

The Impact of Architectural Competitions on the Improvement of the Post-Revolution Architecture in Iran

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ABSTRACT: The 1979 Islamic Revolution of Iran is considered as a turning point in the contemporary architecture of the nation. There have been apexes to the eye catching architectural improvements in the three forthcoming decades after the revolution. One of the most effective is organizing the contests in architectural that affairs has not only removed the recession in the field but has also discarded the professional monotonicity. It may enhance the possibility of the best selections and invite the younger generation to experience the existing trends of the profession. But, the inconsistency of the competition organizers in fulfilling their commitment to either pay cash prizes or signing contracts with the winning competitors and failure in judging the designs decrease the positive effects. Examining the competitions throughout the three decades after the Revolution suggests that the continuity of such competitions, and revising their structure, can be considered as a suitable and useful approach in developing the contemporary architecture of Iran.

Keywords: *Iran's Contemporary Architecture, Architecture Competitions, Post-revolutionary Architecture, Decade of Recession, Decade of Construction, Decade of Development.*

INTRODUCTION

There have been influential factors in the formation of the contemporary architecture of Iran as follows:

1. The imposed war and the destructive economic and structural effects (1980-1988)
2. The rebuilding of the war affected areas after the war(1988-1997)
3. Organizing architectural competitions (since 1983)
4. Qualitative and quantitative developments in architecture education (since 1989)
5. Presenting architecture awards(since 2001)
6. Increase in the general understanding of the latest world experience in the eyes of both the public and the professionals for what is known as the 'third revolution of mankind' or the 'revolution of information'(E'tesaam, 2007).

From all the above-mentioned factors, the way the competitions have influenced the improvement of post revolution architecture has also been considered in this study.

The thirty years after the Revolution have been divided into three decades for the great events that have occurred and are

as follows:

1. The first decade: the imposed war and the obstructive conditions in the development of architecture.
2. The second decade: post war construction and the qualitative and quantitative education of architecture.
3. The third decade: flourishing of the experiences of the previous decades and the flowering of the talented youth.

By analyzing the competition results throughout the three decades, the main tendencies of every decade, which are noteworthy, emerge. They are considered as a drive for dynamism and forward movement by architects, employers/clients, and exploiters. This analysis is based on a comparison between the form and the content of the presented works of architecture. Since some of the presented works in the competitions have been performed and worked out, they are an appropriate standard for measuring the contemporary architecture of post revolution Iran. In the present article, the competitions of the three decades are demonstrated in a table and the major ones will be closely analyzed and finally conclude through comparing both positive and negative effects of the competitions so as to make corrections and improve the quality of the future competitions.

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Architecture Competitions v. Architecture Awards

Contests in architecture are generally categorized in two main groups: designing and grand prix (Beski, 2007, 37). On the one hand, the designing competition aims directly at the design which is creative, efficient, and the best one that suits the clients' economic and social conditions, and on the other, it provides those lesser known architects the opportunity of entering competition in order to introduce their capabilities and contribute their share to the professional market. The grand prix goes to those buildings whose designs apply to the code of practice in the competitions considering the year the building has been erected, opened, its application, and other parameters as such agreed on by the referees (Beski, 1998, 32). The competitions and the awards bring architects recognition by clients both professionally and academically for the best design and best performance and the main difference between these two competitions is the role of the clients and the administrative elements in the finished buildings and the awards for those designs that were not performed at all. For the freedom of action in creating architectural ideas in architecture competitions and the probable shortcomings that may occur on site, the present study exempts itself from examining the awards and prizes.

Introducing the architectural competitions

The architectural competitions, the main objective of this study, are the best methods to be held in such art courses as architecture and urbanization. The basis of the competitions is on the fact that mainly the work should be left to courses such as architecture, graphics, sculpture, urban designing, and the like which are related to designing arts whereas engineering projects are handed on through tenders considering project, equipment, and working force expenses of the construction engineering firm. In other types of designing, that is industrial design, stimulating the sense of competition happens in other ways than arranging contests. Ranking, for instance, is a kind of recognition of creativity which limits the possibility of unoriginality and misuse of ideas (Beski, 1998, 32). These competitions are held in both limited and unlimited forms. Both individuals and legal entities are invited in the former, whereas there is no limit for participants in the latter.

