



Factional politics in Iran (2005-2023): A study of conflicts, clientelism and influence

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the factional conflicts in Iranian politics from 2005 to 2023, exploring their influence on governance, political evolution, and foreign relations, especially with India. Iran's political system uniquely integrates theocratic and democratic elements, with significant power concentrated in the Supreme Leader and the Guardian Council. The paper identifies three primary factions: conservatives, reformists, and moderates, each representing distinct ideological and policy preferences. Conservatives uphold revolutionary principles and central authority, reformists advocate for civil liberties and openness, while moderates seek pragmatic governance balancing Islamic principles with socio-economic needs. Key presidencies reflect these dynamics: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005–2013) represented conservative populism, marked by economic polarization and international sanctions. Hassan Rouhani (2013–2021), a moderate, focused on the 2015 nuclear deal (JCPOA) and economic reforms but faced resistance from conservatives. Ebrahim Raisi (2021–present), aligned with ultra-conservatives, emphasizes strict governance and geopolitical shifts like "de-dollarization." The paper highlights factionalism's fluidity, where political allegiances shift over time, creating a dynamic interplay of power and dissent. Clientelism is prevalent, driven by Iran's rentier economy, fostering patronage networks that consolidate political influence. Additionally, the study underscores the role of these factions in shaping Iran's strategic decisions and its implications for regional stability. This research stresses the importance of understanding Iran's internal political conflicts beyond Western-centric narratives, focusing on its distinct political and institutional framework. By analyzing factional struggles and their socio-political impacts, the paper offers insights into Iran's unique positioning in global politics and its evolving ties with India.

Keywords: Factional Politics, Iranian Governance, Supreme Leader, Guardian Council, Rentier State

Introduction

The quest for power plays out through the shuffle of stakeholders which often have conflicting interests, these interests are actualized through attaining legitimate authority and acquiring political power. The tumult of conflict is premised in the arena of negotiations and deliberations over 'political power', despite the state's alleged monopoly over the use of force, its actions are sanctioned through societal reception. Considering the peculiar nature of Iran as a Twelver state despite its theocratic commitments is not completely independent of influential factions who often have dissenting positions over actualizing Ayatollah Khomeini's "velayat-e-faqih", whereby the very design of the political authority holds the potential of an implicit strife between the people's elected republican parliament and president with the religious ordained Guardian Council and Supreme Leader. Herein, the potential of vetoing the parliamentary position concerning the social and economic policies

as well as holding the authority of the deciding who is eligible for contesting elections amongst other crucial political decisions. Apart from the very design of the state which is conducive towards the stronghold of the theology and arguably undermines the democratic will in the favor of ensuring stronghold of the clergy. This paper attempts to gauge the different political factions and conflict between them and interrogate the methods regarding how competition for power and influence in the process of political development and successions play out. The core concern of this paper lies in assessing the role of political factions in sparking the schism over establishing a consensual narrative of Iran's strategic position and their impact on foreign policy decision-making concerning India.

Considering that internal political dynamics of Iran are often undermined while analyzing the prospects and perils upon the bilateral relations between India and Iran, this paper holds that the significance of internal conflicts between factions and the rift between them could not be overlooked in furthering the scholastic understanding of Iran's internal tussle of power. The paper focuses on the period from 2005 to 2023, attempting to explicate the role of these factions

in the political succession and how the presidents, parliamentarians and the guardian council have been part and parcel in the dynamics across different factions which play a role in Iranian politics. The pressing concern of this paper revolve around identifying and demarcating different factions that are instrumental in Iranian politics, the stakes and points of dissent between these different factions, the negotiations and prospects of peace despite the tussle, as well as, how these different factions are of different opinion with regards to their position towards the potential and perils of the ties the aspire or detest with India. Iran is subject to key feature of a rentier state, considering the fact that élites, either those who are permanent or elected assume power on account of political representation, are eligible to access immense "rent" derived largely from oil exports (for which there is no proper parliamentary oversight), this wealth is then consequently allocated for the concentration of power and influence, in instating the clientelistic networks which ensure the perpetuation of influence, wealth and power (Fathollah- Nejad, 2021).

