

media, specialized knowledge, and global communications, this class can usually comprehend the real consequences of war, foreign intervention, and the collapse of political order better than other social groups. Contrary to the prevailing assumption that political dissatisfaction necessarily leads to welcoming any change in the political system, this class often understands that external attack or political instability can generate a chain of uncontrollable consequences: excessive depreciation of currency, breakdown of public services, large-scale emigration of elites, destruction of infrastructure, economic insecurity, and even partition or civil war. The second important characteristic of this class is its preference for development over chaos. The new middle class is generally not a revolutionary class. In the literature of development sociology, it is stated that the middle class, rather than desiring fundamental transformation, seeks gradual reform and sustainable development. The reason is clear: this class has made the greatest investment in education, expertise, profession, and foresight, and any severe instability could destroy that long-term capital. For this reason, even if under normal conditions it criticizes economic, social, or cultural policies, at the moment it perceives the overall structure of the country to be exposed to external threat, it alters its behavior. The third characteristic is the intense dependence of this class upon institutional order and modern infrastructure. Unlike traditional classes, whose economic life may be partially independent of complex modern structures, the new middle class has organized its daily existence in direct connection with the university, the banking system, the internet, the specialized labor market, formal education, modern commerce, digital communications, and bureaucratic structures. For this reason, this class knows better than others that foreign war or political collapse would destroy precisely these infrastructures before anything else. The fourth characteristic is rational calculation. This class typically regulates its political action not merely on the basis of emotions but rather on a cost-benefit calculus. Under normal conditions, it may criticize, advance political and social demands in the public sphere, participate in certain protests, or abstain from certain elections, but when confronted with external danger, a rational reassessment occurs. This class asks: "Is the available alternative superior to the current condition, or will its costs prove far more costly?" This is why, under conditions of external threat, the behavior of this class usually changes. This change does not necessarily signify active political support; rather, it sometimes manifests as a temporary suspension of criticism. I want to use this point to recommend to officials that, should war unfortunately commence again, they should not disconnect the internet because even if access to the internet and the public sphere remains open and the possibility of continued criticism persists, a segment of this class will consciously reduce its level of criticism or remain silent, and many of them will express support, because their mental pri-



Amid the ongoing US-Israeli aggression, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (L) visits a chain store in the country's capital, Tehran, on March 27, 2026, to ensure that the supply chain is not disrupted and the stores are fully stocked.
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ority will have shifted from "demanding change" to "preventing collapse". From a theoretical perspective, one may say this class distinguishes between two conditions: first, dissatisfaction with the performance of internal structures; second, a threat to the existence of the country. These two are not identical for them. An individual may criticize internal policies yet still believe that foreign war or severe instability would eliminate any possibility of future development. Another important point is that the Iranian middle class over recent decades has become intensely globalized. This class studies the experiences of various countries and observes contemporary examples: Iraq after 2003, Libya after 2011, Syria during its war. For a significant portion of this class, these experiences constitute a historical warning, demonstrating that the collapse of the central government, whether by external force or externally instigated, even if initiated under the slogan of freedom or change, can lead to years of instability. Consequently, one may argue that one of the most important factors in Iran's social resistance to external pressure is not merely nationalist sentiments or political mobilization but rather the presence of a broad, educated, forward-looking, and development-oriented cultural middle class — a class that, although it may criticize many existing conditions, at the moment of external threat, owing to greater awareness of the costs of collapse, prefers to prevent the country from entering a path of chaos. Perhaps one of the significant errors of many analysts from foreign forces is precisely this: they assume every critical society is necessarily a society ripe for collapse, whereas the existence of a development-oriented middle class can produce exactly the opposite outcome.

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idity against foreign aggression. What is your proposal for the continuation of such solidarity?

The 40-day war brought together diverse political and social forces against external aggression — both domestically and abroad — but one must distinguish between "wartime solidarity" and "sustainable postwar cohesion". Wartime solidarity typically forms due to the presence of a common threat, and after the danger subsides, political, economic, and social disagreements reemerge. Therefore, expecting the same silence and unanimity to persist is neither realistic nor necessarily desirable. What can be preserved is the national core of this solidarity: the acceptance that Iran is the common homeland of all Iranians and that political disagreement should not lead to exclusion or reliance upon foreign intervention. I observed many compatriots abroad who, despite the hardships they had witnessed in the past, were intensely concerned about Iran.

For the sustainability of this social capital, several actions are essential. First, no faction should interpret the people's resistance as complete endorsement of itself. Many people stood up to defend the country. Second, a distinction must be made between the domestic critic and the one aligned with the enemy. A citizen may simultaneously be a critic yet loyal to Iran. Third, postwar solidarity must be reciprocated with openness, the reduction of certain restrictions, the hearing of diverse groups' voices, and genuine popular participation.

Fourth, economic reconstruction, inflation control, an increase in employment and public services, and the reduction of insecurity regarding the future must be placed at the center of postwar policies. National solidarity is not preserved by slogans alone; it must have tangible effects on people's daily lives. Among these, the new middle class

plays an important role. During wartime, this class, due to its awareness of the consequences of collapse and instability, may temporarily reduce its criticism. After the war, it expects to have a share in the administration of the country and that development, stability, civil liberties, and connection with the world will be strengthened. Consequently, preserving the very unity of the wartime period is not possible, but it can be transformed into a kind of "solidarity amid disagreement". The condition for this is that the government respond to the people's solidarity with trust, governance reform, justice, development, and the acceptance of pluralism. The people granted the country an opportunity for survival during the war; postwar policy must grant the people an opportunity for participation and a better life.

Alongside popular solidarity, we witnessed an increase in political cohesion and inter-institutional coordination at the national level, which appears to have prevented the collapse of the country's administrative structure. How do you evaluate the government's role in this coordination and cohesion?

In my estimation, if we wish to evaluate the government's role in this war from the perspective of the sociology of the state, we must distinguish between public contestation and governance capacity. These two are not necessarily identical. A government may face serious challenges in public satisfaction yet simultaneously possess high institutional capacity for crisis management; and vice versa.

In the case of Iran, one point that many domestic and foreign analysts have noted is that, contrary to the expectations of some observers, the country's administrative structure did not disintegrate during the war. Ministries, provincial governorates, service institutions, relief networks, the health sector, the energy network, banks, security councils, and military and law enforcement forces were able, despite intense pressure, to maintain their primary functions. This is what in the literature of political science is termed institutional resilience.

The experience of many countries demonstrates that the onset of state collapse usually occurs when essential services such as electricity, water, healthcare, transportation, the banking system, and commodity distribution cease to function. In Iran, despite damages, these services did not completely halt, and this very fact contributed to the preservation of relative social calm. Recent research also emphasizes that war does not necessarily lead to the collapse of institutions and that the quality of governance during crisis plays a decisive role in preventing collapse. Nevertheless, the experience of various countries shows that success in war management transforms into sustainable capital only when the mobilization and coordination capacity of the crisis period is converted, in the postwar era, into efficient governance, economic reconstruction, increased public trust, and institutional reforms.

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Iranian soldiers of various classes pose with victory signs and a flag of their country during the Iraqi-imposed war of the 1980s.
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