

# Management of Political Crises in the Islamic Republic of Iran: An Examination of Challenges and Solutions

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The political system of the Islamic Republic of Iran, given its distinct historical, cultural, and structural characteristics, has encountered numerous political crises throughout more than four decades of its existence, the management of which has required scientific and practical approaches. The primary objective of this study is to examine the mechanisms, challenges, and solutions related to the management of political crises in the Islamic Republic of Iran. In this regard, using a qualitative research method and the analysis of authoritative domestic and international documents and texts, the formal and informal structures of crisis management in Iran have been analyzed. The findings indicate that Iran's unique political structure, the distribution of power among parallel institutions, and certain ideological and political contradictions constitute the most influential factors contributing to the complexity of crisis management. Moreover, the role of media and social networks has been critical in accelerating or controlling crises. Deficiencies in transparency, the lack of broad public participation in decision-making, and legal constraints are fundamental obstacles to the effective management of political crises in Iran. At the same time, successful experiences—such as the management of certain domestic protests and the containment of external pressures—demonstrate that improved institutional interaction, the strengthening of civil structures, and the leadership's capacity to mobilize the public can reduce the severity of crises.

**Keywords:** crisis management, political crisis, Islamic Republic of Iran, political stability, political institutions

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## 1. Introduction

Political crises are among the most complex and sensitive types of crises that any political system may face throughout its lifetime. Unlike natural or economic crises, political crises are directly intertwined with the structure of power, the legitimacy of the regime, and the relationship between the government and the people. These crises, unlike economic or natural ones, possess a high level of sensitivity and complexity due to their direct impact on the power structure, the legitimacy of governing institutions, and state-society

relations, a dynamic emphasized in studies on political instability and crisis mechanisms (Khodabakhshi, 2021). In many countries, ineffective management of political crises has led to long-term instability, a decline in social capital, the weakening of legal institutions, and in some cases, the collapse of political systems. Within such a context, the management of political crises is not merely a technical or administrative duty, but a strategic responsibility that lies at the core of macro-level governance (Boin et al., 2005; Rosenthal et al., 1989).



The Islamic Republic of Iran, as a political system with a unique structural configuration, has faced various political crises since its establishment, each leaving significant impacts on governance and national policy-making processes (Moradi, 2020). This system, formed through a political and ideological revolution, has encountered diverse and parallel crises since its foundation in 1979. From the early post-revolution crises and the imposed war to crises related to factional rivalries, electoral tensions, and international pressures, each has posed distinct challenges to decision-making and policy-formulation institutions. Moreover, one of the defining features of the Islamic Republic is the presence of multiple and sometimes overlapping power structures; appointed bodies (such as institutions affiliated with the Supreme Leader and the Guardian Council) and elected bodies (such as the Parliament and the Executive Branch) each play influential roles in political processes. This multiplicity of voices and institutions has significantly complicated political crisis management (Kazemi, 2022). An examination of major political crises such as the 2009 post-election unrest, the 2017–2018 protests, and the political tensions following the 2021 presidential election shows that institutional misalignment and divergent approaches among actors have hindered unified and effective crisis management (Alizadeh, 2021). The variety and recurrence of these crises have raised critical questions about the preparedness, capacity, and effectiveness of the system in managing political crises (Sadeghi, 2021).

In the past decade, the expansion of cyberspace and social networks as new communication and information tools has played a prominent role in social mobilization and the rapid formation of political crises. Governments are no longer able to fully control information flows, which has increased the complexity of crisis management (Rahimi & Khosravi, 2021). Recent events, such as the November 2019 crisis, clearly demonstrate how social networks accelerate the dynamics of political crises and highlight the need for political systems to develop new strategies suited to the digital communication environment (Heidari, 2020).

Therefore, it must be acknowledged that one of the major shortcomings of the Islamic Republic is the absence of institutionalized and systematized mechanisms for managing political crises (Jafari & Sharifi, 2022; Moradi,

2021). In light of these considerations, the central research question of this study is:

“What challenges and barriers does the Islamic Republic of Iran face in the process of managing political crises, and what strategies can improve political crisis management in Iran?”