The origins of competitions in architecture date back to the birth of Christ. This tradition in world's architecture is, therefore, very old. In "The Inscriptions from the Acropolis", 1926 which appeared in the RIBA magazine, Smith reports that in 448 B.C. designing a war memorial was an issue of a contest. The presented designs were on display to the public for about 10 days for the people's vote. Like many other ideas, which were taken as inspirations from the Greek world by the westerners throughout different ages like the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and others, this tradition has continued into the present time taking different forms and methods of presentation, in different countries. However, the variety of styles and novel movements in architecture has posed

different periods in history (Capon, 2008, 135). Despite their history, earlier competitions have been adopted like many other patterns of lifestyle from the western world. As a good proof of this claim, it is worth noticing the advertisements for competitions that appeared in *Etela'* at daily newspaper of 1911-1921, especially the biography of Vartan Hovanesian in the magazine *The Architect* which refers to his winning the competitions and his good works for which he was appointed by the ruling officials to make important arrangements in later competitions (Mahmoudi, 2003, 32). With reference to the previous classification in the introduction in the present work, the competitions of every decade will be introduced separately and the most prominent of each will be extensively analyzed in detail.

The First Decade Competitions: 1979-1989

The 1979 Revolution led to not only the change in regime but an impingement of changes on cultural, economic, and social aspects of lives of people. Accordingly, in step with such special conditions so many of the pre-revolutionary values turned into counter-revolutionary ones as there were some dependencies to the former regime and issues such as aristocracy. The then newly-born revolutionary community began to negate whatsoever structure and phenomenon that reminded them of the eradicated regime. The architecture of the last 15 years of the Pahlavi regime had in a way propagandist application for the regime, was now considered an abnormality by the by the revolutionaries. Therefore, ignoring those structures and remainders of the Pahlavi era was considered as part of the challenges in the revolutionary ideology (Hashemi, 2001, 3). In the years after the revolution and the reinforcement of the fundamentals or the new regime, the nation was engaged in an imposed unwanted war with Iraq—which left not only negative aftermath effects on it by the time it ended in 1988, but after a decade, affected the economic lives of the nation. Therefore, it was hard to expect any considerable development in the architecture. However, the procedure of organizing competitions remained untouched and constant. Below, you can find a list of contests held during the war years (Table 1).

The most important contest in this period was the designing of the Grand Mosalla of Tehran which was later known as Imam Khomeini Grand Mosalla.

The Grand Mosalla of Tehran (Imam Khomeini Mosalla)

A public announcement on designing the mosalla was issued via the Friday Prayer Service Tehran, on February 19, 1985. All the qualified, experienced designers were called for the planning. There entered 36 native and foreign individuals as well as legal entities. The foreign participants were from such countries as Japan, Syria, Pakistan, and the Netherlands. The competition was held in 1986 with Mohammad Karim Pirnia, Mehdi Chamran, Bagher Ayatollahzadeh Shirazi, Ali Ghaffari,

Table 1: Some of the contests held between 1979 to 1988

NO.	CONTEST TITLE	EMPLOYER	JUDGES	RESULT ISSUING DATE	WINNER	END RESULT
1	DORMITORY COMPLEX	IRAN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY	EMPLOYER EXPERTS AND ORGANIZERS	1983	4 WINNERS FOR THE CONTESTANS FROM 4 DIFFERENT CLIMATES	COMMITMENTS TOTALLY FULFILLED
2	PARAMEDICAL INSTITUTES	MINISTRY OF HEALTH	EMPLOYER EXPERTS AND ORGANIZERS	1983	4 WINNERS FOR THE CONTESTANS FROM 4 DIFFERENT CLIMATES	COMMITMENTS TOTALLY FULFILLED
3	TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE EXCEPT FOR ONE PART OF STEEL RESIDENTIAL COMPLEX	AHWAZ STEEL COMPLEX	EMPLOYER EXPERTS	1984	A-TAK, BAAWAND, SAFA MANESH	COMMITMENT TO PLAN A NEIGHBORHOOD OF 300 UNITS TO THE WINNERS FAILED
4	300 RESIDENTIAL UNITS IN WAWAN TOWN	WAWAN TOWN	MISTERS ALI GHAFARI, MOHAMAD TEHRANI, HASHEM RAHBARI, AND HASHEM POURKERAMATI	1985	ENG, SETAAYESH	CASH PRIZES PAID, NO CONTRACT WAS ASSIGNED WITH THE WINNER, YET ANOTHER PLAN WAS ASSIGNED TO THE WINNER
5	THE GRAND MOSALLA OF THERAN		MOHAMAD KARIW PIR NIA, BAGHER AYATOLLAHZADEH SHIRAZI	1986	NO WINNER	IN ANOTHER STEP, ANOTHER DESIGNER WAS INVITED
6	QOM MOFI UNI.	MOFID CHARITY INST.	ENG. KAAMRAWA, ENG. HOJJAT...?	1988	A-TAK	WINNER WON A CONTRACT
7	GENERAL PLAN FOR SHAHID MAHALATI TOWN	TOWN'S PLAN ADMINISTRATOR	?	1988	A-TAK	DETAILED DESIGN CONTRACT FOR PART OF THE TOWN WAS OFFERRED TO THE WINNER

