

WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN IRAN: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE  
REFORMIST ERA AND THE GREEN MOVEMENT

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WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN IRAN: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE  
REFORMIST ERA AND THE GREEN MOVEMENT

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Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **WOMEN’S MOVEMENT IN IRAN: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE REFORMIST ERA AND THE GREEN MOVEMENT**

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M.S., Program of Middle Eastern Studies

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In this thesis, two periods of Iranian women’s movement are examined; the Reform period and the Green Movement. The reason for selecting these two specific period is due to important improvements in liberties that the society experienced during the Reform period and almost the complete opposite situation they experienced with the Ahmadinejad era, the same era that Green Movement took place. Hence, women’s experiences in these periods were significant. These periods are examined through themes. In the Reform period’s women’s movement’s characteristics are; fragmentation, pragmatism and multi-strategy. Green Movement’s women’s movement’s characteristics are; diversity, political change, independence, disperse coalition and retreat due to repression. By looking at these two periods through the themes that are established to analyze the unique characteristics of these periods further, it is possible to see that women’s movement in Iran is quite active. They have been fighting for gender equality for more than a century. This fact is apparent when looking at these periods comparatively. It is understood that women’s movement in these periods, although differed in some aspects, showed similarities with each other.



**Keywords:** Women's Movement, Iran, Green Movement, Reform Era

## ÖZ

### İRAN'DA KADIN HAREKETİ: REFORMİST DÖNEM VE YEŞİL HAREKETİN KARŞILAŞTIRMALI BİR ÇALIŞMASI

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Bu tezde kadın hareketinin iki dönemi incelenmiştir; Reform dönemi ve Yeşil Hareket. Bu dönemlerin seçilmelerinin nedeni Reform döneminde toplum hakları konusunda iyileşmeleri tecrübe etmeleri, fakat Ahmadinejad döneminde ise bunun tersi bir durumu yaşamış olmalarıdır. Dolayısıyla kadınların bu dönemlerdeki tecrübeleri önemlidir. Bu iki döneme oluşturulan temalar sayesinde daha derinden bakılmaktadır. Reform dönemi kadın hareketinin özellikleri; parçalanma, faydacılık ve çoklu stratejilerdir. Yeşil Hareket dönemi kadın hareketleri özellikleri ise; çeşitlilik, politik değişim, bağımsızlık, dağılma koalisyonu ve baskı nedeniyle geri çekilmedir. Bu dönemlere bakarak İran'daki kadın hareketlerinin oldukça aktif olduğunu görebiliriz. İranlı kadınlar cinsiyet eşitliği için yüzyıldan fazla bir süredir mücadele etmektedirler. Bu gerçek bu iki döneme karşılaştırmalı bakılarak görülebilmektedir. Anlaşılan odur ki, her ne kadar kadın hareketleri bu iki dönemde farklılık göstermişse de, benzerlikleri de ortadadır ve bu tez bunu göstermektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kadın Hareketi, İnan, Yeşil Hareket, Reform Dönemi

*To My Precious Nephew Sarp...*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGIARISM .....	iii
ABSTRACT .....	iv
ÖZ.....	vi
DICATION .....	viii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	ix
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	x
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .....	xii
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1. Literature Review .....	1
1.2. Thesis Statement .....	7
1.3. Methodology .....	9
1.4. Outline of the Thesis .....	10
2. WOMEN’S MOVEMENT IN IRAN: A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.....	11
2.1. Women’s Movement as a Modernization Project .....	12
2.1.1. Education.....	15
2.1.2. Employment .....	21
2.1.3. Family Law.....	24
2.2. Women’s Movement as Civil Rights .....	25
2.2.1. Education.....	27
2.3. In the Revolutionary Period (1980-1989).....	28
2.3.1. Employment .....	29
2.3.2. Family Law.....	31
2.4. Conclusion .....	33
3. REFORM MOVEMENT AND WOMEN .....	36
3.1. Reform Movement’s Successes and Failures Regarding Women .....	37
3.2. Women’s Movement .....	40

3.2.1. Fragmented .....	41
3.2.2. Pragmatism .....	43
3.2.3. Multiple Strategies .....	46
3.3. Conclusion.....	48
4. AHMADINEJAD, GREEN MOVEMENT, AND WOMEN .....	50
4.1. Ahmadinejad Era and Women .....	52
4.2. 2009 Presidential Elections .....	55
4.2.1. Diversity .....	56
4.2.2. Political Change .....	57
4.2.3. Independence .....	59
4.2.4. Disperse Coalition .....	61
4.2.5. Retreat Due to Repression .....	63
4.3. Conclusion.....	64
5. CONCLUSION.....	66
REFERENCES .....	71
APPENDICES	
A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET .....	78
B. TEZ İZİN FORMU / THESIS PERMISSION FORM .....	89

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

CEDAW	The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against
MENA	Middle East and North Africa



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims to examine Iranian women's movement in the periods of Reform and the Green Movement. The perception regarding Iranian women and their movement in the Western world is quite complicated. Indeed, the words "movement" and "Iranian women" are seeming to clash, partly because of the classical understanding of social movements and both structure and the policies of the Islamic Republic regarding them and the resulting image of the Iranian women. Middle Eastern countries and women who live in these states are regarded by most as suppressed and voiceless. The Islamic Republic has cemented these ideas about women after its establishment through the 1979 Iranian Revolution. However, a look inside the 20th century Iranian women's movement tells a different story about Iranian women.

#### 1.1. Literature Review

How do we define social movements? The answer to this question varies. For example, McCarthy and Zald argue that a social movement is; "set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distributions of a society."<sup>1</sup> Toch defines social movements as "efforts by a large number of people to solve collectively a problem that they feel they have in common."<sup>2</sup> Jenkins and Form argue that "social movements have traditionally been defined as organized efforts to bring about

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<sup>1</sup>John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory," *American Journal of Sociology* 82, no. 6 (1977): 1217.

<sup>2</sup> Hans Toch, *The Social Psychology of Social Movements* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 5.

social change."<sup>3</sup> This particular narrative, specifically, the inclusion of the concept change in the social movements came into existence in the 1970s and 1980s with the leftist protests and their drive to change.<sup>4</sup> It is in contrast with the scholarly view of social movements in the previous two decades. Indeed, in the 1950s and 1960s, social protests were regarded as irrational behavior,<sup>5</sup> which does not come as a shock when one considers Durkheim's views on the social protests. Indeed, according to Durkheim, social protests were as deviant as the concept of suicide.<sup>6</sup>

As can be gathered, social movements' literature is quite extensive. There are works on the concept of Resource Mobilization, which are about the importance of social organizations in the matter of changing the tide of social movements. McCarthy and Zald's "Research Mobilization and Social Movements" can be given as an example. In this article, the authors argue that the literature of the social movements should move more towards the organizational viewpoint through constructing them in terms of resources. It is because they agree, resources are what organizations are striving for.<sup>7</sup> Another concept in the theories of the social movement is the Political Process and Opportunity. This concept stresses the importance of the dynamic and complex relationship between the three variables; economic resources, culture, and the political process. Works like Gamson and Meyer "Framing Political Opportunity" showed that these three variables have significant importance in the course of a social movement.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, political

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<sup>3</sup>J.Craig Jenkins and William Form, "Social Movements and Social Change," in *The Handbook of Political Sociology: States, Civil Societies, and Globalization*, ed. Thomas Janoski et al. (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 331.

<sup>4</sup> Tara Povey, *Social Movements in Egypt and Iran* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 22.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> McCarthy and Zald, 1220-1.

<sup>8</sup> Valentine N. Moghadam, and Elham Gheytauchi, "Political Opportunities and Strategic Choices: Comparing Feminist Campaigns in Morocco and Iran," *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 15, no. 3 (September 2010): 268.

opportunities are significant because they are bound to the systems they exist inside. Meaning, the openness or closeness of those political systems is crucial. Also, states' capacity for repression is another significant element. A closed Political Opportunity, according to Della Porta, can have significant consequences for a social movement by "restricting a movement's resources and limiting its facilities...destroying leaders...encouraging conflict between groups, and sabotaging particular actions."<sup>9</sup> Cultural framing has come to be understood as "meanings and definitions that people bring to their situation, which reflect or inform ideas and sentiments."<sup>10</sup> Values, collective identities, tactics, and, also, cultures themselves are counted inside the cultural framing context. Thus, these frames are being used "strategically to persuade audiences."<sup>11</sup>

Feminist literature also contributed to the studies of social movements by drawing attention to a couple of variables. For example, how women's movements build their identities regarding their relations with the states, their transnational linkages with one another, and the relationship between gender and social movements, et cetera. For example, in their work Joya Misra and Leslie King first explained the complicated relationship between women and state, and second, pointed out that the fact that transnational feminist movements help advance women's rights on the subjects of employment, population policies, and social welfare. According to Misra and Leslie, these movements have both national and international echoes, as one of the globalizations' effects. In the end, women's movements reshape both national and international governance, which translate as local and state policy makings.<sup>12</sup> Einwohner, Hollander, and Olson, pointed out that although gender is

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<sup>9</sup> Donatella Della Porta, "Social Movements and the State: Thoughts on the Policing of Protest.," in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framing*, ed. Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald (Cambridge, UK: The Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1996), 65.

<sup>10</sup> Moghadam and Gheytanchi, 269.

<sup>11</sup> James Jasper, "A Strategic Approach to Collective Action: Looking for Agency in Social-Movement Choices," *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 9, no. 1 (January 2004): 4.

not an objective opposition tool to be used inside a social movement, it can be used as such. Indeed, they state that using gender in a social movement can determine whether or not that movement is successful by either establishing the existing gender norms or challenging them.<sup>13</sup>

When it comes to the Middle East, however, the application of these different concepts to the region gets complicated. Indeed, the general idea, which is excepted about the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), is that these two regions are not compatible with the studies of social movements. Hence, the bulk of the works regarding MENA and social movements are devoted to Islamist movements. The reason for this is because, in these two regions, authoritarian regimes are typical, and democratically motivated structures and policies are rare. These variables are essential for the development of both civil societies and social movements.<sup>14</sup> Despite this, however, interest in the Middle East is getting rampant. Indeed, new literature devoted to Islamists movements, women movements, and protests movements that took place in states like Iran, specifically about the Green Movement, emerged.<sup>15</sup> Despite the growing literature on the contestation politics, social movements in the Middle East and North Africa regions, such as the Iranian Revolution, are being viewed as the "exceptional cases."<sup>16</sup> The reason for this understanding is that social movements that take place in the MENA region are regarded as them taking their source from religious revivalism. As a result, these

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<sup>12</sup> Joya Misra and Leslie King, "Women, Gender, and State Policies," in *The Handbook of the Political Sociology States, Civil Societies, and Globalization*, ed. Thomas Janoski et al. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 544.

<sup>13</sup> Rachel L. Einwohner, Jocelyn A. Hollander, and Toska Olson, "Engendering Social Movements," *Gender & Society* 14, no. 5 (October 2000): 694-5.

<sup>14</sup> Moghadam, and Gheytauchi, *Political Opportunities and Strategic Choices: Comparing Feminist Campaigns in Morocco and Iran*, 270.

<sup>15</sup> Moghadam and Gheytauchi, "Women, Social Protests, and the New Media Activism In the Middle East and North Africa," 3.

<sup>16</sup> Navid Pourmokhtari, "Protestation and Mobilization in the Middle East and North Africa: A Foucauldian Model," *Foucault Studies*, no. 22 (June 2017): 193.

movements are considered as not progressive.<sup>17</sup> As a consequence, according to Pourmokhtari, both Alberto Melucci and Alain Touraine labeled these movements as "regressive utopianism and anti-movements," respectively.<sup>18</sup> Hence, when it comes to the MENA region, these types of regards concerning the area made it hard for any social movements that happened inside to fit into the theories of social movements.

Concerning women in the region, the studies about them were mostly focused on family laws and women's legal status in the region. Turkey, Iran, Egypt, and Palestine is where the general body of work was devoted to women's movements.<sup>19</sup> Especially the studies of women and Iran, "perplexed"<sup>20</sup> observers, while trying to understand the nature of it. Indeed, was there a women's movement in Iran where Iranian women added their spin to it? Was there a movement at all? After all, if there was a women's movement in Iran, it was far and few in between. Indeed, it also lacked a few fundamental structures like a clear cut strategy, hierarchical leadership. The same structures that turn social protests into movements, according to Western imagination.<sup>21</sup> This confusion, according to Bayat, comes from Western-oriented social movements studies, and, according to them, either there is a movement, or there is not.<sup>22</sup> He argues that women's activism in Iran is what James Scott refers to as "everyday forms of resistance."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Moghadam and Gheytauchi, "Political Opportunities and Strategic Choices: Comparing Feminist Campaigns in Morocco and Iran," 270.

<sup>20</sup> A. Bayat, "A Women's Non-Movement: What It Means to Be a Woman Activist in an Islamic State," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 27, no. 1 (January 2007): 168.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 168-169.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

James Scott explained his everyday forms of resistance by giving the example of the poor Japanese peasant women's experience, their struggle through foot-dragging, false compliance, and or sabotage in order to show disobedience to the superior classes.<sup>24</sup> Bayat admits, however, that women's movement in Iran is carrying aspects of what could help them characterized as the new social movements. Aspects like the fact that they do not have a strict leadership structure, a collective identity that binds them all under one umbrella, or a singular ideology.<sup>25</sup> Ali Akbar Mahdi makes similar observations. Indeed, while pointing out the women's movement unique nature, he argues that this movement is, according to Moghadam, "without direction, leadership, and structure."<sup>26</sup> However, these seemingly negative aspects of the Iranian women's movement does not, in reality, constitute a negative situation for Mahdi. Different women's activism from different segments of society makes women's movement unpredictable.<sup>27</sup> Meaning, Iranian women's movement's lack of similarity with classical social movements is what constitutes its leading quality. He argues what their movement can be called is, in this case, a "collective action without actors."<sup>28</sup> Farhad Khosrowkhavar, on the other hand, argues that Iranian women's movement is one of the three movements that have emerged in the late 1990s, alongside student movements and intellectuals.<sup>29</sup> While admitting Iranian women's movement's unusual disposition, Homa Hoodfar and Fatemah Sedighi argue that;

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>26</sup> Valentine M. Moghadam, 2004, "Women in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Legal Status, Social Positions, and Collective Action, paper presented at Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, November 16-17, 2004.

<sup>27</sup> Ali Akbar Mahdi, "The Iranian Women's Movement: A Century-Long Struggle," *The Muslim World* 94, no. 4 (November 2004): 444.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 443.

<sup>29</sup> Farhad Khosrokhavar, "New Social Movements in Iran," *ISIM Newsletter*, no.7 (2001): 17.

"its diverse organizations have demands that are shared across class, ethnicity, and generation, and even across ideological and secular/religious boundaries."<sup>30</sup>

According to Moghadam, however, women in Iran are in the period of pre-movement. Indeed, she argues that women are in the pre-movement period where there are neither massive public mobilizations nor organizations which could help women to build a social movement. However, the necessary consciousness and discourse to build such a movement are, indeed, present.<sup>31</sup> She gives indicators that point to a possible, full-fledged social movement by the women. The first is the fact that women are making their grievances known both in public and private spheres. Individual acts of resistance towards the compulsory hejab by both young religious women and secular women are examples of this. Second, although women's movement in Iran does not have an established leadership structure, some women activists are slowly getting to be known in both national and international areas. Third, even though numbers remained relatively small, women organized feminist gatherings on essential dates such as International Women's Day. Fourth, new types of activism are emerging. For example, feminist magazines are being published by women, magazines like *Zanan*, *Farzaneh*, *Hoghough-e Zanan*. Also, in order to achieve rights in the legal sphere, several campaigns have been made. The emergence of Islamist feminists and the opening of women's studies throughout universities are also examples.<sup>32</sup>

## **1.2. Thesis Statement**

In the light of the Literature Review, I concluded that the Iranian women's movement is, indeed, a social movement, though it is different from the classical understanding of what a social movement is. From this point further, I will regard it as such. Also, I would like to contribute to this argument by analyzing two

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<sup>30</sup>Homa Hoodfar and Fatemeh Sadeghi, "Against All Odds: The Women's Movement in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Development* 52, no. 2 (2009): 221.

<sup>31</sup> Moghadam, 9.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

different women's movements; the women's movement inside the Reform period and in the Green Movement. The intention behind analyzing these two periods is to understand the women's movement's evolution better. In order to achieve this task, I ask a couple of questions:

- 1) How did Iranian women's movement develop over time?
- 2) What are the specific characteristics of these two individual cases of women's movements in Iran? Are there specific themes?
- 3) If there are specific characteristics/themes of these movements, do they show change?

A clarification about the women's movement needs to be given. This thesis considers that Iranian women's movement throughout the 20th century did not have an independent voice except for two separate occasions; the post-constitutional era and the Green Movement. What is mentioned here with the Green Movement is the period before the elections of 2009. The specifications of this period are made because, during the protests of 2009, after the elections, the Iranian women's movement moved independently at first. However, it could not remain as such due to the movement's nature. This situation will be explained in the chapter examining this issue. In the post-Constitutional period, for a time, women of Iran had an independent women's movement. This situation was not the case before and only included the period from 1911 to till the first Pahlavi Shah's ascending to power. Their movement was independent because the women's movement in this period was not linked with any political party or organization, unlike in the constitutional period. The movement for women's emancipation was an integrated part of the Constitutional movement. The post-Constitutional period, however, saw the separation of women's movement organizations from political parties. This distinctive character of the women's movement in Iran would not be seen until the 2009 Green Movement. First, with the Pahlavi Shahs, second with the establishment of the Islamic Republic, women's movement has always been either subordinated to a modernization project or put under government tutelage. Both Pahlavi Shahs' reigns and the Reformist government in the Islamic Republic, are examples of this.



This thesis aims to contribute to the literature of Iranian women's movements. While the literature about Iranian women's movement's history, beginning with the 20th century, is vast, however, an analysis between the different periods of this long journey is sparse. More importantly, an analysis between different periods where the dramatic change happened in the perspective of women is rare. This situation is the reason why these two periods have been chosen to be examined. Observing the shift between a relatively open era of reform period and the harsh realities of the Ahmadinejad period is interesting. Thus, an examination of this exciting process regarding women is not something to be found easily. Hence, this thesis can fill this void to a certain degree. Although this thesis can guide readers through a more detailed analysis of Iranian women's movement, it has restrictions that need to be analyzed as well. For example, in order to give a cohesive explanation of the Iranian Women's movements history, the Mosaddegh era of 1951-1953 has not been examined. The reason behind this decision was to be able to cut women's movement into two different periods. Even though extensive thinking about this period has been done, a category which this period would fit could not be found. Another restriction that should be mentioned is the fact that this thesis takes the Green Movement specifically as a period to examine the women's movement inside. A thorough analysis of Ahmadinejad's period's women's movement, outside of the Green Movement, has not been made. Although relevant information can be found in Chapter 3, it is to a limited degree.

