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**The Constant Friction between Tradition and Modernity
in Iran: The Rise and Fall of the Iranian Reformists**

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The Constant Friction between Tradition and Modernity in Iran: The Rise and Fall of the Iranian Reformists

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Abstract

In Iran, there is a long history of a constant friction between Islamic-Iranian tradition and the concept of “western modernity” including civil liberties and democracy. This friction was first manifested almost two centuries ago during the “constitutional movement”, when some aspects of “western modernity” were infused into then monarchical political system at the expense of the marginalization of Islamic-Iranian tradition. Iran’s 1979 Islamic revolution was a focal point in this challenging history. The post-revolution governance structure was arguably based on a mix of Islamic concepts and democratic aspects of western modernity. Nonetheless, by no means, the revolution was able to put an end into this long-run friction. While the first decade of Islamic revolution reflected a relative dominance of Islamic concepts, the rise of reformists in late 1990s during the government of ex-president Mohammad Khatami dramatically shifted the balance in favor of western-flavored civil liberties and democracy. This paper investigates that period of time, 1997-2005, when tendencies towards pro-western policies, civil liberties, and western models of democracy was on the rise within the government, the parliament, and large parts of media and civil societies. Ironically these tendencies led to the full collapse of the reformists and their marginalization from the Iranian political sphere for almost a decade.

Keywords: *Tradition, Modernity, Iran, Reform, Reformist Movements, Radicalism.*

The emergence of political movements in Iranian history can be analyzed on the basis of the frictions between tradition and modernity. This friction has existed since the emergence of the concept of modernity in Iran. At first, some social reformers and political philosophers tried to interpret modernity through the lens of traditional views and argued that what so-called modernity is a substantially adaptable concept with clear roots in Islamic tradition. In fact, they have argued that such modern aspects of Islamic thought have been historically marginalized due to socio-political contexts of traditional societies rather than Islamic thoughts per se. These reformists have emphasized that Islamic thought has similar elements to the so-called western concepts of liberty, freedom, and equality. In contrast, another group of Islamic political thinkers believed that western concept of modernity was the creation of colonizer of the Islamic world whose end goal were to westernize the Muslim communities and therefore making them ripe to be colonized.⁸⁵ Contemporary political history of Iran has witnessed a constant challenge between these conflicting views, their emergence and decline, and their subsequent political rise and fall. Of course, the interaction between these competing views has created a complex and opaque socio-political reality in Iran and it is not always easy to over-simplify those complexities by associating a particular social or political movement with one of the views above.

In this work, the historical evolution of the conflict between modernity and tradition is discussed in the context of Iranian society and political structure. In doing so, political reform movements that have attempted to reconcile between modernity and tradition in Iran are identified and the reasons for their decline is examined, with a particular focus on the rise and fall of reformists between 1997-2005.

⁸⁵ Set aside another group of fully secular philosophers who had moved beyond Islamic thoughts arguing that Islam should be left to achieve “progress” and thus be totally westernized (Bigdeli, 2013, 5).

Historical Analysis of the Confrontation Between Modernity and Tradition in Iran

The Qajar Era: Iranians have faced modernity and its components for over a century old. The beginning of this introduction can be traced back to Iran-Russia wars in 1918. After Iran's heavy defeat from Russia, the question was raised in the minds of the political elites: why Iran was lagging behind? The main answer given to this question was the lack of modern science and political and social order. With the hope of what it had to offer, the political elite started to pursue modernity and its various components. The initial steps were taken for nearly half a century during the period of Nasir al-Din Shah, one of the Qajar kings. Following the Ottomans, the main component behind the reforms in this period has been the idea of *Tanzimât*. From this perspective, reforms were implemented by the political elite from top to down. In the model, because the reforms are implemented top-down, the state can control such reform and therefore the political system can be maintained. This idea emphasizes the formation of a modern state and regularity agencies within the government, while power of the king is reduced to some degree by modern advisory institutions.

