A STUDY OF THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CLASSES AND GROUPS AND THEIR COALITION IN THE IRANIAN CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION*

Mohammad Rahimian1, Abbas Keshavarz Shokri2, Zahed Ghafari Hashjin3

Abstract: The main thrust of the present paper is to investigate the role of social classes and groups and their coalition in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution within the theoretical framework of Charles Tilly’s theory. The Constitutional Revolution was a social, popular and civil movement involving all walks of life. Four social groups had a more noticeable role in advancing the Constitutional Revolution i.e. clerics, intellectuals, merchants and nomads while the contribution of social classes such as farmers, landowners and workers also should not be overlooked. The main question which is addressed in this study is: How various social groups and their coalition contributed to the Iranian Constitutional Revolution? To answer this question, documental method was employed and the necessary data was collected from documents, books and journals of repute. The findings of the study reveal that farmers, landowners, nomads, intellectuals, merchants and clerics had an active presence in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution. Historical evidences suggest that there was a broad coalition among clerics, intellectuals, merchants and leaders of various tribes and the conditions for a revolution, based on Tilly’s theory, were present. These social groups used force in order to prepare the grounds for the Revolution to take place.

Keywords: the Constitutional Revolution, class coalition, revolutionary situation, revolutionary consequences

I. INTRODUCTION

The main objective of the present study is to investigate the role of social classes and groups and their coalition in the Constitutional Revolution. First, we need to have a definition of social classes and class coalition then we will investigate the role of farmers, landowners, nomads, intellectuals, merchants and clerics in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution. Max Weber defines the social class based on people’s volume and kind of consumption while Karl Marx holds that classes are classified based on whether they own means of production and the class who owns the means of
production is the ruling class (Weber, 1976: 96). The class coalition refers to a temporary or permanent unity among social classes and groups. These alliances play a decisive role in the victory of revolutions. The class coalition contributed significantly to the victory of the Constitutional Revolution. The Constitutional Revolution was a social, popular, democratic and civil movement in which all walks of life participated actively. Social groups such as clerics and modernist intellectuals played a significant role in advancing the Constitution movement and they were followed by effective groups including merchants and traders, industrialists and workers. Even though farmers did not participate as an organized group in the Constitutional Revolution, the role of farmers in Gilan should not be ignored and will be dealt with later. During the constitutional period, merchants and traders expected the state support by approving laws which would secure their interests, but it never happened, therefore, they had no choice but to enter the policy sphere and organize collective establishments. The Constitutional Revolution was an inclusive social movement whose roots had been there long before the Revolution took place. It was the cultural part which kept this phenomenon afloat and alive. The spirit of anti-despotism, justice-seeking and anti-colonial had its deep roots in Islam which were being promoted by the key Shiite scientists, scholars and jurists. The victory of the Constitutional Revolution was a significant stride towards the basic and fundamental developments in the Iranian society. The Revolution had effective and important consequences. This is the reason why it is important to study what actors there were and how they forged a coalition among social classes and groups to stand against the state and make the Revolution take place. Therefore, the main question of the current study is about the role of each social class and group and their coalition in the victory of the Constitutional Revolution.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Fazeli (2014), in a paper entitled “the institutional-structural approach to the causes of instability of the coalition of the Constitutionalists,” posed his main question as: why was the coalition of the Constitutionalists unstable during the Constitutional period and there was no atmosphere to strengthen the agreements among the various groups of the coalition? He used analytical-historical methods in his study. The findings revealed that the unstable foundations of the political institutions during the constitutional period were the main cause for the unstable coalition which abated any chance of strengthening the agreement and organizing the goals and decisions of the political actors. The current study is different from this one since we will also deal with the Islamic Revolution. Tabari (2001), in his article entitled “Key groups in the constitutional movement and the nationalization of oil” dealt with the role of traditional and modern middle classes and their impact on the advent of the constitutional movement and nationalization of oil. The study showed that there were four groups who had played a key role in the victory of the Constitutional Revolution and the nationalization of oil including clerics, intellectuals, merchants and workers. He used an analytical-documentary methodology. The current study has a different subject since the Islamic Revolutionary along with the Constitutional Revolution will be studied. Jahanbin’s (2006) article was concerned with the causes of disagreements among scholars and jurists during the Constitutional Revolution. The main question was about the factors which led to the disagreements among jurists and scholars, some
of whom were in favor of the Constitutional Revolution and others were in favor of a potential Shari’a revolution. He adopted a documentary analytical approach to his study. He concluded that most factors were environmental in the disagreements. The current study also explores the Islamic Revolution which makes distinct from his study.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The following model is used in order to explicate the role of the coalition of groups and classes involved in the Constitutional Revolution.

![Conceptual Model](source)

Figure 1: Conceptual model
Source: Adopted from Charles Tilly’s theory

The variables used in this model include the existence or absence of alliance between the defying groups/members as well as the extent the ruling and defying groups can control the force. If the revolutionaries are efficient in these variables, they will be victorious. Based on the model, if the defying groups form an alliance and control the force, the revolution will be successful. According to Charles Tilly’s theory, the victory of a revolution means the revolutionary aftermath that follows after the victory of the revolution. Tilly explains the revolutionary aftermath in terms of the power transition. A distinct feature in the revolution situation is about the involvement of more than one block which controls a noticeable part of the state. The historical ground for a revolution is prepared when the defying class has come to take control of the state power though it has not become the official ruler yet. In the beginning of the advent of a revolution, the power becomes dual. In other words, a revolutionary situation takes place when the ruling state is defied effectively by two or more political societies. The power of the previous state ends when one political society takes control of the state. Consequently, the revolutionary situation or state within state can be confirmed when the rival’s assertion goes beyond a simple claim and is accepted by a noticeable part of population who refuse to comply by the current central rule and have become obedient and supportive of the new power. Tilly states the causes of a
revolutionary situation as: 1. Emergence of challengers or an alliance of them who propose a savvy full-scale alternative way of ruling; 2. Compliance of many people with the alternatives; 3. Lack of capability or interest to crack down the challengers and their supporters (Tilly, 2006: 287). Also, the revolutionary consequences denote that a number of authorities are substituted with other ones. There are three groups of causes of the revolutionary consequences which are noteworthy for the transition of power: 1. The existence of a revolutionary situation: divided state, 2. Revolutionary alliances among challengers and members of political society, 3. Taking control of a noticeable part of forces by the revolutionary alliance. As previously illustrated, there are two potential scenarios when the revolutionary situation unfolds. The challenging groups and members either form an alliance or their differences are too far for them to reach an agreement. In the first scenario, the revolutionaries will be victorious if they control the force. And similarly in the second scenario, the revolutionaries can be victorious if they control the force, even though there is no alliance among the challengers.