and Mehdi Hodjat as the jury members. Although the budget was low, the results were magnificent leading to general idea as the initial guidelines of the architectural design. However, none of the presented designs could satisfy the jury. In 1990, the then general manager of the, Mosalla appointed a new team of engineers to reconsider the former designs of the 1985 contest. The final vote went to Dr Parviz Moayyed Ahd's design which was accepted and reconfirmed for the mossalla (Mojtahedi, 2006,42). To maintain the experience of Islamic architecture, the designer has not limited his plan to the modern time Iran but, as he mentions, his design includes territories like Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, and Georgia which formerly were part of Iran. (Moayyed, Ahd, 2010) (Figs. 1 and 2).

The Second Decade Competitions: 1989-1999

The decade after the imposed war, which is also known as the Decade of Construction, was mostly involved in the rebuilding of the destroyed constructions in war affected areas, economical infrastructures, and creating anatomical spaces required for industries, government buildings and the like. In this decade, the procedure of organizing the competitions had almost slackened after the war outbreak was enlivened and as some analysts mention, it has turned as one of the most dynamic factors in the architecture after the revolution. Organizing architecture competitions was an event that magnificently gathered and activated the energetic forces in architecture introducing them to the community.



Fig. 1: A project which peresented inmosalla'sCompetition



Fig. 2: MoayyedAhd's Model designed for mosalla

Nevertheless, there were shortcomings and wreckages and the oppositions against instability in results and the manner of organizing that followed. A'BADI prizes for the plans after the revolution have been offered since1991. The tradition of

competitions grew rapidly, followed by small and big designs. One after another, there were different organizations arranging competitions in different cities (Hashemi, 1991, 2). some of these competitions are listed in table2 below (Table2):

Table 2: Some of the competitions held between 1988 and 1998

No.	Competiton Title	Client/employer	Judges	Result Date	The first winner	End result
1	Bank Saderat, management, Isfahan	Bank Saderat	Experts of the ministry of housing and urbanization	1991	Eng. Khalili	Expenses were paid to the winner/contract signed with the winner
2	Isfahan Uni. Central Office	Isfahan Uni.	Experts of the ministry of housing and urbanization, Isfahan Cultural Heritage Organization	1991	Polshir	Contract was signed with the winner
3	Cultural and educational center, Rafsanjan	Office for the Revolution's Culture Development (Daftar Nashr Ma'aref `Enqelab)	The expertise committee of the Self employers	1992	Arshikaam	Contract signed and performed
4	Il-Goli residential complex, Tabriz	Khanesaazie Iran Co.	Eng. Diba, Eng. Bushehri	1992	Naghsh-e-Jihan Pars	The first phase contract signed with the winner
5	Islamic Republic Academies	Ministry of Housing and Urbanization	Misters Seyed Reza Hashemi, HashemHasehemnejad, Bagher Ayatollah zاده Shirazi, Mahmood Daadmanesh, LatifAbolghasemi, Manoochehr Soleimonipour, HadiNadimi, BijanFatahi, ShahabKatoozian	1994	Naghsh-e-Jihan Pars	The contract signed with the fifth rank winner

