



المركز العربي للأبحاث ودراسة السياسات
Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies

Iranian Studies Unit Fourth Annual Conference

The Social Sciences and Humanities in Iran: Possibilities and Constraints

9-10 October 2024

[About the Conference](#) | [Timetable](#) | [Participants](#) | [Abstracts](#) | [Moderators](#)



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About the Conference

The ACRPS Iranian Studies Unit is holding its fourth annual conference, titled "The Social Sciences and Humanities in Iran: Possibilities and Constraints."

The conference explores the evolution and current state of social sciences and humanities in Iran. The discussion will be centred around the state of social sciences and humanities in theory, methodology, and practice, and examines how they are taught and researched in Iran. The two-day conference will study the impact of the Islamic Republic's establishment and its policies, as well as the state's official discourse, on research and teaching in disciplines such as history, sociology, economics, philosophy, and political science. Focus will be on the dynamics between academia and politics and state ideology. The event will also address some of the challenges that Iranian academics face when teaching and conducting research in the humanities and the social sciences.

The conference will also discuss other factors placing constraints on academia, such as the local production of knowledge versus reliance on imported concepts, theories, and methodologies; assumptions underlying the study of Arab and other Middle Eastern countries; and the impact of international sanctions on research, publication, and academic exchanges. The problem of language and access to scholarship produced outside Iran, along with access to scholarship produced inside Iran for global academic audiences, will also be examined.

Conference participants include, Hamid Ahmadi, Mohsen Amin, Mehrdad Arabestani, Hani Awad, Kristin Soraya Batmanghelichi, Ahmad Bostani, Mostafa Bostani, Aicha Elbasri, Mehran Esmaeili, Hessem Habibi Doroh, Maziar Mozaffari Falarti, Mohammed Hemchi, Mohammad Homayounvash, Emad Kaddorah, Hossein Kamaly, Mehran Kamrava, Alireza Koohkan, Elaheh Koolaee, Ahmad Kurdiea, Mohammad Mazhari, Golnar Mehran, Zahra Karimi Moughari, Hossein Mousavi, Abdou Moussa, Issam Nassar, Younes Nourbakhsh, Abdolmehdi Riazi, Sara Roshani, Rana Sibli, Atieh Tavasoli, Mandana Tishehyar, Masoud Zalizadeh, and Sadegh Zibakalam.

Timetable

Day 1

Wednesday, 9 October 2024

9:30-10:00	Registration
10:00-10:15	Opening Remarks Speaker Mehran Kamrava
10:15-11:15	Keynote Lecture Future of Islamic Iran Under President Masoud Pezeshkian Moderator: Mehran Kamrava Speaker Sadegh Zibakalam
11:15-11:30	Coffee Break
11:30-12:45	Panel 1: Challenges to Academia in Iran Moderator: Hani Awad Hossein Mousavi: Third Generation of Politicians in Iran: A Shift in Occidentalism, Clerical Authority, and Islamization of Humanities and Social Sciences Elaheh Koolaee: Impacts of International Sanctions on Research, Publication, and Academic Exchanges Hessam Habibi Doroh: Neglected Research with Neglected Data: Barriers and Opportunities in Research on Sunni Muslims in Contemporary Iran
12:45-14:00	Lunch

<p>14:00-15:15</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Panel 2: History and Academia in Iran</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Moderator: Issam Nassar</p> <p>Mohsen Amin and Masoud Zalizadeh: Historical Report on the Rise and Fall of the Social Sciences in Iran</p> <p>Hossein Kamaly: Iranian History and Historiography: Perspectives and Prospects</p> <p>Mandana Tishehyar: Internationalization of Higher Education in the Humanities and Social Sciences: An Iranian University's Experiences</p>
<p>15:15-15:30</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Coffee Break</p>
<p>15:30-16:45</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Panel 3: Islamization of Academia in Iran</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Moderator: Mohammed Hemchi</p> <p>Golnar Mehran: Islamization and Politicization of Social Sciences in Iranian Schools</p> <p>Mohammad Homayounvash: Indigenization of the Social Sciences in Iran, Institutional Inertia, and State-Academia Discord</p> <p>Atieh Tavasoli: Alternative Paradigms or Ideological Alignment? The Duality of Islamic Social Science</p>

- Timing of panels is based on Doha local time (GMT +3).

Day 2

Thursday, 10 October 2024

9:30-10:45	<p>Panel 4: Background Look into Academia in Iran</p> <p>Moderator: Emad Kaddorah</p> <p>Younes Nourbakhsh: The Modernization Process and the Formation and Development of Sociology in Iran</p> <p>Ahmad Kurdiea: The Third Cultural Revolution in Iran: Ideology and the Humanities Crisis</p> <p>Sara Roshani and Alireza Koohkan: Bridging the Gap: Addressing the Challenge of Language and Access to Scholarship Produced Outside Iran</p>
10:45-11:00	Coffee Break
11:00-12:15	<p>Panel 5: Precarity and Disconnect in Iranian Academia</p> <p>Moderator: Abdou Moussa</p> <p>Mehrdad Arabestani: Academic Precariat: Practicing Social Sciences in Iran</p> <p>Zahra Karimi Moughari: Disconnection between the Teaching of Economics and Iran's Economic Challenges and Its Impact on Students Enthusiasm for Studying Economics</p> <p>Kristin Soraya Batmanghelichi: Out of Place: Iranian Academics-in-the-making and the Limbo of Perpetual Precarity</p>
12:15-12:30	Coffee Break
12:30-13:45	<p>Panel 6: Academia in Iran from Different Perspectives</p> <p>Moderator: Aicha Elbasri</p> <p>Maziar Mozaffari Falarti: Bridging the Scholarly Divide: Iran's Strategic Pivot to Asia and the Foreign Policy Imperative of Asian Studies in Academia</p> <p>Mostafa Bostani and Ahmad Bostani: Javad Tabatabai and Academic Indigenization in Contemporary Iran: From Critique of Nativism to "National" Academia</p> <p>Mohammad Mazhari*: Islamic Sociology Versus Secular Sociology: A Question of Explanation</p>

13:45-14:45	Lunch
14:45-16:00	<p style="text-align: center;">Panel 7: The Social Sciences in Iran</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Moderator: Rana Sibli</p> <p>Abdolmehdi Riazi: Social Sciences and Humanities Research in Post-Islamic Revolution Iran: The Case of the <i>Journal of Methodology of Social Sciences and Humanities</i></p> <p>Mehran Esmaeili: Humanities and Social Sciences in Iranian <i>Howzehs</i>: A Review of the Activities of <i>Howzeh</i> Advanced Education Institutions in Recent Decades</p> <p>Hamid Ahmadi: The Tragedy of Humanities and Social Sciences in Iran: Contending Schools of Knowledge</p>
16:00-16:15	<p style="text-align: center;">Closing Remarks</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Speaker</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Mehran Kamrava</p>

* Attending online

- Timing of panels is based on Doha local time (GMT +3).

