ROLE OF THE REFORMIST MOVEMENT IN IRANIAN POLITICS, 1997-2016

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled **"ROLE OF THE REFORMIST MOVEMENT IN IRANIAN POLITICS, 1997-2016"** submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this university or any other university.

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CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this thesis be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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DEDICATED TO
MILLIONS OF WOMEN WHO ARE
FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The objective of the education must be to transform a being into a moral and conscious human who can fight for social justice and spread love, compassion and kindness among others. The objective of academia must be to expose the social realities and evils as well as to construct the mechanism to demolish them rather than maintaining a hegemonic status quo. The scholarly attitude which is growing in me is not the consequence of the formal training which people like us even cannot afford but it is lived experience of my life which has been sharpened in the environment of the universities such as Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University (BBAU) and Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). However, the universities have huge structural problems where students coming from marginalised sections of society have to suffer. University campuses which are supposed be a place of human emancipation, in contrary becomes the ghettos for many who often succumb to the circumstances. JNU too has to progress a lot in this regard.

I cannot stop myself mentioning about my Amma. Amma has laid the foundation of humanity, freedom and compassion which is perpetually growing in me. My friend Rehna is a brave debater who has been very instrumental in shaping and reshaping my approaches to life. I have no words to recognise her unconditional help during my thesis writing. My friends Vinod and Anju are more than a family for me. I am obliged to have such beautiful persons in my life. My friends Chimat, Jadu, Govardhan, Bhupali, Chinmay, Pinky, Kanchan, Sunil, Shakeel, Anwesha and Jatin have played a crucial role in my academic journey in JNU. The debates and discussions with my friends have grown me academically and intellectually.

Last but not the least, I acknowledge the struggle of the millions of women, students, youth and marginalised communities of the world who are fighting against the structural and other kinds of oppression. The struggle of Iranian women, students, minorities, and youth against all kinds of imperialist and authoritarian oppression inspired me to change my approach and helped me to formulate the arguments.

Needless to say whatever shortcomings may exist in this work are all mine.

Umesh Kumar

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ABBREVIATIONS

AE	Assembly of Experts
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CCA	Combatant Clergy Association
CCR	Council of Cultural Revolution
CSS	Centre for Strategic Studies
CWP	Centre for Women's Participation
EC	Expediency Council
FEL	Followers of the Emam's Line
GC	Guardian Council
ICA	Islamic Consultative Assembly
ICS	Islamic Coalition Society
IIPF	Islamic Iran Participation Front
IPF	Islamic Participation Front
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Gourd Corps
IRI	Islamic Republic of Iran
IRP	Islamic Republic Party
ISNA	Iranian Student News Agency
JCPOA	The Joint Comprehensive plan of Action
JEO	Joyful Essence of Obedience
MCIG	Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance
MIRO	Mujahedin of the Islamic Revolution-
NCP	National Confidence Party
NGO	Non- Governmental Organisation
OCU	Office for Consolidation of Unity
OEIR	Organisation of the Endeavourers of the Islamic- Organisation
OSU	Office of Strengthening Unity
PII	Prosperity for Islamic Iran Revolution
SKF	Second of Khordad Front
SOR	Servants of Reconstruction
STTQ	Society of Theology Teachers of Qom

CHAPTER I
Introduction

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 began as a series of protests against the westernisation of Iran and the dictatorship of monarchy. Iranian Revolution in its initial phase was represented by diverse ideologies such as nationalism, Islamism, Marxism and liberal secularism. The groups representing these ideologies had disagreed on various grounds and their fragmentation became a major impediment for the success of Revolution. Meanwhile, Ayatollah Khomeini did emerge as the chief leader of the Revolution. The charismatic leadership of Khomeini played a crucial role in the success of the Revolution. However, it led to the domination of Islamist groups during and after the Revolution in Iranian politics. Under Khomeini's charismatic leadership, various discourses of the Revolution cohered in the shape of an Islamic ideology. The Islamic ideology became increasingly revolutionary and culminated in Ayatollah Khomeini's theocratic redefinition of Shi'a authority (Boroujerdi 1996).

Khomeini's leadership has not only changed the dynamics of Iranian Revolution but also managed to get legitimacy for his government based on *veleyat-e-faqih* (guardianship of Islamic jurist). The new Constitution drafted by the 'assembly of experts' under the guidance of Khomeini got a huge popular support in the referendum (Naraghi 2015; Arjomand 2002; Schirazi 1997). It led to the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Ayatollah Khomeini became its first Supreme Leader. The office of Suprme Leader was created upon the concept of *veleyat-e-faqih*. However, the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran had also incorporated the principle of 'popular sovereignty'. Thus the Constitution of the Islamic Republic became a unique blend of theocracy and democracy (Schirazi 1997).

For almost a decade, the politics in post-Revolution Iran and the legitimacy for the Shi'a Islamic theocratic government was determined by two major factors: the charismatic leadership of Khomeini and the war with Iraq. These two factors have provided legitimacy for almost every decisions and policies irrespective of oppressive nature of the

state. The oppressive nature of the state was the result of the state-led top-down Islamisation process (Alsaif 2007). However, positive aspects of Khomeini rule in terms of socialist and welfare policies such as nationalization of banks, insurance companies and industries also played a crucial role in securing legitimacy for the theocratic government. The weakening of the economy has emerged as one of the major drawbacks of Khomeini regime. Despite of the increased administrative efficiency and genuine efforts to reconstruct economy, there was a persistent deterioration of the economy. Apart from the damages caused by War (Iran-Iraq War) the other factors responsible for the weakening of economy were corruption and mismanagement (Fadaee 2012). The biggest drawback of the Khomeini regime lies in the top-down state led forced ideological justification of the Islamic policies (Alsaif 2007:73).

The end of war with Iraq in 1988 and the demise of Khomeini in 1989 led to a paradigm shift in Iranian politics. Since the Iranian Revolution of 1979, Iran's demography has been changing radically, especially in terms of urbanization, new technologies and media. The younger generation molded new public spaces and sociability at the societal level. The claims and expectations of a large educated middle class were much different from the yester years of the Revolution. Moreover, the acceleration of globalization process especially after the disintegration of the Soviet Union at the end of the twentieth century had contributed to the growth and development of the concept of civil society and democracy across the world including Iran. However, it is important to note that the indigenous struggle for democracy in Iran is more than a century old (Rahimi 2012:61).

Above mentioned circumstances have contributed to the emergence of reformist discourse in Iranian politics in early 1990s. The first decade (Khomeini regime) of the Islamic Republic is described as a revolutionary paradigm. The politics in this period was determined by the ethos of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 (Alsaif 2007). The emergence of reformist discourse was a reaction to the failures of the revolutionary paradigm and the governance model existed during and after the Iranian Revolution of 1979. The reformist shift was a major aberration from the revolutionary and ideological character of Iranian politics. There was a paradigm shift in the socio-political as well as the philosophical orientation of the people. The failure of the revolutionary paradigm under the leadership

of Khomeini was amounted to its top-down state-led forced ideological justification of the policies. It was also due the negligence of the demands and aspirations of the people at the ground level. It has been observed that the political system of Islamic Republic was constructed without any pre-planning. The constitutional foundations were built on the basis of immediate and instant emotions and aspirations that were formed and grew during the Revolution under particular circumstances rather than on the basis of long time requirements of the society. In complimentary to this, Alsaif stated that "the inconsistency between the idealistic aspirations in the form of revolutionary ideology and actual circumstances has always been the source of the conflict in the Islamic Republic of Iran" (Alsaif 2007:73).

The idea of reform as an intellectual deliberation among the academic and intellectual circles of Iran began taking place since early 1990s. The deliberation took shape of a discourse over the years. Barlow and Akbarzadeh (2018) have opined that "the reformist discourse (or movement) had a number of key rights-based objectives at its core. They included enhancing democratic principles such as transparency and accountability within government, building civil society, increasing the freedom of the press to publish alternative perspectives to that of the establishment, and promoting the rule of law".

In previous decades, the key terms associated with the public and intellectual discourse in Iran had been "*emperialism* (imperialism), *mostazafen* (poor), *jehad* (jihad), *mojahed* (mujahidin), *shahed* (martyrdom), *khish* (roots), *enqelab* (revolution), and *gharbzadegi* (Western intoxication)" (Abrahamian 2008a: 186-187). Since the emergence of the reformist movement, the terms like "*demokrasi* (democracy), pluralism, *moderniyat* (modernity), *azadi* (liberty), *barabari* (equality), *jam'eh-e madani* (civil society), *hoquq-e beshar* (human rights), *mosakerat-e siyasi* (political participation), *goft-e gou* (dialogue), and the *shahrvandi* (citizenship)" became very popular. This cultural upheaval was as important as the revolution of 1979. Many of the intellectuals who began their political career as militant revolutionaries (having anti-western zeal) now openly started citing the western thinkers like Voltaire, Rousseau, Hume, Kant, Descartes and Montesquieu. During the revolutionary paradigm, citing western philosophers were considered as producing derivative knowledge and contradicting revolutionary goal of

fighting epistemological imperialism of the 'west' (Abrahamian 2008a:186-7).

In the early days, the central focus of the reformist discourse was the question of defining reform. At that time, reform was an abstract idea with philosophical idealism and optimism (Nabavi 2013:41). The Reformist project is defined as the post-revolutionary 'religious intellectual' discourse and termed as 'reformist apparatus'. The reformist apparatus presents a complex of discursive intellectual practices which tries to regulate, frame, understand and engage with the nature, method and objective of social change and political transformation (Boroujerdi 2019).

The reformist discourse recognizes the fact that the political change is inevitable through gradual and sustainable method. Therefore, it has emphasised the rule of law, non-violence and gradualism. It also encourages transparency, tolerance and political openness (Nabavi 2012:44). The questions of political behavior, structure and culture were the predominant concerns of the reformist discourse. Reformist intellectuals demanded more democratic and pluralistic form of society. The discourse emphasized the significance and promotion of civil society and public sphere by establishing a popular sovereignty after opening up the closed theocratic structure of the Iranian polity (Nabavi 2012a:41). The idea behind reform was also to search for a 'third way' which is otherwise described as the political development from below after the failures of the previous regimes. The third way is considered as an alternative to the imperial westernization under the Shah's regime described as 'modernization from above' whereas the Islamic theocratisation is described as 'revolution form above' (Tazamini 2010).

Emadeddin Baqi analyzed the primary difference between reform and revolution. He stated that "revolutions looked to the past, and on the basis of fighting the past, became intent on wiping out the present circumstances in order to move forward, reform just looked to the future……without wanting to make the past into a setting for punishments or execution". Reformism for Baqi has implied the possibility of 'neither accepting the status quo nor opposing the revolution' (quoted in Nabavi 2012:42). Abbas Abdi, another reformist writer made a differentiation between reform and revolution on the ground of

operational methods. He was of the opinion that revolutions tend to be uncertain, erratic and violent with a momentum of its own. On the other hand, the reform could only occur through non-violent, constitutional and lawful manner (quoted in Nabavi 2012:42).

Kathami has defined reform as a search for a middle path. There are two extremes in the political thinking. One group of extremists is the traditionalists who advocate for a radical Islamic retreat. They talk about the return to the past, old habits and customs. Other kind of extremist group is western oriented intellectuals who blindly follow the west. These two streams are opposite to each other and create antagonism which leads to tension in the society. In this context, Khatami called for a middle path in order to avoid the two extremities. Khatami delved upon the reformist tradition in the Islamic world and endorsed the ideas of reformist thinkers namely Asadabadi, Abduh, Lahuri, Allameh Naini, Motahari, Shariti and Sadr. He talked about learning lessons from the positive experience and achievements of the 'west' (Lali 1999:372, quoted in Mehran 2003:13).

Parallel to the emergence of reformist discourse among the intellectual circles, social movements like students' movement, women's movement and minorities' movement also started emerging with their autonomous voice and a new zeal within the larger context of the civil society. A loose coalition of intellectuals, students, reformist intellectuals, women, labour class, dissident Shi'a clerics, university students, middle class professionals, seminary students and minorities gained momentum in the mid-1990s. (Rahimi 2013:61). The coalition turns into a popular movement during the election campaign of the reformist candidate Mohammad Khatami in 1997 presidential election. The success of the popular momentum was evident in the huge victory of Khatami in the presidential elections of 1979. Khatami who comes from the clerical establishment became the president of the Islamic republic of Iran for two consecutive terms in 1997 and 2005. The victory of Khatami in 1997 election was announced on 23 May 1997 which was the second day of the Khordad in the Iranian calendar[1]. Therefore, the reformist movement is also known as 'second of Khordad' movement in Iran (Rahimi 2012: 61).

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[1] Khordad is the third month in the Persian calendar.

In 1997 election, Khatami secured sixty nine percent votes against twenty five percent votes of the conservative candidate Nateq Nuri who was supported by the Supreme Leader Khameini. The enthusiasm for reform was also reflected in the unprecedented level of voter turnout. It had eighty percent voter turnout in comparison to fifty percent in the last presidential election in which there was no presence of reformist candidates. Khatami received support from all class and region lines including even the revolutionary guards called Qom seminarians (Abrahamian 2008:186). It is also interesting to note that the Basij members also voted for him (Molavi 2005:149). The major chunk of his electoral support was found among the college students, urban workers, women and modern middle class (Abrahamian 2008:186).

During the election campaign, Khatami identified the real problem of the society. He emphasized on the need for more freedom of speech and assembly. He talked about strengthening of civil society and raised the issues of human rights, liberalism and pluralism which were considered as taboos in the Islamic Republic. He criticized the interference of the state in the private life of the individuals (Farhang 2009:92). His reform agenda focused on consolidating the rule of law, enhancing social liberties, encouraging political and intellectual discourse. During the campaign, he also advocated for democracy, rule of law and inclusion of all Iranians in the process of political decision making. The victory of Khatami was largely owed to a significant number of votes given by women and youth as he made a promise to improve women's status and respond to the demands and aspirations of Iran's younger generation (Alsaif 2007:80, Tazamini 2010: 1, Rahimi 2012: 62-65).

During Khatami's campaign, the theme of 'civil society' was described as the mechanism to cure the weak economy, bring back the individual liberties, women's rights and political pluralism (Abraminian 2008:186). Khatami expounded his goals in terms of a sustainable and comprehensive development. He described a reformist agenda which is analogous to the concept of 'human development' that creates a social environment conducive to democracy and an atmosphere where individuals can freely make their choices (Alsaif 2007:81).

The reformist's victory continued unabatedly. For instance, reformists received seventy five percent of votes in 1999 local elections. In *Majles* or the Iranian parliamentary (Islamic Consultative Assembly) elections of 2000, the reformists got majority by securing 69.25 percent of the votes and won 190 out of 290 *Majles* seats (Abrahamian 2008:188). The 2001 presidential election was a sign of pre-assumed re-election of Khatami. The conservatives has shown no enthusiasm and remained passive. They have adopted the strategy of waiting for public dissatisfaction with the reformist regime. A pro conservative daily, *Jomhuri-ye eslami*, wrote that "there is no sign of excitement in the society about this election." Only ten candidates were given the clearance among the three hundred who applied for the candidacy. Khatami was the strongest candidate among others. Other candidates have not campaigned properly. Most of the candidates even did not post posters. Consequently, the voting turnout was decreased as compared to the 1997 election. There was a decline from eighty percent to sixty seven percent. However, Khatami's vote share was increased from 77.1 percent to 69.6 percent in 1997 due to the absence of a strong contender (Razavi 2008:154-55).

However, in the second *Majles* elections in 2004, conservatives secured a resounding victory. The number of reformists MPs was reduced from 190 MPs to a mere 40 (Razavi 2008:160). The reformist again met with a major defeat in the presidential elections of 2005. The reformist candidate was defeated by less popular conservative candidate named Mohmoud Ahmadinejad who was previously a Mayor of Tehran. After that, conservatives came to power in *Majles* as well as in the presidency. There was no position or office held by the reformists in the decision making structures at the national level (Masroori 2007:172-174).

The reformists have responded by putting the hypothesis that 2005 election was forged and there were widespread electoral irregularities. Mehdi Karroubi, one of the prominent reformists in Iran, has been vocal about the election improprieties. However, election irregularities have always been there in the Iranian electoral system. The common perception behind the defeat of reformists was framed around the economic failures of the reformists. The reformists did not comprehend the economic concerns of the people. During their election campaign, conservatives focused mostly on the issues of economy

(Masroori 2007:172-174).

Ahmadinejad promised economic growth, equity and redistribution. He also assured that the income from oil would be spent for improving the basic living conditions of the people. Conservatives also raised the issues of corruption and government transparency. They have stressed more on the poverty alleviation targeting and the upliftment of the poor urban population of the county. The urban poor had voted for the conservatives with a hope that the new regime would implement social programs which were declined due to the increasing liberalization by the early regimes. However, conservatives had revealed their position on women and showed their critical, negative or digressive, stand on public role and equal rights of women. Despite this, the reformists couldn't garner the support of women unlike the previous elections due to the failure of reformists in fulfilling demands and mobilizing the women in favor of their agenda (Bahramitash 2007: 94).

The major factor behind reformists' defeat in 2005 presidential election was the massive boycott of the election by the groups such as youth, university students, women and intellectuals. These groups were disillusioned by the reformist agenda as the former was unable to fulfill the promises that they made in the previous two elections. There was a 37 percent boycott in the first round and 40 percent in the second round elections (Masroori 2007:172-174). The total voting turnout was sixty percent. It is observed that some students were disillusioned with Khatami's reform agenda and joined the conservative campaign. In the 2008 parliamentary elections, the number of reformists was reduced to forty seven and in 2012 there were only nine *Majles* seats (Arjomand 2005:518).

During Khatami regime reformist movement has witnessed many positive as well as negative experiences. The commencement of local council election in 1999, growth of political parties, civil society and interest and pressure groups are seen as some of the major positive developments (Alsaif 2007:81-85). The major drawbacks of the Khatami regime could be observed during the major events of the reformist movement. The assassination attempt on Saeed Hajjarian in 2000 and the publication of the *Red Eminences and Grey Eminences* by Akbar Ganji which caused him six years of imprisonment are the major instances where Khatami administration failed to take a

stand. Many reformists, intellectuals, activists and supporters were imprisoned, tortured and murdered. The Khatami government has failed to curb the state led suppression. Apart from this, the failure of Khatami administration was also evident in not protecting the students against the state led oppression during those important upheavals of reformist movement such as Student Uprising of 1999 (the 18 of *Tir* or July 9) and National Day Protest of 2003 led by the student groups (Esteshami and Zweiri 2007:10, Molavi 2005:313-15).

The most decisive development in the reformist discourse as well as in the ongoing socio-political transformation in Iran was the Green Movement of 2009. It emerged with an immediate cause. Though, Green Movement was a popular movement against the alleged rigged results of the presidential election of 2009. However, it was to challenge the closed theocratic structure of the Islamic Republic Iran at the core (Dabashi 2010). There is also an ongoing Referendum movement as the part of the reformist movement. It calls in effect for a return of the 1979 referendum which paved the way for the establishment of a Constitution and consequently the foundation of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Referendum Movement demanded for an opinion poll on the question of whether the Iranians in the contemporary time still want an authoritarian Islamic Republic brought by the Revolution led by the previous generation (Molavi 2005:311).

At present, the various political factions with a reformist agenda are active in the politics and provide a huge support base for the current government ruled by the moderate president, Hassan Rouhani. Since the emergence of the reformist politics, the number of political factions has increased rapidly. Hundreds of political parties and pressure groups have been formed. The reformists form a vital political alternative to hardliners of the governing elite. President Hassan Rouhani who claims himself as a moderate also promised for a change and pledged to fulfill the same demands raised by the people, particularly by the supporters of the reformist factions (Barlow and Akbarzadeh 2018).

In the major public and dominant academic debates, it is argued that the reformist movement lasted for two consecutive regimes (1997-2005) under president Khatami (Ebadi 2006:180, Hojati 2005: iv, Niakooee 2016). Karimi and Yucesoy (2018) have

opined that "the reformist project in Iran is dead and the events of the past year show that the Reformist movement does not offer a 'pro-democracy' alternative in Iran". Naikooee has talked about the failure of reformist movement by stating that "it is not able to produce an appropriate framing even for the intelligentsia and students, due to a lack of solutions to the political deadlock and its theoretical ambiguity. In sum, the inappropriate framing of the reform movement diverted many groups from the movement and served an important role in the decline of the movement during 2000–2005" (Naikooee 2016: 407). Shams is also in opinion that "the arrangement of Iranian politics has radically changed – and in particular that the mainstream political project known as reformism is no longer the decisive force, it was" (Shams 2018). Mohammadi (2019) has argued that "the Reformists' tendency to control every aspect of Iranians' lives, leading the movement down a dead-end" (Mohammadi 2019).

There is an argument that Khatami's reform failed because it could not resist the attacks of the conservative right wing. It happened because reformists have their clout only on the legislative and executive branches, not in the judiciary and army (Mehran 2003:312). Barlow and Akbarzadeh opined that "Khatami's reform movement is widely viewed as a failed experiment. Most scholarship concerned with the topic attributes the failure of reform to the constraints of the operating environment that is the veto power of Iran's clerical elite over the parliament (*Majles*)" (Barlow and Akbarzadeh 2018).

However, there are few works which argued that the failure of reformism was due to strategic miscalculations. The dearth of strategy to resolve the challenges concerning elections, instrumental usage of social powers and negligence of other collective actions had undermined the attempts made by the reformists. Indeed, the movement faced a crisis of strategy and the fragility of the collective action. Behravesh argued that "Khatami's ultimate failure to implement social and political reform was not simply the result of incidental stumbling blocks or even structural hindrances on the ground', but can be ascribed in part to 'his lack of an organized plausible strategy for implementing change" (Behravesh 2012).

There are also contrasting opinions about the reformist movement which recognizes the

presence of a reformist political camp and their influence within the power structure of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Yazdani 2016). But the opinions on the reformist movement change according to the gains and losses of the reformist political faction in the popular elections. However, there are few works which have seen the reformist movement from the perspective of below. Adib-Moghaddam defined the reformist movement as the *pluralistic momentum*. He has seen 'pluralistic momentum' as a challenge to the state-centric approach of Iranian politics. The demands for change among various groups like youth, students, women and intellectuals have reversed the state-society relationship in Iran (Adib-Moghaddam 2006: 666-66?).

Structure of the Research

Most of the scholars on reformist movement have concluded that the movement is dead with the end of Khatami regime as he failed to bring forth the promised reform. Thus such previous works on reformist movement has adopted a reductionist approach while defining the reformist paradigm. Most of the scholars have seen reformist movement from a top-down perspective. Thus the failure of ruling class (Khatami) became synonymous with the failure of the reformist movement. Reza Yousefian, a former *Majles* (Parliament) member rightly stated that "If you interpret reform as a movement within the government, I think yes, this is the end. But if you regard it as a social phenomenon, then it is still very much alive" (Quoted in Siddiqi 2006). There was no bottom-up approach used to analyse the reformist discourse. The present study sought to address the gap in the existing literature. Thus the research has inquired the reformist movement from the bottom-up approach.

The research has analysed it from the perspectives of real actors of reformist movement like youth, students, women and intellectual class who conceptualized reform. The real actors of the reformist movement are continuously raising their voices against both authoritarian government and western imperialism. The study divided the reformist movement majorly into three streams; a) Reformist political faction within ruling class b) Reformist intellectual discourse c) Reformist movement from the perspective of its real actors; youth, student, women-social movement.

The present study enquires into the relationship of reformist political faction within clerical establishment with the reformist intellectual discourse and the social movements such as students' movement, minoritys' movement, labor movement and women's movement. Thus the study examines the association of the reformist political faction with civil society in Iran in a larger context. The study also attempted to understand the reformist intellectual discourse in a broad theoretical context. It attempted to understand the reformist discourse in a theoretical framework in both Iranian as well as the global context. In order to inquire into the role of reformist movement in transforming the Iranian politics, the study analyzed the political process such as elections and growth of political parties, especially from 1997 to 2016. To analyze the reformist discourse from the bottom- up approach, the research has also studied reformist movement in the context of various socio-cultural and political activities like blogging and protesting.

In order to pursue the underlined research problem in the study, the research has sought to address the following research questions. (a) What is the nature of state and politics in the post-revolution era in Iran? (b) What are the factors which led to the emergence of reformist movement? (c) How has the reformist movement redefined and transformed the nature of politics in Iran? (d) What is the relationship between civil society and reformist movement in Iran? (e) What are the continuities and changes in reformist movement and in the nature of politics since 1997? (f) Has reformist movement led to the emergence of factionalism and competitiveness in Iranian politics? (g) Why have the major demands of reformist movement not been fulfilled yet?

The present study has formulated two hypotheses. The first hypothesis is that the reformist movement has been instrumental in transforming the nature of Iranian polity from a monolithic structure to one of pluralistic political actors. The second hypothesis is that the reformist movement has been used as a strategic tool of co-optation of dissent and regime legitimacy by the political elites to reinforce their political power rather than addressing its core demands. The research analyses the political barriers and hindrances created by the legal system and political elites in the ongoing process of transition from theocracy to religious democracy in the Iranian politics.

Today, Iranian politics is operated with the representation of various political groups and political organizations within the political structure of Islamic Republic of Iran. Generally, these political factions could be divided within two major coalitions. One coalition is composed of theocrats, conservative, hardliners and principalists. The other coalition is composed of republican, pragmatists, reformists and moderates. But there are many contradictions within the coalitions on the basis of ideological differences. These developments in Iranian politics remain intricate and the political situation is highly unpredictable. In this context, it is inevitable to assess whether the reformist movement causes the growth of political factionalism or not and whether the reformist movement transforms politics from non- competitive into a highly competitive one.

The study has adopted a bottom-up approach which emphasises that the society or structures are shaped by its individuals and ideas. This is in contrast to the dictum of the top-down approach which regards individual as the product of the society. The bottom-up approach argues that local interactions between a set of individuals influence each other which can generate global models. In the case of Iranian reformist movement, the collective actions such as social movement or civil society have been decisive in determining the nature of reformist politics at the top. The bottom-up approach would help to study the reformist movement from the perspective of below. The approach provides the scope for looking at reformist movement in a more comprehensive manner.

The research adopts an interpretative method to re-evaluate events, available data, statements and arguments provided in the previous works. Thus the research mostly relied on the secondary sources and the knowledge which is already produced. However, the books and articles written by political leaders becomes the primary resourses in the study. The detailed narration of the nature of politics in the post-revolution Iran, the emergence of reformist movement and the concomitant rise of civil society qualify the study as descriptive in nature. The evaluation and scrutiny of the cause and effect relationship of the reformist movement with the nature of politics makes this study analytical too. The research has used both primary and secondary resources. The primary sources consist of various records, government reports, speeches and memoirs of political leaders, press statements, blogs and interviews. The Constitution and the constitutional amendments

have been examined in the study to portray the nature of state and politics in Iran. Secondary sources such as books, articles, research works done by researchers, reports of non-governmental organizations, magazines, and newspaper reports have also been used.

Theoretical Framework

This research is an effort to identify the location of the reformist movement (1997) in Iranian politics. It also seeks to analyse reform in a broader context and addresses the question of what reform and reform movement means in a postcolonial state and especially in the state like Iran in post-revolution era. The politics in post-revolution Iran hasn't solved the economic, social-cultural, religious and foreign policy issues. Politics has been revolving around a fundamental concern: the search of an indigenous identity. Every step taken by the decision or policy makers has gone through the prism of an anti-imperialist framework and a leaning towards 'cultural authenticity' (Nabavi 2003: x). Iranian Revolution of 1979 is one of the major instances of the anti-imperialist or indigenous struggle in Iran. The Iranian Revolution is defined as a series of 'nativist' protests against the westernization and dictatorship of the monarchy. Then it was followed by a Cultural Revolution and eight years long war with Iraq. Both of these developments have a core motive of bringing 'cultural authenticity' (Boroujerdi 1996; Arjomand 2002:325). The reformist discourse emerged in order to address the failures of the Iranian Revolution. It has put forward the task of establishing an indigenity with a new framework, considering the changing circumstances in Iran as well as around the world.

The body of thought which was presented by the reformist discourse represents the indigenous tradition of resistance existed for more than hundred years in the modern history of Iran. It appeared in the form of non-violent civic movements in different periods. The beginning of a non-violent, civic movement is marked by the emergence of the Tobacco Movement of 1890–1892. It was then followed by the Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1907. These movements have played a pivotal role in the creation of a political culture and the formulation of an Iranian national identity. Both of these movements laid the foundation for the national and collective identities in Iran. These

two major civic movements in the history of modern Iran has been a major source of inspiration in the recent non-violent insurgences. Both the events are the symbols of the self-determination through the non- violent struggle. It carried the major demands such as sovereignty of the people and rule of law. Therefore, these movements provide a historical context of non-violent resistance for later events in the series of Iranian national liberation struggle (Mohammadi 2019).

The rise of a social movement in the second half of nineteenth and early twentieth century led to the commencement of a state-building process and the beginning of a modern nation. The nature of civil resistance since then has been against the imperialist western superpower and corrupt autocracy at the home. This inherent nature of civil resistance has played a crucial role in forming a national consciousness (Arjomand 1988: 27).

The major developments in the modern history of Iran such as nationalization of oil in 1951-1953, the revolution of 1979 and the Green movement of 2009 were inspired from the Tobacco movement and the Constitutional Revolution in terms of adopting most of its tactics and strategies. Since the beginning of civil resistance in Iran, a section of political elites, intellectuals and politicians has been supporting the democratic modern state. These groups have introduced many principles such as separation of powers, constitutionalism, rule of law, centralized government and an independent judiciary. During the Qajars and Pahlavis, the nexus between monarchial autocracy and great powers created obstacles in Iran's way to self-determination. However, in the post-Revolution Iran, the politics connected with anti-imperialist rhetoric has become a major obstacle in the transition from theocracy to democracy (Mohammadi 2019).

By considering the indigenous context and nature of reformist discourse along with the socio-political development of early 1990s to Green movement of 2009, the study has taken two broader theoretical frameworks. Thus these theoretical frameworks will help in contextualizing and conceptualizing the reformist discourse and movement in the present study. The first theoretical framework titled as 'Reconsidering Post-Coloniality' is adopted from the literary critique which offers a fresh critique of the postcolonial theory and process. The main proponent of this theoretical framework is Hamid Dabashi who is

an Iranian intellectual based in New York. The main purpose of taking his critique as the first theoretical framework in this research is that his major arguments are built in the context of Iran. So, it becomes more relevant for this research. The second theoretical framework tiled as 'Islamism, Post-Islamism and Democracy' is adopted from sociology or political sociological theory of religion. The main proponents of this theoretical framework are Iranian liberal Muslim thinker Abdulkarim Soroush who has given liberal theory of Islam and popularized the notion of religious democracy and Asef Bayet who has produced the theory of post-Islamism.

These theoretical perspectives adopted in the study are used to comprehend the socio-political development of Iran and expound the phenomenon in the post-Khomeini (or what sometimes termed as post-revolutionary paradigm) Iran. It covers the period between the emergence of reformist discourse in early 1990s to Green Movement of 2009 in Iran followed by the Arab Spring in the region. These theoretical perspectives are still placed in a transitional period and have not yet reached their logical conclusion. Hence, it is more important to discuss these theoretical perspectives and use it as a theoretical framework for the present study.

Reconsidering Post-Coloniality

With the process of decolonization in the post-colonial world or what is called Global South, every nation or society has been engaged with the construction of an alternative way of life or indigenity which may be different from the western world. In other words, the post-colonial communities have been in the search of finding an alternative modernity as a resistance to the dominant western led triumph of modernity (European enlightenment). This process is also understood as redefining the concept of modernity by hitherto colonized. It is an attempt to make a structure of modernism free from the Eurocentric connotations (Araeen 2000:6).

The process of indigenization is multifaceted. It could be seen in the socio-political thought, institution building, nation-state building, and methods of change like revolutions and reforms and in the overall way of life. The process of indigenization in the post-colonial or global south often goes to the level of hyper nationalism and cultural

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fundamentalism. The politicians often justify traditionalisation of society in the name of opposing westernization. That is how religion, culture, tradition becomes and remains politically important. The major aim of indigenization was the construction of an alternative modernity and searching for an alternative way of life. This aim is still has to be achieved (Rathore 2018).

Though, Iran was never a colonized country, the modern history of Iran reveals the colonialist imposition of the imperialist powers on Iran. The encounter between Iran and the west since the nineteenth century has led to an increasing relevance of post-colonialism in the context of Iran, at both theoretical and societal levels. The Iranian history tells that how the country was confined to the status of a semi-colony due to the political and economic exploitation by the west (Ghaderi 2018:455-456). It is well understood that after the decline of European imperialism, colonialism took a new shape and operated as neo- colonialism through a newer form of controlling mechanisms of exploitation with transnational corporations and global institutional mechanisms on economy and trade. Europe was replaced by United States as the habitat of imperialism. In the aftermath of World War II, there was a significant shift in the realm of the production of knowledge and epistemological ecosystem. If Europe was at the forefront in producing orientalist scholarship in pre-war period, it was handed over to the United States. The United States emerged as the new significant force to continue the pace of both imperialism as well as orientalism. Ramakrishnan stated that "though the change was more visible in the nature of imperialism, American orientalism still retains much of the European orientalist bandwagon" (Ramakrishnan 2008:1)

Ramakrishnan has found two major factors on which American attitudes, perceptions and policies towards the 'orient' are based: "(1) the stage of development of American imperialism with all its requirements of meeting political, economic and military interests in the region or the country concerned; and (2) the corpus of knowledge produced in American establishments on the region or the country concerned and the resultant discourse that informs the analyst and the policy-maker, that is, the nature of American orientalism. The above two factors are integrated linked together in enunciating any particular attitude or policy" (Ramakrishnan 2008: 1).

Historically, there have been many instances where imperialist forces have undermined indigenous struggle for democracy. The Iranian constitutional Revolution of 1906 was people's attempt to "tame internal despotism and initiate political reforms", which was undermined by the Russians and British. Both imperialist forces were tensed about their interest due to the anti-imperialist nature of the Revolution (Behravesh 2012: 389, Ghaderi 2018:457). In the post II world War period, the US has developed interest in Iran and started imperialist interventions. Mohammad Mosaddeq government was overthrown by the US-British joint venture in 1953 after he nationalized the oil industry of Iran. He saw Anglo-Oil Company as the "personification of the evils of the economic imperialism" (Louis 2004:148). Though coup d'état was justified in the pretext of saving Iran from the Soviet communists and indeed aimed at protecting their interests in Iran (Byrne 2004: 213–218; Louis 2004:151–177). After dethroning Mosaddeq government, US has established mutual co-operation with Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi for fulfilling its political and economic interest which continued for two and a half decade (Fayazmanesh 2008:12). The coup helped Shah Pahlavi in restoring his authority and developing a military bond with the west which led to the decline of the status of Iran to a mere colony (Abrahamian 2008:157). These developments prepared the ground for the anti- imperialist movements which ultimately led to the Iranian Revolution of 1979 that was characterized as "deeply anti-American" (Gasiorowski 2004:261; Ghaderi 2018)

Iran's case is very well suited within the postcolonial framework. The politics after Iranian revolution indicates a clear sign of indigenization process and its failure. Even though, Iran had officially never been a colonized country, it has been subservient to the colonial powers. The history of Iran has witnessed prolonged pseudo-colonisation, regime of puppet rulers and foreign powers' influence. Therefore, struggle for real independence and democratic governance has been in psyche of the people in Iran for more than a century (Nikzadfar 2010:1)

The Iranian Revolution which ousted the western influenced Shah regime had represented a unique character among the other revolutions happened in other parts of the world (particularly in western world; French revolution, Russian revolution). However, in

the early stage, Iranian revolution was represented by various forces and religious, Marxist, secular nationalist and moderat political streams. But soon it was dominated by Islamic force led by Ayatollah Khomeini. Ayatollah Khomeini's charismatic leadership and his reinterpretation of Islam as an indigenous cultural identity against alien (western) interference in Iran has provided legitimacy which ultimately led to the establishment of Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI). Soon after the establishment of IRI, the process of Indigenization in the form of Islamisation or Cultural Revolution started. Rather than giving an authentic alternative to the people, the indigenization has suppressed the freedom of the people. Under the indigenization process, the state has promoted age old religio-cultural tradition, mandatory veiling for women, Islamization of universities, ban on foreign music and cinema. It has suffocated the lives of the people (Heywood 2015:200).

The failure of the revolutionary paradigm or the process of indigenization led by the revolutionary discourse (with the domination of Islamic ideology and identity) is linked with the critiques of postcolonialism. The critics of postcolonialism have argued that in the process of establishing post-colonial identity and rejecting the western intellectual tradition, traditional values, authority and structure are justified. Thus, it also abandons progressive politics. One of the fundamental concerns of postcolonialism is that it could provide a distinctive political identity to the developing world different from the European or Universalist pretensions of liberalism and socialism. Postcolonial theory as a form of identity politics was inclined to take inspiration from the indigenous religion, culture and traditions (Heywood 2015:200-201).

Nevertheless, postcolonialism is found in various forms. It can be found in the attempts made by Gandhi to merge Indian nationalism with the principle of non-violence and self-sacrifice rooted in Hinduism. It can also be seen in the form of a religious fundamentalism, especially the Islamic fundamentalism. Heywood stated that "in the Gandhi's view, violence, 'the doctrine of sword,' is a western imposition upon India. By contrast Frantz Fanon emphasized the link between anti-colonialism and violence. He argued that decolonilisation requires, in effect, a new species of man to be created, and that this is largely achieved as the psychological burden of colonial subjugation is

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rejected through the cathartic experience of violence" (Heywood 2015:200-201).

Along with postcolonialism as a process, the postcolonial theory has also been widely criticized in the recent developments within the postcolonial paradigm for its lack of reflectivity on the postcolonial reality. Rathore (2017) starting with background and contextuality of postcolonial studies wrote that:

> Though its origins date back earlier, for example in the writings of Franz Fanon, it is the period since the 1979 Revolution in Iran where we witness the widely visible emergence of postcolonial studies. Most of the postcolonial literature may be seen, I believe, as a unique form of transatlantic (Western) self-understanding—what Habermas (2010) refers to as 'the shocking dialectic of higher-level reflexivity'. When reading these postcolonial texts you should not mistake what you experience for any sort of raw encounter with radically alternative epistemologies, temporalities, and so on. You may have become familiar with postcolonial studies through sources like Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin's Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts (2000) or Loomba's Colonialism/Postcolonialism (1998/2005), by Robert Young's Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction (2001), or theoretical landmark texts like Homi Bhabha's Nation and Narration (1990) or The Location of Culture (1994), or Gayatri Spivak's A Critique of Postcolonial Reason (1999) (Rathore 2017:124-125).

Rathore further made a distinction between postcolonial theory and the theory in the post-colonies. He critically analysed the postcolonial theory for its lack of engagement with the non-western intellectual traditions or practices as an alternative. He pointed out the lacunas in the emic (internal nature) of postcolonial theory (Rathore 2017: 125).

> Every single book mentioned above as representative of postcolonial studies was originally published in a transatlantic metropolis; usually London and New York……..The mentioned works are critiques of orientalism and Eurocentrism but they don't undertake to engage with non-Western intellectual traditions or practices as an alternative; they remain immanant (partly due editorial demands and market consideration), even as they pretend to represent the post-colony……. Postcolonial theory as thus conceived is mere resistance, or better, *resentment*, against the triumph of liberal modernity. It is liberal modernity's soft, immanent, self-critique. It counterfeits an internal discourse for an external encounter, or an etic one as anthropologists say.

The most recent critique of postcolonialism in Iranian context is represented in the Hamid Dabashi's recent work "*Iran without Borders: Towards a Critique of the Postcolonial Nation,*" (2016). Dabashi (2016), in his cosmopolitan approach, what he termed as "cosmopolitan worldliness", revealed the inadequacy of both approaches; secularists (western derivative) as well as postcolonials to understand the nation called Iran. He termed secularists and postcolonial as "whitewashed, eurocentic generation of Iranian intellectuals". He considers postcoloniality merely as an extension of colonial thinking.

The 'idea of nation' in Iran is determined by the manufactured postcolonial borders. The same colonial burden has harmed the development of a group of nations like Turkey, India and Egypt. These nations are within the colonially manufactured sectarian hatred and ethnic identity politics (Dabashi 2016:4-5).

Dabashi looks Iran from a cosmopolitan lens and asserts to bring life beyond identity politics. He attempts to emancipate Iran from the simplistic top-down depiction. In simplistic top-down depiction in the daily news and public debate, Iran is depicted as "society consists of the tyrannical Islamic ruling regime against the secular, liberal, urban elites". He stated that "no ruling regime could ever make an exclusive claim over the idea of 'Iran' as a nation, a people, a public sphere, a cultural effervescence still awaiting its political fulfillment". In this seminal work, Dabashi (2016), discovers an alternative means in which the 'real' Iran since 19th century has been portrayed. He has adopted the bottom up methodology to construct an Iranian identity as 'transnational public sphere' drawing on a comprehensive and detailed understanding of not only history, but also the growth and evolution of Iranian film, poetry and the alternative press. He has rejected the binaries such as tradition vs. modernity, Islamic vs. secular and Persian vs. Arab (Dabashi 2016:4-5).

Dabashi's critique is grounded in contemporary transnational uprisings from Syria to Yemen and Iran to Morocco. The Green Movement in Iran was just a popular protest against the allegedly rigged presidential election result. However, it has gone beyond that to challenge the foundations of the Islamic Republic. It has revealed the failures of the state which claimed to establish an Islamic homogeneity (Homo Islamicus). The Green Movement presented the defiant sprit of Iran's cosmopolitan political culture which included militant Islamism. However, it is not just confined to it. It has given a momentum to the repressed opposition (cosmopolitan political culture). The cosmopolitan political culture of Iran was "non-sectarian, non-denominational, gender and class conscious, and above all transnational and worldly in its character and culture" (Dabashi 2016).

It had played a pivotal role in previous civil movements and finally culminated in the

course of the 1977-79 revolution. Nevertheless, the revolution was hijacked by militant Islamist before it could succeed in establishing a free and democratic republic. For more than three decades, the ruling regime has been involved in the process of redefining the Iranian political culture exclusively in Islamist terms. But they have continually failed to deal with the challenges of peoples' discontent emerged from the women's rights movement, labor unrest and student protest. Green movement was the culmination of this consistent discontent to claim a public space. Dabashi opined that "these were manifestations of a defiant cosmopolitan culture that the militant and besieged Islamists wished to deny; but the harder they denied it, the stronger it became" (Dabashi 2016).

The Arab Spring was emerged as the translational popular uprising after the Green movement in Iran. These uprisings came with the capacity of changing the world with a better and hopeful version of itself. The Arab Spring has initiated the process of transforming our consciousness which was hitherto conditioned by dogma or violence into a word beyond it. The events from Green Movement to Arab Spring have challenged the colonially imposed geographical divisions or notions (categories), such as 'North Africa', 'Arab', 'Middle East' and the 'Muslim World'. The world is transcending itself and overcoming the puzzled consciousness derived from the colonial and engrossed by the postcolonial. To understand the transformation led by the Green Movement and Arab Spring, there is a need of new metaphors beyond the colonial or postcolonial. There is a need of rethinking of the concept of 'revolution' as it was understood by Karl Marx and Hannah Arendt. The uprisings have transcended many factors such as religion, race, ideologies, sects, pro- or anti-western etc. The term 'west' has lost its potency. Therefore the condition called 'postcoloniality' is becoming meaningless. "The East, the West, the Oriental, the colonial, the postcolonial- they are no more. What we are witnessing unfold in what used to be called 'the Middle East' (and beyond) marks the end of postcolonial ideological formations" (Dabashi 2012).

The postcolonial in the process of negating the colonial did not overcome it. The postcolonial subject was the colonial subject itself. It lasted with the illusion and emancipation projected by the colonial. Dabashi stated that "for more than two hundred years- from nineteenth to twentieth century- colonialism began postcolonial ideological

formations: socialism, nationalism, nativism (Islamism); one meta-narrative after another, ostensibly to combat, but effectively to embrace and exacerbate, its consequences" (Dabashi 2012).

The Arab Spring has commenced the process of overcoming both colonial and postcolonial paradigms. These uprisings create new methods of liberation and emancipation which are no longer shaped by the colonial or rests upon the postcolonial structures of domination. The ruling regimes are disturbed by these new revolutions or uprisings due to their transformed nature that goes beyond 'the politics of replicating' 'the West'. The revolutions have not only challenged the ruling regimes, but also the self-claimed superpowers due to the nature being beyond the colonial dividend. Therefore, revolutions are simultaneously rejecting the colonial oppression as well as the postcolonial ideologies "that had exhausted themselves as antithesis of colonial in form of Islamist, nationalist or socialist grand narratives". Theses postcolonial, ideological formations have also exhausted epistemologically (Dabashi 2012).

Along with his critique of postcoloniality, Dabashi also developed a critique of Islamic Ideology and incepted a non-ideological approach to Islam. In this context, Dabashi argues that the transformation of Islam into a purely ideological resistance paved the way for the disintegration of Islamic intellectual heritage. He holds that "neither the radical Islamism nor the bipolar West/Islam dichotomy in the twentieth century is necessary in order to resist the domination of global capitalism. The Islamic ideology successfully ousted western colonialism in Iran. However, it was a failure as it reproduced forms of domination and hegemony learned from the west" (Dabashi 2008).

The survival of the contemporary militant Islamism rests on its prevalent understanding which is produced and reproduced by the US propaganda machinery. It is operated on the outdated epistemic assumption which is inherited from the colonial phase of Muslim encounter with the European modernity. Dabashi stated that "almost 200 years of persistent transformation of Islam into Islamic ideology came to an end with the success and subsequent failure of the Islamic revolution in Iran" (Dabashi 2008).

'The west' also has collapsed as a coherent principle of Euro-North American modernity.

Hence, Islam lost its principle interlocutor. 'The West' as a representative image of the European Enlightenment modernity has self-destructed post-modernity. It is also because of the emerging geo-politics of the capital which produced an unprecedented and new geo-politics of power. The concept of the 'west' has no longer had any role to perform. As a mode of liberation theology, the Islamic ideology was formed over the last two hundred years in combative correspondence to and critical dialogue with a 'global colonial monstrosity' code called the west. With the west now over, Islam lacks the leading Muslim intellectuals, activists, interlocutor and leaders who knows whom they are talking to. Dabashi stated that "The Islam and the West as one of the most potent delusional binaries of the last 200 years has in fact exhausted all its epistemic possibilities and thus ended its regenerative epistemic energy" (Dabashi 2008). Dabashi (2008) also proposed that:

> Resisting a US-inspired globalized empire requires a radical rethinking of the very notion of ideology-whether in its secular or theological variations. Neither anti-colonial nationalism, nor Soviet-style socialism, nor indeed nativist grassroots ideologies such as Islamic ideology of the last 200 years in Muslim countries or its Christian version the liberation theology of the last quarter of the century in Latin America is capable of mobilizing and sustaining enough revolutionary synergy to resist this predatory empire (Dabashi 2008).

Islamism, Post-Islamism and Democracy

The second most important theoretical discourse to explain the development in Post-revolution Iran in general and in Post-Khomeini period in particular is the liberal theory of Islam. The liberal theory of Islam is developed by the leading Muslim liberal thinker named Abdulkarim Soroush. It is a critique of militant political Islam. The liberal theory of religion is regarded as highly relevant to the current religious and intellectual dynamics in the Islamic world. Soroush's thoughts also refute the orientalism-occidentalism dichotomy by historical-critical and dialogical approaches. "The theory regards religion, including Islam, as being a contextual and historical dialogue between man and the Absolute" (Shadi 2019). He has developed a historicist and pluralist theory of religion through post-positivist engagement and considering Islamism in practice (Shadi 2019).

In the early 1990s, Abdolkarim Soroush directly challenged the authority of state by arguing that no individual or group maintains the divine right to dominate the spiritual

authority (Nabavi 2012). Soroush further contended that the religion should be devoid of ideology. Because, ideologisation of Islam denied human thought, reason, freedom, democracy which eventually leads to dictatorship (Sadri and Sadri 2002). He advanced a non- ideological approach of Islam on a theoretical level (Nabavi 2012). Yousefi Eskhevari, a mid-ranking cleric also followed Soroush by suggesting the concept of religious democracy and challenging Supreme Leader's theocratic position (Rahimi 2012).

The liberal theory of Islam got a huge attention in its most popular theoretical variant termed as 'post-Islamism'. Post-Islamism is majorly developed by Asef Bayat, "focusing on the ideas of various scholars working in the field, such as Mojtaba Mahdavi, Adolkarim Soroush, Abolghasem Fanaei and Farzin Vahdat" (Badamchi 2017). Bayat has originally introduced the term post-Islamism in his 1996 brief essay explaining the sociological transformation of post-Khomeini Iran. Since its inception, the term is used by Bayat and some other scholars in disciplines such as sociology and political science to explain the contemporary development and challenges that Islamism or political Islam is facing (Badamchi 2017).

Bayat (2007) observed that there is a paradigm shift towards "post-Islamism". The structures driven by students, women, youth and religious intellectuals, as well as the professional class tilt towards the 'post-Islamism', a new vision of the society and polity. At the heart of the post-Islamist project, there is a blend of republican ideals and religious ethic which paved the way for a "religious democracy" as its political mission (Bayat 2007:49).

As a socio-political process as well as an intellectual discourse, the inception of post-Islamism could be considered in three factors; a) the end of war with Iraq in 1988, b) the death of ayatollah Khomeini, c) program of post-war reconstruction and pragmatist shift under President Rafsanjani. Later it merged with the demands of students, women and youth for democracy, tolerance, rights and gender equality. Therefore, the post-Islamism turns into a comprehensive discourse and as a contradiction to the Islamic state. However, it is also argued that Islamic state under Khomeini has empowered the public in

order to transform them from citizens to subjects. Subsequently, it questioned the political and the intellectual foundations of the Islamic republic itself. Mostafa Malekin perceived this as a positive aspect of the Islamic state. He also opined that "following their experience of the religious state, the younger generation of Iranians differ in two main ways from their fathers and some of their counterparts in the rest of the Muslim world: first, they are less utopian and more realistic; second, they are more interested in using philosophy and critical thinking to solve socio-political problems" (quoted in Badamchi 2017).