Core Contentions regarding Political Factions in Iran

The factional politics of Iran is largely under looked, especially within the existing literature whereby most English literature on this subject is marred by the notions of bilateral relations with different countries and how they impact the Iran's stance with the larger international community, instead of attempting to understand how the tussle between these factions are impacting social and cultural with regards to the implications that they hold for the political evolution, policy impacts and the situations concerning political stability within Iran. One of the most key concerns that this paper attempts to investigate stems from inquiring what are the key political factions in Iran during the period from 2005 to 2023 and how have their dissenting ideologies created an arena for conflict in the aforementioned period. Another key concern that riddles the scholastic community and political commentators with regards to factionalism in Iran is regarding despite the Guardian Council having the final say over ascertaining if a candidate is eligible for contesting elections, the how are these dissenting factions spurring about and operating to fulfill their objectives and ambitions. Apart from different institutions within the design of political authority of Iran happen to the arena where struggle of factions for power and influence plays out, although these different authorities themselves act as factions where the task of streamlining the trajectory of country concerning the state of its internal politics and the terms with which it establishes contact with the international community. The internal factions and their struggle for power is also affected by the geo-political conflict across the region of west and central Asia, considering that each of these factions endorse a different approach towards tackling the geo-political conflicts that inflict the region and hence the factional conflicts are also driven by different allegiances towards the vision of accelerating geo-political influence, as well as, acquiring more control over the resources and access to rent for the sake of acquiring and perpetuating wealth, power and influence.

Political Structure in Iran: Explicating Key Authorities

Iran's Islamic Republic combines elements of both theocracy and democracy. The Supreme Leader, currently Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, holds significant power alongside an elected president and parliament. The Guardian Council comprises of clerics and jurists which plays a crucial role in vetting candidates and ensuring adherence to Islamic principles.

Supreme Leader

The Supreme Leader of Iran is the highest-ranking political and religious authority in the country. They hold the authority to interpret Islamic principles and guide the country's policies based on those principles. They hold substantial political power oversees and guides the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. Despite the existence of an elected president and parliament, the Supreme Leader exercises final authority over matters of national importance. They are the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, providing control over the military and security apparatus. They shape Iran's foreign policy through undertaking decisions regarding international relations and matters of strategic importance. They appoint half of the Guardian Council's members and ensure that legislation aligns with Islamic principles. The Supreme Leader is responsible for appointing key officials, such as head of the judiciary, the head of state broadcasting, and commanders of the

military and security forces. The succession of supreme leader is ambiguous, this ambiguity give way for different factions to influence wherein the Assembly of Experts is responsible for electing, supervising and dismissing, although the appointment of supreme leader is for an entire lifetime and their decision has never been challenged,

President of Iran

The President of Iran holds a significant position in the country's political structure. Their powers are subject to the overall framework established by the Supreme Leader and the Islamic Republic's political system. They are elected through popular vote for a four-year term and vetted and approved by the Guardian Council, which is under the influence of the Supreme Leader. They head the executive branch along with setting domestic policies, economic strategies, and social programs with due approval from the Supreme Leader. They represent Iran in international forums, engage in negotiations, and contribute to shaping the country's global relations. The President is involved in economic matters, including budget proposals and economic planning with the influence of Supreme Leader and other key institutions. The President can propose legislation to the parliament and has the power to veto bills, although, the Guardian Council can review and reject legislation.

Guardian Council

The Guardian Council of Iran is a powerful body with a significant role in the country's political and legislative processes. It is responsible for vetting candidates for presidential, parliamentary, and Assembly of Experts elections ensuring that candidates adhere to Islamic principles and loyalty to the ideals of the Islamic Republic. It oversees the electoral process by monitoring the fairness of elections and addressing any irregularities. It reviews all legislation and interprets the constitution passed by the Iranian parliament, ensuring its compatibility with Islamic law (Sharia). It consists of 12 members. Six of them are Islamic jurists appointed by the Supreme Leader, and the other six are experts in various fields appointed by the judiciary and approved by the parliament. This composition ensures a mix of religious and technical expertise. It works in conjunction with the Expediency Discernment Council that resolves disputes between the parliament and the Guardian Council.

