

# The Role of Social Mobility in the Development Policy Process in Iran

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The aim of this article is to examine the role of social mobility in the development policymaking process in Iran. Social mobility is a consequence of social changes and forms the foundation of individuals' and groups' movement and transition toward growth and development. The level of development in societies can be assessed in various sectors based on their degree of social mobility. Development represents a foundational transformation, a multidimensional process, and a series of actions undertaken by governments and nations to achieve progress and improve economic and social conditions. Accordingly, the concept of social mobility is emphasized in this study, which addresses the question: What impact does social mobility have on the development policymaking process in the country? A descriptive-analytical approach has been employed to answer this research question. The findings indicate that social movements by individuals, classes, and political and social groups, along with their demands within the framework of governmental programs and policies, have facilitated their participation in national progress. This dynamic has also provided a foundation for development-oriented programs across various dimensions. Moreover, these movements create opportunities and conditions for enhancing the status and position of individuals and groups to obtain greater benefits within society.

**Keywords:** Social mobility, Development, Group participation, Policymaking, Government.

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## 1. Introduction

In today's world, due to the rapid flow of social changes in various societies, efforts and movements toward development and modernization have increased. The manner of growth and modernization shapes social groups and classes, leading to development in multiple dimensions. In other words, change and transformation are necessities of life; just as humans evolve over time, social relations are also continually influenced by different conditions and undergo transformations. Our country is no exception to this rule. Development occurs

when growth is accompanied by improvements in the quality of life and a reduction in social issues. Social mobility stems from the changes and transformations rooted in the principles of life for nations and societies, influenced by various internal and external factors. Development, in this sense, refers to progress toward specific goals to eradicate poverty and enhance living standards. It is a concept that emerged after World War II, shaped in the Western world, and adopted as a model by other nations.

The importance of development has prompted countries worldwide to focus on it through various means. In



underdeveloped societies, changes occur slowly, while in industrial societies, changes are shaped by change-driving forces based on need. Most of these countries have chosen to alter and transform their societal structures and values to achieve progress. Development encompasses a comprehensive environment with economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions, one of which is social and political participation, which arises through the social mobility of individuals and groups. An individual's position in society is solidified when they, through the process of socialization by internal societal institutions, consistently adhere to and apply the norms, patterns, laws, and accepted values of the community.

If we consider the movement and transition of individuals across social positions and statuses as a defined goal for growth and advancement—climbing the ladder of progress—individual or personal development can essentially be seen as group and social development within a society. Thus, social mobility and change can accelerate the development process in various aspects, playing a crucial role in development programs.

In research conducted in Iran, this subject has often been overlooked from the perspectives of social and political mobility, and there is a need to take steps in this direction. The distinction of this study compared to previous research lies in its greater focus on social, cultural, and political elements in creating societal dynamics, highlighting the role of social and political actors in the country's development.

Given the limited literature, it can be stated that social mobility and development have not yet been studied as independent topics. The main question addressed in this article is: What impact has social mobility had on the country's development policymaking process? To answer this question, a descriptive-analytical approach based on Robert Dahl's "democracy" theory has been employed. The research aims to establish a causal relationship between these two variables (mobility and development) within the framework of planning and policymaking for the country's progress.

The data collection method used in this research is library-based and document-oriented, relying on available sources. The statistical population covers the time period from the Constitutional Movement to the Islamic Republic. Descriptive-analytical research seeks to provide an objective, realistic, and systematic description of the characteristics of a subject or situation,

examining the relationships between its variables to develop valid and generalizable concepts, principles, and rules.

In the following sections, the study first addresses the concept of social mobility, its forms, and its contributing factors, and then analyzes the role of social mobility indicators in the policymaking and development planning processes of different governments in contemporary Iran, spanning both pre- and post-revolution periods.

## 2. Concepts

The concepts examined in this research include social mobility, government, group participation, policymaking, and development planning. The principles and elements of these concepts are explored from various perspectives, focusing on the role of social mobility in the mechanisms of development and democracy in the country. The study employs a descriptive-analytical method based on Robert Dahl's democracy theory.

### 2.1. Main Research Question

What impact has social mobility had on the country's development policies?

Alternatively, have the components of social mobility in Iran—such as education, participation, political parties, social classes, and intra-societal interactions—fostered the mobility of individuals and groups and contributed to the country's development programs?

