



January 22, 2005 | home

LETTER FROM TEHRAN

SHADOW LAND

by JOE KLEIN

http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/?020218fa_FACT

Who's winning the fight for Iran's future?

Issue of 2002-02-18 and 25
Posted 2002-02-11

On the evening of September 11, 2001, about two hundred young people gathered in Madar Square, on the north side of Tehran, in a spontaneous candlelight vigil to express sympathy and support for the United States. A second vigil, the next night, was attacked by the basij, a volunteer force of religious vigilantes, and then dispersed by the police. The vigils may have been the only pro-American demonstrations in the Islamic world after the terrorist attacks on the United States. "It was what we all were feeling," said Arash, a young teacher I met; he had stayed home with his wife, Ava—these are not their real names—nervously watching the unimaginable television images from America. "But I was also worried: Would the Americans blame Iran for this? How would our government respond? Would we express sympathy and condemn the attacks, or would it be a Marg bar Amerika—"Death to America"—"reaction? Finally, at ten o'clock, Khatami came on and expressed sympathy. What a relief!"

The statement that Mohammad Khatami, Iran's popularly elected President, made was extraordinary—extraordinary to American ears, at least. "My deep sympathy goes out to the American nation, particularly those who have suffered from the attacks and also the families of the victims," he said. "Terrorism is doomed, and the international community should stem it and take effective measures in a bid to eradicate it."

Three months later, Ava, who is also a teacher, sat in the comfortable, rose-colored living room of the couple's North Tehran flat, listening to her husband. She is a bright and fiery woman, and this was a rare moment of repose. "Do you want to know what I was really worried about?" she said, pausing for ironic effect. "Woody Allen. I didn't want him to die. I wanted to know that he was all right. I love his films."

But wasn't she pleased by President Khatami's statement? "Khatami! I don't believe in Khatami. I believe in Superman." She shrugged and raised her eyebrows. "At least in the world of Superman there is a certain logic. There are rules. There is no logic in the world of Khatami. He's just part of an irrational system. At the top of the system is the Supreme Leader." This is actually a constitutional office, occupied by the chief religious figure in the country. Its first, and most memorable, occupant was Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini; since Khomeini's death, in 1989, the office has been held, less notably, by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. "But

SHADOW LAND

nobody believes in the Supreme Leader," she went on. "Everybody believes in Khatami. Everybody votes for Khatami, who has none of the power. Nobody votes for the conservatives, but they have all of the power. So I like the fantasy of Superman better than the fantasy of Khatami."

Mohammad Khatami is, indeed, a curious public figure. He is fifty-eight years old, and even his opponents concede that he is a gentle, charming, and learned man. He is a popular, charismatic politician; women consider him sexy, clean-cut, an elegant dresser. ("When he was elected President, I pasted pictures of him all over my car," a young woman who was studying insurance finance at a local business school told me. "I don't know why I did that. I never do things like that.") He has been elected President twice, by large majorities; his first election, in 1997, came as a shock to Iran's clerical establishment and launched what seemed a significant political reform movement. But Khatami and his allies have no control over the military, the police, or the courts, and there is a growing sense now that he is only a mirage—a courtly shimmer of intellectuality and moderation masking a brutal, obstinate, and impenetrable system.

In fact, the Marg bar Amrika chants returned to Iranian public discourse two weeks after the World Trade Center attack, when the Supreme Leader spoke in Tehran. Ali Khamenei is, in his way, every bit as curious a figure as Khatami. Khamenei's position is impossible: his image is twinned everywhere with Ayatollah Khomeini's on giant wall murals and in public offices, and he suffers in comparison. Khamenei, who wears thick eyeglasses, seems bland and slightly befuddled next to Khomeini's eternal glower. Khamenei tries to emulate his predecessor's vehemence at times, but his public statements tend to be pedestrian and vituperative, if such a combination is possible, and his reaction to America's call for an anti-Taliban coalition in Afghanistan was typically obtuse. "You, who have always caused blows to Iran's interests," Khamenei said, referring to the "incompetent" American government and its "disgusting" campaign against terrorism. "How dare you request help [from us] in order to attack the innocent Muslim nation of Afghanistan, which has suffered and which is our neighbor? . . . The Islamic Republic of Iran will not participate in any move which is headed by the United States."

Khamenei's statement was not definitive, though. Two days later, at the Friday prayers at Tehran University, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani—who had preceded Khatami as President and remains a prominent political force—announced yet another modification of Iran's position: "Despite all the differences we have . . . and if the United States does not want to impose its ideas, we can become a member of a U.N.-led antiterror coalition."

