Chapter 2
Theoretical Framework

In this chapter we develop the theoretical framework which would be used for this study. The subject of the research demands a rigorous theoretical treatment to the political dynamics of Iran in the chosen period. Hence, a workable theoretical construct is developed using the appropriate political concepts. Accordingly, the first section ("The Concept of Thermidor") of this chapter explains the concept of 'thermidor.' Apart from defining this concept, this section also tries to trace the history of formulation of this concept as attempted by Trotsky. Several theories of revolutions have also been touched upon in this section in order to place the concept of thermidor in the wider context.

The second section ("Thermidor in Iran") of this chapter illustrates how the concept of thermidor is applicable in Iran. The onset of thermidor in Iran has been described and also the reasons of the same have been incorporated with due justifications. The third section ("The Theories of Power") of this chapter deals with the various theories of 'power.' A thorough investigation of this concept has been made in order to find out its meaning and its various dimensions. An elaborate treatment has been given to the relevance of the concept of power in the study of politics.

The fourth section ("Pareto's Theory of Elites as Applicable in Iran") deals specifically with Pareto's theory of elites and how it is applicable in case of Iran. The concepts 'Elite' and 'Elitism' have been defined and the elite theory of power has been investigated. Further, an investigation has been made to trace and identify the political elites in Iran. The last section ("Reformists and Conservatives") tries to define and distinguish the two opposite terms – reformists and conservatives. The term 'Conservatism' has been defined and also an attempt has been made to understand what is understood by the term 'reform bills'. Finally, in this section, a thorough investigation has been made to identify the reformists and conservatives in Iran.

Before getting into the main sections of this chapter, it would be appropriate to give a short note on the 'Theoretical Framework'. Here, the features and relevance of the
theoretical framework is sought to be highlighted. Also we give a thorough account of the available literature related to the present study which was reviewed. The purpose of this exercise is to highlight the knowledge gap in the chosen field of study.

A Note on the Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework plays its role in two stages in understanding any social phenomenon. Any social phenomenon is a complex interlinking of related issues. Any conceptually devoid attempt to understand such issues falls in the trap of overlooking vital factors. Further, such attempts result in a superficial understanding, dangerously entrenched with risky oversimplifications. Taking recourse to a theoretical or conceptual framework, thus, avoids such pitfalls and helps us in appreciating the complexities of such problems and issues. This is the first stage of the process.

The second stage of this process constitutes the actual understanding of the cause and effects of such phenomenon. This facilitates the investigator in giving a comprehensive treatment to the subject under investigation. The final outcome of such effort would often be a clear understanding which is free from vague generalizations. A notable point is worth mentioning here. Not all social investigations culminate into complete deciphering of the phenomenon. There are cases where, either due to the lack of data or due to the insufficient evolution of theories themselves, a final word cannot be said on the subject of investigation. Under such circumstances the recourse to theoretical framework does the minimal possible role of highlighting the complexities and actual causes of such incomplete understandings.

Accordingly, a theoretical framework is developed in this chapter to facilitate this research. The nature of this study demands capturing the political dynamics of Iran. Power struggle, though vital, is but one dimension of the entire political dynamics of Iran. The present political system of Iran is the outcome of the Islamic Revolution of 1978-79. Less than three decades have passed since then. This is a very short period of time for any polity to evolve. Apart from the evolutionary nature of Iranian polity, the most distinct factor influencing the political process is the nature of the Islamic Revolution itself. Any attempt to understand Iranian politics detaching it from its
revolutionary fervour will result in incomplete, and also, wrong understanding of the political dynamics. Placing the contemporary Iran into the proper time-frame from revolutionary perspective, thus, is our first task at hand.

Since the time of French Revolution, world has seen many revolutions and social scientists have tried to study them; and a number of theories have been developed to explain this social phenomenon of revolution. Apart from horizontal study (the comparative study of various successive revolutions), its vertical studies (understanding various phases of a single revolution) have also been undertaken. For the purpose of our study, this vertical approach is more important. The theory of 'thermidor' is a constituting factor of such an approach.

Having placed the contemporary politics of Iran in the proper time frame, the next step is to focus on the present politics itself. For this purpose, a careful study of the post-revolutionary politics of Iran is to be undertaken identifying the various distinct phase that can be defined while undertaking the power-struggle perspective of this politics.

Thus, the use and application of the two concepts of thermidor and Pareto's theory of elites makes it easy for us to understand Iranian politics. Having observed this, a note of caution is again important to remember here. Iranian polity is quite unique. The Islamic Republic of Iran has such unique and strange features that it makes it almost impossible to fit it in any particular political model. Accordingly, in this research, due care has been taken to avoid forcefully fitting these concepts in Iranian case. These concepts have been used while taking the liberty of maximum possible allowances and adjustments. The purpose here is not to categorize Iranian politics into this or that category, but, just to construct a workable theoretical framework in order to facilitate our research and, through this, further understanding of the power-struggle perspective of the politics of reform.

**Review of Literature**

Political transformation in Iran has been a subject of keen interest among the academics. However most of the works available on the subject are of general nature. Political
reform in Iran during President Khatami, too has been undertaken by some scholars. A number of scholars (Mehran 2003; Martin 2003) have tried to make sense out of the reform efforts of President Khatami. They have highlighted the resistance faced by the president from the hard-liners. However, the power struggle perspective between the Conservative Guardian Council and the Reformist President has been particularly lacking.

One notable feature of this research is that while being unique, it is of contemporary nature. Thus this research has relied heavily on the primary data which were found from various documents of Iranian government in print form as well as available on the Internet on government websites. Apart from this, Iranian and Western newspapers were of great help. For the analytical study and developing an insight into the power system of Iranian politics both primary and secondly literatures were referred.

In order to facilitate the survey of the available literatures, the research may be conceived as a series of successive studies involving the following identifiable steps. The first step was to study the Iranian political system that came into being as a result of the Islamic Revolution of 1979. This involved positioning the contemporary regime in the historical perspective of Iranian revolution. The concept of thermidor devised by Trotsky (1972) and subsequently applied to Iranian revolution by Wells (1999) and Ehteshami (1995) has been found useful in this regard.

The second step was to focus on the post of the President in this political system with special focus on its power vis-à-vis the Guardians Council. The aspects of conflicting power centres and competing governing elite factions were sought to be explained with the help of Elite Theory of Power as developed by Pareto. The next step was to analyze the political transformation of Iran since the Revolution and the need of political reforms that was felt by the large section of its population.

Finally, the study of political reforms undertaken by President Khatami during his two tenures as president was undertaken, giving the power-struggle dynamics of the process. Literatures related to these sub-topics were separately available which have been found
useful. Thus an overview of these existing literatures and sources of data is accordingly furnished in a thematic manner.

The Literature available on the various aspects of the Islamic Revolution is in abundance. Some of them, however, stand out clearly. Among such works, mention may be made of Keddie (1993), Halliday (1995), Martin (2003) and Abrahamian (1993).

Keddie (1993) makes two types of comparative studies of the Iranian revolution. First, she compares the Iranian revolution with other Iranian revolutionary movements since 1890. In the second type of study, she compares the Iranian revolution with other major revolutions of the world history. In these studies she attempts to employ theories of revolution that seem to fit the Iranian case. However, both comparisons appear tentative since the Islamic revolution of Iran does not bear much ideological similarities to either the other world revolutions or the Iranian constitutional revolution of 1905-6. Still, the insights developed by Keddie can be found useful in the present study while placing the contemporary politics of Iran in its revolutionary perspective.

Halliday (1995), in his volume takes a broad overview of modern West Asian history and its relation with Islam. Chapter 2 of this volume is particularly helpful for the purpose of our study. In this chapter, titled, “The Iranian Revolution in Comparative Perspective”, the author attempts to explain the Iranian revolution and the role of Islam. The author explores the relationship of the Iranian revolution of 1978-79 with the religious forces and attempts to study its effects in the wider context of West Asian Islamic politics. Like, Keddie’s work, this one too, helps us in understanding the Islamic revolution in its various dimensions.

In his work, Martin (2003) studies the development of Khomeini’s ideas and the influences upon him. He explains how Khomeini can be considered both as a realistic political leader as well as an idealist. This can be seen from the timing in which Khomeini entered into the national politics after 1961. Khomeini can also be seen as flexible in his political programme. Proper understanding of the nature of Khomeini is essential for any study of Iranian politics as the constitution of the Islamic Republic of
Iran is the reflection of Khomeini’s vision of state and its relationship with Islam.

