

*Arang Keshavarzian*

REGIME LOYALTY AND *BĀZĀRĪ*  
REPRESENTATION UNDER THE ISLAMIC  
REPUBLIC OF IRAN: DILEMMAS OF THE  
SOCIETY OF ISLAMIC COALITION

Tracing the political trajectory of the Society of Islamic Coalition Association (SIC) since the Islamic Revolution, this paper explains the party's poor electoral performance and its increasingly apparent divergence from its assumed social base, the bazaar (*bāzārī*) community. The article argues that SIC organization and behavior are influenced by the experiences of the prerevolutionary era and state institutions of the Islamic republic. SIC's initial position of power was associated with its members' long-standing relations with the founders of the regime. However, this ultimately laid the foundation for its unwillingness and inability to develop an institutionalized party structure with a social base. As a consequence, *bāzārīs* have increasingly been alienated from the party leadership and unable to represent their group interests in institutional politics. The analytical narrative incorporates insights from institutionalist approaches to authoritarian politics and presents a view of Iranian political history that stresses contingency, fluidity, and pragmatism in political decision making by elites.