

The Political Parties in Iran between 1941-1947, with particular emphasis on the Left- wings Parties

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Abstract

This article examines the political parties in Iran between 1941 and 1947, with particular emphasis on the left – wings parties. In 1905 awareness grew of the need for constitutional reform, and, as the necessary Pressure on the government could not be brought by parties as we understand them, wich had not yet developed, the struggle was finally won by anjumans. At this stage, Iran was in very bad order, facing economic disaster. The country was plagued by foreign intervention.

The 1921 coup d'état was the only hope for prevention and Rezā Khān, on his assumption of power, did bring some political stability to Iran, However, the freedom given to parties and unions was crushed, along with the independence and integrity of the tribes and ulamā, when the Shāh realized the threat which these same bodies could pose to his position.

A background sketch, discusses the emergence of parties from anjumans, the coup d'etat of 1921 and the subsequent dictatorship of Rezā Shāh, which filled the power vacuum on the abdication of Rezā Shāh; this general view indicates the prevalent political atmosphere and structure.

The occupation of Iran had some consequences. Iran achieved her goal of freeing the country from Riza Shah's regime and enormous freedom was suddenly granted to the political parties, trade unions and religious elements; this encouragement to new political parties came partly from occupying elements. The mushrooming of political parties came about partly due to this political "indulgence" by the Allies and partly as a natural reaction to the sudden end of the twenty years oppressive rule by Reza Shah.

Keywords: Political party, Left wings, Power, Ideology, Iran.

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Introduction

The period in which political activity in Iran flourished in comparatively free conditions and with considerable vigour was a remarkably brief one when viewed from the perspective of the long history that belongs to Iran. It spans the years 1905-47, with two marked phases. Most historians of Iran regard the emergence of the first political parties as coming with the Constitutional Revolution¹. in 1905-11, and this preliminary stage of political activity lasted until 1921, in which year Reza shah came to power. The second stage centred on the years 1941-7, in this case following the abdication of Reza shah.

A number of small parties sprang up during the first phase of this political activity. During the 14th Majlis (1944-6), a socialist Movement, organised on Communist lines, arose out of the members of the moderate and revolutionary parties (the latter were officially democrats)².

During this initial period, from 1905-21, the percentage of the politically aware was low, barely reaching 3%³. Most of the so-called parties were mere outgrowths of traditional oligarchal patterns. They were slightly more structured, however, and possessed an explicit ideology that focussed broadly on nationalism and liberal democracy. As parties, despite being briefly in a position of power, these were more disruptive of the traditional political process than capable of presenting a substitute modern political system: in the years 1906-8, and again in 1919-21, they served as agents of rapid political change, yet could not produce any leader political acumen acute and sharp enough to sustain a stable party (or governmental structure). When such a leader did appear, in Rezā Shāh, he operated outside, and against, the party system.

The political vacuum which we have noted between the years 1921-1941 was due to the attitude and policies adopted by Rezā Shāh, who saw in the party system as a whole, a democratic threat to his dictatorial rule, and as a consequence, suppressed all parties across the political board. This hiatus effectively prevented continuity between the two periods of political activity: those parties that arose in 1941 in response to Rezā Shāh's abdication, a relaxation in censorship and increased freedom of the press, had in effect to begin from the beginning all over again, neglecting any experience that had already been gained⁴. Nevertheless, the proportion of those politically aware at this time was probably approaching 10%. This is reflected in the wide variety of parties that arose, ranging through right,

moderate and left.

Many of these parties were transitory in the extreme. In general, the parties adopted patriotic and nationalist nemes; published their own newspapers- most with irregular issues and limited circulation. These were often formed by prominent individuals, or small groups based on a band or Dawra⁵; seeking representation in the Majlis in the form of a deputyship or ministerial post. It was therefore inevitable that many such minor parties disappeared once the elections for the 14th Majlis were over. The existence of these groups was characterised by fierce in – fighting, carried on through the organs of each particular party. It is noteworthy that this situation reflects the common circumstance of bitter acrimony between rivals with similar programmes, all of which are competitors for the same audience. (The exception to the rule in this case, was the Tudeh Party). Those fewer parties which did, on the other hand, have a more lasting effect upon the political system in terms both of ideology and political administration can be subdivided into three groups, according to political persuasion⁶.

