

A Study Of Democratization In The Islamic Republic Of Iran. Period Of Reform Emphasized

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Abstract

With the Islamic Revolution, a new era in Iranian political history began and a great deal of transformation took place in Iranian political culture. The political system was transformed from a monarchy to a republic, and institutions such as independent (executive, legislature, and judiciary) triads were formed; eventually they had democratic in appearance but the political system and political culture were not substantially democratic. Although the Islamic Republic was formed under the slogan of anti-authoritarianism, it deviated from that goal. One of the issues that is of great importance today is the issue of democracy and human rights in the various societies that have been emphasized in Iran during the reform period. A clear problem now is that with the advent of the global communications industry, new technologies and actors, the scope of powers of governments has been limited. Given that democratization is the way society moves from undemocratic and traditional to democratic governance, the key question is: What are the main obstacles to democratic governance in Iran? The main hypothesis is also that: Rentier state structure seems to have weakened democratic forces in the Islamic Republic of Iran by weakening the market and the private sector and by linking government classes and disrupting the development of civil institutions. The findings indicate that the rentier state, because of its substantial income from renting, does not consider itself to have a tax-dependent, productive and value-add economy; so not only it does not need for a civil society but also creates various obstacles for realization of the civil institutions. The purpose of this research is also to explain the obstacles and outline the most effective indicators in the process of democratization of Iranian society. However, in this research, we intend to analyze democratization in the Islamic Republic with a library and qualitative approach, emphasizing the period of reform.

Keywords: Democratization, Reform Period, Rentier State.

1. Introduction

One of the issues that is of great importance today is the issue of democracy and human rights in various societies. This issue has faced rises and falls in Iran during the rule of the Islamic Republic but has been emphasized in the reform period. What is now clear is that with the advent of the global communications industry, new information technologies and actors, the scope of powers of governments has been restricted; they are not the only players at the inter-state level and there are other factors that have reduced the authority of governments. However, the process of democratization in the Islamic Republic of Iran faced and continues to face many obstacles. Although during the reform period efforts have been made to develop civil institutions and the rule of law and to establish democracy and its indicators, but finally, we have not seen significant progress in these areas. Understanding this condition requires studying and analyzing the various dimensions of this subject. In this research, we first try to explain the many obstacles to democratic governance in Iran, and then to consider what factors and foundations for overcoming the existing barriers have come to existence. Seeing the Various Obstacles during the Decades of Islamic Republic's Rule, what has been the outcome of the developments? In the following, we will address its various dimensions.

2. Examining the obstacles to the democratization process

The democratization process provides basically a golden opportunity for resolving ethnic conflicts. Creating such strategies and opportunities generally requires negotiated agreements. In the absence of democratization, governments must agree to keep negotiations with ethnic groups at bay to reach reconciliation; if the conflict has resulted in civil war, the conflicting parties must show inclination to find a strategy to end the war.

Since in many cases democratization and the process of democracy formation have a negotiated perspective and stage, it is an essential opportunity to address issues that have arisen of increased ethnic tensions, especially when determining and reformulating the constitution is part of the process.

However, the mere existence of such an opportunity is not a guarantee for the successful resolution of ethnic tensions. For the democratization process leads to reduce ethnic tensions, the presence of all ethnic groups in the negotiation process is essential. In addition, all groups must be inclined to resolve these tensions and to create efficient new arrangements that safeguard the interests of all parties (Weysi, 2004: 56).

3. Discourse in Response to Modernism. A Factor in Slowing Democratization Process

In the early years of the revolution and in the need to unite the people against internal and external enemies and then the beginning of the imposed war, the undemocratic behaviors of individuals and institutions were not greatly reformed. Opposing political rivals, factions and parties that opposed the prevailing idea, the elimination measures occur there. However, the basic ideology and structure of the political system was democratic, and although the constitution based on Islamic ideology gave privileges to clergy, scholars, etc., but in some cases, it emphasized freedom of expression, participation, the right to self-determination, Equality, non-discrimination, etc.

According to Dr. Bashiriyeh's theory: This discourse was formed in response to absolute Pahlavi modernism and by declining traditional groups in society. Traditional classes exposed to modernization, reform, and revolution from above have suffered from fear and insecurity, and the discourse of this period reflects the values and interests of the traditional group (religious intellectuals and discontented clerics). In this discourse, the Islamic tradition is the only solution to the problems of society and becomes the dominant ideology. This discourse is composed of Shiite political theory, some aspects of traditional patrimonialism, some elements of modernism (such as parliamentarism), a kind of populism and charismatic primacy (Weysi, 2004: 44).

This discourse negates any manifestation of the modern world and democratic life, and opposes heavily with Western modernity, liberalism, civil society, pluralism, and even Iranian nationalism; in contrast, it has emphasized leadership, social and moral discipline, traditional values, Political elitism and cultural control.