This idea was effectively defeated by Nasir al-Din Shah's assassination and was replaced with the idea of constitutionalism which had its roots in 1906 command of the king to form a parliament. The most important difference between this period and the previous period was the role of the people in the constitution. In the idea of the *Tanzimât*, these were the political elites who spearheaded the reform, but people played a significant role in the constitutional movement. Also, a powerful camp of constitutionalists was formed by the support from religious leaders. The main outcome of the constitutional movement in Iran was the formation of the Shura Council with the vote of the people to restrict the power of the Shah (king).

The creation of this council gave rise to the serious conflict between tradition and modernity. The fundamental issue that led to this conflict was the relations of the laws passed by the Majlis (parliament) with the *Shari'ah* laws. Traditional and religious movements feared that the laws passed might be in conflict with *Shari'ah*. Even some orthodox clerics were of the view that any kind of legislation was solely specific to the *Shari'ah* and exclusively legitimized by religious institutions. These intellectual conflicts turned into physical conflicts and, since then, two movements, Shariatism and constitutionalism, were formed in the political circles of Iran (Katouzian, 1979, 159-180).

In a few historical events, the disputes between these movements even expanded beyond political controversies into the assassination of intellectual and religious leaders. The execution of Sheikh Fazlollah Noori, the main leader of Shariatism movement, led to the negative view of the religious establishment towards the constitutional movement which has symbolically had a significant impact on contemporary Iranian history. As Jalal al-Ahmad, one of the then most important intellectuals writes in his book *On the Service and Treachery of Intellectuals*:

“since the day of Sheikh Fazlollah Noori's execution, westernization has been carved as a hot spot on our foreheads and I consider the corpse of Nobleman like a flag on the roof of this country, which was inspired by the dominance of westernization after 200 years of struggle” (Al-Ahmad, 1979, 402).

The continuous clashes between supporters of constitutionalism on the one hand and the efforts of the kingdom system for the continuation of its exclusive authorities on the other hand not only weakened the national government and central authority, but also led to the widespread pessimism of the people towards the constitutional movement. These events eventually led to insecurity all over in Iran. The modern expectation of the people for the establishment of the house of justice and the council gradually shifted towards a basic demand for the creation of a powerful central government. At this time, with the advent of Reza Khan, a powerful army, a new interpretation of modernity began to come into the Iranian political debate.

The Start of the Exposure of Iranian Public to Modernity

First Pahlavi Era: Reza Shah pursued a fierce modernization program (inspired by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk) during his twenty-year reign. The establishment of a systematic army and a powerful bureaucratic government were the main reforms of Reza Shah. On the other hand, he ignored the legacy of Constitutional Revolution (1905-1909) and its liberal and democratic ideals. Instead he mainly emphasized on industrial and cultural developments. The system was extremely totalitarian.

“Cities were forcibly westernized, and many of the traditional items of dress were eliminated, including the veils of women. His reign did a great deal to unify and stabilize Iran, but, as was true with Ataturk, his solutions were too often superficial. The West was industrialized; so Iran had to be industrialized. There was little rationality in the process” (Cottam, 1964, 12).

Arguably, Reza Shah had the ability to establish the first modern central government in Iran. Nonetheless, his mandatory modernization process while ignoring the social and religious context of the country by eliminating Iranian traditions and Islamic symbols led to the marginalization of a great majority of Iranian people. As such, the first Pahlavi era was focused on industrial modernization, while it ignored social modernization and political development, as two pillars of modernity. The Parliament was actually artificial and the representatives, already elected by Shah, were unable to confront his decisions. It seems that the rivalry between tradition and modernity was going on in favor of modernity in this era, however, the liberal and democratic aspects of modernity were still lacking. In fact, in Reza Shah's point of view, regardless Iranian traditional structure, the modernization process might be possible only through the way of coercion and autocracy. In contrast, since the government of the Shah held all the power, this kind of modernization led to despotism and not a modern democratic society, preventing people from political and even economic participation, which in turn led to lack of social, political and economic development (Avery, 1990, 164).

