

## **The Effect of Constitutionalism on the Emergence of Political Parties and Liberal Associations in Qajar Persia (Iran in Qajar Era)**

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**Abstract:** Iranian society from the middle of the Naserian era had entered a new phase, created at its core several political-economic and mysterious societies. These societies had a role in the development of new thinking in Iran. Covert and overt activities of these societies such as the Union of humanity, secret society, National Association, the occult association of Tabriz, the social and Amyoon (people) are considered as the intellectual foundations of the constitutional revolution. The research question is that the constitutionalism process to what extent was effective in the emergence of political parties and liberal associations in the Qajar era? In response it should be said that mere constitutionalism has not been led to the emergence of political parties and liberal associations but it was a mutual relations meaning not only the idea of constitutionalism and ask for the law has been the cause of forming parties and associations and also Constitutional Movement indebted to the formation of overt and secret activities of these groups and associations.

**Key words:** Constitutional revolution, associations, political societies, political parties, political-economic

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In the examining the emergence of political parties and associations after revolution, firstly the political activities and cooperation before the constitutional period should be seen.

The idea of constitutionalism and the fight against tyranny and legalism led forming associations. During the constitutional revolution, political parties and civil and people societies were formed one after another and influenced the political situation in the country by their wishes. Undoubtedly this process was unprecedented in the political situation in Iran.

This study aims at that by investigation of the constitutionalism in Qajar Persia (in Iran at Qajar era) examine the impact of this movement on the emergence of newly established people political parties and associations of that time.

### **THE VICTORY OF CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION AND THE EXPANSION OF POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS IN IRAN**

Before the victory of the Constitutionalism only political organizations that partly were responsible for leading the underground activities, called secret societies which their origin is traced in the late Naser-al-Din Shah's

reign and the beginning of the reign of Muzaffar al-Din Shah (Kermani, 1983). These associations by releasing and distributing night letters and declarations and various treatises in the field of rule of law and delivering newspapers published abroad contained useful and diverse matters of civilization and modern science and the principles of free wisdom contributed to help awakening of public opinion effectively (Shajie, 1993).

The life of secret societies of this period (Qajar) actually begins with pseudo-Masonic associations; associations which formed and led by intellectuals and clergymen support with them was very limited and intangible (Javaheri, 2001).

The contemporary Shah, Muzaffar al-Din Shah Qajar, was forced to accept fair and reasonable demands of the masses in 5 August 1906 and issued constitutional decree. Some of liberal Clergymen of Iran played their role well in this process.

In fact, from this date, little by little overt and covert groups and associations were formed and were organizing association and activities of people against the government. Groups and associations in the early stages of Constitutional Movement were formed by intellectuals and Clergymen and had an important contribution in this people and national movement. To the extent that we can say that the Constitutional Movement owes the formation

and covert and overt activities of these groups (Nazarpour, 2005). Community (association) in Iran of that time was using by three means:

- Pre-revolutionary secret societies aimed at discussing political and social issues in Iran
- Civil and state societies (association) under the constitution 1906 c/1285's the constitution was set up to monitor local affairs
- Informal communities (association) with different political goals and objectives were establishing around the country (Furan, 1999). The first constitution was drafted on December 27, 1906 (Amanat, 2003). The first session of parliament was held on 17 Sha'ban 1324 AH in Tehran (Karimi, 2009)

Official societies (association) in Tehran and other city on the eve of the revolution, especially in the time of first constitution were formed. Since still under the law, the domain, supervision and intervention of such associations in government affairs had not been determined, these societies (association) had many interventions in public works and sometimes extreme acts against government agents and various classes of society as well in supporting members of societies (association) according to their psychic characteristics that oppose the government, execute their orders and every day by accumulate in the environment of societies (association) help strengthen their associations (Shajie, 1993).

Revolutionaries recognized the extant societies (association) which their scope was urban space in terms of the geographical composition of states and provinces in the amendment that was added to the constitution (Koochekianfard, 1999). The most important laws that were enacted during this period are: first Assembly at around 50%.