There were further shadings by other public officials over the next few weeks, none of which quite acknowledged the reality of the situation: Iran and the United States were momentary allies. The Iranians had always opposed the Taliban; they were longtime supporters of the Northern Alliance rebels, especially the warlord Ismail Khan, whose territory, around the city of Herat, is close to Iran's eastern border. When the war began in Afghanistan, Iran joined the so-called six-plus-two talks (the six neighboring countries to Afghanistan plus the United States and Russia) aimed at establishing a post-Taliban government; at one of the meetings at the U.N., Colin Powell shook hands with Kamal Kharrazi, the Iranian Foreign Minister—the first official contact between the two nations since 1979, when the Shah was overthrown. The Iranians quietly agreed to rescue American fliers downed in their territory, and allowed American food relief to be unloaded in a Persian Gulf port.

But the rapprochement was temporary; now Iran has been included, along with North Korea and Iraq, in President Bush's "axis of evil"—a designation that the Supreme Leader responded to by saying, "The Islamic Republic is proud to be the target of the rage and hatred of the world's greatest Satan." Iran seems to have increased its support of radical Islamic groups like Hezbollah and Hamas since September

SHADOW LAND

11th; in early January, the Israelis intercepted a ship, the Karine A, carrying fifty tons of arms apparently donated by Iran's Revolutionary Guards—an élite militia controlled by the clerics—to the Palestinian Authority. (Iran has denied the connection.) This was a puzzling escalation, according to American security experts. Ship traffic in the Persian Gulf is closely monitored; the Iranians had to know that the scheme would be found out. Indeed, it almost seemed an intentional effort to infuriate the United States and burnish Iran's radical credentials in the Islamic world. But, just as the Iranian government had taken at least three different public positions on the September 11th attacks, so it stood on rapprochement with the United States, support for the Palestinian rejectionists, and almost every other public issue: there are shadings and subtleties, conflicting statements and occasional outrages. A purposeful opacity seems the only rule.

"Iran is a kaleidoscope," says Kenneth Pollack, who is the deputy director of national-security studies for the Council on Foreign Relations and who was a director for Persian Gulf affairs at the National Security Council during the Clinton Administration. "There are fourteen dozen different positions on each issue, and it is very difficult to say with any certainty which of the insiders support which position. Khatami indicated a willingness to accommodate the United States on the three basic areas important to America: weapons of mass destruction, the Palestinian question, and Iran's covert-intelligence activities. But he couldn't get anywhere with Khamenei and the hard-liners. It's not impossible that some of them were sending a message to Khatami as well as to us with the Karine A."

Khatami, Khamenei, Khomeini, Rafsanjani: the names are easily confused by inattentive Westerners, who tend to have only two indelible images of post-revolutionary Iran—the furious visage of Ayatollah Khomeini and, in 1979, the blindfolded, stumbling Americans held hostage in the Tehran Embassy compound by radical students. Iran's upheaval was the first successful religious revolution in the Islamic world, threatening not only to the West but also to the secular dictators and royal families who controlled every other nation in the region. The new Islamic Republic of Iran went through an early messianic phase, in which the country's Shiites attempted to export Islamic radicalism—a difficult sale in a world where eighty-five per cent of Muslims are Sunni. Iran was particularly active in Lebanon, where American hostages were seized in the nineteen-eighties, and the United States Embassy and Marine barracks were bombed in 1983. Two years of Jacobin terror within Iran ended only when Iraq's Saddam Hussein invaded and an unspeakably brutal eight-year war ensued, in which at least three hundred thousand Iranians were killed. Khomeini died in 1989, just after a sullen truce took hold. The second decade of the Islamic Republic was a fretful attempt to recover from war and mayhem.

A glacial power struggle has followed. Indeed, in Iran it is practically impossible to get a clear answer to the simplest of questions: Who is running this country? Quite often, the response is nervous laughter. Academics, when asked, will draw inconclusive flow charts of the government's structure: there are shadow institutions everywhere—regular courts and clerical courts, a regular army and a revolutionary army, an elected parliament and a clerical Council of Guardians. At the top of these charts sits the Supreme Leader—but Ayatollah Khamenei is widely regarded as a mediocrity, and no one seems entirely convinced that he is actually in charge. The most vehement, and surprisingly frequent, answer to the question tends to be the most melodramatic. "There is a small group, a dark group, that really runs the country," a prominent Tehran businessman told me. "They decide who is assassinated and who is arrested, they threaten and blackmail the leaders. They never speak publicly."

But, then, Iranians are inveterate conspiracy theorists; there are always international cabals directed against their nation, inevitably orchestrated by either the British, who held the country as a semi-colony after the discovery of

SHADOW LAND

oil, or the Americans. There is sufficient evidence of Anglo-American misbehavior to make this theory credible: there was the C.I.A.-sponsored coup that toppled the popular, nationalist Prime Minister, Mohammad Mossadegh, and restored the Shah to power, in 1953; there was the continuing American support for the Shah's vicious secret service, the SAVAK; there was the covert but obvious support for Saddam Hussein in the Iran-Iraq War (including, the conspiracy theorists insist, the provision of chemical and biological weaponry); there was the accidental shooting down of an Iran Air jumbo jet over the Persian Gulf, in 1988, which nobody believes was an accident. "Is it not possible that Bush himself orchestrated the September 11th attacks?" a college professor in Isfahan asked me after an hour of careful, sophisticated political analysis. "He did not really win the election, and this was a way to unite the nation behind him."