The post-Islamism could be more understood by comparing it with Islamism. For that purpose, it is imperative to understand Islamism first. In its philosophical parlance Islamism aims at establishing an Islamic order with the help of state power. The Islamist considers state as the most effective institution for eliminating evil and enforcing good. Therefore Islamic political theory emphasizes more on the obligations of individuals than rights. In that case people are perceived more as dutiful subjects rather than rights-bearing citizens (Badamchi 2017).

Islamism is also seen in terms of ideologisation of Islam. It is defined as a nativist ideology established by the marginalized Muslim intelligentsia against the western epistemic imperialism. Islamism presented as a "divine system with a superior political model, cultural codes, legal structure, and economic arrangement" (Shahibzadeh 2016). In that sense, it is seen as a comprehensive ideology capable of resolving the human problems. In Iranian Revolution of 1979, the Islamic ideology or Islamism took a dominant role and consequently Islamic Republic came into the existence (Badamchi 2017).

The approach of looking Islam as a comprehensive ideology resulted in the marginalization of all or non-Islamist socio-political forces. Thus Islamism as an expression of Iranian nativism was proved as a flaw epistemologically, ethically as well as politically. It reduced everything through its reductionist nature into constructed binaries between authentic and alien. The authenticity of the other forces was denied and other voices were suppressed (Shahibzadeh 2016). Following Soroush, Daryush

Shayegan's critique of ideology is also regarded as important for understanding post-Islamism. For him, "post-Islamism is defined as distancing oneself from the ideological reading of religion. Ali Mirsepasi also observes that post-Islamist political theory can be associated with the critique of anti-modernist Islamist political discourse" (cited in Badamchi 2017).

As above mentioned, the post-Islamism attempts to develop a theory of 'religious democracy'. Therefore, democracy is always in priority in this discourse unlike the theocracy and the ontological reality of the Islamism. Nevertheless, Islamism also came into existence with the objective of establishing democracy. The Islamist discarded the Western imported democracy while discarding the democracy itself. They regarded the western democracy as the carrier of the class domination and economic exploitation. They aimed at discovering true democracy having the capacity of realizing the human emancipation based on a classless vision which could transcend all social antagonisms. In other words, the Islamist conception of democracy is influenced by the Marxist totalistic approach of looking into history as well as future. In Iran, the Islamist ideology after overthrowing Shah's monarchy established a revolutionary state (Shahibzadeh 2016).

The revolutionary state aimed at preparing the modalities for true democracy at national and global level through a universalist political and intellectual discourse. The Islamist which represented the universalist revolutionary Islamic ideology is Ali Shariati's discourse in late 1960s and 1970s and guerilla organizations such as Fadaiyan-e Khalq and Mojahedin-e Khalq. These revolutionary Islamists justified Ayatollah Khomeini's leadership as the manifestation of the general will. The Islamic Republic had successfully created a nationalized public sphere free from the western influence and intervention under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini. However, it was done at the cost of suppression of other or non-Islamist forces. Consequently, Islamism have diverted from its objective of establishing true democracy (Shahibzadeh 2016).

Post-Islamism is defined as an intellectual project that attempts to theorize the socio-political transformation in Islamic society transcending Islamism. The political theorists associated with post-Islamism critically analyze and review the fundamental principles of

Islamism. It presented a more reasonable interpretation of Islam as a comprehensive doctrine through gradualism as an approach and process. It asserts unreasonable character of the Islamist political theory, considering its refutation of mutual respect and social co-operation. Therefore, post-Islamic theorist provides a fusion of religiosity and rights, faith and freedom, Islam and liberty. The theory focuses on "rights instead of duties, plurality in the place of a singular authority, historicity rather than fixed scripture and the future instead of the past." Overall, it inquires into the compatibility of religion and democracy (Badamchi 2017).

Islamist discourse as a discursive condition and the failure of the Islamic totalism has given a ground for post-Islamic intellectual shift. As a critique of Islamic totalism, post-Islamism considers democracy as a realization of civil and political rights of individuals at present, beyond the Islamist rhetoric of achieving true democracy in the future. Therefore it developed a critical approach towards the ideological foundations of Islamism. It launched a socio-political struggle against the Islamic authoritarianism to pressurize the state to recognize the civil and political rights of the citizens. The post-Islamic intellectuals and activists are the open supporters of the reformist movement from 1997 to 2005, Green Movement of 2009 as well Rouhani's candidacy in 2013. The post-Islamist intellectuals and activists are self-educated who relied on the democratic tradition of Iran itself. They do not represent the so called western constructed moderate Islam that is advocated by western NGOs. Following a non-derivative and non-universalist, or in other words, indigenous (authentic) and pluralist approach, post-Islamism aims at achieving an 'alternative modernity' (Shahibzadeh 2016).

In this regard Mahadavi argues that post-Islamism is an attempt to evolve an alternative modernity. It is a critical engagement with Islamic tradition through reinventing and reforming it. It rejects 'traditionalism' as well as anti-modernism. Post-Islamists have evolved a type of native concept of modernity and democracy, deconstruction of tradition as well as western modernity. They are engaged with an ongoing project which offers a consistent critical dialogue between "tradition and modernity and between religion and democracy" (Badamchi 2017). Abdolkarim Soroush has opined that:

On the one hand, my heart is devoted to spirituality and religion, whereas on the other

hand it is devoted to modern knowledge and rationality. I cannot divorce myself from either of these attachments; moreover, my personal experience of faith and reason has taught me that pursuing both of them together is quite possible. What I will attempt to do is establish a dialogue between two major assets of human civilization, namely religion and modern reason. I attempt neither to subordinate modern rationality to religion nor religion to modern reasoning. Rather, what I wish to do (according to my current understanding) is to establish a dialogue between the present and the past. The proper definition of a [post- Islamist] religious intellectual, I think, is a person who is in a permanent process of dialogue, sometimes interrogating and criticizing religion, and sometimes doing the same about modern rationality. Such a person never considers neither case as closed nor leaves either of them in peace (Badamchi 2017).

The emergence of post-Islamism is not the end of Islamism. Bayat in this context observes, "We may witness simultaneous processes of both Islamization and post-Islamization". He further emphasises that the prefix post does not have a historical connotation. It is essentially a significant deviation from the Islamic intellectual discourse. Post-Islamism must not be confused with the post-Islamic. Post-Islamists do not discard their religion; instead they oppose a religious state and underline its danger for religion (Islam) as well as the democratic government. Post-Islamism is not a secularist departure from the Islamic faith. It emphasises the dangers of the use of religion for consolidating state power and argues for the segregation of religious matters from the state affairs. It adheres to a kind of inclusive religious discourse in which "Islam nevertheless continues to remain important both as faith and as player in the public sphere" (Badamchi 2017). The post- Islamists focused on the necessity of the presence of religion in the public domain in order to promote spirituality and piety in the society. They regarded the constructive role played by religion in a civil society. Underlining the incompatibility of religion and state power, the post- Islamists consider Islamic state as an oxymoron as it in practice, becomes no less than "clerical oligarchy or a Leviathan in practice that protect the interests of the ruling class" (Badamchi 2017).

Post-Islamism also contains similar characteristics of what is known as 'religious secularity.' Religious secularity also stands against the unification of state and religion. Ghobadzadeh contends that the discourse of religious secularity "blurs the boundaries between the religious and the secular, conflating the terms into one" (Badamchi 2017). It rejects the politicization of both Islam; Islamism as well as authoritarian western secularism and a top-down modernization. It believes in the compatibility of Islam with a secular state. However, it recognizes the importance of religion in the public sphere.

Soroush also talks about two kinds of secularism called political and philosophical secularism. The former "means to separate religion institutionally from the state, so that the state has to regard all creeds and religions as equals, recognize their plurality and treat them in an impartial and neutral way. In this sense, post-Islamists are political secularists who support the state's political impartiality in the face of a variety of beliefs and world-views" (Badamchi 2017).

Badamchi stated that "when it comes to philosophical secularism, however, which is for Soroush 'synonymous with atheism', lack of belief in religion and a 'kind of materialism', post-Islamists reject it as being incompatible with religiosity". According to Soroush, philosophical secularism is based on the negation of religion. The political secularism has its basis in the affirmation of religion. He further opined that it is impossible to combine both negation and affirmation (Badamchi 2017).

Vahdat defines post-Islamism in terms of 'abandoning passivity'. Islamists imposed a form of dutiful psyche on masses that they should be, "inactive, docile, compliant, idle, suffering and resigned". Rejecting the passivity, post-Islamism represent the critical masses in Muslim society acquired a psyche of "assertiveness, vigor, volition, resolve and action". Finally, the post-Islamism in the Iranian context offers a direct critique to the 'Islamic jurisprudence' or the *fiqh* based state. Soroush Dabbagh analyzed post-Islamism as adopting moral account of religion opposing its ideological one. In that sense the legitimacy of Islamic jurisprudence must be evaluated form an ethical perspective. From the perspective of morality, Abolghasem Fanaei explains post- Islamist view as "jurisprudence within the boundaries of morality, or exhibiting the moral falsifiability". This has to be understood differently from the mainstream assumption among the Shia and Sunni jurists called "jurisprudential falsifiability of moral values, i.e. morality within the boundaries of jurisprudence". In his post-Islamism theses, he has adopted a religion friendly political secularism which is completely a rival view to the Islamists (Badamchi 2017).

Abdulkarim Soroush made a difference between a moral state and a *fiqh*-based state. In an interview after the Green Revolution of 2009, he said that "the best product one can

buy in 'religion shop' is morality and that post-Islamists believe in a moral religion. The noble Prophet said, 'I came to complete morality' (*innama buestu liutammima makarimul al-akhlaq*). He did not say that 'I came to complete *fiqh*'". Soroush further argues that "in a *fiqh*-oriented state, morality is treated unfairly whereas morality has to be given its due treatment in an ideal state. When I talk about a post-theocratic state *(hokumat-e faradini)*, I mean a moral government that leans on morality more than it leans on *fiqh*" (quoted Badamchi 2017).

Scheme of the Chapters

The present study is divided into six chapters which include an introduction and a conclusion. The present introductory chapter starts with the background of the research and moves further by developing the research problem. This chapter expounds the theme and research design of the study. It also describes the research gap, research questions and hypotheses. Apart from giving an outline of the research methodology and the tools that are followed, the chapter also attempts to define reformist discourses and movements in order to understand it in a broader theoretical framework. The purpose of giving a theoretical framework is to locate and contextualize the concerned research in the broader theoretical framework, therefore anticipating the underlining implications of it.

The second chapter titled 'Politics in Post-Revolution Iran: Khomeini Regime' mainly focuses on understanding the foundations of Islamic Republic of Iran as well as the politics under Khomeini. It starts with time and context of the Iranian Revolution of 1979. It briefly discusses the origin, discourses, and uniqueness of the Iranian Revolution. The chapter describes the political structure of Islamic Republic, formal as well as informal. It further analyzes the nature of politics under Khomeini regime known as revolutionary paradigm. It also analyses how the Revolution, War with Iraq and his charismatic leadership determined the legitimacy of the state for almost one decade. The chapter describes the policies such as Islamisation and its implications and how it leads to the growing discontent among the masses due to the top-down hegemonic imposition of state policies as well as authority. This chapter seeks to understand the revolutionary paradigm in order to better understand the reformist paradigm since the previous chapter provides the context in which reformist discourse and movement are emerged.

The third chapter titled as 'The Emergence of Reformist Discourses' starts with a brief discussion on Rafsanjani regime who laid the foundation of the reformist discourse in the post-Khomeini Iran. It also discusses the inception of the movement in 1990 and its growth during mid-1990s especially during the presidential election of 1997 in detail. This chapter also describes and analyses the achievements of Khatami regime, the growth of civil society, press, internet etc. It also discusses the political processes such as elections and growth of political parties. The elections are the major junctures of the reformist movement.

The fourth chapter titled 'Reformist Politics and Social Movements' starts with the discussion on the failures of the Khatami regime, its institutional-legal as well as political barriers. This chapter inquires into the major concern of the research that how political elites created barriers in the transition of theocracy into a religious democracy. The chapter discusses about the real actors of reformist movement includes civil society or social movement such as student movement, women's movement labour movement, minority movement and youth activities. The chapter develops the argument against the reductionist top-down approach which declares reformist movement as dead and looks reformist from a non-reductionist bottom-up approach. It has also a section on blogs (internet) or social networking which played a significant role in the movement for reform at various junctures which gave a new perspective of analysing reformist movement from below. To reach at argument and test the hypotheses, the chapter comprehensively assesses the relationship between reformist political leadership or political elites and the real actors such as students, women and youth.

The fifth chapter titled as the 'Green Movement and its Aftermath' discusses the developments that occurred in Iranian politics and the reformist discourses after Green movement. The chapter considers Green movement, the second wave of the reformist movement, which led to the victory of moderate candidate Hassan Rouhani. It discusses the changing character of social movement due to new technology and platforms of social networking. The Green movement's transnational impacts and influence in the Arab Spring is also discussed. The chapter also discusses the Rouhani regime and how the politics of co-option continues. The chapter ends with a short discussion on 2016

parliamentary and assembly of expert's election. The sixth chapter is the conclusion which summarizes the overall findings of the study.

CHAPTER II

Politics in Post-Revolution Iran: Khomeini Regime

The politics in post-revolutionary Iran until the death of Khomeini revolved around the ideological underpinnings of the Iranian revolution of 1979. In this regard, Rostami-Povey has written that "the Islamic Republic rose from the ashes of the Iranian Revolution of 1979" (Rostami-Povey 2010). The Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) has evolved as a unique political system in modern political history. Iran is the only Shi'i country in the world that claims to have modeled the system on Imam Ali and Prophet Mohammad's rule of pristine Islam. The Shi'a Islamism and clerical (*ulema*) authoritarian political establishment with the Constitution provide the form of democracy which made Iran a rare case of its kind in the modern era. The Iranian Islamic state has its own theoretical Islamic ideology which forms the basis of its society and political system (Mohammadi 2015).

Politics in IRI is an unprecedented case as it challenged the exiting theoretical propositions on modern polity. It has not only challenged the western dominant political theories but also other Islamic experiences. Therefore, the study of politics in IRI magnetizes extraordinary attention and it becomes an interesting case for a scholar or a researcher. The resurgence of Shi'ism during the Iranian Revolution of 1979 has challenged the general notion of the theorists of political development that the influence of religion declines with the increase of modernization. In pre-revolution period under Phahlavi dynasty, Iranian society had undergone a process of rapid modernization, secularization and globalization. However, it provided the ground for religious revivalism. The religious revivalism occurred with the reformation of Shi'a authority. Ayatollah Khomeini's new definition of Shi'ism has given a thrust to the re- construction of knowledge. It also led to a critique of modernity (Zaidi 2006).

The Shi'a authority in IRI unlike its historical precedents returned with many revisions and redefinitions with a mixture of democratic elements of modernity. This is also

because of the fact that the country has already witnessed some facets of modernity which contained a certain degree of constitutionalism and industrialization. As far as the constitutionalism is concerned, the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 became an important development (Alsaif 2007:11). However, the rise of Islamic republic after the Revolution resulted in the separation of state from the society. It resulted in the possibility for two types conflicting rules; religious authoritarian and democratic. The authoritarian rule was entrenched in tradition while the democratic institutions were affiliated to modernity. The Islamic republic represented the both. While the democratic paradigm has its influence in the society, the authoritarianism marked its presence in the state system (Alsaif 2007:81).

The Politics in IRI has gone through many good and bad experiences. Immediately after the Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini got legitimacy in favor of his idea of Shi'a Islamic Republic through the popular referendum for the rectification Constitution. The Iranian society had gone through a bad experience under Khomeini regime as it endorsed authoritarian Islamization of socio-political institutions. The new born republic also witnessed a devastating decade of war with Iraq (1980-88) which began after Saddam Hussein's attack. It also faced a worse economic recession due to the economic sanctions imposed by USA.

The Shah's Regime and the Origins of Revolution

The Mohammad Shah Pahlavi regime had made Iran an important force in the international society through his modernization program. During his regime, Iran has achieved a tremendous economic growth in the first half of 1970's. Shah has enjoyed the support of the United States and other Western powers. The then U.S. President Jimmy Carter praised Shah for his project of modernization. He has famously called Iran as an "island of stability" in a violent and volatile region. However, after one year Jimmy Carter's praise, his government was overthrown (Heikal 1983, Milani 1994). Although, the county had never been ruled by a foreign power or colonized, the development of capitalism in Iran resulted in an uneven economic development as experienced by the colonized countries. It experienced the same kind of imperialism as experienced by the

colonized countries in terms of the development derived from the need of the European capitalist market. The import of goods and materials from Iran and the export of goods manufactured in European back to Iran was a usual trading system that was occurring in colonized countries (Rostami-Povey 2010: 23).

The dependence and affiliation with west and the despotism of the Shah's regime has increased the suffocation among the people. There was a complete lack of independence. Ayatollah Khomeini wrote that "The Shah had done away with our political, military, cultural and economic independence and placed Iran at the disposal of the west; in all aspects. He tortured and killed the people in his dungeons. He prohibited the men of religion and the preachers from telling the truth" (Khomeini 2009: 149). About the origin of the Uprising Khomeini further wrote that:

> The origin of this uprising stems from two points: one is the intense internal and external pressure and the internal and external plundering and the extraordinary suffocations in the fifty and odd years (the reference is of Pahlavi Dynasty: including the rule of Reza Khan and Mohhamad Reza) during which the people of Iran did not see even a single day of happiness, and lastly the massacres which took place in most parts of Iran. These animated the people to back this uprising. The other point is our desire for a Islamic and equitable government, a regime to stand in the face of the tyrant regimes, in order to be able to enact the Islamic precepts as they were in the early years of Islam (Khomeini 2009: 149).

Khomeini also revealed the Shah's unrestricted support to Israel to which he referred as "the usurper". The Shah's support to Israel caused in the growing resentment in some section of the Iranian population and became one of the causes for uprising. The Shah exported oil and opened Iranian market for the Israeli products. In order to deceive the public opinion, he continually condemned Israel (Khomeini 2009:150). Other causes of the uprisings which are intrinsically linked to above points raised by Khomeini are following (Khomeini 2009: 151-59):

i. *Moral Corruption-* According to Khomeini Moral corruption included issues such as extermination of the young generation, propagating corruption in the mass media, expanding corruption centers, ruining the faculty of thinking, ruining the human power and unveiling etc.

ii. *Un-development-* In the field of economic sphere, Khomeini has pointed out the causes which ruined the economy. In the opinion of Khomeini the Shah's "land reforms" were a

way to destroy agriculture, increasing dependency in food matters and the domination of the American advisors.

iii. *Domination of Imperialistic Culture-*In the Cultural field, Khomeini has talked about that the Shah's policies encountered Islam and the '*ulema*', promoted self-losing, distracting the minds from real matters, separating *ulema* from the people, denying man-making, separation between university and religious seminaries (*Howzah*) etc.

In the early 1978, a coalition representing diverse groups and individuals was spontaneously formed whose common aim was to oppose the Shah's Regime. Their opposition to the Shah's regime gained momentum through the dispersal of various demonstrations across the country. These groups and individuals represented various ideologies, perspectives and theoretical alternative to the Shah government. The major groups were Islamists, liberals and leftists. At the time of demonstrations, they had no intention to compromise with their ideological affiliation despite the fact that their objectives were same. Moreover, their hold was limited to a particular population. The ideological fragmentation became the major obstacle in the way of success of the Revolution (Farhang 2009:85).

Meanwhile, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini emerged as the most prominent and powerful leader of the Revolution. His main support base was the urban poor and the lower middle class population. The emergence of Khomeini as a charismatic personality enabled the Islamists' control over the revolution. However, his popularity stemmed from the fact that most of the supporters believed that Khomeini was not interested in taking any official political power (Farhang 2009:85).

Iranian Revolution and its Discourses

The Iranian Revolution was the collective discontent against the 'west'. The ideological base of the Revolution was formed from the discontent and resentment of the 'injured self' (Islamic Iran) against the antagonistic other called 'west'. This ideology is constructed by a collective representation of revolutionary discourses including religious, Marxist radical revolutionary and liberal democratic groups. The revolutionary ideology includes the thoughts of many intellectuals like Jalal Al-e Ahmad, Ali Shariati, Morteza

Motahhari, Mehdi Bazargan and most importantly, Ayatollah Khomeini. In this context, Al-e Ahmad's famous concept of *Gharbzadegi* (Westoxication) and Shariati's dynamic lectures on "Islamology" became more important (Dabashi: 1993, Abrahamain: 1996).

Dabashi (2016) identified three major ideological discourses that had been present since two hundred years of Iranian history much prior to the Iranian Revolution. The Iranian Revolution in its early phase represented the mixture of all these three discourses namely 'Third World socialism', anti-colonial nationalism and militant Islamism. The *Tudeh* has significantly represented the 'Third World Socialism' in the 1940s. The nationalization of oil industries in 1950 by Mohammad Mosaddegh against the British colonial domination was exemplified as an anti-colonial nationalism. The third one, namely the militant Islamism was reflected in the Islamist uprising which was led by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1960s. The militant Islamism led by Ayatollah Khomeini ultimately defeated and outmaneuvered the nationalists and socialists. Nationalists and Socialists had lost their moral and intellectual grip on the society to the militant Islamists till the success of Revolution and especially after the ideological confrontation in the aftermath of the Revolution. However, the charismatic leadership of Khomeini became the major weapon to overcome other ideologies (Dabashi 2016).

As mentioned above, three political cultures have also defined the geopolitics of the entire region; from the Indian subcontinent, Central Asia, Arab world to North Africa. "These three simultaneous, competing and alternating ideologies were identifiable as the byproduct of some two hundred years of confrontation and contestation with European imperialism" (Dabashi 2016). In the Iranian history of intellectual discourses, Seyyed Jamal al-Afghani (1838– 97) represented all three discourses at a time. Born as an Iranian Shi'a, he mastered at disguising himself in multiple and varied identities. Dabashi opined that "he had been an authentic revolutionary an anti-colonial nationalist, a Third World socialist, and a militant Islamist all at the same time by means of never being culturally authentic to any identity politics" (Dabashi 2016).

The Islamic Revolution of 1979 was a series of events that began in January 1978 and aimed at the overthrow of the Pahlavi regime ruled by Mohammad Reza Shah. The

Iranian revolution of 1979 came as an oppositional force against the westernization of the Iranian society under the monarchical and authoritarian rule of the Shah. The Iranian Revolution's success was connected with the gradual development of the 'Islamic ideology' which was shaped by the contribution of many philosophers and socio-political thinkers of the country. The Islamic ideology has become revolutionary with the anger of the people against West and the Shah's regime. The Islamic ideology became the base of Khomeini's theocratic definition of Shi'a authority of the state (Algar 1983: 61).

Iranian revolution was not just about dethroning the unpopular king and abolishing two thousand and five hundred years old dynastic rule. It was rather a quest for empowerment. It was an attempt to challenge the centralizing tendency of power. The earlier attempts of the Constitutional Revolution (1906-1911) and White Revolution to challenge the power centres were failed. Those attempts were evolutionary in nature. However, it was ultimately aborted. Thus, the protesters resorted the previous Revolutions. The Iranian Revolution didn't happen in isolation. It was rather a part and parcel of the global transformation containing the rule of whites in Africa, military domination in Latin America and the demise of communism in Europe (Robin 2000:133-134).

Harney is in opinion that in its early phase, Iranian revolution was a populist and nationalist movement against the failures of the Pahlavi rule. The people were dissatisfied with the Shah's corrupt government as the benefits of oil were not reaching to the poor. People raised their anger against the rising unemployment and economic inequalities. Government became oppressive and brutal in responding to popular protests (Harney 1998). The socio-religious changes initiated as a part of the modernization of the society by the Shah's regime were not acceptable to the conservative sections. Shi'a Islamic conservatives reacted against the westernization, modernization and secularization efforts of western backed Shah regime. The revolution was also supported by various forces such as leftists, Islamic leftist groups, nationalist, secularist and other individuals. The student movement has played a pivotal role in strengthening the protests. Hence, the revolution became a mixture of various forces, discourses and ideologies which aimed at overthrowing Shah Regime (Abrahamian 1982:534).

The Iranian Revolution is defined as a series of 'nativistic' protests against the westernization and dictatorship of monarchy which gradually took the shape of an Islamic ideology. The ideologisation process gained a particular momentum with the contribution of Jalal Al-e-Ahmad and Ali Shariati (Boroujerdi 1996; Arjomand 2002:325). There was a gradual rise in the revolutionary character of Islamic ideology which resulted in a theocratic redefinition of Shi'a authority by Khomeini. It was an ideological mix of populism and clericalism which is termed as "Khomeinism" (Abrahamian 1993; Arjomand 2002: 325).

The Shi'a authority was an ideological combination of clericalism and populism under the leadership of Khomeini (Arjomand 2002:326). This revolutionary transformation and the redefinition culminated in the creation of an ascetic revolutionary political ethic by Khomeini in his theory of theocratic government. This theocratic establishment is based on *velayat-e-faqih* (guardianship of the jurist) (Naraghi, 2015, Arjomand, 2002). Khomeini reiterated the need for the rule by *ulema* (religious scholar). For Khomeini, a virtuous individual could lead the community by having a proper knowledge of religious truth and divine justice. Khomeini emphasized on a set of specific values for the theocratic state which included justice, independence, self-sufficiency and Islamic piety (Rieffer-Flanagan, 2013).

The victory of revolution was undoubtedly a humiliating experience for the US. The Islamic revolution was an inspiration for many other Muslims and even non-Muslim societies throughout the world (Attar 2005). Dabashi (1993) identified the emergence of "Islamic ideology" in Iran as a new term which is different from other "militant," "fundamentalist," "populist," "political," "Resurgent," or Revivalist Islam. It accentuates that Islamic ideology does not explicate the whole story. It simply sets the 'universe' and the 'discourse' in which the entire revolution was unfolded. The major thesis is that the "ideology of Revolution was that of discontent of the injured self (Islamic Iran) against the hostile other (the west)" (Dabashi 1993). Dabashi starts with Al-e Ahmad, particularly his popular "Westoxification" (*Gharbzadegi*) and discussed widely on Islamology propounded by Shariati. He aslo discussed Bani-Sadr's "monotheistic economics" and Taleqani's work on property. In addition to it, he talked about many

proclamations of Khomeini appealing for an Islamic Republic and Islamic Revolution. Abrahamian argued that "Dabashi is able to prove that the common theme running through these writers is the desire to preserve the self against the other" (quoted in Abrahamian 1996).

Alastair Crook (2009) traces the "essence and human spirit of the Iranian Revolution from its origins in Egypt, via the Iranian Revolution to today's Hamas and Hesballah". He gives an account of the ideas animating the world of Islam and questions what it means and where it comes from. He further expounds "how the thinking that underpins this Revolution has led to a novel vision of the future for Islamist societies, one that challenges some of the West's deepest convictions and juxtaposes this Islamist rediscovery of 'self' with the western intellectual response- and exposes the unspoken roots to both modes of thought" (Crook 2009).

Indeed, more than anything else, the Revolution was the result of the collective grievances against the imaginative creation of the 'west' which was deeply animated in Iran's revolutionary movement. The repudiation of the 'west' cultivated the ideological foundation of the Islamic revolutionary reaction. Ram argued that "the west became the epitome of moral corruption, of ethical bankruptcy, of illegitimate domination of the world, and of plundering the wealth and of other sovereign nations and it was cause of all ills, the mother of all corruptions, the condition of all despair, the father of all tyrannies" (Ram: 2002). The Revolution produced a new kind of modernity. In this regard, Dabashi (2007) argued that the "experience of modernity is a paradox generated by the fact that the European Enlightenment modernity that was meant to liberate Iranians from darkness, denied their agency by bringing the enlightenment message to them through the gun barrel of colonialism". Dabashi expanded it further by generating the idea of an "anticolonial modernity." From this perspective, European modernity is a "self-raising/other lowering project" to advantage the small fraction of the world's population. Dabashi calls Iran as a resisting nation. The anticolonial or postcolonial modernity led to Iranian's resistance against imperialism and many other cultural manifestations associated with it (Dabashi 2007).

The Iranian revolution was often seen as a development in occidentalism. Occidentalism is the discourse associated with liberation and oppression in the third world countries which bloomed during the decade of 1960s and 1970s marked by Mao's Cultural Revolution and Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1979. Mao regarded that the Chinese thoughts and traditions are being destroyed by the western imperialism. Zabardast stated that:

> In 1950s Mao ordered intellectuals to be cleansed of bourgeois ideology (individualism and pro-Americanism) in a similar way after cultural revolution, the Supreme Council of Iran's Cultural Revolution set up to clear universities of the Western ideology and mindset and in the Iranian Occidentalism, some of Iranian intellectuals such as Fardid, Jalal Al-e Ahmad and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad showed his opposition to be 'dissolved' or 'absorbed' to the west". Development of an Islamic ideology or religious Occidentalism is a common idea between the Iranian occidentalists (Zabardast: 2015).

Among the many ideological discourses, Khomeinism is a major discourse which not only meant to be Khomeini's thought but represents the collective strength of all discourses. It can be referred to a discourse which surpasses the particularity of Khomeini himself. It consists of policies and symbols of Iranian regime along with grander the Shi's cultural discourse existed at the time. Khomeinism can also be employed as a discourse which has always existed in the Iranian society at both during and after the Revolution. Webb stated that:

> It can be referred to a discourse that transcends the particularity of Khomeini himself, one that includes the symbols, rhetoric, and policies of the Iranian regime, as well as the larger Shi'a cultural discourse existent at the time. But in some way it even run counter to Khomeini's general position in particular, on can look to the influence of Iranian Marxism (e.g.,Jalal al -I Ahmad), and more progressive, reformist Islamic thinkers like Ali Shariati (Webb 2005).

Abrahamian (1993) defines that Khomeinism is essentially 'third world populism'. He rejected the notion about Ayatollah Khomeini (as fanatic, dogmatic, fundamentalist) that is described by west. He argues that Khomeinism should be seen as a 'third world populism' that did not reject modernity, but enters in it through its own way. Contrarily, Taheri (2010) critically argued that Khomeinist Revolution is based on a "pseudo-religious ideology" over the past three decades. He opined that the regime mobilized the resources for a global "holy war" against US and its allies. Iran's trajectory towards war is evident from Khomeini's "division mission" to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's messianic campaign in the name of "hidden Imam". An equally important task is to

ascertain and analyze the ideological discourses that were collectively responsible for mobilizing the Iranian masses (cited in Dabashi 2016).

Three major revolutionary discourses were in operation since World War II in Iran: the religious, the radical revolutionary, and the liberal democratic. Each of these three has had its own specific history, complexity, and relative significance in the revolution. However, the religious discourse by virtue of having ideologically dominant position superseded the other two. Though, it has been a subject of more scrutiny and examination. So long as we do not lose the sight of the proportional significance of the other two discourses in the course and outcome of the Revolution, the precession of our insight into the revolutionary movement can only be increased. Then we would get more acquainted with the representative writings of the religious discourse. In that context, the essays and speeches by Murtaza Mutahhari and Ali Shariati are more important (Dabashi 2016).

Nikpay, an Iranian Sociologist has opined that the evolution and the development of a political religiosity in post-revolution time were confronting the challenges emanated from modernization. Responses from the side of the religious community have been unsteadily fluctuating from the call to modernize Islam to Islamic modernity. Within this uncertain condition, political religiosity in the pre-revolutionary era has emerged in three forms; instrumental type, ideological type and jurisprudential-political type (quoted Alsaif 2007:56).a). The instrumental type took Islam as just an anti-imperialist ideology which was embraced by nationalists or pan-Iranists. The ideological type underlined Islam as the foundation of social and political reform which was embraced by Islamic intellectuals and the followers of the Ali Shariati. The Jurisprudential-political type concentrated on the religious behaviors and attitudes. This category was represented by clergy (Alsaif 2007:56).

Another categorization of political religiosity in the pre-revolutionary Iran was done by Ranani, a professor at Esfahan University. He has analyzed it within the broader division of the transition process from traditionalism to modernity which is considered as the major source of discontent in the modern Iran. He has divided Iranian society in two

sectors; traditional sector and modern sector. For him, traditional sector has revolted against the modernizing tendency of the Shah's regime and the modern sector has vehemently opposed the existence of traditional patterns of politicization within the establishment (quoted in Alsaif 2007:56).

The plurality of these diverse opinions has created a disharmony among the political elites and hindered the unified approach for new political system in the formative period of Islamic Republic (Alsaif 2007:57) Kamrava has categorized Islamic Revolution as a spontaneous event by rejecting it as a pre-planned variety. In that case ideology takes shape after the Revolution. The ideals and promises of the revolutionary movements have gone through many debates and interpretations. The Islamic Revolution suddenly emerged with no plan or preparation (quoted in Alsaif 2007:61).

Uniqueness of Iranian Revolution

Revolutions are momentous events with long lasting impacts. In world history, revolutions have occurred to start a new era of change. Many of the famous revolutions across the world (French Revolution, American Revolution and Russian Revolution) are understood as the harbinger of modernity and inspired other societies to be free from the ecclesiastical authority. The French Revolution was inspired by the enlightened thoughts of Voltaire, Diderot and Rousseau. The revolutionaries confiscated the property of the Roman Catholic Church and changed its Gregorian calendar to a zero year. It was insisted that the humanity will prevail once the shackles of superstitions and ancient institutions are abolished. The French Revolution became synonymous with liberty, equality and progressive change. The communist Revolutions in Russia and China had emphasized on secular ideology which was inherently antagonistic to religions domination (Milani 1994:8).

The term 'revolution' is contested among the scholars and used so ubiquitously and loosely in social sciences. The definitions of the term given by some famous scholars are the following. Raymond Tanter and Manus Midlarsky defined revolution as an "event in which a group of insurgent illegally or forcefully challenges the governmental elites." Charles Tilly defined it as the "displacement of one set of power-holders by another."

Hannah Arendt perceived it as the "liberation from oppression aims at least at the constitution of freedom, can we speak of revolution." Samuel Huntington opined that it is "a rapid, fundamental and violent domestic change in the dominant values and myths of a society, in its political institutions, social structure, leadership and government activity and politics." ThedaSkocpol also opined that revolution is "a rapid, basic transformation of a society and state structure…accompanied and in part carried through by class based revolt from below" (all quoted in Milani 1994:9). Mohsen M. Milani defined revolution as "a rapid, fundamental change in the social structure as well as in the state's personnel, institutions, and foundation of its legitimacy, accomplished from outside the legal channels and accompanied in part by a movement form below (non- governing classes)" (Milani 1994:9).

Before the Islamic Revolution of Iran (1979), the dominant perception about the revolution was that the dismissal of religion has been a relevant force in the revolutionary movements. It was perceived that modernization and development would unfold in the third world following the western model or western model of development which has a universal applicability. One of its inherent characters is secularization or the disenchantment of politics from religion. Marxists, liberals and other modernist paradigms may differ in many respects. However, it generally viewed religion as a dying force. The secular ideologies such as nationalism and socialism had been considered as the potential discourses for radical change which reduced religion to a private matter of the human social life. It was believed in the context of the revolution in Iran, especially in the early phase of protests of the Revolution that the peasantry and middle class having leftist and nationalist aspirations would be the major agents of change and the religious groups and Islam would become peripheral forces (Milani 1994: 11).

James Bill (1972) was in a view that the middle class posed a greatest menace to the Shah's regime. In 1979, Professor Bill wrote that the "middle class was the main force behind the Revolution and *ulema* would never participate directly in the formal governmental structure" (qouted in Milani 1994: 11). Leonard Binder (1997) was also in the view that Islam has become a marginal force. However, Professor Hamid Algar (1972) had an intuition that religious influence will continue in the protests, especially

under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini (quoted in Milani 1994:11).

Both U.S. and the Marxists were failed to understand the religious angle of future political course in Iran. In January 1978, US ambassador William Sullivan has reported at Washington that despite possessing a strong network, capturing political structure it is difficult for *ulemas* to capture power. Similarly, in February 1979, the editors of *Monthly Review* which was a socialist publication argued that after Shah's ouster of the Iran, "question of class come to the fore and religion will cease to play leadership role it enjoyed during the revolutionary period". In this similar line, Professor Ervand Abrahamian also predicted that the religious hold will soon lose its ground over the left (Marxists) with a unity of labor movement (quoted in Milani 1994:12). The roots of failures of scholars in assessing the Iranian Revolution were found in the conceptual crisis prevalent in the Iranian studies. Milani (1994) termed it as "theoretical glaucoma" that is associated with prevalent assumptions of nature and consequences of modernization in social sciences in third world (Milani 1994:9). The unique feature of the Islamic Revolution of Iran was the crucial role played by Islam and its emergence as the revolutionary ideology in post- revolution Iran (Milani 1994:3).

The unpredictability of the Iranian Revolution is proved by the fact that when Mohammad Shah fled the country on 16 January, 1979, there was an unthinkable situation that monarchy would be succeeded by theocracy. The Iranian experience of the Revolution reemphasised that Revolution often occurs as a surprise and defies prediction in the course of their development (Farhang 2009:85).

Foundation of the Islamic State

The redefinition and revolutionary transformation of Shi'a authority led to the construction of a revolutionary political ethics in Khomeini's theory of theocratic government. The theocratic government is based on *velayat-i faqih* (the guardianship of the jurist) (Naraghi 2015; Arjomand 2002; Schirazi 1997). Khomeini asserted on the need for the rule by *ulema* (religious scholar). For Khomeini a virtuous individual having the proper knowledge of religion, truth and divine justice could lead the community (Rieffer-Flanagan 2013). The new Constitution drafted under the guidance of 'Assembly of

Experts' and Khomeini (or Revolutionary Council) was rectified by democratic means (referendum, supported by 99.5 percent). It emphasized on a set of specific values for the theocratic state which included *Tawhidi* Islam (belief in one God), divine justice, independence, self-sufficiency and religious leadership (Hussain 1985).

The Constitution also shows some contradictions among its three major elements; Islamic legalist, democratic and secular. There is also a contradiction exists between the sovereignty of people and the Islamic jurists (Schirazi 1997). Thus, Iran has emerged as a "religio-political" state or a state that emphasizes Islamic revolutionary ideology and theocratic-democracy (Rostami-Povey 2010: 43; Hosseini and Tapper 2006). As a holistic observation, Halliday (2001) holds that Revolution was a combination of both "modernity" and "tradition" which provided an "institutional" and "ideological" base for the post-revolutionary state (Halliday 2001).

At the very early stage of the post-revolution era, there was a period of 'multiple sovereignty' or political factionalism among *tawhidi* and non-*tawhidi,* clerical and non-clerical Islamists and nationalists groups (Abrahamian 1993). But, by 1981 the clerics (*tawhidi*) had monopolized the power and became the most powerful part of the regime (Hussain 1985; Fadaee 2013). The political factionalism was managed by Khomeini's charismatic leadership. It was also controlled by a "paranoia" from which post-revolution Iranian politics was suffering. In the name of 'national security', the dissidents were suppressed as well as controlled by the leadership (Abrahamian: 1993).

Ayatollah Khomeini envisaged a very simple system of organization in the Islamic Republic. He considered the large system of legislature as unnecessary. The large bureaucracy consumes time and money. It has also failed to ensure a fair administration. Later on, this perception of him was seen as a deficiency of Shi'a authority and *velayat al-faqih*. It had underestimated the part played by the institutions and exaggerated the significance of the persona of the ruler. The less emphasis on instuition building under Shia rule has been due the perception that the regime based on the faith would be rewarded by God's grace (Holy Qur'an 7:96; quoted in Alsaif 2007:59).

The Constitution of 1979 (or 1980) is the most integral and comprehensive record on the

political ideology of Islamic Republic. It encompasses 175 Articles and a preamble. After the amendment in 1989, the number of Articles was increased to 177. The objective of the Islamic system envisaged in the Constitution was to produce a conducive environment for the development of citizens' life in accordance with the universal values of Islam. It promotes people's participation in the political process. It provides a conducive atmosphere to the people of the Islamic Republic to liberate them from the tyranny of the system. The Constitution also spreads the mission of the Islamic Revolution beyond the borders of the Iranian territory. It paved the way for the formation of a single Islamic world community. It also recognises the struggle for the emancipation of all oppressed and deprived sections across the world. It terminates all forms of "despotism, autocracy, monopoly of power as well as foreign influence and ensures political and social freedoms; participation of the all people in determining their political, economic, social and cultural destiny; elimination of discrimination along with the promotion of just economy compatible with the Islamic criteria, aiming at creating a welfare state, eliminate poverty and abolish all forms of deprivation based on food, housing, work, health care. It pursues self- sufficiency in scientific, technological, industrial, agricultural and military spheres" (Alsaif 2007:62-63).

The Constitution of Iran, the speeches of Khomeini and other leaders emphasised on five notions associated with revolutionary ideology; Islam, independence, justice, renovation and public participation. Nevertheless, the agreement does not seem to be reaching at a practical level. The principle of justice has been a prominent theme in both philosophical as well as the political debates since ancient times. It also occupies a significant position in the Islamic thoughts. In Shi'ism, it is one of the five *usul* of the religion. According to Motahari, justice is the core of all religious preaching and teachings (quoted in Alsaif 2007:64-65).

A brief reading of the Constitution could give an impression that the Islamic Republic has some features similar to the western European model of modern state. However, the political equality and majority rule is conditioned by the supreme authority. Thus, it seems that the republicanism of Islamic Republic is more influenced by the Leninist model of 'democratic centralism rather than the notion of popular sovereignty and checks

and balances in western democracy (Farhang 2009:87). One of the merits of the Islamic Republic is that even if it is categorized as an autocratic state by many observers, the practice of regular competitive parliamentary and presidential election makes it republican in nature. The institution of competitive election in theocracy sets it different from the contemporary autocratic states (Farlang 2009:87).

The consolidation of regime power has progressed through the following stages. (a). The referendum on the nature of the political system in March 1979, which culminated in the endorsement of Islamic Republic (b) Elections for the Council of Experts assigned the task of drafting a new constitution in August 1979 (c) referendum on the new constitution in November 1979 (d) Presidential elections in January 1980 (e) Parliamentary elections in March and May 1980 (f) reign of terror following the bombing of the headquarters of the Islamic Republican Party (IRP) in June 1981 (g) The pursuit of the main mass of Iraqi troops into Iraq in July 1982 (h) elections for another Council of Experts sanctioned to select Khomeini's successor in December 1982 (i) widespread detentions and arrests of members of the Tudeh (pro-Moscow Communist Party) in April 1983 (j) elections to the second session of the parliament in May 1984 (k) Second presidential elections in August 1985 (l) The (belated) announcement in November 1985 that Ayatallah Husayn Ali Muntaziri had been in fact officially elected Khomeini's successor by the Council of Experts (Akhavi 1987:182). The institutional structure of the clerical domination which was designed by Khomeini reached to its culmination in 1989 through various constitutional amendments which accommodated the notion of the Absolute Mandate of the jurists (*vetãyat-e motlaqa-ye faqih*) (Arjomand 2000).

After the constitutional amendment of 1989, the Supreme Leaders' extended powers which included: (a) the authority to make appointments and dismiss the head of Iranian television and radio and b) determination of the general policies of the regime (article I and 10 of the constitution) which had previously been included among the Prime Minister's responsibility. Apart from the extension of the supreme Leader's powers, the 1989 amendment has created the Expediency Discernment Council of the system or Council for the Determination of the Internet of the Islamic Order or the Maslahat Council. The creation of the council was hailed as the final revolution of Khomeini. The

council is recognized as a state apparatus at the service of the Leader. Originally, the function of the council was a mere arbitration between the *Majles* and the Council of Guardians. The constitutional revision expanded its functions to advice the Leader on 'general policies of the regimes'. Another revision which came through the constitutional amendment has given Assembly of Experts a greater power in determining the qualification of the Leader. It has also the power to dismiss him. After the expanded power with the Assembly of Experts, a seven-member Investigation Committee was set up. With this, the Assembly became more influential within the clerical rule (cited in Chehabi 2001:36, Arjomand 2001:351).

Islam, Shi'ism and Politics

Islam since its origin was not just a faith or religion, but an entirety in itself. Prophet unlike Jesus was not just a saint, but also a political leader and an organizer. Other religions, whether monolithic or non-monolithic, evolve with an inherent separation. Irrespective of this fact, at many historical junctures religious authority dominated over political affairs. The uniqueness of Islam is mingled with the cultural formation of an Islamic world. Almost from its beginning, Islam expanded as a world empire or a world civilization (Bernard 1994: 18, 19). Ramakrishnan opined that "the integral linkage of Islam and politics has been stressed in no uncertain terms by Iranian Islamic leaders and thinkers like Ayatollah Khomeini, Jalal Al-e Ahmad and Ali Shariati. The history of revolt, resistance and radicalism possessed by Shi'a Islam obviously found its contemporary expression in their thinking and activity" (Ramakrishnan 2008: 11).

The holistic nature of Islam is inherent in its origin and evolution of secterialism within it. After the death of prophet, there was a dispute among his followers on the issue of religious and political leadership. Those who believed in the Twelve Imams (leaders), with the first Imam 'Ali and the last Imam Mahdi are called Athna 'Ashari Shi'a. Athna 'Ashari Shi'a also believed that those Imams were selected by Allah and his Prophet. They believe that Imams are the successor of the Prophet. Those Muslims who do not have such beliefs are called Sunni (Neshat 2009: 57-62). Shi'a Islamism has its political roots in *imamate* theory which believes that leadership in Islamic society belongs to the

descendant of Prophet Mohammad. However, Sunni Islamism feeds from the caliphate theory of leadership in which a group of elders and nobles elect the leader of Muslim societies among themselves (Bernard 1994:155,157).

Imamate Shi'a is an Arabic term which means a faction or a party. It was originally used of the *Shi'atu* 'Ali'; the party faction of 'Ali' who thought that he shall be the caliph after Prophet. Ayattollah Khomeini has defined the distinction between Sunnis and Shi'a and opined that the Sunnis have been teaching and practicing the submission to authority and evil. While Shi'a have been representing the principle of opposition and resistance by seeking an overthrow of the tyrannical rule. In his perception, Shi'a group was in opposition. It is the defenders of the oppressed and the critics of power and privilege. There was a historical and doctrinal basis of this claim. The dissent and opposition in Shi'a belief came with its origin when the supporters of Ali opposed Abu Bakr to be the caliph after Prophet's death. Bernard argued that "for the Sunni, obedience to authority is a divine commandment that lapses only in rare and extreme cases. For the Shi'ite, obedience to the exiting authority is a political necessity owed as long as it can be exacted and no longer" (Bernard 1994:155,157).

In the history of Iran (called as Persia earlier), the Shi'ism was imposed as a state religion with the establishment of the Safavid Dynasty in 1501 (founded by Shah Isma'il). Shah Isma'il imposed the Twelver Shi'ism as the state religion. According to Twelver Shi'ism, after Prophet Mohammad, Ali and his male descendents from the line of Fatemeh (Prophet's daughter) were the legitimate *imams* of the Islamic community chosen by the God. The twelfth and the last of these *imams*, the Mahdi, disappeared by God's fiat at the age of five. The Hidden *Imam* will resurface at the end to inflict the godly justice (Milani 1988). After its imposition in Safavid Dynasty, it has gone through many ups and down and took so many years for the country to obtain a Shi'a character. During the Safavid rule, Shi'i clerics played a leading role in promulgating Shi'ism in eighteenth century and also in the daily affairs of the early modern Iran. After the collapse of the Safavid Empire, the clerical establishment relatively became isolated from the state and entered into a struggle with monarchy for power. Due to the influence of modernity and advent of nationalism, a nationalized religion was developed with a more focus on the Persian

Cultural trait by the nineteenth century. Though, in this period the bazaar and clerical network based in Mashhad, Isfahan and Qom played a very significant role in the political affairs. Ayatollah Khomeini's theology based on revolutionary aspirations emerged in 1960-70 which led to the re-establishment of Shi'ism in Iran in the shape of a new radical ideology. It later developed as an official religion of IRI (Rahimi 2013:55-56).

Shi'a Islamism (Shi'a political Islam) was born in Iran. Then it was expanded to Lebanon, Iraq and elsewhere. Lebanese, Iraqis and other Shi'a Islamists are totally under the influence of the teachings and doctrines of different brands of Iranian Islamism. The Najaf seminary has been on a decline in the recent decades and Qom has been on the rise. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 gave an upper hand to Khomeini and his disciples in Qom. As a result, the clerical authoritarianism and *shariah*-oriented Islamisms became the dominant ideologies in its seminaries (Mohammadi 2015:26).

Since beginning, in his writings and speeches, Ayatollah Khomeini emphasized on one of the intrinsic qualities of Shi'ism which is to stand against dictatorship and to combat injustice. Shi'ism is a religion of movement and revolution against injustice. The role of Shi'ism in modern Iranian political history could be observed in the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, Tobacco Movement, Uprising of the People in 1962-63 and the Iranian Revolution (Imam Khomeini 2009). The philosopher and the ideologue of Iranian Revolution defined Shi'ism as "it was not an opiate like many other religions, but was a revolutionary ideology that permeated all spheres of life, including politics, and inspired true believers to fight all forms of explorations, oppression, and social injustice"(Abrahamian 1982:26,Ramakrishnan 2008:12).

Jalal Al-e Ahmad who discarded religion and proclaimed himself as a secularist at the beginning of his intellectual journey, returned to Islam and accepted it as a powerful indigenous oppositional force. Being a radical Marxist in early phase of his life and a member of Tudeh Party, Al-e Ahmad thus identified Iranian brand of Islam with a great oppositional political potential. Al-Ahmad has seen Islam as a transformed revolutionary force capable of ousting the monarchist regime of Muhammad Reza Pahlavi supported by the imperialists (Ramakrishnan 2008). Ayatollah Khomeini rearticulated Shi'ism as a

new radical ideology. It reasserted on the martyrdom as a core ethos of the political actions (Rahimi 2012:56).

The Islam has been a pivotal force in all the major historical events. It was at the centre of debate during the Constitutional Revolution of 1906-11 and the white revolution in 1963. Since the Islamic revolution of 1979, Islam has emerged with a new vigor. It remained as a significant force during the reform movement in 1997 and the Green Movement in 2009 (Kar 2010:2-3).

In the Isalmic Republic of Iran the official religion is Islam and the Twelver *Ja`fari* school (in *usul al-Din* and *fiqh)*. The preamble of the Constitution of Islamic Republic says that its objective is to "bring about the conditions under which the lofty and worldwide values of Islam will flourish" (Ghanea and Hass 2011:5). Article 12 of the Iranian Constitution says that the "other Islamic schools, including the Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki, Hanbali, and Zaydi, are to be accorded full respect, and their followers are free to act in accordance with their own jurisprudence in performing their religious rites" (Article 12 of IRI Constitution).

