Research Article

THE DUO-BONY REGIMES

*Samin Ustiashvili

Department of American Studies, The International Black Sea University, Tbilisi 2 01031-David Aghmashenebeli Alley, Georgia

Abstract

The Islamic Republic of Iran has always lived in a " critical moment." Its crises, like the revolution itself, change or multiply, but they never end. So why it took so long for the political system to face instability? And why has the government managed to control the protests so far?

In recent years, the growth and expansion of the class divide, systematic government corruption, and international pressures have increased public dissatisfaction and provoked nationwide protests in Iran (Transparency, 2022).Overseas media, especially satellite networks, the Internet, and the foreign trip of Iranians have created a fundamental change in information and public awareness (Aldroubi,2022). During the last four decades, the government has monopolized the news flow. Daily, even the official or semi-official media reported the economic corruption of government agents and affiliates and revealed corners of the repression of political opponents and civil activists (BBC, 2022).A considerable part of society has swallowed its anger until September 2022. The death of a young Kurdish girl named Mahsa Amini while in morality police custody has changed the situation. However, why doesn't society's deepening despair bring it out of passivity? Is there a prospect for overthrowing the regime and establishing democracy? Why are some still in favor of keeping the Mullahs in power?

Keywords: Islamic Republic, Duo-Regime, Authoritarian, Revolution.

INTRODUCTION

Without an agreement on the concept of "revolution" and defining the type of Islamic Republic system, it is difficult to find an answer to these questions. The concept of revolution is sometimes confused with popular uprisings, coups, religious wars, and radical government reforms. Here, we use revolution in the sense of a widespread mass movement that often, by force and violence, ends the life of the fundamental elements of a political system to replace it with a new arbitrary order (Bullock, 1999). According to Lenin, a revolution occurs when people are no longer willing to endure life under the established system. At the same time, the ability of the rulers to exercise power through the existing means has been depleted (Lenin, 1918). However, widespread misery and poverty do not automatically lead to people's rebellion and the regime's fall. Even on the contrary, general helplessness in a situation can guarantee the survival of the ruling class and make it appear as the only hope for guaranteeing and providing the minimum needs, such as bread and security.

Duo-Bony Regime

The Islamic Republic is neither a democratic system nor a type of full-fledged authoritarianism. However, it belongs to the family of regimes that today, political scientists call "hybrid regimes," a mixture of democratic and authoritarian institutions and mechanisms. Just as dual-fuel cars use two energy sources, dual-bony regimes rely on two types of ideological apparatuses and the exercise of combined power to overcome severe problems as needed without being forced to implement fundamental reforms or completely collapse after closing the doors to reforms (Göbel, 2011)."Competitive authoritarianism" or "electoral authoritarianism" are other names for these regimes.

*Corresponding Author: *Samin Ustiashvili*
Department of American Studies, The International Black Sea University, Tbilisi 2 01031-David Aghmashenebeli Alley, Georgia

Most of the regimes that emerged after the fall of the Eastern Bloc and the end of the Soviet Union, including in Russia, or some developing countries in Latin America, are examples of the Duo-Boney regime. Ironically, a number of them are the result of velvet revolutions or violent overthrows that, in effect, have given new clothes to the overthrown totalitarianism (Sebetsyen, 2009). Many of them have lived for decades, and there are still no traces of cracks in their pillars.

Duo-Bony regime has a democratic form and a totalitarian content; It is a committed and flawed democracy in which a closed circle of elites competes for the transfer of power and use elections and democratic institutions to gain legitimacy. Although elite competition is severe, the election process cannot be considered fair and accessible. The perfect house of government is the "House of Leadership." the central role of the leader is to the extent that he becomes the embodiment of the government. In the literature of the Islamic Republic, leadership is sometimes referred to as a "system." (Nasr, 1987) The leadership is the legislation's supreme authority, supervises its implementation, and has the right to violate it according to expediency. Special emergency measures and government decrees can turn any situation into an exceptional situation and suspend the law in it. Application of the constitution is ceremonial and expedient. Government institutions and forces are dominated by power centers and do not have the authority and independence of conventional action in democratic countries, including the judiciary, which is dependent, violates the law, and is an appendage of the hard core of the regime. The system is designed in a discriminatory and privileged manner, and ethical blindness is characteristic.

