CHAPTER 3

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS PREVAILING IN IRAN ON THE EVE OF PAHLAVI DYNASTY
Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to illustrate the importance of twentieth century as a critical period in Iranian history. In this era, for the first time, Iranians from different social classes came together to challenge the uncontested arbitrary rule of the Qajar dynasty. This sentiment brought about the Constitutional Movement which is considered to be the beginning of Iranian modern history. In association with this movement, in 1921, with the help of British officers, a self-made military man named Reza Khan orchestrated a coup that demolished the powers of the ruling Qajar king and founded the Pahlavi Dynasty. In addition to this, the chapter explores, in detail, the social and political factors that had an impact on the Iranian society. These factors contributed to the domination of foreign states over Iranian affairs, which gave rise to anti-Western feelings, the chronic problem of despotism in Iran, and led to social and economic backwardness of the country. In the end, this chapter illustrates different views about political parties in Iran: the opponent, proponent and clergy views towards formulation of political parties in Iran.

3.1. The 1906 Constitutional Movement

The Iranian Constitutional Movement was the first incident of its kind in Asia. The movement paved the way for great change in Iran. It generated new opportunities and opened up ostensibly unlimited possibilities for Iran's future. A lot of diverse sections of society fought for the movement, and changed society. Until that time, the government system in Iran was an autocratic monarchy, in which authority was passed down from father to son. There was no parliament and Iranian people had no right in determining the political issues of the government. The Shari’a courts, which were defended by the king, who was viewed as the “shadow of Allah,” would consider
people's complaints and penalize lawbreakers according to understanding of religious laws.

"By the end of the nineteenth century, Iranian intellectuals felt the need for a national constitution which would limit the power of the Qajar kings. People from all different classes of Iranian society, including the clergy, secular intellectuals, and merchants, supported this constitutional movement. Their inclination to question the arbitrary rule of the monarchy sparked a process of change that enabled Western ideas of constitutionalism, social democracy, and communism to take hold in the political arena" (Borougerdi, 2006: 1).

When Iranian merchants protested and called a strike, Mozaaffarudin Shah Qajar (who ruled from 1896 to 1907) was forced to approve the people's desire to have the first parliament in Iran. It was named as the National Consultative Assembly, or Majlis-e Showray-e Melli in Persian. After this Iran became a legitimate monarchy: which means that the monarch's power was restricted, and selected members of the assembly made major decisions. Therefore, this Constitutional Movement is considered to be the beginning of Iranian contemporary legislative history.

Also, "the year 1905 marked a profound transitional juncture in political development in Iran, and Russia that would have consequential bearing on relations between the two countries. In Russia, the military defeat in the 1904-5 war against Japan coincided with the outbreak of major labour unrest and large-scale protests by disgruntled mass suffering from chronic state oppression and economic hardship, sparking a revolution that led to the introduction of a parliamentary system (the Duma). The turn of events in Russia provided further encouragement to the already seething political discontent south of the border in Iran. Subsequently, the Tsarist authorities attempted both to suppress the parliamentary movement in Russia and to assist the
Iranian autocracy in crushing the constitutional movement that broke out in Iran in 1906. Russia's opposition to the Iranian constitutional movement was aimed at preserving Russian influence in Tehran, while destroying any additional source of inspiration for reformers in Russia itself"(Bonakdarian, 2006: 27).

The Qajar kings could not admit this failure, so the next Qajar king ordered the bombardment of the assembly, and the capture and execution of a number of parliamentary members. Following this, the assembly felt insecure, as did the rest of the nation under the remaining Qajar kings.

"During this period there were many mass revolts, some for democratization of the country and other by ethnic groups seeking political autonomy. The British and the Russians, in exchange for favors, supported the corrupt Qajar kings against the wishes of the Iranian population. These foreign powers did not take decisions made by the Iranian parliament seriously and often acted based on their own self-interests. For example, when the Iranian parliament announced Iran’s neutrality during World War I, Russia and Britain ignored this national decision and sent their expeditionary forces into Iran" (kheirabadi, 2002: 45).