Chapter 7 of this volume is quite helpful for the present study. Titled, “The Establishment of the Islamic State”, this chapter focuses on the organization and ideology of Khomeini’s movement. Abrahamian (1993) too asks us to look directly at Khomeini’s own works for understanding his ideologies. In his volume, the author has presented Khomeini’s theological writings apart from many of his public statements. These are in the form of Khomeini’s speeches, fatwas (judicial decrees), interviews and proclamations. The author, however, concludes that a study of these viewpoints of Khomeini present sometimes contradictory political ideology that focuses more on the immediate political, social, and economic issues rather than on issues of scripture and theology.

A number of authors have delved into the situations of post-revolutionary Iranian social and political conditions. Homa (1994) argues that the Islamic Republic has betrayed its people. The conservative and theocratic government that has emerged in Iran counters the vision of the revolutionaries. According to the author, it is also against the very core of Shiism. In Chapter 5 (“The Revolution Betrayed”) of her book, the author argues that although the Islamic revolution had promised the creation of an egalitarian Islamic society, this promise was not fulfilled. This was primarily the reason of the discontent in the Iranian society which was witnessed soon after the establishment of the Islamic republic.

Commenting on the post-revolution Iran, Katouzian (2003) says that in Iran the working of the administrative and theocratic institutions is not always harmonious. The post-revolutionary decision-making bodies and command structures coexist uncomfortably in Iran. Such inherent conflicts used to be resolved by the intervention of Ayatollah Khomeini. However, with his demise, it has become difficult to contain these differing chains of command. The author contends that the bureaucratic pluralism that is rooted in the character of the religious establishment in Iran is difficult to change in the context of the current theocracy. The post-revolutionary political situation is the product of the attempts of the ulema at curbing the process of secularization.
Reza Pahlavi (2002) gives a detailed account of post-revolutionary Iranian situations. He is the son of the late Shah of Iran and was forced to live like an ordinary person in exile. In his book, Reza Pahlavi attempts to provide his own viewpoints on the Iranian politics and society. Yaghmaian (2002) also provides such insights into the social and political conditions of Iran. Kian (1997) focuses on the conditions of women in the post-revolutionary Iran. The author contends that the implementation of the Sharia led to the disillusionment of the gender-sensitive Islamist women. This study is based on personal interviews. Another study (Yegameh 1993) of similar nature also attempts to explain the relationship between Iranian nationalism, Islam and women.

Building a workable theoretical framework was the essential part of this study. The available literature has been surveyed for getting insights into the construction of this framework. The literatures that were available on the theories of thermidor, power and elites have been therefore listed here. Knei-Paz (1978) has given an exhaustive analysis of Trotsky's formulation of thermidor. In his book, the chapter titled, "The Revolution Bureaucratized" is very helpful for proper understanding of the concept of thermidor as developed by Trotsky. The author gives a detailed historical account of the evolution of this concept. Some attempts to apply this concept of thermidor to the Iranian revolution have also been found (Wells 1999 and Rajaee 1999).

In the context of post-revolution Iranian politics, the formation of elite factionalism is of particular relevance. Wells traces this elite factionalism in the Islamic Republic. He argues that with the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, Iran has entered into a period of thermidor. He attempts to explain such development and takes up the era of the presidencies of Rafsanjani and Khatami separately to explain the factionalism in post-revolutionary Iran. The author attempts to raise important questions related to reformist’s victory and the fate of the conservatives.

The era of Muhammad Khatami has also been undertaken by Rajaee (1999) who contends that the election of Khatami in May 1997 election marked two important turning points in the Islamic Revolution. With Khatami's victory, the politics of revolutionary Iran turned into politics as usual. This election also marked the emergence
of a new generation in the Islamic movement in Iran whom he referred to as “Islamic Yuppies.” This article examines these two trends in the revolutionary context of Iran. It examines the conflict of modernity and tradition within Iran’s Revolution. This article gives useful insights into the various voices of the post-revolutionary politics but falls short of a comprehensive treatment to the factional strife.

Literature on the theories of power has been found in abundance. However, for the purpose of our study, Goverde’s (2000) work may be mentioned here. Goverde contends that “power has always been the most fundamental concept in the study of politics (Goverde 2000: 1).” This approach has been adopted in this study as it was found to be most suitable in the post-revolutionary Iranian context. The chapter titled “Power in Contemporary Politics” has been found to be most insightful for understanding the concept of power for the purpose of constructing the theoretical framework. Sharma’s (1999) work may also be mentioned in this context where he takes up the twin concepts of power and power elite.

The literature available on the Iranian political elite is scarce as far as the contemporary politics is concerned. However, the study of Zonis (1971) on the subject is helpful to some extent in understanding and theorizing the concept of political elite in Iranian context. This work, though carried out in the period of Shah, is helpful in understanding the deep rooted psychology of the Iranian elites. This study is based on the assumption that the “political” concerns the interrelationships of people. Therefore, in order to understand and analyze these interrelationships, it is imperative to consider the attitudes and values of the political actors apart from the formal political system.

For understanding the factionalism in the initial years of Islamic Republic of Iran, Akhavi’s (1987) article was found extremely insightful. His treatment of the various aspects of Iranian leadership, public policy, opposition and intra-elite conflict in the Islamic Republic is very comprehensive. This paper, however, has focused primarily on the period preceding 1987 in the internal politics of the Islamic Republic.

The issue of the religious legitimacy has been a recurring theme in the Iranian power
politics. It is therefore important to consider this theme for a comprehensive treatment to the subject. Roy (1999) has takes up the issue of religious legitimacy in his work. He observes that the Iranian Republic was founded on a dual legitimacy. These were religious and political. Both these legitimacies were embodied by Ayatollah Khomeini. However, since the death of Khomeini, the political legitimacy has dominated the religious legitimacy.

Some contemporary scholars (Tamadonfar 2001; Rezai 2003; Khosrokhavar 2000; and Ehteshami 1999) have reflected on the linkages between Islam, law, democracy and power. These studies provide useful insights into the dynamics of contemporary Iranian politics. Tamadonfar (2001) argues that Khomeini and his supporters developed doctrinal justifications for establishing the clerical rule in Iran. These clerics thought that their attempts would ensure political order and social conformity. However, by communalising the legislation and ensuring its adherence by institutional control, the clerics actually marginalized the Sharia. The author sees this trend as separating the clerics from their traditional role and in turn undermining their legitimacy.

In the preceding paragraphs, we have mainly listed such literatures which have largely dealt with the Iranian history, its political system and those concepts and theories that have been applied in the course of this study. The issue of social and political reform in Iran has been the core of this study as the power struggle perspective between the reformists and the conservatives is sought to be studied on this premise. Therefore a sincere effort has been made to find out all the relevant literatures dealing with the issues of political and social reforms.

Such literatures are indeed available which have dealt with the important dimensions such as the relevance of the reforms, its effect on Iranian foreign policy, its effect on education and its effect on women. Many authors have made attempts to evaluate the extent of success of Khatami’s reforms and the causes of its failures. Such literatures have been found useful for this study and therefore we enlist such works which have been found relatively more important from our perspective.
The ideological transformations of Iran have been studied by Jahanbegloo (2001) in his work. He has taken historical overview of this theme focusing on the issues of Shiism, Islam and democracy. The author contends that synergising between Islam and modern democratic institutions has not been easy for Iran. He analyzes the case of Khatami’s victory in June 2001, when he got over 76 per cent votes and this victory was endorsed by the Velayat-e-Faqih Ali Khamenei. This example has been cited by the author to support his argument that this synergy was indeed taking place, though with great difficulty.

Jahanbakhsh (2001) has attempted a theoretical treatment to the subject of political reform on Iran. However, he has mostly focused on the linkages between Islam, democracy and religious modernism. This work focuses primarily on the question of the compatibility of Islam and democracy. The power-struggle perspective has been found missing from this study. Still, this study gives useful insights on the themes that have been undertaken.

Since there are no formally recognized political parties, factional politics becomes extremely important for a proper understanding of power politics in Iran. Brumberg (2001) offers a new interpretation of the factional struggle that paved the way for reforms in Iran. He argues that the traces of the struggle for a more democratic Iran could be found in the Islamic revolution itself. He further contends that the election of President Muhammad Khatami in 1997 was actually in accordance with the core principles of the Islamic Revolution.

