

# Analysis of Economic-Social Development Programs During the Second Pahlavi Era Based on Samuel Huntington's Theory

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Political development and economic-social development are among the topics that have drawn the attention of critics in recent decades. Since World War II, Western scholars have sought to promote a model of political development aligned with their principles and theories to facilitate their influence in various regions. However, although the Second Pahlavi government attempted to align itself with Western societies, political advancements did not occur during this period. This study aims to compare Samuel Huntington's model of economic-social development (as one of the latest Western models) with the development model implemented during the Second Pahlavi era to highlight its characteristics. Each of these models is based on three main pillars: increasing societal wealth and welfare (and eradicating poverty), individual well-being, and the functional adaptation of societies. The distinctions between these models are discussed in the text. The findings of this study indicate that none of the prerequisites for political development, as outlined by Samuel Huntington, were met during the Second Pahlavi era. On the contrary, obstacles to political development emerged during this period. These barriers included the presence of an authoritarian culture within the Second Pahlavi government, the absence of a scientific and rational perspective, societal weakness, and the erosion of social capital.

**Keywords:** *Development, Political Development, Economic-Social Development, Second Pahlavi Era, Huntington's Model.*

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## 1. Introduction

Throughout human history, the pursuit of prosperity, both at the individual level and within society, has been a fundamental issue. Some philosophers considered a society based on justice as a prosperous society, while others viewed communal societies or societies based on natural freedom as prosperous.

Since the 18th century, early economists—who were also primarily philosophers—shifted their focus from

the nature of prosperity to methods and tools such as wealth, health, knowledge, welfare, freedom, and technology, which were perceived as means to achieve prosperity from a rational perspective. In other words, the concept of "development" in the 20th century was equivalent to the historical notion of "prosperity," which was regarded as a valuable goal for nations worldwide (Renani, 2002).

The concept of development has a long history. Since the European Renaissance, and in line with social scientists'



attention to concepts such as "progress," "evolution," and "growth," the term has undergone complex semantic changes. Ultimately, in the 20th century, it evolved into an independent concept known as "development."

"Planning" for development emerged as a process after World War II, primarily for rebuilding war-torn areas and ensuring the independence of former colonies. One of the most successful development planning models globally dates back to the former Soviet Union, which adopted a comprehensive and centralized approach involving extensive state intervention in all means of production and service provision. Due to the positive outcomes of this planning model, many countries, including non-communist ones, implemented development planning after World War II.

In our country, development has had an intermediate nature, yielding unfavorable results in some regions. Ultimately, if development is considered a socio-economic phenomenon, it is defined by indicators such as individual welfare, per capita income, purchasing power parity, social justice, and quality of life. However, economic development is often equated with economic growth, encompassing not only quantitative economic growth but also inherent concepts of economic change and transformation (Azkia & Ghafari, 2004).

Economic-social development, on the other hand, refers to the continuous economic growth and progress of a society to achieve individual and social well-being. This transformation is realized only through developments rooted in the economic, social, political, scientific, and cultural foundations of society (Abrahamian, 2006; Malekif, 1979).

Accordingly, in this study, economic-social development indicators, including individual welfare, per capita income, perceived social justice, and citizens' quality of life, are assessed. The contribution of each factor to the overall development of the Second Pahlavi era is examined.

## 2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

A review of existing sources indicates that three major schools of thought have emerged in political development studies.

The first school consists of classical developmentalist theories. This approach seeks to formulate and structure universal explanatory theories inspired by 19th-century sociological ideas. It should be noted that the inductive

guidance of economics played a decisive role in shaping the developmentalist perspective within political science. Key figures in this school include Lipset, Dahl, Deutsch, Lerner, Shils, Almond, Coleman, Pye, Verba, and Organski (Milani, 2013).

The second school of thought in political development studies aims to reconstruct sociology (political science) by moving away from grand theories and adopting abstract formal models that focus solely on identifying commonalities among all political modernization processes (Badi, 2000, p. 23). Notable scholars in this tradition include Huntington, Apter, Bendix, Rokkan, and Eisenstadt.

