CHAPTER: I

INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is to review and to examine the role of Dr. Mossadeq (1882-1967) in Iran’s democratic process. For this purpose, a systematic study of Dr. Mossadeq’s political career, activities and ideas has been undertaken. The study has focused in on two major phases in Dr. Mossadeq’s political life. The first phase deals with his pre-World War II political career and the second phase deals with his post World War II politics, which ended following the Coup that deposed him from the seat of power, in 1953 and aftermath of the Coup.

Having been born in a royal family Dr. Mossadeq already had the kind of ruling class-consciousness that prompted him to take lead in the cause of the people. The “Constitutional Revolution” of 1906 provided a favorable site for Dr. Mossadeq to engage himself the emerging democratic politics. Dr. Mossadeq’s exposure the European intellectual traditions had a deep impact on his democratic and liberal orientation. Consequently, he decided to intervene Iranian politics with a view to democratize Iranian polity. The task was difficult. The autocratic regime of Reza Shah as well as the vested interests of the British and Russian imperial power thwarted the efforts towards democratization. As a result, Dr. Mossadeq had to spend almost 14 years of his political career in exile.
The post World War II period brought about fundamental change in the Third World politics including Iran. The Colonialism was on the decline and a new wave of democratic nationalism captured the Third World societies. The forces of democratization again gathered momentum in Iran. Dr. Mossadeq returned from his exile and emerged as a prominent political figure in Iran. His vital role in establishing the National Front and as an instrument of democratization and his role in nationalizing the oil industry marked his determination to make Iran independent of the colonial influence and arouse his people in the true spirit of democracy. He became the Prime Minister of Iran in April 1951; this gave him further space to implement. His drive for democratization through the progressive policies, which he implemented. It is more significant that his activities during (1949-1953) constituted the most brilliant periods in Iran’s democracy history. The study, therefore, is very significant to understand Iran’s experimentation with liberal democracy.

The present study is based on library research, both primary and secondary sources have been extensively utilized to understand and explain the political career of Mossadeq. The primary sources includes the original writings and the correspondence of Dr. Mossadeq both published and unpublished, the parliamentary debates, and number of articles which he wrote both in Persian and English. The secondary sources include the researches based studies on Mossadeq both in Persian as well as in English carried on by Iranian and foreign scholars. The memoirs and biographies as well as autobiographies by his contemporaries have also formed the major sources of research material.

The problem of finding Iranian sources proved even more difficult. First of all, no archival material is available. Secondly, Mossadeq become a non-person after his removal in 1953, and Shah made certain that his name was not mentioned in any publication or speech. Thus, for twenty-five years, during which events
were fresh in the mind of many who were close to Mossadeq or who were historians of the era, there was a total ban on publications of any sort concerning him. In a short space of time, between the fall of the shah in 1979 and the consolidation of theocracy, a number of books were published in Persian, dealing with subject of Mossadeq. Some of the more important of these are mentioned in the bibliography. Since the rise of the religious hierarchy in Iran, Mossadeq has yet been presented in a harsh and unsympathetic light. Publications in this period have also been studied. With these difficulties in mind, the present work is based primarily on Mossadeq’s own writings, including manuscripts, which have rarely been available, as well as on documents in the British and American archives. The research has utilized particularly CIA document about overthrow of Dr. Mossadeq. When In April 2000, a CIA report on the coup inexplicably surfaced after lying dormant for 45 years. It appeared first in summary in The New York Times (April 16, 2000); then in an expurgated 80-page form on the web site of the same newspaper, entitled “Overthrow of Premier Mossadeq of Iran,” the report was written in 1954 by Donald Wilber, a CIA operative involved in the coup. It was commissioned by the CIA’s Historical Division, and was designed as a handbook for future coups.