In this discourse, traditionalism and the clerical rule class have government positions, and ideological traditionalist discourse has sought to create obedient subjects and subordinate to traditional authorities. In this discourse, there is no place for criticism, individualism, pluralism, intellectual competition, and a democratic way of life, and all that is expected of society is silence, devotion, and blind obedience.

Fouran also argues that "The political climate and the practical consequences of the Islamic Republic's rule were not democratic, progressive, liberal or socialist" (Fouran, 1999). We may argue that the ideological state of the Islamic Revolution was somehow pseudo-democracy or formal democracy, as it had some formally democratic and demonstrative institutions; it somehow merged the oligarchy with some features of the democratic system. In any case, this ideological traditionalist discourse is affected by the globalization process and the internal pressures of democratizing forces and is declining (Ibid.).

4. Oil revenues and the state-oriented economy

Oil revenues and the state-run economy have been one of the obstacles to the formation of democracy in Iran. Now let's look at this. First, we need to provide a definition of rent and rentier state, and then examine its impact on the democratization process in Iran.

The rent is "income derived from the gift of nature". That is, an income that is earned without effort given the meaning of rent. "Any state that receives a substantial portion of its income from raw and underground and foreign-exchange grants, in the form of rent, is called a renter state. In other words, the rentier state, for certain reasons, has the ability to receive directly income from the sale of goods and services at prices well above their cost".

The rentier state receives rental incomes and distributes it as it wishes and the bulk of it is rent income; rental incomes directly flow into the government treasury and has nothing to do with domestic production. But it has a profound effect on the national economy and the relationship of government to society. These petroleum revenues make the state independent of society because government spending and costs are not funded by taxes and by the public. Therefore, the government does not hold itself accountable to society, and the decisions it makes are independent of society and in the interests of the particular group, and do not take into account the interests of society, and may even make decisions against the interests of society. Rentier states have a patrimonial or neo-patrimonial form and often have family ties. "Teda Skatchpole believes that the state has relative independence when it can implement policies that are not due to the influence of civil society elements, but sometimes against their interests".

In general, rentier state does not favor democratization unless it has needs; it is not interested in the formation of civil society and the independence of society from the state. "Thus, we can conjecture that if the rentier state once supported the conversion to democracy and the openness of the political system and accepted the political participation of civil society, it must have faced a serious financial crisis" (Ghavam, 2000: 66).

The rentier state is trying to create public prosperity and keep the people silent by distributing oil revenues to society. We can say that the rentier state has three goals: "1) gaining legitimacy, 2) strengthening its independence from society, 3) increasing its own wealth", which ultimately leads to the formation of an authoritarian and totalitarian state. With this introduction, we are going to Iran. Iran is a rent-seeking government because of its huge oil resources and the income it receives from rent.

So after the revolution, the Iranian states had the characteristics of a rentier state. After the revolution until the end of the war, we saw the independence of the state from society and the economy was largely in the hands of the state; the private sector as part of civil society did not play a major role in economic activities. "All laws were put in place to state the economy, and as the scope of government expanded, the activity scope of civil society was reduced" (Ibid.).

With Mr. Rafsanjani's appointment, the need for the private sector arose and its involvement in rebuilding the country after the war, which enabled the private sector to participate in economic affairs.

On the other hand, the International Monetary Fund program (Structural Adjustment), which was based on the two principles of economic liberalization and privatization, required the involvement of civil society and the private sector. The government of the Islamic Republic also acknowledged the involvement of the private sector in the economy by limiting its intervention in the economy (liberalization of the currency, elimination of import controls, elimination of price controls, etc.) and by adopting the structural adjustment program, the need for structural reforms in the economy. It allowed civil society to intervene in the economy, which was a positive leap towards democratization.

The internal necessities and external pressures of the globalization process forced the rentier state of Iran to accept private sector activity and structural adjustment. Also since 1995, the government has faced a decline in oil revenues, which has led to increased taxation. This has reduced the government's relative independence from civil society and the growth of democratization (Weysi, 2004: 99). This is one of the reasons for increased public participation and active participation of people in various economic, political and other spheres. During the Khatami era, we are witnessing an increase in the benefits of civil society.

With all these developments, the Iranian government is still a major actor in the economic arena. Although faced with restrictions, the private sector is also not fully capable of undertaking economic activities. This government's dominance of the economy is due to the wealth of oil revenues.

"High oil revenues have left governments with huge funds that no longer need taxes and people, and even manipulate people. For this reason, it is not like the West that the taxpayer plays an important role in democracy. As long as they do not need to the tax of people, they will not allow real democracy to be possible. "One of the areas for achieving democracy is the free economy. In most underdeveloped countries, including Iran, free economies have been separated from democracy; it is believed that with a state economy we can achieve political democracy, and that the free economy is fundamentally opposed to democracy. This is not the case because the state-run economy leads to the intensification of the dominance of the state over economy and leads to the separation of the state from society.