### **1.3. Methodology**

During this thesis writing process, secondary sources have been used, which includes books, chapters from edited books and articles from journals. Some news and other internet sites also have been used. These secondary sources helped me to create the themes which I used as a toolkit to analyze each chapter. There is a total of eight themes. For the reform period, there are three, and for the Green Movement, there are five of them. These themes were reached by looking at each 10.

women's movement's characteristics, their activities, their behaviors, how they resisted against the regime, etc. For the reform period, by looking at the activities that women groups were involved during that time, whether they were among each other or with each other, let me to my themes. In terms of the women's movement in the Green Movement, the process went precisely the same way, albeit a bit easier because it was easier to find patterns that could lead me to the themes in that period. These themes were used, in a sense, like lenses, which guided me through each period. The usage of secondary sources was born out of necessity due to my inability to read Persian. Hence, it would be fair to admit that this situation created certain limitations regarding this thesis. This is a point that should be kept in mind before going forward with this thesis. Although the secondary sources were plentiful and provided much help while writing this thesis, the limitations such as the lack of diverse perspectives from all different sides, from all different spectrums regarding women, is also the truth.

#### **1.4. Outline of the Thesis**

In this chapter, there are five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction, which consists of the Literature Review, Thesis Statement, Methodology, and the Outline of the Thesis. The second chapter gives the history of 20th century Iranian women's movement. This history is given by dividing it into two different categories, which are called respectively "Women's Movement as a Modernization Process (1906-1978) and "Women's Movement as a Civil Rights Movement (1979-2013). Themes are established to further analyze each chapter. The third chapter examines the Reform period's women's movement. This examination is done, once again, through the themes which are established to analyze more in-depth. The fourth chapter moves onto the Green Movement and the women's movement inside of it. There are specific themes to analyze this chapter too. The last chapter contains the final arguments, a discussion regarding these different periods of women's movement and their respective themes, and observations about the thesis.

## CHAPTER 2

### WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN IRAN: A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the Western world, after the Iranian Revolution, the image of Iranian women has completely changed. The pictures of thousands of women wearing chadors marching alongside men to overthrow Shah, while at the same time, chanting praises for the Islamic Republic, have flipped the image of Iranian women. An image that the Shah had meticulously created previously, from modern and educated to religious fanatics. The new Islamic Republic's rules about women, mainly the forced veiling, caught the attention of the West, and their understanding of Iranian women moved alongside with what they had seen from the outside. They saw women in chadors fully covered, and the Islamic Republic's treatment of women as inferior to men resulted in them labeling women of Iran as voiceless and weak. However, a closer look into Iranian history is enough to find that the assumptions about the country's women cannot be further from the truth. Iranian women have been active participants of social events throughout history, but more importantly, they have been fighting to be equal with men for more than a century.

Before going any further, establishing the structure for this chapter is needed. First, I shall divide this century-long women's movement into two different periods. The first period will cover from the Constitutional Revolution and through the Pahlavi Shahs' reigns' and the women's movement in these years up until the revolution, which constitutes the years from 1906 to 1979. This period will be named as "women's movement as a Modernity Project." The second period will cover from the Iranian Revolution and through the Ahmadinejad period and the women's movement in these years from 1979 to 2013. This period will be named as "women's movement as the Civil Rights Movement." For each period, I shall focus

on the demands which have been made by women throughout the 20th century, primarily about their needs, such as education, employment, and family law.

If one takes the Constitutional Movement as a starting point, one realizes that between the years 1906 and 1979, women's movement had a broader context, which was modernization. This situation means that the progress of women was a tool, in the eyes of the state, to modernize Iran, which will be explained below. It was the case specifically for both of the Pahlavi Shahs. After 1979 however, the women's movement slowly but surely moved to gain what it had lost with the Revolution, which was women's civil rights.<sup>33</sup>

## **2.1. Women's Movement as a Modernization Project**

Modernization of Iran, in this thesis, is understood as reforms, regulations, and change due to Iran's entrance into the world capitalist system. It first started as the modernization of the army due to European colonialism, which spread out to North Africa and the Middle East.<sup>34</sup> It was inspired after their Turkish counterparts as early as the nineteenth century.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, Najmabadi argues that Ottoman reforms did not only gave the footprints of modernization to the inspiring Iranian reformers at the time, but they also provided them with legitimacy.<sup>36</sup> Another Muslim country's road to embark on specific reforms in their state gave Iranian reformers the relative justification, in the eyes of the public, to follow the same road, which would allow them to embark on administrative, legal, and military reforms.<sup>37</sup> Constitutional Revolution (1906-1911) is the direct consequence of these reforms

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<sup>34</sup> Stephanie Cronin, "Importing Modernity: European Military Missions to Qajar Iran," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50, no. 1 (2008): 197.

<sup>35</sup> Afsaneh Najmabadi, "Hazards of Modernity and Morality: Women, State, and Ideology in Contemporary Iran," in *Women, Islam and the State*, ed. Deniz Kandiyoti, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press), 55.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

because they failed to be effective, especially when it comes to the economy.<sup>38</sup> During this period and afterward, anything related to the women was considered in the scope of modernization. It was particularly apparent during the reign of both Pahlavi Shahs. Reza Shah was the first ruler to elevate women's position in the country through some changes. These changes, in the fields such as economics and political institutions, were all occurred firstly, to sustain Iran in the new capitalist system. Capitalism demanded more contribution to the workforce, and division of labor and state had to comply. Secondly, one of the crucial aspects of modernization in Iran's case was the centralization of the state, which meant the centralization of power.<sup>39</sup> By the cause of centralization, women were positioned as the tools of ensuring it by being the agents that needed to be reformed to curtail the power of the clergy. As Faghfoory puts it:

Modernizers in Iran sought to achieve two primary goals. They sought to transform Iran's economy to a semi-industrialized and commercialized system; they also aimed at expanding the power of the central government over all segments of the society, with the purpose of centralization and unification. In the process, the government sought to eliminate the traditional social forces and ideologies such as the ulema and religion and to substitute new ideologies and attitudes seen as more compatible with its modernist aims.<sup>40</sup>

Hamideh Sadeghi is perhaps the one who explains the women's position in the modernization scheme of the first Pahlavi Shah the best. She argues that Reza Shah aimed to create a centralized and robust Iran, which meant building a strong army and establishing a Westernized country. Westernization, or Westernism, was synonym with secularization, which was the separation of powers between religion

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<sup>38</sup> Hellen Gheorghe, "The Constitutional Revolution of 1905 in Tehran: a Visible Manifestation of the Consequences of Imperial Modernisation in Qajar Iran?," *Asfar*, August 12, 2015, <https://www.asfar.org.uk/constitutional-revolution-1905-tehran-visible-manifestation-consequences-imperial-modernisation-qajar-iran-hellen-gheorghe/>.

<sup>39</sup> Mohammad H. Faghfoory, "The Ulama–State Relations in Iran: 1921–1941," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19, no. 4 (1987): 413.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 414.

and politics. For Iran, what this phenomenon meant was cutting back the power of the clergy.<sup>41</sup> She says:

Reza Shah and his Court allies used women to counter clerical power and enhance the Westernization and modernization images of the new secular and centralized state. It unveiled women, altered family laws, and slowly integrated women into the public space. It also modified the social and political landscape of the country, which women had come to represent to the world.<sup>42</sup>

Like his father, Mohammed Reza Shah continued his father's centralization of power methods by embarking on "new modernization schemes"<sup>43</sup>, such as the White Revolution, which will be touched upon in the second part, much to the dismay of the clerics. As we shall examine, the Pahlavi state made changes in the areas such as education, family laws et cetera and, actively supported women to be visible in the public sphere to modernize and centralize the Iranian state. Hence, one of the ways of achieving these aims meant curtailing the power of the clergy. The clergy needed to be curtailed because they had tremendous power when it comes to religion. Since religion involves matters such as family, anything related to women was under the dominion of it too. Hence, in the eyes of the central authority, taking women under the dominion of the clergy would be cutting an essential vein of the ulama. Although, it would be far-reaching to argue that both Shahs' only aims by enfranchising women were to cut the power of the clergy. As mentioned above, Iran's entering into the new capitalist system forced Iran's hands to make necessary changes in order to adapt to it. However, it is fair to say that women were crucial in the matter of centralization of power, which consequently meant dissolving the powers of other traditional classes such as the clergy.

The reforms and legal changes and the modernization project, in general, did not automatically change everything for the better. It soon became apparent that modernization, in the case of Pahlavi state, meant repression too. Indeed, Reza

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<sup>41</sup> Hamideh Sedghi, *Women and Politics in Iran: Veiling, Unveiling, and Reveiling*(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 64.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.

<sup>43</sup> Shireen Burki, *Politics of State Intervention: Gender Politics in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 84.

Shah not only repressed any opposition to himself, but he also did not allow people to establish independent newspapers, women's organizations, trade unions, and the like.<sup>44</sup> Especially for women, this contributed to them not being able to form an independent voice, which could raise the awareness about the gender inequality they were experiencing for centuries.

### **2.1.1. Education**

From the mid-nineteenth century, the issue of women's education had been at the forefront of the minds of individuals who were the advocates of women's emancipation. For them, education was a vital issue to overcome gender inequality in Iran. Women's demands regarding this issue were raised quite strongly in the period of the Constitutional Revolution. Honestly, women's heavy involvement in the movement made it impossible for broader society to ignore their demands or their presence in society any longer.

Constitutional Revolution, in the years 1906-1911, was the demand from the Iranian people to limit Qajar Shah's powers by establishing both a constitution and a parliament. The protests unfolded in early 1905 as a result of the economic hardships. Different segments of the society, like bazaar, merchants, and ulema, came together and protested against the Qajar Shah.<sup>45</sup> In these protests for the constitution, women were heavily involved. They marched with men and protested alongside them. Women were also encouraged to participate in the sit-ins, which had been conveyed outside of the royal place to force Mozaffar od-Din Shah's hands. In the end, the protests proved to be fruitful, and the first Majlis convened on August 5, 1906, just three weeks after the protests.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Sedghi, 65.

<sup>45</sup> Arzoo Osanloo, *The Politics of Women's Rights in Iran* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 24.

<sup>46</sup> Parvin Paidar, *Women and the Political Process in Twentieth-Century Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 54.

This involvement of women in a severe societal event changed the way for women by enabling them to be more active and build women's movement.

Even though women's schools, to a minimal extent, existed before the Constitutional Revolution, the first official school for women opened by Touba Azemudeh in 1907 called Namous.<sup>47</sup> By the time 1910 was rolled up, there were 2,167 students and 41 girls' schools.<sup>48</sup> In 1913 the number of schools reached 63.<sup>49</sup> Besides women, the pioneers of the fight for women's education were the progressive intellectual men, ranging from journalists, poets to parliamentarians. Two of such parliamentarians were Vakil-or Ro'aya and Taghizadeh.<sup>50</sup>

The involvement of the parliamentarians and intellectual men was because women's emancipation was synonyms with the progress of Iran to many. For Iran to move forward, mothers who were aware of their positions in Iran, who was responsible and fervent supporters of the country's progress, were needed. Education first and foremost started at home; hence, the education of the mothers was necessary to build better Iranian generations.

Between 1911 and 1917, with political oppression and political leaders' exile, women took control of their movement. In 1917, while the effects of the Bolshevik Revolution in the world could be felt, women were able to use this radical atmosphere to establish societies and organizations and publish newspapers where they continued to fight for education and women's rights in the matters polygamy, family and veiling.<sup>51</sup> For example, in 1913, Shokufeh (Blossom) was established by Mrs. Maryam

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<sup>47</sup> Hammed Shahidian, "The Education of Women in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Journal of Women's History* 2, no. 3 (1991): 8.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ali Akbar Mahdi, "The Iranian Women's Movement: A Century-Long Struggle," *The Muslim World* 94, no. 4 (2004): 429.

<sup>50</sup> "Remembering Iran's Brave Women in Constitutional Revolution," NCRI Women Committee, October 31, 2018, accessed May 30, 2019, <https://women.ncr-iran.org/2018/08/06/remembering-iran-s-brave-women-constitutional-revolution/>.



Amid Mozayen-ol-Saltaneh, who also founded the women's organization Anjoman Khavatin Irani (Iranian Women's Society). Its primary aim was "the promotion of Iranian goods, promotion of art, industry, education, science, and art among women."<sup>52</sup> The membership for Anjoman Khavatin Irani reached 5.000 women in just a couple of weeks, and Shokufeh stayed active until 1919.<sup>53</sup> However, Reza Shah's rise to power halted this burgeoning women's movement in Iran.

Reza Shah is the first of the two Pahlavi Shahs who ruled Iran up until 1979. He was an officer in the Qajar Iran first. Due to Iran's problems in the first two decades of the 20th century, namely Russian and British involvement in Iran, economic problems, and issues regarding the ethnic diversity in the country, he decided to take charge and organize a coup in 1921. When the coup was successful, he was reinstated as the war minister. In 1925, however, he was appointed as Shah by the Majlis.

In this period, women's development and emancipation, for the first time, were handled with state policies. This situation meant that for the first time, women became one of the focus points which the state wanted to fix. It subsequently meant that blossoming independent women's movement, where women took charge of their demands were incorporated into the state. Women organizations were brought under state control when, in 1935, Reza Shah established Ladies Centre officially. As a result of the rising of the strong state, women's activities seized to be independent. The state abused women's earlier activisms for Westernization and used them for centralization policies. This condition, in turn, created state feminism, where the state acted as the primary voice for women.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>52</sup> Shireen Burki, *Politics of State Intervention: Gender Politics in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 184.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Sedghi, 76.

Reza Shah started his program regarding women with education. He made sure that public education was accessible to women. For the first time, obstacles against female education were removed by the state. It gave way to more schools being established in the following years. In 1929, more than 10,000 girls were enrolled in schools, and 190 schools for girls were established. Most of these schools were private establishments run by individuals who believed educating women was a necessary step towards emancipating them.<sup>55</sup> Next was the opening up of teacher training schools for women to overcome the shortage of teachers.<sup>56</sup>

Although Reza Shah opened up a pathway for women's education, he, in the end, did not manage to further women's emancipation. His policy of suppressing women's independent organizations and himself establishing them instead led to an absence of debate on important issues about women. *Alam-e Nesvan* remained as the only women's periodical at the time, and its voice too was virtually the same as the state's.<sup>57</sup> Shah's repressive policies toward any organization which was established independently from the state meant that feminists were becoming advocates of the state. This situation also prevented oppositional feminist voices from surfacing.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, his unveiling policy, which first started in the schools, prevented conservative Iranian families from sending their daughters to school. Indeed, the decree of 1936 regarding women's veils created problems of mobility among women who were not permitted to leave the house without their veils.<sup>59</sup> Hence his policies concerning women, although successful in terms of

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<sup>55</sup> Eliz Sanasarian, *The Women's Rights Movement in Iran: Mutiny, Appeasement, and Repression from 1900 to Khomeini* (New York, NY: Praeger, 1982), 61 quoted in Hammed Shahidian, "The Education of Women in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Journal of Women's History* 2, no. 3 (1991): 9.

<sup>56</sup> Shireen Mahdavi, "Reza Shah Pahlavi and women: a re-evaluation," in *The Making Of Modern Iran The State and Society under Riza Shah, 1921-1941*, ed. Stephanie Cronin, (Fetter Lane: London, Routledge, 2003), 184.

<sup>57</sup> Jasamin Rostam-Kolayi, "Expanding agendas for the 'new' Iranian woman: family law, work, and unveiling," in *The Making of Modern Iran The State and Society under Riza Shah, 1921-1941*, ed. Stephanie Cronin, (Fetter Lane: London, Routledge, 2003), 175.

<sup>58</sup> Paidar, 105.

education, were limited in the sense of creating real change in Iran. Several scholars have argued that only one percent of the population of women benefitted from his reforms regarding women.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, according to Beck and Nashat, the segments of society which celebrated the modernizing policies of Reza Shah regarding women were the upper-class and educated women. The majority, however, could not be won over because reforms such as unveiling, was not a step towards satisfying the actual needs of women of Iran.<sup>61</sup>

Reza Shah had to abdicate his crown to his son in 1941. The two great powers, the Soviet Union and Great Britain, forced him to leave his post to his son and go to exile to prevent Iran from joining the ranks with Nazi Germany.

His son, Mohammed Reza Shah, continued his father's path to modernize Iran. His reforms regarding women, however, were more extensive than his father. Unlike his father's strict orders regarding unveiling, the young shah relaxed the extensive control over it to allow women to appear in chadors if they wished. Some women who had been unable to mobilize because of the veil ban were finally able to use this relaxed environment to get educated. Women were also able to voice their demands. Unlike his father, Reza Shah was viewed as inexperienced and not as strict as his father. Even though women had been pressured not to act independently from the state concerning women's problems, they were able to use their voices again. Several women's organizations emerged once more. For example, Safiyeh Firouz established the national Women's Society in 1942, and Huma Huoshmandar established the journal called "Our Awakening." In this journal campaign for education, among other issues regarding women was talked

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<sup>59</sup> Osanloo, 25.

<sup>60</sup> Rudi Mathee, "Transforming Dangerous Nomads into Useful Artisans, Technicians, Agriculturalists: Education in the Reza Shah Period," in *The Making Of Modern Iran The State and Society under Riza Shah, 1921-1941*, ed. Stephanie Cronin, (Fetter Lane: London, Routledge, 2003), quoted in Arzoo Osanloo, *The Politics of Women's Rights in Iran* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 26.

<sup>61</sup> Lois Beck and Guity Nashat, *Women in Iran from 1800 to the Islamic Republic* (Urbana, IL: Univ. of Illinois Pr., 2004), 24.

about extensively.<sup>62</sup> After a brief period where Shah had to leave the country, due to the National Front's struggle for oil nationalization with the leadership of Mohammed Mossadeq, he centralized women's movement like his father before him. In 1958, 18 women's organizations were brought under one roof with the establishment of the Federation of Women's organizations.<sup>63</sup> This structure later got transformed into the Women's Organization of Iran with the leadership of Shah's twin sister Ashraf Pahlavi.<sup>64</sup> In doing so, Shah, like his father, took control of women's demands, depoliticized them, and used women's progress in the country as a marker of Iran's development.