Mossadeq was an ardent advocate of the Constitution Revolution of Iran (1906). In fact, he was current political history of Iran contemporary, and an incorruption liberalist. Mossadeq’s role in democratization of Iran society in his era referred to Mossadeq’s personality and society political condition Iran. In the fifth and sixth Majles (1926) mainly resistd against increasing encroachment to people’s rights and freedom, he opposed to the monarchy of Reza khan. Uncompromising with Reza Shah Tyranny regime and pursuing his liberal views led to his exile to Ahmad Abad, over 14 years (1927-1941).
In amidst of the word war II, Iran was occupied from south by Britain and north by the Soviet Union. The Allies compelled Reza Shah to abdicate power in favor of his son. Occupied Iran and absence of Reza Shah despotic regime a free political sphere was created, which was unique in Iran’s political history. In this stage of Iran’s political history, four main political groups came to light: Monarchist (Mohammad Reza Shah and his court); Islamists, communists and nationalists (the National Movement). Monarchists were looking for US and UK dominance on Iran. Communists were to influence the Soviet Union on Iran. Islamists were wishing for exerting God’s will. Chief motto of The National Movement was “Independence and Freedom”. Independence means non-interference of foreigners in Iranian polity, Freedom means every Iranian should be equal before the law, rule of law and restricting the Shah and his court power based on the Iran’s constitution. The National Front emerging was derived from a minority objection against the supplementary Agreement of Gess–Golshaian in the fifteenth Majles. The Supplementary Agreement was making the 1933 Accord legitimized that was between Reza Shah and Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) until 1993. As a result, the minority asked Mossadeq directly to come in, and took the movement leadership. Mossadeq as a zealous nationalist was dubious of foreign control and came to articulate the concept of “negative equilibrium,” under which Iran would preserve its autonomy by playing off one empire against another. Mossadeq was a genuine patriot of seeking to emancipate his country from the clutches of the British Empire.

The provocative and callous British conduct only managed to unite the differing strands of Iranian opposition into a remarkable coalition, the National Front (12 November 1949). The National Front was essentially composed of liberal reformers, the intelligentsia, elements of the clerical class, socialist activists, and middle-class professionals. It is important to appreciate that the demands of the National Front soon transcended the oil issue as the party pressed
for a more representative government with constitutional demarcation of power. The continued British obstinacy further antagonized Iranian nationalistic feelings, eroding the consensus behind the 50-50 profit-sharing arrangement. The minority position in the Sixteenth parliament, led by Mossadeq, had been pressing for outright nationalization of the oil industry, and now it gained strength. On March 20, 1951, the Iranian parliament passed the nationalization bill, defying the monarch and propelling Mossadeq to the post of the prime minister.

This was not just a movement to reclaim Iran’s resources, but a new progressive alliance seeking to revamp Iranian society and government. The National Front government emerged sought to improve public education and establish and accessible health system. Its proposed judicial reforms were designed to ensure equality before the law, while its efforts to broaden the prerogatives of the local governments were intended to decentralize power. In essence, he launched profound reforms, land reforms in favor of peasant, and welfare for workers, support freedom of the press and speech, purge army and exalted stand of political parties in his 28 months tenure. In fact, Mossadeq and the National Front could cut off foreign intervene in Iran’s policy, also to confine the Shah in border of the constitution. For the first time in modern Iran, Mossadeq managed the Iran’s economy without revenue of oil. In terms of dealing with Mossadeq’s challenge, the British contemplated a policy of what we would now call “regime change”. Britain imposed a stringent embargo on Iran’s oil, depriving Tehran of much of its revenues. The AIOC’s announcement that it would take legal action against anyone seeking to purchase Iran’s oil proved a sufficient deterrent to many international oil firms, who were already wary of Tehran’s nationalization act. In the meantime, the departure of British technicians essentially crippled the Iranian oil industry. It was hoped in Whitehall that by undermining Iran’s fragile economy and deprive views, overly sensitive to the political ramifications of any deal. For Britain, Iran’s nationalization act remained
an illegal expropriation of private property, while for Iran it was a legitimate reclamation of a natural resource long exploited by a greedy foreign company. As both sides became entrenched in their principles, the prospect of mutual agreement seemed far-fetched. The only difference was that the British could better afford their intransigence than poverty–stricken country deprived of its indispensable source of subsistence.

