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REVOLUTIONARY REFORM:
THE CASE OF SOCIO-POLITICAL CHANGE UNDER MOHAMMAD MOSADDEQ

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Introduction

Iran's encounter with modernity and eagerness for democracy has produced "four waves of democratization" within a single country. There were two major revolutions: 1905 Constitutional Revolution and 1979 Islamic Revolution; and two reform movements: Mosaddeq's oil nationalization movement and the current democratic movement. Neither of the revolutions brought about democracy. To return to the original revolutionary goals therefore two reform movements took place.

In this paper, I will attempt to examine the nature and scope of socio-political change under Mosaddeq. Given the currency of reform/revolution dichotomy, I would argue neither revolution nor reform could possibly explain the spirit of that change and therefore I utilize a third conceptual category called 'revolutionary reform'. To clarify my theoretical framework, I apply Hanna Arendt's critic of revolutionary violence (Arendt 1976), Charles Tilly's distinction between revolutionary situations and revolutionary outcomes (Tilly 1993), and finally Timothy Garton Ash's conception of 'refolution' (Garton Ash 1990) to the specific case of Mosaddeq's structural reform. I would also briefly examine the significance of Mosaddeq's revolutionary reform and its relevance, lessons, and legacy for the current democratic reform in Iran.

Reform and revolution are two ways of social changes. They are not, however, two contradictory concepts essentially in collision. Their legitimacy is subject to a proper socio-historical context within which they are applied. More specifically, their relevance rests on two factors: one is societal conditions within which social change takes place and the other is the nature of political system. Hence, the nature of society and state are two decisive factors, which determine the context of reform or revolution. When revolutionary (either subjective or objective) conditions are absent, revolutionary outcomes may yield in the form of structural or qualitative reforms. In his analysis of social revolutions, Charles Tilly makes a clear distinction between revolutionary conditions and revolutionary results. Tilly suggests that it becomes possible to distinguish between more and less revolutionary situations and revolutionary outcomes (Tilly 1993). In other words, forms of social change may not necessarily correspond to the outcome of a revolutionary situation. Hence, quite contrary to what conventional arguments suggest there is not much difference between a genuine reform and a true revolution. A real difference, however, exists between a genuine and a pseudo reform. A pseudo reformer does not go beyond formalities and therefore maintains the status quo. Similarly, there is a distinction between a real revolutionary who realizes the limits of socio-political structures and a dogmatic revolutionary whose aim is to enforce his own deliberative will and to impose his radical, dogmatic project on the logic of reality. A legitimate

dichotomy therefore exists not between reform and revolution but between reformism and dogmatism. Reform and revolution are interrelated, complementary and reinforcing each other. For this reason a third conceptual frame is warranted. This concept may be called 'structural reform', 'revolutionary reform', or 'refoluion', a new phrase coined by Timothy Garton Ash, referring to the peaceful and non-violent revolutions in which the political change results from a set of actions that hold a combination of both revolutionary and reformation elements (Garton Ash, 1990).

In Hanna Arndt's view, "the word 'revolutionary' can be applied only to revolutions whose aim is freedom." Revolutions may be the condition of freedom but by no means lead automatically to it. Only "where the liberation from oppression aims at least at the constitution of freedom can we speak of revolution." Revolution, Arndt argues, "is considerably more than a mass hysteria", more than a successful insurrection and more than violence (Arendt, 1963). If Revolutions start violently storming Bastilles they may end up building new Bastilles. According to Charles Tilly, although some collective violence under the French Revolution and the Iranian regime of 1979 "consisted of revolutionary attacks on old authorities and struggle among revolutionary factions, the most intense domestic violence pitted revolutionaries and their military forces against reluctant citizens (Tilly, 2003).

Crucial, then, to any understanding of revolution or reform is the idea of freedom and a democratic approach to achieve it. We cannot separate ends from means. The methods we adopt determine the outcome we will achieve. We cannot lie our way through to the truth. Revolutionary reform clearly refuses revolutionary violence as it replaces one form of violence to another one. Theoretically speaking, therefore, the concept of revolutionary reform aims at qualitative changes in structures and quantitative changes in forms.