On the left were Hizb- i- Tuda and the Firqa-yi Dimukrāt- i Azarbāyjān. On the right, three types of party emerged. The first comprised Conservatives, and pro-British notables such as sayyid Ziyā's National will party; then there were the extreme nationalist parties, which included the Pān Irān, Sumkā, Ariyā, and the National Salvation Group of the Revolutionary Nationalist party; lastly, there were the religious groups such as Fidā'iyān – i- Islām and the Mujāhidin- i Islām.

Between the right and the left were a number of other parties- Miḥan Parastan Paykār, Mardān-i-kār, Ittihād-i- Milli, Vahdat-i Irān, Iran – i Mā, and the socialist party.

Different historians offer varying explanations for the rapid proliferation of political parties within Iran during the later years (1941-7). Analysis of the existing literature of the time, however, in this article I have tried to answer The question, whether the leaders of political parties had the necessary knowledge, political awareness.

Research Methodology

This research has been conducted thoroughly on the question whether left-wings parties in Iran had any major influence in that period in social or economic sphere.

In this research , I tried to use published books and scholar's articles in

different scientific journals, mainly pamphlets, by laws and also the publications of each party, the interviews and speech made by party leaders are also included.

Theoretical Basis

This research has been conducted thoroughly on the question whether left-wings parties in Iran had any major influence in social or economic sphere.

The English term 'party' describes a structure which is both a social organisation⁷ and a polity – a miniature political system with its own hierarchy. The party exhibits distinctive patterns of power distribution, since as a decision – making body, it involves itself with a representative process, an electoral resolving internal conflicts. It thus shares the characteristics common to most social groups, while at the same time possessing its own distinctive characteristics. These can be summarised with four tentative constructs⁸:

a) The party is a clientele – oriented structure: the open, informal, personalised nature of the party system is in contrast with that of the bureaucratic model.

b) it operates as a structural system that seeks to translate or convert social and economic interests directly into political power.

c) its power structure is hierarchical, although not necessarily oligarchic.

d) it has a leadership that is well-organised, self-conscious, self-perpetuating, congruent, conspiring, and with a high turnover rate at all levels of the hierarchy,

The nature of the party structure is governed by three main factors: it is heavily influenced by environmental pressures- socio – economic conditions and political history: by the "political subculture", i. e. the normative and operational codes adhered to in the power process, and by the time factor, for the characteristics of a party structure normally evolve gradually over time, with room allowed for change or reorientation at critical points along the way.

The party system itself manifests itself in three main types: the single-party, two-party systems, or a multi-party structure.

The single- party system has usually been regarded as a new political structure that developed in the twentieth century, exemplified by the former regimes in Germany and Italy, and the former soviet government.

The two-party is closely associated with the Anglo-saxon world, although it is neither universal among such countries nor exclusive to them.

A typology of the multi-party system is somewhat difficult to establish, for the number of parties involved may range from three to a theoretical infinity, while, there is an equally extensive variation within each of the parties individually. The tripartite system of France or Belgium, for example, show no common features, and there is little similarity between the quadri-partite systems of Scandinavia and Switzerland⁹.

Research findings

The political awareness of Iranian population during the years 1905-1947 was between 3 to 10 percent, there fore in this circumstances, people did not have the necessary knowledge or the required understanding of the political parties. However due to occupation of Iran by foreign powers and their interference in internal affairs and public dissatisfaction of Reza shah era in one hand and the free sphere created after his abdication in 1941, the society became ready for the parties to be established. so many parties shaped one after another but since they lacked social basis or practical principles, they quickly were omitted after wards. We shall emphasize that one of the main reasons for the creation of these parties was to send their representatives to the general assembly "Majlis".

The whole left wing parties in this period were created, supported and motivated by Tuda party. Since these parties lacked the fundamental structures, many of them disappeared soon after each election.