The law of the press release consists of 53 articles adopted in dated 18 Bahman 1286's (February 1907 c) in accordance with 5 Muharram 1326 AH and under this law journal and national newspapers in Iran increased and their numbers during the 2 years old of first parliament increased around 50%.

States Administration Act and the agenda of the Board of Governors consists of 433 articles and 26 appendix articles in 17 Azar 1286's (1907 December) in accordance with 4 Zighdeh 1325 AH was approved by MPs.

The law of provincial societies (councils) including 122 Articles on 8th Khordad 1286's (June, 1907) (in accordance with the Rabi-Avval 1325 AH) was approved by the members of parliament. These associations began accordance with the law and the

activities of some associations in some of the city decreased a certain measure the concentration of power in the hands of the ruling caste and provided the background of public intervention in the field of social affairs and improve the situation in their city.

The municipality law adopted on 12 Khordad 1286 s (June 1907). Duties Act was passed on 1th Ordibehesht 1287 s (May 1908) (Shajie, 1993).

According to the amendment to the constitution individual freedom and the freedom to form parties and associations was guaranteed but clergymen monitor on the legislation on amendments to the constitution was projected as well (Tehrani, 2000). In accordance with Article 21 of association and assembly formation should not produce religious and country sedition and be disruptive.

Also, "Article 90-93 related to formation of provincial and state societies (councils) and the manner of the election of representatives of societies and their domain and duties" was approved.

After declaring the constitution and bill of the provincial and state societies (associations) whereby the assemblies were legislative, provincial and state societies (associations) began their activities, both covert and overt as formal and informal societies (associations). In the cities that due to their geographical location were closer to the centers of revolutionary organizations and modern civilization and their members had new and advanced ideas members such associations (societies) had been expanded and had positive practices (Shajie, 1993).

In addition to monitoring of elections other cause of the emergence of societies (association) in this period can be attributed to motivation of groups of warriors and liberalists, especially the radicals which had been entered to the National Assembly through elections and in defense of parliamentary and constitutional values, had attempted to establishment of societies (associations) such as the house devotees outside the Parliament House and especially in Tehran (Tabrizi, 1995).

Aforementioned societies (association) were the mainstays of the radical representatives of House, especially in times of conflict between Muhammad Ali Shah and parliament. So that many of these societies (associations) during the conflict between Shah (king) and Parliament even formed armed groups were posing their demands if necessary sending them to the House and resorted to coercive coffee in the House floor.

Log (entering) of society (association) to political activities scene as an organization for the defense of the Constitution, led to formation some societies (association) by constitutional opposition in order to deal with this

issue. So that said, Equality and Law Societies were working in secret for the king and contemporary historians have called the Community of Muhammad (PBUH) as a court community (association). Meanwhile the secret societies (association) also emerged in support of constitutionalism including secret society of Malek-al-Motekallemin and and Seyed Jamal al-Din Va'ez (Koochakianfard, 1999).

In general there are two types of societies (association), one provincial and state (public and official) and other the political societies (associations) which their difference is not so clear, so that sometimes causes confusion and bewilderment. State and provincial societies (association) were the representative of the central government and the governors acts were under the supervision of them. Their basis was on 1325 AH law. Of the important tasks of these societies (association) was states election monitoring and investigation of complaints and collecting tax. States societies (association) had 12 members and provincial societies (associations) had six members. The parliament specially had emphasized on the formation of these societies (association) and one of first bill passed in the parliament was the formation of them, because they should monitor the election. The main of all these societies (associations), as they were announced was defend and support from the constitution and parliament. As mentioned sometimes these associations played tasks of the Party in a parliamentary democracy. Gradually these activities and association were wider and had more power. Societies (associations) were interface between the public and parliament. What distinguishes the societies (associations) from the party was not having a specific purpose and ideology and often most of them didn't have an organizational system in the country and in terms of membership activities were limited.

The other political societies (associations) considered free being political rule "making societies (associations) and communities not led to religious and secular intrigue and detrimental to order" (Vorham, 1970).