Some scholars have taken the two terms of President Khatami separately to focus on the political and social reforms. For instance, in their work, the authors (Feldman and Valenty 2001) have chronicled Iran during Khatami’s first tenure. They credit Muhammad Khatami for his reforms despite conservatives retaining most of the key power positions within the Iranian government.

Likewise, Takeyh (2003) analyses Khatami’s second term for analysing his efforts at reform and ensuing power struggle. He observes that Iran has been immersed in a
dynamic debate regarding the direction of the Islamic Republic. He argues that Khatami’s attempts to liberalize the theocracy were countered by a determined conservative backlash. Still, like any other democratic transition, Iran’s reform movement too had been acquiring new strategies for the democratisation of the state. He even prophesies that the “Islamic Republic of Iran may yet witness another momentous realignment of its political order (Takeyh 2003: 42).”

Some scholars have primarily focused on the foreign policy dimension of the politics of reform of Muhammad Khatami. David Menashri (2001) in his book examines Khatami’s domestic policies to find out their influences on Iran’s foreign policy. It also takes up Iran’s regional ambitions. He argues that Khatam’s victory was the result of growing discontent and it signalled the intensification of the domestic conflicts.

Similarly, Halliday (2001) analyses the influence of the conflict between the reformists and conservatives on Iran’s domestic policy to place the whole issue in the larger perspective of Iran’s international relations. The author also argues that the resultant domestic policies did not match with the foreign policy of Iran since both trends were internally divided. It is also argued that Iranian foreign policy was not uniquely determined by either Iraq or Israel. According to the author, Iran faces several regional security concerns. Further, Iran’s international isolation, caused largely by the United States, constricts its overall progress.

The influence of Khatami’s political reform on the condition of Iranian education has been analysed by Mehran (2003). This study also tries to assess whether Khatami’s reformist agenda was reflected in the formal schooling in Iran. Rezaei (2003), on the other hand studies the relevance of student demonstrations that took place in December 2002. The author argues that this event revealed that the public sentiment favoured political and economic reform in Iran. He shares his opinion that the reformists led by Muhammad Khatami have largely failed in harnessing this force for pushing further their reform programmes.

For assessing the economic situation of Iran prior to Khatami era, works of McLachlan
(1995) and Mazarei (1996) have been found useful. These studies provide useful reference points for assessing Khatami's economic achievements during his presidential tenures. Similarly, for understanding the role of women in the political process of modern Iran, Paidar's (1995) study is useful. The author contends in his study that in the Iranian political process the gender issue has been very much alive. We can agree with him as we find that women had been particularly active even during Khatami era.

One recent volume (Cronin 2004) undertakes the study of leftist activism in Iran. The author highlights the significance of Iranian Left in the evolution of the power struggle between the reformists and the conservatives. The author argues that despite never holding power in Iran, the leftists in Iran have deep impact on the political development of modern Iran.

Amuzegar's (2006) article deals with Khatami's legacy and provides useful insights into the reform process. The author argues that Muhammad Khatami's presidency started with great promises of reforms but ended unceremoniously. The author hopes that the eight-year tenure of Khatami might be viewed more favourably in the future since during the period of Khatami, his supporters were largely disillusioned. He concludes that Khatami's efforts at reform had some successes as well as certain setbacks. Still, Khatami's efforts have made his country freer than before in many respects. He also highlights Khatami's diplomatic triumphs. The author takes a sympathetic view of Khatami's reform efforts and concludes that his apparent failure is mainly the result of very high expectations of the people and Khatami's limited capacity to fulfil them.

On the issue of power struggle between the conservative Guardians Council and the reformists, Samii's (2001) work is commendable. He bases his study on the elections that were held in Iran during Khatami period. He interprets these election results as an indication of the people's desire to change the political status quo through the democratic means. He observes that such efforts, however, were countered by the state organizations which had competing agendas. It was also a direct result of the vague provisions of the Iranian constitution. He observes that "the Guardians Council, with the constitutional duty of supervising elections, is the most powerful body in blocking truly competitive
elections (Samii 2001: 643).”

In his other work of similar nature, Samii (2004) bases his analysis on empirical findings to study the sphere of influences of the political institutions of Iran. He concludes that the unelected institutions in Iran are more powerful than their elected counterparts. He also observes that the efforts of President Muhammad Khatami’s legislative efforts to change this situation completely failed. He supports his argument by indicating towards falling voter participation.

Some scholars have focused on the Iranian parliament to highlight the power struggle between the reformists and the conservatives. One such study (Baktiari 1996) analyses the parliamentary rivalry between the competing factions. The author also undertakes the study of organization of elections and approval of candidates for understanding the real structure of the parliament. There are several articles (Larijani 1994; Baktiari 1996; and Azmi 1989) which are written on the activities of the Majlis. They provide useful understanding of the legal changes that were attempted in the Iranian polity.

Ehteshami (1999) in his article takes a different look at the elections in the authoritarian regimes. He argues that merely holding elections at regular intervals did not necessarily imply the democratization and liberalization. He takes broad view of West Asian politics for understanding this aspect of elections. There are some other efforts (Mayer 1987; Halliday 2001; and Keddie 1995) that have tried to understand the Iranian politics in the wider context of West Asian politics.

Thus, this survey of the available literatures brings to light the fact that the available studies have so far been lacking in focusing political reform as a perspective of power struggle in Iran. The available materials have dealt separately with the variables that were included in this research. The contemporary nature of the research also explains the lack of such studies.
I. The Concept of Thermidor

The concept of thermidor plays an important role in placing the Iranian political and social reforms and the ensuing power struggle in its revolutionary context. The term 'thermidor' may be defined as a particular phase of revolution in which the hard-line revolutionaries face challenges to their hold over power by the reformists. This phase is normally the result of a popular backlash when the ruling elites take their hard-line revolutionary policies to the extremes (Wells 1999: 27).

It is, however, notable that the thermidorean reactions do not occur in all types of revolutionary states. The thermidor phase is generally found in such a revolutionary state where the power is shared by several diverse factions. Such an arrangement is stabilised by an over-arching charismatic figure. Such conditions were found in the former Soviet Union where Lenin represented such a charismatic figure. The same conditions were found in the Islamic Republic where the role of such a charismatic figure was played by Ayatollah Khomeini (Ibid.).

For a proper understanding of the concept of thermidor, we need to go back to the history of French Revolution (1789). It is so necessitated since the genesis of the concept of thermidor has been traced to this revolution. Historians have noted that in the early stages of the French Revolution (1789-1799), Louis used to command the legitimacy and support of the people. However, the radicalisation effected by his regime alienated many constitutional monarchists such as Lafayette and Barnave. This situation led to the fall of the Girondins and even of 'moderate' Jacobins such as Danton. Eventually, the stage of thermidor reached which saw the overthrow of the radical purists led by Robespierre, and put the Directoire in power (Katouzian 2003: 48).

Leon Trotsky used this example of the French Revolution for formulating his own theory of thermidor in the context of former Soviet Union. He achieved this task by identifying certain parallel developments in the Social Democratic movement in Russia. In his book, The Revolution Betrayed, Trotsky (1972) referred to the rise of Stalin and the accompanying post-revolutionary bureaucracy as the "Soviet Thermidor" (Knei-Paz
1978: 394). Trotsky defined thermidor as “the bureaucratization of revolution, or of those essential changes which the revolution had introduced (Ibid.: 399).” Such bureaucratization of the revolution was seen by Trotsky as something undesirable and he associated many of the ills of the society to this situation.

Understanding the true meaning of the term thermidor also helps us in understanding the causes and effects of post-revolutionary conditions of a society. It is commonly seen that during any revolution, a temporary alliance is formed by diverse groups. This type of alliance is necessitated by the perception of a common enemy. This common enemy, often the despotic regime, is sought to be overthrown by this common alliance (Wells 1999: 27).

However, soon after the realization of the goal of overthrowing of the ruling regime, the new regime faces a disintegrating force. This happens because the coalition that participates in the revolution soon realizes that there is little in common with one another except the perception of the mutual hatred for the old regime. Consequently, they charge one another and the minor groups or factions often get marginalized in due course (Ibid.).

However, it becomes difficult for the triumphant faction to marginalise all the constituting factions and thus a kind of compromise is made. This compromise results in the rule of a coalitional alliance (Ibid.). The role of a charismatic leader is important in the efficacy of such an alliance. It is this charismatic leader that keeps the ruling alliance intact and keeps the dissidents at bay.