Second Pahlavi Era: The resignation of Reza Shah in favor of his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, resulted in a more open political atmosphere and revival of democratic aspects of modernity as well as the rebirth of traditional institutions in Iran. However, this revival did not last more than a decade and came to a halt by Mossadeq's collapse in 1953 coup. Thereafter, a new stage of modernization started in Iran which lasted until Iranian Revolution in 1979. Similar to the first Pahlavi era, the most evident characteristic of modernity in second Pahlavi era was its emphasis on industrial development and the expansion of western popular culture.

Although there was a parliament and the elections were held periodically, Shah still effectively remained as the ultimate decision-maker. Again the liberal and democratic aspects of modernity were marginalized in favor of its industrial and bureaucratic aspects. On the other hand, because of growing centralization and significant waves of migration to main cities and therefore the creation of a semi-modern social class which was reluctant to accept the traditional authorities, a form of social conflicts and inconsistencies were on the rise in Iran's social space.

Ignoring the religious roots of the majority of people, creating a closed political space, and causing high rates of economic inequality were of the elements that led to the gradual dissatisfaction of the public and the eventual occurrence of Islamic Revolution of Iran. According to a prominent theoretician of Iranian contemporary history, Ervand Abrahamian, the main reason of the Revolution was that Shah sought economic-social modernization that resulted in the development of a new middle class and industrial worker class, but he could not pursue modernization in the political sphere. This inability led to the erosion of links between the government and the social structure and developed a growing gap between the governance and the modern social groups and forces. Most importantly, this process destroyed the few bridges between the political institutions and the traditional social forces especially the influential individuals in Bazaar and the religious establishment. Therefore, the 1979 revolution took place not only because of the extreme development or lack of it, but because of the inconsistent development processes (Abrahamian, 1982, 524-525).

Post-Islamic Revolution: As a result of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, tradition regained the upper hand in the friction between tradition and modernity. In fact, the idea of a return to Islamic traditions and values was at the heart of Islamic Revolution.

In sum, the historical development presented above shows that tradition and modernity has always been part of Iran's social and political context and over the past two hundred years, neither of these two views has been able to eliminate its opponent. The evolution of the reform process in Iran should be analyzed and understood in the context of this friction and rivalry between modernity and tradition.

The Revival of Modernity in Post-Revolutionary Iran

The post-revolution modernity discourse was first officially revived in the Iranian social and political circles in 1997 after the election of Mohammad Khatami to presidency, when the political faction called Reformism entered Iranian politics and produced its own discourses and institutions. The three important victories of this faction are Iranian presidential election (1997), Iranian local elections (1999) and Iranian parliamentary election (2000). Iranian Reformism created a great hope among its advocates who had a new understanding of tradition and religion and sought to obtain concepts such as democracy and freedom as the main components of modernity. In this context, the political and social development took precedence over economic development. The following factors are the main developments which created the background for rising of the reformist government: growing body of middle class that were not ideologically consistent with the traditional school of thoughts, the progress of higher education and therefore increasing the human capital of the middle class, the expansion of the urban culture in a way that created conflict with the ideological system resulting from the traditional forces, the formation of some gaps in the political structure which is itself a premise for a wider shift towards democracy, cultural and social pressures from growing economic and cultural globalization, and the rise of democratic pluralistic interpretations of religion and Shiite political theory. The Islamic reformist groups or the Modern Right began to challenge the incumbent ideology by forming a coalition with the new middle class and civil society institutions (Bashirieh, 2002).

The Rise of Reformist Government in 1997 and its Background

The rise and victory of the political and social movements are not based on a single cause, but are rooted in the evolution of previous developments. Jalaeipour believes that Reformism is a movement, which its occurrence has resulted from the emergence of certain conditions and structures the center of which is modernization or democratization: "The emergence of movements like the Khordad 2nd Movement needs some structural conditions namely a social structure that is exposed by the modernizing policies and processes" (Jalaeipour, 2000, 17).

The Reformist discourse was inaugurated along with such concepts as civil society, religious democracy, and freedom of speech, human rights, social justice and stabilizing the Constitution.