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)

The IRGC in Iran is a powerful paramilitary tasked with safeguarding the Islamic Republic and protecting it from internal and external threats operating independently along with the regular armed forces. Its political influence is exercised by supporting the Supreme Leader and having a stronghold in the government and state institutions. The IRGC is involved in various economic activities, including construction, energy, and telecommunications. It controls a substantial portion of Iran's economy, contributing to its influence and resources (Reuters, 2023). The IRGC is active in regional affairs especially with regards to West Asia, providing support to allied groups and militias. Its the foreign espionage and paramilitary arm, the Quds Force heavily influences its allied militia across the Middle East, from Lebanon to Iraq and Yemen to Syria. Its members have fought in support of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria's civil war and have backed Iraqi security forces in their battle against Islamic State militants in recent years. It is alleged to have founded Lebanon's Hezbollah in 1982 to export Iran's Islamic Revolution and fight Israeli forces that invaded Lebanon that same year. It has been involved in suppressing internal dissent, particularly during periods of political unrest through quelling protests and uprisings. It is significantly linked to Iran's nuclear program, particularly in securing and protecting sensitive nuclear facilities.

Parliament (Majlis)

It is officially known as the Islamic Consultative Assembly. Members of the parliament (Majlis deputies) propose, debate, and vote on laws that impact various aspects of Iranian society, including politics, economy, and social issues. Members of the Majlis represent the diverse interests and views of the Iranian population. It serves as a forum for the expression of different political, social, and cultural perspectives. Members of the Majlis represent the diverse interests and views of the Iranian population. It serves as a forum for the expression of different political, social, and cultural perspectives. It is the most vibrant organ of the political structure and conducive to the exchange and deliberations across different factions in Iran. It conducts the usual legislative and executive functions assigned to the parliament, such as, approving the budget, confirms the ministerial appointments proposed by the president, oversees the executive activities and holds officials accountable, approves international treaties negotiated by the government and contributes in the elections of key officials of the Guardian Council and the Assembly of Experts.

Identifying the factions: Historical Background and Demarcations

The political system of Iran was termed *correntocrazia* (which literally translates to 'factionocracy') (Baktiari, 1996), it was alleged that under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini there were no explicit power asymmetries across factions as the style of his leadership was focused on balancing dissenting views and perceived Parliament to be a useful arena for different factions to discuss, debate and deliberate over their conflicting viewpoints. After the demise of Khomeini, Iranian politics is characterized to be strained by elite factionalism and power rivalry. There were some subtle changes in the equation regarding the political factions Iran.

Khamenei was elevated to the position of *velayat-e-faqih*, or Supreme Leader whereas the pragmatist, Hashemi Rafsanjani (1989-1997) became the president of Iran. Under these two leaders, Iranian politics prioritized were seen to be based on national interest rather than ideology which were a bone of contention between different political factions because the conservatives were not in favor these developments on account of the seeming soft stance on aggravating the revolution across different parts of the world. These ordained and elected leaders raised the expectation among the international community that they would de-radicalize Iranian foreign policy and make it pragmatic and realistic. Thus Khomeini's concept of 'export of the revolution' was re-defined in less radical and more rhetorical terms. The main focus of Iran's foreign policy, during this period, was rebuilding cooperation with advanced industrial countries, the European Union (EU) and Asian countries including the Persian Gulf countries. After Rafsanjani, reformist leader Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005) became the president of Iran who allied with the reformist faction, his call for a "dialogue of civilizations" and emphasis on political openness led to a freer media environment which was not condoned by the conservative elements within the government and the clerical establishment resisted the changes he brought about. He tried to continue his predecessor's political stance especially with regard to its attitude towards the international community. Although Khamenei dissuaded Khatami from conducting direct negotiations with the US. Despite disagreement between Khamenei and Khatami on domestic issues, Khamenei supported Khatami's approach towards the GCC as well as Asian and European countries. But Khamenei was highly skeptical of any diplomatic relations with the US. Khamenei believed that Iranian national interests required close relationship with its neighbors and extended neighbours, as well as its European trading partners. However, he would disagree with Khatami over the latter's approach towards engaging the US. This is not to deny that in the initial stages of Khatami's presidency Khamenei was willing to allow him some leeway.

