

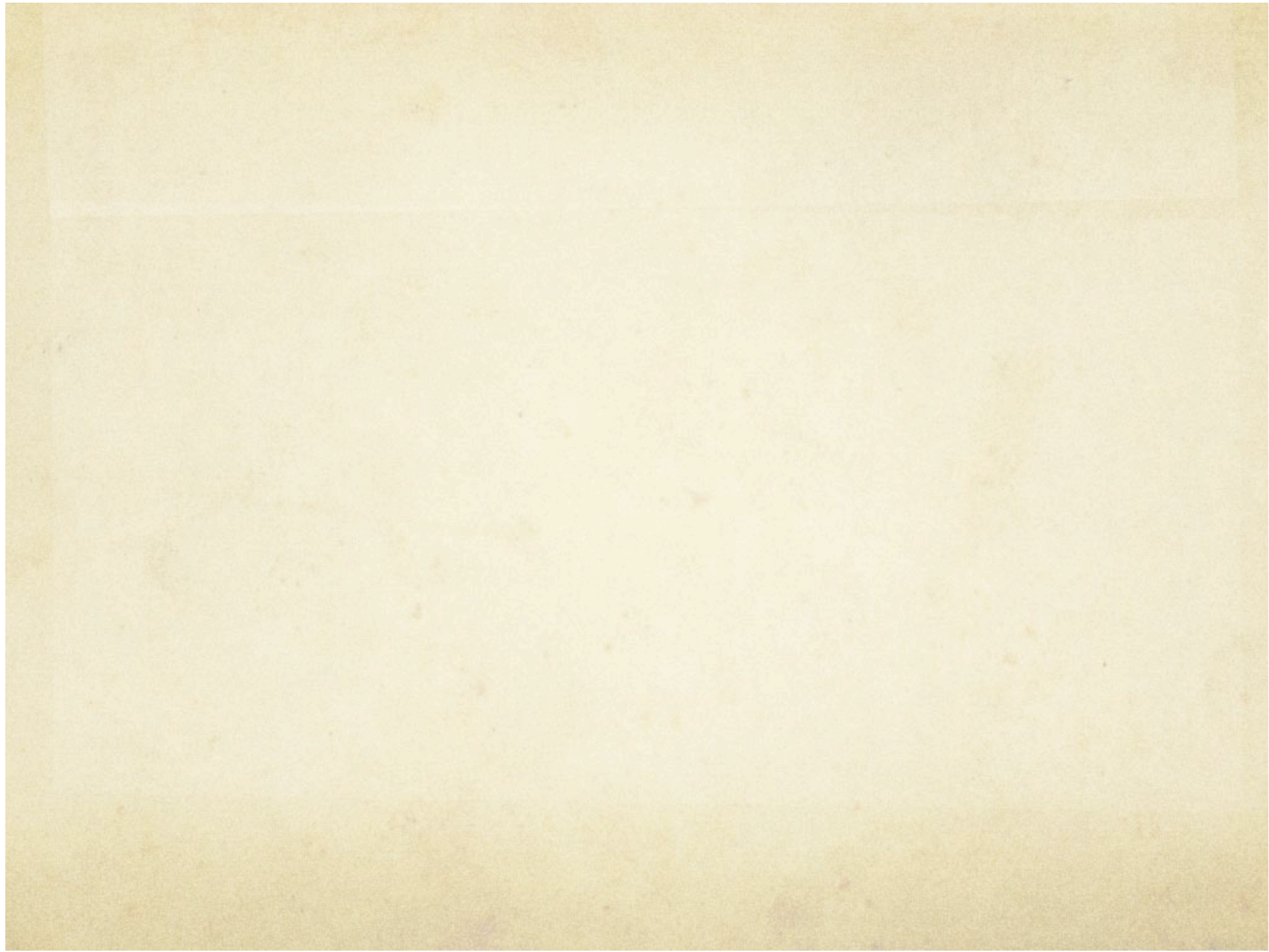
What's Happening in Iran?

A non-Western Perspective

by *Peyman Vahabzadeh*

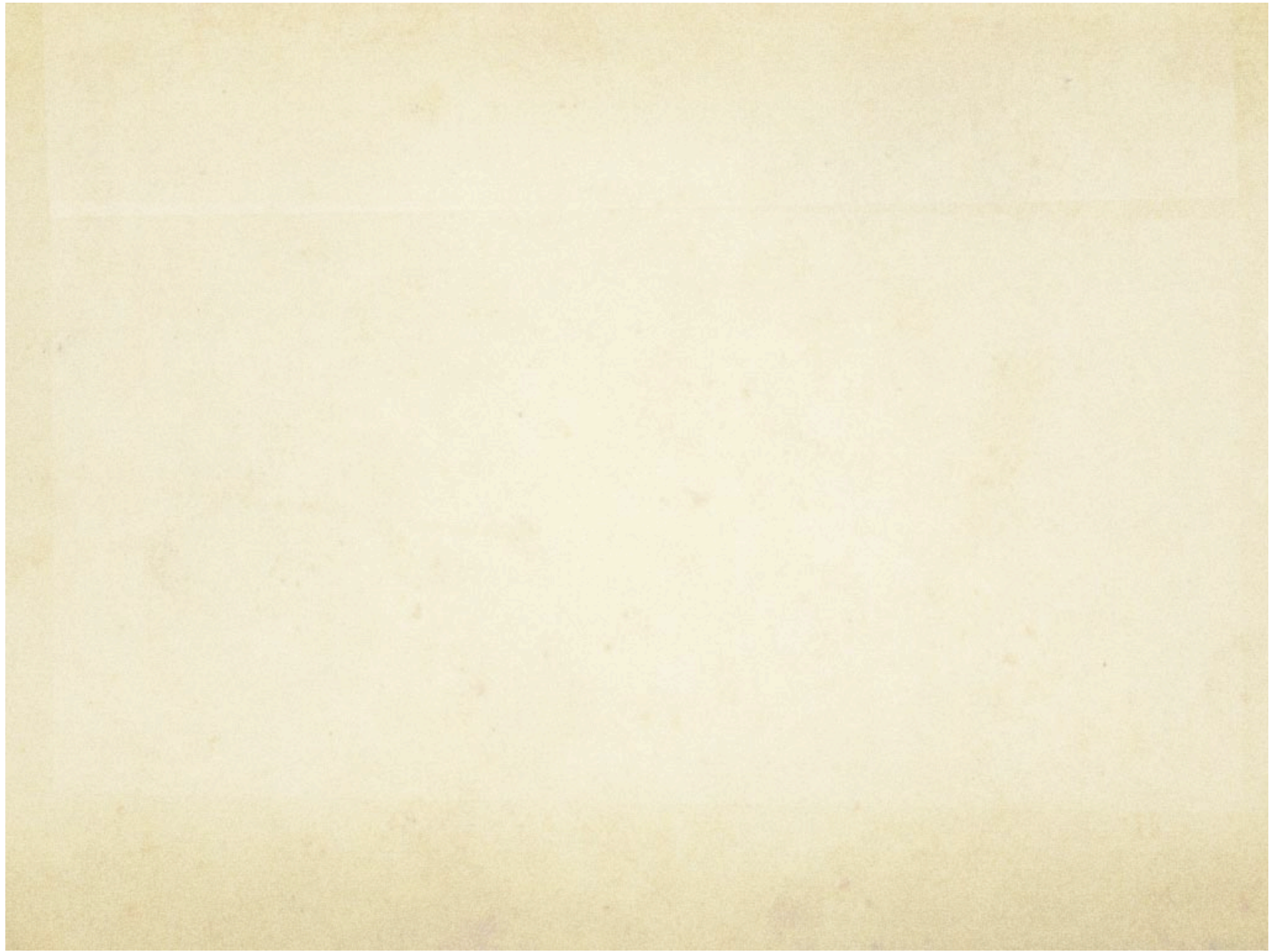
3 major themes

- Iran's Constitutional Dilemma
- The Rise of Military-Commercial Complex
- The Grassroots Social Movements