By 1953, as the oil crisis entered its third year, a combination of events would lead the United States to contemplate Mossadeq’s overthrow. A new president, Dwight D. Eisenhower, came to power with a determination to wage a more aggressive Cold war, and his administration displayed a marked suspicion of Third World neutralism. Eisenhower and his hawkish secretary of state John Foster Dulles proved more sensitive to the British assertion that only a change in the Iranian regime could resolve the impasse. This claim seemed even more compelling as the economic situation deteriorated, which seemed to empower the Communist Tudeh Party that the prime minister was both brandishing as a threat and increasingly relying on as a coalition partner. In retrospect, Tudeh had little capacity to dislodge Mossadeq, since its radicalism remained unacceptable to many parts of Iranian society. But in America’s zero-sum Cold War rivalry with the Soviet Union, Third World nationalist struggles were too often subsumed in the framework of the containment policy. Mossadeq became just one more victim of the stark Cold War duality—which every government was either “with us or against us.”

The cast of characters is indeed bewildering. Kermit Roosevelt, the scion of America’s foremost political family, paying street thugs to agitate against Mossadeq; American operatives shoring up an indecisive monarch to return to Tehran from his exile in Rome and reclaim his throne. Communist and clerical struggling under the same banner and participating in demonstrations financed by
the United States and Britain. As Iran veered from crisis to crisis, the armed forces finally stepped in and ended Mossadeq’s brief but momentous tenure. The famed Operation Ajax would stand as one of the most effective of CIA’s covert enterprise, leading Washington to perceive that it could easily replicate its success elsewhere. However, in the contemporary Iranian political imagination Mossadeq remains a promising democrat, subverted by a malicious America. Iranians continue to believe that their country may have forged a nationalist path, reclaimed its resources from foreign exploitation, and escaped the tentacles of a despotic monarchy. After the Coup, the coup government sentenced Mossadeq to three years solidarity confinement, and under house arrest for all his life. In essence, the coup caused to eradicate the communist and nationalist forces from Iran’s political scene and remaining monarchy and Islamists forces. Consequently, Iranian society went towards fundamentalism.

In a sense, the coup of 1953 made the Islamic Revolution of 1979 possible, even predictable. The Shah proceeded to create a rigid authoritarian state, relying on an extensive secret police apparatus to maintain order. The coup essentially destroyed the delicate internal balance of power, with the monarchy coexisting with assertive Parliaments and prime ministers. The National Front that was the main engine of the modern middle class’s aspirations was effectively crushed when the monarchy proved relentlessly hostile to leftist and moderate political parties. As the secular opposition was repressed and its leaders and politicians imprisoned, the clerical establishment emerged as the main venue of opposition politics. The clerical community largely stayed out of the 1953 nationalization crisis, while at critical junctures it even assisted the restoration of the monarchy. However, by the 1960s more militant clerics such as Ayatollah Khomeini were coming to the forefront and mobilizing the impressive clerical network against the regime. Given the fact that the secular forces were largely decimated, the clerics
with their privileged mosque sanctuaries managed to appropriate the leadership of the evolving anti-Shah opposition and finally the revolution in 1979.

Mossadeq achievements and failures put him in the rank of the most prominent men of this century. There is the sublime figure of Mossadeq himself, who led a principled struggle for freedom, and the inalienable right of his nation to political development. Mossadeq, though plagued by serious illness for most of his life, never capitulated, and was ready to die his cause. Although he could have fled the country, escaped prosecution, and lived abroad, he chose to remain in his beloved homeland, whatever he spend over 30 years in exile. Nevertheless, still myth of Mossadeq is alive. Disappointment of imaginary Marxists and Islamists and constitutional Monarchy has absorbed old and new political activists towards principles and traditions of Iran’s National Front and Mossadeq’s path. It would be posed as the major alternative for Iran polity.