Participants

Abstracts



Hamid Ahmadi

Hamid Ahmadi is Professor of Political Science at the University of Tehran. He was a visiting professor at Carleton University, Canada (2012) and the University of Lyon, France (2019). Ahmadi's published works include: "The Instrumental Dimension of Ethnic Politics in Iran," *Muslim World* (winter-spring 2023), and "Nationalism in Iran," in *Routledge Handbook of Persian Gulf Politics* (Routledge, 2020). His latest publication, in Persian, is a trilogy book series on the Middle East (*Politics and Government in the Middle East*, 2022; *Regional and International Conflicts in the Middle East*, 2023; and *Political Trends in the Middle East and Iran's National Security*, 2024).

The Tragedy of Humanities and Social Sciences in Iran: Contending Schools of Knowledge

This research analyses the state of and the contending schools of thought on the nature and mission of the humanities and social sciences in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Utilizing David Ricci's work on the state of political science in the US universities in the mid-1980s, I argue that the Iranian humanities and social sciences have faced "tragedy" since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. This tragedy stems from the continuous policy of Islamization across two waves: First, the general Islamization of universities in the 1980s, and second the Islamization of humanities and social sciences in the late 2000s. The paper explains the contending schools of thought on the policy of Islamization and on knowledge production in humanities and social sciences. The paper posits that the ideological-religious school of thought has failed in its policy of Islamization and has little foundation or popularity among the Iranian humanities and social sciences milieus. Instead, the historical sociology school which emphasizes the idea of the University of Iran is receiving more attention in this regard.



Mohsen Amin

Mohsen Amin is a researcher and translator interested in identity, nationalism, Middle East studies, and social studies of Shi'i rituals. Amin also teaches courses related to sociology in several Iranian universities and holds a PhD in Cultural Sociology from Allameh Tabataba'i University in Tehran. He has published articles, book reviews, and book chapters in Persian, English, and Arabic, including, most recently, "Naini and the Concept of Ummah: The Strategy of Acceptance and Specialization," *Journal of Social Theories of Muslim Thinkers*.

Historical Report on the Rise and Fall of the Social Sciences in Iran

Social science in Iran has had a bumpy history. Sociology entered Iran a relatively long time ago, roughly when it was established in France. Initially, positivism dominated social science, but soon leftist currents presented an alternative interpretation. The establishment of the Institute of Social Studies and Research by Ehsan Naraqı highlighted the status of social sciences in Iran. Soon, positivist social science trends were overshadowed by the rise of revolutionary currents in Iranian society, and intellectuals like Ali Shariati presented a revolutionary interpretations of Shi'i Islam using sociology. The development of sociology was temporarily stunted by the revolution, before quickly recovering within the framework of political sociology. To investigate these historical developments in period of the discipline's founding and development (both before and after the Islamic Revolution), the paper utilizes the method of historical sociology and sociology itself is the subject of study. Therefore, across different stages, it discusses the most important developments in social sciences, particularly, sociology in Iran. This is to clarify the relationship between the developments of these two periods in the local and global contexts as well as cases such as regionalization and Islamization.



Mehrdad Arabestani

Mehrdad Arabestani is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Tehran. He specializes in exploring human societies and cultures. His publications explore the intricacies of Kurdish culture in Iran, Malaysia's indigenous peoples, and the Mandaeans of Iran, through fieldwork documented in books and peer-reviewed journals. He has actively contributed to international academic projects and played a role in guiding postgraduate students from Iranian, European, and US universities. His research expertise spans ethnicity, minorities, identity, subjectivity, power relations, and psychoanalytically informed ethnography.

Academic Precariat: Practicing Social Sciences in Iran

Academics increasingly face precarity through job insecurity, stressful working conditions, and limited career choices. The roots of this precarity vary, stemming from neoliberal policies, gender issues, intellectual leadership dynamics, and political forces. In Iran, where politics permeates social and private life, practicing social sciences is inherently political. Research on sensitive topics like ethnicity, religion, social issues, and sexuality, which may critically address dominant political discourse, is significantly impacted. This situation affects all aspects of academic work, including the selection of research subjects, rhetoric, publication, faculty recruitment, job security, and researcher/ethnographer-interlocutor relationships. Due to chronic suspicion toward foreigners, complications arise when international researchers are involved. This politically driven academic precarity is underrepresented in scholarship because affected scholars are inhibited from sharing their experiences. The political apparatus tolerates the transgression of the "unwritten laws of prohibition" as long as they do not directly challenge nodal points of the dominant discourse. Social scientists operate within a zone of permissiveness that allows some degree of disidentification with the dominant discourse, yet the authorities maintain the right to intervene and interrogate. Thus, this permissiveness paradoxically contributes to this state of anxiety and precariousness.



Kristin Soraya Batmanghelichi

Kristin Soraya Batmanghelichi is an Associate Professor for the Study of Modern Iran at the University of Oslo, and Faculty-at-large at the Brooklyn Institute for Social Research, New York. A women's activist and feminist scholar, she studies contemporary women's movements, sexuality, and gendered public space in Iran and the modern Middle East. Her monograph *Revolutionary Bodies: Technologies of Gender, Sex, and Self in Contemporary Iran* was published by Bloomsbury Academic in January 2021.