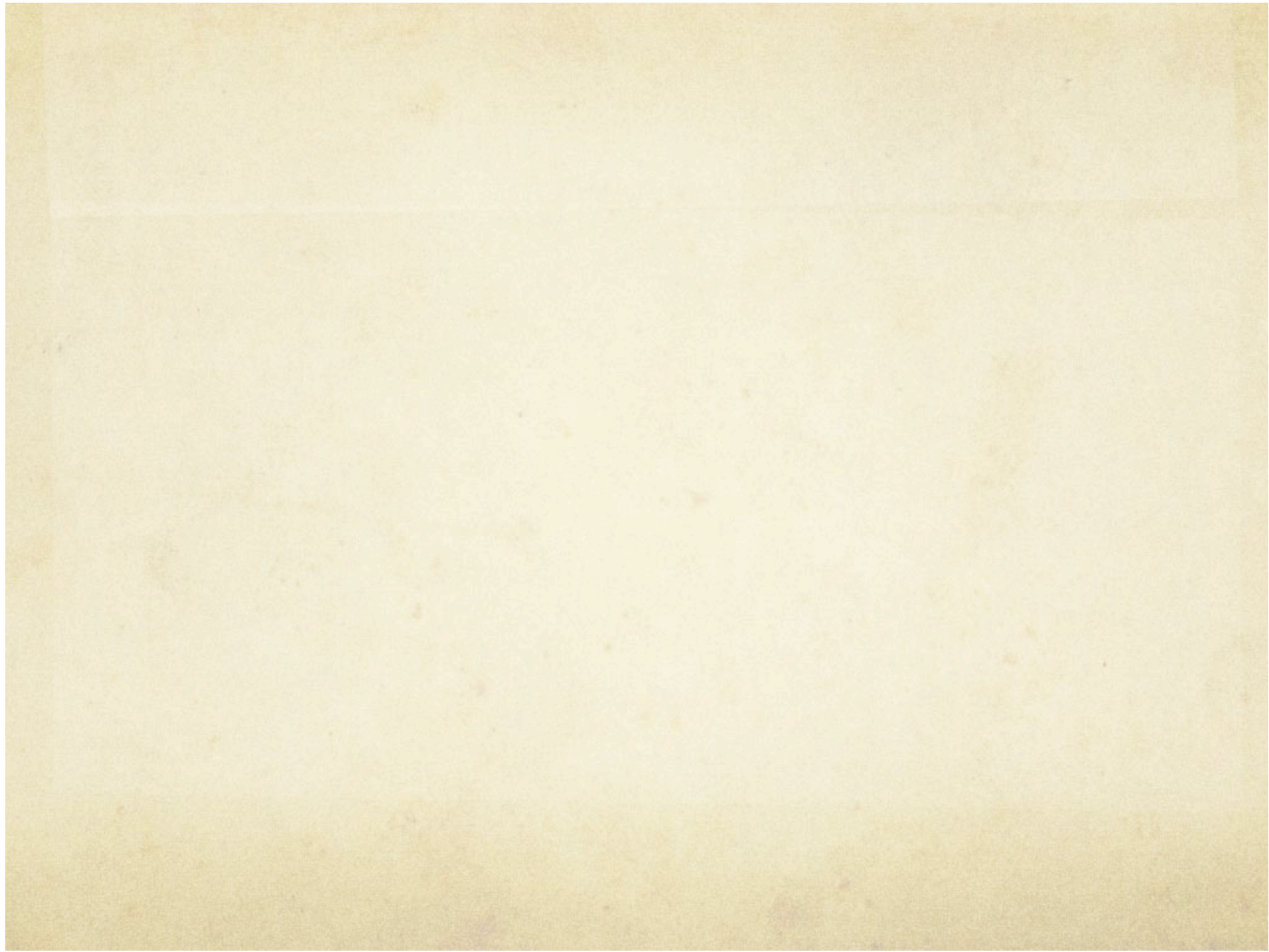
Iran's Constitution

- Deep division within the Constitution
- The republican, elective aspect of the Constitution as a response to the overthrowing of monarchy in Iran. Democratic 'by default,' popular sovereignty by negation. The secular impulse.
- The Islamist, non-elective aspect of the Constitution as an indication of suspicious of democratic and secular impulse. Popular sovereignty institutionalized and legalized through top-down delegation of power.



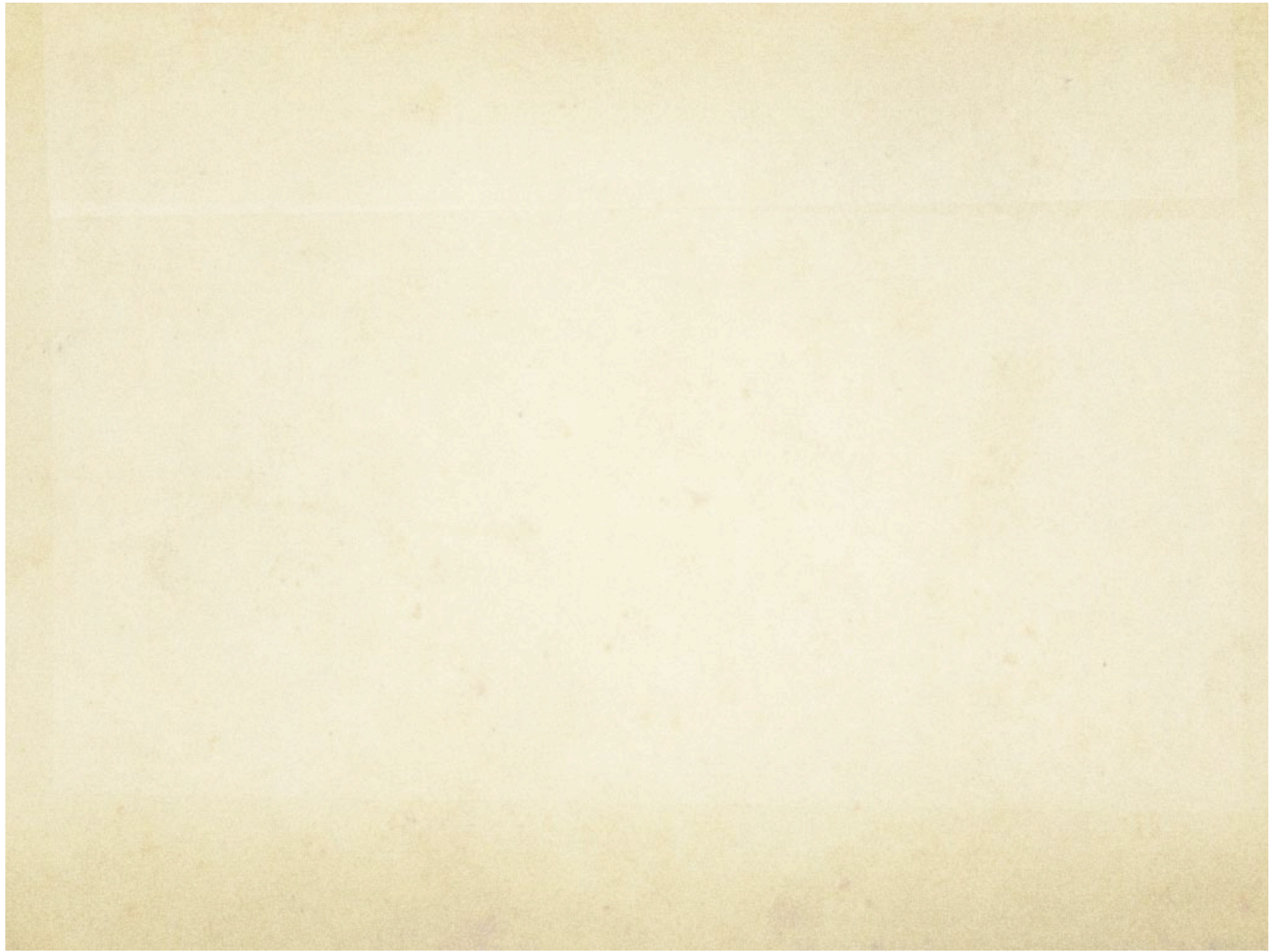
two movements from within

- The reform movement: Parliamentary principles, 1980 Constitution; rulers to be checked by constituents.
- The hardliners and ruling elite: principles of Islam override democratically elected offices; 1988 amendments to the Constitution; rulers to curb and control the constituents.