Khatami's call for his 'dialogue among civilizations' was welcomed abroad. However, the hardliners at home were critical of such initiatives. In June 2005, this initiative lost its shine and the subsequent international developments made such a dialogue even less acceptable to the Iranians especially the conservatives.

Scholastic understanding on pertinent factions in Iran is divided over the identification of different factions, while certain scholars that only two factions are prominent namely 'moderates' and 'radicals' (Siavoshi, 1992), principlists (whose allegiance is tied theocrats across 'left' and 'right') and 'reformists' (who are identified as republicans across left and right) (Mohseni, 2016), while others advocate factional divisions in contemporary Iran are far more complicated and fluid, and they do not lend themselves to simple classification (Moslem, 2002). Whereas, some scholars argue that Iranian politics is more concerned with individuals instead of factions (Warnaar, 2013). The most accurate observation with regards to factionalism in Iran states that "each faction is made up of a number of smaller factions whose positions may shift over time; alternatively, a faction's status may coincide with those of other groups associated with another faction. The demarcation separating factions are often unclear and undefined with tremendous fluidity and changing positions characterizing various grouping and alliances" (Rizvi, 2013). This paper classifies and identifies three pertinent factions which are often influential in the political development and succession in Iran especially during the period that spanned across 2005-2023.

Conservatives: Also known as principlists or hardliners, conservatives generally advocate for preserving the Islamic Republic's revolutionary principles. They often support a strict interpretation of Islamic law and are skeptical about opening up to Western influences.

Politically, they tend to emphasize the role of the Supreme Leader and favor a more centralized and authoritative government.

Reformists: Reformists seek political and social reforms within the framework of the Islamic Republic. They emphasize the importance of civil liberties, political participation and rule of law. Reformists often advocate for a more open political environment, improved relations with the international community, and greater personal freedoms. However, their ability to implement reforms is influenced by the balance of power within the Iranian political system.

Moderates: Sometimes overlapping with reformists, moderates adopt a pragmatic approach. They strive for a balance between preserving Islamic principles and addressing the socio-economic needs of the population. Moderates may support limited political and social reforms while also favoring economic development and diplomatic engagement with the international community. Their positions often lies between the more conservative and reformist factions.

Maneuvering the Conflict amongst Political Factions across 2005 and 2023

This section indulges in analyzing the role and influence of factions in Iran during the period of 2005 and 2023, herein, the presidencies of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Hassan Rouhani and Ebrahim Raisi have been focused upon considering that each of these presidents are associated with different factions. Hereby, the implicit nature of the operations of the political factions in Iran with regard to their quest for political representation and lack thereof are being assessed.

The nature of struggle is characterized by the representation that each faction is able to attain and retain in the quest of establishing and maintaining relevance in the political arena. As opposed to the popular conception, Iran is not a one-man dictatorship; instead it is an oligarchy of clerics and parliamentarians (Kazemzadeh, 2008). Hence, the political factions and divisions which further different goals with regards to the social design, political freedom, inculcation and approach towards the international community with regards to shifts in power hold very key insights into the geo-political developments within West and Central Asia, considering Iran's stance is very vital in shifting the balance of power, the political developments within Iran have been of significant concern. Although, the role of factions in perpetuating and negotiating the conflicts have largely been understood through categories which stem from the cannon of western literature, scholastic understanding on Iran have highlighted that the conventional understanding of the categories or faction as demarcated as 'left'/'right' or 'conservatives', 'reformists' and 'moderates' do not explicitly apply in the case of Iranian politics (Perletta, 2022). Considering that the applicability of eligibility for contestations has to be approved by the guardian council which consists of clerics (faqih) and jurists (specializing indifferent areas of law, to be elected by the Parliament (Majlis) among the Muslim jurists who are nominated by the Chief justice, who in turn is also appointed by the Supreme Leader). Hereby, the assertions of different factions despite all points of dissents have to be funneled through the approval of Supreme Leader and the Guardian Council. Hence, the political arena where the differences of political factions play out are unlike any other country