Empirically, as the case of a few Scandinavian countries indicates, this concept suggests that these countries experienced radical structural changes while their old forms and frameworks remained unchanged. The nature and scope of such structural changes forced old institutions such as monarchy and church to modify their functions; they indeed became dysfunctional. In the case of Iran under Mosaddeq, the institution of monarchy could have been dysfunctional and yet maintaining its legitimacy if the Shah had joined Mosaddeq in his two major revolutionary reforms, both in domestic and foreign policy.

Mohammad Mosaddeq's government came to power with two agenda in hand: first, to implement the oil nationalization law approved by the parliament and utilize all the respective incomes to improve living conditions of the people. Second, to amend the electoral laws applied in the parliament and the country's local councils. Mosaddeq's reform agenda was intentionally less-controversial in form but deeply revolutionary in character; it was a revolutionary reform: a 'refolution' both in domestic and foreign policy. In his own words, Mosaddeq makes this clear: "After fifty years of contemplation and experience, I have come to the conclusion that it is only the attainment of freedom

and full independence which will enable the Iranian nation to overcome numerous obstacles in the path of its prosperity and greatness.” (Buzurgmehr, 1985)

I have identified four elements in Mosaddeq’s domestic policy and another four elements in his foreign policy to apply the concept of revolutionary reform to the nature of socio-political change under his leadership.

Four features of revolutionary reform in Mosaddeq’s domestic policy

1) Nationalism for a parliamentary democracy: Mosaddeq’s nationalism was not used as instrument of oppression or communal prejudices at home in the name of achieving independence, nor an excuse to ignore the danger of domestic authoritarianism. In his view, dismantling authoritarianism did not simply require the termination of the British influence in Iran, but the establishment of a parliamentary democratic polity. Hence, “Mosaddeq’s nationalism embodied firm beliefs in both independence and democracy; it aimed not only at creating a genuinely Iranian state to rule the nation, but also an autonomous and credible democratic polity. It entailed a firm conviction that the Shah should, in the spirit of the Constitution, reign and not rule” (Azimi, 1988, 61). Mosaddeq made this quite clear: “in a constitutional country, in order to safeguard the crown from criticism, the King is not responsible. It is for this reason that I maintain the King must reign and not rule” (Diba, 1986, 171).

Mosaddeq never ceased to insist that the realization of freedom and independence required a government independence of the Court. In so doing, he attempted to clarify the ambiguities of the Constitution in regard to the nature of royal authority. He demanded that the Majles approve the report of an eight-man parliamentary committee set up to investigate the relations between the Shah and the prime minister, which emphasized the ceremonial nature of royal authority. “It had become customary for Cabinets to meet in the royal presence; Mosaddeq terminated this practice by holding Cabinet sessions in his own house,” carrying out his duties from his own home, “often lying on his metal bed, clad in his so-called ‘pyjamas’” (Azimi, 1988, 63).

Furthermore, the control of army was sought by the Shah, according to the tradition established by his father. Mosaddeq challenged this tradition adhering strictly to the implementation and intention of the Constitution. He claimed that the army was not the Shah’s personal militia, but the country’s shield; and, therefore, it should be administrated on behalf of the people. Mosaddeq’s strong response and reaction to the Shah’s resistance is clearly showed in his words:

“since from the experience of the past government, it has become evident that, for the work to progress, it is necessary for me to also assume the post of minister of war, and since the Shah does not agree to this point, therefore it is better that the next government be formed by someone who enjoys his full confidence, and carry out the Shah’s orders” (Diba, 1986, 153).

Indeed, “no politician in the constitutional era of Iranian history succeeded to such a degree in marginalizing the Shah and containing the Court” (Azimi, 1988, 61). He had realized that monarchy in its existing form could not be successfully reconciled with the working form of parliamentary government. He had come to the conclusion that the

situation has to change. His solution was a peaceful transition to a parliamentary democracy. His demand for plenary powers and parliamentary approval of the report of the eight-man committee make sense only within this context.

Democratic Constitutionalism was beyond Mosaddeq's political behavior, it was part of his personal character: this is why in the course of his trial he boldly asserted: "even if I am hanged I will not accept that in a constitutional country the king has the right to dismiss the prime minister" (Buzurgmer, 1985, 597).

