



## **Feasibility study of the impact of the Governance Gap on the Efficiency of the Political System from the Perspective of Political Stability; Case study of the Islamic Republic of Iran**

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### **Abstract:**

The governance gap is an important one and somewhat unknown. Although there is a lot of talk about how and why, but so far it has not been addressed in detail. This gap is the result of non-compromise and agreement on principles and foundations and arising from the atmosphere of conflict that arose in the years after 1997 between the two discourses of reformism and fundamentalism. In this research, using the method of discourse, while examining the discourse of the Islamic Revolution as well as the two discourses of reformism and fundamentalism, the two issues of the relationship between the conflict and the gap between the two with the category of "efficiency "and then" political stability "have been considered. This study seeks to answer the question: "What effect has the governance gap in the Islamic Republic of Iran had on the efficiency of the system in the years after 1997?" And its main finding is that the governance gap, by creating instability in the political system, has provided grounds for inefficiency in some areas. In a way, if this rift and conflict did not exist, the political system would have functioned better.

**Keywords:** Political Stability, Islamic Republic, Governance Gap, Efficiency, Inefficiency

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### **Introduction**

political groups and elites. This gap, many of which dates back to the early years of the Islamic Revolution; Since 1997 with a new

formulation that was created in the forces of the Islamic Republic. From that year onwards, some of these forces came together

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under the name of "reformists", and since then this gap has been seriously raised at the Iranian political level. One of its most important consequences was the formation of two discourses of reformism and fundamentalism, which created a hostile atmosphere between them. The most important effect of this hostile atmosphere could be political instability. Since the stability of the political system is one of the main areas for its efficiency, this issue is directly related to the efficiency of the system. Meanwhile, the rift resulting from this conflict led to the dysfunction of the political system in Iran in the years after 1997. Instead of improving the political and economic situation of the country, the time and energy of the political forces were spent in conflict with each other. With such a perspective, this study seeks to answer the question: "What effect has the governance gap in the Islamic Republic of Iran had on the efficiency of the system in the years after 1997?" This research deals with this issue from a discourse perspective and in it, the conflicting atmosphere of reformist and fundamentalist discourses has been considered.

### **Discourse of the Islamic Revolution**

The discourse of the Islamic Revolution is based on its central signifier, "political jurisprudential Islam." On the one hand, this discourse is rooted in Shi'a political jurisprudence, which, with new interpretations, is in charge of government affairs and people's lives. The pillars of this government are all modern. The pillars of Islamic jurisprudential discourse have largely dominated the modern pillars of government; And this shows that Velayat-e-Faqih and in its subsequent transformation, absolute Velayat-e-Faqih is the basis of the government in the Islamic Republic. Because in articulating the discourses of the

Islamic Revolution, it was political jurisprudence that was its central signifier. Whatever other name is given to this sign and it is referred to in any sense, it is necessary to return to this important sign in understanding the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and its functions and issues. (Afsordeh and others, 2019, pp. 64-65).

The three signs of "freedom", "democracy" and "justice" can be considered as floating signs of the discourse of the Islamic Revolution, and the rifts of sovereignty have been formed mainly around these signs. In the discourse of political-jurisprudential Islam, freedom means only within the framework of the rules of jurisprudence and the laws of Sharia; And it saw liberal freedom and the West as free and chaotic and had nothing to do with it. For this reason, from the first months after the revolution, adherents of Islamic jurisprudence emphasized the need to control the press and the supervision of religious experts over their work. (Alipour Gorji, 2014, p. 68). The sign of "freedom", which was considered a concept of modernity in Iranian thought, finds its new meaning in the framework of the discourse of the Islamic Revolution and through the central sign of this discourse (Esmaili et al., 2016, p. 50).