The number of them has been estimated to 200 societies (associations). The formation of these societies (associations) and the extent of their involvement freely in all political affairs is a new political-social phenomenon in this country's (Iran) history. The emergence of societies (associations) and political organizations of this period in fact, is the product of a diverse intellectual forces attempt that brought together the constitutional movement to victory. And now had the opportunity to develop their own ideas and creating conditions for their realization. Some of these efforts were in the House and was reflected in the majority and minority groups. And other part of it was crystallized in the form of societies (associations) and organizations in the community.

While moderates did not interest in political societies (associations) in order to achieve their goals, the most important and most active political societies (associations) of the period belonged to radicals who organized and led by the revolutionary committee. These societies (associations) that had the support a wide range of preachers, scholars and clerics were important supporters of extremists (radicals) of House minority and had vital contribution to the success of this minority. Other part of groups outside of parliament, were formed by the constitutionalism seekers. The constitutionalism thinking which was formed among a group of scholars and prominent clergymen, had no place in Parliament thus the constitutionalism seekers were trying to get through the creation of organizations, announce their objectives and views to general public and clergymen of other cities. They by use of their authority and influence were successful to a certain extent affect the workflow of parliament (assembly) (Javaheri, 2001). Vorham has pointed out to 90 societies (associations).

#### **CONSTITUTIONALISM AND THE EMERGENCE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN IRAN**

Iranian society from the middle of the Naserian era had entered a new phase, created at its core several political-economic and mysterious societies. These societies had a role in the development of new thinking in Iran. Covert and overt activities of these societies such as the forgotten house, the Union of humanity, secret society, National Association, the occult association of Tabriz, the social and Amyoon (people) are considered as the intellectual foundations of the constitutional revolution. But in the process of dispersion and countless societies (associations) gave nothing but political chaos for the country and Iranian people. It was a great experience to reinforce the idea of establishing political parties in Iran (Atabay, 1999).

Political parties were organized first time officially after the resignation of Mohammad Ali Shah from power in 1327 AH/1909 CE. which coincided with the start of the second parliamentary elections. Four "parties" were present in the House: Democrats (Democrats sect of Iran, Social and Amyoon (public), moderate socialists (social and moderates) and two small parties, the liberals (libertarians) and the "consensus and progress". In Azerbaijan, a number of socialist parties were active as well such as the "Socialist unifieh" and the Armenians "Dashnaks" party (Union, 1982).

However, the main reasons that led to from second parliamentary political parties emerged as form and program like European parties as follows:

- Returning the passengers of abroad such as Taghizadeh, Moazd-al-saltaneh, Dehkhoda and others. They observing Europe party systems, particularly the United Kingdom found the important point to protect freedom, revolution, constitutionalism and assembly (parliament) should have a political establishment (organization). They found to deal with the power of tyranny and feudal have armed machine at their disposal in a manner like bourgeois parties with regular and equipped organizations such as Europe, against establishment of the aristocracy and absolute monarchies care achievements of the revolution
- The bitter experience of a great number of societies (associations) that had failed to succeed against Mohammad Ali Shah coup
- The influence of professional revolutionaries such as Hedar Khan Amouoghli that as a result of Caucasus Social Democrats advertising and inspiration from their political experience believed formation of the party as necessities of the political battle

The combination of these factors, changed political figures of constitution after the fall of Mohammad Ali Shah and those conservative, revolutionary, moderate, liberalism, constitutional, etc., tendencies which were exist in the first Parliament were emerged in the form of new political parties.

In the second period of the parliament, there was no longer the number of national and local societies (associations) and rather two large political parties and two smaller parties were emerged which became behind the policy of Iran (Morvarid, 1999).

Interestingly political parties of the Iran were not fully independent from ruling government or corporate officials. Also, political parties in Iran mainly for their personal nature, often were playing the role of non-core activities of the party (Azghand, 2007).

Iranian parties, at no time have had the opportunity for the free development and because of it, did not find some aspects of modern European parties and weren't fitting in a Western context.

In the West, the parties gradually came into being; firstly aristocratic and conservative and then liberal parties were emerged.