Once the consolidation of the power takes place by the core alliance under the leadership of the charismatic leader, the internal pulls and pressures take place. Such internal tension remains only to the extent of winning over the charismatic leader. It does not reach the breaking point at least until the death of the charismatic leader. In the ensuing internal strain among the ruling elites, that faction of the alliance gains ascendancy that is found more loyal to the charismatic leader. Such loyal faction is often found to be the hard-liners. Such faction, because of its proximity to the charismatic leader, holds greater control over the power. These hard-liners then make an attempt to impose their political,
economic and social agenda on the whole country (Ibid.: 28).

The rest of the factions of the ruling alliance oppose such attempts of the hard-liners. They are therefore also known as the reformists or moderates. Such opposing factions are termed as the thermidoreans. These thermidoreans are also a part of the ruling coalition of the revolutionary parties. They are also affiliated with the hard-liners who have greater control over the power. However, what sets them apart is that their ties to the charismatic leader are not as strong as the hard-liners (Ibid.).

Brinton (1965 in Keddie 1993: 612) has described some features that are associated with the period of thermidor. He explained the concept of thermidor while giving his typology of the revolution. According to him, during a thermidor, the fall of the radical elements is witnessed. This is often the result of a reaction to the over emphasis by the ruling faction to the rule of virtue and justice. Because of such stringent norms of the governing faction, the people long for laxer ways. The result of such a reaction is the "deradicalization" which is often followed by autocratic rule. Brinton cites the example of France where Napoleon succeeded the Directory. Also, in Russia this situation occurred when Stalin replaced the NEP (Ibid.)

The reaction of the people in a thermidor is not sudden. This is a gradual process as over time the waning of the revolutionary zeal is witnessed. It results in the incompetence and corruption and the efforts of hard-line factions to control the people with the stringent rules fail. The popular backlash that follows subsequently forces the regime to bring stability and order based on relaxed rules (Wells 1999: 28). This kind of situation often takes the form of urgency shortly after the death or ousting of the charismatic figure.

However, the signs of such tendencies can often be seen during the leader's reign (Ibid.). For example, "the growth in strength of the conservative faction in government and Khomeini's December 1982 decrees providing some protection for legal rights" were the "early signs of a Thermidor in Iran (Keddie 1993: 612)." Such signs started increasing as the years of Khomeini's rule progressed. However, these were not very evident during the time of Khomeini and became increasingly evident only after his death in 1989.
Soon after the death of the charismatic figure, the efforts of the thermidorians or the reformists go into 'high gear' (Wells 1999: 28). This results due to the deprivation of the hard-liners of their protector – the charismatic leader. Now, the reformists find themselves in a better position to express openly their grievances with the revolutionary policy (Ibid.). They often do this by blaming the hard-liners of diverging from the revolutionary promises.

For example, in post-revolutionary Iran it was Khomeini who had institutionalized those forces that made mass politics extremely powerful. He had gradually incorporated all his supporters into a ‘ministate’ that he created. While he was alive, he kept the conflicting factions of the ruling coalition competitive. He never allowed one faction to dominate the other and always acted as the final arbiter of such internal conflicts (Milani 1997: 84, 87). However, soon after his death in 1989, this status was changed. Consequently, the warring factions of the ruling coalition became more expressive and the reformists blamed the conservatives of failing to fulfil the revolutionary promises.

Wells maintains that even after the departure of the charismatic leader from the scene it is not easy to oust the hard-liners because of their reluctance to surrender the power. This results in the struggle for power between the hard-liners and the reformists. This battle intensifies gradually and leads to the erosion of the overall legitimacy of the system. The hard-liners are now forced to either change their position or loose their legitimacy. Faced by such a predicament, the hard-liners often moderate their position or use rhetoric. The situation is often complicated by the ascendancy of various competing reformist factions with differing agendas (Wells 1999: 28).

It is notable that such patterns in the period of thermidor are not often strictly determined. Rather, they reflect historical trends and can be found repetitive in the similar situations. The reformists may become successful in their reform efforts. However, this often happens after a long period of intra-elite competition which is characterized by numerous factional shifts within the ruling coalition (Ibid.).
Trotsky's Formulation of Thermidor

Leon Trotsky (1972) has given a detailed account of his formulation of the concept of thermidor in his book, *The Revolution Betrayed*. Trotsky developed this concept in the context of former Soviet Union and referred to the rise of Stalin and the accompanying post-revolutionary bureaucracy as the "Soviet Thermidor". This formulation of thermidor of Trotsky has been very exhaustively chronicled by Knei-Paz (1978) which we elaborate here.

Trotsky had used the example of the French Revolution for identifying certain parallel developments in the Social Democratic movement in Russia. Initially, Trotsky had denounced the 'dictatorial' tactics of Lenin. This denouncement was the result of Trotsky's own perception of Bolshevik 'substitutionalism'. Within the Russian revolutionary movement, Trotsky saw ugly stirrings of Jacobinism (Knei-Paz 1978: 394).

At the time of this denouncement, Trotsky was an opponent of both Jacobinism and Bolshevism. However, he had later embraced both Jacobinism and Bolshevism. Therefore when the character of the Russian Revolution was debated by analogy with the French Revolution, Trotsky invoked the memory of Lenin and defended the Bolshevik Jacobin tradition (Ibid.).

Consequently, Trotsky stood to fight against this particular kind of 'substitutionalism' which he thought was leading to an anti-revolutionary dictatorship. He thought that the way the 'Thermidor' in France had destroyed the revolutionary fervour of French Jacobinism; it would also threaten the remaining essence of the Russian movement, which he termed as Bolshevik Jacobinism (Ibid.).

Trotsky has been found inconsistent in his attempt to define the term thermidor. This was primarily due to his intermittent revision of the extent of thermidor into Soviet society and of its prospects. He was himself aware of this inconsistency. However, later, he adopted slightly less unambiguous position. It took Trotsky some time to decide how to apply the label of thermidor in the Soviet context (Ibid.).
Eventually, however, Trotsky settled on a consistent approach and applied the concept of thermidor to the Soviet society. In the final form, Trotsky defined thermidor as the bureaucratization of the Soviet revolution in the Soviet society. According to him, the term thermidor included the bureaucratization of all essential changes that were introduced by the revolution. However, thermidor did not imply that such changes would be safeguarded permanently (Ibid.: 399).

According to Trotsky, this dictatorship of the bureaucracy was not a permanent solution to the social contradictions in Soviet society. It had just created the 'illusion' of internal stability. It was quite possible that a social upheaval would be witnessed and there might be a reversal to pre-Soviet society. He concluded that the regime would find it increasingly difficult to control the society purely by bureaucratic means when the social contradictions would become more irreconcilable (Ibid.).

Iranian Revolutions in Theoretical Perspective

Since thermidor is a particular phase of a revolution and we intend to apply this concept of thermidor into the Islamic revolution of Iran, it is imperative to take a look at various Iranian revolutions from theoretical perspective. The phenomena of revolutions have always intrigued the historians. Victor Hugo has regarded revolution as "the larva of civilization" (Milani 1994: 7). It is observed that there have been various attempts to understand the causes and effects of revolutions. However, despite the abundance of literature on revolution; there is hardly any consensus on the intricacies of revolution (Ibid.). Precisely because of this, "there is no universal theory of revolutions, since, in any case, scientific theories are not and cannot be universal (Katouzian 2003: 30). This aspect makes the study of revolutions a complex exercise.

It is, however, unanimously agreed that revolutions are momentous events of history and they are known to have lasting impact on society (Milani 1994: 7). The term "revolution" is used very loosely in social sciences. It reflects that the study of revolution is still in a pre-paradigmatic stage. Still, for the purpose of our study of revolution in the Iranian context, we can use the definition of revolution as given by Milani (Ibid.). He defines revolution as "a rapid, fundamental change in the social structures 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 from below (the nongoverning classes) (Milani 1994: 9)."

The way most other European theories are universally applied, there is no such theory of revolution which could be universally applicable. Still, one can find some elements which could be generalized for understanding the European revolutions (Katouzian 2003: 31). Such elements and their generalization also help us in understanding and theorising the Iranian revolutions. Although the revolutions, revolts or rebellions that Iran has witnessed in its history have many causes, the primary of them has been the conflict over succession. This is so because unlike Europe, in Iran the legitimacy has rarely been based on some binding law or tradition. This has been true for most of the arbitrary state (Ibid.).

