

Civil Society in Iran after the Revolution (Case Study: The Eleventh Government)

Sajedeh Sadat Jafari*

BS, Department of Political Science, Faculty of Humanities, Tarbiat Heydariyeh University, Iran

*Corresponding Author Email: sajedehsadatjafari@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: Background and Aim: Iranian civil society has experienced many ups and downs in the last decade. After providing a clear definition of civil society in this article, we will examine the civil society of the 11th government (Hassan Rouhani) in Iran. Research Method: The method of this study is based on the historical practice or historical research, which is based on the analysis of events, development, and expansion of past experiences, accurate assessment of the validity of documents and other information sources, and description and description of Iranian social history documents. Results: The government of Hassan Rouhani, which with the slogan of "hope" gave hope to the young generation to start anew, came to power with the promise of opening up a trade union and civic activities. Given the limitations and critical conditions of the country, it can be said that the government of prudence and hope has been able to overcome some of the calamities.

Keywords: Civil Society, Eleventh Government, Iran

INTRODUCTION

The term civil society as thought is rooted in the political philosophy of eighteenth-century Europe, but as a socio-political movement that seeks and defends the fundamental rights of citizens in society and has a special place in the system to play particular roles. Mostly appeared in the second half of the twentieth century. Its roots in political philosophy often go back to the political ideas of seventeenth-century European thinkers, especially Hobbes (*Leviathan*) and John Locke (two treatises on government). According to Hobbes and Locke, civil society refers to a society in which, in addition to the rule of law in the public sphere, the sphere of individual rights is also established (Bloom, 2014).

The life of a normal human being, or as Hobbes puts it, "the image of life in the natural state," is violent, animalistic, ugly, and short. Therefore, if people want to stay, such a situation cannot continue indefinitely, so one turns to civil society to eliminate the natural situation. Contrary to Hobbes' view, Locke's thought is devoid of pessimistic beliefs about human nature. As one of the pioneers of libertarianism, John Locke also emphasized the creation of "open spheres" for individuals in society against the government. His emphasis on providing an open sphere was that in such a sphere, the multiplicity and diversity of collective activities are formed, which together constitute civil society, which is a factor to prevent the use of power against the individual. According to Locke, civil society arises when people come together and exercise their natural rights and hand over this power to society. Therefore, John Locke considered the establishment of civil and political society as the best cure for the disorders caused by the state of nature. Human beings enjoy freedom and civil rights by renouncing their liberty, property, and other natural rights. According to him, government and personal power should be limited in civil society (Taylor, 2013).

Instead of the natural law, Rousseau abandons the law of reason, as the theory of "collective will" suggests. For this reason, in Rousseau's view, the social contract is by no means a treaty of subjugation but a treaty of participation and cooperation between members of society. Thus, the individual belonging to civil society does not follow anyone except the collective will, which results from the sum of individual choices. Freedom, then, is obedience to the law that one sets for oneself. Freedom, in its essence, is to be its legislator.

Another chain of thought about civil society emerged in the nineteenth century, mainly by Hegel and Marx. Hegel's view of civil society is different. In his view, civil society is seen as an area between the family and the political community or government. Civil society, in comparison with the family, is itself a form of the inadequacy of the state. In contrast with the state, it is a minor issue. The family is a symbol of unity and love, while civil society symbolizes division and competition. According to Hegel, civil society includes the private world of individuals and their interests and activities. It is, therefore, outside the realm of the state. For Hegel, the victory of the French Revolution is the victory of "civil society" over the feudal fabric of the past. Therefore, civil society is a system and interdependence. This dependence is manifested in the division of labor, which responds to the system of needs and needs and increases public wealth. Concerning Hegel's interpretation, Marx insisted that civil society was nothing more than a series of formal legal privileges for all citizens, but real and objective for only one class, the bourgeoisie. The rights derived from civil society have nothing to do with it other than the freedom of action of the bourgeoisie and the exploitation of the working class.