Answering these questions is theoretically and practically significant because effective political crisis management is one of the key factors in safeguarding national security and ensuring the durability of political systems (Sadeghi, 2021).

## 2. Theoretical Foundations and Literature Review

### – The Concept of Political Crisis

A political crisis refers to a situation in which the stability and functions of a political system are severely disrupted due to conflicts, dissatisfaction, or disturbances in the processes of policymaking and policy implementation. In other words, a political crisis occurs when “the relationships among political institutions, civil society, and the state become strained, distrustful, or conflictual, thereby challenging the capacity of governing institutions to manage public affairs effectively” (Khodabakhshi, 2021). Such crises may arise from internal factors, including public protests, factional rivalries, or governmental inefficiencies, or may be triggered by external pressures, sanctions, and foreign intervention (Tabatabai, 2020).

### – Political Crisis Management

Political crisis management refers to the process of designing, planning, and implementing strategies aimed at preventing, controlling, and mitigating the negative consequences of political crises. This management requires rapid reaction, inter-institutional coordination, and the use of political, security, and media tools to restore system stability (Kazemi, 2022). Moreover, political crisis management must incorporate dialogue, social participation, and public trust-building to prevent the escalation of crises, as failure to do so increases the likelihood of regime legitimacy erosion (Fukuyama, 1995).

### – Institutionalism Theory

Institutionalism emphasizes the role of formal and informal institutions in shaping political and social behavior and organizing decision-making processes. It asserts that institutions constitute frameworks that define the rules of the game, thereby regulating power

structures, resource distribution, and patterns of interaction (North, 1990). In the context of political crisis management, institutionalism underscores the significance of coherent, coordinated, and efficient institutions capable of preventing, detecting, and responding to crises (March & Olsen, 1984). Weak institutionalization and conflicts among parallel institutions generate fragmentation in crisis management and can exacerbate crises (Moradi, 2021).

#### – Multilevel Governance Theory

This theory highlights that in complex political systems, power and responsibilities are distributed across different levels of government (national, regional, local), and effective crisis management requires cooperation across these levels (Putnam, 1993). In managing political crises, multilevel governance mandates coordination and effective communication among institutions and across governance layers to ensure timely and coherent responses (Agranoff, 2007). Lack of such coordination leads to confusion, policy conflict, and declining public trust (Coleman, 1988).

#### – Crisis Communication Theory

This theory emphasizes the importance of message management, transparent and timely information dissemination during crisis periods, and argues that effective communication can prevent crisis escalation and sustain public trust (Coombs, 2007). In political crises, controlling information flow and responding promptly to public concerns are crucial (Heath & O'Hair, 2010). With the emergence of new information technologies and social networks, the speed and complexity of communication have intensified, requiring innovative and specialized crisis management approaches (Austin et al., 2012).

#### – Crisis and Political System Theory

This theory maintains that political crises typically stem from internal contradictions, institutional weaknesses, and declining regime legitimacy (Rosenthal et al., 1989). Crises occur when political institutions fail to respond effectively to public demands and societal needs (Kriesi, 2004). Some theorists argue that if properly managed, crises can become turning points that facilitate political reform and strengthen the system (Boin et al., 2005).

### 3. Political Crisis Management from the Perspective of Imam Khomeini

Imam Khomeini, as the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, adopted a comprehensive approach to crisis management. He viewed political crises not merely as threats but also as opportunities for awakening and strengthening the Islamic system. Several principles of crisis management from his perspective can be identified (Khomeini, 1999).