Article 13 of the Iranian Constitution stipulates that "Iranian Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians (people of the book, Zoroastrians are considered in holy Qur 'an as the similar to those of the followers of the divine books) shall be only recognized religious minorities who within the limits of law shall be free to carry out their religious rites and practice their religion in personal status and religious education" (Article 13 of the IRI Constitution; Neshat 2009: 57-62). All the people who do not follow any of the divine-religions irrespective of whether they follow any other religion or not, are not bound to convert to a divine religion. It is because of the fact that the guidance of the people can be done through logical arguments and a good disposition. Secondly, as long as they do not actually stand against Islam or the IRI, they can enjoy the rights of being elected as a president, a holder of a high political position. Besides it is a condition in Islam that a judge should have a religion (Neshat 2009:62).

Political Structure of IRI

The official name of Iran, 'Islamic Republic of Iran', is a conundrum for many scholars.

Nevertheless, many other political scientists and theorists opined that theocracy is the political system of Iran (Roskin 2009: 684; Amuzagar 2003: 135). Others defined the political system of Iran as a religious tyranny (Behbudi 2014: 24). Amuzegar described it as a 'theocratic oligarchy' (Amuzegar 2003: 139). The Constitution of Iran says that Iran is a unitary state and an Islamic Republic in which the powers of the state are divided into mainly three braches; the legislative, the executive and the judiciary (Kurun 2017: 118). Article 1 of the Constitution gives the credit to the people of Iran for adopting the system of popular vote and forming a majority government. Thus constitution inscribes the 'popular sovereignty' and represents the will of the people or nation. But in the same Article, it also subscribes to the idea of 'divine sovereignty' which embodies God's will (or law of God). Thus Islamic Republic's constitution adopted two contesting notions of sovereignty (Yesiltas 2016:60).

Figure 1: The Political System of Islamic Republic of Iran

Source: http://www.payvand.com/news/11/nov/1114.html
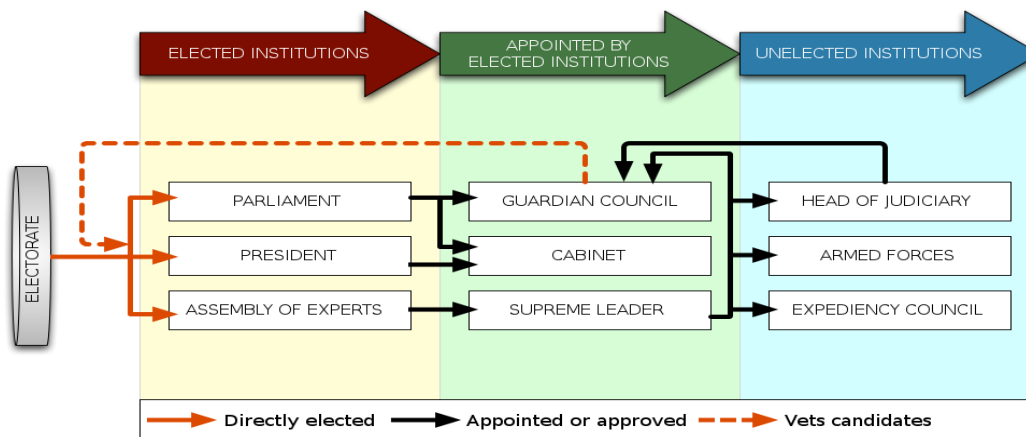
Islamic Republic of Iran's power structure is a combination of tradition and modernity which carries a unique place among other contemporary modern political systems. In the post-Revolution era, the Iranian Political system has gone through a radical transformation. The secularism oriented political elites supported by west were replaced by religiously committed clerics. The most popular leader of the Revolution, Ayatollah

Khomeini has introduced the theocratic mode of rule based on *velayat-e faqih* or otherwise known as the governance of jurist. The theocratic rule was legitimized through a referendum and institutionalized according to the 1979 Constitution. It was further added with one more important dimension called *velayat-e motlaqah-e faqih* (the Absolute Governance of Jurist) by a constitutional reform. Despite the religious jurist's supremacy in the power structure, the political structure of IRI is based on a modern state. The modern nature of the political institutions has its roots in the constitutional document which was formulated after the Constituional Revolution of 1905-11(Rakel, 2008).

The government of Islamic Republic of Iran had no precedence in its shape and nature in the world. It is neither similar to the individualism subscribed by the liberal democracies, nor socialism associated with the socialist democracies. It is also dissimilar to the secular element of modern democracies. In IRI, democracy and divine ruling are tied up together. It is called Divine-democracy or theocratic-democratic government. The political system represents a religio-political state. This is the result of a religio-political discourse developed by the Iranian thinkers and activists during the Revolution. It was also influenced by the religio-political thoughts of Khomeini (Neshat 2009, Rostami-Povey 2010, Rmakrishnan 2008:11). The power in IRI is based on the principle of separation of power and bestowed on judiciary, legislature and executive. It all operates under the guidance of the absolute *velayat al-amr (*the leadership of *ummah).* Article 57 of the Constitutional law stated that "these powers are independent from one to another" (Neshat 2009:10-15).

Iran's political power structure is composed of competitive and connected formal and informal power arrangements. The formal power arrangement consists of state institutions and its associated institutions such as republican institutions and religious supervisory bodies. The informal power arrangement has two levels:

> a) The different political factions of the political elite (the Conservative faction, the Pragmatist faction, and the Reformist faction) that cut across the state institutions and their aligned institutions. As there are no legal political parties in Iran, it is the political factions that represent the different ideas on economic, socio-cultural, and foreign policy;
> b) The informal power structure consists not only of those people who have power according to their position in state institutions, but also of those individuals that influence, or attempt to influence, the political discourse (Rakel 2008).

The conflicts and enmities among various political factions in Iran had an impact on Iran's policy formulation process as they became a major hindrance in forming a coherent domestic and foreign policies. Rakel argued that "while "most state institutions in Iran are weak, due to the principle of the *velayat-e faqih,* personal networks are strong. As a consequence, the formal system for policy formulation is often ignored or bypassed in favor of the informal power structure, based on personal networks and power relations" (Rakel 2008).

The power of the supreme leader (ve*layet-e-faqih*) is based on the *velayat-e faqih* system. The supreme leader is the top most decision maker in IRI (Moslem 2002: 33-34). The Supreme leader has the authority to dismiss the senior officials and position holders, mobilize troops and declare war. Rakel stated that "these senior positions include: the head of the judiciary; the head of state radio and television; the supreme commander of the IRGC; the supreme commander of the regular military and the security services; as well as the clerical jurists in the Council of the Guardian. He also appoints and removes the heads of the religious supervisory bodies" (Rakel, 2008).

Neshat said that the religious supervisory bodies include two groups: "a) three decision-making and advisory institutions: the Council of the Guardian, (Shora-ye *Maslahat-e Nezam*); the Assembly of Experts (*Majles-e Khobregan*); and the Expediency Council (*Majma'-e Tashkhis-e Maslahat-e Nezam);* b) Institutions, with no legal status, that are considered to be the extended arms of the supreme leader". The constitutional law of IRI emphasises on an equal status of people based on the Islamic principle. It reiterated that it is not appropriate for a person to be anybody's slave; due to the fact that the God has created him free. Allah has made Mankind rule over his own destiny and no one can set up the rights or rule for the benefit of any specific individual or group. Article 58 of the constitutional law entails that "Only, people themselves are competent in deciding about their destiny and managing their society in a way that they desire. The people are entitles to choose their government in accordance with their will" (Neshat 2009).

Iran's revolutionary regime got into a trouble after a generation gap ever since it has seized power. The major troubles faced by the regimes are economic disorder, social

restrictions, political divisions, rampant corruption that are disliked by a large section of its changing population. For the outside world, the Republic of Iran and its theocratic government appears to be at the verge of implosion due to the internal tensions. Over the period of time, its 'political drama' took a violent form such as killings, student unrest, political trails, newspaper closures, relations with USA and the charges of espionage against the Jewish minority (Robin 2000: 134).

The Islamic Republic is based on a unique political system with a combination of political and religious power which is vested in the politico-religious leadership. It is governed by the Shi'ite clergy which is a politicized section. It declares Islam's absolute supremacy over the public life as seen in other the totalitarian regimes too. Like in the authoritarian regimes, it allows a partial amount of pluralism. It holds regular elections like the democratic regimes. Thus within Iranian regime, one could see a co-existence of totalitarian, authoritarian, and democratic tendencies along with its supporters at all levels of institutions in the country (Votyagov 2009: 2-3).

The emergence of equilibrium between the political factions, institutions and patronage networks culminated in the opening of a public sphere of discussions and debates. However Votyagov opined that "it remains to be seen whether the equilibrium leads to the emergence of a consensus on mechanisms for formulating policy and the development of a strong legal culture conducive to the rule of law that would guarantee stability and predictability of public life and render the implementation of governmental decisions and policies" (Votyagov 2009: 2-3). The Shi'ite clergy in Iran is loosely organized which allowed a certain degree of pluralism and a limited diversity of policy preferences and opinions. This characteristic actually contradicts the definition of totalitarianism. The Iranian regime is more fit into a framework of authoritarian regime as it does not completely fit into the definition of either democratic or totalitarian models.

The political structure of Iran is very complex. It holds a regular system of elections with a parallel system of unelected institutions that is shaped to check both legislative and executive structures and system. The Supreme Leader and President form the power structure of Iran. Ayatollah Ali Khomeini came to power in 1989 after the death of

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. He possessed the highest religious authority and office in the country. Chehabi was of the opinion that the complexity of the political system of Iran was originated from the 1979 constitution (Chehabi 2001).Votyagov argued that "the post-revolutionary regime combined Khomeini's theocratic ideas with republican institutions inherited and adapted from the constitution of 1906. Significantly, this basic law did not mandate rule by a single party, leaving room for the development of somewhat representative institutions on the one hand, and the emergence of multiple and competitive power centers on the other" (Votyagov 2009:16).

Figure 2: The Complexity of the Political Structure of IRI

Source: https://www.kisspng.com/png-islamic-consultative-assembly-politics-of-iran-gov-3852873/

The constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran was amended in 1989 which stipulated for a bifurcation of the executive power invested in the institution of *velayat-e-faqih* and the presidency. The term of office of the president is four years. President appoints the cabinet. The citizens of Iran who reaches the age of sixteen years are eligible to vote. The Supreme Leader is the highest esteemed cleric who is chosen by his peers in the Assembly of Experts on the basis of his knowledge, Islamic jurisprudence and other religio-political credentials. His major duty is to guide the Iranians toward a just government of God. He holds extensive powers. Khomeini's death in 1989 and the election of Khatami in 1997 sparked a debate on the question of dual executive. The

major question has been raised at this junction was whether Iran can remain both Islamic and Republic at the same time in the twenty first century. The inheritors of Khomeini's ideological front couldn't answer the question. The political competition in Iran in the recent years is characterized by a complex relationship between the religious intellectuals and the ruling clerical establishment. In this context, Baktiari stated that:

> The religious intellectuals' challenge against the establishment centers on engaging the establishment clerics in debates over doctrinal, political, and sociocultural issues. The most critical component of this debate has had practical consequences on post-revolutionary Iranian polity, because by focusing on the relationship between religion and the state and the role of the clergy, these religious intellectuals seek to strengthen the cause of reform by opening the doors for other intellectuals and defenders of civil society (Baktiari 2009:114-15).

Figure 3: Another reflection of complexity of the political system of IRI
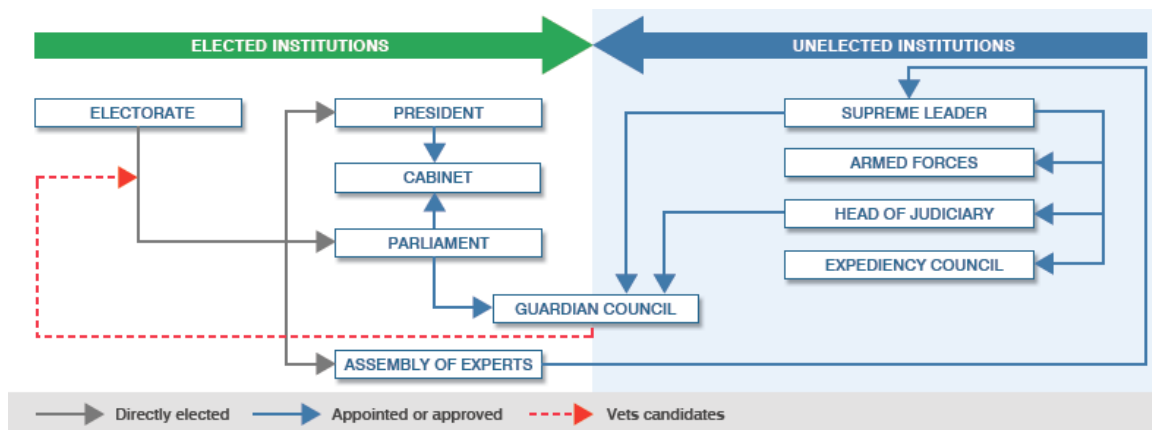
Source: BBC http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8051750.stm.

The political structure of IRI could be categorized into two broader categories: formal political structure and informal political structure.

Formal Political Structure

The formal political structure of the Islamic republic of Iran is divided into sets; unelected and elected institutions.

a) Unelected Institution of Iran

Supreme Leader: The Supreme Leader is positioned at the top of Iran's political power structure. His role is majorly based on the ideals of Ayatollah Khomeini. He makes appointments of the head of the Judiciary (for eight years), six members of the Guardian Council (for six years), the members of the Expediency Council (for five years) commanders of all armed forces, the Friday prayer Imams (for a lifelong), the head of the Intelligence Unit, the General Directorate of Security and the head of the TV and radio. He also approves and confirms presidential election in Iran. He is chosen by the clerics who are otherwise known as the Assembly of Experts. The major source of political instability in Iran is the tension between the office of the president and the office of the leader. The tension during the reign of President Mohammad Khatami is an embodiment of the strain relationship between the religious rule and the democratic aspirations of the people in Iran (Votyagov 2009: 16; Kamrava& Hassan-Yari 2004: 505).

The Supreme Leader is the uppermost religious authority and the head of the state. In the book titled "Islamic Government" (1970), Khomeini articulated his political ideas and argued that the Supreme Leader has to guide the Umma or the Islamic community until the emergence of the twelfth Imam who would then take the religious and political role. The government will be considered as illegitimate until the emergence of the twelfth Imam. Thus, Khomeini thinks that there can be no separation of politics from religion (Aykac&Durgun 2012: 564-568). The Supreme Leader is elected for eight years and is eligible for a re-election without any limit. He has more authority and respect than a president. He can impeach the President with the backing of two out of total three members of the Assembly of Experts. So far, there have been only two Supreme Leaders in Iran; the first one is Ruhollah Khomeini (1970-1989) and the second one is Sayyid Ali Khamenei since 1989 (Kurun 2017: 119-120).

Armed Forces: This includes the regular forces and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) which are under the joint general command. All the leading army and IRGC commanders are appointed by the Supreme Leader. They are accountable to the Supreme Leader. IRGC was founded after the revolution with an objective to protect the new institutions and leaders. They are formed to fight against those who oppose the

revolution. IRGC has branches in every town and it controls the volunteer militias. It has a strong presence in various other institutions as well. The influence of IRGC has increased within Iran as it now possesses all political, economic and military power (Votyagov 2009: 16-17). Armed force is another important political institution in Iran which consists of a republican Army and the Revolutionary Guards. The latter is under the direct regulation of the Supreme Leader for averting any possibility of a coup by the ordinary army (Aykac&Durgun 2012: 579). It has a significant impact on the bureaucracy and the security of the state (Harris 20144: 164; Kurun 2017: 121).

The Guardian Council: The major function of the Guardian Council is to ensure that the parliament and the presidency are conforming to the Islamic principles of Iran. As per Article 91 of the constitution, it includes six lay jurists appointed by the judiciary and the six Islamic clerics appointed by the Supreme Leader. They must be approved by the Parliament as well (Votyagov 2009: 17; Constitute Project 2016). Its members are elected in phases.

Half of its members changes in every three years. The Guardian Council is the upper house of the parliament. It has also the right and authority to vet all the laws passed by the *Majles*. It also vetoes any laws which are considered as non-compliant with the Iranian Constitution or the Islamic laws. It possesses a considerable discretionary power which allows the conservatives to dominate the body and rejects the reformist legislation. It also vets the candidates who stand for the presidential elections. It can reject the candidacy of an individual without any right to appeal. This provision allows the conservative to have an enormous influence in the elections (Votyagov 2009: 17).

Guardian Council has the authority to make guardianship for the Islamic principles and the responsibility to interpret the Iranian constitution. It also supervises the elections of the Assembly of Experts, parliamentary and presidential elections. It reviews all laws (Kamrava& Hassan-yari 2004: 505). Since it has the extended powers, the Council traditionally vetoes those reformists candidates in parliamentary and general elections. For example, the Council had vetoed 1006 candidates out of total 1014 candidates during the Presidential Election in 2005. As a result, there were only eight politicians in the

elections (Takeyh 2009: 230). Due to the veto power of the Council, the conservative Islamists constitute majority of the Iranian parliament. More Often, the reformists are rejected in the elections due to its veto. The conservative Islamists nominate half of the members of the council who are from the conservative members of the judiciary. Thus a conservative Islamist feature of the parliament has been sustained. A change in the council can be brought by changing the Supreme Leader as he appoints half of the members of the council. The council is largely criticized for obstructing the process of democratization in Iran (William 2001; Naini 2006; Kurun 2017: 120).

The Expediency Council: This body acts as a mediator between the *Majles* and the Guardian Council. However, it tends to rule over the *Majles*. When the term of the former President, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani ended in 1997, he took over the Chairmanship of the Expediency council in order to ensure his influence over the Islamic Republic. After the election of the Ahmadinejad as the president of Iran in 2005, the Expediency Council was given an undefined power of supervision over all the three organs of the government. It also included foreign affairs (Votyagov 2009: 18). The Expediency council is the seventh major institution. It functions as a consultative body for the Supreme Leader which concerns with regime's general policies. It also determines the interest of Iran (Kamrava&Hassanari& Hassan-ari, 2004: 505; Kurun 2017: 121).

Assembly of Experts: This clerical body is elected for a term of eight years by a direct election. It includes 88 members. The members of this body have to be the experts of Islamic jurisprudence in accordance with a law passed by the Parliament of Iran. The constitution has not mentioned any condition for the nomination for this post. The Assembly meets twice in a week (Kamrava&Hassanari& Hassan-ari, 2004: 505; Kurun 2017: 119). Votyagov stated that "the primary function of it is the selection of the Supreme Leader and the members of the Guardian Council and it can theoretically dismiss the Supreme Leader if he fails to meet the required criteria or fails to implement his duties satisfactorily" (Votyagov 2009: 18). However, the members have never openly resisted against the Supreme Leader so far. The minutes of the Assembly are the secret documents (Kamrava&Hassanari& Hassan-ari, 2004: 505; Kurun 2017: 121). Rafsanjani was elected as the head of the body in 2007 (Votyagov 2009: 18).

The Judiciary: The Judiciary of Iran is based on Shari'a law since the revolution in 1979. The structure of the court has many components. Votyagov stated that "there is a Supreme Court, dozens of Revolutionary Courts, Public Courts and Courts of Peace and the head of the Judiciary is appointed by the Supreme Leader for a period of five years" (Votyagov 2009: 18). The eighth institution in Iran is the head of the judiciary. It differes from the Minsitry of Justice as it is based on Shi'a Islamic law. Thus, the top of the Iranian Judiciary system is occupied by a senior cleric (Kamrava&Hassanari& Hassanari, 2004: 506; Kurun 2017: 121).

b) Elected Institutions

President: The president is the head of the executive branch. He is elected for a fixed term of four years. He cannot serve for more than two consecutive terms. He is the second highest official in the country. He ensures the implementation of the constitutional provisions (Votyagov 2009: 19). The fifth important political institution in Iran is the presidency (Akac&Durgun 2012: 577-579). According to the constitution of Iran, the president must be a citizen of Iran and of Iranian origin. He must be a believer of the basic principles of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Shi'a Islam (Kurun 2017: 121). The president is accountable to the Supreme Leader. His functions include "making of agreements with other countries and international organizations, ratification of the budget, appointments of vice president and cabinet ministers with the approval of the Parliament" (Aykac&Durgun 2012: 577-579).

The president is not the supreme authority as the Supreme Leader has the control over the armed forces, foreign and nuclear policy. President is the head of the National Security Council, Cultural Revolution Council and the Commander-in-Chief. He has the power to declare martial law and war along with the power to suspend all the laws. (Aykac&Durgun 2012: 577-579). Ahmadinejad is Iran's first non-cleric president (Votyagov 2009: 19).

Cabinet: The cabinet is also known as the Council of Ministers. The members of the cabinet are chosen by the President. They need the approval of the parliament. The parliament can impeach its ministers. The president or the vice-president chairs the

cabinet (Votyagov 2009: 19). Cabinet is the sixth major institution in Iran. Ministers in the cabinet are directly accountable to the President. They can be expelled at the will of the president. They can also be disqualified by a no-confidence vote (Aykac&Durgun 2012: 579; Kurun 2017: 121).

The Majles: A new 290 member *Majles* was created by the 1979 constitution. It was created on the basis of the principle of universal suffrage. The members are elected for a term of four years (Votyagov 2009: 19-20). It is a unicameral body (Constitute Project 2016). It legislates on all matters that come under the purview of the constitution. It approves the office of the ministers nominated by the president, all international treaties and agreements. To impeach the ministers and the president, the cabinet requires one third of the votes of the members of parliament for the impeachment (Kamrava& Hassan-Yari 2004: 505; Kurun 2017: 119). *Majles* can propose bills considering the fact that those bills are approved by the Guardian Council. It enjoys a significant amount of political independence as it cannot be dissolved by the executive. It can vet the ministerial candidates suggested by the executive. It summons the ministers in order to get their explanation for their behavior (Votyagov 2009: 19-20).

Informal Power Structure

The power centres in Iran is not held by a group, institution or an individual. In this context, Iran differs from Iraq. In Iran, there is a domination of multitude of relatively autonomous or loosely connected centres. These power centres are hierarchical in nature and structure. A horizontal connection exists among them. The quasi-feudal and the decentralized power of Iran is a legacy of its hierarchical structure maintained by Shi'a clergy which has been existing in the power structure since 1979. These power structures which are decentralized took the form of a loose coalition of similar groups and individuals. They are featured by personal patronage links. The posts in the upper strata are given to the friends and immediate relatives of those who are in power. Their close associates are provided with the sensitive and influential positions. The success of the functioning of Iranian government depends on the working of these informal networks (Buchta 2000: 6-7).

Another significant feature of the political system of Iran is that the prominent individual figures are more strong and powerful than the formal offices that they hold. Therefore, in order to understand the internal dynamics of the system of Iran, one has to see the interlinks of loyalty and patronage that exist among the individuals rather than looking at the ideological, formal and bureaucratic characteristics of the system. The title of the individual shall not be likened with his actual influence. Buchta argues that "at least important are the informal, uncodified relationships based on personal bonds and personal or group rivalries" (Buchta 2000: 7). Thus, the informal power structures have its existence beyond the formal constitutional power structures of Iran. Buchta further argues that "its organization, can best be described using a model (admittedly oversimplified) made up of four concentric 'rings of power' that increase in size from the inner to the outer circles and that interact to varying degrees" (Buchta 2000: 7).

The "Patriarchs": They are the most influential political clerics in the judiciary, legislature and executive. However, patriarchs are inferior to the highest ranking clerics such as grand ayatollahs in the theological hierarchy. The nine most influential patriarchs according to their influence include: "1. Ayatollah Ali Khamene'i, Supreme leader; 2. Hojjatoleslam 'Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Chairman of the Expediency Council; 3. Ayatollah Mahmud al-Hashimi, head of the judiciary branch; 4. Hojjatoleslam Mohammad Khatami, president; 5. Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, head of the Council of Guardians; 6. Hojjatoleslam 'Abbas Va'ez-Tabasi, head of the Imam-Reza Foundation in Mashhad; 7. Ayatollah Ali Meshkini, head of the Assembly of Experts; 8. Hojjatoleslam Mohammad MohammadiRayshahri, hajj emissary; 9. Hojjatoleslam 'Ali al Taskhiri, member of KhameneTs private office" (Buchta 2000:9).

State Functionaries and Administrators: They are the representatives from judiciary, legislature and executive. Mayors, provincial governors and technocrats come under this category. They design and implement the economic plans of the state (Buchta 2009: 9).

*The Power Base of the Regime***:** It consists of religious security forces, committees, revolutionary institutions, IRGC, media and revolutionary newspapers (Buchta 2000:9).

Formerly Influential Groups and Individuals: They are positioned between civil society

and state. Their major aim is the reform the system from within. It consists of Montazeri Group, Islamic women's rights groups, Iranian Freedom Movement etc. They have an informal interconnectedness with the Islamic left in the third ring and the technocrats in the second ring.

Figure 4: Four Rings of Power (The Informal Power Structure)

First Ring: The "Patriarchs"

Second Ring: The highest-ranking governmental functionaries and administrators

Third Ring: The regime's power base

Fourth Ring: Formerly influential individuals and groups

Outside the Circles of Power: The quietistic majority of Shiʻi clerics
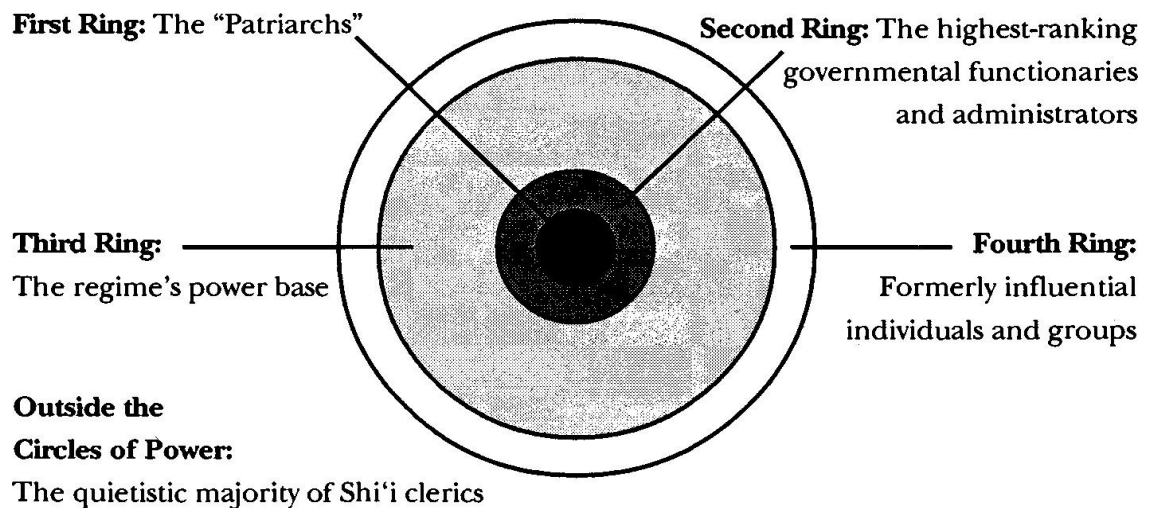
Source: (Buchta 2000: 9).

The central ring of the system consists of a cluster of powerful clerics and patriarchs who lean towards the conservative side of the political spectrum. They embody the most influential decision making body of the regime. They act as the central nervous system of the regime. Those patriarchs jointly control their own specific ring of power. In addition to it, the large portion of the remaining political spheres too comes under their control. Their power centres include the formal power structures like Council of Guardians, Assembly of Experts and the informal power structures such as Society of Teachers of Qom, Theological colleges etc. which has thirty clerics. It is important to mention that the patriarchs are not essentially the highest ranking clerics of Shi'a Islam as its range goes beyond Iran. Moreover, since the 1979 revolution as Buchta pointed out that "most Shi'a theologians in Iran, Lebanon and the Gulf states have adhered to their traditionally apolitical and quietistic stance" (Buchta 2007: 7).

The high ranking government officials such as provincial governors, administrators and state functionaries are included in the second ring of power. The third ring of power consists of individuals who regulate different entities and organisations including the leading members of the press and media, security bodies and the revolutionary foundations. Thus the power base of the system consists of these diverse groups. They propagate their ideology. The fourth ring of power included those individuals who played a crucial role in the system in the past. Even though these former elites remain relatively influential, they operate between the state and civil society (Buchta 2000: 10).

Politics under Khomeini Regime

In the Khomeinist Phase, the politics revolved around the institutionalization of new radical Shi'a ideology. The authoritarian institutionalization tries to create the legitimacy with the charismatic leadership of Khomeini. The populism and clericalism played a pivotal role in this period (Rahimi 2012:58) The Khomeini period was marked as a period of centralization of the authority of Shi'a through state building and ideology (Rahimi 2012:61).

Khomeini regime began with the disintegration of economy, army and security forces after the revolution. There was a chaos. There was a struggle for power between political left and right, secularist and religious forces. This power struggle lasted till 1982. After refusing to recognize the Prime Minister Bakhtiar who was appointed by Shah, Khomeini named his own Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan. Bazargan was the founder of the Freedom Movement which was a liberal opposition party during the revolution. A group of influential clerics who are closely associated with Khomeini established the Islamic Republic Party in mid-1979. The purpose behind the formation of IRP was to unify various Islamist factions and become the dominant party in Islamic Republic which was later abolished in 1987 due to its recurrent failures (Farhang 2009:86).

Khomeini also established the Council of the Islamic Republic (CIR) which was composed by *ulema* and guided by Khomeini and the Revolutionary Gaurds[2]. Bazargan

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[2] Revolutionary guard is an armed force distinct from army to curb the opponents of revolution.

wanted to encourage the formation of a secular government. Due to the point of difference between him and council, Bazargan resigned in November 1979. The revised constitution was sanctioned in the national referendum which was held in late 1979. The first President of Islamic Republic, Abol Hasan Bani was elected into power in 1980. Even though Bani Sadr was devoted to safeguard the Islamic cultural identity of Iran, he was against the growing dominance of the religious establishment and favored the secular government. He was impeached in 1980. After Bazargan's and Bani Sadr's isolation, the political stage was left for IRP and Khomeini to consolidate power. Soon after Khomeini and his supporters faced militant opposition of Islamic left, Khomeini regime managed it with many mass arrests and executions (Cleveland 2012).

After consolidating power, the main objective of the government was to acquire an equitable distribution of wealth and the Islamic principles of social justice. It was the major promise made by the leadership during and after the revolution. In the first attempt, insurance companies, nationalized banks owned by the government and industries, and restored the administrative efficiency. In achieving the objective of Islamic values, Khomeini regime started the process of so called authoritative Cultural Revolution known as Islamisation. The government made compulsory dress code for women, suggested fitting garments and Hijab in 1980 and banned music and dancing in public places. Harsh steps were adopted at universities and educational institutions. Khomeini in a meeting with the Islamic Association of University Students said that "our universities are colonial universities, our universities serve the interest of the west" (Razavi 2009).

In the process to Islamise the universities, revolutionary council ordered the closing down of universities from May 1980. The universities were re-opened in 1983. During the shutdown, textbooks were modified, faculties were purged and a curriculum was redefined to promote the Islamic values. Abdolkarim Soroush who later became the philosopher of reformist movement of 1997 was a university lecturer and a member of the committee for Cultural Revolution. He argued that "in order to coordinate the education system in universities with the *howzeh* (religious seminaries), there was a need for reviewing the university courses". Another supporter and participant of the Cultural Revolution was a university lecturer named Sadeq Zibakalam. He argued that "there was

no organic relationship between the university module and the social and cultural situation in the country". Nevertheless, both Zibakalam and Souroush, sought to distance themselves from the process of Islamisation after two decades (Razavi 2009).

The Iranian revolution is often interpreted as the revival of spiritual Islamic culture. In this connection Bahonar wrote that "in the Islamic Revolution of Iran, the Cultural revolution is dominant and the economic and political revolutions are based on the cultural roots" (Bohonar 1992). The Cultural Revolution as a process of cultural transformation was begun in 1980. The first major step towards this direction was the closing down of the universities for two years for the "Islamisation" of education and the imposition of restrictions on the western influenced media culture (Golkar 2012).

All western newspapers were banned in early 1980s. The state also appointed ideological units. Along with that Islamic societies were incorporated into all other sectors of the society especially media including television channels, journals and newspapers. These were used as an effective means to resist the anti-government, anti-Islamic and pro-western discourse (Webb 2005). After the three decades of Islamic Revolution, the Cultural Revolution led by the state has passed through many stages of self-criticism and resentment (Sreberny and Torfeh 2013; Webb 2005).

The cause of "Islamisation" is narrated by Khomeini government, his supporters and also by scholars in the early period as a very positive indication. It is considered as an objection against the westernization process. Tibi stated that:

> Islamization is considered as a kind of cultural strategy and 'cultural response' towards westernization. Therefore, it is a 'revolt against the West'. In other words, it is revolting of the Islamic kind of lifestyle against the western kind of lifestyle. In the process of 'Islamization' the culture and traditions of non-western society especially the Islamic ones are reinforced through the cultural strategies of Islamic governments. Furthermore, the 'Islamization' is a kind of "battle against unbelief (Tibi 1995:2-7).

In other words, it indicates the revival of the local against the global. In the Islamisation process, the individualistic, secular and consumerist facets of western culture have to be terminated and the traditional, collectivist and otherworldly characteristics of Islamic culture needs to be widened and endorsed across all Islamic societies (Tibi 1993, Godazgar 2007). All science, especially humanities and social sciences should be "de-

westernised" and Islamic knowledge has to be strengthened in the Islamic societies. In other words the "Islamic governments or groups have to eliminate 'epistemological imperialism of the West' throughout the Islamic society" (Sardar, 1985, 85). This issue led to the establishment of the Islamic revolution against west. Indeed, "Islamic Revolution" attempts to de-westernize the Islamic knowledge and concepts in the age of globalization and global modernity (Tibi 1995; Piri and Halim 2011).

The term "de-westernization" also denotes the process of "de-westernization of communication" in the contemporary times which is an idea that emphasizes on the Islamic model of society and communication (Khiabany 2003). In other words, it indicates Islamisation of the media and communication in the era of the domination of media in the west. In such kind of theory, Islam is seen as a force that drives the Islamic society during history. Mowlana established his theory on the basis "Tabling (propagation) in the Islam which means the propagation of some Islamic principles in the Islamic world" (Mowlana 1996: 119). In this context, it is significant to note that the government and the Islamic media must disseminate the above stated Islamic principles across various Islamic societies (Khiabany 2003). Piri and Halim argued that "it is against the western propaganda which has focused on the issues of materialism, secularism, and individualism" (Piri and Halim 2011).

Some scholars have seen Khomeini government's policies in the nationalistic and identity framework. They emphasize that "after the revolution, the policy of Iran's Islamic government was based on the strengthening of Islamic nationalism and the Islamic government has intended to establish an Islamic identity based on the ideology of *umma* which is an Islamic principle that has let the Islamic government to assemble the Iranian Muslims around the Islamic culture" (Godazgar and Fathi 2005). The Islamic government regarded that the only way to confront the west led capitalism and materialism is the revival of the Islamic culture and identity among the people of Iran. In order to achieve the goal, the sentiments of anti-materialism, anti-imperialism and anti-western should be emboldened. Moreover, the construction of a 'uniform style' on the basis of the Islamic culture has been one of the main objectives of the Islamic government after the revolution. This is considered as a major obstacle against the expansion of the

consumerist and western lifestyle across the Iranian society (Godazgar 2007, Piri and Halim 2011). It is also interpreted that the "Islamisation" did not harm the development of technology inside the country. Semati stated that;

> Satellites dishes, and their use, remain ubiquitous. Internet growth in Iran has been phenomenal and among the fastest in the world. Iran has a vibrant newspaper industry in terms of production and circulation even in the face of states restrictions. Iranian cinema is praised as the most innovative national cinema in the world today. The image of Iran, however, marks the unique way in which Iranian society has engaged modernity and the current wave of globalization, and how it managed contradictory forces and tendencies (Semati 2008).

There are some critical take by other scholars on the Khomeini regime and IRI politics which asserts that the new Islamic state became repressive in order to survive when it faced both internal and external challenges. During Iraq-Iran war, there was a state of emergency which led to a more centralized and authoritarian state which repressed women, workers, ethnic and religious minorities, left and the secular-nationalist (Rostami-Povey 2010: 43). The state led Cultural Revolution (*Islamisation*) made people poorer in socio-political sense. Moreover, the women felt more oppressed than before. Omid (1994) argued that revolution betrayed its cause and its people (Razavi 2009; Omid 1994).

There are also assumptions that the breakout of War with Iraq hampered the process of Islamisation. The mismanagement of the government also became major drawback in the the process of Islamisation of education. Intellectuals like Azadeh Kian argued, "the state has failed to completely purge universities of Western-trained academics or to remove social science and humanities curricula, which include significant doses of Western political theory" (quoted in Razavi 2009). Khomeini regime got legitimacy in spite of the bad experiences of the authoritarian Islamisation and unsuccessful economic restoration of the country due to his charismatic personality (Rostami-Povey, 2010: 44).

There are some moderate views also which propounds that the Islamic Iranian State is not a step backwards to totalitarianism and barbarism as often claimed by Western academics and activists as well as the media and politicians. The Islamic Republic from its inception has been engaging in a battle between conservative and democratic Islam. Therefore the state and society in Iran are not so much 'fundamentalist' in many ways. There is

dialogue and competition between those want to protect the traditional conservative Islam and those who wish to establish the democratic modern Islam (Rostami-Povey, 2010: 44). Khomieni era has been known for its vast enlargement process of the public sector, weakening of the economy and anti-western foreign policy, especially anti-USA. Apart from the damage caused by war, the other factors behind the weak economy were corruption, mismanagement and inefficiency of the institution (Fadaee: 2012). Cleveland stated that:

> Iraq's invasion served to rally support for Khomeini and Islamic Republic. Sentiments of Iranian patriotism mingled with pride in defending the cause Islam against the enemies to generate widespread feeling of loyalty to the new republic and to the Islamic principles for which it stood. The war also enabled the government to expand its authority by recruiting thousands of young men for services. The conflict enabled government to expand its authority recruiting Revolutionary Gourds and the regular armed services (Cleveland 2012).

The economic sphere under the Khomeini has been one of the major issues of contestation among the political elites. The main dispute revolves around the nature of the economic order in the Islamic Republic. Khomeini had been oblivious about economic problem of the society due to his insolvency in solving other problems like hostage crisis, war with Iraq and Islamisation of society. He was critical on the economic question. He has often responded saying that the priority of the revolution is not economy. Khomeini government has developed a kind of rhetoric of rejecting both capitalism and socialism by proclaiming Islamic economics as superior to both. However, Khomeini government was failed to define the Islamic economics and explain how it was different from both (Farhang 2009:90).

There are many factions and individuals who involved in the revolution. Many experts have studied the revolution and presented many theories which explain the origins and causes of revolution that took place in 1978-1979. The diverse groups that are involved in the revolution are a faction of clerics, urban middle class, students, communist parties, leftist Islamic groups and pro-democracy nationalists. It is important to mention that all the clerics were not involved in the revolution and some factions chose to remain outside the political debates (Mohebi 2012: 130-131).

The common factor which unified these diverse groups is their goal of ousting the existing monarchy which is embodied by Shah. According to Takeyh (2006), Khomeini who became the face of revolution was not considered for the role of the head of the state until the strategic maneuvering by him and his supporters. Khomeini had a modest following in his country due to some written works and speeches that he recorded in exile. It was disseminated in Iran through tape recordings. Secondly, Iran was compelled to get into an eight-year war with Iraq soon after the revolution due to the political tactics of the new regime. Khomeini and his supporters (the new emerging political forces) were successful in consolidating their power through the redirection of the resources and interests of the citizens towards the maintenance of national sovereignty against the external aggressors. The revolution of Iran and its claims precipitated in a clash. It led to the ejection of the Iraqi forces by Iran by mid- 1982. Chubin stated that "the momentum of war and the drive to extend the control of the Islamic revolution throughout the region prevailed over the assessment of the military capabilities of Iran" (Chubin 1989: 3).Consequently, there were little time or resources available in order to counter the power of the emerging state structures and to support the social development by the state. The culmination of war and the period of reconstruction coincided with the death of Khomeini in 1989. This marked a new era of the emergence of intellectual activity (Mohebi 2012: 130-131).

There have been many attempts by scholars and theoreticians to theorize politics in IRI. However, their attempts have limitation associated with the approaches, time and space. The theorization of the politics with relevant and authentic approach provides a comprehensive picture of the entire phenomenon or history. It identifies and explains the dominant themes linking throughout the given history. Mere description of a phenomenon without a committed attempt of theorization may provide an incomplete knowledge which may become harmful for a human endeavor. This section provides an overview of the most renowned scholars' who attempted to theorize Iranian politics in the post-revolution era.

Abrahamian (1993) has observed that Iranian politics has been dominated by a paranoid style (Abrahamian 1993:104). Soroush (2000) has attempted to generalize Iranian

political sociology in terms of his popular concept of three cultures. He argues that the three cultures that form our common heritage are of national, religious and Western culture. The concept of three cultures not only explains the political history in its broader sense but also explains the post-revolutionary experiences and conflicts (Soroush 2000:121). Homa Katouzian (1997) has established the theory of 'arbitrary rule'. This expounds the recurrent crisis of succession in 20th century Iranian history. Katouzian stated that:

> The state's legitimacy was not founded law and the consent of the influential social classes and mere success of rebellion was sufficient ground for its legitimacy. The revolts and revolutions were led against an 'unjust' arbitrary ruler to replace it with a just one. The result was generalized chaos until a new arbitrary rule was established. Notwithstanding their many differences, two revolutions (Constitutional Revolution 1909-11 and Islamic Revolution 1979) in the 20th century were massive revolts against the state for lawful government. But despite some temporary successes, long experience of the society proved to be more powerful state than the newly acquired political idea and programmes (Katouzian 1997:195).

The economy of Iran continues to depend on the oil and the state is the recipient of crude revenue. Iran is known as a 'rentier state' as it collects huge amount of revenues from their external rent which is the sale of oil. Iran completely fits into the definition of a rentier state given by Beblawi who stated that "a rentier state is one where the rents are paid by foreign actors, where they accrue directly to the state, and where only a few are engaged in the generation of this rent (wealth), the majority being only involved in the distribution or utilization of it" (Ross 2001).

The rentier nature of the Iranian state and its plentiful natural resources allow a wider space for the functioning of state. Iran performs as a 'distributive state' since 1979. The populist component of the revolution and its insistence in favour of the weak and the oppressed was materialized in various forms of assistance. For example, some selected urban poor groups were given lodging facilities. However, "the radical measure of the welfare policies for the systematic protection of the rights of peasants and workers were subverted by the groups led by the conservative clergy" (Zubaida 1988; Votygov 2009: 5).

This spending effect (spending of oil wealth on patronage) as a component of the rentier effect undermines the popular pressure for the democratization of Iran. The 'group

formation effect' is the other element which prevents the democratization process in Iran. Group formation effect implies that when the government is provided with enough money through oil revenues, it uses it largesse to halt the creation of social groups which are independent of state and prevent them from demanding political rights (Ross 2001).Votyagov argues that the civic institutions which promote democratic governance are often suppressed in Iran (Votyagov 2009: 10).

The political regime in Iran shows the authoritarian features such as dominant ideology, limited pluralism, strong leadership and mobilization. The inadequate representation of various competing factions in the governing group indicates the limited political pluralism in Iran. Furthermore, they engage in politics without essentially challenging the system. It is a typical feature of an authoritarian system. The power of the reformists in *Majles*, executive and City Councils, is completely restricted by the conservative and non-elected establishments controlled by the supreme leaders. Seifzadeh stated that "70 percent of the highest state power positions are filled through appointments by the fundamentalists" (Seifzadeh 2003). Iran has a distinctive position among the non-democratic political systems as it has a regular presidential and parliamentary election in which voters possess a real voice even though it is limited (Votyagov 2009: 8-9).

The factor of culture plays a significant role in the political institutions and structures, ownership patterns and factional politics of Iran as the principles of Islam are incorporated into the politics of Iran. Iran's current political structure is based on Shia's hierarchy which is featured by several objects of imitation and parallel power. It functions with clientalism. Clientalism in Iran is closely connected with Shi'ism. It also linked with the Islamic revolution and the rentier state which culminated in the formation of patron-client bonds by many autonomous groups.

Alamdari defined clientelism as "a non-class system with a power structure that consists of separate vertical rival groups rather than horizontal class layers" (Alamdari 2005). The power arrangement of the Shi'ism is predominantly based on the relationship between a faqih and its adherents. Such kind of culture overcomes occupations, classes and ethnic identities. It arranges a society based on family or mafia-style relations (cliques and clans) and patron-client interests. Alamdari further argues that "clientelism disintegrates

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class, occupational and ethnic solidarity and instead organizes people into rival groups and clique- or clan-types of relations" (Alamdari 2005). It describes the complex political structures of Iran with its parallel institutions whose responsibilities often overlap. It also provides insights into the nature of factional politics in Iran. It is important to note that, in Iran, factions dominate the political parties. Alamdari argues that "unlike in a class system, the clientelism, the clan-type group unit subordinates class integration in the form of political parties and unions" (Alamdari 2005). Hence, class conflicts are dictated by the group competitions.

Alamdari argued that "political parties or occupational unions are not used as the organizational means to achieve class goals as state is the major source of income, groups compete to get positions in the government and gain influence in society" (Alamdari 2005: 11-12). In the current situation, Iran cannot achieve democracy unless and until the class system replace the clientelism. The power structure of Iran is clientelistic which consists of several autonomous parallel groups that are completely based on the patron-client bonds. Iran's political structure is based on many parallel, independent and rival centres of power that binds the system all together (Alamdari 2005: 15).

The major factions within Iranian politics are reformists, fundamentalists and pragmatists. Even though their approaches are different, they all come within the pro- Islamic Republican sphere. The overlap between the politics and religion is the most fundamental source of conflict. All factions support the combination of religion and politics as they are pro-Islamic. However, they disagree with each other on the question of the extent and mechanisms of this fusion (Seifzadeh 2003; Votyagov 2009: 20). The fundamentalists embody the political Islam which stipulates that the political sovereignty has been conferred to the Supreme Leader by the God. Hence, the Supreme leader is responsible to implement the will of the God. The fundamentalist argues that the Guardianship of *faqih* and the Islam are the two main elements of the Islamic system, not the Republic (Votyagov 2009: 21).

On the other hand, the position of pragmatists and reformists is more instrumental and rational than ideological. They differentiate the functions of the religion and the state. They believe that Iran as a nation-state is founded in order to maintain the security of the

polity and the individual. The United Principlist Front (UPF) is a dominant force in the newly elected *Majles* in 2008 which is a coalition of eleven conservative lists. Hardline Iranian conservatives adopted its name for the interpretation of the western term called "fundamentalist". Votyagov stated that "UPF promoted presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as he represents principalist's authoritarian vision for Iran" (Votyagov 2009: 21). The Inclusive and Participation Fronts belong to reformists. They challenged the expansionary fiscal policies of the government. They condemned the mounting inflationary troubles in Iran. The reformists opined that Ahmadinejad's rhetoric on the nuclear programme of Iran actually exacerbated Iran's global isolation (Votyagov 2009: 22).

Drawbacks of the Revolutionary Paradigm

The reformist movement of 1990s was a reaction to the failures of the revolution. It recognizes the fact that the political change is inevitable with the gradual and sustainable method. It has asserted on non-violence, gradualism and rule of law and encouraged tolerance, transparency and political openness (Nabavi 2012:44). The emergence of reformist group was a result of the failure of the governance model which was existing since the Islamic revolution. The shift of the reformists was a serious deviation from the revolutionary and ideological character of Iran. There was a paradigm shift in the philosophical orientation of the people. The failure of the post-revolution rule lies in its ideological justification. Renani has emphasized that the political system of Islamic Republic was constructed without any pre-planning. The constitutional foundation was built at immediate emotions and aspirations that developed during the Revolution within a particular circumstance rather than requirements of the society for long back. Alsaif stated that "the inconsistency between the idealistic aspirations in the form of revolutionary ideology and actual circumstances has always been the source of the conflict in the PRI" (Alsaif 2007:73).

The factionalism among political elites was deepened by 1990s because of local and global challenges. Thus the deviation from revolutionary approach and inclination towards pragmatic approach could be observed in Iran just after Khomeini's death in

1989. Katouzian, argues that the tendency towards pragmatic approach was helped by the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. In the post cold war era there was a universal demand to abolish totalitarian regimes and centralized policies. There was a desire for democratization of polity. These changes effected Iranian political elites and population. The increasing tendency of inclination towards pragmatism came to its materialization through a constitutional amendment of 1989, especially after the death of Ayatollah Khomeini. Iranians voted for the option of giving state priority over religious idealism. In the amendment, the political and administrative experiences were given importance of the religious scholarship in qualification of *velayat al-faqih*. The amendment also sought to revisit the religious teachings and tried to establish the 'public interests' as a main motive of education (Alsaif 2007:75).

This move was later identified as 'statist shift' and the major contributor to this shift was Hashemi Rafsanjani. He was the *Majles* speaker then and later became President. Rafsanjani has seen this shift as a necessity step for the continuation of Islamic regime (Alsaif 2007:76). In a personal testimony, speaking on the legislative process in the *Majles* Rafsanjan says that:

> Our legislative work in the *Majles* was a real difficulty due to the wide gap the jurisprudential injunctions and the '*ulema's* opinions and the realities of public life. We wanted to formulate the laws necessary to promote the public interest and to ensure that the state was moving within the religious framework. Yet that endeavour was often hindered by lack of any religious framework which was relevant, to the issue in question, or because the available opinion were by no means appropriate to the obvious and actual exigencies of the society (Alsaif 2007:76).

Even though his will was to change the political priorities of the state Rafsanjani during his Presidency focused duringon the economic reforms rather than political reforms. He argues that "political reforms should develop slowly to avoid possible conflicts with traditional forces. On theoretical level he emphasized that the political changes must be preceded by substantial improvement in the peoples' livelihood" (Alsaif 2007:77).