Only the Tuda party had long lasting effects and continued with their activities until 1953. Although this party became influential in many parts of Iran but the oppositions saw them as the puppet of USSR, therefore people did not consider them as genuine and indigenous party.

As Tuda was an allied of USSR and Kept supporting the interests of USSR in Majlis and was known as a communist party, at last it was declared as illegal irreligious party, which pushed them once again to start their uderground activities.

Party politcal activity was encouraged by the occupying powers, it appears. This activity enabled the powers to consolidate their position and maintain much-needed social stability in Iran. The parties formed, as is usually the case, a channel through which socio-economic discontent could be articulated; thus parties contributed to the stability of the status quo.

The growth of both a middle and an intellectual class during the years between 1921-41 also contributed to the propagation of liberal ideas, and aided the development of political parties. Moreover, for the first time after the constitutional Revolution, the Majlis was able to debate openly, and the deputies were thus enabled to express their views and form different groups. Often, these would expand into parties, based on a particular political ideal. This circumstance applied to various strata within Iranian society- landowners, workers, intellectuals, politicians, who seized the opportunity to make claims for their rights.

As a result of the occupation, it was feared by many parties that Iran's independence was threatened, and might not be regained after the war. Their only option, then, was to form their own parties to disseminate their ideas through society, informing the people of the danger of foreign occupation, and urging them to resist. The National front party (*Hizb- i- Jabha- yi Milli*), for instance, led by Musaddiq, and supported by many patriots, sought to eliminate British influence over Iran's internal affairs.

Finally, the most significant factor in the formation of political parties lay in the dissatisfaction of the Iranian people with the existing situation in Iran. This feeling was heightened by the food shortages of 1944, which were mainly due to the large numbers of foreign troops in the country. Furthermore, in 1943, Iran was forced by foreign powers to increase the currency in circulation, a situation that resulted in high inflation. Concern for this circumstance led to the establishment of several parties, in the attempt to voice the dissatisfaction felt generally. As will be seen, most of the new parties emerged during the years 1943-4.

Numerous other parties were very short – lived. Some of the smaller groups proposed ambitious manifestos and were simply incapable of implementing them in practice, as the Democrat Party of Qavam, for example. Others, such as the National will party (*Irada-yi Milli*) were created solely to deflect support from the influential Tudeh Party. These also lacked the support of the majority of the working-classes, but drew their members instead, from the educated middle and upper class sectors of Iranian society, a fatal flaw.

The limits of this study permit only one chapter to be devoted to the minor political parties. The Tudeh, and most importantly, the *Firqa-yi Dimokrat-i Azarbayjan*, however, will be considered in greater detail, as appropriate to their significance in Iranian political history. Here, we shall follow the lines of the political persuasion of the minor parties, classifying

them loosely according to right, moderate and left, although it should be noted that such categorisation is more one of imposition for the purpose of easy classification than following a strict definition made from within each party itself.

Analyse

In this article, I tried to analyse different left-wing parties by examining the individual life of these parties, we can see that their influence within Iran, both political and social, was indeed minor although only the Tudeh and the *Firqa-yi Dimokrāt- i Azarbāyjān*, and that of *kurdistan*¹⁰ can be fully called left- wings parties. The others, such as *Hizb-i Irān*, *Hizb- i Jangal*, *Hizb-i Hamrāhān*, *Hizb-i Susyalist*, all exhibit socialist views on a milder scale, although they can each be distinguished views by certain individual characteristics. Certain features are basic to the make-up of all these parties: membership in all rested on conditions of age (over18) , a flawless past record, the swearing of an oath of allegiance to the party and its manifesto (which included forswearing of membership to any other party); and payment of fees¹¹. The majority membership came from the new intellectual class in Iran, but their emphasis was placed primarily upon upholding the rights of the working class¹². A parallel stress was made by all of these parties upon the 'enlightenment' of the Iranian population concerning the dangers inherent in a pro-foreign -power government in Teheran – such a government, they felt had the interests of that foreign power at heart, at the expense of those of her own people¹³.

