THE PARADOX OF PARTICIPATION: INSTITUTIONS, SOCIAL STATUS, AND
THE PROVINCIAL DIVIDE IN IRAN’S ELECTORAL POLITICS

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Why do citizens bother to vote in electoral authoritarianism, while their votes will not change the main body of the ruling elite? Following the rise of competitive authoritarianism, scholars and pundits have actively debated the features of these regimes and the prospect of authoritarian change or durability. Much scholarly attention has been paid to the role of elections as a catalyst for change or as an agent of durability in these systems. However, few have addressed the question of political participation in electoral authoritarianism. That is, the origin of political participation has not been the primary focus of scholarship in electoral authoritarianism. The conventional wisdom of scholars generally stresses the role of clientelistic exchanges in mobilizing citizens in electoral authoritarianism. Existing studies highlight the monopoly over patronage resources and constraining citizens’ choice (Magaloni 2006), patronage distribution as a driving force for electoral behavior (Lust 2009; Blaydes 2011), elite co-optation (Gandhi and Przeworski 2006), and the role of natural resources (Mahdavi 2015). Some of these studies correlate the higher participation in these regimes with the lack of knowledge and illiteracy (Blaydes 2011, Pp 115-121) notably among indigent voters.

Despite some empirical evidence from provincial and rural districts, this approach overlooks the complexity of electoral behavior in authoritarian settings and consequently fails to develop an inclusive and comprehensive causal link for the origin of political participation in electoral authoritarian regimes. In particular, it appears this rational choice-styled approach
overlooks the significant role of institutional setting in shaping the pattern of political participation. This dissertation addresses this shortcoming by studying the role of institutional setting, socioeconomic variables, and electoral engineering strategies in shaping the pattern of voting behavior in Iran’s electoral politics since the 2000s. My research uncovers an uphill struggle between conservative and reformist forces in Iranian politics to influence citizens’ preferences in Iran’s electoral politics. This struggle stems from a fundamental conflict over transition toward democracy in Iran. On the one hand, reformists try to establish a democratic rule which requires entrenched political parties. In this reformist political platform, political parties and programmatic policymaking is a crucial determinant of the electoral politics and voting behavior. On the other hand, conservatives\(^1\) thwart the establishment of “Western-style party politics” by promoting populist voting behavior at the national level and also depoliticized particularistic demands in provincial politics which translate into clientelistic exchanges in Iran’s parliamentary politics. This dissertation examines the root causes of this pattern of voting behavior in Iran’s electoral authoritarianism. It argues that conservatives employ the existing institutional setting to divert provincial citizens’ preferences towards depoliticized and particularistic demands which undermine the role of programmatic accountability and party politics in Iran’s parliamentary elections. At the national level notably presidential elections, conservatives also try to weaken the role of parties and factions through a strategy of preventing the polarization of presidential elections. This strategy promotes depoliticized demands like distributive policies or populist attitudes such as anti-ruling elites demands as occurred in the 2005 presidential election. The uncertainty and the evolving predisposition of Iranian voters, however, challenge the conservatives’ electoral strategy. This dissertation uncovers the struggle

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1 For a detailed account on the rise of Iran’s conservative faction and who they are, see Moslem (2002).
of Iran’s authoritarianism to shape electoral preferences of citizens. Thus, the main research question of my study is how the authoritarianism in Iran plans to shape the voting behavior of citizens. This introductory chapter begins by situating Iran in the context of Middle Eastern authoritarianism. Next, I review existing approaches to the study of voting behavior and introduce the puzzle of electoral politics in Iran; then a summary of the chapters and the main argument of the dissertation are presented. Afterward, methodology and theoretical framework are discussed. Lastly, the implications of the study are described.

The transformation of political order in the Middle East has always been a challenging topic for academic research. The Middle East is one of the least democratic regions in the world. Autocratic states in the Middle East survived the “Third Wave” of democratic transition. Although the Arab Spring has shaken the authoritarian order in the Middle East, the prospect of reaching a democratic Middle East is still uncertain, and hopes of a democratic region are beginning to fade. The persistence of authoritarianism in the Middle East challenges the classic theories of democratization in explaining change and stability of the political order in the Middle East. According to Teorell’s (2010) typology, classic approaches to democratic regime change are structural (Lerner 1958, Lipset 1959), strategic (Rustow 1970, O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986), the result of social forces (Moore 1966, Rueschemeyer 1992), and the economic approach (Haggard and Kaufman 1995; 1997, Boix 2003)). These classic approaches are not able to explain the persistence of authoritarianism in the Middle Eastern countries.

In the case of Iran, most indicators of democratic transition according to these approaches (e.g. structural variables, economic indicators, and ruling elite fragmentation) are present.
However, it appears that instead of democracy, the overall outcome of these indicators has been despotism and populism, and Iranian society has only experienced a “transition” from a secular tyranny to a religious authoritarianism. Despite some scholarly attempts in recent years (e.g. Keshavarizan (2005)) to explain the barriers to viable democratic rule in Iran by examining the particular characteristics of the Iranian regime, the persistence of authoritarianism and failure of democratic reform in Iran has not been sufficiently studied from a scholarly standpoint. One of the most significant features of Iran’s authoritarianism is holding relatively competitive and frequent elections. (Tezcur, 2013) Iranian citizens participate widely in elections\(^2\), and election results usually create meaningful changes in regime’s policy platform. In seeking to address the question of authoritarian persistence, my research uncovers how Iran’s authoritarianism struggles to shape vote choice and citizen-politician linkages to maintain its rule.

This study has drawn on my Ph.D. studies in political science and my experience as an activist and journalist inside Iran. Since the Arab Spring, there has been an explosion of interest in the topic of transition in the Middle East. My interest, however, goes back further. Following the demise of Iran’s reform movement in the early 2000s, I began investigating the failure of democratic reform and the rise of populism. Conventional wisdom on Iranian politics views the failure of reform as a consequence of the Guardian Council’s barring reformist candidates from participating in elections, implementing market reform policies, or forming a coalition by the reformists. However, the impact of genuine popular disaffection with reformists on this process has been widely overlooked. This dissertation examines the failure of reformists and persistence of authoritarianism by investigating the ways that authoritarian rule shapes the electoral

\(^2\) Election turnout in recent years is available in Appendix I.
preferences of citizens, notably by devising and utilizing institutional setting and electoral engineering strategies. This study contributes to the field by bridging the literature on democratic transition, clientelism, electoral politics, and policy process.

AN OVERVIEW OF EXISTING APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF ELECTORAL POLITICS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Recent scholarly attempts to study elections in authoritarian regimes commonly stress the elections’ role in the durability of authoritarian regimes. They highlight the monopoly over patronage resources and constraining citizens’ choice (Magaloni 2006), patronage distribution as a driving force for electoral behavior (Lust 2009, and Blaydes 2011) and elite co-optation (Gandhi and Przeworski 2006). However, the struggle of authoritarian rules to shape the vote choice of citizens in the volatile electoral market of developing nations is relatively unexamined. That is, despite authoritarian rulers’ attempt to influence electoral process, the evolution of political predisposition in an unsettled electoral politics challenges the authoritarian plots to impact electoral politics. This section briefly reviews classic approaches in the study of vote choice. Afterward, electoral studies in developing states particularly existing studies on the electoral victory of populist candidates are briefly examined. Finally, the section introduces the puzzle of electoral politics in Iran.

The classic approach to the study of the vote choice in industrialized democracies holds that economic voting originates in the reward or punishment of the ruling party by voters. That is, voters reward the ruling party for economic prosperity and punish it for economic stagnation. The resulting hypothesis correlates the opinion of electors on economic prosperity to their vote choice. In fact, the reality is that in advanced democracies the incumbents are accountable for
their performance, and economic voting is an effective way of punishing or rewarding the parties. Additionally, longstanding party tradition provides sufficient insight to allow citizens to judge the economic performance of the parties. However, nascent parties and evolving political predispositions, as well as the absence of entrenched democratic institutions may lessen the suitability of the democratic accountability model for studying vote choice in developing countries. In some cases, this volatile electoral context provokes populist attitudes in developing countries’ electoral politics. Nevertheless, few studies have examined the impact of volatile electoral market on electoral outcome in developing countries. Instead, some studies stress the impact of economic indicators (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier (2008)) on the rise of populism in developing nations’ electoral politics. They commonly suggest that populism results either from economic hardship (usually as a result of market-oriented policies) or as a bargaining strategy by authoritarian rulers to buy off some segments of the society. In the former case, for instance, the literature on the recent wave of populism (with few exceptions such as (Remmer, 2012)) argues that the 1980s financial crisis in Latin America led politicians to implement market-oriented reforms, and that the cost of these policies -- such as inequality, and poverty-- stirred a popular backlash against incumbent political parties. This backlash helped the leftist-populist politicians to win electoral contests ((Arson & Perales, 2007), (Boron, 2008), (Kaufman, 2007), (Roberts, 2008)). In the latter case, authoritarian regimes occasionally use the populist bargain to manage domestic discontent. In some instances, the populist policy platform aims to obviate the pressure to liberalize the political system (e.g. the monarchies in the Middle East after the Arab Spring) or to contain upheavals resulting from the fiscal crisis through organizing a “loyal socioeconomic and political coalition” ((Brynen, Moore, Salloukh, & Zahar, 2012), Pp 149-150). In other cases,
the strategic use of resources constrains citizens’ choice in electoral politics and convinces them to remain loyal to authoritarian rulers ((Magaloni, 2006); (Lust, 2009); (Blaydes, 2011)).

These approaches, however, cannot sufficiently account for electoral politics in Iran at the turn of the 21 century. On one hand, the populist candidate won the electoral contest in relatively stable economic circumstances with overall positive macro-economic indicators showing poverty had declined (Salehi-Isfahani, 2009). On the other hand, populism was defeated by a centrist candidate (with a market-oriented economic policy platform) in 2013 while the country was suffering from a deep economic recession and economic hardship. Thus, the puzzle of Iran’s electoral politics has remained unexamined. My research pieces together this puzzle by showing how an unsettled electoral market and fragile democratic institutions laid the ground for the victory of populist candidates in Iran. The research stresses the role of institutional setting at the local level and conservatives’ engineering strategies of elections at the national level, particularly weakening party politics and preventing the politicization of voters’ demands. In particular, the absence of a polarized electoral contest paved the way for the victory of the populist candidate in Iran’s 2005 presidential election; yet the economic crisis and the emergence of a history of factional politics in Iranian society (or the long term political past experience of the performance of factions) aided the pragmatist candidate in winning the 2013 presidential election.

OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS AND THE MAIN ARGUMENT

The research begins by developing a model explaining the origin of citizen-politician linkage particularly in Iran’s localities, based on the data that I collected from the field during my work experience and later through the interviews. Next, the impact of electoral engineering
strategy on vote choice at the national level is examined through statistical analysis of Iran’s presidential elections. Finally, the research unfolds authoritarian persistence and the failure of reformists in Iran by applying the theories of the policy process and agenda setting within a historical institutionalist framework.

Understanding the Citizen-Politician Linkage in Iran’s Politics

The first empirical chapter of my dissertation about citizen-politician linkage relies upon my experience from the field in the light of the theories of clientelism. During my work experience, I found a deep fissure existing both among Iranian citizens and also among the political elite. This class divide is seen primarily between the urbanites and the citizens of rural areas and small towns. While in urban areas factional politics is the primary determinant of electoral outcome, in localities, the vote choice is driven by informal networks generally shaped by clientelistic relationships between citizens and politicians. This disparity between center and periphery has profoundly affected Iranian politics and any prospects for democratic transition in Iran. Drawing from Kitschelt and Wilkinson’s research agenda for the study of clientelism, I designed a research strategy to unpack this disparity between modes of political participation in Iran. I conducted a series of interviews with MPs (Members of Parliament) and local activists. These interviews revealed the patron and client linkages between MPs and executive agencies on the one hand and ordinary citizens on the other hand. This clientelistic relationship is rooted in the gradual historical development of Iran’s state institutions. Therefore, instead of taking a snapshot of the post-revolutionary institutional setting, my research depicts a moving picture of institutional development from the early 20th century to the present era. The historical institutionalist analysis concludes that clientelism results from the candidate-centered electoral
system, the substantial supervisory power of legislative institutions over executive agencies, and the lack of bureaucratic autonomy in Iran. This institutional setting has coupled with socio-economic disparity (between center and periphery) and has enabled the local power (i.e., state machinery) in localities to shape the citizen-politician linkage. Therefore, the MPs with substantial supervisory power over executive agencies become an important element of this clientelistic setting.

_Electoral Behavior in the Competitive Authoritarian Setting of Iran: Participation without Politics_

The next chapter examines electoral behavior on a national level - presidential elections - by accounting for the rise of Iranian populism at the turn of the 21st century. The use of common statistical methods for measuring voting behavior is problematic in the Iranian case, as Iranians are wary of answering political questions; making most surveys on political affairs unreliable. To surmount this difficulty, I applied district level quantitative analysis toward the study of voting behavior in Iran. A statistical analysis of presidential elections indicates that the engineering strategies of the conservatives, notably depoliticization of society through weakening party politics and preventing polarization of the electoral contest, paved the way for the victory of the populist candidate in the 2005 presidential election in Iran. In other words, in the absence of a polarized electoral contest in the 2005 presidential election, the reformists’ electoral base of support was fragmented and distributive and populist slogans determined the electoral outcome. However, the abysmal economic performance of the Ahmadinejad administration and the prolonged political struggle resulting from the green movement polarized the 2013 presidential race and organized the masses behind the reformists’ candidate, leading to victory for the
coalition of reformists and centrists. In sum, authoritarian rule in Iran has preserved an institutional setting which undermines party politics and promotes the particularistic demands of citizen-politician linkage. This setting relies on the unorganized masses and their clientelistic relationship with the MPs in local politics. Similarly, authoritarianism on the national level hinges on the unorganized masses and their populist behavior, undermining party politics and preventing the politicization of the electoral contest.

**Political Institutions and Populism: From the Politics of Subsystem to Macro-Politics**

The third empirical chapter of my dissertation explains the failure of democratic reform and the persistence of authoritarianism in Iran by integrating the findings of the previous chapters on the pattern of political participation at the local and national level. This chapter explains the failure of reformists by illuminating the difficulties that new ideas have in breaking through the established system. Iranian reformists pursued a liberalization agenda through parliament and legislative process. Therefore, examining the policy process plays a crucial role in understanding the failure of democratic reform in Iran. Building on theories of change and stability in the policy process, and the findings of transition literature, I develop an explanation of the impact of institutional setting on Iran’s policy process. According to this account, institutional setting, which lays the ground for the clientelistic and populist pattern of political participation, has created a rigid politics of subsystem\(^3\). This politics of subsystem has been employed by the conservatives to resist any attempt to change authoritarianism in Iran. However, development of

\(^3\) Drawing from Redford (1969), and Baumgartner and Jones (2006), by subsystem politics I mean the politics of minor particularistic issues that dominate Iran’s parliamentary politics. In this my study, I show that the subsystem politics is highly influenced by institutional setting in Iranian politics. I use the term subsystem to differentiate the dominant politics in Majles from the macro-politics or the national programmatic politics which overshadows Iran’s presidential elections.
long term past experience of voters on factional performance undermined this conservative strategy and triggered the reformists’ victory in the 2013 presidential election.

**Summary of the main argument**

In seeking to address the rulers’ strategy to shape electoral politics, this research distinguishes between the metropolitan\(^4\) and provincial (or local) level of parliamentary electoral politics. This distinction primarily results from the different causal mechanism in the local and metropolitan level. Iran’s institutional setting, notably the electoral system, has created a fundamental disparity between the parliamentary electoral politics of center and periphery. While the personal linkage between the citizens and MPs drives the local parliamentary politics, factional politics determines the vote choice in metropolitan districts. At the national level, however, controlled politics and shift in attentiveness, notably through agenda setting, are the most important determinant of national elections. This dynamic produces two possible electoral outcomes. In the absence of polarization, the conflict over particular issues at the national level and particularistic demands in localities shapes the electoral outcome. Polarized electoral contests, however, enhances the role of factional politics and partisanship in the national elections. Accordingly, Iran’s conservative ruling elite pursues a dual electoral strategy; in localities, they primarily rely on institutional setting to influence Iran’s parliamentary electoral politics. That is, they employ existing institutional setting to divert local citizens’ demand in parliamentary politics to particularistic needs and keep the national change and reform off the agenda in parliamentary politics. In urban areas and national level, however, the authoritarianism

\(^4\) Metropolitan areas in this study refers to large cities of Iran particularly Tehran, Mashhad, Isfahan, Karaj, Shiraz, Tabriz, Ahvaz, Qom. Local or provincial peripheries (Ehsani 2009) are the districts around the metropolitan areas.
relies on the engineering strategy of depoliticization of elections as well as screening and disqualifying candidates to shape national electoral politics.

DATA AND METHOD

This research utilizes a pluralistic methodology. The first empirical chapter relies on interviews with MPs and local activists. These interviews explore the dynamic of citizen-politician linkage and legislative authority over executive agencies. Given the hidden nature of the clientelistic relationship, the questionnaires ask the respondents to discuss their observations to bypass social desirability bias and any possible involvement of interviewees in clientelistic exchanges. Interviewees recruited from two main factions in Iranian politics, and the pool of respondents was expanded through snowball sampling. Most interviews were conducted through Skype and phone calls, and data has been extracted after reaching to the level of saturation. Finally, considering some disagreements on the turnout in the 2008 and 2012 parliamentary elections\(^5\), the interviewees were asked to explain their observation in the 2000s notably the 2000 and 2004 parliamentary election.

The second empirical chapter examines the electoral politics at the national level i.e. presidential elections through statistical analysis. The study of voting behavior in Iran’s presidential election is relatively new and dates mostly back to the 1997 presidential election. The surprising election of Mohammad Khatami in 1997 motivated analysts to provide an explanation for the electoral outcome. Surveys and analyses\(^6\) usually discuss the impact of socio-

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\(^6\) The summary and bibliography of studies on the 1997 presidential election, a report by the research center of Majles: May 1999, report number 4104395.
economic change on the results of the election. The result of surveys on vote choice is mostly aggregated at the national or a city level (i.e. Tehran) and does not provide grounds to correlate the vote choice with the attitude of voters on an individual level. The few exceptions which contain vote choice are not reliable, as Iranians are wary of answering questions about critical political issues\(^7\) particularly on their vote choice. For instance, 2005 World Value Survey contains questions on the vote choice of the respondents in Iran’s 2005 presidential election. However, the aggregated vote choice of the respondents in the World Value Survey significantly differs from the real percentages of the candidates’ votes\(^8\).

To address this drawback and avoid the social desirability bias of Iranians on vote choice questions, the dissertation sets aside the individual level of analysis and focuses on the real aggregate number of votes on the district level as the main dependent variable in my analysis. The district level analysis technique which has been previously applied in scholarly literature (e.g. (Fidrmuc, 2000); (Blaydes 2011), (Masoud, 2014)), enables the researchers to bypass some of the shortcomings of the surveys in an authoritarian context. However, scholars of political methodology call for cautious interpretation of aggregated data in inferring individual level behavior ((King, 1997)). Therefore, I cross-check the statistical findings of the chapter3 with qualitative analysis and existing studies; and the dissertation primarily relies on micro-level theory and analysis to lessen the difficulties of ecological inference (Tam Cho & Gaines, 2004). Finally, the comparative study of the 2005 and 2013 elections provides additional evidence for

\(^7\) As Nicholas Kristof observed in his trip in Iran, “Hugs from Iran”, (2012, June 13), The New York Times.

\(^8\) The number of respondents who said that they voted for Ahmadinejad is two times higher than the total actual vote for Ahmadinejad in Iran. Middle Eastern Value Survey, Iran’s 2005 wave.
the study’s findings on the voting behavior and the rise of populism in the 2005 election.\textsuperscript{9} Thus, this paper’s analysis investigates the correlation between the real percentage of votes in the districts\textsuperscript{10} and the corresponding percentage of aggregated independent variables in each district.

The independent variables have been obtained primarily from two censuses conducted by the Statistical Center of Iran in 2006 (for analysis of the 2005 election) and 2011 (for analysis of the 2013 election)\textsuperscript{11}, and the Survey of Iranian Values\textsuperscript{12} conducted by the Iranian Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (for the analysis of the 2005 election). In my dataset, I aggregated the census and survey data in each district. Then, I lined up the variables from each district in the same order to correlate them with the electoral outcome (obtained from the Iranian Ministry of the Interior). Finally, I included a series of control variables from Household Expenditure and Income Surveys, the Statistical Year Book of Iran (Iran, various years), and the World Value Survey\textsuperscript{13} as well as some dummy variables for ethnicities and religious minorities, e.g. the Sunnis\textsuperscript{14}. A detailed description of variables is available in Appendix I of the second empirical chapter.

\textsuperscript{9} Diagnostic tests for multicollinearity and heteroscedasticity have also been performed.

\textsuperscript{10} The total number of districts in my analysis is 336 in the 2005 presidential election and 397 in the 2013 election.


\textsuperscript{14} Obtained from University of Texas Libraries, Middle East and Asia Maps.
The first round of the 2005 presidential election is analyzed by the Seemingly Unrelated Regressions Model, and the result of the second round of elections is examined through an OLS regression model. To investigate the fall of populism in Iran, the 2013 presidential election also is analyzed by the Seemingly Unrelated Regressions model. The comparative analysis between the 2005 and the 2013 elections provides supplemental support for the impact of some variables and also sheds light on the origin of voting behavior in the particular context of Iran. For the sake of brevity, the effects of some controlling variables investigated in this study is not discussed in the dissertation.

**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This work falls into several related areas: electoral studies, democratization and liberalization, clientelism and populism, institutional change and stability, and agenda setting. At the local level, the research argues that Iran’s electoral system enables the local power hierarchy to influence the parliamentary electoral politics. The chapter argues that Iran’s parliamentary politics has developed in tandem with the transformation of local power configuration and institutional setting - namely electoral institution, legislative-executive arrangement, and bureaucratic organization. This institutional setting has been coupled with structural elements (i.e. socio-economic and modernization variables) to accommodate the local power structure into the parliamentary politics of Iran. Thus, the shifts the center of local power notably through subnational state-building have impacted the pattern of political participation in localities. Therefore, the research relies on an institutionalist approach that stresses the impact of state-building on the political participation (e.g. Shefter 1994).
This underlying causal process has occurred gradually over an extended period of time from Iran’s constitutional period to the present era. That is, the pattern of political participation in the post-revolutionary parliamentary politics of Iran results from gradual institutional development stretching back over time. Thus, instead of taking a “snapshot” of post-revolutionary parliamentary politics in Iran, the study depicts “moving pictures” since the early 20th century of the forces which have induced clientelism in parliamentary politics. This theoretical framework (Mahoney & Rueschemeyer, 2003; Pierson, 2004) vastly enriches the understanding of complex social and political dynamics such as persistence of authoritarianism in Iran. This institutional development created a path-dependent process “dynamic triggered by an event or process at one point in time reproduce and reinforce themselves even in the absence of the recurrence of the original event or process” (Stinchcombe, 1968, in Pierson, 2003, p.195). Therefore, attempts at democratic reform through the Iranian parliament ran afoul of the deep-seated institutional setting in Iranian politics.

The conservative nature of this institutional setting necessitates conflict expansion for reforming the political system. This Schattschneiderian framework aligns well with reformists’ strategy to liberalize Iran’s political system. That is, instead of classic democratization which has been subsumed under the category of regime change and transition, the reformists merely followed a liberalization agenda (as O’Donnell and Schmitter (1986) Pp. 9-11 ) by introducing legislation to allow more free and fair elections, lifting ban on newspapers, and increasing regime’s tolerance toward opposition groups. In other words, reformists in Iran did not intend to overthrow the unelected institutions in the Iranian regime, and their agenda cannot be regarded a classic democratization through the regime change. Thus, considering the fact that the Iranian reformists, as one faction of Iran’s ruling elite, pursued their liberalization agenda through the
Majles (the Iranian Parliament) and policy process, this research seeks to explain the failure of democratic reform through the theories of conflict expansion and agenda setting.

**IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

The findings of this study have important theoretical ramifications on the origin of voting behavior in electoral authoritarianism. The finding for the particular case of Iran stresses the role of polarization and attention politics in the electoral process. That is, in the absence of factional and polarized electoral contest, the attentiveness and temporary conflict expansion outweigh the role of partisanship. In this environment, enlarging the scope of conflict and heightening the attention over specific issues shape the voters’ attitudes toward political factions (as the issue of democratic reform and anti-ruling elite were the key determinants in 2000 and 2005 elections). However, the development of long term political past experience in a polarized electoral contest enhances the role of partisanship. In this environment, the background of the candidates and the factional support overshadow issue politics (as happened in the 2013 election). In fact, the opportunistic economic policies of Ahmadinejad on the supply side of the equation also provoked the voters to curb conservatives and return to reformist-pragmatist policy platform. The evolution of mass opinion in Iran’s past decade points to a rich future research agenda which will put the current approaches to the study of mass opinion to the test in a volatile electoral context.
Chapter 2

The Rise of Clientelism in Parliamentary Politics of Iran

Following the collapse of the Shah’s regime in 1979, the revolutionaries recast Iran’s political order in a new, hybrid paradigm of democracy and theocracy. Analysts and scholars then began to interpret this ostensibly peculiar political rule in the modern world. The resulting studies have addressed different aspects of this newly established order, such as theocratic power, factional features (Moslem 2002 and Chehabi, 2001), the constitutional configuration (Schirazi, 1997 and Arjomand, 2009), and authoritarian durability (Keshavarzian, 2005). Despite these scholarly efforts, the important role of the institutional setting in shaping post-revolutionary Iran’s electoral politics has been mainly overlooked. One of the key central institutions in Iranian post-revolutionary politics is the parliament or Majles. Iran’s parliament is among the most effective legislative institutions in the region, and Iranian citizens participate widely in parliamentary elections. A few studies of Iran’s parliament account for the factional politics and legislative outcome of the Majles (Baktiari, 1996), the role of the Guardian Council (Samii, 2001), and the impact of the Majles on democratic transition in Iran (Saeid, 2010). However, the relationship between MPs (Members of Parliament) and voters in Iran’s parliamentary politics has remained relatively unknown. This chapter aims to explain one of the most significant functional aspects of the Majles, i.e. the MP-citizen linkage, and to illuminate the origin of clientelism as the dominant type of citizen-politician linkage in Iran’s parliamentary politics.

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15 The average turnout of the parliamentary elections between 1992 to 2008 is 60.92 percent.
politics. In this introduction, I first briefly show the importance of clientelism in determining the parliamentary vote choice in Iran. Next, I explain clientelistic mechanisms in Iran’s parliamentary politics, and finally, I outline the theoretical framework and composition of the chapter.

Determinants of parliamentary vote choice in Iran are as diverse as Iranian society. Drawing from my field work and existing studies, in some districts, tribal affiliation and kinship ties drive the vote choice.\(^\text{16}\) Regional conflict, notably the tension between neighboring towns or counties of a district, also influences citizens to participate in parliamentary elections.\(^\text{17}\) Cultural and religious elements draw the vote choice in some areas.\(^\text{18}\) Traditional local institutions such as Friday prayer; and local magnates like influential families, heads of local bureaus and even teachers, actively influence parliamentary elections in some instances. In rare cases, elegance and a modern look have been reported to be influential in shaping the parliamentary vote

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\(^{16}\) In addition to my fieldwork, Isa-gholi Ahmadinia, the MP from Khuzistan, recounted the impact of tribal affiliation in a public session of the Iranian Parliament: “In small towns and rural areas, because of the absence of strong civic institutions and social organizations, ethnic and tribal context is dominant. In those areas tribe, folk, and family play the role of political factions. People vote to their tribe and folk. For example, in the recent election in my province, Khuzestan, which includes 15% of Iran’s population, the most important determinant of people’s vote, was tribe and folk, not the political factions. [The situation] in some other provinces was the same, but because of emotional reaction I cannot mention their name here” Issa-gholiAhmadiNia, RooznameRasami # 16933, 11 March 2003, 20/12/81 available at: http://www.ical.ir/index.php?option=com_mashrooh&view=session&id=2518&Itemid=38

\(^{17}\) In an interview an activist stated that “In an occasion, an ordinary citizen met a candidate and told him that he would contribute substantial part of his possession to his campaign, because he is really upset that their district’s MP belongs to the neighboring county, and this brought disgrace [nang in Farsi] on their county” Interview with an activist 5/14/2014.

\(^{18}\) For instance, in some districts, descent to Prophet is an important determinant of the vote choice. Jasem Saedi, the MP from district of Susa (chush), has won several parliamentary elections, because of his grandfather, Seyyed Abbas who was a pious and popular Seyyeds [grandsons of prophet] in the town.
In contrast to local and traditional determinants, factional politics and party endorsement is an important determinant of the parliamentary vote choice in metropolitan districts, notably Tehran, Tabriz, Shiraz, and Isfahan.

To understand determinants of parliamentary vote choice and the dynamic of MP-citizen linkage in Iran’s parliamentary politics, I conducted interviews with local activists and MPs. Almost all activists and MPs that I interviewed observed that jobs as private goods are the most frequent demand of constituents from their MPs, and that individuals regularly request that their MPs write a letter introducing them or their family members to a bureau or state-owned enterprise for recruitment. Based on the data that I collected, administrative work cases are the second most frequent demand by constituents. These work cases cover a broad range of issues from transferring a conscript to his hometown, to ombudsman-like services or minor favors like expediting a case in a local bureau, or even some bizarre cases such as helping a dismissed student with the academic appeal process in his college. Requests for low interest-rate loans are the third most frequent demand of constituencies. In general, in Iran’s parliamentary politics, it is assumed that MPs will deliver private goods in their districts as a routine responsibility, and only a few question the legitimacy of private goods disbursement by MPs.

In some cases, however, club goods such as paving the roads, particularly in rural districts, are demanded by the electorate. Nevertheless, public goods (such as macro-economic indicators and fighting corruption) are among the least frequent favors demanded of MPs, and

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19 The research center of the Majles, 2/1379, May, 2000, report number: 5505523, page3

20 Given the economic recession and high unemployment in recent years, I asked the respondents to explain their observations in the past decade to avoid the impact of economic crisis on my results.
interviewees believe that allocation of public goods in their districts plays a minor role in shaping the parliamentary electoral outcome. In some districts, MPs distribute cash handouts in deprived areas (Saeid 2010, p.174), and vote buying is influential in some cases. Overall, disbursement of private goods has dominated the MP-citizen linkage in the parliamentary politics of Iran. The prevalence of clientelism, however, is not as great in all districts, since MPs in metropolitan areas rely less on clientelistic exchanges than do MPs in provincial peripheries. Additionally, some MPs are more interested in patronage politics than others.

In sum, the interviews reveal that clientelism, as the exchange of private goods for political support, is an omnipresent and decisive variable in the parliamentary electoral outcome, and is particularly influential in the re-election of candidates. Almost all of the activists that I interviewed observed that clientelism is an important variable in shaping the vote choice of citizens in their district. In fact, clientelism is influential far beyond parliamentary elections and has been pervasive throughout domestic politics in Iran. Corruption has been viewed as interrelated with clientelism by some scholars (Kitschelt, 2000), and some consider the corruption perception index as a proxy for clientelism (Manow, 2002, cited in Muller, 2007). Iran is ranked 133rd by Transparency International as having one of the highest corruption indexes in the world. According to a survey of Iranian values conducted by Iran’s Ministry of

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21 Vote buying is illegal in Iran, and the Guardian Council is assumed to disqualify vote seller candidates, yet vote buying has been observed in Iran’s parliamentary elections. Twenty percent of activists that I interviewed observed that vote buying influences electoral outcome in their districts. Given the hidden nature of vote buying this number is considerably high and even higher than the observed number in similar cases.

22 Drawing from my interviews with activists and MPs

Culture and Islamic Guidance, 87% of Iranians believe that illegal connections in state machinery are an important problem in the society, (56.4 % of these respondents think these connections are a very important problem in the country, and 30.6% believe that they are important). During the Ahmadinejad administration, the country was faced with a burst of cronyism and clientelism, and several executive agencies were involved in supplying public resources for patronage. Except for a few journalistic accounts, there is no systematic research on the underlying causes of clientelism in Iran. This chapter fills this gap in the literature by accounting for the rise of clientelism in Iran’s parliamentary politics.