The discourse of the Islamic Revolution has populated Shi'a Islam with the basic concepts of modern democracies. The constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on the one hand, is based on Islamic rules, and on the other hand, relies on the people's vote as one of the unchangeable principles of this type of Islamic government. (Feyrahi, 2005, p. 154) The first and fundamental step in this regard in the Constitutional Revolution, with the formation of the House of Representatives, the rights of the nation, the separation

of powers, state and provincial associations, etc., was taken by imposing the constitution and its amendments to the absolute monarchy. Also, the highest guarantees for the implementation of democracy or part of its principles without other necessary conditions alone will not be sufficient for the establishment of democracy; And without a doubt, the constitution is the highest guarantee of any system, and in Iran this issue sometimes exists in the best way and in some cases in a limited way. (Falsafi, 2007, p. 162).

According to the Shi'as, justice is necessary to assume social responsibilities such as government, judgment, and so on. Justice can be defined in a variety of contexts, including political justice, which means that things are properly managed so that people can live in a just environment. In fact, there is a logical relationship between justice and politics, so the elected government of the people is responsible and accountable. There should be no discrimination between people in public participation. Everyone should feel that they have achieved their rights, and also because people have political growth and awareness, it is necessary to monitor everything. (Rezaei Jafari et al., 2016, pp. 95-96).

### **Discourses arising from the Islamic Revolution and the resulting rifts**

Here we pay attention to the two discourses arising from the discourse of the Islamic Revolution that all political conflicts in the Islamic Republic can be organized and considered around these two discourses. One is the discourse of "fundamentalism" which has had its ups and downs, and the other is the discourse of "reformism".

#### **Discourse of fundamentalism**

To understand the signs of fundamentalist discourse, one must first seek its discourse

formulation. In terms of the emergence and consolidation of signs in this discourse, they can be considered to belong to two time periods. The formation of some of these signs took place during the developments of the early years of the revolution, following a historical process that can be called the rivalry between the discourse of traditionalism and modernism. The signs of Velayat-e-Faqih, clergy and jurisprudence were among these signs, because the fundamentalist discourse used them to form its identity against an enemy that was secular and non-Islamic in nature. (Soltani, 2005, p. 154).

One of the most important divisions of the fundamentalist discourse, which in many cases is defined as the discourse at its heart, is "justices"; Which constitutes the dominant discourse of Ahmadinejad during his presidency, and its central signifier, as its name implies, is "justice." "The discourse of fundamentalism, with a justice-oriented reading, at its best, is the rise of the discourse of the first decade of the Islamic Republic from the right. "On this basis, the discourse of social justice is a right-wing reading of the signs and ideas of the Islamic left discourse." (Izadi and Rezaei Panah, p. 66) It can be said that the formation of the fundamentalist discourse with emphasis on the sign of justice was a natural response to the problems and challenges of the reformist discourse in the political and economic spheres, as well as the disregard for the concept of justice. Although the people voted for a discourse in June 1997 that elaborated on the signs of political development, freedom, civil society, and participation. The need for justice has always been in the minds of the people, and it was not the case that with the advent of reformism and the formation of a new semantic formulation in this discourse, the sign of justice in society was forgotten. However, the reformists did not emphasize

this sign in their elaboration and did not use it; But by choosing the signs that were rooted in politics and culture, they pointed out that if they succeed in establishing political development, other issues such as justice will be realized in the light of it. But during the period of the domination of the reformist discourse, fundamentalism considered neglect of economic development as the cause of many problems; And by laying hands on this sign and expressing inefficiencies in this area, he promised the establishment of justice. And this is while the reformist discourse gradually declined due to the crises and problems that occurred to it in the field of politics and economics, and created the conditions for its rival discourse. (Kasraei and Saeedi, 2016, p. 140).

Ahmadinejad's rise has shown that many are serious supporters of the fundamentalists and share their views on "equitable distribution of wealth," "poverty alleviation," and "fighting corruption." (Dehghani Firoozabadi and Mehdi Ataei, 2015, p. 29). In this branch of fundamentalism, there are four floating signs; "Justice", "compassion", "material and spiritual progress and excellence" and "service" and these are detailed around the central sign of the province. (Behrouz Lak, and Zabetekari, 2012, p. 125) In addition to turning the fundamentalist discourse of justice into a symbol through which it responded to all the needs of the people of that day; Another factor increased the accessibility of the fundamentalist discourse; And that was the placement of justice under the concepts said in simple and understandable language. (Kasraei and Saeedi, 2016, p. 155). According to the justice-oriented fundamentalist discourse, the Iranian revolution is an Islamic revolution whose mission is to guide mankind from overcoming the crisis of spirituality and oppression and bringing

them to the happiness and perfection of the two worlds. (Izadi and Rezaei Panah, 2013, p. 70).