#### 3.1. Reliance on Faith and Public Will

Imam Khomeini consistently emphasized the role of the people in confronting crises and believed that the faith and unity of the population constituted the strongest foundation of the system during critical periods. In the context of the Iran–Iraq War, he stated:

*"Our people, with their faith, will neutralize any conspiracy" (Khomeini, 1999).*

#### 3.2. Preservation of Independence and Rejection of Foreign Dependence

One of the central pillars of Imam Khomeini's crisis management perspective was the preservation of political and economic independence. He strongly rejected compromise with adversaries and maintained that dependence on foreign powers would intensify internal political crises. As he stated: *"We must stand on our own feet and fear no power" (Khomeini, 1999).*

#### 3.3. Active Diplomacy Coupled with Resistance

In addressing internal political crises, Imam Khomeini adopted a strategic approach that differentiated between legitimate public protests and organized riots. On one hand, he affirmed the legal right of the people to express their grievances, encouraged officials to respond and eliminate discrimination, and remained attentive to societal demands. On the other hand, he responded firmly to unrest orchestrated by foreign-backed actors. Historical experiences of domestic sedition demonstrate that Imam Khomeini, through a strategic combination of public engagement and revolutionary firmness, defended people's rights while safeguarding system integrity against conspiracies. By accurately identifying the political nature of crises and avoiding the unnecessary securitization of society, he presented a

model in which the people serve as the principal guarantors of national security—not as threats to the system. This balanced outlook remains instructive for contemporary political crisis management.

### 3.4. *The Supreme Leader's Theory of "Revolutionary Security" and Its Components*

The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic has advanced the theory of "Revolutionary Security," which presents a hybrid approach to political crisis management. A comparison between this theory and classical crisis management frameworks is conceptualized below (Khamenei, 2014, 2016).

**Table 1**

*Comparison Between the Supreme Leader's Revolutionary Security Theory and Classical Theories of Political Crisis Management*

| Component            | Classical Theory     | Revolutionary Security Theory |
|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Source of Threat     | External             | Internal and External         |
| Fundamental Strategy | Political Compromise | Active Resistance             |
| Role of the People   | Passive              | Active Agents                 |
| Timeframe            | Short-term           | Long-term                     |
| Primary Tool         | Official Diplomacy   | Popular Diplomacy             |

### **People-Centered Nature of the System**

The Supreme Leader places particular emphasis on the role of the people in crisis management, asserting that social capital constitutes the primary foundation of the system in confronting political threats. In multiple speeches, he has described the people as the "connecting link of national security." This view was evident during the 2017 and 2019 unrest, when the conscious presence of the people functioned as a stabilizing force (Khamenei, 2019a, 2019b).

### **Rejection of Dependence on Foreign Powers**

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution identifies dependence on East or West as the greatest threat to national security. In his perspective, independent decision-making is a prerequisite for successful crisis management. A prominent example of this approach can be seen in his firm positions during nuclear negotiations, where principles of the Revolution were upheld despite international pressure (Khamenei, 2016; Tabatabai, 2020).

### **Active Resistance Strategy and Its Dimensions**

#### **- Offensive Diplomacy**

Offensive diplomacy refers to the strategic use of diplomatic tools to neutralize threats. The Supreme Leader emphasizes the necessity of being "active in the international arena." Practical manifestations of this strategy can be seen in the formation of the Axis of Resistance and the expansion of relations with non-aligned countries (Tabatabai, 2020).

#### **- Selective De-escalation**

He believes that while principles must be preserved, opportunities for intelligent de-escalation should be utilized. This entails calculated engagement with international actors who share mutual interests. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and certain regional collaborations illustrate this pragmatic approach (Maloney, 2015).

### **Crisis Governance Model in Domestic Unrest**

#### **- Differentiation Between Legitimate Protests and Organized Unrest**

The Supreme Leader strongly stresses distinguishing between lawful protests and foreign-backed riots. In his view, the system must respond to legitimate demands but act decisively against unrest orchestrated by external actors (Khamenei, 2019a).

#### **- Role of Popular Institutions**

Institutions such as the Basij and Islamic Councils act as arms of the government in managing domestic crises. These organizations play vital roles both in preventive measures and crisis response (Sinkaya, 2015).

### **Strategic Balance Theory and Its Levels**

#### **- Ideological Level**

Preserving revolutionary and Islamic values as non-negotiable red lines at all stages of crisis management is a central principle. This means that no crisis-resolution method may contradict the foundational principles of the system (Khomeini, 1999).