This chapter unpacks the rise of clientelism in Iranian parliamentary politics by tracing the process of institutional development in the contemporary politics of Iran. This institutional setting has been impacted during critical junctures in Iranian history. Therefore, significant episodes of transformation in Iranian politics, notably shifts in the center of local power (as the focal point of clientelistic behavior), have been examined by this dissertation. The chapter argues that clientelism in Iran’s parliamentary politics has developed in tandem with the transformation of local power configuration and institutional setting - namely electoral institution, legislative-executive arrangement, and bureaucratic organization. This institutional setting has been coupled

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24 Iran’s Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, “The Result of Survey in 28 Provinces of the Country: Values and Attitudes of Iranians” (in Farsi) p64.

25 For instance, an official report by a monitoring bureau of the Iranian parliament (Iran Audit Court: Divan Mohasebat in Farsi) unravels the burst of corruption in Ahmadinejad era: BBC Persian, 06/26/2013, available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2013/06/130625_u08_iran_audit_court.shtml

26 Some such as Alamdari made a very universal case for the existence of clientelism in Iran. However, it appears that these types of generalization about the “power structure” in Iran are not testable and have confounded clientelism as type of citizen-politician linkage with power structure. Alamdari’s views are available at: http://www.kazemalamdari.com/publications/
with structural elements (i.e. socio-economic and modernization variables) to accommodate the local power structure into the parliamentary politics of Iran. This underlying causal process has occurred gradually over an extended period of time from Iran’s constitutional period (starting from 1907) to the present era. That is, the dominance of patron-client linkages in the post-revolutionary parliamentary politics of Iran results from gradual institutional development stretching back over time. Thus, instead of taking a “snapshot” of post-revolutionary parliamentary politics in Iran, the chapter depicts “moving pictures” since the early 20th Century of the forces which have induced clientelism in parliamentary politics. This theoretical approach (Mahoney & Rueschemeyer, 2003; Pierson, 2004) vastly enriches the understanding of complex social and political dynamics such as the rise of clientelism in the authoritarian context of Iran.

This institutional development created a path-dependent process “dynamic triggered by an event or process at one point in time reproduce and reinforce themselves even in the absence of the recurrence of the original event or process” (Stinchcombe, 1968, in Pierson, 2003, p.195). Therefore, attempts at democratic reform through the Iranian parliament ran afoul of the deep-seated institutional setting in Iranian politics.

My analysis starts by examining the major shifts in the center of power of localities as the nucleus of clientelism in parliamentary politics in Iran. These major shifts are seen in three important critical junctures in the local politics of Iran: modern state-building in the early 20th century, land reform in the 1960s, and post-revolutionary local policies. Next, I describe how the candidate-centered electoral system in Iran has accommodated the local power configuration into the parliament. The chapter shows that transformations in local politics promoted the role of bureaucracy in localities to an important component of power, and the politicized and spoils
bureaucracy attached to the legislative-executive arrangement in Iran and enabled the MPs to employ bureaucratic resources for clientelism. As a result, the candidate-centered electoral system connects the MPs to particularistic demands of the electorate and channels state resources to their clients. To shed light on this institutional setting, the lack of bureaucratic autonomy and legislative-executive arrangement have also been highlighted in the chapter. In the concluding remarks, I describe how the pattern of political participation in parliamentary elections has been influenced by this institutional setting as well as by the socio-economic disparity between center and periphery in Iran. This pattern of participation has been employed by conservative forces to resist democratic reform in Iran. Finally, I discuss the implications of my study for the citizen-politician linkage in competitive authoritarian systems.

DATA AND METHOD

The empirical foundation of this chapter primarily relies on interviews with MPs and local activists and study of newspaper archives and official reports. The interviews explore the dynamic of citizen-politician linkage and legislative authority over executive agencies. Given the hidden nature of the clientelistic relationship, the questionnaires ask the respondents to discuss their observations to bypass social desirability bias and any possible involvement of interviewees in clientelitic exchanges. Interviewees were selected from provincial and metropolitan districts to represent the spatial divide in Iran, and the sample is also a representative of ethnic rift and socio-economic divisions in Iran. Interviewees recruited from two main factions in Iranian politics, and the pool of respondents was expanded through snowball sampling\(^27\). Most

\(^{27}\) Most interviews lasted between 10 to 30 minutes, and the interviewees who did not presented enough information dropped from the study. Finally, total of 53 interviews have been used in this study.
interviews were conducted through Skype and phone calls, and data has been extracted after reaching to the level of saturation. Finally, considering some disagreements on the turnout in the 2008 and 2012 parliamentary elections\textsuperscript{28}, the interviewees were asked to explain their observation in the 2000s notably the 2000 and 2004 parliamentary election.

**LITERATURE ON CLIENTELISM**

Early studies on patronage politics highlight the social background and cultural heritage of the voters as the leading causes of clientelism. These studies argue that immigrants, displaced peasants, and the poor respond favorably to clientelistic promises, as opposed to the middle class, who prefer programmatic benefits. Thus, political parties who rely on the support of the middle class are more likely to be programmatically-based and to invest in ideological appeals and public goods disbursement. In contrast, parties who rely on the lower segments of society are generally more patronage-oriented (Scott, Banfield, Wilson, Epstein, in Shefter, 1994, p.23). More recent studies, however, explain the evolution of patronage politics by studying institutional configurations; notably the electoral system, legislative institutions, bureaucratic organization, and party politics. Shefter’s seminal study of political parties in France, Germany, Britain, and the United States argues that the sequencing of party competition and bureaucratic formation shape patronage politics. That is, the presence of an autonomous bureaucracy before enfranchisement prevents patronage politics. In contrast, “where the creation of a mass electorate preceded the establishment of civil service examination or other formal procedures to govern

recruitment into bureaucracy, politicians were able to gain access to patronage.” (Shefter, 1994; P. 25).

Other scholars expanded the institutionalist view and developed more detailed explanations for the rise of clientelism in other regions. Geddes’ (1994) study of the Brazilian state suggests that effective policy making and debilitating patrimonialism depends on the robustness of party competition. In her game-theoretic model for the study of administrative reform in Latin America (Geddes, 1991) finds that reforms of civil service law are more likely to pass legislative barriers when patronage is evenly distributed among the strongest parties. Along similar lines, Ziblatt and Biziouras (2005) suggest that a strong link exists between the quality of party competition and politicization of the state. O’Dwyer (2006) appends party system institutionalization as a variable to Shefter’s theory. He argues that party competition and bureaucratic formation is not sufficient to explain the emergence of patronage politics (p.25).

Analyzing the runaway state-building in three newly democratized nations in Eastern Europe - Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia - O’Dwyer concludes that underdeveloped, noncompetitive party systems drive patronage politics. Another set of scholarly literature scrutinizes policy outcomes as the dependent variable in the study of programmatic policymaking or clientelism. Cox and McCubbins’ (2001) study of institutional determinants of policy outcome argues that “some societies may be inherently more prone to distributive, particularistic, or clientelistic politics than others. However, the electoral rules and legislative structure with which society is endowed can help or hinder the impulse to particularism” (p.51). They suggest that constitutional division of power and decentralization of legislature enables MPs to supply pork, while the electoral system and campaign finance shape the demand for politicized disbursement of goods.
As opposed to these institutionalist analyses of the emergence of clientelism, Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007) restore the modernization framework by drawing clientelism from modernization and socio-economic variables. They specifically assert that “overall - formal institutions are not particularly useful in accounting for the strategic dynamic of democratic accountability and responsiveness”\(^{29}\) (p.44). Their theory incorporates the level of development of party competition along with patterns of ethnic heterogeneity to explain the rise of clientelism. According to this theory, at low levels of economic development, clientelistic goods monopolize the policy mix, while at high levels of development, programmatic goods dominate the policy mix. However, at intermediate levels of development, political competition drives the policy mix; as in limited competition, clientelistic goods are higher in policy mix, but when political competition increases, the policy mix is distributed equally between programmatic and clientelistic goods.

Finally, in recent years, the study of clientelism in the MENA has received some scholarly attention. King’s (2003) study of state-led economic liberalization in Tunisia argues that neo-liberal economic transformation led to retraditionalization of local politics and resurgence of clientelism. Lust’s (2009; p.122) study of parliamentary elections in Jordan views elections in the Arab authoritarian states as forms of competitive clientelism which “promote pro-regime parliament and allow incumbent elites to manage elections largely through institutional rules rather than extralegal manipulation.”

**LOCAL POWER AND PARLIAMENTARY POLITICS IN IRAN**

\(^{29}\) Kitschelt considers clientelistic relationship between politician and citizens as a form of accountability as well.
Limited access to resources in rural areas and small towns commonly ignites a quest for rents in local politics, as reliance on the resources of powerful patrons stabilizes the daily life of citizens in localities. The classic modernization paradigm argues that clientelism in localities results from economic backwardness. However, modernization can also restore a new kind of patron-client linkage in localities. King’s (2003) study of local politics in Tunisia argues that economic neo-liberalization enables rural notables to deliver the votes of their peasant clienteles to their bureaucratic allies (p.3). Additionally, the constitutional division of labor between the central and local government also influences the citizen-politician linkage. Scholars and pundits disagree about the impact of decentralization on clientelism. Muller (2007) outlines this debate on the impact of decentralization on the citizen-politician linkage (pp. 261-263). Treisman (2000, pp.430-33) finds that (legal) federalism induces corruption whereas Rodden and Wibbels (2002) and Weingast (1995 & 2000) argue that market-preserving federalism constrained clientelism. Overall, local governance is very prone to a clientelistic form of accountability as opposed to a democratic form (Roniger & Gunes-Ayata, 1994).

The centralization of power, on the other hand, enhances clientelism in a different way. It results in a concentration of resources in the capital, and, therefore, the daily life of individuals in the periphery will hinge upon central resources more than is the case for residents of the capital. This setting provides bargaining power for the local officials to pressure central government to exercise clientelism. In the particular context of Iran, the centralized process of state-building in the early twentieth century and the hyper-concentration of resources in Tehran have driven the local elites to utilize central resources for patronage. Similarly, transitions in the locus of local power through land reform promoted the role of the local bureaucracy to an important source of power in the periphery, creating a new mechanism for exercising clientelism in localities through
bureaucratic resources. This chapter argues that the centralized structure of local governance in Iran and power transition in localities aided the rise of clientelism in parliamentary politics. Increasing the power of central government in the local areas enabled MPs, as the only elected linkage between the central government and local constituencies, to shape clientelistic linkages by influencing the local bureaucracy and the allocation of the bureaucratic resources. In this section, I explain how the process of state-building expanded the power of the state in local areas. Afterward, I show that the land reform policies undermined the traditional local elites and replaced them with state representatives in localities, and that the post-revolutionary state-building and policies have even expanded the power of the state in localities. Finally, this section illuminates how this chain of events in Iran’s local politics strengthened the patron-client linkage in Iran’s provincial parliamentary politics.

Centralization and Clientelism

In pre-modern Iran (before 1900), the country had been divided into few large provinces (ayalat in Farsi). In the Qajar era, the governors of these large provinces were recruited from the royal princes, tribal leaders, and later from among high-ranking members of the bureaucracy. The functions of these governors were to collect and remit taxes, supply troops, and administer justice. The power of the state over localities, i.e., towns and villages, was limited. The tribal leader and landowners controlled the provincial peripheries, and the central government accepted their control over the local areas in exchange for collecting and remitting taxes (Bakhash, 1981, p.32). However, a period of disintegration between 1909 and 1921 triggered a demand among political elites for a strong central government with a well-disciplined army and a well-administered bureaucracy. This demand laid the ground for the rise of a military autocrat, the
commander of the Iranian Army, Reza Khan; later transformed into Reza Shah. Reza Shah’s centralized state-building was underpinned by the establishment of modern state machinery and a strong army. Bent on monopolizing power in Iran, the modern army consolidated Reza Shah’s power in the peripheries by suppressing local revolutionary movements, and the local bureaucracy transmitted the power of the state into the localities for the first time in the modern history of Iran (Abrahamian, 1982, p.137). Moreover, Reza Shah established a new system of local administration modeled after the centralized systems of France and Prussia, aiming to reach from the center toward the periphery (Banani, 1961, p.60 and Chehabi, 1997, p.237).

Despite some attempts to decentralize the government’s power over local affairs (Baktiari, 1996, p.221-223), the centralized system of administration has remained relatively untouched since then. The governors of the provinces are appointed by the cabinet in Tehran, and the heads of local bureaus are appointed by the corresponding ministry in Tehran. The city governors (farmandar in Farsi which is not the same as city mayor in Iran’s system of administration) and county governors (bakhshdar) are appointed by the governor of the province. The only significant change in Iran’s local governance took place in the reformist era (from 1997-2005) when city council elections were held for the first time in Iran’s history.
Notwithstanding strong critiques of the function and effectiveness of the city councils in Iran (Tajbakhsh, pp.394-396), this novel elected local institution (city councils) added a new source of power to traditional sources of authority, namely bureaucratic representatives of the central state ministries and the social power of local religious institutions (Tajbakhsh, 2000, p.400). The reformist MPs also passed legislation in 2002 handing over more power to the city council by sharing their power of supervision over the local bureaucracies between the MPs and the city councils. Nonetheless, the Guardian Council vetoed the legislation, and MPs continue to be the sole elected agents overseeing the operation of local executive agencies; consequently exercising substantial power over the local bureaus. Thus, despite the emergence of a newly elected institution in local politics (the city councils), the centralized state-building and legal setting guarantees the dominance of the MPs in supervision and consequently facilitates their access to bureaucratic resources.

Transition in the local power and clientelism in Iran’s parliamentary politics

Figure 1. The Diagram of Formal Authority in Iran
Before the 1960s, landlords had near-absolute authority over the countryside of Iran, yet land reform gradually shifted the power of landlords to the central government, notably state machinery in the local areas (Hooglund, 1982). This transition of the locus of local power promoted the role of state machinery, namely the local bureaucracy, to a significant source of patronage in provincial peripheries. In particular, since the 1979 revolution, the local officials along with the MPs have controlled local politics mainly through clientelistic exchanges with the local elites and constituents. In this section, I explain the local power transition resulting from land reform. Afterward, I briefly explicate the post-revolutionary welfare policies in localities to show how the power transition and distributive policies of revolutionaries in localities paved the way for the rise of clientelism in post-revolutionary local parliamentary politics.

Shortly after Iran’s constitutional revolution in 1907 and particularly after the rise of Reza Shah’s autocracy, parliamentary elections were rigged by the government. Reza Shah determined the outcome of parliamentary elections and the choice of his cabinet minister. Consequently, Iran’s parliament became a meaningless institution. However, after the ouster of Reza Shah by the Allies Powers in World War II, his young successor was not able to control parliamentary elections. Therefore, local elites along with political factions gained significance in Iran’s domestic politics. Although Reza Shah’s Jacobin pattern or centralized pattern of local state-building increased the power of the state in localities, the landlords still exercised considerable power over Iran’s local politics. Some of the landlords and local aristocrats had been recruited into the local administration. Additionally, they were capable of mobilizing their villagers in elections and consequently controlled parliamentary politics in the mostly rural Iranian society. As Richard Cottam (1964), an American political scientist and a former CIA
agent in Iran observed: “Traditionally these peasants had allowed themselves to be herded like cattle to vote for the candidate of the landowner” (p. 274).

The traditional conservative classes, notably the landowners, favored the status quo; yet the modern classes (such as educated middle class) demanded fundamental change, which weakened the Shah’s power. Thus, before the land reform, the young king of Iran, Mohammadreza Shah, allied himself with these powerful landowner families to consolidate his power in the localities. In fact, he followed a dual policy of tightening controls over the modern and intelligentsia classes while wooing the traditional classes: the landowning aristocracy and bazaari merchant middle class (Abrahamian, 1982, pp. 420-1). This alliance between the Shah and the traditional classes was disrupted by the US pressure for land reform in the early 1960s.

The land reform was intended to ally the Shah with the peasantry to prevent a leftist-style uprising in the rural areas (Bill, 1970; Siavoshi, 1990; Bayat 1994). According to the land reform plan along with a series of reforms called “the White Revolution,” the landlords were to sell their land to the government, and the government was to distribute the lands amongst 1.5 million peasants at 30% below market value, with loans payable over 25 years at very low interest rates.

The social and political transformation resulting from the land reform went far beyond the distribution of land to the peasantry and the potential alliance between the Shah and the peasants. The center of local power shifted from the landowners to the state machinery of the local bureaucracy in provincial peripheries. As a result, the land reform expanded the Shah’s rule in the post-1953 coup environment by shifting the basis of local power from the landlords to the local bureaucracy. Farazmand’s (1989) study of state bureaucracy before the revolution shows that by the late 1960s and as a result of land reform, Iran’s rural population was under the
dominance of various state bureaucracies. In fact, the people’s expectations of the landlords were
directed toward the local bureaucracy (Zonis 1971), and “villagers had to deal with different
bureaucratic entities of the state that had been replaced the feudal landlords” (Farazmand,1989,
p.141). Thus, the consequences of land reform were not limited only to power consolidation for
the Shah, and the daily lives of rural people have been dependent on the state through the local

This power transformation in localities exacerbated clientelism in the post-revolutionary
parliamentary politics of Iran in provincial areas, as it turned the local bureaucracy into an
important source of patronage for politicians. The impact of this transformation in Iran’s pre-
revolutionary parliamentary politics was negligible, because parliamentary elections in the late
Shah’s era had become fraudulent, 31 and, therefore, this shift in the local power merely enhanced
the Shah’s influence. However, after the 1979 revolution, the local bureaucracies were handed
over to the revolutionaries, including the MPs, transformed into a vital component of patron-
client linkage in the relatively competitive elections of the post-revolutionary period.

Revolutionaries also solidified their power in local areas by expanding public sector, distributive

30 This general pattern ensued from the land reform in the broader Middle East (Kazemi & Waterbury, 1991, and
Moore, 2010, p.75).

31 In a period from the 1960s to 1979, Parliamentary elections were rigged and the Shah determined electoral
outcome. The fraudulent elections have been documented by Shah’s officials. For instance, Jafar Sharif Emami,
then the Shah’s Prime Minister in 1960 and 1978, states in his memoir:

“[after Amini], My opinion for the [parliamentary] election was finding a solution that makes the result of election
acceptable for our people, and also does not make his Majesty upset. So, I suggested to his Majesty that for each
district, we consider some candidates who are popular, and tell these candidates to campaign in their district. So,
the result would be really the people’s vote. ... The Shah was worried that a Tudehei [communists] or unsuitable
candidates would be elected. So, we consider 5-6 candidates for each district who are from the district. In this way,
we would prevent the election of unsuitable candidate, and at the same there would be a fair competition, and
election would be real. ... We did it in some districts, but in some other places, unfortunately his Majesty ordered
the Minister of Interior to announce certain candidates as the winner and the others as loser. This created trouble,
but we couldn’t do anything” (Sharif Imami & Lajevardi, (2001), p227)
policies and “through the etatisation of the economy, whereby direct involvement by the state in the production and distribution of essential goods led to the emergence of new state clients who accumulated wealth through their political connections” (Ehsani, 2009, p.45). Additionally, they established a bureaucracy named “Construction Jehad.” The central task of this organization was to enhance rural development. It implemented thousands of development projects in countryside including piped water, electricity, and rural roads.\(^{32}\)

To fulfill the redistributive promises of the revolution, they also established welfare foundations. The combined budget of the welfare foundations was as much as half that of the central government in the 1980s, and only seven of these foundations together employed more than 400,000 employees (Amuzegar, 1993, p.100). Some of these welfare bureaucracies have influenced the local politics, particularly parliamentary politics in local areas, through their networks. As an MP observed, IKRC (Imam Khomeini Relief Committee), a charity styled welfare organization, is influential in parliamentary elections in eight deprived provinces. Some MPs in these provinces have the direct experience of working in IKRC, and some others were endorsed by IKRC agents\(^{33}\). In sum, while the Revolution enhanced the sense of empowerment in the countryside (Ehsani, 1995); in its early stages, the power transformation in localities and socio-economic concerns led the provincial citizens to rely on state resources more than in the pre-revolutionary era.

**ELECTORAL INSTITUTIONS AND CLIENTELISM IN IRAN**

\(^{32}\) Azkia and Ghaffari, 2003, Tose-eh Rustaee, p125

\(^{33}\) Interview with an MP 04/25/2014: “In deprived provinces, we can roughly say that the IKRC determines the parliamentary electoral outcome. For instance, [even] in 6th Majles the head of IKRC in Ilam [province] won the parliamentary election, or the same in 7th Majles for Kermanshah, and IKRC has a very important influence in parliamentary elections in those areas.”
The impact of electoral institutions on democratic accountability is a recurring theme in scholarly literature. Some studies associate clientelistic accountability with personalized political competition as opposed to party-oriented contests. Muller’s review (2007) of research on the impact of electoral systems on patron-client linkages finds that the more clientelistic, the more candidate-centered the electoral systems are (p.269). The causal link for this phenomenon has been discussed by several scholars. For one thing, in personal vote strategy MPs cannot claim credit for national policy outcomes (Mayhew, 1974; Fiorina & Noll, 1979; Arnold, 1990; cited in Cox & McCubbins, 2001, p.38). Yet they can earn credit for particularistic goods and for supplying patronage, pork, and ombudsman-like services in their districts (Ferejohn, 1974; Fiorina, 1977; Wilson, 1987). Additionally, personalized political competitions let the politicians bargain with small target groups of voters, facilitating clientelistic linkages (Ames, 2001; Katz, 1980). Similarly, Buchanan and Tullock (1962) show that everything being equal, majoritarian systems experience clientelism more than proportional representation (p. 263), and Kitschelt (2000) contends that multimember majoritarian systems are even more prone to clientelism. In contrast, some studies associated clientelism with highly centralized party systems in the proportional representation structure, as these systems block the accountability of MPs to identifiable local constituencies (Coppedge, 1994, in Kitschelt &Wilkinson, 2007, p. 42).

The impact of the electoral system on the rise of clientelism in Iran has been twofold. On one hand, Iran’s candidate-centered electoral system has led politicians to highlight particularistic demands and rely on personal ties with voters and has furthered clientelistic exchanges in Iran’s parliamentary politics. On the other hand, the electoral system has attenuated the influence of political parties in Iran’s political sphere and, therefore, weakened programmatic policymaking, which is more party-induced, and promoted clientelism and particularistic
policymaking. In fact, instead of party politics, the power arrangement in localities has been embedded in Iran’s legislative institution and consequently has weakened the forces who sought to further democratic accountability through reform and enhancement of party politics in Iran. The conservative resistance to democratic reform fed clientelism in Iran’s parliamentary politics, and despite drastic shifts in the patrimonial settings of Iranian society through state-building and land reform, clientelistic behavior in parliamentary politics has remained in place thus far and attempts to reform Iran’s electoral law have run afoul of this deep seated conservative pattern in Iranian politics. In this section, I trace the development of Iran’s electoral law from the early constitutional period to illuminate how the electoral system created an obstinate pattern of electoral behavior in Iran’s parliamentary politics, underpinning clientelism in post-revolutionary Iran.

In the early constitutional era, Iran’s electoral law had specified the property and educational requirements for the electorate. These requirements were abolished in 1911 extending suffrage to all male Iranians. Paradoxically, the enfranchisement of the Iranian citizens has harmed the transition to democratic rule in Iran. That is, extending the right to vote to all adult males in the chaotic days of the early twentieth century implanted Iran’s patrimonial structure of power into the parliament. In mostly rural Iranian society in the early twentieth century, the local magnates were able to mobilize the villagers to vote for their candidates. These conservative candidates commonly favor the status quo, thus weakening democratic reform in Iran. As a poet and maverick politician, Bahar, states:

“This electoral law, which continues to plague the country even today in 1944, is one of the most harmful and least thought-out bills ever passed by us Democrats. By introducing a democratic law from modern Europe into the paternalistic environment of traditional Iran, it weakened the liberal candidates and instead strengthened the conservative rural magnates who can herd their peasants, tribesmen, and other retainers into the voting polls. It is not surprising that when the liberals in the Fourth Majles tried to rectify their
mistake, the conservatives staunchly and successfully rallied behind the exiting “democratic” law.” (cited in Abrahamian, 1982, p.121)

This electoral law resulted in the replication of Iran’s traditional local power hierarchy in the Parliament. As explained in the previous section, the landlords were the locus of power in localities. Given the power of landowners in Iran’s provincial politics, they regularly gained a majority in Iran’s parliament. Drawing on existing studies of the occupational background of Iran’s MPs, the average percentage of landlords among MPs in different terms of the Majles from 1907 to 1960 was 42%, not to mention the MPs who were not from the feudal class but endorsed by the landlords. This number was even higher – up to 51% - during the nationalization of the oil movement. The landowners commonly forged an alliance with pro-Shah forces in the Iranian parliament. Although some landowners and local notables, such as the Zolfaghari clan in Zanjan, were moderate and centrist; most of them resisted the reformist forces - notably the nationalist movement of Prime Minister Mossadeq. As Cottam argues:

“A strong case can be made for the hypothesis that, paradoxically, Mossadeq’s strong belief in liberal democracy helped set in motion the forces that were to lead him and the National Movement to defeat….Convinced that the people supported him, he saw little reason to fear a popular verdict. In this thinking Mossadeq was incredibly naïve. Although it was true that articulate opinion in January 1952, when the election began, was overwhelmingly pro-Mossadeq, the majority of Iranians were not articulate. Tehran and Tabriz would support Mossadeq, but what of the thousands of villages in which no more than a handful of peasants were politically aware?” (Cottam, 1964, p.274)

In fact, Mossadeq realized that electoral law harmed pro-democracy forces in Iran and empowered conservatives in Iranian parliamentary politics. Consequently, he attempted to pass an electoral reform bill to constrain the influence of the Shah and the landlords over Iran’s

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35 Ashraf (1991) estimates that feudal landlord class controlled two-third of parliamentary seats before the 1979 revolution.
parliamentary politics. However, he was deposed in the 1953 coup, and his bid for reform was aborted.

As explained in the previous section, land reform carried over the power of the feudal landlords to the state apparatus in provincial Iran. This transformation in the center of local power coupled with post-revolutionary populist policies and shaped a new mode of electoral behavior in local parliamentary politics. To illustrate this transition in parliamentary electoral behavior, I describe Iran’s electoral system and show how the post-revolutionary local power hierarchy shaped parliamentary electoral behavior.

Although the 1979 revolution radically transformed Iran’s political hierarchy, the electoral system remained relatively unaffected. In fact, Iran’s electoral system promotes particularistic demands in parliamentary politics and has regenerated the pre-revolutionary pattern of voting behavior in provincial Iran. Conservatives in post-revolutionary Iran have employed this pattern to encourage citizens in rural areas and small towns to vote on the basis of personal ties with MPs, thus nurturing clientelism in those areas.

Iran’s current electoral law is based on a multi-member majoritarian system in two rounds of elections. The size of the district’s population determines the number of MPs chosen from the district. Districts usually correspond with the division of local administration, thus preventing malapportionment. The total number of districts is 196, corresponding to a total of

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37 However, some districts include two or more counties. The competition between these counties in parliamentary elections usually ignites regional conflicts. In some cases, local elites lobby the central government to assign a separate seat for their county. The number of MPs for each district varies from one to thirty.
290 seats in Iran’s Parliament. A candidate must obtain 25% of the total votes in her or his districts to be the winner of the first round.\textsuperscript{38} If the candidate cannot obtain this threshold, two leading candidates (or twice the number of seats) compete for the remaining seats in the second round. All candidates have to be qualified by the Guardian Council to be able to run in elections, and the Guardian Council monitors the election process. The Guardian Council’s monitoring of elections is by “approbation supervision” (nezarate estesvabi), which gives the right to disqualify candidates even after they have won an election, and the right to invalidate the result of the election in districts or ballot boxes.

Political parties are still nascent and weakly organized in Iran. In fact, parties in Iran are organized by influential figures and factional networks. Additionally, parties are discouraged by Iran’s revolutionary leaders as a “Western” product of liberal democracy, in contrast to the Islamic utopia of Iran’s revolution. Considering the long history of abortive party politics in Iran, Iranian elites are wary of party politics (Fairbanks, 1998, p.30). Given Iran’s candidate centered electoral system and also the negative attitudes toward political parties, candidates tend to invest in personal votes more than party support. Based on the data that I have collected, the majority of interviewees observed that party endorsement and factional affiliation play minor roles in the victory of candidates in small towns and rural areas. Instead, particularistic promises of candidates, and endorsement by local elites, tribal leaders, influential family members, or heads of local bureaus play a significant role in the victory of candidates in those areas. In this context, MPs rely upon personal ties with the voters, feeding clientelistic accountability as opposed to

\textsuperscript{38} Iran’s electoral law available at http://www.parliran.ir/index.aspx?siteid=1&pageid=229 Originally this threshold was 33%, but the 5\textsuperscript{th} Majles changed it to 25%.
democratic accountability and programmatic policymaking in Iran’s parliamentary politics. As an MP argues:

“Clientelism can be traced back to Iran’s electoral system. Because our system is not party oriented, the electoral system leads people to select local magnates instead of political parties. For example, an MP from Isfahan who only lost the 6th Majles election [and won all other elections] visits homes in rural and deprived areas of his district and helps people with their daily chores. He has done nothing for the district; instead, he has built a close connection with constituents. In the 7th, 8th, and 9th Majles, even though conservatives did not endorse him, he and his wife won these elections, and he had the highest votes in his district. He builds a personal relationship with people, and this relationship helps him to win. The reason that he lost the 6th election was that the level of participation in metropolitan areas was high. He has constant electoral support in deprived areas and city peripheries. The [MP] Nategh Nuri from [the district of] Nur, and the MP from Aamol, along with many other MPs have the same base of support. In Iran, usually, the MPs who can establish a personal connection with ordinary people, solving their minor problems and paying them small amounts of money, are successful…. I know that on one occasion, the MP from Isfahan [mentioned above] visited the famous families of a compound in the periphery of the city, and gave each of them a small gift. He has also had a connection with Basij, and that helped him as well. Overall, Iran’s electoral system provides an opportunity for this kind of behavior, to select on the basis of personal trust rather than party politics. 39

Considering the inefficiencies of candidate centered electoral law in Iran, reformists in the 6th Majles attempted to reform electoral law to lessen the effect of the personal vote strategy and increase the role of parties in Iran’s politics. In March 2003, the 6th Majles passed legislation entitled “Provincialization of Election Plan”(Tarhe Ostani Shodan Entekhabat) by a narrow margin of 17. According to this bill, instead of selecting candidates for each district, the electorate was to choose a list of candidates for their entire province. In this way, candidates would have to rely more on party endorsement and programmatic promises for all voters in the province. It was assumed that the new electoral system would increase the efficiency of the parliament by redirecting the attention of MPs toward the macro-problems of the provinces instead of the minor personal concerns of the citizens.40

39 Interview with a MP 5/3/2014
40 Yase no daily newspaper, 12 March 2003
The advocates of the bill argued that MPs spend more than 80% of their time on trivial issues like the work cases of their constituents, and do not have enough time to develop a grand vision for their region. Thus, provincialization of the election would bring about prosperity and development through enhancing programmatic policymaking and avoiding the allocation of resources to parochial demands of the districts. In fact, the bill was assumed to constrain particularistic demands, notably pork-barrel and clientelism, in MP-citizen relationships.

Opponents of this bill from small districts argued that the plan would divert development resources from rural areas to the capitals of provinces. Opponents of the bill, however, were not limited to MPs from small towns and rural areas. Conservatives, pragmatists, and even some reformists affiliated with religious and traditional groups also opposed the bill. In fact, all conservative forces in Iranian politics rallied around the candidate centered electoral system. Hossein Marashi, a pragmatist MP from the district of Kerman, also disagreed with the bill. He argued:

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41 Ibid

42 One opponent of the bill from the district of Ahar and Hariss near the border of Iran and Azerbaijan stated:

"You gave all of the projects to each other in the subcommittees, and still want to leave us empty handed? It should be really embarrassing for you...Iran has a rural and tribal context. If you want this government to be effective, you should pay attention to the rural areas and tribes. All resources should be allocated in those areas. It should not be taken from them and be spent in Tehran and the capital of provinces because immigration [will happen], and if this takes place, we will be ignored again. I am appealing to [MPs] from deprived areas: Do not be deceived. We have seen injustice and discrimination. We will face discrimination again. They would tell us: Sir! This project is not necessary [for your district]. They will only take into account Tehran and the capitals of the provinces, and again immigration [to large cities will escalate].


