



# CYRUS THE GREAT INSTITUTE



# Vision

# Contents



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*01*

CYRUS THE GREAT INSTITUTE

---

*02*

IRAN PRIOR TO THE REVOLUTION  
OF 1979

---

*06*

POST-1979 REVOLUTION

---

*10*

VISION OF CYRUS THE GREAT  
INSTITUTE

---

*16*

REFERENCES

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# Cyrus the Great Institute

Formally established on October 29, 2022, coinciding with Cyrus the Great day, the Cyrus the Great Institute (CGI) emerged during a tumultuous period in Iran's history, marked by the nationwide uprising following the tragic murder of Mahsa Amini at the hands of the Islamic Republic in Iran. Recognizing the pressing need for an institution dedicated to rigorous research and academic endeavours concerning Iran, the founders of CGI embarked on a mission to produce high-quality analysis and policy recommendations. As a non-profit and non-partisan institute, CGI is unwaveringly committed to advancing education and research on Iran-centric matters.

The institute's name, **Cyrus the Great Institute**, is not a mere label but a profound statement. It underscores the Iranian people's yearning to reconnect with their historical heritage, symbolizing the deep reverence CGI holds for Iran's history and culture.



# IRAN PRIOR TO THE 1979 REVOLUTION



**THE PINNACLE OF PROGRESS  
FOREIGN POLICY ACHIEVEMENTS  
THE SHAH'S LEGACY TODAY**

# The Pinnacle of Progress

Under the reign of His Imperial Majesty Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, the Shah, Iran embarked on a transformative journey of growth and modernization. Born on October 26, 1919, His Majesty ascended to the throne in 1941 and dedicated his rule to the nation's development [1,2]. His visionary "White Revolution" of 1963 marked a turning point, introducing groundbreaking reforms. Women were granted the right to vote, land reforms were implemented, and innovative programs like the literacy corps and health corps were established [3,4].

The Shah's commitment to progress extended to the economic realm as well. The Iranian banking system, under his leadership, flourished both in magnitude and sophistication. Notably, Bank Melli Iran, founded by Reza Shah the Great in 1925, not only dominated the domestic banking scene but also secured its position among the world's top 50 banks in terms of assets [5].

From the 1940s to 1979, under the Shah of Iran, there was a marked emphasis on education. Numerous universities were founded across Iran, and by 1975, all institutions of higher education were government funded.

Women's access to education saw remarkable growth, with their university enrollment surging to 28% by the late 1970s from almost 0%. Additionally, the government championed equal educational opportunities, providing free education and meals for elementary students [6].

The Shah's profound influence on Iran's political and economic landscapes is irrefutable [7,8]. Even his critics could not ignore the vast changes he brought about. This transformative era is aptly summarized in Gerard de Villiers' book, "The Imperial Shah – An Informal Biography", which notes, "[...] the world's third largest air power, and a modern industrial country with welfare programmes more comprehensive than Sweden's [...]" [9].



# Foreign Policy Achievements

The Shah's era was marked by significant foreign policy achievements. Under his leadership, Iran emerged as the guardian of the Persian Gulf, contributing significantly to regional security and stability [10]. Despite challenges and disagreements with Western powers, the Shah pursued an independent and patriotic foreign policy, seeking friendly relations with neighbouring countries and reducing Iran's dependency on the West [11].

The Shah's approach was underpinned by a profound grasp of geopolitical realities, emphasizing that the nation's prosperity was intrinsically linked to the monarchy's strength and endurance<sup>12</sup>. As an example, His Majesty played a pivotal role in establishing OPEC and came to dominate its leadership, effectively affecting the oil price [2,13].

By the late 1960s, Iran had carved out a newfound international status for itself, transitioning from a mere participant in the bipolar world order to asserting a more independent and influential role in a multipolar global landscape [14]. One of the most significant foreign policy gains of the Shah, which also made western countries his adversaries, was seen in January 1973 when he stated that the current oil contract with Western oil consortiums in Iran would not be renewed after it expires in 1979 [15].

The Shah's foreign policy achievements positioned Iran as a formidable global force [16].



