

## The Study of the Performance of Reformation Government from the Perspective of Renovation

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### Abstract

The 8 year period of the governance of reformists is one of the major eras in political and social history of Iran. In this era we can observe the widespread political and civil liberties and the social mobilization in a broad of the social classes. In addition to investigating the government performance in varied areas, the current study introduces the reconstruction in social and political domains as the factor which raised society's expectations in other areas like economy. The question of this paper is that: "what are the consequences of social reconstruction and increasing political demands?" The hypothesis makes the assumption that the gap between the social and/or economic reconstruction and inability of the reforming government to create economic capacities in line with the social and political growth resulted in the gradual alienation of the society from the performance of reformists.

**Keywords:** Renovation, Reform movement, Political-Social renovation, Economic gap.

### Introduction

The 2<sup>nd</sup> of khordad movement and emergence of the civil society forum, undoubtedly, is the beginning of a new era in political and social life of Iran. After the huge political contribution of the nation to abolish the monarchy and to establish the Islamic Republic, this election is considered the most splendid aspects of the political participation and one of the points of excellence in the democracy examination which, by utilizing the electoral behavior, brought up the need for balancing reforms within the existing framework without violence. In Mr. Hashemi Rafsanjani administrating system and in the frame of the first and the second development programs of the country the progression, the economic indices, the welfare and the construction issues were advertized and promoted as the characteristics of an ideal society. By establishment of Mr. Khatami's government the political, legal, and cultural dimensions of the ideal society became important. These dimensions were introduced as the civil society which attracted lots of interest due to the harmonization with the political-cultural aspects of the revolution.

In this time, a kind of convergence created between the spectrums of the groups in the system which were united because of the ideological interests or protecting Khatami in the election in Khordad 1997 and defiant clergymen were on the head of this coalition.

These groups which were somehow free from isolation after the fifth parliamentary election first tried to bring the wartime prime minister (Mirhossein Mousavi) as a candidate to the stage. He rejected the suggestion and announced his lack of preparation through a statement. The right party reacted strongly to the return of Mousavi and the broker party was not satisfied with introducing Mr. Mousavi. In fact, considering Mousavi was a symbol of the tendency of the traditional layers of the

left party which had the anti-liberalism and equalitarianism concerns and was against the economic adjustment program in Hashemi Rafsanjani's era. Anyway, with rejection of the candidacy by Mousavi, the left party chose Khatami. Actually, the Islamic left party consists of the modernists that were connected to the academic and intellectual. They usually attracted some of the values and novel and democratic definitions to their political discourse structure and Khatami was the introducer of the recent tendencies among this party (Fouzi, 2005: 12).

### **Conceptual framework: Renovation definition**

Several definitions were presented by the thinkers in relation to the renovation and its dimension, requisites, and characteristics. The current study investigates the gap hypothesis that insists on the social mobilization and economic growth and is derived from Harington as the frame for analyzing the period of modification governance.

### **The gap hypothesis**

The gap between social stimulation and economical growth offer a standard to conclude that the urbanization, literacy, education, and media are effectively play role in making traditional human familiar with the modern aspects of life. This novel experiences break up the cognitive obstacles and traditional cultural approaches and bring in higher and newer level of demands and desires. Thus, a transitional society's ability to meet the demands is much slower than the process of demands growth. Therefore, a broad gap is formed between the desires and expectations, the formation of necessity and fulfilling it, or between the desires functioning and the level of life functioning. This gap can cause social frustration and dissatisfaction which practically results in political instability. If the traditional society is open enough to provide opportunities for social and economical mobility, the social frustration can be relieved. However, due to the closed political contribution system, there will be a mobilized condition. In this situation, the political participation will pave the way for one's social progress. The social frustration increases the demand from the government and spread the scope of political participation for carrying forward the demands. Nevertheless political backwardness, from political institutionalized viewpoint, does not allow the demands to be announced legally or to be adjusted/ focused in the political framework. In this situation, the occurrence of political instability is imminent (Harington, 1991 82-83). Generally, Harington evaluated the concept of political development in accordance with the industrialization rate, social mobilization, economical growth, and political participation. He believes that in the political development process new demands will appear in the form of participation and the newer roles. Thus the political system should have the required capacity and ability to shift the condition. Otherwise, it will face with inconsistency, anarchy, authoritarianism, and political deterioration and the community's response to these irregularities may leads to violent instabilities like upheaval. Despite much criticism, the modernized measures of Hashemi's government made notable changes in different economic and social section and provided the condition to the social mobilization and growth in broad layers of the society. The influence of these evolutions manifested in genesis and growth of varied social classes, especially the new middle class. Different spectrums of this class such as doctors, employees, students, instructors, intellectuals, educated women, etc. enjoyed a remarkable growth (Kordzadeh Kermani, 2001: 58).