43 Available at Official Newspaper (RooznameRasmi), 11 March 2003, 20/12/1381
If we agree to be an MP, we should be happy to take on people’s minor work issues… People even refer to their president for minor issues, and [the incidence of minor demands] is higher than that of macro-problems in the country. You cannot prevent people from demanding particularistic issues. This is the nature of the parliament … The advocates of this bill seek to strengthen political parties. They think that by provincialization [of elections] the influence of political parties increases. [But] first we need to have a party. We do not have real parties with strong popular support or a serious base of support. … This is because people do not register in parties as members. Only by passing legislation, we cannot support the political parties. In contrast, this bill weakens the popular base of support for the Majles, and [by passing this bill] instead of political parties, small groups without any political attitude will take over [provincial politics].

Reformists, in response, argued that this bill would bring prosperity and development to small towns and rural areas by highlighting programmatic instead of particularistic policymaking for the entirety of the province. Javad Eta’at, an MP from Darab district in Fars, pointed out in a public session of the 6th Majles:

“By this legislation [provincialization of the election], the Office of Management and Budget can allocate resources on the basis of poverty, population and size, instead of personal connection as is dominant now; and we [MPs] will not need bargaining and under-the-table relationships, etc anymore….Also, the current [electoral] system has intensified ethnic, tribal, regional, Shahrestani [small town] conflicts. Particularly where three to four small towns have only one MP, vote choice is determined only by the hometown [not the competency] of the candidate. … We are assumed to be a national parliament, but now we are functioning at the local [level]. You know that when a minister comes to Majles, all MPs gather to ask him to do [their local] demands. …A good procedure was begun last year to provincialize the allocation of funding and resources. [Therefore] the members of the Shuras (city councils) will also be able to ask for resources. “

The 6th Majles did pass the Provincialization of Electoral System bill, but the Guardian Council vetoed the legislation. A member of the Iranian parliament reported they had asked the Guardian Council to allow the Ministry of Interior to implement this legislation provisionally in just one province, and the Guardian Council had initially accepted, but eventually the members of the Council refused to pass the provisional proposal. In the next Majles, some MPs tried to pass a similar legislation, but the Guardian Council sent an informal message that they would

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44 HosseinMar’ashi, available at Official Newspaper (RooznameRasmi), 11 March 2003,

45 JavadEta’at, ibid

46 Skype interview with a MP 1/30/2015
veto any attempt to provincialize the electoral law. As a result, Iran’s electoral system remained candidate centered, promoting clientelistic exchanges in Iran’s local politics and serving the conservative forces in Iranian politics.

In sum, the Iranian conservatives have employed electoral law to encourage provincial citizens to vote on the basis of personal ties and particularistic clientelistic exchanges instead of party politics and programmatic policymaking. This institutional setting has created a docile parliament which will undermine any attempt at democratic reform in Iran by discouraging the voters in metropolitan areas from participation in parliamentary elections. As explained, this gap between the parliamentary voting behavior of provincial and metropolitan voters is a recurring phenomenon from the early constitutional era to Mossadeq period and recently in the reformist era. In fact, Iran’s electoral law in the early constitutional period mirrored the local paternalistic structure of power in the Iranian parliament. Similarly, in the post-revolutionary period, the local power setting has been embedded in provincial parliamentary politics of Iran. The center of local power in the post-revolutionary setting, however, has been shifted from the landlords to new power centers, specifically to the governors, local bureaucracy, traditional elites, and MPs. In the next sections, I will delineate this post-revolutionary setting by explaining how the MPs exploit resources in local bureaus to establish a linkage with their clients.

**BUREAUCRATIC ORGANIZATION AND CLIENTELISM IN IRAN**

Weber’s classic study of bureaucratic organization is the first scholarly attempt to understand the evolution of the state apparatus from paternalistic systems to modern states.

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47 Skype interview with a MP 12/10/2014
Weber views bureaucracy as one of the most important components of the transition from traditional patrimonial authority to modern legal-rational rule. “Only with the bureaucratization of the state and law in general can one see a definite possibility of separating an ‘objective’ order from ‘subjective rights’… This conceptual separation presupposes the separation of the ‘state’ …as the creator of a ‘legal norm’ from all personal ‘authorization’ of individuals. These forms are necessarily remote from the nature of pre-bureaucratic, and especially patrimonial and feudal, structures of authority” (Weber 1958, p.239). The defining features of the legal-rational mode of bureaucracy according to Weber are political autonomy of the state administration, separation of office and office holder, professionalism as the basis of authority, predictable career path, and finally the spread of the rational-legal norm to other organizational settings (Weber 1978, pp 1028-31). In this framework, state administrators prefer to insulate themselves from patron and client politics and legitimize themselves through the legal-rational authority. However, patronage-seeking politicians can derail state administrations from the legal-rational bureaucratization path. Thus, if the political change affects career bureaucrats, they invest in personal ties with politicians instead of loyalty to the office. This type of relationship between politicians and bureaucrats instantiates another mode of patrimonialism.

An overview of the evolution of Iran’s modern bureaucratic organization shows that the Iranian state administration lacks bureaucratic autonomy and has been deeply affected by shifts in political leadership. The central authority and politicians have routinely exploited bureaucratic organization as an instrument to exercise power and expand their control over different segments of Iranian society. Thus, instead of a rational-legal administration according to the Weberian model or the New Public Management model, Iran’s bureaucracy instantiates a spoils bureaucratic system, which is characterized by a lack of bureaucratic autonomy and the misuse
of bureaucratic resources for political reasons. In this environment, politicians, including MPs, employ the bureaucracy to advance their political interests. To illustrate the lack of bureaucratic autonomy and the exploitation of the bureaucratic setting by politicians, in this section I trace the process of bureaucratic development in contemporary Iran to show how political leaders have employed the bureaucratic setting to further their political ambitions and have, therefore, prevented the forging of bureaucratic autonomy in Iran’s modern state apparatus.

The first attempt at building modern bureaucracy in Iran dates back to Qajar dynasty in the 19th century. Sheikholeslami’s (1978) study of the establishment of modern bureaucratic organizations during the rule of Naser al-Din Shah of Qajar shows that the newly established state apparatus at that time was dysfunctional and primitive according to the Weberian model. “Many offices, departments, and ministries existed in name only. Others duplicated each other’s tasks, vied for favor from the Shah, and intrigued against each other” (pp 239-40), while organizations were an extension of the king’s household and the notables’ structure of rules. (pp 239-40) For the most part, other attempts to build modern state organization during Qajars failed primarily because of the absolutist rule of the early Qajari Kings, and the lack of resources and means necessary for modern state-building.

The second attempt at modern state-building however, made in the 1920s by Reza Shah, created a relatively effective body of administration. Reza Shah gradually transformed the chaotic collection of traditional bureaus into 90,000 full-time government employees in ten civilian ministries. This newly established modern state machinery was one of the most important instruments in consolidating Reza Shah’s power both in centralities and localities (Abrahamian, 1982, pp.136-137). After the ouster of Reza Shah, his successor continued to
expands his control over Iranian society through the civil and military bureaucracy. The Shah “even more relentlessly expanded his power over the bureaucracies” (Zonis, 1971, p.18). The modern bureaucracy built by Reza Shah turned into an inefficient body of corrupt and nepotistic cliques (ibid, p.22), in which professionalism was replaced by politics and personal ties to the central authority. Thus the young Shah, Mohammadreza Pahlavi, utilized the bureaucracy as an instrument to consolidate his power in Iranian society.

The Shah dramatically expanded the size of the bureaucracy, enabling his regime to penetrate the daily lives of his citizens (Abrahamian, 1982, p.438). Additionally, the Shah bought off the Iranian political elite through co-optative recruitments in bureaucracies. Zonis (1971) thoroughly explains the Shah’s policy of controlling the politically influential elite through co-optative recruitment in bureaucratic settings. These co-optative recruitments strengthened the Shah’s rule at the cost of weakening bureaucratic autonomy in Iran’s state administration. The Shah’s use of bureaucratic appointments to enhance his power was not limited to co-optative recruitments. As explained in the previous section, land reform transformed the power of the local bureaucracy in provincial Iran by weakening the landlords as the traditional center of local power. Thus, controlling the local bureaucracy became an important means of leverage in Iran’s local politics. After the land reform, the government also reorganized the political administration by replacing the old administrators of the villages and counties (dehdar and bakhshdar) with young college graduates (Hoogland 1982, p.132), and these positions were no longer under the control of landowners. This change in the administrators’ recruitment can be viewed as a part of the Shah’s larger plan to replace old career bureaucrats with young technocrats, seriously
undermining bureaucratic autonomy. 48 In fact, the Shah sought to replace old bureaucrats who had the potential to emerge as opposition with young technocrats who were docile and loyal to the Crown. As the Head of the Shah’s Planning and Budget Office stated:

“…when [Prime Minister] Amini was in office, another type of opposition emerged. … Consequently, the Shah’s solution was to favor young [technocrats]. He suddenly abandoned his old men and replaced them with younger technocrats. These young technocrats, in the eyes of ordinary people, were westoxicated; creating a gap between ordinary people and the technocrats. The majority [of Iranians] believed that this group of [technocrats] in charge understood neither the poverty nor the problems of ordinary people. Therefore, [in the eye of ordinary people] they were usurpers; agents of the Western governments. In other words, the majority of people thought that these [young technocrats] had colonized Iran.” 49(Majidi & Lajevardi, 1998, pp. 50-52).

As a result of the negative public attitude toward the Shah’s young technocrats, 1979 Revolution brought about a massive cleansing of state administrators, and the revolutionaries placed their own men in bureaucracies (Bakhash, 1990 & Chehabi, 2001). Some called this massive transformation of state apparatus the de-bureaucratization of Iranian administration (Farazmand, 1989). During this post-revolutionary period, the Shah’s bureaucrats were replaced by young revolutionaries who barely knew the daily tasks of an administrator. As one author describes: “One of the ministers in the early period after [the 1979] Revolution reports that on his first day [in office], his secretary told him, ‘This is your cartable. Please make a paraph at the end of the letters.’ However, he did not know the meaning of cartable and paraph50. By this story, I want to illustrate our lack of experience and vision to run a country” (Ahmadi Amuyi, 2003, p.358).

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48 Abbas Milani, 2001, Muamayeh Hoveyda, pp189-190, Akhtaran Press

49 Majidi & Lajevardi, 1998, Pp 50-52

50 These are basic tools of administrative works in Iran.
Given the absence of an autonomous bureaucracy or any effective civil service law, the commitment to revolutionary ideology replaced the role of a civil service examination. The revolutionaries even developed a method of bureaucratic recruitment called the commitment theory (*nazarieh ta’ahod*). Saghafi (1999) provides a detailed account of the development of this theory, which replaced expertise and experience with a commitment to revolutionary ideology in the recruitment process.

The revolutionaries also enlarged the public sector. They expanded the public sector from twenty ministries with 304,000 civil servants in 1979 to twenty-six ministries with 850,000 civil servants in 1982 (Abrahamian, 2008, p.169). This phenomenon, which has been called runaway state-building by students of political science, provided a depository of patronage for the revolutionary factions. The next administrations in the late 1980s and 1990s, namely those of Mousavi and Rafsanjani (particularly in his first term), tried to enhance bureaucratic autonomy and halt political pressure on the state apparatus. However, these attempts were limited to a handful of important bureaucracies such as the Planning and Budget Organization (Ahmadi Amuyi, 2008, pp. 72-73). Afterward, the Rafsanjani Administration and the reformists passed legislation trimming the size of the public sector and regulating civil service recruitment. According to the 3rd and 4th Five-Year Development Plan of the Islamic Republic proposed by the Khatami administration, the new recruitment in each bureau should not exceed 50% of the number of retired people in the bureau in each year. 

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51 Some has attributed this increase to the nationalization of the Iranian industry, but it appears that creating several bureaucratic organizations after the revolution has swollen the public sector.

sector steadily increased in the 1990s and remained constant in the early 2000s. Additionally, the reformist administration regulated the civil service examination, and on December 2002 held the first centralized comprehensive civil service recruitment examination in Iran’s modern history. The conservative 7th Majles passed the Civil Service Management Law to regulate bureaucratic appointments. This provisional law differentiates between professional positions and political positions which roughly accord to career bureaucrats and political appointees in modern administrative systems. The law specifies that professional position holders should have already served in the bureau to be eligible for promotion. Ironically this law debilitated bureaucratic autonomy in Iran, as the Ahmadinejad Administration had already replaced the independent and reformist bureaucrats with callow conservatives. Therefore, practically speaking, the law may consolidate conservative domination of Iran’s bureaucratic scene for a generation.

Overall, given the long history of exploitation of state administration for political purposes, the state apparatus in Iran continues to be permeable to political pressure and deeply affected by transitions in power. Bureaucratic autonomy in Iran is meaningless to many Iranian politicians and activists, and most of them do not even know the difference between a career

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53 Calculation is based on the number of permanent public sector employees. The total number of government employees increased from 1783114 in 1991 to 2213303 in 2001 and from 1370731 permanent employees in 1991 to 1997849 in 2001, (Iran Statistical Year Book 1383, p154). The official number of public sector employees under Ahmadinejad administration is not reliable.


55 Iran daily newspaper: Dec 14, 2002.

bureaucrat and a political appointee. Politicians routinely have access to bureaucratic resources to supply patronage, and bureaucratic appointments commonly can be viewed as an extension of factional politics. Recently, Ahmadinejad’s cabinet ratified a plan (Tarhe Mehre Kaar Aafarin) to allow bureaus to hire without any reference to civil service law. Analysts regarded this plan as an attempt by Ahmadinejad to influence the next presidential election and provide jobs for his advocates.

MPs, as a significant linkage between center and periphery, also influence bureaucratic appointments. According to the data that I collected, the majority of my interviewees observed that a new MP brings changes in the heads of local bureaus. This influence over bureaucratic appointments differs across different bureaus and districts. That is, some MPs have more influence than the others, and some bureaus are more resistant to political pressures than other bureaus. According to interviewees, the MPs mostly affect the appointment of city governors (Farmandaars) by pressuring the governor of the province and the Ministry of Interior in Tehran. The MPs also influence the appointments in different bureaus, notably the bureaus of Education and Training, Public Health, universities, and the bureaus of Agriculture and Construction Jehad.

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57 Drawing from my interviews with activists and politicians

58 Mehr News agency, January 1th, 2013, available at: http://www.mehrnews.com/detail/News/1781306 , This Plan was assumed to hire more than 300,000 civil service employees.

In sum, the Islamic Republic system in Iran inherited the political misuse of bureaucratic organization from the prior regime. Bahman Ahamdi-Amuyi, an investigative journalist, conducted a series of interviews with Iranian bureaucrats to explain the dynamic of bureaucratic development and economic policy-making in post-revolutionary Iran. In the second volume of his book, “How the Men of the Islamic Republic Became Technocrats,” he concludes that the continuous, politicized cycle of replacement of old technocrats and bureaucrats with a new generation ran afoul of attempts at development in Iran (pp.14-5). In these politicized replacements, politicians exploit the bureaucratic resources to advance their interests. Therefore, bureaucracies cannot solidify their autonomy, and they are deeply affected by politics.

Given the significant role of the bureaucracy in the daily life of citizens in local areas, as discussed in the previous section, it can be seen that the bureaucracy functions as the main mechanism for establishing clientelistic linkage in localities. Bureaucracy in Iran is not merely a repository for jobs and patronage; it provides necessary resources for the daily lives of citizens in the local areas. Therefore in a spoils bureaucratic system, bureaucracy enables local politicians, particularly MPs, to build patron and client linkages by placing their own men in the local bureaus. That is, the unprofessional and politicized bureaucracies facilitated the politicians’ intervention to exploit organizational resources for clientelistic purposes, and enhanced patron and client linkages.

EXECUTIVE-LEGISLATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

As explained in the previous section, an unprofessional and politicized bureaucracy in Iran facilitates the exploitation of bureaucratic resources by MPs. Members of Parliament in Iran commonly utilize their constitutional power over the ministers and the executive agencies to
influence the bureaucratic appointments in their districts. In some cases, they also affect the resource allocation for pork-barrel projects. This section reviews the executive-legislative arrangements in Iran, illuminating the control of MPs over bureaucratic resources.

In clientelistic policy making, legislative institutions work as a linkage between MPs and resources in executive agencies. Cox and McCubbins (2001, p.39) argue that MPs with the de facto right to veto or block government policies can exercise clientelism and pork-barrel politics. Research on the impact of legislative institutions on clientelism mainly focuses on the division of labor between the president and the parliament and how it affects resource allocation. Studies from American politics suggest that the division of labor leads the president to administer a broad national policy program, whereas legislators engage in pork-barrel and clientelistic demands by voters (Kitschelt, 2000). Comparativists, on the other hand, show that presidents may also utilize their power to reward their clients. In the particular context of Iran, the power of MPs to influence national policies and budget allocation is limited, leading them to invest in local bureaucracies, particularly the appointments of heads of local bureaus in their districts in order to exploit resources. The primary mechanism for exploiting bureaucratic resources is pressuring the ministers by exercising the power of oversight and impeachment over the executive branch. Recently, Iran’s president, Hassan Rouhani, denounced illegal requests by MPs to ministers and emphasized that ministers should not be threatened by MPs.60

The governor of the province is appointed by the cabinet, constraining the influence of the MPs over the appointment of the provincial governor. However, the governors of cities

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(farmandar) and counties (Bakhshdar) are appointed by the governor of the province, facilitating the influence of the MPs on the appointment of city governors. Iran’s Civil Service Management Law specifies that the governors of cities and counties are professional positions as opposed to political positions.  

A professional position is assumed to be immune from the intrusion of political lobbies. However, the MPs largely influence the appointment of city and county governors, and it appears that factional and political lobbying for the appointments of these governors has been accepted in Iranian public debates, as Iran’s Interior Minister considers political lobbying for the appointment of the city governors as normal and a sign of the “political vitality” of the country. The Interior Minister has also ordered the governors of provinces to appoint city governors on the basis of the MPs’ viewpoint.

As discussed in the previous section, the MPs influence the appointments of city governors more than other bureaus. The heads of local bureaucracies are also appointed by the corresponding ministry in Tehran, and MPs affect these appointments as well. MPs generally affect these appointments by pressuring the ministers in Tehran. According to Iran’s constitution, MPs have the right to supervise and impeach ministers, thus gaining a considerable amount of power over the ministers and consequently the local bureaucracies. They usually pressure the ministers and the heads of executive agencies through confidence votes and impeachment in

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62 Tasnim Semi-official News Agency, 3 September, 2013, 12/6/92

exchange for resources and placing their men in local bureaus. As an MP told me in an interview:

“In [provincial] areas MPs try to place their close friends and allies in authority over provinces in order to exploit their resources and maintain their base of support. This is common among all [MPs]; even my friends tried to do this. [This has been] the most important instrument for MPs. This occurred not just in deprived provinces; even in the wealthy provinces MPs do this. The mechanism for this is pressuring the ministers. Afterward, they send letters to these officials [their allies in local bureaus] and put forth their constituents to solve their problems using the local bureaucracy.”  

Drawing on the interviews that I conducted, it appears that MPs mostly influence the appointment of city and county governors. The legislative institution in Iran provides a considerable amount of power for MPs to pressure and bargain with ministers, and MPs utilize this bargaining power to influence the appointments in localities. According to Article 133 of Iran’s Constitution, a minister will be appointed by the president and will be presented to the Majles for a vote of confidence. Article 89 states that MPs have the right to interpolate and remove ministers from office.

“Members of the Islamic Majles of Shura [Iran’s parliament] can interpolate the Council of Ministers or an individual minister in instances they deem necessary. Interpolations can be tabled if they bear the signatures of at least ten members. The Council of Ministers or interpolated minister must be present in the Assembly within ten days after the tabling of the interpolation in order to answer it and seek a vote of confidence. If the Council of Ministers or the minister concerned fails to attend the Assembly, the members who tabled the interpolation will explain their reasons, and the Assembly will declare a vote of no-confidence if it deems it necessary. If the Majles does not pronounce a vote of confidence, the Council of Ministers or the minister subject to interpolation is dismissed. In both cases, the ministers subject to interpolation cannot become members of the next Council of Ministers formed immediately afterwards.”

MPs utilize the bargaining power of vote-confidence and impeachment both before and during a minister’s incumbency to influence local bureaucratic appointments. In a news article,

64 Skype interview with an activist 2/9/2014

65 Iran’s constitution: Ghanoone Asasi Jomhuri Eslami Iran
an MP argues that failure of ministers’ confidence vote results partly from ignoring the MPs’ expectations of influencing the appointments of local officials.  

MPs can also exercise their power through subcommittees and agenda control. However, their power to divert resources and national projects to their district is rare and limited to a handful of influential MPs, and some executive organizations - notably the Management and Planning Organization— resisted political pressure for budget allocation (Ahmadi Amuyi,2008, p.77). A report by the research center of the Majles indicates that the rate of approval for MPs’ proposals to change the annual budget is limited to the negligible number of 3% of the proposals. In fact, MPs from rural areas and small towns usually lack the expertise and bargaining power to influence budget proposals, and in many cases, they do not even possess enough power to assure the allocation of the approved budget for the national projects in their districts. However, seasoned and influential MPs can exercise pork-barrel politics. These MPs do not suggest their budget amendments on the floor and usually influence resource allocation by lobbying the ministers long before the annual budget reaches the floor.

**Mohammadreza Tabesh, The lessons from the failure of a vote confidence, 28 October 2013, Shargh daily newspaper, available at:**
http://www.sharghdaily.ir/Modules/News/PrintVer.aspx?News_Id=23874&V_News_Id&Src=Main

Tabesh is a centrist MP from the district of Ardakan

**Ahmadinejad dismantled the Management and Planning organization, but Rouhani administration planned to revive this important organization.**

**Panahi, Ali, An analytic Evaluation of MPs’ proposals on Annual Budget (p137), 2001, Majles and Research, Volume, 31,**

**Phone interview with an MP 2/11/2014**

**Skype interview with a MP 12/10/2014**
These influential MPs can attract national projects to their district by lobbying the ministers and controlling the agenda in the committees of the Majles. For instance, in the small district of Esfarayen, the Majles passed legislation to allocate the budget of a large industrial complex to be the largest manufacturer of industrial steel products in the eastern part of Iran. According to the original plan the complex was intended to be built in the vicinity of Mashhad, the capital and the largest city of the province; but Iran’s Council of Economy relocated the complex to the city of Esfarayen along with a technical college to train the human resources needed for the complex. This project launched the production of industrial equipment in 1998. The project brought jobs and prosperity to the district of Esfarayen by imposing costs at the national level. Given the size and the importance of this district, which was the 12th largest city in Khorsan province at that time, this project instantiates pork-barrel politics in Iran’s parliamentary setting. Seyyed Reza Norouzzadeh, the MP from this district, played a key role in building this project in Esfarayen. He was Chair of the Industry and Mining Committee of the Majles for six terms. His position in this committee and his long incumbency helped him to establish connections with the decision makers in the cabinet and convince them to allocate the budget towards this project. He has been one of the most popular and longstanding MPs from provincial peripheries, but eventually he was disqualified by the Guardian Council in the 9th Majles election, and barred from running in Iran’s parliamentary election.

71 The population size of Esfarayen is 60732 which was 12th largest city of Khorasan province at the time of legislation, Statistical Center of Iran, 2001 census

72 The Complex’s Website, Available at: http://www.esfst.com/aboutus-moarefi2-fa.html

73 In 1991 Esfarayen was part of the Khorsan province, but in 2001, Majles divided this province to three smaller provinces. Esfarayen, now, is the third largest city of the newly established and small province of North-Khorsan.

74 Skype interview with an MP 2/11/2014
Overall, pork-barrel politics or allocation of club goods that benefit local constituencies and impose costs on the national level is not the primary mechanism for gaining support in provincial peripheries. Rather, MPs primarily rely on minor private favors of constituents to maintain citizen-politician linkage. MPs who have been in office for several terms utilize this secondary mechanism to gain electoral support. Long periods of incumbency help them to establish a connection with the central executive organizations which formulate programmatic policymaking.

Legislative Institutional Reform

The reformists in the 6th Majles attempted to decentralize the executive-legislative arrangement by sharing the Parliament’s supervision power with the city councils, notably the Supreme Council of Province (Shura ye aali ostan in), and the County Council (Shuraye Bakhsh). Additionally, they tended to concede partly the power of national budget allocation to the city councils.\(^75\) According to existing law, city councils only appoint the mayors and control the municipal budget, and local bureaucracies are independent of the mayor and municipality. City councils have no control over the rest of the budget. Consequently, MPs are the only link between ordinary citizens and central state resources. The Supreme Council of Province consists of the representatives of all city and county councils of the province, and the County Council includes representatives of the village councils (Shuraye Deh). According to proposed amendment to the Councils Law (eslahieh ghanoone shura ha) introduced by reformists in the 6th Majles, MPs would share their power of supervision over the local executive agencies with

\(^{75}\) Skype interview with an MP, 7/1/2014
the Supreme Council of the Province. This bill aimed to decentralize and balance the power of MPs against the local democratic institutions, i.e. the councils.

Conservatives opposed this amendment by arguing that the power of supervision should remain in the hands MPs, and that conceding this right to other institutions such as city councils creates conflict and confusion in policy making and the bureaucratic oversight. As Hassan Sobhani, a conservative MP from the district of Damghan, argued:

“[What this bill tries to do] is not about supervision; instead, it is an intervention …. in executive [power], and even regulating this intervention in [executive] affairs without giving [legal] authority to council [to do so]. Basically, this bill should already have determined and revised the management structure of bureaus and executive agencies in localities. …On the city level …officials are appointed by executive officials, and are accountable to these executive officials. Are they accountable to the higher authorities in their bureau, or to the city council, or both? To answer this question, we should ask who gives them their budget. Since they receive their budget from the executive branch, they should be accountable to executive agencies. The responsibility of supervising the city council is meaningless …. As you can see, as long as we do not revise the grand executive management [system] of the country, you cannot concede authority to city councils”.

Reformists argued in response that MPs’ supervision is different from councils’ supervision, and this amendment provides more channels for citizens’ supervision and, therefore, leads to more participation in administrative affairs. They also argued that according to this amendment, the city council does not have the power to veto the executive agencies’ decision. They can only send their cases of disagreement between the Dispute Resolution Council, and this council will be the final decision maker. As Mohsen Mirdamadi, the reformist MP from Tehran district, stated: “The Dispute Resolution Council includes MPs, the representative of the Supreme Council of Province and also the representative of the executive and judicial branch. This combination [has been designed such that] the elected officials including the MPs and the

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76 Official Newspaper, Roozname Rasmi, September 1th, 2002, 10/6/1381

member of the Supreme Council of Province have the majority in the Dispute Resolution Council… We deliberately hand it over to the majority of elected officials to preserve the people’s will.”\(^{78}\)

Regardless of the conservatives’ views of democratic reform in Iran, it appears that the conservative MP, Sobhani, correctly highlighted the contradiction in this amendment. As previously explained, the scheme of local administration has been designed to preserve the dominance of central government over the localities. Therefore, sharing the power of supervision without reforming the scheme of local governance triggers conflict and confusion in the decision making process. Despite this contradiction, the 6\(^{th}\) Majles passed the amendment to the Councils Law, but the Guardian Council vetoed it. Afterward, the 6\(^{th}\) Majles revised the amendment to be in accord with the Guardian Council’s view. According to this revision, the MPs remained the sole elected source of supervision over the executive agencies, and the Supreme Council of Province merely offers consultative suggestions on the budget of a province.\(^{79}\) As a result, the MPs continue to influence the bureaucratic appointments in their district, and, therefore, the executive-legislative arrangement enables them to utilize bureaucratic resources for patronage.

CONCLUSION

Clientelism is a nearly omnipresent phenomenon in modern politics (Roniger, 1994). This phenomenon is not an exclusive feature of modern democracies. It also exists in authoritarian regimes (such as Taiwan and Brazil) to different degrees and has been employed by some authoritarian systems to halt the transition to democratic rule. A promising and growing

\(^{78}\) Mohsen Mirdamadi, ibid

\(^{79}\) Councils Law, article 78, Official Newspaper, roozname rasmi, 28 September 2003 #17075, 6/7/82
literature on the features of elections in authoritarian regimes (such as Gandhi & Lust, 2009) highlights the ways that these regimes engineer the electoral process and exploit democratic institutions. It appears that these studies downplay how the micro-level power hierarchy replicates itself in the parliaments of these regimes. In the particular case of Iran, in the absence of strong party politics and democratic institutions, local power configurations have shaped MP-citizen linkage and parliamentary electoral outcome. To be more precise, clientelism in the local politics of Iran results from the local power configuration, the candidate-centered electoral system, legislative-executive arrangement, and unprofessional and politicized bureaucracy. This institutional setting has gradually developed from the early constitutional period to the present time. The institutional choices of politicians in the early constitutional era accommodated the power hierarchy of localities into parliamentary politics. That is, the candidate-centered electoral system and the extension of suffrage to adult males assisted the local magnates, namely the landlords, in controlling Iran’s parliamentary politics. This setting has been regenerated in the form of bureaucratic clientelism in the post-revolutionary parliamentary politics of Iran. In fact, ethnographic studies demonstrate the resemblance between the patron-client linkage and the landlord-peasant relation in traditional agrarian societies (Piattoni, 2001, p.9), and the transition in local power in Iran through land reform and post-revolutionary populist organizations regenerated this relationship in a new arrangement. The land reform of the 1960s purged the power of landowners from the local politics of Iran and enhanced the role of local bureaucracy in the daily lives of citizens in provincial areas. Accordingly, control over the local bureaucracies became an important component of local power, and therefore, the de facto power of MPs over executive agencies enabled them to employ bureaucratic resources for patronage.
The fraudulent elections in the decades before the 1979 Revolution were a major setback to the rise of bureaucratic clientelism in Iran’s parliamentary elections. However, the 1979 Revolution, as a transition from a sultanistic regime to competitive authoritarianism, unleashed local power arrangement to shape parliamentary politics, and clientelism rose as a vital component of Iran’s parliamentary politics, especially in localities. Not only did the institutional setting lay the groundwork for the rise of clientelism, but it also shaped the preferences of citizens and political elites in both localities and centers (as institutionalist framework such as Steinmo; Thelen, Longstreth, 1992 argue). In fact, this institutional setting created a fundamental disparity between the voting behavior of center and periphery, since in provincial districts, the turnout in parliamentary elections is significantly higher than in metropolitan areas. Figure 1 illustrates the disparity in parliamentary election turnout between the two provinces of Tehran and Ilam. Ilam is one of the smallest provinces of Iran, in which 70% of the population resides in small towns and countryside. The percentage of turnout in four parliamentary elections in Ilam is about two times higher than in Tehran province, which has the highest urban population of Iran.

Figure 2. Turnout in Center and Periphery

As explained, factional politics, i.e. party endorsement, is not a significant determinant of parliamentary vote choice in provincial districts such as Ilam. Instead, clientelism, endorsement by local magnates, ethnic and regional conflicts, and cultural elements shape the vote choice of citizens in the localities. In contrast, in metropolitan areas like Tehran factional politics primarily determines the electoral outcome. The rational choice framework (in Kitschelt, 2000, p.857) may argue that in a deprived province like Ilam with high unemployment, indigent and uneducated citizens discount the future and rely on instant advantages such as clientelistic transactions; whereas in metropolitan areas such as Tehran the educated, wealthy and more informed voters realize that rent seeking and clientelism result in an undersupply of collective goods, and, therefore, they prefer programmatic promises and party politics to particularistic and clientelistic

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81 Ilam unemployment rate is 25 percent, the highest rate in 2009, Shapour Pouladi (Ilam's MP), June 2009
exchanges (Blaydes, 2006; Tezcur, 2008). Similarly, the modernization paradigm would contend that pre-modern elements like traditional ethnic cleavages or kinship ties in an underdeveloped area like Ilam outweigh modern party politics (Lust-Okar, 2006, Magaloni, 2006). As Bahar and Cottam argued 60 years ago, the local magnates in provincial Iran can herd the illiterate and politically uninformed villagers to vote for their candidates.