In Marx's interpretation, civil society is the realm of economic relations or infrastructural relations in the form of classes outside the Rubinian state's realm. Civil society is the state's natural base, and its main feature is individuality, competition, and conflict. Marx's civil or bourgeois society, in general, is the realm of class private interests. Hannah Arendt sees civil society as an "open project" that guarantees lasting democracy. He recognizes the importance of having an open field in cultivating free will in society and considers it a consolidator of democracy from the bottom up.

Jürgen Habermas also sees civil society institutions as a bridge between the government and the people, bringing the problems and shortcomings of the private sector to the attention of the men's government. Civil society uses its facilities to raise the demands and issues of the people more openly and extensively so that the government can incorporate them into its policies. The goal of Moss politicians is to establish a society in which there is no distorted communication. The endpoint of Habermas's process is a rational society with a communication system in which thoughts are freely presented and have the right to defend against criticism (Chandouk, 2018).

Civil society's new concept and meaning in the last quarter of the twentieth century include groups, associations, institutions, and organizations formed to examine and critique the government's responsibility. In the present discourse, civil society means increasing the accountability of the government to its actions and taking into account the rights of citizens. Thus, in the current sense, civil society is not a part of the government that seeks the rights of the people but as institutions outside the structure of the government that aims to deprive the government of its fundamental citizenship rights, which will include components such as the creation of political and social organizations and institutions, individuality, rationality, freedom-seeking, limitation of government power, expansion of the public sphere, legality, privatization, and economic growth and development, etc. (Shariat, 2015).

In Iran, from the time of constitutionalism, when intellectuals and thinkers, along with the creation of new institutions and political organizations, gave meaning to the concept of civil society, so far, efforts have been made to make it peaceful with religious and Islamic principles and components. Comply with Islamic and religious principles and features. Therefore, civil society's contradictory views have been presented, which has caused confusion and ambiguity (Mahmoudi, 2015).

Theoretical Foundations

In the early 21st century, despite the new world order, democracy and civil society are still the most important common denominator in many parts of the world. But civil society is a unique society that respects social pluralism and can limit the looting of political power. This society, which was born in Europe, can be expanded and stabilized in some other parts of the world with the mutual efforts of the government and society (Hall, 2003).

The simplest definition of civil society is that civil society is a unique set of various non-governmental organizations that have sufficient power to control the government while not preventing the government from acting as a custodian and arbiter of internally cohesive groups, can prevent the government from dominating society and activating other sections of society (Gellner, 2003).

There are two categories of definitions in the literature on civil society in Iran. In the first view of civil society, which is the dominant definition according to one researcher, civil society is lawful and based on social contracts, transparent, protecting the rights of individuals, based on national sovereignty, distributor of power within parties and councils. In this sense, when the term civil society is used, it refers to the whole of society. This considers civil society a utopia. Because Iranian society and surrounding societies are far from it, they rule the

absence of civil society in these societies. But the second definition and perception of civil society, which is approved by most scholars and is also prevalent in Western political literature, and therefore approved by the author, introduces civil society as a barrier between the government and the family. Thus, civil society is an area of social relations independent of direct government intervention and composed of public and group institutions. Civil society is an arena of social power, while the government is political and authoritarian (Bashirieh, 2013).

This is an essential point for Iranian society. As Nikos Banana Liss puts it, civil society refers to all social groups and institutions that, in modern times, are placed between kin groups or ancient institutions on the one hand and governmental institutions on the other. Current conditions are social conditions in which the complete separation of public and private spheres, widespread mobilization of the population, and the absorption of independent and heterogeneous forces of society in the national, economic, political, and cultural spheres (Banana Liss, 2013).

In the case of Iranian society, too, the arrival of modernity coincides with the constitutional movement. The constitutional movement was a popular object of struggle against tyranny and dictatorship; the primary purpose was to legitimize the government. In a way that explains and clarifies these bilateral rights and duties of the government and the people. In Iran, what is known as the rule of law and constitutionalism was the most crucial goal of the freedom seekers today. We have a legal system that, on the one hand, is the continuation of the Constitution and, on the other hand, has changed during the Islamic Revolution (Mir Sepasi, 2010).