### - Operational Level

The theory emphasizes the use of state-of-the-art crisis management methods within the framework of Islamic principles. This includes integrating modern technologies with traditional approaches (Boin et al., 2005).

### Preemptive Strategy and Its Implementation Stages

#### - Threat Monitoring and Surveillance

The Supreme Leader places special emphasis on early-warning systems. This includes continuous monitoring of cyberspace, public opinion, regional developments, and international relations (Rahimi & Khosravi, 2021).

#### - Scenario-Based Response Planning

He believes that the system must pre-plan for a variety of potential crises, enabling swift and appropriate reactions when crises occur (Heath & O'Hair, 2010).

## 4. Research Methodology

This study, using a qualitative approach and content analysis, examines the management of political crises in the political system of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The qualitative method, due to the complexity and multidimensional nature of the subject, makes it possible to gain an in-depth understanding of the influencing factors, institutional interactions, and the socio-political contexts of crises. The data for the research consist of the analysis of official documents, reports, legal texts, and relevant statements, as well as the content analysis of media and social networks to explore the various dimensions of political crises and the role of new technologies in their escalation and management. The collected data were transcribed and processed through qualitative content analysis and then coded and categorized based on the conceptual framework of the study. Sampling was conducted purposefully and, in some cases, by convenience sampling so that the most significant news and information regarding political crises in Iran could be examined.

To enhance the credibility and validity of the data, the results of the analysis were reviewed through collaborative and expert reassessments. Furthermore, data triangulation was carried out by comparing documents with media sources to increase the accuracy and robustness of the findings. Precise documentation of the analysis and coding process was also undertaken to ensure the auditability and replicability of the research.

## 5. Findings and Results

The analysis of the examined texts shows that, regarding crisis management in the Islamic Republic of Iran, emphasis must at least be placed on the following challenges:

### 5.1. *Multi-layered and Parallel Management and Power Structure*

The governmental structure of the Islamic Republic of Iran, due to the division of roles and the combination of appointed and elected institutions, exhibits specific complexities that strongly affect the management of political crises (Sinkaya, 2015). Appointed institutions such as bodies affiliated with the Supreme Leader, the Guardian Council, and security agencies, alongside elected institutions such as the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament) and the Executive Branch, each endeavor to manage crises through their own preferred policies (Moslem, 2002). At times, their functions overlap, and at other times they come into direct conflict, creating frictions in decision-making processes (Kazemi, 2022). In this context, apart from the unique and strategic role of the Supreme Leadership, the lack of a central mechanism capable of ensuring coordination and coherence in decision-making leads to the prolongation of crises and greater complexity in responses (Moradi, 2021). Table 2 illustrates a sample of political crises in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the roles of various institutions in those crises.

Table 2

*Selected Major Crises of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Recent Years*

| Political Crisis       | Involved Institutions                                    | Reactions and Problems                                                  |
|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2017 Protests          | Government, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Judiciary | Lack of coordination between security and executive institutions        |
| November 2019 Protests | Government, Law Enforcement Forces                       | Reliance on policing and insufficient political accountability          |
| Economic Crises        | Government, Central Bank                                 | Ineffective economic policies and lack of transparency in communication |

These problems reflect the reality that management mechanisms during crises require full coherence; yet in many political crises in Iran—particularly in the pre-crisis and crisis phases—proper division of labor, synergy, and integration are often neglected (Moradi, 2021).

## 5.2. *Weak Social Capital and Declining Political Participation*

Social capital is recognized as a key and critical factor in the stability and resilience of any political system. Research has shown that the absence or erosion of certain indicators can weaken political systems and intensify related crises (Maloney, 2015).