2) Reviving the Spirit of Constitutionalism: Mosaddeq was in principle committed to "the fundamental democratic ideals and values which he believed enriched and sustained the spirit of constitutionalism." But in the prevailing critical situation, when the royal Court used the Majles to launch a legislative blockade, he could not respect all the existing constitutional rules, particularly those which were evidently manipulated to the clear loss of "the basic prerequisites of a democratic political arrangement" (Azimi, 1988, 59). He therefore appealed to the people. In his words: "Laws, parliaments and governments are made for the people, not the people for them. When the people do not want any of them, they may express their opinion about it. In democratic and constitutional countries, there is no law higher than the people's will." Similarly, resorting to a referendum, Mosaddeq announced that "in democratic countries no law is above the will of the people" (Diba, 1986, 174). In October 1951 Mosaddeq went to the Majles in order to address the question of the dismissal of British personnel from Abadan; opposing Mosaddeq's plan, a small group of deputies abstained from attendance. "Mosaddeq therefore proceeded to the front gates of the Majles and delivered his speech to the masses crowds gathered outside in the Baharestan square. His opening words went to the core of his political philosophy: 'Wherever the people are, the Majles is at the same place'" (Diba, 1986, 130).

Mosaddeq effectively used 'populism' in light of the people's freedom and the nation's independence; he never used his 'magic appeal' as an instrument of oppression against his personal opponents. "When he appealed to the people it was to inform them on issues and seek their informed judgment. He believed that the will of the people was a sufficient legitimization source for the change of laws which contravened his ideals or could easily be manipulated by his opponents. He believed in the intrinsic goodness of ordinary Iranians" (Azimi, 1989, 335).

3) Moral politics without being a moralizer: Mosaddeq's genuine attempt to combine political activity with consistent adherence to moral standards does distinguish him from many other statesmen of his kind. More important, what perhaps above all distinguishes Mosaddeq's politics of morality from a traditional version of moral politics was his desire to elevate adherence to ethical values and civic standards in the Iranian political culture without being a moralizer. "His main vision was to establish a polity which would be impervious to corruption and would, therefore, enhance the credibility of the government and ultimately give substance and meaning to citizenship and political participation" (Azimi, 1989, 334).

Mosaddeq boldly challenged the hegemonic patrimonial and clientalist culture in the Iranian polity. He showed no desire for self-sanctification; he banned the ceremonial titles, he made no use of office for personal ends, he refused to collect a salary, he personally met many expenses he incurred in an official capacity, and he carried out his duties from his own home. In 1951, he issued an order to the police, specifically allowing anything to be said or written about him 'without making difficulties for the people'. Similarly, he immediately issued an angry statement once he heard that a group of people had collected money for a statue of him to be placed in a public square; he accused them of idolatry. Mosaddeq put an end to a long-living tradition in Iran's formal political culture, i.e., the practice of sycophancy (Diba, 1986, 116).

Mosaddeq's main leadership strategy was to rely on unmediated and frank communication with the people. Fighting the elitist, aristocratic approach in politics, a democrat charismatic Mosaddeq appealed to the people whose will gives legitimacy to political power. "People," said Mosaddeq, "were perfectly capable of recognizing and, in congenial circumstances, rewarding their genuine servants" (Azimi, 1988, 63).

Mosaddeq "seldom inspired the people without himself being inspired by them" (Azimi, 1989, 335). He was not a demagogue. In the bloody fiasco known as Siyeh-e Tir (July 21) Mosaddeq's main principle and policy in inspiring the public and being inspired by them worked very well. In the same vein, people showed their confidence to Mosaddeq when he made a broadcast speech, asking them to buy the government bonds. They in response bought the total amount of one billion Rials offered within fifteen days (Diba, 1986, 139).

Mosaddeq's "assumption of power had proved to be incongruent with the tenets of clan politics, which during his term of office had been overshadowed by nationalism." Clientalism and patrimonialism were challenged "by Mosaddeq's own standing, by mobilized public opinion, the effective politicization of the urban population and the politics of the street" (Azimi, 1989, 335).