And so Ava's comic-book metaphor carries with it a fundamental truth: Iran, at times, can seem like Bizarro World, the shattered, doppelgänger planet from the Superman comic books. Western visitors note the difference between the austerity of public life and the normality of private life: for years, the most popular journalistic image has been of Iranian women wearing designer dresses beneath their chadors. A pirated version of Victoria's Secret recently opened in Tehran—no lingerie is visible from the street, of course. Cosmetic surgery is all the rage. "We are the world capital of nose jobs," an Iranian woman writer told me. "Think about it—when the mullahs took away our bodies, all we had left were our faces. Look at the noses on the street. You'll see."

But the most striking thing about the street is how relaxed it is. There isn't an oppressive police or military presence, and not much of a religious presence, either: few mullahs wander about (except in Qom, the religious center, and a few other holy sites). Indeed, there is little sense of the political fervor common to "the street" in other Islamic countries. Iranians are still recuperating from their radical moment. "We want a refolution, not a revolution," Hamid Reza Jalaipour, a newspaper publisher who was jailed briefly, said. He was referring to the radical reforms many Iranians are seeking. "We've had enough violence."

Most Westerners who visit Iran are surprised by how unexceptionally modern it is: it has little of the seething poverty or primitive clannishness common in neighboring Central and South Asian countries. The economy is said to be stagnant, and unemployment is relatively high, but oil revenues subsidize food and housing for the poor and gasoline for the middle class (which costs five cents per litre). Tehran, a city of putty-colored buildings tucked against the Alborz Mountains, wreathed in smog and overwhelmed by a perpetual traffic jam, resembles no place so much as it does Los Angeles. On the north side of town, creeping up between the knuckles of the Alborz foothills, there are affluent neighborhoods with high-rise apartment buildings and fancy shops. Satellite dishes, although illegal, are becoming popular anyway; and Internet use is apparently resistant to intermittent attempts by the government to regulate it. Near Tehran University, there is a row of bookstores (roughly eighty per cent of Iran's population is literate and seventy per cent is under the age of thirty) that sell practically everything—except, perhaps, the works of Salman Rushdie. Most of the anti-American murals around town have been removed, except on the walls surrounding the old United States Embassy compound, and those seem anachronistic and pitiful: "On the day the U.S. will praise us," one reads, "we will mourn."

For several years—especially after Khatami was first elected President—that day seemed imminent. But the public and private faces of Iran have reversed themselves in the Islamic revolution's second generation. Khatami provides a public image of moderation. Privately, however, the government is, in some ways, as intemperate as ever; it is certainly more desperate now, facing a public that, for the first time since the overthrow of the Shah, is obviously hostile. The conservative counterattack has largely succeeded in neutralizing the reform movement. Those close to Khatami—and, apparently, Khatami himself—fear that the moment for reform

SHADOW LAND

may have come and gone. "He did not want to be a candidate for reëlection in 2001," said Mohammad Ali Abtahi, a mullah who has been one of Khatami's closest associates for twenty years. "He thought that there was no way to make progress on reform. But his friends convinced him to run. We said even if there is slow movement toward reform it is better than nothing."

Khatami didn't particularly want to be a candidate for President in 1997, either. His political career, which had been a tasteful, aristocratic amble toward prominence, had taken a detour. He had been ousted as Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance in 1992, apparently for entertaining the possibility that Islamic guidance did not need to be dogmatic. He was shuffled off to become head of the National Library, a position that seems to have delighted him. He spent five years there, reading, communing with intellectuals, and waiting.

After the revolution, Presidential elections in Iran had been fairly inconsequential: the Presidential candidate, usually selected without much fuss by the Supreme Leader, was meant to be a managerial sort. He could serve for two consecutive terms and—since there wasn't much in the way of democracy on offer—he inevitably did. Rafsanjani, Iran's ultimate and seemingly eternal pragmatist, ended his second term as President in 1997. Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri, the Speaker of the parliament, was expected to float into power simply because he had been designated. However, there was a small group of reformers who believed that it was time to test the democracy promised in the Islamic constitution. They wanted to propose their own candidate for President, a long shot—a thoughtful, unthreatening protest candidate, the Persian equivalent of Eugene McCarthy.