## 3. General Discussion of the Study

### 3.1. Political Development

Various definitions have been provided for political development. In this study, political development refers to citizens' political participation and group competition—criteria identified by scholars such as Robert Dahl, Almond, David Apter, and Eisenstadt (Bashiriyeh, 2001). Daniel Lerner and Lucian Pye also identified electoral participation as an indicator of political participation (Badi, 1996).

Beyond economic and military aid, ideological necessities and international system imperatives made it essential for the United States to focus on the political development of Third World countries. Under these circumstances, the modernization and political development of Third World nations became a priority in U.S. foreign policy. Many American scholars and theorists believed that one of the key preventive measures against these nations joining the Eastern Bloc and communist countries was to support their political development. The rationale was that such efforts would not only improve economic conditions but also accelerate political transformations, inevitably steering these nations toward liberal democracy.

Political development emphasizes objectives such as democracy, freedom, and human rights. A closer analysis reveals that political development aims at micro-level aspirations, particularly individual freedoms and personal rights.

### 3.2. Economic Development

Discussions on economic development began in European countries during the 17th and 18th centuries. The pressures of industrialization and technological advancement, combined with the colonization of weaker nations, quickly widened the gap between developed and underdeveloped countries, leading to the emergence of two distinct global blocs: developed (or industrialized) nations and underdeveloped (or developing) nations.

"Economic development" refers to growth accompanied by increased productive capacities, including physical, human, and social capacities. While economic development results in quantitative production growth, it also transforms social institutions, changes perspectives, enhances resource utilization, and fosters continuous innovation. Moreover, it alters the composition of production and the relative contribution of various inputs in the production process.

Development is an all-encompassing phenomenon within a society; it cannot be confined to a single sector. Unlike economic growth, which is entirely quantitative, development is a qualitative phenomenon driven by human factors and, therefore, has no specific limits (Ghafari, 2010).

Additionally, economic development is a process through which the economic and social foundations of society undergo transformation. The primary outcomes of such change include reduced economic inequalities, shifts in production structures, adjustments in distribution patterns, and modifications in consumption models. Economic development is inherently linked to social progress and the advancement of society as a dynamic entity (Azkia & Ghafari, 2004).

Economic development has two primary objectives:

- Increasing societal wealth and welfare (and eradicating poverty)
- Creating employment opportunities—both of which align with social justice.

The perspective on economic development varies between developed and underdeveloped nations. In developed countries, the primary goal is to enhance welfare and living standards, whereas in underdeveloped nations, the emphasis is on poverty eradication and social justice.

### 3.3. Social Development

The term "social development" is relatively recent. A review of sociology dictionaries from 1950 to 1996 reveals that they do not mention social development (Milani, 2013). In fact, what we refer to today as social development emerged as a result of shifting development approaches from the 1970s onward. Its prominence was particularly driven by the excesses of mid-20th-century economic planners and the structural adjustment policies of the 1980s.

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in a report titled *Financing Global Social Development*, defines social development through the lens of human factors and human development as follows: social development, or social progress, refers to individual well-being and the functional adaptation of societies. It encompasses efforts, issues, concerns, and sectors of development, as well as social perspectives on human activity domains. The social perspective links the individual to society, considers various human needs, distinguishes between goals and means, and is sensitive to the pursuit of the common good of humanity (Katouzian, 1993, 1998).

The World Bank defines social development in terms of democracy, government accountability, sustainable participation, and the empowerment of marginalized groups (Mousavi, 2007).

It is evident that social development, as understood since the 1990s, aims to involve all members of society in public affairs, recognize their rights, and clarify their responsibilities, which naturally accompany these rights. In this way, social development seeks to eliminate discrimination and create a conducive social environment for individuals to realize their potential (Piran, 2005).