### 5.2.1. *Lack of Transparency in State Powers and Declining Public Trust in Government and Electoral Systems*

Insufficient and non-transparent information about the performance of the government and state institutions generates distrust and reduces citizens' motivation to participate. One important manifestation of this is concern over the integrity and fairness of elections, which leads to hesitation and reluctance to vote and to engage in political participation (Putnam, 2000). Moreover, feelings of indifference and hopelessness about the possibility of reform and the impact of politicians discourage individuals from taking part in political processes. Overall, when people do not trust governmental institutions and officials, their willingness to participate in political processes declines (Sadeghi, 2021).

### 5.2.2. *Weakness of Political Institutions and the Decline of Independent Media*

Studies indicate that non-governmental organizations and voluntary groups, which serve as intermediaries and

tools for oversight and participation, have often failed to play an effective role in managing political crises. As trust in intermediary political institutions diminishes, individuals and protest groups increasingly pursue their demands directly through street protests and strikes. Consequently, protests lose their organized and institutionalized character, making their management and control more difficult, because the incomplete performance of intermediary political institutions leads individuals to prefer entering the public arena themselves to claim their rights (Rahimi & Khosravi, 2021).

### 5.2.3. *The Growing Importance of Micropolitics Compared to Macropolitics*

Ulrich Beck argues that in today's world, major risks and threats often arise from issues he calls "micropolitics." In his view, the system of micropolitics plays a special role in the structures of a modern society (Beck, 2018). This is part of what he terms the fragmentation of politics: a context in which politics is no longer solely in the hands of the central government but increasingly extends into the sphere of individual and group-level activities involving diverse stakeholders. In fact, micropolitics now operates alongside macropolitics (macro-level policies), playing a significant role in the political environment of society, such that a tension between these two poles has emerged, reflecting the weak performance of macropolitics in controlling micropolitical dynamics (Beck, 2018).

### 5.2.4. *Intensification of Poverty, Economic Hardship, and Livelihood Pressures*

Economic problems, inflation and high prices, the increase of absolute and relative poverty, unemployment, and the non-fulfillment of certain economic promises are among the factors that shift

attention away from political issues and discourage individuals from engaging in the public sphere (Katzman, 2020). Unfavorable economic conditions place the greatest burden on low-income groups, reduce their tolerance thresholds, and foster conditions for decreased political participation and the eruption of social protests (Bayat, 2020).

#### 5.2.5. *Class and Ethnic Divides, Rising Inequality, and the Absence of Social Justice*

As the upper and upper-middle classes become more culturally and behaviorally influenced by the demands and pressures of external actors, in many marginalized and disadvantaged areas a noticeable erosion of social bonds is observed. In such settings, what might be termed “anomic individualization” becomes prevalent (Tabatabai, 2020). Under these conditions, values and norms necessary for collective life are weakened through individualistic interpretations, reducing social cohesion. As social attachment diminishes and collective living norms are eroded, a form of alienation emerges between individuals, society, and their living environment, which in turn contributes to more emotional, less controlled protests and the escalation of violence (Bayat, 2020).

#### 5.2.6. *Resilience Threshold, Rising Expectations, and Feelings of Deprivation*

The most important driver in the expansion of dissatisfaction across society is the reduction in tolerance thresholds, resilience, and the growing sense of relative deprivation. Resilience refers to the capacity to absorb shocks and to return to a functional state—or at least to prevent collapse—and denotes the ability to adapt to changing conditions, withstand sudden disruptions, and recover from them. Some perspectives define resilience as the capacity of an individual, community, or system to adapt in order to maintain an acceptable level of functioning, structure, and identity (Golvardi, 2018). At the national level, resilience denotes the ability of a society to endure hardships or crises in various domains by adapting or changing without damaging its core values or fundamental institutions. Thus, the resilience threshold is a specific psychological state beyond which individuals or groups in society can no longer tolerate further pressure (Bayat, 2020).