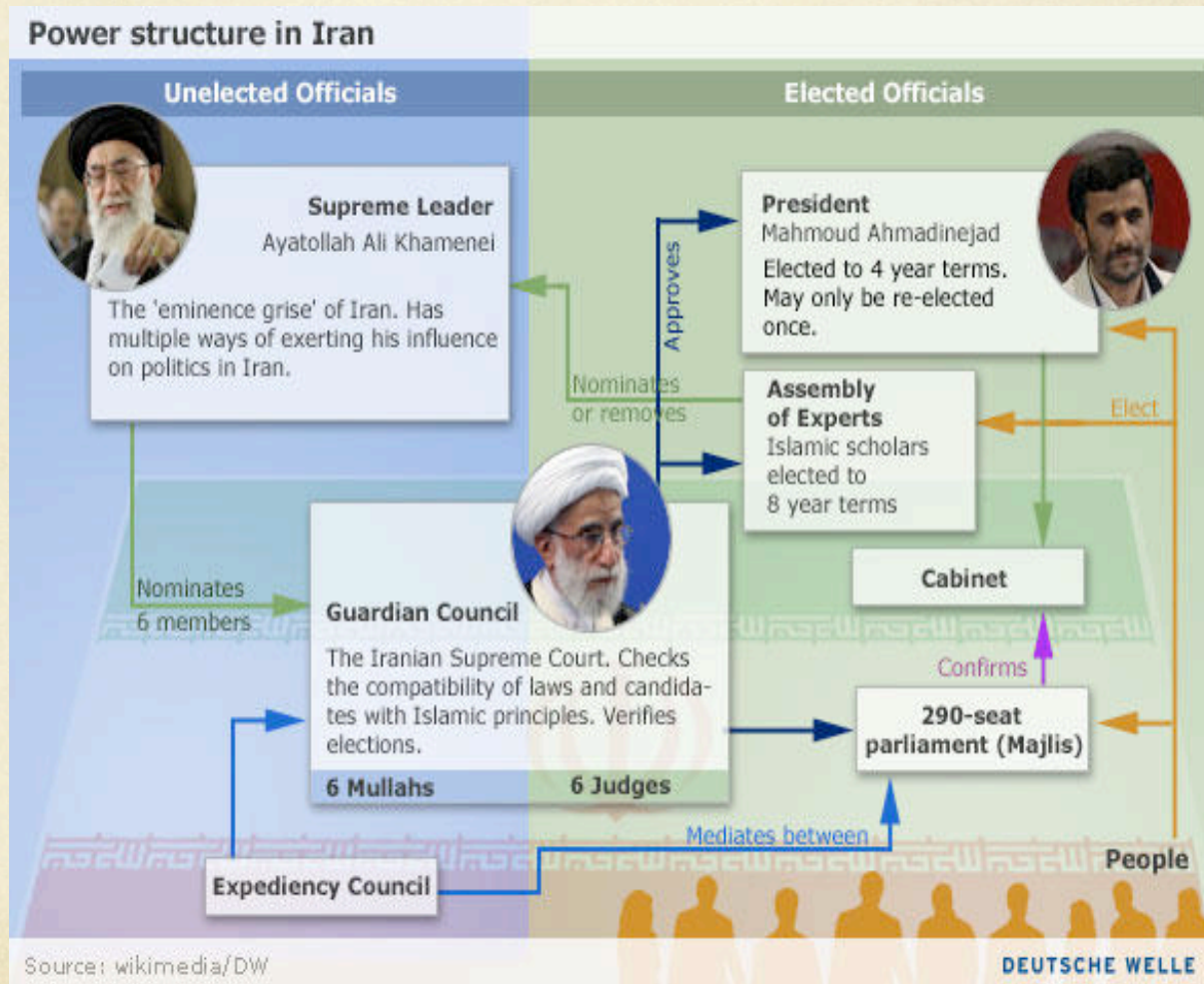


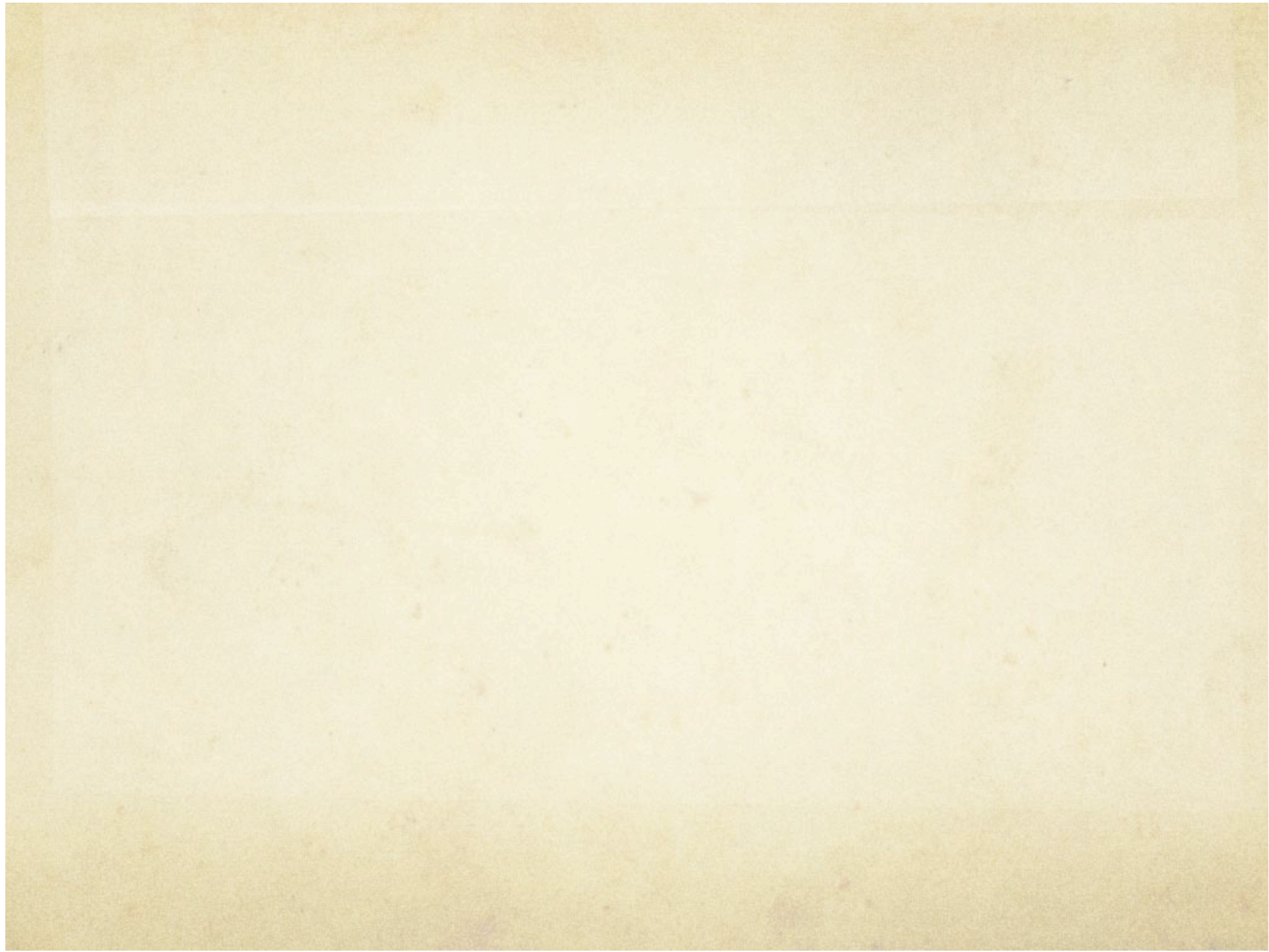
4 Islamic Republics in Iran

- Periodization by Mojtaba Mahdavi
- 1: **the revolutionary period**; wartimes; consolidation of power; leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini (1979-1989)
- 2: **the reconstruction period**; the rise of the new elite and new entrepreneurial class; presidency of Ayatollah Rafsanjani (1989-1997)
- 3: **the reform period**; the rise of reformists; greater freedom of press; social movements; presidency of M. Khatami (1997-2005)
- 4: **the populist period**; period of “backlash”; the consolidation of power by new elite; militarization of country and economy; populist president M. Ahmadinejad (2005-present)