Through the beginning of legitimate preparations in Iran in 1906, the newly founded parliament became the main ground for contestation among constitutionalists on how best to classify, strengthen, build upon and institutionalize the new political success. The reconciliation of political order and constitutional responsibility were the cause of the differences of opinion among parliamentarians. Outside the parliament there were several political associations or societies, in which a number of people advocated fundamental or radical measures, as did a vocal group of deputies. Political radicalism was supported by the Qajar king and the royalty, who resorted to a coup although they were unsuccessful in eliminating constitutionalism.
According to Azimi, in the Second Majlis (1909-11) political orientations found clearer ideological and organizational articulation, in terms of embryonic parties, of which two groups, the Democratic (Dimukrat) Party and the Moderate (Ijtimayun-Itidaliyun) Party, were significant. A majority of the Moderates tended to appeal to the Qajar nobles, landlords, big merchants, constitutionalist ulama, secular but non-radical constitutionalists, as well as shopkeepers, trade guilds and other traditional strata. The Democrats primarily sought to cultivate the intelligentsia, while attempting to widen their appeal. The individuals who led these parliamentary groups played a crucial role in determining their direction; but modern ideas also had a considerable impact. Indeed, the significance of these groups, in particular the Democrats, was more tangible in the realm of ideology than organization. Inspired by socialist ideas, the Democrats had a radical and secular agenda, whether fully or partially articulated. It included political and civic equality of citizens, freedom of expression and organization, distribution of state land among the peasantry, regulation and improvement of peasant-landlord relations, and compulsory primary education. They opposed the privileged classes, including the ulama, as well as the imperial powers, particularly the Russians, whom they blamed for hampering socio-economic reforms in Iran. They professed commitment to parliamentarianism and gradual change. Ideologically less assertive, the Moderates also advocated reform but displayed greater responsiveness to traditional sensibilities (Azimi, 1997: 54).

None of the above mentioned parties was successful in gaining popularity among the people; they were also unable to maintain a parliamentary majority; which came in the way of development and effectiveness of the parliament.
3.2. Reza Shah: the First Pahlavi King (1925-1941)

After World War I, the Qajar reign that had ruled Iran from the late 18th century began to decline. The dynasty had failed economically and lost support. The Iranian society was ready for a major transformation. In 1925, Reza Khan a self-made military man, after several years of consolidating his position as the country's strongman, overthrew Ahmad Shah Qajar, the last Shah of the Qajar dynasty, and crowned himself as Reza Shah or Raza the King.

"The rise of prominence and power of Reza Khan, a hitherto unknown officer in the Cossack Brigade, reflected the urgent need among intellectuals and the political establishment to restore order within the state and rescue Iran from the dire consequences of the First World War, which despite the country's neutrality, had seen it become a battleground for the belligerents. It also reflected both Britain's dominance in Iran following the Russian Revolution, and the British desire to limit the costs of empire in the aftermath of a costly world war" (Ansari, 2006: 29).

Reza Shah's choice of regime was constitutional monarchy instead of a republic, which most Iranian intellectuals also supported. Neighboring Turkey had just put an end to the Ottomans, a despotic dynasty, and replaced them with a republican regime, so it was natural for the people of Iran to want to replace its own despotic system with a republican one in which the people, rather than kings, would run the country. However, Iran was doomed to have another king in the name of Reza Shah.

"In a hot national debate over the merits of a constitutional monarchy versus a republican system, many leading clergy interestingly chose the monarchy. Reza Shah had made an agreement with the leading clerics that five Islamic jurists would be involved in government decision making to ensure that the government functioned
within the Islamic context. He ignored the agreement, however, as soon as he took office" (kheirabadi, 2002: 46).

Distrust in hatred among politicians was on the rise and political conditions had begun deteriorating; Reza Shah's strong point was in being a man of action. The rising aspiration for a well-built centralized power, effective leadership and political order in a country lacking a workable state construction, rendered Reza Shah indispensable. He got benefitted because of the political impasse and the fragility of the parliamentary and social management and he got better chances to dominate as dictator. Reza Shah was not ready to see anybody gain power besides him. He was against political stabilization, intellectual development, and stabilization of the parliament. He was ready to eliminate anybody he thought as a potential threat to his authority. His rule was conventional and coercive; no political parties were formed or permitted, and the character of the government was overshadowed by the character of Reza Shah, as it had been under the authority of Qajars kings.

"Early on in Reza Shah's reign and with his blessing, Abdul-Husayn Taymurtash, the influential court minister, founded the New Iran (Irain-i naw) Party, consisting of prominent members of the elite. Fearing that the party would become a power base for the Court minister, the Shah arranged for its dissolution. Prior to his ascension to the throne, Reza Shah had taken advantage of party combinations, and wishing to promote himself as a man of progress, had shown himself sympathetic to the Socialist Party. He had also favored the "Radical Party" (hizb-i radikal) formed by Ali Akbar Davar, one of his prominent and capable aides, and consisting of "the educated and the intellectuals. Davar, however, soon abandoned his party, while Ahmad Matindaftari (prime minister from November 1939 to June 1940) did not push to realize
his plan of forming a government-sponsored party modeled on the Turkish [Republican] People's Party" (Azimi, 1997: 58).

In complete agreement with the existing political culture, Reza Shah viewed political parties as vehicles for hostility and considered them as a cause of confusion, disagreement, and disparagement in his rule. He did not see parties as vehicles for endowing the government with controlled support or for organizing accepted support in society.

The issue of the absence of successful and large political parties in Iran worried many intellectuals. Reza Shah's dictatorship prevented the people from learning to cooperate, but after his abdication in 1941, party activity became stronger until 1953, when it was suppressed by Mohammad Reza Shah.