## 4. The Evolution of Political Development in Iran

As previously discussed in the definition of variables and research methodology, analyzing the trajectory of political development in Iran requires an ideal-type model of political development. This model allows for the systematic assessment and evaluation of political events and transformations in Iran over the past century. Therefore, in this section, based on the constructed ideal model, the political and social conditions of the country will be examined according to the six historical periods

identified earlier. This analysis will assess the alignment and divergence of each period's political and social conditions with the criteria of the ideal model, thus providing a more informed depiction of the fluctuations in Iran's contemporary political development.

#### 4.1. *The First Pahlavi Period (1925–1941)*

The reign of Reza Shah marked a new chapter in Iran's political history, characterized by efforts to centralize power. His government succeeded in increasing the concentration of political power and creating new mechanisms for its consolidation. Undoubtedly, both international and domestic conditions—such as national fragmentation, economic and political instability—necessitated such centralization (Bashirieh, 2001).

According to Gabriel Almond's analysis, Iran during this period faced multiple simultaneous challenges: the "national unity revolution," the "power structure revolution," the "economic welfare revolution," and the "participation revolution" (Almond & Verba, 1963; Almond & Verba, 1992). However, the crises stemming from a lack of national unity and identity, as well as economic underdevelopment, led the political elite to prioritize the expansion and centralization of political power. Consequently, among the various goals and necessities of this period, the primary objective became increasing political power.

This period marked a unique phase in Iran's political development. The parliament, which had once held a key role as a defender of national interests and a pillar of constitutional and democratic governance, quickly lost its significance (Abrahamian, 2006; Molaei Tavani, 2002). Widespread electoral fraud, manipulation of parliamentary composition (Malekif, 1979; Matin-Daftari, 1991), and the elimination of political opposition transformed the parliament into a tool for Reza Shah. Its function was reduced to the immediate and unquestioning approval of his legislative proposals, effectively institutionalizing his decisions and creating legal barriers to civil liberties, political participation, and competition. Measures such as revoking the political immunity of parliament members and ministers, banning independent political parties and the free press, were among the actions taken to consolidate autocratic rule (Golshaeian, 1998; Molaei Tavani, 2002).

Considering the ideal-type model of political development and the historical context of this period, it

is clear that, particularly from 1927 onward, political participation and competition in party, electoral, and parliamentary activities declined to their lowest and most unfavorable levels.

#### 4.2. *The Second Pahlavi Period (1941–1979)*

The 37-year reign of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi can be divided into two distinct periods in terms of political development:

1. **The first period (1941–1953):** From September 1941, coinciding with Reza Shah's abdication, until the August 1953 coup against Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh.
2. **The second period (1953–1979):** From the coup against Mossadegh until the Islamic Revolution.

During the twelve years between 1941 and 1953, following Reza Shah's forced abdication, Iran experienced a surge in political participation and competition across various domains, particularly in electoral, parliamentary, and party activities. The political transformations following Reza Shah's downfall were most evident in the elections of the 14th National Assembly in 1944. Excluding the first four parliaments of the constitutional era, the 14th Assembly elections were arguably among the freest parliamentary elections in Iran's 72-year constitutional history (1906–1979). A major factor contributing to this electoral freedom was the weakness of the ruling administration's executive mechanisms (Abrahamian, 2006; Zibakalam, 2001).

During this period (1941–1953), Iran's political landscape opened significantly, partly due to new power rivalries among the Allied forces and the replacement of the authoritative Reza Shah with his inexperienced young son. This environment fostered the formation of political forces and parties, with the peak of political party activities occurring during the two-year tenure of Prime Minister Mossadegh (1951–1953). During this time, the newly established power structure excluded the young Shah from the political center. This period saw the emergence of the largest number of political parties and organizations in Iran's history, surpassing both earlier and later periods (Modir Shanechi, 1996). The political spectrum was dominated by four major factions: nationalist, Islamist, leftist, and pro-government parties (Aboorashad, 1992; Morshedizad, 2001).