electd vs. appointed

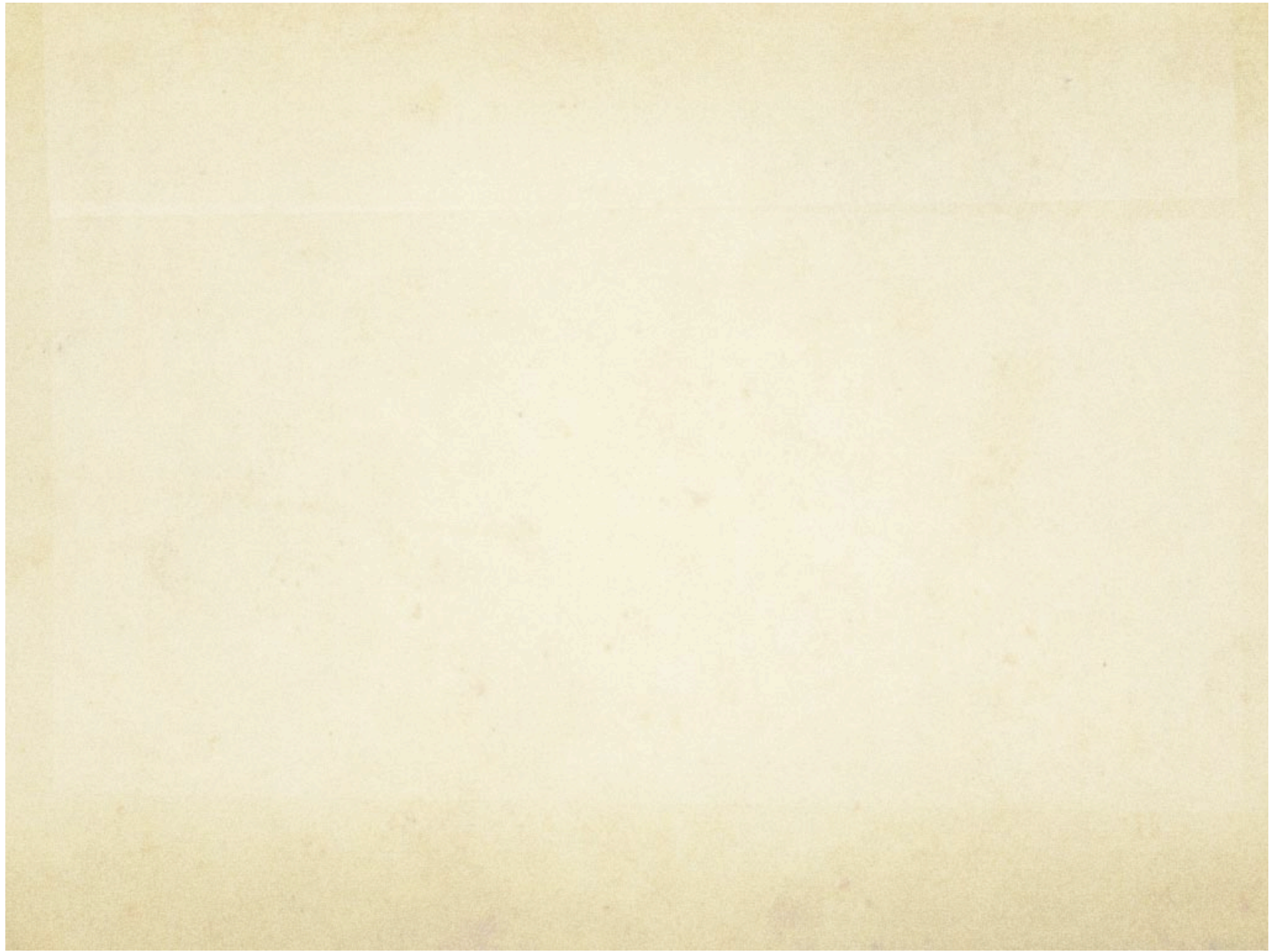




supreme leader

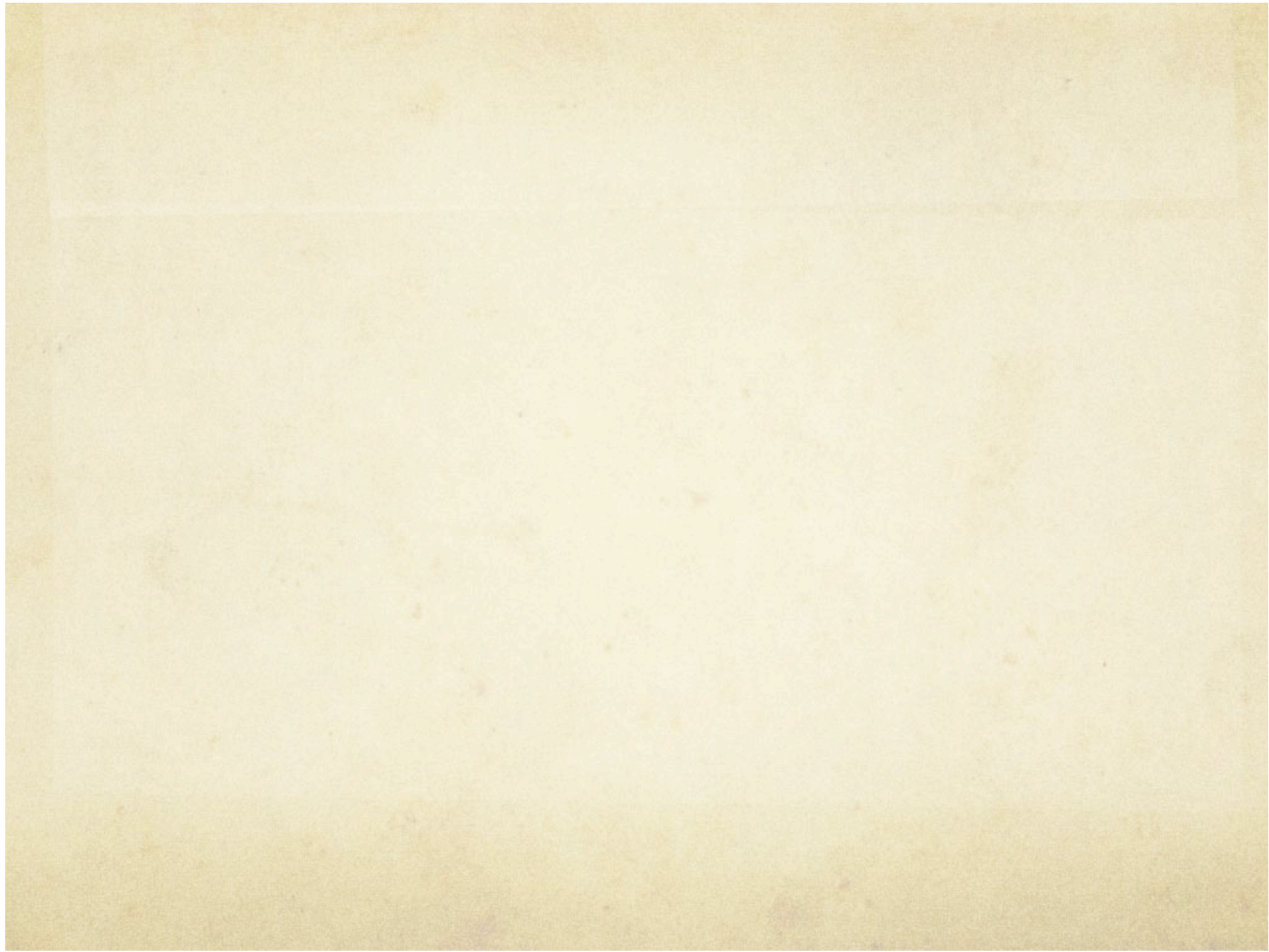
Article 107:

After the demise of the eminent marji' al-taqlid and great leader of the universal Islamic revolution, and founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatullah al-'Uzma Imam Khumayni - quddisa sirruh al-sharif - who was recognized and accepted as marji' and Leader by a decisive majority of the people, the task of appointing the Leader shall be vested with the experts elected by the people. The experts will review and consult among themselves concerning all the fuqaha' possessing the qualifications specified in Articles 5 and 109. In the event they find one of them better versed in Islamic regulations, the subjects of the fiqh, or in political and social Issues, or possessing general popularity or special prominence for any of the qualifications mentioned in Article 109, they shall elect him as the Leader. Otherwise, in the absence of such a superiority, they shall elect and declare one of them as the Leader. The Leader thus elected by the Assembly of Experts shall assume all the powers of the wilayat al-amr and all the responsibilities arising therefrom. The Leader is equal with the rest of the people of the country in the eyes of law.