4) Gradual but structural reforms: The 'nine-point program' under Mosaddeq leadership was a comprehensive plan including the amendment of the electoral laws, legal system, press laws, land reform, employment law, tax policy; improvement of education, health and communication, and establishment of local government and village councils. Mosaddeq's Agrarian Reform was a method of lessening foreign dependence and resolving socio-economic problems. His land reform law provided for the country's more than 40,000 villages to the have partly-elected councils, an income, and their own bank account. He forced the Shah to return the Court lands to the state to be distributed to the peasants. As part of Educational Reform he made Tehran University financially independent. He sought free and compulsory education throughout the country. By giving independence to the Iranian Bar, Mosaddeq sought for an independent judicial system, which guarantees for the rights of defense. He renamed the Ministry of War the Ministry of National Defence, for the army was considered only a Defensive Force. Knowing that the Shah's real aim of controlling army was to consolidate his own power, he reduced the government spending on the army (Diba, 1986, 158-163). Mosaddeq was the first Iranian

prim minister to order that “the debates of the Majles be made public by way of broadcasting, years before many Western democracies did so” (Diba, 1986, 169). Moreover, “during 1953 a total of 273 publications were appearing in Iran, of which about 70 in Tehran alone were opposed to the government” (Diba, 1986, 168).

And finally, Mosaddeq’s ‘oil-less Economy’ itself was a structural reform with both economic and political effects. In his speech in the Majles in March 1953, Mosaddeq clearly argued the economy must be independent of oil, stressing that the oil revenues have to be utilized not in buying arms but in developing project. Economically, the ‘oil-less economy’ was to achieve a healthy state of self-sufficiency as a means of national sovereignty and therefore a plan for a fundamental change in Iran’s economic foundations.

Reorganizing the economy without oil revenues, Mosaddeq succeeded in increasing Iran’s export products of 13 percent whereas imports were reduced by 50 per cent for the same period. This combination was a good start to achieve the desired goal. Moreover, this meant that “Iran could be independent and stand on its own feet economically, without the oil revenues. This added to the national pride in exports, created an enviable balance of trade, never to be achieved again in the years after Mosaddeq” (Diba, 1986, 162).

Politically, Mosaddeq’s ‘oil-less economy’ significantly challenged the development of ‘rentier state’ as a major structural obstacle to Iran’s political development. Rentier state is an allocation state in which a substantial portion of state’s revenue is derived from the rents received from the outside world (Beblawi and Luciani, 1987). Rentier state’s dependence on a single commodity such as oil tends to become autonomous from society, unaccountable to its citizens, and therefore sustaining autocratic polity. “Rentier states are those countries that receive on a regular basis substantial amounts of external rents. External rents are in turn defined as rental paid by foreign individuals, concerns or governments to a given country ... The oil revenues received by the governments of the oil exporting countries have very little to do with the production processes of their economies. The inputs from the local economies – other than the raw materials – are insignificant (Hossein Mahdavy, 1970, 428-29).

“An important characteristic of a rentier state is its ability to reduce its dependence on internal sources of revenues and subsequently on internal social classes” (Sussan Siavoshi 1990, 11). The rentier state generates “the capacity to take initiatives and formulates policies that were not necessarily reflective of the aspiration and interests of any group within civil society” (Siavoshi, 1990, 11). The ‘oil-less economy’ was a significant step in challenging the politics of rentierism in Iran.

II. Four features of revolutionary reform in Mosaddeq’s foreign policy

1) Nationalism for national dignity and true independence: “Life is entirely worthless,” says Mosaddeq, “if not combined with liberty and independence. In achieving such noble aims, the history of great nations has witnessed struggles, endeavors, sacrifices and devotion” (Bakhtare Emrouz, 1953). He stressed that, “if we are to be deprived of freedom of action in our own home and to be subjugated by foreigners, death is preferable to such an existence” (Mozakerate Majlis, 1951). In Mosaddeq’s view,

therefore, the oil issue was a tangible instrument symbolizing a post-colonial nationalist movement. In the words of Hussein Fatemi, the architecture of the oil nationalization industry, the oil issue was “as significant for Iran as was independence for Indonesia, India, Syria, and Lebanon” (Bakhtare Emrouz, 1950).