Out of Place: Iranian Academics-in-the-making and the Limbo of Perpetual Precarity

The substantial waves of brain drain and academic expulsion of Iranian academics since consecutive nationwide protests rocked Iran country-wide between 2019 and 2023 have been widely reported. Less has been said about the precarity of promising young academics in Iran, especially those seeking entrance into postgraduate humanities programs and facing a myriad of closed doors, domestically and abroad. Further, those secondary and tertiary persons vital to their educational, immigrant trajectories – for instance, advisors, mentors, and coaches of students hoping to improve their chances at gaining acceptance at universities abroad – remain behind-the-scenes and their experiences and perspectives seldom reflected upon or requested. If inquired upon, what might they say about forging community amid tense diaspora relations, the role of academic mentorship outside Iran, and/or the very real pressures to train bright students who often come with poor critical and technical skills, for instance? More so, what sustainable forms of partnership and solidarity are possible between diaspora academics and Iranian students who seek out their mentorship and networks? This essay integrates an autoethnographic approach situated in contemporary Oslo, Norway to investigate diasporic responsibility towards the "development of homelands," examining the nature and conditions of the exilic experience for Iranian academics-in-the-making.



Ahmad Bostani

Ahmad Bostani is an Assistant Professor of Islamic Political Thought in the Department of Political Science at Kharazmi University in Tehran. His research interests include comparative and Islamic political theology and Iranian intellectual history. Bostani has written numerous articles and book chapters in Persian and English. His recent publications include "Henry Corbin's Oriental Philosophy and Iranian Nativist Ideologies," in *Religions* 12 (2021), and "Rethinking Political Theology in the Islamic Context: The Case of Iran," in *Islamic Political Theology*, edited by Massimo Campanini and Marco di Donato (Lexington Books; 2021).

Javad Tabatabai and Academic Indigenization in Contemporary Iran: From Critique of Nativism to "National" Academia

This paper examines the contemporary Iranian intellectual pursuit of indigenizing social sciences and humanities through the scholarship of Javad Tabatabai (1945-2023), an influential figure in recent debates on nationhood and identity in Iran. In his early career, Tabatabai explored the "conditions of impossibility" for establishing modern social sciences within Islamic civilization, critically addressing the nativist pursuit of "authenticity" and efforts to reconfigure knowledge systems accordingly. The nativist discourse, inspired by 1960s postcolonial thinkers of the 1960s across the "Third World," as well as figures like Henry Corbin, influenced pre-Revolution intellectual debates and supported the 1979 Revolution's ideology, driving efforts to reshape social sciences and humanities in Iran with indigenous Iranian or Islamic elements. Despite initially rejecting nativist approaches, Tabatabai's later scholarship marked a significant shift, as he began advocating for the creation of a distinctly "national" framework for social sciences and humanities in Iran, fulfilling his lifelong commitment to developing a "theoretical foundation" to address its presumably unique complexities. This paper explores Tabatabai's shift in perspective as a renewed effort in the longstanding pursuit of indigenous knowledge among Iranian intellectuals, situating this change within the broader context of the "nationalist" turn in his later scholarship on Iran.



Mostafa Bostani

Mostafa Bostani is a PhD researcher in International Politics and Conflict Research at the Bundeswehr University of Munich, Germany, focusing on EU-Middle East relations. His research interests include the intersection of law and politics and the comparative study of normative discourses and ideologies in Islamic and Western traditions. His professional work covers political risk analysis and conflict research. He has served as a senior researcher at the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research. His article "EU Normative Foreign Policy Actorness on Iran's Nuclear Profile: Capability and Limits" was published in the *Young Journal of European Affairs*, 1 (2021).

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Mehran Esmaeili

Mehran Esmaeili is a member of the Department of History and Islamic Civilization at Shahid Beheshti University and a member of the Board of Directors of the Iranian Islamic History Society. He is the author of *The Origins of Medina in the Social Structure of the Settlement of Yathrib: A Historical and Social Study on the Representation of Tribal Conflicts in Religious Concepts*, (Tehran: Samt, 2023). He translated (with Mushtaq Al-Helou) *The Principles of Political Thought in the Meccan Quran* by Abdul Qader Hamid Tijani (Tehran: Nay, 2004) and *The Sources of Islamic Political Heritage* by Nasr Mohammad Aref, (Qom: Higher Institute of Islamic Sciences and Culture, 2010).

Humanities and Social Sciences in Iranian *Howzehs*: A Review of the Activities of *Howzeh* Advanced Education Institutions in Recent Decades

Following the political events of 1979, Iranian universities underwent a cultural revolution (1980-1983), and professors accused of following the ideas of both Western and Eastern political camps were expelled from the universities. The Islamist revolutionaries believed that solutions to all social and human problems could be extracted from Islamic texts, so they turned their attention to the *Howzeh* (Shi'i seminary), which, after having focused primarily on jurisprudence, was suddenly tasked with finding Islamic ideas in the humanities. The political and social instability following the Islamic Revolution and the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) dominated the first decade after the revolution. Since the 1990s, private higher education institutions were established in the *Howzeh* to systematically teach the humanities to religious science students. Accordingly, interested students could, after the first educational cycle, continue advanced studies in one of the fields of the humanities and then start research. This article reviews the achievements of these institutions, with a focus on advanced education institutions that were established with the aim of encouraging interest in the humanities and social sciences among seminary students. The study relies on a historical approach, utilizing published documents and sources and oral testimony obtained through interviews with directors of the institutions or graduates.



Hessam Habibi Doroh

Hessam Habibi Doroh is a Course Coordinator and Lecturer at the University of Applied Sciences FH Campus Vienna and is the author of *Sunni Communities in the Islamic Republic of Iran* (Brill, 2023). He has taught courses on International Relations, intercultural studies, and interreligious studies for master's students. His primary research focuses on politics and society in contemporary Iran and the International Relations of the Middle East. He is currently pursuing his PhD at the University of Public Service in Budapest.