Though Iran has seen many upheavals in its history, two of them stand out as the major movements. These have been the constitutional revolution of 1905-06 and the Islamic revolution of 1978-79. These two upheavals of the twentieth century have been explained by Keddie (1993 and 1995) through the help of two important theories of revolution. These are James C. Davies’ J-curve theory of revolution and Crane Brinton’s “Anatomy of Revolution”. According to Davies (1971 in Keddie 1995: 105), “revolutions emerge after a considerable period of economic growth followed by a shorter, sharp period of economic contraction and decline.” The pre-Revolutionary experience of Iran in the 1970’s was matched by Davies’s J-curve.

“To a lesser degree, the revolution of 1905-11 may also fit the model, since some scholars see a period of growth in the late nineteenth century followed by economic difficulties that stemmed from the shah's extravagance and Russia’s economic and political troubles after 1904 (Keddie 1995: 105).” Iran at that time was greatly influenced by the West. “1906 Revolution had come about because the country’s intellectuals and the educated class, even though very small in number and from different social backgrounds, had become conscious of the country’s backwardness vis-à-vis Europe (Daneshwar 1996: 4).” 

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Notably, the year 1911 has also been identified by Katouzian (2003) as the period of thermidor. He found in this period all the features that are associated with thermidor. However, this thermidor was associated with the constitutional revolution of 1905-06. During this time, the helpless Iranian government was forced to close the national assembly (Majlis). The popular American adviser to the Iranian treasury was also expelled by the government. This was necessitated by the Russian ultimatum which was done in alliance with the British government (Katouzian 2003: 118).

Katouzian has compared this Iranian “disaster” of 1911 with the thermidor of French Revolution that occurred in 1794. This analogy of Katouzian seems justified in so far as the idealists had a major setback on both occasions. Further, in both cases, the idealists played an important role in bringing the disaster upon themselves. However, unlike the case of France, the conflict in Iran over the Russian ultimatum was not a domestic matter, and so no domestic political force had engineered this ‘thermidor’ (Ibid.: 208).

Apart from Davies’ model as described above, Brinton’s ‘descriptive typology’ (Brinton 1965 in Keddie 1993: 611) also fits the Iranian Islamic revolution of 1978-79. “The political, economic, and financial troubles of an ancient regime that made rule in the old way impossible ... were clearly seen both in the lesser crises that preceded the revolution and in the revolution of 1978-79 (Keddie 1993: 611).”

Similar crises were the characteristic of the financial situation before the English (seventeenth century) and French (eighteenth century) revolutions which have been discussed by Brinton. However, such characteristics have not been without some variations. The way it had happened in Russia in early twentieth century; in Iran too in the 1970s, intellectuals and elites were politically alienated from the court (Keddie 1993: 611). “The gradual and somewhat unexpected movement from demonstration to revolution, characteristic of Brinton’s revolutions, has also characterized both Iranian revolutions (Ibid.: 612).”

1 In this thesis, unless otherwise stated, by the term ‘Iranian Thermidor’, we imply the thermidor which occurred after the Islamic Revolution of 1978-79.
The Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1906 and the Islamic Revolution of 1978-79 were different in many aspects. They also contained different ideologies. However, both revolutions were similar in as much as they were directed against the state. Also, in both these revolutions, most of the political society had participated. Further, both revolutions followed by conflict and chaos. These features have been consistently seen in all the traditional Iranian revolts. Despite the differences, the pattern of “society against the state” has been familiar in all the Iranian revolts since ancient Persia (Katouzian 2003: 31).

II. Thermidor in Iran

In an article published as early as 1983, Keddie⁹ had foreseen the early phases of thermidor in Iran. She had observed that during this time Iran had tried to normalise its economic and political relations with some ideologically divergent regimes. Notably among such regimes were Pakistan, Turkey and some European countries. Although not much of Iran’s internal and external policy had softened by March 1983, “the growth in strength of the conservative faction in government and Khomeini’s December 1982 decrees providing some protection for legal rights may be early signs of a Thermidor (Keddie 1993: 612).” Such an observation was made by Keddie while theorising the Iranian revolutions.

“The Iranian revolution of 1978-79 conforms in part to the pattern of growing radicalization found in all four of Brinton’s revolutions (Keddie 1995: 105-06).” Toward the end of 1987 and at the beginning of 1988 Khomeini was forced to issue a set of fatwas. These fatwas were directed towards establishing the principle of maslaha as a formal basis for legislation. This step of Khomeini was necessitated by the difficulties faced by the regime due to the Islamic laws and the Shiite jurisprudence. “When consideration of the sharia was no longer necessary because of the widespread familiarity

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⁹ This article, titled “Islamic Revolutions in Comparative Perspective”, was originally published in 1983 in American Historical Review, Vol. 88, pp. 379-98. The same article was reprinted in 1993 as a chapter with the same title, in Albert Hourani et al (eds.) The Modern Middle East: A Reader, London: I.B. Tauris, pp. 601-623. Again, a shorter version of this article was published in 1995 by Keddie as a chapter of her book, Iran and the Muslim World: Resistance and Revolution, New York: New York University Press.
with the difficulties of running a government based on it, a further step was taken and maslahat was declared to be the final decisive principle of legislation (Schirazi 1997: 238)."

Wells argues that “since the death of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in 1989, the Islamic Republic of Iran has entered a period of Thermidor (Wells 1999: 29).” During the decade of the rule of Ayatollah Khomeini, the power was shared by a group of Islamic factions who were fundamentalist revolutionaries. This period was characterised by the ascendancy of a centre-left coalition called the ‘followers of the Imam’s line’, or the Maktabis (Wells 1999: 29). The ruling Islamic coalition has also been referred by Ehteshami as the ‘Fundamentalist Islamic Republican’ bloc (Ehteshami 1995 in Wells 1995: 28).

Although this ruling coalition consists of diverse groups, most of the members of the groups were originally from Islamic left. However, after 1989, the centre and moderate factions started defecting from this grand coalition. They started forming a different alliance in association with the right-wing conservatives. This right-wing was formerly known as the Hujjatis (Ibid.: 29). Such factional re-alliances made the politics of Iranian Republic highly turbulent. Such inherent differences were not witnessed during Khomeini period so explicitly.

In the post-Khomeini period these hard-liners and the revisionists engaged themselves in factional fighting over the future of the Islamic Republic. The period between 1989 and 1997, saw the dominance of a slightly reformist centre-right coalition in the government. It was seen for the first time in the history of the revolutionary Iran that such a faction was playing a major role in the policy-making process. This has been considered as the defining feature of the Rafsanjani administration. The left-wing faction led by Mir Hosain Musavi, Ayatollah Karrubi, Ayatollah Karim Ardabili, Bezhad Nabavi and Hojatolislam Musavi-Khoeniha, who were formerly dominant in the government, naturally opposed the newly dominant faction (Ibid.).

Two events precipitated the ascendancy of the right-wings. First was the constitutional
reform of 1989. The second was the defeat of the leftist hard-line faction in the parliamentary elections of 1992. With the victory of the moderate Muhammad Khatami in May 1997, the situation changed greatly and the centre and moderate factions deserted the conservatives forming a new coalition with the old hard-liners (Ibid.: 29). This is the background of the power struggle that was witnessed between the reformists and the conservatives during the period of Khatami.

Rajaee (1999) has considered a much later date as the onset of the Iranian thermidor. He contends that Muhammad Khatami’s election as president of Iran in May 1997 “inaugurated the overdue Thermidor of the Iranian Revolution.” He argues that this was so because during this time the politics of revolutionary Iran was turned into politics as usual and this politics was characterised by all the peculiar conflict and compromise that is usually witnessed during the period of thermidor (Rajaee 1999: 217).

Muhammad Khatami had actually represented the views of various groups and factions that were seeking moderation in the Islamic Republic. The Speaker of the parliament, Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri, whom Khatami had defeated, similarly represented the voice of the Islamist coalition during this election. Thus the election of the president in 1997 was a contest of two opposing voices and the demand of the period chose the voice of moderation. This competition was, however, not taking outside the Islamic fold. It has to be emphasised here that the contest between the two differing voices was taking place within the context of an Islamic pluralism. This pluralism is a peculiar feature of the Islamic Republic which has evolved in the Islamic movement in Iran (Ibid.: 218).