We can conclude, therefore, that democracy is not a serious issue in rentier states and in a state-run economy, and that rentier state does not care about democracy as long as rent and its income are there. Unless the rentier state is in financial trouble and forced to collect taxes from society, it demands the economic participation of civil society and the private sector (Ibid.).

In the case of Iran, too, we can conclude that oil revenues have been one of the barriers to the formation of democracy in Iran and have made the state independent of society. Already, with the decline in oil revenues and external pressures resulting from the globalization of the economy and the need for government to engage with civil society, we are witnessing the private sector activity in the economy, which is the ground for the growth of democracy. Although the globalization of the economy has limited the scope of government activity and forced it to give political, economic and social benefits to society, due to its oil revenues it is still a major actor in the economic arena; we are witnessing the continuation of the state-run economic system in Iran. It keeps the state independent from the society and not allows the spread of democracy and civil society.

5. Foundations for Democratization

Democracy, as a culture rooted in the West, is spreading throughout the world and is becoming a public culture. This culture also has a relatively solid base in Iranian society and is intended to replace the undemocratic culture of Iran. The Iranian people have welcomed this culture and its values, such as human rights, political freedoms, free elections, citizenship rights, press freedom, and so on. They have shown a willingness to establish democracy in harmony with their culture and religion.

"The experience of democracy is related to both political and cultural phenomena. Democracy is no longer a luxury but a necessity. Just as industrialization requires competence, expertise, and conscious individuals, democracy requires a change of mentality; in other words, it requires a spirit of tolerance, acceptance of others, and a party and pluralistic system that are rooted in the human behavior and conduct. One must also be free from his/her being under subjugation.

From the collective 'self' dissolved in a mass of the community he/she becomes an autonomous and rightful citizenship." Of course, the Iranian society is still far from that level and is transitioning from the current semi-democratic situation created since the second of June 1997 to true democracy (which does not mean a perfect democracy).

In recent years, there have been developments that have brought about democratic aspirations in the Iranian society. These developments, both internally and externally, are the result of the globalization process (Sharif, 2002: 102). Internally the changing context of the population, increasing literacy, increasing the level of awareness and participation of women, and the growth of urbanization have led to the growing spread of Western ideas such as democracy, civil society, human rights, participation, and so on. Demographic changes have given rise to a new middle class of intellectuals, staff, and academics.

The emergence of the new middle class and the formation of numerous political parties and groups, especially after June 1997, have provided the basis for the growth of civil society and religious

pluralism, which we will discuss below. We now describe the internal developments in Iran that have raised popular awareness (Weysi, 2004: 99).

5.1. Generational substitution

One of the factors behind the change in Iranian political culture and the acceptance of global values, such as democracy, is the replacement of generations. Due to the declining mortality rate and birthrate growth in recent decades, Iran's demographic structure has changed. Iranian society is a young society and population change is changing values and cultures. "Youth in population building" increases the pace of change.

5.2. Urbanization growth

Another internal factor is influence of Western culture and the growth of urbanization in Iran. One consequence of urbanization is the growth of the middle class, which has relative economic prosperity and is politically educated, more knowledgeable compared to the illiterate, and able to judge social issues. Especially after the June 1997, this class has achieved identity and wanted to be more involved in politics (ibid).

5.3. Women's social involvement

In recent years, we have witnessed an increase in literacy among women, which has promoted the social status of this layer and, ultimately, made them aware of their rights. They have demanded equal rights with men, which is one of the manifestations of democracy.

5.4. Increasing literacy

Increasing literacy is one of the factors contributing to the cultural growth and political participation of the people in political affairs and gives a foundation for the formation of civil society. "Expanding university education in the society means strengthening, deepening and expanding modern discourse in society. Since the university is a place of knowledge production, it establishes a close link with critical rationality (Sharif, 2002: 88).

Critical rationality is a constant critique of our knowledge, beliefs, and opinions about the world. Human beings are often not confined to the academic domain and inevitably embark upon criticism of society, government, and governors. On the other hand, students' modernity, innovation, criticism, and energy make them carriers of intellectual movements.

5.5. Growth of the press

This factor has also played an important role in the development of the political culture of individuals in society and has raised the level of public awareness. All of these issues have associated with Iran's internal developments and have led to social movements to achieve democracy. Of course, one of the important factors in the growth of democratic thought in Iran is the information and communication revolution that has been shaped by the process of globalization and has led to the expansion of civil society in Iran (Oraei, 1995: 66).

The growth of communications and the access of people to the means of communication, such as the Internet, satellites, television, telephones, etc., have increased the people's information and expanded the culture of liberal democracy in Iranian society. Traveling and migrating outside of Iran has increased considerably, which in turn has raised popular awareness. Influenced by these increasingly complex connections, democratic beliefs have been introduced into all aspects of Iranian life to which we list them.