## 3. Definitions of Key Concepts:

### 3.1. Social Mobility

In the process of socialization, individuals continuously learn societal norms, values, and laws, which enable them to achieve mobility. Social mobility refers to the movement of individuals from one social status to another. People may move upward or downward between social positions, transitioning from one occupation to another. Social mobility, through parameters such as modernization, participation in interpersonal and group interactions, and attainment of social status, drives social changes and has a significant impact on the political and economic development of a country. It helps organize the economic and political

structures of the country, promotes public participation in decision-making, and creates opportunities for individuals to advance.

### 3.2. *Group Participation*

In the contemporary era, in political and social discussions, any form of support or advocacy for the goals and programs of political and social elites in any political system is referred to as participation. This is manifested in activities such as voting in elections and referendums. When members of a society engage voluntarily in selecting leaders and participating directly or indirectly in public policymaking, they demonstrate political participation. Political participation entails involvement in a framework that either fulfills collective will or prevents its realization. Competition and public demands, expressed through institutions, are among the foundational elements of political science. This factor focuses on the formal rules, procedures, and organizations of governance and aims to clarify the relationship between democratic structures and methods.

### 3.3. *Development*

According to the Oxford Dictionary, development refers to gradual growth toward becoming more advanced, powerful, or even larger. Development and modernization involve creating changes in various aspects of social life. Governments and policymakers in most developing countries consider transformation and modernization essential for achieving progress and industrialization. The importance of development and modernization has been emphasized to such an extent that attaining these goals is deemed the only solution to addressing the diverse social and economic challenges of society. Governments view industrialization and modernization as solutions to economic and social problems such as poverty, unemployment, and insecurity in a short period (Shirzadi, 2014).

### 3.4. *Policymaking*

Policymaking is a term closely associated with governance, the state, society, and public affairs. It refers to actions taken by governments to manage public matters effectively. Policymaking comprises a set of actions guided by complete or limited rationality to solve

a problem. Essentially, policymaking encompasses the entire process of establishing, shaping, and implementing policies. All policies are designed to address public issues and are recognized as government priorities, such as equitable resource distribution. Therefore, policies represent the political system's response to public agendas and opinions, emphasizing social events within society (Sharbatian & Ahmadi, 2014).

### 3.5. *Government*

In Dehkhoda's Dictionary, the term government is defined as wealth and assets, fortune and destiny, authority and splendor, country and territory, power and dominance, and success. Government, as a political entity, possesses characteristics such as population, governance, territory, and sovereignty. In political science, government refers to a coercive political organization with centralized authority, maintaining the legitimate monopoly on the use of force within a defined geographic territory. The term government is also used interchangeably with state in many contexts. In colloquial and media language, government often refers to the executive branch or the council of ministers, though this usage reflects only a part of the broader concept of governance.

## 4. **Theoretical Foundations: (Robert Dahl's Theory of Democracy)**

Robert Dahl, one of the prominent scholars in political science and a pioneer in utilizing "empirical techniques in political science studies," asserts that every government must practice "democratic policymaking." Two key principles of this policymaking should be "ensuring equal opportunities for advocacy" and "establishing and guaranteeing political equality" among citizens. In his book *On Democracy*, Dahl provides a definition of democracy and explores its relationship with concepts such as society and politics. The concept of democracy, which forms the core of Dahl's works, has been debated for centuries by political philosophers. The term democracy originates from the Greek language and approximately means "rule by the people." Democracy is a dynamic concept, constantly evolving and changing as the demands and desires of people transform over time. However, certain fundamental

elements are widely agreed upon regarding democracy, such as equal human rights, freedom of thought, freedom of the press and expression, equality before the law, and the conduct of free elections. Dahl investigates the nature and evolution of democracy and, under the notion of ideal democracy, addresses questions such as: What is democracy? Why democracy? Additionally, in *On Democracy*, Dahl examines topics such as democracy on different scales, constitutions, political parties, electoral systems, and the favorable and unfavorable conditions of societies.

According to Dahl, for a leader to govern a country effectively, they require not only knowledge but also an unyielding will to resist the corruption that power can bring. Such resistance can only stem from self-sacrifice and a commitment to national rather than personal interests. Dahl believes that democracy helps prevent autocratic and unplanned governance, allowing social and political activists to participate in the economic development of society and pave the way for democracy. Economic, social, and cultural development—achieved by eradicating extreme poverty and improving living standards—helps reduce social and political conflicts. This process stems from public demands and the social mobility of individuals, classes, and their participation in societal relations and interactions (Dahl, 2010).

