Rethinking Agency and Structure in the Study of Democratic Transition: Iranian Lessons

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1. Introduction

In 1979 Islamic Revolution human agency triumphed over structural constraints to overthrow the Shah's autocratic regime. But such a triumph was full of contradictions. The Revolution brought a new regime with a new constitution founded on the exceptionalism created by politics, personality, and perspectives of Ayatollah Khomeini. Under this polity the rule of law is not universal since the office of *velayat-e faqih* (guardianship of jurist) stands outside the constitution. The struggle within the Islamic Republic in Khatami's reformist government (1997-2005) represented the efforts of the in-system reformists to bind the office of *velayat-e faqih* by the constitution. But the reformists failed and the conservative-hardliners consolidated their autocratic rule in June 2005. Paradoxically, the 2005 reversal turning point was coincided with the centennial anniversary of the 1905 Constitutional Revolution, a revolution that divided Iran into a pre-modern and modern era and marked Iran's first major attempt to establish the "rule of law" (*hokomat-e ghanoun*) and replace arbitrary despotic rule. This paradoxical coincidence suggests Iran, after a "century of revolution"[1] and reform, still remains in a "painful and indefinite"[2] democratic transition. This coincidence also raises a significant question as to whether contemporary Iran will complete its transition to democracy. Why would a reformist government be replaced by an extreme autocratic regime? What social and political factors inside Iran make the Islamic Republic strong and Iran's democratic forces weak?

The "chicken-or-egg" controversies in science are constant. In social science one of these controversies has taken place over the issue of agency and structure, political voluntarism and structuralism, short-termism and long-term socio-historical determinism. The present study keeps an equal distance from vulgar voluntarism and structural determinism to examine Iran's interrupted democratic transition. This synthetic and dialectical approach combines elements of voluntarism and structuralism. It provides us with a useful theoretical tool in understanding the complex picture of conflict between political voluntarism in favour of democracy, and structural constraints resistant to democratization in Iran. This study offers an operational definition of structure and agency. The structural factors will be measured by three power structures of *state*, *class*, and *transnational power*: the nature of the Iranian state (political level), the extent of societal development (socio-economic level), and the global structure of power (international level). The agential factors will be examined in terms of the leadership capability (individual level), the organizational arrangements (institutional level), and the intellectual discourse (cultural/ideological level).

2. Dialectics of Structure and Agency in Democratization

Rueschemeyer, Stephen, and Stephen in *Capitalist Development and Democracy* introduce a "three power structures" model in which the interaction between *state, class,* and *transnational power* structures shape the societal and political outcomes.[3] On this view, the state structure is of great significance in promoting or preventing change toward democracy; there is a correlation between the paths towards democratization of the state and the type of regime. There is also a correlation between democratization and the socio-economic structure; the success or the failure of democratization depends largely on the extent to which social groups/classes have equal and sufficient access to the state resources. Finally the structure of international politics contributes to the politics of democratization/de-democratization.

Capitalist Development and Democracy, in spite of all its limitations, has successfully synthesized three structural theories of social change: modernization theories, dependency/world system theories, and Barrington Moore's structural-historical approach. It provides us with a wide-ranging structural argument that takes into account the interaction of internal and external structures, and social (class) and political (state) factors. Rueschemeyer, Stephan, Stephan reject either optimism of modernization theories ((linear-universalism) or pessimism of dependency/word system theories (negative correlations between dependency on the one hand and development and democracy on the other). They follow Barrington Moore's particularistic tradition in which a positive correlation exists between capitalist development and democracy *only* under particular class structure. They advance Moore's historical-structural tradition by including two more structural factors: state and transnational power. Yet, like most structural accounts, *Capitalist development and Democracy* pays less attention to the role of political agency in social change and regime transformation. This brings us to the new generation of democratization theories: the voluntarist theories.

The practice of post-1970s democratic transitions led to the rise of a new generation of democratization theories and shifted the focus from structuralism to voluntarism. This theoretical turn was due to the new practice of contemporary democratization in which democracy evolved in countries without the presence of all structural conditions required for democratic transition. The new generation of democratisation theorists argued that political agency can make a significant difference, given the absence of required level of development and the immaturity of capitalism, the ineffective task of class coalitions and the effective acts of individual elites in recent democratic transitions. The actor-centred school, Adam Przeworski argues, was a reaction to the mechanistic approach of the early modernization theories in which individual roles remained unnoticed.[4] The school was a strong calling for the role of wise politicians to by pass all structural obstacles in transition to democracy. These theorists, identified as the "transitologists," give more credit to the individual agency, the leadership skills, and the choice and strategies of political elites in democratic transition. The transition period, they argue, is a momentum of political uncertainty in which countries can escape their past and transform the present into an uncertain future. Democratic transition is a political game. All is needed is a group of wised political elites who know *what*, *when*, and *how* to act.[5] Democracy, Doh Shin argued, "is no longer treated as a particularly rare and delicate plant that cannot be transplanted in alien soil; it is treated as a product that can be manufactured wherever there is democratic

craftsmanship and the proper zeitgeist."[6] Transition to democracy is bound, to use O'Donnell and Schmitter's concept, by the "structuralist indeterminacy" and the elite's strategic choice would determine the outcomes.[7]

Voluntarism of the transitologists is a reductionist approach for two reasons: first, it, Jean Grugel observes, "does not explain adequately why outcomes are different, except by presuming inadequate leadership styles or the adoption of incorrect policies." In other words, "when democratizations go wrong it is, by implication, because individuals 'get it wrong.'"[8] This approach reduces the success or failure of democratic transition to some psychological factors and sends structures to holidays. Second, it underestimates the role of civil society. Strong and active civil society, transitologists argue, may or may not serve democratization. The transitologists admit that the Solidarity Movement in Poland, the student movement in South Korea, and mass mobilization or, to use O'Donnell and Schmitter's concept, the "resurrection of civil society"[9] in the Philippine, Argentina, and Chile were conducive in the politics of democratization. But civil society movement is helpful as long as long as it is controlled by the elites. Strong and independent civil society, Karl observes, could hinder a successful democratic transition since the acts of civil society are not consistently predictable. The regime hardliners are likely to jeopardize the process of democratization if the demands of civil society exceed the capability of the regime softliners.[10] To the transitologists, the primary actors are individual elites and civil society is of secondary importance. This reductionist assumption ignores that the success of democratic transition, as John Markoff observes, depends on the interaction between social movements (civil society actors) and the elite reformists.[11] The pressure from below (civil society) provides invaluable soft power to be used in the negotiation from above (the negotiation of softliners with hardliners). Last but not least, in non-democratic countries where democratic institutions are weak, civil society organizations could serve as multifunctional organs. They could educate and also aggregate the citizens' interests where the party politics is weak. Iran's third wave, as will be discussed in this study, provides evidence regarding the significance of civil society forces.

Having discussed the two top theoretical literatures on regime transformation we now turn to the third generation of the literature. This generation, as James Mahoney and Richard Snyder observe, represents an integrative approach in which elements of structuralism and voluntarism, or structure and human agency are synthesized.[12] In this approach, democratization, as Ruth Berins Collier argues, is, at once, a class-based project and a political-strategic process in which class structure, elites, and institutions work together.[13] Similarly, Samuel Huntington attempts to make a bridge between the historical and structural "causes" and the "causers" of democracy, which correspond to the actors and agential factors.[14] By the same token, Juan L. Linz and Alfred Stepan suggest that a society's structural characteristics "constitute a series of opportunities and constrains for the social and political actors;" and yet, "those actors have certain choices that can increase or decrease the probability of the persistence and stability of a regime."[15] From this integrative perspective, "structures both enable and limit human agency;" they "operate as environments that delimit the range of possible actions without determining action. From this perspective, "people act through structures, rather than structures acting through people." In other words, "actors can choose how to use structural resources and potentially improve these resources."[16] On this view, social

conditions are not the ultimate causal factor. Human choices and the very concept of leadership suggest that individual/political agents can make a significant difference in democratic transition.[17] Political agency, however, is very much affected by balance of power, both among *social* and *political* forces. Democratic transition, as Tatu observes, "will take place under conditions in which power resources are so widely distributed that no [*social* or *political*] group is any longer able to suppress its competitors or to maintain its hegemony."[18]

On this synthetic and dialectical view, individuals, ideas, and, to use Barrington Moore's words, "cultural values do not descend from heaven to influence the course of history."[19] They are rooted in and influenced by social structures. Yet, "if you ever doubted the importance of the individual in history," writes Timothy Garton Ash, "consider the story of Ayatollah Khomeini": An old man who invented a new and modern political system founded on an old and apolitical concept of *velayat-e faqih* (guardianship of jurist). This political system, which would not exist without him, is "*Khomeinism*."[20] This study subscribes to such an integrative and synthetic approach to examine the complexity and difficulties of democratic transition in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

3. 1. Structural factors: Nature of the State

The Islamic Republic of Iran hardly fits the current categories of states given its distinctive character of institutional arrangements and intellectual foundations. I shall first define what the Islamic Republic of Iran is not and then turn to what the Iranian state stands for. Contrary to the conventional wisdom, the post-revolutionary Iranian state is not a traditional Islamic state for a number of reasons: first, it is conceptually an oxymoron. There is no such thing as an Islamic state because Islam never introduced a model for state. Islamic state, as it is claimed to be, is a modern phenomenon invented by contemporary Islamists, not congruent with historical Islam. As such, the essentialist position of both Muslim apologists and Western Orientalists is neither conceptually nor historically legitimate. Secondly, theoretically, Ayatollah Khomeini's doctrine of the *velayat-e faqih* was a major departure from historical Shiite Islam. Thirdly, Ayatollah Khomeini's doctrine of Islamic state, Sami Zubaida argues, proved to be "Islamic in its personnel" at best since the institutional forms of the Iranian state have no "particularly Islamic features." Not only does the Islamic *sharia* "constitute only one element among many,"[21] but Ayatollah Khomeini favoured a relatively dynamic interpretation of the *sharia* in the socio-economic policies of the Republic. More importantly, the survival of the state, the interests of the state and of the statesmen trumped the rulings of the Islamic *sharia*. In 1989 Ayatollah Khomeini explicitly argued that the state ruled by the *vali-ye faqih*, if necessary, can stop the implementation of the *sharia* and dismiss the founding pillars of Islam in order to protect the general interests of the state.[22]

As such, the state founded by Ayatollah Khomeini is by no means a revival of tradition, or a reassertion of traditional Islamic values. Many scholars suggest that the Islamic Republic is a modern construction. They identify the regime with "populism,"[23] "third world fascism,"[24] a "mishmash of traditional theocracy and modern democracy"[25] and a "post-traditional theocracy."[26] And yet, the concept of theocracy is not helpful in pointing out the nature of the Iranian state for the following reasons: Because, writes Chehabi, "God does not exercise His sovereignty directly," therefore,

a group of men rule in His name. These men may indeed believe that they do not act in their own interests and are instead instruments of the unfolding of a divine plan – but Communist leaders also claimed to act in the name of historical necessity...which does not prevent us from analyzing their mode of rule independently of the bases of legitimacy which they claimed.[27]

Furthermore, "Iran is not ruled by clergy but by a politicized section of it," given the separation of political and religious leadership in post-Khomeini era.[28] As such, the intellectual foundation of the Islamic Republic fits neither a traditional-Islamic state (theocracy), nor a modern fascist state, nor a solely populist state.