It was this pluralism that gave rise to various political factions in Iran. This process was given impetus by the dissolution of the umbrella organization, the Islamic Republic Party, on 1 June 1978. Further, the parameters of this pluralism were delineated by the revision of the Iranian constitution in 1989. In effect, only those factions were permitted to participate in the political process in the Islamic Republic who accepted the core principle of the Velayat-e-Faqih (Ibid.).

Those, who did not agree, were effectively thrown out of the process. For example,
Ibrahim Yazdi, the leader of the Freedom Movement of Iran, refused to accept this condition in this presidential election. This guaranteed his disqualification and he could not even contest the election. The powerful Guardians Council disqualified not only Yazdi, but also 223 other candidates from participating in the 1997 presidential election (Ibid.).

III. The Theories of Power

Meaning of Power

“Power has always been the most fundamental concept in the study of politics (Goverde 2000: 1).” Many other concepts are important for understanding the nature of politics. Such concepts may be liberty, justice, equality, culture and class. However, since the origin of the political theory in the ancient Greece, power has often stood at the top for defining the conceptual issues of politics. Still, it is imperative to note here that too much emphasis on power to explain the political phenomena may prove to be counterproductive. Since in this research, we intend to study the politics of reform of Khatami period as a perspective of power struggle, the concept of power has been given special emphasis.

The concept of power has never been static throughout the history of political philosophy. The events of twentieth century resulted in great many intellectual debates on the nature of power. Such events included the First and Second World Wars, the emergence and collapse of Communist states and the spread of capitalism (Ibid.). These events compelled the political scientists and philosophers to take increasingly new look on the concept of power.

Bertrand Russell (1938) in his book, Power: A New Social Analysis, has defined power as “the production of intended effects”. Simply put, power denotes the ability of a person to achieve his objectives. The term power is normally used in various contexts. It has been witnessed that most theorists of power prefer to see it as ‘power over’ something. Thus Robert Dahl (1991) in his book Modern Political Analysis; defines power as a kind of influence. According to Dahl, power is exercised “when compliance is attained by
creating the prospect of severe sanctions for non-compliance.” (Gauba 2003: 249)

The above definitions pose the concept of power as some force to be exercised by some one over an ‘unwilling’ lot. However, power also takes the character of ‘authority’ which also involves legitimacy. In this case power commands willing obedience. The authority therefore should not be neglected when the concept of power is dealt in a comprehensive manner. The force normally comes into play when the legitimacy fails. Only the authority, ensures the social acceptance of the decisions of the power holder (Ibid.).

The concept of power is also important to understand the progress of society. The power often plays important role in enforcing such decisions which may be found essential for carrying out the progress. “Progress in society derives not from some felicitous virtuous circle or invisible hand but from the continuing struggle of individuals and groups to improve their lot in a context of both continual manifest and deep latent conflict between them and others who have less or more power than they do (Goverde 2000: 5).”

Power, naturally has been essential ingredient of the study of politics in one way or other. We also know that democracy is an integral part of the study of politics, particularly so in the context of our study. Goverde observes that “probably the most important debate about power in the modern era has been concerned with democracy (Ibid.).” Democracy in the modern days attempts to construct an egalitarian society. Democracy provides the people power over the policies of the government by giving the people the right to vote.

However, one should be cautious, that sometimes in authoritarian regimes; this very concept is generally manipulated. Such regimes use the techniques of frequent elections to show that their regime is legitimate; whereas in practice, such elections are so manipulated that the essence of democracy is completely extracted out of the very process of election. This point is important particularly in the case of Iran, where the elections are regularly held; however, the vague constitutional provisions and the overlapping power structure make the whole exercise of elections practically redundant from the point of view of real democracy.
Politics as Power

The broadest definition of politics sees it as working in all social activities. It does not confine politics to a particular sphere such as the government or the state. Adrian Leftwich (1984: 64 in Heywood 2005) also proclaimed in his book, What is politics? The Activity and Its Study, that "politics is at the heart of all collective social activity, formal and informal, public and private, in all human groups, institutions and societies." When we see it in this sense, politics is found to take place at every level of social interaction. It can be seen as taking place even in a small group of people just as amongst the nations on a global scale (Heywood 2005: 10).

Politics concerns itself with the production, distribution and use of resources in the course of social existence. "Politics is, in essence, power: the ability to achieve a desired outcome, through whatever means (Ibid.)." This view of politics was expressed by Harold Lasswell (1936) in his book, Politics: Who Gets What, When, How. When we see politics from this perspective, it relates to the diversity and conflict. The scarcity of resources and the conflict resulted by the claims over them is the essential ingredient of politics. "Politics can therefore be seen as a struggle over scarce resources, and power can be seen as the means thorough which this struggle is conducted (Ibid.: 11)."

When we apply this view of politics to the nations such as Iran, we find that "the term 'political' concerns the interrelationships of people (Zonis 1971: vii)." Therefore, for understanding and analyzing such interrelationships it is as important to focus on the behaviour of the political actors as on the form of government and the political institutions. It is so predicated since the behaviours, attitudes and ideologies of the political actors all affect one way or the other all such interrelations that constitute politics and the political process (Ibid.: viii).

IV. Pareto's Theory of Elites as Applicable in Iran

In this section we intend to apply Pareto’s theory of elites in the case of Iranian Republic. An attempt has been made to explain how this theory fits in Iranian case. For this very reason, we start this section with a brief account of the development of elite studies. A
mention has also been made of the attempts by the scholars to apply the elite studies in case of West Asian politics. Subsequently we give detailed account of Pareto’s theory of Elites. Finally, the description of the Iranian elites has been furnished and the application of Pareto’s theory of elites has been applied to the Iranian politics.

Development of Elite Studies

“Elite studies developed in early twentieth century European scholarship as an alternative to Marxist emphasis on class and as a corrective to the egalitarianism of democratic philosophy (Zartman 1980: 1).” The basic concern of this approach has been that power is always concentrated in the hands of few people regardless of the nature of the political system. Since the power was seen as unevenly distributed, it became necessary to find out how some people acquired more power than others. This resulted in analyses of different political systems solely on the basis of power concentration. “In their now classical works, Mosca, Michels, Pareto, and, to some extent, Weber were sometimes excessively fascinated with this basic discovery of power concentration, but, at other times, were able to move toward the identification of concepts for explaining distinctions among elites (Ibid.).”

The term elite refers to that minority of people who control most of the power and privilege either justifiably or unjustifiably. Elitism is simply a belief in the rule by elite (Heywood 2005: 79). As explained above, elitism developed as a critique of egalitarian ideas such as democracy and socialism. Elitism in fact focuses on the elite rule either as desirable or inevitable one. Classical elitists, such as Gaetano Mosca, Vilfredo Pareto and Robert Michels have taken the position that elite rule is inevitable. They firmly believed that regardless of the form of the government, political power is always exercised by a privileged minority. This minority has been termed by them as elite (Ibid.).

The term ‘elite’ as a category of sociological analysis was introduced by Pareto while the idea associated with this theory was floated earlier by Mosca (Gauba 2003: 258). For Example, in The Ruling Class, Mosca (1939) said that in all societies “two classes of people appear – a class that rules and a class that is ruled (Mosca 1939 in Heywood 2005: 79).” According to Mosca, the necessary attributes for rule are often distributed unequally
and therefore the ruling minority often controls the masses. This, according to Mosca was true even in a parliamentary democracy (Heywood 2005: 79).

The idea of 'the ruling class' as conceptualised by Mosca serves as the foundation for understanding the elite rule and the behaviour of the elites. Mosca explained his idea of 'the ruling class' in the following words which is worth quoting in full:

"Among the constant facts and tendencies that are to be found in all political organisms, one is so obvious that is apparent to the most casual eyes. In all societies – from societies that are very meagrely developed and have barely attained the dawning of civilization, down to the most advanced and powerful societies – two classes of people appear – a class that rules and a class that is ruled. The first class, always the less numerous, performs all political functions, monopolizes power and enjoys the advantages that power brings, whereas the second, the more numerous class, is directed and controlled by the first, in a manner that is now more or less, legal, now more or less arbitrary and violent, and supplies the first, in appearance at least, with material means of subsistence and with the instrumentalities that are essential to the vitality of the political organism."