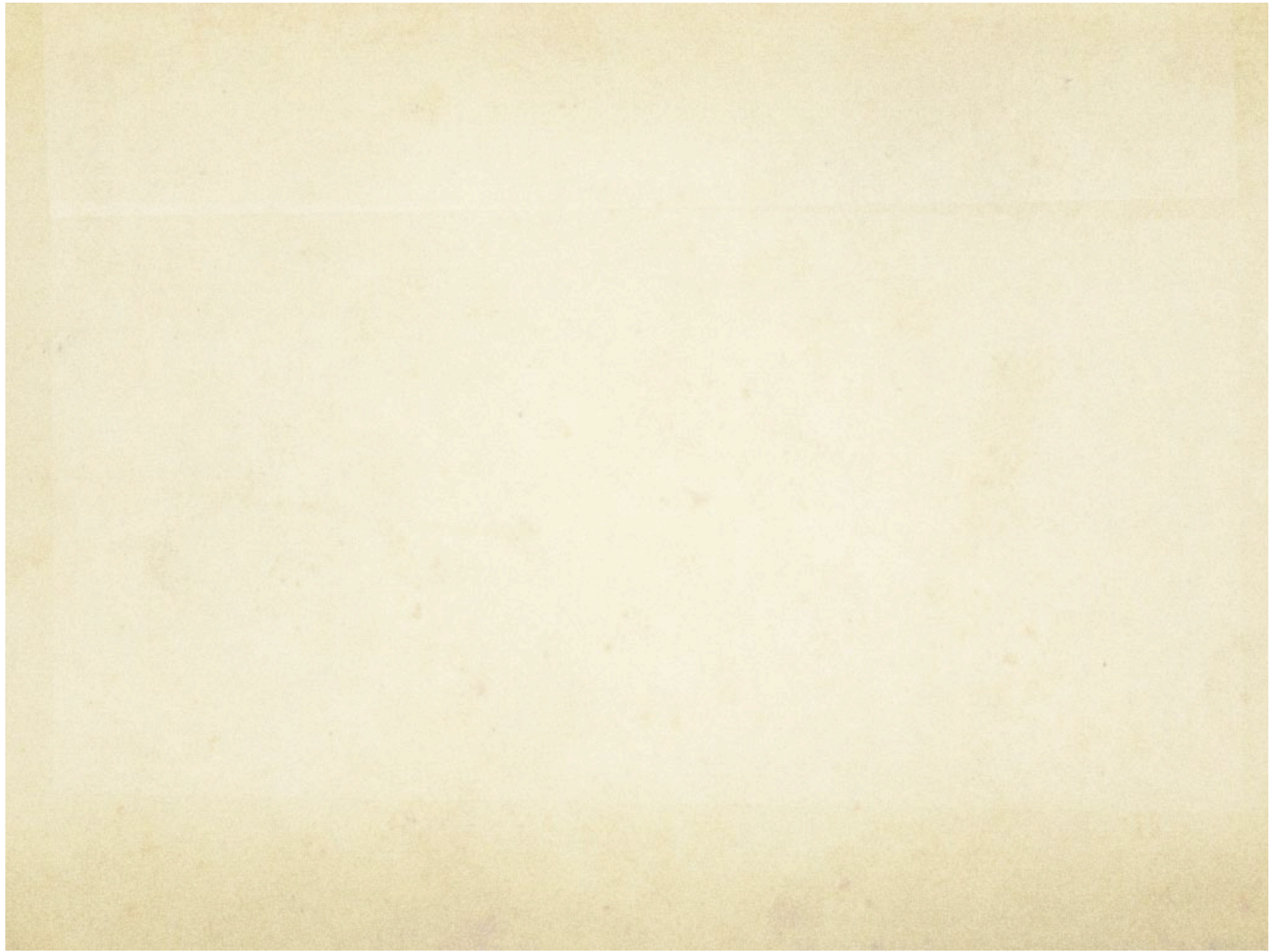
postwar Iran, 1988

- death of Ayatollah Khomeini; end of charismatic authority; supreme jurist is no longer a popular leader;
- amendments to the Constitution; circumventing the principles of the Islamic Republic as envisioned by theorists;
- sidelining of clerical establishment and rise of non-prominent clerics to power; power in the hands of junior clerics with the support a small number of senior clerics;
- rebuilding the country; economic-commercial extension of Revolutionary Guards;



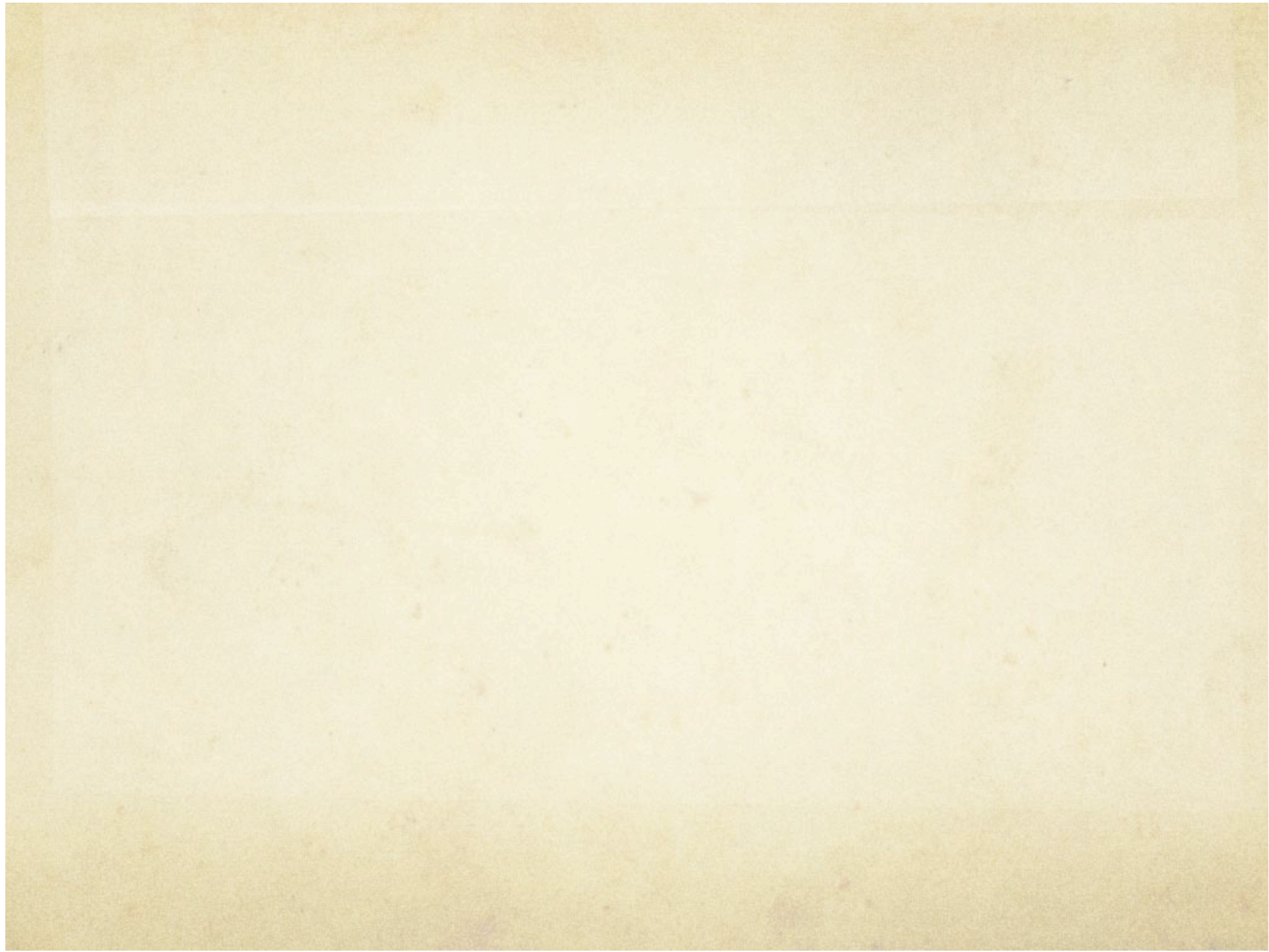
new elite

- Reconstruction/development bases: *Khatam al-anbia* & *Qorb*
- Between 1989 and 2006 *Khatam al-anbia* base executed 1,220 construction projects and it is carrying out 244 projects still ongoing
- *Qorb* built Tehran metro/subway at \$2.4 billion
- *Khatam al-anbia* expansion project of Shahid Beheshti port, a \$341 million contract
- Pars Jonubi natural gas field expansion were given to *Khatam al-anbia* base without competition in the amount of \$2.5 billion
- Founding Bank Ansar by Revolutionary Guards is now in progress (transformed out of RG's *Ansar al-mojahedin* credit union)