A basic 3-fold programme, with individual emphases, can be seen in all of these parties, centering around political, economic and social aspects. The political aim focussed externally upon the integrity and independence of Iran, and the removal of foreign influence within the central government; internally upon democratic government and parliamentary party vote. Economically, they demanded the establishment and growth of the Iranian economy, proper use of resource and land distribution, and the general improvement of Iranian economic well-being. In the social sphere, their aim was towards adequate health and welfare facilities provided by the government, free compulsory education, and reform throughout Iran¹⁴.

Hamrāhān Party

The Hamrāhān party was formed in October 1942, under the leadership of

Mustafā Fātih, after the latter's break with the Anti-Fascist society¹⁵. It consisted chiefly of progressive intellectuals who had socialist sympathies¹⁶. However, as a consequence of disagreement between its leaders among other things, the Hamrāhān party split in April 1944, and a new party emerged under the name of Hizb-i Susyalist¹⁷. The Hizb-i Susyalist was a fully leftist, socialist party, and its new organ, *Imruz va fardā*, (put out instead of the former paper, *shām*) claimed that the reason for the split lay in the apathetic opposition to Sayyid Ziyā and the "reactionary party" on the part of the Hamrāhān deputy Hasan Narāqi, and in the lack of attention that the party's committee paid to the protests subsequently made over the issue¹⁸. Mustafā Fātih on the other hand, maintained that the Hizb-i Susyalist broke away because they had only joined his party in order to find jobs, and were therefore disappointed that he had not obtained any for them.

The Hamrāhān Party also suffered from the resignation of Abd al-Qāsim Narāqi¹⁹, deputy for Qazvin. Shām expressed regret that he should have resigned after his explanation over his reticence concerning Sayyid Ziyā had been accepted by the party committee. Narāqi, however, announced that, having been unable to attend meetings out of ill-health and personal reasons, he felt that he should offer his resignation²⁰.

Hizb-i Susyalist

The Hizb-i Susyalist, led by shahidzāda and Bani sadr, sympathised with the peoples' party of Iran, and also with the USSR;²¹ it was thus unfavourably disposed towards the West, in contrast to Hizb-i Paykār, which tended towards France, and against the soviet Union.²² The Hizb-i Susyalist also fiercely opposed Tabātabā'i's National will party (*Irāda-yi Milli*)²³. Unlike the Hamrāhān party, the Hizb-i Susyalist had fewer members in the capital, and more numerous branches in the provinces and towns, such as Shiraz, Mashhad and Bābul. The programme of the Hizb-i Susyalist, based very much on the socialist model of the USSR, incorporated most aspects of the ideology of the contemporary progressive parties, but was never given the opportunity to put its ideas into practice because it was blocked by reactionary elements in order that they might protect their own interests²⁴. Thus both the Hizb-i Hamrāhān and Hizb-i Susyalist, as other parties, disappeared without any real achievement or influence, although their ideology was continued in a modified way through an informal amalgamation of its members with the Tudeh²⁵.

Hizb- i Jangal

The Hizb- i Jangal formed a milder version of the previous revolutionary Jangal movement, now resurrected by Muhammad Tadayyun in January 1943²⁶. The party had great hopes for success, believing that, that would come as a result of their solid support from the whole of Gilān²⁷. Their appeal was made therefore to all lovers of freedom and intellectuals, not simply for passive support but rather for action instead of mere political discussion. The Hizb-i Jangal believed that since the country was passing through a critical phase, even momentary apathy or indifference could have fatal consequences; sacrifice and heroism were thus necessary to eradicate all the problems and obstacles along the way, and to consolidate the first definite and ruthless steps the party had already taken.

The Jangali programme remained essentially unchanged from that of the earlier movement, but adapted itself to contemporary circumstances. Jangal formed a coalition with the Tudeh and Mihan and other socialist groups²⁸." Because of its strong standing among the working class, Jangal came under much pressure from the reactionary forces, including extreme censorship-just as had the earlier movement²⁹- and it was finally crushed in 1947.