"Khatami was in Lebanon, visiting libraries or some such thing," Karim Arghandehpour, an editor at Nowrooz, the leading reform newspaper, recalls. "I was working at another paper, Salam, then"—Salam has since been closed by the mullahs—"and several of our editors and other reformists decided to propose Khatami for President. We printed a front-page color photo of him. He was very upset. 'I haven't been consulted about this,' he said."

Salam's initiative evoked a surprising response. Suddenly, all sorts of people were asking Khatami to run. "I was among those pushing for the idea of Khatami as President," Hadi Semati, a political-science professor at Tehran University, said. "He said, 'You haven't found anyone stupider than me to do this?' But he was perfect! He wasn't a typical politician. He wasn't a politician at all. He was a thinker. At the National Library, he had been exploring the most important question in Iranian politics: How do you reconcile freedom and religion?"

The campaign lasted two weeks. "There had never been anything like this before," Semati said. "I had studied American politics, and had some insights. I proposed that Khatami take a bus tour through northern Iran. The crowds were enormous. Everyone was surprised. The conservatives were still expecting to win on Election Day."

Khatami got nearly seventy per cent of the vote. He won everywhere, in every demographic group; he even carried Qom, the religious citadel. The very size of the victory appeared to change Iran's political calculus, and the librarian began to act as if he had actually won a mandate to lead the nation. His demeanor itself was a political statement; his constant smile conveyed kindness and confidence, and something else as well—the promise of freedom. He spoke of the rule of law. He said that he didn't want photographs of himself plastered about, lest there be a cult of personality. He said it was unseemly to chant things like "Death to America" at public rallies. He was interviewed by Christiane Amanpour for CNN, and the footage later became part of a documentary that seemed to presume Iran's imminent transformation into a moderate, democratic society. He addressed the United Nations, calling for a "dialogue among civilizations," and Secretary-General Kofi

SHADOW LAND

Annan was so impressed that he designated 2001 as the year when the dialogue would take place. Indeed, Khatami seemed embarked on a path that would put him in the same pantheon as Nelson Mandela and Václav Havel. His annual visits to the United Nations became significant events; in 2000, a handshake with Bill Clinton was choreographed, and then cancelled at the last minute by the Iranians. "We were prepared to consider normalizing relations," then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said, "but there was a question of whether praising him would be good or bad for him domestically. We called it the 'kiss of death' factor."

When he visited the United Nations last November, Khatami held a breakfast with several journalists; I sat across from him, and he seemed a civilized and immaculate presence, arrayed in a brown cloak over a taupe tunic, topped by the black turban that is worn only by descendants of the Prophet Muhammad. He had long, carefully manicured fingers, a turquoise ring on his left hand and an onyx ring on his right. He was cautious when asked about the resumption of diplomatic relations with the United States, less so when asked about the anti-American sentiments commonly heard on the street in Islamic countries. "There is a version of Islam that says, 'Whoever disagrees with me is a disbeliever and must be killed,' " he said. "But there are other versions of Islam. We believe in a version that favors a dialogue of civilizations. . . . We believe that when religion and freedom are put at odds both suffer. Without democracy, religion becomes extreme. With religion, democracy becomes more spiritual."

Khatami's rhetorical elegance had made an immediate impact in Iran after his election. Religious thuggery diminished—in the past, it had not been unusual for the basij to hassle women on the street for improper dress, or even to burst into private parties where music was playing. Bolder women now began wearing their head scarves further back, off the brow, to reveal provocative swirls of hair. A new generation of newspapers began to report freely and irreverently about the government; satirists and cartoonists thrived. The conservatives seemed stunned by all this. Khatami was even able to push some reforms through the parliament, which was still dominated by the clerics.

A conservative reaction began late in 1998: the Judiciary, which is controlled by the Supreme Leader, started closing reform newspapers (many of which promptly reopened using different names), and then jailing the journalists causing the trouble. At the end of 1998, five noted intellectuals and political dissidents were killed—Iranians called these the "serial murders." Khatami demanded an investigation, which was generally assumed to be an empty gesture. But, in what remains his greatest triumph as President, there really was an investigation, and in January of 1999 the Ministry of Intelligence and Security announced that "irresponsible, misguided and unruly members of this ministry . . . have committed these criminal acts."

"This was an astonishing moment," said Bijan Khajepour, who is the managing director of a consulting firm in Tehran. "But it was not decisive. It was an early blow in what has become a fifteen-round championship boxing match. The reformers had some success in the early rounds, but then the conservatives gathered themselves and came back. In 2000, the reformers won a great victory in the parliamentary elections, but the conservatives came back again—far more forcefully, in part because the reformers became overconfident."