# The Shah's Legacy Today

An increasing number of Iranians, especially the younger generation, view the Shah in a positive light. This shift in perception is evident in the streets of Tehran, where symbols from the Shah's era, like the Lion and Sun emblem, are making a comeback [17]. This emblem, which was systematically eradicated from public spaces after the revolution, is now seen on various memorabilia, hinting at a nostalgia for the Shah's era [18].

The Shah's era is remembered by many as a time of progress, modernization, and cultural freedom. The streets were alive with music, art, and fashion. The Shah's policies led to significant advancements in infrastructure, education, and women's rights. Many Iranians today, especially those who lived through the Shah's reign, reminisce about the prosperity and global respect Iran enjoyed during his time. Yet, the Shah's legacy is not just about the past; it is also about the present and the future. The younger generation, many of whom were born after the revolution of 1979, are increasingly drawn to the Shah's era. They view it as a time when Iran was on the cusp of becoming a global powerhouse, a nation that balanced its rich history with modern aspirations [19].

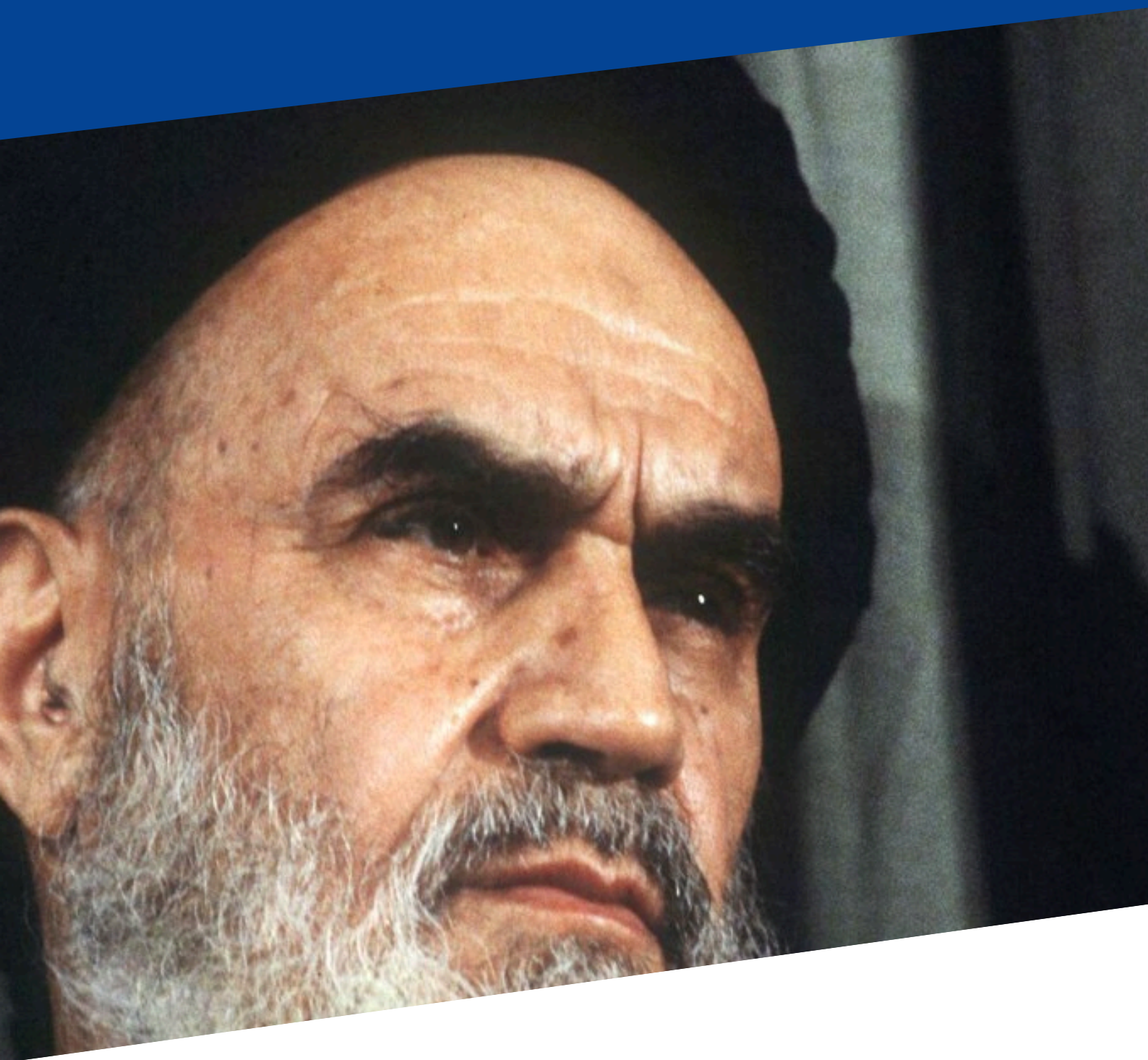
Interestingly, despite the Islamic regime's efforts to suppress monarchist sentiments, they view monarchists as a significant internal threat [20].