#### 5.3. *Legal Limitations and the Absence of Institutionalized Mechanisms for Crisis Management*

Political crises in the Islamic Republic of Iran have frequently been confronted with a lack of institutionalized and clearly defined mechanisms. Unlike economic or natural crises, which are governed by specific laws and procedural guidelines, political crises in Iran are often managed without precise planning or a coherent legal framework (Jafari & Sharifi, 2022). In many cases, security and intelligence agencies, by necessity, assume the role of defenders of the status quo and intervene with security-oriented priorities. Unfortunately, such security and policing approaches not only fail to de-escalate crises but may also exacerbate tensions.

A noteworthy development in this regard is the changing geography and form of protests in the 2010s, both in terms of substance and organizational patterns. One of the most significant changes has been the shift of protests from the center to the peripheries of cities. Studies of the 2017 and 2019 protests show that, in the absence of intermediary political institutions to control and channel protests—particularly in peripheral urban areas—there has been an increase in violence, accompanied by substantial damage to public and private property and, in some cases, human casualties (Vesali & Ghasemi Nejad, 2020).

In these crises, instead of initially relying on political mechanisms, negotiations, and dialogue, authorities often resorted—based on general, top-down directives—to primarily security and law-enforcement methods, which ultimately led to acute polarization of the political climate in the country. Although these crises were eventually managed through the patience, restraint, and prudence of the highest authority of the system, and the Islamic Republic emerged intact from these threats, an examination of these critical events makes clear that the lack of transparent laws and updated regulations, legislative gaps—especially concerning the facilitation of party activities and the management of assemblies and demonstrations—as well as insufficient oversight of governmental actions not only complicate the resolution of crises and the proper management of protests, but also intensify public dissatisfaction and distrust.

**Table 3**

*The Impact of Transparency and Public Participation on the Intensity of Political Crises*

| Political Crisis          | Information Transparency | Public Participation | Crisis Intensity |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| 2019 Protests             | Low                      | Low                  | High             |
| 2009 Post-Election Unrest | Low                      | Medium               | Very High        |
| 2017 Protests             | Medium                   | Low                  | Medium           |
| 2021 Economic Crisis      | Medium                   | High                 | Medium           |

This table indicates that the lower the levels of transparency and public participation, the more intense political crises tend to become. Likewise, weak transparency and the failure to base decision-making on public consultation contribute to the emergence of distrust and increased social pressure.

#### 5.4. *The Role of Social Networks and Cyberspace*

In today's world, social networks and cyberspace have become powerful tools in shaping political crises. These media enable individuals to rapidly share information and facilitate social mobilization and the expansion of protests. Castells, one of the leading theorists of social movements and street-based protests in the context of the "network society," argues that masses of people—due to the absence of institutional organization and the inability to establish such structures—use the capacities of the internet and social networks for coordination. In conditions lacking classical organizational frameworks, these technologies effectively fulfill mobilization and information-dissemination functions (Castells, 2012, 2017).

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the use of social networks in recent crises—especially during the November 2019 protests and the 2017 protests—has played a critical role. Consequently, internet shutdowns and restrictions on messaging platforms significantly reduced the intensity and spread of unrest (Rahimi & Khosravi, 2021).

At the same time, cyberspace can also serve as a tool for crisis management and reducing tensions, provided that the government can effectively use this space to communicate transparent messages and establish direct contact with the public (Castells, 2017).

#### 5.5. *Weak Coordination and Interaction Among Institutions*

Another major challenge in managing political crises in Iran is the lack of coordination, proper division of labor, and effective interaction among institutions. As previously mentioned, various governmental bodies in the Islamic Republic of Iran often operate independently in crisis-management processes. This lack of coordination results in fragmented and ineffective responses.

In various political crises, including the 2009 and 2017 protests, it has been evident that inadequate coordination among security, judicial, and political institutions has prevented crises from being managed swiftly and has instead turned them into internal disputes. Under such conditions, neglecting the capacities of civil and non-governmental institutions for participation in crisis management—alongside delays in action—further complicates the situation and indicates the need for serious structural reassessment (Alizadeh, 2021).

#### 5.6. *The Impact of External Pressures*

External pressures are also recognized as key factors influencing the management of political crises in Iran. Sanctions and international pressures—particularly from the United States and Western countries—have significantly affected Iran's domestic politics and economy. These pressures have not only intensified economic and social problems but have also exacerbated political crises (Buchta, 2000).