Boxing is a popular metaphor among political observers in Tehran. Hadi Semati, the Tehran University political scientist, calls Khatami's current, passive strategy "rope-a-dope." But the power struggle is too complicated to be reduced to a sporting analogy. The common designations "reformers" and "conservatives" are crude approximations. There are dozens of factions. There are also obscure, quietly powerful forces that escape public scrutiny—not just the security apparatus but enormous charitable trusts called bonyads, which were created from the private

SHADOW LAND

holdings of the Shah and his supporters after the revolution and now constitute a significant portion of the Iranian economy. The "charity" of the bonyads encompasses everything from subsidies to the widows and orphans of the Iran-Iraq War to the suspected financial aggrandizement of the clerical establishment and the funding of terrorism. The charitable trusts exist in the semi-official netherworld that provides conspiracists with much of their grist. The Supreme Leader has authority over the bonyads and the Revolutionary Guards. Khamenei, however, has a few dusty reform credentials as well: he was one of the Qom clerics who had ties to secular intellectuals before the revolution. "It is possible that the Supreme Leader is not a boxer at all," Bijan Khajepour said. "It is possible that he is trying to be the referee. After the reformers trounced the conservatives in the parliamentary elections of 2000, and there was a movement to overturn the results, he was the one who said the results should stand."

But Khamenei also undoubtedly gave final approval to the attacks on the reformers that began almost immediately after those elections. The moderates now held the Presidency and the Iranian parliament, which is called the Majlis; they began to speak of amending the Islamic constitution to give elected officials more power. Much of this talk was idle posturing: the Islamic constitution is clogged with checks and balances. There are all sorts of delightfully named committees with the power to block parliamentary initiatives, such as the twelve-member Council of Guardians, a stunted upper house that has direct veto power over the Majlis, and the Expediency Council, which mediates disputes between the Majlis and the Guardians. Given the array of contending forces, inertia seemed a cinch. But the reformers had been elected with overwhelming majorities; the public was clearly tired of the mullahs, and the situation threatened to get out of hand.

In April of 2000, a second wave of attacks on the reformers was launched. Nearly twenty publications were shut down, and there was another round of arrests—a campaign that later broadened to include the interrogation of members of parliament who had criticized the government. The violence began again, too: less than a month after the elections, Saeed Hajjarian—who was among Khatami's closest political advisers—was shot in the head by two men on motorcycles; Hajjarian survived, but the personal impact on Khatami apparently was enormous. He cried at Hajjarian's bedside and despaired as other supporters were taken off to jail. He told friends he was helpless to prevent those arrests; according to several close associates, Khatami's chronic back pain intensified, he became depressed, and said he didn't want to run for reelection in 2001. "There are times when I'm afraid that he'll have a stroke," his longtime aide Mohammad Abtahi told me. "He suffers so much."

There was a second, less obvious consequence of the reformers' over-confidence: They had attacked Rafsanjani—perhaps the cleverest politician in the country—during an attempt to retain his seat in the Majlis. (The journalist who led the campaign, Akbar Ganji, was jailed.) Infuriated, Rafsanjani drifted from the reform camp toward the conservatives, perhaps carrying the balance of power with him. Akbar Karbassian, an economist, told me, "It is said that power in Iran resides wherever Hashemi Rafsanjani happens to be sitting."

Rafsanjani is an instantly recognizable figure. He's the mullah with the round, boyish, beardless face and a benign tuft of hair peeking out from beneath his turban. He is a living monument to the absurdity of the relations between the United States and Iran since the revolution, and has always played the same role: the moderate who promises rationality but never quite succeeds in delivering it. "He was the speaker of parliament trying to broker a deal during the hostage crisis," says Jim Steinberg, the director of the Foreign Policy Studies Program at the Brookings Institution, who worked for both Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton. Rafsanjani's sensibility is, essentially, that of a Chinese mandarin: he is from a wealthy pistachio-growing family, a believer in a free market in everything but ideas. As President, he began the privatization of the economy, and he also

SHADOW LAND

attempted a rapprochement with the United States on terms that he assumed would be most attractive: in 1995, he selected Conoco's offer of a billion dollars to develop Iran's offshore oil fields. The reaction from the Clinton Administration—which was not attentive to the nuances of Iranian politics and had embarked on a counterproductive, if symmetrical, policy of "dual containment" toward Iran and Iraq—was outrage. Conoco was ordered to void the deal; a new and even more punitive set of economic sanctions was hustled through Congress. Rafsanjani was left to ruminate on the perils of moderation.

I saw Rafsanjani speak in Tehran on Friday, December 14th, on the occasion of Jerusalem Day, the Islamic world's annual anti-Zionist festival. He spoke at the Friday prayers at Tehran University, which has been the most important platform for Iran's religious leadership since the revolution. In the old days, it wasn't hard to raise a crowd from the Islamic radicals on campus; but most of the radicals are secular humanists now, and so the crowd has to be bused in from mosques around town. The mullahs often have difficulty filling the vast open-air pavilion. On Jerusalem Day, the space was crowded, however: perhaps five thousand of the faithful, all men—the women were shunted off to an adjacent area—shoeless, kneeling or sitting cross-legged on prayer rugs. It was a peculiar crowd, rebels subdued by age and weary in their chanted responses. On both sides of the stage, electric signs with multicolored lights linked the names of the Prophet and two Shiite heroes, Husayn and Zahra.