Neglected Research with Neglected Data: Barriers and Opportunities in Research on Sunni Muslims in Contemporary Iran

This article conducts a comprehensive review of the extant scholarship on Iranian Sunnis, highlighting the challenges inherent in researching Iran's sociopolitical periphery – a region often marginalized yet essential for understanding the country's broader dynamics. In this context, the paper explores the primary challenges of researching this topic, particularly the securitization of research within Iran's already securitized Kurdish and Baluchi borderlands, where the majority of Sunnis reside. This study introduces a dataset from research on Sunni presence on social media, offering valuable insights for social scientists studying confessional and ethnic minorities in Iran and the broader Islamic community. It provides a direct look into the socio-religious life of Iranian Sunnis through the perspectives of their religious leaders, revealing the community's internal discourse. The study explores data from Sunni communities, focusing on primary sources and systematically analysing around 100 Instagram pages managed by Iranian Sunnis. It concludes that modern communication tools have created a new "territory" for these communities, strengthening the influence of Sunni religious elites in Iranian Baluchistan and facilitating broader communication. Initial findings show a variety of online Sunni communities in Iran, many linked to mosques, madrasas, Sufi groups, or tribes, alongside individuals operating independently of established institutions' social media networks.



Maziar Mozaffari Falarti

Maziar Mozaffari Falarti is an Assistant Professor in the Department of South, East Asia and Oceanian Studies in the Faculty of World Studies, University of Tehran. With a focus on the Asia-Pacific region and the Islamic World he has taught, travelled, researched, and published on numerous political science, historical and international relations topics, regions and subjects.

Bridging the Scholarly Divide: Iran's Strategic Pivot to Asia and the Foreign Policy Imperative of Asian Studies in Academia

This study explores Iran's strategic pivot to Asia under the late President Ebrahim Raisi (2021-2024), emphasizing the urgent need for enhanced Asian studies within Iranian academia. Following severe economic sanctions and a reassessment of foreign policy, Iran has increasingly prioritized relations with Asian nations, leading to significant growth in trade, travel, and academic exchanges. However, substantial deficiencies in Asian studies remain, largely due to cultural biases, geographical misunderstandings, and institutional constraints. This article argues that strengthening expertise in regional languages and cultures is essential for informed policymaking and fostering mutual understanding. By integrating Asian studies into the academic curriculum, Iran can not only navigate its geo-political landscape more effectively but also cultivate critical thinkers equipped to engage with diverse perspectives. Ultimately, this initiative serves as a vital component of Iran's foreign policy, facilitating sustainable partnerships while enhancing its global diplomatic standing.



Mohammad Homayounvash

Mohammad Homayounvash is the Founding Director of the Jaffer Institute for Interfaith Dialogue and Education at Miami Dade College and an International Relations lecturer at the University of Miami and Florida International University. He is the author of *Iran and the Nuclear Question* (Routledge, 2017) and holds a PhD in International Relations from Florida International University. He has held previous positions as a Visiting Assistant Professor at Louisiana State University, a Research Fellow at Monash University in Johannesburg, South Africa, and a Tung Faculty Scholar with Semester at Sea in Colorado State University.

Indigenization of the Social Sciences in Iran, Institutional Inertia, and State-Academia Discord

After the Islamic Revolution of 1979, the Cultural Revolution Headquarters was established as a key institution to shape and oversee cultural and educational policies in the country and embed Islamic values throughout society. A cornerstone of this state driven institutional campaign was the pursuit of the indigenization and Islamization of the social sciences aimed at cultivating and advancing theories, methodologies, and research agendas that were rooted in Iran's Islamic heritage, historical context, and societal values. Drawing on primary materials in Persian, predominantly sourced from key decision-makers and strategists involved in the Islamization project, this paper investigates the complex historical, cultural, religious, and geopolitical contexts that have shaped the evolving relationship between the Islamic Republic and Iranian academia since 1979. It provides a critical analysis of the factors contributing to the limited success of efforts to indigenize and Islamize social sciences in Iran. The study focuses on several key areas: The imposition of constraints on specific academic research; the intricate dynamics between the Hawza and the university system; the pervasive influence of "Westoxication" and the deep-rooted pro-Western institutional inertia within Iran's academic institutions; and the securitization of social sciences, whereby certain disciplines, topics, or research agendas are framed within a national security context, reflecting Iran's ideological and geopolitical confrontations with the West.



Hossein Kamaly

Hossein Kamaly is Professor of Interreligious Studies at the Hartford International University for Religion and Peace (formerly Hartford Seminary) where he holds the Imam Ali Chair in Shia Studies and Dialogue among Muslim Schools of Thought. He previously taught at Barnard College, Columbia University in New York (2007-2017). His recent books include *God and Man in Tehran* (Columbia University Press, 2018), and *History of Islam in 21 Women* (Oneworld Publications, 2020, so far translated into Turkish, Arabic, and Chinese). His next monograph, *Persian Letters in World History* is projected for publication in 2026.

Iranian History and Historiography: Perspectives and Prospects

Drawing attention to the large number and extensive variety of books published on history in Iran, this paper distinguishes three interrelated institutional sources of such publications: state, state-favoured, and non-state institutions. It argues that no single institutional source enjoys an uncontested monopoly on the production, dissemination, and reception of the material. Rather, the plurality of historic and historiographic views extends across different spectrums. It also highlights the impact of translations into Persian, citing examples from five fields of historical enquiry – national, intellectual, Islamic civilizational, and global, as well historiographic methodology. The paper cites hundreds of recent titles as examples of national, intellectual, Islamic, and global history published in Iran from 1988 to the present. While state, state-favoured, and non-state institutions – the three distinct loci of production, dissemination, and reception of historical knowledge – mutually influence each other, none has a monopoly to the exclusion of the others. At this time, ample empirical foundation – especially enriched by global histories–combined with heightened sensitivity toward methodological issues, and institutional patronage of various kinds and public interest, have prepared the grounds for further advancement of history as a discipline in Iran.