From the time of the Constitutional Revolution to the Islamic Revolution, Iran's leading political and cultural issue has been the independence of Iranian society.

However, it is essential to note that in most semi-peripheral countries, general development criteria in different political, economic, cultural, and social aspects are between modern developed countries and third world countries - the development process is delayed. Once started, the government is like an amorphous device that cannot react quickly to changing international conditions. It is possible to point to the links between the government and civil society in an organized way, which is the main problem of civil society in such countries with late development. Participatory-nouveau riche-based practices are prevalent in late-developed semi-marginalized societies, involving people in individual, highly partisan client networks such as parties primarily based on cosmopolitan criteria. Recruitment or Populism, in which newcomers mobilize and, instead of spontaneously organizing, bring them to the forefront through the attachment of the masses to leadership, becomes the primary source of legitimacy, among which Populism brings people into the field more vertically and heterogeneously so that they replace integrationist methods with the nature of relatively independent horizontal absorption and spontaneous organization of people in the national politics of major developed countries and delays the emergence of influential civil society (Banana Liss, 2013).

A century has passed since the Iranian constitutional movement. What is important is a critical look at this movement from the perspective of Iranian society. We are still in the era of constitutionalism. The continuation of these demands is still with us. The society in which we live now is the result of constitutional changes (Bashirieh, 2016).

However, almost two decades have passed since the birth of the concept of civil society and its arrival in Iran. But what and the efficiency of civil society in Iran? The existence of dust and turmoil caused by factional rivalries has prevented a common ground on the concept and efficiency of civil society, which should be claimed not only in the West but also in Iran. There is no civil society. As Nikfar (2013) states, civil society is a space between organized social action in independence from the government. In a country like Iran, its cost is the second part of the sentence because freedom from its government brings the second part. Because it cannot be organized unless it has already defined its task with the government. The government also wants the role of social organizations to be clear in terms of the relationship they have with the government and what the government should do with them.

In contrast, the government in Iran is the most objective reality. The government in Iran has its function that makes the focus of the ability to exercise will on society. The way out is to find another logic against the government's reasoning. Of course, this issue should be answered by society, not the society that wants this today and tomorrow, but the society as civil society (Nikfar, 2013).

As one of the main tools of social agreement, mass media helps build individual and collective identity; the media acts as a cultural exchange. It is mainly through the media that people are motivated to talk about how they want to think about whom they become and what society they belong to. The importance of the influence of the media becomes more apparent when we know that the perceptions, attitudes, readings, and discourses that govern the concept of civil society have a significant impact on the nature and destiny of the formation and shaping of the civil society project in a society (Nejati-Hosseini, 2011). Like other mass media, the press has a dual function, reflecting both society and its evolution. It can create a new world through which society can see itself differently; in this way, it can make social changes. In today's societies, the three means of political mass communication, namely newspapers, television and satellite, and more recently, virtual Internet social networks, are the most popular among politicians and political communicators. Politicians use the mass media to provide information about characterizing society's reality and shape public opinion. Habermas also integrates power with mass

communication and believes that power does not mean instrumentalizing the will of others but the formation of a common choice in mass communication that aims to reach an agreement (Rouhani, 2006, quoted by Alavi).

RESEARCH METHODS

The method of this study is based on the historical method or historical research, which is based on analyzing events, developing and expanding past experiences, accurately assessing the validity of documents and other information sources, and describing and describing Iranian social history documents that, like other methods collect information and evaluate and describe them.

FINDINGS

Civil society organizations in Iran

Now, according to the chosen definition of civil society, we will express and describe civil organizations in Iran in different periods. On this basis, civil society organizations can be studied in three periods before the Constitution, from the Constitution to the Islamic Revolution and from the Islamic Revolution onwards.