Generally, the rapidly formed economic and social growth as the result of Hashemi's renovative measures in the second decade after the revolution (constructive age) followed by the rise in the new middle class numbers and consequently the rise in the demands for political participation. However, lack of simultaneous political development which means not planning strategies and organizing the requirements by the political system in order to canalize and draw the inquiries to the

public participation, resulted in the gap between the two in society and the 2<sup>nd</sup> of khordad was the alarming phenomenon. The major part of negative function in the second decade after the revolution occurred in the construction era while the adoption of economic policies and the rapid progression of them by Hashemi's government made this authoritarian procedure inevitable. But the government neglect that the renovation and modification of economic and social domains gradually set a background for formation of a class that would entirely challenge the government and their policies in the close future (Ebadpour, 2003: 60-66).

The election held in 2<sup>nd</sup> of khordad was engaged with the occurrence of some evolutions in domestic and international arena. In domestic area, the communication improvement, the appearance of groups and effective social strata, the value system and common social norm evolution, the growth of requirements, cultural and political claims, and in the international area the spread of informatics such as satellite and internet, globalization process, and worldwide democracy plan are the examples of the mentioned evolution. Actually, the programs and slogans of Khatami in Khordad 1997 were efforts to adjust with these evolutions and demands. In this epoch, Iranian society transformed to a young, civilized, educated society who were aware of their rights and dislike the forced discussion in the information explosion and accelerated globalization age. Therefore, slogans like legalism, attention to the personal and social rights, civil society, etc. was of great interest. The victory of slogans derived from advertizing slogans of Khatami, noticing the young generation, and disappointment were some of the performance of right party. Yet the review of political reform in that age and also Khatami's performance in different areas in addition to awareness about the efforts of the seventh and the eighth administration period, provided a new space to evaluate the following evolutions, particularly about the ninth presidential election in June 2005 and July 2005.

### **The reforms carried out in Khatami's presidential period**

Khatami's approach was first introduced in the seventh presidential election in 1997 and expanded after his victory. In his lectures, he insisted on the relation between faith and spirituality, equality and discrimination removal, the human dignity, rights, and his legal freedom, the country's independence and the national authority, the rule of law and the social security, the Islamic and national unity, the construction and the holistic sustainable development, participation, competition and attempt to reconciliatory of religion, democracy, and Islam. He believed that the political development should be a priority to embed the public participation properly.

In his first presidential round, Khatami brought in the new political discourse about underscoring the civil society, political development, and political and civil liberties expanding, the rule of law, religious democracy, the creation of dialogue of civilization, and extra stress elimination in foreign politics. In such atmosphere that was companied with the publishing of reformist's magazines, intellectuals, academics, and artists activities in culture and art area. Definitions such as rationality, regularity, freedom of speech and intellectual freedom, tolerating the opposition, nonviolence, and civil right entered the political culture of Iran and had stable effect on it (Moseghi, 2005: 293). Totally, one of the greatest effects of Khatami's government is to provide condition for posing multitude demands of different groups and present a new attitude about the rights and people's freedom by the government (Fouzi, 2005: 318).

During Khatami's governing, the process of stress relief in foreign politics of the country which began in Hashemi's time, accelerated. Khatami could attract and refresh the public opinion in favor of Iran by holding the Islamic conference organization summit and spreading the relation with Arabs, especially Saudi Arabia. Also, the idea of the dialogue of civilization faced with worldwide welcome. United Nation called 2001 the year of civilization dialogue (Kadi, 2004: 67). All in all,

Khatami's talk consists of the new and ancient elements. His speech is about the society, companionship but not the substitution relationship between the traditional and modern society, civil and infused society, young and old, male and female, self and other, need and value, constitution and republic, theocratic and democratic, etc (Tajik, 2000: 97).

Khatami was able to provide the background for catch the attention of foreign investment and the decrease the investment risk in Iran by amplifying the democratic dialogue and further stress relieve and by putting trust in Europe. Khatami's government presented the economic organizing plan to confront the extreme decrease in oil revenue in 1998 and recover the economic situation of the country. This plan is based on the economic-social approach and the priority of social justice and protecting the people and low income groups by the government and the emphasis on paying the subsidies and helping people to handle life, and was prepared with different orientation than before. There are different aspects about the result of economic organizing plan. But Khatami mentioned some points such as the decrease in government intervention, the amplification of the private section, the inflation inhibition and the relative price stabilization, policies adjustment, commercial regulations and non petroleum export development, exiting from the downturn and starting the economic prosperity. Production growth foreign investment, reconstructing Iran's credit, and increase in social welfare as the result of this organizing (Etelat Magazine, 17.March.2000: 14).