### **Reformist discourse**

The reformist discourse can be considered as a new articulation of some of the most important elements of the discourse of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This discourse paid a lot of attention to the democratic elements of the Islamic Republic and tried to create a new part of the discourse for the continuation of the democratic elements and open the way for the reform of the system by re-reading the discourse of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Hence this elaboration of the Islamic Republic's discourse in the social and political spheres, highlighting issues such as democracy, people, civil society, individual and social freedoms, citizenship rights, and the rights of minorities and women; would led to a significant and serious rift between influential political forces within the discourse of the Islamic Republic. (Khoei, 2016, p. 229) This gap arose in a new semantic system and led to changes in the understanding of the meaning of the discourse of the Islamic Revolution; And the reliance of the reformist discourse on the category of political development, in which the sign of democracy and freedom was very prominent, caused a different attitude towards the political system in the Islamic Republic. Of course, it must be borne in mind that the opposition of this kind of view to the discourse of fundamentalism can be considered an important gap. The discrepancies in the semantic system of reformists and fundamentalists are too deep to be considered merely a difference or difference in taste. Two types of systems of meaning to the political structure created a kind of "duality" in the way the

country was run. This "duality", sometimes referred to as "dual sovereignty", is one of the main gaps in governance.

Political development and freedom spread in the reformist discourse among the people. Naturally, in the discourse of reform, values and justice, and the weak strata of society, there were empty signs that since the above gap was not filled in this discourse, the discourse of justice, by articulating these empty signs, presented a new semantic system of development that is now established. (Nozari and Karimi, 2012, p. 69) The articulation of political development, although it did not have any conflict with the Islamic aspects of the Islamic Republic's discourse, focused more on the republican aspect of this discourse. The intensification of this articulation and opposition of the political forces and activists of the discourse of the Islamic Republic, who emphasized the Islamic aspect of this discourse, caused a rift between the two main political forces within the discourse of the Islamic Republic. In short, these two forces were composed of political forces that, by emphasizing the Islamic aspect of the Islamic Republic's discourse, emphasized the primacy of the authority of the Supreme Leader in legitimizing the actions of the government; And on the other hand, the forces that insisted on the rule of law in legitimizing the exercise of sovereignty. (Khoei, 2016, p. 229).

### **Conflicts between fundamentalism and reformism**

Where the roots of the conflict between the two discourses of fundamentalism and reform should be sought is a very important question. Although we are not talking about these roots here, the basis for the difference between the two discourses is too fundamen-

tal to ignore. This issue goes back to the old conflict between "tradition" and "modernity" in Iran, the elements and signs of which are also present in the discourse of the Islamic Revolution. And so, the elaborations that the two discourses of fundamentalism and reformism have, based on the signs of the discourse of the Islamic Revolution, and both of which have emerged and continue to do so, return to this issue. The conflict over modern signs and symbols can be considered as the main discourse conflict in contemporary Iran, which has spread to the discourses within the Islamic Republic and has caused political unrest and instability as one of the variables of this article.

The important point is that the Islamic Revolution laid its foundations on the discourse of traditionalism versus the modernism of the Pahlavi government; That is why the victory of the Islamic Revolution is the victory of the traditionalist discourse over the modernist one. (Soltani, 2012, p. 135) The Islamic Revolution, which crystallized in the form of the political system of the Islamic Republic, was the result of the articulation of two important signs of the republic and Islam. Islam, the clergy, jurisprudence, and velayat-e-faqih are rooted in traditionalism, and the republic, the people, law, and freedom are rooted in modernism. These two incompatible groups were articulated around the character of Imam Khomeini, and the reason for such an alliance between traditionalists and modernists was the charismatic presence of Imam Khomeini. (Ghasemi et al., 2020, pp. 52-53).