Unlike the totalitarian systems of the 20th century, the Duo-Bony regimes have creative flexibility in the ideological field. While promoting skepticism towards western culture, they are ahead of others in westernization. By reducing the ideological energy for public mobilization or controlling dissatisfaction, they blow the trumpet of extreme nationalism or arouse religious feelings to force even the government's opponents to go along with their domestic and foreign policies (Parsa,

1988). The ideological principles of quasi-authoritarian regimes are theoretically confused and vague; in practice, they are implemented arbitrarily. The theoretical ambiguity and executive irregularity reduce ideology to the cult of personality. Commitment to the ruling system means closeness and loyalty to its influential individuals and institutions, especially the leadership. Citizens' freedom to participate in the political process depends on their closeness and loyalty to the pillars and centers of power. To enter the fortress of power, personal "loyalty" and "allegiance" are more important than commitment and adherence to ideology. Politics is the possibility of equal participation of all citizens in defining the public good and making decisions for national interests. Democracies define the government from the perspective of such a policy. Nevertheless, in regimes like the Islamic Republic of Iran, politics is defined from the government's perspective. The government's ultimate goal and the philosophy of law are not to protect national interests and citizens' rights, which is an imaginary thing like "the people" and - in the case of the Islamic Republic - "pure Mohammedan Islam."(Hamadeh, 2021).

Duo-bony regimes build the most robust and extensive intelligence and security apparatuses so that government departments and organizations take all the public domain under the security and military microscope. Institutions and civil organizations are free, but they operate within the framework of strict supervision and unwritten rules of the government. Civil society is alive but weak, and only in exceptional circumstances or during a slow and limited process can it push back the government and impose its demands on it. The government considers the freedom of expression as a framework for a few opponents to pretend to be democratic. In the Duo-Bony regime, the media, known as non-governmental, have more freedom of action but are under the soft control of the surveillance and security apparatuses and sometimes become their propaganda platforms (VOA, 2013). In the meantime, social media have a dual role. On the one hand, they break the government's information monopoly. On the other hand, they create fertile grounds for the growth of populism and compensate for the weakness of traditional government institutions in public mobilization.

Like Machiavelli, Hebron believed that "people, on the one hand, are ungrateful, outspoken, deceitful, cowardly, and profiteers." In the totalitarian systems of the past, the government's means of exercising power were a combination of repression and loyalty. If the government could not win the loyalty of someone or a group, it would suppress it. However, in Duo-Bony regimes, the existence of the election mechanism offers a wide possibility for the continuous emergence of populism. In the season of election contests, it brings public opinion to the streets. When people's hope for the efficiency of the government decreases, a new trend of populism starts (Abbas, 2010). In this way, the government again confiscates the public's hope and trust for an indefinite period and restores its legitimacy, albeit relatively. After being pushed out of the center of power, yesterday's popular agents appear as critics and reformers. Needless to say, they are the only official opposition in the country; compared to the opposition outside the government, they have more privileges and freedom.Here, we are dealing with inherently authoritarian regimes and practically dependent reformists who, in electoral conditions, compete as the "ruling power party" against the "virtual opposition" or managed opposition.

Outside the government, significant individuals or social groups benefit from cooperation and partnership with it in various fields. Because ideology is incoherent and flexible, cooperation with the government does not necessarily require "practical belief" in ideology. With complete distrust and disbelief in ideology, one can define common interests with the government for personal, nationalistic, or group motives and consciously or unconsciously help to strengthen its social base. Most of the time, entering the government network is a means to gain wealth; for this reason, the degree of loyalty of each government agent and government official to the ruling ideology is different from another.In the cooperation of individuals and groups with the government, personal and group profit-seeking motives usually play a more decisive role than faith and scholastic commitment. Economic and cultural corruption spreads beyond the agents or direct affiliates of the government. The identity and success of many ordinary people are indebted to all kinds of structural corruption. Even if dissatisfied and critical of the government, the different benefits classes get from government corruption connect and bind them to the regime with an invisible chain (Aarabi, 2019). Unlike Soviet Communism, the Duo-Bony regimes have no class affiliation or commitment.

Therefore, they can have common interests or an expedient alliance with each social class and group. Also, boredom and disillusionment with the government are not exclusive to a particular class. Political coalitions are not limited to groups and institutions in power; some government institutions are considered strong allies of social institutions and authorities, such as religious institutions. As a result, more than the government alone is needed, and powerful institutions outside the government affect the decision-making process. A rentier capitalist economy governs these countries. Wealth is distributed irregularly between the old and new elites of the political system. The new elites use the legal mechanism to temporarily nationalize private wealth and privatize it again for their and their client's benefit.