Pre-constitutional period: According to one of the authors, there was civil society in Iran, at least from the second half of the Safavid rule based on two groups with the power of Shiite scholars and bazaars. Shiite scholars in Iran do not have a religious organization like the Christian Church and establish their power and influence on social organizations such as the authority of imitation, representation of the absent Imam, *ijtihad*, collecting and holding religious taxes such as *khums* and *zakat* and Imam's share, guardianship of holy places and endowment. It was solid. In her analysis of the Islamic society of Iran in the Middle Ages, Ms. Sambatón mentions the power of markets. She writes that governments were so dependent on the financial ability of the market that, in some cases, some markets used their influence to reach the ministry (Kamali, 2012). Therefore, the bazaar and the clergy can be considered the two main pillars of pre-constitutional Iranian civil society. Of course, another author, in addition to these two large groups of other institutions such as tribal and rural groups, neighborhoods, *Ayaran* and *Ahl-e-Fotut*, *Lotis* and *Dash*, elders, and the tradition of idolatry as groups and symbols of civil society Iran is mentioned before the Constitution (Khaniki, 2016). In addition, other groups such as religious groups and traditional *Husseiniyya* can be mentioned (Alavitbar, 2019).

From the Constitutional Revolution to the Islamic Revolution: The Constitutional Revolution resulted from the great uprising of traditional civil society and new social groups against authoritarian power. The main forces of this revolution were religious leaders, bazaar merchants, guilds, tribal chiefs, aristocrats who were all part of civil society (Bashirieh, 2013). The victory of the Constitutional Revolution led to the expansion of civil society and new civil organizations alongside traditional civil society. For example, the first trade union of Iran was formed in 1285. But with the rise of Reza Shah and the formation of his new and authoritarian government, and with the domination of the court and the army, civil life declined. However, during this period, the two major urban groups, the bureaucrats and the middle groups and the workers, grew up and weakened. With the fall of Reza Shah and the opening of the social space, civil society came to the fore again. However, again the chaos and strife of internal groups provided the ground for the re-emergence of the dictatorship. The coup d'état of August 28 was accompanied by another period of tyranny and dictatorship and the restriction of civil society (Afzali, 2018).

The period of the Islamic Republic: After the victory of the Islamic Revolution, as in the previous periods, the civil society expanded considerably. The escalation of political conflicts between groups and political currents, the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war, and the victory of Islamist currents led to the obstruction of the political and social atmosphere. At the same time, the dominance of the Islamist current led by the clergy over the currents and the entry of the clergy into political power caused civil society to lose one of its main pillars. The formation of a populist system in the 1960s and the attempt to concentrate power and politicize different sections of society made civil society very weak and suffering.

After the end of the war, the death of the great leader of the revolution, and the coming to power of the new president with open economic policies, there was hope for the advancement and expansion of civil society. But this hope did not bear much fruit. The increase in political conflicts at the level of power and the re-emergence of the system to focus more by removing the Islamic left from power, extensive changes in the second five-year plan, and weakening economic adjustment policies prevented civil society from moving to grow significantly.

The June 2 election and the victory of a candidate who put the expansion of civil society at the top of his campaign agenda. It raised many hopes for the development of civil society. The emergence of the discourse of civil society and its dominance over other lessons was one of the most critical factors of this hope. Civil society has grown significantly over the years. However, the continuing conflict between political groups and new

resistances in the power structure - albeit authoritarian sections - has seriously jeopardized the continued expansion of civil society. As a result of the contents of this section, it can be said that the essence of Iran's political history in the twentieth century has been the conflict between the theory of the constitutional state and the theory of the absolute state. On the one hand, the historical weakness of civil society in Iran and the justification of the absolute government with reasons such as the need for economic development has led to the victory of absolutism over constitutionalism (Bashirieh, 2013).

Characteristics of civic organizations

Now, after reviewing the civil society in the history of Iran, we can mention the characteristics of civil organizations in Iran:

A) Limitations: As we have seen, civil society has had many ups and downs throughout history, especially in the contemporary history of Iran, but what has existed in almost all these years has been the limitations and scarcity of civil institutions. So that even in times of chaos and lack of absolute government, it was a political society that dominated civil society.