Although these developments did not lead to a fully democratic system, they resulted in the diffusion of autocratic power (Katouzian, 1993). Political power was divided among five separate entities: the royal court, the parliament, the cabinet, foreign embassies, and the general public (Abrahamian, 2006). While some viewed this power distribution as a cause of social chaos and national disintegration, others considered it a natural yet challenging consequence of political development and public participation (Abrahamian, 2006).

During the 1960s and 1970s, parliamentary activity was severely restricted, and lawmakers gradually lost their legislative effectiveness. Although the Shah did not formally abolish the constitutional framework or dissolve the parliament, his authoritarian governance effectively rendered the constitution meaningless, reducing the parliament to a ceremonial body that merely ratified his decisions. As a result, legal participatory institutions were paralyzed, and opposition factions, both within parliament and society, lost their ability to engage, participate, and compete politically (Azghandi, 1997, 2004, 2006).

Considering the analysis presented here, it is evident that political participation and competition in Iran significantly increased during the 1941–1953 period, reaching relatively high and desirable levels. In contrast, during the 1953–1979 period—except for a brief interval between 1959 and 1963—political participation and competition in party, electoral, and parliamentary activities declined to their lowest and most unfavorable levels.

## 5. Development Based on Huntington's Theory

Huntington, in his critique of classical developmentalism, argues that political development should not be seen as contingent upon economic development. In American thought, the sequence of political development is often perceived as follows: economic aid promotes economic growth, and economic growth strengthens political stability. This deterministic approach is deeply embedded in U.S. foreign aid laws and, more importantly, in the mindset of both governmental and non-governmental aid program administrators (Huntington, 2007).

### 5.1. Foundations of Political Development

The foundations of political development have been instrumental in mitigating various crises and addressing contemporary global issues. In his seminal work *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968), Huntington outlines four fundamental arguments challenging classical theories of political development and, in doing so, establishes the core principles of his own theory. His four arguments are as follows:

### 5.2. Rejecting the Irreversibility of Political Development

Development is not an irreversible process; rather, it is often situated between phases of political decline. Huntington rejects the notion that development is a continuous progression, criticizing classical developmentalist theories for overlooking historical regressions, which have played significant roles throughout history. He argues that ancient Egypt under the pharaohs, classical Greece, and the Roman Empire all experienced periods of political deterioration that political science must account for. Huntington advocates for a revised analytical framework that remains neutral in assessing both developmental and regressive phases.

### 5.3. The Universal and Timeless Nature of Developmental Analysis

Classical theories of development prioritize contemporary societies, treating them as the exclusive subject of analysis. However, Huntington contends that development has occurred throughout human history. Many ancient societies experienced significant political transformations worthy of study. Therefore, he argues that the scope of developmental analysis should extend across all historical periods, and the conventional association of development with industrialization should be abandoned.

### 5.4. Political Development is Not Dependent on Economic, Social, or Cultural Development

Development should not be conflated with economic, social, or cultural modernization. Industrialization is not the sole driver of political development; in some cases, it even obstructs it or delays its realization. In an effort to compensate for their historical lag, Third World countries prioritize economic and social structures,

often to the detriment of political development, which becomes subordinated to industrial requirements. Consequently, the imbalance may persist in the form of sustained political decay. Huntington argues that modernization and development must be differentiated. In his view, modernization refers to the direct effects of industrialization on economic and political structures, whereas development is an independent process.

Huntington asserts that political development should be defined based on independent and universal political criteria applicable to both ancient and modern societies. These criteria must analytically distinguish political development from economic and social phenomena while also identifying the mechanisms of political decline (Huntington, 2007).

Huntington believes that for a society to evolve into a political community and achieve political development, power must be exercised through political institutions. Accordingly, he considers those political systems to be developed that possess stable, well-established, complex, independent, and cohesive institutions (Huntington, 2007).