Table 2: Some of the competitions held between 1988 and 1998

No.	Competiton Title	Client/employer	Judges	Result Date	The first winner	End result
6	Presidential Document Center Museum, Rafsanjan	Private sector	Misters DarabDiba, Bahram Sadri, IrajE'tesaam	1994	Naghsh-e-Jihan Pars	The contract signed with the seventh rank winner
7	Chaharbagh, Isfahan	Isfahan Municipality	Misters IrajE'tesam, BagherShirazi, Seyed Reza Hashemi, Seifollahi Isfahan Governor's Deputy, Naji from Isfahan Municipality	1995	Naghsh-e-Jihan Pars	The contract signed with another contestant
8	National Library	Ministry of Housing and Urbanization	Misters Seyed Reza Hashemi, MohamadBeheshti, HadiNadimi, Mahdi Chamran, SerajadinKazerooni, BagherShirazi, MohamadHasanMo'meni	1995	PirRaaz	There was a contract signed with the best design
9	Teheran Provincial office	Teheran Governor General	Misters Husain Zeinodin, IrajKalantari, Ali Ghaffari, Moasaghi, HmaidMajedi	1997	Gatoo	Contract was signed with the second winner
10	ToseyeSaderat Bank	ToseyeSaderat Bank	Misters SerajodinKazerooni, Seyed Reza Hashemi, DarabDiba, HashemHashemnejad, Mohamed Hassan Momeni	1997	Naghsh-e-Jahan Pars	The winner won the contract, But the expenses were not paid to the participants

From among the cited competitions, two of them were the most noteworthy ones: Design for the Islamic Republic of Iran's Academy in 1994, and the design for the National Library of Iran in 1995.

But the former was the most prominent and influential contest in which the participants, the grand prix, and the closely selected jury members ignoring the jury's decision to implement the fifth design instead of the first design. This has been the best ever held competition after the Islamic Revolution to recognize architecture and architects both nationally and universally. There has not been much discussion about any other designs than the ones presented in this contest (Hashemi, 2001, 2).

Islamic Republic Academies Contest

Once the Administrative Division for the State and Public Buildings and Facilities at the former Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (Iran) issued an advertisement calling for the competition in 1993 and more than fifty individuals and legal entities like consulting engineers responded. According to the announcement for the scheduled competition, designs for three academies that is the Academy of Science, Academy of Medicine, and Iran's Academy Persian Language and Literature, and also a conference complex within an area of 21450sqm in an 82000sqm land in Abbasabad Hills in Teheran should be prepared and forwarded to the jury that fully issued the votes as follows:



Fig. 3 and 4: Islamic Republic Academies by Naghsh consulting engineers
(Source: <http://www.maskanshahrsazi.ir>)



Fig. 5 and 6: Islamic Republic Academies by Naghsh-e-Jahan Pars consulting engineers
 (Source: [http:// www.mirmiranfound.ir](http://www.mirmiranfound.ir))

1. Naqsh-e-Jahan Pars Consulting Engineers (Co.)
2. Tajir Consulting Engineers (Co.)
3. Bavand Consulting Engineers (Co.)
4. FarhadAhmadi et al.
5. NaghshConsulting Engineers (Co.)

Contract client signed a contract with the fifth winner above (Figs. 3 and 4), leaving Mir Miran's design to archives (Ghamami, 1998, 19)(Figs. 5 and 6).

Mir Miran's plans for academies were simple, brief, creating new forms in combination with existing familiar ones avoiding the common patterns of the day. The main volume is in form of a cube secured to the floor using buttresses (buttressed to the ground). This part of the plan functions as a cultural barricade as well as a metaphor for an Iranian veranda. A much smaller domical covering volume placed on the opposite, in addition to creating symmetry and considering human resources, properly induces the concept of a courtyard.

National Library of Iran Contest

Another considerable competition held in 1995 was a contest on Iran National Library. This time the Administrative Division for the State and Public Buildings and Institutions at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, once again challenged

the potential individuals and consulting engineers in presenting the best design for the National Library considering a given physical schedule and an area of 90.000sqm in Abbasabad Hills. The jury voted for Pirraaz Consulting Engineers Company that is YousefShariatzadeh et al as the best prize winner, Naqsh-e-Jahan Pars Consulting Engineers Company as the second. The last prize went to FarhadAhmadi et al (BaniMasoud,2009, 290) (Figs. 7 and 8).

In this competition, the design by Pirraaz Consulting Engineers Company enjoys high values. However, it could not be introduced as an avante garde work. Spatial interactions planning schedule, negative and positive spaces and so on, it can be considered as a masterpiece or a creation. Perhaps, accepting and performing the design by Naqsh-e-Jahan Pars Consulting Engineers Company headed by SeyyedHadiMirmiran could have been much more effective than the existing erected project (Figs. 9 and 10).