On this basis, the basic point is that the discourse of fundamentalism is a thinking that, in the face of new and modern phenomena, bases its understanding and thought of religious texts on thought and action; And does not theoretically accept the achieve-

ments of modern rationality in the realm of government. In their view, religious teachings, because of their comprehensiveness and completeness, can govern man in the modern world. And what is meant by the discourse of religious reform is a discourse that uses both the institution of religion in political relations and the achievements of modernity in this regard; Therefore, this discourse is a combination of the political teachings of religion and modern political achievements. (Maleki, 2018, p. 82).

### **Discourse gaps and political stability in the Islamic Republic**

Before addressing the issue of governance gap from the perspective of "political stability", the two concepts of "stability" and "political instability" are briefly addressed. Political stability can be considered as the relative absence of some destabilizing political events that occur in the form of change or challenge in any of the dimensions of the political system. The political system has three basic dimensions. The political authorities referred to as the government; The political regime, which refers to the legal rules governing the resolution of disputes within the system, and the political community, which includes a group of individuals who are related on the basis of the division of political work. (Sanders, 2001, p. 121) Also, political stability is a situation in which members of society have not deviated from the patterns of behavior located within the expectations of their political role. (BaniHashemi, 2015, p. 144) On the other hand, political instability indicates a situation in which the mechanisms and methods of resolving political conflicts and disputes are either ineffective or completely disabled (Delavari, 1999, p. 15).

"The political discourse of the Islamic Revolution in the inner space of discourse

faces challenges such as: unhealthy rivalries of political factions, factional exclusivism and political impiety. (Khaleghi, 2017, p. 14) The distinction between civil society and religious society was the most important distinction within the discourse of the Islamic Revolution in this period. The most important foundations of civil society are individualism, utilitarianism, secularism, rationality, pluralism, and moral and anti-ideological skepticism; These can be considered as "modern" signs and symbols. In contrast, the religious community emphasizes the network of religious-centered social, economic, political, legal, and moral relations, and the religious community, all of which are "traditional" symptoms. It should be borne in mind that the reformist discourse has always emphasized civil society and political development, and on the other hand, the fundamentalist discourse has based its religious thought and action on the religious community. The fundamentalists oppose the convergence of the two, and the reformists have spoken of the possibility of a merger. (Shiri, 2020, p. 183).

The idea of "transition to democracy" (see: Bashiriyeh, 2005 and Bashiriyeh, 2008), played a significant role in the identity of reformists versus fundamentalists. According to Bashiriyeh, during the reform period, the ruling elites in the Islamic Republic of Iran enjoyed the lowest degree of structural and ideological cohesion, and the possibility of a transition to democracy based on a reformist policy was strengthened. (Bashiriyeh, 2004, p. 9) Reformist thinking in the Islamic Republic of Iran failed as a result of the improper performance of the elites in implementing the theoretical and practical requirements of the transition to democracy. (Maghsoudi and Rahbar, 2015, p. 232). The emergence of dualism in the political system, after May 23, 1997, practically



caused duality and multiplicity in policy-making and, as a result, the disintegration of policies, the occurrence of continuous disruptions and unresolved conflicts over the formulation and implementation of policies. (Kazemi and Basirnia, 2018, p. 23) On the other hand, we must pay attention to the ideological aspect of the government in Iran. Here, the government, using the Shiite religious tradition, has made the mass society in Iran a healing feature for the people. The mass society in post-revolutionary Iran was thirsty for a salvific ideology, political mobilization, and religious leadership, and this situation strengthened the power of the clergy. (Bashiriyeh, 2002, pp. 107-108) At the same time, this society provided a strong base for fundamentalism. Because mass society is the counterpoint to the quest for a "transition to democracy," its strengthening created a rift between the two discourses of reformism and fundamentalism. It should be borne in mind that the dispute over the "transition to democracy" is not in itself a "gap". This difference turns into a rift where, on the one hand, the reformists see the path of development as a "transition to democracy" and, on the other hand, the focus of fundamentalism is more on a kind of "mass society". An important example of this, which turned into a deep "gap", can be seen in Ahmadinejad's coming to power and his plans and slogans.