Now we need to study the role of each social group and class and their coalition in the Constitutional Revolution. In this context, the social class refers to those challenging classes such as landowners, farmers, merchants, workers and nomads while the social groups include clerics and intellectuals.

IV. ROLE OF FARMERS IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION

Like many other social movements, the Constitutional Revolutionary involved various walks of life including farmers. Even though their uprising was self-initiated, some of them were not self-instigated. The evidence reveals that there were some provocations done by farmers from Gilan. It must be admitted that the Gilan farmers movement was caused by various grounds and factors including geographical, economic, social and political:

i. Exploitation of farmers, oppressions and excessive denials by masters as well as lack of attention to farmers’ demands and problems by the state prepared the ground for an uprising during the Constitutional period. By the advent of the Constitutional Revolution, they were also willing to join the movement in order to liberate themselves from their miserable situation.

ii. One of the factors which had an effective role in the Gilan peasants movement was concerned with the weakness and crisis that the central state and consequently the local rulers were experiencing due to the Constitutional Revolution. Peasants movements usually take place when the central state has become debilitated and face serious fundamental crises. These crises per se will lead to power vacuum in different states and power vacuum instigates civil radicals to provoke villagers and discontent farmers to rise up against the status quo (Abrahamian, 67: 1997).

iii. The role of immigrant workers was noteworthy in raising awareness among farmers. In 1900s and in the beginning of the Constitutional Revolution, thousands migrated from Gilan to the southern area of the Russian empire. While working in the Caucasus region, they became familiar with the political and social atmosphere of that area and many of them joined the revolutionary organizations such as the Muslim Social Democratic Party (Hummet) which was
active for Muslim workers and the Baku committee of the Russian Social Democratic Party (Etehadieh, 67: 1982).

iv. The immigrant workers went to cities and villages of Gilan and started their own political activities as they were inspired by the socialist thinking trends of Caucasus and Russian regions. They joined the ordinary popular congregations in Gilan and established farmers’ associations in villages which finally played an important role in provoking farmers to be active in the political and social fights and to rise up against their rulers. Therefore, the immigrant workers used what they learned in Caucasus to raise awareness among farmers (Fakhteh jobaneh, 128: 2009).

v. Another factor which contributed to instigating farmers and the expanding of their uprising was groups, parties and associations which had been established in order to defend the interests of farmers and they paid a lot of attention to the land ownership issue in their plans. “The Rasht Mujahideen Sect”, “Abbasi Association” and “Blukat Association” were a few among others who defended farmers’ interests (Fakhteh jobaneh, 125: 2009).

V. ROLE OF LANDOWNERS IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION

Landownership was considered a basis for political power and a sign for social prestige. Iran’s lands used to belong to a few landowners. There were about 2000 big landowners who owned massive agricultural fields (Yazdani, 79: 1992). In the feudal economic system of Iran’s society, land was considered to be an instrument for economic and political power. During the Qajar Dynasty, political power became more diverse and new power groups emerged. The legal and economic system of feudalism became the basis for the relative independence of landowners. Owners had their own advisors and agents. Given farmers were conservative, there was no fear of uprising from them against this system. As Lambton noted, those landowners who were appointed by the state to control lands were called lord. Lords had semi-independent local power bases and the Shah counted on them during the time of crisis. On the other hand, the phenomenon of landownership meant, in a non-political sense, the central state was losing its power. Given the fact that the Qajar regime needed money to strengthen its troops and ability to purchase various production from Europe, it had to sell royal lands to the public. The sales became systemic in a way that the local ruler would sell the lands to the highest offer. The new ruler, then, would appoint new people who were looking for the highest revenue so the situation got exacerbated for the farmers. The villagers had to do extremely arduous jobs under the supervision of the advisors who used to live in big houses with almost any kind of authority. The advisors could set or change the tax amount, punish or fire the farmers and even imprison or execute the rebellious. If the farmers were to go to the city, they had to pay the trip fees and tolls. During the Constitutional Revolutionary, the progressive and intellectual part of Iran’s landowners had an effective role in advancing the revolution goals. For example, Mohammad Vali Khan Sepahdar Tonekaboni, Haj Ali Qoli Khan Sardar Asa’ad and Samsam Al-Saltaneh are a few among these landowners. Sepahdar Tonekaboni, the leader of the Gilan Movement, was considered one of Iran’s biggest landowners at that time.
VI. ROLE OF NOMADIC CLASS IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION

Nomads used to constitute a noticeable part of the population. In Iran’s history, nomads always had a relatively strong position. More than half of the Iranian population were nomads and according to their nomadic customs, they were absolutely obedient to their lords. Such traditions empowered greatly the lords and made them a key player in the social and political developments during the Constitutional Revolution (Foran, 1999: 205-211). Nomads and especially their big lords had a dual role in the traditional civil society. Some nomads were conservative and opposed to the Constitutional movement which were mobilized by the state against the revolutionaries. But on the other hand, some of the lords such as Ali Qoli Khan and Sardar Asa’ad Bakhtiar were among the founding members of the political association of the revolutionary committee and ardent supporters of the Constitutional Revolution (Chalabi, 72: 2008). By the end of Mohammad Ali Shah reign, some lords such as Mohammad Vali Khan Sepahdar, one of the biggest landowners in Mazandaran, and Samsam Al-Saltaneh mobilized their nomads against the central rule and went to Tehran to occupy it (Chalabi, 92: 2008). Mohammad Ali Shah used the forces from the same tribes to crack down the revolutionaries in Tabriz and then to regain its throne after he had lost it. In 1909, Bakhtiari tribes from Isfahan turned into a national power in order to support the Constitutional movement. In short, tribes and nomadic societies played an important role in destabilizing the country during 1905-1911 (Faytvnchy, 110: 2013).