I had joined marchers from a mosque in Jihad Square—twenty-six of them, by my count—as they made their way through town chanting "God is great," "Death to Israel," "Death to America," and, no doubt in homage to great Satans past, "Death to England." The women were in full chadors; the men were dressed shabbily, with stubbly beards, fingering worry beads—it seemed a procession of nuns and aging clerical custodians. Similar marches had been launched throughout Tehran; busloads of pilgrims were imported from surrounding communities.

It was a mild, sunny day, and when all the rivulets converged on Enghelab Avenue, in front of the university, I fell in behind two veterans of the Iran-Iraq War, dressed in camouflage fatigues, who were atop a slow-moving minivan. One of the men was brandishing a Kalashnikov and wearing a kaffiyeh in solidarity with the Palestinians; the other was waving a green Islamic flag and trying to lead the usual chants. The minivan halted for a moment, and the man with the Kalashnikov began to speak. "My friend here was chemically disabled in the Iraq war," he said, nodding at his thin, haggard comrade, who was on his knees and sweating profusely. "Please support the disabled. Don't consider us beggars. We fought for our country." He began to sob, and, I noticed, several of the men in my immediate vicinity had tears streaming down their cheeks. "We're Shiites! Don't abandon us. . . Marg bar Amrika! Marg bar Amrika!"

A bedsheet with a crudely drawn American flag was produced and set aflame; television cameras converged. It was the scene we've watched a thousand times, but not at all threatening somehow: a theatrical moment rather than a political one. I noticed that we were standing in front of a cinema where "The Green Mile" was playing.

The Friday prayer sermons cling to several atavistic rituals from the revolutionary days. As the main speaker takes the stage, he is handed an assault rifle—a prop that seemed particularly ridiculous in the hands of Hashemi Rafsanjani, who spoke softly and leaned the rifle beneath the lectern throughout his speech. "The arrogant United States provided weapons of mass destruction to the Zionists," he said, inaccurately (it was France that helped the Israeli nuclear program). "If the day comes when the Islamic countries have those same weapons, the strategy of arrogance will be at an end."

SHADOW LAND

These inflammatory words were delivered quietly, almost perfunctorily. The entire Jerusalem Day spectacle seemed an attempt by the conservatives to identify a common enemy in order to shift the nation's attention from the intramural political struggles. "But many of the hard-liners really do believe that Palestine is critical to Iran's national security interests," Kenneth Pollack, of the Council on Foreign Relations, said. "It is seen as a way to fight the United States, which, they believe, is an implacable enemy, intent on overturning the Islamic Republic. And they obviously have the power to act on their beliefs."

A few days later, I was granted an interview with Mohammad Hashemi, Rafsanjani's younger brother and shadowy force emeritus—former Vice-President and former chairman of the state-run radio and television organization. We met in a palace built by the Shah for his sister, part of a campus of palaces in a lovely grove of birch and pine north of Tehran. He received me in a room off the garden; pale-green silk wallpaper framed crystal chandeliers and the requisite grand Persian carpet. Tea, sweets, and bowls of almonds and pistachios were provided. Hashemi, who had silver hair and a dark mustache and the soft, knowing manner of a born fixer, immediately announced the end of the reform movement. "They entered the stage with nothing but slogans. This attracted the attention of the public, particularly the young people. But they paid little attention to the most important issues of economic construction and development. They have not delivered on anything. They have alienated many of the country's leaders, and so reform is now at a dead end."

After a discussion about the stagnating economy, I asked Hashemi about his brother. He sighed. "He was attacked from both sides. The conservatives said that Khatami was his fruit," he said, noting that Rafsanjani's supporters in the Construction Party had backed Khatami for President. "And the reformers attacked him in the press, as you know. Today, that situation has changed. Both sides realize that Rafsanjani is a man for the country, not for any particular faction. Both sides are trying to impress him again."

This last appears to be quite true, even though Rafsanjani's reputation remains tarnished. The more moderate reformers freely admit that alienating Rafsanjani was a big mistake. "The Rafsanjani-reformist coalition would have been in a better position to move the reform agenda forward," Bijan Khajepour, the business consultant, said.

Indeed, toward the end of the year, many reformers had grown introspective—trying to figure out where they'd gone wrong, what to do next. There were disputes about strategy. The Khatami forces had proposed an oxymoron: "active calm." More recently, some reform factions had proposed "active resistance." By then, more than fifty members of the parliament had been summoned before the Judiciary and the sentencing of several seemed imminent. Khatami was out of sight, said to be ill but most likely suffering through another period of low spirits. "He's come to the conclusion that reform simply isn't possible right now," one of the President's associates said. "The power points are not at his disposal, and the practical power of the non-elected element is increasing."