- A) Scientific beliefs such as: 1- Belief in the impossibility of progress without new knowledge, 2- Belief in the necessity of acquiring new knowledge, 3- Belief in rational political legitimacy, 4- Belief in the pragmatism.
- B) Social beliefs: 1- Individual fundamental rights, 2- Social democracy, 3- Economic liberalism, 4- Giving people the right to protest, 5- Importance of public opinion that individual's fundamental rights and freedom of thought that are among the most essential element of democracy. It is modern. The arrival of such ideas has shaped the intellectual class of Iran.
- C) In the field of religion: (1) religious tolerance, (2) critic of religious fanaticism, (3) separation of religion from politics. Of course, because of the resistance to and against these beliefs, these beliefs have not become widespread and have found acceptance only among the young, academics and intellectuals.
- D) Political beliefs: 1- Becoming authority a law, 2- Rule of law, 3- Belief in democracy, 4- Belief in the republicanism. Of course, these beliefs have also met with resistance from formal and informal sources of power and have had little impact. If the process of reform and democratization continues, we hope that they will expand and come to fruition (ibid).

The changes that have taken place in the political culture of Iran are the result of interaction with the outside world; ultimately, they created some demands among which democracy is at the forefront. As noted, by the impact of domestic developments (change of population structure, literacy growth, youth population, etc.) as well as the pressures of globalization, we are witnessing developments within Iran that are leading to increased Political awareness and democratic demands in Iran.

At the societal level, we are witnessing the emergence of a new middle class that represents the democratic tendencies of society; with the formation of this class, political parties and groups, religious pluralism, people's desire for participation and the formation of civil society have been formed. These developments mark the emergence of a period that heralds the transition from undemocratic political culture to democratic political culture (Weysi, 2004: 192).

5.6. Emergence of new middle class and new demands

"The spread of democratic values and the creation of democratic institutions around the world fueled the expectations of Iranian youth to live in a freer society. Neither the illegality of use of satellite dishes nor the auditing of the press and books could have shed a wall around Iran and its extremely curious young generation. As a result, over the past few years, the Iranians' sense of liberation from foreign domination has become a demand for freedom for some form of political participation. Globally, democracy has transcended the boundaries of civilizations and countries. At the same time as the Iranian presidential election in 1997, nearly half of the countries in the world had a political system of democracy, double the number of such countries at the time of the victory of the Iranian revolution 20 years ago.

This class gradually revealed its appearance in the 1993s. "Unlike the upper and lower classes, the new middle class has had economic, political and ideological conditions for emerging and operating as a political force because it had both a weak economic relationship with the government and had politically a sense of alienation. It has been deprived of organized participation in politics and ideologically incompatible with the ideology of Islamic traditionalism. The new middle classes are usually engaged in intellectual and administrative work, receive modern education and receive salaries. Teachers, academics, students, bureaucrats, intellectuals, artists, professionals, writers, doctors, engineers and lawyers and so on are the main components of the new middle class".

The new middle class is capable of analyzing and criticizing the policies and structures of the ruling class because they have a high education. This class wants to engage in politics and civil society. These developments signify the emergence of a period that heralds the transition from undemocratic political culture to democratic political culture (Weysi, 2004: 88).

5.7. Formation of political factions

Following the spread of the discourse of democracy, after June 1997, the ground for the participation of political groups and parties became more and more desirable. According to Dr. Bashirieh, "Iranian society is structurally pluralistic and can create a multiparty system.

Some active socio-political divisions such as traditionalism and modernism, Islam and secularism, constitutionalism and absolutism, Etatism and economic liberalism form the foundations of such a structural tendency to form political pluralism." In the early years of the revolution, the ruling group, with the help of ideological power and the power of official repression, prevented the activity of non-insider groups and managed to isolate them. In the shadow of the power of repression, political unity prevailed and group conflicts declined, but non-insider groups were not completely suppressed; after the war, through the relatively open political space, these groups and parties began to engage in political activity in the framework of constitution (Shaygan, 1995: 77).

The propagation of the desires of each group created a gap in society, and even profound gaps such as the gap between tradition and modernity, which had been forcibly suppressed in the early years of the revolution, were reactivated.

"At present, the Iranian political society can potentially produce a multiparty military, at least on the basis of two major and active intersectional gaps: the first is the historical conflict between traditionalism and modernism that has become apparent in the realm of political, social, cultural, and social life, and the other is a quasi-class gap between etatism and economic liberalism that forms the basis of right and left tendencies in the field of economics.

At present, these two conflicts have created the most acute and sensitive disputes in Iranian political and social life. Thus, four potential blocs of political parties are conceivable: 1- bloc of traditional Islamic conservative parties and groups, 2- bloc of Islamic reformist parties and forces, 3- bloc of liberal, nationalist and secular parties, 4- bloc of Social-Democratic parties and groups" (Ibid).