However, despite decades of development and drastic changes in Iran’s socio-economic indicators, Iran’s parliamentary elections face a continuing disparity between electoral outcomes in metropolitan areas and provincial peripheries. That is, factional politics has been the major determinant of vote choice in large cities like Tehran, whereas the local power hierarchy shapes the electoral outcome in provincial areas. It appears that changes in modernization elements and socio-economic indicators have not transformed the pattern of parliamentary voting behavior in provincial peripheries. Additionally, ethnic cleavage is not a significant variable in Ilam, as more than 85% of Ilamis belong to one ethnicity.\(^{82}\) Instead, the institutional setting accommodates the local power hierarchy into the parliamentary politics of provincial peripheries. In other words, in few instances of relatively competitive elections in pre-revolutionary Iran, the local magnates, namely the landlords, determine the parliamentary electoral outcome in provincial Iran. Similarly, in the post-revolutionary era, a triangle of state representatives, i.e. local bureaucracies, the MPs, and the ethno-religious traditional elites monopolize local politics. In fact, the candidate-centered electoral system in Iran has remained relatively untouched since the constitutional era. This institution has accommodated the arrangement of power in localities into Iran’s parliament. Moreover, this institutional setting has impacted the preferences of citizens in

localities, as the majority of interviewees observed that voters in provincial districts oppose the electoral system reform and prefer the candidate-centered system to provincialization of the electoral system. Additionally, the institutional setting has influenced the preferences of political elites in Iran through undermining factional and party politics. That is, Iran’s electoral system led the candidates in localities to invest in personal votes instead of party endorsement, and consequently the role of political parties in Iranian politics has been severely downplayed.

However, the socio-economic indicators continue to shape partially vote choice in this institutional setting. In other words, in deprived provinces such as Ilam, the daily of lives of citizens hinge on state resources more than in metropolitan areas where resources have been hyper-concentrated. Therefore, the candidate-centered electoral system provides a channel for provincial citizens to demand their daily needs from an MP who has controlling power over the local bureaucracy. Furthermore, the disbursement of resources in welfare organizations enables politicians to build clientelistic networks and later utilize these networks in parliamentary politics. As Ilam’s MPs in the 6th Majles - the most liberal parliament in the history of Islamic Republic - used to be the heads of IKRC bureaus in the province. Overall, the local bureaucracy has both impacted and been affected by parliamentary politics in Iran.

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83 Drawing from my interviews with activists

84 Ali Yari and Abdoreza Heydarizade, two MPs of Ilam district (the capital of province), used to be the Head of IKRC in the province, Acquaintance with Members of Islamic Consultative Assembly, the 6th Term, November, 2000
In a nutshell, the electoral system persuades citizens in deprived areas to vote, whereas in metropolitan areas, the candidate-centered electoral system dissuades citizens from voting, because the electoral system is not able to accommodate the demands of urbanites into parliamentary politics. Overall, the impact of socio-economic and modernization variables on the one hand, and institutional setting, on the other hand, is intertwined. In provincial peripheries,
the institutional setting, namely the electoral system and the legislative-executive arrangement, enables the MPs to supply patronage and influences the daily lives of citizens. In contrast, parliamentary elections neither impact the daily lives of citizens in metropolitan areas nor reflect the political and social demands of individuals in these areas. Consequently, parliamentary election turnout in provincial peripheries is considerably higher than in metropolitan areas in this institutional setting. The conventional wisdom of analysts’ views the disqualification of candidates by the Guardian Council and lopsided elections as the main obstacles to democratic accountability in Iran’s parliamentary politics. However, this account overlooks the complexity of Iranian parliamentary politics. The institutional setting - that is Iran’s electoral system promotes particularistic demands in the MP-citizen relationship. As scholarly literature shows, particularistic demands are correlated with clientelism (Piattoni, 2001, p.17). This setting has coupled with socio-economic status and created a disparity between the parliamentary electoral behavior of urbanites and that of provincial citizens. Conservatives maintain a vested interest in this discrepancy and utilize it to halt reforms toward democratic rule in Iran. The Guardian Council vetoed the reformists’ bid to alter this institutional setting. Additionally, the Council commonly disqualifies candidates with pro-democratic and modern agendas, thus discouraging the modern segments of society from participation in parliamentary elections. This arrangement fundamentally influences the function of Iran’s parliament, as the Majles has proved inefficient in performing its democratic function. Instead of democratic accountability in MP-citizen relationships, clientelitic accountability has dominated the citizen-politician linkage in Iran’s parliament, despite the fact that parliament has been assumed to be the cornerstone of democratic institutions.
Chapter 3

The Resurgence of Populism in Iran’s Presidential Elections

The previous chapter explained the citizen-politician linkage in Iran’s parliamentary politics. The chapter’s main argument was that the institutional setting has been coupled with socioeconomic status and enabled the local power arrangement to shape parliamentary electoral outcomes at the local level through clientelistic networks. The conservative ruling elites have a vested interest in this setting, as it diverts parliamentary politics into the particularistic demands of the constituencies and creates a docile parliament. However, local power and the institutional setting cannot influence Iran’s national elections, namely the presidential elections. This chapter sheds light on the origin of electoral behavior on the national level, notably during the 2005 and the 2013 presidential elections. The chapter argues that the engineering strategies of the conservatives, particularly weakening party politics and preventing the politicization of society, paved the way for the victory of a populist candidate in the 2005 presidential election in Iran (Ahmadinejad), yet the economic crisis and the development of political predisposition in Iranian society (or the long term political past experience of the performance of factions) aided the pragmatist candidate to win the 2013 presidential election.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, I briefly review the significant events in the history of post-revolutionary Iran, notably economic policies and electoral politics as the most

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85 Due to the lack of reliable data on the 2009 controversial presidential election, this election has been dropped from my research.
important determinants of voting behavior at the national level. Next, I define populism and explain approaches to the study of populism. Lastly, the chapter illuminates the context of the 2005 presidential election and discusses the result of statistical analysis of the 2005 and the 2013 presidential elections. In the concluding remarks, I will show that authoritarian rule of the game determined the outcome of the 2005 presidential election, yet the emergence of long term political past experience defied the conservative engineering strategy of weakening party politics in the 2013 election.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

_Economic Policies in Post-Revolutionary Iran: a Brief Overview_

After the 1979 revolution, the newly established system emerged as a full-fledged welfare state intending to eradicate poverty, slums, and unemployment. The primary mechanism for implementing the welfare policies was strengthening state capacity (Abrahamian, 2008 & 2009). The revolutionary administrations of the 1980s enlarged the Ministries of Education, Health, Agriculture, Labor, and Housing. The size of the central bureaucracy was expanded from twenty ministries with 304,000 employees in 1979 to twenty-six ministries with 850,000 employees in 1982 (Abrahamian 2008, p.169). Additionally, they established Welfare organizations and several revolutionary foundations, such as the Foundation for the Oppressed and Disabled, the Housing Foundation, the Foundation for War Refugees, and the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee. The main mission of these foundations was to fulfill the distributive promises of the revolution for the different segments of Iranian society. The combined budget of these foundations was about half of the central government’s budget, and only seven of them together employed more than 400,000 people (Amuzegar (1993), p100).
They also provided a social safety net for the underclass through rationing and subsidizing bread, fuel, gas, heat, electricity, and health care for the urban poor as well as land and housing for people in slum areas (Salehi-Isfahani, 2009). Similarly, the Islamic Republic regime tried to eliminate the gap between urban and rural life by implementing rural development projects in the countryside, such as building medical clinics, schools, and piped water systems as well as raising the price of agricultural goods.

In the post-Khomeini area, however, Iran’s economic policies shifted from welfare and distribution to economic growth. Much destruction resulted from the eight year war between Iraq and Iran, and the economic stagnation led the succeeding administrations to embrace a quasi-neoliberal policy platform. The Rafsanjani administration instituted pro-market reform policies with the Second Five-Year Development Plan (1989-1994). They relaxed price controls, printed less paper money, tried to balance the budget, launched several free trade zones, attempted to trim the bureaucracy, and tried (but failed) to privatize state-owned enterprises. Overall, instead of distributive policies, the Rafsanjani administration channeled resources into development projects like electrification, dams, steel manufacturing, and petrochemicals. These development programs and welfare policies improved the quality of life in Iran. By 2000, 97 percent of youth were literate, 63 percent of university students were women, and Iran had the lowest infant mortality rate in the Middle East (Abrahamian, 2008). However, Rafsanjani’s period concluded his period with an economic crisis. In 1995, falling oil prices (from $20 per barrel in 1991 to $12 in 1994) and external debt triggered an economic crisis with inflation around 50 percent and unemployment at 30 percent.
In 1997 Khatami, the liberal-minded former Minister of Culture, won the presidential election by a wide margin in a campaign with 80 percent turnout. The reformists won three subsequent elections (parliamentary, city council, and Khatami’s second term presidential election) by an overwhelming margin. Reformists used these victories to liberalize domestic politics. They pursued a liberalization agenda through the Iranian parliament, passing several reform bills to prevent the violation of human rights. The reforms passed included prohibition of physical and psychological torture, prisoners’ right of access to an attorney, distinction between judges, jury and prosecutors in press courts and for political prisoners, improved freedom of speech and democracy in the form of more liberal press laws, and limitations on the control of the Guardian Council over elections, and advances in women’s rights. However, most of these reformist laws were vetoed by the Guardian Council for violating Sharia Law and Iran’s constitution. In terms of economic policies, reformists followed a semi-neoliberal policy platform. Under the Khatami administration, “the foreign exchange market was liberalized, trade barriers were lowered, government control of the credit market was reduced, and private banks were allowed to operate” (Salehi Isfahani, 2009, p17). The administration treated sensitive issues like cutting subsidies gently to avoid popular backlash. However, by the end of the reformist era in 2005, the economy was still dominated by the public sector, growth was slow-moving, and unemployment remained relatively high. Overall, the reformist economic platform in Iran was influenced by a fashionable yet tenuous assumption that free markets make free politics (Kamrava, 2008).

86 The unemployment rate at the end of reformist era was higher than 10%. Salehi Esfahani (2009, p17)
The reformists could not maintain their electoral success. Conservatives won the municipal elections of 2003, which were relatively free and fair. In the parliamentary elections of 2004, the Guardian Council barred more than 2,000 candidates -- mostly from the reformist camp -- paving the way for the victory of the conservatives in that election. Conservative also won the 2005 presidential election, which was competitive and in which more than 62 percent of the electorate participated. Ahmadinejad won this election by promising to fight the corrupt ruling elite and to bring oil money to the people. Overall, analysts view the rise of conservatism in the early 2000s in Iran as a result of “electoral fraud, massive disqualification of candidates and genuine popular disaffection” and the conservative’s pledge to fight “corruption, creating jobs and spreading justice through better distribution of wealth” (Ehsani, 2009).

Ahmadinejad’s administration pursued his distributive agenda through three large programs: a $40 billion lending program for small enterprises, the low-cost housing plan (called Maskane Mehr), and the subsidy reform program\(^ {87} \); while also injecting more employees into the public sector\(^ {88} \). The most controversial program -- the subsidy reform plan -- began in October 2010, aiming to raise heavily subsidized prices of some products to their international level. The government distributed monthly cash handouts to citizens to offset the effects of higher prices on consumers, particularly the lower class. As a result of mismanagement, U.S. sanctions, and the explosion of cronyism and clientelism\(^ {89} \), Ahmadinejad’s tenure concluded with an unprecedented

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\(^{88}\) Etemad daily newspaper, 28May 2014, “The Suspension of Irregular Recruitments”, “Tavaghofe Estekhdam hayeh bi Ravieh” (in Frasi)

\(^{89}\) The official report by a monitoring bureau of the Iranian parliament (Iran Audit Court: *Divan Mohasebat* in Farsi) unravels the burst of corruption in Ahmadinejad era: BBC Persian, 06/26/2013, available at:
economic recession. In 2013, Hassan Rouhani, a centrist cleric, won the presidential election with promises of bringing economic prosperity and reconciliation with the West on the nuclear crisis. As he articulated: “the centrifuges [in nuclear facilities] should revolve, but people’s daily lives should revolve as well.”

APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF POPULISM

Drawing from Hawkins et al. (2012), recent studies highlight the three elements of pluralism, populism, and elitism in the study of populist politics. The first element is associated with opposition to elites in contrast to the general will of the people. Pluralism captures the value compromise and tolerance towards dissenting voices and minorities. The study of elitist attitudes measures the attitudes towards the decisiveness of leaders; i.e., the role of a politician as either a leader or a follower of the people. In the particular context of Iran, however, the pluralist attitude is indistinguishable from the ideology variable as conservatives reject the need to listen to dissenting voices. According to the conservative view, these voices should not have the right to express their opinion, as they are non-believers in the Islamic rule of Iran and will eventually tend to challenge the Islamic order in Iran. Measuring the elitist outlook in Iran is also problematic because the lack of strong political parties promotes the role of leaders. Therefore, in this chapter, I use a minimalist definition of populism as a “thin centered ideology that considers

http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2013/06/130625_u08_iran_audit_court.shtml

90 The estimated economic growth by the Central Bank of Iran in 2012 is (-8.3%), BBC Persian, 22 June 2014, available from: http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/business/2014/06/140622_l26_iran_economic_growth.shtml


92 Iran’s head of judiciary branch, Sadegh Larijani, Hemayat Daily Newspaper, 28 August 2014
society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups: ‘the pure people’ versus the ‘corrupt elite,’ and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonte generale* (general will) of the people” (Mudde, 2007, p.23), and my analysis centers on opposition to the ruling elite as the populist attitude in Iran.

*The rise of populism in a cross-national perspective*

The rise of populism at the turn of the 21\textsuperscript{th} century was a widespread phenomenon in developing countries. Several Latin American countries were faced with populist leaders in office (such as Venezuela’s Chavez, Bolivia’s Morales, Ecuador’s Correa, Brazil’s da Silva, Uruguay’s Vasquez, Nicaragua’s Ortega, Argentina’s Kirchner, and Peru’s Humala). In fact, some authoritarian regimes across the globe (in the Middle East and North Africa, such as Algeria (Brumberg, 1991), Jordan (Brynen, 1998), and Egypt (Blaydes, 2011), and Latin America (Dornbusch & Edwards, 1991)), had long before used the populist bargain to manage their internal problems. Early scholarly attempts on the recent wave of populism argue that the financial crisis in the 1980s in Latin America led politicians to implement market reform policies, and that the cost of these policies -- such as inequality, poverty, and economic stagnation -- stirred a popular backlash against incumbent political parties and democratic rule. This backlash helped the leftist-populist politicians to win electoral contests (Aranson & Perales 2007, Boron 2008, Kaufman 2007, Lynch 2007, Roberts 2008). More recent studies oppose this general approach by showing the variation in the outcomes of neoliberal policies in Latin American countries. Baker (2003) shows that some market reform policies, notably trade liberalization, were mainly popular with the electors. These pieces of evidence and the overall positive economic performance in the 2000s in the Latin American countries motivated scholars
to provide more nuanced analyses on the turn to the left in the region. Remmer (2012)’s analysis of the macro- and micro-level elements attributes the rising “pink tide” to the citizens’ satisfaction with democracy and economy, as well as anti-American sentiments and improvement in trade.

*The economic vote in developing countries*

Another approach that deals with the rise of populist candidates is to study the impact of economic circumstances on voting behavior. Study of voting behavior and economic vote in advanced industrialized democracies is a recurring theme in scholarly literature. The classic approach holds that economic vote originates in the reward or punishment of the ruling party. That is, voters reward the ruling party for economic prosperity and punish it for poor economic performance. The resulting hypothesis correlates the opinion of voters on economic prosperity to their vote choice. Another direction in the study of economic vote distinguishes the voter’s judgment on overall economic conditions of the nation from the voter’s personal circumstances, commonly referring to sociotropic voting versus pocketbook voting (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier (2008)). This approach enables the students of voting behavior in developing countries to interpret the electoral behavior of different segments of society with no income data by studying the correlation between occupational backgrounds of the electors and their vote choice. In fact, in industrialized democracies, the governments are more accountable for their economic performance, and economic voting is an effective way of punishing or rewarding incumbents. Additionally, longstanding party tradition provides sufficient insight for citizens to judge the economic performance of the parties. Therefore, as Campbell et al. (1960) argue, partisanship is one of the most fundamental determinants of vote choice. However, nascent parties and a fragile
middle class, as well as the absence of entrenched democratic institutions and lopsided elections in transitional democracies, defy the competency of the democratic accountability model for studying vote choice. As a result, there remains the important and challenging question of what is the best model for explaining voting behavior and the impact of economic policies on the electoral outcome. This chapter does not seek to develop a voting behavior model for transitional democracies, but it utilizes the existing approaches to explain the rise and fall of populism at the turn of the 21st century in Iran.

*Studies on the rise of populism in Iran*

Despite some scholarly efforts (Abrahamian (1993), Moghadam (1994)) to explain populism in Iran’s Islamic revolution, the political economy of Iran and populism in post-Khomeini era have not been sufficiently investigated. Some studies on the left argue that market reforms in the 1990s and the early 2000s excluded and socially isolated large segments of Iranian society. This socially isolated portion of the society forged an electoral base of support for the pro-justice candidate, Ahmadinejad, and laid the ground for his victory in the 2005 presidential election (Maljoo, 2007). However, some scholars, such as Salehi-Isfahani (2009), argue that the rise of poverty and inequality in post-revolutionary Iran are not grounded on facts. His analysis of household expenditure and income survey data shows a decline in poverty under the market reform and pro-poor policies of the Islamic government. These empirical approaches commonly attribute the rise of populism in Iran to the increasing income gap in the Iranian society\(^9\).

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Other works examine the impact of popular reaction to economic policies. Behdad (2001) argues that the Iranian government halted its economic liberalization policy under the Rafsanjani administration, because it “would have necessitated the unequivocal negation of its revolutionary claims and would have implied the formal abandonment of its remaining popular base.” He contends that the Iranian government has not been able to formally define and legitimize a new social order, and under these circumstances there is little chance for an economic liberalization policy to achieve its objective in Iran.

THE 2005 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Before the 2000s, Iran’s presidential elections were usually pre-determined, and the Iranian public knew who had the endorsement of the system in presidential elections. In most cases, the system’s candidate won the election, but after the failure of this public backing strategy in the 1997 election and the surprising victory of Mohammad Khatami, the regime decided to choose a novel strategy. In the 2001 presidential election, the Guardian Council approved eight candidates for competition in order to reflect a wide spectrum of viewpoints in Iranian politics. The conservative strategy was to fragment the reformists’ electoral base of support by preventing the polarization of the electoral contest between the reformists and conservatives. As an analyst argued, “Even in the 2001 election there was an engineering strategy [for election]. The composition of eight candidates provided a dinner table for all tastes, [and this strategy] would fragment the reformists’ vote. It was like a restaurant with a diverse menu to attract different social trends.” ⁹⁴ In the 2005 presidential election, the conservatives

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⁹⁴ Pournejati, A, Etemad Daily Newspaper, 15-4-92, (Election of Rouhani a more complicated 2th Khordad), “Entekhabe Rouhani Dovome Khordadi Pichide tar” (in Farsi)
pursued a similar strategy. Additionally, the regime’s candidate was not identifiable to analysts and voters. Instead, the Guardian Council qualified seven candidates to represent a wide range of views on Iranian politics. By this method, they pursued a dual strategy. For one thing, several candidates with a broad range of viewpoints increase the turnout and thus the regime’s claim to legitimacy. Furthermore, four candidates from the reformist camp fragment their electoral base of support and prevented the polarization of electoral competition between the reformists and the conservatives. Consequently, none of the candidates would gain a majority, and the contest becomes a two-round election. This strategy enabled the conservative candidate to reach the second round. Given Rafsanjani’s constant electoral base, he would proceed to the second round and mobilizing voters against his background would spawn a conservative victory in the second round. In this section, I briefly examine candidates’ viewpoints in order to illustrate the broad spectrum of candidates in the 2005 presidential election. Examining the candidates’ viewpoint helps the study to extract the variables that shaped electoral outcomes.

<Table 1>

<Table 2>

Among the seven candidates, Ahmadinejad had the most attractive mode of discourse for unorganized and despondent masses. His speeches in the 2005 presidential election included five talking points that he repeated during his campaign rallies. First and the foremost was his attack of the privileged ruling elite for corruption and being isolated from ‘the pure people’. He emphasized in several campaign rallies that “in my administration we will not have a privileged ruling class of officials, because there should not be any gap between people and officials”. “This ruling class prevents us from reaching Islamic society… [because] in Islamic society
officials should be similar to people. If you see that the concerns of some officials are not similar to the people’s will, you should realize that we are not reaching Islamic society.”95 Afterward, he compared some instances of corruption with the widespread poverty in Iran and emphasized that in an ideal society all people progress together at a similar pace96. In other campaign rallies, he discredited the ruling elite, notably the reformists and pragmatists in the executive branch, for economic rent-in-trade and industrial activities97. In fact, the conservatives in the reformist era had framed poverty, corruption, and discrimination as the three important problems of the country98, but Ahmadinejad appended an anti-ruling elite element to this framing which is the bedrock of the populist discourse. In other words, he tried to pinpoint the gap between the “the pure people” and the “corrupt elite” and frame it as the main problem that the country faces.

<Figure 3: A poster of Ahmadinejad’s at a campaign rally reads, “A man from the ordinary people” >

Second, he slammed the semi-market reform policies of the Rafsanjani and Khatami administrations by highlighting the priority of justice over development. “Some [officials] only talk about justice [and do nothing to achieve it]. When we asked these pseudo-revolutionaries,

95 Ahmadinejad’s Speech in a campaign rally in Mashhad, Entekhabe Nohom, Hamshahri Daily Newspaper, 12 June, 2005.


97 Ahmadinejad’s Speech in a campaign rally, Entekhabe Nohom, Hamshahri Daily Newspaper, 11 June, 2005

‘How do your development and construction programs serve justice?’ They responded, ‘You want to distribute poverty by these questions. Let us first develop the country, and then expand the justice.’ But why has the 5.8% economic growth in the past eight years not brought any change on the people’s dinner table?’ His next talking point stressed distributive promises. One of his main slogans was ‘bringing oil’s money to people’s dinner table’.

Fourth, Ahmadinejad called for a return to the original spirit of the 1979 revolution and the Basiji culture. Finally, his campaign underlined the vital role of the youth and promised that his administration would address their problems and provide specific aids such as marriage loans for the youth.

<Rafsanjani, on the other hand, underscored the development and construction of the country and introduced himself as a centrist pursuing moderation (etedal garaeei in Farsi) in Iranian domestic politics. Karrubi, who defined himself as a pragmatist-reformist, centered his promises around economic prosperity and social welfare. He pledged to pay all adult Iranians a monthly wage, worth about 50 dollars at the time. His campaign consisted mostly of Iranian MPs and traditional reformists from the Assembly of Militant Clerics. Moeen, the candidate endorsed by the largest reformist parties, IIPF and MIRO, or the progressive-reformists, and tried

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99 Ahmadinejad’s Speech in a campaign rally, Entekhabe Nohom, Hamshahri Daily Newspaper, 11 June, 2005
100 Ahmadinejad’s Speech in a campaign rally, Entekhabe Nohom, Hamshahri Daily Newspaper, 28 May, 2005
101 Hamshahri Daily Newspaper, 11 June, 2005
102 Hamshahri Daily Newspaper, 15 June, 2005
103 Entekhabe Nohom, Hamshahri Daily Newspaper, 17 June, 2005
104 Hamshahri Daily Newspaper, 13 June, 2005
to form an umbrella group called the Human Rights and Democracy Front, including the progressive reformists and some moderate elements of the opposition, i.e. the Liberation Movement (Nehzate Azadi) and the Religious Nationalist Coalition (etelaf Melli Mazhabi). His policy platform was democratization, human rights, and good governance. The other three candidates, Ghalibaf, Larijani, and Mehralizade, barely had a coherent policy platform or slogans. They commonly highlighted economic concerns, welfare, security, and peace by criticizing previous administrations.105

DATA AND METHOD

The study of voting behavior in Iran is relatively new and dates mostly back to the 1997 presidential election. The surprising election of Mohammad Khatami in 1997 motivated analysts to provide an explanation for the electoral outcome. Surveys and analyses106 usually discuss the impact of social change on the outcome of the election. They view an overall demand for change as the main motivation for the election of a liberal presidential candidate, i.e. Khatami (Rabii, 2001, p170). The result of surveys on vote choice is mostly aggregated at the national or city level and does not provide grounds to correlate the vote choice with the attitude of voters on an individual level. The few exceptions which contain vote choice are not reliable, as Iranians are wary of answering questions about political affairs particularly on their vote choice. For instance, 2005 World Value Survey contains questions on the vote choice of the respondents in

105 Hamshahri Daily Newspaper, 7 June, 2005

106 The summary and bibliography of studies on the 1997 presidential election, a report by the research center of Majles: May 1999, report number: 4104395.

107 As Nicholas Kristof observed in his trip in Iran, “Hugs from Iran”, The New York Times, June, 13, 2012:
Iran’s 2005 presidential election. However, the aggregated vote choice of the respondents in this survey significantly differs from the real percentages of the candidates’ votes\(^{108}\).

To address this drawback and avoid the social desirability bias of Iranians on political questions, I decided to set aside the individual level of analysis, and focus on the real aggregate number of votes on the district level and use the percentage of votes to total eligible voters as the main dependent variable in my analysis. Therefore, the analysis investigates the correlation between the percentage of votes in the districts\(^ {109}\) and the corresponding percentage of aggregated independent variables in each district. The independent variables primarily measure the proportion of different occupational backgrounds, education, and demographic variables in the district. These variables have been obtained primarily from two censuses conducted by the Statistical Center of Iran in 2005 and 2010\(^ {110}\), and the Survey of Iranian Values conducted by the Iranian Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. In my dataset, I aggregated the census and surveys’ data in each district. Then, I lined up the variables from each district in the same order to correlate them with the electoral outcome (obtained from the ministry of Interior). Finally, I included some other independent variables from Household Expenditure and Income Surveys, the Statistical Year Book of Iran, and the World Value Survey\(^ {111}\) as well as some dummy variables for ethnicities and religious minorities, i.e. the Sunnis. The detailed description of

\(^{108}\) The respondents who said that they vote for Ahmadinejad are two times higher than the total actual vote of Ahmadinejad in Iran. Middle Eastern Value Survey, Iran’s 2005 wave

\(^{109}\) The total number of districts in my analysis is 336 in the 2005 presidential election and 397 districts in the 2013 election.


variables, including their source and their level of availability is in Appendix II, and the variable code book is available in Appendix I.

The first round of the 2005 presidential election has been analyzed by the Seemingly Unrelated Regressions Model, and the result of the second round of elections has been examined through an OLS regression model\textsuperscript{112}. The result of linear regression also has been controlled by EI estimation developed by Gary King\textsuperscript{113}. To further investigate the impact of some specific variables on the electoral outcome, another Seemingly Unrelated Regression model has been performed in the 2013 presidential election. The comparative analysis between the 2005 and the 2013 elections provides supplemental support for the impact of some variables and sheds light on the origin of voting behavior in the particular context of Iran. The regression analyses have been performed by STATA software, and the impact of some variables on the 2005 presidential election has been investigated by EI estimate.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As previously explained, scholars and analysts have actively debated the determinants of voter choice in the 2005 presidential election. Some analysts attribute the victory of the populist candidate to his pro-poor stance and distributive promises, or to the consequences of market reform policies instituted by the reformist administration. Others argue that Ahmadinejad’s anti-oligarch discourse and his new image compared to other candidates triggered his victory\textsuperscript{114}. Some analysts and activists, on the other hand, accused the Revolutionary Guard and

\textsuperscript{112} Diagnostic tests for multicollinearity and heteroscedasticity have also been performed.

\textsuperscript{113} The result of EI estimation is available in Appendix III.

\textsuperscript{114} Abbas Abdi, Etemad Daily Newspaper, “Be careful of populists”, 9 March 2013
paramilitary foundations like Basij of mobilizing their resources for Ahmadinejad and rigging the 2005 election through the Guardian Council\textsuperscript{115}. Despite these allegations, the 2005 presidential election was held by the reformists in the Ministry of Interior, preventing the possibility of extensive fraud and massive manipulation of the election results. Therefore, the 2005 presidential electoral outcome may reflect the tendencies of a large portion of Iranian society. After all, competition among a wide range of political views provides a unique opportunity to analyze and understand the attitudes of Iranians towards politics and economic policies. In this section, first, I test existing explanations of the victory of Ahmadinejad in the 2005 election through statistical analysis of the election results at the district level. Next, I evaluate the impact of Ahmadinejad’s slogans and promises as well as the conservative engineering strategy. Afterward, I examine the 2013 presidential election. Finally, by comparing the impact of determining variables in the 2005 and 2013 presidential elections, a unified explanation of voting behavior in Iran will be presented.

\textit{Existing accounts of the 2005 presidential election}

One of the most tempting explanations for the victory of the populist candidate in the 2005 presidential election is the impact of market reform policies, a subject which was among Ahmadnejad’s talking points. According to this account, the losers of market reform policies, which had been pursued intermittently after the Iraq-Iran War, forged an electoral base to support the candidate with pro-justice slogans and distributive promises and beat the liberal discourse of the reformist candidates. The most challenging part of this claim is pinpointing the

winners and losers of market reform policies. Some, such as Maljoo (2007), argue that those who worked inside the government had access to state resources and were the main beneficiaries of market reform policies. Driven by this conceptualization, the public sector employees can be considered as a proxy for these beneficiaries to test this claim. Another approach to investigating this claim is to correlate the human capital to the electoral outcome in the 2005 presidential election. That is, the educated and able workers had a higher chance of landing jobs and earning higher income under the post-War market reform policies. Therefore, the possibility of voting for a pro-market reform candidate would be higher for this segment of society. The percentage of college graduates in these districts can serve as a proxy for the human capital endowment. Table 3 is the result of seemingly unrelated regressions for the first round of the 2005 presidential election.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: The result of Seemingly Unrelated Regression for the first round of the 2005 presidential election</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 4: the result of Ordinary Least Square Regression for the Second round of the 2005 presidential election</th>
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</table>

The analysis of the first and the second rounds of elections concludes there is no evidence for the impact of public sector employees (the variable PublicSecEmp) on the pro-market reform candidates’ vote, and the percentage of college degree-holders (the variable CollegeDeg) even positively correlates with Ahmadinejad’s vote. Therefore, these explanatory variables do not provide support for the impact of semi-market reform policies on the 2005 presidential election. In fact, some evidence shows that higher education in Iran does not necessarily lead to a better
job placement. Additionally, there is no correlation between the percentage of unemployed and Ahmadinejad’s vote. Another way to study the impact of market reform policies is to investigate the correlation between the attitudes of the people toward market reform policies and the election results. As previously explained, the priority of justice over economic growth was one of the key debates in the 2005 presidential election. Therefore, the negative attitude of respondents toward the necessity of an income gap for economic growth, found in the Survey of Iranian Values, can be regarded as a proxy variable for the disapproval of market reform policies implemented in post-War Iran. This variable (InequalityDevelopment) negatively correlates with Ahmadinejad’s vote in the first round of the election, but positively correlates with his vote in the second round of elections, showing that anti-market reform sentiment aided Ahmadinejad in the second round. However, as the expected value indicates, the impact of this variable in the second round is minor compared to other variables.