This perception underscores the lasting impact and influence of the Shah's legacy in contemporary Iran.

The legacy of the Shah may be most aptly elucidated by esteemed Iranologist, Dr. Andrew Scott Cooper. In his recent scholarly examination of the late Shah and the Pahlavi dynasty, documented in his book "Fall of Heaven," he articulates: "Perhaps it is no surprise that Iran today has the look and feel of a haunted house. The man [Shah of Iran] who built modern Iran is nowhere to be seen but his presence is felt everywhere." [2]



# POST-1979 REVOLUTION



**THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL  
THE 1988 MASSACRE  
ASSASSINATIONS AND TERRORISM**



# The Downward Spiral

The Islamic Revolution of 1979 marked a pivotal turning point in Iran's rich tapestry of history. This event, which saw the overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty and the establishment of the Islamic Republic, was not just a political upheaval but a profound societal transformation. The trajectory of a nation, once on the cusp of global prominence and modernization, was dramatically altered, leading it into a labyrinth of political, social, economic, and environmental disruption and disturbance. The vibrant development and modernization championed by the Shah were gradually dismantled. In its place, the new Islamic regime introduced a strict interpretation of Islamic law, which had profound implications for various facets of Iranian society [21].

One of the most glaring changes was the Islamic regime's approach to human rights. Dissent was now met with brutal suppression [22]. Political opponents, journalists, and activists found themselves at the mercy of a system that showed little regard for due process. Arbitrary arrests, torture, and extrajudicial killings became tools of intimidation, ensuring that voices of opposition were silenced.

The plight of women, in particular, took a regressive turn. The strides made in women's rights during the Shah's era were reversed. Women were now obliged to wear the hijab, their roles in society were diminished,

and their legal rights in matters of marriage, divorce, and inheritance were curtailed [23]. The regime's patriarchal stance sought to confine women to traditional roles, limiting their participation in public life.

The Islamic Revolution of 1979 was not just a political earthquake for Iran but also the beginning of a series of economic policies that would cripple the nation's once-thriving economy. The policies implemented by the Islamic Republic have, over the decades, led to widespread economic stagnation, pushing a significant portion of the population into severe poverty [24]. Simultaneously, corruption became endemic [25]. The nation, which once held promise, now found itself ensnared in the clutches of widespread graft. Massive governmental embezzlements became the order of the day, with funds meant for public welfare being siphoned off, further exacerbating the economic woes of the common citizen [26]. This corruption, especially among the highest echelons of power, has held the country hostage, stymieing any meaningful attempts at reform or development.

