

The Emerging Discourse in Iran's Politics is Commitment to Democracy and Separation of Mosque and State

Why with an overwhelming popular opposition to the Islamic republic (IR) and the regime's engagement in one serious crisis after another still IR survives year after year? This is the agonizing question Iranian's political observers fail to find a satisfactory answer for. Could the answer be the existence of a considerable indirect and secretive supports for the regime amid the regime's well known oppositions? If this speculation carries any validity, the question which begs for an answer will be; who are these indirect and secretive supporters of the IR, who carries the burden of Islamic Republic survival? Is it possible to blame outright the opposition outside Iran? If one does so, what will be the underlying reasoning and logic behind it? How the vast number of Iranian opposition outside Iran has been holding the answer to Islamic Republic's regime survival?

During the nineteenth century, Iranian politics suffered from lack of a successful policy encountering the rise of western powers which resulted in Iran's military might disappearance. Iranian politicians in an attempt to safe guard Iranian independence employed Muslim leadership to counter western countries' dominance of Iran. The love and hate relationship of Iranian modernist and Muslim leaders continued surpassing Constitutional Revolution and Iran's occupation in World War II. The major contemporary political development which influenced the national political mentality for years to come was the introduction of Iranian communist party under command of former Soviet Union in the 1930's. Meanwhile, the Pahlavi dynasty's regime abandonment of democracy, one of the core principal of the Constitutional Revolution, left the Pahlavi's regime alone to defend modernization mandate of the Constitutional Revolution. The struggle against imperialists, capitalists and western countries exploitation and domination became the core principal political foundation of nationalists, communists, and emerging Islamists; and thus their political partnership against the royalist's regime triumphed with the 1979 revolution which later led to the Islamist factions' dominance.

The core principal of Iranian politics continued to mold the nature of Iranian modernists' opposition to Islamic Republic's reactionary and dictatorial internal policy and confrontational and adventurous foreign policy. The universality of the core principal of Iranian politics amid Iranians disregard to their political factional differences offers a possible answer to the questions this paper posed at the beginning. The assumptions the Iranian politics employed to lay its foundation gave birth to the inherent contradiction to Iranians' modernist aspiration. One can witness the practical application of this principal in contemporary Iranian history. The major point of contest during the Pahlavi era had been the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. Iranians saw no benefit in the partnership and were determined to dissolve it at any price. Even the Shah of Iran, whose industrial achievements based on his friendship with the west, openly had criticized his blue eye western friends. The Islamic Republic escalated the distrust of west to animosity beginning with occupation of the US embassy in Tehran and to the open conflict for its atomic ambitions.

Iranian expatriate opposition to IR for many years consisted of traditional Iranian political factions including leftists, nationalists, royalists and Islamist reformers new comers who were chased out of country by the supreme leader's camp who advanced Islamist extremism to higher level. This main group of four formed the major opposition to IR. This group of four and IR ideologically influenced each other in variety of ways and to different degrees, but overall they shared the long lasting Iranian core political principal. While royalists, nationalists, and leftists share the same aspiration for modernizing Iran they differ in the specific direction they should take to achieve this same aim. Although, royalists and nationalists disagree on the degree of closeness to west the leftists and Islamists

agree in degree of the hostility toward west. While Islamist extremists represent combative Muslims, royalists and nationalists portray moderate Muslims. The major disagreement between modernists and Islamists is Iran's social characteristics and the inherent contradiction of civil code of law and Sharia. However, this group of four sees variety of benefits in survival of IR in relation to Iranian core political principals. The Islamist reformers count on their fellow reformers still in Iran and hope for their rise to power; consequently, their declared boundary of opposition to IR includes acceptance of reformers leadership inside Iran, peaceful and nonviolent struggle for reforms and stressing on the republicanism of the regime. For different reasons, however, this policy of IR reformers has the full support of nationalists and leftists, but they keep the right to criticize IR in peripheral. Leftists will be satisfied as long as IR keeps its conflict with west, especially the US, going. The nationalists to a lesser degree agree with leftists and support IR for their combative foreign policy; also, the nationalists for the existing close relations with reformers accept the leadership of reformers inside Iran. The royalists for their internal political deficiency dare not to challenge this conditional opposition to IR and hope for the best for the revival of royalist a regime.

Amid Iranian expatriates political activists a recent political development challenged the core Iranian policy of established consonance. The secular democrats declared opposition to IR regime can't be in peripherals and political leadership must be aboard because Islamist reformers fundamentally don't oppose IR regime and don't represent secular democrats. Furthermore, the secular democrats believe democracy's roots can't spread in Iran without the dissolution of Islamic Republic regime. The secular democrats proposed the establishment of human rights manifest as one of its core principal. After a few years of preparation, the secular democrats established its organization under the name of "Iranian green seculars' network for freedom and democracy." With the tireless and hard work of Dr. Nooriala and original members, secular democrat members in a democratic election elected eight members for the Coordinating Council. The Council in an internal election has elected Dr. Farookh Zand to be the leader of Coordinating Council and the rest of the members were assigned organizational duties.

The secular democrats intend to revive the ignored and abandoned original mandate of 1905 Constitutional Revolution which recognized the parliament (Majlas) the legitimate source of political authority with the parliament members elected in a free and fair election. Also, it striped dictatorial powers of the Shah and made the Shah a ceremonial figure; and prohibited the Islamist to interfere to the state authority. However, with the establishment of Islamic republic since 1979 the declared goal of secular democrats is dissolution of Islamic Republic which will be resulted in disappearance of Islamist institution of Supreme leader and other dictatorial Islamic organizations. The stated political principals of secular democrats' network are establishment of democracy in Iran, separation of state and Mosque and human rights manifest. Secular democrats leave no doubt in their opposition to IR and disengage itself from any secretive collaboration with IR. The core principal of secular democrats' politics is clearly in contrast with traditional politics and ignores its Iranian victimization clause. The formation of secular democrats provides the previously missing crucial choice and an alternative for Iranian democrats and modernists who have no attachment to IR whatsoever. In a short period of time since its formation the secular democrats' network attracted considerable number of members. The official site of network, www.newsecularism.com, which is in Farsi already attracted a good number of essayist who contribute articles to the site. There is a new sense of hope among political activists dedicating their political energy to secular network because of secular democrats take charge and result oriented attitude. What the Iranian politics landscape needs is a new attitude and approach, and it seems secular democrats' intent to just provide that.