Alireza Koohkan

Alireza Koohkan is Associate Professor of International Affairs at the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences at Allameh Tabataba'i University, where he also earned his PhD in International Relations. Koohkan's expertise and research interests include Iranian studies, US foreign policy, Iranian foreign policy, and Iran-US relations. He has published several articles, authored books, and has participated in and lectured at several international conferences, contributing significantly to the academic understanding of these complex issues.

Bridging the Gap: Addressing the Challenge of Language and Access to Scholarship Produced Outside Iran

Iran is a vibrant centre of intellectual activity, but its scholars often face barriers in accessing international scholarship due to linguistic challenges. With Persian as the primary language of academia in Iran, this language barrier hinders the integration of global academic discourse and limits knowledge exchange. This research explores the causes and effects of limited access to foreign scholarship, focusing on the role of language proficiency in academic success and the challenges Iranian scholars face when engaging with non-Persian materials. Using a questionnaire distributed to university faculty in Iran, the study examines the extent of the language barrier and its impact on research quality and innovation. While top-tier scholars may not see the language barrier as a significant issue, they still encounter difficulties, suggesting broader challenges across the academic landscape. The research proposes strategies such as language training, translation initiatives, and increased international collaboration to address these issues. This study highlights the need to bridge linguistic gaps to foster a more interconnected and equitable academic environment within Iran and globally.



Elaheh Koolae

Elaheh Koolae is the Director of the Center for Central Eurasia Studies at the University of Tehran. She was honoured as one of the "Prominent" and "Distinguished" researchers of the University of Tehran in 2011 and 2013. She has written many books and articles about Central Eurasia, Iranian foreign policy, and women's issues, and has completed more than 27 research projects and presented at domestic and international conferences. She was a Member of Parliament and was an active member of the Women's Faction in the Reformist Majles. Koolae has served as the Director of the Iranian Regional Studies Association.

Impacts of International Sanctions on Research, Publication, and Academic Exchanges

Sanctions have affected all sectors of society; universities and scientific centres are no exception, which has greatly reduced the academic activities of universities and research centres. An important chunk of the major universities and research centres of Iran are affiliated to the government, and when the country's economy suffers under the weight of sanctions, the knock-on effect on universities and research activities is immediate. The reduction of scientific exchanges between the universities of Iran and different countries of the world, especially in the US and Europe, is one impact of sanctions on higher education and scientific research. Many universities and research centres refuse to admit Iranian professors and students and major international publishers refuse to publish their articles. Although the effects of the implementation of sanction policies have been much wider in technical and medical fields, the same conditions exist in social sciences and humanities. The main question of this paper is: What effect have international sanctions had on the activities of universities and research centres? The research seeks to answer this based on qualitative methodology and a descriptive-analytical approach.



Ahmad Kurdiea

Ahmad Kurdiea is a researcher of Contemporary Iranian and Middle Eastern History. He holds a PhD in contemporary Iranian history and an MA in Gulf studies from the University of Tehran. His research interests include ideological transformations in the Gulf, mediation studies and conflict resolution. His research focuses on Iranian-Omani relations and the role of mediation in these relations. He has published research in Arabic and Persian.

The Third Cultural Revolution in Iran: Ideology and the Humanities Crisis

This study analyses the "Third Cultural Revolution" in Iran, which coincides with the return of the conservatives in government, specifically with the inauguration of President Ebrahim Raisi. The study reviews the role of ideology in influencing the humanities in Iranian universities, including the emergence of concepts such as "Islamization of the humanities" and Islamic "reproduction of the humanities". It also reviews the impact of social transformations and conflicting interests between political parties in deepening the crisis of the humanities. This paper investigates the development of the three stages of the Cultural Revolution in Iran, focusing on the impact of ideology on the humanities. It highlights the institutions that were established to change the structure of these sciences, weakening them through strict restrictions. The paper also discusses the impact of these policies on university professors and students, and how universities have become arenas for political and ideological conflict. The paper concludes with a forward-looking view of the future of the humanities in Iran, based on historical analyses of the subject and the current challenges.



Mohammad Mazhari

Mohammad Mazhari is a PhD student in Sociology at Texas Woman's University and a 2024 graduate in Political Science from the University of Texas at San Antonio. He also holds a master's degree in Sociology from Tarbiat Modarres University, where he focused on the development of Islam through Ibn-Khaldun's theory of *Asabiyyah*. With a background in journalism, including roles as Editor-in-Chief at the Arabic Mehr News Agency and contributor to the Tehran Times, Mazhari explores the intersections of politics, religion, and society.

Islamic Sociology Versus Secular Sociology: A Question of Explanation

This article explores the intellectual debate in Iranian sociology between Islamic and secular frameworks, particularly in relation to the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement, sparked by the death of Mahsa Amini in 2022. The study traces the evolution of sociology in Iran, emphasizing the tension between adopting global scientific paradigms and developing an indigenous framework that aligns with Iran's cultural and ideological contexts. Following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, efforts to Islamize sociology emerged, but have faced challenges, including methodological weaknesses and difficulties in establishing a coherent alternative to Western sociology. The article critically examines the positions of Iranian sociologists on both sides of the debate. Islamic sociology, which often relies on religious principles, struggles to provide a robust framework for analysing contemporary social movements like "Woman, Life, Freedom." Conversely, secular sociologists offer more nuanced and empirically grounded analyses, resonating with local and global discourses on social justice and gender rights. The study concludes that for Islamic sociology to become a rigorous discipline, it must innovate theoretically and develop culturally relevant frameworks that address the complexities of Iranian society.



Golnar Mehran

Golnar Mehran is Professor of Education at Alzahra University in Tehran, Iran. She obtained her Master's degree in Education at Harvard University and a PhD in Comparative Education at the University of California, Los Angeles. Mehran has taught at UCLA as visiting professor and acted as education consultant at UNICEF, UNESCO, and the World Bank. Her research has focused on ideology and education in the Islamic Republic of Iran; the socialization of schoolchildren in post-revolutionary Iran; the Islamization and Indigenization of faculties of education in Iranian universities; and female education in Iran and the Middle East and North Africa region.