The Hizb-i Irān was formed in may 1944 by farivar, originally a member of the Hamrāhān committee³⁰; the editor of its paper, Shafaq, was M. Rahmāni, who started publishing Shafaq by November 1944³¹. Hizb- i Irān fought on a nationalist, anti-imperialist base, yet it also exhibited religious tendencies, and had close ties with Hizb-i Mihan, Vahdat- i Milli, and for a short time between 1945-6 also with the Hizb- i Mardum, and through it, Jabha- yi Milli³².

The Hamrāhān party programme can be taken as representative of those parties under this category.³³

It was concerned first and foremost to ensure democratic rule in Iran by securing freedom of speech and action for every citizen, except where harmful to public welfare, as part of the struggle against all forms of dictatorship or despotism; this also entailed the maintenance of the country's defence. Internally, democracy should be achieved through the upholding of justice and the fight against social corruption – either bribery, fraud, or the exploitation of labour. Thus there was also to be a fierce struggle against unemployment on one hand, and laziness on the other; and compulsory insurance against illness or accidents during work. Agricultural reform played a large role, the party demanding that a greater part of agrarian

products be given to the peasants themselves, beyond mere subsistence level, while production was to be upped through new and advanced technological and scientific methods of agriculture, and the area of tillable land increased. In conjunction with this, compulsory but free education was to be provided throughout the country, to include technical teaching and supplementary education for workers. This would then form the basis for free elections to municipal councils, bodies that would administer the fiscal needs of the towns, regulate housing and water supplies. etc. the government would be responsible for maintaining communication systems, the natural resource industries in the country; balancing taxes with personal incomes, and thus securing a just distribution of wealth; the provision of free health and welfare services, as well as eradicating the problems of alcohol and opium smoking; and lastly, increasing the growth of the population through raising the standard of living, and through infant care.

Although the programmes for these left-wing parties have been seen to be very similar, nevertheless, in-fighting occurred between them as a result of their individual emphases. Therefore, the Hizb-i Jangal and Hizb-i Irān fought mainly on nationalist and anti-foreign intervention platforms, whereas the Hamrāhān and Hizb-i Susyalist were concerned with internal exploitation and social welfare.

Conclusions

Iraniān society is politically speaking of a very delicate nature, consisting as it does of widely differing class interests: workers, intellectuals, capitalists all compete for power and influence. As the public grew in political awareness, so the party system and structure developed, and three stages can be discerned which correspond to the percentage of the politically aware³⁴. The first limited the parties to mere outgrowths of traditional oligarchal patterns, slightly more structured, and with an explicit ideology focusing broadly on nationalism and liberal democracy. The second stage, following Rezā Shāh 's abdication saw the narrowing of ideological appeal in order to attract and mobilise the new intellectual element. The third stage, while out of our brief (1950-3) was one in which party activity was able to enlist the participation of virtually the entire politically aware population³⁵.

The main area of activity was always around Teheran, where the most powerful figures were to be found. The numbers of parties fluctuated quite considerably- it increased dramatically during the approach to elections- and

there was a prevalent belief that all confusions would disappear when the class- struggle began in earnest³⁶. The failure of most of the parties was due, however, to the irreconcilable differences between the party leaderships and the audience which they were attempting to reach. Many leaders were self-seeking careerists, striving to maintain the existing power-struggle and consolidate their individual positions within it. The radical public, on the other hand, wished to break that same system, and thus gave them little support. The general tendency was towards strong and charismatic leaders, like Qavām or Sayyid Ziyā, to rally the various elements of society in times of danger or threat from outside and inside Iran; but internal conflicts nearly always destroyed the parties and rendered them powerless³⁷.

During the period 1941-7, the elements of the successful ideological appeal were becoming clear. An essential feature was an intense devotion to the goal of a truly independent Iran with a dignity consonant with Iran's great past. We can thus distinguish three main types of political party.(right wings³⁸ parties, national³⁹ parties and moderate⁴⁰).

Among the parties of the extreme left, most advocated thorough- going socialist policies. These, such as the Tudeh and the Hizb-i Hamrāhān, supported the peasant, agricultural and industrial classes, promoting the cause of the class- struggle. It appears that only the Tudeh had any significant or long- lasting influence on Iranian politics or social life.

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