The victory of Reformism in presidential elections was the result of the social, political, cultural and economic developments rooted in the era of "Administration for Construction" (Hashemi's government) and the previous developments. President Hashemi's government approach to different social, political and economic issues was a key factor in the victory of Reformists. In other words, the acceptance of Reformism was partly due to the rejection of the rival discourse (Tajik, 2008).

The Economic Background

Privatization, export-oriented policies, expansion of consumerism and economic adjustment policies in Hashemi's government which necessitated political development are among the economic reasons for the rise of Reformism. Although these economic efforts led to the enhancement of Iran's economy as a whole and some specific economic developments, it also led to increasing levels of economic inequality. Indeed, the missing link in this economic policy was justice and equality (Jamshidi, 2014, 33-66). Justice and equality, a fundamental ideal of revolutionary discourse, was almost belittled in Hashemi's economic policies. On the other hand, these policies led to the emergence and the expansion of a middle class which came into conflict with the governing ideological discourse. The middle class had new ideals in different realms, showing rapid cultural and social developments in Iranian society including the development of the modern urban culture and its conflict with traditional values.

The Social Background

The following were some of the main social changes observed during this era: 1) a demographic change in population pyramid and unprecedented prominence of young population, 2) the progress of urbanization and the consequent pursuit of welfare and economic ideals, 3) the expansion of modern socio-cultural institutions including NGOs, 4) the unprecedented growth of Iranian university student population, 5) the formation of a group of student movements who were socially westernized and politically reformist, 6) the emergence of new middle class and the formation of modern intellectual circles, 7) the overall shift in social values and norms and the formation of new value systems, and 8) the emergence of a new generation of political elite mainly graduated from western universities. These factors mutually supported each other in creating a social environment that was ripe to accept the reformists' agendas. Most importantly, the expansion of middle classes in the society led to the possibilities of social mobility. According to Karl Deutsch, social mobility is a process through which the traditional social, economic, and psychological beliefs and affiliations has the potential to change and people will be readier to accept new behavioral patterns and new paradigm of sociability (Ghavam, 2003).

The Cultural Background

The main characteristic of Hashemi's government was the economic development of the country which itself was a result of the structural necessities of post-war era. Therefore, based on this predominant discourse, economic issues were at the center of government's agendas and programs, while the cultural and political issues were deliberately marginalized. As a result, the Reformists were able to use such a policy gap as a path toward victory. Also, the establishment of cultural centers and publishing of several newspapers by municipalities are some examples of efforts by Hashemi's associates for changing some of the elements of traditional culture and moving toward the new cultural system.

Hashemi used technocrats as executive ministers and allocated only the political ministries (Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Ministry of Intelligence and Ministry of Justice) to clerics. The country's move toward technocracy was pursued even stronger in the second term of Hashemi's government. The technocrats had different cultural values and norms in comparison to Revolutionary values and discourses. The technocratic government had hidden secular elements in its nature. As a result, by the facilitation of technocratic administrative machinery, many cultural changes occurred in the Iranian society's structure and its power distribution system. The social, cultural, and educational modernization in Hashemi's government also led to the strengthening of political and social ideals of the new middle class which was emerging as a prominent social group and political power (Ehteshami, 1995). One of the main advocates of reformism were some active groups of university students who had already changed their ideals from Islamism to pursuit of political liberalism.

The Intellectual Background

The formation of various think tanks and intellectual circles as the theoretical backup supported and strengthened Iranian Reformism. The emergence of several journals and their wide distribution was another important factor in the development of Reformist discourse. They reflected the intellectual ideals of the circles of Islamic reformers. Kian was arguably the most important among this group.