Rafsanjani was of the view that the state has to be a risk taker. The state should be durable; it has to be dependent on authority and rule of law rather than on the clout of the personality of supreme leader. His economic views are totally different from the

revolutionary approach. He believes in the role of private sector and foreign assistance. He realized that the concept of social justice based on the direct redistribution has not been viable at the policy level. Alsaif (2007:77) argued that "the systematic and gradual process is the only way to develop an egalitarian character and ensure fair distribution of resources across the nation". Thus the failure of the revolutionary regime has provided ground to the reformist discourse to emerge. Thus a fair distribution of resources was considered as very significant to establish an egalitarian society.

CHAPTER III
Emergence of Reformist Discourses

The clerical project of creating a perfect human being was bound to fail. After the culmination of war with Iraq in 1988 and the death of Khomeini in 1989, the Iranian citizenry who experienced exclusive nature of state and perils of a closed society (under Khomeini regime) were willing to discontinue his political fiasco. The new leader (Ali Khamenei) too did not wish to take Khomeini's inheritance on some political matters and wanted to establish his own. With the beginning of post-Khomeini era, a large section of his followers and supporters started protesting against the political tradition that he established. They started a fresh debate and discussion on democracy and political development. The growing dissent within the ruling class though had its historical roots. It was also coterminous with (or influenced by) the people's assertion against the authoritative nature of the state. The authoritarian tendency of state has given the Iranian citizenry the era of death, darkness, and violence. The people were willing to live their life with peace, happiness and friendship. There was a growing need of knowledge, life and communication which was denied by the previous era in the name of divine rule (Mohammadi 2019).

With the end of Khomeini period (aftermath of 1989), the centralization of Shi'a authority has acquired the character of political pragmatism. It has gone beyond ideology or theoretical speculation. This transition is termed as 'pragmatic shift'. The pragmatic shift took place under the Rafsanjani regime. Rafsanjani was a pragmatist cleric who became the President of Islamic Republic in 1989. Rafsanjani aimed at strengthening the control of the state over the public sphere in order to establish a functioning bureaucratic state. The thrust for the state centralization majorly quenched through constitutional amendments of 1989. It widened the judicial and political clout of the guardian jurist and also made changes in the ability to qualify for the post of Supreme Leader. After the constitutional amendment, the cleric can be chosen for the office of the Supreme Leader

without being a *majra*[3] This made the selection of the current Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, a mid-ranking cleric. Khamenei was the choice of the conservative clerics (Semati: 2008, Rahimi: 2012).

Rafsanjani's priorities and his pragmatic approach in the economic sphere reversed some of the earlier welfare policies of previous regime. The welfare policies were replaced by the measures that benefited mercantile bourgeoisie class. The revised constitution gave the leader not only the authority to decide the general policies of the state and to oversee their implications, but also the control of more institutions, notably Television and Radio (Mir-Husseini and Tapper, 2006: 25). The Rafsanjani era is also described as "the reconstruction era" where there was the "statist shift". It has witnessed lack of pluralism in the society, continued anti-US foreign policy, economic sanctions followed by increasing unemployment and price hike (Fadaee 2012).

Despite the more centralization of power in the core power structure through constitutional amendment, Rafsanjani's eight-year regime is seen as the creator of the viable conditions for relaxing the rigid controls over social and individual activities. Before becoming the president of Islamic Republic, Rafsanjani promised for bringing reform. Even though, his reform policy was a by-product of the economic reforms rather than the deliberate attempt to reform the political system. Nevertheless, it has its impact on the society in the larger context. His reform policy has the limitations of his own personality and position, immediate requirements and power structures of Islamic Republic (Alsaif 2007:78).

Rafsanjani regime is categorized as 'second republic' after the 'first republic' under Khomeini rule and before 'third republic' of Khatami regime. The second republic lasts from 1989 to 1997. In the second republic, Iran attempted to move from the idealistic glorification of the past to the realistic dealing with the present. It is said that during Rafsanjani regime "government of the God plummeted back to the earth". It has stressed

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[3] Also known as *majra taqlid* and *majra dini*, the literal meaning of word *majra* is "source to imitate or follow". It is a title given to the highest level of intellectual authority in Shi'ism. In the Constitution of 1979, the Supreme Leader should gain the title of of *majra*.

on the realistic notions like infrastructural reconstruction, economic reform and diplomatic open-mindedness (Robin 2000:135).

The economic reforms during Rafsanjani regime made a public opinion that the Islamic Republic is no longer bearing the revolutionary ideological element. It was speculated that openness and free market along with some adjustments is the only means to achieve a better livelihood. It also serves as the means to the survival of Islamic regime. After the relative success of the economic reforms, the left wing factions also seem to change their opinion. Overall, the change in political language could be observed. With the Rafsanjani's emphasis on liberalisation of economic sphere, liberal policies started dominating major themes in the public and academic deliberations (Alsaif 2007:80).

In spite of Rafsanjani's policies of privatisation and liberalisation, the agenda of the development and stability remained unfulfilled. The manipulative tactics of regime could not hide corruption and the increasing debt which led to the failure of Rafsanjani regime. (Robin 2000:135). Ansari (2000:113) has observed that:

> The election of Rafsanjani was initially seen as an opportunity to get the revolution back on track with serious attempts at political development, hopes were disappointed by the erratic and haphazard nature of reform under that regime many reformists considered that Rafsanjani had betrayed the cause in favor of his own personal, financial and political interests (Ansari 2000:113).

The changing nature of the state deepened the division within the clerical establishment and divided them in new fragments. The absence of charismatic leadership during the Rafsanjani regime also led to an increase in the political factions within the establishment. This factionalism became one of the major factors that determined the prospects for change in Iranian politics (Saeidi: 2002). Grand Ayatollah Moterzari emerged as a spokesperson of the dissident clerics and represented most defiant voices. He became the most prominent critic of the regime within the clerical establishment (Rahimi: 2012). With regard to dissidents, Matsunaga (2010) observed that the "rise of *faqih*-headed Islamic state with coercion-wielding enthusiastic supporters in 1979 not only marked the birth of the full-fledged modern Islamic state but also political dissent (Islamic dissent)" (Matsunaga: 2010). At the end of Rafsanjani presidency, Iran was still

plagued with socio-economic problems. The failure of the regime increased the possibility of social turmoil (Robin 2000:135). There was a growing resentment among educated youth and women against the regime's restrictions and moral policing in their life (Farlang 2009:91).

The failure of 'first' (Khomeini regime) and 'second republic' (Rafsanjani regime) is seen parallel with the collapse of the Soviet Union with end of cold war. Both the countries shared the borders and had experienced revolution though different manner. The collapse of Soviet regime had set a warning before the revolutionary regime in Iran. In the same manner, the economic restructuring could not save the Soviet Union from disintegration as the Rafsanjani's efforts of economic reform could not provide stability in the Islamic Republic (Robin 2000:136). Fadaee (2012) is in opinion that by 1997, the Islamic regime, which started as a populist theocracy had transformed into an oligarchy where only few institutions dominated the rest. The economic crisis and the structural changes in state, society, and culture during the years after the revolution had led to the emergence of reform movement (Fadaee: 2012)

Emergence of the Reformist Discourse

The reformist discourse in Islamic Republic of Iran had started taking shape in early 1990s. Several intellectual tendencies started framing a new formula of thinking that challenged the foundation of the Islamic Republic. The intellectuals like Abdolkarim Soroush directly challenged the authorities of the state by contending that no group or individual upholds the divine right to regulate the spiritual authority. Soroush further argued that "religion should be devoid of ideology, which denies human thought and eventually lead to dictatorship". Yousefi Eskhevari, a mid—ranking cleric, put forward the idea of 'religious democracy' questioning the theocratic structure of the state (Rahimi 2012). Barlow and Akbarzadeh (2018) are in opinion that "the reformists' core mission was to empower elected institutions and to hold unelected offices more accountable. The movements for political reform in Iran encompassed a complex set of organizations including clerical and lay reformist parties, nationalist groups and the student movement at the grassroots" (Barlow and Akbarzadeh 2018).

Soroush had previously been a member of the Commission for the Cultural Revolution[4]. In the academic circle he is recognized as the philosopher of science. Major clerical theorists who supported the Soroush Idea of the Shi'ite Islamic reform are Mohammad Mojtahed-Shabestari and Mohsen Kadivar. Mohsen Kadivar had written a direct repudiation of Khomeini's theory of a theocratic government. Soroush and his clerical supporters share common interests in rational theology and philosophy. These are the methods that they used in the reconstruction of religious thought. The question of Shi'ite Islamic reform has reopened the debates around the principle of theocratic rule in Islamic Republic. The debate around the theocratic principle was happening at the theoretical and philosophical level for the first time since 1979 Iranian Revolution (Arjomand 2005:510-15).

The origin of the reformist discourse can be traced back to the discussions that were carried out by intellectuals in different forums. The one such forum was the Kiyan (a monthly) led by Abdolkarim Shoroush. Kiyan re-examines the subject of the interconnectedness of religion and politics. On a theoretical level it tried to advance a non-ideological approach to Islam. Another forum was the Center for Strategic Studies (CSS), directed by Mohammad Mousavi. It was a think tank associated with the office of the president. The CSS deliberate on issues around politics culture, behavior and structure. It also discusses the problems of political upheaval and development in the Islamic Republic (Nabavi 2012:40-41). Saeed Hajjarian[5] is considered as the chief theoretician of the reformist movement. He coined the term *tawse`ehye siyasi* (political development) a euphemism for 'democracy'[6]. Hajjarian defended the rule of law. He explained that laws are essential to ensure institution building in peaceful manner and for preventing the violent situation to occur (Nabavi 2012:42).

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[4] The Commission was created by the Ayatollah Khomeini for the Islamisation of Universities.
[5] Saeed Hajjarian is the former Deputy Minister of Intelligence who later turned as a reformist.
[6] The term democracy was neglected in the official language of Islamic Republic. In the after math of Iranian Revolution of 1979, there was an antagonistic discussion among the people within the power structure on the 'name' of state. Mehdi Bazargan has emphasised on the 'Democratic Islamic Republic of Iran' as the official 'name' and opposed 'Islamic Republic'. His suggestion was rejected. Since then the people within power structure of Islamic Republic have developed a kind of hostility towards the word 'democracy' (Nabavi 2012:41, 51).

Grand Ayatollah Montazeri emerged as a leading defiant voice of the dissident clerics. Earlier, he was a strong follower of Khomeini and supported the idea of 'guardianship of jurist'. He was known as the person of knowledge, religion and courage. He advocated for the betterment of lower class. He ardently criticized the approach of the government dealing with opposition and political prisoners. In early 1980s (immediately after the Revolution), he became one of the principal figures among the revolutionary clerics in the government. After Khomeini, he was the next possible Supreme Leader of Iran. Meanwhile, he was dismissed by Khomeini for appealing for a 'review of the Islamic regime' (Alsiaf 2007:75; Rahimi 2012:62).

After that episode, he tuned to the most vocal critique of the Khomeini regime. He started advocating for the spiritual authority with strong elements of human rights and democratic principle which is termed as 'theocratic democracy.' He also challenged the notion of 'absolute authority of Jurist and advocated for a 'democratic Islamic Republic'. In his new thoughts he also supported the demand of 'position of Islamic jurist subject to electoral processes'. His new thoughts are covered in his book "*Hokumat-i Mardomi va Qanun- Asasi*" published in 1999. In the work he tried to focus on redefining the political power in the line of a new understanding of spiritual authority (Rahimi 2012:62).

Supporting Montezari's notion of 'theocratic democracy', other mid ranking clerics like Mohsen Kadivar and Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari suggested a new theology called "dynamic jurisprudence" as a new concept within Islamic reformism. They provided a reinterpretation of sacred law in the modernist framework. In later period Grand Ayotollah Ali Sistani from Najaf (Iraq) also supported the reformist agenda in Iran and advocated for the reinterpretation of the theology. The support for the reformist movement of Iran in Iraq has reflected in the Najaf Spring of 2003 (Rahimi 2012:63).

Seyyed Hashem Aqajari [5] who belonged to a non-clerical background emerged as a prominent reform-oriented political leader. He understood reform in terms of 'Islamic Protestantism' and 'essential Islam'. In a lecture entitled "Dr. Shariʿati and the Project of Islamic Protestantism", he lamented that more than 100 years' regular demands calling for 'the rule of law', still has not come to rule'. Aqajari distinguished between 'historical Islam' (*Islam-e tarikhi*) and 'essential Islam' (*Islam-e zati*). The 'Islamic protestants' are

concerned with the latter. The 'essential Islam' is coterminous with the 'Islamic humanism.' For Aqajari[7], 'Islamic protestantism' and 'Islamic humanism' went hand in hand. Aqajari sarcastically mocked at the clerical hierarchy and its titles of Ayatollah, *hojjat al-Islam*, and *thaqat al-Islam*, remarking that "some of their titles are so new; their lifespan doesn't exceed fifty to sixty years". He asserted against the clergy's presumed monopoly on the Quran and their claim to mastery over 101 sciences and specializations. He called this claim baseless. Quoting Shariati, he said that "Shariati wanted to remove such false intermediaries (*vaseteh-ha-ye kazeb*). In Islam, we did not have any clerical class (*tabaqeh-ye rowhani*); the clerical class is a new class in our history." He categorically declared that "in essential Islam there is no clergy at all" (Boroujerdi 2019).

The emergence of reformist ideas in the early 1990s is derived from its intellectual, cultural and historical context. The intellectual collectives associated with the ruling class realized the perils associated with the state's appropriation of religious doctrine. They identified the anomalies in the revolutionary paradigm and in the 'divinization' of political power. The notion that, "the political power can become a vehicle for the sacred and the implementation of God's law on earth" proved utopian. It failed facing ground reality. The reformist intellectuals engaged with political and epistemological ideas explaining the error of human knowledge of the divine. They emphasized on the understanding of human knowledge of divine or else through historicity. The historicity of religious knowledge has emerged as the core epistemological principle in the reformist discourse. It asserts on the deemed notion that knowledge of religion was both 'historical' and 'fallible.' Therefore the statements and rulings of the clergy were susceptible to error and criticism. The reformist intellectuals' body of thought ultimately attempted to produce the anti-utopianism (Boroujerdi 2019).

The medium through which the ideas, concepts and arguments about the reform have been introduced and communicated majorly through articles, interviews, comment pieces

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[7] Aqajari was a longstanding member of the Mojahedin Organisation of the Revolution of Iran. After disagreements he disassociated himself from the organization. Aqajari resigned in January 1983 along with thirty-six other members many of whom would become proponents of reform following the 1997 presidential election (Boroujerdi 2019).

and public speeches. There were less theoretical treatises or proper books. These writings and pieces were mainly published and distributed in the patronage of political elites. The lectures and interviews which comprised an overwhelming part were mostly delivered in the universities and mosques. The articles, interviews, comment pieces, and public speeches were first published in newspapers, magazines, and periodicals and then gathered together and published in a single volume. The major stakeholders involved in publishing and distribution of the works were publishers and their political allies. These stakeholders at one side were ideologically sympathetic towards reformist content but on the other side they have seen potential commercial opportunity in publishing the same (Boroujerdi 2019).

However, the efforts of intellectual groups could not be translated into concrete results. The reformist discourse still had to reach its coherent definition (Nabavi 2012:40-41). However, intellectuals associated with reformist project had achieved some success after Khatami's victory. Khatami regime has provided a way forward for the task of defining reform due to the growth of relative freedom of press and intellectual activity. Reformist intellectuals have tried to define 'reform' in comparison with revolution which was more convenient for Iranians to grasp. Seyyad Morteza Mardiha has done comparison between 'reform' and revolution (Nabavi 2012: 41). Mardiha has also emphasized on the rule of law for him. Laws were indispensible to protect democracy and freedom from the disarray (Nabavi 2012:43).

Another reformist Emadeddin Baqi analyzed the primary difference between reform and revolution in the framework of past. He stated that the "revolutions looked to the past, and on the basis of fighting the past, became intent on wiping out the present circumstances in order to move forward, reform just looked to the future……without wanting to make the past into a setting for punishments or execution" (Nabavi 2012:42). Reformism for Baqi has implied the possibility of 'neither accepting the status quo nor opposing the revolution' (Nabavi 2012:42).

Abbas Abdi, another reformist writer differentiated between reform and revolution on the ground of operational methods. He was of the opinion that revolution tends to be erratic

and violent. On the other hand, the reform could only occur through non-violent, constitutional and lawful manner. Abdi has taken the importance of law very seriously and asserted that one of major objectives of the reformist discourse is to make *velayet-e faqih* (guardianship of jurist) accountable and answerable to the law (Nabavi 2012:42).

In other way of defining reform, the idea behind reform was to searching for the 'third way'. The 'third way' represented the political development from below after the failure of the previous two, imperial westernization described as 'modernization from above' and Islamic theocratisation described as 'revolution from above' (Tazamini 2010: 29-34). The central to 'third way' was the promise for more democratic society. However, the 'democracy debate' in Iran steps back to the constitutional revolution of 1906. It stems from an indigenous movement. It was not either western import or compromised with the west. It also cannot be a state project or elite foisted on the masses. It is rather a popular concept which is developed from the society (Fadaee 2012:62-63; Semati: 2008).

The Shah regime's 'modernization from above' was speedy, state-directed and limited to industrial-military development. Reform began with the build-up of the army and expansion of the country's military capabilities[8]. There was a five-fold increase in the military budget an annual average of 33.5 per cent of the total revenue from 1921 to 1941. It allowed the development of an air force and a navy base in the Persian Gulf. Shah also expanded bureaucracy with formation of new ministries. He has developed infrastructure, roads, railway and air transportation. It was a state led industrialization by raising tariff rates and establishing government monopolies. Shah also initiated reform of the education system that raised the status of women. However, women were yet to attain the right to contest election and vote, an men continued to be recognized as the legal head of the family and were entitled to more favorable inheritance (Tazamini 2010:23).

The Shah failed to implement reform evenly, limiting the endeavour to the expansion of industry, the military and infrastructure, while neglecting both civil society and the indigenous economy. This contributed to the widespread political discontent and socio-

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[8] In June 1925, the Shah persuaded the *Majles* to extend the conscription law. The result was a growth of army from 40,000 to 127,000 in 1941.

economic disparities. The state led modernization of military and bureaucracy by Shah was driven by his own security. It was in the response of deepening legitimacy crisis in despotic monarchical rule from both external and internal factors (Tazamini 2010:25).

The major factor behind the failure of the revolutionary paradigm can also explain what is termed as 'revolution from above'. The failure of the post-revolution politics (Khomeini regime) lies in its top-down state led forced ideological justification of the policies and neglecting the requirement of the people at the ground level. It has been emphasized that the political system of Islamic Republic was constructed without any pre-planning. The constitutional foundation was built at immediate emotions and aspirations that developed during Revolution within particular circumstances rather than requirements of the society for long back.

Alsaif stated that "the inconsistency between the idealistic aspirations in the form of revolutionary ideology and actual circumstances has always been the source of the conflict in the Islamic Republic of Iran" (Alsaif 2007:73). Mohammadi is also observed while defining the reformist movement that, "the Iranian reform movement was a non-violent protest against Shi'a Islamism (Revolutionary paradigm) as it was introduced and enforced in Iranian society. Khamenei and his loyalists' inability to control every aspect of Iranians' life and the duality in the governmental structure in the 1990s made the movement possible" (Mohammadi 2019).

Boroujerdi (2019) has identified two factors behind the intellectual's emphasis on 'reform' as contradiction to 'revolution'. Firstly; most of these intellectuals were themselves participated in Revolution. They have held positions within the state institution. Abdulkarim Soroush was part of Council of Cultural Revolution. Other reformists like Mohammad Mojtahed-Shabestari, Hassan Yusefi-Eshkevari, Behzad Nabavi were in the Islamic Consultative Assembly. The major theoreticians like Said Hajjariyan and Abbas Abdi were associated with the Ministry of Intelligence. Mohammad Musavi has been in the General Prosecutor's Office. Mohammad Khatami himself was the minister of Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance before becoming president. Mostafa Tajzadeh was in the Ministry of Interior. Along with Khatami,

Mostafa Tajzadeh, Mohsen Armin, Ataollah Mohajerani were also part of Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. Behzad Nabavi was associated with Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting. Mohammad Salamati was in the Ministry of Agriculture. Behzad Nabavi and Mohsen Sazgara were in the Ministry of Heavy Industries. Akbar Ganji, Hashem Aqajari, Mostafa Tajzadeh, Hamid-Reza Jalaipur, Ali-Reza Alavi-Tabar, Emad al-Din Baqi were in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (Boroujerdi 2019).

Secondly, the most of public intellectuals and thinkers[9] associated with reformist discourse at some point of time were affiliated or sympathetic to the Islamic left. They has been associated with various Islamic left groups like *Majma-e Rowhaniyun-e Mobarez* (Association of Combatant Clerics, henceforth, MRM), the *Sazman-e Mojahedin-e enqelab-e Eslami-ye Iran* (Mojahedin Organisation of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, SMEEI), the *Jebheh-ye Mosharekat-e Iran-e Eslami* (Participation Front of Islamic Iran, PFII) and the *Hezb-e E'temad-e Melli* (National Trust Party, HEM). Many of them had worked for state and shared the experience of working in different intellectual junctures and political milieu of post-revolution Iran. Due to their shared experience they have developed a comparative attitude or dialecticism to develop new ideas. It is defined as a form of 'socialized subjectivity.' Most of the intellectuals associated with reformist project worked in partnership with political elites. The solidarity of both the intellectual class and political elites led to a profound change in the general public thought about politics (Boroujerdi 2019).

The collective experience of reformist intellectuals during Iran-Iraq War, state led violence and their own political marginalization has made them critical to the clerical rule. Along with that, the international developments such as the collapse of the Soviet Union and the change in the entire political order at global level also played a role. The critical approaches towards the idea of a revolutionary method of socio-political change in contemporary Euro-American philosophy and political theory also influenced the reformist intellectuals to differentiate between the notions of 'reformist' and 'revolutionary' political change. However, the reformists' contestation to the meaning

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[9] The reformist intellectuals in Iran are known as *rowshanfekran-e dini* (Boroujerdi 2019).

and significance of Revolution, Khomeini's legacy, the Islamic Republic, and its Constitution has been central to the psyche of the reform. In other words, the reformist intellectuals are involved in a struggle of bringing Islamic Republic to its real meaning. It is the paradox of the reformist intellectuals that they play a double role; as play a dual role; as supporters and protectors of the Islamic Republic as well as internal critique of Revolutionary order. This happens due to the hegemonic practices of the Islamic Republic which turns more hegemonic at the time of possible challenges from the side of its dissidents. In such situation, it becomes impossible to disassociate them from order. As a benefit, Boroujerdi stated that "they could also potentially avail themselves of privileges, accumulated social capital, and attained social mobility, first in their roles as its defenders and later as internal critics of the revolutionary order" (Boroujerdi 2019).

In another view, the political transformation in Iran is defined under the purview of the 'third wave' of the democratization. Within the framework of democratization, it is the constitutional politics which dominates the theme after the 1997 election in Iran. The constitutional politics occurs within the perspective of the sociology of revolution on the post-revolutionary institutional building. In post-revolution Iranian regimes, the constitutional politics reflects in terms of two typical processes; institutionalization and consolidation of a collective system of rule. The constitutional politics is a scuffle for the definition of order. The constitutional politics differs from the notion of constitutionalism. "The political struggle for the constitution of order takes place among groups and organizations aligned behind different principles of order by their material and ideal interests. These principles of order are heterogeneous and potentially contradictory." The competing organisations and groups are brought into a situation where they have to compromise. In the process, the different groups and organizations have to present concession and reinterpretation of the fundamental laws that could adjust with the system. The constitution becomes the center of public debate which shapes the politics accordingly (Arjomand 1992:30-34, Arjomand 2001:349-50).

The election of 1997 has opened the question of fundamental order in Iran even though the constitutional politics is played within Islamic Republic's institutional framework. The rule of law and the civil society, the two pillars of the Khatami's reform, have

become implicitly contrast to the principalist structure of the Islamic Republic. There have been many critique of the nature of civil society in Iran that it does not reflect the real social organization. But it has mobilized various groups in order to create a momentum for constitutional politics (Arjomand 2001:343).

The critical thinking emerged during the Khatami government has questioned the principle of leadership of theocratic government especially during the student uprising in July 1999. Despite the direct opposition of the Supreme Leader Khamenei and slogans like 'Khamenei must go', he had to condemn the forces for violence on students in Tehran University. It indicates the significant erosion of the theocratic authoritarianism. It is because of the pressure created by the constitutional politics. Nevertheless, the conservative has halted the reform project of the Khatami government through various methods. In the *Majles*, the conservative clerics rejected the bill presented by Khatami's Minister of the Interior[10]. But they cannot afford to ignore the constitutional politics since it has become the integral part of the body politic (Arjomand 2001:355).

Ansari (2000) is of the opinion that reformist discourse was not the rejection of the Islamic Revolution. The reformists have perceived Islamic Revolution as the movement for political emancipation. The Islamic Revolution intrinsically linked to the two previous attempts of political emancipation; Constitutional Revolution of 1906 and the secularism of Mosaddeq. In this sense, the Islamic revolution was the third attempt to attain stability, political emancipation and democratic order. Ansari has asserted on this regard that reformist camp has an ideological cohesion and they shared a consensus on their 'meta-narrative'. There were agreements among the most of the reformists that they wanted reform for the current system not for its removal. They were rejecting the particular interpretation of the Islamic revolution, the interpretation that promoted authoritarian tendency. There was a rejection of the 'mercantile bourgeois republic'. The view among the reformists was that the Islamic Revolution was itself a manifestation of the popular will which was later hijacked by the authoritarian forces in the circumstances of war.

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[10] The bill was aimed at restraining the power of the clerical jurists of the Council of Guardians to disqualify the candidates for elected office.

This led to the diversion of the institutionalization of popular participation in the first decade of the revolution for which it was committed (Ansari 2000:112-13).

According to Ansari (2000:115-16), the reformists had the following objectives at the policy level: (a) Political rationalization is a pre-condition for the economic development, (b) Institutionalisation of the civil society, (c) The enrichment of the *Majles*, (d) Consolidation of popular participation, (e) Decentralization and Depersonalization, (f) Religion as the handmaiden of democracy, (g) Economic reconstruction and (h) reintegration into global society.

Abdolkarim Soroush's Reform Project

Abdulkarim Soroush arose as a leading Iranian political philosopher and Islamic theologian. He became the intellectual leader of the reformist discourse (Sadri and Sadri 2000). Soroush is considered as the contemporary liberal reformist Muslim thinker or the philosopher of religion. His extensive intellectual project aimed at reconciling reason and faith, spiritual authority and political liberty (Sadri and Sadri 2000). The modern reformist discourse could be traced back to the scholars such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–1897) and Ayatollah Mohammad Hossein Naini (1860–1936). In the pre-modern era, there has been a classic tradition of Islamic reform. Al-Ghazali (1058–1111) is one of the earlier reformist thinkers who were critical to the dominant position of *fiqh* within the Islamic scholarship (Shadi 2019).

Al-Ghazali's efforts were aimed at revitalizing ethical and spiritual aspects of Islam. His work "Reviving the Sciences of Religion" (*'Ihya''Ulum al-Din)* became the masterpiece of Islamic reform. The other Islamic thinkers like Jalal al-Din Mohammad Rumi (1207–1273), and Feyz Kashani attempted to clean and purify religion from many misunderstandings. Soroush says that "understanding and saving religion's eternal message in this attacking flood of change and modernity is the core of the efforts of the contemporary reformers. The intention of the formers was saving religion from misunderstanding and misusing but the intention of contemporaries is transit the religion safely from the dangerous passageway of the time and to give meaning and relevance to religion in the evolutionary age" (Shadi 2019).

In Iran this intellectual tradition is termed as *'roshanfekri-ye dini'* (religious intellectuality). The reformist discourse has its indigenous roots in Iranian intellectual as well as resistance history. Therefore it is sharply distinguished from the secular intellectual discourse originated in the West. In the second half of the 20th century, the reformist discourse was continued by thinkers such as Mehdi Bazargan (1907–1995), Mahmud Taleqani (1911–1979), and Ali Shariati (1933–1977). Soroush became the foremost member of the present generation of these Muslim reformist thinkers. Soroush has provided new life to the discourse matching it with the current changing socio-political scenario in the Iran and geopolitics at the global level (Shadi 2019).

In 2005, Abdolkarim Soroush was featured in the Times' list of world's 100 most influential people. He has gone for his post-graduation to London after his graduation from Tehran University. Initially he was a supporter of Khomeini and was part of his Cultural Revolution that was designed especially for restructuring of universities. In the end of 1980s Soroush disenchanted with the state's approach and came into conflict with conservative elements of Clerical order because of his views on Islam with the emphasis on pluralism. Soroush advocated the need to move beyond the religious texts and the works of other scholars both within and outside of the Islamic world. He studied Kant, Popper and Habermas even though he was critical to the western political thought. He has contributed in Iranian political thought significantly with his critical approach (Mohebi 2012:137-38).

His reform project as a body of thought has grown through the interface with the perils of the local Islamism in practice in the post-revolutionary Iran as well as the inability of western secularism to qualify universality. His experience of the both; local Islamism and western secularism led to his discovery of the indigenous reformist democratic tradition within the modern history of Iran. Consequently, he became capable to develop a liberal theory of religion with the potential to be applicable in the contemporary times (Shadi 2019). The evolution of his thoughts has started its journey from the publications of articles in the *Kiyan*; a monthly critical and literary journal based at Tehran. He addressed university students on many occasions. He has also delivered many funeral orations (Sadri and Sadri 2000).

His two major theories namely *The Contraction and Expansion of Religious Knowledge* (1988) and *The Expansion of Prophetic Experience* (1997) are well recognized not only in Iran but also around the world (Shadi 2019). His theory is also termed as "The Hermeneutical Expansion and Contraction of the Theory of Shari'ah". The theory reexamines "the Islamic *shariah* in the light of jurisprudence, history of ideas, hermeneutics, epistemology, philosophy of science and sociology of knowledge" (Shadi 2019). Therefore Soroush's theory is expanded in various fields like "epistemology and sociology of knowledge, philosophical anthropology and political theory, and ethics and social criticism" (Sadri and Sadri 2000). But major concern of his works covered the theories of religious epistemology, revelation, and prophet hood (Shadi 2019).

These theories emphasized on two major thinks; firstly the contextual and historical approaches of interpretation of religion including Islam and secondly the pluralism. Applying these approaches, Soroush calls Quran as "the Word of Muhammad". Therefore he regards the Quran; the Prophets' interpretation in light of his prophetic experience. In this context Quran is seen as historical text which can be interpreted, decoded, demythologized from a religious perspective rather than a verbal revelation. This does not necessarily delegitimize the Islam as a religion. The historical or contextual approach of religion is considered as the epistemological shift from the traditional Islamic epistemology within the Islamic reformist discourse. The earlier generation of the Islamic reformist modernist thinkers had attempted to justify the compatibility of modernity and Islam through Islamic genealogy and by finding the modern concepts in Islamic sources (Quran and Sunnah). In contrary, Soroush avoided finding legitimacy of modernity in the Islamic sources. His experience of Islamism which also used the same traditional Islamic methodology to justify political Islam or militant Islam led to a methodological shift. Therefore, Soroush with his rationalist approach kept modern values like human rights, democracy and justice independent of religion. Soroush's methodological shift within the modern reformist Islamic discourse attempted to depoliticize religion and Islam (Shadi 2019).

His ideas have contributed across theology, philosophy and politics. His ideas became challenges to the status quo of the regime and recognized as the precursor of the reform movement. On the relation of Islam and democracy, he asserted that Islamic jurisprudence *(fiqh)* and rule of law are incompatible. The notion of democracy is based on the concept of subjective freedom and rights. In contrary to this, Islamic jurisprudence is based on the duty. He emphasized on the introduction of the concept of the right to the Islamic jurisprudence for achieving democratic rule (Mohebi 2012:139-140).

He has asserted on the idea of liberty. According to him, liberty is the value that even an opponent shall possess in order to oppose it (CSD interview: The beauty of justice, 2007). Freedom, according to Soroush, is a "component of justice; in contrast to justice, freedom as a concept is not abstract" (Seyyedabadi, 2006). Soroush opined that "Freedom of expression is a key component of liberty and if the power of speech is taken away from human beings, his whole being is doomed; the freedom of expression brings with it freedom of thought, critique, writings, newspapers and public media" (Soroush 2003b:74, Soroush 2003a:64, Mohebi 2012:140). Soroush has given three prerequisites of democracy. For each steps, freedom is essential element. The first step is installing the rules and the second step is criticizing the rules. Dismissing the rules is the third step. According to Soroush, to avail justice people must be provided with atmosphere where they are capable of exercising all these three steps (Seyyedabadi 2006). He further provides various references that intellectuals in west has proved the interdependence of concepts like democracy, justice and freedom (Mohebi 2012:142, Arjomand 2005:510-15).

Soroush's historical or contextual interpretation of Quran or what he called Quran "The Word of Muhammad" (2007) received diverse reactions. The idea was rejected by many theologians but other scholars have seen Soroush's words as a paradigm shift and beginning of a new era in Islamic thought. Forough Jahanbakhsh has commented that Islamic thought is "entering a stage of self-examination that will allow it to overcome its past shortcomings." She categorized the new shift as neo-rationalism. She further described neo-rationalism as an "intellectual maturity" in Islamic thought which calls "for a systematic approach to reform through rethinking the underpinnings of the tradition."

Asef Bayat termed this phase in Islamic reform as post-Islamism. The post-Islamism as a new intellectual paradigm is neither Islamist nor anti-Islam. Bayat clarifies that by post-Islamism he means "a condition where, following a phase of experimentation, the appeal, energy, symbols, and sources of legitimacy of Islamism gets exhausted, even among its once- ardent supporters. As such, post-Islamism is not anti-Islamic, but rather reflects a tendency to resecularise religion". Alternatively, Jahanbakhsh views this new phase from a political aspect and calls it as 'post-fundamentalism'. Another term that has been used by Yasuyuki Matsunaga in his interpretation of the Islamic reform discourse in post-revolutionary Iran is post-revivalism. He identifies this reformist movement as a crossing from "historical Islam" to "spiritual and goal-oriented Islam". On the other hand, Mehran Kamrava evaluates this post-revolutionary intellectual discourse in such a different and radical way that he describes it as an 'intellectual revolution' Robin Wright described the religious intellectualism in post-revolutionary Iran as Islamic Protestantism and called Soroush the Martin Luther of Islam (Shadi 2019).

Momentum of 1997 Presidential Election and Khatami Regime

Gradually, the groups supporting reformist discourse formed a coalition. It was a coalition of "dissident Shi'a clerics, seminary students, university students, intellectuals, women, labourers class and middle class professionals" (Rahimi 2013:61). The reformist cleric Mohammad Khatami won the presidential election of 1997. In the election, 90 percent of the voters participated and Khatami received 70 percent of the votes. The conservative candidate Nateq Nuri received 20 percent of votes (Farhang 2009:92). Before becoming the president, Khatami was a Cultural Minister and the head of the National Library. He was very renowned among the reformist intellectual circle. However he was less popular among the common people. In opposite, Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri served as the *Majles* Speaker for eight years (Farhang 2009:92). The 1997 election was the first which gained a huge turnout. The people voted for a dark-horse[11] cleric against theocrat candidate. The election marked the arrival of 'third republic' and empowerment (Robin 2000:137).

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[11] The reformists have a negative image among the conservative clerics. Khatami once have been purged in 1992 in the charge of 'liberalism' and 'negligence' when he was minister of cultural and Islamic guidance (Robin 2000:137).

The huge support for Khatami came from women and youth who made him the symbol of discontent with status quo of the Islamic regime. It has been emphasized by him that his reform agenda supports the rise of the civil society, freedom of expression and political tolerance within the constitutional framework and Islamic values (Farhang 2009:93). The victory of Khatami has given a momentum to the coalition. The victory was announced on 23 of May 1997 in the Iranian calendar that was second of the Khordad. Khordad is the third month of the Persian year. Therefore, reformist movement is also known as 'second of Khordad' movement in Iran (Rahimi 2012: 61). Iranian society was entering into a fresh experience after one and half decade of revolutionary rule and war. Mohammadi stated in this regard that "hope was replacing fear and optimism was in the air. After years of darkness, mourning, death, grief and eulogy, Iranian society was waking up to color, life, laughter, pleasure, lust and joy" (Mohammadi 2019). Ansari has commented that "Khatami's victory was a return to the original aims of the Islamic Revolution" (Ansari 2000: 113).

During the election campaign, Khatami identified the real problem of the society. He stressed on the need for more freedom of speech and assembly. He talked about the emboldening of civil society and raised the issues of human rights, liberalism and pluralism which were considered as the taboos in the Islamic Republic. He criticized the interference of the state in the private life of individuals (Farhang 2009:92). Khatami's cabinet members were technocrats who held high positions in past and has been deferring to the clerical authorities on policy matters. Most of the cabinet members have served as ministers during Rafsanjani presidency (Farhang 2009:93).

Khatami has defined reform as a search for the middle path. There are two extremes in the political thinking. One kind of extremists is traditionalist who advocates Muslim retreat. They talk about the return to the past, old habits and customs. Other kinds of extremists are western oriented intellectuals who advocate for the blind following of the west. These two streams are opposite to each other and created antagonism which led to tension in the society. Khatami called for middle path in order to bring a balance. Khatami think about the reformist tradition in the Islamic world and mentioned about the reformist thinkers such as Abduh, Asadabadi, Allameh Naini, Lahuri, Sadr, Shariti and Motahari. He

discussed about learning from west's positive achievements (Lali 1999:372, quoted in Mehran 2003:13).

Khatami had asserted on freedom as the precondition of both democracy and Islamic salvation. The aim of the western notion of liberty is the emancipation from outside. However, freedom provides the condition for humans to determine their own fate. Governments in west are accountable to serve the individuals for this achievement. The negative consequence of the western concept of liberty is that it led to atomic individualism which makes human need and desire central to everything. The Islamic notion of salvation refers to the emancipation from inside and wins over desires, lust and worldliness. Khatami finds out the incompleteness in both points. Islamic salvation disregarded the political and social freedom of the human beings and led to the enslavement of the Islamic society and the rule of the oppressors. On the other hand, the western liberty disregards the internal emancipation of the individuals. Khatami advocated for the synthesis of both viewpoints that rejects negative aspects of both. In other words, religion must be compatible with freedom. In his speech on the occasion of the first anniversary of the 1997 election victory at Tehran University he asserts:

> The history of humankind has clearly shown that whatever confronts freedom will eventually lose. He uses the experiences of the Middle Ages in Europe and the communist world to show how religion in the former and economic justice in the latter suffered when they stood against freedom. Khatami was of the opinion that If religion opposes freedom, religion loses. If justice opposes freedom, justice loses. If development opposes freedom, development loses.... people's ideal has always been and will always remain freedom (Mehran 2003:314).

The huge support for Khatami came from the young population. The Iran's demography was rapidly and radically changing. The generation born after revolution has seen new prospects in urbanization, technologies and societies undergoing globalization. The younger generation molded innovative public platforms and spaces at the societal level. The claims and expectations of the large educated middle class were much different from the early period of revolution. Moreover, the acceleration of the globalization processes during the last decade of the twentieth century had contributed to the development of democracy and civil society worldwide including Iran (Rahimi 2012:61).

Therefore, Khatami's reform agenda which was predicted before the victory had focused on promoting political and intellectual discourse, consolidating the rule of law and stimulating civil society and enhancing the social liberties (Alsaif 2007:80; Tazamini 2010: 1, Rahimi 2012: 62,65). During Khatami's campaign, the theme of 'civil society' is described as curing the sick economy, individual liberties, women's rights and political pluralism (Abraminian 2008:186). Khatami delineated his goals in terms of a comprehensive and sustainable development. He expounded a reformist agenda which similars the concept of 'human development'. It creates a social environment conducive to democracy and an atmosphere where human can make their choices freely (Alsaif 2007:81).

Reformist success in the 1999 local election, *Majles* elections 2000 and re-election of Khatami in 2001 revealed that most Iranians were still hoping that Khatami would fulfill his promises about making the socio-political order more open and equitable (Farhang 2009:93). Khatami had adopted pragmatic and cautious approach towards reform. The reform agenda was built over the stress on the break from the past principalist and passive approaches. It was believed that "break from the past would encourage the promotion of civil society, rule of law, economic integration and gradual rapprochement with the international community" (Tazmini 2010:18).

Nonetheless, the vision of Khatami for reform was guided by the ultimate goal of the preservation of Islamic culture of Iran and values on 1979 revolution. During the election campaigns, Khatami stressed that reform would not clash with the Islamic principles. Tazmini opined that "his idea of reform was based on the broader interpretation of Islamic texts in order to adapt Islamic principles to the exigencies of the day" (Tazmini 2010:18). In the 2001 presidential election, Khatami was re-elected and received around 70 percent votes despite many obstacles and obstructions created by the conservative factions. The support of Khatami in his re- election came from intellectuals, artists, university professors, teachers, students and seminaries. In both election, a huge support came from women and youth (Mehran 2003:311).

The initiative of the Khatami government to start the local elections was another major

step of the constitutional politics. Khatami has emphasized on the theme of political development. The first step of the political development is people's political participation. The elections of the local bodies became the significant channel of the political participation. The election of the municipal and local councils is stated in the constitution of 1979. However, it was never implemented before Khatami. Khatami has successfully implemented the provision of the constitution. He has emphasized that implementation of the local bodies; 107,000 village and town councils is the step towards the consolidation of popular government and Islamic democracy. He also asserted on the need of decentralization and said that "sacred terms such as 'revolution', 'freedom', 'Islam' and 'leadership' are not monopoly of any group and individual". In that context, the recognition of the right to opposition is also the necessary requirement of political development (Arjomand 2001:358). Thus, the parameters of the constitutional politics are from the above, set by the constitution itself (Arjomand 2001:363).

In broader sense, Khatami's modernity did not have a western derivative element. His purpose was not an attempt to westernize the society. History of modern Iran has proved that importing western modernity is failed. One instance was during the Shah regime and the other instance is the revolution of 1979. This was termed as westernization form the above and revolution from the above respectively. The complex web of Iran's socio-religious and political setup has not allowed such development to take place smoothly which resulted in a social unrest. Khatami sought to find a solution distinct from both the experiences by improving and promoting the two pillars such as rule of law and civil society without destroying the theocratic structure of the country. By adopting a middle approach he tried to balance the power structure according to the changing scenario (Tazamini 2010:18).

In the view of Khatami, modernity had a different starting point in Iran. Hence it would have a different outcome form the west. Mainstream theories of the modernization depict that the modernity with its ideological baggage grounded in European cultural experience. Khatami questioned the genealogy of modernity. He emphasized that modernity is a social construct that produces its own reality. Khatami decentred the unilinear path of modernity by proposing historically sophisticated trajectory of social

development. In 1990s, Iran reached to a historical juncture where development required a more nuanced and integrative approach. The transformation was essential. Khatami realized the need to open up political space as well as the importance of internationalizing the economy and of fostering a global dialogue. International relations, trade and commerce, women, youth, press, culture and the arts, he believed, would collectively contribute to the efficiency of the state and the welfare of the society (Tazamini 2010:19).

Barlow and Akbarzadeh (2018) have observed that the reform agenda of Khatami depends upon the constitutional foundations of the Islamic Republic. The basic justification of reformists' rely on constitution is that along with its predominance to clerical authority which is based on divine law and religious law, constitution incorporates the will of the people. The objective of Khatami's reformist agenda was to amplify the later aspects of the constitution. Khatami attempted to strengthen the 'will of the people' as the part of the constitution by developing an indigenous discourse on popular sovereignty and good governance, and also through Islamic vernacular. He emphasized on strengthening of civil society by which the economic, politics, social and human rights are respected based on the Islamic notion of *Madinat al-Nabi* (City of the Prophet). Barlow and Akbarzadeh stated that "thus Khatami endorses the indigenous sources of democracy and promote the Islamic tradition of ijtihad as a process of theological reasoning by which holy sources could be reinterpreted based on contemporary circumstances" (Barlow and Akbarzadeh 2018).

The Khatami government's overall efforts may not have brought any tangible changes in terms of breaking the legal-political barrier to the democratic change. However, it had created a socio-political space for reformist movement to grow. The Iran has witnessed a perceptible increase in the "non-governmental organizations, independent press, the diversity of narratives reflecting different ideologies, policies and lifestyles, powerful counter-movements, dramatic changes of individual appearance in public, a dramatic decrease in youth appearances in religious places in the hands of people who represent ideologised religion, and the electoral successes of reformist candidates". It changed the public discourse from ideology (1970s and 1980s) to human rights (1990s and 2000s). In the post-Khomeini Iran, the terms and concepts associated with the human right discourse

has captured the spaces even among authoritarian factions. Thus the entire public discourse got filled with human rights terms and concepts (Mohammadi 2019). Apart from the reformist success in the form of development of the formal political process; the elections and growth of political parties, the growth of media and publications, economic reform, growth of cyber space and Khatami's international policy also comprised the major achievements of his government.

Media and Publication

Under Khatami's regime, a vibrant reformist press started flourishing. From May 1997 to March 2000, the newspaper increased four times higher than before. During the first half decade of the reform process, 2,288 publications got permission according to Esa Saharkhiz. Every year 352 publications were given permission on an average and before that it was 96 each year from 1993 to 1997 (Razavi 2008:105). The rapid growth of publications has provided an opportunity for the discussion on 'reform', especially its development and critique. The reformists dailies such as Jame'eh, Neshat and Tus, has become a voice for reformists like Morteza Mardiha. He has observed Khatami's victory as the opportunity to regain the ordinary life, "to eat, sleep, talk, love, read, protest, have no fear and thus live". In his words it signified "an end to the respectability of the age of epic, and the arrival of the time for love and co-existence" (Milani 2015: 217, Rahimi 2012: 41).

There was a significant rise in the media publication under the reformist rule. The number of applications for new periodicals was increased from 591 in 1997 to 2,622 in 2003. By the end of 2003, the private sector gave 1931 permissions representing eighty percent of all the periodicals in the country (Alsaif 2007:85). Ansari stated that:

> The function of the press was in essence to set the terms of political discourse and dictate the agenda. They were to define the new hegemony, outline the borders of a new discursive field and force the pace of political development through a simple process of information transparency. People had a right to know, and the more they knew the more effectively they could hold those in government to account. The press was not only a conveyer of ideas; it was to be a central pillar of civil society, mediating views in both directions (Ansari 2000:119).

The growth of the press has resulted in the evolution of popular pro-reform publications

which flourished and spread the reformist political discourse. These pro-reform or pro-Khatami press has advocated and made popular the terms and concepts associated with the reformist discourse like "civil society *(jamea-ye madani)*, legality *(qanun-mandi)*, citizenship *(shahrvandan)*, pluralism *(pluralizm, takkathur-gara'i),* rule of law *(qanun-gara'i)* and 'reading' *(qera'at)* of Islam" (Barlow and Akbarzadeh 2018). The pro-reform student's movement and the Office for Strengthening Unity founded the Iranian Students' News Agency (ISNA). The ISNA has rapidly emerged as the reliable source of news. The growth of press has played a crucial role to provide checks and balances on power (Barlow and Akbarzadeh 2018).

The conservative reaction to the growth of reformist press resulted in the crackdown on the independent press. From the year 1999 to 2004, more than 100 daily were forcefully closed by the state institutions. The conservatives misused the state institutions in order to suppress the freedom of expression. They have launched the series of press trials ignoring the due process. The unjustified imprisonment of journalist, hyper activeness of judiciary and torture in terms of creating pressure on press had proved a setback for reformist press and publication. This became the most highlighted aspect of power struggle between the conservative political factions and the reformists (Mohammadi 2019).

Despite the conservatives' state led crackdown of the reformist press, it still exists and plays a significant role in terms of creating checks and balances. Mohammadi (2019) has opined that this phenomenon could never be eradicated. Although, the reformist press has changed in terms of strategy and method after experiencing its bad days of conservative crackdown especially during the year of 2000 in order to survive (Mohammadi 2019). In other terms, reformist press has its hold in the society. But it has faced a setback because of the control of the state sponsored mass media in the hand of conservatives. During Khatami's eight year regime, the reformist press made huge efforts to improve political environment and change the state-society relations (Alsaif 2007:81).

Economic Reform

In the economic sphere, Khatami defined that the function of the reform is to redirect the centralized, state-controlled, closed, and uncompetitive economy towards an economy led

by private sector that ensures the people's participation and active interaction with the international market. Khatami's government faced the same hurdles as the previous government of Rafsanjani faced in terms of liberalizing the economy. After 2002 Khatami realized that a full-scale transformation into a market economy is impossible without decisively dealing with the cultural and legal barriers that are inherent in the revolutionary paradigm as well as in the constitution. Article 44 of the constitution states that:

> All large-scale and mother industries, foreign trade, major minerals, banking, insurance, power generation, dams, and large-scale irrigation networks, radio and television, post, telegraph and telephone services, aviation, shipping, roads, railroads and the like; all these will be publicly owned and administered by the state (Article 44, Constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran, also quoted by Alsaif 2007:82).

Along with this, Article 81 "forbids that foreign investments that involve concessions granted by the government in any sector of the economy including commerce, industry, agriculture, service, and mineral extraction". However, Article 82 stipulates that "the consent of the parliament upon the employment of foreign experts" (Alsaif 2007:82).

The government reformists were successful in shattering the deadlock by passing a new law that permitted and supported the foreign investment, insurance, big industrial firms and the establishment of private banks. The Fourth, Five-Year Development Plan was also approved by the Reformists in the sixth *Majles*. Alsaif states that "the Fourth Five-Year Development Plan (2005-2010) envisages a major transformation of the economy by expanding the programme of privatization and allowing foreign and private firms to enter sectors that hitherto have been monopolized by the state, including, telecommunication, public transport, mining, heavy industry, oil and chemicals and power stations" (Alsaif 2007: 82).

The government had passed those laws and development plan in spite of the opposition from the Constitutional Council. The Council made 112 objections related to Article 44 and 36 objections related to Article 85 that abandons the delegation of powers of the state to institutions or individuals outside the system. The Constitution Council was supported by the newly elected seventh *Majles* which was predominantly consisted of many conservatives. However, the plan will continue in the same form as suggested by the

government as it fulfills the objectives that are enshrined in the twenty-year vision that was adopted as the major foundation of the state policy until 2025 by the Expediency Council and legitimized by the Supreme Leader in 2004. Alsaif argued that the expediency council's new elaboration on Article 44 in December 2004 paved the "way for the privatization of the most of the public rector, including mother industries and large-scale businesses. According to the chief of the privatization office, 221 companies were to be sold through the Stock Exchange by March 2005" (Alsaif 2007:84).