He further argues that institutions function to mediate and regulate power, ensuring that the dominance of one social force is balanced by the participation of other forces. In a heterogeneous and complex society, no single social force can govern alone and establish a political community unless it creates political institutions that can survive independently of the social forces that originated them (Huntington, 2007).

Huntington builds upon the work of his predecessors, such as Ralf Dahrendorf and Shmuel Eisenstadt, but expands their theories in a broader and deeper manner. While earlier theorists regarded the gradual institutionalization of political conflicts as a prerequisite for democracy and political development, Huntington elevates institutionalization as the sole criterion for political development, structuring his entire theory around this concept (Badie, 1996).

In his view, the more integrated and coherent an organization is, the higher its level of institutionalization. Conversely, fragmented organizations have lower degrees of institutionalization. Institutionalization manifests when a society's political organizations attain a degree of continuity, recognition, and legitimacy among both the public and the political elite. A functional political organization, at a minimum, must establish clear

boundaries of authority and effective mechanisms for resolving conflicts (Huntington, 2007).

### 5.5. Requirements and Indicators of Political Development

Huntington identifies three key aspects of political modernization: the rationalization of political authority, functional and structural differentiation, and the expansion of political participation (Huntington, 2007). Political modernization, therefore, requires the rationalization of authority, structural differentiation (institution-building), and broader political participation (Huntington, 2007). Each of these components is briefly explained below.

#### 5.5.1. Rationalization of Political Authority

Political modernization necessitates the rationalization of political authority, meaning that traditional, religious, familial, and ethnic sources of authority should give way to a singular, secular, and national political authority. This concept implies that government should be a human construct rather than a product of divine will or natural law. A well-structured society must have a human-centered source of legitimacy, with adherence to civil laws taking precedence over other obligations (Huntington, 2007).

Huntington elaborates on this concept extensively in another section of his work, stating:

*"In a traditional society, transformation is inconceivable because individuals cannot even imagine it. Modernization begins when people start believing in their own capacity to understand and control nature and society to achieve their objectives. Most importantly, modernization requires faith in human ability to apply rational action in altering the material and social environment. It signifies the rejection of external constraints on human agency and the Promethean liberation of humanity from the control of gods, fate, and destiny."*

Essentially, Huntington views the rationalization of authority as a crucial element of political development. By "rationalization," he refers to the supremacy of human reason over divine decree. In this phase, individuals reach a level of rational maturity where they no longer rely on divine predestination. Instead, human reason legitimizes governmental authority, meaning that governance derives its legitimacy from human

rationality rather than a divine source. In a traditional society that has not undergone political development, individuals remain passive in the face of divine law and providence. Conversely, in a modern, developed society, individuals become active agents, independent of divine oversight (Huntington, 2007).

#### 5.5.2. *Functional and Structural Differentiation (Institutionalization)*

Political modernization requires the differentiation of political functions and the development of structures specifically designed to carry out those functions. Technical, military, administrative, and scientific competencies must be distinct from political authority, with independent and specialized institutions assigned specific political tasks. Administrative hierarchies should become increasingly structured, complex, and disciplined. Positions of power must be allocated based on merit rather than appointment or inheritance (Huntington, 2007).

#### 5.5.3. *Expansion of Political Participation*

Political modernization entails the broad participation of various social groups in political affairs. In totalitarian states, increased mass participation often leads to greater government control over society. Conversely, in democratic states, it enhances public oversight of the government. Regardless of the regime type, all modern governments must directly engage with citizens, who, in turn, are increasingly affected by governmental actions (Huntington, 2007).

Based on the aforementioned points, Huntington distinguishes modern, politically developed societies from traditional political societies through three primary indicators: rationalized authority, functionally differentiated structures, and widespread political participation. In his view, these three characteristics are essential for political development.

#### 5.5.4. *Summary and Analysis of Huntington's Theory*

The introduction of this model refutes the notion that all societies throughout history share a single, universal objective or that a uniform mechanism governs the functioning of all societies. According to proponents of this theory, society and history operate in a domain distinct from that of nature.