Women's education, in this period too, had been viewed with great importance. Women's education was vital in the pathway to women's awakening; hence, female students' numbers in the period 1949 to 1979 rose from 94,000 to 1,800,000 at the primary level. Concerning the secondary level, numbers went from 7,000 to 824,000. Higher education also showed a considerable increase from 500 to 43,000. Also, in order to increase literacy all over Iran, Literacy Corps was established. Literacy Corps was one of the six aims that constituted Shah's White Revolution. This program was brought up to the Shah by the Kennedy administration in order to "combat communist subversion."<sup>65</sup> Also, it was a must in order to obtain American aid. The six aims of this program were; "land reform, sale of some state-owned factories to finance the land reform, the enfranchisement of women, nationalization of forests and pastures, formation of a literacy corps, institution for profit-sharing for workers in the industry."<sup>66</sup> As one of the

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<sup>62</sup> Sanam Vakil, *Women and Politics in the Islamic Republic of Iran Action and Reaction* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 35.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Farian Sabahi, "The Literacy Corps in Pahlavi Iran (1963-1979): Political, Social and Literary Implications," *Cemoti* 31, no. 1 (2001): 191.

<sup>66</sup> Lisa Reynolds Wolfe, "The White Revolution in Iran," *Iran Review*, April 20, 2013, <http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/The-White-Revolution-in-Iran.htm>)

objectives of this program, the Literacy Corps was established on the belief that it was the cheapest way to educate the masses. About 200,000 men and women were actively involved in this project.<sup>67</sup> By the time it was in the mid-'70s, more than 12,000 individuals were working in the villages. Another educational gain for women at the time was that they were able to get into academic fields like education, medicine, engineering, liberal arts, and the like.<sup>68</sup>

### **2.1.2. Employment**

Women in the late Qajar period participated in the labor market, although mainly what they did was related to their family, which resulted in them working as unpaid in their households. For example, the first textile factory in Iran was established in the 1850s. However, the textile business continued to be dominated by small-scale household type production centers. Women were mainly spinning wool and cotton from their households. Even though textile was primarily seen as a female occupation, most women continued to work in their homes. Since Iran, before the production of oil, exported agricultural products and handicrafts, women were active in production too. They, however, remained as unpaid workers of their households. The woven carpet was another one of Iran's exports where most women and little children worked. Women went mainly unpaid because this was seen as their contribution to their household rather than an occupation where one exchanges money in return for production. They also worked in small-scale manufactures where the working conditions for women were extremely dire. They worked long hours with little money.<sup>69</sup>

The situation for Iranian women's involvement did not show signs of changing up until the first Pahlavi era; however, the issue of women's employment was first

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<sup>67</sup> Sabahi, 192.

<sup>68</sup> "Feminist Movements iii. In the Pahlavi Period," Encyclopædia Iranica, accessed June 15, 2019, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/feminist-movements-iii>.

<sup>69</sup> Valentine M Moghadam, "Hidden from History? Women Workers in Modern Iran," *International Society of Iranian Studies* 33, no. 3/4 (2000): 308.

brought up in the journal *Danesh* (Knowledge), which was established in 1910. Indeed, after the first step of women's education was brought up by women, some journals like *Danesh* went further to advocate women's employment. Nursery was the first line of a career path according to one article published in 1911.<sup>70</sup> It was Reza Shah in the 1930s that brought this idea into reality. Indeed, midwifery teaching centers, where the education period was three years, were established by the Ministry of Health.<sup>71</sup> Midwifery, as it turned out, was not the only career choice a woman could take. Indeed, soon after making schools available for women, teacher shortage appeared to be a problem. Teacher training centers were opened to answer the need for teacher shortage. According to data, between 1936 and 1937, there were 3,967 women teachers.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, state bureaucracy grew, and it was able to absorb a small number of middle-class women into it. Most rural women, however, felt little change in their situation regarding employment opportunities. Indeed, because of Reza Shah's unveiling policies, a lot of rural women who wore traditional clothes could not enjoy Reza Shah's development reforms for Iran.

Mohammed Reza Shah took his father's mantle of Shah after him and continued to modernize Iran. During his period, he, too, continued to ban any organization, which operated independently from the state. This situation left little room for women to maneuver. However, this does not mean that women's activities stopped altogether; it was, in fact, the opposite. They continued to be active through the state. The state gave attention to social welfare programs; hence, women's activities mostly moved with them. For example, in 1956, the Welfare Council for Women and Children was founded by the Ministry of Labor. The main objective of this organization was to improve the employment conditions for women and children. Women mostly contributed with great enthusiasm to the organizations

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<sup>70</sup> Camron Michael Amin, *The Making of the Modern Iranian Woman: Gender, State Policy, and Popular Culture, 1865-1946* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2002), 165.

<sup>71</sup> Paidar, 108.

<sup>72</sup> Camron Michael Amin, "Propaganda and Remembrance: Gender, Education, and "the Women's Awakening" of 1936," *Iranian Studies* 32, no. 3 (1999): 376, January 02, 2007, accessed June 06, 2019.

about agriculture, industry, midwifery, home economics, et cetera, for women all over Iran to improve their lives.<sup>73</sup> Another critical point in this period regarding women's employment was the fact that Mohammed Reza Shah allowed women to be judges. This point was a big step in addition to women getting their voting rights in 1963.<sup>74</sup>

Even though the Shah encouraged women to work, due to Iran's rapid economic transformation in the 1960s, women who participated in the labor force still were not equal to men. Indeed, after 1963, especially with the White Revolution's policy of enfranchisement of women, the government, in order to encourage women to work, sought a more favorable policy of integrating women of Iran in the public sector. Consequently, this created opportunities for women associations to be established. Paid maternity leave was one of the positive consequences of this new government policy. However, the ratio of women who were active in the workforce remained around eight percent in the 1970s.<sup>75</sup> The reasons for women's limited participation in the workforce can be counted as follows; discrimination of women in the labor market, undesirable working conditions, and difficulties of managing both a household and a working life. The numbers are low compared to men for another reason too. The unofficial jobs of women were not shown in the statistics. For instance, women produced handicrafts from their homes. As mentioned above, these types of productions which were financially beneficial to women's households were quite common. These occupations of women, however, were not included in the numbers of women who participated in the workforce, which is why the statistics of women in the labor market were lower than they originally were.

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<sup>73</sup> Paidar, 136.

<sup>74</sup> Paidar, 145.

<sup>75</sup> Vakil, 38.

### 2.1.3. Family Law

Family law in Iranian history has an uncertain meaning for Iranian women. Since the turn of the century, after all the reforms had been issued by Pahlavi Shahs and through the women's active involvement in demanding them, laws regarding family was the one area where the change took place slowly. Subsequent adjustment to the family law resulted in a backlash that showed itself almost immediately after the Revolution.

Family in Iran was a dominion which the ulama were responsible for centuries. Marriage, divorce, family relations, dowry, polygamy, any issue regarding these topics and beyond were under the control of the ulama. Even though with the Constitutional Revolution, issues relating to the marriage were drafted in the constitution, it was Reza Shah who took the final step of restricting ulama's jurisdiction over the family. One of the most significant shifts was the Marriage Law, which passed in 1931. It required all marriages to be regulated and legislated by civil courts instead of ulama. This law also gave a chance for a woman to demand a divorce. Also, the marriage age for boys and girls under this law was established; 18 for boys and 15 for girls.<sup>76</sup> Although Reza Shah delivered a big blow to ulama, in reality, the applicability of these new laws was limited. Like many other reforms that brought forward by both Pahlavi Shahs, the urban residents of wealthier women were the ones who were able to take advantage of them. Also, while granting women rights to some degree, Reza Shah did not completely go against the ulama concerning family matters. Indeed, many of the provisions of the family law continued the Shia tradition of male supremacy. Even though women were able to initiate divorce proceedings and the fact that marriage licenses were started to be issued for every marriage, still laws regarding child custody, polygamy, and inheritance favored men.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 31-2.

<sup>77</sup> Sedghi, 74.



Mohammed Reza Shah, however, was able to move one step forward than his father. The first change in his period came in the 1967 Family Protection Law. With this law, what was intended to be achieved was equality of divorce. Also, polygamy was subjected to harsh limitations. Indeed, taking a second wife was to be achieved on the conditions of the first wife's consent. Likewise, men were unable to divorce their wives just by saying 'I divorce you' three times in a row. Marriage age for girls was also another matter of change, which with the law it was raised to 18.<sup>78</sup> The last amendments to the Family Protection Law before the Islamic Revolution took place in 1975. These amendments brought further equality of women in terms of child custody. Generally, in the Sharia, child custody automatically went to the father. Even in the cases where the father in question was deceased, the father's family got the parenting rights of the children. Women could get the custody of children for boys up until two years, for girls up until seven years. With the amendment, however, children could go to either parent.<sup>79</sup>

## **2.2. Women's Movement as Civil Rights**

As we have seen, women's movement from the beginning of the 20th century to the Iranian Revolution was in line and part and parcel of the modernization project. Women were treated as the tools of the centralization of power in the modernization project and as the markers of Westernization. Thus, women's movement was able, to a certain extent, to use this situation to demand more significant improvements concerning their lives. However, both Pahlavi Shahs absorbed women's movements into their own perception and understanding of modernizing Iran, leaving women unable to represent themselves independently. The situation started to change with the Islamic Revolution.

Islamic Revolution is the event where people of Iran came together to overthrow the Shah, whom they increasingly perceived as an agent of American imperialism. Coupled with uneven development due to the oil boom in the 1970s, the Iranian

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<sup>78</sup> Vakil, 36-7.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

economy's complete dependence on it, the widening gap between the rich and the poor frustrated people further, causing them to challenge the Shah. The issue started when a pro-Shah newspaper published an article about Khomeini in 1978, who, since 1963, was seen as the sole adversary of the Shah. Frustrated by the "slandorous remarks"<sup>80</sup>, people marched to the streets to demand Shah's removal. In the subsequent events that claimed many lives and caused a lot of blood and tears to be spilled, the Shah of Iran finally left the country, after much struggle, and with the return of Khomeini from exile, the Iranian Revolution was completed.

Women's role in this period of revolution will not be examined further here. What one needs to know is that as in any other social event that occurred in Iran, women marched together with men with overwhelming numbers. However, the regime that had glorified women throughout the revolution was the same regime that would not fulfill their promises to women. They had promised women more significant societal roles; they created a utopia where women and men were equal by the eyes God first, and then the government. The reality, however, was different. Women slowly realized the reality of the Islamic Republic when the new regime first removed the existing Family Law just two weeks after the establishment of the Islamic Republic. Those amendments had brought significant acquisitions for women. The second blow came with the government's decree for women to observe hijabs. First, it was put forward for women in the labor force. Women who refused to comply were removed from their jobs. Then this rule became applicable to all women, no matter what their thoughts were on the matter. The same rule applied to women of different religions as well. Women, from the beginning of the Islamic Republic to this day, having faced these realities, protested, bargained, and came up with new ways to defy and make their voices heard no matter what. Here, the focus here is women's movement following 1979 until 2013 through the themes of education, employment, and family.

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<sup>80</sup> Janet Afary, "Iranian Revolution," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, March 28, 2019, accessed June 15, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Iranian-Revolution>.

### 2.2.1. Education

In April 1980, due to the Islamic Revolution's Cultural Revolution, the universities were shut down for the next three years.<sup>81</sup> Faculties were purged from people who did not comply with the rules of the Islamic Republic. When universities opened again in 1984, women's field of study was limited. Some fields did not apply to women anymore; out of 169 academic fields, 91 fields were forbidden for women to enter. These fields usually consisted of technical and engineering fields.<sup>82</sup> The first years of the Islamic Republic's education policies had complex effects on women. On the one hand, women's participation in education increased since conservative families could now send their daughters to school with ease, unlike in the Pahlavi period. Because of this reason, the literacy rate increased. Indeed, in 1976, the percentage of literacy among women was 35.5%; however, in 1986, the percentage rose to 52.1%.<sup>83</sup> On the other hand, however, even though the number of women in elementary and secondary education increased, the same could not be said for higher education. Indeed, while the ratios for women who attended higher education in the academic years of 1974-5 and 1978-9 were, respectively, 28.5 and 30.8, it was decreased to 29.9 in the 1985-6 academic year.<sup>84</sup> The numbers for higher education decreased because of two reasons. The first one is that some fields were closed for women to enter, and the second one is that the total closure of universities for three years.

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<sup>81</sup> Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "The Revival of the Student Movement in Post-Revolutionary Iran," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 15, no. 2 (December 2001): 283.

<sup>82</sup> Goli M. Rezai-Rashti, "THE FUTURE OF IRAN: Educational Reform Women and Education in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Repressive Policies, Unexpected Outcomes," working paper (London: Legatum Institute, 2012), 4, accessed June 07, 2019.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Paidar, 320.

### 2.3. In the Revolutionary Period (1980-1989)

After the war with Iraq, which had lasted eight years, 1980-88, and after Ayatollah Khomeini's death in 1989, under president Rajsanjani, the Women's Social and Cultural Council was established. The central premise of this organization was to tackle the problems that women face that are legal, social, and economical. This council succeeded in lifting the ban on academic fields for women with the help of Islamic feminists in 1993.<sup>85</sup> Islamic feminism, briefly, is the "intellectual and theological trend advocating women's advancement and gender equality within an Islamic discursive framework."<sup>86</sup> Zahra Rahnavard, who is a prominent scholar herself and is the wife of ex-prime minister Mousavi, was the one who was credited for the removal of the ban on women. She was also one of the Islamic Feminists.<sup>87</sup>

Reformist era, between the years 1997-2005, with president Khatami's presidency, meant further improvement for women. The reforms that he pursued during his presidency, coupled with the liberalization wave that had started before him with Rajsanjani and, finally, the elimination of bans on women regarding academic fields, created the conditions for women to participate in the higher education with increasing numbers. Indeed, by the time it was 2001, women in higher education were more than 50%. Studies show that the population of women in most of the fields doubled between the years 2002-2003, except engineering. Women were dominating the fields which had been considered as traditionally belonged to men only, such as medicine and sciences.<sup>88</sup> The relaxed environment of the Khatami presidency changed when, in 2005, new president Mahmood Ahmadinejad came

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<sup>85</sup> Valentine M. Moghadam, *Modernizing Women Gender and Social Change in the Middle East* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Pub., 2013), 178.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>87</sup> Rezai-Rashti, 5.

<sup>88</sup> Goli M. Rezai-Rashti and Valentine M. Moghadam, "Women and Higher Education in Iran: What Are the Implications for Employment and the "Marriage Market?" *International Review of Education / Internationale Zeitschrift Für Erziehungswissenschaft / Revue Internationale De L'Education* 57, no. 3/4 (2011): 425-6.

to power in Iran. With him, the conservative ideas of women, even more so than the ones in the first couple of years of the Republic's establishment, emerged again. One of the most prominent of those ideas was about where women belong in Iranian society. The answer was home. Indeed, the emphasis on women's real place as their homes was heard a lot in the eight years that he remained in the office. During his presidency, the Special Council for Development and Promotion for Humanities was established to pursue the Islamisation of the academic disciplines.<sup>89</sup> In addition to this, universities once again limited the fields which women could have access to. Indeed, 77 fields got restricted for women to enter.<sup>90</sup>

### **2.3.1. Employment**

From 1979, women's employment in Iran was strictly discouraged unless individual families' survivals were dependent on them. As for the working women in the public sector, veiling was enforced to keep the working places following the Sharia Law. Any woman refused to comply with it was purged from their jobs. Many women lost their jobs in the public sector due to this new rule. Also, since the new government did not recognize female judges, women who had been appointed during the Pahlavi era were dismissed. Either women in the top governmental offices were purged, or they had to agree to work in lesser positions than their original places in the governmental posts. Islamic Republic's insistence on keeping women strictly in the private space also had another negative consequence for women. This negative consequence was the decreased participation of women in the labor force. The women population in the labor market fell under 10% from 13.6, according to the census, which was drawn up in 1986.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Rezai-Rashti and Moghadam, 428.

<sup>90</sup> Zakiyah Wahab, "Universities in Iran Put Limits on Women's Options," *The New York Times* (The New York Times, August 20, 2012), <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/20/world/middleeast/20iht-educbriefs20.html>

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 424.

This situation regarding women and employment, however, started to change during the 1990s. Indeed, women's participation in the labor market grew substantially. There are a couple of reasons for this. First, due to rising educational opportunities both in rural and urban areas, women had the opportunity to work in other professions aside from rural manufacture industry, which had been their primary source of income in the 1980s.<sup>92</sup> Second, rising oil revenues created a demand for the service sector where educated women could find opportunities for work.<sup>93</sup> Also, the Islamic Republic's segregation of the sexes policy, which encompasses every aspect of life, created a demand for women both in the education and health sectors.<sup>94</sup>

Even though women's employment opportunities rose, women still had to struggle for jobs throughout the decades. This struggle became a problem when women got more educated but could not find jobs to provide for themselves. One of the reasons for that is the fact that women get discriminated in Iran due to their sex when it comes to securing jobs for themselves. According to a relevant study on the matter<sup>95</sup>, the government and private sectors continue to prefer men over women in the hiring process. Moreover, harassment in the workplace is prevalent, and necessary changes in the laws have not been made to ease women's burdens in the labor market.<sup>96</sup> Another reason for the struggles women face in terms of employment is the changing attitudes of governments towards the issue. Khomeini's death and the period of rebuilding war-torn Iran, coupled with

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<sup>92</sup> F.E. Moghadam, "An Evaluation of the Productive Performance of Agribusinesses: An Iranian Case Study," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 33 (4): 755–76, quoted in Roksana Bahramitash and Hadi Salehi Esfahani, "From Postrevolution to the Reform Gender Politics and Employment," in *Veiled Employment: Islamism and the Political Economy of Women's Employment in Iran*, ed. Roksana Bahramitash and Hadi Salehi Esfahani (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2011), 96.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>95</sup> Rozalina Burkova, Human Rights Watch, report, May 25, 2017, accessed June 09, 2019.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

liberalization and reform movements, created job opportunities for women. However, these came to a halt with Ahmadinejad's presidency. To force women back to their homes, the government took some measures such as decreasing the women population who worked in the public sector. These measures affected 40% of women were employed. Another problem lies in the constitution. Indeed, even though the attitudes toward women's employment changed over time, women, if they wish to work, still need their husbands' permission to do so. Husbands, who are aware of the direct link between women's education, employment, and their free will to marry or get a divorce, do not let their wives work unless their work is needed.<sup>97</sup>

### **2.3.2. Family Law**

As mentioned above, once the Islamic Republic acquired power in Iran, authorities of the new regime almost immediately revoked the Pahlavi regime's Family Law. Second shah's family law amendments were progressive compared to the beginning of the Pahlavi rule, especially in the matter of women. However, the law amendments were not introduced long before for society to accept and adapt to them. Thus, the new regime's annulment of the Pahlavi family law was welcomed by many. The amendments regarding the age of marriage for girls, divorce rights, the issue of polygamy, and such were reversed.<sup>98</sup> Clergy's authority was re-asserted in the matters of family, after almost five decades without it. Men once again regained their right to unilaterally divorce women, polygamy and temporary marriages were encouraged once more. The age of marriage was reduced to nine years for women. Women's reactions to these developments alongside their reaction towards forced veiling, which was persuasive in the beginning, were quickly put out. The new regime was quick to label any opposition as western-influenced, and coupled with the repression due to the war with Iraq, women's

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<sup>97</sup> Azadeh Kian, "Gender Social Relations and the Challenge of Women's Employment," *Middle East Critique* 23, no. 3 (2014): 337.