Cyber Space

In the last years of Khatami's first term reformist leader, Montezeri advocated for the use of cyberspace for the dissident *ulemas*. Internet became the new and easy means of communication for the reformist intellectuals (Rahimi 2012:63). The reformist discourses were getting popularity through online activities also because of restrictions on print media. Mohammad Reza Abtahi the reformist vice president also promoted the online activism for discussing and debating various topics from the reformist discourse, religion to politics. Abtahi represented the online community by ensuring the clerical presence in the blog space. The reformist online activism also resulted in making the Persian one of the top languages on internet (Rahimi 2012:63).

The internet also provided a platform for the younger generation and the Iranian women to raise their voice and in sharing their experiences. It led to the expansion of Islamic feminism. The leading feminist, A`zam Taleqani appealed to rethink the Quran from the women's perspective. In reaction to the challenges posed by the internet platforms, the conservative fraction of the government has imposed measures to control the cyberspace. In 2001-03, the government started filtering net activities, surveillance, arresting web technicians and activists. Notwithstanding, the government also used cyberspace for propagating its ideology (Rahimi 2012:63-64).

Till the last period of the Khatami's regime, reformist movement took a shape of the social movement (Fadaee 2012:62-63). It was helped by the demographic changes; globalization, technological revolution, cultural exchange and diffusion in the field of

communication. The internet or cyberspace became the most effective medium for the manifestation of the dissident voices challenging authority of the Supreme Leader (Tazmini 2010:34; Rehemi 2013: 63).

Khatami's International Policy

Khatami's reformist policy at the international level called 'Dialogue among civilizations' advocated a new strategy for the relationship among the national and civilizational identities. It stressed that the globalization should be based on and must imply multipolarity, enhanced sovereignty and democracy of all the nations and their increased responsibility for international issues. It must take into account the emergence of new morals, new collective justice based on the international establishments and laws, This requires that all components of the international system (states and civil institutions) actively and equally participate both in development and decision making on the international level (Sanah: 2006). The concept, of 'dialogue among civilizations' stressed on the diversity to avoid hegemony in the age of globalization. Picco stated that:

> Diversity is a given, a law of nature shared by all species, human and non-human alike. The problem is not the fact of diversity itself, but rather the perception of diversity as a threat. Our sense of belonging is not exclusive. We are part of our family, but also of our community, our linguistic group, our religious denomination, our professional brotherhood, our nation, our continent and finally, our human species. Yes, we do have multiple identities in the same individual (Picco et al: 2001).

Khatami addressed the international audience in UN's General Assembly in 1998. "His proposal for such a dialogue is an inclusive concept that reaches beyond the Iranian/Muslim/non-Muslim dichotomies. It is an appeal to all the humanity in growing violence and conflict worldwide, ultimately aiming at the betterment of world". UN announced the year 2001 as the "Year of Dialogue among Civilizations". There he delineated his major arguments. "The dialogue of civilizations has many objectives: laying the ground for peaceful, constructive debate among nations; providing a context in which civilizations can learn from strengths and weaknesses; replacing fear, blame, and prejudice with reason, tolerance; and facilitating a dynamic exchange of experiences among culture, religions, civilizations aimed at reform". Khatami believed that such dialogue balances the two extremes of "self-denial, unquestioning imitation, surrender and hatred, irrational rejection, and execration". He sought to construct a legacy for the

coming generations through his international dialogue. His imagination of a better world replaces "force, violence, and hostility by cooperation through the institutionalization of justice, freedom, and human rights" (Khatami, 1999b:53, Mehran 2003:322).

The foreign policy of Khatami has followed post-Khomeini strategy in order to normalize the Iran's relations with other countries. Khatami's efforts of reforming foreign policy have proved much more successful than those of President Rafsanjani. Khatami successfully incorporated the pragmatic element within the foreign policy. His reformist personality has been convincing in persuading international community. Though, Khatami government had not achieved tangible results in normalizing the Iran-west relations. However he has laid the founding stone for future developments (Farhang 2009:94).

Khatami's dialogue of civilization thesis is considered as an antidote to Samuel Huntington's 'clash of Civilization'. Khatami's thesis advocated tolerance, peace and understanding. It has helped Iran's efforts for rapprochement with the international community and internationalization of the Iranian economy (Tazmini 2010:1). On the particle ground Khatami government has been successful in improving the relations with Arab nations and particularly with its main rival Saudi Arabia. The dialogue with European countries which was initiated by Rafsanjani had reached to positive outcomes during Khatami period. But Khatam had not achieved any success in decreasing the level of confrontation with the United States (Redaelli 2007:485).

Political Process in Iran since 1997

The formal political process such as elections and growth of political parties has been the dominant trend in the assessment of the reformist paradigm in Islamic Republic of Iran. The elections are the major junctures and the political events which determined the nature and pace of the reformist movement. The elections reflected the will of the people in the form of demands for reform. The second determinant of the reformist movement has been the growth of political faction and political parties.

Elections

After Khatami's victory in 1997 election, the political development changed its nature from 'state controlled one directional' to the 'plural multidirectional'. The 1997 presidential election became significant in terms of the increased voter turnout (Razavi 2008:132). There was an increase of voter turnout from 50 percent in the last presidential election to 80 percent in the next elections (Abrahamian 2008:186). It initiated a debate on the increased voting turnout. The high turnout is mostly analyzed in terms of open public support to reformist candidate Khatami. Thus it signals that the high voting turnout was the indication that society wanted reform to be a reality. But voting turnout also became a basis of claim that the system enjoys the public support (Razavi 2008:132).

After the 1997 election, there was a lot of argument about whether this was an election to promote democracy, or a show of solidarity and another vote of confidence for the system's policies since 1979. In an interview after the election Hasan Rowhani, the Deputy Speaker of the *Majles* said that "according to the Supreme Leader (Khameini) propaganda must be conducted so that 30 million people come to the polling stations. This (the turnout) is important for me and it is not important who will be the president" (Razavi 2008:132). After the elections, the Supreme Leader also said that the election proved the people's loyalty to Islam. It proved that they trust clergy and system of government of Islamic Republic. A year later, in a meeting with the Friday prayer Emams, Khamene'i further claimed that "last year's presidential election was one of the best maneuvers that the Iranian nation did against the enemy and they saved Islam and Muslims' dignity". He again emphasized that, "whoever you vote for, it will count as a vote for the system" (Razavi 2008:133).

The 1997 election has introduced a new player into the politics of Iran; the people. The reformist movement transformed the populace from the passive bystander of the politics done by the clerics into an arbiter. They became arbiter not only through the ballot box but the active participation of the people and specially groups of students, women. Various others have also launched a democratic momentum. The elections became significant in the politics that was earlier a mere tool to validate the rule of the clerics.

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The elected representatives at the parliament and local level rejuvenated the accountability. They attempted to ensure the pluralism and rule of law into a polity which is deprived of such characteristics. It led to the re-emergence of the political life of the people whose aspiration were earlier hurt due to war, corruption and spiritual claims (Takeyh 2004:131-132).

After the 1997 presidential elections, the first election took place in 1998. It was elections of Assembly of Experts (AOE) which could not create much excitement due to its limited scope. The members of the Assembly of experts come from a group of religious experts and jurists. These elections happen once in eight years and members have power to choose and remove the supreme leader (Article 107 of the Iranian Constitution; Razavi 2008:136).

The biggest achievement of Khatami government was to start the local bodies' elections for the materialization of reformists' principles of democracy. Even though, article 100-106 of the constitution has provision of the local governments. It states that local and regional matters shall be administered by locally elected officials in the councils. The elections were suspended even though the bill on local councils was passed in 1982. The first local elections were held only in 1999, after two years of Khatami government. It was conducted at a large level including 34,303 villages, 24 towns and 721 cities. The first local elections were held for 236,138 council seats. The total of 3,34,000 candidates participated in which 3,28,826 male and 7,276 female candidates contested in election. The reformist secured the major electoral gain in this election. The voting turnout was 64 percent that was considered as high percentage as per the first election. The women candidates secured their win on 300 seats. The reformists received 75 percent of the votes and 71 percent of seats in the city councils. These elections have been perceived as a means to break the power monopoly and led to the process of decentralization of power at grassroots level (Alsaif 2007:81-82).

The local elections helped in achieving constitutional as well as reformists' objective of ensuring people's political participation. It laid the process of making new political elites and new aspiration of politics as career option among the people. It also helped

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communally as well as ethnically minority groups to participate in political process (Alsaif 2007:81-82).These elections legitimized the Khatami's agenda for the second time after the 1997 presidential election in terms of electoral support. The high level of participation was an encouraging factor for the Reformists (Razavi 2008:137-138).

The third major election was the sixth *Majles* (2000) election after the presidential election of 1997 and the local elections in 1999 during the Khatami regime. The reformists secured the two-thirds majority in the *Majles*. This election once again reflected the significant participation by securing the turnout of 69 percent (Razavi 2008:139-40). In the Iranian parliament or *Majles* (Islamic Consultative Assembly), in the elections of 2000, the reformists got majority by securing 69.25 percent of the votes and won 195 of the 290 *Majles* seats (Abrahamian 2008:188). The election has further legitimized the reformists' agenda and opened the doors for the change. The reformists have contested under the collation of 18 groups. The coalition was monitored by the Islamic Participation Front (IIPF). The conservative camp comprises the Combatant Clergy Association (CCA), the Society of Theology Teachers of Qom (STTQ) and the Coalition of Emam's Line including the support of Leader. The grouping in the election further intensified and consolidated the factional politics in Islamic Republic (Razavi 2008:139-40).

The next presidential election was in 2001. This election was a sign of pre-assumed re-election of Khatami. The conservatives have shown no enthusiasm and remained passive. They have adopted the strategy of waiting for public dissatisfaction with the reformist regime. A pro conservative daily *Jomhuri-ye eslami* wrote that "there is no sign of excitement in the society about this election". Only 10 candidates were given the clearance among the 300 who applied for candidacy. Khatami was the strongest candidate among others. Other candidates have not campaigned properly. Most of the candidates even did not posted posters. Consequently, the voting turnout decreased (67 percent) in the comparison with the 1997 election (83 percent). However, the Khatami's vote share (77.1 percent from 69.6 percent in 1997) was increased due to the absence of a strong contender (Razavi 2008:154-55).

However, in the second *Majles* election (2004) under the Khatami regime, the conservatives secured a resounding victory. The reformists were reduced from 190 MPs to 40 (Razavi 2008:160). The reformist again met with major defeat in the presidential elections of 2005. The reformist candidate was defeated by less popular conservative candidate Mohmoud Ahmadinejad who was previously a mayor of Tehran. After conservatives came in power in *Majles* as well as in the presidency, the reformists lost their positions in the decision-making at the national level. Reformists have responded with putting a hypothesis that 2005 election was forged and there were widespread electoral irregularities. Mehdi Karroubi, one of the major reformists has been vocal about the election improprieties. But election irregularities have always been there in the Iranian electoral system. Second argument revolves around the economic failures of the reformists. The reformists did not grasp the economic concerns of the people. During their election campaign, conservatives have raised the issues of economy (Masroori 2007:172-174).

Ahmadinejad had promised for economic growth, equity and redistribution and spending oil income in improving the basis living conditions. Conservatives also raised the issues of corruption and promised government transparency. They have stressed more on the poverty alleviation targeting the urban poor population of the county. The urban poor had voted conservatives in the hope of the introduction and implementation of social programs which were taken away by the increasing liberalization in the last regimes (Bahramitash 2007: 94).

But Ahmadinejad's economic promises were vague and rhetorical and reformists also promised for the economic betterment during their campaign. Another factor which is said about the Ahmadinejad's victory is that he was from a non-clergy background. So anti-incumbency against the reformists as well as the clergy has worked to gain support. However, Ahmadinejad was a Revolutionary Guard Militia commander. He has also been a provincial governor before becoming a mayor of Tehran. After all, he cannot be called an outsider since he has extensive contacts and cordial relations with conservative clergies and support of Khomeini. It is noteworthy that he was not the only non-clergy candidate. There were four others with him (Masroori 2007:172-174).

The conservatives had signaled their position on women which shows their critical stand on the equal rights and public role of women. Despite of this, the reformists did not get women's overwhelming support like in the previous elections due to their failure in fulfilling the demands and mobilizing women in the favor of their agenda (Bahramitash 2007: 94). The major factor behind the reformists defeat in 2005 presidential election was the huge boycott of the elections by the groups like youth, intellectuals, women and university students. These groups have disillusioned by the reformist agenda due to the unfulfilled promises in previous two elections. There was 37 percent boycott in the first round and 40 percent in the second round (Masroori 2007:172-174). The total voting turnout was 60 percent. It is observed that some students who were disillusioned with Khatami's reform agenda had joined the conservative campaign. In the parliamentary elections in 2008, the *Majles* seats for the reformists were reduced to 47 and in 2012, it was just 9 (Arjomand 2005:518).

Political Parties and Groups

In a democracy, political parties play a significant role. Political parties provide the platform for the citizens where they assemble and work for the materialization of their political and policy aspirations. It could be generalized that the political parties as political institutions are the integral part of democracy. Even the dictatorial and totalitarian systems do have at least one political party (Lapalombara and Wiener, 1966, Biezen 2004:18, Asayesh, et. al 2011: 221). Duverger (1964) and Michels (2001) suggested that "political parties are often little more than a small group of oligarchs; we cannot disregard their role as a connector between political systems and the community and as instruments of civil society" (Almond & Powell, 1966, Asayesh, et. al 2011: 221).

It was after the Constitutional Revolution, especially in the year of 1908, that Iranian people created political parties for the first time (Bahar 1942; Nozari 2001). However, the low political culture in the society of Iran at time did not result in any significant transformation of politics. There has been a long period of political stagnation in terms of formation of political parties. The fall of Reza Shah's dictatorship in 1941 contributed in the beginning of a new era of political parties. From the year of 1941 to 1953, due to the relative decentralization of power, there was an extension era of political parties.

However, majority of these political parties suffered an organizational weakness. These parties were largely depended on the individual success of the founder and collapsed after the death their founders. Soon after the coup d'état against the Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh and restoration of dictatorship, there was a complete halt to the development of political parties (Naghibzadeh 1999, Asayesh, et. al 2011: 221-222). The state led single party dominated with consent of monarch. Immediately after the Iranian Revolution, Iranian politics witnessed the sudden increase in the number of political parties which reached close to 100. The rise of the Mujahedin of the Islamic Revolution Organization (MIRO) and the Islamic Republic Party (IRP) was the part of this phenomenon (Khani 2012).

During the short period of Bani Sadr, as the president of newly founded Islamic Republic, the political parties worked on the broader ideological division namely Islamic and Nationalist camps. After the repulsion of Bani Sadr as president, the political parties were bound to be confined within the Islamic framework. Inside the Islamic block, the division of political opinion was remained only as the 'right and left wings' (Islamic right and left) (Asayesh, et. al 2011: 222). Soon after that, the hegemony of Islamic forces was established under the Leadership of Khomeini. During Khomeini regime Iranian polity has been dominated by one party; the Republic Party. It was later abolished in 1988 (Razavi 2008:105). Asayesh, et al observed that during the period of 1981 to 1989, the political development was neglected due to war with Iraq (Asayesh 2011: 221-222).

The constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran (1979) recognizes the formation of political parties. The Article 26 of the constitution states that "the formation of parties, societies, political or professional associations, as well as religious societies, whether Islamic or pertaining to one of the recognized religious minorities, is permitted provided they do not violate the principles of independence, freedom, national unity, the criteria of Islam, or the basis of the Islamic Republic." It allows every citizen to participate in the groups and party organizations but also restricts the forced participation of any citizen. For the implementation of the Article 26, a parties Law was passed in September 1981. The law provides the definition of political party and explains the condition about the establishment and operation of political parties in Islamic Republic. It also recommended

for the establishment of a commission called as "the Article 10 Commission" to ensure the proper functioning of the law. The proposed commission would comprise two representatives of the Judiciary, two parliamentarians and one Interior Ministry official. The commission is authorized with issuing the permits and dissolving the parties (Khani 2012).

Due to the War with Iraq, the party bill has been suspended. With the end of war, the bill came in effect since 1988. Even after the political party bill came into effect only few groups have applied for the permission (Alsaif 2007:83, Barlow and Akbarzadeh 2018). Even though some groups (almost 30) who applied and also got the permission to function as political parties, just very few effectively appeared in the political domain (Khani 2012, Asayesh, et. al 2011:222). During the period of 1989 to 1997 under the presidency of Rafsanjani, there were little efforts made towards the democratic and political development. In this era, the major focus was on the economic reconstruction of the huge devastation caused by the war. Thus there was a political passiveness unlit the mid-1990s (Barlow and Akbarzadeh 2018).

The emergence of reformist movement led to the unleashing of a new spirit in terms of public opinion. Since 1997, hundreds of political parties emerged which played a significant role in influencing the body politic. Six political parties along with twenty nine professional and interest groups were recognized by the government until 1997. The figures rapidly increased after the emergence of the reformist movement in 1997. According to the Mohammad Javad Haqshernas, an official in the Interior Ministry, there was hundred political parties registered from May 1997 to March 2000 (Razavi 2008:105). By 2001, the total number of political associations reached to 130 including political parties and professional interest group. There were 114 parties and 171 interests groups in 2004, among which 35 organizations belong to religious minorities. Advocacy groups and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) including those focused on the issues related to women, youth and the environment increased rapidly (Asayesh, et. al 2011: 221-222).

There was a vibrant growth of the NGOs too. In 2003 there were 2,500 NGOs in Iran among which 600 NGOs were associated with women issue (the women NGOs in 1997 were only 75). The total number of NGOs reached 20,000 in 2003 including the community based organizations (CBOs). The youth organization also witnessed rapid growth during Khatami government. The university student activity became the largest organized political activity in the country. There was an estimated number of 2500 university based organizations. The Union of Islamic Pupils Associations consists of 8,000 groups operate in at a high school level (Alsaif 2007:83, Barlow and Akbarzadeh 2018). Asayesh, et al (2011) argued that, "with the election of Mohammad Khatami as president in 1997 with his promises to start social reforms, create a civil society and increase political engagement, the way was paved for the growth of political parties and political development" (Asayesh, et. al 2011: 221-222).

In the parliamentary election of 2004 and the presidential election of 2005, the reformists got a huge setback. The authors also stated that "Unlike the government of Khatami, neo-conservative president Mahmud Ahmadinejad's administration viewed political parties in a negative light, considering them as unhelpful for the improvement of economic performance and making a better society. However, Ahmadinejad himself was an active member of the Islamic Society of Engineers before he became President" (Asayesh, et. al 2011: 221-222).

In the current time political parties and groups are broadly divided into two streams; namely 'right' and 'left'. However, in Iran the 'right' and 'left' have their unique definition. The political streams could not be defined in the general framework as defined in other democratic countries. In Iran, both right and 'left' have to work within the Islamic framework. The right party has its roots in the Shi'ite tradition. It believes that religious law should govern the county. They recognize that the decree and ideas or religious rules are more important factor to provide the credibility to whole political structure than any other factor. In a nutshell, the right parties are categorized as traditionally conservative which emphasized traditional social relationship. Within the 'right' wing of the current time, some factions are categorized as neo-conservatives (Ahmadinejad and his party). In Iran the right wing parties are also known as

'principalist'. Contrary to it, the 'left' parties are distinguished on the basis of their focus on the execution of the constitution in order to respect the rights of the people. They claim to work towards enhancing the political freedom and democratization of socio-political affairs in the country. These parties consider political and legal freedom as the most important element for the socio-political growth. They prioritized these values over other issues. However, their understanding over these values is drawn from the indigenous roots of Islamic reformation and democracy. The 'left' wing in Iran is described in the broader categories or terms like 'reformists' and 'moderates' (Asayesh, et. al 2011: 222).

In the current time, the active right wing (principalist or conservative) political parties and groups in Iran are; "Combatant Clergy Association (Ayatollah Mohammad-Ali Movahedi Kermani), Society of Seminary Teachers of Qom (Mohammad Yazdi), Islamic Coalition Party (Mohammad-Nabi Habibi), Society of Devotees of the Islamic Revolution (Mohammad Javad Ameri), Front of Islamic Revolution Stability (Morteza Agha-Tehrani) and Ekta Front (Front of the Comrades for the Effectiveness and Transformation of Islamic Iran)-(Hamid-Reza Haji Babaee)". Other right wing parties or groups are "Islamic Society of Engineers, Society of Pathseekers of the Islamic Revolution, Islamic Association of Physicians, Islamic Society of Employees, Islamic Society of Athletes, Zeynab Society, Association of Islamic Revolution Loyalists, Fadayeen of Islam Society, Development and Justice Party, Green Party, Progress and Justice Populations of Islamic Iran, Modern Thinkers Party of Islamic Iran and Islamic Iran Freedom Party" (Faghihi 2015; Abrahamian 1982).

The Major active 'left' wing (Reformists and Moderates) are Association of Combatant Clerics (Mohammad Mousavi Khoeiniha), Islamic Labour Party (Hossein Kamali), National Trust party(Mehdi Karroubi), Union of Islamic Iran People Party (Ali Shakouri-Rad), Executives of Construction Party (Gholamhossein Karbaschi), NEDA (Nasl- e Dovom-e Eslahat-Second Generation of Reforms) Party (Sadegh Kharazi), Islamic Iran Freedom and Justice Organization (Mehdi Moghaddari) and Moderation and Development Party (Mohammad Bagher Nobakht). Other reformist parties and groups are "Assembly of Qom Seminary Scholars and Researchers, Islamic Association of

Teachers, Islamic Association of Engineers, Islamic Association of Iranian Medical Society, Islamic Association of University Instructors, Association of Followers of the Imam's Line, Islamic Iran Solidarity Party, Democracy Party, Will of the Iranian Nation Party, Association of the Women of the Islamic Republic, Islamic Assembly of Ladies, Worker House and Popular Party of Reforms" (Faghihi 2015; Abrahamian 1982).

The Islamic Revolution of Iran Organisation and the Islamic Iran Participation Front have been the most active and major reformist groups which were banned by the government after the Green Revolution (2009) for being major organizers and participant in the protests. The Green Path of the Hope was founded by Mir Hossein Mousavi as the organizational body of Green Movement which was also banned along with above two (Faghihi 2015; Abrahamian 1982).

There are other secular-nationalist, socialist-Islamic and Islamic-nationalist parties which are working as outlawed parties inside the Iran; National Front, Pan-Iranist Party, Nation Party, Movement of Militant Muslims, Freedom Movement of Iran and Council of Nationalist Religious Activists. Apart from above political Parties and groups working inside the Iran, there are numerous political groups working in exiles in various countries like UK, France, Iraq, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Sweden, Germany, Netherland and USA. These groups include monarchists, ethnic-secessionist, leftist, nationalists and liberals (Faghihi 2015; Abrahamian 1982).

After Khomeini's death in1989, politically and ideologically centralized system was broken and led to the increasing factionalism. No major organization was emerged as such till 1995. However, the Servants of Reconstruction (SOR) was formed by 16 ministers of Rafsanjani with his support. Rafsanjani's move was the indicator that factionalism reached at a critical juncture. The intra-elite politics even continued after the reformist movement got the real momentum form the societal level. Before the 1997 election, 18 different factions formed into a coalition known as the Second of Khordad Front (SKF). Khatami was nominated as presidential candidate by this coalition. The political development initiated by Khatami has further polarized politics. As a result, hundreds of new organisations and political parties were founded. The Islamic Iran

Participation Front (IIPF) was managed to get the permission even though establishing as political party was not legally and constitutionally valid as stipulated by the Article 10 (Razavi 2010:81).

The sudden increase in the political organizations was observed as the consequences of the reform movement. On one side, the Khatami's failure in implementing the reform according to public's demand resulted in the rise of factionalism within the reformist camp. On the other side, the rise of conservatives and division within was unprecedented. Another development meanwhile was the shifting of alliances. The Office for Consolidation of Unity (OCU) and student organization came in tie with the SKF in 2003. Mehdi Karroubi established the National Confidence Party (NCP) in 2005. Since 2003, the local elections, the traditional conservatives in the close alliance with the revolutionary guard started gaining electoral ground. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad became the Mayor of the Tehran in this election. In 2004 the principalist established their group called the Prosperity for Islamic Iran (PII) to create the propaganda in economic sphere for *Majles* election. However, within a year, the relationship between the new president and PII was deteriorated. Consequently, during the 2006 local elections, a group of conservatives formed the Joyful Essence of Obedience (JEO). The JEO was not against the principalists' government. Later, during the *Majles* election of 2008, the rift between PII and JEO was increased and they became the part of a different coalition (Razavi 2010:82).

After 2009, factionalism within the principalist camp reached to a level of high intensity. The growing criticism of the Ahmedinejad within the cabinet leading to the ousting of four of his ministers resulted in the decreasing credibility of his government and leadership. This period was observed as the peak of system's inability. The reaction of the people on the streets and frustration out of the system's inability to manage has not only questioned the government but also the Supreme Leader's position (Razavi 2010:82-83). The nature of factionalism works in a way that it reproduces itself with the changing scenario to maintain the legitimacy. However, ever since Khatami's government came in power, the factional politics reached at a decisive point. It pushed the elites towards dynamism. The conservatives entered in a situation where they have to compromise with

their traditional politics. It also revealed the system's internal instability and inability to deliver demands of the people (Razavi 2010:83).

The promotion of party politics since 1997 was intended to widen the social base and bring more security and legitimacy to the establishment. It was the policy to contain the rising expectations of the younger generation (Razavi 2010: 87). Most of the parties could not function as party even though they were permitted to publish their newspapers. Ali Bagheri, the head of the 'Article 10 Commission', has said in an interview that "despite having 220 political parties in the country, we will find out that in a real sense, we haven't got a party in the country". He further stated that, "the new parties do not have the potential to create ideas because the parties do not have the right structure to absorb and assimilate forces within society" (Razavi 2010:87-88).

The new political parties faced many problems. Firstly, the legal structure of the country has not allowed free functioning of political parties. Secondly, the conservatives attacked the free working of the political parties. Thirdly, the new political parties were structurally weak. Fourthly, the political parties were formed from above by the elites (Razavi 2010:90). The modern Iran has witnessed two revolutions namely the constitutional revolution of 1906 and the Iranian revolution of 1979. It has also experienced two reform movements; 1960s modernization program and reform movement of 1997. These events have demonstrated more dynamism and demanded for the creation of a feasible political system. However, none of these events led to the creation of a system based on party politics (Razavi 2010: 91).

Table 1: List of Political Parties in Iran

Serial No.	Name of the Party	Year of Foundation	Ideology	Name of Founders
1	Islamic Republic Party	1987	Right	Mohammad Hossein Beheshti, Mohammad Hossein Beheshti, Ali Khamenei
2	Society of Combatant Clergy of Tehran [SCCT]	1979	Right	
3	The Society of the Militant Clergy of Tehran	1977	Right	Founded by the followers of Ayatollah

				Khomeini
4	Tehran Combatant Clergy Association (JRM)	Pre-revolution era	Right	Ayatollah Mohammad-Reza Mahdavi-Kani, Ayatollahs Ali-Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani and Ahmad Jannati, Hassan Rohani
5	Islamic Coalition Party	1963	Right	Tehran Market merchants
6	Islamic Society of Engineers (ISE)		Right	Mohammad Reza Bahonar, Ghollam Hossein Amiri, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Manouchehr Mottaki
7	The Population of Defense of the Islamic Values	1995	Right	Mohammad Mohammadi Reyshahri, Sayyed Ali Ghayouri, Sayyed Ali Akbar Aboutorabi, Mohammad Araghi
8	The Office for Strengthening Unity	1979	Right	
9	Association of the Devotees of the Islamic Revolution	2001	Right	Mahmoud Ahmadinejad
10	The Association of Combatant Clerics (ACC)	1987	Left	Mohammad Khatami, Mohammad Mousavi Khoieniha, Asadollah Bayat, Rahimian, Imam Jamarani, Rahmani and Ali Akbar Mohtashami
11	Islamic Revolution Mujahidin Organization	1979	Left	Behzad Nabavi, Mohammad Salamati
12	The Executives of Construction Party	1989	Left	Ataollah Mohajerani, Mohammad Hashemi, Ghollam Hossein Karbaschi, Mostafa Hashemitaba, Ali and Faezeh Hashemi Rafsanjani
13	Islamic Iran Participation Front	1998	Left	Mohammad Reza Khatami, Mohammad Khatami, Mohsen Mirdamadi, Saeed Hajjarian, Abdollah

				Remzan-zadeh, Mostafa Tajzadeh
14	National Trust Party	2005	Left	Rasul Montajabnia, Mohammad Javad Haghshenas, Reza Hojjati, Esmail Gerami Moghaddam
15	The Assembly of Teachers and Researchers of Qom Seminary	2001	other	Abayi Khorasani, Musavi Tabrizi, and Bayat Zanjani
16	The Association of Women of the Islamic Republic	1987	other	Zahra Mostafavi, Marzie Hadidchi, Fatemeh Karrubi, Zahra Rahnavard
17	The Freedom Movement of Iran	1961	other	Mehdi Bazargan, Yadollah Sahabi, and Ayatollah Mahmud Taleqani
18	The Assembly of Militant Clerics	1988	other	Mehdi Karroubi
19	Islamic Iran Developers'Council	2003	other	
20	Islamic Iran Solidarity Party	2000	other	Ebrahim Asqarzadeh
21	Islamic Labour Party	1991	other	Ali-Reza Mahjoub, Abol-Qasem Sarhadi-Zadeh, and Hussein Kamali

Source: (Copiled from the information provided in Asayesh, et. al 2011: 222-227; Khani 2012, Iran Data Portal 2009).

Table 2: A comaprision of right and left parties' perspectives on various issues

Issues	Right Wing	Left Wing
Selection of the Supreme leader	Right wing parties believe that it is the obligation of the Assembly of Experts to discover the supreme leader.	Left parties believe that the existence of the Supreme Leader must be under the control of the people.
The Authorities of the Supreme Leader	Right wing parties advocate that authorities of Supreme Leader are beyond the Constitution. They say the Supreme Leader is only	Left parties believe that the authorities of Supreme Leader are limited by the Constitution.

	answerable to God and does not have any accountability to the people.	
The Holiness of the Supreme Leader	Right believes that the Supreme Leader is holy and should not be criticized by anyone.	Left parties strongly opposed to this view and say Supreme Leader can make political mistakes just like others politicians.
The Ruling Right in the Islamic Republic of Iran	The right considers that God only has the absolute authority to rule.	Left believe right to rule is given to people. They say the most important factor in decision-making is the popular vote.
Islamic Government and Democracy	Some on the right parties claim that there is no democracy in Islam. The principal of democracy is fundamentally against Islamic thoughts. In effect in Islam the views of the people are not important, and Islamic Law is the only basis for governing society and this can be deduced by the religious leaders for the benefit of society. People are there mainly just as supporters and followers who only have to obey the religious leader. The pioneer of this school of thought is Ayatollah Mohammad Taghi Mesbahhe Yazdi.	On the contrary, the left considers the democratic vote of the people as the only means of governing society and Islam is the religion of freedom and democracy.
Freedom	The right parties such as the Society of Combatant Clergy of Tehran, Islamic coalition party and Islamic Society of Engineers, take the second view of freedom. The right believes it is a privilege that government gives to the people.	Freedom is viewed by the left as the natural right of people.
Political Participation	Right see citizen's participation only in	Left considers political participation of the people

	activities such as taking part in demonstrations, attending Friday prayers etc. (The Population of Defense of the Islamic Values is exception in this regard)	necessary for democratic consolidation.
Export the revolution	Parties of the right believe that the Islamic Revolution should be exported to other countries.	Left emphasize the need to focus on domestic problems and setting a good example of the Islamic Revolution which other countries may practice in their own country.
Foreign Policies	Right has an anti-foreigner position and its main concern is maintaining the traditional culture. Parties of the right fear for any changes in traditional belief. They believe that it may weaken their political power.	Left takes a liberal approach regarding foreign policy and advocate for dialogue with the foreign countries including western countries.
Privatization	Right supported free trade policies with the least amount of government control over the economy.	Shortly after the revolution parties of the left believed that the state should be dominant in the economy and control the market, and they were against privatization. However, today both right and left parties have the same views.
Using of Foreign Resources	Since revolution, right have been in favour of using foreign resources for the development of the country.	At the outset of the Islamic Revolution, the left parties were against using foreign loans and imposed strict laws on foreign currency pricing and other economic controls. However, at the present time both parties have the same views.
Social Justice	All the right wing parties believe social justice should be a priority in the economic sphere.	This approach is also shared by the Left leaning parties. (Alone as a dissenting voice is the Executives of the Construction Party who

		believe as long as Iran has not developed valuable assets there should not be redistribution of resources).
Supervision over Cultural Activities	Right takes a more interventionist and censorious approach. They believe there should be supervision before publication.	While the left believes in supervision over cultural products after publication if the content has bad effect on society.
Cultural Exchange	Right opposes this position. They believe that their own culture is richer than others.	Left talks about learning from the positive elements in other cultures.
Cultural Policy	Right emphasizes over cultural control. They strongly defend government control over cultural activities. Right parties believe in tradition and in maintaining the existing status quo and are against modernism.	Left parties believe in a pluralistic and open cultural policy. The Left opposes government interference in cultural activities, as they believe that the government should just supervise and offer guidance over the cultural activities.

Source: (Asayesh, et. al 2011: 227-228-229).

The growth of political parties and factions is considered as the major arena of pluralistic momentum which took place after the emergence of reformist movement. Hoever, the experience of the political party system in pre as well as post-revolution Iran has been a failure. The development of the political parties has been uneven and unstable in spite of the fact that Constituion of Islamic Republic provided enough scope for its development. The major causes behind the failure of the development of party system in Iran are as follows. (a) There is a cultural belief among the Iranians including elites that "Iranians are better off when they act individually." This belief led to pessimism and skepticism among Iranians, (b) the mulfuncioning of the political parties in the past has also contributed in the spyche of pessimism about political among Iranians, (c) In Iran the party politics is considered harmful for the national unity, (d) there is lack of support at the grassroots level which also leads to failure of political parties, (e) there is lack of

funding mechanism which also leads less survival of the paries. The political parties mashrooms before the electtions and diminish after the elections. The unstable development of the political parties has become major obstacle in the systematic study of the political party system in Iran. It leads to a highly compex situation where the correct definistion and categorization of political parties become difficult (Khani 2012).

CHAPTER IV

Reformist Politics and Social Movements

Despite the great efforts of many essayists, activists and intellectuals, there were no agreements on what reforms entails. There were also no agreements over the question of how it should be implemented and made into a practice. Before reaching the coherent conceptualization, reform faced criticism from outside as well as within the reformist circle. During the second term of Khatami the differences on defining reforms have increasingly grown. The reformist writers criticized the movement for its elitist nature. It has also been questioned for its theoretical vagueness or for being too much theoretical. There was no consensus over the strategy and approach. By the presidential elections in 2005, these differences reached at its peak and created a separation between 'state reformist' and 'non-state reformist'. The non-state reformists decided to boycott the 2005 presidential elections instead of researching the possibility of dialogue within the reformist camp (Nabavi 2012:45).

With the arrival of Khatami's regime, despite the institutional constraints associated with Iran's power structure and powerful conservative establishment, the reform movement successfully managed to set in motion a pluralistic momentum in Iran (Tazamini 2010: 37). Iran has experienced rapid emergence of civil society movements, oppositional activities and cultural and artistic life (Elling 2012: 82). But when it came to the practical ground or in terms of plan and action, it has taken different tracks from what was expected. Khatami asked to the civil society agents such as media, student associations, scholars, trade unions and other professional organizations to work with the government. There was a shift in defining civil society from a counter force to working under the tutelage of state. By joining power positions the actors have diverted from their goal of achieving their demands (quoted in Nabavi 2013:46).

On the question of human rights, Baqi a reformist intellectual critically observed that the reformists are detached themselves from the social domain and human rights because of their obsession with elitism (quoted in Nabavi 2013:46). Therefore, Khatami's top down

agenda proved ineffective in order to initiate a dialogue between state and society (Bahravesh 2014:263-269, Rivetti and Cavatorta 2013: 645-657). The top down approach is the inherent nature of the post- revolutionary Iranian politics. Bayat (2007) argues that in Iran it was largely a top down process. The establishment of the first Islamic Republic in modern times following the revolution set the stage for Islamisation of the public spaces, state institutions and individual behavior (Bayat 2007:23-24).

The role of the conservative faction in halting the reform policy of Khatami has also been crucial. The conservative establishment always tried to block the initiative of the Khatami. They have been in the opinion that the reform initiative of Khatami government could provide an opportunity for the proponents of democracy to criticize and challenge the theocratic order (Farhang 2009:94).

In the counter, the conservative faction adopted various means including violence, assaults on individuals and gatherings. The conservatives have also executed assassination of the reformist activists as a last resort to curb the voices of the dissent. They used courts against the reformists. Many reformist leaders were arrested. Reformist publications were forcefully closed. Around 85 reformist publication houses and 41 dailies associated with major reformist political parties were closed (Alsaif 2007:80). There is an argument that Khatami's reform failed because it could not resist the attacks of the conservative right wing. The reformists have their power in legislative and executive branches of the government. However, they lack power in the judiciary and army (Mehran 2003:312).

The success of the reform movement has witnessed the growth of the conservatives and hardliners as the confrontational force. The conservative's political success depends on the de-politicizing of the Iranian population. The conservatives, especially after Khatami's became President, came with a rigorous tactic to create functional separation between the state and society. Ayatollah Ali Khameini completely discarded the role of Iran's citizenry in determining its policies. He announced that "the Islamic Republic is no longer prepared to allow flawed and non-divine perspectives and ideas that are aimed at enhancing the power of individual to dictate its social and political lives". The support of

the Supreme Leader, Judiciary to conservatives, security forces have helped them to attack on the reform politics. Conservatives' success was observed in the 2003 local elections. The ultimate purpose was making election meaningless. The people were disenchanted with the election and only 16 million out of 41million eligible voters participated in the local election. This was a clear departure of the political development that had increased participation in the elections over 70 percentage. The decline of the participation was repeated in the further elections also. In the 2004 *Majles* and 2005 presidential elections too conservatives gained due to low participation. The low participation of the people due to de-politicisation in the elections helped conservatives to capture all the city councils and local bodies and secure majority in the *Majles* and presidency (Takeyh 2004:132-133).

Mehran (2003) has observed that the major obstacle before the reformist regime was the conservative faction. The conservatives have hindered the execution of the reformist objectives which led to the disappointment among the supporters of the reformist movement. Conservatives' strategy against the reformists is termed as 'institutional obstructionism' (Mirzaei 2016). The emergence of Ahmedinejad in 2005 was due to 'neo-Khomeinist'[12] coalition that entered in politics with the support of the hard-liners. The success of coalition had revitalized the legitimacy of the state on the populist-theocratic ground that has been the founding stone of the Islamic Republic. The conservatives perceived reformist movement as the threat to the theocratic element of the Islamic Republic (Ehteshamiand 2007).

The revival of the theocratic belief resulted in the Ahmadinejad's rise in power. It could become possible through the support of the Supreme Leader, military and the intelligence (Rahimi 2013)[13]. The election of the conservative president has led to the growing speculations that it will make an end to the opportunity for democratic reforms. However,

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[12] Ehteshamiand (2007) has termed the coalition of the, theocrats; the conservatives as well as hardliners as neo-Khomeinism. In the neo-Khomeinist coalition the major force were the hardliners. The hardliners are defined as the theocratic left by Mohseni (2000). The factional categorisation is discussed in details in the next section of this chapter.

[13] Ahmadinejad promised to eradicate poverty in the country and to break the cycle of corruption within the government. Regardless of his intention, Ahmadinejad's political agenda has proven to be lack luster, ineffective, and prone to instigating political infighting between his party's rank & religious elite.

the reformist forces continued to change the political dynamics of Iran (Yesiltas 2016:62).

The complex political system of the Islamic Republic also has been the major obstacles in the path of reform. The political institutions were used by the conservative factions to restrain the reformists. The reformists secured the large support of the groups like students, women and youth. They enjoyed majority in the *Majles* and in local bodies. However, the political system has not allowed them to sustain their agenda and to cope with the public demands. Various intuitions have effectively blocked the roefrms of Khatami. The institutions like Guardian Council have rejected the bills passed by the *Majles*. It disqualified a large number of reformists' candidates without any valid ground for contesting the *Majles* elections. The judiciary has arbitrarily closed many reformist magazines and newspapers. The reformist journalists, political activists, university students and intellectuals were sent to prison. The security forces violently attacked the protests and peaceful gatherings of the reformist supporters on various occasions. Khatami was himself threatened by the Revolutionary Gourds commander to control the students' protests and political activities. The reformist had controlled *Majles* and executive branch of the government and enjoyed majority of the public support and surprisingly they failed in achieving their goals and protecting themselves (Masroori 2007:175).

The complexity of the political system of Islamic Republic comprises the institutions which work in an antagonistic manner. The complexity of the political system is generated between the elected institutions and not elected institution. The major contradiction is between the President of the Republic and the Supreme Leader (Redaelli 2007:483). The biggest obstacle in the path of reform has been the authority of Supreme Leader.[14] Therefore, making the Supreme Leader's position subject to the direct election was the major demand of the reformist movement or he must be accountable to the

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[14] The Supreme Leader enjoys the constitution provides Supreme Leader the supreme authority. The Leader has the power to appoint the head of the judiciary branch and controls the armed forces. He also controls the appointments of the membership of the Guardian Council. He approves elections. The elected candidate can assume the office only if the Supreme Leader approves the election. The Leader has the authority to appoint the head of the National Radio and Television and determine the core policies of the government. He works as the supervisor of the activities of the all branches (Masroori 2007).

Majles. Even some reformist supporters demanded for the abolition of the position of the Supreme Leader. Despite such demands Khatami remained silent on the issue (Masroori 2007:176).

Apart from the above mentioned factors behind the failure of the Khatami regime what resides in core is the duality (double standard) of the reformist leadership. At the end of Khatami's second term many of his supporters came to realize that Khatami's reform agenda was limited to 'reform without transforming the system'. The failure of his reform agenda also linked to his personal opinion and thoughts. Farhang (2009) has observed that despite creating a reformist image Khatami has been supporter of the *velayat-e faqih* system. He has defended the constitutional prohibition on freedom of expression and assembly to curb the activities of secular Iranians (Farhang 2009:94). The reformist leadership has been optimistic towards the conservatives in the system. They had belief that conservatives would not hinder reform to occur. The optimism of reformist towards conservative elites was born due to working together for two decades within the establishment. Along with shared working experience the reformists in many cases shared family relations with conservatives (Barlow and Akbarzadeh 2018).

There was a misperception among many that "Khatami's victory represented the rejection of the Islamic Revolution by an oppressed society". In fact, some had casted their votes having this perception in mind. Ansari (2000) has argued that the reformist politicians neither rejected Revolution nor Islamic Republic. They have even quoted Khomeini with more enthusiastically than the conservatives. Khatami himself shares family relation by marriage with Khomeini family. He enjoyed support of Hassan Khomeini, the Ayatollah Khomeini's grandson (Ansari 2000:112-13).

Factionalism and Pluralism

The political factions are understood as the networks of the parties, associations and individuals. They are loosely affiliated with one another. They function as the main vehicle of completion which happens among the political elites. The elites compete over state as well as the non-state institutions through both electoral and non-electoral means. In Iranian politics the political factions are generally categorized into two camps;

reformist and conservative or hardliners and soft-liners. However, such categorization doesn't explain the intricacy of the real factional complexity. Mohseni (2000:8) has classified the Iranian political factions with more nuanced reflection of the factional dynamics.

Republican Left (Reformists) - The republican left is the conceptual term which better explains the reformists' political position. The reformists give priority to the popular sovereignty. They advocate the major role of the state in the economy. Therefore, they fall to the left of the economic spectrum. However, radicalism of republican left survived till 1980s. In the current scenario the most (but not all) of the reformist political elites has shifted their position. They have shifted to the right of the economic spectrum. The Mohammad Khatami and the Green Movement leaders Mir Hussaein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi are the major figures in the republican left (Mohseni 2000: 8-9).

Republican Right (Moderates) – The republican right represents the technocratic class. Similar to the republican left they asserts on the republican ideals of the Islamic Republic. Economically they are more inclined towards neo-liberalism. The key figures in this camp are current President Hassan Rouhani, late Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani and the Kargozaran party represents this faction (Mohseni 2000: 9).

Theocratic Left (Hardliners) – The theocratic left represents core believers of the Islamic Republic. Their major support bases are Basij and IRGC. The theocratic left asserts on the divine basis of the regime. They support state intervention and distribution in the economy. The camp is inclined towards the values and ideals propagated by the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. However, Khamenei keeps balancing both the theocratic camps depending upon the circumstances. The most prominent figure in this camp is former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (Mohseni 2000: 10).

Theocratic Right (Conservatives)-The theocratic right represents the traditional power base which includes two dominant groups; the clergy and the bazaar merchant class. They stand with the divine principle of the Islamic Republic of the regime. In the economic sphere, the theocratic right advocates less state intervention in the economy. However they also prefer certain degree of state protectionism. Key figures include Ali

Akbar Velayati, Ali Larijani, and Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi. In the recent time, a subsection led by Larijani has emerged which is termed as 'modern theocrats.' The modern theocrats have adopted more pragmatic approach in regard with the interaction with world. They have supported the nuclear agreement (Mohseni 2000: 10-11).

Figure 5: Classification of Iranian political factions

Theocratic

Theocratic Left
(Hardliners)

Theocratic Right
(Conservative)

Republican Left
(Reformist)

Republican Right
(Moderates)

Republican
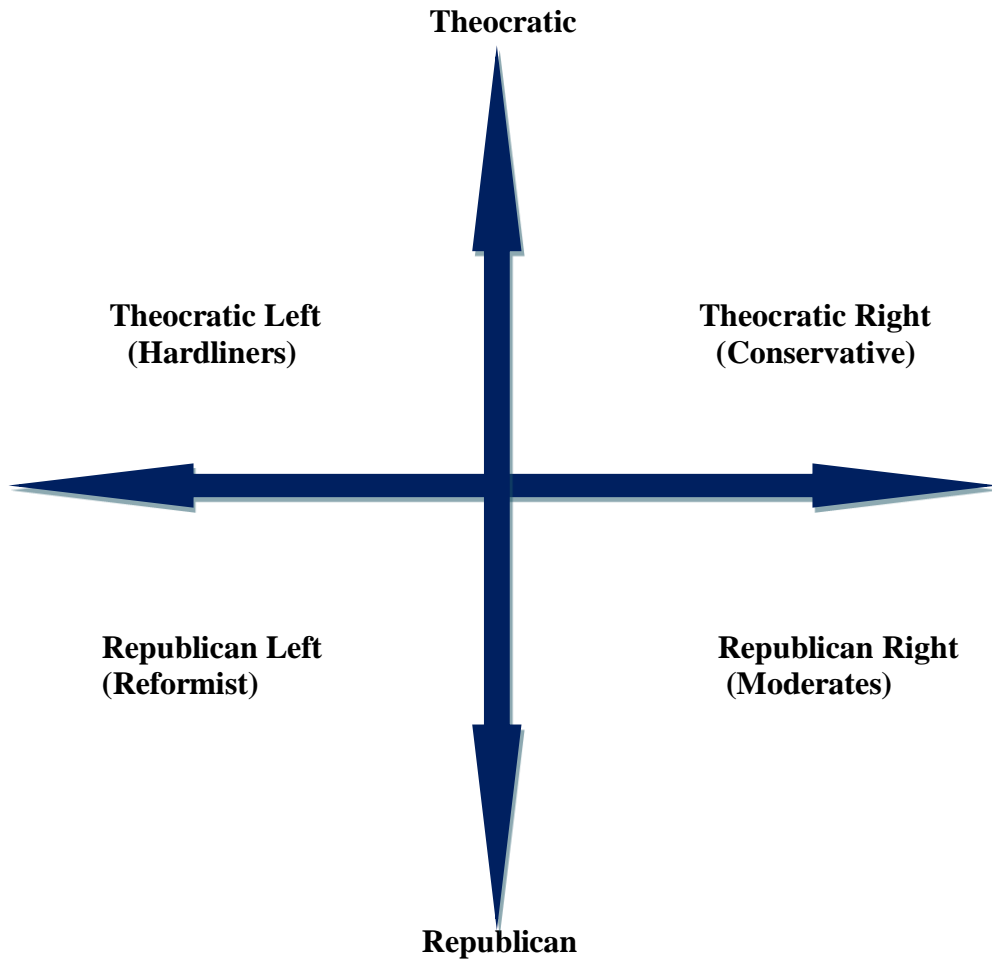
Source: (Mohseni 2011:8).

The political factionalism does not always leads to pluralism. Sometimes, it obstructs pluralism to occur. The political factionalism in the case of Iran has secured the state legitimacy by co-opting dissent at the ground level. It is often said that after Khatam's victory in 1997 election, political development changed its nature from state controlled one directional to the plural-multidirectional. This is argued on the basis of growth of

political parties, pressure groups and overall civil society organizations during the Khatami regime (Razavi 2010:86).

During Khomeini regime Iranian polity has been dominated by one party; the Islamic Republic Party (IRP) which was abolished in 1988. Due to the critical and volatile political condition in 1981, Ayatollah Khomeini imposed ban on all other political parties. Thus, IRP remained single dominant ruling political party. Khomeini had done that due to the opposition of secular and leftist parties (Razavi 2010:86, Razavi 2008:105). Despite of the authoritarian control of Khomeini over state and society, the factionalism and disputes have been the trait of Iranian Politics. Before the advent of the reformist movement in 1990s, the divisions within the clerical establishment have been over the issues ranging from land reform to the foreign policy. The countervailing ideological tendencies within the clerical establishment were the basis of such disputes. But the factions within the clerical establishment were totally disconnected with the populace (Takeyh 2004:131-132).