Iran's post-revolutionary state, in spite of its initial attempts, failed to establish a totalitarian state; "Iran's totalitarianism was stillborn."[29] According to Chehabi, the Iranian state lacks major features of totalitarian government as defined by Carl Friedrich.[30] The Iranian state failed to maintain an "official ideology," given the growing pragmatic tendencies in domestic and foreign policies of the state.[31] Because Islam is not an ideology there is hardly any substantive content to so-called Islamic ideology in the politics of the state. The Iranian state is short of another hallmark of totalitarianism, i.e., a modern single-mass centralized political party. The Islamic Republican Party clearly failed to fulfill such role and was dissolved in the mid-1980s. The decentralization of Islamic faith and openness to diverse interpretations together with the elite factional politics contributed to the development of limited pluralism in the Iranian state and overruled the success of totalitarian tendencies.[32] By the same token, a relative diversity of opinion in the press, and the existence of independent-private sector in economy suggest that the state does not hold two other features of totalitarianism. The last hallmark of a totalitarian state is terror and yet "terror is not specific to totalitarian regimes and can also appear in authoritarian ones."[33] According to Linz, there is "no correlation between the use of terror and the type of non-democratic regime."[34] In sum, if the intentions were realized, the Islamic Republic might have been a totalitarian system; however, "such an outcome was prevented by the organizational and ideological peculiarities" of the post-revolutionary state.[35] Likewise, Abbas Milani argues, "Iran has been ruled by a would-be totalitarian regime." More precisely, the Islamic Republic "has failed to establish a tight totalitarian hold on power not for lack of trying, but because various strata of Iranian society, particularly women and students, have fought vigorously to thwart the regime's attempts to deprive them of their rights."[36]

Having defined what the Islamic Republic is not, it is time to turn to define what it really is. A closer look at the institutional arrangements of the Islamic Republic leads us to better understandings of the nature and the typology of the state. "The state in the Islamic Republic of Iran," as Mehdi Moslem put it, "is unique in its institutional arrangements and distribution of power," because the state is "multilayered and institutionally diffused."[37] This distinctive institutional arrangement, to use Daniel Brumberg's phrase, is "dissonant institutionalization,"[38] which, at once, combines Ayatollah's Khomeini's theory of *velayat-e faqih* with the republican institutions inherited from the 1905 Iran's Constitution and adapted from the constitution of French Fifth Republic. Given its republican institutions, the Islamic Republic, at surface, shares more features with the contemporary modern Western states than with theocracy. In

substance, however, the republican institutions are subordinated to the rule of the *vali-ye faqih*. Unlike parliamentary democracies, the parliament in the Iranian state must share its legislative authority with the Guardian Council whose jurist members are appointed by the *vali-ye faqih*. "In fact the constitution clearly states that without the existence of the Guardian Council, the Majles is devoid of sovereignty." The Majles must also share its legislative authority with the Expediency Council whose chair and most members are appointed by the *vali-ye faqih*. Similarly, unlike presidential democracies, the president in the Islamic Republic is ranked next to the *vali-ye faqih*. Article 113 of the Constitution suggests that "after the leader, the president is the highest official in the country." Furthermore, the *vali-ye faqih* holds many institutional "extended arms,"[39] ranging from the powerful Revolutionary Foundations to the parallel institutions accountable, not to the republican institutions, but to the *vali-ye faqih*.[40]

The Iranian state maintains a mixture of "post-totalitarian" and "authoritarian" features; a polity, to use Juan Linz's definition of authoritarian regimes, "with limited, non-responsible political pluralism; without an elaborated and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities; without neither extensive nor intensive political mobilization, except at some points in their development, and in which a leader, or, occasionally, a small group, exercise power from within formally ill-defined, but actually quite predictable, limits."[41]

Iran's limited political pluralism is best represented in the two-tier electoral system in which "candidates are screened, genuine opposition candidates are prevented from running and political parties are discouraged."[42] Citizens are implicitly divided into two groups of insiders (*khodi*) and outsiders (*gheir-e khodi*), excluding the latter from a meaningful political participation. Furthermore, the relative decline of intensive political mobilization and a weakened ideological mentality of the elites in post-Khomeini era indicate that the state remains less totalitarian and more authoritarian. Last but not least, the elite's factionalism and the inner contradictions in the constitution contribute to the leadership diversity in the Islamic Republic. As Chehabi points out, three top clerical leaders of Iran's reformist regime subscribed to different versions of the Islamic Republic: the *vali-ye faqih* Khamenei was in favor of totalitarian state, the Chair of Expediency Council, Rafsanjani, favored "a variation on Janos Kadar's famous (post-totalitarian) dictum 'those who are not against us are for us'", and President Khatami was more proximate to democracy.[43] As such, the state synthesizes totalitarianism, post-totalitarianism, authoritarianism, and democracy.[44]

Like the Pahlavi regime, the Islamic Republic remains a rentier state and drives its financial power, not from citizen's tax, but mainly from oil resources. This makes the state capable of forming and controlling social-political forces without their consent. "All cannot be blamed on oil," writes Abbas Milani, "the vicious cycle of despotism and political and economic corruption existed long before the discovery of oil in the early 1900s."[45] However, given the nature of the state, the power of oil and petro-dollars remain central in shaping the state's relations with civil society. The Islamic Republic of Iran has used this power, making the state a domain dominated by particular rent-seeking interests and imposing certain policies and importing certain goods to buy loyalty and organize anti-democratic groups. Iran's autocratic rentier state has subsidized and supported all Revolutionary Foundations (*Bonyads*), supervised and controlled by the *vali-ye faqih*, with gross annual income of almost half that of the state budget.[46] The

Rentier-state with a broker (*dallal*) economy has produced a new class whose interests and survival rest on the status quo. Most of the counter-reform forces belong to this state-sponsored class.

In sum, the nature of the state remains an "early post-totalitarian state", which lacks sufficient diversity and autonomy within the ruling elites and prevented the rise of a strong and independent democratic opposition. Hence, the failure of the state's softliners and the weakness of the democratic opposition prevented a peaceful democratic transition.

3.2. Structural factors: Uneven Development

Iran's complex socio-economic status under the Reformist regime deserves a closer look. According to Abrahamian, "by the early 2000s, most villages, not to mention towns (which constituted 65 percent of the country's population), had electricity, schools, health clinics, roads, and running water. The UN estimates that 94 percent of the population now has access to health services and safe water." By 2002, the literacy rate was 84 percent in general and 97 percent for ages of six to twenty-nine. Infant mortality and population growth, respectively, declined to 25 percent in 2002 and 1.2 percent in 2003. Life expectancy increased to 69 percent in 2002. By 2002, the number of university students increased to 1,700,000. By 2000, most farmers had radios, televisions and refrigerators, and the "regime distributed over 630,000 hectares of confiscated land to peasants." By 2003, Abrahamian argues, over two million used internet, "women formed 63 percent of the incoming university students, 54 percent of all college students, 45 percent of doctors, 25 percent of government employees, and 13 percent of the general labor force."[47] The GNP, as Ervand Abrahamian observes,

> grew 6 percent in 2000, 5 percent in 2001, and 6.8 percent in 2002 – the non-oil sector increased nearly 8 percent in 2002-2003. The tax revenue jumped 24 percent in 2002. The unemployment rate fell from 16 percent to 12.5 percent. Inflation was reduced from 30 percent per year throughout the war years to less than 13 percent in 2000. For the first time since 1979, capital flew into the country both from expatriates and from foreign investors. The International Monetary Fund – hardly a friend of the Islamic Republic – gave Iran high marks in 2002 for its economic growth and fiscal reforms.[48]

Yet, the complete picture of Iran's socio-economic development in the Third regime remains more complicated. The complex relation of political and economic development is reciprocal, not deterministic. Yet given the nature of the Iranian state, i.e., an autocratic clerical rentier state, Khatami and the in-system reformists truly believed economic development in the absence of political development is unsustainable. The reformists understood a sustainable economic development required political development to establish a transparent and accountable political system. In theory the reformists, Ansari argues, believed that "for the economy to grow, it had to be freed, not only from government restrictions (as the conservatives demanded) but from the vagaries of the mercantile bourgeoisie (a reality they obviously rejected)."[49]

A meaningful economic reform would indeed challenge the financial power of the hardliners and was resisted. Facing these obstacles, the in-system reformists, in spite

of their original agenda, gradually left the economy to the conservatives and placed more emphasis on political development. Given the nature of the Iranian state, this strategy brought only a relative success. The economic source of the hardliners' power remained almost untouched, providing them with stronger positions in politics. Hence, the in-system reformists were gradually forced to give up their main goal of political development. The more the reformists stepped back in politics, the more deteriorated became the economy. In the end, the reformists, and the reform in general, lost both economic and political grounds. The economic and political passivity on the part of the reformists brought in apathy on the part of the public.