<sup>98</sup> Homa Hoodfar and Shadi Sadr, "Islamic Politics and Women's Quest for Gender Equality in Iran," *Third World Quarterly* 31, no. 6 (2010): 891.

movement was dead even before it began.<sup>99</sup> Women's fight to gain what they have lost with the Islamic Republic continued, albeit differently. For instance, a feminist reading of Islam was one of the tools women used in order to gain their rights once again. *Zan-e Ruz*, an Islamic Feminist oriented journal, was used by women to get some amendments to the family law.<sup>100</sup> After much struggle, amendments regarding divorce and marriage contracts were achieved in 1984. Under these amendments, women gained the right to construct a contract before marriage, which they could put their conditions of marriage inside. Moreover, if these conditions would not be met, they could use them as legitimate grounds for divorce.<sup>101</sup> Another journal, *Zanan*, ran for 16 years, was also crucial for the women's cause. It contributed to further changes regarding family law by enabling wider society to gain insight on women's issues by printing them on the pages of the journal.<sup>102</sup>

Changes regarding family law continued. The new regime's move to reverse the family law had not just affected secular women. Indeed, even the most devout and supporters of the regime soon got disillusioned with the regime because of it. The Islamic Republic, seeing that it was losing the faith of the supporter women, modified laws in order to continue to get women's support. Indeed, by the time it was 1992, the family protection law of the second Pahlavi era, which was invalidated by the Islamic regime, was put in use once again.<sup>103</sup> In 1997, Family Courts were reestablished as separate entities once more with the presidency of Khatami. The majles mandated that family courts had the primary jurisdiction over family matters, and every court had to have one woman judge to consult. This

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Paidar, 282.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Vakil, 121.

<sup>103</sup> Louise Halper, "Law and Women's Agency in Post-Revolutionary Iran," *Harvard Journal of Law & Gender* 28 (2005): 97.



situation marked a complete return to the discarded family law of 1975. It is important to remember, however, that the family law had not been completely discarded from the beginning, much to the chagrin of the regime. Women's insistence on maintaining their rights stopped the regime from doing so.<sup>104</sup>

With the presidency of Ahmadinejad, there were talks of amendments to the Family Law. Indeed, The Family Protection law under president Ahmadinejad was created in 2007 to permit women to be judges. It also had provisions inside to deal with the punishment of men who marry girls when they are under the age of maturity. However, the government added its spin to the Family Protection bill, adding article 23, which allows polygamy without the consent of the first wife. Polygamy is a practice that is common in the Muslim Middle East. However, Iran is the only country to demand the first wife's permission in order for her husband to take a second wife. Although polygamy is not very common in Iran, what Ahmadinejad government was trying to do was to return women to their traditional roles in Islam. Hence, this could be ensured by putting it in the country's legal system.

A good result of this understandably controversial bill was that it managed to bring secular and Islamist women together to oppose it. Honestly, at least 50 women activists, secular and Islamist, decided to prevent this bill from being ratified. Other women's associations, such as One Million Signature Campaign, Women's Organization of the Islamic Republic, and Zainab Society, joined in and demanded a meeting with the parliamentarians to oppose the bill. In the end, they have succeeded postponing the bill for further consideration.<sup>105</sup>

## **2.4. Conclusion**

The turn of the 20th century in Iran brought many changes to the country. Maybe the most significant one, the Constitutional Movement, is where we usually take as

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>105</sup> Vakil, 187.

the starting point for women's movement in Iran. Indeed, the Constitutional Movement was the first time in Iran, where women's place in the society came under scrutiny. Prominent women who were aware of the shifting social structures in Iran were the ones who took advantage of them and slowly starting advancing women's cause.

As noted while looking at women's movement spanning more than a century through the themes of education, employment, and family law, women's movement in Iran showed two different paths. In the first path, women's movement, starting from the Constitutional Revolution until the end of the second Pahlavi Shah's reign in 1979, moved alongside with the modernization of Iran. Although the women's movement in Iran showed relative independence from time to time, such as in the aftermath of the Constitutional Revolution, it failed to develop as a completely separate movement from political parties or the state itself. It was due to the modernization project, which both Shahs undertook. This modernization project was first, top-down, second, and was not independent of the state itself. Due to this fact, women gained much of their rights as a result of the two Pahlavi Shahs' modernization efforts. This issue, however, does not mean that women stood beside while the state gave them their rights. Women, especially in the area of education, fought hard to make advances. Even in the early years of 20th-century women talked about the employment and familial rights of women.

The real struggle for women came after the Revolution. In the following years after the revolution, women fought in different ways to get what they lost: their civil rights. They resisted against the patriarchal interpretation of Sharia by opening up the discussion of gendered reading of it, they fought back while appearing to support the Islamic Regime, they struggled from the inside. Women also resisted to the patriarchal interpretation of their societal roles by getting more and more educated instead of remaining at home. They have supported reformist regimes to bring change into their situations. They have demanded their civil rights, especially in the reformist period and afterward, with campaigns such as One Million Signature Campaign. These women's, from middle-class to working-class, from Islamic feminists to secular oriented women, or women with no

ideological preferences, efforts forced governments to make changes in the fields of education, employment, and family law in order to gain women's support. While women's situation in Iran showed improvement due to their struggle and due to internal struggles of the republic itself, a.k.a, a factional power struggle between the conservative right and reformist left, their movement could not develop as an independent movement. The only instance where they succeeded in being independent as they were in the post-Constitutional period was the brief period in the Green Movement, which will be discussed.

## CHAPTER 3

### REFORM MOVEMENT AND WOMEN

Presidential elections of 1997 have brought what the scholarly circles term it the "reform movement" in Iran. Indeed, in the years 1997-2005, Iran experienced what have been the consequences of a rift among the ruling elite. In the period between 1979 and 1997, this rift was primarily related to the respective economic policies. On the one side, the left favored nationalization of the economy and advocated for greater governmental control. On the other hand, the right was in favor of a more open economy and less government hand in it. The leftist faction, though having similar commonalities with the left in general, was not as progressive concerning women's position in the society.<sup>106</sup> However, with the presidency of Khatami, the right-left divide ceased to be only about the economy and only associated with the one side of the ruling elite. Indeed, Hoodfar and Sadr argue that; "Khatami's unexpected success in 1997 shifted the categorization of political parties and factions from being based on economic policies to their social and political perspectives."<sup>107</sup> Even though the movement had been symbolized by Khatami and by his subsequent rise to power, reformist ideas can be found in a section of society—as opposed to a section of ruling clergy—who believe in the need for gradual reforms in the system whether they are political or economic or cultural. It is important to note that what reformist section of Iranian society believed was not a regime change. Instead, what they strive to achieve was a gradual change

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<sup>106</sup> Homa Hoodfar and Shadi Sadr, "Islamic Politics and Women's Quest for Gender Equality in Iran," *Third World Quarterly* 31, no. 6 (2010): 894.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 895.

towards a more open society and democracy, and establishing the primacy of human rights.<sup>108</sup>

### **3.1. Reform Movement's Successes and Failures Regarding Women**

Second Khordad, on May 23, 1997, corresponding with Khordad in the Iranian calendar, marked the way for a new period in Iran. Mohammad Khatami, who won the elections with a staggering 70 percent of the votes, created a new wave of optimism in the Iranian society, especially among the youth and women. Indeed, it has been recognized that the success of Khatami was a consequence of the votes cast by women and the youth. Women especially were eager to be actively visible in society, which was a direct consequence of the Iran-Iraq war. Women had been needed either for financial reasons such as employees in an economy with an acute shortage of men, or mobilization purposes such as nurses or cooks. Sometimes, even as soldiers in the war front. Thus, they refused to go back to their homes after the war ended, much to conservative ruling class' dismay. Another reason for women's increased demand to be involved in politics and society was due to the activities of religious feminists who became active around the beginning of the 1990s. Therefore, when it was time for the elections, the regime caved in to the pressures, as it usually does near elections, and made half-hearted attempts to at least mention women related problems and how those problems would be handled to win them over. The attitudes of the candidates regarding the women question turned out to be very decisive in the election process,<sup>109</sup> as a presidential candidate, whom everyone thought as a weak contender, won the election with an overwhelming majority.

Women's involvement in politics did not end with women being active participants for the 1997 presidential elections. Honestly, women had been demanding more significant space for themselves in the realm of politics since the beginning of the

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<sup>108</sup> Sedigheh Karimi, *The Virtual Sphere and the Women's Movement in Post-Reform Iran*, Master's thesis, The University of Melbourne, 2018, 51, accessed June 07, 2018, <http://ijcrr.in/index.php/ijcrr/article/view/509>.

<sup>109</sup> Ali M. Ansari, *Iran, Islam, and Democracy: The Politics of Managing Change* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2006), 92-93.

1990s. Women had already run for the parliamentary elections by 1996; hence, 13 women had been elected to the majlis. Prominent women like Azam Taleghani, who is not only a famous Islamist-feminist but also the daughter of one of the revolutionary leaders Ayatollah Mahmoud Taleghani, took one more step forward for women and announced that she would run for the presidency for the elections in 1997. As for her reason to run for the presidency, she argued that it was her religious duty to run as a woman and to advance women's causes not just for her sake but for all the women in Iran. While announcing her candidacy, she was actively challenging the notion that only men could be eligible to run for the presidency. Even though she was denied to run by the Guardian Council, she stood as a perfect role model for Iranian women who wish to be active in any way possible in the realm of politics.<sup>110</sup> Women soon followed her example and participated in the presidential elections of 1997, and with their active involvement as both voters and candidates, Khatami was elected as president in 1997.

Since the involvement of women was one of the reasons for the reformist government to come to power, the government could not ignore their demands any longer. Thus, Khatami appointed a woman in essential positions. As a Deputy President and head of Environment Ministry, he selected Masumeh Ebtekar to take these posts, posts which she occupied through the Reformist era. This move was unheard of in the Islamic Republic of Iran as it showed that women could rise in the realm of politics and filled women with hope for the future. The reformist government's policies regarding women did not stop there. Aside from this, many women gained increased access to higher education simply because discrimination against women was relaxed in this period. Indeed, statistics show that the number of women in universities went from 47.9 percent in 1997 to 53.4 percent in 2004.<sup>111</sup> Another significant advancement for women in this period was Khatami's commitment to NGOs in Iran. He believed that an open society with NGOs would propel change towards the rule of law and give more strength for democratic

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<sup>110</sup> Tara Povey, *Social Movements in Egypt and Iran* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 77-78.

<sup>111</sup> Karimi, 68.

institutions in Iran, which, then, would result in a healthy and reliable system. Thus, under his presidency, non-governmental organizations flourished. Indeed, women took this opportunity to establish NGOs for themselves. One example of this is the Women's Cultural Center, which was founded in 1999. This organization was one of the key organizations which brought forward the concerns of women in Iran through publication and advocacy, while at the same time, bringing together professional women who fought for women's rights such as Nobel Prize winner Shirin Ebadi, writer Parvin Ardalan and human rights lawyer Noushin Ahmadi Khorasani.<sup>112</sup>

Even though positive improvements regarding women in Iran took place with the reformist government in power, soon, women and other segments of society who had supported Khatami were disappointed with him. There was a perception of a significant gap between his campaign promise and what he did in practice, especially regarding women. Achievements such as women being elected in the local and municipal councils in April 1999 and a subsequent landslide victory for reformists were encouraging. However, as Mohajer argues,

Khatami failed to take an unequivocally favorable stand in support of any of the significant demands of Iranian women, such as gender equality under the law, reform of textbooks portraying women exclusively in traditional roles, removal of the ban on women candidates for the presidency and a meaningful increase in the female government appointees.<sup>113</sup>

Reformists' inability to pass substantial progressive policies to reform the system was the result of the Council of Guardians' conservative make-up. Indeed, despite the massive success of reformists in the system, this particular institution that oversees the bills which pass in the parliament to check whether or not they conform with the Sharia Law, was the powerhouse of the conservatives. This situation proved to be a significant roadblock for women's movement in Iran and the reformists who were sympathetic towards their cause. For instance, the sixth

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<sup>112</sup> Fariba Davoudi Mohajer, Roya Toloui, and Shazka Beyerle, "The Iranian Women's Movement: Repression Versus Nonviolent Resolve," in *Civilian Jihad: Nonviolent Struggle, Democratization, and Governance in the Middle East*, ed. Maria J. Stephan, The Palgrave Macmillan Series on Civil Resistance (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 283.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.

parliament, which was dominated by the reformists tried to pass bills that were advocated by the Iranian feminists. One of the examples of those bills that passed in the parliament was about the custody laws. If the bill were to pass through the Council of Guardians' inspection, it would give women the right to keep the custody of their sons as long as they were able to keep the custody of their daughters, which was up to seven years. Iranian feminists had been trying to modify this law for years, using reform-minded Islamic scholars' interpretations of the Sharia Law regarding this issue to their benefit. However, this bill, like many others which had passed in the parliament, was vetoed by the Council of Guardians.<sup>114</sup> Council of Guardians' unwavering attitude of vetoing the laws which had the potentials to improve women's lives in Iran and the push and pull of power struggle between the reformists and conservatives brought failure to the reform movement. Even though this harsh stance of the Council of Guardian's attitude towards reforms regarding women was not the reformist government's fault, the public still blamed Khatami and his presidency for the regime's unwillingness to change. Hence by 2005, many individuals in the society were disillusioned by the once-celebrated reform movement. Women's reaction to this disillusionment was to boycott the elections in 2005, and since the sentiment was shared by anyone who wanted reform in the system, it led to the rise of Neo-conservatives or Principalists with the election of Ahmadinejad.

### **3.2. Women's Movement**

Women's Movement in Iran, in the past energized with the reform movement, slowly changed once women realized that the reform movement was failing. Against this backdrop, the women's movement in Iran in this period can be characterized as fragmented, pragmatic, and non-strategic.

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<sup>114</sup> Majid Mohammadi, *The Iranian Reform Movement: Civil and Constitutional Rights in Suspension* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 107.



### 3.2.1. Fragmented

At the beginning of the reformist movement, reformist politicians and advocates of the reform movement had clear connections with the Islamic feminists. Islamic feminist movement started after the end of the Iran-Iraq war in 1989, in the period called the Islamic Republic's construction, and was effective till 1997 and beyond. Since the extreme situation regarding war and its devastating effects were finally over, the groups who had been suppressed and silenced slowly started to re-emerge once more. One of those groups were women. Women's press grew significantly in the period of construction. The journals *Zanan*, *Farzenah*, and *Zan*, were especially quite effective in bringing forward women's issues to public discussions. These journals were criticizing the constitutional inequalities between the sexes, while at the same time demanding changes in the realm of law to fix those inequalities which were leading to the subjugation of one sex to another. The reason for women activists who were writing in these journals to be called Islamic Feminists is because women were attempting to reach change through a feminist reading of the Quran and Hadiths. In the words of Shahla Sherkat, the founder of the women's journal *Zanan*;

Iranian women are asking themselves why they are deprived of the right to leadership of the people in spiritual, political, and legal matters. We consider that the Qur'an has not forbidden women to play these roles. This interdiction has its origins in the opinions of yesterday's clergy, based no doubt on the model of their relationships with their wives and the women around them, which they have generalized to all women.<sup>115</sup>

Among others, especially the journal *Zanan* had the most impact on the matters of women in Iranian society. *Zanan*, through its Islamic Feminist writers, pioneered this new reading of the religion, and for the first time, reform in religion was in the discussions, albeit with a rather indirect approach by not admitting it outright it was indeed a reform movement in religion.

These women were keen supporters of the reform movement. Indeed, they were not actively against nor the enemies of the system. Quite the contrary Islamic

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<sup>115</sup> Azadeh Kian, "Islamic Feminism in Iran: A New Form of Subjugation or the Emergence of Agency?" trans. Ethan Rundell, *Critique Internationale*, no. 46 (January 2010): 54.

feminists did not campaign for a separation of religion, and state like secular feminists have been demanding in Iran. Instead, they tried to reform the regime from within while staying committed and fully accepting the primacy and legitimacy of it. Islamist women were also referred to as reformist women too, sometimes, due to their activism in the reformist period. These activities involved women getting elected for the majlis. Thirteen women were elected in 2000. These women soon started to be referred to as the Women's Faction. They were loyal to the state and did not question nor outright challenged the Islamic Republic. According to them, the roots of the women's suffering in the Republic were not the regime itself but rather the laws and policies regarding women instead.<sup>116</sup>

Meaningful collaborations between secular women activists and Islamist feminists took place. The first was through Zanan. This Islamic feminist-oriented journal was successful in bringing secular women to contribute to it. It opened up further collaborations between the two groups. One of the examples of this took place in January 2000, when secular women, including Shirin Ebadi and Mehrangiz Kar, organized a meeting which included fifth majlis' religious women. The reason behind this invite was to discuss and try to analyze how women of the fifth majlis could get better results in the majlis as men dominated it.<sup>117</sup> For the first time, the two groups, despite their differences, came together and discussed women's issues. However, this positive achievement came to a halt in 2000. In April of that year, women from different ideological standpoints gathered together in Berlin to talk where the reform movement was heading after the victory of the reformists in the parliamentary elections back in February. At first, the government had approved the meeting; however, after getting agitated by the opposition that resides in exile, the meeting was declared un-Islamic. The repercussions of this conference changed from one faction to the other. Indeed, secular women got harsher punishments than their reformist counterparts: some got prison sentences, while reformist/religious women faction got fines and trials but no prison sentences.

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<sup>116</sup> Rebecca Barlow and Shahram Akbarzadeh, "Prospects for Feminism in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Human Rights Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2008): 26-27.

<sup>117</sup> Mohammadi, 105.

Secular women especially felt they were left alone by their reformist sisters, which caused a rift between the factions. Indeed, while secular women were dealing with the aftermath of the Conference, Islamic feminists had mainly been quiet.<sup>118</sup> Even though women factions and Islamic feminists had made gains regarding women's issues, the divide between secular women and Islamist women remained.

Khatami's reformist movement had benefits for both factions of the women's movement. After all the repression the secular feminists had faced after the revolution, they finally had a breathing room with the reform movement. Islamist feminists were already active and defending women's rights at the same time. Hence, these two factions did not need to fully diverge their causes since both were able to defend their ideologies separately. The moments when these two factions worked together existed afterward, too, as will be explained below. However, they stayed apart from one another after the Berlin Conference fallout, and their ideological boundaries remained intact. Their strategies also remained different from each other. Islamic feminists continued to follow their cause using the Quran as their justification for changing the laws to the benefit of women, while secular women used international human rights standards as their starting points.<sup>119</sup> These all together led to the lack of clear direction of the women's movement in Iran.