After Khomeini's death, though Iran's autocratic structure remained intact, but it no longer has an uncontested autocrat. The three factions: the conservatives, the reformists and populist have emerged as contenders to capture the executive and legislative branches of the government. They are coalitions of local and sectional interests and keep shifting their position on domestic issues in order to satisfy the interests or value preferences of specific groups, localities and state agencies. Even when these coalitions manage to elect a president or win a majority of seats in the *Majles*, they are not necessarily able to enact public policy. In cases where the Guardian Council vetoes their legislation acts to be unconstitutional or contrary to Islamic doctrines, they rarely take a unified stand in defense of their position. Moreover they have no control over the powerful charitable foundations (bonyads), the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) or intelligence agencies (Farhang 2009:91).

In this context it is imperative to understand whether the political factionalism or the growth of political parties and pressure groups has led to the creation of political pluralism or it is merely a factionalism which manages the dissent. To do so, first of all,

one must know the historical trajectory of the factionalism in Iran. The Iranian politics during Qajar Dynasty (1796-1926) was dominated by three major groups. These three major groups were *ulema*, the aristocracy and *bazaaris*. These groups functioned as main pillars of the state and were centre of political activities. However, the Constitutional Revolution (1906-11) has disturbed the monopoly of these groups (Razavi 2010:80).

The emergence of modern progressive ideas and civil society organization led to an increasing pressure on these dominant groups and consequently the opening up of their boundaries towards modernism. In the unprecedented socio-political pressure and demand, the new king Mozaffar ad-Din Shah Qajar had to issue a decree to establish the parliament in 1907. The parliamentary politics was dominated by two parties emerged within the prism of emerging modernism. These political parties were the Democratic Party and the Conservative Party. The international developments like outbreak of the First World War and Russian Revolution (1917) led to the simultaneous end of the two fragile systems the Qajar Dysnasty and the party politics that emerged after the establishment of the parliament. The Pahlavi dynasty was founded and Reza Shah centralized the power. As a result the civil society activities were restricted. However, the state led modernisation continued in Iran (Razavi 2010:80).

In the early 1940s two political parties; the Communist Party and the Nationalist Front Party came to the political scene. These parties unlike previous political parties came as mass base parties with huge numbers of members. Both the parties formed mass gathering from the 1940s to 1950s. This political development was further disturbed after the Military coup of 1953. The three pro establishment political groupings were formed namely Nationalist Party, the People's Party and New Iran Party. However, these political parties were dissolved by Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (1941-79). He formed the Resurgence Party with the purpose of organizing people under one political umbrella. The purpose of the party was also to divert people from religious and Marxist inclination (Razavi 2010:80).

In the early 1960s the Islamic Coalition Society (ICS) was formed. It had close links with traders and clergy and the main purpose of this elite coalition was to secure the interest of

these two traditionally dominant groups. Just before the revolution of 1979, the Combatant Clergy Association (CCA) to unite the various factions of the clergies was formed. Immediately after the Revolution, the Organization of the Endeavourers of the Islamic Revolution (OEIR) was established. Both ICS and CCA did not function as political parties. These were close circles like private member clubs. These organisations were highly influential and largely include far-right conservatives and traditional clerics and common people with a robust social and financial network to religious seminaries and bazaars (Razavi 2010: 80-81).

Nevertheless, all the organisations that owed allegiance to the leadership of Khomeini became a part and parcel of the Followers of the Emam's Line (FEL). FEL comprised of a major organization called OEIR. The major members of the FEL were high ranking clergies include "Ayatollah Musavi Ardebili, Hojatoleslam Musavi Khoeyniha, Mir Hossein Musavi and Hojatoleslam Mohammad Khatami" (Razavi 2010:81).

Another faction including the traditional religious conservatives, bazaaris, CCA and ICS were organized under the Islamic Republic Party. The factional rivalry was contained by Khomeini's presence. In spite of the Khomeini's control the intra-elite factionalism have been growing though slowly. Later, the Assembly of Combatant Clerics (ACC) was emerged within CCA with the purpose of strengthening the position of FEL (Razavi 2010:81).

During his regime, Khomeini with his tall legitimacy has authoritatively maintained not only the political elites but also mobilized public support in all the corners of the society. The Islamic Republican Party was the single political party which played a crucial role in maintaining power consensus. After Khomeini's death, it is not that Iran has transformed into a republican democracy but also a change in the functioning of the polity into a more contending faction which has changed the capacity of the state to proceed its politics in a consensual way (Adib-Moghaddam 2006: 667).

In the current scenario, the factions or the political parties in Iranian politics are broadly categorized into conservatives (*osulgarayan*) and reformists (*eslahtalaban*). The conservative faction is also known as the 'principalists' in reference to the principles of

1979 revolution or hardliners. This categorization is usually based on the alliances formed during the elections. Some alliances have become permanent. Others are flexible which formed and broken from situation to situation. The parties which become a part of one alliance do have their differences. But their identity is negligible without an alliance (Kar 2010:3).

The political factionalism has intensified in post-Khomeini Iran and continued with the new heights and dynamics since the emergence of reformist movement. The reformist politics with its emergence in early 1990s has remarkably played a crucial role in shaping the struggle for power among the competing blocs within the regime. The reformists appealed for the democratization of the society and conservatives oppose it. It is often observed that the source of the contention is inherent in the foundation of the Islamic Republic that it attempts to blend theocracy with that of republic. The major cause behind the power competition between the reformist and the conservative blocs was the attempt done by the Islamic government to merge theocracy with the ideals of republic (Yesiltas 2016: 60)

The reformists attempted to emphasize and give the due share to the 'popular sovereignty' which forms the major substance of constitution of Islamic Republic (Article 1) and have consistently neglected by the conservatives. To do so, the reformists want to marginalize the concept of 'divine sovereignty' which got an over emphasis by the conservative ruling elites and this led to the suppression of the 'popular sovereignty.' The conservative also challenged the religio-national identity of Iran promoted by the conservative ruling elites (Tohidi, 2009: 319).

Daniel Brumberg has defined Iranian Politics as a 'Dissonant System'. Brumberg had stated that "dissonant politics generates patterns of political change which do not move forward or backwards along with one clear line". He also opined that the factors such as divide and rule and the elite accommodation are the two sides of the dissonant system. Thus factionalism becomes a necessary element for the survival of the system. Factionalism can accommodate various interests within the system (Razavi 2010:83). The clerical establishment has managed to dominate society with all its factions since the

revolution and also without such policies that can resolve socio-political problems in the country.

The politics in post-revolutionary Iran has undergone many complex and uncertain state of affairs. It is because of the presence of many factions, not only in pre-revolutionary era but their continuation in post-revolution era too. Despite of the popular legitimacy to the constitution and Islamic governance and authority, there have been many factions surviving within the clerical establishment, among intellectuals and people in general. In the post-revolution political history, the major obstruction to the political development has been the lack of consent upon the identity of the Islamic regime. Nevertheless, there is a partial agreement on the religious character of the regime in the broader sense. But there is less agreement on the meaning of the principles provided by the constitution. It is because of these shortcomings that the factional rivalry is not restricted to the normal differences over power allocation or policy making as in the case of democratic regimes. The differences extend to the foundations of regime (Alsaif 2007:62).

The conservatives emphasize on the morals and values of Islam along with the duties and responsibilities. They perceive western culture as a threat. They are more powerful since they capture the position of the Supreme Leader, Judiciary branch, Guardian Council and Assembly of Experts. They have been the main obstacle in the path of reform. But the state institutions are constantly under the pressure to generate concrete outcomes especially in the economic realm. The necessity of producing tangible results creates competiveness which finally led to some sort of rationalization of policies. Thus in order to cope with the basic needs of people who support the factions, there is no big difference between reformists and conservatives when it comes to the economic policy. Both the factions support the private property and economic growth. In the current political scenario even conservative cannot afford to be against the people's political participation in the public and political affairs. The reformist agenda became the intrinsic part of the political process. Thus, it goes beyond the reformist-conservative divide and comprises all institutions of the state. Most importantly, it entered into the social sphere (Adib-Moghaddam 2006: 666).

The reformist supports individual freedom, civil rights, and civil society within the Islamic framework in which they advocate 'new religious thinking' (Kar 2010:3). The intellectual discourse of the liberal form of Islam was materialized into a political movement in the year 1997 by Mohammad Khatami with the support of his reformist followers. This liberal perspective underlines the concepts like political freedoms, individual rights, religious tolerance with prominent representatives among scholars and clerics, such as Ayatollahs Saanei and Montazeri, Dr. Mohsen Kadivar, and Dr. Abdulkarim Soroush. The Islamic reformists frequently argue that Koran, the *hadith*, and the *sunnah* have all been misinterpreted and the fundamentalist reading of religious works is faulty. Soroush, for example, has emphasized on the reformist interpretation of reconciliation between Islamic doctrine and modern ideas of freedom and individual rights. He has said that "notions of liberty, faith, dynamism of religious understanding, and rationality of worldly affairs were evoked to attest the possibility, even the necessity, of such an auspicious reconciliation. Religious morality would be the guarantor of a democracy, where the rights of the faithful to adopt religion would not vitiate the democratic, earthly, and rational nature of the religious government" (Kar 2010:4).

Islamic reformists such as Soroush have also promoted the modern idea of a person's inalienable rights, transforming Muslims into right-holders rather than duty-bearers. Kar stated that "The language of religion (especially that of Islam as exemplified by the *Qur'an* and the tradition) is the language of duties, not rights. In these texts, human beings are given commandments by a supremely sovereign authority. The language of *shariah* is that of commanding. In the modern world people have the right (not the duty) to have a religion; they are free to be religious or non-religious" (Kar 2010:4).

Even though, pluralism and factionalism are intimately linked to each other, they both perform different functions with their different scope and limitations. Both works are complimentary to each other at some point of time but turns contradictory at the other time. In the case of post-Khomeini Iran, the political factionalism does not lead to plurality which could offer the pluralistic momentum to occur at the ground. Contrary, the political factionalism in Iran has its limitations to work within the clerical system. In contrast to its expected function to lead plurality in real sense, it manages to secure the

state legitimacy through co-opting the popular dissent which represents the growing plurality at the grassroots.

The plurality which occurred after 1997 is defined as the 'pluralistic momentum'. The pluralistic momentum challenges the state-centric approach of the Iranian politics. The demands for change among various groups like youth, students, women and intellectuals have reversed the state-society relationship in Iran. This original and indigenous political culture of Iran along with other factors like globalization and growth of internet has initiated the political process in a bottom up manner. The political process worked from society to the state. It has positively hampered the state-centric approach of politics in Iran. The major feature of the 'pluralistic momentum' is that it has captured the social strata. Consequently, it has changed the equation in such a manner that clerical establishment can no longer ignore the demands of the people. The pluralism generates political competition where state policies are contested due to the force at the socio-political movements. The political allegiance primarily no longer directed by the Leader. The state institution and elites have entered in the competitive atmosphere where they have to organize themselves in a way that they could mobilize their constituencies. In the contemporary Iran, the political parties do not compete for the approval of the Supreme Leader for their policies but for public opinion in their support (Adib-Moghaddam 2006: 665-666).

The civil society is a more important unit in the pluralistic momentum. It is the civil society of Iran that represents the pluralistic momentum, not the government (or factionalism within the clerical establishment or among the social and political elites). The pluralism is emerging from the below and it negates the ruler-subject relationship at the level of the state-society-relations. It comes with a defiance, critique and opposition exercised from the various centers within society. Thus the pluralistic momentum cannot be controlled or redirected by any political faction within the clerical establishment or by political elites. The pluralistic momentum operates itself from no unitary institution, no single agent, and no charismatic leadership and even it has no homogeneous goals. It is an omnipresent yet polymorphous phenomenon. Adib- Moghaddam opined that "the pluralistic momentum has 'functionally differentiated' the power consensus among the

political elites in Iran" (Adib-Moghaddam 2006: 667).

Apart from civil society, the modern mass communication also has played the significant role in the pluralistic momentum. The modern communication has provided a platform to the vastly educated population of Iran to comprehend the alternative worldviews and evaluate the facts beyond the state manufactured facts. Both the factors together, the oppositional forces of the Iranian civil society and the technological opportunities, have led to the de-monopolization of the politics. The new set of norms, values and world views are emerging through the mass distribution of ideas via satellite television and that has lessened the monopoly of state-controlled media (Adib-Moghaddam 2006: 668).

Adib-Moghaddam (2006) argues that "Iranian state has lost its monopoly over the political culture of the country". The other sources of political thinking are occupying the political spaces. The most crucial actors are women, intellectuals, student leaders, film makers, activists and are influencing the society more effectively than state. Article 3 of the Constitution stated on the duty of the state. It says about the need of "raising the level of public awareness in all areas, through the proper use of the press, mass media, and other means." Since the advent of pluralistic momentum it is observed that state has been failing despite its reactionary oppression on the population. "Society has become differentiated and more complex, and none of the actors can hope any more for a monopoly over it.' In other words, the Iranian state is no longer the only authoritative representative of the country's political reality. Somehow the entire balance of power is changing. It is the new, post-revolutionary generation that is slowly imposing the political realities on the establishment, and not the other way around" (Adib-Moghaddam 2006: 668).

The pluralistic momentum exists in a decentralized manner and in innumerable discourses within the Iranian society. It goes beyond the domain of the state and could never be confined within the organizational pluralism which is the relatively autonomous organizations within the domain of state. It transforms opposition into political practice. The focus of the pluralistic momentum should be understood by investigating the diverse empirical expression of opposition and critique within Iranian society rather than

Khatami regime which fosters the reform. The state since the emergence of pluralistic momentum has responded in two ways; one is the promotion of reform and the second is the oppression against it. The state adopted the violence to crush the protests and many reformists were sent to prison. However, at the same time judiciary banned the torture and solitary confinement in 2004. There have been series of resignations of the state officials as a form of protest against the state authoritarianism. The significant events are when the "Friday prayer leader of Isfahan, Ayatollah Jallaleddin Taheri, regined in 2002, the members of the Iranian parliament who protested against the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in 2003, or of Mohammad Ali Abtahi, who had given resignation as Khatami's vice president and chief of staff in 2004" (Adib-Moghaddam 2006: 668). Thus state has given mixed responses. The current political analysis becomes more complex rather than simplifying the state centric approach. Therefore, the critical approach to Iranian politics becomes the need as a methodological basis (Adib-Moghaddam 2006: 668). Adib-Moghaddam has argued that

> The pluralistic momentum in Iran is not a commodity that can be possessed by this or that group; there is no engine that can be localized here or there. It must be analysed as a 'gliding' phenomenon that is in constant motion. A trajectory of its infinitesimal movements requires analysis of the multifarious discourses, ideas and political cultures that constitute the Iranian polity (Adib-Moghaddam 2006:670).

To study pluralistic momentum, there is no need to identify some single locus such as the ruling elites' or 'the state'. The political parties and institutions at the top became less relevant in terms of studying the pluralistic momentum. However, the non-governmental organizations, intellectuals, students, writers, filmmakers, poets, women's right activists and bloggers are the central focus of the pluralistic momentum. Adib-Moghaddam (2006:670) further emphasized that

> It pays attention to processes of differentiation, reification, deconstruction, theorisation and other ideational sources of reform emanating from Iranian civil society. It establishes, in short, a genealogy of reform emancipating 'the local', i.e. Iranian society vis-a`-vis 'the whole', i.e. the state. With this understanding of the pluralistic momentum as a background, one may assert that a dynamic element is introduced into Iran's state – society-relations that is intrinsically anathema to the very idea of conservatism and traditionalism. I have argued elsewhere that this competition manifests itself in the fight between an intellectual and scientific (enlightened?) world-view and a theocratic or clerical (Adib-Moghaddam 2006:670).

The conservatives (or for that matter reformists too) cannot take the politics and people of the country taken for granted. The reformist movement led to the paradigm shift in the

Iranian politics. The conservative faction has no viable solution to Iran's manifold economic and political problems. The conservatives are suffering from the intellectual poverty, the tag of corruption. They have the challenge of confronting an increasingly radicalized and politically active population. The conservatives may get short term success in undermining the change, but cannot impose their hegemony on politically sound population. They can't appease the people with their oversimplified economic agenda which is far from the contemporary realities (Takeyh 2004:133-134).

The political success of the conservative is majorly dependent on two propositions; the economic growth and public apathy. The conservative cannot give results without effectively restructuring the economic system. In early years of the Islamic Republic, the conservatives were in the favour of private property and reformists were inclined towards the radical statism that reflected during Rafsanjani period. The dissatisfaction associated with economic issues is rising in Iran. On one side there is wage strike organized by the teachers and labourers and on the other side there is discontent against the privatization of the universities and other public institutions. Since the emergence of reformist movement, the economic reforms, including de-centralization, competition, transparency and rule of law are hindered by conservatives' power base. Any political faction who is in power cannot privatize or restructure economy without liberalizing its polity (Takeyh 2004:136-137).

As far as the public apathy is concerned, the Iranian populace is developing the dissent where the entire structure of the Islamic republic is in rejection. Moreover, like reformists the conservative bloc is not a homogeneous group. Broadly, the conservatives are the coalition of pragmatists and hardliners (ideologues). Nevertheless, both pragmatist conservatives and hardliners undermine the reformers and reject the democratic pluralism. Though, they have differences on policy matters. The coalition of conservatives is a causal effect of the success of the reformists. On the contrary, the demise of the reformists is likely to shatter the myth of conservative solidarity (Takeyh 2004:134- 135).

Social Movements as Agents of Change

The objective of the reformist movement was not to destroy the political system of Islamic republic rather to transform it into a new political development. In this context, the notion of civil society becomes the key component of reformist discourse. The civil society is perceived to become a method of establishing a more balanced relationship between the rulers and the people; state and society (Nabavi 2012:43).

In order to strengthen the civil society, reformist discourse moved from a mere 'reform' to the 'rights'. The concept of rights became the key component of civil society. Khatami expanded the meaning of civil society from Islamic to the pluralist interpretation and asserted that "our civil society is not where only Muslims have rights and are considered citizens but it is a society where every human being has the right in the framework of law and order and defending their rights, is among the duties of the state". This idea of the inclusive society was also extended to the 'rights of dissidents'. Abdi in an article published in *Rah-e-naw* in 1998, argued that "rights of dissidents was not an abstraction, but a necessity; not only would dissidents voices invigorate the politics of any society, but they would also help in bringing attention to the shortcoming of society, which would in turn have to be addressed by people in power" (Nabavi 2013:46).

The term 'civil society' as a liberal democratic rhetoric came into the debate with the advent of reformist discourse in early 1990s. In these days it was used by the dissident clerics as a concept to denounce the state authoritarianism (Rivetti and Cavatorta 2013:648). The term 'civil society' entered into the broader political language only during the 1997 election campaign of Khatami and mainly after his victory. The use of 'civil society' was the integral part of his broader democratic agenda with a special emphasis on the rule of law. The term 'civil society' became a thread to connect various group of supporters of Khatami; particularly women and youth (Mohebi 2012:114).

The dissident or former Khomeinist supporter has used civil society as an antidote to the authoritarianism and corruption within the system based on original revolutionary ideals. It also represented the supremacy of the people's will against the mismanagement of power. The civil society as a means of change denounced the glorification of past and

took critically the revolutionary ideals that was used in the defense of privileges acquired by certain groups (Rivetti and Cavatorta 2013:648). The civil society has become the slogan of protest of the youth, women and student movement after their participation in the 1997 and 2001 election campaigns and movement emerged after it (Mohebi 2012:114).

The definition of civil society differs according to the social and political setup. Therefore, notion of civil in Iran comes with the influence of Iranian brand of Shi'a Islam (Mohebi 2012:114). The prerequisite of defining the civil society in Islamic countries requires viewing Islam not just as a religion but also as a political theory. In that sense Islam becomes major source of legitimization (Kamali 2001:457). Gellner has established that "Islam is incompatible with the civil society. As a 'moral order' and 'neutral' entity it is difficult to reconcile the notion of civil society with a religious order." Gellner believes that Islam lacks the space to fit divergent political institutions and intellectual pluralism (quoted in Mohebi 2012:57-58).

Masoud Kamali defines civil society as a non-political sphere. He states that civil society 'a social sphere where non-political individual and groups interact and organize their social life' (Kamali 1998:35-36). He differentiates between the Western conception of civil society and the Iranian case. In Iran, "It is a civil society of communities and institutions rather thanindividual citizens and their associations" (Kamali 1998:11).

Soroush defined civil society in a broader sense. He has seen civil society as 'a regulated society'. In this context, it provides legitimacy to the rule. He says that the concept of Supreme Leader is validated by the constitution, even though it is purely grounded in the religion (Soroush 2000: 61-62). He further criticizes the western notion of civil society and says that "civil society cannot be based on individuals 'selfish desires' rather it should be based on the collective decisions." In the western context, the civil society is defined on the basis of the freedom of choice. Soroush has provided the legal-rational approach of the civil society. However, Soroush emphasizes the necessity of linking the freedom with justice. He asserted that "without justice freedom becomes an orphan" (Soroush, 2000 quoted in Mohebi 2012:141). Soroush advocates that as other western

concepts like constitutionality and republicanism became embedded in the Iranian society with their indigenous form. Therefore, the notion of civil society also becomes the necessary element which must be considered. The meaning of civil society liked with peoples representations and participation in all arena of life with enjoying rights. Contrary, having no rights makes society uncivil. It is against the Islam. Government has limits and must work within the particular framework. Supreme Leader is elected by Assembly of Expert which is elected by the people therefore Supreme Leader cannot go against peoples will (Khatami: 2001, Mohebi 2012: 143-44). Khatami also emphasized on the compatibility between Islam and civil society. In his words,

> In this part of the world, and especially in Iran, religion has called people to establish and consolidate civil society, a responsible society, a society in which people are participants, a society where the government belongs to the people and is the servant of the people, not their master, and is consequently responsible to the people. Civil society needs to be based on order and the cornerstone of that order, is the Constitution (Khatami & Mafinezam 1997:90, Mohebi 2012: 143-44).

Other group of intellectuals such as Majid Mohammadi, Alireza Alavitabar and Hooshang Amirahmadi has provided the confrontational interpretation of civil society. In this point of view, the growth of civil society is considered as the oppositional force to the state apparatus. It is often perceived as a form of protection from the oppression of the state. Rivetti and Cavatorta stated that "thus civil society can be defined as social discourses, trends and autonomous social movements that attempts to regulate society and the very purpose of civil society is to augment the citizen's capabilities to counter state's arbitrary exercise of power". This view of civil society distinguishes it from the state. Akbar Ganji also buys this argument in defining the civil society. By defending the state civil society separation, he considered civil society as a milestone of freedom and democracy (Rivetti and Cavatorta 2013:648).

At the practical ground, civil society has diverted its purpose on which it was formed. After Khatami came in power he asked the civil society to participate in the policy making and support the government programs. He asked the actors of the civil society including the professional associations, researchers, trade unions, student organisations, and media to supervise the policies. Thus the civil society enters the political state sphere. The civil society activists became the members of the parliament and the officials in

departments. They have acquired new positions and shared elative power. They became the promoters of a collaborative and embedded civil society. Khatami was in view that participation of civil society in the policymaking and state activity is the way to give voice to the demand of the people and discharging the duties of civil society more effectively.

However, the meaning of the civil society was modified by asking the civil society to engage in the governance under the tutelage of the government. It has dragged the civil society into the liberal democratic interpretation and diverted it from the non-western rhetoric. The debate on the civil society was regarded to be a counter power discourse in the early 1990s. After Khatami's modification of civil society, most of the promoters of civil society have occupied power position within the state apparatus. This situation culminated in numerous cases of governmental co-optation of the civil society organisations (Rivetti and Cavatorta 2013:649).

The views which endorse that social movement can be studied under civil society consider civil society a political entity. It is in contrast to the perspectives that present civil society as neutral or benign (Cohen and Arato 1992:495). Social movements play a dynamic role in realizing the potentials of civil society. Thus, including the social movement within the civil society studies can provide significant insights. The social movement takes place on the boundaries between social and political spheres. So with the expansion of the scope of civil society, it can provide civil society a new relevance. Since social movements are considered as most significant political category, it can give new vigor to the old notion of civil society. The social movements represent significant social networks and collective action which is also the basis of civil society. The reformist movement is intrinsically linked with agency and the role of individuals in social movements. Looking at civil society and social movement as homogeneous category gives civil society sustainable counter force to avail the opportunities against the constraints imposed by the state (Mohebi 2012:67-68).

The nature of state and society relation and civil society is determined by the historical experiences of unique political economy. The development of rentier state has been a

major factor and also how the state has established its relationship with the citizens. States have been surviving without taxes despite the status of being a republic. State remained as a major provider of employment, welfare schemes and basic needs of citizens. The of civil society since the early 1990s has also seen because the breakdown of economy after long war with Iraq, economic sanctions and consequently rise of liberalization in economic sector specially during Rafsanjani regime (not clear) (Mohebi 2012:81-82).

Students' Movement

There has been a long history of political participation of Iranian university students. They have been actively playing a crucial role in building resistance against wrong doing of the state. Throughout the twentieth century, they have been a part of many political campaign and protests. Their fight has been against authoritarianism, tyranny, despotism, injustice and poverty. Since the modern universities were established in 1930s to the advent of reformist movement in 1990s students demanded democratization of the political system. Though there are some conservative student groups who advocate for the status quo and stand with the policies of the government. After the triumph of the reformist movement in 1997 presidential election, most of the student activists took up the path of political parties. They compromised with their goals and agreed working with the framework of the Islamic Republic. Due to the increasing relevance of civil liberty and constitutional rights after the advent of the reformist movement, the role of students in the politics and especially in the elections of 1997, 2000 and 2001 became more significant (Mohammadi 2007: 623). Nevertheless, student movement is divided across the political discourses. Mohammadi stated that "these discourses are social justice, tradition, totalitarianism, religious democracy, and liberal democracy" (Mohammadi 2007:634).

Historically, the student movement played a pivotal role in Iran's political affairs. The foundation of the Tehran University in 1935 by Reza Shah has provided the organizational platform and strength to the student movement. The student uprisings of 1968 played a fundamental role in forming a base of the Iranian Revolution of 1979. In

that sense Shah has misunderstood the students. His promotion of higher education later proved as the cradle of his destruction. Later, the seizure of the US embassy in Tehran in 1979 by students became the most symbolic and significant acts of the Iranian Revolution. Unlike Shah, Khomeini has established a cordial relationship with students and students remained loyal to him. However, after the establishment of Islamic Republic, the state led act of 'purification' of curriculum proved suppressive for students. In which students coming from 'Islamic' background were given priority in the admissions (Ansari 2000:117).

Since the emergence of the reformist discourse, the student movement transformed itself from the justice-oriented one in Khomeini period into democracy oriented one in the post-charisma Iran. In its transformation, the student movement is deeply influenced by intellectuals and women (women's movement). Reformist transformation of the student's movement is determined by the popularity of reformist discourse among the students who got the assistance of the government, attended larger universities and also those who do not belong to the traditional religious groups based on mosques. Thus the socio-economic status of the students and some social conditions in larger sense has developed psychology and behavioral pattern to grow reformism among them (Mohammadi 2019).

The new generation of students has developed a critical approach particularly towards establishment and society in general. The development in the field of the global communication has resulted in the easy access to an abundant literature. The translation of significant and original works of great contemporary philosophers in Persian has also helped. The students has developed keen interests to know and debate on the ideas of the authors such as Locke, Hegel, Marx, Weber, Foucault, Nietzsche, Habermas, de Tocqueville, Wittgenstein, Gadamer, Ricoeur, Oakeshott and Giddens. The students have been determined and optimistic to achieve their objectives. They have a sense of history of resistance and political emancipation in their own country. Due to its independent status and disassociation from political elites, student movement is an intellectual representation of the society. The student movement shares an organic relationship with the society (Ansari 2000:118).

> The emergence of the student movement promises a renewal of Revolutionary politics as well as the arrival of a new social force. Student insurgents have rejected established models of political action. They refuse to pin their hopes on the remote maneuvers of parliamentary assemblies or party conferences. The main student movements are quite aware that their struggle is against the social system as a whole. They refuse to participate in it on its own terms (Cockburn 1969:7; quoted in Ansari 2000:117).

After the failure of the Khatami's reformist agenda, reformist students' groups were disillusioned with the factional and party politics. They found that most of the roots of reform were practically and legally closed and relying on the constitutional framework which would not be sufficient for reform. They realized that reformist political parties has detracted themselves from promoting democracy and human rights in spite of the fact that they were busy in capturing political position and co-opting public dissent (Razavi 2008:206). The two factors have been crucial in the students' withdrawal of the support to the reformist political wing, especially after the 2000. Firstly, the failure of the elected representatives to fulfill the promises they did during the election campaigns. Secondly, the reformist leaderships' failure to detach themselves from the ideological principles derived from the Islamic ideology (Mohammadi 2019).

Immediately after 1997 elections, demonstrations were organized by students in October 1997. Students demanded for many constitutional amendments. The major demand was "the direct election of the Supreme Leader by the people". The other allied demand was that 'Supreme Leader must be accountable to the *Majles'*. Moreover, students also demanded for the amendment for change in the electoral system. Their focus was on the change in the elimination process by the Guardian Council. Another student demonstration took place in May 1998. In this demonstration students challenged the authority referring to Article 56 of the Constitution which states that "absolute sovereignty over the world and human being belongs to God. And it is He who has made human beings sovereign over their social destiny. No one can take this divine right away from human beings or apply it to interests of a special person or group. The nation exercises this God-given right". Therefore, students questioned the ruling elites that why have they have overlooked this natural right of the people for the past twenty years? (Razavi 2008: 204-205).

Figure 6: Student Demonstrations in Teharan in 1999

The slow pace of reform, the quest for more freedom and the constant hindrances in the process of political development caused by the conservatives finally attained its saturation point in July 1999. A major student protest took place in July 1999. Termed as "The 18th of Tir (July 9) crisis", it was a huge demonstration in the dormitory of Tehran University. The protest was a reaction to the arbitrary closing of the reformist newspaper called Salam by the government. The demonstration lasted for a week across the major cities. The demonstration also became transnational and captured more than 95 countries worldwide (Enteshami & Zweiri 2007:10)

It was the first time after the 1979 revolution that huge number of students came out on streets. The protests were organized by students autonomously without the organizational support of any political party. Therefore, it was a realization of civil society. It was also first time that student politics came out of the campus politics independently. Hamid Dabashi has observed the 1999 student uprising as the culmination of the end of the Islamic Ideology. He described uprising was not anti-Islamic but non-Islamic, not-socialist, non-nationalist. Thus it was non-ideological or post-ideological in nature. It has proved that any form of ideological method is irrelevant in defining the new changes that the society is going through (Razavi 2008: 207).

The student uprising of July 1999 remarkably questioned the theocratic principle of Leadership. Protesters have raised the slogans 'Khamenei must go'. It symbolized the high time of public dissent with the position of the Supreme Leader in the history of Islamic Republic. The state led hardliners has adopted violent means to suppress the movement (Arjomand 2005:509). Sate has launched attacks on university dorms. The demonstration ended in violence. It resulted in the death of a young Iranian citizen along with many casualties (Enteshami & Zweiri 2007:10).

The uprising also became the turning point in Khatami-students relationship. For students it was a test for Khatami to show his commitment towards reformist ethos. Contrary to this, Khatami condemned the student movement on the ground that uprising has created division and promoted violence in the society. Khatami had pressure from the state (Razavi 2008:206-7). Khatami regime had failed to protect the students. There was a widespread despair among students towards reformist parties and establishment within state. Consequently it led to the shift of student movement from factional or party based movement to the civil society arena. In later period, student movement as a civil society apparatus focused on and raised voice against the economic stagnation, unemployment, political oppression, fragility of civil rights and liberty, restrictions on social and cultural freedom and demanded for political accountability and transparency (Mohammadi 2007: 623).

After few days of his condemnation of student uprising, Khatami has realized his mistake and tried to allure students by saying that 'the attack at the university dormitories was a crime that pained the heart of all.' He promised that the responsible authorities for attacks would be punished but it was too late for undoing the damage it done to the image of Khatami among students (Razavi 2008:208). It is noteworthy that even after failure of Khatami regime in protecting student from state oppression, students supported him in election of 2001 and helped him to secure almost same majority as in 1997 election.

After the student uprising, hard-liners' response apart from violence was to suppress the reformist press. Many reformist newspapers were closed with the allegation of backing student uprising. The *Khordad* was closed. Its editor Abdollah Nuri (former Interior
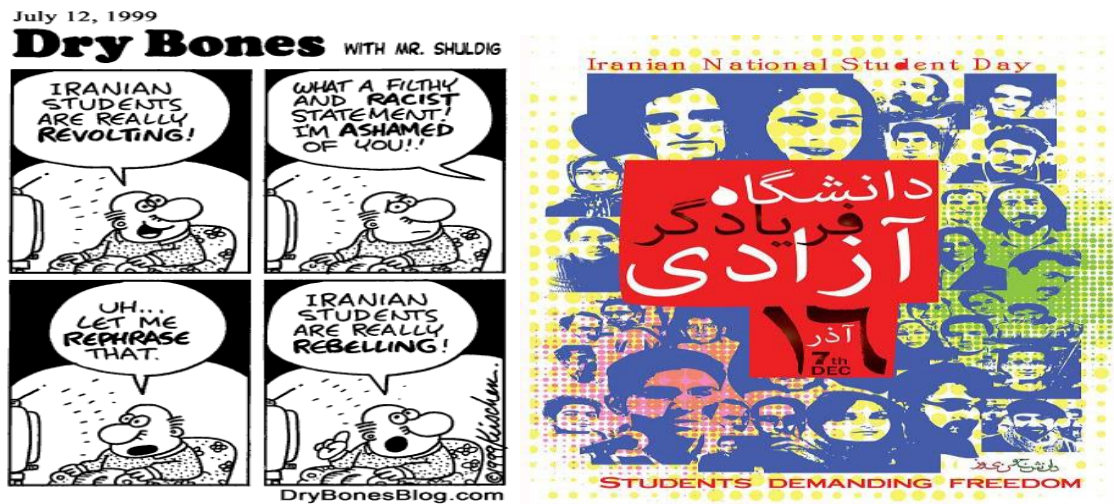
Minister) was taken on trial in the notorious Special Court of Clerics. There was hardly any legal argument in the charges and thus the nature of trial was politically motivated. Nuri was sentenced for five years. His sentence was widely criticized and damaged the legitimacy of legal system of Islamic republic (Arjomand 2005:509).

The second largest student uprising took place on 10 July 2003 and lasted for a week across the country. The protest also referred as '18th of Tir uprising'. The protest was called by a leading pro-democracy student group, the Daftar-e Tahkim-e-Vahdat under the title 'national day of protest' to commemorate 1999 protest (Molavi 2005:313). However, the protests happened after a court in Hamedan city placed death sentenced to a war veteran and university lecturer Hashem Aghajari for criticizing the clergy's monopoly on interpreting Koran. He was accused of insulting the Prophet. The uprising in July 2003 reflected the same sentiments as those of in the 1999 uprising. However, the former was more radical than the latter. Moreover, the authorities dealt the 2003 uprising more swiftly than the 1999 uprising (Razavi 2008: 208).

Many pro-reform advocates demanded the resignation of Khatami following the 2003 uprising. The activities of the student movement during the presidency of Khatami, especially in light of the two major students' riots suggest that in the long run, the policy of containment failed to bring tangible results, in terms of political stability, legitimacy and security. Instead, Khatami was accused by the conservatives for radicalizing the society in general and the political movements in particular (Razavi 2008: 209).

Molavi (2005:313) observed that the failure of the Khatami to protect the student in this protest "delivered a fatal blow to the reform movement". He further opined that "many Iranians hoped the day would lead to an uprising that would 'break the back' of the hardliners, but instead the Islamic Republic employed violence, intimidation, and sophisticated carrot-and-stick approach to suck the wind out of the demonstrations." Apart from violence state also used alternative methods to control the protest. State has used technology to block satellite and television. State has also sponsored the outdoor pop concerts (which otherwise illegal in the country) to draw young Iranians away from the protests. The Dartar-e Tahkim-e-Vahdat demanded for UN assistance also became a setback for protest from the side of students (Molavi 2005:315- 9).

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Figure 7: Today's Golden cartoon from July 1999 and a canvass of Iranian students.

Source:https://drybonesblog.blogspot.com/2009/07/iranian-student-protests-1999.html:,
http://www.payvand.com/news/11/dec/1080.html.

As discussed in the previous chapters that the major factor behind the reformists defeat in 2005 presidential election was the huge boycott of the elections by the groups like youth, university students, women and intellectuals. These groups have disillusioned by the reformist agenda due to the unfulfilled promises in previous two elections. There was 37 percent boycott in the first round and 40 percent in the second round (Masroori 2007:172-174). The total voting turnout was 60 percent. The boycott continued in the 2008 parliamentary elections and the reformists were reduced to 47 and in 2012 to 9 *Majles* seats (Arjomand 2005:518). This tendency particularly among students indicates towards a transition of student movement from active party politics and civil society activism to civil disobedience and passivism. In the contemporary Iran, the civil disobedience and passivism emerged as the major strategies and method among the Iranian student movement in its struggle against despotism and authoritarianism (Mohammadi 2019).

Women's Movement

Women as the most important social group have been the major part and supporter of the reformist movement and politics (Khatami). The women as journalist, lawyers, university students and intellectuals have played a crucial role in raising the standard of the political activism (Majid Mohammadi 2019). Even though women's movement in Iran have been there for long but emerged with new energy since 1979 which played a crucial role in

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shattering the stereotype about Iranian women within and outside the country. Almost one generation after revolution, women's groups are most politically active in Islamic Republic (Robin 2000: 142). For convenience, the history of post-revolution Iran can be divided into three periods; from 1979 to 1988, Rafsanjani presidency from 1988 to 1997 and Reformist movement and its after math. During first phase; 1979 to 1988, women have become easy target of state oppression. Many middle class women lost their job due to forced dress code. Veiling had become compulsory for working and university women. Khomeini got women's support even though their agency as an equal human being was suppressed on religious ground. Many women have worked as volunteers in revolutionary institutions. During the Revolution, Khomeini called for women to join protests and break the curfew in order to fight against the brutality of Shah Regime. Later, under his own rule Khomeini issued *fatwas* against women for being involved in political affairs. Without providing them legal equality, Khomeini mobilized women during war with Iraq to support Iran. Many women lost their husbands and children (Poya 1999; Bahramitash 2004). The women who participated in Revolution believed in the ideals of revolution including social justice and equality. In return they got nothing but the state oppression (Mehran 2003, Bahramitash 2007:89-94).

In the second period; 1988 to 1997, Rafsanjani adopted liberalization of economy at social level. There was some relief but at the economic level country was going through an economic slowdown. State had to withdraw many welfare policies which largely affected economically backward families and mostly women since huge number of women are involved in household activities. The prices of basic goods and services increased rapidly after Rafsanjani launched Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) which led to privatization some of state-owned industries (Bahramitash 2007:90-91).

The reformists enjoyed the enthusiastic support of women. Women across the class background were behind the Khatami's victory in 1997 and 2001. The concept of dynamic jurisprudence and need of reinterpretation of religious text from women's perspective gained momentum. Many scholars have argued for women's rights and documented the ways through which women could engage in politics (Kian-Th iébaut 2002; Mir-Hosseini 1999; Rostami Povey 2001; Halper 2005, Bahramitash 2007:89-94).

Khatami has recognized the specific political concerns of women unlike Khomeini who mobilized women on religious and non-gender issues (Poya 1999; Bahramitash 2004). Khatami advocated for the women's participation in the political sphere. The issue of gender-egalitarian interpretation of Islamic laws started gaining momentum. In his campaign, Khatami promised to address gender rights within the existing political and religious framework (Mehran 2003, Bahramitash 2007:89-94).

Figure 8: Protests by women to assert their rights

Source: www.Asianews.it,, https://www.allianceofiranianwomen.org/

In order to fulfill his promises that were made during the election campaign, Khatami government has taken certain initiatives to provide gender equality. Khatami has expanded the Bureau of women's Affairs which was founded under Rafasnjani. His government changed its name to Centre for Women's Participation. During Khatami regime CWP was headed by Shahla Habibi. Massoumeh Ektebar whom Khatami appointed as the first female vice president of the Islamic Republic was the main driving force behind CWP. Ektebar had previously been the head of the Organization for the Protection of the Environment. Khatami has appointed Zahra Shojaie as the Presidential Adviser for the Women's Affairs (Mir-Hossseini 2006). In 1997, four women registered to run for the presidential election and all were disqualified by Guardians Council on the ground of their gender. Khatami government's biggest achievement was to start the local elections in 1999. In the first local elections 5000 women were contested and out of

which 300 won (Robin 2000:141). In the Fifth Majles 14 MPs were women and in Sixth *Majles* there were 13 women MPs. In the civil society arena there were increase in the percentage of female journalists and NGO activists (Bahramitash 2007: 94, 95, 96,). Reformist Movement helped in increasing the number of women in the universities. Today women constitute 40 percentages of students and one third of faculty (Robin 2000:145).

Although, reformist movement has increased the overall status of women in Iran, it has failed to change the law to allow them to run for the presidential election. In June 2005, before the presidential election, thousands of women participated in sit-in demonstrations in front of the Tehran University for the re-interpretation of the Constitution to allow women to run the presidency. Soon after that, the protests spread across the country. Huge number of women participated in the protests in the "major cities such as Esfahan Kermanshah and Tabriz as well as in smaller cities in the provinces of Kordestan, Lorestan, Sistan and Baluchestan, and Khorasan" (Shekarloo 2005). This was the single largest independent mobilization of women ever since the revolution. Bahramitash argues that "to some extent it indicates how reform era gender politics has become part of mainstream politics in Iran. This multi-local demonstration epitomizes the result of eight years of gender politics in the reform era" (Bahramitash 2007:89-90).

Women's movement in Iran has hugely contributed in the human rights debate on universality and cultural relativism. The grassroots level initiatives like One Million Signature Campaign organized by women's movement has constructed a ground for the dialogue between universal human rights and Islamic principles of human rights. The Iranian lawyer and Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi has commented that "human rights discourse is alive and well [in Iran] and civil society considers it the most powerful framework for achieving sustainable reform". This statement came in 2007 and was considered as the most powerful one from a foremost voice of reformist discourse. However, the conditions for human right have continuously been deteriorating. According to the United Nations' report, the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic is not improving rather getting worse (Barlow and Akbarzadeh 2018).

Labour Movement

Like student and women's movements, labour movements also increased during the Khatami government. Behind the rise of labour movements there were two factors; Khatami's liberal attitude of promoting human rights and Rafsanjani' and Khatami's economic policy of privatization. The reformist discourse has hugely contributed in changing the state-society relationship in Islamic Republic. Khtami's rise to power created political openness. It also led to the increasing privatization and foreign investment. State had lost the capacity of investment in different industries which contributed to the high growth of unemployment. Khatami is criticized for his economic policy that his policy was framed to satisfy a particular faction not to fulfill the interest of the economy (Razavi 2008:212). There were spontaneous public gatherings and street protests. Strikes in factories were observed in the demand of better pay, more freedom and better working environment. The reform process changed the nature of labour movement from a negative and defensive character to a positive and aggressive one (Razavi 2008:106).

Youth Culture

The youth always comprised a significant share of the population of Iran. Sixty percentage of the Iran's population is under the age of 25. However, it was not the unique feature of Iranian population till early 1970s. In the entire developing countries, 58 to 65 percentage of the population consisted of young individuals under the age of twenty five years. The unique characteristic of the young age structure of Iranian population is that youth constitute a major factor behind the socio-political and cultural changes. More specifically, since 1970s, the youth showed their want for a profound change in terms of more opened socio-political arena. The youth constituted as the major actors in the 1979 revolution. The broad participation of new generation of youth has been significant in the elections of 1997, 2001 and later in 2009. Though youth of new generation have evolved a different way of participation, the youth of the time of revolution choose revolution as a method of change. Thus the new generation youth adopted for nonviolent and civil right movement. The different socio-demographic context of the 1970s in comparison to that of 1990s made the previous generation of the youth to be different from the present

generation. Over the period of time, the youth has grown up in terms of the development of their social and political behavior. The decline in the fertility rate in the mid-1980s resulted in the reduction in the family size. It has played an important role in the destabilization of the patriarchal system which has dominated the families before. The expansion of the education from 1980s onwards facilitated many young people to prolong their school and higher education. The education level of the new generation born around the 1970s was higher than that of their family members, especially their fathers. This is a factor which caused the weakening of the patriarchal system. Fathers were no longer figured as a higher authority. The nature of the parent-child relationship was also changed in terms of the increasing spaces of dialogue or conflict which replaced the traditional values of obedience and admission. These changes have hugely contributed in the socio-political transformation that took place during mid-1990s and onwards, with mobilization of youth and emergence of civil society (Fouladi 2013:137-8).

Today, seventy percent of Iran's population is under the age of thirty. Urban young adults who comprise almost two-thirds of the Iran's population are highly mobile and educated.[15] Even though, Iran had a remarkable size of young population for a long time. It is very recently that the young generation is formed into a social group with its own identity. Contrary, in the early 1950s, the young population in Iran used to be completely integrated into the patriarchal family structures and their level of education was not much different from their fathers. In those family structures, fathers had imposed their authority and they possessed a social representation which forbidden the autonomous expressions and opinions of the youth. The early marriage among the young adolescents including girls and boys made them incorporate into the family structures at an early age. They enter into adult life by the virtue of their newly acquired position in the family. However, over the period of time, the condition has changed. The factors such as expansion of schools in urban areas including the big cities have played a crucial role. The number of young urban girls and boys who had access to the school system was increased. Consequently, the gender gap in education was reduced considerably. Thus, it is in this

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[15] Eighty five percent of young Tehranis are currently enrolled in university or are university graduates. Sixty five percent of these graduates are women. There is a thirty five percent unemployment rate among this age group (Mahdavi 2011:150).

context that the youth started to be recognized as a separate social category. A new form of individualization was evident with the emergence of the youth as a category in the early 1970s. The young people became more aware over the period of time and began considering themselves as a distinct social group. As a result they tried to assert their demands and points of difference. They principally opposed the patriarchal system of the family in which young males are completely subordinated to their elders and the young girls and woman are subordinated to the male members of the family. Fouladi opined that "at the same time, they tried to construct their own social identity and to invent their own social frameworks in the shape of gangs, gatherings, clubs and associations" (Fouladi 2013: 144).

In the pre-revolution era, there was a feeling of anger and frustration among the Iranian youth. Especially, among the urban middle classes were more actively participated in politics. The anger had grown due to dependency on family and their conflicting relationship with father's generation. The anger had gradually transformed into an opposition against the entire system. The young population demanded for their political freedom. They also demanded for the liberalization of the social arena. They wanted such social atmosphere where their individuality could blossom. In the late 1970s, the young students began to organize protests in big cities. These students were inspired by different political ideologies such as Islamism, socialism and communism (Fouladi 2013: 144).

The protests and demonstration increased and young generation demanded the overthrow of the regime under Mohammad Reza Shah. The urban youth had been at the forefront in the 1979 Revolution. They have also inspired the population in the rural areas. In this context, one could argue that it was with the emergence of the 1979 revolution that the youth in both cities and rural areas was recognized as a social category. However, some weeks after the revolution, the youth was divided into two separate groups of supporters and adversaries. Thus it shows that the youth was not a homogenous category due to the existence of various socio-economic disparities (Fouladi 2013: 144).

The patriarchal system and the traditional values have undermined most cherished goals of the youth and women. Nowadays, new values comprise the foundation of the

relationships within families that are more egalitarian. These newly formed relationships are not confined to any specific geographic area. It encompassed almost all the segments of the population transcending all geographic areas of the country including both rural and urban. There was a transformation from the modernization of the relationships in the family to aspiration for democracy (Fouladi 2013:157-8).

The new modern socio-demographic situation has transformed the social representation of youth into a distinct social group. In contemporary Iran, like in the western societies, youth is undergoing a transition stage in which both young men and women are ready to enter into their adulthood. Fouladi stated that:

> They opposed the moral order of the Islamic Republic which drastically reduced the liberties of the individuals by imposing restrictions on both men and women's dressing style. Restrictions were also imposed upon the interaction between the unmarried men and women, single sex clubs, censorship of books and films and the regulation of public spaces. The young people who are accustomed to enjoying the conditions that allowed them to nourish their independent individuality in the family context could not accept the ideology unleashed by the Islamic state. The major demand of the new generation was the rule of law. This was the necessary condition that would allow then to construct their own social identity and assert themselves as young people distinct from the adults' world (Fouladi 2013:158).

Youth in Iran have become a major political and social force. Accounting for nearly 40 percent of the voting-age population, young people demonstrated their importance most recently in the 2009 presidential election by playing an instrumental role in the campaign of reformist Mir Hossein Moussavi. This trend of youth political activism is not new. Young Iranians were an influential force in the landslide victories of the reformist president Mohammad Khatami in 1997 and 2001. However, the youth also played a crucial role in the election of his opponent Ahmadinejad, in 2005 (Isfahani and Egel 2009:39)

In the traditional Iranian society the transition to form adolescence to adulthood was typically smooth and predictable. Young men were expected to adopt the profession of their parents or inherit the family business. Family and community networks together come to ensure a smooth transition to marriage for young men and women, and these same networks worked to support them when they start their families. But with the gradual disappearance of traditional society, the predictability in the transitions to

adulthood that the family and local community offered has also disappeared. These changes have been compounded by a demographic boom resulting from high fertility rates in late 1970s and early 1980s that has increased the proportion of youth in the population from 28 percent in 1996 to 35 in 2006. Together these changes have led to the emergence of significant uncertainty in the transition to adulthood for today's youth (Isfahani and Egel 2009:39-40).

In the contemporary Iran, youth face a various difficulties in the transition. "Traditional Iranian society, though much poorer, deliberated youth and encouraged the young generation to take over farms, professions, and businesses form the older generation while they set up their families." Modern Iranian society instead offers competitive schools, inflexible labor markets, and a rigid marriage market that, together, contribute to stalled transitions filled with anxiety, unhappiness, and often depression. Iran's young generations' difficulties and challenges are the culmination of the baby boom in the 1970s and 1980s, educational system in Iran, labour market and the failure of the marriage market to make the necessary adjustments to ease the effect of this youth bulge. While demographic alterations often bring with them larger cohorts of youth who need to compete for resources and jobs, they can also give economic benefits such as faster growing labour force and huge potential for the accumulation of the human capital. In order to make the advantage of these benefits, social institutions must be adaptable to changing demographic realities. Iran's relevant institutions such as schools, the formal labor market, and marriage are not sufficient flexible to take advantage of the country's "demographic gifts" (Isfahani and Egel 2009:60-61).