The monthly Kian was the most famous journal of religious intellectualism in post-revolutionary Iran. It was established in 1991. One of the most prominent religious intellectuals, Abdolkarim Soroush, a powerful critic of the governing system was a frequent writer in Kian. This journal became the main base for the critics of the political system who had a new interpretation of religious concepts. It was used as an epistemological source by the younger generation of reformists who played an important role in political shift of Iran. Its main articles were on the topic of relationship between Islam and democracy, women in Islam, epistemological debates, hermeneutics, and issues central to Islam. Some of these issues were new interpretations of Revelation and Qur'an, critical texts on Christianity and religion in general, and the critique of prevalent interpretations of Fiqh or jurisprudence. In other words, this journal tried to reinterpret religious ideas in a more compatible way with modern values like western flavored democracy, pluralism, and human rights.

Kian was a circle to create a link between modernist liberal characters and a medium for explaining the thoughts of religious liberal views. It went beyond a theoretical journal and became a link for different movements of a new emerging generation. Kian became more radical when reformist youth and its political pioneers joined its ranks. It acted like a shadow of Reformist Movement in pursuing its agendas (Ghouchani, 2000).

CSS⁸⁷ was another institution of reformist movement to shape their discourse and plans. In the first structure and under the rule of Hashemi Rafsanjani, the head of the center was Mousavi Khomeini. In the Hashemi administration, by the pressure from the right spectrum, the left-leapers were pushed out of key posts. Therefore, the left-wing intellectual spectrum inevitably leaved policy domains and moved on to their intellectual and research activities. At this time, Khatami from the Ministry of Guidance and Mousavi Khoini, Saeed Hajjarian, and Abbas Abdi (all of whom later became influential administrative figures in Khatami's government) went to the Strategic Research Center.

This center had good access to data and it didn't have any administrative responsibility. So it designed the first draft of political liberalization plan. For example, Saeed Hajjarian once said: "Since the year of 1368 ... the political deputy of the center had just one project which was the project of "political development" that I was responsible for. The subject of political development was "democratization" (Hajjarian, 1384).

During this era in the post-revolutionary Iran, one sees a kind of emphasis on the necessity of cultural and political development, wide political and social reforms, open social and political space, the process of integrating people's ideals in the stabilized forms like civil society, parties, tolerance, freedom of speech, pluralism, legal positivism, the growth of media outlets, holding political conferences in the universities, and discussing political and social issues in media (Akhavan Kazemi, 2009).

The Fall of Iranian Reformism

The developments mentioned above along with various factors led to Khatami's victory in 1997 and the official dominance of Reformist discourse during his government. However, gaining political power was a challenging step for Iranian reformism in the way of its institutionalization. In contrast, political pitfalls facilitated a rapid failure of this movement leading to its absolute loss in the ninth Iranian presidential election (2005). As a result, the reformists were ousted from political power for the next eight years. Different reasons are provided for the failure of Reformist movement in 2005, but two main factors namely political radicalism and intellectual radicalism are examined here as the primary sources of this failure.

Political Radicalism

Since inception, the Reformist movement was suffering from an inconsistent heterogeneity including a wide range of activists and politicians with different inclinations from radical fanaticism to conservatism, from traditional to modern ideas and from secular to religious intellectuals. The main weakness of this movement, however, was the gradual dominance of radical factions in different aspects including the dominance of political radicalism.

One of the most important aspects of political radicalism was attacking Hashemi's government in different realms. Even Hashemi, whose administration facilitated the rise of Reformists, framed as the symbol of conservatism and all the political structure overruling the society. Hashemi was presented as the main representative of all the values, norms, programs, policies and principles based on which Hashemi's government had evolved and operated. Attacking Hashemi and criticizing his actions meant criticizing the traditional conservative right-wing politics in the power circles. Mohammad Ghouchani wrote "Hashemi's family are a symbol of

⁸⁷ The name of the "Center for Strategic Studies in the Presidency" was selected by the Khatami government. In the new constitution, changes took place in the structure of the center and Mohammad Reza Tajik was selected as the first chairman of the center.

secretive power relations in a society in which latent diplomacy is the age-old technique of politicians and the government's legitimacy is decided, not in the ballot box, but in the backrooms of authoritative families" (Ghouchani, 2000).