3.3. Mohammad Reza Shah: The Second Pahlavi King

Mohammad Reza shah Pahlavi was the last Shah of Iran who governed Iran from 1941 until he was removed by the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

Mohammad Reza Shah had neither his father's charisma nor his willpower. He was inept and at the mercy of his foreign supporters. At the same time, the Iranian assembly, under pressure from foreign countries, changed its stand and declared war in opposition to Germany. The Allied forces occupied and used Iran as a source to provide German occupied Russia with food and war equipment. At the end of the war, when Hitler's armed forces were defeated, the Allied forces called Iran the bridge to victory.

"Foreign forces remained in Iran from 1941 to 1946. The occupation fuelled a nationalist fever for independence from European powers. After the withdrawal of foreign forces, Iran searched for a way to rid itself of European political and economic dominance and their puppet Iranian kings" (kheirabadi, 2002: 49).
During Mohammad Reza Shah's reign, activities of political parties became steadily more intense, until in August 1953, it was suddenly suppressed. But after that Iran's Shah tried to form state-sponsored parties.

**People and nationalist parties**

Mohammad Reza Shah, in April 1957, emphasized the inevitability of formation of a two-party system as a vital instrument for democracy. He suggested two party systems for Iran, following the pattern of progressive and conservative parties. According to his designs both these parties were rendered powerless against the king's rule. Soon after the People's Party was created by Asadullah Alam (a close friend and interior minister since 1955) to operate as a progressive party of opposition. The Nationalist Party with a more conservative program was created to operate as the party of government in February 1958.

In this context Azimi says the Nationalist Party leader, Prime Minister Manuchihr Iqbal, unconvinced of the practicality of political parties or the desirability of parties sponsored by the State, had previously declared in the Majlis that his government would refrain from forming or involving itself in political parties. Iqbal had, however, to eschew his misgivings and comply with royal desires by founding the Milliyun party. He publicly declared that issues pertaining to foreign policy, defence and internal security should not be broached by political parties. It was also implicitly understood that a host of other issues, including activities and interests of the Shah and the royal family, corruption in the upper bureaucracy, key public appointments, and the granting of large contracts, would also fall outside the purview of party politics. Both parties received government subsidies and neither succeeded in gaining real credibility, even with the monarchist elite. It was not difficult to ascertain that the Shah was less than genuinely sincere about political parties (Azimi, 1997: 65).
In 1963, Mohammad Reza Shah launched his White Revolution; which he advertised as a step towards westernization and tried to provide a number of economic, social and political changes. For this, he created the New Iran Party to replace the People Party. He then put some limitation against the People Party in an obvious attempt to decree a two-party system for Iran.

**Freemasonry**

Freemasonry is usually considered as the oldest and the largest organization in the world. It is non-religious and non-political and has a lot of members in the world. The origin of Freemasonry is debatable issue. Some researchers believe that there were freemasonry organizations in Scotland as early as that late sixteenth century. It is an ideology and organization which came to Islamic world and Iran in the nineteenth century.

In this regard, Hamid Algar asserts that the role of freemasonry, as an organization and ideology, in the nineteenth century history of Islamic world has received little serious attention. Available evidence is, perhaps inevitably, fragmentary, and hardly permits any tenable general conclusion to be drawn. However, it came, in the Islamic world, an echo of the Masonic involvement in political affairs, something seen in the French, Italian and other European experience. Freemasonry had, however, affinity to certain modes of thought and social organization traditional to the Islamic world, and thereby could exert a strong, though temporary, attraction in some sections of society. Credit for the introduction of freemasonry to Iran is generally given to Mirza Malkum Khan (1834-1908), a versatile figure and the secret society he founded in Tehran in 1858. But Iranian acquaintance with freemasonry dates back, however, as early as in the reign of Fath Ali Shah Qajar, (1797-1834). Indeed, it coincides with the beginning of serious European political involvement in Iran. The first recruits to
Freemasonry were diplomats and other prominent travellers to Europe, who disseminated information in Iran concerning European lodges, however sparse and incomplete they may have been (Algar, 1970: 276).

Freemasonry was very active in the period of Mohammad Reza Shah. He tried to help this organization to improve the trustworthiness and assumptions about their immoral activities. By doing this Shah tried automatically to confirm the existing suspicious label of freemasonry as an organization infected by its foreign origin and links.

According to Azimi, the Shah welcomed the embarrassing, vulnerability of the elite, particularly those who had ventured to collaborate collectively not only to achieve mutual self-advancement, but also to seek sources of power other than the royal Court. Real or putative freemasons, particularly in the last two decades of Pahlavi rule, were, for the large part, men of questionable reputation. This helped to enhance the credibility of assumptions about their "nefarious" activities. And, some freemasons found it beneficial to stimulate the awe and fear that freemasonry inspired and utilized their networks and links to further their political and business interests. Undoubtedly Masonic links could augment nepotistic networks which inordinately and corruptly enriched themselves through public expense. It was, however, the entrenched fear and disapproval of collectivities and associations, not amenable to effective royal control, which led the Shah to condone the exposure of many of his officials without reflecting upon the implications of such a move. It led him unquestioningly to reaffirm the prevailing paranoid stereotype of freemasonry as an association intrinsically polluted by its foreign origin and links, by definition engaged in improper activities in defiance of patriotism. Not surprisingly, the anti-freemasonry publicity only helped further
undermine the credibility of the regime, since the privileged positions of actual, or, putative freemasons in the state apparatus remained unchallenged (Azimi, 1997: 67).