Rejecting the positivist approach that equates human beings with physical and material objects, this theory posits that social phenomena are constantly evolving, influencing one another, and undergoing continuous transformation. No social or historical phenomenon remains in a state of absolute stagnation; rather, each interacts with others, leading to change and development.

Throughout history, no civilization has existed in complete isolation, as civilizations inevitably merge and influence one another. Thus, integration and synthesis serve as fundamental principles of evolution, rendering the idea of absolute historical rupture or complete continuity untenable.

According to this perspective, the present is a condensed embodiment of the past, and no society can entirely dissociate itself from its historical background. Consequently, any model of development must be designed with consideration of a nation's cultural and historical past as well as its future outlook (Bashirieh, 2001).

This framework suggests that tradition is not necessarily in conflict with modernity; rather, tradition serves as the foundation for modernity. Achieving a modern society is possible only through a proper transition from traditional structures. As a result, the fundamental principle governing relations between nations, religions, civilizations, and cultures is integration, and the notion that Western modern society emerged in a vacuum is an unrealistic and utopian misconception that neglects historical context.

## 6. **The Authoritarian Culture in the Second Pahlavi Government**

The authoritarian culture—characterized by absolute power, total intimidation, unquestioning obedience, monopolization of authority, lack of accountability, suppression of criticism, and a cult of personality—has been reproduced in various forms throughout Iran's history, particularly within the institution of monarchy. Only during the Constitutional Revolution (1906) did the spread of liberal thought—influenced by the first generation of Iranian intellectuals such as Akhundzadeh, Talebov, Mirza Malkam Khan, Mirza Agha Khan Kermani, and Mostashar al-Dowleh, along with enlightened clerics inspired by the European Enlightenment and the French Revolution—manage to disrupt this authoritarian

culture. These revolutionary ideas, which resonated with urban populations, led to the 1906 Constitutional Revolution, establishing the National Consultative Assembly and limiting the king's power.

However, due to the deep-rooted legacy of authoritarianism, the monarchy, and the cult of personality, these structures reasserted themselves, culminating in the Second Pahlavi era, which maintained a façade of modernity but was governed through authoritarian rule.

As a result, the efforts of Iran's first and second generations of intellectuals to institutionalize democracy, rule of law, political limitation of power, and rational governance failed to produce long-term positive outcomes.

Following the 1953 coup, which was orchestrated by British and American intelligence agencies to overthrow the legitimate government of Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh, the Pahlavi regime utilized military and security apparatuses to suppress political, social, and cultural organizations. Independent newspapers were shut down, and severe censorship was imposed on other publications.

The Second Pahlavi government then undertook economic, social, and technological modernization in an authoritarian and top-down manner. In other words, during this period—which marked the beginning of significant modernization efforts in Iran—the regime emphasized the positivist and instrumental aspects of modern civilization (Vahdat, 2003), while fundamentally disregarding public participation in political and cultural affairs.

According to various scholars, the modernization under the Second Pahlavi government was forced, imposed from above, and inherently authoritarian (Kattam, 1993).

Almost all researchers agree that the Pahlavi-era modernization was autocratic and exclusively focused on economic and technological advancements, driven by instrumental rationality and implemented by the ruling elite. However, cultural and political development—particularly public participation—was entirely neglected.

In other words, Mohammad Reza Shah's modernization policies did not entail structural political reforms or cultural transformation. Due to its authoritarian nature, his regime did not foster cultural or political modernity.

Instead, the modernization process reinforced the authoritarian state's structural power. Consequently, modernization took place in certain aspects of life without leading to genuine modernity.

In the Second Pahlavi government's vision of social transformation, critical elements of cultural and political modernity were disregarded. In other words, the complex historical and cultural processes necessary for aligning social transformation with Iran's historical and cultural experiences were entirely overlooked (Mirsepassi, 2006).