Based on this theory, the framework of the present study is organized to process the factors related to individual and social movements, as well as the participation of individuals, groups, political parties, and social classes in Iranian society, to address the research question.

## 5. Rationale for Social Mobility

The movement and transition of an individual or group, referred to as social mobility, improve living standards, enhance economic conditions, and elevate educational levels, ultimately leading to changes in an individual's social class and status. This upward mobility can be achieved through higher education, technical and engineering skills, or membership in social and political clubs. Such mobility requires individual determination and the transition from one status and class to a higher social position. These conditions, coupled with access to societal resources for growth and development, necessitate a developmental plan provided by the government in every society.

Scholars in social science seek to understand why social mobility occurs and examine the factors contributing to its emergence among individuals and groups. They also analyze the intensity and scope of these movements across different societies, acknowledging that various factors influence the degree of social mobility within a given society. To this end, this section first explains the forms and types of social mobility and then discusses how this concept impacts developmental programs and policies.

### 5.1. Types of Social Mobility

#### 5.1.1. Vertical Mobility

Vertical mobility refers to the change in an individual's status from one social class to another. This type of mobility can be upward, such as when an individual moves up the social ladder. For instance, someone promoted from a department head to a director-general experiences upward vertical mobility, which increases their income and overall responsibility. Conversely, downward vertical mobility occurs when a first-division football coach becomes the coach of a second-division team.

#### 5.1.2. Horizontal Mobility

Horizontal mobility refers to an individual moving from one job to another within the same social level. This type of mobility does not involve a change in social status. For example, a person transitioning from a gas station attendant earning a monthly salary of 7,000 units to a construction worker earning the same amount experiences horizontal mobility. Essentially, they move from one job requiring no specific skills to another of a similar skill level.

#### 5.1.3. Intergenerational Mobility

Intergenerational mobility describes changes in social status that occur between generations. For example, if the son of a taxi driver earns a medical degree and becomes a successful physician, this represents upward intergenerational mobility. Conversely, if the son of a physician becomes a taxi driver, it illustrates downward intergenerational mobility.

#### 5.1.4. *Intragenerational Mobility*

Intragenerational mobility refers to changes in an individual's or group's social status within the same generation. For example, a middle-class family with five children might see four of them enter the workforce with average salaries after completing high school. However, the fifth child works part-time while continuing their education and eventually secures a high-level managerial position in a large company. This individual's income and social status significantly exceed those of their siblings, exemplifying intragenerational mobility (Pournaghi & Esteghamat, 2015).

#### 5.2. *General Contexts of Social Mobility*

For social mobility to occur, governments must ensure equal opportunities and provide the majority of society with access to resources and tools for growth and progress. Relatively speaking, such conditions exist in Iran for upward mobility. However, the intensity and prevalence of social mobility vary across societies and economic systems. As societies progress socially and historically, the relative level of social and class mobility increases.

It is essential to note that the degree of social mobility varies from one country to another and even within different regions of the same society at any given time. Additionally, this concept changes over time. Following the Industrial Revolution, the rate of social mobility in Western societies surpassed that of other regions. This evolutionary trend can be categorized as follows:

##### 5.2.1. *Open or Closed Society*

In an open society, although inequalities exist, individuals have the opportunity to move into higher social classes. In such systems, social positions are determined by individuals' achievements and competencies. In contrast, in a closed society, an individual's status is predetermined at birth and remains unchanged throughout their life, with no upward or downward mobility.

##### 5.2.2. *Industrial or Non-Industrial Society*

In urban industrial societies, achieved status is more significant than ascribed status. These societies place high value on specialized skills requiring prolonged

education, facilitating social mobility for qualified individuals. Furthermore, industrial societies provide ample opportunities for occupational competition and the creation of diverse and new positions.

##### 5.2.3. *Urban or Rural Society*

There are significant differences in social mobility levels between urban, rural, and tribal areas. Generally, urban areas experience higher levels of social and class mobility compared to rural or tribal regions. Factors such as education, marriage, and migration contribute to social mobility. Since urban areas tend to have better educational systems and fewer instances of endogamous marriages compared to rural areas, urban residents are more likely to experience social mobility. However, rural residents can achieve social and economic mobility through migration.