(Mosca 1939: 50)

Mosca argues that in practical life all of us recognize the existence of such ruling class (Mosca 1939: 50). Based on this concept of 'the ruling class', Mosca developed his 'theory of the ruling class'. He notes that "the doctrine that in all human societies which have arrived at a certain grade of development and civilization political control in the broadest sense of the term (administrative, military, religious, economic and moral leadership) is exercised always by a special class, or by an organized minority, is older than is commonly supposed even by those who support it (Ibid.: 329)."

Michels developed an alternative line of argument based on the tendency within all organizations. According to him, however democratic any organization might appear, the power is always concentrated in the hands of a small group. Such group consists of dominant figures. These dominant figures are capable of organizing and making decisions. Michels says that the power is never concentrated in the hands of an apathetic rank and file. He termed such capable ruling tendency as the 'the iron law of oligarchy' (Heywood 2005: 79).
James Burnham (1941 in Heywood 2005: 79) further developed this notion of bureaucratic power. In his book *The Managerial Revolution*, Burnham argued that a 'managerial class' dominates all industrial societies. This applies as much to the capitalist society as it is to the communist society. Such managerial class rules by virtue of its technical and scientific knowledge. This class also has superior administrative skills which makes it effective ruler (Heywood 2005: 79). As against the classical elitists, modern elitists such as C. Wright Mills (1956 in Heywood 2005: 79) have tried to focus on the particular political systems in order to find out the extent to which such systems fall short of the democratic ideal.

**Application of Elite Studies in West Asian Politics**

In the West Asian context, the first attempt to apply the approach of elite studies was made in case of Egypt (Zartman 1980: 1). Later this approach was applied to some other countries of the region. This approach was also utilised to study the elite circulation and to relate it to the political, social and economic development of such countries. However, such studies mostly were taken up in a single country. Later, an approach was developed for applying the same concept for a comparative study of the elites of the region crossing over the boundaries of the states (Ibid.).

A great impetus was given to such an approach in a workshop held in Belmont, Maryland, in March of 1972 (Ibid.: 6). In this workshop specialists of elite studies and the scholars of West Asian studies were brought together. The pairs of such specialists were formed for the exchange of ideas. In this way, these scholars examined various aspects of elites and the politics involving them. These aspects included the coalitions and alliances of the elites, their mass linkages, their socialization, their ideology and their political culture (Ibid.).

In this workshop it was observed that it would not suffice to study the elites only through their individual biographies. It would be more effective to study them through their aggregate roles (Ibid.). The "elite studies need to combine the questions of structure and process to explain what happens when particular types of people act in particular positions (Ibid.)." It was also observed in the workshop that "the whole-system approach
to elite studies is a particularly crucial starting point, for anything less abstracts political elites from the context that gives meaning to their actions (Ibid.: 7)."

It was noted that a focus on the elite’s relation to the rest of the polity or the institutions of the particular political system was essential to grasp their true nature. This approach is particularly helpful in the study of elites in the developing world where the standard indicators of change and stability that parties and elections offer are not always present (Ibid.). This is particularly so in case of West Asian region where most of the regimes have authoritarian nature.

"The characteristics of elites – social backgrounds, promotion patterns, geographic or ethnic origins, ideological groups, generational cohorts – constitute sensitive data by which to measure reactions to social change and to test processes leading to outputs such as policies and strategies (Ibid.)." The scholars of the Belmont workshop concluded that it was not sufficient just to refine the use of these characteristics for elite studies. Rather, a more helpful approach would be "to create a framework for understanding their position within broader and more dynamic processes of elite circulation (Ibid.)." Such approach is particularly helpful in understanding the political dynamics of Iran and the circulation of elites in this political system. Therefore we have used Pareto's theory of elites and his conception of ‘circulation of elites’ to understand the power struggle in Iranian political system.

Pareto’s Theory of Elites
The term ‘elite’ has been originally derived from the French lexicon where it implies something excellent. Vilfredo Pareto (1935), an Italian sociologist, in his The Mind and Society, used this concept of ‘elite’ to describe a superior social group. This group of people, according to him, is supposed to have the highest ability in its own field of activity. Such a minority group is supposed to take all major decisions in society. The rest of the society, discounting this minority group, does not have such capability and is therefore called as the ‘masses’. The masses are characterized by their lack of qualities of leadership. These masses are also supposed to be fearful of taking up responsibilities. Masses also feel, according to Pareto, that it is more prudent to follow the elites (Gauba
Pareto also identifies those qualities that are needed for ruling. Such qualities are found to be there in the elites while they are absent in the masses. These psychological qualities, according to Pareto, are associated with the 'foxes' and the 'lions'. By the qualities of the foxes, Pareto means the cunning and manipulative abilities of the ruler through which the elites can rule the masses by their own wishes. By the qualities of 'lions' he means the ability of the elites to rule the masses through coercion and violence (Heywood 2005: 79). Such qualities of foxes and lions are typically absent in the masses and because of this reason they are subjected to the rule of the elites.

Pareto makes the ruling elites an important subject matter of his study. He shows the inequality of individual in every sphere of social life by observing the aspect of ruling elites. Pareto divides the elite into two categories: (1) a governing elite, and (2) a non-governing elite. Both types of elites, according to Pareto, constitute the higher strata of the society. The lower structure of the society constitutes the non-elites or the masses. The influence of the non-elites or the masses is found to be negligible on the government. It is the upper class or the elites that represent the aristocracy in any social setting (Pareto 1935 in Sharma 1999: 34).

Pareto makes it amply clear that the 'governing elite' wields power for the time being while 'non-governing elite' constantly endeavours to replace the former. Non-governing elite continuously tries to achieve this task by showing greater ability and excellence. This results in a particular behaviour pattern of the elites which is characterized by a constant competition between the governing and the non-governing elites. This pattern results in what is called by Pareto as the 'circulation of elites'. This necessarily means that there might be a time, when the non-governing elite would replace the governing elite and vice versa. However, in any case, the masses never get a chance to enter into the ranks of the elites (Gauba 2003: 258).

Political Elites in Iran

As we have seen above, there are varied conceptions of elites and elite formations. It is
therefore evident that a particular approach of elite studies should be applied depending upon the nature and structure of a given society and politics. "Elites and society are interrelated in the sense that elites may guide and direct structure and change in a given society and in return a society may determine the nature and character of its elites (Sharma 1999: 56)." Thus we have chosen the Pareto's concepts for understanding the power struggle and elite dynamics in Iran.

In this research, we have adopted a modified version of Zonis (1971) methodology for identifying the political elites in Iran. The concept of the political elite, as used in this study is empirical and behavioural. In such an approach, the position of elites is not determined solely based on their official positions. Rather, the political elites are defined as those members of Iranian society who exercise and possess political power in a greater degree than other members of the society (Zonis 1971: 5).

"The political elite of Iran consists of those Iranians who more or less persistently exercise power over significant behaviours of large numbers of people with regard to the allocation of highly prized values in the national political system (Ibid.: 7)." The Iranian political process constitutes a system in which the two principal actors may be considered as the Supreme Leader (Velayat-e-Faqih) and Clergy. The decisions of the Supreme Leader, the dominant political actor, directly affect the political elites. Also, the behaviour of the political elites operates as an important influence on the Supreme Leader. There is a feedback system at work in which the Supreme Leader and the elites interact and elaborate the Iranian politics.

"In short, the data indicate that the longer and more thoroughly a member of the elite participates in the Iranian political system, the more he manifests personal attributes of insecurity, cynicism, and mistrust (Ibid.: 15)." It is also noted that the Iranian elites are prone to the personal feelings of insecurity. In this regard, Zonis quotes Joseph M. Upton, who has been considered as one of the most influential interpreters of Iranian history: "This lively and persistent feeling of both national and individual insecurity is perhaps the dominant characteristic of modern Persian history (Upton 1960: 3 in Zonis 1971: 14)." When we take up the study of Iranian power struggle and the politics of reform, we
witness that Iranian political elites are indeed shown to exhibit such characteristics.

V. Reformists and Conservatives

Our research is an attempt to study the power struggle between the reformists and the conservatives in Iran. It is therefore important to define the two terms, the reformists and the conservatives. We shall also see how the classical definitions of the two terms cannot be directly applied in case of Iran as there is a uniqueness that is witnessed in the Iranian political system.