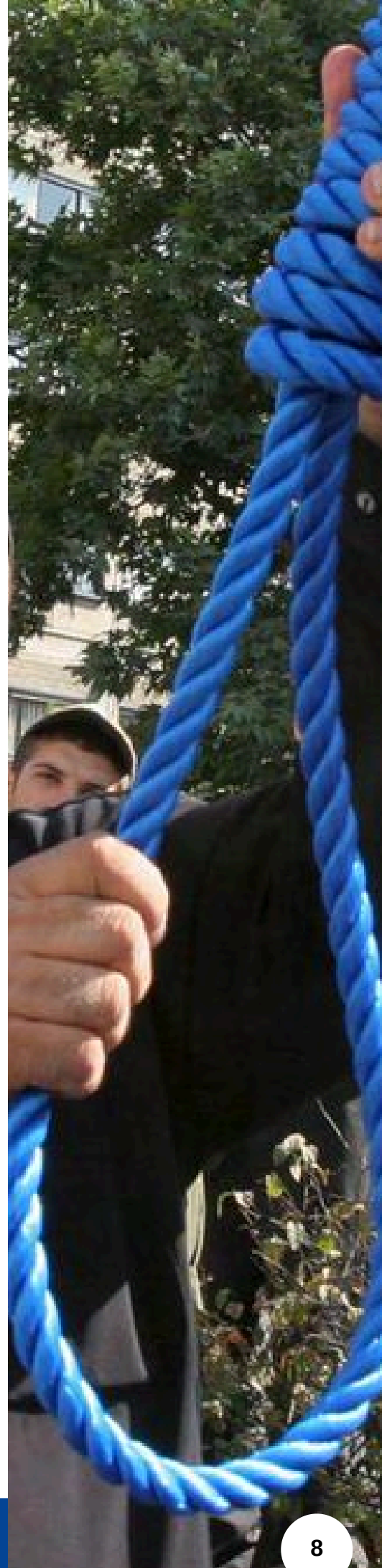


# The 1988 Massacre

In the summer of 1988, Iran faced one of its most harrowing periods. Thousands of political opponents vanished from prisons, later reported to have been executed. It is estimated that at least 5,000 were executed during this time<sup>27</sup>. These extrajudicial killings, ordered by Ayatollah Khomeini, occurred under the premiership of Mir-Hussein Mousavi. Mousavi, a Khomeini loyalist, served as prime minister from October 1981 through August 1989.

Despite Mousavi's later image as a reformist, especially after the 2009 presidential election where he accused Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of vote-rigging, evidence suggests he was well-aware of the 1988 executions. In December 2018, an interview clip from 1988 surfaced where Mousavi acknowledged the repressions<sup>28</sup>. Furthermore, in August 2020, archived Amnesty International letters were published, proving that Iranian authorities, including Mousavi, were informed about the extrajudicial executions<sup>29</sup>.

This revelation ignited debates among Iranians globally about the nation's future. The so-called reformist camp of the Islamic regime was now in crisis. Mousavi's involvement in the massacre and the former President Hassan Rouhani's role in the brutal 2019 crackdown on protesters, which resulted in 1,500 deaths, challenge their reformist credentials<sup>30</sup>. The core issue appears to be the Islamic Republic itself, rather than a reformist versus conservative dichotomy.