The socialist parties later came into existence. Since, in Iran the parties did not have gradual development and also because of the particular situation of this country, the process parties of formation was opposite. Socialist Party came first, then other parties but two large and important parties of second parliament (house) were

Democratic and Social Party of moderates who had some of the characteristics of Western socialist parties and conservative (Saeedi, 2003).

In the West, political parties were formed on the basis of social classes, the aristocratic parties rely on rich and feudal landowner class and their manner is conservatism. Liberal parties rely on the bourgeoisie of industry and trade which constitute the new rich society and the enlightened people tend to these parties.

Liberal parties that were found after the growth of the bourgeois class were seeking to take power from the aristocracy on the one hand and on the other hand they were seeking to implement the constitutional laws. Western parliamentary regimes are born out of this conflict. Socialist and labor parties are the twentieth century phenomenon which came into existence with growth of the working class and gave another color to the party competition and intensified the class struggle, socialist parties, neither indeed could compromise with liberals nor with conservatives with the power of this parties, other parties or joined together or were destroyed over time.

Iranian parties due to specific situation of classes in Iran which was different with Europe, had different, political parties were less dependence on social classes and their party competition, had ideological basis (Saeedi, 2003).

In the first year of the conquest of Tehran in 1908 (1288 S), the excitement created following this conquest by warriors, individuals and various agents were focused on two political parties. These two parties included "revolutionary" and "moderation" and after the opening of the second parliament (house) two above parties called "Democratic of public (Amyoon)" and "the Social moderates" were introduced to Parliament. Other political parties such as "consensus party" and "progress party" were formed but because they did not have many seats in parliament could not be effective in the future of the country (Amini and Shirazi, 2006).

## CONCLUSION

The idea of constitutionalism and fight against authoritarianism and wanting law led to societies (associations) formation.

The societies (associations) which were formed of various classes, groups and communities of each particular spectrum which before the constitutionalism the tyranny of the Qajar was the cause of their convergence and all participated and Constitutional Movement triumphed.

After the revolution, intellectuals in order to fight and resist against opponents of the constitution with the gravitational centers that are general authority and provide the unity and thought concord of constitutionalists, attempted to creating societies (associations) that were secret before the revolution.

The formation of these societies (associations) together with the Constitutional Revolution and its ups and downs, have had ups and downs as well however of the factors contributing to creating these societies (associations) can be referred the Election Guidelines (guilds) of first round of the National Assembly approved in the 17 Persian date Shahrivar 1285 in which it is pointed some societies (associations) to monitor the elections in Iran cities and composition and its members were created from six classes of princes, scholars, notables, merchants, landlords, shopkeepers any place to monitor the elections and preventing violations. But after the election the aforementioned societies (associations) continued their activities as references to dealing with local people affairs.

The other cause of the emergence of societies (association) in this period can be attributed to motivation of groups of warriors and liberalists, especially the radicals which had been entered to the National Assembly through elections and in defense of parliamentary and constitutional values, had attempted to establishment of societies (associations) such as the house devotees outside the Parliament House and especially in Tehran (Tabrizi, 1995).

In other parts of the country with the pretext of election regulations or in compliance with the capital and other provinces with association (community) Similar measures were taken in order to create a association (society) which meanwhile some works of them in order to promote the new culture such as the publishing of publications has been remained.

At this stage, the task of societies (associations) was both helping to waking of thoughts and preserve of freedom and institution and protect of newly established constitution named National Assembly that was unprecedented in the ancient history of its people.

But in the process of dispersion and countless societies (associations) gave nothing but political chaos for the country and Iranian people. It was a great experience to reinforce the idea of ??establishing political parties in Iran.

They found to deal with the power of tyranny and feudal have armed machine at their disposal in a manner like bourgeois parties with regular and equipped

organizations such as Europe, against establishment of the aristocracy and absolute monarchies care achievements of the revolution.

It can be stated that although secret societies (association) played a role in advancing constitutional revolution but in the end it was the Constitutional Revolution and its statute that gave the societies (association) to freedom of establishment and allowed expansion and public as far as these societies were apparent around of Iran and we can say that it was Constitutionalism and assembly (parliament) that in order to avoid confusion, limited societies (associations) and provided free and public activities of parties.

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