactive in chronically lonely people. That is why a lonely person perceives neutral faces as more hostile, is suspicious of compliments from others, and is always on high alert to be rejected. This constant hypervigilance drains an enormous amount of mental energy.

At the same time, loneliness changes the structure of the brain. The volume of gray matter in a part of the brain called the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for empathy, understanding others' perspectives, and rational decision-making, is smaller in lonely individuals. This explains why people who experience loneliness for a long time gradually become weaker at communicating and empathizing. On the other hand, loneliness as a chronic stressor causes the body to constantly release the hormone cortisol, or the stress hormone. Chronically high cortisol shrinks the

hippocampus, which is the memory center, causing forgetfulness, disrupts sleep, and by creating chronic inflammation in the body, weakens the immune system and paves the way for heart disease. All these brain changes work together to trap a person in a vicious and dangerous cycle. To protect itself, the lonely brain distances itself from others. This distance causes its social skills to deteriorate, leads to more rejection, and as a result, it becomes even lonelier than before. This is why loneliness is the strongest predictor of depression and anxiety after family history. Many people take refuge in the virtual world to escape this feeling, but constantly comparing themselves to the ideal lives of others on Instagram deepens their feelings of worthlessness and loneliness. So, what is the solution? Treating loneliness is not possible by saying the cliché "go out and be more social." The most effective scientific method is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), which helps a person identify and correct distorted thoughts such as "nobody likes me." Mindfulness and meditation practice, by reducing amygdala activity, teaches the brain to observe the feeling of loneliness without judgment instead of fighting it. Instead of trying to find a large and crowded group, focusing on building one or two deep and high-quality relationships, doing volunteer work, or even keeping a pet has a much greater impact. And finally, limiting time spent on social media to less than 30 minutes a day, according to research from the University of Pennsylvania, directly reduces feelings of loneliness and depression.

In the end, we must understand that loneliness is not a personality flaw or a luxury choice. Loneliness is a neurological condition and a biological alarm bell telling us that the need for connection, just like the need for food and sleep, is a vital need for our survival.



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The Continuity of Seeking Justice: From Navid to Mahsa

By Leila Kharazi

The anniversary of Navid Afkari's immortality and its overlap with the memory and path of Mahsa Amini remind us of an unbreakable chain of national justice-seeking against religious tyranny. The pure blood spilled in recent years did not intimidate society; rather, it became a strong axis for national solidarity and growing political consciousness. The movement for justice has now transcended emotional reactions, becoming the most strategic tool of civil struggle to strip moral and political legitimacy from the usurping regime. This historical continuity demonstrates that the Iranian nation's will to achieve justice cannot be extinguished by any repressive apparatus.



Connecting names like Navid and Mahsa has crossed geographical, ethnic, and gender boundaries, confronting the repression structure with a united national front. The courageous resilience of seeking-justice families domestically, alongside echoing their voices in international forums, has drastically raised the regime's survival cost. Oppressors have realized that the killing of every freedom fighter serves as a focal point for multiplying resistance and igniting new uprisings. This collective consciousness has eroded the fortress of repression from within, depriving security bodies of their capacity to contain society.

Furthermore, the persistence of the justice-seeking movement proved that the tyrannical ruling system suffers from absolute powerlessness in answering society's most basic human and legal demands. The government's futile attempts to distort truth and intimidate activists failed to erase the memory and path of the immortals from the nation's historical memory. Iranian civil society, with utmost vigilance, keeps the dossier of the regime's organized crimes open domestically and internationally. This

historical endurance serves as a powerful accelerator in dismantling the foundations of the government's claimed legitimacy.

The accumulation of justice-seeking experiences in recent years has transformed the people's struggles from fragmented actions into a structured, targeted movement for democratic transition. Diverse societal strata, recognizing the link between systemic violence and structural corruption, seek the ultimate salvation of the homeland in the total rejection of religious tyranny. The steadfastness of victims' families has injected the spirit of resistance into student, labor, and guild movements. This unprecedented synergy has shifted the balance of power in favor of the Iranian nation and the complete exhaustion of repressive capabilities.

In this path, the wise guidelines and firm support of the national leader, Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi, have consistently emphasized institutionalizing justice-seeking and supporting the families of the immortals. He has repeatedly stated that the resilience of justice-seekers forms the backbone of the national movement to restore sovereignty to the people and establish fair courts in a free tomorrow. According to the national leader, safeguarding the memory and path of the homeland's martyrs guarantees the rule of law and prevents the reproduction of tyranny in Iran's future. This long-term vision has solidified the legal and political credibility of the people's struggle globally.

The international community and free governments must also recognize the Iranian people's justice-seeking movement and refrain from any political bargains with human rights violators. Legally prosecuting the perpetrators and commanders of crimes, expelling repressive diplomats, and blocking the regime's financial lifelines represent the bare minimum steps to stand on the right side of history. Tolerance toward a government taking the lives of a nation's most competent children stands in complete contradiction with fundamental human rights principles. The free world must manifest its practical support for the Iranian nation's will to achieve justice and freedom.