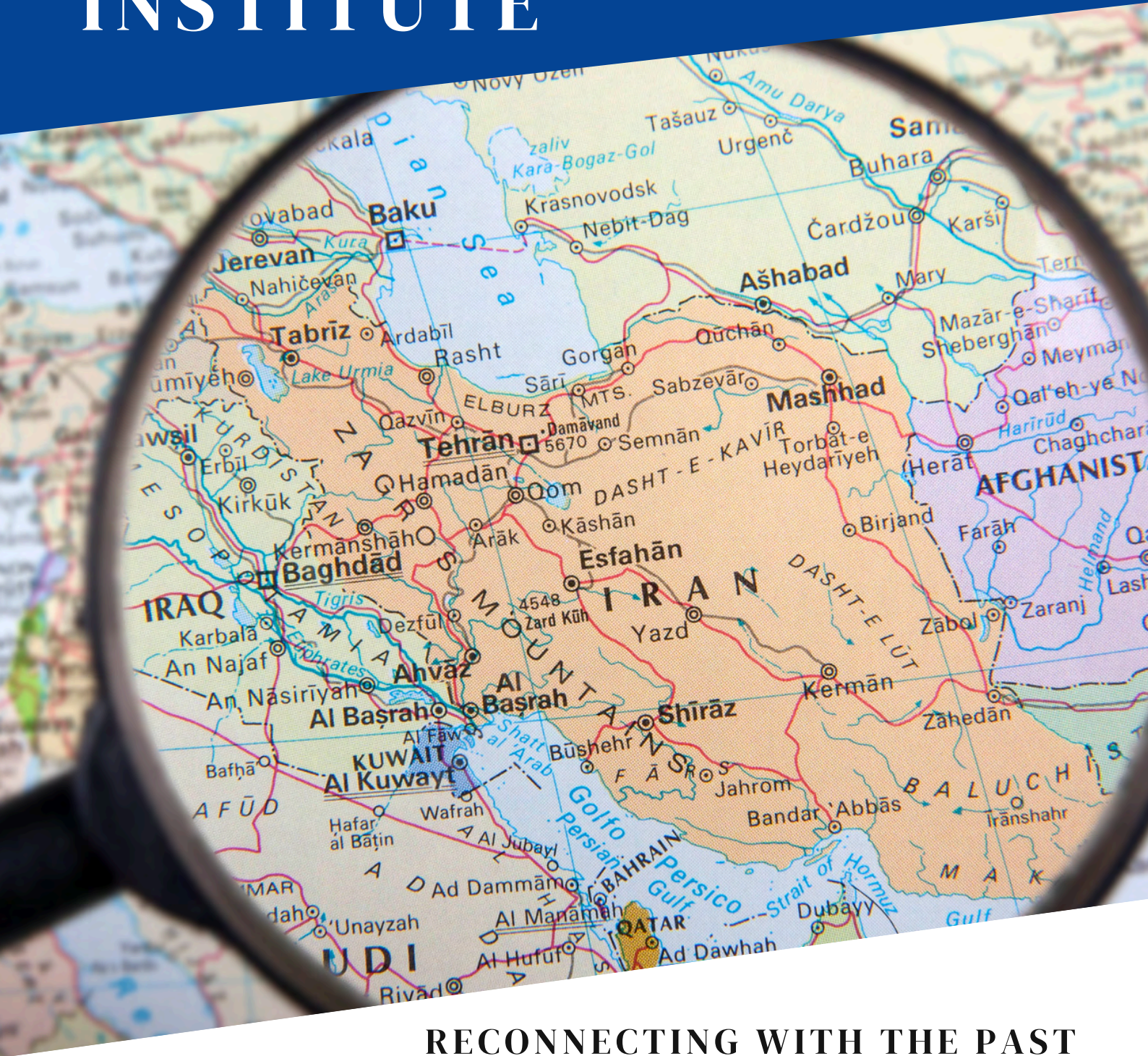
# Assassination and Terrorism

The post-revolutionary regime in Iran has consistently employed assassinations and terrorism as tools of statecraft, both domestically and abroad<sup>31</sup>. This modus operandi has been evident since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979. A notable example of this was the regime's plot to assassinate the US ambassador to South Africa, which, while denied by Tehran, aligns with its historical pattern of targeting foreign diplomats on foreign soil [31].

Four key institutions in Iran drive these operations: the Office of the Supreme Leader, the Supreme Council of National Security, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, and the Ministry of Intelligence<sup>32</sup>. The Office of the Supreme Leader stands at the top of this hierarchy, supervising all government ministries and having its own intelligence and counterintelligence organizations. All significant decisions, especially those concerning regime security, must be discussed with, and approved by the Supreme Leader. The Supreme Council of National Security, on the other hand, is responsible for utilizing the country's resources to confront both internal and external threats. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Ministry of Intelligence (MOI) are primarily responsible for planning and executing these subversive operations. The IRGC, established after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, is tasked with protecting the Islamic regime. Its external branch, the Quds Force, has been involved in numerous assassinations and terrorist attacks worldwide. The MOI, meanwhile, likely focuses on intelligence gathering and analysis, while the actual execution of operations might be carried out by Quds Force operatives [32].

The regime's diplomatic corps often aids in executing these subversive plans. Iranian operatives, in collaboration with diplomats and embassies, have conducted terrorist attacks and assassinations globally, targeting primarily Israeli and Saudi diplomats [31]. Over the years, Iran has extensively used its diplomatic arm for subversive activities, including espionage, assassinations, and terrorist plots. For instance, in 2018, Assadollah Assadi, a member of the MOI and the Third Secretary of the Iranian embassy in Austria, was arrested for providing explosives to an Iranian couple for a bombing plot in Paris [33].