One of Mr. Khatami's slogans in the June 1997 election was the formation of civil society. "The necessary tool for achieving this was the formation of popular institutions such as parties, unions and syndicates, to facilitate and regularize public participation in affairs and to play a mediating role between the nation and the state. The consequence of such a situation is to accept the principle of accountability in society, to clarify matters, to hold the government accountable to the nation, to rule the competition of civil institutions with one another, and finally to introduce a new definition of the rights of the nation and the state.

Although the space has become more open since the June 1997 and the ground has become more conducive to party activity and competition, there are still barriers to non-insider party activity; on the other hand, various groups are under pressure and we distance still from creating a democratic and competitive society.

"In democratic, party-based systems, the power of civil society allows for a rethinking of the activities and programs of parties. But in the traditional, but modernizing, system of Iranian society, party activity is still evaluated and propagated as a political anomaly, divisive force or in opposition to the ruling authority (Fouran, 1999: 19). Political activity is in fact a populist approach and mass participation rather than party and organizational activity as the basis for peaceful change in power, competitiveness, and political institutionalization. "In the current situation where the outlook for party activity is negative, the parties' rotation from power to civil society and vice versa will be in the far horizon".

5.8. Religious pluralism

One of the issues that has been affected by globalization and the rise of popular consciousness in Iranian society is the question of religious pluralism; namely the different readings of religion, the prevalence of many different interpretations of religion, and the desire to adapt it with the democratic

principles provide a good ground for adapting religion to global democratic doctrines. It is also a result of the influence of democratic ideas and beliefs by globalization on the layer of Iranian intellectuals.

"Of course, the record of trying to reform and revive religion in Iran is longer, but generally speaking, none of the previous intellectual efforts to redefine Islam have had so much democratic burden. In many previous attempts, the return to the early days of Islam and early Islam has been the focus of attention, while in the recent attempts the move to reconcile an interpretation of religion with modern issues has been remarkable, with an emphasis on dynamism and interpretability of Sharia and religion.

The purpose is to reconstruct religious beliefs in the light of the requirements of the new society by interpreting them. According to Abdul Karim Soroush: "We do not want to invent a religion, but we want to rebuild it and re-understand it. Reconstruction is re-understanding; human understanding is in flow and evolution" (Ibid).

After the victory of the Islamic Revolution, a specific reading of the ruling body and a particular group of religion took on a dominant hegemonic form. But the new reading of religion takes a form of democratic and pluralistic approach. "The political domination of the clergy, the jurisprudential and religious interpretation of Shiite political theory, and the ideological domination of post-revolutionary Islamic rule also demand a new and specific form of interpretation and reform in religious thought. The Islamic Republic is the first full-fledged Shiite clerical regime in Iran equipped with modern tools and is a completely new experience. For this reason, the new reformist thought took some time to recover.

In this thought, the past conflicts (between the Muslim world and the Western colonialism, religion, science and technology, etc.) no longer make sense. "The group seeks a democratic interpretation of religion and believes in the interference of religion and clergy in politics. This group seeks to reconcile religion with democratic principles.

In his article *Political Islam and the West: Civilizations Dialogue or Clash of Civilizations*, while acknowledging democracy as a universal value symbolizes legitimacy, Esposito acknowledges that Islamic movements oriented to democracy, political freedom, and the necessity of institutionalization and the shaping of political culture and values, as a prerequisite for a robust civil society, face serious challenges.

Many Muslims have embraced the idea of democracy, but disagree on its precise meaning; they try to Islamize democracy through new trends, including revising traditional Islamic concepts - shura, consensus and ijtihad - or reinterpreting texts in supporting parliamentary democracy, elections and religious reforms." In contrast to this group, which advocates the interference of religion in politics, a group of intellectuals also opposes the interference of religion in politics. This group believes that with the involvement of religion in politics, the religion is damaged and polluted with worldly and politicized matters; this becomes a pretext for rulers and others to serve their own interests (Qureshi, 2002: 90). Political religion serves the interests of a particular class (the clergy), and the public interest is sacrificed to the interest of the group who seek to preserve their power with an ideological sense of religion.

"On the other hand, by religiousizing politics, politics and government are harmed; political expediency is confined to religious details and political life loses its dynamism. By combining religion and politics, society is harmed because it restricts the freedom of thought and criticism, which is a condition of progress and development."