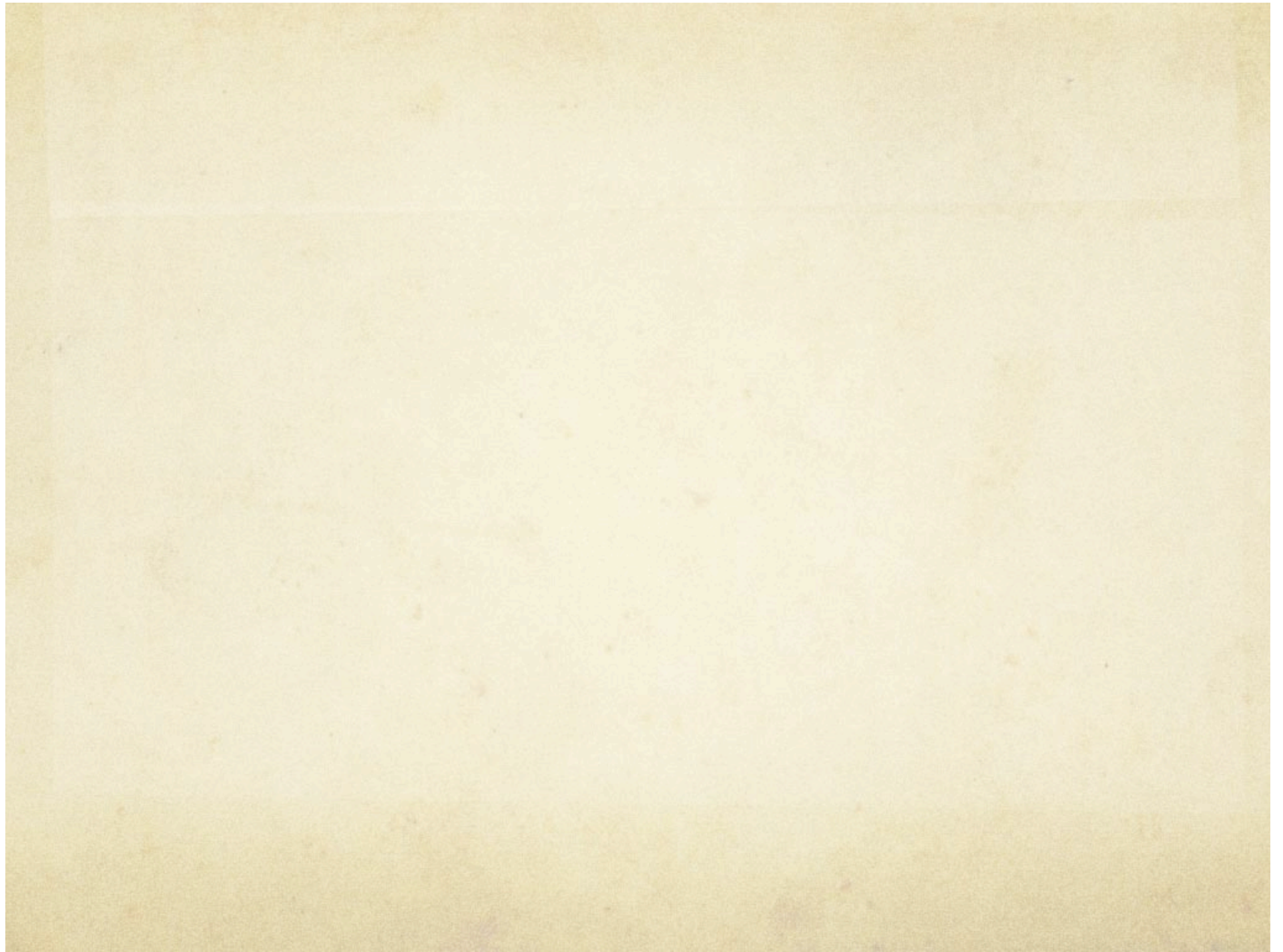
controlling communication

- In September the Revolutionary Guards' company Etemad Mobin purchased within ½ hour after the bidding started and in the absence of any other competitor, 51% of the shares of Iran's state-run Telecommunication Company, in the amount of \$7.8 billion... the largest economic transaction in Iran's history



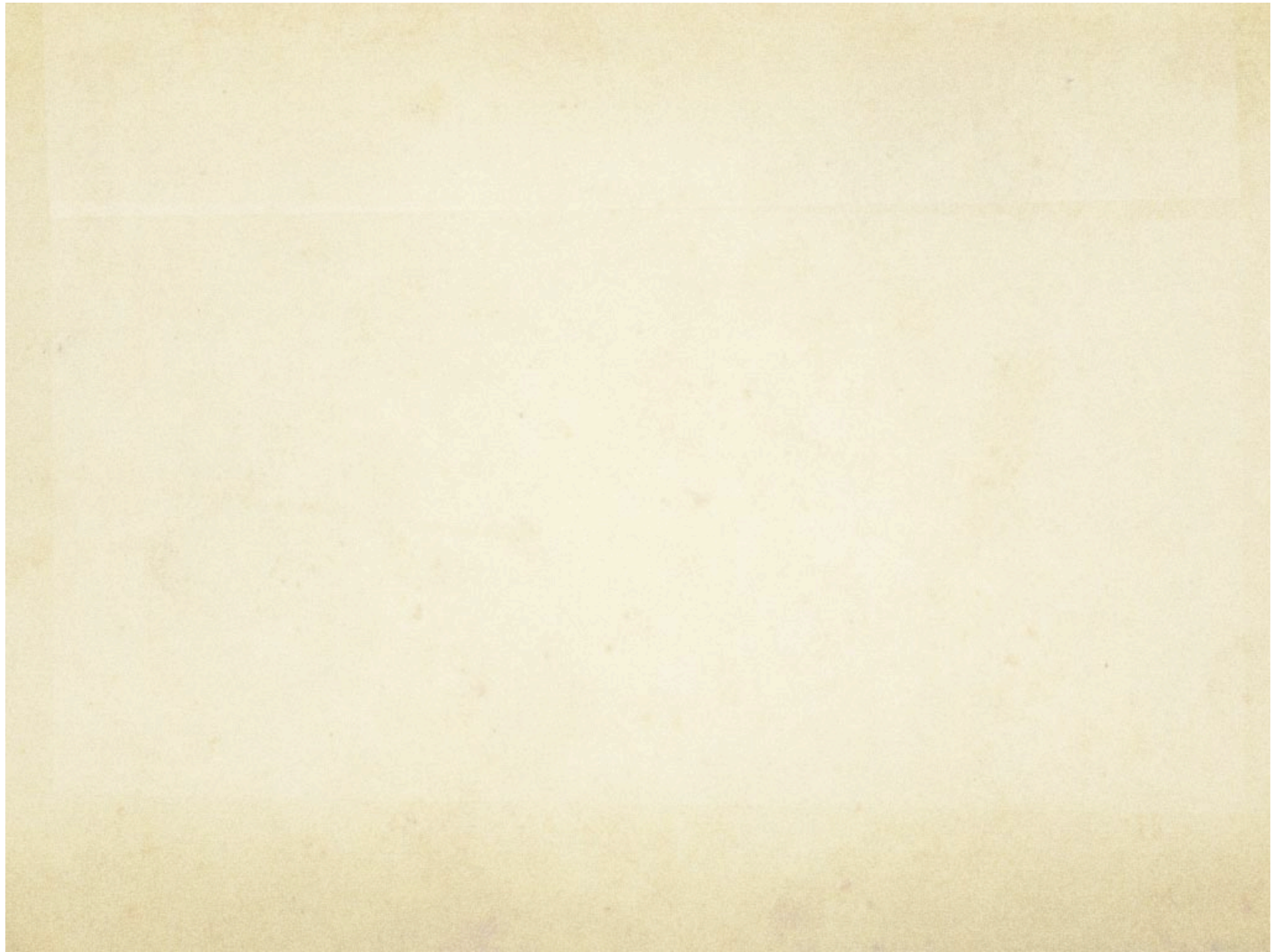
import/export

- Revolutionary Guards bypass Iranian trade regulations and circumvent Iranian customs
- Revolutionary Guards fully control 60 seaports in the Gulf region
- Payam airport in Karaj, a suburb of Tehran, a small mail transportation airport, is controlled by Revolutionary Guards