VII. ROLE OF INTELLECTUALS IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION

William Floor, in his writing on the social history of Iran, maintained that the first group of intellectuals who encountered the West during the Qajar dynasty were composed of politicians, travelers, traders and cultural elite. According to Floor, the intellectual group first left the Iranian government and then gradually became independent and finally an opponent. These intellectuals were able to organize occasional meetings, established newspapers and founded associations in order to get together (Floor, 56: 1987). The intellectual trend was not a reaction from Iran’s social conditions, but there were people who became familiar with the British and French enlightenment movements often through Russian links and they decided to localize such trends inside Iran. Such efforts turned out to be futile because they failed to prepare the grounds among Iranians to accept such way of thinking and it was totally inconsistent with the Iranian local culture. The leaders of the Iranian enlightenment trend were not from one specific social class. This trend was composed of various social groups such as princes, militaries, some clerics and children of traders who travelled to Caucasus for trading interests. The enlightenment movement had a small population of the city. According to Abrahamian, they were part of the middle class government employees which was considered a self-contradiction by itself since they were normally expected to oppose to the status quo while they were part of the power pyramid which made their mission impossible. For example, Mirza Malkom Khan who was fluent in French and English and stayed for a long time in Europe and was able to study European philosophical treaties and books, could play a big role in impacting the Iran
enlightenment trend but he failed to do so since he was attached to the power and its political waves (Abrahamian, 2005). The enlightenment constitutional trend did not have a unified and independent strategy. There were figures such as Akhoundzadeh, Talebouf and Taghizadeh who were interested to westernize Iran in full scale. Akhoundzadeh with his radical approach was trying to remove religion from the social sphere and change the Iranian alphabets. He was not aware of the cultural complexities of the Iranian society at that time. There was another group who were trying to make the Constitution consistent with the Islamic teachings. They were people like Malkom Khan and Mostasharoldoleh. They believed in the inevitability of the Constitution but were willing to adapt the Constitution, liberalism and democracy to the Islamic teachings, given the context of that time. Ironically, the Constitution and democracy were European concepts with goals such liberating individuals from religion and the power of authoritarian rule. The Constitution and democracy in Europe sought the individual will instead of holy providence and proposed it under the framework of social contract. The Constitution demanded that laws come from the will of people instead of religious obligations. Undoubtedly, the latter group did the right thing, because the Iranian society was deeply traditional and religious and it was not possible to remove religion from people’s social life (Bigdeli, 2: 2005). The enlightenment trend in Iran was mostly influenced by the advances in the western world and there were different factors behind its formation and continuity. Intellectuals mainly were so inclined towards the West as they lost their interest in religion. In other words, influenced by constitutionalism, nationalism and secularism, they rejected the past and questioned the present and were looking for a new approach for the future (Abrahamian, 103: 2000). Intellectuals are politically divided into dependent and independent groups. Also, part of the Iran enlightenment movement was composed of the high ranking officials who served the interests of the authoritarian monarchists. They were dependent on the monarchy in terms of family ties, culture and job service. Some of them were members of the conservative party and some of them were in the parliament and the cabinet. Prince Abdul Hossein Mirza, educated in Europe and came from an aristocratic family and son-in-law of Mozaffar Aldin Shah, was among them. During 1906 and 1907, he made a big contribution to the Constitutional movement (Abrahamian, 32: 2000). In general, the enlightenment movement helped the Constitutional Revolution in various positions including editor-in-chief, poet, translator, instructor and professional technicians. A large part of this group were strongly supportive of the Revolution and they were leading and designing the necessary frameworks of the Constitution. Intellectuals such as Sani’ Al-Doleh and his brothers played an instrumental role in the development of the code of conduct for the parliament (Foran, 329: 1998).

VIII. ROLE OF MERCHANTS IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION

Lambton referred to the power of merchants in Iran’s developments during the middle centuries and stated that the Iranian governments were so dependent on the power of economic market that even some traders could reach to the ministerial positions. The market was the beating heart and center for public life in the Iranian civil society. Important centers such as coffee houses, public bathroom, mosques, religious
gatherings, schools, unions and charity institutes were all located in the market and run by the merchant (Abrahamian, 112: 1997). The government needed the market for two main reasons: first, the government not only took taxes from unions but also occasionally received loans from them; and second, the public sphere belonged to the market. Due to the strong social networks in the market and especially the distinct position that the religious scholars had in illuminating people, this sphere had a very big potential to mobilize masses against the state. In his papers on Iran’s sociology, Abrahamian maintained that the morphological structure of Iranian cities was extremely effective in mobilizing social forces against the state and wrote: the political structure of cities was the result from the complex power balance between the Shah and the market. When the Shah was in a strong stance, he would appoint chairs of unions himself and his agents such as Friday Prayer Imams and Sheikh Al-Islams were considered important religious powers in cities and sheriffs had the duty to supervise the unions and inspectors controlled the quality and prices of the market. In other words, the Shah had a relatively full control of the market when he was in a strong position. When the Shah was in a weak position, the chairs of the unions were chosen by the elders and the jurists who had good ties with traders and merchants would claim independent religious power and would consequently defy the power of the state (Abrahamian, 112: 1997). In the past centuries, the market has proved to be a significant and powerful establishment playing a key role in the Iranian social developments. In the Safavid Dynasty, as political ties with Europe grew, trading relations also did remarkably. The market began to influence the political, religious and administrative spheres of the city. The political structure of the city was balanced between the powers of the Shah and the market. By the beginning of the Constitutional Revolution, the market had turned into a main player in the developments (Faytvynchy, 2011). Their main motive had to do with commercial and economic interests. Granting economic advantages to the Russian and British states and the penetration of foreign investments in Iran led to a kind of economic captivity and naturally created obstacles on the way of Iranians’ trading activities in Iran and abroad both. Trading ties with the West brought new competitors in the Iranian market and the customs and tax officials set new regulations which made the situation worse for Iranian traders who were already furious with the state.