In Iran, freemasonry has always been seen as an extension of British imperialism. It existed in Iran prior to the Islamic Revolution of 1979, and recruited a lot of people from various political personalities, but it was banned in Iran after the Revolution.

The Resurgence party

In the 1970s, increasing conflict widened the gulf between Iranian government and the people. It worsened the country's economy and increased the complexities of the Iranian society. The sensitive condition forced the Shah to dissolve both the ineffective parties in 1975, and he created a new party called Iranian Nation's Resurgence Party.

The Resurgence party was designed by two groups of very divergent advisors. One group comprised young political scientists with Ph.D.s from American universities well versed in the works of Samuel Huntington, the distinguished political scientist at Harvard, these fresh returnees argued that the only way to achieve political stability in developing countries was to establish a disciplined government party. Such a party, they claimed, would become an organic link between the state and society, would enable the former to mobilize the latter, and thus, would eliminate the dangers posed by disruptive social elements. They ignored Huntington's observation that in the modern age monarchies are anachronistic.

The second group of advisers was formed by ex-communists from Shiraz who left the Tudeh party in the early 1950s- one had absconded with the party funds- and had re-entered politics under the patronage of Alam, the magnate from Sistan who was not only a minister of court but also the chairman of the People's party. This group
argued that only a Leninist-style organization could mobilize the masses, break down traditional barriers, and lead the way to a fully modern society (Abrahamian, 1982: 441).

In this regard Azimi also says, the party consisted of several establishment figures, each with his own coterie of followers; there were also several factions, two of which assumed a more formal status, namely, the Progressive (taraqqi khah) wing, and the Constructive-Liberal (libiral-i sazandah) wing, led by Jamshid Amuzgar and Hushang Ansari respectively. The party's in-built factionalism and internal rivalries prevented the emergence of unduly powerful individuals and facilitated royal control. The party was portrayed, and was seen by some of its supporters, as a channel for greater political participation. No one was given the choice not to join the party, and yet, the electorate was given the hollow luxury of choosing from among a large number of candidates who were all equally acceptable to the Shah. If popular participation was at all an important issue in the formation of the new party, the paradox that an avowedly totalitarian party should have been expected to function as an avenue of popular participation; seems not to have been grasped. Whatever its aims, the Resurgence Party, abandoned with the first murmurs of the revolution, proved to be a monumental fiasco, a fatal strategic failure on the part of the regime, fundamentally incongruent with credible participatory institutions (Azimi, 1997: 68).

This state-sponsored political party was intended to be Iran's new single party, purposefully created to assert state monopoly on political activity. In addition to this all Iranians were forced to join the same party. However, the single party system finished in 1978 when the Iranian Islamic Revolution gained ground. The political party was completely eradicated in early 1979, with the end of Pahlavi monarchy.
3.4. Socio-political Condition of Iran during the 20th Century

The Constitutional Movement of 1906 forced the Shah to declare publicly that Iran was a constitutional monarchy with lawmaking powers vested in a parliament. The Shah did not fulfil his constitutional promise, and the British and Russian intrusion became more and more perilous to the country. In 1924 a self made military officer named Reza Shah gained the power and deposed the last Qajar's king. Reza Shah started a fundamental modernization program like that of Ataturk in Turkey. Nevertheless he made very slow advancement because Iran was very poor and had been more separated from European influences that the Turkey had been.

Some of the main factors and situations that contributed to the ongoing Iranian social and political debate at that time were the social and economic backwardness of the country, the domination of foreign states over Iranian affairs (which gave rise to anti-Western feelings), and the chronic problem of despotism in Iran.

Political, social and economic backwardness

In this century, political, social and economic corruption had been the most obvious problem that Iranians faced. In 1906 the Constitutional Revolution tried to create a government based on law instead of Iran's conventional arbitrary kingship, and it resulted in the formation of a constitutional framework which assured not only lawful, but also a democratic government. Besides, in 1941, during the period of the Second World War, Allied troops entered Iran and this changed the social and political setup of the country. The same century saw events like nationalization of oil in Iran, a step towards self-governing and democracy. Nationalization of oil companies began in the late 1940s following the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company concession, or the 1933 oil agreement. This agreement was highly not accepted and the nationalization of Iranian oil rapidly became symbol for a movement to resist British interference in its politics.
In this regard Cottam says that by 1941, approximately five per cent of the population was literate, and probably somewhere between five and ten percent had some awareness of modern political process. Awareness and participation are not the same thing, however, and a major effort could be anticipated from rival political figures to communicate with, and then, to mobilize the support of this group. Included also in this public which had become politically aware during the Reza Shah Period was a group, which was well-educated and had achieved a relatively high degree of political sophistication. This group, to be referred to henceforth as the "new intellectuals," was not large, but to the vast majority of Iranians who remained politically unaware, this group was potentially very influential. Emerging from families of moderate means, often small merchants or minor bureaucrats, members of this group were frequently restive and anxious to see fundamental change (Cottam, 1968: 86).