It should be borne in mind that from the perspective of "political stability", the discourse gap between the two groups of fundamentalists and reformists has led to the situation of the country within the political system, towards "instability"; And the excessive polarization of the political space and the lack of compromise and convergence on fundamental issues in the political system has caused that as each of these two groups gains power, their dis-

course rejects the other, and this in itself jeopardizes political stability. One of the issues raised here is that these groups have no knowledge of the boundaries that determine the national interests of the country and are more dependent on their own union, factional and group interests and have not even clarified their own group, factional and union interests. They do not even have a civilized political philosophy or ideology. There is no unity between their political and cultural positions and they do not have an understanding of identity, national interests, national interests and security. (Pourzaki, 2019, pp. 232-233).

Hitting the mark of exclusivism on the forehead of right-wing discourse was an example of the May 23 software invasion of right-wing discourse in an attempt to pretend that rival discourse is authoritarian. On the contrary, the sign of cultural aggression in the face of software, the discourse of May 23 considered the same foreign enemy that has found a domestic base; And it seeks to make the discourse of the revolution the heart of nature and to articulate the subjects by drawing another mythic space and addressing a social image in another discourse space. (Rabbani Khoorasgani and Mirzaei, 2015, p. 58).

Iran's political climate was in a state of conflict from the late 1990s to the early 2010s, with particular political and even cultural consequences. Political-discourse actions and practices in the two elections of 2005 and 2009 are clearly evidence of the formation of a policy based on conflict. The election of 2005 was characterized by the emergence of a political force that, although fully supported by the well-known fundamentalist forces, went beyond them. In the absence of people who could compete with the main figures in the reformist faction, the

principled political forces succumbed to an unknown force that in its political discourse did not hesitate to show that it came for war and struggle. These fighters were the same as the struggle against aristocracy and the struggle against the system of world domination. (Pourzaki, 2019, pp. 247-248) The continuation of such a situation, eventually caused the problems that arose after the 2009 elections. This was largely due to the drastic changes in the seizure of power by the fundamentalist current and its implications for policy-making that exacerbated the bipolar atmosphere of elections this year. And in depth, it involved a battle over how to manage and move the political system in the administration of the country in various fields, including the field of culture (Kazemi and Basirnia, 2018, p. 27).

One of the main features of these two elections was that there was a kind of discourse struggle; And the changing political and social atmosphere of Iranian society, fluctuations in the demands and tendencies of the people, changes in the global political climate and especially the people's perception and perception of the ruling political discourse have led to the victory of one discourse and the marginalization of rival discourses. Finally, the winning discourse paradigm will be an accumulation of new concepts, new demarcations, and delineators of new cultural, social, and political horizons. (Majidi and Rahimi Nia, 2018, p. 126).

All of these issues well illustrate the extent to which political "stability" in the Islamic Republic was declining in the wake of deepening conflicts and divisions in governance. The lack of synergy between the traditional factions of the Islamic Republic, which from 1997 onwards, lined up opposite each other with new arrangements and titles, contributed to further instability. And this instability, in

itself, significantly affected the second and main issue of this article, the issue of efficiency, and as the stability declined. Efficiency also gradually gave way to inefficiency in some places.

### **Governance gap and the issue of "efficiency" of the Islamic Republic**

The discourse gap in the Islamic Republic is not only related to the issue of "stability". The persistence of its connection with "stability" undoubtedly brings it closer to the category of "efficiency", because a "stable" political system is certainly more "efficient" than a system with governance gaps. A tyrannical and dictatorial government with a nation-state divide, not an intra-governmental one, may be found to be "efficient" in many areas, but certainly a system with an intra-governmental divide has many shortcomings.