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's Presidency (2005-2013) - Conservative Resurgence

During Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's presidency in Iran from 2005 to 2013, Iranian politics witnessed significant developments marked by both domestic and international implications. Ahmadinejad was associated with the conservative and populist faction in Iran which emphasized on traditional values, social conservatism, and held a strong stance on national interests (Ehteshami & Mahjoob, 2007). His presidency was marked by populist economic policies, often focusing on subsidies and welfare programs to address social issues which run contrary to the conventional ideas that are ascribed to the conservative faction worldwide (considering that they tend to align with a more laissez faire). Domestically, his economic policies also proved to be a source of increasing polarization due to granting inexpensive loans and heavy spending on infrastructure and other projects, combined with subsidies on fuel, food and other items contributing to a high rate of inflation (rising up to 10% during his first term and reaching as high as 25% during 2009) (Dareni, 2007). This economic turmoil was fueled by international sanctions imposed on Iran on account of its commitment towards its nuclear program (Jacedanfar & Melman, 2007) making it difficult to attract foreign investment. Hereby, the economic situation became a point of conflict as well as an important campaign issue during 2009 elections. Despite his focus towards welfare and easing economic burden upon its citizens, the reformists and fellow traditionalists openly opposed Ahmadinejad's policies due to the lack of political openness and press censorship (from the perspective of reformists), as he was heavily criticized for centralizing power and limiting political freedoms, contributing to internal tensions within Iran's political landscape, while the conservatives criticized his presidency on account of populist measures like cash transfers and subsidies undertaken during his term in office.

Although, Ahmadinejad's confrontational stance towards foreign policy appealed to some hardliners, others within the conservative camp were concerned that such a rhetoric and advancements which strained Iran's relations, these worries were enhanced by the economic impact of sanctions. Even the conservatives were vocal about their uncomfoting authoritative nature of Ahmadinejad's which included suppressing political opposition and restricting freedom of speech. The heavy handed crackdown on the 2009 Green Movement protest drew criticism from even the conservative sympathizers. Apart from experiencing a power struggle with reformers and fellow conservatives in parliament, he also strained his relationship with the Revolutionary Guard and with Supreme Leader over the dismissal of intelligence minister Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Eje'i and his support for his controversial close adviser, Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei. During the time of his presidency Iran continued to be a crucial energy partner for India despite facing many challenges on account of international pressure imposed on the behest of Iran's nuclear program but maintained energy ties. India continued its efforts to develop the Chabahar Port in Iran, aiming to enhance trade and connectivity in the region despite international sanctions. Both Iran and India shared concerns about stability in Afghanistan. Ahmadinejad declared his intentions over contesting for another term during 2017 presidential election, despite the objections of the Supreme Leader, Khamenei. Though his nomination was vetted by the Guardian Council. During the 2017-18 Iranian protests, Ahmadinejad criticized the current government of Iran. He made a second attempt at registering to run for the 2021 presidential election, and was rejected again by the Guardian Council.

Hassan Rouhani (2013-2021) Presidency: The Rise of Moderates

Hassan Rouhani served as the President of Iran from 2013 to 2021; his term is characterized to have allegiance towards the moderate or pragmatic faction. His presidency was marked by efforts to improve Iran's relations with the international community and address domestic challenges, he advocated for a more open and inclusive foreign policy and sought to improve Iran's image on the global stage. He garnered support from moderates and reformists who sought social and political changes, he aligned those favoring a more open and cooperative approach both domestically and internationally, during his tenure he faced staunch opposition