Although Islam is a political religion, this combination is not possible and desirable in the modern world. "Modernization implies a process of secularization," says Majid Tehranian, quoting Max Weber about modernization. In general, most intellectuals have identified the following as inevitable consequences of religion's involvement in politics: the inclination towards a kind of theocracy and oligarchy, the establishment of a privileged ruling class, the personalization of politics and political relations, the interpretability of religion and its influence on political instability, disparity between religious laws and social changes, the perception of political opponents as enemies and the elimination of rival groups and conceptions, the intensification of division between ethnic groups and religions, the creation of absolutist and totalitarian tendencies to monitor whole private and public life, disregard for

the functional competence in assignments, hypocrisy and distrust, creating plurality in the sources of political legitimacy and consequently, creating plurality in the centers of power, imposing fundamental restrictions on political participation and competition, creating a spirit of elitism and expertism, undermining basic human rights and freedoms, minority intolerance and gender discrimination etc. (ibid).

It is evident that contemporary intellectuals have acquired these experiences based on their observations and experiences of post-revolutionary Islamic rule. Of course, we must acknowledge that without the connection to the outside world and without acquaintance with more efficient political systems such as Western democracies and without comparing religious rule with non-religious democracies such results would not have been achieved. Of course, another group of intellectuals insists on the link between religion and politics, as long as it meets the criteria of democracy. On the one hand, this group seeks to revive and gain the legitimacy of the political system; on the other hand, it seeks to respond the democratic demands of the nation, the global pressures, and the global public opinion that are exerted through organizations, nongovernmental groups, and large governments.

5.9. Increasing popular awareness and demands

Throughout Iranian history, tradition and charisma have always been sources of state legitimacy (as was the case in the first decade of the Islamic Revolution). "But now it seems that tradition and charisma cannot provide a reliable basis for legitimacy in the long run. The main root of the crisis of legitimacy is to be found here.

On the other hand, in contrast to the inevitable weakness of those two sources, for legitimacy of system, it is increasingly referred to the legal authority and legalism (in a sense that guarantees democratic rights and freedoms in civil society). After the presidential elections of 1997, legalism has emerged as the dominant political discourse and has been embodied in concepts such as civil society, freedoms and democratic rights" (Weysi, 2004: 122).

6. Legitimacy of democracy

To assess the legitimacy of democracy, one must refer to the views and opinions of the elites and the masses. Among the elites, the most important opinion is certainly related to the charismatic leadership of the revolution. For Imam, democracy is a Western concept that is not suitable for our Islamic society. When choosing the type of government, he repeatedly urges people to vote for the Islamic Republic (Khomeini, 1992, Vol. 3, 457-482). In some instances, the Imam has described the opponents as traitor, westernized, enemy of Islam and an enemy of the nation (Fawzi, 2005: 240-241).

In general, Islamic fundamentalists demanded the implementation of Islamic laws and did not care much about democracy, while liberals and some leftist groups resisted (Hosseinzadeh, 2007: 118). Liberal and Marxist groups advocated democratic rule. Liberal parties and groups such as the Association of advocates, the Freedom Movement, the National Front, the Party of Iran and the Association for the Defense of Freedom and Human Rights have issued statements in opposition to Imam Khomeini's views on democracy (Fawzi, 2005: 240).

The Freedom Movement and Mr. Shariatmadari opposed the principle of Velayat-e Faqih and emphasized the rule of the people and democracy (Bashiriyeh, 2002: 38). The People's Guerrillas have banned the Islamic Republic's referendum (Fawzi, 2005: 242). The Mojahedin Khalq also believed in the compatibility between Islam and democracy and regarded Imam Khomeini's views as short-minded and fatalistic (Hiro, 2007: 213). In sum, liberals and Marxists were in favor of secular democratic rule and believed in the impossibility of integrating democracy and Islam. Of course, religious liberals believed in a democratic structure alongside the cultural atmosphere of Islam. But Imam Khomeini's supporters emphasized a republic based on Islamic law (Fawzi, 2005: 243-244).

In terms of people's views on democracy, their election in various elections shows that although they cared about democracy, its concept was overshadowed by religion. In fact, there was nothing higher

than Islam for the people. For example, Imam Khomeini's words in determining the type of government of the Islamic Republic created the feeling that if one does not vote for the Islamic Republic, he/she is a disbeliever (Hiro, 2007: 164).

Or when the Imam demanded that the people vote for the Ulama in the Assembly of Constitutional Experts, the people again responded to his request, so that 58 out of 72 of them were from Hozeh (Fawzi, 2005: 254). Finally, the principles of the Divine Authority and an institution like the Guardian Council were incorporated into the constitution. This constitution was approved by 99% of the people. These cases suggest that religion was more legitimate than democracy in post-revolutionary Iran.

7. Reform Period and Democratization

We have considered the reform period from President Mohammad Khatami's inauguration to President Ahmadinejad's inauguration. In the following, each of the research concepts has been narrated in sequence during this period.

7.1. Separated Elite

We must first determine whether there was the separated elites in this period. There are three factors to identify the separated elites: disagreement on the rules of political action, weak inter-factional relations, and insecurity (opposition and violence).