IX. ROLE OF THE CLERGY IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION

During the Constitutional Movement, clerics held an influential and powerful position, given the Iranian society have long had a deep bond with religion. Given their significant position, the clerics joined the movement immediately since they were the only force that could have the potential to stand up against the oppressions of the state and act as a preventive and controlling factor in the state policies. This is the reason why the clergy had long been a sole shelter for the people suffering from the oppressions of the authoritarian regimes. Kasravi wrote about the role of clergy in the Constitutional Revolution: “what kept the Constitutional Movement afloat was the insistent efforts by Sayyid Bahbahni, Sayyid Tabataba’I, Akhund Khorasani and Haj Sheikh Mazandarani. Despite being under duress, they never stopped supporting the parliament and constitution” (Kasrawi, 361: 2008). Religious scholars and clerics were
able to make a more influential and significant contribution to the Constitution in comparison to other social forces given the fact that the path had been already paved. Some of them are considered as the leaders of the Constitution. People were deeply religious and clerics were influential among various walks of life. These two factors enabled the clerics to lead the mobilization of the Constitution. They impacted the Constitution from the inside and outside. They undeniably played a significant role in mobilizing people and advancing the process of the Constitution (Faytvnchy, 65: 2013). The biggest factor of their political power stemmed from its popular widespread base. Unlike the state that had confined its relationship with people to merely the tax issue, the clergy had constant contact with people tackling their everyday problems. Such a relationship was distinct during the Iranian contemporary history and neither the state nor intellectuals could obtain a popular base among people as such. This widespread popular base enabled clerics to mobilize people when necessary, therefore, no force could face the power of clerics at that time. As noted earlier, the clergy was the most effective political force which supported the movement and took its lead. The Constitution was built upon different thoughts and by different forces but no idea could lead to result if religious scholars would not support it since Iran’s prevailing atmosphere was completely religious. In fact, the creation and revival of the Constitution took place due to the revolutionary actions by religious scholars. In spite of sacrifices by Ayatollah Tabataba’I and Ayatollah Behbahani who were also the main leaders of the Constitution, the fatwas issued by jurists in Najaf were also so important to revive the movement. Ahmad Kasravi, a notable author on the Constitutional Revolution, wrote about the role of religious scholars in the victory of the Revolution as follows:

“It must be kept in mind that the Constitution was created by the religious scholars. In those days when Iran had the flag of authoritarianism, nobody had the courage to speak and it was the religious scholars who cared for people, and spoke on occasions. I do not mean to say others could not understand anything. I am saying they did not dare speak. Read Habl Al-Matin Journals. At that time, the majority were sleeping and nobody cared for the state interests, but the religious scholars spoke in many cities. They put the basis for the Constitution” (Abadian, 85: 1995).

X. ANALYSIS OF THE ALLIANCE OF THE BAZAARIS AND CLERICS IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION

The market and clergy had long had solidarity. Iranian traders and merchants were with the clerics at various events which happened to Iran. One of the reasons behind such solidarity was their mutual economic and political need. The market would provide economic and financial basis for the independent clergy who was politically standing up against the state. In exchange of these advantages, the clergy was also supportive of the market against the state when necessary, since there was no force who could defy the state. Another aspect of proximity between the market and clergy was concerned with social, legal and religious issues, because trading deals and arbitrations would get religious scholars and merchants closer to each other. When signing contracts, the merchants used to refer to religious scholars who would undertake such tasks. Also, the physical and economic structure of cities and proximity of the market and the Jameh Mosques would promote the religious inclinations of the city. Merchants were religious and given the fact that the science of religion exclusively belonged to
the clergy, the merchants used to consider them as religious leaders. In general, there was a close bond between the market and clerics and it was a norm in the market to close it when clerics would demand it in order to fight against some measures by the state (Lambton, 33: 1986). Hossein Bashirieh noted: “micro bourgeois should be known as one of the major bases for the political Islam movement in Iran which was developed in the late 19th century to block the penetration of the West. The clerics were able to mobilize the micro bourgeois by their religious and anti-colonial slogans” (Bashiriyeh, 169: 2005). As noted earlier, the clerics would defend the interests of their supporters against the state and would use their position in order negotiate with the state for better advantages for themselves and their supporters. If they succeeded, they would gain more prestige and value among their supporters. When on strike, the merchants would need the clerics’ support if they wanted to be successful. The clerics would consider giving shelter as one of their main bases. The merchants were certain that they would at least receive the indirect support of clerics when they would go on strike. Therefore, the merchants used to close the market and demand the clerics to negotiate with the state in order to solve their problems. The clerics would also do their best to ensure the best interests of the merchants (Sery, 103: 1986). The mutual relationship between the market and clergy showed how influential clerics were in the market as it also depicted how dependent clerics were on the market. In other words, the clerics had to support the market against the state in order not to lose their social base as well as their financial capability. Those clerics who had sacrificed their political independence and social base in order to get close to the government, they lost their popularity among merchants very soon. Friday prayer Imams and Sheikh Al-Islams who were appointed by the state had no influence in the market (Faghihe Mohammadi, 84: 2000). Another factor which contributed to the alliance between the merchants and clerics had to do with the economic domination by the Russian and British colonialists in Iran. Such domination started with the Treaty of Turkmenchay and Treaty of Paris. These treaties not only separated rich lands like Caucasus and Afghanistan from Iran, but also established capitulation and granted exclusive advantages to foreign states like Russia and England which eventually paved the way for the full economic penetration into Iran. Afterwards, the European colonialists began to realize that the expansion of their economic activities would improve and strengthen their political position. For example, the Russian Tzars believed that the best way to secure their semi-colonial activities in the north of Iran was through investments in Iran (Ashraf, 47: 1980). But the Iranian statesmen did little to stop the big flow of imports from Europe through a free trade agreement. Their measures were limited to slogans, advice and occasionally sanction some foreign products. For the first time, Mirza Aboulghasem Ghaem Maghami Farahani, Vice Chancellor of Mohammad Shah, realized that these unlimited imports would have adverse effects on the Iranian market and tried to stop it. After him, it was Amir Kabir who was completely determined to establish a national organization for industries and support the domestic economy so that he could stop the domination of foreigners in Iran (Adamiat, 297: 1977). But after Amir Kabir was removed from his position, his reform plans got forgotten. Iran’s economy went under the domination of foreigners which debilitated the domestic industries. The foreign companies took control of all commercial and trading activities in Iran and Iranians had to act as middle people in order to survive. In a short time, the prices, quantities, qualities of the
products in Iran were determined by the Russian and British policies (Mohit Tabatabai, 101: 1987). Its direct impact caused the domestic industries to become bankrupt or decadent and at the same time weakened the Iranian traders, since the foreign products were more appealing due to their variety and price. Domestic producers could not compete with them and had to declare bankruptcy. Furthermore, the Iranian traders could not also compete with their foreign counterparts because the state was not supportive of them, demanding a lot of taxes from the Iranian traders. A quick look at the economic situation of Iran at that time illuminates this matter. Therefore, the Iranian national economy was under the biggest attacks from the Western companies during Mozaffar ad-Din Shah. The Iranian traders, consequently, used their previous contacts with the religious scholars in order to advise them about these problems. Given the fact that religious scholars could not tolerate such a misery in the Iranian economy, not only did they take positive measures like sanctioning foreign products and urging people to buy domestic products but also called upon people to rise up and end the foreign economic domination and authoritarianism (Zarghari Nejad, 76: 1995). Molla Abdul Rasoul Kashani also argued that the economic factors were behind the Constitutional Revolution in his treatise. He wrote:

“since the Safavid dynasty, the European traders began to have access to the Iranian market and people gradually preferred the European products since they were more appealing, so the Iranians gave their gold and silver reserves in order to take these products. Gradually, poverty and debilitation began to surface in Iran, because they produced for us during those years”.

He concluded that the Constitutional state must “rush to start the production factories even if it would cost much” and the state must promote the domestic products. As Protests expanded among traders and producers against the foreign economic domination, the clerics also joined them since they had close ties with the Iranian merchants and gradually they formed an alliance to lead the Constitutional movement. Another group which also participated in this fight and became the ideological leader of the movement, were the intellectuals. Given the nature of their class, they also joined the merchants like the clerics (Zibakalam, 209: 1998).

XI. ANALYSIS OF THE ALLIANCE BETWEEN THE INTELLECTUALS AND CONSTITUTIONAL CLERICS AND THEIR ROLE IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION

In this part, we will discuss the economic factors which brought dissatisfaction among traders, intellectuals and clerics and led them to form an alliance together.

A). Concessions: after signing the Treaty of Turkemenchay, Russia increased its dominance over Iran. This situation continued until the 1917 revolution. Russians expanded their influence through money and mostly by coercion. They received various concessions and granted Iran many loans which evening destroyed Iran’s political and economic independence. In days of the Qajar dynasty, if Britons gained any advantage from Iran, Russians would use all of their capacity to end that advantage or get a similar for themselves. The Russian influence grew even more after the Tobacco Movement, because when the Talbot advantage was revoked, Amin Al-Sultan, Vice Chancellor of Naser Al-Din Shah, turned towards Russians and opened the Iranian market to the Russian products and paved the way for extensive Russian
investments in Iran. This situation reached its climax when Mozaffar Al-Din Shah received two loans and signed a customs contract with Russia (Teimory, 242: 1982). Interestingly, Britons also obtained the same privileges as Russians after they signed the Treaty of Paris. A quick look at the given concessions Russians and Britons tells us what political and social damages we had received during the Qajar dynasty. It should be noted that these advantages were not given to foreigners merely because the Iranian statesmen were dependent on them, but sometimes there were people who strongly believed that Iran’s economy could grow by granting these concessions to foreign states. There was no investment security or an institution which would guarantee the interests of traders and investors, so some statesmen thought they would need to motivate foreigners to invest in Iran to ameliorate the economic situation. When Mirza Hossein Khan Sepahsalar, a minister of Iran in Istanbul, and his assistant, Mirza Malkom Khan, sent various reports about the advanced industries developed in Europe, advising Naser Al-Din Shah to bring these inventions to Iran. In 1863, therefore, Mirza Mahmoud Khan Naser Al-Molk, a minister of Iran in London, and Hasanali Khan Amir Nexam Groosi, a minister of Iran in Paris, were missioned to begin negotiations with the European companies. Following these negotiations, some offers were given to Iran to construct railways, extract mines, build roads, establish plants, factories and banks (Teimory, 101: 1982). In 1874, the Britons succeeded to obtain the Reuter Concession. After that, concessions such as free sailing in Karoon River (in 1888) and the establishment of the Royal Bank (in 1889) were given to England. The concession of free sailing in Karoon lasted for 50 years which used to permit the British and foreign ships to sail. It damaged the Iranian economic independence since not only the British had full access to the south of Iran but also they were authorized to supervise and run the commercial roads in those areas (Teimory, 151: 1982). Not only did the clerics rise up against such concessions but also the progressive people and those who had been dreaming of having railways and advanced industries in Iran, were afraid of the Iranian state’s generosity and voiced their opposition. Reactions to the concession were so strong that when the Shah returned from Europe, he received various letters from notable religious scholars like Haj Ali Kani and Sayyid Saleh Arab and even his uncle, Farhad Mirza Mo’tamed Al-Doleh. The letters were all meant to convey their opposition about the concession which practically would grant Iran’s all resources to Reuter and also named Sepahsalar as the culprit for the concession so Naser Al-Din Shah had to oust Mirza Hossein Khan and finally revoke the concession to stop the widespread protests. On the other hand, he also had to keep other concessions by the insistence of Reuter such the concession of the establishment of the Royal Bank and using Iran’s mines (excluding gold and silver mines). As soon as the Bank was established, it was permitted to invest in trade and industries and open a branch in Tehran and other cities (Motazed, 1987: 326-327). In his 60-year activities, the Royal Bank with the help and advice of robust advisors and employees conducted investigations about various areas such as politics, culture, society, economy, history, industry and agriculture in order to find to penetrate into Iran’s trading, economy and administration. These activities and the notable presence of Britons in Iran were opposed by clerics, merchants and freedom-seekers since it was damaging the Iranian interests and brought about dissatisfaction among people. The officials of the Bank were using various instruments to place pressure on Iran. These instruments included
the purchase of provisions and food and other basic needs of people, creation of artificial famines in Iran, giving bribes or big amount of loans to the statesmen, etc. Such methods helped the bank officials to interfere in Iran’s administrative affairs (Teimory, 209: 1982). The worse concession was for Tobacco in 1890 which instigated massive protests in the country. Clerics such as Mirza Hasan Shirazi, Haj Mirza Habib Rashti, Haj Mirza Aboulghasem Karbalai, Haj Mirza Javad Aqa Tabrizi, Sayyid Ali Akbar Fal Asiri and Sheikh Hadi Najm Abadi were strongly opposed to the exclusivity of tobacco in Iran. Such unity helped prepare the grounds for the formation of an alliance between religious scholars and freedom-seekers in the Constitutional Revolution. In general, these concessions to foreigners on the one hand and imposing big taxes upon Iranians on the other hand threatened the interests of such groups to a large extent. Also, the state tried to diminish those clerics who had defied the Qajar rule and their royalist clerics. Considering the fact that these defiant clerics were supported by the merchants and traders in the city and also were influential among people, they were brave enough to challenge the power of the government. Naturally, the state was so determined to limited their influence and eventually erase them. The popular and influential clerics during the rule or reign of Mozaffar Al-Din Shah were Sayyid Mohammad Tabatabai, Sheikh Hadi Najm Abadi and Sayyid Abdullah Behbahani. Such figures apprehended that these concessions not only would threaten the Islamic lifestyle in Iran’s society but also would mean to sell Iran to non-believers who would in the end control and subdue Iran (Gilbar, 225: 1976). Therefore, religious scholars first voiced their opposition to the Reuter concession in 1873, then to the tobacco concession in 1890 and finally to the administrative changes and new customs regulations as well as receiving loans in 1906 (Gilbar, 226: 1976).