Islamization and Politicization of Social Sciences in Iranian Schools

Shortly after the 1979 revolution, the religiopolitical leaders of Iran sought to Islamize and politicize the content of education, especially in the humanities and social sciences. The Islamization "project", aimed at the de-secularization of education and revival of Islamic identity, has been an indivisible part of politicization – the rule of state ideology in schools. This study examines the Islamization and politicization of education through a content analysis of official documents as well as Social Studies school textbooks used during the 2023-2024 academic year. The results indicate attempts made to create an "Ideal Islamic Person" – a pious and politicized Shi'i who is proud of their Islamic heritage, firmly believes in Islamic rule, and loyally follows the rule of the religious jurist. They are a revolutionary Muslim who believes in the inseparability of religion and politics and solidarity with the oppressed and downtrodden. Their role models are Shi'i Imams and religious scholars as well as political figures fighting against the enemy and struggling against foreign domination. At the same time, Iranian-ness is a significant component of curricular content, and the ideal citizen is also a patriotic Iranian who is proud of their pre-Islamic heritage and remains true to the homeland.



Zahra Karimi Moughari

Zahra Karimi Moughari is Professor Emeritus and member of the Women's Studies Center at the University of Mazandaran, Iran. She earned her PhD in economics from Allameh Tabataba'i University, and has been cooperating with Global Labour University since 2007. Her field of research is the labour market in Iran through the perspective of gender. Moughari's other field of interest is institutional economics and development economics. Her most recent book is *How the Dragon Awakened* (2021) on China's economic miracle and its lessons for Iran. Her latest journal article is "Foreign Policy, Sanctions, and Economic Performance in Iran".

Disconnection between the Teaching of Economics and Iran's Economic Challenges and Its Impact on Students Enthusiasm for Studying Economics

The teaching of the social sciences, particularly economics, has a long-standing tradition in Iranian universities. The Iranian curriculum relies heavily on textbooks from reputable Western universities, resulting in the predominance of mainstream economics paradigms. Typically, international economic issues are generally interpreted through the lens of prevailing neoclassical theories, with alternative perspectives that integrate political, social, cultural, and historical contexts often dismissed as unscientific. There is a prevailing belief that addressing Iran's specific economic challenges in lectures can be very costly. Consequently, economics professors tend to avoid discussing the country's flawed fiscal and monetary policies or the inefficient resource allocation. This paper examines the underlying causes of declining student interest in studying economics. To this end, a survey was conducted in 2014, involving 100 economics students, with a follow-up survey conducted in the spring of 2024 to assess changes in students' attitudes over the past decade. The findings of these surveys indicate that in addition to the inefficient education system and disconnect between economics education and Iran's real economic issues, the labour market crisis, and students' difficulties in securing suitable employment after graduation, significantly undermine their enthusiasm for studying economics.



Hossein Mousavi

Hossein Mousavi is a PhD student in politics at Royal Holloway, University of London. His research focuses on the integration of digital humanities, discourse analysis, and the emerging field of historical international relations to enhance our understanding of the Middle East politics. Mousavi is particularly interested in the history of clerics' self-perception, how others perceive them, and the impact of these perceptions on Iranian politics, both before and after the revolution. He has a background in both Western and Islamic philosophy and graduated from the Aga Khan Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations.

Third Generation of Politicians in Iran: A Shift in Occidentalism, Clerical Authority, and Islamization of Humanities and Social Sciences

This article examines the educational background in humanities and social sciences of the third-generation revolutionary politicians in Iran. It explores the authoritative sources they rely on, their primary references in social sciences, their relationships with social science institutions and new political factions. Scholars have highlighted Occidentalism, the portrayal of the West as a hegemon and colonizer, as central to post-revolutionary Iran's and other Muslim countries' approach to humanities and social sciences. This kind of Occidentalism leads to de-Westernization and removal of negative aspects of modernism to align science with Islamic teachings. However, this study reveals a shift from de-Westernization and critique of modernism to another form of Occidentalism among third generation of revolutionary politicians. This form promotes the complete rejection of sciences and the dehumanization of the West as the centre of lust. The findings are based on discourse analysis of publications by newly elected parliamentary representatives affiliated with revolutionary factions. This shift is attributed to two major changes. First, there is a move from systematic theoretical critique of modernism to an eclectic mix of theories and a decolonial approach. Second, there is a shift from focusing on the scholastic knowledge of the Qum seminary to prioritising a pietistic and ascetic approach over scholastic Islamic jurisprudence.



Younes Nourbakhsh

Younes Nourbakhsh is an Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology, University of Tehran, where he has taught the course of Sociology of Religion and Culture since 2007. He holds a PhD in Sociology from the University of Hamburg, Germany, and has been the chair of the UNESCO Chair for Social Health and Development in Iran since 2015. He is a member of the Iranian Sociological Society and has published more than 40 articles and more than 15 books, including: *Atlas of Muslim Minorities in the World with a Focus on the Shi'a* (University of Tehran; 2019), *Critique of Foucault's Political Wisdom* (2012) (translated from German to Persian) published by Imam Sadiq University, and *The Role of Education in Preventing Crime and Social Harm* (University of Tehran; 2016).

The Modernization Process and the Formation and Development of Sociology in Iran

This article analyses the concept of modernization and the simultaneous transformations in sociology in Iran from the Qajar era to the present over the ages. It studies the formation of scientific institutions and bodies related to this field, and the obstacles and challenges that sociology faced during different periods of political and social transformation in Iran. This article, in addition to a historical description of events and phenomena, provides varied explanations and narratives about these transformations in Iranian society and their impact on social sciences. The research methodology relies on documents, library sources, and interviews with sociologists in Iran. It seeks to understand the process of the formation of sociology in Iran and the changes that occurred due to renewal and political and social transformations. The research studies the period from the establishment of the University of Tehran up to the 2010s. The research shows that the social science in Iran faces the same problem as the natural science establishment. Conversely, due to its critical positions, sociology receives less interest from governments and has been marginalized by most people. Despite this, sociology is growing in Iran, with some trends in the discipline making a significant impact in Iranian universities, while some important global trends are either barely represented or non-existent in Iran.