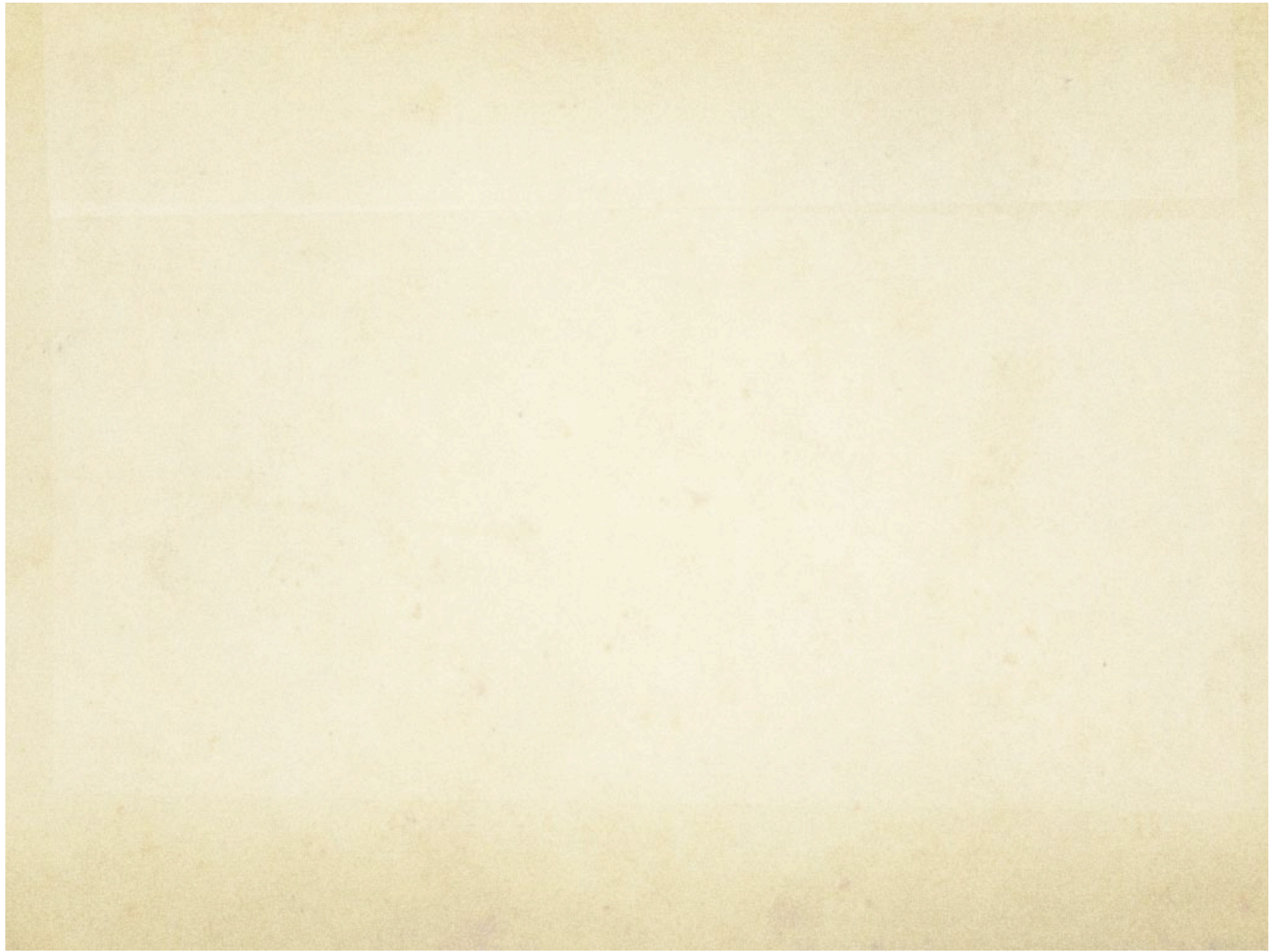
other investors

- *Komiteh emdad Imam Khomeini; Imam Khomeini Assistance Committee (set up in 1980 to help the poor)*
- has 6 million people on assistance payrolls
- has \$6 billion in assets
- owns: 30% of shares of Bank Parsian; 30% of shares of Iran Khodro (car manufacture); Bank Dey; Tadbir Investment Group



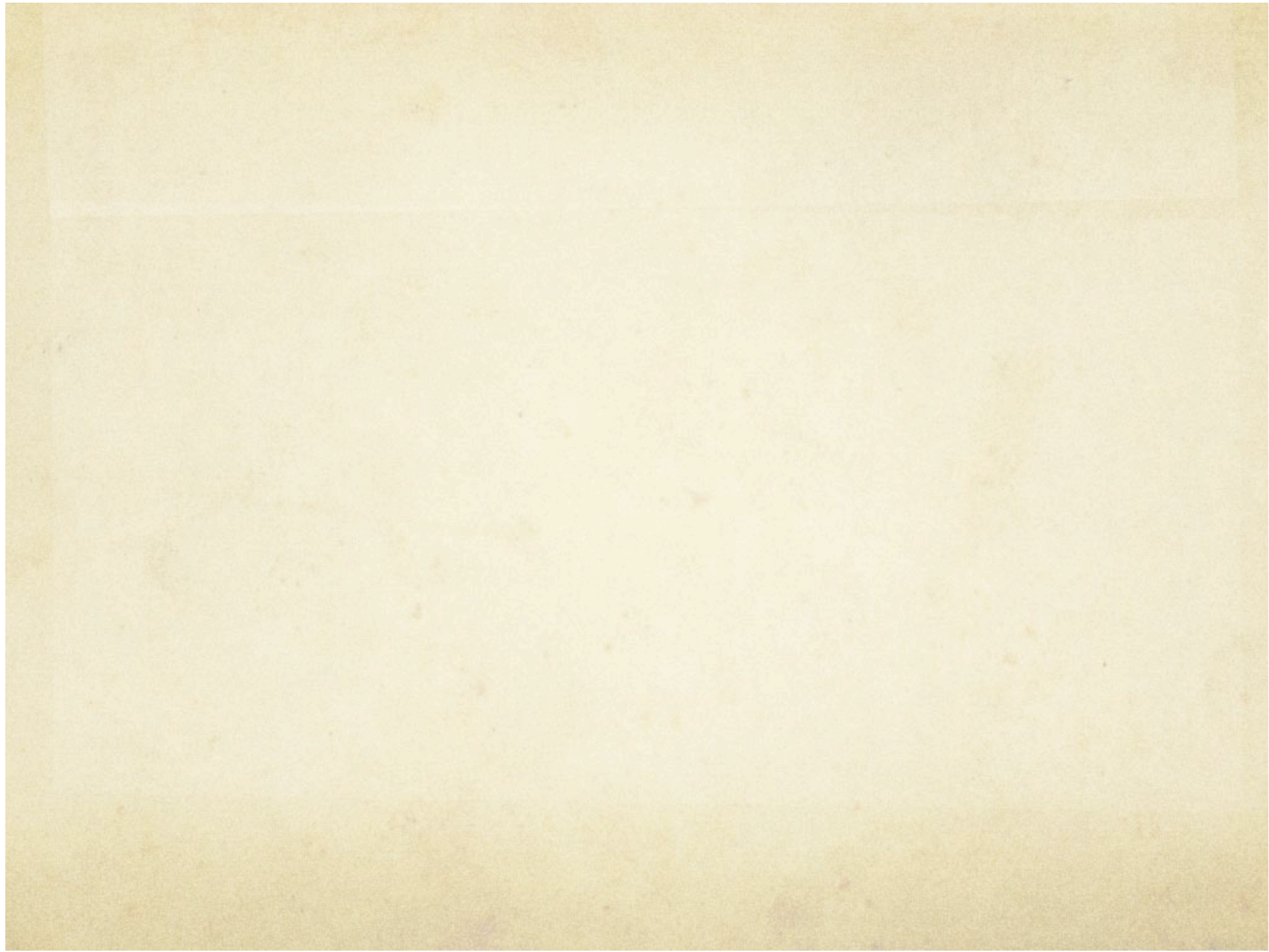
social movements

- the 1980s: eradication of dissent in the country
- the 1990s: the advent of a new generation of “home-grown” activists; first in the form of legal challenges to the existing laws
- advocating basic social and civic liberties; against discriminatory laws; advocating women’s and children’s cases in various courts
- headless, organizationally loose and transparent networks of activists