Minorities' Movement

Iranian society comprises diverse ethnic groups, speaking different languages, living in diverse regions following different religions. The diversity has always been a source of contention in the construction of nationhood in the various phases of modern Iranian history. The constitutional revolution of 1906 has become an earliest and significant juncture to recognize a nation with the diverse cultural identities in the modern history. However, multi-ethnic ad multi-cultural character of Iranian society could be traced back to the pre-Islamic time (Kashani-Sabet 2002:162; Yesiltas 2016:55). The ethnic

minorities such as Arabs, Balochs, Kurds and Turkmen have never accepted uniform national identity of Iran imposed by the ruling elites (Boroujerdi 1998:54).

According to the population census 2016, Iranian population was seventy-nine million approximately (Iranian Census Result 2016). Being a majority, Persians comprise 51 percent of the population. The second largest ethnic group or largest minority is Azeris which are 24 percent of the population. Rests are the Gilaki and Mazandarani (8 percent), Kurds (7 percent), Arab (3 percent), Lur (2 percent), Baloch (2 percent), Turkmen (2 percent) and other (1 percent). The majority of these ethnic minority groups live at the border areas of Kurdistan, Turkman Sahra, Sistan and Baluchestan and Khuzestan provinces of Iran (Yesiltas 2016:55; Hassan 2007; CIA 2012).

Figure 9: The Ethnic concentration in the Provinces (2008)

Provinces	Ethnic Groups
West Azerbaijan	Azeri and Kurdish
East Azerbaijan and Ardabil	Azeri
Sistan and Baluchistan	Baluch
Golestan	Turkman
North Khorasan	Kurdish and Turkman
Khuzestan	Arab and Lor
Chehar Mahal, Bakhtiyari, Kohkiloye, Boyer Ahmad, Lorestan	Lor
Elam	Lor and Kurdish
Kermanshah	Kurdish
Kurdistan	Kurdish and Azeri
Zanjan	Azeri

Source: UN CERD: International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms Of Racial Discrimination: Eighteenth And Nineteenth Periodic Reports Of States Parties Due In 2006:, Http://Www2.Ohchr.Org/English/Bodies/Cerd/Docs/Advanceversions/Cerd-C-Irn-20.Doc. **Note:** Spellings For Provinces Are Those Given In The Original Source Document (Adopted from Nazila Ghanea and Binesh Hass (2011).

Figure 10: Iran's Ethnic and Religious Distribution
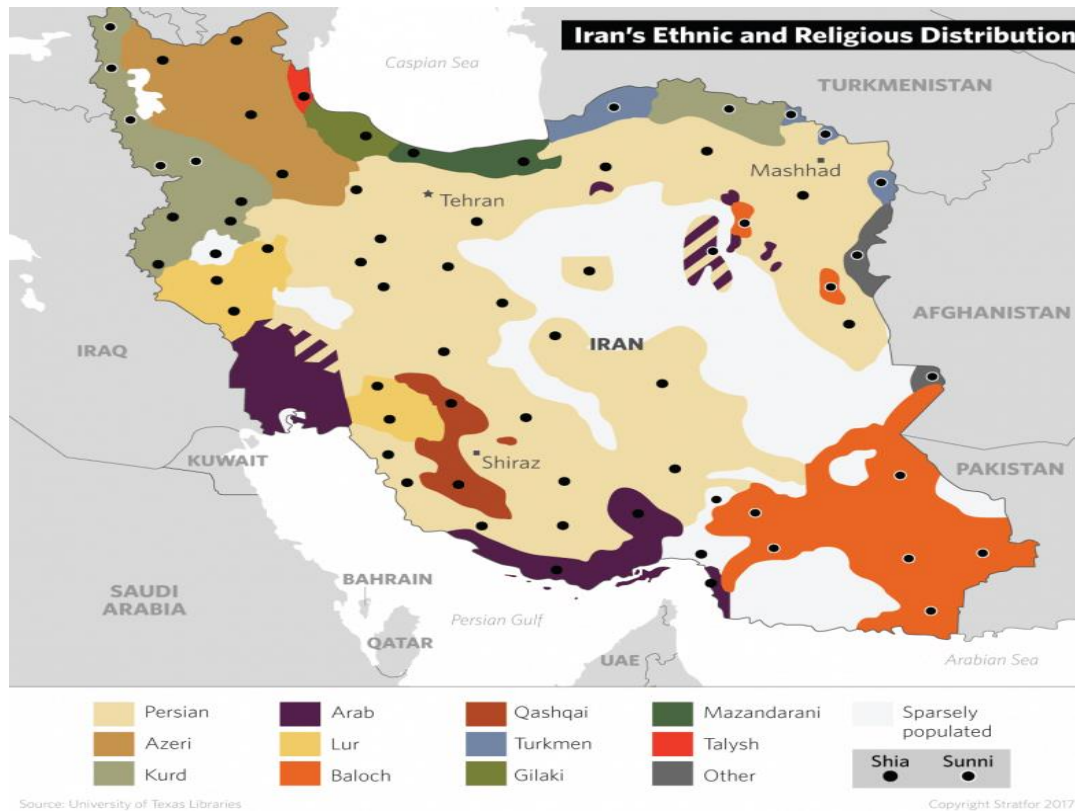
The origin of the ethnic problem in the Islamic republic rests in the constitution itself. The constitution does not recognize the ethnic minorities. Article 12 of the constitution establishes Shi'a Islam (Twelver Ja'fari school) as the official religion and primary principle of unity. Article 13 of the constitution recognizes only major religious minorities namely such as Zoroastrian, Jewish and Christian Iranians. Only these three groups are"free to perform their religious rites and ceremonies, and to act according to their own canon in matters of personal affairs and religious education" within the limits of the law. In addition the Article 14 also protects religious minorities by asserting on the duties of the Muslims of the Islamic Republic to respect the human rights of non-Muslims and to treat them in "conformity with the ethical norms and principles of Islamic justice and equality"[16] These three religious minorities have representation quotas in the Iranian Parliament. However, the quota in legislative body has not proven as

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[16] This principle applies to all who refrain from engaging in conspiracy or activity against Islam and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

effective mechanism for improving their status and realizing equality (Nazila Ghanea and Binesh Hass 2011:6).

The Article 19 of the Constitution prohibits the privileges on the basis of the language and ethnicity. Therefore, ethnic minorities are constitutionally prohibited to assert their identity or minority status. Due to their identity crisis ethnic minorities were abstained from voting for the new constitution at the time of proclamation of Islamic Republic (Yesiltas 2016:58). However, sometimes it is also argued that the ethnic minorities refused to participate in the vote for the constitution (Khorshidi et al. 2011:148). The constitution further discriminates the ethnic and religious minorities by reserving the office the president to the adherent of the official religion of Islamic Republic (Twelver Ja'fari school of Shi'a Islam) in the Article 115. In practice all the official position are occupied by the adherents of the official religion (Nazila Ghanea and Binesh Hass 2011:6).

The causes of the ethnic and religious minorities are often linked to each other. Most of the ethnic minorities specifically Kurds, Arabs, Baluchis and Turkmens of Iran practice Sunni Islam. Therefore these ethnic groups are doubly affected one because of their ethnic identity and other because of their faith. Nevertheless, Constitution also talks about the unity of entire Muslim community in Article 11and oblige the government to promote the same. The Article 12 also obliges the government to bear responsibilities of securing religious schooling and providing scope for local law according to whichever school of Islam constitutes the majority in a given region. But in practice the situation is completely reverses. For example Sunnis have a decisive population in Tehran (13 million) and they do not have a single mosque in the city for which they have been demanding for long. In other places the Sunnis mosques were destroyed for example in 2008 the Abu Hanifa Mosque (near Zabol) in Sistan Baluchistans were destroyed and converted into a park. According to some reports (in the January 2010) 19 Sunni clerics were arrested in the charge of spreading Sunni teachings in Kurdistan, Kermanshah, Baluchistan, West Azerbaijan, Ahvaz (Khuzestan), Tavalesh (Gilan) and Khorassan provinces (Nazila Ghanea and Binesh Hass 2011:6).

The Islamic Republic suppressed the ethnic movement perceiving the demand of ethnic minorities having a separatist tendency. The perception has the source in the history of the ethnic resistance. The first ethnic resistance erupted in 1945. The Kurdish and Azeri national movement emerged against the Pahlavi's politics of centralization and construction of uniform Iranian Identity since 1925 (Vali 2011:1-2). The Kurdish and Azeris assertion was aimed at getting the administrative autonomy and recognition for their own languages. At that time the success of the movement reflected in the establishment of two autonomous administrative bodies in the northern Iran; the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad and Azerbaijan People's Government. However, the ethnic movements have always been depicted by the state as the threat for the national unity since then (Yesiltas 2016:57).

The ethnic minorities started opposition to the Islamic government shortly after the establishment of the revolutionary regime. They have consistently resisted against the state's minority policies and emerged as the substantial force for the political change in Iran. The Islamic state permanently suffered with the legitimacy crisis in the ethnic regions of the country. There has been very little support for the ideology of the Islamic Republic. Yesiltas 2016:54-60). The common demands of the ethnic minorities are autonomy in administrating their own socio-cultural, linguistic and economic affairs. They aim at the decentralization of authority and limiting the central administration to managing foreign policy, financial and defense affair (Mojab & Hassanpour, 1996:234). The state has been successful in tackling the ethnic uprising (with the exception of the Kurdish resistance). However, state failed in imposing its ideological hegemony on ethnic minorities (Hiro 1987:111-113; Yesiltas 2016:57).

The Khatami's election campaign has given a ray of hope among the ethnic minorities. The campaign promised for an inclusive decision-making process and ensured the equal political participation of all Iranians. It also pledged to expand the language rights of Iran's non-Persian minorities. During the campaign Khatami attempted to reach out the ethnic and religious minorities. The election materials were distributed in the Kurdish, Azeri and other ethnic minorities' regions (Shaffer 2002:219).

The slogan 'Iran for all Iranians' initiated a debate on re-articulation of the Iranian national identity and re- constructing it with the priority of inclusiveness and respect for diversity. The ethnic minorities comprised significant support base for Khatami regime along with youth and women as major groups. In the presidential election of 1997 more than 70 percent ethnic population voted for Khatami. The support of the ethnic groups was crucial in re-election in 2001 too. The vast participation of minorities in the election process demonstrated the potential of these groups to change the dynamics of the democratic process in Islamic Republic. Previously, the ethnic minorities had been boycotting the presidential elections (Khorshidi et al. 2011:148).

Despite of his promises of inclusiveness Khatami's two term regime has failed to fulfill the demands of ethnic minorities. The question of the ethnic as well as the religious minorities has been neglected in the reformist human right discourse during the Khatami regime. For example, Khatami has promised Sunnis to build a Mosque in Tehran during his election campaign but failed to deliver it and later excused that the Supreme Leader had advised against it. The passive attitude of the government towards minority question has proved that the reformist leadership's objective of democracy did not challenge the Shi'a Islamist exclusionary national identity discourse imposed by the conservatives. The minority right activists criticize the reformists' for their failure to recognize the multi-ethnic culture of Iran and ignoring the need for pluralism advocated by the ethnic movements. The minorities' movements emphasize that their demands are compatible and coterminous with that of Iran's greater demands of democracy and political development (Tohidi 2009:310; Yesiltas 2016:60; Nazila Ghanea and Binesh Hass 2011:6).

According to minorities' rights activists, reformist politicians are not concerned with genuine political change rather the control of power. On many occasions the reformist proved their hesitance of recognizing the demands of ethnic minority groups (Shemirani 2005). For example the left oriented Tudeh party[17] avoided the term 'nationalities' in referring to Iran's minorities (Ghassemlou 1993: 116-117). The reformist group such as Iranian National Republicans and human rights groups such as the Center for Defenders

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[17] Tudeh Party traditionally had a closer association with the ethnic cause.

of Human Rights in Iran did not condemn government repression of the ethnic minorities (Yesiltas 2016:61).

The reluctant behavior of the reformist leadership and activists has been due to two co-related major factors; the separatist stigma attached with ethnic minority and the pressure from the dominant conservative ruling class (Yesiltas 2016:61). Yesiltas argued that "Khatami's support of ethnic rights could be seen as a strategy to attract voters, his emphasis on democracy, rule of law and political participation was largely a result of the pressure coming from minority political groups and the efforts of the political and civil rights activists in ethnic regions" (Yesiltas 2016:61).

In the post-Khatami Iran, the rise of the conservative forces (the victory of Ahmadinejad) could not mark the end of reformist politics rather consolidated it. In the same manner, ethnic regions have continuously staged opposition to the policies of the state and have been playing an important role in the expansion of civil society. The presence of ethnic movements has also been the crucial factor in determining the political agendas, particularly at the time of elections. The ethnic and religious minorities' issues have captured a significant part of election campaigns during 2005, 2009, 2013 presidential elections. In April 2005 severe ethnic clashes occurred in the oil-rich Arab minority inhabitant Khuzestan province. The Arab minority revolted against the plan of the government to alter the composition of Arab population of Khuzestan. The government attempted to force Arab minorities to migrate to the other part of the country that non-Arab groups could be inhibited. The places and streets of the Arab names were renamed with that of Persian (Tohidi 2009:313). This civil unrest had a direct impact upon the campaign of the 2005 presidential elections putting ethnic issues at the forefront in the ethnic minorities regions (Yesiltas 2016:62).

Blogging

The internet entered in the Iranian public sphere in 1998 just one year after the Khatami became president of the Islamic Republic. Within short period of five years the most of the state and government institutions, political parties, media and NGOs created their own

websites (Mohammadi 2019). According to an internet survey the number of registered Persian blogs reached 7, 00,000. Along with Persian blogs thousands of English blogs are published by Iranians from Iran as well as abroad. In the counting done by *Technorati* search engine in 2006 , it was found that Persian was listed in the top ten most popular languages for blogging in the world (Mina 2007:6).

The rapid growth of blogging is the causal effect of the state's restriction on the independent press media. Many media and group blogging blossomed in Iran like *Cappucino* which is founded by several groups of bloggers. Some younger journalists like Arash Hassan-Nia, Ali Aghar Seyed-Abadi, Gissou Faghfouri and Armen Norsessian founded the group blog *Hanouz.* These journalists had lost their jobs after Ahmadinejad's government had imposed a massive bans and restrictions on media in 2005. Mina (2007) observed that, "during Mohammad Khatami's presidency (1997-2005), the judiciary remained under the control of the conservative faction which used it as an instrument to roll back the reformist movement and impose restrictions on pro-reform media outlets (Mina 2007:8)..

Younger professional journalists, who had lost their employment when their newspapers were closed, discovered cyber journalism through blogs, to offer an opportunity to continue writing without fear of persecution by the state, internal censorship by authoritarian and conformist chief editors or patronization by older colleagues". The Iranian artists and intellectuals who are mostly living in abroad have also founded group blog like *Realm of Malakut*. Daryoush Ashouri (living in Paris) who is a lexicographer, philosopher and translated the books of Nietzsche and Shakespeare in Persian, Akram Abooyi (living in Berlin) is a famous musician and writer, documentary filmmaker Mehdi Jami and Amir Hossein Sam who is a poet are founders of the this blog (Mina 2007:8).

The blogging has provided the space to diverse voices and opinions to be heard which otherwise had not been possible through conventional media due to state restrictions. The collective or group blogging has emerged as the new arena of the exercise in grass roots democracy. It has become the integral component of a growing pluralism and democracy from the below. The pluralistic spirit of new media has challenged the homogenizing agenda which state imposed through editorial scrutiny and censorship (Mina 2007:8).

However, to control the unrestricted civil society activities on internet, the government came with filtered techniques. More than six million websites have been filtered by the government. The organization *Reporters sans Frontières* has Islamic republic in the world's top 15 greatest enemies of the internet in 2005. ARTICLE 19, a London based human right organization ran a campaign tiled as *The Persian Impediments* against internet censorship in Iran in 2006. The campaign criticized the censorship mechanism and repressive measures that state has adopted (Mina 2007:14).

Figure 11: Country Profile of Iran: Internet Freedom Scores

Source: https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2017/iran
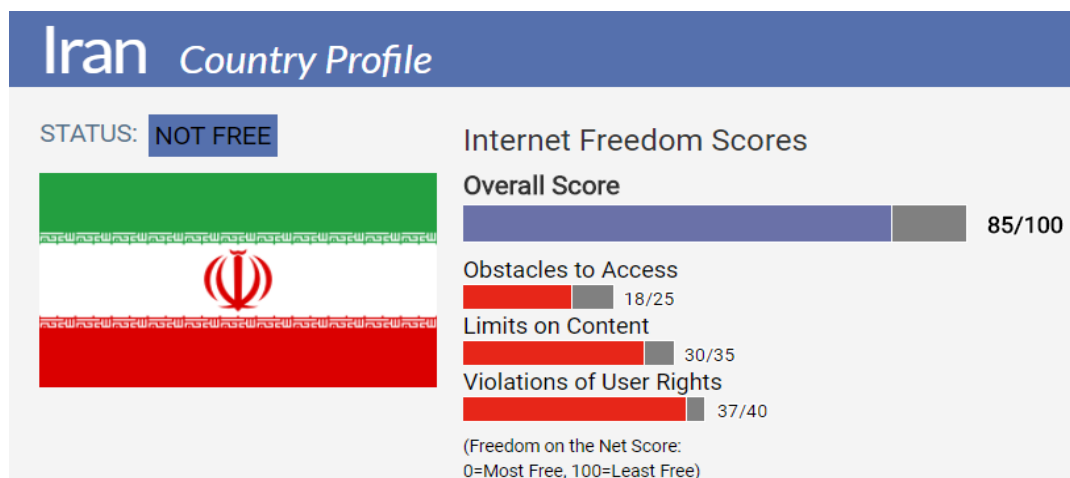
In spite of the heavy state surveillance, the political activities on internet in the form of blogging, writing essays, journals and statements could not be stopped from creating a pluralistic momentum. The expansion of the internet has opened such a public sphere in Iranian society which government cannot resist (Mohammadi 2019). The internet transformed communication form disconnected to connected one between the civil society within Iran and Iranian diasporas in Western Europe and North America (Mina 2007:5). The socio-political use of internet has proved its potential via virtual social network such as Twitter, Facebook etc. during the Green Movement of 2009. Although, it must be noted that internet alone is not capable to democratize society until and unless the peoples resistance could not arise from the grass roots level rather it could play its role as the carrier and medium of the same (Mohammadi 2019). A large population has neither reached nor used the internet. In a survey conducted by the Centre for

International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM) in association with IranPoll.com ahead of 2016 parliamentary (*Majles*) elections reveals that a large population has never used internet in their life.

Question: On average, how often do you use the internet?

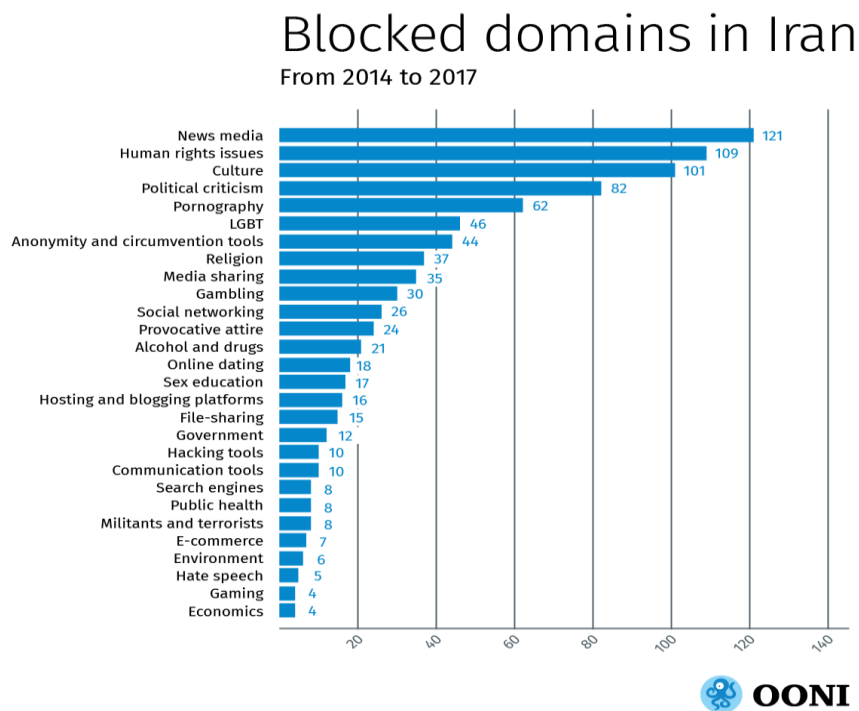| Everyday | 35.4% |
At least once a week	17.6%
Less than once a week	8.4%
Never	37. 9%
DK/NA [vol.]	0.7

Source: (CISSM and IranPoll.com 2016).

The paradox of the internet is that, on one hand it is offering a virtual platform for civil society to demonstrate society's anger, dissent and resistance. On the other hand it is also serving government to secure and expand its legitimacy. The high level of state authorities, clerics including reformists and conservatives have adopted internet to have a quick and easy reach to the public. Mohammad Ali Abtahi, the vice president (legal and parliamentary affairs) in Khatami regime stated this in his own blog on 24 November 2002. In an article published by BBC Persian, he revealed that before becoming a blogger he spent hours to read blogs written by young Iranians. He found that the blogs written by young Iranians are more insightful and reflect the reality of society in comparison with the news bulletins prepared by the intelligence services for cabinet members. Abtahi further said that "the blogs show directly what is going on in the heads of the younger generation and are indispensible sources for politicians who are concerned about this generation". A few months later reformists lost the presidential election 2005, editors of the journal *Chehel Cheragh* created blog for Khatami and named it as "the Man with the chocolate colored robe". The purpose of creating such blog was discussing about the failure of Khatami's reformist agenda. Initially Khatami showed interest and got huge response from readers but soon he became inactive on blog. Other reformists who have been active bloggers are Mohsen Kadivar, Ahmad Qabel and Ali Montazeri (Mina 2007:9).

Following reformists, the conservatives also found internet as the new medium for effective communication. President Ahmadinejad himself started his blog in 2007. He has

written in English, French, Arabic and Persian to target a large population. The government had organized a festival called "festival of revolutionary blogs and websites" which occurred at Tehran under the patronage of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. The minister of the concerned ministry, Mohammad Hossein Saffar Harandi declared that there would be a title change of his vice-minister for press affairs to vice-minister of media affairs in order to include blogs and internet. He had also stated that the ministry would vigorously involve in the development and expansion of blogs which spread the values of the Islamic Revolution. The ministry would also be instrumental in increasing the cultural authority of the Islamic Republic in the virtual spaces (Mina 2007:10).

Figure 12: Blocked domains in Iran

Blocked domains in Iran
From 2014 to 2017

Category	Value
News media	121
Human rights issues	109
Culture	101
Political criticism	82
Pornography	62
LGBT	46
Anonymity and circumvention tools	44
Religion	37
Media sharing	35
Gambling	30
Social networking	26
Provocative attire	24
Alcohol and drugs	21
Online dating	18
Sex education	17
Hosting and blogging platforms	16
File-sharing	15
Government	12
Hacking tools	10
Communication tools	10
Search engines	8
Public health	8
Militants and terrorists	8
E-commerce	7
Environment	6
Hate speech	5
Gaming	4
Economics	4

OONI

Source: https://blog.torproject.org/internet-censorship-iran-findings-2014-2017.

Since the emergence of blogging and social networking judiciary reacted in a hyper active manner in order to hinder it from becoming a social phenomenon of protest. As a result, the social networking and blogs have become the only medium for protests against

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the arbitrary arrest of the dissidents. For example Reza Shokrollahi initiated a campaign through his blog *Khabgard* against the arbitrary imprisonment of his fellow writer Yaghoub Yadali. Sina Motallebi, a film critique and cultural columnist was arrested due to his moments against the arrest of Akbar Ganji on his own blog *Rooz Negar*. His arrest received a huge reaction on internet and later received huge media coverage (Mina 2007:14-15).

Politics of Reform

There have been many factors behind the rise of socio-political movements since late 1990s. The oppressive policies of the government and politicization of the demands during the Khatami's campaign became the major reason in bolstering the socio-political movement. Despite the high level of modernization during Shah Regime, his regime depoliticized the Iranian society. Contrarily, in the Islamic republic politicization of the society happened in different context in different periods. Khomeini has politicized society to mobilize the support for his Islamic nationalist agenda. During revolution he mobilized against the Shah Regime and during war he again mobilized around religious-nationalist line. Under his Islamisation policy Khomeini mobilized university students to take care of the revolution in the universities. But political mobilization was limited to support the state policies. It had not allowed creating space beyond the regime or building capacity for civil society. Two factors majorly contributed to the success of this kind of limited mobilization; the charismatic leadership of Khomeini and war with Iraq. Due to these factors socio-political movement could not politicize their demands during Khomeini regime as they could during the Khatami regime. During reformist movement high degree of mobilization occurred around the democratization, rule of law, rights and political participation within the universities, places of work, schools and public places. The student protests before 1997 were confined within the universities and for their own problems. But since 1997 there were quantitative as well as qualitative rise in the student movement (Razavi 2008:192-193).

In spite of internal factors, the external factors like globalization, internet and social media also contributed in making political ground fertile. The political system could not

resist or block the avenues to the civil society forces and socio-political movements to grow. The faction within the political clerical establishment though existed before the rise of socio-political movements but the nature of factionalism was different. The political factions within the clerical establishment acquired the new shape according to the public demands which at least reflected in their rhetoric communicated during election campaign if could not be materialized by them at the practical ground when they came in power (Razavi 2008:193-194).

The close observation on reformist leaders' statements, working behavior and their relationship with social movements shows their deliberate avoidance towards a collective action and mass mobilization. Reformist thinker Kadivar termed it as an 'active tranquility'; the active silence. The political reformers have shown activeness in terms of mobilizing masses for their electoral gain and have been silent on the question of political change and demands of the people. The active tranquility is the result of two factors. First; the reformists has spent years working within the system and second; the reformist avoided open confrontation with the conservative authorities of the state either they trusted conservatives that they would allow democratic change to occur or reformists shared close relationship with conservatives of working together (in some cases family relations). It could be justified by analyzing statements and comments of the reformist leaders. For examples, in 2000, in a newspaper associated with Khatami's administration, it was stated that, "We believe there is a rational faculty at the upper level of the regime that has always rescued the country at the edge of the precipice". Another article stated that, "The best way to engage the enemies of civil society is to give them this opportunity to rethink and let them readjust. We should show them in practice that transition to democracy presents greater opportunity than threats" and "there is no way to change the world than to act within legal institutions" (Barlow and Akbarzadeh 2018).

Thus reformist leaders and politicians adopted a top-down approach of reform from within the formal boundaries of the regime. Khatami has chosen the inside track and worked within the system to bring change rather respecting the will of the people who voted for him. He sacrificed the agenda on which he came in power for the sake of

maintaining the relation with his conservative colleagues and being faithful to the upper layer of the authority. Khatami's close aide and foremost theoretician of the reform, Said Hajjarian also proposed a method of 'compromise' based on values of tolerance and dialogue. The compromising attitude of reformists is derived from the belief that change could be possible through realizing republican principles of Constitution (Barlow and Akbarzadeh 2018).

CHAPTER V

Green Movement and the its Aftermath (2009-2016)

The Green Movement of 2009 emerged as the second wave of the reformist movement (Yesiltas 2016). The first wave had emerged during the campaign of the 1997 presidential election. However, the reformist movement as an intellectual discourse began taking shape since early 1990s which laid the foundation of what is termed as post-Khomeini politics or reformist paradigm. The Khatami regime (1997 to 2005) is generally considered as the reformist phase in the Iranian politics. However, the students' uprisings (especially in 1999 and 2003) and many other protests organized by real actors of the reformist movement like students, women and youth became the authentic markers of the reformist movement. These events have reflected the demands of the Iranian people and given a direction to the democratic discourse which has an indigenous and authentic root.

The Green Movement though has many critiques and support; it has undoubtedly proved to be the authentic marker of the reformist movement or ongoing people's struggle for democracy in Iran. The Green Movement has not only renewed the demands of the people but also provided a fresh and new experience to the democratic movement in the changing scenario. The socio-political events from Green Movement in Iran to the emergence of Arab Spring within as short gap of a year had compelled one to think towards the reconsideration of the very notion of 'revolution' that one learned from Marx and Hannah Arendt. However, Green Movement despite of stirring the political discourse in Iran left the belligerent theocracy in power. The Arab Spring proved more fruitful. It toppled the tyrants in Tunisia and Egypt and changed the regime in Libya. Despite of the variation in the pace and achievements, the Green Movement and Arab Spring are inseparable in terms of context, time and space in which these events were occurred. The happening of these events in a series and influencing one to other has transformed the character of socio-political movement into a transnational nature. This trans- nationality is breaking the national boundaries as well as transcending the old narratives based on divisions of multiple identities (Dabashi 2012). The Green Movement has not only

further determined the reformist discourse in the Iranian politics but also influenced the course of action of dominant conservative faction. Therefore it requires a detailed discussion to reach its core to know its role in Iranian politics.

The Green Movement

The result of the most contested and allegedly fraudulent presidential elections were released on June 12, 2009. Incumbent President Ahmadinejad defeated the reformist candidate Mir Hussien Mousavi. Immediately after the declaration of the result, approximately three million peaceful protestors began arriving on the streets of Tehran against the allegedly rigged results. They chanted the slogan "Where is my vote" (Milani, 2010; Tahmasebi 2012; Sundquist 2013:19-20). People demanded recounting of the votes. The Supreme Leader declared that those contesting the results are "seditious elements" (Sadr 2012). The protest was followed by many other peaceful demonstrations till December 2009. The government and its security forces brutally attacked the peaceful demonstrations (Tahmasebi 2012). This uprising is generally known as the Green Movement (for the color of banners and bandanas used by protesters). It was widely praised as a nonviolent, non-utopian movement facilitated by twenty-first century communication technology (Milani 2015). Though movement was just a protest against the alleged election results, it also represented people's perpetual demand for democracy, peaceful change and human rights (Yesiltas 2016:66).

The rapid conversion of the Green Movement from a protest against the immediate cause of alleged rigged elections into a mass movement with the demand of democratic rights has led to the revival of state's age-old strategy of deploying anti-imperialist narrative. The state attempted to portray the Green Movement as western funded. However, the state's effort proved to be futile due to Iranian people's construction of an indigenous narrative. The people have revealed the economic and political shortcomings of the state and concentrated the attention towards a deep-rooted grass root problems of the Iranian society. The attitudinal shift in the people could be observed in the slogan chanted by people in the Green movement such as "Neither for Gaza nor for Lebanon, my soul is sacrificed for Iran" (Tafesh 2012; Yesiltas 2016:64-65-66).

Figure 13: Protesters at Tehran in June 2009

Source: http://www.payvand.com/news/12/feb/1101.html.
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/feb/13/iran-opposition-demonstrations-government-warnings

The green movement is categorized as a 'social movement' and political demonstration which challenged the fundamental political assumptions about the Islamic Republic and its political culture. It is acknowledged as the first great popular uprising after the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Green Movement is the most important political event in Iran since 1979 revolution (Aslan 2010: 311; Cole 2010: 316). It has renewed the grievances of other social movements including students' movement, women's movement and also the reformist movement as a whole. It has united different groups and social movements at the national level and demanded civil rights and more democratic political culture (Khosrokhavar 2012). It garnered the support of the people and gathered local grievances. It challenged the monopoly of the clerical political elites. Thus it is considered as a "driving force of the public sphere". (Adelkhah 2013:18)

The green movement as a whole has been seen as a continuation of the "third way" that propagated during the early period of the reformist discourse. Dabashi (2010) characterizes it as 'the end of ideology' and move towards a practical disposition as well as the contemporary needs and desires (Mansouri Zeyni and Sami 2014:50). Kar (2015) argues that the Islamic Republic of Iran had lost its legitimacy due to the brutal repression of the Green Movement that was a mirror reflecting people's grievances which cannot be erased from Iran's post- revolutionary history. Hassan Rouhani's victory in 2013 proved that people are still hoping to expand civil freedom through democratic means (Kar 2015:69).

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Figure14: Green movement protests on the streets

Moghssi (2012) argues that Green movement is one fraction of the broader civil and political movement for democracy and social justice in Iran. The movement is an open, informal and certainly unplanned coalition and the supporters of this coalition have different visions. Its symbolic representatives have specific objectives and ideas that are not necessarily shared by many of its supporters. However, they share some common goals which are necessary for a fundamental change (Moghssi 2012). The Green movement is a failure in terms of lack of unity and its internal divisions. It was also failed because of the inability of its leadership to reframe its grievances. Nevertheless, it was succeeded in further transformion of the relationship between the state and society. At the bottom level, the Green Movement has united different voices and demands. It mobilized masses from bottom up according to the grievances (Adelkhah 2013:33).

The demonstrations were not only against the unfair election but also the oppressive rule of the Islamic Republic. Green movement in Iran was non-violent and youthful. This was a civil movement aimed at change within the Iranian society. It was a historical battle for the foundation of a lawful and accountable government. Jahanbegloo argued that "as the movement developed, it became increasingly clear that the fraudulent elections had given the Iranian people an opportunity not only to defend what few democratic rights they had, but also to attempt to lay the new foundations for a truly democratic Iran". It is important to note that the Green Movement hasn't suddenly materialized the democratic beliefs in the aftermath of the fraudulent elections. The growing democratic beliefs among Iranians

are also the result of the increasing level of education of the young population and their growing secular and liberal credentials. It is the part of the ongoing political and social evolution which Iran has been experiencing more than two decades. This has brought the liberal ideals to the forefront of the political discussions in Iran (Jahanbegloo 2012: 1).

Iranian political system is facing a legitimacy crisis after the Green Movement. The people who were at the power positions lost their moral credibility due to their cruelty and lies. The Green Movement focused on an alternative source of legitimacy against Supreme Leader's absolute sovereignty. Moreover, most of the demonstrators who challenged the legitimacy of the electoral system of Islamic Republic are from the young generation. They have no experience and are too young to remember the revolution of 1979. One third of the voters in the 2009 presidential elections were from young generation. The monolithic image undercuts the aspirations of the seventy percent population that comes under the age of thirty. The quest for democracy among the young generation posed a threat not only to the reform movement but also the legitimacy of the doctrine of the Guardianship of the Jurist. It has also raised the question of democratic authenticity (Jahanbegloo 2012: 3).

In the Islamic revolution, the revolutionaries used the cassette tapes to circulate the speeches of Khomeini. Similarly, the young protestors of the Green Movement are using Twitter and Facebook. Most of the young activists believe that non-violence is the only means to achieve democracy and peace. The demonstrators were encouraging a dialogue with the state rather than choosing the path of bloodshed. The non-violent nature of the Green Movement owe to the factors such as the ideological shift of the younger generation from the radical Islamism as well as Marxism-Leninism. The younger generation has shifted to the non-ideological approaches such as post-Islamism. Jahanbegloo stated that "the Iranian Revolution of February 1979 was a great socio-political change accompanied by a hybrid intellectual discourse; but it was incontrovertibly not an intellectual shift towards a critique of violence". Moreover, it caused the return of a massive violence into the modern politics of Iran. For the younger generation, it was difficult to believe that Khomeini was successful in forming a violent theocracy. Even though, Khomeini did not romanticize the violence unlike the leftists in

Iran, he practiced it in an unbending mode against his opponents (Jahanbegloo 2012: 4). Another impact of the Green Movement was that it has caused an intensification of division within the regime. Kamrava argued that "it revealed the deep fissures that existed between factional and ideological groups within the Islamic Republic" (Kamrava 2013:168). In addition, Hashemi and Patel argued that "the Supreme Leader was no longer seen as the 'neutral arbiter' of the state and lost legitimacy in the eyes of many Iranians" (Hashemi and Postel 2011:52).

The impact of the Green Movement was very much evident in the increasing division between the Iranian civil society and state. It has also separated those people who regarded that political and economic relations with the west is essential for the future of Iran and those disdain the relations with the west as the violation of the ideals of the revolution. It is not possible to say that Green movement was all failure despite the fact that it did not succeed to overcome the Islamic Republic politically. It had a significant impact on the Iranian politics and political culture. The protests illustrated the democratic maturity of the Iranian people. For the sake of democracy, they were ready to risk their lives. Jahanbegloo opined that "the republican principle of popular sovereignty is what led the social and political actors of the Green Movement to challenge Ayatollah Khamenei's authoritarian methods of governance. It let the genie of democracy out of the bottle, and the Iranian regime clearly fears that it won't be able to drive it back" (Jahanbegloo 2012:5-7).

When the protests broke out in Tunisia and other Arab countries, Hossein Musavi, the leading presidential candidate of the Green Movement stated that "the starting point of what we are now witnessing on the streets of Tunis, Sanaa, Cairo, Alexandria and Suez can be undoubtedly traced back to days of 15th, 18th and 20th June 2009 when people took to the streets of Tehran in millions shouting 'where is my vote?' and peacefully demanded to get back their denied rights" (Kurzman 2012:162). However, Ali Khamenei had expressed a different opinion. He said that events in Egypt, Tunisia and Africa are as same as the Islamic Awakening. However Musavi suggested that the Green Movement in Iran is not the only motivational event for the Arab Spring rather it is one of the sources of inspirations among a series of 'color revolutions' of the past decades. To demonstrate

this, Sayid Yossif, an Egyptian activist included the name of the Green Movement in his list of precedents and stated that "We learned how to become a revolution in name, like the Salt March (India), the July Movement (Cuba), Solidarity (Poland), the Movement of Lawyers and Judges (Pakistan), and the Green Movement (Iran), and how to make a revolution really alive and active like the Orange Revolution (Ukraine), the Cedar Revolution (Lebanon), and the Lily Revolution (Kyrgyzstan)" (Kurzman 2012:162-163).

Moreover, Ghonim told the Iranian activists that "we have learned from you guys". The tactics that they learned from the Green Movement was the use of cell phone, phototherapy and videography, the use of the internet to spread the information. It worked as the medium of communication bypassing the government censorship. The images of the Green Movement were demonstrated in the protests at Cairo's Tahrir square during the Arab Spring. However, the successful uprisings of the Arab Spring replicated the Iranian Revolution in terms of overthrowing the authoritarian regimes and doing general strikes which the Green Movement could never do (Kurzman 2012:164-165). Moreover, scholars like Simonowitz and Picerkings also agreed that the Green Movement was instrumental for the emergence of Arab Spring and and the subsequent fall of regimes in Edgypt, Tunisia and inspired the revolutionary movements in Bahrain and Yemen (Moghanizadeh 2013: 4).

In Tunisia and Egypt, the uprisings are the bottom up movements which demanded political and economic changes. However, in the Green Movement the role of affluent class has been dominant and determinant to shape its nature. The Green Movement had comprised of lower class as compared with the Arab Spring. Green Movement could not garner the support from the lower class strata such as peasants and labour organizations which are essential for a broad base movement. In fact, "Green Movement was an election related uprising instigated by a few defunct officials who have never gone supported the ideological foundation of the Islamic regime" (Torbat 2011). Torbat (2011) argued that:

> The Green movement was quickly discredited because the disputes brought up by the candidates who lost in the elections could not be substantiated. Both Mehdi Karroubi and Mir-Hossein Mousavi claimed the government had rigged the elections, but they failed to show any credible evidence that they could have earned enough votes to win the election.

The media outlets in the West manufactured Mousavi and Karroubi as the leaders of the opposition in Iran. There are of course many opposition groups against the Islamic regime in Iran but their leaders are not known and surely are not Karroubi or Mousavi. The uprisings in the Arab world however did not have any specific leaders and were not election related, and were not Islamic movements as the clerics in Iran claimed. In the Arab uprisings, people wanted the existing client regimes cease to exist in their totality as opposed to the Green movement in Iran that agreed the existing Islamic regime remains intact (Torbat 2011).

It is important to know the key figures and the class base of the Green Movement. Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani was the chief supporter of the Green camp within the regime. He was an advocate of neoliberal capitalism. He is a moderate cleric and supported the interests of the affluent and the merchant class of Iran. His family acquired a substantial amount of wealth by using the influence in the regime and there were charges with corruption on various occasions. Rafsanjani lost his position as the head of the Assembly of Experts on March 8, 2011 which was a major setback for the Green Movement. Nonetheless, he headed the Expediency Council for long (Torbat 2011).

Mehdi Karroubi and Mir Hossein Mousavi had emerged as the two foremost leaders of the Green Movement who contested against Ahmadinejad (Yesiltas 2016:65). Mehdi Karroubi previously served as the head of the parliament. Karroubi was also accused of corruption charges. It was in the news debate during election of 2009 that Karroubi has taken bribe from a wealthy businessman. Another important figure of the Green Movemnt was Mohammad Khatami. He also faced the criticism that he could not deliver the promises to the people of Iran during his eight years of rule (Torbat 2011).

Mir-Hossein Mousavi Khameneh also emerged as the influential figure during the Green Movement. He is the second cousin of Ali Khamenei. He was an interior designer and architect. He became politically active when he joined the Militant Muslims Movement, the group of young militants, in 1977. He possessed the title of the Prime Minster in 1981-89 after the revolution. However, he was a nominal figure who depended on Ayatollah Khomeini for taking decisions. According to the Amnesty International, around three thousands prisoners were executed in the prisons of Iran under his repressive premiership. In the later period, especially since 1989, Mousavi remained inactive in politics. He returned back to politics by declaring his candidacy in 2009 presidential election. In order to garner the support from the labour class, he began his

campaigns from the labour union headquarter. However he failed in garnering the support of the labour class (Torbat 2011).

This suggests that the prominent leaders of the Green Movement had earlier served the Islamic regime as its main officials. The candidates in the presidential election were handpicked by the Guardian Council. Mousavi and Karroubi had decided to contest in the election within the framework of the existing election rules of the regime. However, they rejected the election results after their defeat and declared that the election process had some flaws. Western media backed Mousavi during the run up and after the election of 2009 which boosted the image of him against the President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. However, the propaganda of the western media could not succeed in turning away the multitudes of the voters who supported Ahmadinejad (Torbat 2011).

The self-reliant policies and the anti-foreign image of Ahmadinejad contributed to his success in his re-election. The west backed moderate fraction of the Islamic Republic to fight against the conservative wing with the help of the influential media outlets. Nevertheless, the replacement of one wing over the other is not considered to be a progress towards democracy. Hossein Mousavi and Karroubi were in the illusion that they are in the leadership position of the opposition factions during the 2009 elections by looking at the support given by the western media outlets. Moreover, the Green movement neither opposed the status quo nor supported any movement for social or political change. Torbat argues that "the genuine opposition groups in Iran are not led by those defunct officials rather it was the intelligentsia which took the leading role of the opposition groups in Iran. The middle class in the intellectual circle in Iran favored a secular government and challenged the clerics saying that they have no divine right to rule Iran" (Torbat 2011).

Most of the Iranians revolted against the restrictions imposed by the government on their social life. For instance, the women in Iran opposed the rules imposed by the clerics on their dress code, rules that stopped them from becoming judges; prevent them from singingand the legalization of the polygamy. The broadcasting of many religious programs and the control over the press by the government resulted in Iranians depending

upon the media outlets located in abroad such as Voice of America, Persian BBC and many other outlets broadcasted from the west. The policies suggested by the leaders of the Green Camp did not consider the interests of the lower class. Instead it sought to destabilize the country on the basis of false and fraudulent allegations. In addition to it, the excessive western media propaganda in support of the Green camp caused a backlash among the Iranians against the movement (Torbat 2011).

Figure 15: The Supreme Leader's Prayer Rug

However, Green Movement differed from the reformist momentum or ongoing reform process in so far as that Iranian people have transcended the grip of the political leadership. They have demonstrated the strength of growing civil society in Iran and indicated its move towards autonomy. The reform process due to the strong grip of political leadership has never arisen above the boundaries of the system. However, Green Movement has proved as the symbol of the repudiation of the existing political structures and demanded for a structural change. It was because of this reason that Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi did not enejoy the control over the protesters despite their position as the leaders of the Green Movement. They were reacting to the sentiment on the streets instead of directing it (Wright 2009: 43;

Yesiltas 2016:65-66). Dabashi (2016) has asserted that

> Green Movement shook the ruling regime to its foundations. Superficially, the Green Movement was just questioning the accuracy of the electoral vote-count, as millions of protestors strongly believed the election had been rigged; but at a deeper and more troubling level for the regime, it was giving air and momentum to something more deeply repressed. What the Green Movement proved beyond any shadow of doubt was that the Islamic Republic had failed to manufacture a Homo Islamicus, and that the defiant spirit of Iran's cosmopolitan political culture (which included but was not reducible to militant Islamism) had resurfaced in triumph. The Green Movement of 2009 was the return of this repressed opposition. From the very beginning, that process was perforce was cosmopolitan, non- sectarian, non-denominational, gender and class conscious, and above all transnational and worldly in its character and culture (Dabashi 2016).

The contemporary transnational uprisings, from Iran to Morocco, from Syria to Yemen, have transformed society and politics in an unprecedented manner. The Green Movement in Iran, however, was not just a popular protest against the alleged rigged presidential election. It has challenged the foundations of Islamic Republic. It has revealed the failures of the State which tried to establish an Islamic homogeneity. The Green Movement presented the defiant sprit of Iran's cosmopolitan political culture which included, but not reduced to militant Islamism (Dabashi 2016).

Milani stated that "it had grown as a crucial popular opposition movement that staged a great challenge to the country's power structure. It was as unique phenomenon as the Iranian Revolution which took place almost thirty years ago" (Milani 2010). It has given a momentum to the repressed opposition and the cosmopolitan political culture. The cosmopolitan political culture of Iran was "non-sectarian, non-denominational, gender and class conscious, and above all transnational and worldly in its character and culture" (Dabashi 2016). It had played a crucial role in the previous civil movements and finally culminated in the course of the 1977-79 revolution. Nevertheless, the revolution was hijacked by militant Islamist before it could succeed in establishing a free and democratic republic. For more than three decades, the ruling regime has been involved in the process of redefining the Iranian political culture in exclusively Islamist terms. But they have continually failed to deal with the challenges of peoples' discontent raised from women's rights movement, labor unrest, and student protest. Green movement was the culmination of this consistent discontent to claim the public space. Dabashi stated that "these were manifestations of a defiant cosmopolitan culture that the militant and besieged Islamists

wished to deny; but the harder they denied it, the stronger it became" (Dabashi 2016).

After the Green Movement in Iran, the Arab Spring emerged as the translational popular uprising. These uprisings came with the capacity of changing the world with a better and hopeful version of itself. The Arab Spring has initiated the process of transforming our consciousness of the world not by dogma or violence but beyond that. The events from the Green Movement to Arab Spring has challenged the colonially imposed geographical divisions or notions (categories) known as 'the Middle East' or 'North Africa' or 'the Arab and Muslim world'. The world is transcending itself and overcoming the puzzled consciousness derived from the colonial and engrossed by postcolonial. To understand the transformation led by the Green Movement and Arab Spring, there is a need of new metaphors beyond the colonial or postcolonial. There is a need of rethinking of the concept of 'revolution' as it was understood by Karl Marx and Hannah Arendt. The upheaval has transcended all boundaries of religion, race, sects, ideologies and pro or anti- western sentiments (Dabashi 2012).

The term 'west' has lost its potency and therefore the condition of 'post- coloniality' has become meaningless. "The East, the West, the Oriental, the colonial, the postcolonial- they are no more. What we are witnessing unfold in what used to be called 'the Middle East' (and beyond) marks the end of postcolonial ideological formations". The postcolonial in the process of negating the colonial did not overcome it. The postcolonial subject was the colonial subject itself. It lasted with the illusion of the emancipation projected by the colonial. Dabashi opined that "for more than two hundred years, from nineteenth to twentieth century, colonialism begat postcolonial ideological formations: socialism, nationalism, nativism (Islamism); one meta-narrative after another, ostensibly to combat, but effectively to embrace and exacerbate, its consequences" (Dabashi 2012).

The Arab Spring has commenced the process of overcoming the both; colonial as well as postcolonial. These uprisings are creating new methods of liberation and emancipation which are no longer shaped by the colonial or rests upon the postcolonial structures of domination. The ruling regimes are disturbed by these new revolutions (uprisings) due to their transformed nature that goes beyond 'the politics of replicating' 'the West'. The

revolutions have not only challenged the ruling regimes but also the self-claimed superpowers due to the nature of being beyond the colonial dividend. Therefore, Dabashi opined that "the revolutions are simultaneously rejecting colonial oppression as well as the postcolonial ideologies that had exhausted themselves as antithesis of colonial in form of Islamist, nationalist or socialist grand narratives and these postcolonial ideological formations have also exhausted epistemically" (Dabashi 2012).

Green Movement and Internet

Globalization facilitated a broader availability of communication technologies through internet that in turn increased the social connectivity. The process of circulating information was accelerated by social media tools such as Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, Email, photo sharing and text messaging. The functioning of these communication tools is more significant in the authoritarian regimes where the non-governmental media is absent. In the academic debates also, the association between the social media and social movements is a controversial issue. Some believe that the social media is a noteworthy tool in regard to the social movements which accentuate the potential of these tools in mobilizing the masses for freedom and social change. For example, Shirky (2008) is of the opinion that the social media is a beneficial platform for democracy. It reduced the state led restrains of communication and provides easiness in the dissemination of information. However, scholars like Morozov believe that these tools are also used by the authoritarian regimes to suppress the social movements (Morozov 2011: 10).

After the declaration of the results of presidential election on 13 June 2009, Mahmud Ahmadinejad was re-elected and Mir Hussein Mousavi was defeated. Within a short time, the video clips and the pictures of the demonstrators were circulated in the internet. Later, the social media became a viable option for the protestors to organize the demonstrations and sharing the information. This happened despite the restrictions and filtering imposed on the internet by the regime. As a result, the western media has termed the movement as "the Twitter Revolution" since Twitter was most used social media platform. The mass protestors were tweeting the messages of hope and inspiration to the rest of the world. Twitter users were able to overcome the censorship of the government which restricted

the access to mobile text messaging (Scow 2010: 99; Moghanizadeh 2013: 3).

Cohen (2009) considered the new communication tools as privatized, depoliticized, personal and entertainment apparatuses. Similarly, Morozov (2011) also opined that these tools have a negative impact on the social movements. On the other hand, the media experts like Shirky (2008) perceive new media and internet as the beneficial tools for democracy (Moghanizadeh 2013: 4-5). In the book titled *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organization*", Shirky (2008), argues that "the internet and the social media reduces the barriers of communication and help in disseminating the information and organizing the groups in the social movements" (Shirky 2008).