from conservative factions, particularly regarding the nuclear deal and his diplomatic overtures. One of Rouhani's significant achievements was the negotiation and signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015, wherein the negotiations around limiting Iran's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief were conducted. This diplomatic success enhanced Rouhani's international standing and demonstrated his commitment to resolving the nuclear issue. Although, this move was vehemently criticized amongst the staunch conservative factions who argue that Iran was losing its peculiar position towards being an unfettered geopolitical power and such negotiations would prove deleterious for Iran's position. Rouhani's ideological and political position as moderate or pragmatic figure can also be accounted from economic challenges inherited from his predecessor. He implemented economic reforms to address issues such as inflation and unemployment. However, progress was hindered by external factors, including the reinstating of sanctions following the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018. Despite his moderate stance, Rouhani faced challenges from hardline factions within Iran, particularly from those aligned with the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The conservative-dominated institutions, such as the Guardian Council, often limited the scope of his reforms. He advocated for greater freedom of expression and press during his presidency. However, these efforts faced resistance from conservative elements in the Iranian establishment. Rouhani pursued a more diplomatic approach in the region, attempting to ease tensions with neighboring countries. However, conflicts in the Middle East and Iran's involvement in regional issues continued to pose challenges to his efforts. During Rouhani's tenure, his moderate faction faced challenges in various elections, including parliamentary and local elections. Conservative factions sought to maintain or strengthen their influence in these electoral processes, leading to political competition and occasional confrontations. Iran remained an important energy supplier for India, and economic ties were strengthened during Rouhani's presidency, with discussions on infrastructure development and trade. The Chabahar Port acts as a strategic project, it was initiated during Ahmadinejad's presidency and progressed significantly during Rouhani's tenure. It aimed at enhancing connectivity and trade routes, providing India access to Afghanistan and Central Asia while bypassing Pakistan.

Ibrahim Raisi's Presidency (2021 till date): Revoking Ultra-Conservatism

The newly elected President Ibrahim Raisi, who is associated to align with the ultra-conservativist faction, stepped on this role in a very tumultuous situation. This precarious situation can be understood in various ways considering that the withdrawal of United States from the JCPOA, alongside full scale escalation between Russia and Ukraine (which drastically altered the balance of power in West Asia by rigidifying blocs which side either with Russia and NATO respectively) and civil unrest on account of the rise of humanitarian issues which were caused on account of alleged human rights violation against women in Iran. The narrative and popular protest have been in the aftermath of Raisi's rise to presidency and the steps taken by state authorities to repress the protest had been further divided people's opinion and raised concern over the state of governance and balance of power between the factions within Iran. Hereby, the factions like reformists and moderates are actively critical of Ibrahim Raisi's presidency and allege his governance to be draconian in suppressing dissents within the country. Though, the assertions of dissenting factions and their critique holds semblance in the contemporary political climate in Iran. In 2019, the United States issued sanctions on Raisi, arguing his involvement in internal persecution. Raisi is renowned for heading the "death commission" that authorized the extrajudicial murder of hundreds of political inmates in 1988. Both in his successful 2021 campaign and his unsuccessful 2017 presidential attempt, Raisi was critical of Rouhani. Raisi's hardliner stance and affiliations with the proto-conservative factions assisted his candidature and supplemented support for his rise to power, considering that his candidacy was heavily supported by the Supreme leader and the Guardian Council, this support is reflected in vetting the candidature of Ahmadinejad and fellow prominent candidates during the 2021 elections. Raisi has a strong stance towards Europe and America, his presidency is witnessing the trend of 'de-dollarization' (shift from the world's reliance on United States Dollar as the chief currency reserve) where the primacy of dollar as the currency of exchange for trade of crude oil has drastically altered the influence of United States in the region. This shift from the prominence of petro-dollar has simmered the influence of sanctions, considering fellow countries are now interested in conducting trade on fellow currencies. This alters the bargaining power of Iran in foreign trade, hence, the rise of an explicitly conservative faction which is backed by the Supreme Leader, guardian council and Islamic Revolutionary Guard corps along with the consideration towards the succession of the Supreme Leader, considering the likeliness of Ibrahim Raisi for becoming the next Supreme Leader of Iran have contributed to his rise of power and influence. The tendency of associating dissenting actions to not be in the best interest of Iran and the allegations upon dissenters for being motivated by the influence of foreign powers have manifested in the dismissal of various ministers with on account of the dissent and disturbances within Iran. Iran has witnessed waves of anti-government protest since the death of a 22 year old Kurdinsh Iranian woman who was detained by the morality police for allegedly violating Iran's strict Islamic dress code. This protest generated narrative that claimed of its escalation for the demands of overthrowing Iran's Shiite cleric's challenging their four decade rule. Although, this narrative was curbed by the statements of Raisi's government alleging that these protests were motivated by foreign powers and claim that these were an extension of the economic sanctions to cause unrest in the civic culture of Iran. In such a political climate, all tendencies for fellow factions to further their stakes and alter the balance of power in Iran are viewed with a perspective of suspicion. This creates a very conflictual