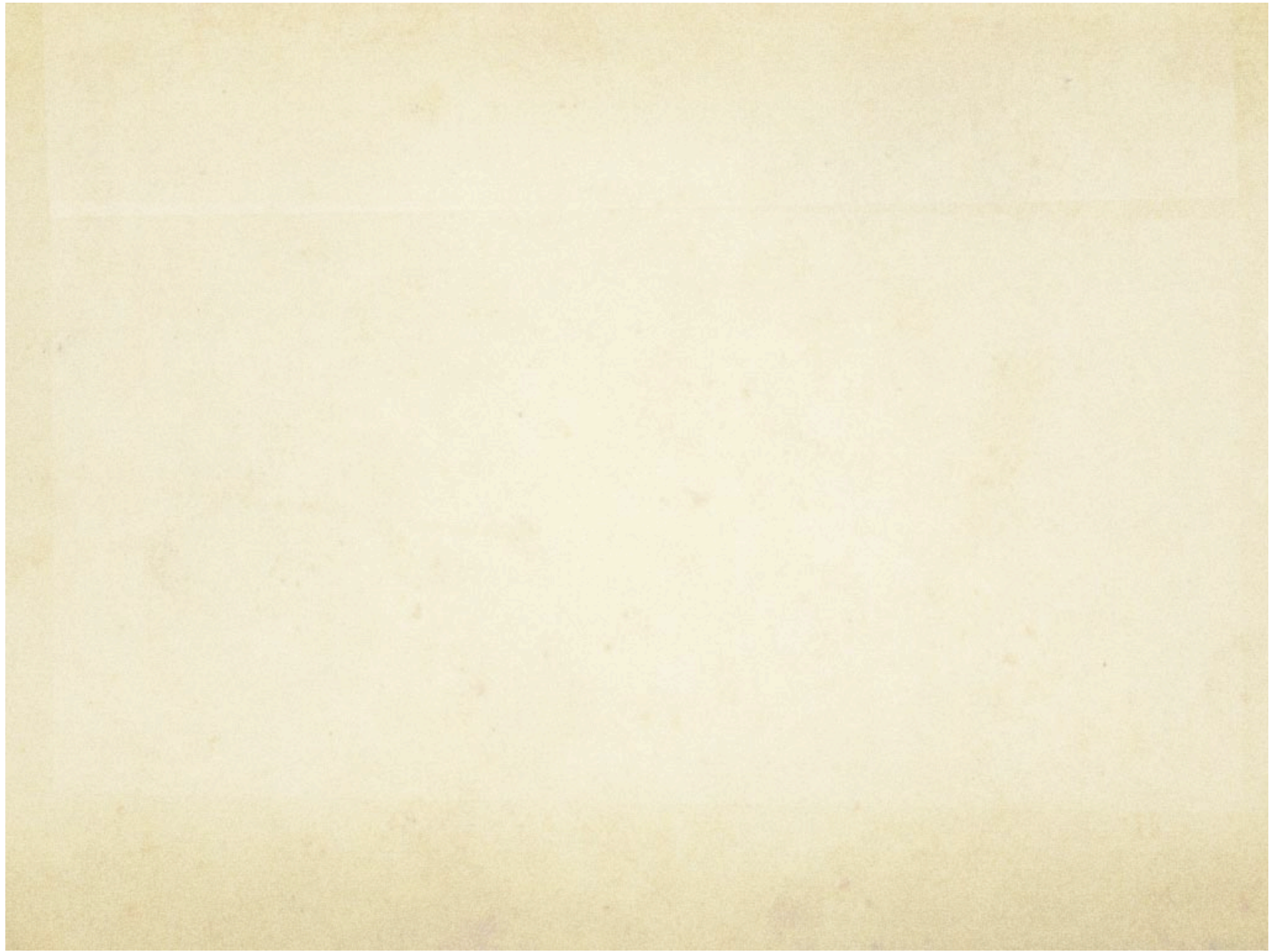
the women's movement

- Largest non-violent, grass-roots social movement in the Middle East;
- Arguably one of the largest women's movements in Asia;
- Consists of various action networks; they unify around issues; latest the Campaign for Equality;
- Seeks forms of grassroots movement as well as legal-advocacy;
- The social force behind change in Iran: presidency of reformist M. Khatami; candidacy of M. Moussavi; Green Movement
- Has received world-wide recognition through many international awards for human-rights, gender equality, fighting for freedom, etc. human rights and children's rights lawyer **Shirin Ebadi**, Nobel Peace Laureate in 2003.



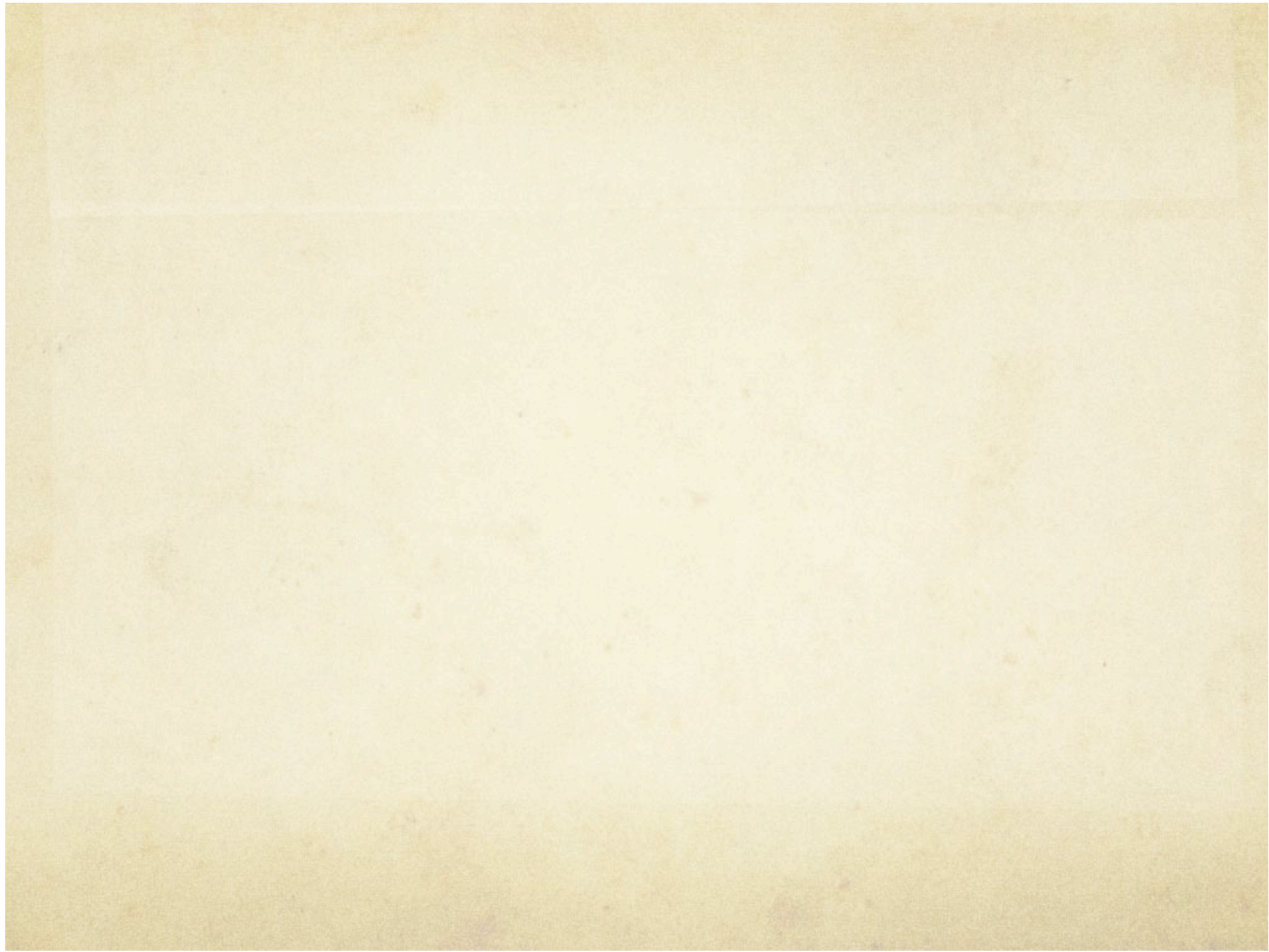
the student movement

- 3,580,000 university students in Iran; 2,200,000 bachelor/honors
- Emerged out of pro-state Office of Union of Iranian Students (*Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat Daneshjui*);
- Gradually, students across universities created their own student unions without a central organization;
- Supported M. Khatami and made his presidency possible by voting en masse for him;
- Student movement of 1999 (in reaction to the ban of *Salam*, a reformist paper) was crushed and activists jailed;
- Continues to grow; support for Green Movement; daily student unrest in Iranian universities right now



workers' movements

- Workers' and trade unionist movement, against all odds;
- It is a sporadic movement without any confederation at the moment;
- Difficult to organize because of control of state and employers; activists are often jailed; a growing movement due to economic hardships;
- Tehran Transit Union and Hafttapeh Sugarcane Workers' Union; leaders in jail.



the youth movement

- 75% of Iran's population is under 35 years of age; The invisible movement; 65% under 25 years of age;
- Without organization but present through informal networks;
- Mans the other movements as the occasion calls; the social force behind the Reform Movement;
- Iranian youth challenge social restrictions on the everyday basis;