Later on, main Reformist leaders found that attacking Hashemi was a strategic mistake, not only for losing his support for the movement, but also as the manifestation of political radicalism of the movement warning a wide range of political establishment about socio-political risks of such an extreme approach. Also, they criticized *Howzah* very harshly. *Howzah* was a symbol of religious and Islamic knowledge and identity of the society. In sum, the main weakness of Reformism was such kinds of radical behaviors which were intolerable by the Iranian political tradition and society in general.

The radical part of the 2nd of Khordad Movement was dreaming to make so rapid radical changes in Iranian institutions and political systems. One of the Reformists' strategies in their political radicalism was the motto "conquer trench after trench". This motto became famous after their victory in the three aforementioned elections. It suggested the gradual conquest of all the governmental institutions by the Reformists. Such an aggressive totalitarian approach led to the 1999's social riots, mainly in Tehran, which was firmly confronted by the establishment and a large part of the society. As such, reformist radicalism gradually created a momentum of radical reactions in rival movements and the establishment which eventually set the conditions for Reformists' failure in 2005.

Iranian politicians and activists dealt with most difficult disagreements and disputes during the period 1997-2005. This caused a kind of convulsion in the country which was the result of fanaticism and radical beliefs of Reformist groups and factions that triggered radical reactions in the conservative parts of the society. The growth of radicalism in the country caused huge political gaps which created the conditions for conflict and violence. Such conflicts led to the polarization of society. The Reformists chose a confrontational attitude instead of using the available space in the country to pursue public's ideals and exploiting the country's ability for development. They sought to conquer more "trenches" in the power structure of the country, but were faced with the heavy hands of the traditionalists.

In a clear response, Conservative factions within Iran's state were successful in creating a wide coalition against such threatening political radicalism. It is also documented that even Khatami himself repeatedly warned against this kind of radicalism (Akhavan Kazemi, 2009). Such an internal confrontation was manifested in the idea of "*moving beyond Khatami*" amongst radical factions of the movement. As a result, the coalition widely legitimized and agreed upon restricting the reformist movement, banning liberal newspapers, and disqualifying candidates for parliamentary elections. This clampdown on dissent led to increasing political apathy among the movement's advocates who had great hope for subsequent victories and rapid changes in economic, social, and political conditions in Iran.

Intellectual Radicalism

One of the other aspects of radicalism in the reformist movement was the intellectual aspect. The reformist discourse included divergent goals and objectives. Some factions sought to stay committed to Islamic principles by establishing a democratic system compatible with religion through conceptualizing an adaptable interpretation of Islam with pillars of modernity. On the other hand, some factions tried to fully westernize and secularize the society by being outspoken against popular Islamic principles and traditions. These secular activists were the most radical advocates of reformist movement. Such radical attitudes were the Achilles' heel of the Reformist movement, because it caused fierce reactions on the part of other movements and large factions in the society. This movement was so extremely elite based and it separated from lay people so it loosed popular base.

The intellectual radicalism of the Reformist movement created severe challenges for the movement because it made the movement seen as having major conflicts with traditional and religious norms of the Iranian society. The intellectual radicalism shook the traditional beliefs of the society. Questioning the legitimacy of Shiite clerics in political domains, the authenticity of Revelation and traditional interpretation of Islam and different conceptions of Shiite history (the predominant form of Islam among Iranian people), relativism about religious epistemology, opposition to the sanctity of Revelation and seeking a secular attitude were all among the radical aspects of Iranian Reformism. This radicalism is best evident in the sentence "God can be criticized too" which was then a famous sentence among Reformists. The Iranian society and the power structure (which used religion and tradition as a backbone) widely resisted this radicalism and as a result the Reformist movement was legitimately ousted from power in 2005.

External factors

In addition to the above, a number of international developments and factors also contributed to the fall of the reformists in Iran. The most important of these developments were the second Gulf War in the Bush era, the collapse of the idea of Dialogue of Civilizations,⁸⁸ and the emergence of a number of anti-U.S. left radical movements around the world. The U.S. military presence in the region, especially in Afghanistan and Iraq, and naming Iran as part of an axis of evil alongside North Korea practically diminished the political slogans of the reformists in Iran. The withdrawal of Israel from Lebanon in 2000 and the special circumstances in the region after September 11th, led to the formation of new discourses centered around resistance and a return to the slogans of the revolution in Iran.