Then, in late December, it was announced that Khatami would go to Tehran University and speak to the students. In anticipation of the meeting, the President had said that if the views of students weren't heeded there would be an "explosion." Some of his followers hoped this was an indication that he finally intended to provide the spark. Those closest to Khatami, however, were not only dubious but quite candid about their disappointment in him. Several days before the speech, I visited Zahra Eshraqi, an official at the Ministry of the Interior, who is married to Khatami's brother Mohammad Reza, the Deputy Speaker of the Majlis; she is also the granddaughter of Ayatollah Khomeini and has inherited some of the old man's fire, if not his politics. "The President has a very strong character. He is very calm," Mrs. Eshraqi, who is in her late thirties and was wearing what looked like a

SHADOW LAND

Burberry scarf, said. "Sometimes I want him to get angry, to speak out against the opposition. I say the same to my husband. The Judiciary are like the Saudis!" she said, meaning that they were extremely conservative. "They are going to throw members of parliament in jail! React to them!" She continued, with a pleasant smile and a shrug, "What happens now depends on Mr. Khatami. But, no matter what he does, this country is not going back to the past. We'll see if the future is more clear when he speaks on Saturday."

The hall at Tehran University was already filled when I arrived at nine in the morning on Saturday, December 22nd. It was a relatively small room, with seats for about a thousand; the walls were lined with photos of university students who had been martyred in the Iraq war. Women and men were segregated in the room, but both were equally vehement. "In Kabul, in Tehran, down with the Taliban!" they chanted, and, in a reference to the head of the Judiciary, Mahmoud Shahroudi, "Shahroudi, Iraqi, resign, resign!" Soon it was clear that a scuffle was taking place outside the doors. There were screams and fierce pounding—and then, at about nine-fifteen, the rear door gave and hundreds more students crashed into the room, filling the aisles. One small group went after the Iran TV cameras, overturning them, causing the cameramen to flee. Security seemed remarkably lax, and I wondered if this chaos was precisely the image that the conservatives wanted the country to see.

Khatami arrived a half hour later, precipitating another explosion. The students chanted, "Khatami, Khatami, honesty, honesty," and a second scuffle broke out. This time, the door on the women's side of the auditorium was breached; there was frantic screaming as verses from the Koran, the standard introduction to public meetings, were read. The mayhem seemed to intensify as Khatami took the stage, but the President remained unperturbed. He looked as elegant as ever, in a black cloak and charcoal-gray tunic, his black turban tilted high on his brow. "I have a cold," he told the students. "So please be quiet. Calm down, calm down."

He began what seemed a rambling introduction; he spoke of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

"Change this place first!" a heckler shouted, referring to the crowded room. Many of the students laughed.

"O.K., O.K.," the President said. "Tolerance! Tolerance!"

"For the sake of Khatami," the women's section began to chant, "we will be tolerant!" That seemed to quiet everybody down, and the President proceeded. He was sweating and dabbed his brow with a crumpled white handkerchief; his cloak slipped off one shoulder. "You shouldn't be expecting a champion," he said. "In a democracy, the people are the champions. If we are defeated, my defeat, or my victory, is not yours. It's not the public's defeat."

That didn't sound very encouraging. Later, he spoke of Socrates. "He was a philosopher, accused of seducing the youth of Athens," the President said. "He was tried and convicted, and he drank poison in order to maintain the respect for law and order in society."

The overpowering impression was of a defeated man, a tragic figure begging for sympathy. Afterward, the students were more disappointed than compassionate. "That was very weak," Ali Reza, a twenty-year-old philosophy major, said, expressing the unanimous opinion of those milling outside the hall after the speech. "These were all things he'd said before. We need a President more radical than him."

SHADOW LAND

One rainy December evening in Tehran, I went to a coffeehouse with four young women, three of them university students and one a recent graduate. All four spoke excellent English, which they had learned in school. They appeared to be supremely indifferent to politics. We talked about movies (they had just seen pirated DVDs of "Harry Potter"), poetry—the Sufi poets are a national obsession—and fashion. All four wore their head scarves at the very crown of their heads, showing lots of dark, gleaming hair; the scarves were set so far back that they were continually slipping off and the women seemed in constant motion, tying and retying them. "Can't you just pin them in place?" I asked.

The women giggled and shot conspiratorial glances at each other. "I have a friend," Zahra, a chemical engineer, said, "a boy. He says that boys find it sensual."

"Everyone has her own style of scarf adjustment," Hasti, a business student, said. I asked for a demonstration, but the women refused, saying that it had to be done unconsciously. (I did pay attention thereafter and noticed that several of them had fairly brazen styles, winging out their scarves before retying them, so that their heads were almost bare for a moment.)