environment where the dissents are curbed under the pretense of alleging all dissents to be stemming from perverse and malicious intention and not having Iran's best interest in mind.

Clientelistic Politics in Iran

Clientelistic politics refers to a political system where politicians provide benefits to individuals or groups in exchange for political support, the elements of clientelism are pertinent and peculiar on account of the nature of especially because of the implicit rentier nature of Iranian economy. Hence, perpetuations of appropriating stakes are concretized by establishing client-patron relationships between the representatives (elected or prospective candidates). Scholars allege that the Islamic Republic of Iran holds staunch overtones of clientelism whereby the power structure of Iran has shifted from populism and transformed towards clientelism and militarization of the government (Alamdari, 2005). Politicians, especially those in power, often build networks of patronage where they provide material benefits or favors to individuals or groups in exchange for loyalty and support, they use access to benefits such as jobs, services, or subsidies as a way to build and maintain a loyal support base. Political representatives in Iran implement economic policies that disproportionately benefit certain groups or regions, creating a system of dependence and loyalty in exchange for economic advantages. Such practices often take form of vote-buying, where politicians distribute material goods or financial incentives to secure votes.

In regions with tribal or ethnic affiliations, politicians leverage these networks to consolidate support, providing benefits to specific groups in exchange for political loyalty. Religious figures and institutions also play a role in clientelistic politics, especially in areas where religious leaders have significant influence or even the appointments of key officials are concerned. Politicians may align themselves with religious authorities to gain support. Political factions are actualized through the practice of establishing client-patron allegiances where positions of power and influence are bestowed to fellow members who ideologically align with the vision and the stakes the representatives of different sanctions stand for, there have been immense disturbances on account of the rejection of the suggestions of key political authorities and appointment of officials which would not question the mandate of their senior officials on account of the fear of losing their positions of power, such instances were very common during Rouhani's and Raisi's presidency.

Conclusion

The core concern that this paper attempts to highlight is the pressing need of identifying and addressing the lack of understanding towards the internal dynamics of Iranian politics on account of the factional conflicts operating therein. Considering that language barriers have often played a crucial role in instrumenting the understanding of Iran especially pertaining to their discourse that operates within the borders of the nation, herein, the risk of only addressing and comprehending the discourse through a marred lens of how they do or do not fit the ascribed role that they've been assigned in the international arena for supporting the objectives and ambitions of major foreign powers. This study stresses on the emphasis of untangling the assemblage of the major foreign powers that Iran has been tied to in major scholastic works and indulge in the need of paving an understanding of Iran's internal conflicts and peace proposition independent of how they serve the goals and aspirations that they have been assigned, because Iran happens to assert a peculiar and an explicitly unique position for itself within its design of political institutions and while asserting a crucial and distinct perspective in the international community. This distinction associated with Iran can only be best understood when one interrogates the roots of internal dynamics with regards to the factions operating therein. This tussle and tumult across different factions and how the very definition of 'factions' hold a peculiar manifestation within the Iranian context considering how different institutions of political authorities themselves act as "factions" wherein the stakes, participation and representation of dissenting objectives play out, alongside the ideological differences in the representative politics of elected parliamentarians. This paper highlights the need to comprehend how despite the explicit demarcation of powers across different authorities in the political structure of Iran these factions arise, operate and further their stakes.

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