“Mosaddeq and his colleagues were explicit that the most important reason for the oil nationalization was political rather than economic” (Katouzian, 1990, 137). Mosaddeq was “prepared to settle the Anglo-Iranian oil dispute at almost any economic price, but was equally determined not to grant another concession at any cost” (Katouzian, 1990, 138). For him any talk of democracy, freedom and the rule of law was no more than indulgence in romantic self-deception unless foreign concessionaires was removed at all economic costs. That is why the very principle of nationalization of oil industry was undebatable. In his words: “anyone who aims to disparage the holy struggle of our nation by assessing the achievements of the Iranian movement in economic terms and by comparing the independence of our country with a few million pounds, has no certainly perpetrated a blunder” (Mozakerate Majlis, 1952).

“Nationalism was the last thing Britain wanted to see emerging in the Middle East, and its perpetrators were to be suppressed.” Mosaddeq’s visit to Cairo was therefore a defeat for British’s Middle Eastern policy. On his return journey from New York to Tehran, Mosaddeq stopped over in Egypt and was received as a hero, as shown by photographs in the international press of the time. Naha Pasha welcomed him as ‘the guiding light of the Middle East’ (Diba, 1986, 135).

2) ‘Negative equilibrium’: a radical paradigm shift for Iranian foreign policy: In Mosaddeq’s view dismantling authoritarianism did not simply mean the termination of the British colonial influence in Iran but also meant the consolidation of a policy in which the great powers were equally deprived of unjustifiable influence over Iranian affairs. This belief constituted the essence of his advocacy of ‘negative equilibrium’ as the best paradigm for Iranian foreign policy (Azimi, 1988, 51).

Mosaddeq’s principle of ‘Negative Equilibrium’ eventually became an initial important step towards making a third block in the bipolar international politics during the cold war era. The ‘non-alignment movement’ and its active neutrality were very much influenced by Mosaddeq’s radical plan of Iran’s foreign policy paradigm. A significant case for Mosaddeq’s policy of ‘negative equilibrium’ towards non-western powers was that of the ‘caviar concession’ and the fishing rights in the Caspian Sea. This concession conceded by Reza Shah, expired in October 1927. Mosaddeq, however, refused to renew the concession, despite Russian efforts through their ambassador, Sadchikoff. Mosaddeq himself gives a telling story of this episode:

Sadchikoff, the Russian ambassador, came to my house on two occasions to discuss the Caspian fisheries, whose concession was ending in Bahman 1331. He requested that the fisheries be left in the hands of the Russians, as heretofore, until a new concession was drawn up. I said that a government which had nationalized the oil company before the end of concession and expelled the

British oil workers from Iran, how can it now leave an expired concession in the hands of the Russians? The Russian ambassador replied: you are correct, we should not have made such a demand of you. He apologized and left (Diba, 1986, 168).

3) Working within the International legal and political system: Mosaddeq masterfully defended the Iranian actions in the face of international legal concepts and treaties at The Hague and the United Nations. He was skeptical of British readiness to come to an agreement with him; he was, however, adherent to the rule of law, given his own legal background. Whilst Britain was practicing seizures, imposing financial blockades, and “flexing its muscles in a show of ‘strong-arm’ tactics, Mosaddeq’s Government was countering with the pen and written legal arguments” (Diba, 1986, 1231).

Mosaddeq was aware of the logic of Realpolitik. He welcomed American mediation efforts and was ready to accept a reasonable solution. In October-November 1951, for instance, he agreed on a solution provided by Gorge McGhee, the US Assistant Secretary of State; however, the plan was rejected by Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary (McGhee, 1983).