Some argue that the failure of reformists to deliver on their promises to establish democratic rule dissuaded a large portion of their supporters from participating in the 2005 presidential election, and laid the ground for a conservative victory (Alamdari 2008, Abdi 2007, Arjomand 2005, and Brownlee 2007). In fact, the low turnout in the second city council in 2003 and the 7th Majles election in 2004 led some to view the 2005 presidential election as a part of a domino effect which removed the reformists from office because of the apathy of their proponents. However, the function of the presidency is different from that of the city council in Iran’s institutional setting. Several analysts criticized the function of city councils and dismissed

116 Mehrnews Agency, Aug 18, 2014, 1.1 million university educated are unemployed

117 The turnout of the second city council election dropped to below 50% (49.96%) for the first time in the history of Islamic Republic, and the turnout decreased 21% in the 2004 parliamentary election.
them as ineffective\textsuperscript{118}. Additionally, the Guardian Council barred more than 2,000 candidates from the 7\textsuperscript{th} Majles election, which seriously harmed the competition and, therefore, discouraged a large segment of Iranians from participation in the 2004 parliamentary election. Yet, the 2005 presidential race reflected a wide spectrum of political attitudes, from populist-neoconservative (Ahmadinejad) and conservative (Larijani and Ghalibaf), to centrist-pragmatists (Hashemi Rafsanjani) and pragmatist-reformists (Karrubi), to progressive-reformists (Moeen). As a result, the turnout in the 2005 presidential election reached a relatively high percentage of 65%. In the next chapter, I will explore in more detail the impact of low turnout on the fate of the reformists. Considering the prevalence of this claim among analysts and pundits, I performed a regression to test the corresponding hypothesis and investigated the correlation between the percentage of absentees in the district with the attitudes of individuals toward radical political change versus gradual reform of Iran’s political system.

<Table 5>

In fact, there was an ongoing debate about the futility of gradual reforms among reformists at that time, and most of the above-mentioned analyses argue that the failure of reformists in liberalizing the political system led their proponents to defect from the reformists paradigm and switch to a more radical approach in their attempt to reach towards democracy and freedom (Alamdari 2008). The priority of gradual reform over radical change was one of the key assumptions of the reformist elite in Iran\textsuperscript{119}, and their opponents in the pro-democracy camp commonly criticized this assumption. Thus, studying the impact of this attitude on the electoral

\textsuperscript{118} A review of these critiques is available at: Tajbakhsh (2000)

\textsuperscript{119} An overview of the reformists’ view on gradual change and how they frame it in elections: Honari, Ali, “a critique of electoral discourse of the reformists” in Farsi, Goftogu magazine, December 2008, Volume 52
outcome can discredit the claim that the failure of gradual reform discouraged citizens from supporting reformist candidates, and catalyzed the demise of the reform movement in Iran. As Table 5 illustrates, there is no statistically significant correlation between the percentage of individuals who did not vote (the variable NoVote 1&2) in the first round of the 2005 presidential election and the percent of people who believe that the country needs radical change instead of gradual reform (the variable RadicalChange). Moreover, the percentage of absentees in the first round of the election negatively correlates with the people who think that the country needs to undergo a radical political change, showing that advocates of radical change did participate in the first round of the election. One may argue that this finding shows that an anti-ruling-elite sentiment in the second round of election mediated the impact of radical change attitudes. However, some of the proponents of reformist candidates in the first round of the election voted for Ahmadinejad in the second round\textsuperscript{120}. Moreover, there is no statistically significant correlation between Ahmadinejad’s vote in the second round and attitudes toward radical change.

Another popular hypothesis to explain the victory of Ahmadinejad was the impact of his anti-ruling-elite discourse in the 2005 presidential election. Despite the active presence of Ahmadinejad and his team in the Islamic Republic ruling elite, his most important talking point in campaign rallies was fighting Iran’s corrupt ruling elite. In other words, he introduced himself as an independent academic who intended to fight the corrupt ruling elite and oligarchs of Iran, and one of his most effective slogans was “a man [coming] from the [ordinary] people,”

\textsuperscript{120} The sum of four reformist candidates’ vote in the first round of election is about 16,652,000, but the Rafsanjani’s vote in the second round (the candidate that had been endorsed by the reformists in the second round) is 10,046,701. Assuming that all people who voted in the first round participated in the second round, more than 6 millions of voters defected from the reformists and voted for Ahmadinejad in the second round.
implicitly contrasting himself with the other candidates, who were part of the privileged *regime class* and thus assumed to be above the ordinary people. Additionally, they even referred to Ahmadinejad’s main rival, Hashemi-Rafsanjani and his team, as the petro-mafia of the country who wanted to stifle the anti-corruption movement of Ahmadinejad, and they were even successful in selling this argument to some part of Iran’s intelligentsia\textsuperscript{121}. In fact, the lack of deep-rooted parties and unorganized masses aided the populist candidate to hide his background as a member of the ruling elite of the Islamic regime, but ironically his administration became one of the most corrupt administrations in the history of Iran\textsuperscript{122}.

To test the impact of anti-ruling-elite sentiments, I investigated the correlation between the electoral outcome and the attitudes of citizens toward the ruling elite. The result of regressions in Table 3 indicates that there is no statistically significant correlation between Ahmadinejad’s vote in the first round and the attitudes of people of towards the ruling elite (the variable RulingEliteopposition), whereas the attitudes of respondents toward the ruling elite played a significant role in his victory in the second round of the election. I will compare the impact of anti-ruling attitudes with other variables in the next section.

*The origin of populist victory in the 2005 presidential election*

Thus far, I have examined the main existing explanations for Ahmadinejad’s victory over the reformists. It appears most of these explanations have difficulty in accounting for the

\textsuperscript{121} BBC Persian Interview with Farhad Jafari, “Be ebarate digar”, Published on Jun 11, 2013, available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYTowjkbZCqo

\textsuperscript{122} An official report by a monitoring bureau of the Iranian parliament (Iran Audit Court: *Divan Mohasebat* in Farsi) unravels the burst of corruption in Ahmadinejad era: BBC Persian, 06/26/2013, available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2013/06/130625_u08_iran_audit_court.shtml
outcome of the election. To provide a through explanation of the origin of the victory of the populist candidate, I compare the impact of different variables on the electoral outcome. Despite the existence of real competition in the Islamic Republic system, presidential elections in the post-Khomeini era have been engineered to maintain the supremacy of the conservative faction in Iran. This engineering strategy, however, differs across elections. It appears that the main strategy in the first round of the 2005 presidential elections was to prevent polarization of the electoral competition in order to enable the conservative candidate to reach the runoff. This strategy was effective in the 2005 presidential election. The competition among three reformist candidates fragmented the reformist constituencies, and the mobilization of the conservative segments of Iranian society enabled Ahmadinejad to reach the second round. In the runoff, however, the conservatives followed an inverse strategy by polarizing the electoral contest over populist slogans, i.e. the anti-ruling-elite sentiments. In this section, I compare the role of different attitudes in the outcome of the 2005 presidential election. Next, the correlation between the occupational background of the voters and their vote is examined. Finally, I evaluate the outcome of the 2013 presidential election to explore the dynamic of voting behavior in Iran’s presidential election.

As explained, some of the variables from censuses and surveys, notably ideology, and attitudes towards distributive promises, had a statistically significant correlation with Ahmadinejad’s vote in the first round of the 2005 presidential election. To compare the impact of these attitudes, the expected value of the electoral outcome for each of these variables has been calculated. The expected values in the figures 3 and 4 are the difference in the dependent variable (the vote) achieved by setting the targeted independent variables at their minimum and
maximum and holding other variables at their mean. The dummy variables were held at the mode.

<Figure 5>

As figure 3 illustrates, change in ideology creates the greatest difference in the electoral outcome of the first round of the election. This finding is in line with the impact of conservative strategy in shaping the electoral outcome in the first round of election through mobilizing supporters in the election and fragmenting the reformists vote. As figure 5 demonstrates, the higher number of votes for Ahmadinejad in Persian Belt provinces matches up with the more conservative attitudes in those provinces.

<Figure 6>

<Table 6>

In fact, the number of conservative voters in Iran is less than the 10 percent of eligible voters\(^\text{123}\). However, in the absence of a polarized electoral landscape, this base of electoral support enables the conservative candidate to reach the second round of the election. The electoral outcome of the 2013 presidential election is also in line with this explanation. As a conservative candidate, Saeed Jalili had the same base of electoral support in the Conservative Persian Belt, and his vote correlated with the Ahmadinejad vote in the first round of the 2005 presidential election. In fact,

\(^{123}\) The average number of conservative voters in presidential elections in recent years (7,248,317 in 1997, 4,636,372 in 2001, and 5,711,969 in the first round of the 2005 election) is about 5.8 million votes
as a politician observed, conservatism is rooted in the history and traditions of these provinces in the Persian Belt, including Isfahan, Qom, Yazd, Markazi, and South-Khorasan\textsuperscript{124}.

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure7}
\caption{Figure 7}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure8}
\caption{Figure 8}
\end{figure}

However, ideology was not a sufficient motive for the majority gain in the second round of the election, as the conservative segment is a small portion of Iranian society. Therefore, the conservative candidate stressed anti-ruling-elite slogans and economic concerns, and the voters were provoked by anti-ruling-elite sentiments in the second round of the election. As figure 4 illustrates, the change in anti-ruling-elite attitudes (the variable RulingEliteopposition) from minimum to maximum amount creates the highest change in the expected values of Ahmadinejad’s vote in the second round of the election.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure9}
\caption{Figure 9}
\end{figure}

Overall, the engineering strategy of the regime did work in the first round of the 2005 election, and Ahmadinejad’s bid to mobilize anti-ruling attitudes helped him to win the runoff. That is, introducing the conservative candidate as an independent and anti-ruling-elite politician, and polarizing the contest between a candidate with long period of incumbency (Hashemi-Rafsanjani) and an unknown candidate, provoked anti-ruling-elite sentiment against the coalition of reformists and pragmatists in the second round, and paved the way for the victory of the populist candidate in the 2005 election.

\textsuperscript{124} Skype Interview with a member of Iranian Parliament, 01/12/2014
Electoral outcome and the occupational background of voters

Analyzing the correlation between the occupational background of the electors and the electoral outcome in the districts provides an insight into the voting behavior of the different segments of Iranian society. The pocketbook voting approach argues that personal circumstances outweigh the nation’s overall conditions in shaping vote choice. In this analysis, the percentage of those employed in different sectors in each district may serve as a proxy for pocketbook voting and the personal circumstances of the electors. In fact, the lack of income data in Middle Eastern countries leads researchers to choose other proxy variables for personal circumstances. Fortunately, the actual number of employees in the districts and their corresponding sectors are available in Iran’s census data. Therefore, the percentage of employees in the districts can be correlated with the candidates’ votes.

The result of analysis for the first round of the 2005 presidential election indicates a statistically significant correlation between the percentage of industrial labor in the district (the variable Industry Employee) and the vote for Ahmadinejad. However, the analysis finds no evidence for a correlation between agricultural and public sector employees (the variables ‘Agra Employee’ and ‘Public Employee’) and the populist candidate’s vote in the first round of the election. In fact, industrial workers residing mostly in urban peripheries were the main component of the lower income class in Iran, and policies in the reformist administration generally had not improved their economic well-being; therefore they defected from the reformists in favor of the pro-poor and anti-market reform discourse of Ahmadinejad.125

125 Previously middle class and poor backed the reform movement. (Kazemi, 2003: 90-91), but lower class defected from the reformist in favor of the populist promises of Ahmadinejad.
However, the agricultural policies of the reformist administration, notably raising the price of agricultural goods, advanced the daily life of people in the countryside. Thus, distributive slogans did not resonate in those areas. In the second round of the election, however, the polarization of the contest over anti-ruling-elite sentiments mobilized the employees in all these sectors in favor of the populist candidate.

*Analyzing the other candidates’ vote*

The suggestive result of regressions also provides some evidence on the impact of several variables on other candidates’ votes. First, the regression result in Table 3 shows that the pragmatist-reformist candidate’s vote (Karrubi) mostly derives from economic concerns (such as InequalityDevelopment and GapWorsening) and ethnic affiliations. As the disagreement on the necessity of an income gap for economic growth increases, the vote for Karrubi also increases. Additionally, people who believed that the economy is the country’s most important problem also voted for Karrubi. Attitudes toward freedom of speech and freedom of political activities also positively correlated with Karrubi’s vote. Accordingly, it can be seen that conservative ideology (the variable ideology) negatively influences his share of the vote. Moreover, the percentage of IKRC pensioners positively correlates with his vote, showing the importance of his promise to hand out monthly wages to the lower class who receive pensions. Karrubi’s hometown and ethnicity (Lur and Bakhtiari) also positively correlates with his vote. The other reformist candidate, Moeen, who called himself a progressive-reformist, mostly relied on the vote of minorities, particularly Sunnis. The conservative candidate, Ghalibaf, however, obtained his votes from a mixture of economic and ideological appeals, as ideology and the frustration resulting from the economic gap aid him in the electoral campaign, and positive attitudes toward
freedom and democracy hurt him. The result of regressions for the two remaining candidates, Larijani, and Mehralizade, shows that they mostly rely on their hometown or ethnicities, namely the Azari ethnicity for Mehralizade.

Voting behavior in the 2013 presidential election

A statistical analysis of the 2013 presidential election provides some supplemental evidence to my findings on the 2005 presidential election and can aid in developing a preliminary model for the determinants of voting behavior in Iran. In the 2013 presidential election, the economic recession resulting from U.S. sanctions and the mismanagement of the Ahmadinejad administration turned the public towards a pragmatist candidate who promised economic prosperity and rapprochement with the West. Although the main concerns of voters in the 2013 presidential election centered around economic hardship (the variable ‘Gini91’) and security problems (the variable ‘SecurPref’), i.e. the threat of an air strike on nuclear facilities and important targeted areas in Iran, the electoral outcome to some extent replicates a similar pattern of voting behavior. First, the conservative Persian Belt again positively correlates with the conservatives’ vote, particularly the neo-conservative candidate, Saeed Jalili, and negatively correlates with the pragmatist-reformist candidate Rouhani, proving the role of ideology in the

126 There are several surveys and analyses on the 2013 presidential election in Iran. Some of these analyses are:
http://iranpolpartresearch.org/DataPanelData
http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2013/07/130707_139_file_election_behavior_84_88_92.shtml#1
http://www.zogbyresearchservices.com/blog/2013/12/6/zrs-releases-september-2013-iran-poll
http://www.cissm.umd.edu/papers/files/irans_presidential_election_and_its_ramifications_v2.pdf
conservatives’ electoral base of support. Second, minorities, notably the Sunnis, once more voted for the reformists’ candidate. Additionally, some ethnicities, i.e. Lur and Bakhtiari voted for a candidate from their own ethnicity (Mohsen Rezaee) as they did for Karrubi in the 2005 presidential election.

<Table 7>  
<Table 8>

Instead of anti-ruling-elite sentiments, economic hardship and security concerns played a critical role in the victory of the pragmatist candidate Hassan Rouhani in the 2013 presidential election. The attitude of people toward the priority of security over other problems (the variable ‘SecurPref’) positively correlated with Rouhani’s vote and the Gini coefficient (the variables ‘Gini91’) as an indicator of inequality and frustration over economic hardship increased the likelihood of a vote for Rouhani. However, the most important conceptual shift from 2005 to the 2013 presidential election is the impact of partisanship on the electoral outcome. In the 2013 presidential election, Rouhani was endorsed by pragmatist and reformist groups and their leaders, notably two former presidents, Rafsanjani, and Khatami. Some analysts believe that this endorsement played a critical role in the victory of Hassan Rouhani. Additionally, Rouhani had a long history of service under the Rafsanjani and Khatami administrations as the secretary of the Supreme Council for National Security and the head of the nuclear negotiation team in the reformist era. In fact, the endorsement that Rouhani received from the reformist

127 BBC Persian Website, 11 June 2013 available from: http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2013/06/130611_l39_rafsanjani_khatami_rowhani_ir92.shtml

128 BBC Website, 15 June 2013, Rouhani had a surge of support after endorsement by reformists. available from: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-22916174
leaders, particularly Khatami (the former reformist president of Iran), played a crucial role in mobilizing the middle class to vote for him. Unlike the 2005 presidential election, it appears that in 2013 the middle class voted for the reformists’ candidate. There is some evidence for the role of the middle class in the victory of Rouhani. First, the percentage of college degree holders, as the backbone of educated middle class\textsuperscript{129}, positively correlates with Rouhani’s vote. As explained in the previous section, in the first round of the 2005 election, the college degree holders voted for the populist candidate, despite the affinity between the reformist slogans and the middle class. In fact, the lack of party tradition and partisanship in Iran helped Ahmadinejad to deceive voters and introduce himself as an independent academic. But after winning the election, he pursued an oppressive policy toward the middle class and academia in Iran\textsuperscript{130}. However, in the 2013 presidential election, despite the modern posture by the conservative candidate, Ghalibaf, college degree holders voted for a cleric (Rouhani) who traditionally may look distant from middle class ideals. This finding and the impact of ideology on the conservative vote may lead one to conclude that there is a gradual development of partisanship in Iranian politics. Instead of a vague desire for change (as in the 1997 election) or blind anti-ruling-elite sentiment (as in the 2005 election), factional endorsement and the background of the candidates played an important role in the voting behavior of corresponding segments of society.

It appears that Iranian society is gaining long term experience on the performance of political

\textsuperscript{129} According to the most recent census the total number of college degree holders in Iran is 10498675 (statistical center of Iran, 2011 census: http://www.amar.org.ir/), not to mention their influence on the family members and relatives.

factions in what has commonly been called partisanship in some vote calculus formulas (Fiorina 1981). However, this conclusion requires more data and evidence of future electoral behavior to be verified.

The 2013 presidential election has been viewed as a test case for measuring the impact of distributive policies. Some analysts argue that subsidies were an incentive for the poor to vote for populist candidates. However, there is no statistically significant correlation between the lower class elements in the district and the candidate with distributive promises, Mohsen Rezaee, or the candidate with pro-justice slogans. In fact, voters from different segments of the society defected from the populist candidates in favor of the reformist endorsement and pragmatist background of a candidate on foreign policy issues who was the head of the nuclear negotiations team in the Khatami administration. It appears that instead of distributive promises and anti-corruption slogans, partisanship -- as a proxy for long term political assessment of candidates and their supporting factions -- was the most important determinant of vote choice. That is, the candidates deserted the adventurous foreign policy and distributive promises -- i.e., better monthly wages -- of conservatives in favor of a reconciliatory foreign policy and the better macroeconomic indicators of the reformist era.


Salehi-Isfahani and some other scholars in Iran equate populism with distributive policies. However, my analysis views populism as the “anti-ruling elite” trend in contrast to pure people.


CONCLUSION

Similar to economic models of transition, such as Acemoglu and Robinson (2001), and Boix (2003), some empirical analyses view the distributive conflict -- notably the struggle resulting from inequality-- as the underlying causal variable for the rise of populism in Iran. However, the reality of politics in a developing country like Iran with a competitive authoritarian system is much more complicated and calls for a multi-causal approach (Haggard and Kaufman (2012)) to examine the electoral behavior of citizens during a transitional era. In the particular context of the 2005 and 2013 presidential elections, the conservatives’ engineering strategy played an important role in shaping the outcome of the election in the 2005 presidential race. Conservative control over influential institutions, notably the Guardian Council, helps them to demarcate the playground of electoral contests. One of the underlying aims of this engineering strategy is to prevent “Western-style party politics” by aborting the emergence of political predisposition in Iranian society. The primary mechanism for dismantling party politics is avoiding the polarization of the polity and electoral contests between reformists and conservatives. In the absence of political polarization, the struggle between the conservatives and the reformists does not impact the competition between the candidates, and consequently apolitical variables (such as distributive promises), or populist attitudes (such as anti-ruling-elite


\[135\] As the Supreme Leader of Iran stated: “Political factions are OK, but the society should not be polarized.” ,27 August 2014, the website of the supreme leader of Iran, available at: http://www.leader.ir/langs/fa/index.php?p=contentShow&id=12191

The reformist, on the other hand realized the benefits of polarized election in the 2009 presidential election: “The benefits of a polarized election in presence of Khatami”, Asre no, 24 Nov, 2008
sentiment) gain significance and help conservatives to electoral contests. In fact, the result of the recent presidential election shows that the Conservatives’ electoral base of support is about 5 to 10 percent of eligible voters; less than the reformists’ vote in Iran. Any political polarization between reformists and conservatives leads to the defeat of conservatives. Thus, conservatives commonly try to fragment the reformists’ electoral base of support in the first round of elections by allowing several reformist candidates to run. Next, they frame the contest around vague or confusing issues such as anti-ruling-elite attitudes to win the run-off.

In a cross election analysis, it appears that partisanship and the polarization of electoral contests are the two central variables determining the results of presidential elections in Iran. That is, a blind judgment based on the populist slogans of the 2005 election, and the polarization of the election over a non-partisan issue, i.e., the anti-ruling-elite sentiment (particularly in the second round of that election) aided a radical candidate with a populist platform to win the electoral race. As the scholarly analysis on the impact of polarization on the electoral outcome shows, polarization in the absence of partisanship leads to the victory of radical candidates (Ezrow & Tavits et al. (2013)). However, after eight years of reformists’ incumbency (1997-2005) and eight years of conservatives’ terms (2005-2013), the Iranian public gained overall experience of the performance of the two main factions in Iran. Therefore, with the prevailing political predispositions apparent in the 2013 election, the polarization of the election led to the victory of a centrist candidate, Hassan Rouhani.

136 The total reformists’ vote in recent election is commonly higher than 15 million vote.

137 In fact, the reformists emerged from the Islamist left faction in the 1980s. (Moslem (2002)) However, they recast a new policy platform under the rubric of reformism. Therefore, Iranian public had not long term experience on the factional performance before.
In fact, the conservatives attempted to apply the same engineering strategy in the 2013 presidential election by preventing the polarization of the contest over political cleavages in Iran and relying on the blind behavior of unorganized masses. However, the resignation of the other reformist candidate, Aref, laid the ground for the polarization of the election. In fact, the deep economic crisis resulting from the mismanagement of Ahmadinejad’s conservative administration was easily distinguishable from the overall positive macro-economic indicators in the reformist era. Therefore, despite the suppression of reformist parties in the post-Green Movement environment, people overwhelmingly voted for the candidate endorsed by the reformists. Fiorina’s seminal study reconciling two contradictory schools of rational choice and behaviorism in voting studies argues that vote choice originates in long term political past experiences (party identification), near-term experiences under an incumbent (retrospective judgment), and future expectations (prospective judgment). A preliminary evaluation of the 2013 election may show that the retrospective judgment of the conservatives’ performance motivated the electorate to vote for Rouhani. However, the surge in middle class voting for Rouhani, and the higher conservative vote in Persian Belt can be regarded as the emergence of partisanship in Iranian politics. In fact, it appears that all three elements of Fiorina’s model were present in the 2013 presidential election. First, the public’s frustration with the mismanagement of Ahmadinejad and conservatives (as a retrospective judgment) led the people to vote for the reformists’ candidate. Second, Rouhani’s promise to solve the nuclear crisis shows the role of future expectations, and finally, the significance of the reformist endorsement and the role of the educated middle class in Rouhani’s victory can be regarded as demonstrating the impact of partisanship on voting behavior in Iran.
As explained in the previous chapter, authoritarian rule in Iran has devised an institutional setting to undermine party politics and promote the particularistic demands of citizen-politician linkage. This setting relies on the unorganized masses and their clientelistic relationship with the MPs in local politics. Similarly, authoritarianism at the national level hinges on the unorganized masses and their populist behavior undermining party politics and preventing the politicization of the electoral contest. However, the abysmal economic performance of the Ahmadinejad administration and the prolonged political struggle resulting from the Green Movement polarized the 2013 presidential race and organized the masses behind the reformist candidate. As a result, the voters’ behavior shifted from an opportunistic type of behavior to a more rational and advanced mode on Iran’s political scene, thus, may prove the ineffectiveness of authoritarian strategy in the long run.
## Tables and Figures

*<Table 1, The result of the first round the 2005 presidential election>*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Hashemi-Rafsanjani</th>
<th>Ahmadinejad</th>
<th>Karrubi</th>
<th>Bagher Ghalibaf</th>
<th>Moeen</th>
<th>Larijani</th>
<th>MehrAlizade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political Views</td>
<td>Pragmatist-reformist</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Reformist</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Reformist</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Reformist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Votes</td>
<td>6,211,937</td>
<td>5,711,696</td>
<td>5,070,124</td>
<td>4,095,827</td>
<td>4,083,951</td>
<td>1,713,810</td>
<td>1,288,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>22.00%</td>
<td>20.30%</td>
<td>18.00%</td>
<td>14.50%</td>
<td>14.50%</td>
<td>6.10%</td>
<td>4.60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
<Table 2, The result of the second round the 2005 presidential election>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Hashemi-Rafsanjani</th>
<th>Ahmadinejad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Votes</td>
<td>10,046,701</td>
<td>17,284,782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>35.93%</td>
<td>61.82%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
<Figure 3: A poster of Ahmadinejad’s at a campaign rally reads, “A man from the ordinary people”>
<Figure 4: An Ahmadinejad’s billboard reads: “oil’s money should be seen on people’s dinner table”>
Table 3: The result of Seemingly Unrelated Regression for the first round of the 2005 presidential election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>Ahmadi1</th>
<th>Hashem1</th>
<th>Karrubi</th>
<th>Ghalibaf84</th>
<th>Moeen</th>
<th>Larjani</th>
<th>MehrAlizade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agra Employee</td>
<td>0.0801*</td>
<td>0.0186</td>
<td>-0.0656**</td>
<td>0.0675***</td>
<td>-0.151***</td>
<td>-0.00996</td>
<td>0.00705</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0455)</td>
<td>(0.0390)</td>
<td>(0.0333)</td>
<td>(0.0172)</td>
<td>(0.0265)</td>
<td>(0.0157)</td>
<td>(0.0112)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Employee</td>
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<td>-0.353***</td>
<td>-0.00259</td>
<td>-0.0647</td>
<td>-0.0844***</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0820)</td>
<td>(0.0696)</td>
<td>(0.0593)</td>
<td>(0.0304)</td>
<td>(0.0488)</td>
<td>(0.0277)</td>
<td>(0.0197)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Employee</td>
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<td>-0.186**</td>
<td>-0.0387</td>
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<td>0.141**</td>
<td>-0.0308</td>
<td>-0.0425</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.106)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>(0.248)</td>
<td>(0.216)</td>
<td>(0.110)</td>
<td>(0.168)</td>
<td>(0.101)</td>
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<td>0.229***</td>
<td>-0.632***</td>
<td>0.0774</td>
<td>0.166***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.167)</td>
<td>(0.143)</td>
<td>(0.124)</td>
<td>(0.0628)</td>
<td>(0.0952)</td>
<td>(0.0574)</td>
<td>(0.0412)</td>
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<td>RulingEliteopposition</td>
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<td>0.250</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.213)</td>
<td>(0.175)</td>
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<td>(0.113)</td>
<td>(0.0755)</td>
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<td>TotalemployedPer</td>
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<td>(0.0348)</td>
<td>(0.0213)</td>
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<td>-0.00309</td>
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<td>-0.0492***</td>
<td>-0.107***</td>
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<td>(0.101)</td>
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<td>Coefficient</td>
<td>Standard Error</td>
<td>t-Value</td>
<td>z-Value</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GapWorsening</td>
<td>0.210</td>
<td>0.228</td>
<td>0.912</td>
<td>0.859</td>
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<tr>
<td>EthnicDiscrimination</td>
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<td>0.112</td>
<td>-1.81</td>
<td>-0.859*</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PartyFreeImportant</td>
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<td>0.103</td>
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<td>-0.360*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.0846</td>
<td>0.026</td>
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<td>0.150</td>
<td>-2.93</td>
<td>-0.439**</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-0.0420</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>LogConsump</td>
<td>-10.72*</td>
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<td>-10.72*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HTownRafsanjani</td>
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<td>9.00</td>
<td>18.81***</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunni</td>
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<td>2.378</td>
<td>-2.15</td>
<td>-5.181***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.441</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baluch</td>
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<td>2.454</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>2.674</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azari</td>
<td>1.597</td>
<td>1.073</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>1.597</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurd</td>
<td>3.835*</td>
<td>1.030</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>3.835*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HTownAhmadinejad</td>
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<td>1.08</td>
<td>2.565</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HTownKarub</td>
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<td>2.260</td>
<td>7.13</td>
<td>16.11***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{lcccc}
\hline
 & (1) & (2) & \\
\hline
\textbf{VARIABLES} & \textbf{Ahmadi2} & \textbf{Hashem2} \\
\hline
Agra Employee & 0.326*** & -0.298*** \\
 & (0.0596) & (0.0561) \\
Industry Employee & 0.590*** & -0.594*** \\
 & (0.0902) & (0.0875) \\
Public Employee & 0.258* & -0.265** \\
 & (0.137) & (0.132) \\
Education Employee & 0.396 & -0.448 \\
 & (0.362) & (0.327) \\
College Degree holders & -0.0744 & 0.0611 \\
 & (0.212) & (0.206) \\
Total employedPer & -0.0162 & 0.0211 \\
 & (0.0674) & (0.0641) \\
Rural Population & -0.0751* & 0.0804** \\
 & (0.0396) & (0.0359) \\
Female Unemployed & 0.106 & -0.119* \\
 & (0.0735) & (0.0699) \\
RulingEliteopposition & 0.908*** & -0.743*** \\
 & (0.243) & (0.205) \\
TaxingForSubsidizeTop4 & -0.0258 & 0.0100 \\
 & (0.0642) & (0.0509) \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

<Table 4: the result of Ordinary Least Square Regression for the Second round of the 2005 presidential election>

\[\begin{array}{cccc}
\text{HTownGhalibaf} & 16.85*** \\
& (0.916) \\
\text{HTownMoin} & -3.458*** \\
& (1.247) \\
\text{HTownLarijani} & 18.41*** \\
& (0.923) \\
\text{HTownMehrAlizade} & 10.45*** \\
& (0.603) \\
\hline
\text{Constant} & 26.26 & 115.9*** & -53.69 & 58.11*** & -116.7*** & 79.37*** & -180.3*** \\
& (42.63) & (40.24) & (33.31) & (17.36) & (26.70) & (16.02) & (11.09) \\
\text{Observations} & 336 & 336 & 336 & 336 & 336 & 336 & 336 \\
\text{R-squared} & 0.581 & 0.391 & 0.763 & 0.796 & 0.734 & 0.870 & 0.943 \\
\hline
\end{array}\]

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-0.231*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>GapWorsening</td>
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<td>(0.308)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>InequalityDevelopment</td>
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<td>(0.233)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EthnicDiscrimination</td>
<td>-0.323**</td>
<td>(0.132)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PartyFreeImportant</td>
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<td>(0.225)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DemocPrefFree</td>
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<td>(0.152)</td>
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<td>EconPref</td>
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<td>(0.101)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LogConsump</td>
<td>-14.55</td>
<td>(10.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HTownAhmadinejad</td>
<td>4.539</td>
<td>(3.446)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunni</td>
<td>-9.933***</td>
<td>(2.878)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azari</td>
<td>6.642***</td>
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<tr>
<td>LurBakhGhash</td>
<td>1.365</td>
<td>(1.709)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baluch</td>
<td>0.243</td>
<td>(4.874)</td>
</tr>
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<td>(56.07)</td>
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<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
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<td>0.520</td>
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Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Table 5: the result of Ordinary Least Square Regression for the non-participants