During Khatami era, the distinguishing feature of the Iranian politics was that the reformists were directly opposed to the conservatives. Thus we understand the reformists as those who oppose the conservatives. The conservatives, in turn, are those who support conservatism. Therefore, it would be best to first define the term ‘conservatism’ itself.

The term conservatism may simply be defined as the attitudes of the people who wish to preserve or conserve the existing social, political and economic system. The term conservatism is also used to define the philosophical doctrines of such proponents. Conservatives attempt to preserve the existing system and its institutions as they believe that such systems and institutions have stood the test of time. Therefore they work towards maintaining the status quo and even if some changes are extremely desirable, they favour the gradual or incremental change in such traditions, systems and practices (McHenry 1993: 554). This is the classical definition of the term conservatism. In modern days, some variations can be found to this definition. However, the main essence remains the same.

"The father of modern conservatism (although he never used the term conservatism) was the British parliamentarian Edmund Burke (Ibid.)." His ideas regarding conservatism were developed as a result of his reaction to the French Revolution of 1789. In his Reflections on the Revolution in France, Burke (1790) attacked the French activists. He considered the French activists as the “theorists”, “metaphysicians” and “speculationists".

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He considered them so, as he saw them to be extremely preoccupied with their theories and ideas (Ibid.). Burke would instead favour the preservation of the existing system at all cost and would never appreciate its change since such systems and practices had stood the test of time.

Burke further notes that such preoccupations were largely responsible for the activists' underestimation of the complexities of the government. These activists would always be preoccupied with their theories and ideas to such an extent that they would never be able to see other important things that were actually necessary for a proper understanding of the system and process of the government. Since they would always indulge in the abstract notions such as "right", they were never in a position to appreciate the far reaching changes that could really be achieved (Ibid.). Such ideas were considered to be initially propounded by the philosophers of the Great Britain and therefore it has been considered as the birth place of modern conservatism (Ibid.). The term conservatism as understood this way is something which is not supportive of changes.

The reformists have historically been found to be raising their voice against the conservatism. The reformists are those who favour positive changes in the society. When we take up the politics of reforms in the Iranian context, we observe that a lot of action took place in the Majlis. In the Iranian parliament, the reformists tried to pass some bills for reforming the Iranian political system and, through this, to vest power from the conservatives. Such bills were popularly called as the reform bills. It is therefore important to understand what we mean by the term reform bills. It would also be necessary to understand if such bills had any divergences from the Western conception of the 'reform bills'.

A 'reform bill' has been classically defined as "any of the British Parliamentary bills that became acts in 1832, 1867, and 1884-85, and which expanded the electorate for the House of Commons and rationalized the representation of that body (Ibid.: 994)." It is historically noted that the first reform bill was directed to serve the transfer of voting privileges from the small boroughs to the industrial towns (Ibid.). The other two of these bills were directed towards a more democratic representation. This was sought to be done
by expanding the voting privileges (Ibid.).

Thus we notice that such bills are generally considered as the reform bills that are directed towards making the political system more democratic and representative. In the Iranian context, if we apply this notion exactly, we would be at a loss of finding any bills as reform bills in the true sense of the term. However, the uniqueness of the Iranian political system compels us to consider even those bills as the reform bills which were directed towards making the authoritarian system even slightly more open, free, representative or liberal.

Within the accepted arena of Islamic fold, the Islamic Republic of Iran has seen a continuous struggle between various factions. Such struggling factions were segregated into two clearly identifiable broad camps during the Khatami era. These were popularly called as the reformists and the conservatives. These factions have been defined and analyzed in detail in the next chapter. Here, we simply define the two respective factions.

Iranian conservatives consist of the clerics who supported the revolution because of the power that it gave them over the society. The conservatives use the clerical rule to reinforce their own perception of the Islamic values. Such values are enforced in social, political as well as the economic spheres of life. They give strong emphasis on the religious morality and its observance. Censorship of art, culture and the media forms the core of their ideology. Notably, such conservatives favour the private property and enterprise and oppose state control over the means of production. “Khamenei, as Leader, seems to be working primarily through this faction (Beinin 1997: 112).”

It is notable that the conservatives are not found to be very organized or homogeneous. Several factions are found within the conservative fold who support one another. Such support is based upon the issues that suit the purpose of the respective factions. It is important to point out that “while some leading politicians are clearly identified with one or the other faction, most Majlis members have no definite allegiances (Ibid.: 112).” Moreover the shifting of loyalties is not very uncommon within the conservative bloc.
The reformists on the other hand are those who advocate increasing freedom in society. They are generally found to be supportive of the gradual democratization of Iranian politics and society. "The reformists, as represented by Khatami, did not wish to do away with the Islamic Republic, but to make it democratic, tolerant, progressive, and in tune with the needs of the people (Siddiqi 2006)." Primarily due to this reason, they were pitted against the conservatives since any reformation of the existing political system would have resulted in the balance of power tilting in favour of the reformists.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have developed the theoretical framework for the purpose of this research. The post-revolutionary politics of Iran makes it amply evident that three distinct phases can be identified while undertaking the power struggle perspective of the politics of reform. The first phase, of course, was the Khomeini era. Khomeini was a widely accepted spiritual leader. He was widely recognised as the highest ranking cleric as well as a strong statesman. He embodied this dual role in a very successful manner. Due to this reason, there was not much scope of any political dissidence during his time as far as his personal capabilities were concerned.

However, he encountered the difficult task of running a state while at the same time claiming the legitimacy based on Islamic principles. He also had to preserve the revolutionary principles. These diverse roles made his task extremely difficult. Initially, he did not face much difficulty, but as the time progressed, he started facing difficulties. The material realities of the state started putting pressure on his government. This necessitated for him to take the course of political expediency. This expediency naturally drifted the state away from the Islamic and revolutionary principles. This situation was not to the liking of those radical clerics among the elites who wanted a strict adherence to such principles. Consequently, a fissure appeared within the clerical order. Initially, this fissure was not very much evident; however, it was a reality. These two emerging factions may be identified as the radicals and the conservatives.

It is notable that these two terms are purely used in a relative sense. The radicals are the
ones holding a radical view of Islamic principles and wished its blanket imposition on the Islamic Republic. The conservatives, on the other hand were actually less radical than these radicals but more radical than the centrists or the reformists of a later stage. These two factions – radicals and conservatives – were then antagonistic to each other. These two can be identified as the political elites of Iran. There was a continuous struggle between these two throughout the Khomeini period.

The second discernible phase of post-revolutionary Iran is the period of early 1990s. This was a period when Khomeini’s death had created a power vacuum. The radicals were largely marginalized in due course and the period of thermidor had evidently begun. Among the ruling elites of Islamic Republic, another faction had become evident which favoured some relaxation to the Islamic principles based on the liberal ideas. This faction, however, did not wish to go far away from Khomeini’s legacy and may be termed as the centrists (again, in a relative sense). Due to its pragmatic approach, this faction was also called a pragmatic faction and it was headed by Rafsanjani.

Throughout this period of early 1990s there was a power struggle between the centrists and the conservatives. Though both these factions consisted of clerics, the conservatives were holding power in a manner Pareto would have defined the governing elites to distinguish them from the non-governing elites – the centrists. Here, it is imperative to note the position of the president in the power structure of the Iranian political system. The president has such little power vis-à-vis other non-elected constitutional bodies, that he can very well be considered outside the realm of the governing elites. Thus, there was the struggle for power among the governing and the non-governing elites – the centrists and the conservatives in this period.

The third phase of Iranian power-politics was the later part of 1990s when the centrists were either consumed in the governing elites or were marginalized. This period, however, saw the maximum polarization of Iranian power politics. The political conditions of this period gave prominence to a new potentially opposing faction – the reformists. Khatami became the embodiment of this movement and tried to capitalize this wave of reform in order to vest power from the conservatives. There was thus a stiff struggle for power
between these two ruling elites of Iran – the reformists and the conservatives. As the thermidor period suggested and Pareto would have agreed, the reformists were optimist to capture power expecting “the circulation of elites” in the given conditions of the Iranian politics of that time.

The actual “circulation”, though, did not happen. But then, vesting power from the governing elites by the non-governing elites, during a thermidor, is a long and arduous process. Thus, in this chapter, we have developed the theoretical framework around which the whole thesis is woven. This chapter has also highlighted the importance of understanding factionalism in Iranian politics, which is an integral part of understanding the Iranian thermidor. So, we move to our next chapter where we take up the genesis and evolution of the factions and ensuing power struggle in Iran.