These indicators suggest that Mohammad Reza Shah was both a product and a perpetuator of authoritarian culture. By consolidating his monarchical power, which had historically obstructed democracy and freedom in Iran, and by suppressing civil society, shutting down independent newspapers, censoring the press and mass media, and dissolving political parties and middle-class organizations such as the National Front, he created political and cultural stagnation.

This suppression effectively halted intellectual progress, eliminated platforms for social and political critique, and eroded a culture of participation and competition in political, cultural, and social domains. As a result, Iranian society under the Second Pahlavi regime was deprived of the opportunity to achieve political development.

### 6.1. *Lack of Scientific and Rational Perspective*

One of the most crucial cultural elements required for political development is the prevalence of scientific and rational thinking in both societal culture and political authority. This means that "individuals in society, as social actors, must internalize the belief that every event has one or more causes, that these causes can be discovered, and that their discovery must be approached through scientific and rational methods". Additionally, political leaders must adopt scientific and rational perspectives in policy-making and governance.

Consequently, the absence of a scientific and rational outlook stands as one of the most significant cultural barriers to political development. Unfortunately, a review of Iran's social transformations, including during the Second Pahlavi era, reveals that social actors in Iranian society often followed emotions rather than rationality. In other words, whether we like it or not, Iranians tend to be highly emotional in making decisions.



According to Saeed Seraq-al-Qalam, rationality is rooted in the consistency of behavior, personality, thoughts, and intellectual tendencies. No nation, regardless of its historical background and cultural structure, can progress and develop without embracing rationality. Rationality is not bound by geography—it is a universal human achievement. The deepest definition of rationality lies in the application of thought and knowledge in every endeavor. The cure for emotionalism, impulsiveness, unpredictability, and individualism is to engage in scientific, intellectual, and rational pursuits (Sariolghalam, 2013).

A prime example of irrational governance under Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was his establishment of the Rastakhiz Party, a single-party system that mimicked totalitarian regimes, even during an era widely recognized as the age of democratization. This move blatantly mocked democracy and democratic aspirations.

In his book *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, Abrahamian (2006) states:

"In March 1975, the Shah dissolved the two existing royalist parties (the Iran Novin Party led by Hoveyda and the Mardom Party led by Asadollah Alam) and established the Rastakhiz Party, proclaiming that a one-party state would now govern the country. He further declared that anyone unwilling to join this party must be a secret supporter of the Tudeh (Communist) Party. These traitors, he insisted, must either be imprisoned or leave the country immediately. When foreign journalists asked the Shah how this declaration contradicted his previous support for a two-party system, he mockingly responded: 'Freedom of thought! Democracy! Should five-year-olds go on strike and flood the streets? ... Democracy? Freedom? What do these words even mean? I have no use for them'" (Abrahamian, 2006).

On the other hand, the formation of radical groups, such as the Fadaiyan-e-Khalq (People's Devotees), Mojahedin-e-Khalq (People's Mujahedin), and various fundamentalist religious organizations, reflected irrational and unscientific approaches to society, culture, politics, and social issues. These intellectual, political, and religious fundamentalist groups, driven by abstract and irrational ideologies, adopted armed struggle against the Pahlavi regime, believing this would bring freedom, democracy, and social justice to Iran.

However, it is irrational to assume that assassinations and armed operations can lead a society toward democracy, social justice, or political development. These extremist groups ultimately faced severe repression from the authoritarian Pahlavi regime, which responded to their radical actions by intensifying political and cultural repression. This demonstrates the irrationality on both sides of the conflict.

Thus, without overcoming unscientific and irrational perspectives in societal culture, political movements, and governing authorities, neither general development nor political development can be achieved.

## 6.2. *Weak Society and the Erosion of Social Capital*

A crucial barrier to social and economic development is the weakness of civil society and the erosion of social capital, both of which facilitate societal decline. The notion that a society can achieve intellectual progress, cultural and political development, and stable democracy without strengthening civil society and social capital is naïve and unrealistic.