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<th>(2) NoVote2</th>
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<tr>
<td>RadicalChange</td>
<td>-0.404*</td>
<td>0.149</td>
</tr>
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<td>Agra Employee</td>
<td>0.0795</td>
<td>0.0361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Employee</td>
<td>0.0417</td>
<td>-0.0957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Employee</td>
<td>0.328***</td>
<td>0.254**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Employee</td>
<td>-0.510</td>
<td>-0.361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Degree</td>
<td>-0.217</td>
<td>-0.473*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TotalemployedPer</td>
<td>-0.279***</td>
<td>-0.227***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Population</td>
<td>-0.107**</td>
<td>-0.148***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Unemployed</td>
<td>-0.0312</td>
<td>-0.0377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TaxingForSubsidizeTop4</td>
<td>0.0448</td>
<td>0.0191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UnemploymentPensionTop4</td>
<td>0.00594</td>
<td>0.163**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunni ideology</td>
<td>-0.405**</td>
<td>-0.348*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GapWorsening</td>
<td>0.617**</td>
<td>0.434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inequality Development</td>
<td>-0.0367</td>
<td>-0.0921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Coefficient (SE)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Discrimination</td>
<td>0.00638 (0.201)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.246** (0.188)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PartyFreeImportant</td>
<td>-0.401* (0.204)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-0.0958 (0.180)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DemocPrefFree</td>
<td>0.455** (0.218)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.204 (0.177)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EconPref</td>
<td>0.347 (0.312)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.0438 (0.283)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IKRC PensionHH</td>
<td>0.0971 (0.104)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-0.0219 (0.104)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LogConsump</td>
<td>4.390 (9.661)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12.70 (9.312)</td>
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<tr>
<td>HTown Ahmadinejad</td>
<td>-18.62*** (4.346)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-17.90*** (4.313)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunni</td>
<td>26.86*** (7.864)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31.03*** (7.613)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azari</td>
<td>13.81*** (2.923)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13.45*** (2.738)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LurBakhGhash</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-0.721 (2.122)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baluch</td>
<td>-8.587** (4.180)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-16.83*** (4.314)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurd</td>
<td>15.62*** (4.824)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.925** (3.654)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-53.90 (59.46)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-51.39 (55.95)</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

Observations 336 336
R-squared 0.577 0.666

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
<Figure 5, Expected value of Ahmadinejad vote in the first round resulted from change in the ideology and distributive variable from its Minimum to Maximum>

<Figure 6, Expected value of Ahmadinejad vote in the second round resulted from change in the anti-ruling elite from its Minimum to Maximum>
<Figure 7, Ideology and conservative vote in Persian vs. Non-Persian Provinces>

<Table 6, The correlation between Ahmadinejad and the conservative candidates’ vote>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
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<th>(2) Ghalibaf92</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ahmadi1</td>
<td>0.293***</td>
<td>0.0601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0219)</td>
<td>(0.0387)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>7.101***</td>
<td>14.70***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.416)</td>
<td>(0.736)</td>
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</table>

116
R-squared 0.350 0.007

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

<Figure 8, Conservative Persian Belt Map>

<Figure 9, The map of front-runners, the first round of 2005 election>
<Table 7, Result of the 2013 presidential election>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Hassan Rouhani</th>
<th>Bagher Ghalibaf</th>
<th>Saeed Jalili</th>
<th>Mohsen Rezaee</th>
<th>AliAkbar Velyati</th>
<th>Gharazi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political Views</td>
<td>Centrist-Reformist</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Centrist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Votes</td>
<td>18,692,500</td>
<td>6,077,292</td>
<td>4,168,946</td>
<td>3,884,412</td>
<td>2,268,753</td>
<td>446,015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage vote</td>
<td>50.88%</td>
<td>16.46%</td>
<td>11.36%</td>
<td>10.59%</td>
<td>6.18%</td>
<td>0.88%</td>
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</table>
### Table 8, Seemingly Unrelated Regressions for the 2013 presidential election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>(1) Rouhani</th>
<th>(2) Galibaf</th>
<th>(3) Jalili</th>
<th>(4) Rezaee</th>
<th>(5) Velayati</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RuralPop</td>
<td>0.0613*</td>
<td>-0.0225</td>
<td>-0.0258</td>
<td>-0.0170</td>
<td>0.0109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0369)</td>
<td>(0.0264)</td>
<td>(0.0182)</td>
<td>(0.0358)</td>
<td>(0.00912)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IndustryEmployed</td>
<td>-0.0473</td>
<td>-0.0532</td>
<td>0.0246</td>
<td>-0.0776</td>
<td>0.138***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0896)</td>
<td>(0.0640)</td>
<td>(0.0442)</td>
<td>(0.0870)</td>
<td>(0.0222)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PublicSecEmp</td>
<td>-0.331***</td>
<td>0.239***</td>
<td>0.0136</td>
<td>0.123</td>
<td>-0.0500*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.118)</td>
<td>(0.0843)</td>
<td>(0.0582)</td>
<td>(0.115)</td>
<td>(0.0292)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EduEmploy</td>
<td>0.187</td>
<td>-0.928***</td>
<td>0.117</td>
<td>0.570*</td>
<td>0.0619</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.347)</td>
<td>(0.248)</td>
<td>(0.171)</td>
<td>(0.336)</td>
<td>(0.0858)</td>
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<td>PercentFem</td>
<td>-1.935**</td>
<td>1.449**</td>
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<td>(0.471)</td>
<td>(0.927)</td>
<td>(0.236)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FemUnEmp</td>
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<td>-0.209****</td>
<td>-0.0607</td>
<td>0.232**</td>
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<td>(0.0514)</td>
<td>(0.101)</td>
<td>(0.0258)</td>
</tr>
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<td>CollegeDeg</td>
<td>1.411***</td>
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<td>-0.359**</td>
<td>-0.728***</td>
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<td>(0.286)</td>
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<td>(0.141)</td>
<td>(0.277)</td>
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<td>Youth</td>
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<td>-0.139</td>
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<td>(0.223)</td>
<td>(0.159)</td>
<td>(0.110)</td>
<td>(0.216)</td>
<td>(0.0551)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LogPop</td>
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<td>2.064***</td>
<td>-1.014</td>
<td>-0.717</td>
<td>-0.454</td>
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<td>(1.433)</td>
<td>(1.024)</td>
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<td>(1.391)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gini91</td>
<td>35.21**</td>
<td>-3.401</td>
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<td>9.063**</td>
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<td>(17.45)</td>
<td>(12.47)</td>
<td>(8.599)</td>
<td>(16.93)</td>
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<td>(0.103)</td>
<td>(0.0263)</td>
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<td>EconPref</td>
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<td>SecurPref</td>
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<td>(0.0575)</td>
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<td>(0.909)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(1.920)</td>
<td>(1.324)</td>
<td>(2.607)</td>
<td>(0.665)</td>
</tr>
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<td>LurBakhGhash</td>
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<td>-1.958*</td>
<td>36.71***</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>(2.216)</td>
<td>(1.583)</td>
<td>(1.092)</td>
<td>(2.150)</td>
<td>(0.548)</td>
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<td>Persian</td>
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<td>3.553***</td>
<td>5.602***</td>
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<td>-17.10</td>
<td>-38.79</td>
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120
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<th>(40.44)</th>
<th>(27.89)</th>
<th>(54.93)</th>
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<td>397</td>
<td>397</td>
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<td>0.610</td>
<td>0.452</td>
<td>0.471</td>
<td>0.681</td>
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</table>

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Chapter 4

Preferences, Attentiveness, and Democratic Reform in Iran’s Electoral Politics

“There are billions of potential conflicts in any modern society, but only a few become significant. The reduction of the number of conflicts is an essential part of politics.” E.E. Schattschneider, The Semi-sovereign People, P61

After the rise of competitive authoritarianism, scholars and pundits have actively debated the features of these regimes and the prospect of authoritarian change or durability. Much scholarly attention has been paid to the role of elections as a catalyst for change or as an agent of durability in these systems. However, few have addressed the question about political preferences and the ways that rulers shape these preferences in electoral authoritarianism. In other words, what are the origins of political preferences in these systems? How does an institutional setting, such as the electoral system and the legislative-executive arrangement, shape electoral preferences in these regimes? Why does the pattern of participation differ across national and local levels? How does socio-economic disparity between the center and periphery influence preferences and the relationship between citizens and politicians? What role does the local power play in shaping the citizen-politician linkage? How do conservative forces influence the pattern of accountability and undermine democratic reform in authoritarianism? Overall,

138 Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009.

139 Lindberg 2009.

140 These studies generally highlight the monopoly over patronage resources and constraining citizens’ choice Magaloni 2006, patronage distribution as a driving force for electoral behavior Lust 2009, Blaydes 2011 and elite co-optation Gandhi and Przeworski 2006.
elections’ role in authoritarian change or durability on the national level in the literature has crowded out the understanding of elections’ impact long term, and the role that the institutional setting and micro-level power hierarchies in localities might play in shaping preferences in these regimes.

This chapter focuses on attention politics\(^{141}\) and the development of political predisposition and how this development influences the rulers’ strategy in electoral politics. That is, the rise and fall of reformism and populism in the past decades created a long term political past experience for citizens and impacted electoral preferences in Iran’s electoral politics. The previous chapters account for the origin of electoral preferences at the local and national levels. The first empirical chapter argues that local power shapes the voters’ preferences in parliamentary politics. That is, in the absence of entrenched democratic institutions, local parliamentary politics have been impacted by sub-national state building and transitions in the center of local power in Iran. Iran’s electoral system promotes personal connections\(^{142}\) between MPs and citizens in localities and enables subnational state machinery with controlling power over resources to shape patterns of mobilization and accountability in parliamentary elections. After elections, the executive-bureaucratic arrangement and the lack of bureaucratic autonomy allows MPs to meet the particularistic demands of citizens through the exploitation of bureaucratic resources. In fact, subnational state machinery provides necessary resources and

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\(^{141}\) Attention politics in this study refers to the ways that politicians manage the flood of information and prioritize the issues to be the focus of attention in politics.

\(^{142}\) The relationship between local elite and center can be investigated through the study of material (institutional setting) or immaterial linkage (informal networks, and communication flow) Gibson 2013. This study stresses the institutional setting as the underlying causal process and therefore the personal channel is not the topic of this study.
communication networks to influence local parliamentary politics and consequently shape parliamentary electoral preferences in provincial peripheries. However, the dynamic of electoral politics at the national level differs from that at the local level, and the institutional setting does not shape political preferences at the national level. As the second chapter demonstrates, conservatives primarily relied on an electoral engineering strategy and controlled politics to thwart the success of reformists and the opposition at the national level.

This chapter explains the electoral success and failure of the reformists and its impact on the development of political preferences in Iran by integrating the findings of previous chapters into the pattern of political participation at the local and national level. The chapter unpacks the failure of the reformists by illuminating the difficulties that new ideas have in breaking through the established system through the shift in public attention. Iranian reformists pursued a liberalization agenda through the parliamentary legislative process. Therefore, examining the policy process and agenda setting plays a crucial role in understanding the failure of democratic reform in Iran. Building on theories of agenda setting and conflict expansion, and the findings of previous chapters, this chapter develops an explanation of the impact of an institutional setting on political participation and explores the evolution of political predispositions in Iran’s electoral politics.

I argue that change in Iran’s parliamentary politics during the reformist-era primarily stemmed from a shift in attentiveness notably in metropolitan districts. In other words, the reformists viewed the emergence of the pro-democratic preferences among Iranians as the underlying causal factor for their victory. They took their electoral success in 1997 presidential election and three subsequent elections as a sign of Iranian tendency towards democratic values,
as the structural changes in Iranian society can be viewed in line with this explanation. However, instead of a change in Iranian values, the reformists’ success primarily stemmed from a shift in attention. Therefore, when the issue of democratic reform declined from the public attention, the existing political preferences remained in place and laid the ground for the rise of populism. In other words, the reformists primarily relied on the change in ideological attitudes and equated the development of liberal attitudes with the dominance of a partisan predisposition toward the reformist faction. However, after the decline of democratic reform from public attention, other issues (such as the conflict over distributive issues or opposition to the ruling elite) became significant and triggered the fall of reformism in Iranian politics.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, it reviews the existing explanations for the rise of the reform movement in late 1990 i.e. the impact of structural change. Next, the chapter presents a more accurate account of the structural explanation. It accounts for the boom in Iran’s higher education and its impact on the expansion of democratic values among Iranians. Drawing from this account, the chapter shows that it challenges the institutionalist explanations presented in the first chapter. Afterward, the chapter evaluates the institutionalist explanation by comparing the institutionalist account with alternative explanations such as modernization or the impact of structural change and rational choice through statistical analysis of parliamentary turnout and electoral outcomes. The study of electoral outcomes confirms the role that local power plays in shaping the pattern of political participation in localities. The statistical analysis also illuminates the origin of the disparity between the center and periphery of parliamentary politics and distinguishes between parliamentary turnout in local districts and metropolitan areas. The next section examines parliamentary turnout in metropolitan districts and concludes that, unlike provincial districts, attention politics determined the shift in the metropolitan electoral outcome
of the reformist era. Thus, the reformists plan to change electoral behavior in parliamentary politics was limited to metropolitan areas, and in localities the pattern of parliamentary participation and politics remained relatively untouched. Lastly, the development of political predisposition after the reformist period and its impact on Iran’s electoral politics is examined. In the concluding remarks, I summarize the findings of the study and briefly discusses its theoretical ramifications for electoral politics in authoritarian regimes.

INSTITUTIONAL SETTING AND ITS IMPACT ON ELECTORAL PREFERENCES IN IRAN’S PARLIAMENTARY POLITICS

Structural Change and Expansion of Democratic Values among Iranians

As explained in the previous chapter, existing studies highlight the role of structural change in the rise of the reform movement in Iran. This modernization-style approach argues that development programs implemented following the Iraq-Iran war increased urbanization and created a vibrant and growing middle class, who then demanded democracy and freedom. The Islamist-left faction inside the Islamic Republic’s ruling elite revised their policy platform to embrace these middle class demands and introduced this platform under the banner of reformism. This argument may seem convincing at the first glance. However, examining Iranian history shows that decades of development and modernization programs during Shah’s era did

143 In addition to Gheissari and Nasr (2006), several Iranian analysts stress the emergence of democratic values in Iranian society. For instance, Ganji, Akbar, Republican Manifesto, May 2005, Published online August 2006, Available at: http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03064220500239729?journalCode=rioc20

not bring about the democratic rule and instead paved the way for the rise of the Islamic Revolution, not to mention the classic critiques of the modernization paradigm. Moreover, the same electorate who voted for the reformists in the 1997 presidential election and three subsequent elections defected to a populist-conservative candidate in the 2005 presidential election, which was a relatively competitive election. In fact, the tendency toward a secular ideology and democratic values did expand in the post-war Iran. Yet, this trend did not merely result from modernization and change in structural variables such as urbanization. In the rest of this section, I will briefly account for the evolution of democratic values among Iranian electorate in recent decades. Afterward, I will examine existing explanations on the rise of reformism in Iran and compare these explanations with the institutionalist account.

*Expansion of higher education and democratic values among Iranians*

An important part of construction plans in the post-war Iran was addressing the high demand for higher education among Iranian youth. The Rafsanjani administration addressed this demand through expanding private higher education institutions, notably by allowing the establishment of new branches of Aazad Universities, distance college education through Payame Nour Universities, and allowing some colleges to run double shift (shabaneh shift) to offer associates degrees as well as increasing public universities’ capacity. As figure 1 illustrates, this policy resulted in a boom in Iran’s higher education, as the number of college

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144 The War between Iraq and Iran ended in August 1988.

145 These policies was part of the development and construction programs implemented after the Iraq-Iran war, The Third 5 Years Development Program, article 152. Tehran, The e-library of Majles.
students tripled in the period from 1988 to 1995 to more than 660,000 students; currently, Iran has and more than 4,800,000 university students\textsuperscript{146}.

![University Students in Iran](image)

Figure 10: University Students in Iran, Data obtained from Statistical Center of Iran

The result of this expansion went far beyond training the work force and addressing the demand for higher education. Existing surveys on the Iranian values demonstrate a correlation between higher education and democratic values in Iranian society. Table 1 shows that the respondents who hold a college degree or higher have a higher belief in secular ideology (or the proxy variable of believing that non-religious individuals should be allowed to hold positions in the government). Additionally, belief in the priority of freedom and political participation over welfare and security increases among people with a higher education. A tendency toward democratic values and secular ideology increase among the youth accordingly. As Table 2 shows

\textsuperscript{146} Statistical Center of Iran, Census, various years, Available at: http://www.amar.org.ir/Default.aspx?tabid=133
the secular ideology and the attitude toward the priority of freedom and participation over security and welfare is higher in the younger generation.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>The Most Important Problem of the Country</th>
<th>The Second Important Problem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>none</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>45.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>43.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>48.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-29</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-49</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over50</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the positive attitudes towards democratic values among people with higher education and the exponential increase (Figure 1) in the number of university students in the post-War Iran, one may argue that the shift in democratic values among Iranians triggered the rise of the reformist movement in Iran. That is, the students and college degree holders as the backbone of an educated middle class mobilized their families and communities in favor of pro-democratic forces. However, the impact of this shift on a partisan predisposition toward the reformists is shaky and ambiguous. As explained in previous chapters, the institutional setting, and a volatile electoral market also influences the political preferences of citizens and could pave the way for the rise of populism in Iran. The first step in unpacking this ambiguity is to provide
an explanation for the reformists’ victory. If the expansion of democratic values in Iranian society did not trigger the rise of the reform movement, what was the underlying causal variable for reformists’ electoral success? As explained in Chapter 3 existing analyses of the rise of reformism commonly stress either the role of structural changes or the public reaction to the conservative regime’s electoral plan. In other words, the conservative electoral plan of publicly backing a candidate and forcing the public to vote for that candidate backfired in the 1997 presidential election, when voters overwhelmingly turned to the reformist candidate, Khatami, as a reaction against conservatives’ electoral strategy. If the 1997 election was a reaction against conservatives, what was the origin of reformists’ victory in the subsequent elections, particularly the 2000 parliamentary election? The next section addresses this question. My statistical analysis of the parliamentary electoral outcome demonstrates that electoral outcomes remained unchanged in localities and that local power continued to influence electoral outcomes even in the reformist era. However, the shift in attentiveness dramatically changed the pattern of parliamentary electoral outcomes in metropolitan districts. The next section begins by discussing an alternative explanation, i.e. structural change and the role of controlled politics in parliamentary elections. Afterward, the result of my statistical analysis of parliamentary turnout is presented.

Controlled politics or institutionalist explanation?

Conventional wisdom commonly assumes that the control of politics by the Guardian Council determines parliamentary electoral outcomes in Iran. The vetting rate of candidates by the Guardian Council may serve as a proxy for the level of control over parliamentary elections. Considering the substantial increase in the number of college degree holders in the electorate and
other structural changes, one may argue that Iranians’ attitudes have shifted toward democratic values. The electorate normally votes for pro-democratic candidates in a fair and competitive election. The argument is that the disqualification of reformist and pro-democratic candidates by the Guardian Council discourages the Iranian public from voting and spawns conservative victories in Iran’s politics. In fact, the vetting rate in parliamentary elections can be regarded as evidence for this argument. As figure 2 illustrates, the vetting rate in the 2000 parliamentary election dropped to 11 percent of total candidates, the lowest level in the post-War era of Iran, and the reformists won the 6th parliamentary election in 2000 by a wide margin. The 6th Majles election was one of the most competitive elections in the post-Khomeini era. Leading reformist figures were allowed by the Guardian Council to participate and be nominated in the parliamentary election. The disqualification rate dropped from 40 percent in the 1996 election to the 11 percent in 2000 election.

Figure 11: Vetting Rate in Iran’s Parliamentary Politics, Data Obtained from Iran’s Ministry of Interior
Considering this landslide, one may claim that in with the absence of controlled politics in the 6th Majles election (i.e. the 2000 parliamentary election), voters found an opportunity to express their true preferences towards democratic forces in Iranian politics. In contrast, the Chapter Two demonstrates that the institutional setting (i.e. electoral system, legislative-executive arrangement, and local power) primarily shapes the voters preference in the parliamentary elections. Therefore, the vetting rate and controlled politics explanation, representing the structural approach, challenges the institutionalist argument (presented in the second chapter) about the origin of voters’ preferences in Iran’s parliamentary politics. In this section, I examine existing explanations through a comparative study of voter participation in the 2000 and 2004 parliamentary elections. In the 2004 parliamentary election, leading reformist figures had been barred from participation in the election, and consequently key reformist parties, namely the IIPF and MIRO, boycotted the election\textsuperscript{147}. Considering the low disqualification rate in the 2000 parliamentary election and the high disqualification rate in the 2004 election, this comparative study provides insight into the preferences of Iranian voters in the presence (6th Majles) and the absence (7th Majles) of reformist forces in two parliamentary elections. Additionally, I investigate the other possible explanations, including rational choice and modernization theories. Afterward, I show that while the local parliamentary electoral outcome remained relatively unchanged in the 6th Majles election, the parliamentary election in metropolitan areas, notably the Tehran district, experienced an unprecedented change in the 6th

Majles election. Finally, I explain the origin of this unprecedented change in the metropolitan districts.

The result of my statistical analysis of the parliamentary turnout of the 2000 and 2004 (6th and 7th Majles) at the district level is in line with the institutionalist explanation. As Tables 3 and Table 4 illustrate, the turnout roughly follow the same pattern across the 2000 and 2004 parliamentary elections. The population of eligible voters in the district (the logged population in this model or the variable ‘LogVoters’) correlates with the percentage of electors who voted, and has the highest impact on the turnout; as one unit of increase in the log of eligible voters in the district (roughly about 900,000 in the number of district’s eligible electors in this model) corresponds with about a 20 percent drop in the turnout percentage. The rational choice framework and modernization paradigm may provide an alternative explanation for the higher turnout in less populous districts. Thus, the chapter examines these alternative explanations and compares them with the institutionalist explanation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>(1) Majles6Turnout</th>
<th>(2) Majles6Turnout</th>
<th>(3) Majles6Turnout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>0.0416</td>
<td>0.0323</td>
<td>0.0332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0289)</td>
<td>(0.0293)</td>
<td>(0.0294)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>illiteracy</td>
<td>-0.497***</td>
<td>-0.463***</td>
<td>-0.445***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.120)</td>
<td>(0.133)</td>
<td>(0.137)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LogVoters</td>
<td>-19.37***</td>
<td>-19.10***</td>
<td>-19.01***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.402)</td>
<td>(1.414)</td>
<td>(1.425)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RuralPopulation</td>
<td>0.183***</td>
<td>0.180***</td>
<td>0.179***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0307)</td>
<td>(0.0310)</td>
<td>(0.0316)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totalemployed</td>
<td>0.0103</td>
<td>0.0110</td>
<td>0.00960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0438)</td>
<td>(0.0437)</td>
<td>(0.0440)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Employ</td>
<td>-0.155**</td>
<td>-0.167**</td>
<td>-0.175***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0656)</td>
<td>(0.0658)</td>
<td>(0.0666)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PublicEmploy</td>
<td>-0.0469</td>
<td>-0.0355</td>
<td>-0.0207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0841)</td>
<td>(0.0841)</td>
<td>(0.0860)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EducationEmploy</td>
<td>0.817***</td>
<td>0.798***</td>
<td>0.783***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11: Statistical analysis of the parliamentary turnout of the 2000 election; the Variables codebook is available in the Appendix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>(1) Majles7Turnout</th>
<th>(2) Majles7Turnout</th>
<th>(3) Majles7Turnout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>-0.0289 (0.0476)</td>
<td>-0.0524 (0.0479)</td>
<td>-0.052 (0.0480)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>illiteracy</td>
<td>-0.620*** (0.198)</td>
<td>-0.483** (0.218)</td>
<td>-0.452** (0.223)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LogVoters</td>
<td>-21.50*** (2.306)</td>
<td>-20.70*** (2.311)</td>
<td>-20.52*** (2.330)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RuralPopulation</td>
<td>0.236*** (0.0506)</td>
<td>0.225*** (0.0506)</td>
<td>0.219*** (0.0517)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totalemployed</td>
<td>0.0600 (0.0720)</td>
<td>0.0624 (0.0713)</td>
<td>0.0574 (0.0719)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>idustEmploy</td>
<td>-0.0291 (0.108)</td>
<td>-0.0621 (0.108)</td>
<td>-0.0669 (0.109)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PublicEmploy</td>
<td>0.287** (0.264)</td>
<td>0.313** (0.264)</td>
<td>0.327** (0.266)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Estimate 1</td>
<td>Estimate 2</td>
<td>Estimate 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EduEmploy</td>
<td>2.688***</td>
<td>2.649***</td>
<td>2.618***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.138)</td>
<td>(0.138)</td>
<td>(0.141)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CollegDeg</td>
<td>-0.460</td>
<td>-0.587**</td>
<td>-0.615**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.284)</td>
<td>(0.289)</td>
<td>(0.296)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributive</td>
<td>-0.122**</td>
<td>-0.126**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0477)</td>
<td>(0.0482)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunni</td>
<td>-4.336</td>
<td>-4.562</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.753)</td>
<td>(2.783)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EthnicHetro</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.830)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MultiCounties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.524)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>154.0***</td>
<td>159.0***</td>
<td>158.7***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(14.75)</td>
<td>(14.95)</td>
<td>(15.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.413</td>
<td>0.427</td>
<td>0.428</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 12: Statistical analysis of the parliamentary turnout of the 2004 election; the Variables codebook is available in the Appendix.

The rational choice framework suggests that in a deprived province such as Ilam with high unemployment, indigent and uneducated citizens ignore the future and prefer instant clientelistic transactions with MPs; whereas in metropolitan areas such as Tehran, educated, wealthy and more informed voters consider the effect of clientelism in the long run - that is, the resulting scarcity of public goods - and therefore prefer programmatic promises and party politics to particularistic and clientelistic exchanges. As a result, pocketbook issues or pre-modern elements like traditional ethnic cleavages or kinship ties in an underdeveloped area like Ilam outweigh modern party politics and encourage most provincial voters to participate in parliamentary elections. Similarly, some attribute the higher turnout in localities to poverty and
lack of political knowledge and illiteracy. As Bahar and Cottam argued 60 years ago, the local magnates in provincial Iran are able to herd the illiterate and politically uninformed villagers to vote for their candidates. (Abrahamian 1981; Cottam 1969)

However, Tables 3 &4 demonstrate that the level of development does not influence the percentage of turnout in the district. Illiteracy and the percentage of industrial workers (the variable Industry Employ) in the district (as a proxy for low income voters) negatively correlate with the percentage of voters to total eligible voters in the district, challenging the rational choice explanation for higher turnout in provincial peripheries. In fact, the percentage of employees in the educational service sector (the variable EducationEmploy) with relatively higher education positively correlates with the turnout, and college degree holders also positively influence the parliamentary turnout. As explained in Chapter 2, despite decades of development and drastic changes in Iran’s socio-economic and modernization indicators, Iranian parliamentary elections face a recurring disparity between electoral outcomes in metropolitan areas and provincial peripheries. That is, factional politics has been the major determinant of vote choice in large cities like Tehran, whereas the local power hierarchy shapes the electoral outcome in provincial areas such as Ilam.

It appears that changes in modernizing elements and socio-economic indicators have not transformed the pattern of parliamentary voting behaviors in provincial peripheries. Additionally, ethnic cleavage is not a significant variable in a small province like Ilam, as more than 85

\[ ^{148} \text{Blaydes 2011} \]
percent of Ilamis belong to one ethnicity.\textsuperscript{149} The impact of denser social networks in rural areas\textsuperscript{150} is also not a sufficient explanation for higher turnout in the particular case of Iran, as the market reform policies (which have been implemented in Iran to some degrees in the post-Khomeini era) atomize citizens in the countryside\textsuperscript{151}. Instead, the candidate-centered electoral system in Iran has remained relatively untouched since the constitutional era. This system facilitates the personal connection between MPs and citizens in provincial peripheries with a small proportion of MPs to voters, (e.g. 145,907 eligible voters in Ilam\textsuperscript{152}), yet a large number of citizens (e.g. 6,875,699 eligible voters in Tehran district\textsuperscript{153}) that an MP represents in metropolitan districts precludes personal connections. Therefore, instead of personal connection, mostly fostered by the disbursement of private goods in localities, voters in metropolitan areas rely predominantly on heuristics such as factional politics and a candidates’ fame.

The lower number of eligible voters in provincial districts (as a result of Iran’s electoral system) facilitates the personal connection between MPs and citizens in those districts. One may attribute this personal connection to the impact of single-member districts versus multi-member districts. (Mahdavi, 2015) However, as explained, a multi-member district with low population (like the Ilam district) can experience a considerably higher turnout compared to populous

\textsuperscript{149} According to the Council of Public Culture’s Survey, 86 percent of Ilamis belong to Feyli Kurd ethnicity, and other ethnicities (Lak and Lur) are minority in Ilam. Vaezi Mansur, 2012, “Survey and Measurement of Public Culture Indexes”, Ketab Nashr Press.

\textsuperscript{150} Lust 2009, 128.

\textsuperscript{151} Kurtz 2004.

\textsuperscript{152} Statistical Center of Iran, The Result of 2011 Census, Tehran, Daftare Riasat. Ilam district includes Ilam, Ivan, Shirvan-Chardavol, and Mehran.

\textsuperscript{153} ibid, Tehran district includes Tehran, Rey, Islamshahr and Shemiranat.
districts. In sparsely populated districts of the periphery, the personal connection between MPs and citizens mediates the particularistic economic concerns of the voters (as suggested by the rational choice framework), and traditional elements such as ethnic and kinship ties (as argued by the modernization paradigm). For instance, in deprived provinces such as Ilam, the daily of lives of citizens hinge on state resources more so than in central metropolitan areas. Therefore, the candidate-centered electoral system provides a channel for provincial citizens to demand their daily needs from MPs, who have controlling power over the local bureaucracy. As a result, the disbursement of bureaucratic resources through welfare organizations enables politicians and bureaucrats to build clientelistic networks and later utilize these networks in parliamentary politics; as Ilam’s MPs used to be the head of the local IKRC bureau in the province.

In a nutshell, the logged population, as a proxy for Iran’s candidate centered electoral system and also a proxy for the impact of personal connection between MP and citizen, correlates with the parliamentary turnout in both elections, and has the highest impact on the turnout. The percent of college degree holders as a proxy for democratic values in the controlled politics explanation does not correlate with the turnout, and the percentage of employed individuals in educational areas (with relatively higher education) positively correlates with voter turnout in both elections. Additionally, the impact of other independent variables, such as the

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154 In addition to the author’s interviews, an official report indicates that jobs and unemployment, paving the urban and rural roads, and providing and distributing agricultural goods are the most frequent requests of MPs from the ministers and executive bureaus. Hossein Mozafar, Khaneh Mellat, Majles News Agency. 2014. June 10.

155 Ali Yari and Abdoreza Heydarizade, two MPs of Ilam district (the capital of province), used to be the Head of IKRC in the province. Bureau of Culture and Public Relation, Majles Shurayeh Islami, “Acquaintance with Members of Islamic Consultative Assembly, the 6th Term”, November, 2000.
levels of development, illiteracy, and socio-economic status challenges the modernization and rational choice explanations. Therefore, the institutional setting is the main determinant of participation in parliamentary elections. Since the institutional setting remained untouched, the reformists’ victory in the 2000 parliamentary election cannot be interpreted as a shift in the pattern of electoral participation. In the next section, I show that the parliamentary electoral outcome in localities also remained unchanged.

Local Power and Parliamentary Electoral Outcome

Thus far, my statistical analysis shows that electoral turnout roughly follows the same pattern across the 2000 and 2004 parliamentary elections, and the pattern of participation in parliamentary elections remained unchanged. However, one may argue that parliamentary turnout does not necessarily reflect the electoral outcome, and the low vetting rate led to the victory the pro-democratic candidates in the 2000 parliamentary election. Although the reformists gained an absolute majority in the 6th Majles, the underlying causal link in parliamentary electoral mobilization remained unaffected. In other words, local power was the main determinant of the parliamentary outcome in the 2000 election. Drawing from the findings of chapter 2, this section investigates this underlying causal link. By analyzing the occupational backgrounds of MPs in the reformist parliament, I show that the electoral outcome also follows the same pattern in the 2000 election. In this section, the role of subnational state machinery in elections in authoritarian settings is discussed. Next, drawing from an analysis of MPs’ occupational background, the electoral outcome in the 2000 parliamentary election is examined.
Existing studies on center-periphery relations commonly highlight the dominance of the center over the periphery\textsuperscript{156}. In contrast, some recent studies of subnational power in transitional democracies argue that local power can resist the national wave of democratization\textsuperscript{157}. These ways of framing the center and periphery relationship, however, may obscure the important role of the periphery and subnational power in consolidating the central rule by influencing the pattern of mobilization in authoritarian settings. Competitive authoritarian regimes are not democratically accountable at the national level, and national policies may not conform to the will of the nation. However, a subnational power with control over resources can create a viable pattern of accountability through clientelistic exchanges at the local level. Consequently, the existence of nationally controlled politics alongside clientelistic patterns of accountability that fulfills the particularistic demands of citizens at local levels preserves electoral authoritarianism. In this environment, political pressure from factional leaders at the center to reform this type of accountability has run afoul of deep seated conservative forces with vested interests in preserving this system.