The Reformist *regime*, in effect, pursued a mild version of the economic policy of the President Rafsanjani, a policy which had brought down his regime in 1997. The Reformist *regime*, in effect, tolerated the crony-clerical corruption and overlooked several important urban riots among the urban poor and the veterans of the Iran-Iraq War. By March 2002, Iran's foreign debt stood at $20 billion. By year 2000, 20-23 percent of the urban and rural households lived under the absolute poverty line[50] and the vast majority needed two jobs. By year 2001, the inflation ranged from 20 to 50 percent and more than 4 million Iranians remained unemployed. Each year more than 750,000 individual enter a labor market while the economy can offer only 300,000 new jobs annually.[51]

The reformist economic policy failed to stop the worsening class divisions. As an oil-centered rentier state, the Iranian economy was, and still remains, deeply dependent on both oil and dollar/Euro economy. This means that, writes Ansari, "there were stark differences in the standards of living between those with access to hard currency and those whose income was denominated in rials. Every time the rial was devalued, the cost of living for most Iranians rose just as dramatically as it fell for those with foreign bank accounts."[52] The gap between poor, living by rials, and rich, living by dollars/Euro, emerged in the Rafsanjani's government during and after the Iran-Iraq war. This "New Class", to use Milovan Djilas's classic concept, continued to enjoy its privileged position in the third *regime*. The "*agha-zadeh*" (clerical noble-born) became a common name attributed to the Ayatollah's sons and/or close relatives who are blessed by patrimonial politics and privileged by the rents received from formal and informal sources. Moreover, the emergence of this "New Class" was largely linked to the development of the revolutionary and religious foundations (*Bonyads*).

The socio-economic structure in the reformist *regime* remained uneven and unfavorable to a sustainable and successful democratic transition. This shortcoming was due to the following reasons: first, the rural poverty and unemployment were, and still remain, a source of ever growing rural migration to the urban areas, increasing the number of the urban poor. These urban poor have constituted the major part of the *Basiji* militia, which is organized by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and controlled by the conservative-hardliners. Because the reformists failed to communicate with this group, they, ironically, remained, and still are, a source of organized counter-reform activities. Petro-dollars and the rents/revenues produced by the *Bonyads* assisted the counter-reform forces to buy loyalty of a group of the urban poor.

Secondly, as James Mahoney argues, the history and practice of democratization suggest that "working-class strength is positively associated with democracy," but its strength depends on its organizational ability to form coalitions with

other class actors.[53] Although significant in number and subject to economic hardship, Iran's more than 4 million wage workers, excluding the salaried middle class,[54] has remained ineffective in recent democratic transition. The strict control by state over all the labor organizations, and the reformists inability to communicate with the working class or help them create independent organizations, contributed to the growing gap between the working class and the reformist government. Iran's working class, as Garton Ash put it, could have hardly performed what "Poland's did in the Solidarity movement twenty-five years ago."[55]

Thirdly, the rich and modern businessmen have remained critical of the Islamic Republic in private, but dependent on it for their businesses and formed commercial partnerships with the ruling *mullah*-merchant coalition. Like in other societies, Iran's upper class prefers its economic interest first. Because the economy is still controlled by the bazaari-merchants, many businessmen have chosen to remain a junior partner of the bazaari rivals with some economic benefits rather than a junior partner of pro-democratic forces. This class supported the 1997 reform movement and remained supportive during the first phase of the reform (1997-2000), given the boost in economy with higher prices for Iran's oil exports and growing foreign investment. But when the Reformist regime failed to bring about political stability required for sustainable economic activities they soon turned their back. Even worse, some segments of the private sector established links with the conservatives to maximize their economic interests. "In the words of reformist strategist Said Hajjarian, the private sector is now part of the problem facing democracy in Iran."[56] This class hardly constituted a social backbone for the recent democratic transition.

Fourthly, Iran's urban middle class remains the most complicated case. The middle class, as Rueschemeyer argues, has shown its inconsistency over democratization.[57] The interest of any class needs to be understood within a particular socio-political and historical context. In post-revolutionary Iran the traditional middle class with ties to the clerical authority have remained on the whole the most unfavorable social force to democratization. The merchants and the *mullahs* have historically been allies since the past century and worked together against the political establishment. The politics of the Islamic Republic has divided the two groups into forces for and against change. But like Iran's upper class the pro-reform bazaaris have often picked their immediate economic interests rather than long term comprehensive interests. They have worked with the state-sponsored bazaaris to maximize their economic interests. The modern urban-middle class has remained critical of the Islamic Republic, but dependent on it for its daily economic life.

Last but not least, the reform movement was largely depended on the youth and women. One major social support of the in-system reformists was the young people. With almost two-third of its seventy million population under the thirty years age, Iran, an old country with over 2,500 years history, "is also a remarkably young country."[58] It is estimated there is a million men and a million women attending universities. Post-secondary education, internet and satellite televisions have made Iranian youth well-informed about national and global issues. The youth population has remained most vulnerable to unemployment, inflation, and economic instability. As a result, the Reformist regime gradually lost the support of a significant segment of youth.

The 2005 ninth presidential election results partly represented the failure of the reformist regime in dealing with the uneven socio-economic structure of the Republic. The election results suggest the following lessons: first, the centre in Iran's political spectrum remains "ideologically to the right and economically to the left," contrary to where the reformists thought it was.[59] Secondly, some segments of the poor cast their vote for the moderate-reformist Karrubi, and the hardliner Ahmadinejad who spoke about economic inequality and social justice. Some segments of the middle class turned out to vote for the reformist Moin, the pragmatist-conservatives Rafsanjani and Qalibaf. Yet, the overwhelming majority of the twenty million who did not cast their vote belonged to the poor and the middle class. The lesson here is class as a variable alone cannot expose entirely the dynamics of reform and counter-reform activities. Iran is a divided society where some social classes identify closely with the establishment, while others have lost faith in the system. Thirdly, like other late-industrializing countries, in Iran *social* elements of democracy remains an essential part of democratization. Economic privatization without social justice brings about economic inequality, which results in support for populist agenda at the polls.

3.3. Structural factors: International Politics

The potential effects of international politics on regime transition are undeniable, but these effects are "mediated by domestic conditions" such as state structures.[60] The question is to what extent the international politics weakens and to what degree strengthens Iran's domestic conditions for democratic transition.

During the 1997 presidential-election-campaign, Mohammad Khatami made it clear he would pursue a policy of détente. Shortly after his election in an interview with the CNN, Khatami praised the American civilization, appreciated the American democracy and its link with religion, paid respect to the American people, acknowledged the legitimacy of the American government, condemned all forms of terrorism, and even expressed his regret for the 1979 American hostage crisis.[61] In September 1998, Khatami made a significant speech in the UN General Assembly, suggesting that all civilizations need an understanding of each other and engagement in dialogue with one another. Soon, Khatami's idea of "Dialogue between Civilizations" gained recognition by the United Nations, declaring the year 2001 the official year of Dialogue between Civilizations. Khatami's UN speech "raised hopes for a détente" with the U.S.[62] Washington's response to Khatami's initiatives was positive by toning down the anti-Iranian rhetoric and taking some small positive steps. On June 17, 1998, U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright responded: "we are ready to explore further ways to build mutual confidence and avoid misunderstandings. The Islamic Republic should consider parallel steps….As the wall of mistrust comes down, we can develop with the Islamic Republic, when it is ready, a road map leading to normal relations."[63] The administration of President Goerge W. Bush did not alter the Clinton administration's opening relations to Iran. In post-September 11 2001, Iran was instrumental in removing the Taliban government and establishing a pro-American regime in Afghanistan: not only did Iran support the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance but, as Americans admitted, Iran was, "extremely helpful in getting Karzai in as the president."[64]

The 2002 speech of President Bush, in spite of carefully choosing words to attack "non-elected" sections of the Iranian states, proved to be counterproductive. The

speech was instrumental in launching an anti-American united front, which brought together the *vali-ye faqih* and his traditional-conservative allies, the pragmatist-conservatives headed by Hashemi-Rafsanjani, the reformist President Khatami and the reformists. The hardliners were quick to cite national security when attacking the reform institutions and the reformers. The speech contributed to the consolidation of Iran's reverse democratic wave in a number of ways. According to Ervand Abrahamian, the speech "created a mood of the past, especially of the 1953 coup," forces the hardliners to raise the flag of national security, persuaded some reformers "to put their hopes on the back burner waiting for better days," and energized "Pahlavi royalists – who dread reform and hope that ultraconservative obstinacy will bring about a revolution.[65]

Iran's nuclear program began under the Shah's regime in the early 1970, was interrupted by the revolution and the war, and was revived since the early 1990s. The structure of international power itself much contributed to the revival of Iran's nuclear plan in a number of ways: first, the eight-year Iraq-Iran war, as discussed in chapter four, was started by Iraq and orchestrated by a number of Western and neighboring countries. Since war and peace were imposed on the Iranian state, the authorities planed to ensure the very survival of the state, pushing for the revival of the nuclear program. Secondly, Iran is surrounded with a number of nuclear powers ranging from Russia, Pakistan, India, China, and Israel, not to mention the United State itself, giving the existence of the American bases in almost all neighboring countries of Azerbaijan, Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and other tiny Arab Persian-Gulf states, and Central Asian countries such as Georgia and Uzbekistan. For all these reasons, both geopolitically and geostrategically, Iran, the argument goes, has no choice but develop its own nuclear program. Thirdly, for the top-ranking authorities, a powerful nuclear Iran would subscribe to the national prestige and public pride, postponing and preventing popular protests against Iran's economic, political, and socio-cultural crises. Fourthly, Bush's "axis of evil" speech, the quick American invasion of non-nuclear Iraq, and the American hesitancy to invade a nuclear North Korea, offered a pretext to justify Iran's immediate military concerns and prioritize security over democracy.