### **3.2.2. Pragmatism**

Another significant feature of the women's movement in the reform era is pragmatism. What is pragmatism? Pragmatism is a philosophical idea, a movement that assumes that if an ideology or a proposition works the way they should, it means they most likely are true. Meaning, the consequences of an ideology or proposition show whether or not they work.<sup>120</sup> Thus, unpractical ideas

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<sup>118</sup> Barlow and Akbarzadeh, 36.

<sup>119</sup> Eliot Assoudeh and Debra J. Salazar, *Non-state Violent Actors and Social Movement Organizations: Influence, Adaptation, and Change*, ed. Julie M. Mazzei, vol. 41, *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts, and Change* (United Kingdom: Emerald Publishing, 2017), 152.

are not accepted. Pragmatism has found its way in feminism, as well. This pragmatic-feminism embraces the idea that feminism and pragmatism are mutually beneficial for each other. In this type of feminism, different interpretations of feminism, whether they are Islamic or secular, do not have to compete with each other concerning which one suits women better. Indeed, pragmatism inside feminism objects to dualisms because it usually leads to “denigration of one oppositional by the other.”<sup>121</sup> Thus, different feminist interpretations can exist in the same space, learning from each other, respecting one another while not disputing the validity or relevance of each other. This particular feature inside feminism encourages collaboration across different interpretations of feminisms to gain effective results. In terms of women's movement in the reform era, women acted pragmatically to gain advantages in the movement. Even though they experienced divergence of opinions among themselves, both women's factions favored pragmatism to achieve more significant results in the fight for the equality of the sexes. Their willingness to put aside their differences and work together from time to time was based on this pragmatic understanding.

This pragmatic approach to women's movement was the consequence of a couple of facts. First, the loss of feminist representatives in the Majlis elections forced women to find other ways to assert their rights.<sup>122</sup> Indeed, after the 2004 legislative elections, thirteen women were elected as representatives. However, twelve of those women were conservative and not reform-minded like the women before them. Their actions such as opposing the CEDAW (The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) bill, something that had been pursued by their predecessors, showed women that governmental sources, meaning women who were in the parliament and had the power make change happen for the benefit of women, would not be much help. The second was

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<sup>120</sup> Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, accessed October 9, 2019, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/pragmati/>.

<sup>121</sup> Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, accessed October 9, 2019, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/fem-prag/>.

<sup>122</sup> Diana Childress, *Equal Rights Is Our Minimum Demand: The Women's Rights Movement in Iran, 2005* (Minneapolis, MN: Twenty-First Century Books, 2011), 107.

the fact that the reform movement's general incompetence regarding women's issues was frustrating to women from every stratum, including Islamic feminists. After working within and with the system for more than twenty years and not having achieved substantial gains opened a way for them to understand their secular counterparts. It was understood that solely working from within the regime was not useful as it should be, and more and more conservative women warmed up to the idea that women's rights can be pursued by following the Human Rights framework.<sup>123</sup> Lastly, Shirin Ebadi's 2003 Nobel Prize win both energized women and strengthened their belief in their movement while pushing them towards working together. Even though they had fallen out in the aftermath of the Berlin Conference, women once again put aside their differences on June 12, 2005, joined their forces right before the new elections to air out their grievances. Although the collaboration remained limited and sporadic during the reform period, the pragmatism of the women's movement showed itself clearly with this one big event, which constituted an essential feature of it.

In 2004, joint meetings were held with different women's organizations to discuss what could be done, what the priorities should be, and such. It was understood that legal reform, especially in the field of family law, was enough to bring different factions together to agree on a plan of action. The result was the call for a collective action that could take place close to the new presidential elections in 2005 since generally closer to elections government restrictions would be lax compared to other times.<sup>124</sup> These diverse women collectively initiated their first course of action, which was to protest in front of Tehran University on June 12, 2005. Participation in this protest was high, with many as 150 NGOs.<sup>125</sup> It was believed that between three to five thousand women joined the protest. They demanded constitutional change, which would include changing all discriminatory laws toward women.

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<sup>123</sup> Homa Hoodfar, "Against All Odds: The Building of a Women's Movement in the Islamic Republic of Iran," 8.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>125</sup> Mohajer, Toloui, Beyerle, 286.

The protest was a real success. The public eye was caught onto the events despite the lack of media coverage about it. The internet was used to spread the messages of women instead of mainstream media. However, despite the success and relative peaceful atmosphere of the protest, there was not a significant gain for women. Reformist faction once again disappointed women by not giving any real promises to improve the lives of Iranian women. This situation, in turn, led most women to boycott the upcoming elections. Subsequently, Ahmadinejad was elected as president, whose conservative views on women's place in society surpassed even the likes of traditional conservatives.

Despite the lack of long-term success, this particular protest shows Iranian women's willingness to work with each other despite their different ideological standpoints. Although in the reformist period, women experienced a fall out among themselves, as Islamic/conservative-oriented feminists vs. secular feminists, they occasionally collaborated when political factors in Iran let them no choice but to unite. This pragmatic side of the Iranian women's movement became an essential aspect of the women's movement in Iran and showed itself from then onwards.

### **3.2.3. Multiple Strategies**

Due to the division between Islamic feminists and secular oriented feminists, the women movement as a whole lacked a coherent, goal-oriented strategy to advance women's rights. These two factions had multiple strategies to further women's cause.

Islamic feminists used Islamic texts as a starting point, as mentioned above, an attitude which have been, at times, seen as "accommodating"<sup>126</sup> Since Islamist women generally acted with their belief that change would be slow to achieve progress by establishing a link with women-friendly allies was a necessity. For example, Zeinab Society is one of the most prominent organizations that were founded by Islamist women. This organization, aside from believing Islam holds

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<sup>126</sup>Hoodfar and Sadr, 896-7.

gender equality and any misdeeds carried out against women, were the causes of the misinterpretation of texts, created links with the reformist government. They tried to achieve gains through persuading the political elite to believe in their cause, which, in turn, led to several comments by critics such as they could start "cultivating female constituency"<sup>127</sup> which is something more beneficial to women than trying to pursue political elites.

Secular women also tried to use different strategies, as well. Since they were heavily pressured, and most of them forced to live in exile, secular women used tactics like civil disobedience to attract attention. Thus, instead of conventional means, they could take their issues immediately to the public through protests and acts of civil disobedience. One of the critical examples was the bad-hijabi phenomenon: Women acted out against the regime by choosing to wear their veils in such a way that a certain amount of hair was not covered. Although with the rise of Ahmadinejad, this form of disobedience became quite common, the starting point of this goes back to the early 1990s. At first, it might sound like a simple matter of fashion; but in reality, it was far from it.<sup>128</sup> It was a matter of protest, not clothing. Also, in 2003, a new organization was launched, which was called the Forum of Women Activists in Iran. Students, apolitical men and women, secularists, and some Islamist feminists were included in this organization. This organization acted as an event organization agent. Forums were held twice a week, and making gender equality a reality was the goal. Their strategies involved staging sit-ins, acts of civil disobedience, organizing and participating demonstrations and press conferences, and the like.<sup>129</sup> Both factions used NGOs and women's press as a way to put pressure on the political elites. Islamist women already had government linkages through NGOs. Even though secular women, due to the failure of the reform movement, slowly backed away from this kind of

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 897-8.

<sup>128</sup> Barlow and Akbarzadeh, 36.

<sup>129</sup> Assoudeh and Salazar, 154.

connection, some secular factions still insisted on establishing connections with the ruling elite, in this case, the reformist government.<sup>130</sup>

This apparent lack of one single strategy had two different consequences. The first was the issue of unification. Since multiple strategies do, in fact, come from the internal divisions in the women's movement, this created a united women's front, which could stand against the regime as a whole. Instead of one single unified front with a single and most importantly, effective strategy, this meant smaller women constituencies with different tactics. This "negative" side of the women's movement brings the second consequence, which is fluidity. Because women's movement was fluid with different ideas and ideologies and tactics, instead of one single block which acts with one strategy, it gave women to be able to raise their issues in multiple ways. This situation led the government to deal with multiple fronts rather than one single entity. As a result, the government had a hard time suppressing the women's movement entirely. This seemingly "negative" aspect of the women's movement was, in reality, the aspect which saved women's movements to be suppressed entirely. In other words, what was a liability turned out to be an asset.

### **3.3. Conclusion**

Women's movement in the reform period had flourished. Indeed, the eased pressure mechanisms of the government served women by allowing them to express and raise their concerns concerning their movement. Relaxation of the pressure on the press especially made it easy for women to develop more media outlets that solely dealt with women's situation, and gender consciousness rose among women as a consequence. Coupled with establishing NGOs, it looked like women were finally getting their space in society. However, the reform movement's lack of significant success concerning women says otherwise. Even though Khatami's government had looked gender-conscious, its inability to establish lasting changes disappointed women. The Guardian Council was indeed the main reason why any significant change in the lives of Iranian women could

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 153.



not be achieved. However, Khatami's lack of interest pursuing gender equality was also one of the reasons. When Shirin Ebadi received the Nobel Peace prize, in 2003, not only President Khatami did not congratulate her, but he also downplayed the importance of the prize, stating that the prize was given to Ebadi on political grounds.<sup>131</sup> This particular incident does not necessarily mean that the president was not sincere in regards to women's advancement. However, it shows that what concerned him first and foremost was the primacy of the regime, even when it meant going against any faction that he had gotten his support from. This primacy of the regime was evident when, in 1999, student protests had started, and the government suppressed them brutally. They were the same students who had enthusiastically supported Khatami in the elections. Hence women were not the only exceptions. Although women's movement was having issues at the time, it grew and strengthened and changed once more under Ahmadinejad's presidency due to political atmosphere leaving women no choice on the matter.

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<sup>131</sup> "Khatami Advice to Nobel Laureate," *BBC News*, October 14, 2003, accessed July 23, 2019, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/3190536.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3190536.stm).

## CHAPTER 4

### AHMADINEJAD, GREEN MOVEMENT, AND WOMEN

June 12, 2009, elections in Iran caused unprecedented events that neither expected nor prepared for. Indeed, the tenth presidential election of the Islamic Republic of Iran not only gave way to the biggest protests the country had ever seen, except the 1979 Revolution, but it also demonstrated how Iranian people felt about their country's regime. As it turned out, not everyone was supportive of the regime. So what caused all this uproar and chaos?

Before going in dept in inquiring about the Green Movement, the rupture which had occurred in the Iranian political structure should be quickly explained. After the 1979 Iranian Revolution, which had resulted in dethroning of the Shah and Ayatollah Khomeini coming to power as the supreme leader, Iranian elites built a new system where Western-style republicanism met with religious authority. In this new hybrid system, the religious authority had the final say in political matters. Simply put, Iran has democratic institutions, and people practice their political wills through the regularly held parliamentary elections. However, no institution, be it the Parliament or the judiciary is higher than the Supreme Leader and his authority. This duality of powers was manifested in the set of institutions that had been built after the revolution. For example, with velayet-i faqih, also called the Guardianship of the Jurist, a system based on the Shia Islamic theory where the guardianship has a responsibility of custodianship of the people in the absence of Imams, Islam is expressed through them. Republican elements of Iran are the institutions such as the executive, judiciary, and legislative.<sup>132</sup> In matters of the constitution, Islamic foundations of the Republic have a say over the republican dimensions of the regime. The duality in the regime stemmed from

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<sup>132</sup> Ali M. Ansari, *Crisis of Authority: Irans 2009 Presidential Election*(London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2010), 13.

whether the Republican characteristics of the country should gain more weight. This change, in the clerical regime, occurred after the election of President Khatami, which paved the way for the emergence of the advocates of the "elective character of the constitution"<sup>133</sup>, the so-called Reformists. This division within the ruling elite continues to this day. Hence, the Green Movement carried this competition between conservatives and reformists within it.

The days leading up to the tenth presidential elections were marked by peaceful though unequal competition between Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi, the reformist candidates, and Mahmud Ahmadinejad, a conservative candidate who was running for a second term as president. The atmosphere was mostly peaceful even though Ahmadinejad had more funds and help from all sectors in the system like Basij, which is a revolutionary army like group<sup>134</sup>, to promote himself as the president, this situation still did not disturb the air. However, on June 12, the seizing of the public space by reformist supporters of Mousavi and Karroubi became apparent. Thus, the campaign got further intensified.<sup>135</sup>

The participation was very high compared to the elections in 2005, where the voter turnout was slightly above 80 percent.<sup>136</sup> What sparked the outrage from citizens was the announcement from the official channels. The next day these channels said the winner was Ahmadinejad with a significant margin, almost twice the votes Mousavi had gained, 63 percent of the total votes. (Mousavi was said to have gained only 34 percent of the total votes). The people's disbelief over the results was reflected through the demonstrations on June 14, 2009. These impromptu and massive demonstrations that broke out in Tehran and other major cities were an unexpected reaction on the part of the regime. Reformist leader Mousavi was

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>134</sup> Farhad Khosrokhavar, "The Green Movement," in *Navigating Contemporary Iran: Challenging Economic, Social and Political Perceptions*, ed. Eric Hooglund and Leif Stenberg (Abington: Routledge, 2012), 169.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 170.

expected to win by many, and when faced with the election results, people took to streets with slogans like "where is my vote?". In just a couple of days, the protests reached other parts of the country. The regime was quick to respond and tried to suppress the protests. Opposition leaders put under house arrests, and the crackdown on the protestors, which involved vast numbers of women and youth participation, continued. The movement drew the international audience, and the brutal treatment of the protestors drew widespread condemnation of the Iranian regime.

With the last massive demonstration on February 11, 2010, which is the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, the Green Movement protests ended. The question which should be asked and is one of the purposes of this thesis is: How women and women's movement was involved in the Green Movement?

#### **4.1. Ahmadinejad Era and Women**

Ahmadinejad's 2005 electoral win was a surprise to many. Indeed, to most, Ahmadinejad was a sidelined figure, pretty unknown. He was the mayor of Tehran before he ran for the presidency. Compared to other candidates like ex-president Rafsanjani, or conservative nominee Bagher Qalibaf and reformist Mostafa Moin, he was not taken seriously. The reason for that is that the majority believed the presidential race would be among the previous three names mentioned. Hashemi Rafsanjani was the president of Iran before Khatami's term. The conservatives seemingly favored Qalibaf over anyone else, and the reformists were putting their bets on Moin. However, when the results were announced, it was Ahmadinejad who won, not the other candidates. Why?

There are a couple of reasons for Ahmadinejad's victory in 2005. First, reformist regimes' inability to make the changes that they had promised in the system alienated many from the regime. Conservative state institutions such as the Council of Guardians' resistance allowing reformist candidates to run was another

reason for people not wanting to participate in the elections.<sup>137</sup> Second, Ahmadinejad had the support of what the other candidates lacked: poor classes. He built his campaign on the premises of fixing the deteriorating economy, which appealed to the deprived classes who had been getting the brunt of the undesirable economic conditions.<sup>138</sup> Finally, active support from state institutions such as Revolutionary Guards and Basij contributed to his success in the elections.

Women, during the Ahmadinejad presidency, saw that the little advances they had made through hard work and tears in order to improve their lives since the establishment of the Islamic Republic was beginning to disappear slowly. Indeed, shortly after the electoral success, the government started a campaign to tighten the dress code of women, which, according to them, had been far too relaxed during the reformist era. They also set a new, stricter code of conduct, especially concerning the relations between males and females.<sup>139</sup> According to the new government, the percentage of female students in universities was shifting the power balance in the labor market and was taking the Islamic Republic to un-Islamic ways of the West. That is why the newly established regime also tried to introduce a quota system that would restrict the departments that women could choose. In doing so, the career paths of the female students would be limited. Those gaps would be filled with men instead of women, and this, in turn, would further increase the percentage of men in the labor market. Thus, women would, once again, be pushed out of the public space and into the private. Faced with these difficulties and regressive gender politics, women who are reformists, Islamists, seculars concluded that they could not put their trust in men and wait for them to realize gender equality.<sup>140</sup> Thus, aside from women forming different cooperations with different groups, they opened up women-only groups.

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<sup>137</sup> Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Mahjoob Zweiri, *Iran and the Rise of Its Neoconservatives: The Politics of Tehran's Silent Revolution* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 59.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 59-61.

<sup>139</sup> Hoodfar and Sadr, 896.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

Moreover, the two camps, Islamist and Reformist women, decided to join together to advance the women's cause. Indeed, Hoodfar and Sadr state that, "while these various coalitions are very fluid and may include different women around different topics, it is possible to identify two major coalitions: the Islamists and reformists, the latter often including secular activists."<sup>141</sup>

One of the significant examples of women coming together to bring change for the benefit of women was the One Million Signature Campaign, which was founded "on a hot summer afternoon in late August of 2006 on the streets of Tehran".<sup>142</sup> Susan Tahmassebi defined One Million Signature campaign as:

An effort designed to raise awareness among the public through face to face discussions and collection of signatures of the citizen on a petition addressed to the Iranian parliament. The petition asks that laws discriminating against women be reformed and brought in line with international human rights standards.<sup>143</sup>

Although the campaign never reached its premise, since it could not gain one million signature, it showed how a campaign could reach millions of people in very innovative ways. Indeed, the campaign was brought to the general public through face to face meetings with people. Activists used every means possible in their hands to broaden the support for the campaign. They have used small gatherings like weddings, home meetings, sports events, and the like, to build dialogue within the society. This effort of women helped them to gather much-needed support for the campaign, plus, it helped the campaign to stay in the public eye.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Sussan Tahmassebi, "The One Million Signatures Campaign: An Effort Born on the Streets," The One Million Signature Campaign in Iran, accessed January 09, 2019, <http://amnestymena.org/en/Magazine/Issue20/TheOneMillionSignatureCampaigninIran.aspx?media=print>.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Homa Hoodfar and Fatemeh Sadeghi, "Against All Odds: The Women's Movement in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Development* 52, no. 2 (2009): 221.

As shown above, with the example of One Million Signature Campaign, women of Iran under Ahmadinejad presidency succeeded in keeping the women's movement alive, against all the odds. Perhaps it was this situation that had pushed women to keep the movement alive. Indeed, the women's movement in this era became even more active than before. They managed to keep the movement healthy despite having to deal with much larger restrictions like the dress code, the code of conduct, and the like. They were also harassed continuously about these two by the moral police, while at the same time living with the fact that their access to universities was limited. Because for the first time since the establishment of the Islamic Republic, reformist, secularist, and Islamist women came together in an organized manner to further create a space for themselves in a country where gender apartheid was reaching unprecedented levels. Although women from different ideological standpoints had come together before, the difference with the Green Movement was the way they achieved this togetherness. Against this backdrop, women entered the 2009 presidential elections, and, subsequently, came the Green Movement.