Despite efforts to explain the impact of local politics on electoral contests in some authoritarian regimes\textsuperscript{158}, the important role of subnational government in driving citizen-politician linkage has been relatively unexamined. As explained in the chapter 2, local state-building fundamentally transformed the citizen-politician linkage in Iran’s parliamentary elections. The underlying causal process for this phenomenon has gradually developed from the

\textsuperscript{156} Rokkan and Urwin 1983 & Tarrow et al. 1978.

\textsuperscript{157} Gibson 2013.

\textsuperscript{158} such as Shi 1999; King 2003; Landry et al. 2010.
early constitutional period of Iran to the present. The electoral system and the extension of suffrage to adult males assisted the local magnates, namely the landlords, in controlling Iran’s parliamentary politics in the pre-revolutionary era. This setting has been regenerated in the form of bureaucratic clientelism in the post-revolutionary parliamentary politics of Iran\textsuperscript{159}. The main drivers of this transformation were land reform and post-revolutionary state-building. As a result of these transformations, the daily lives of local citizens hinge upon the acquisition of bureaucratic resources, and consequently, the center of local power shifted from landlords to local bureaucrats. To demonstrate the effect of local state-building on the electoral outcome, I examine the impact of local power on parliamentary elections through a study of MPs’ occupational background. This study demonstrates that local bureaucrats have remained the main players in parliamentary politics.

\textsuperscript{159} Ethnographic studies demonstrate the resemblance between the patron-client linkage in a modern context and the landlord-peasant relation in traditional agrarian societies Piattoni 2001, and the transition in local power in Iran through land reform and post-revolutionary local state-building recreated this relationship in a new arrangement.
The analysis of the occupational backgrounds of MPs in the 6th Majles (the reformist parliament) confirms the institutional explanation of the parliamentary electoral outcome. As Figure 3 illustrates, serving as the head of the state’s local bureaus in the district (particularly as governor of the city or county\textsuperscript{160}) is the most frequent occupational background of MPs in the reformist parliament. Former heads of revolutionary foundations (notably the heads of Construction Crusade bureaus in the rural districts\textsuperscript{161}) composes the second most frequent occupational background, highlighting the important role of post-revolutionary state-building in

\textsuperscript{160} As 47% of these heads of local bureaus were the former governors and mayors in the districts.

\textsuperscript{161} More than 40 percent of these MPs served in the branches of Construction Crusade (Jehad). Construction Crusade has been mostly in charge of rural development. Additionally, as table 3 and 4 shows the positive impact of rural population on the turnout is in line with the above explanation of the role of local bureaucracy in the lives of citizens in the countryside.
shaping parliamentary politics. Overall, about 60 percent of MPs served as heads of local bureaus or local branches of revolutionary foundations, which is considerably higher than the corresponding percentage in other countries\textsuperscript{162}. The relatively large number of teachers among MPs in localities also shows the important role of intermediaries between the state’s machinery and its citizens. The teachers’ relatively high education and their permanent link with local state agencies make them “the natural intermediaries between their communities and the outside world”\textsuperscript{163}. These intermediaries, in return, can deliver voters to politicians across different segments of society, particularly in local electoral politics, and in some cases even promote themselves to electoral office, as is the case in the local parliamentary politics of Iran. Overall, the subnational state machinery, as an important component of power in localities, is the most influential determinant of parliamentary electoral outcomes in provincial districts. This influence primarily results from land reform and post-revolutionary state-building, which placed the revolutionaries in charge of local bureaucracies. The post-revolutionary refurbishment of bureaucratic positions and welfare state-building enabled revolutionary factions to fill positions and establish personal networks with intermediaries and citizens through resource allocation and service providing. These networks would later facilitate the mobilization of citizens in parliamentary politics. The result of my study of the occupational background of MPs in the 6\textsuperscript{th}

\textsuperscript{162} For instance, in the UK, less than 5% of MPs served in civil service/local government. (McGuinness, Feargal. 2010, Social Background of MPs, House of Commons Library. December 14.) In the United States, most congressmen worked in business or local legislative offices, and 30% of representatives served in public service/politics, with less 5% of these congressmen in charge of local government. (Manning, Jennifer. 2014, Membership of the 113\textsuperscript{th} Congress, Congressional Research Service. November 24). In Turkey, most MPs were businessman, or active in the educational service sector or law(Genckaya, Omer Faruk, 2011, Professional Development Structure for Parliaments in Turkey, Inter-Parliamentary Union).

\textsuperscript{163} Durazo Herrmann 2010.
Majles confirms the findings of the chapter 2, that the revolutionary foundations, along with the local state machinery, have influenced local parliamentary politics in Iran through their networks\(^{164}\), with state machinery at the subnational level becoming an influential determinant of parliamentary politics in provincial peripheries. Therefore, despite the victory of the reformists in the 2000 parliamentary election, parliamentary turnout and electoral outcomes in local areas demonstrate elements of continuity resulting from Iran’s institutional setting, and this victory does not reflect a tendency toward democratic values in Iran’s local parliamentary politics.

THE 2000 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION AND THE SHIFT IN METROPOLITAN DISTRICTS’ PARTICIPATION

So far, I have demonstrated that the pattern of parliamentary politics in localities remains relatively unaffected in the 2000 presidential election. However, metropolitan districts in the 2000 election experienced an unprecedented shift. In this section, I first explain the impact of institutional setting, namely Iran’s electoral law, on parliamentary politics in metropolitan districts. Next, the origin of this unprecedented turnout in the 2000 parliamentary election is explored. Finally, the evolution of political predispositions after the reformist era is discussed. As explained in the first empirical chapter, Iran’s electoral system promotes personal connections between MPs and citizens in local districts. In this environment, local MPs rely on personal connections and tangible promises to citizens to win electoral contests. As an MP argues, “we have a parliamentary system, but we do not have parties. Consequently, the candidates must personally convince people to vote. When they want to convince individuals,

\(^{164}\) For instance, an MP estimates that IKRC, Imam Khomeini Relief Committee, (a charity styled revolutionary foundation) is influential in the parliamentary politics of eight provinces of Iran. Author phone interview with a former member of Iranian parliament, January, 25, 2015.
they offer tangible promises, and these promises deal with daily lives of people.” In metropolitan districts, however, establishing personal connections is exhausting. For one thing, the voters have difficulty in seeking and establishing personal connections with 30 candidates in a district like Tehran. For another thing, the large number of eligible voters (such as 6,800,000 in Tehran district compared to 200,000 in the average provincial district) impedes the establishment of a personal connection between MPs and constituents. Therefore, instead of personal connections, voters rely on other heuristics, such as the prominence of a candidate or factional politics. A report by the Majles Research center indicates that the average number of votes received by candidates who have been endorsed by at least one party or faction in a parliamentary election in Tehran is 437,459, whereas the average number of votes received by independent candidates (with no party endorsement) in Tehran is 5,524. This is a recurring phenomenon from the pre-revolutionary era to the present time and supports Iran’s authoritarianism by undermining the role of political parties even in metropolitan districts. As Westwood (1961) argues:

“the urban districts are multiple-seat and the characteristic urban election party consisted of a very prominent man at the head of the slate with lesser men further down the list. The prominent men of several of the parties often won election with the lesser men failing. Mossadegh consistently ran and won in Tehran without any party support or affiliation and generally against the government. In the Majlis parliamentary factions formed and re-formed with shifting issues, but few deputies were willing to submit to party discipline when they did not need a party for election.”

165 Ahmad Tavakoli, 2014, Interview with Iran’s state-run TV, Channel 5, Barname Shabe Aftabi, October 8.

The 2000 parliamentary election in metropolitan districts, however, was an unprecedented event in the history of Iran’s electoral politics. As explained, Iran’s electoral system defines the metropolitan districts as one multimember district. The population of the district determines the number of MPs. For instance, Tehran district with 6,800,000 eligible voters has 30 MPs in the Iranian parliament. Each of these 30 MPs represents the entire district, and the Tehrani voters write the name of 30 candidates on the ballot paper. The Guardian Council has blocked several attempts to computerize the voting system and slates. In addition to difficulty in counting the votes in metropolitan districts, this electoral system commonly creates confusion and wearies the voters. After all, selecting 30 candidates from a list of several hundred qualified candidates is exhausting and frustrating for the voters. Consequently, the voters usually cannot fill out the entire ballot paper and select less than 30 candidates. Thus, few candidates are able to obtain the threshold (25% of total votes) to be a winner in the first round. For instance, in the 5th Majles election (1995-1996) only two candidates reached this threshold, and the next 56 candidates competed for the 28 remaining seats in the second round of voting. The winners of the first round in the Tehran district usually number less than 15 candidates, and these are limited to influential and prominent figures. In this environment, political factions’ lists consist of one or two prominent candidates at the top followed by less influential figures. In fact, instead of political factions, the prominent candidates at the head of the list commonly improve the popularity of the entire slate.
However, in the 2000 parliamentary election (the 6th Majles election) an exceptional phenomenon occurred in the history of Iran’s electoral politics. The entire list of 30 candidates from Tehran district passed the threshold in the first round, and the average vote of the winners of the first round reached a record number of 1,050,000. As figure 4 demonstrates the average vote of the winners in the 2000 parliamentary election was about 1,700,000. The Guardian Council invalidated some ballots reducing this number to 1,050,000. The reformist candidates (mostly from IIPF list) originally won all 30 seats in Tehran district in the first round. However, after invalidating 700,000 votes by the Guardian Council, two reformist candidates were replaced by two conservative candidates. Regardless of this dispute between the Guardian Council and the Ministry of Interior, this election was an exceptional phenomenon. In fact, some
analysts argue that in the 2000 parliamentary election, the confusion among metropolitan voters declined, and instead of 14 candidates (as in the 1992, 1988 election) and two candidates (as in the 1996 election), all 30 candidates were selected in the first round of the election\textsuperscript{167}. The origin of this exceptional phenomenon in the 2000 parliamentary election, however, has not been investigated so far. This section briefly unpacks this shift in the electoral outcomes of metropolitan districts, notably, Tehran.

As explained above, one possible explanation is the lack of controlled politics in the 2000 election. As figure 2 shows, the vetting rate of parliamentary candidates dropped to its lowest historical percentage, 11 percent, in the 2000 election. Tehran voters selected 30 candidates out of 836 candidates, the highest number of qualified candidates allowed in the Tehran district in post-Khomeini electoral politics. As a result, the voters were offered more options, with the structural change and expansion of higher education creating a cascade of participation in favor of reformist candidates. However, a statistical analysis of the turnout and MPs’ occupational background challenges this explanation in rural localities. The turnout in the 5\textsuperscript{th} Majles election of 1996 challenges this argument in metropolitan districts as well. As figure 5 shows, despite the higher vetting rate in the 1996 parliamentary election, the percentage of voters who participated in the 1996 election was higher than in the 2000 parliamentary election.

\textsuperscript{167} The Research Center of the Majles, Mehdi Mohsenianrad. “A Statistical Evaluation of the 6\textsuperscript{th} Majles Electoral Outcome in Tehran” (in Farsi). May, 2000.
Figure 14: Parliamentary Turnout in Tehran District, Data Obtained from Iran’s Ministry of Interior

This shows that the lower vetting rate and a more competitive and fair election does not necessarily lead to a higher turnout. However, what did cause the exceptional electoral outcome in metropolitan districts in the 2000 parliamentary election? Theories of conflict expansion and agenda setting provide an opening to answer this question. Since Schattschneider’s (1960) groundbreaking study about mobilization and conflict expansion, theories of agenda setting argue that the conservative nature of a political system makes conflict necessary for any major change. Therefore, when a policy shifts to macro-political institutions to create major change, it commonly occurs during a period of heightened attentiveness by media and the broader public as well as changing issue definition. (Jones 1994, p.185) A content analysis of Iran’s newspapers in the reformist era is in line with this approach. As explained, the reformists pursued their liberalization agenda through Iran’s parliament and policy process. They passed more than one hundred bills to improve human rights and democracy in Iran. Some of the legislation passed included the prohibition of physical and psychological torture; giving prisoners’ the right of
access to an attorney; creating a distinction between judges, jury and prosecutors in press courts and for political prisoners; improving freedom of speech and democracy in the form of more liberal press laws and limiting the control of the Guardian Council over elections; and advancing women’s rights. However, most of these laws were vetoed by the Guardian Council for violating Sharia Law and their interpretation of Iran’s constitution. Reformist newspapers laid the ground for this drastic shift in Iranian policymaking though agenda setting and issue definition. They changed the focus of public discourse and prioritized the reformists’ liberalization agenda. As one historian observed:

“These reform newspapers, together with others that followed, changed the whole tenor of public discussion. In previous decades, the key terms in public discourse had been imperialism, mostazafen, jehad, mojahed, shahed (martyrdom), khish, (roots), enqelab, (revolution), and gharbzadegi(Western intoxication). Now the key terms were demokrasi, pluralism, moderniyat, azadi (liberty), barabari (equality), jam’eh-e madani (civil society), hoquq-e beshar (human rights), mosakerat-e siyasi (political participation), goft-e gou (dialogue), and the brand new word shahrvandi (citizenship). This was a cultural turn almost as significant as that of the 1979 revolution.” (Abrahamian, 2008) Pp187-188

The reformist newspapers’ attempt was not limited to introducing liberal concepts to Iranian public, they also shifted the focus of public attention, focusing on factional debates; and this shift changed the pattern of participation in metropolitan districts. As explained in Chapter Two, a critical step in the reformist project to liberalize Iran’s political system was enhancing party politics in Iran. They tried to accomplish this project by changing Iran’s electoral system (as previously discussed), and also by shifting the focus of political attention in electoral contests from individuals to political parties. The reformist newspapers led this shift in political attention. Existing studies on the content of reformist newspapers in the 2001 parliamentary election reveal that, unlike previous elections, the focus of electoral debates shifted from individuals to political factions. (Javadi, 2001; Taraghi 2001) Additionally, in previous elections, government
institutions were the main source of electoral news, whereas in the 2000 parliamentary election the source of news shifted toward political factions (Javadi 2001; Taraghi 2001; Karimitabar 2005).

In sum, instead of a shift in voter political preferences through a change in structural elements, the change in the tenor of public discourse by the reformist newspapers transformed parliamentary electoral behavior in metropolitan districts. A preliminary analysis highlights the role of attentiveness in this shift in metropolitan parliamentary politics. As explained in Chapter Two, Iran’s electoral system promotes particularistic demands and an individualistic relationship between MPs and voters in local parliamentary elections. Reformist newspapers created an environment of changing issue definition and heightened attentiveness. This environment aided the reformist faction to transform the macro-political demands at the national level by enlarging the conflict over the issue of democratic reform, which also resulted in the factionalizing of electoral contests in metropolitan areas. Thus, instead of individual candidates, the focus of public attention in metropolitan areas shifted towards political factions, with these areas overwhelmingly voting for reformist factions in the 2000 presidential elections.

However, instead of factional politics, the institutional setting continued to promote particularistic demands and an individualistic relationship between voters and MPs in localities. Consequently, the shift in attentiveness did not influence the provincial parliamentary electoral behavior. Therefore, the reformists passed laws to modify this institutional setting notably Iran’s electoral system to promote the role of political parties in Iranian politics. The Guardian Council vetoed these laws and Iran’s provincial parliamentary politics continued to be dominated by particularistic demands. Additionally, controlled politics and electoral engineering strategies
triggered the decline of reformist discourse from the public attention. Iran’s conservative judiciary shut down many reformist newspapers and prosecuted several reformist journalists and activists. In addition, the Guardian Council barred more than 2000 candidates, including leading reformist figures, from participating in the 2004 parliamentary election. This chain of events resulted in the decline of public attention for reformist ideas. Consequently, in the 2005 presidential election, the pro-democracy discourse of the reformist candidate, Moeen, did not even resonate in metropolitan districts with the populist discourse of Ahmadinejad beating the liberal upper discourse of reformists in the Tehran and Isfahan districts.

In conclusion, the institutional setting, which lays the ground for the clientelistic and populist pattern of political participation, has created a rigid politics of subsystem that promotes particularistic demands in citizen-politician linkages. This politics of subsystem has been employed by conservatives to resist any attempt to change authoritarianism in Iran. Although reformist efforts to enlarge the scope of conflict over the issue of democratic reform were relatively successful during the open policy window for a short period after the 1997 presidential election, the decline of democratic reform as an issue combined with the negative feedback from this subsystem stalled democratic reform and maintained the stability of the whole system. Reformist attempts to change the tenor of public discourse in order to liberalize political institutions through Iran’s parliament and policy process has thus far failed, and the politics of subsystem remained in place after political involvements in metropolitan districts receded. Existing studies on this shift in the public discourse (through a study of Iranian newspapers of the reform era) show how the reformists enlarged the scope of conflict through ‘agenda setting’ and ‘issue definition’ as two important elements of the policy process. Nonetheless, when the issue of democratic reform receded from the public’s attention, the politics of subsystem
remained in place. As the statistical analysis of the 2005 presidential election shown in Chapter 3 indicates, in the absence of polarization around the issue of democratic reform, populist promises by candidates were the most important determinant of vote choice. This populist pattern of participation was primarily shaped by the gradual historical development of Iran’s institutional setting, including post-revolutionary organizations and their populist policies.

DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL PREDISPOSITION AFTER THE REFORMIST ERA

If the reformists’ victory in the 2000 election stemmed from a change in issue attention, how did they influence the 2013 presidential election? Have the political preferences of the Iranian public remained constant after the fall of reformists? How did political predispositions evolve during Ahmadinejad’s incumbency? The rise and fall of populism after the reformist era has significantly influenced political predispositions and has created a sense of long-term political past experience for Iranian public. Candidate suppression and the conservative electoral engineering strategy triggered the fading of reformist ideas from public attention and heightened other conflicts in Iranian electoral contests. In the 2005 presidential election, the populist discourse exemplified by the anti-ruling elite mood played a key role in the conservative victory. Ahmadinejad portrayed himself as an independent academic who intended to fight Iran’s corrupt ruling elite, and he was successful in selling this idea to voters, including those from Iran’s educated class. As the statistical analysis in Table 5 demonstrates, college degree holders voted for Ahmadinejad. Despite the prevalence of democratic values among the educated middle class, they rejected the democratic discourse of Moeen, the reformist candidate, in favor of Ahmadinejad’s populist discourse.
However, the abysmal economic indicators of Ahmadinejad administration and their suppressive policies toward educated middle class turned the public back toward the reformists. This section briefly accounts for the evolution of voting preferences, distinguishing the impact of supply side policies from voter demands. To begin, the existing literature on both sides of the equation is briefly reviewed. Next, I account for the particular case of the rise and fall of populism in Iran. I argue that the fading of reformist discourse from public attention in the context of the unsettled and volatile electoral market of Iran paved the way for the victory of populism in Iran. Yet, the development of political predispositions and long term political past experience resulted in the conservatives’ loss in the 2013 presidential race.

Drawing from Alesina, Roubini, and Cohen’s (1997) literature review, early studies on the supply side emphasize the role of the incumbent’s ideological orientation on electoral cycles. For instance, leftist parties commonly try to decrease unemployment, but the right generally focuses on inflation. (Hibbs 1977) Other approaches mostly emerged in the mid-1970s highlighting candidates’ motivations. The argument is that instead of relying on a coherent ideological policy platform, politicians are mostly concerned with getting re-elected. (Nordhaus 1975, Lindbeck 1976) On the other hand, more recent approaches incorporate the rational expectation of the voters and argue that rational voters can restrain the impact of opportunistic motivations on the economic cycles (Rogoff (1990)), and opportunistic policies such as loose monetary and fiscal policies “are confined to short-run, occasional manipulation of policy instruments around elections”. (Alesina, Roubini, and Cohen 1997 p)

On the demand side of the equation, voters seek the best policy outcomes, but they do not know the details of policy platforms and their possible consequences. Campbell et al (1960)’s
study of American voters found that across sixteen public policy domains less than a third of electorate satisfy the necessary conditions for issue based voting behavior. The classic reward-punishment theory of elections argues that elections provide an opportunity to evaluate the incumbent (Key, 1966). A more advanced version of the reward-punishment approach views retrospective judgments as a cost-cutting element providing the knowledge of past-performance. Instead of simply rejecting or accepting the incumbent (as explained by the traditional reward-punishment approach), voters interpret incumbent policies by drawing from their knowledge of past performance. (Downs 1957) Drawing from this Downsian version of the reward and punishment approach, Fiorina (1981) incorporated a time dimension into the evolution of partisanship and introduced a voting behavior model that distinguishes retrospective evaluations from future expectations. His theory bypassed the shortcomings of both rational choice and psychological models i.e. the simultaneous relationship between the current party ID and policy distances. Unlike some approaches, which argue that socio-economic status and ideology are the leading determinants of party identification and policy stances, Fiorina introduces a temporal modification of party identification. His seminal study synthesizing two schools of rational choice and behaviorism in voting behavior studies argues that vote choice originates in long term political past experiences (party identification), near-term experiences under an incumbent (retrospective judgment), and future expectations (prospective judgment). This model provides the grounds to explain the evolution of political predispositions in Iranian politics.

The transformation of voting behavior from the 2005 presidential election to the 2013 presidential election can be regarded as a major step in the development of political predispositions in Iranian politics. The volatile electoral market and lack of longstanding party traditions in Iran helped Ahmadinejad to portray himself as an independent academic intending
to fight Iran’s corrupt ruling elite. As table 5 demonstrates, this populist discourse even resonated among the educated middle class\textsuperscript{168} who are assumed to support the democratic values and liberal discourse of the reformists. However, after winning in 2005, Ahmadinejad pursued a suppressive policy (such as replacing secular academic and students with conservative ones) toward Iran’s educated middle class and academia. He also did not deliver his promise to bridge the gap between ordinary Iranians and the ruling elite. Instead of fighting the so called “corrupt ruling elite”, he replaced reformists and independent bureaucrats with young conservatives, who were another branch of Iran’s ruling elite. The replacement of bureaucrats and the dismantling of some organizations, such as Planning and Budget Office, resulted in opportunistic and poor economic policymaking. As explained in Chapter 3, Ahmadinejad’s distributive agenda primarily relied on three large programs: a $40 billion lending program for small enterprises, a low-cost housing plan (called Maskane Mehr), and a subsidy reform program\textsuperscript{169}; in addition to expanding public sector employment\textsuperscript{170}. These programs brought about both inflation and recession. For instance, the low-cost housing plan (Maskane Mehr) offered public lending to people by allowing the banks to borrow $40 billion from the Central Bank increasing liquidity and causing high inflation\textsuperscript{171}. On the supply side of equation, Ahmadinejad’s opportunistic

\textsuperscript{168} The variable of college degree holders in the district


\textsuperscript{171} Ali Tayebnia, Iran’s Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance & Abbas Akhoundi Iran’s Minister of Transportation and Housing. (08/26/2013) http://www.dw.de/%D9%88%D8%B2%DB%8C%D8%B1-%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%87-%D9%88-%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%B1%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%B2%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%87-%D9%85%D8%B3%DA%A9%D9%86-%D9%85%D9%87%D8%B1-%DB%8C%D8%B9%D9%86%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%87-%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%85/a-17045168
policy platform seriously undermined budget equilibrium and triggered an unprecedented economic recession and fiscal crisis as the Rouhani administration was not able to find a reliable source for 40 percent government expenditure\textsuperscript{172}. This recession motivated the voters to step in and curtail the opportunistic policies of the conservatives in the 2013 presidential election.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>Ahmadinejad1</th>
<th>Ahmadinejad2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industry Employ</td>
<td>0.654***</td>
<td>0.634***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0761)</td>
<td>(0.0854)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Employ</td>
<td>0.0552</td>
<td>-0.145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0866)</td>
<td>(0.0972)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Employ</td>
<td>-0.0968</td>
<td>-0.550*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.263)</td>
<td>(0.295)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Degree</td>
<td>0.436**</td>
<td>0.867***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.191)</td>
<td>(0.215)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Population</td>
<td>-0.116***</td>
<td>0.0930**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0350)</td>
<td>(0.0393)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>8.050**</td>
<td>44.35***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.712)</td>
<td>(4.166)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.364</td>
<td>0.232</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 13: Voters’ Occupational Background and education vs. Ahmadinejad’s vote in the first and second round of the 2005 presidential election

In sum, the evolution of public attitudes and the creation of a set of long term political past experiences in Iran resulted from a two-sided equation. On the supply side, the incumbent’s distributive policies and promises triggered a recession and motivated the voters to restrain his opportunistic policy platform. On the demand side, the voters’ desire to solve the nuclear crisis

\textsuperscript{172} Salehi-isfahani : Challenges: http://www.lobelog.com/challenges-and-opportunities-await-irans-rouhani/
and pull the country out of economic recession aligned well with their long term political past experiences with the performance of reformist-pragmatist faction. In fact, some studies show that Rouhani’s personal characteristics played a minor role in the 2013 presidential election\textsuperscript{173}. Instead, factional endorsements by two former reformist and pragmatist presidents decisively influenced the 2013 electoral outcome, with the educated middle class overwhelmingly voting for Rouhani. In fact, the educated class continues to support Rouhani, as the most recent survey suggests that “Rohani performing significantly better among respondents who have a university degree, and Ahmadinejad performing significantly better among respondents without a university degree.”\textsuperscript{174} Thus, long term past experiences have led voters to favor the liberal discourse of the reformist-pragmatist coalition to solve Iran’s economic and nuclear crises.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>(1) Rouhani</th>
<th>(2) Galibaf</th>
<th>(3) Jalili</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>0.00697</td>
<td>0.403***</td>
<td>0.102**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.126)</td>
<td>(0.0764)</td>
<td>(0.0508)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Employee</td>
<td>0.0435</td>
<td>-0.0251</td>
<td>0.0373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.104)</td>
<td>(0.0628)</td>
<td>(0.0418)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Employee</td>
<td>-0.233</td>
<td>0.358***</td>
<td>0.0394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.147)</td>
<td>(0.0889)</td>
<td>(0.0591)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Employ</td>
<td>-1.011**</td>
<td>-0.621**</td>
<td>0.146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.448)</td>
<td>(0.271)</td>
<td>(0.180)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Female</td>
<td>-0.548</td>
<td>2.327***</td>
<td>1.216***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.104)</td>
<td>(0.667)</td>
<td>(0.444)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Degree</td>
<td>2.007***</td>
<td>-0.419**</td>
<td>-0.276*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.350)</td>
<td>(0.211)</td>
<td>(0.141)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Population</td>
<td>0.0477</td>
<td>-0.0236</td>
<td>-0.00398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0430)</td>
<td>(0.0260)</td>
<td>(0.0173)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>-0.0393</td>
<td>-0.880***</td>
<td>-0.223**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.275)</td>
<td>(0.166)</td>
<td>(0.110)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\textsuperscript{174} IPOS: http://www.ipos.me/en/polls/2015/03/04/rohani-vs-ahmadinejad/
By contrast, the conservative’s electoral support in the 2013 presidential election primarily relied on voters who do not conform to the above rational mode of voting behavior. Conservative voters were motivated by ideological appeals and clientelistic bonds. As Table 6 illustrates, the dummy variable for the Conservative Persian Belt correlates with the conservative candidates’ vote and has the highest impact on votes for Ghalibaf and Jalili’s. Unorganized voters such as unemployed women and homemakers175 also significantly influenced the number of conservative votes with the next highest impact on conservative candidates. Finally, the percentage of public sector employees in the district (as a proxy for patronage) positively correlates with the conservative candidates’ vote.

Development of Political Predispositions and Parliamentary Politics

Thus far, I have explained the evolution of political predispositions and their impact on the rise and the fall of populism in Iran in the national level. However, the impact of national political shifts on provincial politics remains unexamined. Drawing from the above analysis of voter turnout and MPs’ occupational backgrounds, it appears provincial citizens’ preferences in

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175 As these voters have fewer connections with society and outside world.
parliamentary elections stems from the institutional setting, and thus the evolution of political predispositions does not influence provincial politics. However, recent discussions in Iran’s parliament indicate a growing tendency toward the provincialization of Iran’s electoral law (explained in chapter 2) and even conservative elites have supported these efforts. In spring of 2015, the conservative 9th Majles, MPs passed an amendment to provincialize electoral rules. Iran’s electoral law has been also evaluated by the Expediency Discernment Council. It appears that the factional leaders in the conservative camp have recognized the inefficiency of Iran’s electoral system. However, the Guardian Council supports the candidate-centered electoral system in Iran, and has warned MPs that recent legislative efforts to change the electoral system will be blocked or “treated like the previous attempts.”

Despite the decisive impact of the institutional setting on the function of Parliament and the role of the citizen-politician linkage in Iran’s parliamentary politics, macro-politics and national shifts in factional politics also have influence. This influence partly stems from the impact of metropolitan parliamentary politics on parliamentary outcomes. As discussed above, the institutional setting enhances the role of factional politics in metropolitan districts. Moreover, key factional figures commonly compete in metropolitan districts, and they initiate and monopolize the macro political debates as opposed to local particularistic demands. Thus, metropolitan parliamentary politics can be viewed as a manifestation of the shifts in national factional politics. The role of factional politics in metropolitan districts may result from the shift in public attention (as occurred in the 2000 parliamentary election), or as a response to the Guardian Council’s massive disqualification and engineering strategy (as in the case of the three

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176 Mobasher, Khosro, 3 March 2015, Iran Daily Newspaper’s interview with Guardian’s Council Spokesman.
subsequent parliamentary elections), or the development of political predispositions (which may happen in the next parliamentary election). In sum, the development of political predispositions at the national level ultimately will influence parliamentary politics to some extent, and this influence may eventually lead to some degree of reform in the institutional setting underpinning Iran’s provincial parliamentary politics. The analysis of the 2016 parliamentary election provides further evidence to examine these explanation. The statistical analysis of the 2016 parliamentary election in the following postscript shows despite the victory of Rouhani camp in metropolitan districts, institutional setting continues to influence the pattern of participation in Iran’s parliamentary politics. However, the presence of reformist in the parliament and other state institutions can facilitate institutional reform and the activities of civil society more generally.
Chapter 5
Conclusion

THE CASE OF 2016 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION

Analysts view the disqualification of candidates by the Guardian Council and lopsided elections as the main determinants of electoral politics in Iran. This oversimplified account overlooks the complex dynamic of Iran’s electoral politics. The recent scholarship on electoral politics in the Middle East highlights the clientelistic exchanges as the main driving force behind the electoral participation in authoritarian settings. The determinants of electoral participation in Iran, however, move far beyond clientelistic transactions. Electoral politics in Iran represented a multi-layered struggle for power, rather than just disbursement of state resources through clientelistic exchanges. As this dissertation demonstrates, this struggle empowered the Iranian political factions at the expense of democratic accountability, dramatically transformed policymaking in the 2000s, created far more actors than a handful of conservatives in the Guardian Council. This process was more than the exchange of patronage for political legitimacy, or creating new actors in Iran’s parliamentary politics. Instead, the fragmented centers of power in Iran’s local politics continually challenged the power of conservatives by gaining control over key the links between central government resources and periphery. The Guardian Council persistently purges the new actors in Iran’s parliamentary politics which can
be observed in peculiarly low incumbency rate in Iranian Parliament. Although the Guardian Council does make rules that affected the way actors conducted their battles with each other, it was never able to bring the struggle for electoral politics under control. My research charts this struggle and its effects on the Iranian domestic politics. In doing so, the research traces the trajectory of electoral politics in Iran since the inception of modern democratic institutions in the early 20th century and test exiting explanations on the origin of participation in this context. The previous chapters demonstrated that the institutionalist view offers a more compelling explanation comparing to rational choice and modernization approach. To further investigate the impact of new factional configuration, I added the statistical analysis of the recent 2016 parliamentary election to this post-script.