The Third Decade Competitions: 1999-2009

The third decade after the Revolution has multiple advantages: the first of which is that the post revolution graduates entered a serious and challenging decade. On the one hand, the number



Figs. 7 and 8: National Library of Iran (Source: Pirraazconsulting engineers)



Fig. 9 and 10: National Library of Iran by Naghsh-e-Jahan Pars consulting engineers
(Source: [http:// www.mirmiranfound.ir](http://www.mirmiranfound.ir))

of architecture colleges reached over a hundred (Goudarzi, 2005, 65). On the other, the global changes especially those in the media communications improved, hence term 'Global Village' practically resulting in a rapid transfer of information, knowledge, art, tastes, cultures, etc. The use of the internet reduces the time of learning; a process that has connected architects to the world styles and patterns, which, in effect, is revealed in the later decade. The most important events are introduced in table 3 (Table 3).

The Oil Industry Main Office Contest

There were ten consulting engineers entering the contest for the Oil Industry Main Office in 2003. The project site was east

of Taleghani Park on Hemat and Shahid Haghani Highways in an area of 30,000sqm vacant lot space accommodating 8000 personnel. The jury was comprised of Nader Ardalan, Iraj Etessam, Darab Diba, Ali Akbar Sarami, Amid Masodi, Arata Isuzaki, and David Dewey. The most emphasized condition in the competition was to share and consult the design with a foreign adviser (Habibi, 2003, 39).

The winners were as follows:

1. Bavand Consulting Engineers Company and Kirkland International Institute (Fig. 11)
2. Gueno and Norr International Consultants (Fig. 12)
3. Naqsh-e-Jahan Pars Consulting Engineers Company and NHT et al (Fig. 13)

Table 3: Some of the competitions held between 1999 and 2009

NO.	COMPETITION TITLE	EMPLYER/ CLIENT'S NAME	RESULT DATES	THE WINNER
1	THE DESIGN FOR THE EXPANDING OF THE HOLY SHRINE OF SAINT MA'SOOMEH(P.B.H)	QOM CITY HALL	1998	NAGHSHE-JAHAN PARS
2	INT'L TRADING CENTER OF TEHRAN	EXPORT DEVELOPMENT CENTER	1998	MAHDI ALIZADEH
3	DESIGN FOR IRAN EMBASSY IN BERLIN	MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS	2000	DARAAB DIBA
4	DESIGN FOR THE H.Q. OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE OFFICE	PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE	2001	BAHRAAM SHIRDEL
5	Presidential Office/ Oil Industry H.Q.	Oil Ministry	1993	BavandEneineering Associates
6	AN Center Design	Private sector	1994	Geno Engineering Associates
7	Sacred Defense Museum Garden	Tehran Municipality	1995	JilaNorouzi
8	TarbiatModares University Entrance Gate	TarbiatModares University	1995	Reza Ebadi Rajoli, Sara Majdi

4. Baftshahr Consulting Engineers Company and the WSW Architects (Fig. 14)
5. TarhwaTakwineBana Consulting Engineers and Carlos Ott et al. (Fig. 15)
6. FarhadAhmadi et al with Franklin Andrews Battle McCarthy (Fig. 16)
7. Sinaam Consulting Engineers Company and S.E.T.E.C French Firm (Ibid, page39) (Fig. 17)

The project was for different reasons neglected.

Ati Center Designing Contest

The client of this project was Atisaaz that held it in a competition narrowing down the number of the consulting engineers to ten out of forty major consulting engineers. The location was in Shahrake Qods, Hormuzan Street in Teheran in an area of 70.000 sqm. The project is considered one of the



Fig. 11: The First Winner
(Source: Sadeghi, 2002)



Fig. 12: The Second Winner
(Source: Sadeghi, 2002)

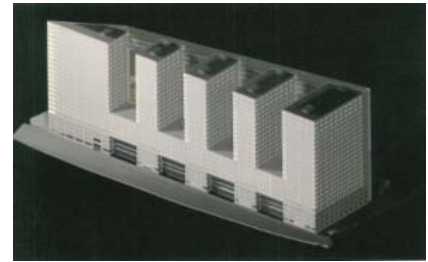


Fig. 13: The Third Winner
(Source: Sadeghi, 2002)



Fig. 14: The Forth Winner
(Source: Sadeghi, 2002)



Fig. 15: The Fifth Winner
(Source: Sadeghi, 2002)