Moreover, shirky in his article in the *Foreign Affairs* (2011), he emphasized the role of the new media in co-coordinating the collective political activities and regarded the action of imposing restrictions on internet in the authoritarian regimes as a proof for contention. In relation to the Green Movement in Iran, Shirkey stated that "during the June 2009 revolt of the Green Movement, Iranians activists used every possible technological coordinating tool to protest the miscount of votes for Mir Hossein Mousavi, but were ultimately brought to heel by a violent crackdown" (Shirky 2011). Likewise, Kurzman considered the electronic media as the backbones of the Green Movement and argued that "Mousavi's Facebook page continues to be one of the central ways for the Green movement to distribute information" (Kurzman 2010: 7).

However, Sreberny and Khiabany (2010) while accepting the effectiveness of new communication technologies in the popular social mobilization have critically looked at the ineffectiveness of internet in the political movements in Iran. They have discussed the difficulties occurring in the intellectual activities in Iran. This is the major reason for the appearance of intellectual activity in the blogosphere. They also enumerated the limitations such as slow internet, filtering and hardware costs that prevented many Iranians from accessing the internet (Sreberny & Khiabany 2010: 152).

Malcom Glaswell (2010), argued that the potential of new media and internet cannot be considered as positive elements in the revolutionary movements as these links are weak ties which could not motivate the individuals to participate in any offline action which

made the action impossible (Moghanizadeh 2013: 6). Moreover, Evgeny Morozov (2011) opined that the tools of social networking can be useful for the authoritarian governments to sustain more power, if those are not used properly. To prove this proposition, he has used the example of the Green Movement. The writer stated that "once the protests quieted down, the Iranian authorities embarked on a digital purge of their opponents in December 2009 the pro-Ahmadinejad *Raja News* website, published a batch of thirty-eight photos with sixty-five faces circled in red and a batch of forty-seven photos with about a hundred faces circled in red. According to the Iranian police, public tip-offs helped identify and arrest at least forty people" (Morozov, 2011: 10). Rahaghi (2012) in his article stated that:

> The Largest Benefit of Twitter in 2009 was informing the world of the events transpiring on the ground in Iran. This is a very important role and in different circumstances, Twitter may have helped organize the Iranian opposition in their efforts at protest but modern communication technology was rendered ineffective due to a lack of clear organization and leadership…depending on the circumstances, the capabilities of these technologies may be negated or used against protesters through monitoring by the government (Rahaghi, 2012: 174).

Rahaghi further argued that "the technology may be powerful but its effectiveness will be less if the target population cannot access it." The extensive censorship and filtering has lessened its effectiveness (Rahaghi, 2012: 175). The modern communication technologies used in the favorable circumstances have the potential to gain support of outside world in the uprisings for democracy such as Green Movement (Moghanizadeh 2013:7).

The new media has the potential to rejuvenate the public sphere. Its impact on the state-society relations can be understood by comprehending the states' attempt to curb the access of the same. The government systematically hindered the access of outside worldview to the demonstrations in Iran. The state have been banning the social media, arbitrarily arresting the bloggers and journalists (Giroux, 2009). The internet could be a medium of expanding the scope of the autonomy, freedom and creativity. The internet is a viable medium to connect one-to-one and one-to-many for mutual interaction. Notwithstanding, it may affect the sustainability of the movement. The physical gatherings are necessary to effectively organize, mobilize and sustain the movement (Lim and Kann, 2008: 77-107). Hamid Dabashi (2010) also rejects the argument that universal access is a necessary condition for effective use of the social media. He opined

that "it is required just one person per family or a few per neighborhood, to account for the entire public domain" (Dabashi 2010: 153, Moghanizadeh 2013:8).

Role of Women in Green Movement

Women's participation in Green Movement is one of the crucial aspects of its understanding. Women's struggle for equal right and social justice got momentum during the Green Movement. In the early years of reform movement, women's rights did not get separate attention. In Green Movement, women's participation in huge number challenged the hegemonic gender ideology of the Islamic Republic (Sadeghi 2013). Women's participation in Green movement directed the mode of movement in a more democratic activism. It also raised women's awareness and took their issues to the general public (Tahmasebi2012; Sadr 2012).

Figure 16: Protests by Women demanding political rights

Source: https://www.slideshare.net, http://henrythefrog.blogspot.com/2009/08/
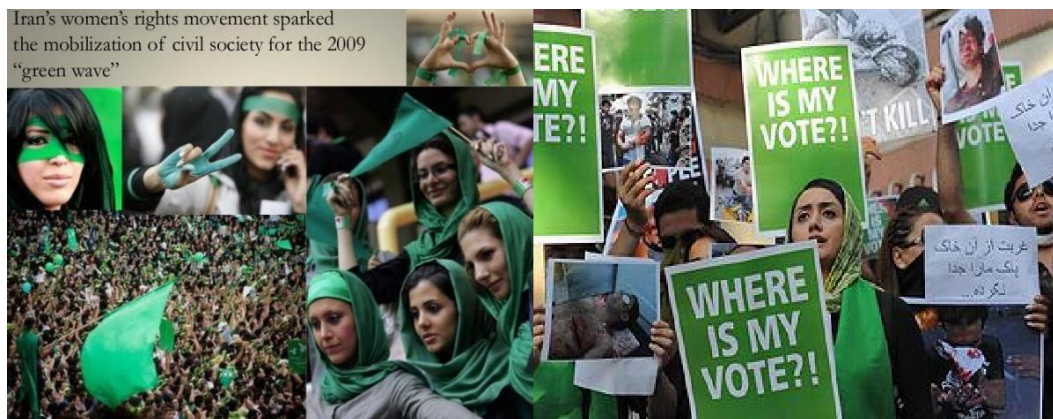
The majority of women in Iran have come under the young population since the seventy percent of the population of Iran is under thirty. The literacy rate of women in Iran is ninety percent. Women constitute sixty percent of the university students. There are more than forty women's organizations and 700 women, civil and human right activists. The women's movement in Iran especially for last three decades has huge impact on the ongoing democratic transformation in the country. It has influenced the socio-political change in terms of method, content, philosophy and in the method of resistance. The Iranian women through their incessant struggle and active participation have developed

an intrinsic relationship with the general democratic struggle in the Iran. As a logical consequence, the presence of indigenous feminist thought and ideals at grassroots level could be observed (Victoria 2010:79).

Figure 17: Iranian and American supporters in Los Angeles in solidarity with Neda

Source: http://www.nbcnews.com/id/31488552/ns/world_news-mideast_n_africa/t/video-turns-woman-icon-iran-unrest/#.XSkLoOgzayI

The new generation of women through their struggle and active participation has established the ambition that goes beyond the legal equality. Although women have participated in the 1979 revolution in significant number, but they were counted behind the men. In the current scenario the women movement came with its own identity and women are fighting on streets for equal rights with men in every sphere of socio-political and cultural life. There is a new consciousness among the women fighting for the recognition for their own agency. These developments within women's movement have not only changed the equations of the Green Movement but also its direction, philosophy and content. It is evident in the images and videos of the demonstrations during the Green Movement which showed an unprecedented presence of the women (Victoria 2010:79).

The massive presence of women is awakening not only for Iranian politics but for the whole world. The Green Movement witnessed thousands of women marching, carrying banners, chanting, and singing. The women were attacked by the military and police forces. They were beaten up, arrested, killed and jailed. Many women have gone missing

or declared dead without any evidence. Neda Agha-Soltan, (26) a philosophy student was shot dead. Her image had gone viral and symbolized the victimization of Iranian women and their self-determination. Thus, the green movement has witnessed the realization of the women's existence in the public sphere (Victoria 2010:79).

Figure 18: People hold placards bearing images of Iranian Neda Agha Soltan. This was during a demonstration against Iran's clampdown on opposition activists, near the Effeil Tower in Paris, Saturday, July 25, 2009.

The uniqueness of the women's participation in the Green movement was that it crossed the ideological boundaries. It represented the heterogeneous character of the Iranian society. The ideological lines such as secularism and religion did not become the barrier in transforming the women's united identity. The women who participated in the demonstrations were from both religious and non-religious backgrounds. The common goals which brought the women together are achieving the freedom and equality for all and determining the exercise of their civil rights. The major objective was to be considered as an equal participant in the Iranian political process. The most significant example of the women's unity is the *One Million Signature* campaign. The campaign aimed at pressuring the state to recognize the equality of women and men before the law. The women across the ideological and religious lines participated in the campaign (Victoria 2010:80).

The Green Movement is known for its non-violent ethos. Women's contribution in

making green movement as non-violent is significant. It was contrary to the other movements like labour movement and student movement which adopted violence to some extent. The women's movement has always been committed towards peaceful campaigns, strikes, boycotts, sit-ins and civil disobedience. During the demonstrations, the women acted as a buffer between the male demonstrators and security forces to stop violent clashes. Victoria opined that "there were many incidents, some recorded and broadcasted, where women tried to protect both the riot police and the protestors, preventing them from being beaten or killed by each other" (Victoria 2010:84).

Ethnic Minorities and Green Movement

Apart from its external obstacles which the government security forces created in the form of inhuman suppression, the Green movement also suffered from internal deficiencies. One such deficiency was the lack of support from the ethnic minorities' groups such as Kurds, Balochs, Arabs, Turkmen and others. The demonstrations had been limited to Tehran and the cities with the Persian majority. The ethnic minorities comprised almost half of the population of Iran. The participation of the ethnic minority and support from their movement would have changed the dynamics of the Green Movement. Their participation had the potential to transform Green Movement into a nationwide movement (Ghajar, 2010; Yesiltas 2016:64-65-66).

The leaders of the Green Movement intentionally avoided the inclusion of the ethnic minorities in the movement due to the notion of separatism attached with them. However, the ethnic minorities' movement shares many goals with the Green movement such as opening Iranian society for greater internal political dialogue and increasing popular representation in government. Due to the elite leadership in the Green Movement, ethnic minorities also had less faith in it. The Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq declared at its website named the Kurdish Globe, that the Green Movement is the latest reflection of the elite factionalism that has been existing since its foundations (Ghajar, 2010; Yesiltas 2016:64-65-66). The Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan also issued a statement in January 2010 which reflected the Kurdish movement's reluctant stand on the Green Movement. The statement reads like "democracy in its real form can only be

obtainable when the national rights of the various nationalities are acknowledged explicitly. The Green Movement will succeed if it joins its cause with ethnic minorities. But that's something we believe the Green Movement is, so far, afraid to do" (Medya News, 2010; Yesiltas 2016:64-65-66).

However, the Kurdish Komala Party had a slightly different position. The secretary general of the party, Abdullah Mohtadi, issued a statement on June 7, 2010 which aimed at giving solidarity with the Green Movement. The statement stated that the people of Kurdistan do not demand separation from the country. Neither have they demanded any especial rights or benefits for themselves. Their demands are coterminous with the contemporary democratic movements and human right discourse within the Iran. The people of Kurdistan wish that leaders of Green Movement support the demands of the ethnic movements (Mohtadi, 2010; Yesiltas 2016:64-65-66).

In spite of exclusiveness and less commitment towards the ethnic cause, the leadership of the Green Movement went in the opposite ways. The minority parties have also not shown much assertiveness from their side and remained passive. The Green Movement emerged as a great opportunity for the ethnic minorities. It created such a political space that ethnic groups could have integrated their demands into a larger grassroots democratic movement whose real actors are youth, not the political elites. There can be fewer disagreements about their criticism of the elite leadership. But ethnic groups could have challenged the both; the elite reformist leadership as well as the conservative ruling class (Yesiltas 2016:64-65-66).

Rouhani Regime: The Co-option Continues

The presidential election of 2013 was held on 14 June 2013. The self-acclaimed moderate candidate Hassan Rouhani was backed by the reformists. Rouhani secured 50.71 percent votes[18] and avoided a run-off. [19] The conservative candidate Tehran Mayor Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf secured only 16.56 percent votes. The voting turnout was 72.2 percent.

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[18] According to accouchement done by Interior Minister Mostafa Mohammad Najjar, Rouhani has won 18,613,329 of the 36,704,156 votes cast (BBC 15 JUNE 2013).

[19] According to the election processor of the Islamic Republic the presidential candidate requires more than 50 percent of the votes to avoid the a run-off (BBC 15 JUNE 2013)

The supporters of Rouhani were gathered to hail the victory at Vali-Asr Square and Kaj Square situated in the central Tehran and north-west of Tehran respectively. The crowd shouted, "Long live reform, long live Rouhani." The one supporter told a journalist from Reuters News agency that "many people are holding Rouhani posters. Some are hugging and crying. We are all so happy here. We cannot believe there is finally a change" (BBC 15, June 2015).

After the victory, US has given a statement that it is 'ready to engage directly' with Iran over the nuclear programme which has been disputed since long. Congratulating Rouhani, supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khomeini has stated that, "I urge everyone to help the president elect and his colleagues in the government, as he is the president of the whole nation." In the first public statement after his victory Rouhani said that "this victory is a victory for wisdom, moderation and maturity….over extremism." However, in his statement he also urged that world should "acknowledge the rights of Iran. He further said, "The nations who tout democracy and open dialogue should speak to the Iranian people with respect and recognize the rights of the Islamic Republic" (BBC 15, June 2015).

The credentials of the Green Movement were proved in the Rouhani's victory (Kar 2015). Rouhani stood for reform and change, like Khatami, he promised to provide a government based on the rule of law. He promised a government of prudence, optimism and of reconciliation in term of relations with other world, particularly West (Milani 2015). His priorities could be explained in one sentence which he used in his campaign; "save the economy, revive morality, and interact with the world" (Ditto 2013: 59).

Even after a lot of criticism from the opposition, Rouhani nuclear deal with USA got legitimacy in the *Majles* election of 2006. But his domestic approach in his presidency did not seem fulfilling the promises. He followed a conservative approach domestically. In his government freedom of expression existsted only on paper. Some reformist newspapers were banned during the first year of Rouhani's presidency including *Roozan*, *Bahar*, *Khorshid*, *Ebtekar* and *Aseman* (BTI 2016). Though, Rouhani has projected him as a reformist, he also enjoys the support of the conservatives. Therefore, he is also termed as a 'pragmatic conservative'. Some also argue that he was elected with the

support of the Supreme Leader Khamenei (Juneau 2014:100-101).

Figure 19: Supporters of Hassan Rouhani during a rally at Zanjan in 2017

Rouhani's lackluster approach towards the reformist goals is reflected in his failure of keeping his promise of improving human rights situation in Iran. Islamic Republic has always been subject to serious criticism concerning falling status of human rights in the country. Rouhani during an election campaign of 2013 presidential election has promised for the restoration of popular sovereignty and respect for human rights. Rouhani's positive response to the human rights has also seen as the strategy to protect the state interest at the time of deepening crisis of legitimacy. Rouhani's promises regarding human rights proved to be false and purely election wining tactics (Barlow and Akbarzadeh 2018).

The proponents of human rights are continuously going through intense harassment, intimidation and repression. Even the leaders form the establishment, Mehdi Karroubi and Mir-Hossein Mousavi, are in house arrest. However, their house arrest may be symbolic that ordinary human right activists could be intimidated. In this situation the actors of change like students, youth and women who are working in different arenas

rarely come together to share their ideas, strategies and co-ordinate to form a united struggle. However, the failure in achieving human rights goals is also due to the mutual antagonism and mistrust among various agents of change. There have been a lack of sustained and systematic working relationship among the civil-society actors, between civil-society and political reformists (Barlow and Akbarzadeh 2018). In this situation, the reformist political elites get opportunity to continuously co-opt the dissent and regime legitimacy.

In the 2013 election, Rouhani has secured fifty-one percent votes. Rouhani projected himself with a reformist image. However, there are many differences in his working style from that of Khatami. His strategy was rather cautious. He grasped the nerves of both continuity and change in the country. His foresightedness has yielded tangible results for success. Due to various developments in multiple directions, Iranian politics has become much more complex. Knowing the reality of this complexity, Rouhani has attempted to establish a balanced approach towards politics (Schmidt 2014, Tazmini 2018:58).

His promises are broadly divided into two categories; domestic and international. Rouhani has propagated an intrinsic link between domestic and international issues in the Islamic Republic. At the domestic level his promises comprises from tackling countries' deepening economic crisis to liberalizing social restrictions and liberating political prisoners. At the international level he promised to repair the damage rendered by the previous confrontational policies during Ahmadinejad government. Rouhani announced that the solving the economic problem of the country is directly linked with the international sanctions (Juneau 2014:100-101).

The Rouhani government has achieved an unprecedented success in nuclear agreement with P5+1 (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council; China, France, Russia, UK and USA and Germany). After a week long negotiations, the parties reached to an interim agreement in November 2013. The nuclear deal has given relief from the sanctions. The impact of the nuclear deal and consequent relief from the economic sanctions as expected provided more legitimacy to Rouhani government and also improved economy in a rapid manner (Juneau 2014:100-101).

Previously, Khatami's reform project did not deliver his promises and stuck in the gridlock imposed by the structure of Islamic Republic. The political system which comprises of numerous overlapping power sources and with profound policy differences hindered Khatami's efforts to push forward his reformist agenda. "Owing to their staunchly conservative political orientation, these 'superbodies' did not cooperate with the reform-orientated president. In the end, Khatami found himself in an institutional gridlock, and unable to reconcile the political rifts that impeded his program for change" (Tazmini 2018: 64-65).

The question of the institutional barrier and opposition of conservatives was the major concern for the Rouhani government too. However, "Rouhani's strength is that he straddles both sides of the moderate-conservative fence, and this gives him a freer hand in implementing change" (Tazmini 2018: 64-65). He is familiar with both the sides. He is as much a 'conservative, establishment figure as he is a moderate figure'. Rouhani has more leverage in terms of implementing the reform. Rouhani has the capacity to deal with conservative opposition which Khatami lacked. For Khatami maintaining his progressive vision, intellectual endeavors, prioritizing state-society relations, promoting pluralism and civil society was more important. However Rouhani focused on the core issues of the state which were directly concerned with the state's legitimacy. Rouhani's success in implementing his policy is linked with his 'brand' based on his background. Rouhani's candidacy was approved by Guardian Council in 2013 presidential election while in same election Rafsanjani was disqualified. It was the testimony of the Rouhani's bond with the conservative establishment (Tazmini 2018: 64-65).

Tazmini (2018), has described about the Rouhani that "the president is the synthesis or the product of a thesis (the reformist/pragmatist camp, excluding the more radical, secular Green Movement supporters), and an antithesis (Ahmadinejad and the more conservative-traditionalist, principalist elements)". The Rouhani is also looked as a compromise and reconciliation of competing and contending camps. Tazmini further stated that "the Iranian president has not exacerbated the political rifts and factional infighting that Khatami bequeathed him. Rouhani is closer to bringing harmony to the Byzantine labyrinth of Iranian politics and of acting as an antidote to a socially-divided Iran" (Tazmini 2018: 64- 65).

In the current scenario, Iranian politics is guided by four principles. These principles have been determining the policies and framework of every regime. Rouhani government also has challenge to make a balance between these four principles. These four principles are; (a) Republicanism and Participation –the popular sovereignty along with emphasis on civil society and pluralism is one of the major principles. Khatami has given more emphasis on this principle and it played pivotal role in determining and consolidating the rule of law and promoting civic activism. However Rouhani is tackling this principle with his moderate approach. Thus this principle is not central to his political agenda. (b) The second principle is the economic development. This principle was central to the Rafsanjani presidency. He was surrounded by technocrats in the process of reviving the post war economy (Tazmini 2018:65).

Rouhani also emphasized on this principle since he had a challenge of reconstructing the economy. His strategy of balancing the international and domestic policies has been fruitful in terms of moving towards economic stability. (c) The third principle is economic justice. This principle is concerned with the redistribution of the wealth and achieving justice. Ahmaninejad's agenda of tackling poverty and corruption revolves around this principle though his government has been failed to achieve the goals. Rouhnai government has the biggest challenge to deal with the principle. (d) The fourth principle is independence or freedom. This principle has been the cornerstone of the foundation of the Islamic republic that has been central to all presidency. However, the reformist regimes of Khatami and moderate regime of Rouhani have dealt it with a different approach. They dealt it with the reformist approach which is based on the peaceful reconciliation of the international issues without compromising the non-interference of the foreign forces (Tazmini 2018:65).

Rouhani has proved his aptitude to establish a balance between above principles. His 'brand' gives him a space to pursue the course of balancing. Rouhani, thus represent every factions within the establishment and society. He is a product of the process of the synthesis of thesis and antithesis of demands of Iranian society for political, cultural and socio-economic change (Tazmini 2018:66). However, the Supreme Leader continues to restrict Rouhani. Khameini used inflammatory language against him and warned against

his eagerness to attract the foreign investment and his openness to western-style education systems. Rouhani acted in both ways; sometimes as a defiant and sometimes as an obedient (Tazmini 2018: 67).

The other factor behind his balanced policy approach was the threat from the conservative factions. The margin of victory like that of Khatami had boosted the confidence of Houhani. Perhaps for the same reason, the conservative group with the support of Ali Khameini and system's conservative custodians tried to stop his efforts to convert his electoral mandate into policies that aimed at opening Iran economically and politically. This made Rouhani to adopt very retrograde policies as a balancing one. For example, Rouhani promised during the campaign that Mehdi Karroubi, a reformist and a former presidential candidate, will be released who was under the house arrest since 2011. However, he did not fulfill his promise. In August 2017, Karroubi announced hunger strike against the deployment of security forces around him. The security forces were removed from his premises (Tazmini 2018: 67). Another example is the nomination of the Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi as the Telecommunication Minister. He built parts of the massive surveillance infrastructure in Iran while working in the Intelligence Ministry. This led to the creation of concerns among the civil rights activists. They feared that he may use his position to expand the already extensive online state spying operations on the citizens (Tazmini 2018: 67).

In the recent developments, the antagonism of the United States on nuclear deal would bolster the conservative who were defeated in the local and national elections. That would lead them to regain politically which they lost earlier electorally. Tazmini argues that "Threats of regime change, sanctions and generally arbitrary actions (such as the illegal act of potentially tearing up the international, multi-lateral nuclear deal) are pretexts to obstruct Rouhani's agenda, hinder economic reintegration to preserve their own interests, and to fuel dissatisfaction to ensure their rivals' defeat in the next elections" (Tazmini 2018:67-68).

The United States has proven incapable of supporting the reformist elements in Iran. Contrary to this, its policies served to boost the political platform for the conservative's

success. It is important to note that the losers in this political calculus are the electorates who are hoping for a gradual evolution towards a more pluralistic and open society. Under the Rouhani presidency, functioning of the polity of Islamic Republic is determined by both; continuity and change. The path of reform have acquired the irrevocable character that is set by the pressure from the below. Nevertheless, the reform is obstructed by the conservative confrontation and interest of the deep rooted competing centers of power (Tazmini 2018:67-68).

In the recent developments, reformist political faction has shifted towards accommodation of status-quo tendency. They have continuously compromised with reformist ideals. This has pushed them in the crisis of their own legitimacy among the supporters. The signs of accommodation have reflected when reformist supported conservative candidates in the 2016 Assembly of Experts elections. The reformists supported Mohammad Emami-Kashani (Tehran's interim Friday prayer leader) and Mohammad Reyshahri (former minister of intelligence). The reformists have adopted a reluctant and careless approach towards the release of Green Movement including the leaders like Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi who were in the house arrest. These tendencies in the reformist faction have given an impression that reformists has lost their agenda and consolidating the conservative establishment. It is rapidly decreasing credibility in the society. Thus, the failure and decreasing popularity of reformists primarily lies in the hypocritical acts of reformists themselves (Behravesh 2019).

However, the reformist camp has been justifying their failure due to the hindrances which conservative opposition creates. They have also been criticizing the conservative opponents for corruption and economic mismanagement. Behravesh has observed that, "a number of reformist figures are either directly implicated in, or closely affiliated with, large-scale embezzlement, rentierism and nepotism cases" On the condition of anonymity a Tehran based journalist commented that reformist camp is like a "store with a pretty front but nothing inside except slogans. Many reformist figures have turned into dealers and speculators. Hypocrisy and arrogance are among reformists' worst characteristics" (Behravesh 2019).

The accommodation of status-quo tendency as a strategy to survive or otherwise has developed among reformist due to two major factors. Firstly, the state led brutal suppression of Green Movement which resulted in many imprisonments, house arrests and increased restriction on opposition activists. It has created a crisis of survival and consequential marginalization of reformists. Secondly, the failure of the reformist international policy particularly nuclear lead with US has restored the conservative narratives. The failure of nuclear deal has affected the reformist project at home too. The supporters who have previously campaigned for reformist politicians have lost their trust. In this situation pro-reform group within the power structure inclined towards reviving their relationship with their traditional nemeses aiming to regain power in the establishment. Thus reformist politicians are losing their original identity as a legitimate opposition force (Behravesh 2019).

In a survey conducted by the Centre for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM) in association with IranPoll.com ahead of 2016 parliamentary (*Majles*) elections indicated the fact that the Iranian people's mood could be understood in a well manner. The survey repost is titled as *Iranian Attitudes in Advance of the Parliamentary Elections* The survey was conducted between, July 2014 to January 15, 2016 with the sample size of 1012. The margin error was +/- 3.2 percent. The survey had questions which were in a close ended format. Some questions and responses are selected which are relevant to this study. Among the selected questions, some are regarding Rouhani regimes and others are about various issues concerning Iranian politics. The popularity of President Hassan Rouhani has increased and decreased according to the different scenario, his achievements and failures.

Question: Which option you would about Hassan Rouhani?

	July 2014	August 2015	January 2016
Very favorable	51%	61.2%	42.1%
Somewhat favorable	34	27.9	40.0
Somewhat unfavorable	7	4.7	6.8
Very unfavorable	6	4.3	8.4
Don't' recognize the name	0	0.3	0.7
DK/NA[vol.]	2	1.6	2.0

Source: (CISSM and IranPoll.com 2016).

The above table shows that popularity of Rouhani was suddenly increased in the year of 2015, most probably due to the nuclear deal. However, there is a huge decrease in his popularity when criticism of nuclear deal from the conservative faction got the central position in the public debate. When asked about the economic achievement of the Rouhani regime, the people responded in the following pattern

Question: How successful or unsuccessful has President Rouhani been in improving the economic situation of our country, has he been?

	May 2015	January 2016
Very successful	14.7%	9.4%
Somewhat successful	56.2	54.7
Somewhat unsuccessful	17.1	20.5
Very unsuccessful	8.8	11.4
DK/NA [vol.]	3.2	4.1

Source: (CISSM and IranPoll.com 2016).

The responses of the participant show that the number of people who believed that the Rouhani's economic policy has been 'very successful' has decreased within a short span of time. The percentage of those who believed in the answer 'very unsuccessful' was increased. This indicates the decreasing trust or popularity of reformist or moderate politicians among the masses. The further questions were regarding the status of freedom or liberty in the country.

Question: Do you think people in Iran have too much, too little, or just about the right amount of freedom?

	January 2016
Too much	14.1%
Too little	12.9
About right	69.0

Source: (CISSM and IranPoll.com 2016).

Question: Do you think civil liberties in Iran – in the coming two years – are going to increase, decrease, or remain unchanged? [If Increase or decrease ask: A lot or somewhat?]

	January 2016
Increase a lot	13.6%
Increase somewhat	27.5
Remain unchanged	32.6
Decrease somewhat	6.7
Decrease a lot	1.0
DK/NA [vol.]	18.6

Source: (CISSM and IranPoll.com 2016).

Question: How important do you think it is for President Rouhani to focus on increasing civil liberties in Iran? Is it:

	January 2016
Very important	18.6%
Somewhat important	45.7
Not very important	19.6
Not important at all	9.0
DK/NA [vol.]	7.2

Source: (CISSM and IranPoll.com 2016).

Despite of heavy criticism from the foreign scholarship and commentators, the condition of civil liberty in the country according to the people's responses is better. It contradicts the general opinion about the Islamic Republic that it worked against the liberty. However, majority of people gave the opinion that the issue of civil liberty has to be focused by the Houhani government. It shows that the demand of people matters in order to force the government to work in right direction which could meet the popular will. The next question would be complimentary in comprehending the above responses regarding the civil liberties.

Question: In your opinion, to what degree should our country's policymakers take religious teachings into account when they make decisions?

	July 2014	May 2015	January 2016
A lot	44%	45.2%	44.0%
Somewhat	36	29.5	32.2
Not much	14	15.5	16.3
Not at all	5	6.9	5.4
DK/NA[vol.]	2	2.9	2.1

Source: (CISSM and IranPoll.com 2016).

The responses clearly indicate that religion, particularly Islam still matters as the guiding principle in socio-political affairs. The responses regarding civil liberties contradicted the general opinion about the Islamic republic, probably due to the difference in the approach of Iranian people in defining liberty. The religio-cultural relativism plays a crucial role in defining not only the liberty but also other concepts like human rights and democracy itself. Here, the question of authenticity becomes more relevant which was discussed in theoretical framework of thesis (Introduction). However, recognizing the importance of religious principles in the socio-political affairs does not means that people support Islamism. The Islamism has already lost its epistemic capacity to explain the current phenomenon and preferences of the people of Iran. Here, the concept of 'religious democracy' or the theory of 'post-Islamism becomes more relevant. The following questions are regarding the parliamentary (*Majles*) elections of 2016.

Question: As you may know, in February 2016 there will be a *Majles* election. How likely is it that you will vote in that election?

	January 2016
Very likely	66.9%
Somewhat likely	20.3%
Not very likely	4.7%
Not likely at all	7.1%
DK/NA[vol.]	1.0%

Source: (CISSM and IranPoll.com 2016).

Open ended question: In your opinion, what is the most important challenge or issue that our country faces that next *Majles* should try to address?

	January 2016
Youth unemployment	13.2%
Unemployment in general	26.0
Inflation and high cost	3.9
Economic sanction	4.4
Recession and low economic productivity	1.3
Economic problem and families	11.5
Other economic problem	10.7
Problems related to agriculture	0.4
Environmental problems	0.2
Nonobservance of religious teachings	2.2
Lack of political and civil liberties	0.6

Disunity and partisanship	1.1
Security Problems	2.8
Iran's credibility in the region and the world	0.7
Problems relating to Iran's foreign policy and relations	4.6
Others	3.9
DK/NA[vol.]	12.6

Source: (CISSM and IranPoll.com 2016).

Question: Would you prefer most of the *Majles* to be composed of the:

	May 2015	August 2015	January 2016
Supporters of President Rouhani	49.8%	60.1%	58.9%
Critiques of President Rouhani	24.4	21.9	24.6
Others/depends/neither [vol.]	7.7	6.8	7.7
DK/NA[vol.]	18.1	11.2	8.8

Source: (CISSM and IranPoll.com 2016).

Above responses which were taken ahead of parliamentary elections of 2016 shows that despite of people's criticism regarding his failure of fulfilling promises the majority of the population still supports Rouhani. The presence of the reformist/moderate candidates keep the voting turnout high. In that sense, the reformist movement has led to the increase in the political participation of the people. However, the responses regarding the priority to the issues in the election break the hegemonic agenda imposed by the conservative ruling class. The issues in the current political scenario in Iran are unemployment and economic problems. The state hides its failures of solving these problems by putting an anti-imperialist rhetoric in the front. In fact, its alternative in the form of Islamism/militant Islam as an antidote to the western modernity proved failed. In this situation, the notion of religious democracy or post-Islamic speculation becomes more important. The following responses of the questions regarding the foreign issues, the compatibility or incompatibility of Islamic and western traditions, the possibility of reconciliation and perception of USA about government and people further strengthen both theoretical frameworks that are adopted in the present study.

Question: Which position is closer to yours? Are Islamic and Western religious and social traditions incompatible with each other and conflicts between the two is inevitable? or Most people in the West and the Islamic world have similar needs and wants. So is it

possible to find a common ground?

	Feb 2008	July 2014	May 2015	Aug 2015	Jan 2016
Conflict is inevitable	12%	30%	35.0%	30.1%	29.2%
Common ground is Possible	64	58	54.5	58.9	58.2
DK/NA[vol.]	24	13	10.5	11.0	12.5

Source: (CISSM and IranPoll.com 2016).

Question: Please indicate to what degree do you have a favorable or an unfavorable view of each?

--United States

	July 2014	May 2015	Aug 2015	July 2016
Very favorable	9	7.9	8.6	7.8
Somewhat favorable	19	20.4	22.6	20.5
Somewhat unfavorable	13	16.9	14.3	16.5
Very unfavorable	58	53.2	52.3	54.2
DK/NA[vol.]	2	1.5	2.2	1.0

Source: (CISSM and IranPoll.com 2016).

--US government

	July 2014	May 2015	January 2016
Very favorable	4	2.5	1.7
Somewhat favorable	9	8.6	8.1
Somewhat unfavorable	14	12.6	14.5
Very unfavorable	70	73.4	73.6
DK/NA[vol.]	3	2.9	2.1

Source: (CISSM and IranPoll.com 2016).

American people

	July 2014	May 2015	January 2016
Very favorable	12%	12.2%	12.5%
Somewhat favorable	38	40.1	40.3
Somewhat unfavorable	16	15.6	17.1
Very unfavorable	29	26.8	26.2
DK/NA[vol.]	5	5.4	3.9

Source: (CISSM and IranPoll.com 2016).

The majority of the respondents believe that the reconciliation is possible between Islam and western tradition. However, when they asked about the USA as the world hegemonic power and government system, the respondents have responded against it and majority of had chosen the option 'very unfavorable'. But when they are asked about the American people, majority of respondents had chosen 'very favorable' and 'somewhat favorable'. This indicates that Iranian people do not have hatred towards American people, but they are against America as the superpower and state. Today America represents a multicultural society. Its population consists of various ethnic, religious and cultural-linguistic groups. The residents of America especially marginalized groups like minorities, black and women are struggling with the same issues though in different manner. Moreover, the most marginalized groups like black women could not be blamed for spreading imperialism. Thus there is a possibility of common ground and need of reaking the old fashioned dichotomy politics based on divisive identities. Following tables contains the demographic information of the participants:

Question: What is your current occupation?

	January 2016
Self employed	13.8
Farmer/Animal husbandry	8
Low ranking government employee	5.1
Medium/High ranking government employee	6.1
Low ranking private sector employee	1.9
High ranking private sector employee	2.7
Retired	7.9
Homemaker	28.6
Student	10.5
Unemployed	11.4
Other	3.7
DK/NA[vol.]	0.4

Source: (CISSM and IranPoll.com 2016).

Question: What is your household's total monthly income?

	January 2016
Under 500,000 Tomans	18.9
500,000-1 million Tomans	35.7
1-1.5 million Tomans	20.9
1.5-2 million Tomans	12.8

2-2.5 million Tomans	3.6
2.5-3 million Tomans	2.6
More than 3 million Tomans	3.3
DK/NA[vol.]	2.3

Source: (CISSM and IranPoll.com 2016).

Elections of 2016

The parliamentary elections were held in Iran on 26 February 2016. It was to elect members on all seats (290) of the tenth Islamic Consultative Assembly after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. It was the 34th parliamentary election since the establishment of the parliament after the Constitutional Revolution of 1906. The run-off election was held on 29 of April 2016[20]. The voter turnout was 62 percent in the first round and 59 percent in the run-off election (Press TV 24th March 2016). In this election no faction has done a sweep. Though, conservative and hardliners (the theocrats) camp got defeated but reformists and moderates (republicans) have not gained much that could be described as a sweep.

Political Faction	Percentage of Votes
Republicans (Reformists and Moderates)	34.6%
Theocrats (Conservative and Hardliners)	29.7
Independents	25.2
Modern Theocrats	8.7

Source: (Mohsen 2016:2).

The republicans have performed well in Tehran. The theocrats have done well in the other larger cities. The independents have gained in the semi-urban areas of the countries. Despite not having a clear sweep republicans have got back their say in the mainstream and created the possibility of Rouhani's victory in the next presidential election (Mohsen 2016:2).

Along with parliamentary elections, the Assembly of Experts elections were also held in February in one round. It was to elect 88 members body of clerics. The body is

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[20] The run-off election is conducted on the seats where no candidate secures minimum 25 percent votes (Press TV 24 March 2016).

responsible for monitoring the supreme leader and selecting his successor after his death. The term of the body is 8 years. 801 candidates registered for the election in which only 373 were further registered for the running in the Guardian Council elimination process. Finally, 166 candidates were qualified by the Guardian Council to run the election[21]. The voting turnout was 62 percent. This election for Assembly of Experts was more significant than the previous elections due to the increased possibility of election of supreme leader by the same body which were being elected in 2016. The age of Supreme leader was 77 at the time of election. The change in the composition of the body would have a huge impact in the Iranian politics in terms of policies and decision making (Mohseni 2016:42).

These elections were the first major test after the execution of the Joint Comprehensive plan of Action (JCPOA), the nuclear deal which was done between Iran and the P5+1. There are many reasons that these elections were important. Firstly, it would have an impact for Rouhani's policy implementation. Secondly, it has a stake in the presidential election of 2017. Thirdly, at the regional level it would impact the cold war with Saudi Arabia. Fourthly, at international level, it would influence the uncertain relations with the United Nations especially when new Trump Administration is coming into power (Mohseni 2016:3).

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[21] In the last elections 146 candidates were qualified to run the election in the Guardian Council elimination process (Mohseni 2016:42).

CHAPTER VI
Conclusion

The reformist movement emerged in early 1990s as an intellectual discourse in Islamic Republic of Iran. It came as a critique of the Islamic state and revolutionary Islamic ideology which originated in the milieu of Iranian Revolution 1979. The Iranian Revolution in its initial phase was represented by diverse forces which came under the influence of Ayatollah Khomeini, who turned it into an Islamic one. Immediately after the Revolution, there was a power struggle between various factions on the question of the nature of government. However, Khomeini's charismatic leadership has managed to get the popular support for the government based on the guardianship of Islamic jurist (*velayet-e-faqih)* which led to the establishment of the theocracy.

However, the Constitution of Islamic Republic has incorporated certain republican principles which aimed at establishing a popular sovereignty. It has also become a major reason for the popular support of the Constitution. The blend of theocracy with republicanism makes Iranian political system as a unique case across the world. Though, in practice the republican part of Constitution is marginalized and theocratic part still dominates the rest. The mixture of republicanism and theocracy produces various contradictions and made the political system so complex. Generally, the theocrats or the conservatives who dominate at upper layer of power get benefited out of the complexity that is produced by the political system.

For almost one decade, politics in the post-Revolution Iran and legitimacy for the Shi'a Islamic theocratic government was determined by two major factors: charismatic leadership of Khomeini and War with Iraq. These two factors have provided legitimacy for almost every decisions made by the state irrespective of its suppressive nature. However, the positive aspects of Khomeini regime at the policy level have also managed to secure legitimacy for the state. The policies like nationalization of banks, insurance companies and industries, restoration of administrative efficiency and establishment of

pro-poor image of the state, etc. added to its legitimacy. As a result, the state turned into a welfare state. However, there was a weakening of Iran's economy due to war with Iraq, corruption, mismanagement and institutional inefficiency. The drabacks of the revolutionary paradigm (Khomeini regime) majorly lies in its top-down state led forced ideological justification of the Islamic policies.

The end of the War with Iraq in 1988 and the demise of Khomeini in 1989 led to the emergence of reformist discourse with the demand for democratization of the society. In addition to it, other factors like demographic change and the process of globalization have also significantly contributed to the emergence of the reformist discourse. The younger generation created new public spaces of sociability. The claims and expectations of the large educated middle class were much different from the early years of the Revolution. Moreover, the acceleration of the globalization process after the collapse of the Soviet Union during the last decade of the twentieth century had contributed to the growth of democratization process across the world.

The reformist discourse was aiming at establishing religious democracy, rule of law and a strong civil society. It adopts gradualism and non-violence as a method of change. Therefore, reformist discourse asserted on republican aspects of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran which has been marginalized by divine concept of religious-clerical jurisprudence. The reformist discourse attempted to develop a non-ideological approach of Islam and inquired into the compatibility of Islam with democracy and human rights. The discourse also inquired into the incompatibility of *velayet-e-faqih* (Islamic jurisprudence) with the rule of law.

The reformist discourse is defined as the paradigmic shift from Islamism (political Islam or militant Islam which is known as revolutionary paradigm in Iranian case) to the post-Islamism or 'religious democracy'. At a broader theoretical level, it is also a critique of the postcolonial state (or postcoloniality) and rejects the identity politics based on rigid binaries or dichotomy like West vs. Islam, East vs. West and orientalism vs. coccidentalism etc. It attempts to revive the cosmopolitan cultural heritage of Iran. However, as a positive critique, the reformist discourse does not reject the postcoloniality

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in its entirety, but attempts to democratize it. It does so by recognizing the diverse philosophical trends and discourses developed by various Iranian intellectuals, writers and poets at different point of time. It rejects the militant-Islamic, homogeneous, anti-imperialist rhetoric projected and promoted by the dominant conservative clerical rulers of the Islamic Republic. This has failed to produce any viable alternative to the Western modernity and resistance to the western imperialism.

In this regard, the reformist discourse is defined as the 'third way', the political development from below after the failures of the previous two: the imperial westernization under Shah (described as 'modernization from above') and the Islamic theocratisation (described as 'revolution form above'). Therefore, the reformist discourse aims at establishing an alternative modernity with its gradual, non-violent and democratic means which are developed through experience and going through a dialectical process. However, at the theoretical level, the reformist movement is still in its transition period and has not reached its logical conclusion.

The reformist discourse is non-derivative, non-authoritarian, anti-hegemonic and anti-homogeneous in nature. It is an indigenous and authentic democratic discourse. It has its roots in the indigenous non-violent civic resistance against the western imperialism at global and authoritarianism at home. In the modern history of Iran, there were movements such as Tobacco Movement (1890-92), the Constitutional Movement (1906-7), nationalization of oil by Mohammad Mosaddeq (1953) and Iranian Revolution of 1997 which reflected the elements of indigenous resistance. The reformist discourse is inspired by Islamic reformism or Islamic Protestantism. It has developed a historical approach to look into the Islamic tradition and thoughts. In this regard it rejects the divine interpretation of Islam.

The reformist discourse, though, was a reflection of the socio-political change happening in the post-Khomeini Iran since early 1990s, it was more evident as a socio-political process in the mid-1990s. It got momentum with the formation of a loose coalition of students, reformist intellectuals, women, dissident Shi'a clerics, university students, labourer class and middle class professionals and minorities. The coalition turns into a

popular movement during the campaign of reformist candidate Mohammad Khatami in the presidential election of 1997. Khatami has become president for two consecutive terms in 1997 and in 2001. Under the Khatami regime, the growth of political parties, voting turnout, civil society organizations and freedom of press has created a kind of pluralistic momentum. But it had its limitations to work within the theocratic structure of Iran.

Khatami's regime has failed to address the core demands of the real actors, participants and supporters of the reformist movement including students, women, minorities and youth. Khatami's failure was majorly due to the obstacles created by the conservatives in both ways, as power holders at top positions and as an opposition to the reformists. They used the complexities of political structure of the Islamic Republic in their favour. The discontent among the supporters of the reformist political faction resulted in the defeat of the pragmatist candidate Rafsanjani and the reformist candidate Mehdi Karroubi in the 2005 presidential elections. The less popular theocrats' (hardliner) candidate Mohmoud Ahmadinejad won the election and became the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Ahmadinejad was supported by a larger alliance of theocrats, including hardliners and conservatives. The defeat of the reformists in the presidential elections of 2005 further led to the revival of the faction of theocrats (hardliners and conservatives) in power across the political spectrum. Ahmadinejad's re-election in 2009 was questioned by a popular movement known as Green Movement. Though the Green Movement was brutally suppressed by the state, its credentials were proved in the victory of the moderate candidate Hassan Rouhani in 2013 presidential election. It further led to the increased share of power by the reformist faction in the power structure. However, in the current scenario, the reformists has adopted a more compromising attitude and moved to the mode of accommodating the status-quo tendencies in order to maintain their power positions.

Due to Khatami's failure to realize the goals of the reformist movement, most of the time (barring a few exceptions), it is argued that the reformist movement in a way ended with the end of Khatami regime. This argument is built upon the reductionist approach which

has seen the reformist movement from top-down manner. Therefore, the failure of Khatami regime has been seen as synonymous with the end of the reformist movement. On the contrary, from a bottom-up and a non-reductionist approach, this study found that reformist movement is built or represented through the struggle of its real actors at the grassroots level such as students, women, minorities and youth. Without the participation, desire and commitment (for democratic change) of these groups the reformist movement would not have occurred which subsequently brought Khatami and later Rouhani to power.

Thus, the reformist movement can be divided into three broader categories: a) reformist political faction within ruling class, b) reformist intellectual discourse and c) reformist movement from the perspective of its real actors; youth, student, women-social movement. Out of these three, the last category became the most important. Reformist movement from the perspective of a non-reductionist bottom-up approach is a connecting discourse that bridges the gap between various socio-political movements like students' movement, women's movement and minorities' movement in Iran. It provides a common ground and platform for various forces of change (students' movement, women's movement and minorities' movement) without homogenizing them and keeping their autonomous identities intact. The best part of the reformist movement is that it is built upon an indigenous reformist discourse. Thus, it is an authentic antidote to the conservative clerical elites' policies and tactics that come up with an imposition of sedition on civil society activists to curb various social movements.

The reformist discourse as an intellectual deliberation and a social movement is still alive. The major demands of the reformist movement and the civil society got lost in competitive electoral game of political factions. In other words, the reformist movement became 'reformism' in the hands of the political elites and betrayed its goals. Moreover, it is evident that major goals of the reformist movement have not been achieved, as the nature of the state is yet repressive. The major problem was inherent in the political leadership of the reformist movement. Khatami himself coming from a clerical establishment had limitation which did not allow him to go beyond the rigid political structure of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The political elites from reformist President Khatami to moderate Rouhani have captured power with the support of the real warriors of democratic change like students, women and youth. However, the reformist political elites did never stand with the warrior groups at the time of their crisis, especially when the state brutally suppressed their voices. The most fitting instances are student uprisings of 1999 and 2003, when reformists in power (in the leadership of Khatami) stood with the state apparatus rather than supporting the cause of the students. Khatami failed to protect students from the state-led violence and suppression. Instead of supporting the voices resistance which has brought these political elites in power, they compromise with their conservative elites to serve the interests of the state.

This study found that the reformist discourse and movement has transformed polity from a monolithic structure into one of pluralistic political actors. There was growth of political parties, civil society, other political groups and political factions after the advent of the reformist movement especially under the Khatami regime. These political actors played a crucial role in Iranian politics. It influences the policies and decision making of the state. It brought a pluralistic momentum within the limitations of the political structure of IRI. However, these political factions are mostly represented by political elites who mostly come from a clerical background. They have the experience of working with their conservative colleagues within the power structure of the Islamic Republic. In some cases, the reformist elites share family relations with the conservatives. The reformist political elites have not come out of the working behavior which they have developed during the revolutionary phase of the Islamic Republic under the Khomeini rule. For example, Khatami has implemented his promises of strengthening civil society in the same top-down manner where many actors of civil society had to work under the tutelage of state.

The closed and unchanged theocratic structure of the state has curbed the potential of plurality to transform politics from top-down theocratic structure into full-fledged democracy. Reformist leadership has failed to open up the closed theocratic structures. They have failed to resolve the real issues raised by the real actors of the reformist movement like youth, students and women who form a large base of support. Khatami's

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response and strategy at many instances expose his dual standard and hypocrisy. The limitation of the reformist leadership of not going beyond their loyalty to the higher authority of the state at one hand and their claim of representing the dissent on the other hand has shown the clear sign of the co-optation of dissent and regime legitimacy. The political elites co-opt the dissent to reinforce their political power rather than addressing the core demands of the real actors of the reformist movement.

In the era of globalization, the social movements are transcending the boundaries of state, religion and identity. Thus a form of global movement of marginalized communities like student, women, and minorities is under the construction. It particularly connects the Iranian diaspora and other marginalized and oppressed communities' movement across the world due to the advent of new communication tools and social media. These movements have become the inspiration for each other. The student uprising of 1999 and 2003, Green Movement in Iran and the Arab Spring in the West Asian region are examples of such globality. In that context, the reformist discourse and movement in Iran with its bottom-up approach has the capacity to directly resist imperialism without any mediator (Islamic State) which costs freedom and democracy for rhetorically resisting imperialist forces. State suppresses the voices of dissent by blaming them for being influenced by western culture and charging them with sedition. Thus, the state manages to avoid any possibility of threat to its legitimacy.

The Iranian state in its policies and behavior continues to use rhetoric of anti-imperialism and anti-Americanism. At the top the west-Islam dichotomy has still some role to play. But at the bottom, the real actors of reformist movement such as youth, students, women, minorities and other marginalized sections of society are transcending politics from postcolonial or Islamic or nationalist top-down politics to one that of the inclusive, democratic, decentralized one. They are doing it through social movements like students' movement, women's movement and under the civil society in broader sense but also through various socio-cultural activities like blogging, protesting, cinema and music. Theses sections have looked at democracy not only as a rule of government but also as a way of life with its indigenous roots in Iran. These sections have stressed on the real and unsolved issues of unemployment, education, freedom and emancipation beyond any rhetoric.

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The reformist movement has created a pluralistic momentum and democratic change in the larger socio-political context. However, the political factions within the polity do not represent the real actors of the reformist movement. The increasing political factions are not the reflection of the pluralistic momentum and democratic change. Political factions are just one dimension of it. The political factions are run by the political elites who come from the power structure and enjoyed the power positions. The political factions work on their own rules to survive in state politics. The political elites who are leading factions make compromises of the promises made to the supoorters during the elections. They do so for the sake of securing their individual political interest and power position.

Thus, reformist political factions led by reformist political elites do not represent the pluralistic momentum. Moreover, the reformist political elites hinder the desired change from occurring for the sake of maintaining state legitimacy and status quo. The real actors of the reformist movement like students, women, minorities and youth are the real representatives of the pluralistic momentum. The leadership of the reformist movement must come from the grassroots level to achieve the goals. In other words, the real actors should take the leadership in their hands. The complex political system may not allow them to enter into the formal politics but they can create a united resistance based on the principles that reformist discourse has established. Real changes can come from actors aimed at establishing republicanism in its real sense by removing supreme leader position or making it accountable to the direct vote. The united struggle can further consolidate the reformist discourse. It can also re-conceptualize and modify the reformist discourse.

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