It was in reaction to these social and economic conditions that the Socialist Theorists found its way among Iranians, particularly amidst intellectuals. They believed that socialism, as a social system, would supply the quickest way out for the existing condition. They believed that their differences with the Marxist Tudeh Party were just that, first, they were not forced to obey the Soviet Union’s commands, and second, they did not believe in materialism. In other words, for them, the Party’s socialist plan was satisfactory.

But the Tudeh Party founders explained their social plan for a way out of that miserable condition. While they never described their program as scientific and revolutionary, they aimed to eliminate the dishonest and cruel rule of the feudal bourgeoisie and to create social justice and socialism in Iran.
In the nineteenth century after invasions of Tsarist Russia and the occupation of Northern parts of Iran, superpower countries of the time started influencing Iran. The intervention of these powerful countries, in the first stage, affected Iran's international relations, and then its domestic politics and in the end most parts of public life. During those days the embassies of Britain and Russia interfered continuously, overtly and openly, in the appointment and removal of high ranking officials, regional rulers and even the kings of Iran. They even tried to interfere in affairs like the managing of financial, diplomatic and military services.

They involved themselves in establishing the taxation system and even engaged in mining, oil and trading agreements. This was, in spite of the fact, that, Iran was a self-governing state at that time. The Western dominance and interference gave rise to a deep-rooted sense of offense and hatred towards the Britain and Russia. In the period with which this thesis is concerned, three foreign powers were competing or cooperating to expand and maintain their presence in Iran.

"Following the signing of the Anglo- Russian Entente in 1907, Russia acted as if Iran were another conquered province, Russian troops occupied Khorasan, Azerbaijan and Gilan. Russian consulates became governing bodies and the consuls sometimes collected local taxes" (Andreeva, 2007:21).

According to Taghavi, before the Russian Revolution of 1917, the north and south of Iran were respectively exclusive domains of Russian and British influence. After the Revolution, on the basis of its communist ideology, the Soviet Union abandoned the Tsarist policy of intervention in the affairs of its weaker neighbors. More importantly, communist leaders had to concentrate on their internal affairs and suppress the rebellion supported by Western countries. Hence, the era of the ‘Great
Game' came to an end, providing the British with a golden opportunity for which they had been competing with Tsarist Russia for a century: exclusive domination of Iran, which they maintained until the Second World War. In 1921, the British brought Reza Khan to power to consolidate their influence and block the spread of communism in Iran. Iranians viewed the British as Reza Shah's accomplice in his cruelties and repression. During the Second World War, Iran was neutral, but Reza Shah increasingly became sympathetic to Nazi Germany. This led to the occupation of Iran by Allied armies, which forced Reza Shah to abdicate in favour of his son, Mohammad Reza (Taghavi, 2005: 42).

After nationalization of oil in Iran in March 1951, Britain, as the biggest shareholder of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, opposed this move. The conflict between the two countries increased more and more, until the nationalist government of Mossaddeq in August 1953. The second influential foreign force in Iran at that time was the Soviet Union. After the Russian Revolution of 1917, Russia ended its policy of openly interfering in Iran's internal issues, even though there were some cases of indirect interference through supporting communist groups in the North of Iran. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union, as part of Allied military intervention in Iran, occupied the North of the country in 1941. The Soviet Union were clever to strengthen their status and they drew near their old rival and new ally, Britain.

The rapid growth of the Soviet Union supported Tudeh Party, which had been created after the entrance of Allied forces in Iran, was very upsetting for some Iranians and these worries turned into a nightmare when the Red Army refused to leave Iran at the end of the Second World War.

The truth is that under Russian tutelage, a group of so-called intellectuals, mostly from aristocratic families, formed a party in the name of Iranian masses.
However, neither the inspiration behind the formation of the party with its atheistic Marxist-Leninist ideology, nor its crude imitation of Western political practice and jargon had anything to do with Iranian masses.

The opportunism and inconsistency exhibited by the Tudeh throughout its existence were a result of compliance with Kremlin policies. The Tudeh Communists tried to conceal their treacheries from their countrymen by using socialist or proletarian internationalism label, but this was a cover. Its Marxist ideology, unswerving dedication to the service of the Russian empire, willingness to convert Iran into common booty among the superpowers, its totally European origins, incompatibility with Islamic and Iranian traditions and the consequent separation from the spirit of the Iranian masses were all consistent with the Tudeh Party being a gross political oddity (Zabih, 1986: 45).