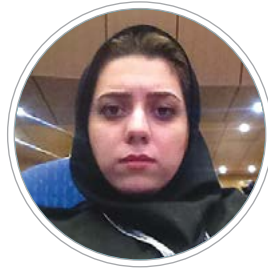


Abdolmehdi Riazi

Abdolmehdi Riazi is Professor of Applied Linguistics at the College of Humanities and Social Sciences of Hamad Bin Khalifa University, where he acts as the Associate Dean for Research and PhD Program Coordinator. Before joining HBKU in 2021, he worked at Macquarie University (2009-2021) and before that at Shiraz University (1995-2008). He is the author of *Less Frequently Used Methodologies in AL* (John Benjamin, 2023), *The Routledge Encyclopaedia of Research Methods* (Routledge, 2016), and *Mixed Methods Research* (Equinox, 2017). One of his areas of interest is research methodology and knowledge production in different disciplines.

Social Sciences and Humanities Research in Post-Islamic Revolution Iran: The Case of the *Journal of Methodology of Social Sciences and Humanities*

This paper investigates the social sciences and humanities research trend in post-Islamic revolution Iran, as reflected in articles published in the *Journal of Methodology of Social Sciences and Humanities (JMSSH)* from January 1995 to October 2023. A total of 751 articles published in 29 volumes and 115 issues were analysed in six five-year periods. A thematic cluster and trend analysis was conducted for each period to (a) identify relevant clusters, (b) illustrate trends in social sciences and humanities research during each period, and (c) explore the overall research trends in post-Islamic revolution Iran. The analysis, aided by ChatGPT-4, classified articles based on their titles to identify thematic clusters and trends. These trends were then reviewed to understand the broader trajectory of social sciences and humanities research in the country. Beginning with an introduction, the paper presents the background, literature review, study objectives, methodology, findings, discussion, limitations, and conclusions over nine sections.



Sara Roshani

Sara Roshani is an International Affairs Expert at the School of Rehabilitation of Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS) and a PhD candidate at the University of Tehran in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. She holds a bachelor's degree in English Translation, a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics, and a Master's in International Relations as part of an in-service training program. She is the executive secretary for Iran-Switzerland Academic Partnerships at TUMS. Her publications include "Science Diplomacy of Iran in Eastern Europe" in the *Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs*.

Bridging the Gap: Addressing the Challenge of Language and Access to Scholarship Produced Outside Iran

Iran is a vibrant centre of intellectual activity, but its scholars often face barriers in accessing international scholarship due to linguistic challenges. With Persian as the primary language of academia in Iran, this language barrier hinders the integration of global academic discourse and limits knowledge exchange. This research explores the causes and effects of limited access to foreign scholarship, focusing on the role of language proficiency in academic success and the challenges Iranian scholars face when engaging with non-Persian materials. Using a questionnaire distributed to university faculty in Iran, the study examines the extent of the language barrier and its impact on research quality and innovation. While top-tier scholars may not see the language barrier as a significant issue, they still encounter difficulties, suggesting broader challenges across the academic landscape. The research proposes strategies such as language training, translation initiatives, and increased international collaboration to address these issues. This study highlights the need to bridge linguistic gaps to foster a more interconnected and equitable academic environment within Iran and globally.



Atieh Tavasoli

Atieh Tavasoli is a postgraduate student at the London School of Economics and Political Science, studying social anthropology. Her research interests focus on the anthropology of religion in the MENA region, with a particular emphasis on Iran and Iraq. She has previously conducted research related to Iranian society and culture.

Alternative Paradigms or Ideological Alignment? The Duality of Islamic Social Science

This article explores the paradoxical evolution of Islamic social science, where criticism of "Western" paradigms intersects with alignment with state authority, leading to the suppression of alternative perspectives within academia through the political intervention of the state to stabilise specific knowledge. The notion of the "Islamic University" in Iran reflects a broader suspicion of "Western" social sciences as cultural and political infiltration, aligning with the state's project of establishing a "modern Islamic civilization". The novelty of this article lies in its illustration of how this perspective on social sciences, entwined with political power, articulates specific notions about the "West" and "Western" social sciences. My focus is on the three significant projects championed by the state and its key representatives, aiming to critique "Western" social sciences and explore alternative paradigms. First, the Heideggerian approach, spearheaded by Reza Davari Ardakani, critiques Western social sciences. Second, influenced by critics of modernity like Foucault and Eric Voegelin, the approach was represented by Hossein Kachu'iyani, a Sociology professor at the University of Tehran, who seeks alternative perspectives instead of sociology. Lastly, drawing from traditional Islamic sources and thinkers, the third approach represented by Hamid Parsania aims to establish Islamic social science.



Mandana Tishehyar

Mandana Tishehyar is a faculty member of the Department of Regional Studies at ECO College, Allameh Tabataba'i University. Tishehyar also heads the Board of Directors at the Iranian Peace Studies Scientific Association. She earned a PhD in International Studies from Jawaharlal Nehru University in India.

Internationalization of Higher Education in the Humanities and Social Sciences: An Iranian University's Experiences

Although the internationalization of higher education is often dubbed a modern phenomenon, scientific relations between scholars and traveling to obtain knowledge to the corners of the world have been a long-standing tradition, especially in Eastern societies. Therefore, scientists and researchers of ancient civilizations have left valuable travelogues of what they saw and heard. This article examines the experience of the internationalization of scientific activities in Allameh Tabataba'i University, as the largest university of humanities and social sciences in Iran and its three surrounding regions of West Asia, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. Drawing on the author's eight-year experience in the management of the Directorate of International Scientific Cooperation at Allameh Tabataba'i University (2013-2021), the paper demonstrates the capacities and challenges related to the internationalization of humanities and social sciences in the Iranian university. The research investigates factors at three levels: macro (higher education system), middle (university management structure) and micro (characteristics of professors and students).



Masoud Zalizadeh

Masoud Zalizadeh is a researcher and holds a PhD in cultural sociology from Allameh Tabataba'i University. His research interests are mostly in the field of cultural developments. He has published articles in Iranian scientific journals in these fields. His most recent study published in scientific journals is: "Living in Slums, Characteristics of the Ahvaz Metropolis," *Journal of Social problems of Iran*, 2024 (in Persian).