Duo-Bony regimes seem to respect international laws, but in practice, they have a pessimistic, cynical, and hypocritical approach to the international community. While fighting the West, they are not isolationists. They are trying to establish a relationship, although weak, with the western countries and looking for allies from among the related regimes. These regimes' domestic and foreign policies are based on pragmatic radicalism; by constantly testing the lines of danger and weighing the benefits and costs, they advance their authoritarian will. The irregular and unpredictable flexibility of the government insulates it against the pressures of civil society or the international community. Neither ideology nor the constitution, but the leadership's will is the sacred principle of the system. The movement of the compass of the ship of the government is in the orbit of expediency. Political language is a true representative of the body of power. The ambiguities, multifacetedness, and meaninglessness of the political language of these regimes show the confusion of ideological foundations and concepts.

The Islamic Republic's Ideology

The Islamic Republic of Iran has a quasi-totalitarian religious security system. Despite the fight against the "cultural invasion" of the West and the relentless battle with the new humanities and culture, the government has a lustful and

insatiable desire for modern technology, especially military and weapons industries. Along with the dogma's determination to acquire expensive and high-impact nuclear and military technology, it also considers cultural technology a security necessity. With an instrumentalist view of modernity, he sees cultural confrontation as a softer form of military war. Intending to control public opinion or social engineering, it invests liberally and unaccountably to acquire advanced technology of "soft power."

The common interests between the government and individuals, institutions, and groups outside it blur the border between the government and the people. For example, in today's Iran, the institution of the clergy, despite not being united, benefits significantly from the Islamic Republic. Although many government officials and agents are clerics, the clerical institution is officially outside the government and under its management and supervision. The regime gets its legitimacy from the ideology of Velayat-e Faghih, which justifies the rule of the clergy over a State. It is also recognized through the Islamic Shiite religion through the clergy of Qom seminary. However, it is not easy to consider the institution of the clergy inside or outside the government. Thousands of cultural institutions and economic enterprises are under the control of the Revolutionary Guards. However, they are managed by academics, business people, and civilians, who are more than the official employees of the Revolutionary Guards (Golkar,2019). On the other hand, the vagueness of the border between the private and public sectors and the structural and administrative complexities makes it impossible to distinguish the borderline between the government and civil society. The critical point is that sharing benefits with the government should not be limited to the capital, material, or economic wealth.

The ruling regime, as it has undisputed dominion over national capitals and the general scope of the country's economy, tries to bring symbolic capitals under its exclusive ownership or management. From privileged positions in the social hierarchy, producing and distributing symbolic assets in religion, culture, and national identity, regardless of sensitivity, needs, and government expectations, are impossible. The system of social relations and the logic of the market of symbolic goods is, to a large extent, subject to the government's will, so even Iranian travelers and immigrants from other countries must behave "according to the customs," otherwise they will be deprived of accessing this market. Without any intention or knowledge, social actors act spontaneously within the framework determined by the government and in line with its policies.

The evidence testifies that, on the one hand, an influential part of the people does not see the overthrow of the Islamic Republic as the only inevitable option before them. On the other hand, the complex mechanism of exercising power in the Islamic Republic controls the society and the flow of discontent. The citizens who reproduce and distribute its values in disbelief in ideology are much more effective than the range that has pledged their hearts to the ideological foundations of the system and its leaders. The costs of the revolution against the regime are high due to its ability to use violence without guaranteeing its victory, especially with the executions of those arrested during the recent demonstrations. The revolution of 1979 and the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq are still alive in the collective memory. These two events' traumatizing and terrifying effects have not lost their alarming freshness in many people's lives, including the young

generation. Today, subversion is the only immediate solution for Iranians, especially the young generation who do not want to live with the decision their parents made 43 years ago. The young generation does not want to live under Islamic rule and be controlled or see every western country as an enemy state. Iran's society today is very atomized. There are spirit and social solidarity necessary for public mobilization against the government. Despite the increasing problems so far, people generally try to live their daily life so that they stay away from injuries as much as possible. However, since September 2022, we have seen the young generation choosing between death and freedom. It should be remembered that - like the specific case of the Islamic Republic - successive crises are only sometimes a threat to the stability of the political system (Cordesman, 2018).

The regime's survival depends on the survival of crises and their management. The crises of the last 40 years in Iran were not always accidental and unwanted, but they were produced deliberately and with a plan in many cases. Intense shock leads people to the peak of confusion. Voluntary crises play the role of shock therapy. The shocking torture resets the prisoner's brain, brings his mind to the zero-degree circuit, and by neutralizing his resistance force, makes him give in to the interrogator's demands. In the same way, shocking crises suddenly stop the society's mind from thinking and make it defenseless against the superior authority, that is, the tyrannical and totalitarian government. At those times, society simultaneously saw the government as a pain and a cure. The only way out of the impasse cannot come from the exhausted power of society, and there is no safe refuge except the government's bosom. A controlling force can only overcome sudden disorientation and worry. The regime of crisis is an enemy-making machine and a factory of fear. The subjugation of the society and its devotion to the government is reconstructed with illusion and fear. The enemy is not only the enemy of the government but also the people and the government. The government tries to make the problem appear not as a domestic enemy - which is real - but as an imaginary monster behind the door. The common enemy of the people and the regime is furthermore terrifying than the regime itself. The further deterioration of the crisis is seductive. It even encourages the government's opponents to put their demands on hold and defend the "principle of the system" and "the existence of the country."