##### 5.2.4. *Aristocracy or Meritocracy*

British sociologist Michael Young introduced the concept of a completely open class system, which he referred to as meritocracy. In this system, individuals are promoted solely based on their merit and competence. While social mobility is significantly higher in meritocratic societies than in aristocratic ones, it is still rare for individuals to rise from extreme poverty to great wealth within a single generation.

## 6. **The Development Policies and Programs Process in Iran**

In the contemporary world, due to the significance of development programs and policymaking in shaping the lifestyles of human societies, most countries have focused on these efforts through various approaches for several decades. In Iran, for over a century—since the Qajar era—efforts have been made to implement reforms and combat the obstacles to modernization. The initiatives of Abbas Mirza of the Qajar dynasty, following Iran's defeat in the war with Russia (attributed to the modern weapons and equipment of the Russians), and the extensive reform efforts of Amir Kabir during his three-year premiership under Naser al-Din Shah's reign, represent the earliest attempts at development in Iran. Although these modernization efforts did not continue after their initiators due to resistance from groups whose interests were threatened, and due to a lack of support

for these reforms from the central government, they highlighted the necessity for transformation in the country and revealed Iran's backwardness compared to its neighbors. Subsequent Iranian rulers incorporated the goals of development and modernization into their theoretical agendas, yet these efforts were not practically and effectively pursued until decades later. In some cases, reforms were attempted but faced significant cultural and human challenges.

During the Pahlavi era (both Reza Shah and Mohammad Reza Shah), efforts were made to modernize the country. However, these efforts were predominantly focused on the hardware aspects of development—industry and technology—rather than its software dimensions. The success of development depends on simultaneous attention to both hardware (industrial and technological advancements) and software (cultural and societal readiness) aspects. Without this balance, development is unattainable.

As a result of this unbalanced approach, not only was development not achieved in certain areas, but significant problems were created for the population. During this period, there was a clash between the traditional culture embedded in societal structures and the modern, imported culture, leading to intellectual and ideological conflicts between proponents and opponents. The ultimate outcome of this cultural confrontation was the gradual acceptance of modern tools and technologies by Iran's traditional society in subsequent periods.

### 6.1. *Development Post-Revolution*

Following the revolution, a somewhat different approach to development was adopted. Development policymakers focused more on the cultural dimensions and the values prevailing in society. They integrated aspects of industry into the development process that were not in conflict with societal values. During this time, limits and restrictions were defined for certain industries and technologies, and exceeding these limits was considered a crime and contrary to national interests (Amini Khoo, 2020; Zarei & Asghandi, 2017).

## 7. **The Relationship Between Social Mobility and Development from Scholars' Perspectives**

### 7.1. *Frank Parkin's Perspective (Mobility and Social Order)*

The relationship between mobility and social order has been a subject of interest for sociologists, some of whom have attempted to examine the effects of mobility on social order. According to Frank Parkin, "A relatively high rate of upward mobility acts as a political safety valve in any society." He argues that widespread upward mobility allows capable and ambitious individuals to elevate their social status. Consequently, in the absence of opportunities for upward mobility, frustration from unmet aspirations can hinder development and progress.

Research in several Western societies shows that individuals experiencing upward mobility tend to adopt and practice the social and political views of the class they join. Studies indicate that those who ascend to the middle class are often more conservative than individuals born into the middle class. Therefore, upwardly mobile individuals do not pose a threat to social stability; rather, they can be considered as reinforcing the existing social order. The same holds true for individuals who experience downward mobility.

### 7.2. *Ralf Dahrendorf's Perspective (Social Mobility and Class Cohesion)*

Ralf Dahrendorf argues that in modern Western societies, the nature of class conflict has transformed due to high rates of social mobility. Open societies provide considerable opportunities for individual advancement, negating the need for individuals to act collectively as members of a specific social class to improve their situation. Dahrendorf posits that when social mobility is possible, individuals compete for prestigious positions as separate entities rather than as part of a homogeneous group. This competition reduces class cohesion and diminishes the intensity of class conflict.