7.2. Rules of practice

There are various ways of governing society and government, and different categories of governments are formed based on these methods. In societies with separated elites, there is a disagreement between the elites over the rules of political action and each faction tends to have its own rules of political action.

During the Reform Movement, there were at least two important approaches to these rules of practice. One was the reformist movement, which advocated a democratic system and emphasized legalism, and the other the conservative faction that emphasized religious rule and advocated authoritarian methods.

The interesting thing about these two factions is that because they both have roots in the Islamic Republic, they accept the Islamic Republic's principle, but emphasize different aspects. The reformists emphasize the republican side and the conservatives emphasize the Islamist side. There are, of course, other groups known as the internal and external opposition. However, according to our definition of elites based on paradigm of elitism, they are not considered elites because they do not have the capacity to exert political influence at the national level.

To illustrate the approach of both parties to the rules of political action, one can refer to the views of prominent figures on both sides. In the conservative wing, people like Mesbah Yazdi and Rahimpour Azghadi described the views of this faction. They believed in the presence of religion on the scene and the link between religion and government and emphasized the opposition of modernism, democracy, and civil society to the sharia of Islam. They considered religious nationalists to be perverse and called reformists liberal and secular (Mirsalim, 2005: 412-422).

Mesbah Yazdi's views are important in several respects. Because he delivered the most explicit and transparent views on this approach. He also represented much of the Hozeh lecturers and combatant clergy and had the explicit and tacit support of the highest authorities in the system. His constant pre-sermon speeches of the Friday prayers in Tehran showed that he had a serious acceptance of his views by the conservative faction (Mirsalim, 2005: 424). Some of his views include emphasizing theism against humanism. From the Islamic point of view, the legitimacy of the government does not depend on the people (Newspaper Resalat, 2000). The principle of law is Islam and other laws are secondary and are validated by the supreme leader (Abrar Newspaper, 07/09/2006).

Democracy is illegitimate; Islam is incompatible with democracy; also the tolerance is denied; the freedom is restricted to the rules and regulations of Islam. The opposition to leadership or other Islamic edicts such as inheritance and retribution deserve punishment. According to the fatwa of Sunni and Shia jurisprudents, if anyone insults God and the Prophet and the blessings and necessities of the Islamic religion in the wilderness and could not be delivered to the police or the Islamic court, it is incumbent upon any Muslim to execute him (Newspaper Sobh Emrouz, 2001). Rejecting Liberalism, Individualism, and the People's Vote (Newspaper Siasat Rouz, 2001). Rejecting External Interpretation of Religion, Religious Pluralism, and Different Readings of Religion (Newspaper Siasat Rouz, 2001). Rejecting Secularism and the Privatization of Religion (Resalat newspaper, 2001). Necessity of Velayat-e Faqih (Journal of Didar Ashnah, No. 24).

Necessity to use coercive force to execute Islamic precepts (Newspaper Sobh Emrouz, 2001). Countering Cultural Influence by Intellectuals, Universities, Cultural Centers (Mellat Newspaper, 2001). The Need for Ideological Selection for Many Important Jobs and Authorities and the Need for Violence Based on Right (Newspaper Sobh Emrouz (2001).

Some of Rahimpour Azghadi's views on government include the rejection of capitalism and liberalism and the emphasis on religious rule (Journal of Shoma, No. 362-363). The Involvement of Religion in Government, Economics and Society (Newspaper Siasat Rouz, 2005). The critic is one who seek Islamic dignity and authority and seek to heal the wounds of the government, not one who disagrees with the principle of religious rule (Newspaper Siasat Rouz, 2006).

In contrast, the reformists such as Khatami, Hajjarian, Abdi, Aghajari, Ganji, Alawitabar were describing their positions. We should note, however, that there were differences between the reformists because of the internal diversity of this process.

Among the main issues highlighted in this process are: orientation to democracy, emphasis on human rights, strengthening of civil society and the use of peaceful means, political development, denial of judicial supervision, the right to political protest, denial of organized violence, presence of juries in political courts, public openness of the courts, de-segregation in foreign policy, inability of the state religion to preserve religion authenticity, independence of religion and authority from political institution, independence of artistic and cultural goods market and reduction of ideological Supervision (Mirsalim, 2005: 442-469). Below we review the views of a number of prominent intellectual figures in this faction. The content analysis of Mohammad Khatami's remarks, who was the leader of the reform, indicates that political development constituted 50% of his speeches with the determinants of legalism, pluralism, freedom of speech, etc. (Hosseinzadeh, 2007: 119).