With all dilemma occurred during that era, Khatami's government could step forward in line with the economic improvement in the following subjects: completion of the unfinished economic plans from the previous period, dept repayments, establishing more financial discipline, producing the single rated exchange in 2002, shrinking the government system and reducing the extent of official and executive system, assigning more tasks to people, presenting the Third version of five year period program 2000-2005 emphasizing on the rule of law, nonpetroleum export, privatization, reduction of the dependency to petrol, generating Foreign Exchange Reserves, modifying the tax law, and supporting the foreign investment (Mosalanejad, 2005: 135).

### **Evaluation of Khatami's government performance**

#### ***Political-cultural performance***

One of the Khatami's government successes in domestic dimension is the development of quantitative and qualitative expansion of press and political parties which can be viewed as the progression in freedom of speech and thought and improvement in being open to criticism. The formation of councils and assigning parts of the government responsibilities to the citizens, creating a safe environment in ministries especially ministry of information and clearing of the place from violent elements, making the government responder, filling the gap between the administration and the public, and replacing the culture of self criticism are considered as the most prominent achievements and successes of Khatami's administration. In addition, criticizing the function of the governor and notifying people in this administration caused the organization of independent movements and the formation of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The government could take positive steps to move into the democratic reforms within the public space (Asna Ashari, 2006: 43-44). Generally, the indices of political development like intensifying civil organization, the governing of law, the freedom of thought and speech etc. upgraded excellently whereas the oppositions and critics mentioned the political development program as the reason for throwing adults away from the Islamic values and educations and spreading secularism and degeneration in society.

Introducing the idea of the dialogue of civilizations globally, building trust and making peaceful relationship with other countries, developing the relations and relieving tensions from neighbors, effective presence in regional organizations, and boosting national ego are the

achievements of Khatami's government in foreign policy which could raise Iran position in the international society. The government function related to the culture, art, and science led to broadening the cultural areas in various domains like book, music, cinema, etc, spreading scientific products and innovations, developing the cultural products and media enhancements, and informing (Amir Ahmadi, 56: 2001).

### ***Economic performance***

Although Khatami focused his activities on the political and cultural development, it does not mean that there are few measures taken in economic area. The main part of economic policies of reform government were focused on reduction of government tenure in economic issues, amplification of private section, reformation and alteration of economic policies and regulations, creation of the foreign exchange reserves, increasing the industrial and petrochemical products, increasing the wheat production and self-sufficiency in this area, oil and gas extraction from South Pars, communication development, establishing Ministry of Welfare and department of social security, making taxes systematic, nonpetroleum export, job creation, reducing the foreign debt, restraining the inflation and the relative stability of prices, supporting the low income citizens, and noticing seriously to the environment protection (Moseghi, 2006: 82). Even though Khatami's government performance was not negative, it was not able to satisfy people's demands and their living expectations which were grown exponentially and were annoying middle and lower class citizens after the war. In this era, the effort and extreme emphasis of the reformists on political issues without paying enough attention to the economic evolution and removing economy from their task priority caused them to neglect supervising the economic chain of Iran such that this condition resulted in accelerating the inflation and public satisfaction. In fact, the other side of reformation, which was the answer to the economic needs and problems, was not taken into account and caused the repugnancy from politics. This subject was utilized by the opponent party to advertize against the reformists (Gozarash monthly magazine, Volume 27: 153).

### **Failure reasons of the reformists**

During 8 years, the reformists gained positions in the sixth parliament, the council election, and the presidential election. But the reformist front did not have the required ability because of not having uniqueness and enough empathy and fundamental variations in comprised parties. Unfortunately, the reformists could not use the opportunity well to create fundamental reforms and to solve people's problems because of the weakness in leadership team. All the reform team elements started to be maladaptive instead of avoiding and insisting on the uniqueness in the approach and with the increase in the range of disputes, they started to oppose to Khatami's government such that after some times, a number of extremists made a the famous slogan "passing by Khatami". All these actions resulted in the failure and frustration of the reform project (Asna Ashari, 40: 2001).