Moreover, because such pressures are often accompanied by discourses framing the situation as the result of a "foreign enemy," the domestic political environment becomes polarized. At a time when the public is widely dissatisfied with domestic policies,

external pressures intensify internal crises and broaden the scope of unrest (Mohammadi & Yazdani, 2022).

Additionally, in numerous instances, adversaries of the Islamic Republic—who seek any opportunity to weaken the system—have sought to exploit protests and redirect them for their own purposes (Rahimi & Khosravi, 2021). On the other hand, various international think tanks and institutions operating under themes such as “Iran Studies” have engaged in producing targeted content, special reports, books, and academic works, supporting dissertations focused on Iran, analyzing events and Iranian media, cultivating global research capacities related to Iran, and making strategic recommendations about Iran’s internal affairs, thereby disseminating their directed narratives (Katzman, 2020).

## 6. Conclusion

The management of political crises in the Islamic Republic of Iran, as reflected in the preceding analysis, is a multifaceted and deeply interconnected process that touches upon institutional structures, socio-political dynamics, technological transformations, and external geopolitical realities. Political crises do not emerge in a vacuum; they arise from accumulations of institutional weaknesses, governance shortcomings, societal tensions, economic pressures, and rapid changes in communication and mobilization technologies. Understanding these crises and formulating effective strategies to manage them require a holistic and integrated approach that acknowledges the complexity of contemporary Iranian society as well as the evolving nature of political interactions.

One of the most fundamental conclusions that emerges from the study is the centrality of institutional coherence in the effective management of political crises. The existence of multiple, parallel, and sometimes competing institutions within the governing structure of Iran has often limited the ability of crisis-management actors to respond swiftly and coherently. When institutions operate independently or without clear lines of responsibility, crisis responses become fragmented, delayed, and reactive rather than preventive and strategic. Furthermore, the absence of a unified crisis-management command structure contributes to confusion, overlapping responsibilities, and inconsistencies in decision-making processes. To move toward a more effective crisis-management framework,

the institutional architecture of the system must prioritize coordination, clarity, and shared objectives.

Another major finding relates to the role of social capital, public trust, and political participation. A society that experiences declining levels of trust in its institutions, decision-makers, and political processes is more vulnerable to rapid crisis escalation. Public distrust not only weakens governmental legitimacy but also reduces the capacity of institutions to engage the public in cooperative crisis mitigation efforts. In such contexts, even minor triggers can lead to large-scale unrest. Rebuilding social capital therefore becomes not simply a political priority but a national security imperative. This requires consistent transparency, meaningful engagement with citizens, and mechanisms that ensure accountability in policy formulation and implementation.

Economic conditions also play an undeniable role in shaping the trajectory of political crises. Persistent inflation, unemployment, income inequality, and unmet expectations fuel public frustration and create fertile ground for political discontent. When economic pressures converge with perceptions of political exclusion or injustice, the likelihood of widespread protests increases substantially. Sustainable crisis management thus demands both economic stabilization and clear communication regarding economic strategies, their rationale, and their long-term expected outcomes.

The rapid expansion of social networks and digital technologies has transformed the landscape of political mobilization, creating both opportunities and vulnerabilities for crisis management. On one hand, digital platforms enable rapid dissemination of information and allow marginalized groups to voice grievances and organize collectively. On the other hand, these platforms also enable misinformation, rumor propagation, and external interference. The dual nature of cyberspace means that crisis-management efforts must go beyond reactive restrictions or shutdowns; instead, they must cultivate the capacity of the state to communicate transparently, engage constructively with digital communities, and use technology as a means of building trust rather than amplifying conflict.

External pressures and international dynamics further complicate crisis management. Economic sanctions, geopolitical tensions, and foreign interventions can aggravate domestic frustrations and shape public

perceptions of the state's performance. These pressures can also be exploited by opposition groups or foreign actors seeking to influence internal dynamics. Thus, an effective crisis-management framework must consider the interplay between domestic grievances and external influences, ensuring that internal cohesion is maintained despite external attempts to provoke instability.