The third powerful foreign country to exercise power on Iran was the United States, which joined hands with Britain and the Soviet Union later during the Second World War. There was no negative view about United States among Iranians till that time.

According to Taghavi (2005: 43-44), despite the unsuccessful bid of American oil companies for the exploitation of oil in the north, which offended Iranian sense of patriotism, and the misbehavior of American soldiers during their presence in the country, there was no serious negative impression of the United States among Iranian people. Infact, most nationalist politicians, such as the leaders of the Iran Party, had an inclination towards the USA. Hence, Washington played the role of an intermediary in the dispute between London and Tehran over oil. However, after a while, the United States decided to take side of its main ally, Britain, and helped the latter in boycotting Iran’s oil export, in order to pressurize Iran to solve its dispute in favour of Britain.
The Iranians then were disappointed with the United States' foreign policy and consequently, after the coup of 1953, which was planned by the CIA, the power exercised by the United States increased in Iran to the extent that it finally replaced Britain in its position as the most important foreign power in Iran.

Despotism in Iran

Iran, during its long history, has been governed by dictatorial governments. All of them gained power by way of armed forces, and until there emerged a stronger individual or dynasty, these governments were in charge of all aspects of people's life in the country. Dictatorial governments imposed heavy taxes, and repressed any sign of opposition. People had respite only intervening period of change of dynasties. Even these islands of peace proved very fragile as people had to face the wrath of local governors who found themselves free to exploit people in the absence of a strong central power.

Through the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, people tried to establish a closely controlled judiciary and parliament from the period of Mozaffar al-Din Shah. The effort of his successor, Mohammad Ali Shah, to lock down the parliament was unsuccessful, when, like other Iranian people, the people of Tabriz, in the North-West of Iran, resisted his despotism and marched towards Tehran to force him to resign in favour of his son, Ahmad Shah. However, because of the intervention of Russia and the British Empire in Iranian affairs, the Constitutional Revolution in a little while, lost its force. After a while during the First World War, Iran became the battlefield for Russian and British armed forces in the fight against the Ottomans and German agents.

"For a decade Iran experienced foreign interference, disorder and insurgency in many provinces. Though there was not yet an independent judiciary, the new parliament survived, and there was at times a lively independent press. The early 1920s
saw the rise of Reza Khan, the end of the Qajars and a return to despotism. Reza Shah, a westernized secular nationalist, formed a strong military and a centralized bureaucracy, and established both secular judiciary and a secular educational system which the constitutionalists had wanted all along. In these and other ways he deprived the clerics of former monopolies and resources, though he did not go as far as his neighbour and model, Kemal Ataturk. Many of his reforms were popular, but the constitution was ignored and dissent was ruthlessly suppressed. The clerics, labelled as fanatical reactionaries, in this modernizing milieu, were furious but reduced to silence" (Mir-Hosseini and Tapper, 2006:13).

The reality is that Iranian people were sick of the long years of disorders. After the Constitutional Movement, and with the inefficient rule of the last Qajar king, people seemed to welcome Reza Khan. Unfortunately, Iranian history was repeating itself once again and Reza Khan was not any different from his predecessors. The people had no option but to choose either unconditional chaos or unlimited dictatorship.

During the reign of the Pahlavi dynasty, the whole of Iranian population found themselves under the rule of a strong and powerful ruling authority; it was hard to find the emergence of any other voice from any part of the country. In spite of previous dictatorship rules, there was no way out from his modern despotism. Neither the people nor any organization remained untouched by Reza Shah’s oppressive rule. With the abdication of Reza Shah in 1941, Iranian people and society was refreshed and, once again felt full freedom. Anyway, Iranians kept the memories of the earlier despots in their minds and were always worried in a skeptic manner about the new ruler. Therefore, some social and political activists tried to recognize the roots of dictatorship in Iranian society, with the purpose of stopping its reoccurrence.
3.5. Different Views about Political Parties in Iran

There are three different views about political parties in Iran. These are the opponent, proponent and clergy view towards formulation of political parties in Iran.

**Opponents views towards formulation of political parties in Iran**

The followers of this view believe that, in Iran, there was no need for political parties. Also, they believe that the creation of political parties was mostly an act of external forces. These analysts believed that the originators of Tudeh party were the blind followers of Moscow.

"The Tudeh Party was grounded in the Marxism imported from Russia in the Constitutional period. After the Bolshevik Revolution, socialist ideas gained a wide following among Iranian activists, who admired the Russian revolutionaries and especially Lenin (1870-1924). The February 1921 treaty signed by the Socialist government, which cancelled the previous Tzarist concessions in Iran, further increased the popularity of the new Soviet regime. The existence of pro-socialist sentiments in Iran is confirmed by many references in the literature and journalism of the 1920s and 1930s" (Gheissari, 1998: 65).