However, the weak possibility of revolution in the future does not mean the eternal survival of the Islamic Republic. Not only does the policy of internal repression not have a long life, but regional and international adventurous ambitions also threaten the durability of the potential Islamic Republic.

Conclusion

Depending on various internal and external factors, regime change can occur in other ways than revolution. A coup d'état, the death of a leader, and a military confrontation with an American-led coalition are among them, and each can turn the book's last page. The regime can fall without the effective intervention of civil society, but its replacement with democracy necessarily requires civil society. The death of Mahsa Amini woke the Iranian up. Women and men, young school girls and students, came into the streets to ask for a regime change and a referendum. The family of those killed for their demands have pledged to continue this revolution.

With the distress and disintegration of civil society, regime change does not go beyond a superficial and formal change. However, with the fall of Velayat al-Faqih, the Islamic Republic will not have any meaning anymore. People must be vigilant and should only go for a regime change without the Velayat-e Faghih or the Islamic Supreme Leader. Kings have traditionally ruled Iran, and a secular state must be established in the 21st Century in that land. The only way to change the regime effectively is to restore the self-confidence of civil society and its effort to rely on itself. Cutting the common interests of civil society with the current quasi-authoritarian regime is an inevitable necessity and a difficult task. Still, the young generation in Iran proves to the world that they are choosing democracy over life under an authoritarian regime.

The uprising against the Islamic Republic is facilitated by negating its institutionalized values and norms. For effective civil resistance, first of all, we need a moral and spiritual revolution; A revolution whose goal is freedom from absolutism, the end of suppression of individual will, and standing against the assimilation of citizens.Such a transformation is possible with a conscious commitment to reality and critical rationality; It means the courage to know and overcome self-inflicted immaturity. The principled honesty of the civil society leaders with themselves and the citizens lights the lamp of hope for politics and unites brave hearts and free souls.

REFERENCES

1. Corruption Perception, 2022, Published by Transparency International, https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021/index/irn
2. Aldroubi, M., 2022, What's happening in Iran and how has social media helped movement against morality police, Published by The National News.com https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/2022/09/28/whats-happening-in-iran-and-how-has-social-media-affected-hijab-protests/
3. BBC Staff, 2022, Iran Profile- Media, Published by BBC https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14542234
4. Bullock, A., Trombley, S., 1999, The new Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought, 3rd Edition. Published by HarperCollins, pp 746-754. ISBN 978-0006863830
5. Lenin V. 1918, State of Revolution, Published by Martino Fine Books in 2011, ISBN-13: 978-1614271925
6. Göbel, C, 2011, Semi-authoritarianism, Published by SAGE Publication, Inc., PP 258-266 ISBN 9781412969017
7. Sebestyen, V., 2009, Revolution 1989: The fall of the Soviet Empire, Published by Pantheon Books, ISBN 978-0-375-42532-5
8. Nasr, H., 1987, Traditional Islam in the Modern World, Published by Kegan Paul International, ISBN-13: 978-0710303325
9. Parsa, M, 1988, Theories of Collective action and the Iranian Revolution, Published by Springer, pp44-71
10. Hamadeh, T, 2021, Iran is the beating heart of Islam by supporting the nations and interests of Muslims. Published by Mehr News https://www.mehrnews.com/news/5420864/
11. VOA, 2013, Iran's Tv: National Media or Propaganda, Published by the Voice of America, https://ir.voanews.com/a/1569035.html
12. Abbas M., 2010, The Green Movement, Published by the Iran Primer, https://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/green-movement
13. Aarabi, K., 2019, The Fundamental of Iran's Islamic Republic, Published by Tony Blair Institute for Global Change https://institute.global/policy/fundamentals-irans-islamic-revolution
14. Golkar,S., 2019 The supreme leader and the Guard: Civil-Military Relations and Regime Survival in Iran. Published by The Washington Institute for Near East Policy No. 58.
15. Cordesman, A.H. 2018, The Crisis in Iran: now what, Published by Center for Strategic & International Studies https://www.csis.org/analysis/crisis-iran-what-now

****