Overall, the study underscores that political crisis management cannot rely solely on security-based approaches. While security interventions may be necessary in specific situations, they are insufficient as long-term strategies and often exacerbate societal tensions if not accompanied by political dialogue, transparency, and institutional reforms. Crisis management must therefore transition from a predominantly reactive model toward a proactive, participatory, and multi-layered framework that engages institutions, civil society, and citizens in constructive ways.

### **1. Establishing a Unified and Institutionalized Crisis-Management Framework**

A comprehensive national crisis-management body should be established with clearly defined authority, responsibilities, and communication channels. This body should integrate representatives from key institutions—including security, political, legal, and social sectors—to ensure that crisis responses are coordinated, timely, and coherent. Clear protocols should be developed for early detection, decision-making, and operational coordination.

### **2. Strengthening Social Capital and Rebuilding Public Trust**

Public trust is the cornerstone of political stability. To restore and enhance this trust, the state must prioritize transparency, consistent communication, and accountability. Mechanisms such as public briefings, transparent reporting of government performance, and participatory decision-making processes can significantly improve public perceptions of legitimacy. Encouraging civic engagement and supporting intermediary institutions—including NGOs, community groups, and local councils—also contributes to rebuilding trust.

### **3. Enhancing Economic Stability and Addressing Socio-Economic Grievances**

Crisis management must be accompanied by meaningful economic reforms aimed at reducing inequality,

controlling inflation, creating employment opportunities, and improving public services. Policy measures should be communicated clearly and honestly to the public, with realistic expectations set regarding timelines and outcomes. Providing support to vulnerable groups can reduce economic pressures that often fuel political unrest.

### **4. Modernizing Digital Governance and Using Cyberspace Constructively**

Rather than relying primarily on restrictive measures, the government should develop robust digital-governance strategies that emphasize transparency, real-time communication, and public engagement. Digital platforms can be used to share accurate information, counter misinformation, and provide direct channels for citizens to express concerns. Training public officials in digital communication and crisis messaging will also enhance the government's ability to manage digital-age crises.

### **5. Encouraging Institutional Coordination and Role Clarity**

Inter-institutional conflicts can be minimized through clear delineation of responsibilities, standardized communication protocols, and joint training programs. Regular simulation exercises involving key institutions can prepare agencies for coordinated responses to various crisis scenarios. Strengthening mechanisms for inter-agency dialogue and cooperation will prevent parallel actions that undermine overall crisis-management effectiveness.

### **6. Expanding Civil Society Engagement in Crisis-Management Processes**

Civil society organizations are valuable actors in early warning, conflict mediation, and public communication. Incorporating these organizations into crisis-management strategies can enhance public responsiveness and create channels for peaceful dialogue. Civil society can also contribute to monitoring the implementation of policy measures, thereby increasing transparency and public confidence.

### **7. Addressing External Pressures Through Diplomacy and Strategic Communication**

To mitigate the impact of external pressures, the state should adopt proactive diplomatic strategies that reduce tensions, diversify partnerships, and communicate national positions clearly on the international stage. Building resilience against external interventions

requires strengthening domestic unity, improving economic foundations, and maintaining consistent and calm national messaging.

### 8. Reinforcing Legal Frameworks for Managing Protests and Public Assemblies

Clear, updated, and transparent laws governing public protests, political participation, and civil engagement should be developed. Legal frameworks must ensure citizens' rights while providing orderly mechanisms for addressing grievances. When legal channels for expression are respected and functional, the likelihood of unrest decreases.

### 9. Prioritizing Preventive and Proactive Approaches

Effective crisis management is grounded in prevention. This requires constant monitoring of socio-political indicators, early identification of grievances, and implementation of targeted interventions before tensions escalate. Investing in research, data analysis, and social-psychological assessments can significantly improve proactive management capabilities.

### 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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### Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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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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