There were some thinkers who were against the formation of political parties in Iran. Among politicians who tried to address problems dealing with activities of political parties, the views of Sayyid Hasan Taqizadah—an experienced person and powerful politician—are worth mentioning here. In his writing, Taqizadah mentions that there was no better party except the old Democratic Party in Iran, neither was there any possibility for the formation of any other worthy political party in the country.

"In the view of Taqizadeh, the reasons for the impossibility of creation of real parties were as follows: firstly, the absence of a spirit of cohesion and tolerance, which militates against the easy settlement of disagreements; secondly, the fragility and the
ephemeral nature of alliances; thirdly, and most importantly, the meagreness of overall
civic-national development in Iran "a fact," Taqizadah added, which, with utmost
sorrow, shame and apology, I cannot refrain from admitting. Taqizadah identified a
fourth factor which rendered impossible the formation of parties in the European sense.
This factor, he argued, had three components: first, the state had become virtually the
an exclusive employer of the educated class, which equates party political activity with
political cliquishness aimed at collective gain. Financial dependence on the state
dissuades members of this class from personal sacrifice and struggle in pursuit of
political aims. Second, the merchant (bazari) class, the guilds and the masses cannot be
mobilized other than with demagogic means, which is contrary to the real interests of
the country. And third, even attracting member's of the educated class by promising
them personal gain or enlisting the support of the masses through emotional agitation
required the expenditure of large sums of money. But were there to appear leaders who
are patriotic and above personal gain, and who neither need to be promised jobs nor to
resort to agitation, finding money would not be impossible; the faithful of the bazaars
and the clergymen would not deny them money" (Azimi, 1997: 70).

Many of the factors pointed out by Taqizadah's describing the party's problems
themselves need clarification. Considering Iranian political culture which prevents the
appearance of workable political parties, Taqizadah does not sufficiently provide
reasons for failure of the emergence of “ideal” parties in Iran.

**Proponents views about the formulation of political parties in Iran**

Followers of this view believe that the formation of political parties in Iran was
the real political phenomenon and to understand the political structure of Iran it is
necessary to know the perspectives of these political parties about the political,
economic and cultural issues.
The issue of lack of successful and large-scale political parties in Iran has worried a lot of Iranians. In the 1940s Reza Shah's dictatorship, did not permit Iranian people from learning to cooperate; its legacy caused early division and collapse of associations, and destroyed ethical, spiritual morale of the Iranian people. In this period, successive governments did not help in people’s involvement in the formation and managing of political parties. Unfortunately private interests were predominant in this intention.

Similar viewpoints are made by many other writers, as well as, Firaydun Adamiyat, the most important Iranian historian of the Constitutional Revolution. He writes: The domination of personal whims over attachment to principles revealed the weakness of civic responsibility and a defect in the cooperative spirit, in the configuration of Iranian society. Throughout the history of Iranian parliamentary politics, vindictiveness and discord plagued all political groups and associations, and ultimately prevented the consolidation and development of political institutions in the country (Adamiyat, 1961: 320).

Azimi counts some writers and thinkers who share the same viewpoint: Khalil Maliki blamed egoism and the spirit of individuality of the Iranians and their lack of sociability as accountable for the problems involved in sustaining large parties, and for the frequent appearance of many so-called parties. In his opinion the greatest challenge facing parties and associations was to combat such aspects of the Iranian character. Similar points were also made by Rizazadah Shafaq, a politician and academic, in his account of the failure of Qavam's Democratic Party. In varying degrees, such assumptions also speak of the political attitudes and practices of leading politicians. A believer in the redeeming virtues of ordinary Iranians, Mossadeq was less sure of those who aspired for leadership positions. In early 1954, reflecting upon his own experience
of party activity, the imprisoned Mossadeq despondently asserted: I am of the opinion that a large (political) party is not attainable in Iran because everyone wants to be a member of the [central] committee and the executive body Mossadeq had previously explained Iranian legislative inefficiency in terms of the absence of party politics (Azimi, 1997: 69).

Mossadeq, as a parliamentarian and prime minister, later on confessed that the reason behind the failure of his government was mainly the lack of organized support and the necessity of awareness of importance of political parties. Nevertheless, he could not tackle the rebellious situation created by the royal opposition against the development of the non-royal constitution, whereas he had a great support of his own non-royal supporters. He simply failed to systematically utilize the huge support of his followers.

Clergy's views towards the formation of the political parties in Iran

The clergy participated in the constitutional movement with huge enthusiasm. They played a key role in making the movement victorious. Although, soon after the constitutional government was installed, they began to understand the harm they had done to their own interests. The constitution accepted by the people was based upon European regulations; for the most part the Belgian constitution.

"Even though it included certain articles which guaranteed the pre-eminence of religion and the role of clergy in the society as well as politics and legislation particularly, the article of the supplementary fundamental law provided a body of clergy to supervise the legislations of the constituent assembly lest they were not in accordance with the Sharia laws, but these remained largely unpractised. Even the above mentioned article was included in the supplementary fundamental law with great opposition from secular intelligentsia of the constitutionalist movement. There was
great reluctance on their part to accept that the supervisory body of the clergy will be constituted on the advice of the clergy themselves and not by the parliament. On the whole, the constitution curtailed many prerogatives and socio-political privileges of the clergy" (Haq, 1991: 18).