The long history of interference finally led to the UN. Britain took its campaign to the UN Security Council. Mosaddeq made documentation of the direct interferences of the British consulates in Iranian domestic affairs into two portfolios and represented to the United Nations in New York and to the International Court at The Hague. To British surprise, Mosaddeq himself attended the United Nation session, arrived in New York on 15 October 1951. Accompanying by a delegation of oil exports, Mosaddeq masterfully defended the Iran’s rights to self determination and national resurgence. He put the Iran’s nationalization of oil industry in a wider context of the anti-colonial movement by referring to the legitimate act of the American people in the defense of their rights against British colonialism in the case of the 1773 Boston Tea Party. In the same vein, in June 1952, Mosaddeq went to The Hague and presented 181 documents against the British interference. In his powerful speech to the International Court, he stated:

There is no political or moral yardstick by which the Court can measure its judgment in the case of nationalization of the oil industry in Iran. In spite of my physical weakness, I have come to The Court in order to talk about these very same political and moral problems within the oil industry, and to point out that under no condition we will accept the jurisdictions of the Court on this subject. We cannot put ourselves in the dangerous situation that might arise out of the Court’s decision (Modafeate Mosaddeq, 1978).

4) Anti-imperialism but not inflaming anti-Western feeling: Mosaddeq did not “harbor instinctive anti-British sentiments.” He expressed admiration for the “British people and their democratic traditions.” He consistently maintained that Iran was neither in dispute with the British people nor even with the government but with the AIOC (Azimi, 1988, 56).

“For Mosaddeq colonialism – whether formal or informal – was not only an instrument of economic and political backwardness and dependence, but also brought spiritual and cultural decay.” Anti-imperialism, however, did not in his eyes mean rigid anti-westernism, impulsive xenophobia or a return to outdated ‘authentic’ local traditions. In his speech in the Majles on 20 June 1950 he admired western cultural values and showed how deeply he was sensitive to the charge of anti-westernism (Azimi, 1988, 60).

III. Lessons and Legacy for the current Reform Movement

Mosaddeq’s main aim was to “lay the foundations of a polity which was qualitatively different from and superior to what had existed before” (Azimi, 1988, 64). He left a very strong mark on the Iranian politics; contemporary Iran therefore still lives with his political legacy and his spiritual heritage. He provided indispensable guidelines by systematically restraining the authoritarian politics, by attempting to consolidate the powers of the elected democratic executive, by reforming the parliamentary electoral laws and procedures, by appealing to the public and encouraging their participation, by relying not on the word but the spirit of constitutionalism, by elevating moral politics without being a moralizer, by fighting patrimonial and corrupt clientelist culture, by showing that foreign powers could easily harm a society if its national polity is authoritarian, by being anti-imperialist without inflaming anti-westernism, by working within the world’s legal and political system without sacrificing national sovereignty and dignity, by attempting to implement gradual but fundamental social changes and in particular elaborating the notion of the ‘oil-less economy’: a notion that forcefully challenged the argument that Iran will not stand on its feet without its oil revenues; a notion, which also provided an alternative path to establish a polity without all ill-effects of rentier state or ‘petrolic despotism’, for it has been acknowledged as a negative character of modern state in Iran.

Nevertheless, it is also true that “he succeeded neither in creating his envisaged autonomous parliamentary democracy, nor in bringing about a true independence through a desirable and lasting settlement of the oil dispute” (Azimi, 1988, 64). Any explanation of his immediate political failure, however, should be attempted in part in terms of circumstances which were beyond his control and in part in terms of his personality and politics (Azimi, 1988, 64). He did little mental or practical preparation that is to say theoretical and organizational frameworks for the realization of an effective parliamentary system and a modern polity. Mosaddeq’s populism was an alternative to the absence of an effective party politics. Indeed, at one level he understood the usefulness of political parties but at a deeper level he did not fully appreciate the need for proper organization. Given the structural and cultural obstacles, Mosaddeq was deeply pessimistic about the possibility of having a successful party system. “This was one of the main unresolved contradictions of Mosaddeq’s political thinking and practice” (Azimi, 1989, 37).

It is now evidence that the easy-made 1953 coup was effective in part due to the “absence of an effective large-scale party organization behind Mosaddeq, and also his failure to appreciate the need for such an organization, which hampered the consolidation of public support for his government” (Azimi, 1988, 62). Despite his revolutionary attempts to go beyond the constitutional constraints, Mosaddeq’s “residue

of old-fashioned liberal beliefs” and partly a “legalistic frame of mind”, as Khalil Maleki truly observed, together with the “repeated failure of previous efforts to create parties in Iran”, all contributed to his failure to organize a party of his own (Azimi, 1988, 62). In September 1962, however, he himself made the following significant confession: “the backwardness of we Iranians is due to the absence of political and social organizations and it was because of this defeat that our beloved Iran lost its freedom and independence without anyone being able to make the slightest protest” (Mokatebate Mosaddeq, 1975).