### 7.3. *Modern Politics Perspective*

In the past, political science was considered part of philosophy, and practical politics—referred to here as "modern politics"—was viewed as a branch of practical philosophy. However, in the modern era, practical

politics and political science have evolved into independent domains. Politics is now defined as a struggle for power and its exercise in society. Harold Lasswell interprets politics as understanding “who gets what, when, how, and why.” Politics, in this sense, encompasses all activities directly or indirectly associated with acquiring, consolidating, and utilizing state power (Alam, 1994).

Under this new definition, the central focus of political science analysis is the state. Harold Lasswell describes the state as a territorial society, divided between rulers and subjects, where relationships are determined by superior coercive power. However, the evolution of states has not been uniform, linear, or continuous. Various factors have shaped different forms of governance across societies. Historically, the evolution of states has included early empires, city-states, the Roman Empire, feudalism, and the modern state. In this context, the primary objectives of the state include sovereignty, independence, security, national interests, unity, and territorial integrity—all of which are inseparable components of “national power” (Alam, 1994).

#### 7.4. *Perspective on State Power*

The relationship between civil society and the state has been a point of contention since the inception of political thought. For example, the Sophists of ancient Greece viewed civil society as a contract, while later thinkers like Plato and Aristotle disagreed. Aristotle considered the “polis” as natural and essential, arguing that it emerged from humans’ natural instincts and was necessary for their social and multifaceted development. Idealists of the 18th and 19th centuries, including Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel, shared similar views, perceiving the state as a moral institution indispensable for humans’ moral development. Althusius and Grotius also saw the state as a public institution for advancing human welfare. In modern times, regardless of the nature of state power, the primary functions of the state have become central to its role. While the ultimate aim of development is to achieve individual ideals such as freedom and civil rights, the primary goal of politics is to achieve national objectives such as national interests, unity, and security—elements that collectively constitute the ultimate aim of modern policymaking: national power.

Accordingly, policymakers and advocates of liberty, with their distinct goals and functions, must understand the differences and relationships between their objectives and functions to prevent these differences from escalating into conflicts.

Based on these perspectives, it can be concluded that social mobility requires equal opportunities within a trusted social system. Additionally, competition within groups is essential for achieving class cohesion. In modern politics, having the power to implement desired objectives is crucial. Finally, as highlighted by prominent political science scholars, collective thought or civil society is integral to organizing national development programs, as it embodies civil rights and represents the ultimate goal of policymaking.

### 8. **Development Planning Theories in Iran**

The trajectory of development in Iran is influenced by various internal and external factors and has incorporated diverse theoretical frameworks. John Foran's in-depth analysis of “fragile resistance,” based on the theories of “dependency” and the “world system,” highlights the role of external factors (Fourn, 2004). Similarly, other analyses emphasize the impacts of colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism as obstacles to political development.

Theories focusing on internal factors often provide a one-dimensional description and analysis of changes. Political-cultural theories, such as the conflict between “tradition and modernity,” revolve around historical debates involving religious, nationalist, conservative, and reformist perspectives. These writings frequently portray modernists in a positive light while attributing failures in creating a developed society to “tradition” and traditionalism.

Political-economic theories focus on the role of the economy in politics, identifying “oil autocracy,” “rentier state,” the “absence of a strong bourgeoisie,” and “lack of capital” as barriers to development. Politically oriented theories address the structure and nature of the political system as the root of civil society and political development failures, emphasizing the role of “historical despotism.” This includes discussions on the authoritarianism of Reza Shah and Mohammad Reza Shah and their suppressive institutions, such as the military, police, gendarmerie, intelligence services, and judiciary, as impediments to development.

A harsh reality of Iran's developmental transformation is that, under the political conditions of the past, democracy and freedom often devolved into chaos during periods such as the Constitutional Revolution, the 1940s, and the 1990s. Paradoxically, social forces advocating for civil society and political development unintentionally played the most negative roles. This historical failure is attributed to an idealistic approach that dominated both theory and practice, prioritizing freedom of expression, thought, democracy, civil society, and human rights as primary values, while neglecting pragmatic goals essential to modern politics.

Goals such as national sovereignty, security, national interests, unity, territorial cohesion, and overarching elements of national power were either ignored or given insufficient attention, contrasting sharply with the practices of modern societies. This idealistic perspective has also heavily influenced Iran's foreign policy over the past century. From the Constitutional Revolution to the nationalization of oil and the establishment of the Islamic Republic, political ideals such as "independence," while necessary and indispensable in their own right, have overshadowed pragmatic realities like state-building and national interest. This dynamic has hindered the country's developmental and growth-oriented efforts, as evidenced throughout historical periods.