The tomorrow of Iran's freedom will be a day of just accountability, the establishment of the rule of law, and national tribute to all the immortals of the homeland's path. With the fall of this repressive system, the country will reach the safe shores of justice, stability, and human dignity. Under the shadow of its national leader, Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi, our homeland will honor the memory of its heroes in the pages of history, directing national energy toward building a prosperous future. The spring of justice and freedom is near, and tomorrow's light will permanently erase the darkness of oppression.



The Shah

The Name by Which the World Knew Iran

By Azadeh Sharafi

When people said “the Shah,” everyone knew whom they meant—whether a humble farmer in a remote village in Belgium, a passerby in Manhattan, or a statesman walking through the cold and turbulent corridors of European politics. “The Shah” was more than a title; for decades, the name was intertwined with Iran itself—the man through whom much of the world came to know Iran: Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Shahanshah of Iran.



September 16 marks the beginning of the reign of a man whose destiny became inseparably bound to that of Iran during one of the most critical periods in the nation's history. He ascended the throne at a time when Iran was caught in the turmoil of the Second World War, with foreign forces occupying the country and immense difficulties facing the Iranian people. Yet throughout his reign, his aspiration remained the same: the dignity, prosperity, and advancement of Iran; an Iran that he sought to leave more prosperous, stronger, and more dignified for generations to come.

During the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah, Iran underwent a profound transformation. Schools and universities expanded, roads and factories were built, cities developed, and health and social services reached ever greater parts of the country. Iranian women gained a broader presence in social and political life. The Literacy Corps, the Health Corps, and the Development and Rural Extension Corps were not merely government programs; they reflected a vision of bringing education, healthcare, and development beyond the major cities and into the most distant villages of Iran.

In those years, Iran was no longer a country known to the world solely for its ancient past and historic grandeur. Iran was preparing itself for the future. It was becoming an industrial nation; its universities were expanding, its infrastructure was developing, and it was seeking a place on the world stage worthy of its history and civilization. Mohammad Reza Shah believed in Iran's

future—a modern, industrial, educated, powerful, and prosperous Iran, capable of standing with dignity among the great nations of the world.

He had a vision for Iran, but his vision was not confined to words. He devoted the years of his reign to building and advancing programs whose purpose was to transform the face of the country. Perhaps today, after the passage of decades, we can better understand the significance of some of those efforts. What may have seemed ordinary to many at the time was, in reality, part of a sweeping transformation aimed at building a modern Iran—an Iran determined to honor its historical roots while keeping its eyes firmly fixed on the future.

And how bitter it is that a nation with such a history and such a future before it witnessed, in 1979, the collapse of an order that had taken years to build. The upheaval of 1979 brought an end to a dream in which the creation of a modern, strong, and proud Iran seemed possible. With the departure of the Shah, another chapter in Iran's history began—a chapter whose wounds and transformations continue to this day, in ways of profound and terrifying consequence, much as His Majesty himself had warned: a great terror would follow.

In his final days, the Shah was deeply concerned about the future that awaited Iran. A statement attributed to him has, after nearly half a century, acquired a meaning that many Iranians regard as heavier today than it was at the time: “Do not forget: if I leave, Iran will go, and if Iran goes, the Middle East will go, and a great terror will rule the world.”

Perhaps many did not hear that warning then, or perhaps they did not wish to hear it. The noise of the streets, the promises of a bright new future, and the tumult of revolution drowned out the voice of a man who had carried the destiny of Iran upon his shoulders for decades. Yet history moves slowly and without haste. Years later, it returned to those days and confronted new generations with the question of whether that warning could truly have been ignored.

The Shah left, but his concern for Iran's future remained embedded in the historical memory of Iranians. Today, for many, those words are more than a historical statement; they are a reminder of a man who, during the final days of his presence in Iran, continued to speak of the future of his homeland and remained deeply concerned for its fate.

Nearly half a century later, generations who never witnessed those years firsthand are once again asking questions about them—through books, photographs, the memories of their parents and grandparents, and the comparison between the Iran of yesterday and the Iran of today. In this reexamination of history, the name of Mohammad Reza Shah is being heard once again. For many Iranians, His Imperial Majesty Aryamehr has come to symbolize an era of construction, progress, national ambition, and hope for Iran's future.

He was not merely a monarch who sat upon the throne of Iran; he was a man whose life became deeply intertwined with the destiny of his country. He loved Iran and dreamed of an Iran that would be great, prosperous, free, strong, and proud—an Iran capable of occupying a place in the world worthy of its history, culture, and civilization.

Perhaps one of the greatest injustices of modern Iranian history is that the achievements of such a man were, for years, pushed aside amid the turmoil of the Revolution and the propaganda that followed it. But history cannot remain behind a curtain forever. The memory of a nation eventually searches again for its past. New generations ask questions, examine photographs, listen to memories, and seek to rediscover what was hidden, neglected, or forgotten from the history of their homeland.

Today, the name of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi remains alive. For millions of Iranians, his memory evokes an Iran that might have had a different future. September 16 is therefore not merely a reminder of the beginning of a reign; it is a reminder of the beginning of an era in which Iran took great strides toward the future and pursued the dream of becoming a modern, powerful, and proud nation. And still, after all these years, when people say “the Shah,” many know exactly whom they mean: His Imperial Majesty Aryamehr Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Shahanshah of Iran.