



## ABSTRACTS

### State / Society Complex in Twentieth-Century Iran Mehdi Parvizi Amineh

This paper claims that the continuous process of authoritarian or what we call *Hobbesian* state/society relations of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century Iran is caused by the weakness of civil society and its modern social forces. Our analysis of the twentieth century *modern* 'state and society relations' in Iran, is based on a dialectical interaction between the state / society-complex - *history as the part* - and the global political economy - *history as the whole* - during three historical periods between 1900 and 2000: (1) 1930-1941 under Reza Shah; (2) 1953-1977 under Mohammad Reza Shah; and (3) 1990- under Khomeini/Hashemi-Rafsanjani and Khamenei/ Khatami.

The capitalist transition process in Iran took place through a dialectical complex of external and internal developments. The *external* developments are found in the process that Fernand Braudel describes as the *longue durée* of global capitalist expansion, which influences and puts pressure on pre-capitalist social relations. The origins of this historical transition process can be traced to the *moment* of 'Rise of the West and decline of the Asian/Islamic Empires' from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. This gradually resulted in the marginalisation and subsequent incorporation of the Asian Empire in general and Persian/Iranian economic system in particular into the global economy and led to the disintegration and subordination of the local traditional economy and global system. By *internal* factors we are referring to the long-term historical process of social, political and economic modernisation guided from above into the public sphere without the integration of the 'mass', or in what we term the 'passive revolution' (*rivoluzione passiva*). Through the passive revolution the state activated *from above* the *complex* process of industrialisation and tried to impose social development in a forced tempo. With other words, in resisting marginalisation in the global political economy, the state tried to achieve an autonomous, catch-up development, through the *passive revolution*, involving authoritarian or what we call 'Hobbesian' patterns of political domination and the subordination of a weak, embryonic civil society to the state-led social and economic modernisation. The successful socio-economic modernisation from above demanded the creation of a political system in which authoritarian rule is changed by the formal legal guarantees which will permit the legitimate expression of different social classes and groups' interests, to place the struggle of contending political forces in a legal and constitutional framework and make it visible to all, and guarantee its public control over important decisions.

The Iranian history can be characterised by a continued *failed* process of passive revolution. The first attempt at modernisation from above was made by the political elite of the Qajar Empire (1786-1925), as a reaction to the marginalisation of the Empire in the global capitalist system. This attempt failed, on account of the Anglo-Russian rivalry in Iran and the weak political system of the Qajar Empire. The task was undertaken again in the twentieth century during two periods from 1930 to 1941 and 1961 to 1977 respectively under the Hobbesian states of Reza Shah and Muhammad Reza Shah. The rapid socio-economic modernisation and extremely *uneven* development between 1961 and 1977, which was embodied by land reforms and industrialisation, resulted in demographic and social tensions. This culminated in a structural economic and political crisis, which ultimately led to the Iranian Islamic Revolution (1978/79). Not surprising, the post-revolutionary regime gradually stabilised in the 1980s but reverted to another state / society complex with a Hobbesian character and a new effort from the 1990s to apply the strategy of passive revolution. This long-term process shows the repeating tendency towards *passive revolution* and the *authoritarian* social order in Iran. We argue that civil society in Iran does not stabilise but remains *primordial and gelatinous*