B) No encirclement: This feature should be considered specific to new civic organizations. These organizations do not have enough influence over their followers and stop at the level of their founders. For example, trade unions and guilds have shown less impact among workers or marketers. For this reason, these organizations do not have the necessary efficiency.

C) Strict supervision and control of the government: Many of the so-called civil institutions formed in contemporary Iran were government-made or under the central government's strict control and management. For example, in the case of the trade union system, this system did not evolve into an autonomous institution due to the historical weakness of civil society and the domination of government officials over business people and urban artisans to help the growth of civil society (Ashraf, 2018).

The situation of civil society in the Rouhani government

In the 2013 elections, the one who chanted the slogan of moderation won the election, who believed that the left (reformist) and right (fundamentalist) currents have gone beyond moderation. He is the one who came up with the key to bring hope to people's lives. Rouhani took over the government with the slogan of moderation and emphasized in press conferences and propaganda speeches that his priority is to have sanctions walls. He promised to set up an academy of Azeri language and literature to establish a relationship with the Ministry of Women; the Gulf states, especially with Saudi Arabia, are improving, but his promises, like the one he made about his relationship with Saudi Arabia, not only did not get better, they became more challenging.

Undoubtedly, moderation could be a new opportunity for the re-emergence of civil society in Iran, especially after a period of blackmail that showed the failed political currents of culture and pretended that society is suffocating in a suffocating blockade. Suppose people do not see the clues of this opening in the key to the president's propaganda programs. In that case, Homay Rahmat will fill the country.

The reform process as a supporter of the president-elect, who considered his greatest wish to be the continuation of the path of the reformist president, and Seyyed Mohammad Khatami played an essential role in the spread of the word civil society at the public level. They also fell. Before Khatami and the social movement introduced the term "civil society" after the 2nd of Khordad, in the early 1970s, some social scientists in Iran began to use the word "civil society." According to Ahmad Zeidabadi, a journalist who was sentenced to prison for trying to overthrow the Islamic Republic following the events of the 1988 elections, he believed that civil society should be strengthened: the pro-democracy forces in Iran should focus on confronting and confronting To overthrow it, the government should establish institutions in the public arena so that the society is strengthened against the authority of the government and acts as its controlling force. In a way, it declares civil society as the basis for the establishment of the government. But reformist political activist Abdullah Naseri believes that civil society means the presence of citizens in various political and social spheres. The strengthening of civil society is essential where politicians alone cannot fight against stubborn issues such as systemic corruption. The press, known as the fourth pillar of democracy, is part of civil society.

According to him, civil society in Iran was realized during the presidency of the reformists (Seyyed Mohammad Khatami), but Mr. Ahmadinejad weakened it. The urban middle class, which is the focus of civil society, was greatly weakened during these eight years. This reformist political activist also says about Hassan Rouhani's four years in the civil field: "This government today, despite its reformist discourse that wants to develop the area of civil society and civil participation, cannot be very successful because the economic power of the government is declining. Nasseris says that although Mr. Rouhani's government believed in expanding civil society, he said that it faced an eight-year ruin and a series of sanctions that would further engage the government in resolving such issues. Depending on the type of government of the Islamic Republic and the concentration of power centers in it, if the government in the general sense (both the government and other government organizations and institutions) do not cooperate, society will not be formed easily. He considered the university an excellent way to overcome the situation he is talking about, because according to Dr. Naqibzadeh: "Mr.

Rouhani's cabinet is a minimal one and is not in a position to meet all the demands in the current situation of Iranian society. It needs expert and pragmatic managers to make up for shortcomings and take a clear path to the advancement and realization of civil society. Of course, he emphasizes, despite the demands of society! It does not achieve itself (economic, etc.) (in Mr. Rouhani's government), but due to its high political consciousness, they try to achieve their goals through civic approaches.