B) Loans: Another instrument that the colonial Russia and England had been using to dominate Iran was through giving loans to the government of Iran. These loans were imposed on Iran with bad conditions which chained the deprived people of Iran and debilitated the economy and politics of Iran. These loads were received under the pretext of building the infrastructure of Iran but often were spent for the Shah’s trips and parties in Europe (Teimory, 365: 1982). During the Mozaffar Al-Din Shah’s rule, Iran’s financial situation got exacerbated very seriously, and Iran had to borrow loans in order to pay the monthly salaries of the government employees and troops. For the treatment of his illness in Europe, the Shah also had to borrow. During this era, Aminoddoleh became the vice chancellor after Amin Al-Sultan was ousted. He tried to find a channel to receive loans from the Belgian investors but the Russian and British states united together to stop any loans from any other third-party country (Aminoddoleh, 261: 1962). Afterwards, Aminoddoleh first went to the Royal Bank and despite the affirmative opinion of the chair, the bank’s partners had difficult conditions for the loan guarantee, so he refused to accept it. On the one hand, Mozaffar Al-Din Shah needed money to travel to Europe for his treatment, on the other hand Aminoddoleh was unwilling to accept the difficult conditions of the loan and at the same time, Amin Al-Sultan instigated some clerics to protest against getting loans from foreign banks. Consequently, Aminoddoleh resigned (Sharif-Kashani, 15: 1984). After him, Amin Al-Sultan who had close ties with Russians, assumed his position and since then, Iran received many loans from Russia and England. The first loan was received from Russia in 1900 for the duration of 75 years. The amount was 22.5 million Rubles.
One of the conditions of the loan was that Iran was not allowed to get loans from other states which forced Iran to beg for money only from Russians with their desired conditions. It was stipulated in the loan conditions that Iran pay the mortgages through its revenues from all the Iranian ports excluding the Southern ports (Kasravi, 25: 1990). Granting such a concession to Russia especially during the rule of Mozaffar Al-Din Shah who was a weak character, led to the widespread economic and political penetration of Russia in Iran and instigated more public outcry. The intermediary for this loan was the ambassador of Iran to Russia, Mirza Reza Khan Arfa Al-Doleh, who took away the Iranian independence. Subsequently, Iran received a loan of 34,000 pounds in 1904 from the Imperial Bank by the Russian authority for the duration of 15 years and another loan of 10,000 pounds from the British state in 1905. Also in 1902, a loan of two million rubles was received from Russia. This loan had very difficult conditions such as giving the Qazvin-Julfa railway to Russia and setting good tariffs for Russian imports to Iran (Safa'i, 106: 1984). Tariffs changes had big damages for the Iranian traders and the Belgian employees of the Iranian customs began to serve the Russian interests after this contract. This led to big outcry among the Iranian traders and merchants. One of the demands of the Constitutional Revolution was about ousting the Belgian chair of the Iranian customs organization. When the British state was informed about this concession for Russians, they also demanded the same conditions from Iran to be applied to the British products. Therefore, in 1902, an agreement was signed between Iran and England with the same provisions (Teimory, 391: 1982). The last two loans subdued Iran economically and politically to Russia very obviously that many public outcries were held in various parts of Iran by freedom-seekers and patriots. These loans waxed people’s hatred towards Mozaffar Al-Din Shah and Amin Al-Sultan and some articles were published outside of Iran about the detrimental effects of these contracts in order to raise awareness among the public. Freedom-seekers formed secret societies to rise up against the state borrowing and contracts. For example, the Tehran secret society which was founded by freedom-seekers such as Malek Al-Motakalemin, Yahya Dolut Abadi, Haj Sheikh Mohammad Kashi, Ali Mohammad Dolut Abadi, Mirza Mohammad Ali Khan Nasr Al-Sultan, Sheikh Mohammad Rafi Tari and Etezad Al-Hokama. They strongly voiced their opposition to these loans (Malekzadeh, 1946: 157). By their efforts, religious scholars from Najaf also joined the opposition and excommunicated Amin Al-Sultan who was had been considered as the main culprit behind these shameful contracts. The members of the Tehran secret society prepared a legislation consisting of 16 articles on the opposition of the Iranian nation with the state borrowing and sent it to Habal Al-Matin newspaper for publication. There were some efforts outside of Iran too. Mirza Malkom Khan sent multiple telegraphs to the Iranian state about the extreme adverse effects on Iran’s economy and politics and also published various papers on this subject in the French and British journals. Objections exacerbated after Iran received two other loans from Russia in 1938 and 1940. The notable religious scholars in Karbala and Najaf sent a protesting letter to the Shah about these two loans and the employment of foreigners by the Iranian state. Harding, the British ambassador to Iran, noted that “opposition to the policy of borrowing from Russians is truly rooted in the national and religious movement against the current state (Qajar) in Iran”. In various meetings and circles, preachers began to criticize the Shah’s performance. The secret societies also tried to
mobilize people by distributing secret pamphlets in the cities. Most of these secret activities were managed by the Roshdieh school of Tehran which was supervised by Sheikh Hadi Najm Abadi due to the absence of Aminoddoleh (Safai, 889: 1984). Malek Al-Motakalemin was a remarkable freedom-seeker in days of Mozaffar Al-Din Shah. When he was informed of Iran’s way of borrowing with miserable conditions, he sent a letter to the foreign minister of Iran to advise him about the adverse effects of these loans and how chained Iran would become since those money would be spent for the satisfaction of a bunch of lustful greedy individuals who never cared for Iran and its future. He urged him to advise Mozaffar Al-Din Shah about it so that the detrimental impact of these contracts would be revealed to him. When he saw all of his efforts were in futile and even he came under prosecution, he decided to leave Iran through Gilan. Other freedom-seekers from both groups of clerics and intellectuals also began to censure these foreign loans Including Haj Siah Mahalati who wrote: “Mozaffar Al-Din Shah is ignorant of everything, the vice chancellor looks for money from all places and spends them wrongly and gradually grants clandestine concessions which will change customs tariffs all in favor of the Russian state. The Iranian state is borrowed and desperate, the national treasure is gone by a few unfaithful miscreants, and all the domestic industries will go defunct and we have to import everything from other countries. Day by day, Iranians will become more and more degraded and humiliated and the Russian and British states will increase their dominance over Iran” (Mahalati, 1977: 508). Haj Siah, therefore, like many other freedom-seekers considered the foreign loans as a factor of weakness and poverty in which Iran would be more deeply owed to foreigners and Russia and England would increase their domination and the people would become more miserable. Gradually, violence of Eino-Doleh, weakness and corruption of the Shah and his cronies, the miserable situation of our country, trips, loans and the increasingly foreign dominance over Iran made religious scholars and some notable figures to rise (Zanjani, 200: 2000). They criticized that the loans and taxpayers’ money were being spent on foreign trips and lustful activities of a bunch of imperial thieves while these money should had been spent on troops, people’s clothing and food (Kermani, 1984: 181). This pressure which was on the people finally debilitated merchant, labour and trader classes. Sadly, patriots’ screams were ignored and silenced and the articles published in foreign journals did not lead to anywhere. However, it had one consequence: people came to realize that Iran would not reach anywhere with this authoritarian regime and they felt the responsibility upon their shoulders to make actions in order to stop the fall of Iran. Foreign loans, consequently, were a key shared point of view among intellectual and clerics to start their alliance for the Constitutional Revolution (Dinparast, 126: 2003).