Neither Iranian nor American politics is monolithic. In both countries the authorities share common concerns about national security and yet differ in approaches. In the United States, liberals, conventional conservatives and neoconservatives are divided on how to deal with the question of Iran. The "regime change" is pursued only by the neoconservatives who belong to the American Think-Tanks such as American Enterprise Institute and the Project for the New American Century, and securely established in the Pentagon and to a lesser degree in the White House. They, unlike their fellow conventional conservatives, make no difference between factions inside the Iranian politics, and are determined to undo the American loss of 1979 revolution. Similarly, the Iranian authorities, in spite of their common concern on the very survival of the state and of the revolution, are divided on how to pursue this goal. For the in-system reformists, the strategy of "regime change" in general, and the American policy against Iran's nuclear program in particular, have no military solution and must be confronted, at once, with democracy at home and diplomacy in abroad. Security and democracy are interconnected, and democratization will ensure the security and survival of the state. They considered Europe, Russia and Japan to undo the U.S. efforts to isolate Iran, slowed down military programs in return for good relations with Europe, and

allowed more inspections and signed an additional protocol to ensure the United Nations that Iran's nuclear program is peaceful. For the conservative-hardliners, by contrast, the nuclear issue, like the American hostage crisis and the Iran-Iraq War, served as a pretext to dismantle the reform and reverse the democratic wave. The liberalization and democratization, the hardliners believed, provided Americans with the best opportunity to overthrow the Islamic Republic. Not all the in-system reformists were strong enough to encounter the anti-American rhetoric; some were "won over"; some practiced "self-censorship"; some "put the issue of reform on the back burner"; and only a few continued to fight for both democracy and national integrity.[66]

Iran's recent democratic transition is a post-Cold War phenomenon. The post-Cold War, and the post-September 11 2001, international politics has enabled and limited Iran's democratic transition. In other words, the structure of international politics has strengthened and weakened at the same time social and political factors/coalitions conducive for democracy. Significant segments of the middle class, the working class, the upper class, the youth and the women have been watching the spread of global democratic norms and the growing number of democracies. A group of dissident democrats openly spoke of the referendum movement, and organizing civil society institutions. The impact and pressure of the international Human-Rights organizations on the Iranian society and state are evidence. Iran's Nobel Prize winner for Peace, Shirin Ebadi, and other Iran's human-rights activists have established mutual relations between domestic and international human rights organizations. As a result, cultural and political globalization of democratic norms have contributed to the spread of democratic demands across the Iranian society.

But the post-September 11 2001 international politics also contributed to the consolidation of Iran's anti-democratic forces. It put an end to Iran's efforts to normalize foreign relations. Khatami's discourse of "dialogue between civilizations" was lost in the situation that followed President Bush's speech of "axis of evils," which placed Iran among rogue states. It then became obvious that, contrary to the hopes raised by the in-system reformists, Khatami's discourse and foreign policies could not provide the Islamic Republic with national security and stability against foreign threats. Likewise, for the hardliners, Khatami's discourse was no longer acting as a safety valve for protecting the entire regime from international pressures. The strategy of regime change and its practice in Iran's eastern and western neighboring countries, Afghanistan and Iraq, and the escalation of tensions over Iran's nuclear program created a national-security concern and helped the hardliners consolidate their power, split the reformists and marginalized their agenda for democratic transition.

In addition to the politics of the state, the social forces in civil society were touched by the impact of the post-September 11 international politics. A significant number of Iran's social forces remained sympathetic with the United States on the tragic events of the September 11; they have also been dissatisfied with the overall policies in the Islamic Republic. And yet they oppose the politics of the regime change declared by the Bush administration. The Iranian nationalism and the American difficulties in Iraq have contributed to this reaction, transforming diverse class interests into a united national interest. The position of the youth, the most dynamic social force in contemporary Iran, is a case in point. They are disenchanted with socio-cultural policies, dissatisfied with the economic situation, and disappointed with the politics of the Islamic

Republic. Yet they sought for an Iranian solution to such Iranian problems. As Garton Ash observes, the U.S. "would be making a huge mistake if it concluded that these young Iranians are automatic allies of the West."[67]

The conservative-hardliners were quick to take advantage of the current global politics in consolidating their power. Because of the Unites States military actions, Iran's most dangerous enemies in the East, Taliban in Afghanistan, and in the West, Saddam Hossein of Iraq, are no longer in power. Moreover, the new regimes consist of Iran's regional allies: in Afghanistan, the Northern Alliance and the powerful governor of Herat, Ismail Khan, are close allies of Iran. In Iraq, Iran has successfully established close ties with the Shiite community – the Islamic *Da'wa* Party, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, and the United Iraqi Alliance under Ayatollah Sistani – and the PUK and the KDP Kurdish parties. Furthermore, the difficulty Americans are facing in Iraq is part of the reason why the conservative-hardliners in Iran felt confident enough to take unprecedented risks in the 2005 ninth presidential elections.

The international politics will also play a significant role in the future success or failure of Iran's democratic transition. On the one hand, "the main casualty" [68] in the American collision with Iran could be Iran's democratic movement and it would be, ironically, only the United States, which brings the Islamic Republic popular support among social forces inside Iran. On the other hand, a real challenge for a legitimate democratic opposition is to balance national interests with international opportunities by learning how to fight for democracy and national sovereignty while working within boundaries imposed by the international politics. In the early 1950s Mohammad Mosaddeq tried but failed whereas in the late 1970s Ayatollah Khomeini succeeded to lead a national revolution while taking advantage of opportunities provided by international politics. Under a favorable condition, the power of agency can transform structural obstacles into opportunities, pushing forward the democratic transition.

4. 1. Agential Factors: Leadership

"A democratic regime," Huntington argues, "is installed not by trends but by people. Democracies are created not by causes but by causers;"[69] these causers are political leaders and social groups who intentionally or unintentionally promote democratization. For Juan Linz, however, the role of the leadership comes only next to the structural factors. "Leadership," Juan Linz argues, is "a residual variable that ultimately cannot be ignored; but it should not be introduced before the explanatory power of other [i.e., structural] variables has been exhausted."[70] Whether a primary or a secondary factor, the fact, however, is that political liberalization, as Adam Przeworski observes, is unstable if the regime's softliners are weak; under such fragile conditions democratic reforms might provoke a backlash from the counter-reform hardliners.[71] In this part, I shall argue that a strong and seasonal leadership could have transformed structural obstacles into opportunities. The reform movement, in spite of all structural constraints, suffered most from the leadership style and the strategic decisions made and/or unmade by the in-system reformists.

The reform movement suffered largely from an ineffective presidency. And yet, Khatami's presidency effectively contributed to the transformation of Iran's political culture both in the political establishment and in civil society. Mohammad Khatami contributed to the spread of democratic discourse, openness and transparency of the

dominant political discourse in the clerical establishment. His presidency was also instrumental in greater diffusion of democratic discourse in civil society.

Mohammad Khatami was neither a mere extension of the will of the political establishment nor an opposition in the establishment. He belonged to the establishment and yet was determined to reform it without harming its very existence. Khatami did not want to repeat what Gorbachev did in the former Soviet Union; his goal was to reform the system without destabilizing it. As a result, he remained in an extremely difficult and paradoxical position. According to Daniel Brumberg, "Khatami strove to sustain *and* transform Khomeini's dissonant legacy."[72] His goal was "to transcend the legacy of dissonant institutionalization,"[73] which "produced systems of 'contending authorities' whose eclectic foundations have been cleverly used by elites to enhance their legitimacy and at the same time hinder a transition from political liberalization to full democratization."[74] Khatami chose not to take Ayatollah Montazeri's advice openly offered to him in November 1997: "If I were you," the dissident Ayatollah advised, "I would go to the leader and tell him that, with all due respect, 22 million people voted for me while everyone knew that you preferred another candidate [Nateq-Nuri]. It means, therefore, that the people have rejected the existing order."[75] By contrast, Khatami strove to rationalize the office of the *velayat-e faqih*, which, in his view, would bring Iran one step forward in democratic transition. This, however, turned out to be wishful thinking.

Given the structure of the Iranian state, the conservative-hardliners, linked to the office of the *vali-ye faqih*, occupied much of the hard power. Nonetheless, the popular president, as Ayatollah Montazeri reminded him, retained invaluable amount of soft power, i.e. the people. The reluctant president, however, failed to transfer his soft power into hard power. As a result, Khatami in effect became a marginal man for both the state and the reform movement.

For the state, Khatami played a role of the "office coordinator" or, as Khatami himself put it, *tadarokatchi*, given the uneven balance between the power and responsibilities vested in the president. His approach in dealing with his own twin bills, described by Khatami as the reform's minimum demand, is revealing. The Guardian Council vetoed Khatami's twin bills – one for expanding the president's power vis-à-vis the *vali-ye faqih*, and the other limiting the electoral power of the Guardian Council – and yet he chose not to mobilize the electorates, but to continue compromising with the ruling elites.

For the reform movement, too, he played the role of a footman, because he was unable or unwilling to lead the democratic movement. Khatami failed to transform its electoral soft-power into an organized and forceful force to promote democracy. It is legitimate to suggest that the reform's leadership remained behind the public. By 2003, 94 percent of the people wanted major reforms and 71 percent wanted a nationwide referendum to expand the reformers' power and to limit the power of counter-reform.[76] In June 2003, even some of the in-system reformists openly demanded a referendum. In their open letter to the *vali-ye faqih*, 127 Majles' deputies argued that "given the current situation, we can conceive of only two alternatives: either a fall into a dictatorship; or a rise into the democracy intended by the constitution…. We cannot claim that the Iraqi people should have the right to hold a referendum yet deny the same right for our own Iranian people."[77]

In sum, the reformist leadership was short of seasonal, serious character and an active approach in mobilizing civil society. Mohammad Khatami, a principled politician, was also a reluctant president and a hesitant reformist leader; he thus remained either unable or unwilling to take the leadership of the movement. The reformist leadership suffered from too much elitism, failed to mobilize the people for a democratic cause, lost its electoral social support, and remained unsuccessful to turn a huge wave of popular discontent into a sustained democratic system. The leadership chose to mobilize the people *only* on election-days; it relied on negotiations from above and distanced itself from the people. The reformist leadership came with the passive and elitist strategies such as "deterrence through active calmness" without active involvement of the civil society forces, which reinforced the status quo and ultimately strengthening the authoritarian forces. The lack of clear strategy and the absence of the authoritative leadership led to the reformists' inability to agree on either a boycott or a single presidential candidate in the 2005 ninth presidential elections. In the end, ironically, the failure of the reformists' leadership turned them into scapegoats for the regime's failures over the past three decades.

4.2. Agential Factors: Institutional Arrangement

If the political context is not right, the social context by itself may or may not serve democratization. Without strong and responsive political institutions civil society forces do not necessarily help democratic transition. The reformist regime failed to mobilize civil society forces because it suffered from "weak political institutionalization."[78]

The president of Iran's Reformist regime, Mohammad Khatami, repeatedly insisted on the rights of the people and the empowerment of civil society. "In his terse inauguration speech in 1997, Khatami used the word 'people' more than 30 times and made not a single reference to the *velayat-e faqih*."[79] For Khatami, "the people must learn to defend their freedom. One of the main ways to do this is precisely through the formation of parties, groups and civil associations, civil institutions in society…[but] it is not up to the government to establish parties; the people must do this themselves."[80] Nonetheless, the in-system reformists, including President Khatami, were inclined to ignore "actors in civil society," as Larry Diamond put it, "need the protection of an institutional legal order to guarantee their autonomy and freedom of action."[81] The in-system reformists hardly succeeded to provide a sustained institutional legal order to protect the independent political institutions and civil society actors. More importantly, they in effect failed to establish a grassroots political party and to institutionalize the reform movement.