A strong civil society is the cornerstone of democracy, both in theory and practice, and plays a decisive role in holding state power accountable. According to John Ehrenberg,

*"Civil society often serves democracy by restraining state power, which is of paramount importance. The history of contemporary social transformations clearly demonstrates how vital a robust sphere of independent organizations can be. However, public participation in civil society depends on the nature of the state and the character of associations, groups, and movements within society"* (Ehrenberg, 2016).

However, during the Second Pahlavi era, particularly after the 1953 coup, the emerging Iranian civil society—which had developed during the first 12 years of Mohammad Reza Shah's reign due to a relatively open political environment—was severely weakened by the regime's repressive policies.

In societies where "lack of responsibility, absence of coexistence, and disregard for civic ethics" (Jahanbegloo, 2002), "social distrust and political cynicism" (Khaniki, 2004), "unpredictability of government actions" (Renani, 2002), and "persistent authoritarianism caused by chronic societal insecurity" (Saif, 2000) dominate, civil society and social capital remain absent. As a result, there is no dynamic environment for political parties,

intellectual movements, and enlightenment efforts, making political development unattainable.

Such conditions prevailed in Iran under the Second Pahlavi regime, particularly after the 1953 coup. Mohammad Reza Shah, by intensifying his authoritarian rule, especially after the June 5, 1963 uprisings, further weakened civil society, eliminated platforms for public critique, and suppressed independent intellectual discourse.

Over time, even the mere mention of democracy caused the Shah to react with hostility. On one occasion, during the Constitutional Revolution anniversary celebrations, two newspapers published editorials stating that Iran was gradually moving toward Western-style democracy as political participation expanded at local and provincial levels.

Upon reading these editorials, the Shah ordered Asadollah Alam to summon the editors and instruct them to publish new articles rejecting Western democracy. He emphasized:

*"As long as Western-style democracy only encourages treason and leads to the tyranny of the minority, Iran will never adopt this system"* (Alam, 1994; Alam et al., 2015).

All these factors contributed to Iran's failure to achieve both general development and, more specifically, political development, ultimately leading to the 1979 Revolution.

## 7. Conclusion

This study examined the development policies during the Second Pahlavi era based on Huntington's theoretical framework. Samuel Huntington identified several characteristics of politics in Third World countries, including a lack of institutionalization, widespread corruption, unorganized violence across all social strata, the military's role in political power, and overt political confrontations.

Huntington also discussed the democratization process in developing countries, arguing that the expansion of democracy depends on economic growth (the formation of a middle class and a free market), the presence of a pluralistic social structure, and a culture of tolerance. Additionally, he emphasized the role of democratic countries in supporting and assisting democratic transitions.

A key aspect of Huntington's theory of political development is the dual interpretation of his views.

Some scholars argue that Huntington equates political development with political stability, which can be achieved under various regimes. Others, however, believe that Huntington defines political development as the growth and expansion of democracy. Regardless of how political development is understood, Huntington explicitly stated his perspective on democratization in Third World countries.

During the Second Pahlavi era, none of Huntington's prerequisites for political development were fulfilled. On the contrary, several obstacles to political development emerged during this period. These barriers included the authoritarian political culture of the Pahlavi regime, the absence of a scientific and rational perspective, societal weakness, and the erosion of social capital.

Overall, this study concludes that political development in Iran during the Pahlavi era did not follow a smooth or progressive trajectory. Instead, it was characterized by fluctuations, setbacks, and reversals. Among the most significant barriers to political development were the weakness of civil society and the dominance of a rentier state.

Historical evidence suggests that whenever the Iranian government became a rentier state—financially independent from the public through non-tax revenues and highly centralized in power—it restricted civil society organizations, preventing the establishment and consolidation of political development. Conversely, whenever the government relied on public taxation and was less centralized, it created historical opportunities for the growth and flourishing of civil society, ultimately fostering political development in the country.

## Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

## Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

## Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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## Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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## Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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