# VISION OF CYRUS THE GREAT INSTITUTE



**RECONNECTING WITH THE PAST  
LIBERATION AND DEVELOPMENT  
RESTORATION OF MONARCHY  
SECURITY AND STABILITY  
NATIONAL INTEGRITY AND UNITY**

# Reconnecting With the Past

The Cyrus the Great Institute (CGI) envisions an Iran deeply rooted in its illustrious history, a history that stretches back to the grandeur and beauty of the golden age of the Persian Empire. We aim to foster a sense of pride and identity among Iranians by promoting education and awareness about Iran's rich cultural heritage. This includes the contributions of historical figures like Cyrus the Great, who laid the foundations for human rights, and the artistic and scientific achievements that have made Iran a cradle of civilization. By doing so, CGI aims to counteract the erosion of cultural identity and historical amnesia, ensuring that Iranians, both within the country and in the diaspora, are empowered and informed.

To achieve this, CGI will initiate educational programs, and public awareness campaigns that focus on the diverse tapestry of Iranian history, from its ancient civilizations to its modern transformations. We will collaborate with historians, archaeologists, and cultural experts to create a repository of knowledge that is both accessible and engaging.

Importantly, our activities are not limited to Iranians alone. We believe that the richness of Iranian culture and history has universal appeal and significance. Therefore, we extend our educational and cultural initiatives to non-Iranians as well, aiming to foster a global appreciation for Iran's contributions to world civilization.





# Liberation and Development

CGI is committed to the liberation of Iran from the shackles of its current regime. We believe in the importance of a free and self-determining nation, where democratic values are not just ideals but a lived reality. Drawing inspiration from the growing disillusionment among Iranians with the Islamic Republic, CGI's strategic plans aim to support the aspirations of the Iranian people for a democratic, transparent, and accountable governance structure.

To further this goal, CGI will engage in rigorous policy analysis, advocacy, and grassroots mobilization. We will work closely with international organizations and democratic nations to apply pressure on the current regime, while also providing platforms for the voices of the Iranian people to be heard.

In addition to political liberation, CGI recognizes the importance of economic freedom and social progress. We envision an Iran where the economy is sustainable, diversified, resilient, and inclusive, providing opportunities for all its citizens and benefiting its environment. This includes the revitalization of sectors that gain sustainable development, like innovation, technology, healthcare, and education, which have been stifled under the current regime.

Moreover, CGI is committed to the promotion of human rights, including freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and gender equality. We believe that the liberation of Iran must be holistic, addressing not just political but also social, religious and economic injustices. To this end, CGI will collaborate with human rights organizations and activists to document abuses and advocate for change, both within Iran and in international forums.

# Restoration of Monarchy



At the heart of CGI's vision is the restoration of the monarchy, with His Majesty Reza Shah Pahlavi II as the rightful Shah (king). This vision is not a mere nostalgic return to the past but a forward-looking aspiration that draws inspiration from Iran's golden eras. The monarchy, particularly the Pahlavi dynasty, is increasingly seen as a symbol of modernity, development, and national unity [17-19]. It offers a traditional yet liberal alternative to the current theocratic regime, one that could unite Iranians from various backgrounds who are opposed to the Islamic Republic.

The grandeur of the monarchy was vividly displayed in the 2,500-year celebration of the Persian Empire in 1971. This event, meticulously planned and executed, was not just a showcase of Iran's ancient history but also a testament to its then-contemporary advancements [34].

It serves as a reminder of the monarchy's potential to be a unifying force, capable of bringing Iranians together under a shared history and a common vision for the future.

In recent years, there has been a revival in the Pahlavi Shah's status, with many Iranians looking back on their era as a time when Iran was prosperous and Iranians happy. Monarchist sentiments, although prohibited by the government of the Islamic Republic, remain active, especially among the youths. Today, the monarchy and His Majesty Reza Shah Pahlavi II enjoy the majority of support among Iranians, signaling a strong desire for a return to monarchical governance [35].