The most important issue for him was the crisis of participation and legitimacy of the system, and his most important plans were to reach civil society, to clarify the policy and overall the political development (Hosseinzadeh, 2007: 200-205). Some of the Hajjarian beliefs include economic development through democratization (Newspaper Doran Emrouz, 1999). Opposition to ideological rule and interference in the private sphere, as well as attention to political ethics, the development of social capital, and trust (Newspaper Seda Edalat, 2006). Politics based on the ethics and dialogue (Abrar newspaper, 2001). Abdi believes that the core of the reformists' vision is democracy and the enforcement of will of the people in a peaceful way that requires strengthening civil society and government accountability (Iran newspaper).

7.3. Impasse of the conflicts

Impasse of the conflict is a situation in which the groups and factions involved have no power to overpower the other groups and impose their domination. To this end, the strengths and means of power of the various factions must be analyzed. These tools include factions' popular bases, legal and political backing, and ultimately force.

Studying the Reform Period, we can say that the power of the Reformist faction was only in its popular base, through which it would win the election. The Conservative faction, in contrast, had the legal backing and the tools of force. Legally, this faction was able to control the legislature and the executive, which were the two elected powers, which were implemented by the Guardian Council and the Judiciary. The two institutions were appointed and could oversee the law of parliament and the conduct of officials. Thus, what the reformists had in the balance of power was legally under control and supervision of the institutions controlled in turn actually by the conservatives.

On the other hand, by law, television was considered to be national media, which was practically conservative. Other factions were thus deprived of a highly influential media (especially the lower classes). In addition to legal protections, the Conservatives also had the power of force. The military and police forces, as well as the mobilization, were frequently used during this period. In fact, the conservatives have used every opportunity to pressure the reformers with these two tools.

During the Reformation period, there was also the situation of the separated elites. In addition to the fact that the two political elites, including conservatives and reformists, had different approaches to the ways in which they exercised power, they were unwilling to work together and the Conservative faction resorted to violent acts. Since the Conservative faction enjoyed legal superiority and the means of force, it was able to impose its dominance on the political arena. Because the reformists did not use their only means of interacting with power, the broader social base. The reformists demanded civil actions and did not want to resort to mass movements. As a result, in the power struggles, they achieved nothing and the conservative faction, at several stages of the election, expelled them in largely undemocratic ways (disqualification). So no compromises were made and the democratic pact was not concluded. This is a process consistent with theory.

Even if democratic allies were formed during this period, the possibility of a weak democracy would be established. Because democracy was not highly legitimized among the elites and the masses. The conservatives feared democracy and political development in general, and the major reformists also defended democracy to some extent that did not conflict with the Islamic Republic (Azghandi, 2006; 40). For most people, democratic principles were not a major concern. There was no strong party system in this period either. The parties were still unstable, there was no party discipline; the parties were dependent on persons and had little to do with their social base. Then, in the case of a democratic treaty, it was still not possible to consolidate a democracy, unless the legitimacy of democracy increased or a strong party system was established.

8. Conclusion

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the legitimacy of democracy has not been high. However, the situation has fluctuated in different periods. Never before had a strong party system been formed in Iran. Most of the parties were weak and dominated by individuals or were suppressed by governments and lacked good organic links with society.

As a result, political activities in Iran has often been non-party. Usually prominent politicians have been decision-makers or have been made under pressure from the masses. Although there have been major fluctuations in the status of democracy in Iran, there has been no consolidation of democracy.

Another point is that one of the most important reasons for the lack of compromise for the establishment of a democratic pact in Iran was the failure to form a conflicts impasse. In theory, the only thing that has been the dominant factor in reaching a democratic pact is the impasse of the conflict. That is, the ruling elites were not in a position of balance of power and one of the elite factions was able to impose its power on the other elite factions. As a result, there was no need for compromise to formulate a democratic treaty.

We can explain this by the fact that after the democratic pact, if democracy is achieved, the process will end, but if we do not, we will have a return to the status of separated elites. Then, if there is no

conflicts impasse, there will be an authoritarian government, and if it occurs, this cycle will be repeated until we finally achieve consolidation of democracy or authoritarianism.

Another obstacle to party activities, of course, is the low culture of participation in the society. Individuals in Iranian society tend to act individually rather than pursue their own interests in different groups. This makes both civil society and powerful parties fail.

In general, in order to get out of this impasse, there is a need to develop in every way, democratic awareness and culture and participation in society. Because there is rent in the country, the state is rentier one, the policy and government are influenced by the idea of rentierism. This was and is a result of the major source of government revenue from unproductive resources. A result of this trend is the underdevelopment of productive and value-increasing economy. The government inevitably has to resort to widespread bureaucracy and rent distribution in society. Rent-seeking and renting are prevalent in society. The rentier state prevents the development of civil institutions and the political, economic, social, and cultural development whose result is the failure of formation of civil society, political parties, and consequently the political blockade and consequent cultural imposition. In spite of widespread corruption and widespread discrimination in society in all fields, it has formed a mass society and populism that disrupts the process of democratization and creates obstacles in transition from traditional and undemocratic to democratic governance.

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