#### **4.2. 2009 Presidential Elections**

As mentioned above, the 2009 presidential elections and the Green Movement had significant effects on every part of the society. Women were a part of that. For the analysts of the Green Movement, who reside inside and outside of Iran, the participation of significant numbers of women to the movement was enough to label women as the driving force behind the movement. Undoubtedly, the presence of Zahra Rahnavard, the reformist candidate Mousavi's wife, and a renown scholar and a public figure herself, confirmed this label.<sup>145</sup> However, perhaps women were the driving force of the movement simply because of how they used the presidential elections to create some real change in the system.

It is possible to analyze the significant characteristics of the women's movement in the Green Movement, along with five major themes.

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<sup>145</sup> GlobalPost, "Iran's Women A Driving Force Behind Green Movement," The Huffington Post, December 07, 2017, accessed January 09, 2019, [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/07/24/irans-women-a-driving-for\\_n\\_244218.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/07/24/irans-women-a-driving-for_n_244218.html).

### 4.2.1. Diversity

Before the June 12, 2009 elections, forty-two women groups, and organizations including both secular feminists and reformists parties' conservative female members, plus, 700 individuals gathered and established a coalition called Women's Convergence.<sup>146</sup> Groups like Mothers For Peace, Association of Women Entrepreneurs, Campaign for One Million Signatures in Qom, Women's Committee of Islamic Associations in East of Iran and such, with notable individuals as Shirin Ebadi, Mehrangiz Kar, Shahla Sherkat, Noushin Ahmadi Khorasani, Shadi Shadr, came together to build an alliance, which would use the presidential race to demand change.<sup>147</sup> According to Nayerah Tohidi, this broad alliance and the following movement was a consequence over the years of repression. Consequently, "women from all walks of life, but mostly young and urban middle-class women, took part in both the electoral campaigns and in the protests against the results, which were widely viewed as fraudulent<sup>148</sup> She also stated that this movement was mostly secular, but she emphasizes that this does not mean it was anti-religious. By "secular," she does not mean "anti-religion or even irreligious, but, rather, adherence to the separation of state and religion."<sup>149</sup>

This urban middle-class women builds the make-up of the Iranian women's movement who, since 1979, resisted the repressive policies of the regime. Due to the Pahlavi regime's modernization efforts, this segment of the society was significantly large and highly influential. After a while, having seen the real side of

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<sup>146</sup> Ziba Mir Hosseini, "Multiplied, Not Humiliated: Broken Taboos in Post Election Iran," in *The People Reloaded: The Green Movement and the Struggle for Iran's Future*, ed. Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House Printing, 2010), 144.

<sup>147</sup> "Statement on the Occasion of the Presidential Elections in June 2009 in Iran," *The Feminist School*, April 30, 2009, accessed January 11, 2019, [http://www.feministschool.com/english/spip.php?article28&debut\\_signatures=15](http://www.feministschool.com/english/spip.php?article28&debut_signatures=15).

<sup>148</sup> "Nayerah Tohidi, "Women in the Iranian Election Campaign and Protest," Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Fall 2009, 5, accessed January 07, 2019, [https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/Women in Iranian Election.pdf](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/Women%20in%20Iranian%20Election.pdf).

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.



the regime, the Islamist and devout Muslim women steadily joined their reformists' sisters. The increasing economic problems, extensive corruption in the government, ever expanding gap between the rich and the poor also did not help matters and turned younger generations of the female population away from the Islamic Republic alongside their male counterparts.<sup>150</sup>

Women from different backgrounds coming together for a united goal was not something new in the women's movement. Indeed, women's movement gained significant grassroots support because of its complex and diverse nature before. One has to look at the example of One Million Signature against the discrimination of women to see how women put aside their ideological differences and came together to make changes in society. Due to this fact, it is not always so easy to determine which part of the ideological spectrum of women's movement belongs in Iran. It is not just because leftist, rightist, Islamist women are involved together in it but also because not every activist falls into one of these categories. Thus, making secular/religious distinction is difficult. Furthermore, the concepts secular and religious were not mutually exclusive. Indeed, women activists groups in Iran had different perspectives that separated them from each other, but they also had common grounds that bound them together.<sup>151</sup> What was unique to this movement was the fact that the movement itself, due to its activists, was neither traditional Islamic nor was a manifestation of Western-inspired liberalism.<sup>152</sup>

#### **4.2.2. Political Change**

The Coalition of Iranian Women's movements wanted, according to their statement, the following;

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>151</sup> Tara Povey, "The Impact of Sanctions and Neo-Liberalism on Women's Organising in Iran," *Social Sciences* 5, no. 3 (June 23, 2016): 1-2.

<sup>152</sup> Victoria Tahmasebi-Birgani, "Green Women of Iran: The Role of the Women's Movement During and After Iran's Presidential Election of 2009," *Constellations* 17, no. 1 (February 22, 2010): 80.

Equal rights as the essence of women's collective demands and the elimination of all forms of gender, ethnic, religious, and class discrimination. Iranian women of all social backgrounds share this common belief that social strata construct and affect gender relations. Hence, to achieve democracy, civil liberties, and citizen's rights, women have long fought shoulder to shoulder with men. Today, as in the past and along with other social groups and aside from our specific demands as women, we demand;

The recognition of people's freedoms as specified in the constitution, including freedom of speech, assembly, and else.

To end pressures on women, students, teachers, workers, ethnic and religious minorities, and individuals.<sup>153</sup>

In order to gain what they want, the Coalition specifically demanded changes in the articles 19,20,21 and 115<sup>154</sup> and, they also demanded the notification of CEDAW.

What women were/are having problems with these articles is the fact that they either do not deliver what they say, like in articles 19 and 115 or, like in articles 20, 21, the wording "Islamic" prevents women from having equal rights with men. Articles 20 and 21 are, due to having the criteria of "Islamic" to them, prevent women from striving for gender equality. Because whenever they try to do so, their efforts are being rejected on the grounds that their demands are un-Islamic,

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<sup>153</sup> Statement on the Occasion of the Presidential Elections in June 2009 in Iran, The Feminist School.

<sup>154</sup> Provision of each of the articles as follows;

19: All people of Iran, whatever the ethnic group or tribe to which they belong, enjoy equal rights; color, race, language, and the like, do not bestow any privilege.

20: All citizens of the country, both men and women, equally enjoy the protection of the law and enjoy all human, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, in conformity with Islamic criteria.

21: The government must ensure the rights of women in all respects, in conformity with Islamic criteria, and accomplish the following goals:

1) create a favorable environment for the growth of a woman's personality and the restoration of her rights, both the material and intellectual;

2) the protection of mothers, particularly during pregnancy and child-rearing, and the protection of children without guardians;

3) establishing competent courts to protect and preserve the family;

4) the provision of special insurance for widows, aged women, and women without support;

5) the awarding of guardianship of children to worthy mothers, in order to protect the interests of the children, in the absence of a legal guardian.

115: The President must be elected from among religious and political personalities possessing the following qualifications:

- Iranian origin ;

- Iranian nationality;

- administrative capacity and resourcefulness;

- a good past record;

- trustworthiness and piety; and

- convinced belief in the fundamental principles of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the official madhhab of the country.

which means that they are not following Shari'a. Even though article 19 claims that every individual is equal in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the decades' long women's struggles and gender inequality in the country say otherwise. Article 115 has the same issue with articles 20 and 21. Although this article says that every individual who was born in Iran can be president, the reality is far from the truth. Truly, Iranian women's struggle to run for the presidency goes back to 1997. Azam Taleghani, 53-year-old and a women's rights advocate at the time, got a place for herself in history since she registered to be in the presidential race for the first time in the history of Iran. The main motivation behind this move was to show the discrimination women had been facing since the dawn of the revolution. Her application was declined. However, she tried again in 2009, and one more time, in 2017. As Esfandiari noted, "twenty years after her initial effort, Taleghani is the most prominent of the 137 women who have registered as candidates for the vote. She knows she is likely to be rejected once again".<sup>155</sup>

Three of the four candidates, in turn, recognizing the potential electoral power of the women, responded favorably. According to Human Rights Centers report on Iran;

Reformist candidate Mir-Hossein Mousavi issued a "comprehensive and ... detailed" plan to promote gender equality through measures that included ratification of the CEDAW and ensuring greater access for women to higher education and professional fields. Reformist candidate Mehdi Karroubi pledged in May 2009, among other things, to review discriminatory laws, ensure women held decision-making positions in government, and implement CEDAW.<sup>156</sup>

### **4.2.3. Independence**

In the past, since the Constitutional Movement in Iran, political parties used women's causes to endorse their political ends. In both periods of the Pahlavi regime, demands for women's rights were taken into consideration if it suited the

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<sup>155</sup> Golnaz Esfandiari, "No Woman Has Ever Run For Iranian President. Will Azam Taleghani Be The First?" RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, April 19, 2017, accessed January 06, 2019, <https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-taleghani-woman-president-election/28439661.html>.

<sup>156</sup> "Silencing the Women's Rights Movement in Iran," Iran Human Rights Documentation Center, August 2010, 13, accessed December 15, 2018, [https://tavaana.org/sites/default/files/women\\_s\\_rights\\_326101714.pdf](https://tavaana.org/sites/default/files/women_s_rights_326101714.pdf).

Shahs. Since both Shahs tried to modernize Iran, the initial women's advancement started as a modernization process. Thus, due to this process's characteristics and its' revolutionary institutions spelled out in the constitution –top-down and lacked sympathy for independent movements– a permanent and a gender-conscious women's movement could not be created. The same principle was apparent in the Iranian Revolution, as well. Ayatollah Khomeini actively encouraged women to fight for Iran and create a better Iran where they can be free. However, as it turned out, it was the same situation women had been facing throughout the beginning of the 20th century.

With the decades' long struggle to achieve gender equality, in the 2009 presidential election, women of Iran decided not to trust any political affiliation to further their cause like its predecessor, One Million Signature Campaign. This last example is why the Women Coalition actively avoided endorsing one specific candidate. Although women did endorse different candidates, the Coalition as a whole was careful not to engage with any specific one. As Tohidi argued, “though as individuals, many feminists did take sides and voted for one of the two reform candidates, the Coalition remained a demand-centered (*motalebeh-mehvar*) campaign only and avoided endorsement of any particular candidate<sup>157</sup> Instead, they tried to get their points across by giving all candidates a chance to respond to the Coalition's demands. This decision was a point of contestation among the supporters of the Coalition. Indeed, not actively supporting a particular candidate drew criticism from the supporters. According to them, instead of merely supporting women's demands, the Coalition should be supporting a candidate. Secular women's advocates like Ahmadi-Khorosani and others were opposed to this on the grounds that women's movement was very fragile, and due to this fact, it should be open to any parties or groups.<sup>158</sup> This not very precise direction of the movement also drew criticisms from the likes of Noushin Khorosani and Haideh Moghissi. Former, criticized the factions inside the movement who were against the Green Movement and stood separate from it and alienated themselves as a

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<sup>157</sup> Tohidi, 6.

<sup>158</sup> Sahraei, 79.

result. Moghissi, on the other hand, while mainly agreeing with Khorasani, criticized her on the grounds that while Green Movement was a stepping stone for a more significant aim, a.k.a. Democracy, their voices did not need to be lost in order to attain it. Also, women's voices in the search for this aim should not be lost in order to determine what the women's movement is or its ideology or its direction. She also disagreed with the assumption that in search of attaining the ideological goals of the Green Movement, secularism and democracy, women's movement would lose its sight and would be encompassed in the bigger picture while losing its independent nature. She argued that the women's movement could strive for both of these aims and could be inclusive enough to include both of them.<sup>159</sup>

#### **4.2.4. Disperse Coalition**

Due to the Green Movement's explosion, the Women's Coalition did not have time to prepare for it. As Sadr argues;

The events of the post-2009 election had taken almost all socio-political activists, including those of the women's movement, by surprise. .... As a result, there were no advance organizational preparations to take advantage of the sphere of public protest or to direct it.<sup>160</sup>

Moreover, even though women poured to the streets, the movement remained gender blind. Women from all spectrums in the society rushed to the streets; however, they were the same women who had no interest in shouting gender-related slogans. These attitudes of women reflected the mindset of the leaders of the women's movement as well. Evidently, "gender blindness was not only prevalent in the thoughts and opinions of political leaders, but also amongst

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<sup>159</sup> Meaghan Smead Samuels, "Upgrading the Women's Movement in Iran: Through Cultural Activism, Creative Resistance, and Adaptability" (Master's thesis, University of Washington, 2018), 28-29, [https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/bitstream/handle/1773/42101/Samuels\\_washington\\_02500\\_18678.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/bitstream/handle/1773/42101/Samuels_washington_02500_18678.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

<sup>160</sup> Shadi Sadr, "Women and the Women's Movement in Post-Elections: Double Females?" in *Civil Society and Democracy in Iran*, ed. Ramin Jahanbegloo (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books), 210.

women movement's activists. Many believed that during the struggle for democracy and freedom, it was no time to bring up women's issues."<sup>161</sup>

Even though in the following eight months, there were multiple chances for women to raise issues of gender discrimination as a whole, for example, as another movement inside the Green Movement or even perhaps entirely outside of it, they did not take these chances. Hence, these opportunities were passed. The reasons for this are first, the gender-blindness of the Green Movement, second, repression, and lastly, lack of preparation, which caused ineffectiveness and the like. But also "pre-existing structures"<sup>162</sup> had a role in it too, according to Sadr. What Sadr calls, the legalist approach, which was widely accepted in the first term of the presidency of Ahmadinejad, like with the One Million Signature Movement, in the women's movement had consequences. One of the consequences was the fact that by choosing this legalist approach, the women's movement accepted and gave the government and its institutions some legitimacy. By doing so, they had to step away from the everyday issues they were facing daily.<sup>163</sup> She says that both of these were ineffective after the election because the protesting women's issues were not their right to divorce, equality of blood money, and et cetera. Their issues were their rights to assemble peacefully, right to vote, and to be involved in the discussions about politics without subjected to sexual abuse from anyone.<sup>164</sup> This changing nature of the problems women faced during the protests prevented them from keeping their formation that they had built in the pre-election period and acting as a group to demand changes.

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 212.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

#### 4.2.5. Retreat Due to Repression

The Iranian regime was quick to come after women and women's movement activists. They started detaining activists without charging them first for long periods. The government denied them lawyers and any contact from their family members. According to Human Rights Agency, the scope of the arrests had different layers: “(1) leaders of the women’s rights movement, particularly the women named in the first indictment, (2) veteran women’s rights activists and their lawyers, (3) leaders, members and signature collectors of the One Million Signatures Campaign, and (4) members of the Mourning Mothers organization who participated in peaceful gatherings to protest their loved ones’ detention.”<sup>165</sup>

Samuel identifies the difficulties women had to face in post-election Iran. According to her, overwhelming violence against women, being forced to choose between whether to stay or flee the country due to imprisonment, lastly, the subsequent torture of the many, undoubtedly had the effect of women's movements' breakage. Women, as a result, stopped participating in the mass demonstrations due to severe dangers they were facing, which in the end, curbed the momentum of the women's movement.<sup>166</sup>

Iranian state used numerous technics to force women out of the streets. One of them was to discredit the leadership of the movement. Since there was no clear leadership structure in the movement—this was one of the things women's movement learned over the years, keeping the structure of the women's movement flexible without strict leadership inside prevented Iranian government from eradicating women's movement—Iranian government arrested and harassed numerous prominent activists who were involved in the movement. These names include Shirin Edabi, Parvin Ardalan, Noushin Khorasani, and Shadi Sadr.<sup>167</sup> In the following years of the protests, there have been many reports published about

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<sup>165</sup> Silencing the Women’s Rights Movement in Iran, 17.

<sup>166</sup> Samuels, 49-50.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid, 50.

the human rights abuses women had faced in prisons or detention centers, including torture and rape. In order to further quell the protests, the government targeted specific targets, women's movements' activities in the past, and their participants, such as One Million Signature Campaign, Stop Stoning Forever Campaign, Mothers for Peace Campaign et cetera.<sup>168</sup> Also, beyond the mass arrests and following prison sentences of women activists, the government shut down numerous women NGOs. Bans of journalism issued for women who were active in the field, many women were banned from leaving the country, and frequent house searches were conducted to women's houses.<sup>169</sup> These measures against women activists undoubtedly led to the weakening of the women's movement, and in the end, with mass repression, the Green Movement itself lost momentum.

### **4.3. Conclusion**

When it came to the time of the Green Movement of 2009, the women of Iran had all sorts of experience to make a change in their lives finally. They had already accumulated these experiences through tirelessly working to achieve gender equality for almost a century. However, the suddenness of the people's anger towards the election results caught women's movement off guard, which was quite understandable, considering no one was expecting such a reaction from the masses. The sudden nature of this movement was what caused women's movement, which was lively and quite formidable and active pre-election, to wither away. As mentioned above, Iranian women went to the presidential elections with demands under their belt. The constitutional change could finally have a good impact on the lives of women in Iran. They had managed to stay together even in the increasing pressure from Ahmadinejad's presidency. Honestly, one could even say that this pressure made women come strongly together in the first place. Indeed, the 2006 Family Protection Bill was the situation that drew much criticism from women because of its questionable articles such as, easing the way for polygamy, making the path for women to come

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid, 51-52.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.



together for the pre-elections in 2009. The accomplishment of women managing to successfully force the government to amend or remove very upsetting parts of this bill, like article 23, “led to the launch of an attempt to consolidate women’s demands in the upcoming presidential election.”<sup>170</sup> Albeit the women's movement was well prepared to do some qualitative changes this time around, their decision about not endorsing a specific candidate, and their reluctance to genderize the Green Movement itself, caused the movement to lose momentum slowly. Although the women's movement in Iran has grassroots connections instead of one specific, secure, and strict leadership, its transparency led police and regime to target veteran and active women activists and sentence them with prison time or send them to exile. This inevitably caused the remaining women activists or women participants in the Green Movement to get the fear of being hunted and forced them into silence. Slowly but surely, the movement, not just the women's movement inside the Green Movement, but the movement itself faded out.

It does not mean, however, that the women's movement was silenced entirely in Iran. The women in Iran have much experience in getting disbanded and scattered. The momentum which was caught in the Green Movement is lost for sure, but women's movement is still active. Instead of a collective movement that brought every woman in different classes to the streets, now women in Iran are acting more individually. The tools they use, their structures, and their coherency may differ; however, it continues, even though a collective organization like pre-elections in 2009 does not exist this time around. Yet.