CONCLUSION

Civil society is not just a particular form and model that only the West speaks of or is referred to as liberalism. Civil society can take different forms and models based on societies' intellectual, historical, and cultural richness. Some people consider the universal civil supreme limit to be both color and formation. The society considered by the West does not give any value or value to the political and religious consciousness and culture of their society. At the same time, some domestic and foreign oppositions consider civil society as just a tool to overthrow the Islamic Republic. They support and strengthen their organizations in the discussion of civil society so that it can play a role in this regard.

On June 15, 2013, a discourse was formed, which was called moderation. The hegemony of this discourse began from the political moments when it demarcated its discourse in contrast to the ruling discourse of the last eight years (2005-2013) under the title of the apocalyptic discourse of political opportunism.

Extreme fundamentalism flourished. The discourse of moderation became hegemonic because it manifested the characteristics of a glorious, original, and well-known reform discourse. In a way, it can be argued that moderation minus the signs of reformism is an empty discourse. The existence of "self" and "other" and the signs that emanate from them are decisive in forming identity. In the words of Ernstolaklau and Chantal Mofte, the atmosphere of conflict in the political arena is formed in comparison with the non-political. The basis of political competition is the difference. Rouhani and his supporters, by showing their differences with the discourse features of the crisis-ridden government of Mehrvarz since June 15, 1992, revealed a new identity called moderation to the people. The vote for Rouhani was a vote for a new identity that had given birth to Iran's political background and time. Rouhani then met with public acclaim for distancing himself from the well-known discourse of extremist fundamentalism and adopting a reformist identity in his dealings with the people. Given the limitations and critical conditions of the country, it can be said that the government of prudence and hope has been able to overcome some of the calamities. To the extent that this discourse adheres to the foundations of its identity, it has achieved success.

In the field of foreign policy, basing national interests and avoiding the delusional ideology of global management has been able to remove the specter of crisis from the political shadow of the country if we accept that the result of the stalemate brought by the previous government in the field of foreign policy, it affected the lives of each of the people of this land and had unfortunate consequences in the area of economy and society! It is then accepted that loyalty to identity is its builder to resolve the crisis of foreign policy, economy, environment, government policies. In the field of domestic politics, the government of prudence and hope has not been able to rely on the signs of its productive discourse and remain faithful to the foundations of its identity and its creator. In domestic politics, the fundamental and identity-building meaning of the government of prudence and hope, which promotes the social movement of reform, has been captured. Internal management and policymakers, especially the lower management in the provinces and cities, still have an identity other than the victorious identity on June 24. The "other" whose moderate "identity" was formed due to its inefficiency is still valued and sits at the top.

Moreover, the unfaithful management of moderation-corrective identity has quickly taken on the color, smell, and language of defeated and stubborn discourse. In the micropolitics of domestic politics, the identity of the creator of moderation-reform is in a state of suffocation. The lack of attention to domestic politics and the neglect of translating moderation into entanglement provides the ground for the discouragement of government supporters in society on the one hand and the ground for Word (everywhere) in a way that is dangerous to the state and its social capital. What represents the discourse of reform in the political sphere of this frontier is the formation of the discourse of reform around the central signifier of the nation's rights: the germ of moderation grows as long as it remains true to its principle of reform. To advance the nation and the nation's rights as the reality and political pulse of the country and its coordinates allow them, just as the reformists have the right to be reminded of their covenant with Rouhani regularly. "It means confusion, not moderation. By reducing the concept of moderation, discourse confusion is formed, a political mystery emerges that this is a disregard for the identity foundations of moderation. Hegemony is no eternal discourse, and discourses are regular." They are definitely under the pressure of disintegration, and restlessness is accelerating. The slippage of any discourse from its fundamental foundations provides the ground for the decline and decline of that discourse. Discourse theorists believe that if the "other" is the elixir of the identity of discourse, it can also be identity-burning, which is when the central signifier of discourse cannot charge the side signals.

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