The most significant party of the in-system reformists, the Islamic Iran Participation Front, was established in December 1998 by the prominent members of the populist-revolutionaries loyal to Ayatollah Khomeini. The party, in effect, remained a party of the in-system-reformist elites, not a grassroots political party inclusive of all Iranian democrats. More importantly, the democratic opposition – even the most peaceful and loyal opposition, that is Iran's Liberation Movement – was excluded from party politics, given the lack of legal protection for the free political activities. Moreover, Khatami himself was unable, or unwilling, to form a political party of his own. As a result, the people who voted for change, "having no means to keep themselves engaged," remained inactive and looked for "their president to bring about the changes for which

they voted."[82] "The critical and oppositional functions of the public spheres of civil society," Iris Marion Young argues, "perform irreplaceable functions for democracy."[83] Ironically, it was President Khatami who excluded himself from the irreplaceable power of civil society. This, in effect, made Khatami's proposal for the promotion of civil society an empty slogan.

Iran's reformist political parties remained really active only for the elections; after elections they left their constituencies to their own ways with no effective efforts to establish grassroots organizations. Three years after the victory of the reformists, Akbar Ganji, the leading dissident journalist, argued "if 30 million Iranian citizens go to the ballot boxes and send democratic reformists to the parliament, it will be possible to reform all laws contrary to human rights, civil rights, and the constitution."[84] Nonetheless, like other in-system reformists, the earlier Ganji, as opposed to the later Ganji, downplayed the significance and the urgency of organized grassroots and inclusive political parties and social organizations to keep 30 million Iranian citizens in the front and the conservative-hardliners at bay. The first evidence appeared in the 2002 second municipal elections where the unorganized and unsatisfied people of the Reformist regime turned way from the ballots.[85] This was followed by two major defeats in the 2004 parliamentary elections and the 2005 presidential elections.

The reformist institutional/organizational strategy suffered from a number of shortcomings: first, the reformist parties remained parties of the elites. They lacked strong, grassroots, and inclusive organizations required for a successful public mobilization. The parties consisted of extremely diverse, but limited, circles and constituencies: they included the reformist clerics organised in the *Majma-e Rouhanioun-e mobarez* (the Militant Clerics Society), an extremely closed circle of the former populist-revolutionaries organized in the *Sazman-e Mojahedin-e Enghelab-e Islami* (the Islamic Revolution Mojahedin Organization), a loose coalition of the state's bureaucrats and pragmatist-politicians organized in the *Kargozaran-e Sazandagi-ye Iran* (the Iran's Servants of the Construction), and a small number of the progressive reformists organized in the *Jebhe-ye Mosharekat-e Iran-e Islami* (the Islamic Iran Participation Front). They all, in spite of their diversities, remained elitists political organizations incapable of public mobilization. The reformists' central motto, i.e., "Iran for all Iranians," in effect, did very little to establish a political party for all Iranians.

Secondly, the reformists failed to communicate with different social constituencies and limited their efforts to attract segments of the middle class. They either ignored or downplayed the significant role of the lower classes in general and the working class in particular. They did a little to mobilize the people in the mosques and other religious centers. As Iran's modern history suggests the modern intellectuals and elites have had difficulties in communication with the average people. Because they are urbanized and educated, their immediate concerns remain much relevant to their immediate social class/force and less to the grassroots society. On the eve of the June 2005 presidential elections, the progressive-reformist candidate, Mostafa Moin, invited the coalition of the *Melli-Mazhabi* (the nationalist-religious forces), a coalition of independent democratic reformists working outside the political establishment, to form a joint Front for Democracy and Human Rights. By extending their hand to the independent reformists such as Ezzatollah Sahabi and Ebrahim Yazdi of the Iran's Liberation Movement, the reformist candidate was hoping to appeal to as many in the

middle class as possible. It was not that the *Melli-Mazhabi* coalition, including Iran's Liberation Movement, were very popular, but they remained the only opposition party in the country working outside the political system. It turned out that Moin's political discourse did not mean much to the lower classes of the urban poor or the rural class. Hence his political slogans of "All political prisoners must be freed," with repeated words of "democracy" and "human rights" remained marginal. The reformists failed to transform these subjective, abstract words into an objective, tangible reality of the people's daily life. The 2005 presidential elections proved that democratic ideals alone are powerless unless they are expressed in a language accessible to all forces of civil society and address immediate concerns of the public. To reach this goal democratic forces need strong and grassroots organization to appeal to the people and mobilize their support.

Thirdly, the politicization of social demands could have mobilized the lower classes and the lower-middle class for the reform movement. The Reformist regime, however, failed to encourage and help various social classes to transform their social demands into political platforms. The coalition of the in-system reformists were united on the need for change and yet remained divided on the nature and the scale of change. For some of the in-system reformists, an extensive public mobilization of the people and grassroots socio-political institutions could have undermined the foundation of the Republic. For this reason, some of the in-system reformists preferred to hold a limited constituency rather than a public mobilization with an unintended consequence of the collapse of the whole regime.

The hardliner-conservatives, by contrast, successfully used their institutional strength to dismantle the reform agenda and discourage the reform's social base. In 1992 the reformist daily newspaper *Salam* described the organizational capability of the traditional-conservatives as the followings: they have "a preparatory cadre-making school called the *Al-Sadeq* University, a daily newspaper called *Resalat*, an armed militia group called *Jamiyat-e Mo'talefeh-ye Islami*, a propagatory body called *Jame'eh-ye Vo'az-e Tehran* [Tehran's Preachers' Society] and a provisional body called the *Jame'eh-ye Anjomanha-ye Islami-e Asnaf va Bazaar* [the Society Islamic Guilds of Tehran's Bazaar]."[86] And yet, there was much more to the organizational success of the hardliner-conservatives. Three factors, in particular, contributed to their success. First, throughout its entire life, the hardliner conservatives has suffered from the crisis of legitimacy, never exceeded 25 percent of the votes, and were elected when the other forces boycotted, or were excluded from, elections. In the 2005 ninth presidential elections, Iran's hardliners, to use Mohammad-Reza Khatami's metaphor, were blessed and backed by the "*hezb-e padegani*, a "barrack-based party"[87] and used millions of Basiji militia as "'electoral foot soldiers.'"[88] Iran's clerical rentier state provided the hardliners with both petrodollars and funding from the revolutionary foundations (*bonyads*) controlled by the office of the *vali-ye faqih*. According to three leading presidential candidates – Moin, Karrubi, and Rafsanjani – the campaign of the hardliner candidate, Ahmadinejad, was well funded.[89]

Moreover, Ahmadinejad adopted a populist platform directed at the urban and rural poor. His focus on "bread-and-butter issues" made the "the theme of the content 'change versus the status quo' rather than 'reformers versus conservatives.'"[90] Ahmadinejad, a loyal but invisible man of the clerical establishment, complained about the past performance and raised the flag of social justice, representing himself as a man

of the people. Ironically, the main beneficiaries of the corrupt-crony-clerical-capitalism – the coalition of the *mullah*-merchants-military – partly succeeded in mobilization of the poor who had suffered most from the socio-economic status quo. They succeeded to disguise Ahmadinejad's close ties to the establishment. For weeks he managed to move with his "headlights off" and "flew under the radar of public attention."[91]

4.3. Agential factor: Intellectual Discourse

Post-revolutionary Iran, as Mehrdad Mashayekhi put it, has experienced two major political discourses: the anti-imperialist-revolutionary discourses and the Islamic Reformism/Constitutionalism.[92] The former composed of diverse religious, nationalist and leftist groups, developed in pre-revolution Iran and remained popular until the first decade of the Republic. Preoccupied "with the radical, nationalistic anti-dependency perspective," this discourse, hardly engaged with the democratic demands of modern urban class. The war and its aftermath, the absence of charismatic leader, explosive demographic changes in society, economic hardship, the regime's international crisis, and the crisis of legitimacy inside, the rise of a non-violent and new democratic-Islamic discourses in civil society, and the rise of elites' factional politics set the stage for the development of the Islamic reformism/constitutionalism in the 1990s. Three themes remained central to the discourse of Islamic Reformism/Constitutionalism: the rule of law and constitutionalism (*ghanoon-gera'i*), promoting civil society (*jame'e-ye madani*), and eventually establishing an Islamic democracy (*mardom-salari-e dini*). By 2005, however, it became evident that the in-system reformists failed to deliver any elements of the discourse of Islamic Reformism. The failure of the Reformist regime, as discussed before, was due to a number of structural and agential factors. In this section, however, I shall discuss the extent to which ideas themselves contributed to the crisis of the reform and the consolidation of the counter-reform.

I. The rule of law/constitutionalism

"Democracies," Charles Tilly argues, "differ from other regimes because instead of the massive asymmetry, coercion, exploitation, patronage, and communal segmentation that have characterized most political regimes across the centuries they establish fairly *general and reliable rules of law*."[93] A general and reliable rule of law implies that the law is universal and no person/office stand beyond the rule of law. Under *Islamic Republic*, however, the rule of law is not universal since the office of *velayat-e faqih* stands outside the constitution. Khatami's concept of "Islamic constitutionalism" aimed at binding the office of *velayat-e faqih* by the constitution. The problem, however, was that Islamic constitutionalism was trapped by the lasting legacy of Ayatollah Khomeini. It sought to reform the political institutions of the Republic without questioning the intellectual foundation of *Islamic Republic*, Ayatollah Khomeini's theory of *velayat-e faqih*. Hence, the difficulty was to establish the rule of law while the *vali-ye faqih* rules absolutely; it attempted to revive constitutionalism while the rulings of the *vali-ye faqih* remained beyond the constitution. Islamic constitutionalism, in sum, lived in the same universe of Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic discourse and failed to reform a political system which is *relatively* "rich in constitution yet poor in constitutionalism."[94]

II. Promoting civil society

The process of democratization, as discussed before, involves the acts of political elites and civil society; it requires development of political and societal institutions.[95] President Khatami announced development of civil society institutions as the second pillar of his reformist discourse. If intellectuals such as Soroush, among others, "injected the idea of civil society into debates among the intelligentsia, Khatami introduced this concept to a much wider public, turning it into a subject for discussion among the political class and the public at large."[96] The civil society discourse, in spite of its public currency, remained far from a success. Two factors, one theoretical and one practical, contributed to this failure. First, like the rule of law, the reformists' discourse of civil society contained conceptual confusion leading to political problem. "The ontological foundation of the political philosophy and institutions of the Islamic Republic," as Farzin Vahdat observes, constitutes the "vacillation between allowing and denying citizenship rights."[97] This political philosophy offers "limited and indirect empowerment of the social universal," yet "affects the people as a collectivity and not as individual citizens."[98] For Vahdat, this political practice is based on an epistemology, which, simultaneously, concurs to, and conflict with, the philosophical foundations of modernity.