Because of not having the visual media or religious site like mosque or holly pray lectures during the passed years, the reform movement which was deprived of direct contact with lots of audiences tried to get advantage of the press as the main information station. Therefore, with giving several publishing licenses to parties and proponent organizations, it tried to maintain its contact with people. However, extremism and radicalism of some dependent personalities and lack of patience in the opponent party ran the reform movement into the beforehand banning of the newspapers and they could not use the press to expand their approach and attitude in an effective manner. The reform approach was intrinsic, but since some parts of the government were opposed to the reform movement and transferring the demands to the authority structure, they did not succeeded in teaching their goals. In other word, they could not affect the administration by exerting authority



and participating in the election. At the beginning of the second presidential period, when the cabinet layout was chosen, the nation felt that Khatami did not want to modify the authority structure. He was in doubt either to show off as a reform leader or to remove the tension at the upper level of the pyramid. He chose the second decision (Shargh Newspaper, July.19, 2005).

One of the imperative, delicate, and fundamental reasons of the reformation failure was opposing and obstructionism of the government critic party which did not allow free activity to the reformists and kept them in a tight circle of egocentrism. The sequential banning of the reformists newspapers, opposing the reform plans of the sixth parliament by the guardianship council, and disqualifying a great number of reformist candidates in the parliamentary election were some of the critic's actions that made trouble for the reformists to reach their goals that was to create an impenetrable obstacle against them (Gozaresh Monthly Magazine, Issue 153: 28). Generally, the most noticeable reasons for the failure of reform movement were: not having a defined strategy, lack of a unique center for decision making, lack of appropriate organization, disability to attract the society's body especially the lower class and depraved citizens, hyper-reliance to the press as the reformation base, involving and making tension with some of well known faces, executing troublesome plans and legislations in the sixth parliament, not recognizing people's real demands thoroughly, make an extra prioritization of the politics over economic, extreme acts of some personalities, not paying attention to the laws and structures, not possessing universal media, insisting on the extra communication with the intellectual society, not supporting Khatami as the reformation leader, and mostly important, troubling of some opponent. From the social perspective, the reformation movement did not satisfy public demands and did not respond to their requests. Therefore, condemnations to the reformists became universal and made the nation reluctant of the reform negotiation and provided the background to discuss with opponents (Nabavi, 2006: 4). Thus, unlike the previous election, refusing to participate in the election had an obvious message: Although social classes and groups are not organized and integrated, they have enough knowledge about the union, the group, and the class. Therefore, they are capable of understanding their benefit (Haji Ghasemi, 2003: 16) and they avoid contacting any groups that do not help them meet their demands.

In strategic areas most of the reformists emphasized on the political argument at the governmental party's level. The purpose of this argument was mainly to rule over all the entire administrative, legal, statutory, and official tools (Haman: 14). They had an elitist and superficial impression of the reform which only included the limited political authority. To achieve this aim, the social reformation was considered essential in order to attract the public acceptance. Alienation of an imperative spectrum of the reform movement supporters and reduction of the public acceptance reveal that elites and the reformation leadership institutions did not have an expanded and stable social base. In fact, the early widespread advocacy of them was sectional, frail, and did not placed in the right bases through an organized mutual relation among diverse social classes, groups, and reformation leadership. That's why there were significant differences between the fundamental priorities and demands in social classes and groups which were advocate of the reformation and political programs of reformist leaders. Khatami and his team did not make convergence efforts for strengthening their relations with social groups and general public. The consequence of this negligence was the weakness and the frailty of their social legitimacy which was exposed to collapse in a short time (Haman: 14).

### **Conclusions**

The interval between 1997- 2005 known as the age of governance of civil society forum began as Mr. Mohammad Khatami was selected in the presidential election. The reformation and

renovation in Khatami's presidential time had the political nature unlike Hashemi's administration era. Not responding to the nation's requests and demands in contribution sections and political development caused the newly formed layers and classes, formed by the modernized actions of Hashemi's government in the seventh presidential election, to vote to Khatami whose main program were based on the social improvement.

In the 8 year old reformation period, the domestic and foreign policies of the country was faced with the primary alterations. The political development indices grew enormously and relieving tension and the Ideas about the dialogue of civilization led to improve Iran's position in the international society. However, contrary to the economic indices growth, there were still many problems and abnormalities in economic domain. The extra emphasis on the political approach made the reformists ignore subsistence issues which gave rise to unwillingness of the nation toward them. In this period, the reformist neglect the society's body and focused on the elites and educated citizens. Although they could not satisfy the middle class citizen's demands, the reason for abandoning the reformists were the increase in political expectations and economic/political inefficiency. The fundamentalists, thus, gained control over the nation by studying the weaknesses of the reformists and by assuring people to respond their economic needs and the depraved citizen's demands.

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