Post revolution there were two different trends among the clergy. One section of them continued the traditional opposition to the Shah's regime as they previously did, while another section of them believed in non-intervention in the issues of politics and directed their powers towards social, educational, and religious reforms. They tried to bring back the reputation and influence of religion in Iranian society.

The reign of Reza Shah was the worst stage for Iranian clergy from all points of view. Reza Shah was impressed by the reforms brought about by Mustafa Kemal (He was an Ottoman and Turkish army officer, revolutionary statesman, writer, and the first President of Turkey. He is credited with being the founder of the Republic of Turkey) in Turkey. The main feature of Shah's modernization plan was the secularization of political and social organization. The first reason for doing this was putting Iran on the path of progress and controlling the power and influence of Iranian clergy.

The clergy also, like other Iranian intellectuals, became active after twenty years of Reza Shah's suppression. The clergy's anger was not only because of the bad treatment they had faced but also because they were not in favour of the latter's policy of modernization of Iran and introduction of a number of reforms. They were also angry about the Shah's policy towards religious organizations, education, and religious donations. But the clergy did not act as an organized force in the post Reza Shah period, they had divergent and opposing trends. They had not only the differences among themselves regarding the degree of activity and participation in politics and public matters but also had different ideas on a number of issues.
"With the occupation of Iran by the Allies in September 1941, which led to the 
exile of Reza Shah, the clash between the Westernized groups, traditionalists and 
reformists intensified relatively openly and a strong Marxist group entered into the 
collision. Given the failure of the Westernized elite in the first half of the twentieth 
century, there was a new tendency towards Islamic reformism. Religious intellectuals 
established various Islamic associations, including Jam’iyat-e Khoda Parastan-e 
Socialist, or the Society of Socialist Theists (led by Jalal ad-Din Ashtiani and 
Mohammad Nakhshab), Anjoman-e Tabliqat-e Islami, or the Society for Promoting 
Islamic Teachings (established by Mahmood Shahabi), Kanoon-e Nashr-e Haqayeq-e 
Islami, or the Centre for Spreading Islamic Truth (founded by Mohammad Taqi 
Shari’ati) in Mashhad, Kanoon-e Islam, or the Islamic Centre (directed by AyatoUah 
Mahmood Taleqani), and Islamic associations of students, engineers and physicians. 
These associations, which were primarily founded, to promote Islamic ideas, one by 
one, directly or indirectly, became involved in politics. In the 1940s and 1950s, Islamic 
reformism flourished in Iran. The main feature of this new trend towards Islam was a 
tendency towards the politicization of Islam. In other words, Islamic reformists were 
eager to involve Islam directly in the political struggle for changing Iranian society" 
(Taghavi, 2005: 3).

In the years before 1941, following the tradition of quietism, the main body of 
Iranian clergy continued to remain their aloof from politics. Although this time some of 
the clergy, as well as Ayatollah Seyyyed Abol-Qassem Kashani began actively 
participating in politics. This group of clergy cannot be seen as a symbol of a sharp 
change from the prevalent tradition. During the period of the establishment of the 
Shi’ite Safavid Empire in Iran majority of clergy collaborated with the government. 
 Later on, some famous members of the clergy supported the Constitutional Revolution
of 1906, although a few of them opposed it. Such participation in politics did not necessitate an independent claim to the rule by the clergy. It was regarded as a social part of primarily religious responsibilities of the clergy.

The establishment of Jam’iyat-e Fada’iyan-e Islam, or the Society of the Devotees of Islam, was a turning point. Mojtaba Navvab Safavi was the founder of Fada’iyan-e Islam, a movement that would have a significant role in Iranian politics and the future revolutionary movement, within his own lifetime and afterwards. In Iran, Safavi was one of the founders of the idea of an Islamic state and Islamic form of government.

At a very early age in his life, Safavi raged against the secularist policies of the Shah. He regarded Iranian clerics, who discarded a form of Islamic government guided by the Shari’a, as apostate of Islam. Safavi was an extreme activist and militant, with an extremely fundamentalist ideology. This became very clear in 1945, when he tried to assassinate the highly influential Ahamd Kasravi.

Safavi’s primary goal was to force back the process of secularization that was started by the Shah, and to bring back Islamic values and law as the highest authority. His ideology was strictly doctrinarian and stripped of all non-Islamic scripture (Thiessen, 2009: 25).

In the historical framework of the first half of the twentieth century in Iran, and specifically after the early death of the 1906 Revolution, conventional inaction and fatalism were widespread among Iranian people. Any political activity by the name of Islam was judged as heresy by some religious leaders. For these reasons, as will be seen later, most Islamic groups were reluctant to participate in political affairs, and it took them a long time to take on board the legitimacy of political action in the name of Islam.
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