Two pillars of modernity, to use Hegelian and Habermasian approach, are "subjectivity and universality." Subjectivity is defined as "the property characterizing the autonomous, self-willing, self-defining, and self-conscious individual agent."[99] Subjectivity is not limited to individual freedom. Individual freedom "refers to a lack of restraint," while "'subjectivity' refers to positive action on the world."[100] The second pillar of modernity, universality, is defined as "the mutual recognition among the plurality of subjects of each other's subjectivity." More precisely, it "refers to elimination of restrictions based on privilege, status or other substantive considerations." It means "a formal equality before the law." For Hegel, civil society is a short form of two central pillars of modernity: subjectivity and universality. According to Hegel, civil society is "an association of members as self-sufficient individuals in a universality which because of their self-sufficiency is only formal."[101]

A closer look at the epistemology the Islamic Republic of Iran suggests that the notion of human subjectivity is embedded in a universality of the divine and the collectivity of believers/faithful; a phenomenon, to use Vahdat's conceptual term, defined as "mediated subjectivity." Mediated subjectivity, Vahdat argues, refers to the notion of

> human subjectivity projected onto the attributes of monotheistic deity – attributes such as omnipotence, omniscience, and volition – and then partially reappropriated by humans. In this scheme, human subjectivity is contingent on God's subjectivity. Thus, although human subjectivity is not denied, it is never independent of God's subjectivity and, in this sense, it is 'mediated'. This situation usually leads to a core conflict between human and divine subjectivity, which in turn gives rise to other conflicts, one of the sharpest of which is the constant, schizophrenic vacillation between affirmation and negation of human subjectivity, on the one hand, and between individual subjectivity and collectivity, on the other.[102]

Khatami's reformist discourse, in spite of all different words, lived in the same universe of the dominant Islamic discourse. Owing to the contradictory nature of mediated subjectivity, Khatami's discourse of Islamic civil society constitutes the vacillation between allowing and denying universal citizenship rights. For Khatami, "the first character of the civil society was written by a great religious scholar, the late [Ayatollah] Na'ini, during the Constitutional Revolution, which has recognized the right of the people; the right of the people to vote; the responsibility of the government to the people and the right of the people to question the government."[103] This is, Khatami argues, an "Islamic civil society:" a "unique and distinct view of existence [which is] *fundamentally* different from the 'civil society' rooted in Greek philosophical thinking and Roman political tradition."[104] According to Khatami, "in its historical and theoretical aspects, Western civil society was primarily inspired by the Greek city states, and subsequently, by the Roman political system. On the other hand, the historical and theoretical *essence* of the civil society that we have in mind is rooted in the esteemed Prophet's Medina."[105]

Keeping a clear distance from anti-Westernism, Khatami suggests that the two concepts of civil society, the Islamic and the Western ones, "should not necessarily contradict each other as far as their manifestations and outcomes are concerned. For this reason, we should never downplay the importance of learning – without imitating and copying – from the positive achievements of Western civil society."[106] In Islamic civil society, Khatami adds, "there should be no sign of individual and group despotism or even dictatorship of majority and efforts to destroy the minority."[107]

There are a number of *unintended consequences* to Khatami's argument: first, his discourse of "Islamic civil society" *essentializes* both Western and Islamic heritages. The partial truth to Khatami's argument is that "respecting human rights and observing its limits and boundaries is not something which we utter simply as a matter of political expediency in order to join some universal chorus." The problem, however, arise when he insists that "what we say is the *natural* outcome of our religious principles and learnings."[108] The modern understanding of people's rights, citizenship, democracy and civil society are not *natural* outcomes of religious principles, Islam or otherwise. "The historical and theoretical *essence* of civil society" in a modern Muslim-majority state is *not* "rooted in the esteemed Prophet's Medina." Like other modern concepts, it has resulted from complex dialectical relations between culture, economy, and politics throughout the history. Moreover, because religious outcomes vary – from fanaticism to progressive/democratic versions – religions hold neither *natural* outcomes nor a *uniform essence*. Cultural essentialism is ahistorical, because outcomes are bound by history; they are all historical. Furthermore, Khatami offers neither a substantive theory nor an empirical fact, which outlines *fundamental* differences between the "western" and the "Islamic" versions of civil society. He simply essentializes a neutral concept, substituting a modern notion of civil society with the "Prophetic society" (*Madina-tan Nabi*). Contrary to Khatami's original intention, not only this essentialism remains ahistorical but implies a dangerous political outcome: it replaces citizens with believers. It produces first-class and second-class citizens. For all these reasons, it is more plausible to speak of a "Muslim" than an "Islamic" civil society where people, not divine ideas, define and determine the nature of civil society. Civil society, like other socio-political concepts has no uniform religious essence; rather, it remains a synthetic entity composed of socio-

historical, cultural and political elements. Secondly, for Khatami, civil society is based on our "*collective identity*."[109] An Islamic civil society, he argues, should "recognize the heritage and traditions of the beliefs and thoughts of Muslims, on the one hand and, the exact and profound scientific and philosophical understanding of the contemporary world on the other."[110]

Khatami, in effect, reduced Iran's multiple collective identity to Islam: "Islamic thought and culture are the pivots of the civil society we have in mind." Or, our Islamic civil society "obeys the words of the Holy Koran and considers it as an obligation to provide all the requirements and necessities for material, economic and technological progress."[111] The triple Iranian identity composed elements of pre-Islamic culture, various versions of Islam, and modern western ideas/civilizations. Moreover, Khatami argues that it is more accurate and correct to call Islamic civilization "the civilizations of the Muslims." This implies that he is aware of the flaw and fallacy of cultural essentialism. As for two concepts of civil society and democracy, however, he preferred to use the term "Islamic", not 'Muslims." Furthermore, there is a potential danger to the concept of "collective." If Islam constitutes the sole or even the major portion of our identity and if our identity remains a collective entity, the implication is that our civil society organizations are mainly an extension of dominant Islamic politics. This ignores the very definition of civil society organizations. Civil society organizations are, by definition, independent entities, which may or may not correspond to the dominant politics. They may or may not remain committed to Islam or other elements of dominant politics. Hence, the notion of collectivity might preclude the individual autonomy intrinsic to all civil society organizations. Two leading reformists once argued that "Iranians are religious people and thus the associations and institutions they set up will indeed be based on religious and not secular principles."[112] Their argument is a case in point where a theoretical confusion leads to an unintended political danger that is the exclusion of a portion of the Iranian society.

The second factor contributing to the failure of the reformists' civil society discourse was practical in nature. The discourse, in effect, became more a subject of abstract intellectual debates and less an object of public political practice. The Reformist regime did little to empower civic associations, to encourage social movements, and to establish grassroots organizations. It is true that, as Cohen and Arato observe, civil society alone can hardly substitute for the elites' political strategies.[113] However, the Reformist regime, in effect, put down the strategy of the "pressure from below." Given their weakness at the top of the political pyramid, the in-system reformists could have used the "soft-power" provided by civil society. The reformists' intellectual confusion together with their political passivity contributed to this loss, converting the civil society discourse to an empty slogan.

III. Islamic democracy

According to Karl Mannheim, "in a realm in which everything is in the process of becoming, the only adequate synthesis would be a dynamic one."[114] In post-revolutionary Iran, both Islam and democracy have been "in the process of becoming." The question is whether the synthetic concept of "Islamic democracy," the third pillar of Khatami's reformist discourse, remained a dynamic synthesis. To what extent did Khatami's concept of Islamic Democracy contribute to Iran's long and painful march for democracy?

Khatami kept a clear distance from religious fanaticism, arguing that "we must understand our past; not for returning to it and stopping in the past, which is truly ossification, but for finding the essence and meaning of our identity and to purify it from preconceptions and habits that are totally dependent on time and place."[115] But the reformists' concept of Islamic democracy, in spite of all great intellectual strivings and good political intentions lacked a solid theoretical base and a plausible political solution. It brought some mixed results. From a theoretical perspective, the concept of Islamic democracy, like Islamic civil society, concurs with the internal dynamism of "mediated subjectivity." From a political point of view, it simultaneously enables and disables the forces of democratization. On the one hand, it offers an "enormous potential for universalizing inchoate subjectivity to the whole of society," mobilizing the public for a greater political participation. It also provides a potential opportunity "for transformation from *within*, a tendency that springs from its contradictory nature." More specifically, as Vahdat argues, "in revealing the complex and dialectical relationship between the forces of modernity and the metaphysics of monotheism in Iran, this contradictory nature has shown that monotheism and modernity – God and Juggernaut – are not totally antithetical entities, indeed, that monotheism may be reincarnated in modern forms."[116] On the other hand, the Islamic-democracy discourse, and the conceptual confusion intrinsic to it, laid the foundation for a few political problems. First, the Islamic principles were utilized to create a sense of limited and inchoate subjectivity among the social universal. Hence, the people, by participating in demonstrations and elections, earned the right to participate in the affairs of their own country. Such participation, however, remained largely limited to endorsing the dominant discourse. On this view, the "mediated subjectivity" set the solid epistemological ground for legitimizing a *mediated agency* in socio-political contexts. For the conservative, and even some reformists, if human subjectivity is contingent on God's subjectivity, then people are contingent on God's representatives' on earth: the *vali-ye faqih*. But in contingent relationships between human and divine subjectivity, people's subjectivity in political participation is not denied, yet it is never independent of the divine ruler on earth the *vali-ye faqih*.