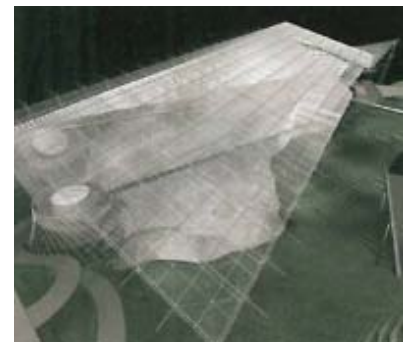


Fig. 16: The Sixth Winner
(Source: Sadeghi, 2002)



Fig. 17: The Seventh Winner
(Source: Sadeghi, 2002)



Fig. 18: The First Winner
(Source: Golkar A. 2004)



Fig. 19: The Second Winner
(Source: Golkar A. 2004)



Fig. 20: The Third Winner
(Source: Golkar A. 2004)

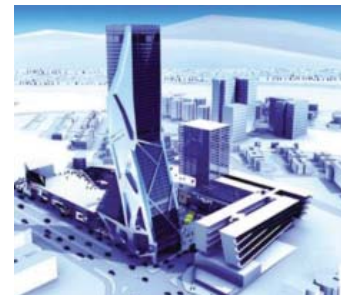


Fig. 21: The Third Winner (Source:
(Source: Golkar A. 2004)

greatest architecture projects in the country and one of the largest residential, office, and business complexes of the kind in Iran. The physical planning of the project includes an office tower, a residential tower, a five star hotel, a mall, recreational centers, and an adjacent supply and maintenance building within an area of 412000 sqm (BaniMasoud, 2009, 364).

Seven of the ten invited companies sent in their designs to the contest by May 25, 1994. IrajE'tesam, Ali Akbar Sarami, Mohsen Mostafawi were the jury with Ali Kermanian as the secretary. They voted for the Genu Consulting Engineering Associates and Norr from Canada as number one, Naghsh_ Jihan Pars and NHT et al from Germany as second, and Kamran Diba et al with Thomas Carbello from Spain as a joint winner shared the third prize with Jodat Consulting Engineering Firm et al and Coop Himmelblau from Austria (Ma, 2004, 83) (Figs. 18-21).

This project was on some grounds left unperformed, too.

RESULTS

The Influence of The Post Revolution Competitions Held in The Three Decades:

Considering the gradual development of the competitions throughout the given periods under scrutiny, the positive points can thus be mentioned as follows:

1. The number of competitions has increased in concert with the growth in economy, culture and social conditions.
 2. In the first decade the client has mostly been the government whereas in the next two decades especially the last one the private sector has been more interested in such competitions, a change that has left a positive impact on the designers.
 3. Holding the competitions has given the architects the opportunity to receive information from their associates, and also, the fair timing and conditions of being equally judged has provided common professional contributions.
 4. In providing a design as a competition material, the contestant doubly spends time and energy into it for his final work is to be judged by peer architects and professionally scrutinized. Totally, it ends in an improvement in the design.
 5. There was the presence of foreign consultant accompanying Iranian architects in the third decade competitions. This participation of the foreigners has both measured the technical and engineering potentials of designs and ideas closely similar to the universal ones.
 6. The competition rules and regulations have developed through years of experience and the quality of judgments too has heightened.
- The greatest negative impacts of the three decades to be mentioned are as follows:

1. Some of the competitions such as the design for the Mosalla of Teheran and the Oil Industry headquarters, on more international basis where decentralization rather than centralization was introduced, were practically, a waste of financial and human resources (and more than justified).
2. The regulations for the competitions have been revised; however, they are not in any better condition. There have been some shortcomings yet due to such rules and regulations.
3. The ignorance of the clients in fulfilling their promises in the contract and dodging from paying in the ignorance of the clients in fulfilling their promises in the contract and dodging from paying the cash prizes of the winners or even settling a contract with the main winner.

CONCLUSION

Analyzing the three decades of competitions reveals a general reception and tendency towards the more common and universal issues in architecture within the last two decades. Focusing on what has already been presented and both positive and negative effects the competitions, this can be understood that the development of such competitions may lead to a betterment in the quality of competitions and the enhancement of the contemporary architecture on both vocational and educational aspects. Arranging at least one major contest over a year as a means of prosperity in architecture in the last decades has been an effective process. Organizations of both the government and private sectors and also those of professional community are the three apices of a triangle in creating a work of architecture. The elimination or reduction of competitions may lead consulting engineers to the menial routine business, doing exactly what clients impose on them, and much of the expected achievements of such competitions remain out of reach.

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