XII. THE VIEWS SHARED BY INTELLECTUALS AND CONSTITUTIONAL CLERICS

Given the fact that modernists and the Constitutional clerics were both supportive of the Constitution and were critical of the situation, it is worth noting that there was a close cooperation between the two groups which generated a mutual spirit of trust. The clerics realized that the freedom-seekers were patriots who were also well-informed about various countries. Their goal was to liberate the Iranian nation from the yoke of colonialism and oppression and make Iran great and honorable again. On the other
hand, the modernist freedom-seekers were also ensured that the clerics were well-intentioned, justice-seeking and opposed to the tyranny. They were certain that the clerics never would desist from their fights against oppression and corruption which existed at that time in Iran. Thus, they came to form an alliance.

XIII. ANALYSIS OF THE ALLIANCE BETWEEN THE MERCHANTS AND INTELLECTUALS

Given the traders had to travel abroad, they were more familiar with the Western civilization’s achievements, science and technology, commerce, transportation and in general economic and political developments in the West, therefore, they had a better and open-minded perception in comparison to other social classes. Due to their shared perception with intellectuals, they began to exchange ideas about the economic and political developments within the country. Intellectuals placed emphasis on the political change as a necessity to have economic and cultural changes, therefore, they tried to bring illumination and political reforms. Comparing Iran’s social structure with that Europe, they analyzed the causes behind Iran’s inefficiency. Their analyses directed them to the necessity of the economic changes and its bond with social and political issues which finally brought them to the merchants. Having good and technical knowledge of the Western technology, they could show robust methods to the merchants and traders for utilizing investment so that the investments would bring prosperity and “civility, industry, science and knowledge” (Wahid-ul-Mulk Kashani, 22: 1944). Undoubtedly, the merchants’ familiarity with the progressive ideas by the intellectuals impacted on their investments and activities and even required their cooperation in this regard. In his letter of motivation for a job vacancy in Mohammad Moein Al-Tojar’s factory, an Iranian graduate wrote about his skills in textile and machinery and hoped that he could cooperate with them and mentioned “the progress and bliss of the country” as his main motivation. He noted, in his last letter, that it was necessary to establish a cooperation with an Iranian graduate for the executive affairs of the factory in order to keep it safe from “falling in foreigners’ traps”. The merchants, thus, were willing to incorporate intellectuals in order to increase their capital.