Historical Report on the Rise and Fall of the Social Sciences in Iran

Social science in Iran has a bumpy history. Sociology entered Iran a relatively long time ago, roughly when it was established in France. Initially, positivism dominated social science, but soon leftist currents presented an alternative interpretation. The establishment of the Institute of Social Studies and Research by Ehsan Naraqi highlighted the status of social sciences in Iran. Soon, positivist social science trends were overshadowed by the rise of revolutionary currents in Iranian society, and intellectuals like Ali Shariati presented a revolutionary interpretations of Shi'i Islam using sociology. The development of sociology was temporarily stunted by the revolution, before quickly recovering within the framework of political sociology. To investigate these historical developments in period of the discipline's founding and development (both before and after the Islamic Revolution), the paper utilizes the method of historical sociology and sociology itself is the subject of study. Therefore, across different stages, it discusses the most important developments in social sciences, particularly, sociology in Iran. This is to clarify the relationship between the developments of these two periods in the local and global contexts as well as cases such as regionalization and Islamization.



Sadegh Zibakalam

Keynote Speaker

Sadegh Zibakalam is a retired Professor of Political Science at University of Tehran. He earned his PhD from the School of Peace Studies of Bradford University, UK in 1989. Zibakalam has published several books on the modern Iranian history and politics and is one of the country's foremost public intellectuals.

Moderators



Hani Awad

Hani Awad is a Researcher at the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies. He holds a PhD in International Development from the University of Oxford (2019), as well as an MA (2011) and a BA (2008) from Birzeit University in Palestine. He is also the managing editor of *Omran for Social Sciences*. He is the author of *The Dilemma of Authoritarian Local Governance in Egypt* (Edinburgh University Press, 2022) and *Transformations of the Arab Nationalism Concept* (Beirut: Arab Network for Research and Publishing). His recent articles have appeared in journals such as *Middle East Critique* and the *British Journal of Middle East Studies*. Awad's research interests include governance, development studies, political institutions, informality, local politics, spatial politics, and social movements, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa, with a focus on Egypt and Palestine.



Aicha Elbasri

Aicha Elbasri is a Researcher at the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies and lecturer at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. Elbasri is a former UN official and has held various media and communications positions in the UN Department of Public Information (2000-2005), UNDP Sudan (2005-2009), and the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (2010-2012). She also served as Spokesperson for the AU-UN Mission in Darfur (2012-2013) and Regional Communications Advisor for the UN Population Fund in Cairo (2013-2014). She has published numerous peer-reviewed papers and authored *L'Imaginaire Carcéral de Jean Genet* (L'Harmattan, 1999). Her current research focuses on the United Nations and international relations.



Mohammed Hemchi

Mohammed Hemchi is a Researcher at the Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies and Assistant Professor at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. He is a former lecturer at the Department of Political Science, University of Oum El Bouaghi, Algeria. He holds a PhD in International Relations from University of Batna 1, Algeria. His publications include *Complexity Theory of International Relations: An Introduction* (2021), a translation of Emmanuel Wallerstein's *After Liberalism* (2022), and a translation of *Populism and Global Politics* (2022), in addition to other articles and chapters in peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes.



Emad Kaddorah

Emad Kaddorah is a Researcher and Head of the Editing department at the ACRPS. He holds a PhD in International Relations and Middle East Studies. He obtained a Master's degree in Defense and Strategic Studies. He has published several books including *Turkish Foreign Policy: Orientations, Flexible Alliances, Power Politics* (ACRPS, 2021); *The Rise of the GCC States and Turkey: Convergent and Divergent Regional Agendas* (New Castle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2021); in addition to several peer-reviewed articles, including "External Initiatives for Regional Security in the Gulf," *Research Paper*, Iranian Studies Unit at ACRPS (March 2021); "The Position of the GCC States in the Belt and Road Initiative," *Research Paper*, ACRPS (May 2024).



Mehran Kamrava

Mehran Kamrava is Professor of Government at Georgetown University Qatar, and also director of the Iranian Studies Unit at the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies. Kamrava is the author of a number of journal articles and books, including, most recently, *How Islam Rules in Iran: Theology and Theocracy in the Islamic Republic* (2024); *A Dynastic History of Iran: From the Qajars to the Pahlavis* (2022); *Triumph and Despair: In Search of Iran's Islamic Republic* (2022); *A Concise History of Revolution* (2020); *Troubled Waters: Insecurity in the Persian Gulf* (2018); *Inside the Arab State* (2018); and, *The Impossibility of Palestine: History, Geography, and the Road Ahead* (2016).



Abdou Moussa

Abdou Moussa is a Researcher at the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies since 2014. His research focuses on political reform, democratic transition, development and human rights. He has worked for several international development organizations, including the United Nations Development Program, and Canadian International Development Agency. He led the Institutional Capacity Building Unit at the Education Reform Program. At the ACRPS, he has co-edited several books, including *Youth and Democratic Transition*; *Transitional Justice and Democratic Transition in the Arab Countries*; *Constitutions and Democratic Transition*; and *The Yemen of Revolution, Democracy and War*.



Issam Nassar

Issam Nassar is a Professor of History and Head of the History Program at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. He specializes in the history of Jerusalem and the history of photography in the Ottoman World. He has authored, co-authored and edited a number of books including *The History of the Palestinians and their National Movement* (2018 in Arabic); *Camera Palaestina: Photography and Displaced Histories of Palestine* (2022); *Studies in the Social and Cultural History of Bilad al-Sham*.



Rana Siblini

Rana Siblini is Lecturer of Arabic Language and Culture and Adjunct Professor of Comparative Literature at the Doha Institute. She received her PhD in Arabic Language and Literature from Münster University in Germany and holds a BA in Political Studies and an MA in Arabic Language and Literature from the American University in Beirut. She has initiated different projects related to teaching Arabic such as "Arabic for social workers" and "Arabic for government employees," implemented in Germany. She is also co-editor of the volume *Arabic and Knowledge Production* published in Arabic.