One of the important factors in the "efficiency" of the political system, from the perspective of the present article, is the "compromise" between the ruling elites and the political factions. Because the higher the level of "compromise" in a political system, the higher its stability, and the direct result is undoubtedly the "efficiency" of the political system. Efficiency focuses on the survival and stability of political systems. Given the importance of the issue of efficiency, political systems need criteria and indicators to assess their status in order to be aware of their efficiency status. (Qeisari and Ghorbani, 2015, p. 130) At the same time, the concept of efficiency is one of the most important concerns of any political system, and its weakness can pose serious risks to the stability of political systems. So that some political scientists consider the first step of the collapse of political systems in the beginning of the crisis of its efficiency;



Which can lead to other crises such as: the crisis of legitimacy, the crisis of differences between the ruling elites and the crisis of repression. Therefore, recognizing and modifying the factors that affect the efficiency of political systems can increase their efficiency and stability. (Sayyad et al., 2018, p. 28)

It is now necessary to consider how the governance gap resulting from the discourse conflicts between fundamentalism and reformism has reduced the possibility of compromise, and consequently stability and, consequently, efficiency. Examining two fundamentalist discourses, it became clear that these two discourses, due to the semantic system that governs them, have not been able to establish a good relationship with political compromise and harmony; And their aggressive approach has caused these two discourses in the field of domestic and foreign policy to face major challenges to society. (Pourghoshchi and Maghsoudi, 2018, p. 68) The inability to compromise and use the skills to form an alliance with the opposition, along with the reformists' failure to maintain a moderate policy, led to the failure of the democratic change process, a sharp reaction from the opposition, and the closure of the political and social space in Iran (Maghsoudi and Rahbar, 2015, p. 231). One of the important results of "lack of political compromise", which has led to instability and inefficiency of the political system, is "intellectual incoherence of political elites." This can be seen in the following cases:

1. Lack of political culture of mutual interaction and existence of subculture of conflict among elites;
2. Lack of attention to national interests among some political elites;
3. Lack of conflict management mechanisms among the elite;

4. Lack of a culture of peaceful competition (Jalali and Gholami, 2010, p. 224).

One of the important consequences of the lack of compromise due to the discourse gap in the Islamic Republic is that the factions in the Iranian political system are composed of several groups with sometimes conflicting goals; And although most of them have agreed to work within the framework of the constitution, they have fundamental differences with each other over the nature of the political system and its policies and guidelines in various fields. In this context, each faction seeks to impose its own interpretation of politics and national interests on policy-making institutions. Conflicts between the Expediency Council, the executive and the legislature, and some other institutions in recent years, have shown the ineffective conflict between the type of interpretation of the principles of the system; Conflicting perceptions that in relation to the interests of each individual in these institutions and forces, the Iranian political scene has verbal violence on the one hand and the clash of forces and institutions in the country's policy scene on the other hand. (Attar and Khajeh Naeini, 2015, p. 6) Based on this, it can be said that conflicts between political factions in Iran are the main network of domestic and foreign policy. In other words, the apparent contradictions of different political groups, none of which have the full sources of power and authority, become a deterrent to building a single, dominant non-ideological and non-hostile national political and economic approach. (Zolfaqari, 2018, p. 15).

### Conclusion

The conflict over the governance gap in the Islamic Republic is largely due to the "lack of political compromise" between the ruling elites, who on the one hand prefer their

factional interests to national interests and on the other hand create political instability. This non-compromise, which is the basic premise of the instability of the system, stems most of all from the hostile atmosphere that exists over the words, deeds and thoughts of the two groups, the fundamentalists and the reformists. Thus, the governance gap in the Islamic Republic of Iran causes inefficiency and causes major problems for the political system. This inefficiency is both in the improvement of macro and micro policies and in the implementation of political strategies, and in some cases is so great that sometimes the political system is unable to resolve non-political crises and an event such as flood or earthquake causes a lot of dissatisfaction. And this shows that if the political system seeks to maintain its efficiency and consequently its stability; It must overcome these gaps, reduce political strife, and move toward political reconciliation among the elites so that it can minimize its real and potential inefficiencies. This article is, above all, a kind of "pathology" of the political situation in Iran in the last quarter-century, which has become more and more hostile, and as a result, its stability and efficiency have been damaged.

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