Secondly, Islamic-democracy discourse contributed also to the intellectual confusion about the nature, scope, and meaning of modern democracy. Such confusion provided the hardliner-conservatives with a pretext to negate the very definition of democracy. The fact however, is that a democratic interpretation of Islam, as Mohammad Mojtahed-Shabestari put it, may concur with democracy yet it never built democracy on the principles of Islam. Muslims can be democrats; they can also come up with a democratic reading of Islam. Such democratic version of Islam, however, does not make their state an Islamic democracy. Muslims ruling democratically become democrats; they do not make the state Islamic. For this reason, "Muslim democracy" is a more appropriate term than Islamic Democracy. Democracy is about power and power remains a worldly political concept. Islam, like other religions, recognizes this same secular, not sacred, power on earth. Political authority has no religious essence, Islamic or otherwise.[117] More precisely, as Abdulkarim Soroush in thinking about democratic Islam observes,

> we do not have religious and non-religious water or religious and non-religious wine. The same is true for justice, government, science, and philosophy. Even the subjects were to have an essence then their Islamization would be rather meaningless. As such, we can not have a science of sociology that is essentially

religious or a philosophy that is essentially Islamic or Christian, the same way we can not have a system of government that is essentially religious.[118]

Thirdly, Islamic-Democracy discourse revealed the intellectual crisis of *Islamic Republic*, a great conflict between the human subjectivity and divine subjectivity. Conflicts that give rise to various other types of conflicts, one of the sharpest of which is the constant shifting of ground between a confirmation and negation of human subjectivity in general, as well as a constant oscillation between free individual subjectivity and a collective notion of subjectivity embodied in the notion of people as believers. It was within this context that some reformists parties, in particular the Islamic Revolution Mojahedin Organization, remained, at least partially, committed to the dichotomy of insider-outsider, placing the Iranian citizens into a first-class and a second-class citizen. Hence, "Iran for all Iranians," as advocated by Islamic Iran's Participation Front, Iran's largest reformist party, remained an empty slogan, given the transformation of the definition of the "people as individual" into the "people as the faithful."[119]

5. Conclusion: Lessens and Legacies

What does the Iranian experience indicate to the general study of democratization? This single historical case study has provided the following lessons: first, a dialectical and integrative theoretical approach can better explain the complexity of socio-political realities. In this approach elements of structuralism and voluntarism, or structure and human agency are synthesized.[120] The Iranian case retested a theoretical approach in which "structures both enable and limit human agency" and "actors can choose how to use structural resources and potentially improve these resources."[121] This study has retested the findings of the current literature that democratization equally depends on the historical, structural "causes" and the socio-political "causers."[122] It is, at once, a class-based project and a political-strategic process in which class structure, elites, and institutions work together.[123] Structural characteristics "constitute a series of opportunities and constraints for the social and political actors;" and yet, "those actors have certain choices that can increase or decrease the probability of the persistence and stability of a regime."[124]

Because structures limit and enable human agency, agencies can choose how to use and improve structural resources. The fall of the Reformist regime was not inevitable; the agency of the reform and the counter-reform played a significant part in its fall. It remains to be seen whether the failure of the "in-system *reformists*" indicates the failure of the strategy of "in-system *reform*." The political question remains whether "in-system reform" can transform the Islamic Republic from its current stage of the "early-post-totalitarianism" into those of the "mature-post-totalitarianism" and/or "authoritarian," making democratic transition more feasible. The case of Iran suggests that democratic transition depends largely on the vulnerability of both the regime and the opposition hardliners. It also depends on the strength of either the regime or the opposition moderates.

The Iranian lesson suggests that ideas are powerless unless they are fused with material forces.[125] Ideas "cannot be separated from their social settings; that is, they cannot be separated from the institutions and social groups that keep systems of ideas in

the socialization process."[126] Progressive ideas are easily defeated by reactionary ideas when the latter are blessed by powerful institutions, a strong leadership, and favourable structural/material conditions. Abstract democratic ideas are powerless.

Like other late-industrializing countries, in Iran *social* elements of democracy remains an essential part of democratization. Economic privatization without social justice brings about economic inequality, which results in support for populist agenda at the polls.

The finding of this study nullifies the theory of Muslim Exceptionalism, which suggests that Muslims are exceptionally immune to democracy and the Islamic culture remains the main barrier to democratic transition. We find that different Islams have played different roles in the democratic transition of Iran.

"The quest for a grand theory of regime change," writes Brumberg, "has given way to more inductive analysis of how particular constellations of social, cultural, ideological, political, and economic legacies make certain kinds of transitions more or less possible."[127] Iran's distinctive historical and socio-political legacies will shape its path in the transition to a democratic society. This legacy both helps and hinders democratic transition. It is here where human agency can make a difference by making strategic choices conducive to democratization. Iran is privileged by a number of structural factors with positive contribution to a democratic transition. As a nation Iranians share the value of political independence and national unity. In social terms Iran has a high rate of literacy rate (83 percent), "a per-capita national income above US\$7,000 per year," and a high level of urbanization and communication. In historical terms Iran enjoys a long and rich history of reform and revolution in pursuit of the rule of law and democracy.[128] The regional and international politics are complex, and pressures have influenced the internal debates about democracy in Iran.

Iran is likely to remain an oil-centered rentier economy for years to come. The oil-centered economy and the political and economic domination of the *mullah-merchant-military* remain the most significant factor determining the nature of the state, and how to meet obstacles in the path of democratic transition. Because "the main contradiction in contemporary Iran is the one between authoritarianism and democracy," the resolution of economic, cultural, and other social contradictions largely depends on political democratization.[129]

In the final analysis democratization and democracy are about people, and how they come together in shaping their destiny. This study has shown that human agency remains the critical instrument in rearranging social structures to meet human needs in the realm of politics and economy. Realizing democracy has proven to be difficult. But it remains the desired goal for most Iranians. "We Iranian Muslims," Abdolkarim Sorush writes, "are the inheriters and the carries of three cultures at once." These triple cultural heritages "are of national, religious, and Western origins. While steeped in an ancient national culture, we are also immersed in our religious culture, and we are at the same time awash in successive waves coming from the Western shores. Whatever solutions that we decide for our problems must come from this mixed heritage."[130]

Notes

[1] I have borrowed the phrase from John Foran in describing modern history of Iran; see John Foran, ed., *A Century of Revolution: Social Movements in Iran* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

[2] This is what a Mexican political scientist labeled his country's long and painful transition to democracy; see Jorge G. Castaneda, "Two Roads Await Mexico's Next Chief," *New York Times*, 8 October 1987.

[3] D. Rueschemeyer, E. H. Stephens, and J. D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), pp. 60-70.

[4] See Adam Przeworski "The Games of Transition." In Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O'Donnell and Samuel Valenzuela Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O'Donnell and Samuel Valenzuela *eds. Issues in Democratic Consolidation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992)

[5] See G. A. O'Donnell and P.C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986); Adam Przeworski, Democracy and the Market (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and D. A. Rustow, "Transitions to Democracy: Towards a Dynamic Model," in L. Anderson, ed*., Transition to Democracy* (Columbia University Press,1999); T.L. Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America," in D.A. Rustow and P.K. Erickson, eds., Comparative Political Dynamics: Global Research Perspectives (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), pp. 163-191; and G. Di Palma, To Crafts democracies: AN Essay on Democratic Transitions (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

[6] Doh C. Shin, "On the Third Wave of Democratization: A Synthesis and Evaluation of Recent Theory and Research," *World Politics* 47 (1994) no. 1:135-170, p. 141.

[7] Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, "Defining Some Concepts," in Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1986), p.49.

[8] Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Palgrave, 2002) p. 61.

[9] O'Donnell and Schmitter, p. 48.

[10] See for example T, L. Karl, ""Dilemmas of Democratic Transition in Latin America," p. 173.

[11] John Markoff, *Waves of Democracy: Social Movements and Political Change*. Thousand Oak; California: Pine Forge Press, 1996.

[12] James Mahoney and Richard Snyder, "Rethinking Agency and Structure in the Study of Regime Change," *Studies in Comparative International Development* (1999) 34: 3-32, p. 1.

[13] Ruth B. Collier, *Paths Towards Democracy: The Working Class and Elites in Western Europe and South America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

[14] Samuel P. Huntington, *Third wave: Democratization in the Twentieth Century*. Norman, Okla: University f Oklahoma Press, 1991.

[15] J. Linz and A. Stepan, "Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibrium," in J. Linz and A. Stepan eds., *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibration* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 4.

[16] Mahoney, Snyder, 13

[17] The lack of democracy in several rich countries and the existence of democracy in several poor nations suggest that Lipset, among other early-modernization theorists, overestimated the role of socio-economic conditions in transition to democracy. See Tatu Vanhanen, *The Process of Democratization: A Comparative Study of 147 States, 1980-88* (New York: Crane Russak, 1990), pp. 194-5

[18] Vanhanen, p. 191

[19] Barrington Jr. Moor, *Social origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Beacon Press, 1966), p. 486

[20] Timothy Garton Ash, "Soldiers of the Hidden Imam," in *New York Tim*, October 2005, <http://www.nybooks.com/contents/20051103>

[21] Sami Zubaida, "Is Iran an Islamic State?" in Joel Beinin and Joe Stork, eds. *Political Islam: Essays from Middle East Report* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), P. 118.

[22] Ayatollah Khomeini himself, acting in the general interests of the state, established an institutional body for the identification of the interests of the state (the Expediency Council), accordingly accepted the 1988 ceasefire with Iraq, removed Grand Ayatollah Shariat-Madari from his religious rank and Ayatollah Montazeri from his political career, and eventually ordered for the amendment of the Constitution in order

to drop the religious condition of the *marja-i yat* (the source of emulation) for the future leadership of the Islamic Republic.

[23] Khomeinism is "mainly a middle-class movement that mobilized the masses with radical-sounding rhetoric against external powers and entrenched power-holding classes, including the comprador bourgeoisie." Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism*, p. 38; for his critique, see Bobby S. Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1997), p. 92

[24] Mnasoor Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 257-62). Similarly, thought sharply different on political approach, Zalmay Khalilzad, a prominent American neo-conservative, co-authored with Chery Benard, identifies the Islamic Republic with "fundamentalist autocracy" and a "totalitarian one-party state" modeled on fascism and communism; see Zalmay Khalilzad and Cheryl Benard, *The Government of God: Iran's Islamic Republic* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984). For a critique, see Bobby S. Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1997), pp. 92-3.

[25] Ervand Abrahamian, "Empire Strikes Back: Iran in U.S. Sights," in Bruce Cumings, Ervand Abrahamian, and Moshe Ma'oz *eds. Inventing the Axis of Evil* (New York: The New Press, 2004), p. 115.