CONCLUSION

Each social group and class and their alliance played a significant role in the Constitutional Revolution as explained in the theoretical framework in this paper. The Constitutional Revolution was the result of various social actors. Some of these defiant groups formed an alliance in their movement and some did not. The evidence shows that the society was in a revolutionary situation, i.e. having a state within state. In other words, some rival groups formed an alliance and claimed the power which was appealing to a noticeable number of people who had defied the central government and urged these rival groups to form a new government in order to meet their expectations and demands. Also, some rival groups did not form an alliance but still they had their own impact on the victory of the Constitutional Revolution. Different social groups and classes such as clerics, intellectuals, merchants, farmers, landowners, workers and nomads participated in the Constitutional Movement. The question of the article, therefore, was about the role of these groups and their alliance in the Constitutional Revolution. The results of this study are as follows: as regard to the peasant class, the
Constitutional Movement, like other social movements, called upon various groups to participate. The farmers had demands of economic nature, though their method of struggle put them in conflict with the political system. It is noteworthy that the main causes of their participation included their exploitation, oppression by their landlords, ignoring of their demands and problems by the state, the crisis of the central government, proximity of Iran to the Russian empire and consequently to the revolutionary centers of Caucasus. These causes engaged the farmers in the Constitutional Revolution. With regards to the feudal class, it should be noted that the Qajar dynasty, in a series of reforms and due to the budget and income deficiency, especially during Mozaffar Al-Din Shah’s rule or reign, had to sell its lands to individuals who later became known as chieftains. During the late years of Naser Al-Din Shah’s rule or reign, most of the properties and lands except in Tehran were sold in ten years. In general, every time the central government had relatively power and resources, it limited its land sales and when its power was prone to challenge or it faced some financial crisis, lands were put on sales and individuals could claim them for some money. Having said that, the Shahs and rulers never considered legally and theoretically any independence rights for landowners as a class and if they could, they would confiscate their lands. The studies reveal that there were some notable nomads such as Ali Gholi Khan and Sardar Asa’ad Bakhtiari who were ardent supporters of the Constitutional Movement and the founders of the the Political Association of the Revolutionary Committee. By the end of the Mohammad Ali Shah’s rule or reign, some nomad leaders mobilized their people to rise against the central government and marched towards Tehran to occupy the capital. Mohammad Vali Khan Sepahdar and Samsam Al-Saltaneh were among them. As far as the role of workers in the Constitutional Revolution is concerned, it can be argued that the labour movement had been constantly supportive of the Constitutional Movement. The Russian Revolution had extensive impact on the political developments in Iran in general and on the growth and nature of the Iranian labour movement in particular. The socio-democratic leaders were mostly intellectuals and paid a special attention to the labour class due to their ideology. In the early 1900s, political parties in Iran were defending the rights of workers and in the following decade the communist movement gained victory in Russia and hence cooperation between parties and labour associations in Iran became closer and more explicit. Many Iranian residents in Russia considered a communist revolution as a solution to many problems. As explained earlier about the role of the middle class in the Constitutional Revolution, there were two groups that were considered the middle class: merchants and technocrats. The Bazaar was consisted of shops, workshops, banks, guilds, stores and commercial centers and religious places. In the Bazaar, traders used to sell their goods, industrialists were busy with producing, merchants built mosques where religious leaders were preaching, the state was storing grains, banks were offering loans and some aristocrats and rulers were negotiating them. The middle class which had unified local communities in the early 19th century, turned into a national unified force and for the first time, this community was conscious of its identity and features. After the adoption of new economic policies in Tehran which led to big concessions and construction of foreign-run factories in 1877 for textile industries, the new enterprises began to seriously debilitate the Iranian handicrafts industry. Most people active in Bazaar, therefore, considered foreigners as
their mutual enemy. Since the state failed to impose supportive tariffs, the producers became more and more discontent. Also, the results of the current study shows that intellectuals played a key role in the Constitutional Revolution by raising awareness among people through the publication of various newspapers and books. The notable intellectuals were Mirza Hossein Khan Sepahsalar, Mirza Fata’ali Akhundzadeh, Mirza Agha Khan Kermani, Mirza Malok Khan, Mirza Yusef Khan Mostasharoduleh and Talebof. The Bazaar also was a key player in the victory of the Revolution. Given the fact that the Bazaar was a center for exchanging money and goods and supplied people’s basic needs and contained an extensive network, it was very influential even among villagers. Their main interests for their participation in the Revolution were of economic nature. Considering the state granted many concessions to Russia and England which generated a kind of economic enslavement in Iran, the Bazaar faced serious obstacles in their businesses. The study also depicts that the role of clerics in the Constitutional Revolution was undeniably important. Kasravi noted that “what kept the Constitution alive was the insistence and persistence by Sayyid Behbahani, Sayyid Tabatabai, Akhund Khorasani and Haj Sheikh Mazandarani. Despite being under duress, they did not give in and they never stopped supporting the Parliament and Constitution”. The main two factors which elevated their role in the Revolution had to do with people’s strict religious beliefs and the influence the clerics had in various walks of life. These two factors enabled the clerics to mobilize people for the Constitution. Therefore, they had a pivotal role in advancing the Revolution and ending the tyranny at that time. Given the traders had to travel abroad, they were more familiar with the Western civilization’s achievements, science and technology, commerce, transportation and in general economic and political developments in the West, therefore, they had a better and open-minded perception in comparison to other social classes. Due to their shared perception with intellectuals, they began to exchange ideas about the economic and political developments within the country. As far as the role of alliance between the Bazaar and clerics is concerned in the Constitutional Revolution, they had a long cooperation together. The main cause of this cooperation was related to common economic and political demands. In other words, the Bazaar used to provide the financial and economic basis independent clerics and was considered a popular power against the state and conversely the clerics would support the interests of the Bazaar when necessary since there was no group which was not affiliated with the central power and they were the only one who could have the bravery to stand up against the government. The clerics and the Bazaar were also closely related in other dimensions such as social, legal and religious issues. Deals and arbitration got them closer. They used to refer to the religious scholars for their contracts. And finally the agreements such as the Treaty of Turkmanchay, the Reuter Concession, the Tobacco concession and foreign loans led to the foreign domination over Iran which formed an alliance between the intellectuals and clerics.
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