To make this vision a reality, CGI will engage in public diplomacy, historical research, and political advocacy aimed at restoring the monarchy. We will also facilitate dialogues among Iranians inside Iran as well as the Iranian diaspora, to build a consensus around the idea of a constitutional monarchy as a viable governance model for Iran.



# Security and Stability

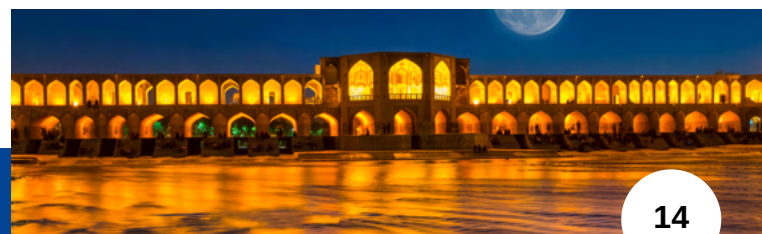
In a post-revolution Iran, security will be paramount. CGI is dedicated to addressing potential security concerns, ensuring the safety and well-being of all its citizens. One of the immediate challenges that Iran may face post-liberation is a surge in terrorism and insurgency, both from internal extremist factions and external influences. CGI advocates for a hard stance against terrorism, emphasizing the importance of robust intelligence and counter-terrorism measures. This approach will include not only military action but also ideological countermeasures to prevent the radicalization of vulnerable populations.

While vigilance against external threats is crucial, safeguarding Iran's independence in the international arena is equally important. CGI envisions an Iran that maintains friendly relations with all countries and powers of the world but does so without compromising its sovereignty. Diplomacy will be a cornerstone in this vision, but it will be diplomacy backed by the strength and self-assurance that comes from economic and political stability.

The world is fraught with geopolitical complexities, and Iran's position in it will require a nuanced approach. States generally act in their self-interest, and power dynamics are central to international relations [36]. Furthermore, the structure of the international system itself influences state behavior.

CGI aims to aid Iran navigate this complex landscape by adopting an approach that balances Iran's national interests with its responsibilities as a member of the international community, all while considering the influence of the broader international system.

A pressing security concern following the post-liberation phase pertains to Iran's environmental condition. Over the past four decades, the policies enacted and implemented by the Islamic regime have exerted significant stress on Iran's ecological landscape [37,38]. This strain has manifested in several detrimental forms, including water scarcity, drought, sandstorms, soil degradation, air pollution, loss of biodiversity, deforestation, inadequate waste management, and wildlife and land degradation, representing noteworthy environmental challenges. These challenges may give rise to internal armed conflicts, escalating poverty levels, and heightened societal inequities. Collaboratively, CGI aims to engage with diverse organizations, ranging from academic institutions to environmental entities, in order to delineate and analyze sustainable resolutions to Iran's environmental predicaments. While acknowledging the multifaceted nature of these challenges, CGI underscores the imperative of addressing the root cause—the presence of the Islamic regime—as an initial stride towards mitigating these environmental issues.







# National Integrity and Unity

CGI stands unwaveringly in defense of Iran's national and territorial integrity. We envision a united Iran where every citizen, irrespective of their regional, religious, or social background, enjoys equal rights and opportunities. In a world where the integrity of nations is often challenged by internal and external forces, CGI believes that a strong, centralized governance structure is crucial for preserving Iran's unity and sovereignty.

Federalism, sometimes presented as a panacea for Iran's regional disparities, is a dangerous gamble that threatens to fragment the nation and dilute its national integrity. Federalism risks fragmenting the country and weakening its national integrity. For example, it can lead to unequal treatment of citizens depending on the region they reside in, creating disparities in access to quality education, healthcare, and legal systems [39]. Such inequalities can sow discord among different communities and undermine national unity.

Instead, CGI advocates for a strong centralized governance structure that respects local cultures and traditions while promoting a unified national identity. A centralized system ensures that all citizens are subject to the same laws and have access to the same quality of public services, fostering a sense of belonging and unity among the populace. It also allows for a more streamlined and effective governance, making it easier to implement uniform policies that benefit the entire nation.