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<sup>170</sup> Roya Sahraei, 77.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

Iranian women's movement in Iran, as this thesis has shown, spawned across more than a century with no showing signs of dying down anytime soon. What makes Iranian case so fascinating is the fact that despite Iranian governments' attempts to nullify women, what has started with the Constitutional Revolution, with regards to women, has not stopped. To summarize, the women's movement in Iran evolved with the chapters of Iranian history. Indeed, in the 20th century, women's involvement in the constitutional struggle changed the landscape for them forever. Women's active involvement in such an essential social struggle not only prevented men from ignoring women's place in society any longer but also opened a way for women to demand changes for the benefit of themselves. First feminist women had emerged, and one of the first cornerstones for empowering women had been recognized as education. However, despite the accomplishments on the empowerment front, women's burgeoning movement was sacrificed to a more significant cause, which was, first, the establishment of the constitution, and the subsequent establishment of the assembly. The post-constitutional period and the Iranian state's political turmoil at the time created an opening for women to take full charge of their movement, instead of getting their movement subordinated by a more significant cause. This period, however, did not last long and the ascendancy of the first Pahlavi Shah, and afterward, his son changed the women's movement once more. Indeed, in the context of modernization, the women were used mostly to decrease the power of the ulama. The intended result with this move was to decrease the power the ulama class had possessed over the society. Since any organization could not develop independently from the regime, this situation constricted women. Hence, women were encouraged to pursue their movement by collaborating with the regime. Then women, even though limited, either influenced

the course of the women's activism, or they took active roles in it by taking part in the women organizations which were established by the Shahs. Hence, up until 1979, women's movement can be considered as a modernization project. Profound changes in the women's movement come with the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The new regime, to establish its difference with the Shah's Iran, put Sharia law into effect. This meant any progressive laws and regulations regarding women and their positions in society to be thrown away. Women, taking the brunt of the regime's new policies, were caught off guard. After all, Ayatollah Khomeini's encouraging discourse about women and their place in the society was something women had believed in. However, soon even the most devout women were starting to be disenchanted by the regime. Starting from this period to up until this thesis premises, including Ahmadinejad's presidency, women's priorities shifted to acquire what had been lost; the civil rights.

In the next part, final analysis and observations regarding the established themes are necessary. Looking at the themes; fragmented and diversity, comparatively, it is possible to say the following;

In the Reformist period, the women's movement was fragmented. Due to the Reformist era's relative freedom, women did not have any compulsion towards building a more united women's front. This fragmented nature of the women's movement in the period of reform is the complete opposite of how they behaved in the Green Movement. Even though the women's movement in the Green Movement is diverse, this variable did not stop women from building a united front. The only question is left to ask would be this: Why women felt the need to come together when, during the presidency of Khatami, this need was nonexistent? The answer would be the political climate. Indeed, the reform period's relative openness to civil societies, women organizations, press and the like, allowed women from different ideological standpoints to exist in the same space. Hence, a substantial, united women's front could not be established. Sure, occasional gatherings of different women's groups did happen; however, they were the exceptions, not the rule. The climate of Ahmadinejad's presidency forced women's hands to build a united voice in order to achieve change.

Although analyzed under different names, these themes show similarities; pragmatism and independence. Reform periods women's movement embraced pragmatism. Different women groups welcomed it, which allowed them to accept other women groups. Instead of arguing which women's group had the primacy over women's issues, they were now open to learning from one another. We see this clearly when different women groups came together to make a stand, like in the 12th June 2005 protests. This pragmatic understanding among women was still present in the Green Movement. Indeed, in order to keep the women's movement alive and protect it from harm, women's movement chose independence. This decision meant women's movement was not going to show a specific candidate in the upcoming elections. This way, they did not tie their future to one specific politician. Instead, they called out to every politician and made their demands known and acknowledged by all of them.

We can see the political climate's effect once more while looking through the themes of multiple strategies and political change. In the reform period, due to women groups diverse natures, there was not a single strategy when it comes to how women to the relations between women and the regime. Secular and Islamist women groups had different tactics to show disobedience. While Islamist feminists used Islamic texts against the regime, secular women used civil disobedience. For example, they chose not to cover their hair completely to resist against regime's unfair gender policies. In the Green Movement, however, we see that women used one strategy in order to achieve change, and that was to demand political change from politicians. Hence, they announced specifically which particular constitutional articles were causing them grief and demanded their change.

What can be said about the Iranian women's movement after looking at these pieces of information? One, women's movement in Iran does not have the classical characteristics one could expect from social movements. For instance, Iranian women's movement decidedly moved through history without having a structured leadership. Honestly, this fact alone was what made Iranian women's movement to endure through time regardless of brutal oppression from the regime, at times. Also, they do not have a clear cut strategy. In fact, we see a clear-cut strategy only

with the Green Movement. Before that, however, as it was shown, a universal strategy decidedly did not exist. However, in the light of the examination of two periods of women's movement, can we argue that Iranian women's movement did not exist because it does not fit the general stereotype of social movements? I argue that the lack of a theoretical framework that could encompass Middle Eastern social movements is the problem here. Thus, this does not necessarily mean that these movements do not count as social movements. If we say that they do not count as social movements because of it, then we would have to regard the Green Movement in a different category.

Indeed, as a movement, the Green Movement also does not fit the criteria of social movements. Honestly, due to Iran's semi-authoritarian structure, Green Movement decidedly lacked organizational structures, strong leadership, and the like. These are essential aspects of a social movement, and yet, the Green Movement did not have them. Instead, it happened simultaneously in the shape of street protests with no clear leadership structure, which points to the lack of organizational structure.<sup>171</sup> Green Movement also did not fit to criteria of being a religion-influenced social movement either. Dabashi, for example, defined Green Movement as; "post-ideological,"<sup>172</sup> referring to the fact that the Green Movement did not get its roots from ideologies like anti-colonialism, socialism, and militant-Islamism, like other social movements that the MENA region had experienced throughout the 20th century.

As can be understood, the Middle East, due to its complex structures and history and cultures, does not fit into the categorizations that have been made by Western scholars. Because those scholars contributed to the studies of social movements, for example, by examining their own cultures and histories, hence, the fact Middle Eastern social movements do not fit the mold is not entirely surprising. The

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<sup>171</sup> Navid Pourmokhtari Yakhani, "Iran's Green Movement: A Foucauldian Account of Everyday Resistance, Political Contestation and Social Mobilization in the Post-Revolutionary Period." (dissertation, 2018), 48, <https://era.library.ualberta.ca/items/6b552565-6ff8-45a0-a0eb-9d84779db9ec>.

<sup>172</sup> Hamid Dabashi, *The Green Movement in Iran*, ed. Navid Nikzadfar (London; New York: Routledge, 2017), 68.

regions change through time, their experiences change, and most importantly, movements change. Indeed, now what we can say about the women's movement in Iran is completely different from five years ago. Due to the Green Movement's lack of success and women's movement retreat to the underground once again because of the heavy oppression by the regime, the women's movement seems to be moving individualistically rather than collectively. Indeed, 2017 saw a woman taking her hijabs and waving like a flag in public to protest the regime. This event was a spontaneous and individualistic action. However, other women started following the same course of action by removing their headscarves, which resulted in dozens getting arrested in 2018. Women continue to protest either by taking their hijabs and waving it like a flag or taking their photos without their regime-enforced hijabs. Civil disobedience is not something Iranian women are unfamiliar with. Indeed, as we saw, different tactics of it had been used in the past and continued to be used to this day. This complex nature of women's movement, whether they take part individualistically or collectively, makes Iranian women's movement unique and, indeed, makes it a *movement*. With time we shall see how it will change once more.

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## APPENDICES

### A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKE ÖZET

Bu tez İranın reform dönemindeki kadın hareketi ile Yeşil Hareket içindeki kadın hareketi incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Batı'nın İranlı kadınları ve onların hareketleri üzerindeki algısı bir hayli karmaşıktır. Gerçekte, “hareket” ve “İranlı kadınlar” görüldüğü üzere çarpışmaktadır, bu durum kısmen sosyal hareketlerin klasik anlayışından kısmen de İran İslam devletinin hem yapısı hem kadınları etkileyen politik anlayışından ileri gelmektedir. Ortadoğu ülkeleri ve bu ülkelerde yaşayan kadınlar genel olarak bastırılmış ve ses çıkaramayan insanlar olarak görülmektedirler. 1979 İran Devrimi kadınlar üzerindeki bu algıyı güçlendirmiştir. Ancak, İran'ın 20.yy kadın hareketleri tarihine baktığımız zaman, başka bir hikaye görmekteyiz.

Bu tez beş bölümden oluşmaktadır. Başlangıç bölümü, Literatür Taraması, Tez Açıklaması, Metodoloji ve Tez Yapısını içermektedir. Başlangıçtan sonra gelen bölüm, yani ikinci bölüm, İran kadınlarının 20.yy süresince gelişen kadın hareketini anlatmaktadır. Üçüncü bölüm, Reform dönemindeki kadın hareketini belli temalar ışında incelemektedir. Temalar, bölüm içerisinde açıklanmıştır. Dördüncü bölüm, bu sefer Yeşil Hareket içindeki kadın hareketini açıklar ve bir kez daha belirli temalar üzerinden bu kadın hareketini inceler. Son bölüm ise, final argümanlarını içermekte ve yapılan gözlemleri barındırmaktadır.

Sosyal hareketleri nasıl tanımlarız? Bunun cevabı değişmektedir. Toch, örneğin, sosyal hareketleri şu şekilde tanımlar; “bir çok sayıda insanın hepsinde ortak oldukları bir sorunun çözümü için harcadıkları efora sosyal hareket denir.” Jenkins ve Form derlerki; “sosyal hareketler genel olarak sosyal değişiklik getirmek amaçlı organizasyonlu bir şekilde yürütülürler.”

Sosyal hareket üzerine yapılan çalışmalar oldukça geniştir. Bu hareketlere olan ilgi 1970ler ve 80ler de solcu hareketlerinin yayılmasıyla daha da artmıştır. Bu yıllarda sosyal hareketlere olan bakış açısı da değişmiştir. Gerçekten de, 1950li ve 60lı yıllarda sosyal hareketler anlamsız hareketler olarak görülürken, Durkheim'in konu üzerindeki etkisiyle, bu anlayış 20 yıl içinde sosyal hareketleri sosyal değişiklik getirmek isteyen hareketler olarak yorumlamaya dönmüştür.

Anlaşılabileceği üzere sosyal hareketler literatürü baya geniştir. Konsept olarak bir kaç tane örnek vermek gerekirse ilk önce kaynak seferliği üzerine konuşulabilir. Kaynak seferberliğinin sosyal hareketlerin yönünün değişimi üzerinde önemli yere sahip olduğunu savunur kimi yazarlar. McCarthy ve Zald buna örnek verilebilir. Birlikte çalıştıkları "Research Mobilization and Social Movements" adlı makalelerinde kaynak seferberliğinin bu önemi yüzünden sosyal hareketlerin bu yön üzerinden değerlendirilmeleri gerektiğini savunurlar. Della Porta ise, sosyal hareketlerde Siyasal Fırsat Yapısının (Political Opportunity Structure) sosyal hareketlerin gidişatı üzerindeki etkisi üzerine şunları iddaa eder, ona göre bir sosyal hareketin kaynaklarını kısıtlamak, liderlerini yok etmek, gruplar arasında çatışmaları desteklemek ve bazı aksiyonları sabote etmek o sosyal hareketin gelişimini tamamıyla değiştirebilir.

Sosyal hareketlerden bahsederken, feminist literatürünün sosyal hareketler konusuna katkılarında da bahsetmek gerekir. Feminist literatür, kadın hareketlerinin ve onların kimliklerini bağlı oldukları ülke üzerinden nasıl oluşturduklarını, onların uluslararası linklerini, cinsiyetve sosyal hareketler üzerindeki ilişkiyi anlamak üzerine bir çok katkı sağlamıştır. Örneğin, Misra ve King, kadınlara ülke arasında geçen kompleks ilişkiyi açıklamaya çalışmakla kalmamışlar, aynı zamanda uluslararası feminist hareketlerinin kadınların haklarının ilerlemesinde ne tür etkileri olduğunu da, iş, nüfus politikaları ve sosyal refah konuları üzerinde, açıklamışlardır. Einwohner, Hollander, Olson makalelerinde cinsiyetin sosyal hareketler üzerindeki etkileri üzerine konuşmuşlardır. Cinsiyet muhalefet hareketlerinde kullanılabilinecek objektif bir alet olmasa da kullanılması durumunda sosyal hareketlerin gidişatı üzerinde ilginç etkileri olabileceğine dikkat çekmişlerdir. Yani, bir sosyal hareketin var olduğu

ülkenin cinsiyet normlarını ya yücelterek ya da tamamen karşısında dikilerek bir başarı sağlaması mümkündür.

Ortadoğuya geldiğimizde, geniş sosyal hareketler literatürünün ortaya koyduğu teoriler üzerinden bu bölge üzerindeki sosyal hareketlerin incelenmesi yönünde sıkıntılar yaşanmakta olduğunu görürüz. Çünkü Ortadoğu ve Kuzey Afrika bölgeleri üzerinde tartışılmaya başlandığı zaman, sosyal hareketler üzerinde, genelde İslami hareketler ele alınır. Bunun nedeni şudur; MENA bölgesinde hakim olan otoriter rejimlerin yaygınlığıdır. Bu, dolayısıyla, demokratik çerçeveden hareket eden kurumların ve politikaların varlığının azlığına neden olur. Halbuki bu ikisi, batı sosyal hareket çalışmaları açısından, ve etkileri bir sosyal hareketin ortaya çıkabilmesi ve varlığını sürdürebilmesi nedeniyle olmazsa olmazdır. Buna rağmen, Ortadoğu üzerindeki ilgi büyüktür. Gerçekten de yeni oluşmaya başlayan literatür, İslami hareketlerin yanı sıra Ortadoğu'daki kadın hareketlerini de ele almaktadır. Özellikle Yeşil hareket detaylı bir şekilde incelenmiştir. Fakat bu ilgiye, Yeşil Hareket gibi büyük bir sosyal hareketin incelenmesi bile halen istisnai hareketler olarak görülmektedir. Bu durum üzerinde, Ortadoğu'daki sosyal hareketlerin başlangıç nedenleri olarak dini uyanışın gösterilmesi büyüktür. Nihayetinde, bu dini uyanış algısı, Ortadoğu sosyal hareketlerinin ilerici olmadığı yönünde yansıtılmaya başlanmasına neden olmuştur.

Kadınlar ve Ortadoğu düşünüldüğünde ise, çoğu çalışma Ortadoğu'daki ülkelerin aile yasaları ve kadınların yasal statüleri hakkına yoğunlaşmıştır. İranlı kadınlar üzerinde yapılan çalışmalar, çalışmayı yapan araştırmacıları şaşırtmıştır. Gerçekten de, bir sosyal hareket söz konusu mu kadınların üstlendiği ya da varsa böyle sosyal bir hareket İranlı kadınlar kendilerine özgü bir şekilde mi şekillendirdiler bu hareketleri, bunlar tartışma konusudur. Çünkü genel anlamda sosyal hareketleri düşünülürse, İran'daki kadın hareketleri Batılı sosyal bilimcilerin teorize ettikleri sosyal hareketlerden farklı bir yerde durmaktalar. Bunun en basit örneklerinden biri kadın hareketlerinin hiyerarşik ve belirli bir liderlik merkezi bulunmamaktadır. Bayat, kadın hareketlerinin ilginç özelliklerini göz önünde bulundurmakla birlikte, bu kendine özgün yapıya tam anlamıyla sosyal hareket demez, onun yerine, günlük



direnişin biçimleri olarak adlandırır. Ali Ahbar Mahdi ise, kadın hareketlerini, sosyal hareket olarak alır ve 90'lar da İran'da ortaya çıkan öğrenci hareketleri ile birlikte inceler. Moghadam'a göreyse kadın hareketleri, sosyal hareket olma aşamasından bir önceki aşamada yer alırlar. Yani ona göre, kadın hareketleri sosyal hareket olmak üzeredir ve bunun bir kaç tane göstergesi vardır. Bunlardan ilki kadınların yaşadıkları sorunları hem özel alanda hem de toplumsal alanda dile getirmiş, yaymış olmalarıdır. İkinci olarak, her ne kadar İran'daki kadın hareketinde liderlik yapısı bulunmasa da, bazı aktivistler hem İran'da hem de uluslararası alanda tanınmaya başlamışlardır. Üçüncü olarak, kadınlar, her ne kadar küçük çaplı da olsa, Kadınlar Günü gibi özel günlerde etkinlikler düzenlemişlerdir. Dördüncü olarak, yeni aktivistlik methodları geliştirilmeye başlanmıştır. Bunun örneklerinden biri kadınların çıkardıkları dergilerdir. Son olarak, kadınların hukuksal alanda başarı elde etmeleri için çeşitli kampanyalar düzenlenmiştir ve kadın çalışmaları üniversitelerde açılmaya başlanmıştır.

Tezin ikinci bölümü İran'daki kadın hareketlerini 20.yy boyunca inceleyecektir. İran devriminin 1979'da vuku bulmasıyla Batı'nın İran anlayışı, özellikle kadınlar açısından olan anlayışı tamamen değişmiştir. Devrim sürecince medyadan yayılan siyah çarşafarla erkeklerin yanında protesto eden kadınların görüntüleri, İran Şahı'nın yarattığı modern ve eğitilmiş kadın imajını yıkmıştır. Şah'ın tahtından edilmesinden sonra kurulan İslam devletinin kadınlar açısındanki politikaları, kadın haklarının reddedilmesi, zorla kadınların çarşafa sokulması vs. gibi, Batı'da İran kadının suskun ve bastırılan varlık olduğuna dair bir algı uyandırmıştır. Halbuki İran tarihine bakıldığında bu algının doğru olmadığı görülmektedir. Bu bölümde İran kadın hareketleri iki alt başlık şeklinde incelenmiştir. Bu alt başlıklar eğitim, iş ve aile hukuku temaları içermekte olup, bu iki dönem bahsedilen temalar üzerinden incelenmiştir.

İlk alt başlık Modernizasyon Projesi olarak Kadın Hareketleridir. Modernizasyon, Avrupa'nın kolonilerinin Afrika ve Ortadoğuya yayılmasından sonra Ortadoğu'da ki ülkelerin, Osmanlı Devleti ve İran gibi, buna karşılık olarak ordularını güçlendirmeye başlayarak yola çıktıkları mecradır. Bu hareket, yalnızca ordu üzerinde kalmamış, zamanla ekonomi ve sosyo-kültürel konuları da içine almıştır.