The current democratic movement in Iran, the reformers in power and President Khatami himself, need to take this historical lesson and confession more seriously. In the absence of strong and organized democratic opposition, the reformers in power have better access to all resources in making strong, open and inclusive socio-political organizations. The fact, however, is they have not yet succeeded.

Mosaddeq owed his privileged position equally to his strong leadership of the movement and his successful grasp and articulation of its underlying objectives (Azimi, 1988, 54). The current reformers in power are clearly short of these privileges, suffering from Khatami’s weak leadership and his politics of oxymoron. A politics that is a marriage of opposite: a paradox of democracy under the velayat-e faqih; civil society coexisting with the totalitarian government; the rule of law under the absolute rule of the faqih; and constitutionalism while the valiy-e faqih is beyond the constitution. Mosaddeq’s constitutionalism was quite ‘revolutionary’, for it did not respect all the existing constitutional procedures once they went against minimal democratic arrangements. Khatami’s constitutional politics, in contrast, is clearly a conservative politics in challenging the statue quo.

Mosaddeq maintained that, with the hegemony of royal authoritarianism, not only would real political development cease but foreign domination would be facilitated because by dominating the despot, foreigners could subjugate the entire nation (Azimi, 1988, 61). Authoritarianism and imperialism are not polar opposites. They reinforce each other. Mosaddeq did not passively prefer royal authoritarianism once there was a real treat of imperialism. He boldly fought in two fronts. Similarly, in today’s Iranian politics, the reformers in power need to take the meaningful and practical steps against clerical authoritarianism otherwise not only would democracy cease but foreign domination would be facilitated. It is a false dichotomy to put clerical authoritarianism in contrast to new imperialism. The former is not better than the latter. In maintaining Iran’s national sovereignty and dignity the reformers in power should appeal not to the autocratic clerics but to the people. The lessons of Mosaddeq’s experience suggest that when the Man and the people came together neither a domestic despot nor foreign powers were able to harm the movement. When Mosaddeq, for whatever reasons, failed to appeal to the public the movement suffered. The reformers in power need to take this lesson more than any time in the Iranian history. Theoretically speaking, in politics of democratization both top-down and bottom-up approaches remain significant. The elite factional politics and social movements are equally effective in transition to democracy (John Markoff, 1996). In the weakness of socio-political democratic institutions in Iran, factional politics can play a significant part in crafting democracy.

Mosaddeq's emergence, as Fakhreddin Azimi properly put it, was largely a result of a complex set of "structural preconditions"; however, Mosaddeq for his part "entangled himself in a struggle which, in a world dominated by realpolitik was more likely to end in defeat than victory. Yet fear of defeat had not discouraged him from embarking on such a struggle. In the words of Fatemi, Mosaddeq was committed to combating 'spiritual defeatism'; he had stepped forward to assume office motivated primarily by hope and a sense of mission" (Azimi, 1989, 338). In today's Iran, the reformists in power must step forward and actively participate in transition to democracy. Complaining that they have faced one crisis every nine days that they were in office is a fact but never explain why they failed in handling these crises with anything bordering on competence; it does not tell us why they are forging shields instead of swords. Their resignation, therefore, neither is politically wise nor morally acceptable. Resignation of the elected segment of a semi-democratic government in favor of its non-elected segment will not craft democratization in Iran; it rather, will privilege clerical authoritarianism more than any thing else in the current political atmosphere. Like Mosaddeq, to paraphrase Gramsci, the reformers in power have to challenge the pessimism of the intellect in favor of the optimism of the will.

My final words are those of the then French Ambassador in Tehran in describing Mosaddeq. He said: Mosaddeq was "a cross between Gandhi and Rousseau" (Azimi, 1989, 338): a man who was distinguished by commitment to non-violence and adherence to freedom and democracy; a man of revolutionary reform. A man for today's and tomorrow's Iran.

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