In sum, a combination of political and intellectual radicalism and external factors set the background for the failure of Reformism in Iranian society.⁸⁹ The reformist movement was substantially suffered mainly from an entrenched naivety amongst the movement about the socio-political context of Iranian society and an underestimation of the level and size of reaction that their aggressive radicalism could arise.

Iranian presidential election 2005

Iran's ninth presidential election took place in two rounds, the first on June 17, 2005, and the run-off on June 24. Mohammad Khatami, the previous President of Iran, stepped down on August 2, 2005, after serving his maximum two consecutive four-years terms according to the Islamic Republic's constitution. The election led to the victory of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the hardline mayor of Tehran, with 19.48% of the votes in the first round and 61.69% in the second.⁹⁰

In addition to the failure of the reform discourse and ripe internal conditions, some international factors such as Chavez's movement in South America, the victory of Hamas in Ghaza, and the 2006 war between Lebanon and Israel, also strengthened and supported the revolutionary discourse inside Iran, leading to its victory in the Iranian society.

Conclusion

The contemporary history of Iran shows that the conflict between tradition and modernity has been part of Iran's society with one or the other having the upper hand at different periods of time, but never able to sustain its position. This situation can be a sinewy condition of the confrontation of tradition and modernity, which moves towards its equilibrium point. The continuation of such a conflict involves this social learning that social forces recognize each other and in some way these two situations cannot easily be eliminated from the political and social scene of Iran.

⁸⁸ Former Iranian president Mohammad Khatami introduced the idea of Dialogue among Civilizations as a response to Samuel P. Huntington's theory of a Clash of Civilizations. The term was initially used by Austrian philosopher Hans Köchler who in 1972, in a letter to UNESCO, had suggested the idea of an international conference on the "dialogue between different civilizations" (dialogue entre les differences civilizations) and had organized, in 1974, a first international conference on the role of intercultural dialogue ("The Cultural Self-comprehension of Nations") with the support and under the auspices of Senegalese President Léopold Sédar Senghor.

⁸⁹ As a clear political implication, the president Rouhani's campaign tried to frame his moderation political approach in opposite side of radicalism.

⁹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iranian_presidential_election,_2005

On the other hand, Iranian leaders are also finding out that for better governance and improvement of the economic and political conditions, it is better to have a balance between these two movements. As a result, the democratic institutions are established in Iran and the right to self-determination on the ballot box has become the main strategy of all political movements. Civil liberties are recognized, in particular, to young people, and, on the other hand, the institution of religion continues to have sufficient power in the pillars of power and social construction. This balancing requires time to achieve its equilibrium and sustainability. For example, after the decline of reformist movement by Ahmadinejad's presidency, the traditionalist movements were able to get the pillars of power. But due to the expansion of the radical space in favor of the tradition, this movement also has seen its decline. From the synthesis of modern reforms and fundamental traditionalist movements, the moderate form of reformism has recently emerged in the form of clergy Hassan Rouhani's political campaign and administrative machine.

From studying Iranian Reformist case, it could be argued that it would be almost impossible to democratize institutions and to expand the civil liberties in a society, unless taking carefully into consideration the social and political sensitivities of that society. In Iran, the Shiite interpretation of Islam and its institutions are still the still widely dominant across different aspects of the society. In such a well institutionalized socio-political context with a set of centuries-old religious and traditional structures in place, it seems too simplistic to expect a quick multifaceted social shift towards, particularly controversial aspects of, western modernity to happen. This piece of work tried to show how the dominance of radical factions within Iranian Reformists facilitated a widespread concern amongst political elites as well as the public at large about huge polarization risk in the way of such a radical social and political shifts. This inevitable political backlash has been seen here as the main reason behind the movement full collapse in 2005 presidential election and subsequent social developments.

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