## 9. Social Mobility in Three Eras: Qajar, Pahlavi, and Islamic Revolution

### 9.1. Qajar Era

During the Qajar period, society was not entirely rigid and closed, and both upward and downward social mobility were present. Two key factors influenced mobility during this time: Islamic inheritance laws and the authoritarian nature of the central government, which posed the threat of asset confiscation. The three main channels of class mobility in this period were (1) attaining high governmental positions, (2) marrying daughters from elite classes to gain social status, and (3) land ownership, all of which played significant roles in social change and mobility.

### 9.2. Pahlavi Era

Between 1921 and the late 1970s, Iran underwent significant changes in social mobility, including shifts from agriculture to industry and the emergence of oil as

an economic driver. The educational system also accompanied these transformations. Rural-to-urban migration created new opportunities for individuals to surpass their parents' social positions. Land reform policies and the discovery of oil significantly influenced migration patterns.

During the Pahlavi era, efforts were made to modernize the country, but the focus was predominantly on the hardware aspects of development, such as industry and technology, rather than the software aspects, such as cultural and societal readiness. Successful development requires simultaneous attention to both hardware and software dimensions. Without cultural and societal adaptation, technological and industrial advancements cannot be effectively integrated.

This imbalanced approach often led to challenges rather than progress, as cultural clashes between traditional societal structures and imported modern capitalist culture created intellectual and ideological conflicts. The eventual outcome of these cultural tensions was the gradual and peaceful acceptance of modern tools and technologies by Iran's traditional society in subsequent periods. The rapid expansion of state and military bureaucracy under the Pahlavi regime inflated the urban middle class. Employers increasingly relied on educational credentials as employment prerequisites, underscoring education as the primary tool for upward mobility, enabling individuals from working-class or lower-class backgrounds to attain middle-class status (Amini Khoo, 2020).

### 9.3. Early Islamic Revolution Era

The first decade following the 1979 Islamic Revolution was marked by an emphasis on Islamic justice and equality, reflected in policies such as nationalization of major industries and banks, confiscation of wealthy classes' assets, and the expansion of higher education. Post-revolution modernization and reconstruction policies included reducing government involvement, privatizing specific industries and services, and fostering an environment that encouraged service sector growth, industrial expansion, and scientific and technical professions.

However, the post-revolutionary approach to development prioritized cultural values and societal norms, incorporating industrial elements that did not conflict with these values. The constraints of war during



the 1980s diverted attention from such demands. Despite the uneven development seen in subsequent decades, society underwent extensive changes in all sectors.

#### 9.4. *A Historical Overview of Social Mobility and Development*

From the Qajar period, when class stratification restricted upward mobility, to the Pahlavi era, where literacy rates improved and rural-to-urban migration facilitated limited mobility, and finally to the Islamic Revolution, which emphasized cultural development, historical approaches to development in Iran have been primarily infrastructure-focused.

Development programs have largely neglected superstructural and socio-cultural approaches. Comprehensive development requires equal attention to both infrastructure and cultural dimensions. Social mobility—viewed as the movement of individuals, groups, and social classes to utilize opportunities for personal and social growth—has been influenced by historical and political dynamics in Iran.

Pre-revolution, various initiatives reflected the socio-political and economic changes of their time. The establishment of scientific centers, industrial complexes, literacy improvements (from an 11% literacy rate to over 85% among school-age individuals), the expansion of media outlets, the growth of higher education institutions, and the emergence of political parties and non-governmental organizations highlight the progressive transformation of Iranian society.

These efforts, supported by technological advancements in agriculture, industry, and infrastructure, and facilitated by social and economic security, demonstrate the open space for upward mobility within Iranian society. These changes enabled individuals and groups to seize opportunities for advancement, elevating their social status and contributing to Iran's development trajectory.

## 10. Findings

According to the study's data, the status of social mobility in contemporary Iranian history demonstrates distinct characteristics across different periods. During the Qajar era, government policies aimed to preserve the status quo, and upward social mobility was typically achieved

through marriage into royal or noble families, which was considered a privilege.