To support this vision, CGI will engage in policy research, public debates, and educational programs that explore the merits and drawbacks of various governance models. Our initiatives will aim to inform both policymakers and the general public, fostering a well-rounded understanding of what it takes to preserve Iran's national unity and territorial integrity. Through these efforts, CGI is committed to building a strong, unified Iran that stands as an independent and respected member of the international community.

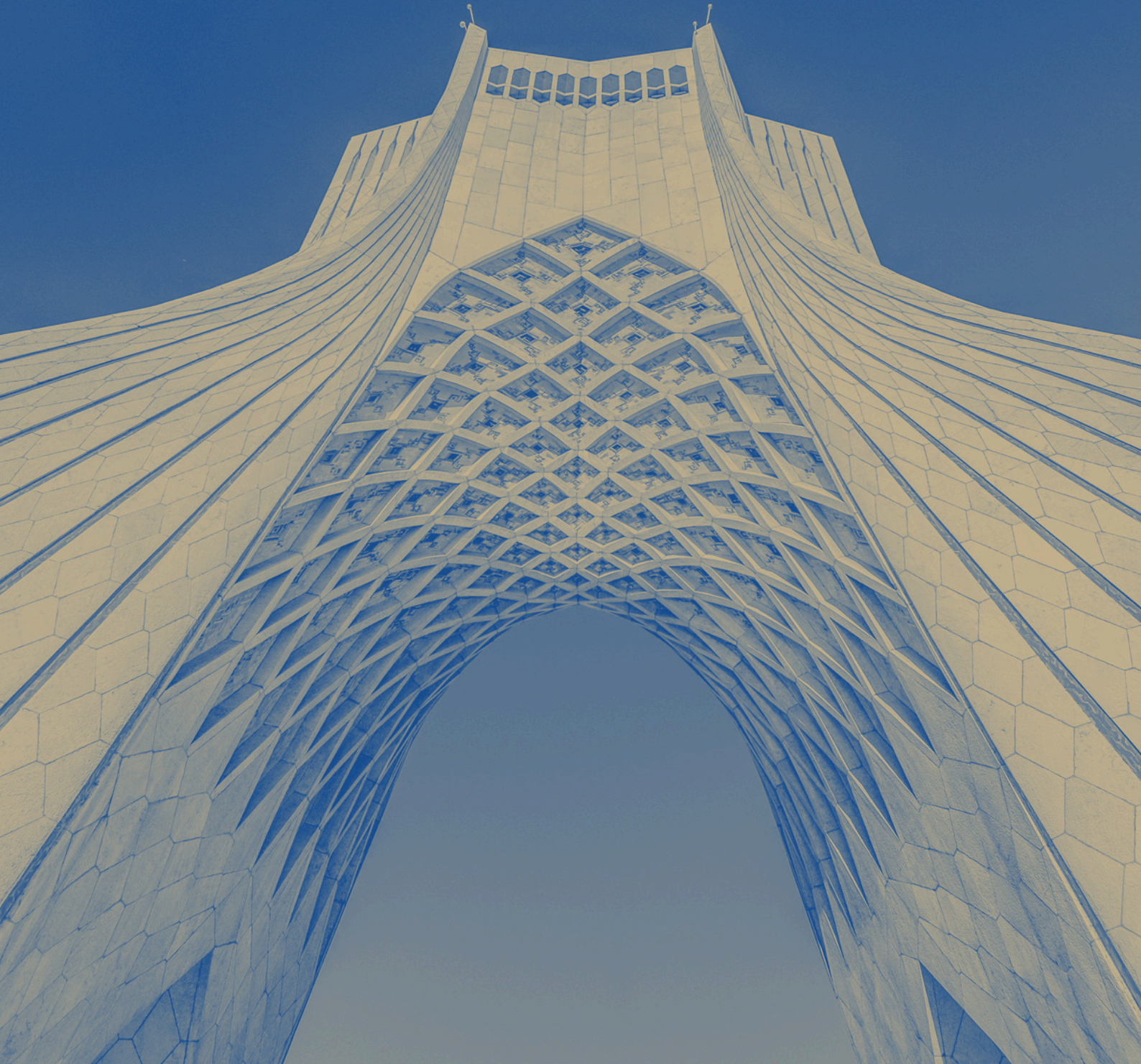
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