Fakat bu çalışmalar, özellikle ekonomi üzerinde yapılan modernleşme çalışmaları İran'da yeterli olmamış ve Anayasalcılık Hareketi bu sorunla direk bağlantılı olarak patlamıştır. Kadınlar, Reza Şah'ın başa gelmesiyle birlikte bu modernleşme hareketinin büyük bir parçası haline getirilmişlerdir. Gerçekten de, Reza Şah'ın modernleşme amacıyla kadınlara sağladığı çeşitli legal hakların amacı ülkede etkisini çok büyük bir şekilde göstermekte olan dinci sınıfının etkisini azaltmaktır. Böylece, otorite tek elde toplanabilecekti. Tabi ki kapitalist ekonomik sisteminin getirdiği zorunluluklar, kalifiye işçi ihtiyacı vs., da bu konuda etkili olmuşlardır.

Eğitimde ilk okullar Anayasalcılık döneminde kurulmaya başlasa da, Reza Şah bunu bir tık ileri götürüp, kadınlar için okullar inşa ettirmeye başlamıştır. Gerçekten de, 1929 yılına gelindiğinde 10.000 den fazla kız okullara kayıt ettirilmişlerdir ve 190 okul kurulmuştur. Bu pozitif olayın yanı sıra, Reza Şah dönemi ile hatırlanması gereken bir başka şey ise Şah'ın özgür herhangi bir topluluğa izin vermemesidir. Reza Şah, kadınların Anayasalcılık Hareketinden itibaren başlayan özgür kadın aktivitelerini kendi bünyesi altında toplamıştır. Bu da deme olmuştur ki muhalif dergiler, organizasyonlar kapatılmış, yerine Reza Şah'ın öncelik gösterdiği Kadınlar Merkezi açılmıştır. Bu, kadın sorunlarının bağımsızca dile getirilip, sorunlara çözüm bulunmasına engel olmuştur.

İş konusunda ise kadınlar için ebelik, öğretmenlik gibi mesleklerin önü açılmıştır. Reza Shah'ın oğlu Mohammed Reza Şah bu konu da babasından biraz daha ileri gitmiştir. Kadınların ve çocukların çalışma koşullarını düzeltmek amacıyla kanunlar çıkarmıştır. Bu dönemde, kadınlar yargıç olabilme yetilerini elde etmekle birlikte, oy haklarını da 1963'te kazanmışlardır. Reza Şah aile hukuku konusunda da yenilikler yapmıştır. Dinci sınıfının elinde bulundurduğu kişileri evlendirme yetkisini onların elinden alıp devlete vermiştir. Aynı zamanda her evliliğin kayda geçilmesi, ve çok eşlilik üzerine de çalışmalar yapmıştır. Oğlu, bir kez daha, babasından daha ileriye gitmiştir bu konuda. 1975'da çıkan kanunla kadınlar erkeklerle aynı velayet haklarına sahip olmuşlardır.

İkinci alt başlık Sivil Haklar olarak Kadın Hareketleridir. Bu bölüm 1979'da kurulan İslam Devleti'nden başlayarak, 2013 Ahmadinejad döneminin sonuna kadar uzanmaktadır.

Eğitim'de 1980 de üniversitelerin devrim nedeniyle üç sene boyunca kapatılmasından sonra çeşitli değişiklikler meydana gelmiştir. Üniversiteler tekrar açıldığında kadınların daha önceden kabul edildikleri bölümlere olan ulaşımalarının kaldırıldığı görülmüştür. Sahiden de kadınlar 169 bölüm içinden 91 tanesinden eğitim alamaz hale gelmişlerdir. Bu bölümler, genellikle mühendislik ve teknik alanları içermektedirler. Dini lider Hümeyni'nin 1989 da ölmesi ve arkasından gelen Rafsanjani dönemin başlayan açıklık dönemi ve 1990 sonlarında kendini reform hareketi olarak gösteren Reform hükümetiyle kadınlar bir kez daha her bölümden eğitimlerini sürdürebilme hakkına sahip olmuşlardır.

İş anlamında kadınlar, İslam Devletinin politikaları sonucunda zorluklar yaşamışlardır. Daha önceleri yüzde 13 bulan iş hayatına katılımları, yüzde 11'e düşmüştür. Bu rakam, devrimin ilk yıllarının bitmesiyle, yani 1989 yılından sonra artış göstermiştir. Fakat iş anlamında iyileşmeler görülse de kadınların kendilerine iş bulmada yaşadıkları zorluk devam etmiştir. Bunun nedenleri arasında işverenlerin kadınlar yerine erkekleri tercih etmelerinin yanı sıra, kadınların iş yerlerinde yaşadıkları zorluklar da gösterilenebilir.

Aile hukuku konusunda kadınlar devrimden sonra büyük sıkıntı çekmişlerdir. Pahlavi Şah'larının düzenledikleri aile hukuku devrimden hemen sonra yırtılıp atılmıştır. Dini sınıfın aile üzerindeki egemenliği bir kez daha başlamıştır. Kadınlar için evlilik yaşı 9'a düşürülmekle birlikte çok evliliği sınırlayan çeşitli kanunlarda ortadan kaldırılmıştır. Durum böyle olunca, devrimin yaptığı değişiklikler bütün kadınları etkileyince, yavaşça en muhafazar kesime ait kadınlar bile devrimle ilgili hayal kırıklığı yaşamaya başlamışlardır. Bu durum kadınların bir araya gelip haklarını talep etmelerine etki etmiştir.

Bölüm üç reform hareketi ve kadınları anlatmaktadır. Reform hareketi 1997 Khatami'nin seçilmesine verilen addır. 1997-2005 arasında devam eden bu süreç

aslında sadece hükümet kademesini ilgilendiren bir olay değildir. Reform hareketi toplumun bir kısmını temsil eder.

Khatami'nin seçilmesinin nedenlerinden birinin kadınlar olduğu akademisyenler tarafından kabul edilmektedir. Gerçekten de kadınların Khatami'ye olan büyük çaptaki destekleri seçimin gidişini etkilemiş, Khatami'nin yüzde 70 gibi bir oy çoğunluğu ile hükümetin başına geçmesini sağlamıştır. Fakat kadınların reform hareketinin başarısı üzerindeki büyük etkileri onlara çok ta büyük bir yarar sağlayamamıştır. Reform hareketinin yapmak istediği, özellikle cinsiyet eşitliği üzerine yapmak istediği tüm reformlar ve hukuki düzenlemeler Gardiyanlar Konseyi tarafından engellenmiştir. Bu muhafazakar kesimin elinde bulunan kurum, meclisten geçen her hukuki düzenlemenin İran'nın devrimden sonra oluşturduğu anayasaya uyumluluğunu kontrol etmekle görevli olduğu için bu gücünü reform hareketinin yapmak istediği düzenlemeleri bloke ederek göstermiştir. Bu da kadınların yavaşca reform hareketinden soğumaya başlamalarına neden olmuştur.

Bu süreçte kadın hareketleri üç ana tema üzerinden incelenmiştir. Bu temalara göre kadın hareketleri parçalanmış, pragmatik ve çoklu strateji odaklıdır. Kadın hareketleri bu dönemde parçalanmış durumdadır çünkü reform dönemi diğer dönemlere göre daha politik özgürlüklerin olduğu bir dönemdi ve bu nedenle kadınlar farklı ideojiler altında kendi davalarını yürütebildiler. Yani, seküler ve muhafazakar kadın grupları bu nedenle tek bir saf oluşturmaya ihtiyaç duymadılar. Kadın hareketleri bu dönemde aynı zamanda pragmatiktir çünkü her ne kadar tamamıyla bir araya gelmeye ihtiyaç duymasalar da kadın grupları bu dönemde iş birliği yapmışlardır. Gerçekten de baktığımızda bunun örneklerini görmekteyiz. Mesela muhafazakar kadın dergilerinden Zanan, sayfalarında seküler kadınlara da yer ayırmıştır. Böylece kadın hakları üzerinde diyaloglara girilmesi mümkün olmuştur. Ve son olarak kadın hareketleri reform döneminde çoklu strateji odaklıdır. Gerçekten de baktığımızda, kadın grupların tamamıyla bir araya gelmemelerinden de kaynaklanan bu olay, kadınların bir çok farklı strateji kullanarak rejime direndiklerini görmekteyiz. Örneğin, seküler ideolojiye yakın olan kadınlar türbanlarını saçlarını tamamen örtmeyecek şekilde bağlayarak rejime

karşı protestolarını göstermişlerdir. Muhafazakar grupta olan kadınlar ise, dini bilgilerini kullanarak, kutsal kitabı cinsiyet lensleriyle okumaya başlamışlardır. Yani, rejimin kullandığı bir yolu, kendileri de kullanarak rejimi kadın odaklı reformlar yapmaya itmeye çalışmışlardır. Başta kadınların bir çok strateji kullanarak rejime karşı çıkmaları taktiksel bir dezavantaj gibi görünebilir. Ne de olsa tek ve belli bir strateji, bir çok kimsenin uygulayabileceği ve bölünme olmadan kullanılacak bir strateji bir çok açıdan taktiksel bir avantaj olabilir. Fakat, aksine bu negatif yönelim kadınların rejimle mücadelelerinde taktiksel bir avantaja dönmüştür. Gerçekten de, rejim bir çok cepheyle birden mücadele etmek zorunda kalmıştır ve bu da kadın hareketlerinin bastırılıp yok edilmesini engellemiştir.

Dördüncü bölüm Ahmadinejad, Yeşil Hareket ve Kadın başlığı altında incelenmiştir. Tıpkı diğer bölüm gibi bu bölümde de kadın hareketleri çeşitli temalar halinde incelenmiştir. İncelenen kadın hareketi Yeşil Hareket içerisinde oluşan kadın hareketidir. Yeşil Hareket, Ahmadinejad'ın başkanlığa bir kez daha geçmesini sağlayan 2009 da'ki seçimlerden sonra ortaya çıkmıştır. Bir çok kesim reform yanlısı Mourabi'nin başkan seçileceğini düşünürken seçimlerden sonra ortaya çıkan sonuca göre başkan tekrar Ahmadinejad seçilmiştir. Bu sonuç, seçimlerde hile yapıldığı sonucuna varılmasını tetiklemiş, bu da halk arasında isyana yol açmıştır. Bu hareket içerisinde gerçekleşen kadın hareketi beş tema altında incelenmiştir. Bu süreçteki kadın hareketi çeşitlidir, siyasal değişim taleplidir, özgürdür, koalisyonu dağılmıştır sonrasında ve baskı yüzünden geri çekilmiştir. Bu dönemde kadın hareketi çeşitlidir çünkü bir çok kesimden, farklı ekonomik geçmişlerden ve ideolojilerden kadınlar bir araya gelmişlerdir. Siyasal değişim talebinde kadınlar bu dönemde bastırmışlardır çünkü kadınlara göre İran'daki kadın ezilmesinin başlıca sorumlusu anayasadır ve anayasada gerekli değişimlerle cinsiyet ayrımcılığı son bulabilir. Kadınlar daha önce yasal değişiklikler için çeşitli kampanyalar düzenlemişlerdir. Bu kampanyalardan bir tanesi Bir Milyon İmza Kampanyası'dır. Bu gibi hukuki düzenlemeler içeren kampanyalar İranlı kadınların haklarını aramak için giriştikleri öncelikli stratejilerden biri haline gelmiştir. Keza, Yeşil Hareket öncesi süreçte kadınlar ilk kez tamamıyla bir araya gelerek, daha önceden de deneyimlemiş oldukları bu yöntemi daha da ileri

götürüp, değiştirmesini istedikleri sorunları yayınlayıp kamuoyuna sunmuşlardır. Bu süreçteki kadın hareketi özgürdür. Gerçekten de bu dönemde kadınlar hareketlerinin , en azından bir süreliğine, hiç birşeyin altında kalmaması için uğraşmışlardır. Bu da belli bir aday seçimler öncesi tutmamaları anlamına gelmekteydi. Onun yerine istediklerini açıkça belirtip adayların hepsinin tepkilerini ve verecekleri sözleri bilmek istemişlerdir ve bu şekilde kadınların seçim için ne denli önemli olduğunu da onlara hatırlatmış olmuştur. Yeşil Hareketin büyük protestolar şeklinde bir anda patlaması kadın hareketini hazırlıksız yakalamıştır. Dolayısıyla ne tür bir tepki verilmesi konusunda çeşitli sıkıntılar meydana gelmiştir. Kadın hareketinin içinde belli bir adayın desteklenmesi konusunda zaten meydana gelen çatlaklar, bu durum sonucunda daha da artmış ve koalisyonun dağılmasına neden olmuştur. Bu da kadın hareketin Yeşil Hareket içinde eritilmesine neden olmuştur. Kimi kadın aktivistler bunu olağan ve yerinde karşılamışlardır. Keza onlara göre önemli olan Yeşil Hareket, yani demokrasi arayışıdır. Kimisi ise bunun büyük bir sıkıntı olduğunu düşünüp karşı çıkmıştır. Bu sorunlar kadın hareketinin bir olarak kalmasını engellemiştir. Daha sonrasında rejimin kadınlar üzerindeki baskısı ise kadın hareketinin geri çekilmesine neden olmuştur. Kadınların belirli bir liderlik yapısı olmamasına rağmen, rejim kadın hareketinde öne çıkmış kadın aktivistleri hapis cezaları ile bastırmaya başlamıştır. Bu baskılar kimi aktivist için hapis cezası demek olmuşken, kimisi içinse ülkeden sürgün edilmesi demek olmuştur. Bu ağır baskılar altında Yeşil Hareket içindeki kadın hareketi dağılmıştır.

Son bölümde, bu incelenilen iki bölümün son analizleri yapılmıştır. Görüldüğü üzere İran kadın hareketleri 20. Yüzyılın başlarından itibaren başlayan bir olaydır. Keza bu 100 yıllık sürece bakıldığında görülen odur ki İranlı kadınlar Batı'nın sandığının aksine susturulmuş ve bastırılmış kimseler değildir. Aksine, onlar kendilerine bu ortamda yer açmayı ve kadın haklarını geliştirmeyi bilmişlerdir. Reformve

Ahmadinejad bölümlerini incelediğimizde kadın hareketlerinin bu özelliklerini görüyoruz.

Her ne kadar farklı temalar olsalar da reform dönemindeki kadın hareketinin parçalanmış özelliği ile Ahmadinejad dönemindeki çeşitlilik özelliği tezatlık göstermektedir. Reform döneminde kadınlar reform döneminin getirmiş olduğu görece özgürlük dolayısıyla bir araya gelme ihtiyacı hissetmemişlerdir. Farklı ideolojilere sadık farklı kadın grupları kendi çalışmalarını, bağlı oldukları ideolojilere dayanan aktivitelerini sürdürmeye devam etmişlerdir. Tabiki bu farklı kadın gruplarının bir araya geldiği dönemler olmuştur. Fakat, bu kısa süreli olmakla kalmıştır. Ahmadinejad döneminde ise daha farklı bir durum gözlemlenebilir. Bu dönemde, dönemin baskısı itibarı ile kadınların bir araya gelmekten başka çareleri kalmamıştır. Burada da birçok farklı sınıfa ve ideolojiye bağlı kadın bir araya gelmiş ve hakları için savaşmışlardır. Reform dönemi kadın hareketinin pragmatik özelliği ile Ahmadinejad dönemindeki Yeşil Hareket içindeki kadın hareketinin özgür özelliği yakınlık göstermektedir. Reform döneminde kadınlar pragmatik davranarak, farklı kadın grupları ile tartışmalara girmektense, birbirlerinden birşeyler öğrenebileceklerini kabul etmişlerdir. Bu farklı grupların bazı zamanlarda işbirliğinin önünü açmıştır. Anlaşılan odur ki kadınların pragmatikliği seçmelerinin nedeni kadın hareketinin devamını sağlayabilmek içindir. Ahmadinejad dönemindeki kadın hareketinin özgür kalmaktaki ısrarı da reform dönemindeki pragmatik anlayışı benimsemekle benzeşmektedir. Keza orda da kadınlar hareketlerinin zarar görmemesi için herhangi bir adaya bağlı kalmayı reddetmişlerdir. Çünkü bir asırlık süre boyunca şahit oldukları şeylerden biri de kendi hareketlerinin daima başka büyük hareketler altında isimlendirilmesi olmuştur. Bu durum, onları kısıtlamakla kalmamış, aynı zaman da hareketlerinin umursanmamasına da neden olmuştur. Bu durumu engellemek isteyen kadın aktivistler özgürlükleri konusunda ısrar etmişlerdir. Reform sürecindeki kadın hareketinin çoklu strateji odaklı olması ile Ahmadinejad dönemindeki kadın hareketinin siyasal değişiklik talep etmesi özelliği bir tezat oluşturmaktadır. Reform döneminde kadınlar tek ve belirli bir strateji izlemektense, farklı stratejiler altında rejime karşı çıkmayı uygun görmüşlerdir. Ahmadinejad dönemindeki genel baskı ortamı kadınları tek bir strateji izlemeye itmiştir.

Şu durumda, anlaşıldığı üzere, İran kadın hareketleri bir sosyal harekettir. Bu sosyal hareketin Batı'nın anladığı veya teorize ettiği şekilde bir sosyal hareketin dışında olması kadın hareketinin bir sosyal hareket olduğunu değiştirmez. Çünkü Batılı teorisyenler kendi ülkelerinin tarihlerini ve sosyo-kültürel yapılarını göz önüne alarak teorilerini oluşturmuşlardır. Ortadoğu'daki sosyal hareketler Ortadoğu'nun yapısı itibarı ile bu teorilerin dışında özellik göstermektedir fakat bu durum o hareketlerin varlığını silemez. Bu tez de dolayısıyla kadın hareketlerinin bir sosyal hareket olduğunu ileri sürer.

Şuan ki İran kadın hareketi farklı bir yapı sürmektedir. Baktığımız da görüyoruz ki, özellikle son yıllarda, kadın hareketi daha çok bireysel bir yapı almıştır. Bunda rejimin süreç içinde yaptığı baskılar bir etken olarak gösterilebilir. Bu süreç nasıl bir şekilde ilerleyecek bunu söylemek mümkün değildir. Bireysel kadın hareketleri şuan daha çok sivil itaatsizlik şeklinde kendilerini göstermektedir. Buna örnek vermek gerekirse kadınlar türbansız fotoğraflarını yüzlerini göstermeyecek şekilde internet ortamına aktarmaktadırlar. Son zamanlarda sokaklarda dans ettikleri videoları da sanal ortama aktardıkları görülmektedir. Kadınlar sivil itaatsizlik yöntemine yabancı değillerdir. Daha önceleri de bunun gibi bir çok itaatsizlik örnekleri göstermişlerdir. Şimdikinin farklı sosyal medyanın işin içine katılması olabilir. Bunun etkilerinden bir tanesi olarak bu tarz sivil itaatsizliklerin hızla yayılmasına neden olduğunu söylenilebilir. Sosyal medyanın kadın hareketleri üzerine etkisi ilerde ne olur bunu bilmek mümkün değildir ve kadın hareketlerinin ilerdeki dönüşümünü zaman gösterecektir.



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