It occurred to me that these women were emblematic of a basic, underappreciated human truth: the ability of average people to blithely confound the intentions of ideologues. The purpose of hejab, the Islamic dress code, was to impose a near-anonymous sexual modesty upon women. But the compulsory imposition of the law had created a delightfully unintended consequence: in Iran, women's dress was now more revealing than men's. In fact, Iranian men seemed universally unexceptional. The flashier guys had a slightly retro, "Saturday Night Fever" pompadour-and-leather look; most wore the casual uniform of young men everywhere—jackets with athletic logos, jeans, sneakers. But every Iranian woman made a political or social statement simply by where she placed her scarf on her head and how long her cloak was (some now wear waist-length coats, jeans, and high-heeled boots). There were simply too many women, in all parts of the country, making political fashion statements for the mullahs to have any hope of reimposing conformity.

"Three of us went to Turkey last summer with our parents," Azra, an architecture student, said. "We didn't have to wear our scarves, but I just couldn't take mine off at first. It felt uncomfortable."

"But you did take it off," Hasti reminded her. "And it was very thrilling."

Azra nodded and smiled. "And when we returned home," she said, "it was hard to put it on again."

The women agreed that it was difficult to imagine a day when they'd be able to walk scarfless through the streets of Tehran; they couldn't provide a scenario for the political changes that would need to take place—and they were not alone. No one in Iran seemed able to describe a credible path from Islamic Republic to Islamic democracy. What distinguished these young women, however—and the young people I'd spoken with at the university and on the poor side of town—was a serene confidence that the conservative position was absurd and untenable, that reform would come, that Iran would eventually rejoin the world. At the end of our time together, they insisted on publicly shaking my hand—an unthinkable heresy, an act that could have meant jail if the wrong people had been watching. But no one was watching, and these handshakes—halting, delicate, nervous—were an exhilarating moment of political rebellion.

A few weeks later, the conservative onslaught seemed to reach its apogee: one of the members of the Majlis who was accused of inflammatory rhetoric was convicted and sentenced, and was about to be carted off to jail. The Speaker, Mehdi Karroubi, staged a walkout and took most of the Majlis with him. Ayatollah Khamenei, acting

SHADOW LAND

as a referee once more, pardoned the parliamentarian—a perfectly Persian solution, conveying the message that, even if members of parliament didn't quite enjoy freedom of speech, they couldn't be jailed for speaking freely. Iran's limited democracy had withstood a serious challenge and continued to limp along, in the general direction of freedom.

Shadowlands PvP Vendors Temporarily Closed. 12h. Can you still complete "The Eternal Traveler" quest? 1d. Shadowlands PvP Vendors Temporarily Closed. Recent News. View All ».

3d. Demonology Warlock in Shadowlands - DPS Strengths, Best Covenants, Soulbinds and Legendaries. 3d. Polished Pet Charm Pricing in Shadowlands. 3d. Legion Raids Harder to Solo at 60 in Shadowlands. 3d. Havoc Demon Hunter in Shadowlands - DPS Strengths, Best Covenants, Soulbinds and Legendaries. 3d. The Shadowlands, resting place for every mortal soul—virtuous or vile—that has ever lived. Pre-purchase the next World of Warcraft expansion now and be ready to discover what awaits in this world between worlds. Brave the Beyond. What lies beyond the world you know? The Shadowlands, resting place for every mortal soul—virtuous or vile—that has ever lived. Pre-purchase the next World of Warcraft expansion now and be ready to discover what awaits in this world between worlds. The Shadowlands (see below for other names and denotations) are nightmarish realms of decay, labyrinthine spiritual planes teeming with the souls of the dead who have passed from the world of the living. The Shadowlands exist on the edge of reality. The origins of the Shadowlands remain uncertain, but they have existed ever since mortal life first arose in the physical universe. They span all worlds, including Azeroth, on which Icecrown serves as an anchor to the Shadowlands. There are those who Shadowland may refer to: Shadowland (band), an early-1990s British progressive rock band. Shadowland (Hula album), 1986. Shadowland (k.d. lang album), 1988. Shadowland (Dark Moor album), 1999. Shadowland (Nocturnal Rites album), 2002. "Shadowland" (song), 2010 song by Jim Kerr. "Shadowland" (The Lion King), song from the musical. "Shadowland", 2003 song by Australian band Youth Group. "Shadowland", song by Casey Stratton. Lester escapes from a Raft shuttle and returns as Bullseye and goes to hunt Daredevil and the Hand, discovering that the city block he had destroyed has been replaced with a castle, and the area has been renamed Shadowland, lead by Daredevil. The two fight and DD breaks both of Bullseye's arms and impales him on his own sai. Luke Cage and Iron Fist try to confront him, but Murdock flees back to his castle.