In the Pahlavi era, public demand for legislation and government policies focused on national development through the establishment of universities, the promotion of education, and the creation of industrial factories. Under the second Pahlavi regime, the transition from traditional to industrial agriculture, the return of educated individuals from abroad, the elevation of public awareness, and the emergence of political parties were emphasized, albeit with a primary focus on the hardware aspects of development.

Following the Islamic Revolution, cultural transformations influenced individual and group mobility, with religious and spiritual teachings guiding public demands for justice in all areas. Government policies aimed to reduce state control across various sectors to foster national progress. Additionally, public sentiments and social dynamics, such as the movement of individuals and classes, the activities of political parties, organizations, and their role in encouraging civic participation in political and social activities (e.g., elections), facilitated development across multiple dimensions.

Politics and policymaking manifest solely within society, and social mobility, in its various forms, can contribute to the collective benefits of society when integrated into development planning. Economic development is contingent on citizen participation in economic activities, while social and political development hinges on political engagement. Throughout Iran's history, social mobility—such as improvements in education, healthcare, the creation of new professions, industrialization, the establishment of political parties, and public advocacy—has driven governments to adopt development-oriented policies.

Active participation in constructive competition, the facilitation of social mobility (upward), and enabling political parties and groups to operate freely are essential for any country's progress. Moreover, the direct relationship between the freedom of political and social groups and national development is crucial for a healthy society. According to Robert Dahl, democracy and sound policymaking by governments foster growth and development, creating rare but transformative moments in human history. Democracy, constantly evolving and adapting, remains integral to this process.

## 11. Conclusion

The findings indicate that social mobility is a result of changes in the principles of societal life over time, influenced by factors such as education, skills, public awareness, and membership in unions, political parties, and cultural or social groups. These changes elevate individuals' social status and position. Development, in turn, involves progressing toward specific goals to eradicate poverty and improve living standards. In essence, development expands a social system's capacity to meet societal needs, encompassing economic growth, increased production, and improved welfare.

Huntington argues that a pluralistic social structure and a culture of tolerance are essential for embracing democracy. In developing countries, new social forces emerge due to development, leading to greater political participation. Social mobility drives changes in individuals' aspirations, allowing them to attain new societal positions.

Addressing the study's central question—how does social mobility influence national development policies?—it can be concluded that development aims to reduce poverty, unemployment, and social inequalities, enhance industrialization, improve communication, establish a justice-based social system, and increase political participation. These objectives result from upward social mobility.

As observed in Iran across various historical periods, during the Qajar era, class stratification limited upward mobility, confining opportunities to the ruling elite. Under the Pahlavi regime, initiatives such as transitioning agriculture to industrial practices, rural-to-urban migration, the discovery of oil, and the establishment of universities and higher education created opportunities for individuals to surpass their previous generations. Following the Islamic Revolution, initial policies emphasized religious principles of justice and equality, but subsequent years, marked by war, disrupted development. Post-war strategies focused on expanding higher education and reducing government control through privatization to promote national development.

In later governments, social mobility was fostered through the activities of individuals and groups, particularly within political parties and civil society, demanding equitable opportunities and inclusion in

modernization and development initiatives. Governments must provide security in all dimensions and facilitate upward mobility, enabling citizens to navigate the challenges of industrial development. Effective government policymaking is essential for achieving economic and social development.

In other words, development requires society's awareness of constitutional rights and freedoms and their recognition by political and social institutions. These aspirations form the political strategies of elected governments, which must transform public demands into actionable policies. Policymaking serves as the bridge between society and power, enabling effective governance.

Robert Dahl asserts that social and economic development supports the foundation and stability of democracy. Effective democracy enhances political stability, promotes better economic policymaking, and facilitates comprehensive development. Dahl emphasizes that democracy prevents autocratic, unplanned governance and enables social and political actors to participate in the economic growth of society, laying the groundwork for democracy. Development reduces social and political conflicts, driven by public demands and the social mobility of individuals and classes.

Democracy is a defining characteristic of social systems and a fundamental condition for fostering meaningful connections among people, organizations, and institutions. Individuals and groups must develop their capacities for interaction, compliance with societal norms, and participation in social mobility within groups, classes, or institutions. This fosters collective engagement and enables citizens to articulate their expectations for progressive development policies.

The history of human thought across various societies demonstrates that social mobility can provide the foundation for civil society, democracy, and national development.

### Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

### Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

### Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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### Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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