[26] H. E. Chehabi, "The Political Regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Comparative Perspective," *Government and Opposition* 36 (winter 2000), 48-70, p. 48

[27] H. E. Chehabi, p. 51.

[28] Even under Ayatollah Khomeini's leadership, all leading Ayatollahs overtly or covertly opposed the idea of *velayat-e faqih*. Some of them were under house arrest. See H. E. Chehabi, p. 52.

[29] H. E. Chehabi, p. 54

[30] C.J. Friedrich and Z. K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), pp. 9,10; quoted in Chehabi, p. 54. .

[31] Chehabi, p.56

[32] Ibid., p. 59

[33] Ibid. pp. 59-60

[34] Juan Linz, "Types of Political Regimes and Respects for Human Rights: Historical and Cross-National Perspective," in Asbjorn Eide and Bernt Hagtvet (eds), *Human Rights in Perspective: A Global Assessment* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1999); quoted in Chehabi, p. 60.

[35] Chehabi, p.69

[36] Abbas Milani, "A Historical Perspective," *Journal of Democracy* 16.4 (2005) 23-34,p.24

[37] Mehdi Moslem, *Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002), p. 35.

[38] Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), chapter 5.

[39] Asghar Schirazi, *The Constitution of Iran: Politics and the State in the Islamic Republic* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997), pp. 73-75

[40] See Mehdi Moslem, pp. 32-35.

[41] Juan J. Linz, "An Authoritarian Regime: Spain," in Erik Allardt and Stein Rokkan (eds), *Mass Politics: Studies in Political Sociology* (New York: Free Press, 1970), p. 255; quoted in Chehabi, p. 63.

[42] Chehabi, p. 65.

[43] Ibid., p. 69.

[44] Ibid., pp. 48-49.

[45] Abbas Milani, "A Historical Perspective," p.29

[46] Jamishid Amuzegar, *Iran's Economy under the Islamic Republic* (London: Taurus Press, 1994), p. 100

[47] Abrahamian, "Empire Strikes Back: Iran in U.S. Sights," pp. 135-136

[48] International Monetary Fund, *Staff Report on Iran* (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 2003) quoted in Abrahamian, "Empire Strikes Back: Iran in U.S. Sights," p. 134.

[49] Ali A. Ansari, *Iran, Islam and Democracy: The Politics of Managing Change*. London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2000), p.169

[50] See Nili et al, "*Barrasi-e tahavolaat-e faghr, tozi'e daramad, va refaah-e ejtemaa'ei; Sazeman-e modiriyat va barnaameh-rizi-e keshvar*; 1379 (Teheran, in Farsi).

[51] The Iranian Statistic Centre, November 2001.By 2002, Tehran alone had 20,000 professional prostitutes, mostly young girls hired by the criminal gangs; see *Entekhab* daily, Jan. 2002.

[52] Ansari, Iran, *Islam and Democracy: The Politics of Managing Change*, p. 168.

[53] The working class, as James Mahoney observes, might not works for democracy if the labor movement "enjoys a privileged statues position within the society of a country with an authoritarian regime." This position, of course, has no implication in the Iranian case. James Mahoney, "*Knowledge Accumulation in Comparative Historical Research,*" p. 165. For further discussions, see D. Rueschemeyer, E. H. Stephens, and J. D. Stephens., *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992).

[54] H. Moghissi and S. Rahnema, "The Working class and the Islamic state in Iran," in Stephanie Cronin, ed. Reforms and Revolutions in Modern Iran: New Perspectives on the Iranian Left (London: Rutledge Curzon, 2004), pp. 280-301.

[55] Garton Ash, "Soldiers of the Hidden Imam."

[56] Vali Nasr, "The Conservative Wave Rolls On," Journal *of Democracy* 16 no.4 (2005): 9-22, p. 13.

[57] See D. Rueschemeyer, E. H. Stephens, and J. D. Stephens., *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992)

[58] In the 1980s, the authorities "encouraged a baby boom, denouncing the decadent Western practice of birth control and calling for mass procreation to replace the country's million martyrs in the Iran-Iraq war." Ironically, the authorities called these children "soldiers of the hidden imam."! See Garton Ash, "Soldiers of the Hidden Imam."

[59] Nasr, "The Conservative Wave Rolls On," p.16

[60] James Mahoney, "*Knowledge Accumulation in Comparative Historical Research,*" p. 166

[61] CNN, "Interview with President Khatami," January 8, 1998. In this interview, Khatami called the 1979 American hostage crisis a "tragedy" and "excessive."

[62] Ervand Abrahamian, "Empire Strikes Back: Iran in U.S. Sights," p. 93

[63] Office of the Spokesman, June 18, 1998, U.S. Department of States; quoted in Gary Sick, "The Axis of Evil: Origins and Policy Implications," *Middle East Economic Survey* 45, no. 14 (April 8, 2002), p. 201

[64] Gary Sick, "The Axis of Evil: Origins and Policy Implications."

[65] Abrahamian, "Empire Strikes Back: Iran in U.S. Sights," p. 94

[66]Ibid., pp. 140-147

[67] Garton Ash, "Soldiers of the Hidden Imam."

[68] Abrahamian, "Empire Strikes Back: Iran in U.S. Sights," p. 93

[69] Huntington, *Third wave: Democratization in the Twentieth Century* 1991, p. 108

[70] Juan J. Linz, "Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibrium," in Linz and Stepan eds., *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibration*, p.100.

[71] Adam Przeworski, "The Games of Transition," in S. Mainwaring, O'Donnell, and Valenzuela, eds., *Issues in Democratic Consolidation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 105-53.

[72] Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 232.

[73] Ibid., p. 245

[74] Ibid., pp. 248-49

[75] *Resalat*, November 23, 1997; quoted in Mehdi Moslem, *Factional Politics in post-Khomeini Iran*, p. 257.

[76] *Economist*, January 16, 2003.

[77] "Majles Deputies, "Open Letter to the Leader," May 24, 2003 <www. Gooyanews.org>; quoted in Abrahamian, "Empire Strikes Back: Iran in U.S. Sights," p. 132.

[78] See Sheri Berman, "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic," *World Politics* 49.3 (1997) 401-429, pp. 408-409.

[79] President Seyyed Mohammad Khatami's Inaugural Speech to the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Tehran: n. n., 1997); quoted in Mohsen M. Milani, "Reform and Resistance in the Islamic Republic of Iran," in John L. Esposito and R.K. Ramazani eds., *Iran at the Crossroads* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. 46.

[80] BBC SWB ME/3344 MED/14, 29 Sep. 1998; Iranian TV, 26 Sept. 1998; quoted in Ali Ansari, 142.

[81] Larry Diamond, "Rethinking Civil Society Towards Democratic Consolidation," *Journal of Democracy*, (1994) 5, 3, p. 6.

[82] Shaul Bakhash, "Iran's Remarkable Election," in Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner, and Daniel Brumberg eds., *Islam and Democracy in the Middle East* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), p. 122-123.

[83] Iris Marion Young, "State, Civil Society and Social Justice," in I. Shapiro and C. Hacker-Cordon, eds., *Democracy's Value* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), P. 152

[84] Akbar Ganji, *Asr-e Azadegan* (Tehran), 15 February 2000; quoted in L. Boroumand and L Boroumand, "Is Iran Democratizing? Reform at the Impasse," in Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner, and Daniel Brumberg eds., *Islam and Democracy in the Middle East* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), p. 143.

[85] President Khatami hold the first local and municipal elections in 1999, the first one in post-revolutionary Iran, which contributed to the greater participation of people, stronger civil society, and decentralization of power. More than 23.6 million or 64.5 percent of the eligible voters cast their ballots. The reformists won 71 percent and the hard-liner conservatives received 14.5 percent of the seats. In the 2002 second municipal elections, however, the reformists lost in major cities and the conservatives won with an extremely low turnout. *Hamshahri*, March 15, 1999.

[86] *Salam*, 5 April, 1992; quoted in Moslem, *Factional Politics in post-Khomeini Iran*, p. 125.

[87] Mohammad-Reza Khatami, Khatami's younger brother and the leader of Iran's Islamic Participation Front.

[88] Abbas Milani, "A Historical Perspective," p. 32.

[89] The hardliner conservatives, for example, distributed five million CD among the urban and rural, which showed Ahmadinejad's simple life and his charm and charity to the poor, and the luxury life of Rafsanjani and his family. Also, the reformist candidate, Mehdi Karrubi accused Khamenei's son, the Guardian Council, and the security forces of having interfered in the election to eliminate him from running for the runoff, giving his second-place to Ahmedinejad.

[90] Michael McFaul, "Chinese Dreams, Persian Realities," *Journal of Democracy*, 16 no. 4 (2005): 74-82, p. 80.

[91] Abbas Milani, "A Historical Perspective," p. 32

[92] Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "A new era for Iran's democracy," *Open Democracy* 16 - 6 – 2005.

[93] Charles Tilly, *Social Movements*, 1768-2004 (Boulder: Paradigm Publisher, 2004), 125.

[94] Daniel P. Franklin and Michael J. Baun, eds. *Political Culture and Constitutionalism: A Comparative Approach* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, Inc, 1995), p. 221.

[95] Ruth B. Collier, Paths to Democracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[96] Shaul Bakhash, "Iran's Remarkable Election," p. 120

[97] Vahdat, *God and Juggernaut: Iran's Intellectual Encounter with Moder*nity (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002), pp. 213-214.

[98] Ibid., pp. 166-167.

[99] Ibid. p.1; for further discussion, see G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Rights*, edited by T.M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967) and Jurgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity – Twelve Lectures* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), p. 16

[100] Farzin Vahdat pp.1-2

[101] W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Rights*, edited by T.M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p.110; quoted in Farzin Vahdat, p. 2.

[102] Farzin Vahdat, p. 134

[103] BBC SWB ME/3318 MED/17, 29 Aug. 1998; IRIB radio, 27 Aug. 1998; quoted in Ali Ansari, p.149

[104] Seyyed Mohammad Khatami, "President's Opening Address to the OIC General Session," <www. Persia.org/khatami/khatami03.html>; quoted in Brumberg, p. 223

[105] Mohammad Khatami, Speech at the Islamic Conference Organization in December 1997, BBC SWB ME/3099S/14-9, 11 Dec. 1997;Iranian TV, 9 Dec. 1997; quoted in Ansari, pp. 145-147

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