The comparative study of the parliamentary turnout of the 2000, 2004, and 2016 elections at the district level is in line with the institutionalist explanation. As Table 5-1, Table 4-3, and Table 4-4 illustrate, the turnout roughly follows the same pattern across the 2000, 2004, and 2016 parliamentary elections challenging the controlled politics argument on parliamentary turnout. The population of eligible voters in the district (the logged population in this model) as a proxy for district size (which represents the electoral institution) correlates with the percentage of electors who voted, and has the highest impact on the turnout; as one unit of increase in the log of eligible voters in the district (roughly about 900,000 in the number of district’s eligible voters in this model) corresponds with about a 20 percent drop in the turnout percentage in the 2000-2004, and 14 percent decline in the 2016 turnout. The rational choice framework and modernization paradigm suggest alternative explanations for the higher turnout in less populous districts. In the following section, the paper examines these alternative accounts and compares them with the institutionalist explanation across the 2000, 2004, and 2016 election.
The rational choice framework suggests that in a deprived province like Ilam with high unemployment, indigent and uneducated citizens ignore the future and prefer instant clientelistic transaction; whereas in metropolitan areas such as Tehran, educated, wealthy and more informed voters consider the effect of clientelism in the long run - that is, scarcity of public goods - and therefore prefer programmatic promises and party politics to particularistic and clientelistic exchanges. As a result, pocketbook issues or pre-modern elements like traditional ethnic cleavages or kinship ties in an underdeveloped area like Ilam outweigh modern party politics and encourage most provincial voters to participate in parliamentary elections. Similarly, some attribute the higher turnout in localities to poverty and lack of political knowledge and illiteracy. (Blaydes, 2006) As Bahar and Cottam argued 60 years ago, the local magnates in provincial Iran are able to herd the illiterate and politically uninformed villagers to vote for their candidates. (Abrahamian, 1982 P. 121; Cottam, 1964) One of the key variables determining the higher turnout in this rational choice-style approach is the level of education and knowledge. As Blaydes (2006 & 2011) demonstrates illiteracy leads to higher participation in Egyptian Parliamentary election.

The result of statistical analysis of the three parliamentary elections does not support the rational choice explanation. Illiteracy negatively correlates with participation in 2000, and 2004 election, and there is no statistically significant correlation between the turnout and illiteracy in the 2016 election. The impact of other proxy variables representing knowledge and education aligns well with the impact of illiteracy. The percentage of college degree holders positively correlates with the turnout in most of the models. The positive impact of college degree holders is the highest in the 2016 parliamentary election. Additionally, the percentage of employed individuals in the education sector (a proxy for teachers) with relatively higher education...
positively correlates with the turnout offering further evidence against the rational choice explanation.

Another way of framing the rational choice argument is highlighting the impact of poverty. That is, indigent and underclass tend to ignore the future and rely on instant clientelistic exchanges in elections. Considering the prevalence of clientelistic exchanges in Iran’s parliamentary politics, we expect that underclass participates at a higher rate to benefit from clientelistic exchanges in the parliamentary elections. Similarly, the modernization framework may argue that in less developed areas, pre-modern elements such as tribal affiliation, ethnic and kinship ties motivate voters to participate in electoral contests and lead to higher participation.

The result of statistical analysis of parliamentary elections does not support the higher participation of the lower class. Industrial workers or percentage of employed in industry sector as a proxy for some segments of Iran’s underclass does not correlate with the participation in the 2004 and 2016 elections, and industrial workers even negatively impacted the turnout in the 2000 election. The result of EI estimate in appendix confirms this finding. The likelihood of participation in industrial labor in the district is less than 30 percent which is less than the half of overall participation rate in elections. The rural population, however, positively affects the turnout in all elections. Modernization and rational choice explanations fall short of explaining this inconsistency in the participation of the lower-class. One may argue that the level of development and pre-modern elements such as kinship ties and ethnic tensions explain the higher participation in rural areas. In fact, the impact of tribal affiliation and kinship ties is understandably hard to measure and test in district level of analysis. Yet, the level of development of modernization in a district may serve as a proxy for the influence of pre-modern
elements. However, the result of statistical analysis does not support the modernization explanation. The level of development does not correlate with the turnout in districts, and the EI estimate in appendix does not demonstrate a considerable difference in the turnout of underdeveloped and highly developed areas. The ethnic diversity in the districts also does not impact the turnout, as the variable EthnicHetro does not correlate with the level of participation in the district.

As explained, another common explanation for the participation in Iran’s elections is the impact of controlled politics. Conventional wisdom commonly assumes that the Guardian Council determines parliamentary turnout and electoral outcome in Iran. Considering the substantial increase in the number of college degree holders in the electorate and other structural changes, one may argue that Iranians’ attitudes have shifted toward democratic values, and the eligible voters normally turnout and vote for pro-democratic candidates in a fair and competitive election. Therefore, the disqualification of the reformists and pro-democratic candidates by the Guardian Council discourages the Iranian public from voting and spawns conservative victories in Iran’s electoral politics. In fact, the vetting rate in parliamentary elections can be regarded as an evidence for this argument. The disqualification rate dropped from 40 percent in the 1996 election to the 11 percent in 2000 election. Yet, the vetting rate in the 2004 parliamentary election increased to 46 percent. In the 2004 parliamentary election, leading reformist figures had been barred from participation in the election, and consequently, key reformist parties, namely the IIPF and MIRO, boycotted the election. Similarly, most reformist figures were disqualified in the 2016 parliamentary election. Considering the low disqualification rate in the 2000 parliamentary election and the high disqualification rate in the 2004 and 2016 election, this comparative study provides insight into the way that controlled politics influences parliamentary
turnout. The result of statistical analysis of the parliamentary turnout at the district level does not support the controlled politics explanation. That is, despite a noticeable decline in the participation rate of the metropolitan areas in 2004 election, the turnout roughly follows the same pattern across the 2000, 2004, and 2016 parliamentary elections. The logged voters as a proxy for district size and electoral system is the most significant variable in all three models, and educated voters, as the main advocates free and fair election, generally participated in a higher rate comparing to less educated voters. Thus, the Guardian Council and controlled politics is not a significant variable in shaping the pattern of turnout and dissuading the general electorate from participation in parliamentary politics.

Overall, statistical analysis of the turnout in Iran’s parliamentary elections does not provide empirical evidence for rational choice, modernization, and controlled politics explanation. In fact, despite decades of development and drastic changes in Iran’s socio-economic and modernization indicators, Iranian parliamentary elections face a recurring disparity between electoral outcomes in metropolitan areas and provincial peripheries. That is, factional politics has been the major determinant of vote choice in large cities like Tehran, whereas the local power hierarchy shapes the electoral outcome in provincial areas such as Ilam. It appears that changes in modernization elements and socio-economic indicators have not transformed the pattern of parliamentary voting behavior in provincial peripheries. Instead, the candidate-centered electoral system in Iran has remained relatively untouched since the constitutional era. This institution facilitates the personal connection between MPs and citizens in provincial peripheries with a low proportion of MP to voters, (e.g. 145,907 eligible voters in
Ilam\textsuperscript{177}, yet the large number of citizens (e.g. 6,875,699 eligible voters in Tehran district\textsuperscript{178}) that an MP represents in metropolitan districts precludes personal connection. Therefore, instead of personal connection, mostly fostered by the disbursement of private goods in localities, voters in metropolitan areas rely predominantly on heuristics such as factional politics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2016 Turnout</td>
<td>2016 Turnout</td>
<td>2016 Turnout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>illiteracy</td>
<td>-0.00825 (0.138)</td>
<td>0.00435 (0.148)</td>
<td>0.0139 (0.150)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LogPop</td>
<td>-14.24*** (1.274)</td>
<td>-13.89*** (1.350)</td>
<td>-14.33*** (1.531)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RuralPop</td>
<td>0.168*** (0.0326)</td>
<td>0.157*** (0.0378)</td>
<td>0.157*** (0.0384)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CollegeDeg</td>
<td>1.055*** (0.247)</td>
<td>0.838*** (0.317)</td>
<td>0.817** (0.320)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>-0.120 (0.100)</td>
<td>-0.0122 (0.117)</td>
<td>-0.0261 (0.119)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IndustryEmployed</td>
<td>-0.0264 (0.0956)</td>
<td>-0.0229 (0.0972)</td>
<td>-0.0308 (0.1012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PublicSecEmp</td>
<td>-0.331*** (0.121)</td>
<td>-0.316** (0.124)</td>
<td>-0.331*** (0.120)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EduEmploy</td>
<td>0.729* (0.390)</td>
<td>0.726* (0.393)</td>
<td>0.726* (0.393)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MultiCounties</td>
<td>-0.743 (1.377)</td>
<td>-0.588 (1.430)</td>
<td>-0.588 (1.430)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EthnicHetro</td>
<td>-0.588 (1.430)</td>
<td>-0.588 (1.430)</td>
<td>-0.588 (1.430)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>136.1*** (8.727)</td>
<td>131.6*** (9.566)</td>
<td>134.7*** (10.72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.352</td>
<td>0.373</td>
<td>0.374</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors in parentheses

\textsuperscript{177} Statistical Center of Iran, The Result of 2011 Census, Tehran, Daftare Riasat. Ilam district includes Ilam, Ivan, Shirvan-Chardavol, and Mehran.

\textsuperscript{178} ibid, Tehran district includes Tehran, Rey, Islamshahr and Shemiranat.
The result of statistical analysis of the parliamentary electoral turnout in the district level confirms this explanation. As Table 5-1, Table 4-3, and Table 4-4 illustrate, the level of development does not influence the percentage of turnout in the district challenging the modernization explanation. Illiteracy and the percentage of industrial workers in the district (as a proxy for low income voters) negatively correlate with the percentage of voters to total eligible voters in the district, challenging the rational choice explanation for higher turnout in provincial peripheries. The EI estimation in the appendix also shows that the participation among industrial workers is significantly lower than other employees. In fact, the percentage of employees in the educational service sector (with relatively higher education) positively correlates with the turnout, and college degree holders also positively influence the parliamentary turnout. The EI estimation validates these findings. Table 4 proves no evidence for the impact development on turnout. However, the turnout in rural areas is significantly higher than urban districts. In particular, the urban turnout estimation in the 2004 election is significantly lower than turnout in rural areas demonstrating the impact of factional competition on the participation in urban areas. That is, the urban turnout in the absence of factional competition (i.e. the 2004 parliamentary election) is significantly lower than the turnout in the presence of factional competition (i.e. the 2000 election).

In sum, the lower number of eligible voters in small districts facilitates the personal connection between MPs and citizens in the district. One may attribute this personal connection to the impact of single-member districts versus multi-member districts. (Mahdavi, 2015)
However, as explained, a multi-member district with low population (like the Ilam district) can experience a considerably higher turnout compared to populous districts. In less populated districts of the periphery, the personal connection between MPs and citizens mediates the particularistic economic concerns of the voters (as suggested by the rational choice framework), and traditional elements such as ethnic and kinship ties (as argued by the modernization paradigm). For instance, in deprived provinces such as Ilam, the daily of lives of citizens hinge on state resources more than in central metropolitan areas. Therefore, the candidate-centered electoral system provides a channel for provincial citizens to demand their daily needs from MPs, who have controlling power over the local bureaucracy. As a result, the disbursement of bureaucratic resources through welfare organizations enables politicians and bureaucrats to build clientelistic networks and later utilize these networks in parliamentary politics; as Ilam’s MPs used to be the heads of the local IKRC\textsuperscript{179} (a charity styled revolutionary foundation) bureau in the province\textsuperscript{180}.

### PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This setting has important practical implications for the performance of the Majles in Iran. The institutional configuration—notably Iran’s electoral system—promotes particularistic demands in the MP-citizen relationship. As a result, the Majles has proved inefficient in performing its democratic function to the extent that national programmatic accountability has

\textsuperscript{179} Imam Khomeini Relief Committee

\textsuperscript{180} Ali Yari and Abdoreza Heydari, two MPs of Ilam district (the capital of province), used to be the Head of IKRC (Imam Khomeini Relief Committee) bureaus in the province. Bureau of Culture and Public Relation, Majles Shurayeh Islami, “Acquaintance with Members of Islamic Consultative Assembly, the 6th Term”, November, 2000.
been overshadowed by the local particularistic demands of citizens in Iran’s parliamentary politics. Accordingly, in localities, accountability, and electoral preferences have been dominated by the particularistic demands of citizens resulting from the electoral system and subnational state-building in Iran. In contrast, parliamentary politics in metropolitan areas has been mainly affected by national shifts in factional politics resulting from controlled politics and attentiveness. For this reason, the conservative ruling elite in Iran pursues a dual electoral strategy in parliamentary politics. In metropolitan districts, these elites rely on controlling factional politics through the process of screening and disqualifying opposition candidates. Additionally, the Guardian Council preserves this institutional setting in order to divert local citizens’ demand towards depoliticized and particularistic needs, thus keeping political reform and national change off the agenda.

This complex association of accountability and the institutional setting in electoral authoritarianism leads to midrange theory building and case-driven\textsuperscript{181} studies of voting behavior in these regimes. In the particular case of Iran, local parliamentary voting behavior has been influenced by local power expansion and subnational state-building, the candidate-centered electoral system, the legislative-executive arrangement, and the creation of a politicized bureaucracy. The lack of bureaucratic autonomy has eroded the boundary between politics and civil service and therefore has allowed state machinery to impact and also be influenced by parliamentary politics. This institutional setting has created a circular shift in local power in which the subnational state machinery that impacts parliamentary politics during elections will be influenced by parliamentary politics after elections to serve the MP-citizen linkage by

\textsuperscript{181} Morse 2012.
delivering particularistic demands of the local voters through personal connections. However, the large number of voters in metropolitan districts impedes such personal connections between MPs and citizens. Therefore, metropolitan voters rely on heuristics such as factional endorsements and the personal popularity of individual candidates. In this environment, a shift in issue attentiveness (as occurred in the 2000 parliamentary election) or evolution of partisanship (as happened in the 2016 parliamentary election) can play a significant role in shaping the outcome of the election. The former case is temporary and limited to a change in public mood through agenda setting and conflict expansion by media outlets. Therefore, the shift in public attentiveness hinges upon the access of opposition parties to the media, notably newspapers in the case of Iran. This access has been controlled and limited by the conservative ruling elite. When they suppressed the media (as happened in the post-2000 elections), then the issues that had been promoted by newspapers, gradually declined from the public attention, making attention politics ineffectual in the long term. The latter case, i.e. the victory of Rouhani block in metropolitan districts in the 2016 election, is more complicated and calls for further investigation. A preliminary analysis may argue that in the absence of reformist newspaper, the online social networks (such as Telegram and Facebook) highlighted the factional endorsement by reformist leaders (notably former president Khatami) and motivated metropolitan voters to select on the basis of partisanship.

ELECTIONS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

Iran’s electoral authoritarianism hinges upon clientelistic accountability at the provincial level. Similarly, authoritarian rule relies on unorganized masses and their populist electoral behavior on the national level. The conservative ruling elite undermines democratic
accountability and party politics at the national level. In fact, they pursue their strategy of depoliticizing electoral contests mainly by preventing the polarization of electoral contests between the conservative and reformist forces in national elections. However, the development of a long-term political past experience on factional performance challenges the conservative strategy in the long term. The nuclear and economic crises resulting from Ahmadinejad’s policies provided a basis for the Iranian public to judge and compare the long term performance of conservatives and reformists. Therefore, instead of merely relying on candidates’ promises or the prospective judgments, the Iranian public utilized their long term judgment in electoral decision making. In other words, the victory of the pragmatist-reformist coalition in the 2013 presidential election was not simply punishment of the conservative faction. In fact, the result of some recent analyses reaches a similar conclusion by arguing that the pragmatist victory in the 2013 presidential election resulted from experience accumulation among Iranian elite and public.

My statistical analysis is in line with this explanation. The long term past experience of the reformists’ performance aligned with their constituency or the educated middle class in the 2013 presidential election. Although the anti-ruling elite discourse of Ahmadinejad resonated among the educated middle class or college degree holders in the 2005 presidential election, the statistical analysis of the 2013 presidential election in the third chapter provides evidence of a correlation between educated voters and the reformists’ candidates. Additionally, recent surveys in the post-election environment indicate that the educated middle class continues to support Rouhani administration. In sum, the voters’ behavior in 2013 presidential election shifted to a more rational (Alesina, Roubini, & Cohen, 1997) and advanced mode, thus showing the ineffectiveness of the authoritarian’s strategy in the long run. The continuance of this rational mode of behavior depends on the Rouhani’s success in solving the nuclear crisis and pulling
Iran’s economy out of a recession; as these achievements will provide more evidence for public’s judgment on factional performance and encourage a rational mode of electoral behavior in future elections. However, if Rouhani fails to address citizens’ economic and security concerns, this may lay the ground for the resurgence of populism or a more security-oriented policy platform by military figures in the future.

**THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS**

The findings of this study also have important theoretical ramifications. First, they shed light on the process of electoral politics without parties. In the absence of well-established political parties, the local bureaucracy with a significant impact on the daily lives of provincial citizens is a potent vehicle for winning electoral contests and gaining power. As a result, instead of national party politics, the particularistic demands of provincial citizens dominate provincial parliamentary politics. The conservative ruling elites have a vested interest in preserving this arrangement, as it impedes national democratic change in Iran’s parliamentary agenda. Second, this study stresses the role of the existing institutional setting in the fate of electoral authoritarianism. Instead of deliberately designing the rules of the game (as has been highlighted by current literature on electoral authoritarianism), Iran’s conservative ruling elite primarily relies upon the existing institutional setting, which has gradually developed over an extended period of time. This institutional setting, which lays the ground for the rise of clientelism in localities, has created a rigid politics of subsystem. This politics of subsystem has been employed by conservatives to resist attempts for reform, and negative feedback from this subsystem helps them to maintain the stability of the whole system. Not only did the institutional setting lay the groundwork for the rise of clientelism in Iran’s citizen-politician linkage, but it also shaped the
preferences of citizens and political elites in both provincial areas and metropolitan centers. This institutional setting created a fundamental disparity in the pattern of voting behavior of center and periphery. The candidate-centered electoral system persuades citizens in provincial areas to vote, whereas in metropolitan areas, the electoral system dissuades citizens from voting, since parliamentary elections neither impact the daily lives of citizens in metropolitan areas nor reflect the political and social demands of individuals in these areas. Parliamentary election turnout in provincial peripheries is considerably higher than in metropolitan areas in this institutional setting. This institutional setting also has influenced the preferences of political elites in Iran by undermining factional and party politics, as Iran’s electoral system led candidates in localities to invest in personal votes instead of party endorsements. Consequently, the role of political parties in Iranian politics has been seriously hampered.

Third, the impacts of institutional and socioeconomic variables on citizen-politician linkage are not mutually exclusive. Institutional arrangements may widen or narrow the scope of immaterial (such as personal) connections between citizen and politician to accommodate particularistic socioeconomic concerns or ethnic and kinship ties. The effect of the institutional setting and structural variables on the immaterial connections between politicians and citizens points to a challenging topic for future investigations. Fourth, the findings of this study about the evolution of political preferences provide a ground for mid-range theory building on the origin of voting behavior in Iran’s electoral authoritarianism. This very preliminary step stresses the role of public attention to issues in the absence of partisanship. In the absence of factional and party identification, the rise in public attention and temporary conflict expansion outweigh the role of

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partisanship. In this environment, enlarging the scope of conflict and heightening the attention of specific issues shapes voters’ attitudes toward political factions (as the issue of democratic reform and anti-ruling elite were the key determinants in 2000 and 2005 elections). However, the development of long term political experience in a polarized electoral field enhances the role of partisanship. In this environment, the background of candidates and their factional support overshadow issue politics (as happened in the 2013 election). In fact, the opportunistic economic policies of Ahmadinejad on the supply side of the equation also provoked the voters to punish conservatives and turn to the reformist-pragmatist policy platform. The evolution of mass opinion in Iran’s past decade points to a rich future research agenda which will put the current approaches in the study of mass opinion to the test in a volatile electoral context.

Finally, this research provides a ground for the study of electoral politics in the broader Middle East. Recent scholarship on Middle East politics challenges classic approaches which emphasize the role structural variables in mobilization in the region. (Kurzman (2012)) The findings of this study about the evolution of political past experience can be utilized to develop an alternative explanation for the study of competitive elections in the region notably in the post-Arab spring environment. That is, this research can be extended to other places in the Middle East and North Africa such as Tunisia, Egypt, and Turkey where voters’ political predispositions are evolving and where they have also experienced a period of incumbency by an opposition party. This framework can be utilized to examine the recent electoral outcome in the MENA by tracing the evolution of public attitudes toward Islamist opposition parties in the post-Arab Spring environment. Existing studies generally suggest that Islamist opposition parties’ electoral

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\(^{183}\) i.e. Ennahda’s party in Tunisia, Brotherhood in Egypt, and AKP in Turkey
success results either from a desire for Islamic government or organizational strength of Islamist groups. However, their recent electoral failure in the MENA challenges these explanations. This approach stresses the role of a volatile electoral market and evolving political predisposition in the fate of Islamist and other political parties in the MENA. That is, voters did not have any long term experience of Islamist parties’ performance, yet they earned overall experience of parties’ performance after a period of incumbency. Drawing from Fiorina’s study of voting behavior, the main argument of this approach can be hypothesized in the following sentence: recent electoral success or failure of Islamist parties stems from the development of long term past experience of political parties’ performance. Based on a quantitative analysis of existing surveys, the research tests this hypothesis through a comparative study of Islamist parties’ electoral success in Turkey and their failure in Tunisia and Egypt. It unfolds how the reward and punishment of the Islamist incumbent by the voters reflect the retrospective judgment and the development of long term political past experience. In sum, instead of ideological appeals or organizational capabilities of the Islamists parties, this approach highlights the impact voters’ expectation and the gradual emergence of long term political past experience on the future of electoral politics in the MENA.
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## CHAPTER 1:

### SUMMARY OF ELECTORAL OUTCOME IN POST-KHOMEINI ERA IN IRAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presidential Election</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>% Participation</th>
<th>level of Competition</th>
<th>Winner</th>
<th>Possibility of fraud</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1989-1993</td>
<td>54.60%</td>
<td>no (pre-determined)</td>
<td>Rafsanjani</td>
<td>low (in % Participation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1993-1997</td>
<td>50.50%</td>
<td>no (pre-determined)</td>
<td>Rafsanjani</td>
<td>low (in % Participation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1997-2001</td>
<td>79.90%</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>Khatami</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2001-2005</td>
<td>66.60%</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>Khatami</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005-2009</td>
<td>62.80%</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>Ahmadinejad</td>
<td>high (first round by invalidating districts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2009-2013</td>
<td>not reliable</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>Ahmadinejad</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parliamentary Election</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>% Participation</th>
<th>level of Competition</th>
<th>Winner in local</th>
<th>Winner in urban</th>
<th>Possibility of fraud</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1989-1993</td>
<td>57.81%</td>
<td>medium (Conservatives &amp; Radicals)</td>
<td>conservatives+Independent</td>
<td>conservative</td>
<td>low</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1993-1997</td>
<td>71.10%</td>
<td>medium (Conservatives &amp; Pragmatists)</td>
<td>Conservative (weak majority)</td>
<td>medium (in % Participation)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>1997-2001</td>
<td>69.37%</td>
<td>high (reformists+conservative)</td>
<td>reformists</td>
<td>reformists</td>
<td>low by invalidating</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2001-2005</td>
<td>50.57%</td>
<td>low (reformists disqualified)</td>
<td>conservatives+Independent</td>
<td>conservatives</td>
<td>low by invalidating</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005-2009</td>
<td>55.40%</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>conservatives+Independent</td>
<td>conservatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2009-2013</td>
<td>not reliable</td>
<td>low (reformists banned)</td>
<td>conservatives+Independent</td>
<td>conservatives</td>
<td>high (in % participation)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 3

I: Variable Codebook

1- The set of employ variables measures the proportion of employed individuals in different sectors (agriculture, industry, public sector, education) to the total number of employed people in the district. For instance, the variable agraEmploy measure the percentage of employed people in agriculture sector to the total number of employed people in the district.

2- Demographic variables (CollegeDeg, FemUnemploy, Totalemployed, logPopulation) measure the proportion of people with specific characteristics (college degree holders, unemployed female, and total employed) to the total number of individuals in the district.

3- The set of HTownCandidate variables is the dummy variable for the hometown of candidates.

4- The dummy variable of religious minorities is Sunni, and the dummy variables of ethnicities are, Azari, Baluch, Kurd, and LurBakhGhash (including Lur, Bakhtiari, and Ghashghaei)

5- The attitudes toward distributive policies: the “Government tax the rich and subsidize the poor” in an essential characteristic of democracy. The responses range from 1 (not an essential characteristic of democracy) to 10 (an essential characteristic of democracy). The variable “Taxingforsubsidies” measures the percentage who chose the top 4 (7,8,9,10)

The questionnaire asks: Many things may be desirable, but not all of them are essential characteristics of democracy. Please tell me for each of the following things how essential you think it is as a characteristic of democracy. Use this scale where 1 means “not at all an essential characteristic of democracy” and 10 means it definitely is “an essential characteristic of democracy”:

6- “Inequalitylaw”: Some believe that “In our society, the law is exercised equally between ordinary people and the officials”. Do you agree with this view? The responses were 1- completely disagree 2-disagree 3-uncertain 4- agree 5- completely agree. The variable “Inequalitylaw” measures the total percentage of respondents who answered “completely disagree” and “disagree”

7- InequalityDevelopment: Some believe that “the income gap between poor and rich is necessary for the progress of the society”. Do you agree with this view? The responses were 1- completely disagree 2-disagree 3-uncertain 4- agree 5- completely agree. The variable InequalityDevelopment measures the total percentage of respondents who answered “completely disagree” and “disagree”

8- RulingEliteOpposition: Some believe that “Ordinary people cannot achieve high rank positions in the government, regardless of the experience and expertise”. The responses were 1- completely disagree 2-disagree 3-uncertain 4- agree 5- completely agree. The variable RulingEliteOpposition measures the total percentage of respondents who answered “completely agree” and “agree”.
9- **GapWorsening**: Some believe that “in our society, the rich are getting richer every year and the poor are getting poorer. Do you agree with this view? The responses were 1- completely disagree 2-disagree 3-uncertain 4- agree 5- completely agree. The variable **GapWorsening** measures the total percentage of respondents who answered “completely agree” and “agree”.

10- **ideology**: some states that “We should not allow the people-who believe that religion and politics are separated- hold any position in the government” Do you agree with this view? The responses were 1- completely disagree 2-disagree 3-uncertain 4- agree 5- completely agree. The variable **ideology** measures the total percentage of respondents who answered “completely agree” and “agree”.

11- **RadicalChange**: Three opinions exist about the current circumstances of the country. Some people think that the current circumstances are good, and we should defend it. Others believe that we should improve the current conditions by reform, and some others believe that the current situation of the country cannot be reformed, and everything should be fundamentally changed. Which of these views is closest to your opinion? The responses were 1-defending the existing conditions 2- reforming the current circumstances 3-Fundamentally change the current circumstances. The variable **RadicalChange** measures the percentage of the respondents who selected “Fundamentally change the current circumstances” number 3.

12- **EthnicDiscrimination**: some believes that the government treats all ethnicities (Lur, Kurd, Baluch, …) equally. Do you agree with this opinion? The variable **EthnicDiscrimination** measures the percentage that selected disagree or completely disagree.

13-The set of preference variables (EconPref, SecurPref, DemocPrefFree, and PartyFreeImportant) measures the percentage of respondents who believe that the mentioned problem (Economy, security, democracy, and freedom for political parties) is the most important problem of the country.

14- The variable IKRCPensionHH measures the percentage of Imam Khomeini Relief Committee Pensioners in the region.

15- The variable LogConsump measures the average household consumption logarithm in the area.

**II: EI Estimation for Ecological Inference**
Table 5. Ecological Inference Result (Dependent Variable Is Ahmadinejad’s Vote in the First Round of the 2005 Election)

Note: Model Standard Errors are shown in parentheses.

Table 6. Ecological Inference Result (Dependent Variable Is Ahmadinejad’s Vote in the Second Round of the 2005 Election)

Note: Model Standard Errors are shown in parentheses.

Table 4. Iran’s Parliamentary Election: Ecological Inference Result (Dependent Variable is Parliamentary Turnout)

Note: Model Standard Errors are shown in the second row.

### III: List of Variables and the Sources:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>SCI</td>
<td>District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Total Number(%inSTATA)</td>
<td>SCI (Census)</td>
<td>District</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Male Population</td>
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<td>SCI</td>
<td>District</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Female Population</td>
<td></td>
<td>SCI</td>
<td>District</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Population</td>
<td></td>
<td>SCI</td>
<td>District</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Male Population</td>
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<td>District</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Female Population</td>
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<td>SCI</td>
<td>District</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Population Over 15</td>
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<td>Male Population Over 15</td>
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<td>Female Population Over 15</td>
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<td>Urban Male Population Over 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural Male Population Over 15</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>Population Over 25</td>
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<td>District</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Female Population Over 25</td>
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<td>District</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Total Urban Household</td>
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<td>SCI (Census)</td>
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<td>Female Employed</td>
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<td>%GDP</td>
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<td>HospitalBed/1000</td>
<td>Number</td>
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<td>Province</td>
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<td>%</td>
<td>IVS</td>
<td>Province</td>
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<td>Freedom</td>
<td>%</td>
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<td>Security</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>IVS</td>
<td>Province</td>
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<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>IVS</td>
<td>Province</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
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<td>Gini Coef</td>
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<td>Province</td>
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<td>Middle Class Perception</td>
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CHAPTER 4

Description of Variables Used in District-Level Analysis of Parliamentary Turnout

Dependent Variable:
MajlesTurnout: The percentage of voters to total eligible voters in the district in the 6th (2000) and 7th (2004) parliamentary elections, Source: Iran’s Ministry of Interior

Independent Variables:
Development: The percentage of households with access to piped water to the total households in the district, Source: Statistical Center of Iran; 2006 census.

Logvoters: Logarithm total eligible voters in the district, Source: Iran’s Ministry of Interior

Illiteracy: The percentage of people who cannot read and write to total population over 6 years old, Source: Statistical Center of Iran; 2006 census.

Totalemployed: The percentage of employed individuals to total workforce in the district, Source: Statistical Center of Iran; 2006 census.

industEmploy: The percentage of employed in industrial sector to total employed individuals in the district, Source: Statistical Center of Iran; 2006 census.

PublicEmploy: The percentage of employed in public sector to total employed individuals in the district, Source: Statistical Center of Iran; 2006 census.

EduEmploy: The percentage of employed in educational service sector to total employed individuals in the district, Source: Statistical Center of Iran; 2006 census.
CollegeDeg: The percentage of individuals with a college degree or above to total population above 21 years old in the district, Source: Statistical Center of Iran; 2006 census.

RuralPop: The percentage of rural population to total population of the district, Source: Statistical Center of Iran; 2006 census.

EthnicHetro: Ethnic Heterogeneity (1=where the ethnic majority is less than 80 percent of the total population of the district, 0=other)

MultiCounties: (1=The districts with more than one county where the eligible voters in the smaller county is at least 10 percent of the total eligible voters of the district=1, 0=other)

**EI Estimates for Ecological Inference:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Industrial Labor</th>
<th>Other Employees</th>
<th>Public Employees</th>
<th>Other employees</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Unemployed</th>
<th>High development</th>
<th>Low development</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EI (estimate)</td>
<td>0.605</td>
<td>0.772</td>
<td>0.288</td>
<td>0.752</td>
<td>0.633</td>
<td>0.675</td>
<td>0.657</td>
<td>0.694</td>
<td>0.668</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.011</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.094</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>0.0036</td>
<td>0.02</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Industrial Labor</th>
<th>Other Employees</th>
<th>Public Employees</th>
<th>Other employees</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Unemployed</th>
<th>High development</th>
<th>Low development</th>
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<tr>
<td>EI (estimate)</td>
<td>0.384</td>
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<td>0.531</td>
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<td>0.374</td>
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<td>0.019</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.073</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>0.045</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.032</td>
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</table>

Table 3. Iran’s Parliamentary Election: Ecological Inference Result (Dependent Variable is Parliamentary Turnout)

Note: Model Standard Errors are shown in the second row.