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**CIVIL SOCIETY IN IRAN, TRANSITION
INTO WHICH DIRECTION?**
Challenges, Opportunities and Strategies



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Civil Society in Iran, Transition into which Direction?

Challenges, Opportunities and Strategies

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Executive summary

In the past several decades and against organisational limitations and bottlenecks, organisms of civil society in Iran enjoyed significant growth. However, in the past few years autocratic powers planned and executed an extensive invasion against it. At present, the civil society is in a very hazardous situation. This is as a combined result of the emergence of a new class of politicians who have got to office, the formation of a garrison-based government, the involvement of the established Revolutionary Guards Corps (RGC) in politics, economy, culture and the cyber space and the prevalence of anti-democracy, civil society phobia discourse; besides the lack of understanding the situation and the inability to organise change management in response to the emerging social needs and political and social transformations, and the conservative and passive approach of the Iranian civil society organisations on the one hand, and the silence and indifference of the international community on the other hand, does not portray a vivacious and positive perspective for the civil society in Iran and the continuation of the situation might replace a real civil society by a “civil society on paper”.

The present study is based on the interviews and discussions with a number of the Iranian civil society activists. The focal point of the study is to identify the transitional orientation of the civil society in such hazardous situation. The study includes a situation analysis of the present civil society in Iran. It defines strategic challenges and gives an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities. Furthermore, it offers proposals in order to transform weaknesses into strength and threats into opportunities so to prevent the premature death of the civil society in Iran.

Consensus on the Following Major Propositions

- The key element in the underdevelopment and lack of sustainable democracy in Iran is the weakness of the civil society and non-participation in the development process.
- Civil society is a transitional focal point into democracy and control of the political power in Iran.
- Transition from a weak civil society to a strong and prolonged one is the most important and effective way to battle the two historical problems of underdevelopment and lack of sustainable democracy.
- The structure and the nature of the government in Iran is anti-civil society. In recent years, the garrison-based state has employed strategies of suppression, limitation and replacement on the civil society.
- To play a decisive role in the development and establishment of democracy and civil rights movement in Iran, the civil society must have a defined strategy and plan of action otherwise it will become the follower of other strategies.

Key Priorities in the Present Situation:

- Expanding the discourses of democracy, human rights and peace for the creation of a healthy, vivid and democratic society. Development of knowledge and skills on networking, advocacy, leadership, peace-building and civil society building. .
- Empowerment of the political, social, cultural and the cyber space environment as key strategies in the transition and solidification of democracy and civil society building. Citizens' empowerment through increasing awareness, education on the rights and responsibilities, expansion of knowledge and skills to work within associations and exercising democracy at micro-level. A democratic government necessitates a strong democratic society without which it cannot sustain itself.
- Development and expansion of communications and relations with the international civil society and organisations. Reconstruction of social networks both in real and the cyber space and expansion of cooperation and solidarity among civil activists; coalition among civil society organisations; and coalition-building and mobilising the international civil society to support the civil society and political movement in Iran.
- Development of a strategy to combat the imposing culture of silence, stagnation and limitations and the circulation of information, media-pluralism and free access to information among activists and organisations, without which, civil society at its best will transform into a society "on paper".

Introduction

In the past hundred years, Iran's civil activists have relentlessly aspired to free Iran from underdevelopment and to establish democracy and a civil society. Many of the political discourses and sharp political-social upheavals from the "constitutional revolution" to "the nationalisation of the oil industry" and the "Pahlavi's modernisation" to the "Islamic revolution" had all been parts of these efforts towards the establishment, solidification, transformation, or limitation and even cancellation of democracy and the civil society.

From the moment the idea of democracy and civil society found its way in the minds and thoughts of the Iran's civil activists, it carried with it moments of vigour and prosperity and years of stagnation and silence.

Transition to Democracy and the Establishment of Civil Society in Various Moments:

The first Transition moment began by the constitutional revolution in 1905 and continued until Reza Khan's coup in 1919. This period can be named as the first constitutional period. Constitutional revolution was a breaking point from the ancient history and the beginning of modern times. The constitutional discourse familiarised Iranians with modern thinking and the concepts of democracy, association life, modern state, rule of law, political participation and civil establishments such as parliament, political parties and civil institutions. The Iranian constitution and its amendments was the first democratic document in the continent of Asia and influenced changes that took place later in the continent.

During the first constitutional period, non-governmental and professional associations and unions were set up and developed in many regions, especially in the cities of Tabriz and Rasht both in the northern parts of the country. These establishments played an ever-lasting role in Iran's contemporary history against autocracy and for constitutional discourses, modern ideas and control of political power.

Constitutional discourses left an ever-lasting mark in the transformation of the Iranian society but due to the weaknesses of the social forces they did not achieve their main goal, which was the formation of a solid democratic society and democratic state. The defeat of the constitutional revolution saw the emergence of the first autocratic state in Iran. Reza Shah centralised resources and instruments of power, created national alliances, established a modern army, weakened the scattered powers of warlords, forced resettlements, disarmed tribal clans, created modern bureaucracy and financial reform and put down the foundations of a modern, autocratic state.

The second moment for transition into democracy and the establishment of the civil society along with the secular culture of constitutional discourses came about after Reza Shah's autocratic rule ended in 1940. During this period (1940-1952), fundamental concepts of modern life such as people's rule, freedom of speech, citizens' basic rights, accountable and responsible government, and the rule of law were introduced and developed. At the beginning of this period, the modern,

autocratic state was paralysed and along with other factors the defeated autocracy could not revive in the short term. Among such factors were the disintegration of the institution of suppression and its ideological tools, the emergence of vigorous social forces and the expansion of civil life, creation of syndicates and unions and cultural institutions. These transformations were not mainly the result of the downfall of Reza Shah but due also to the revival of the political and social establishments left from the first constitution which made it possible to lead the society towards democratisation. Political and cultural life in the society stood on modern establishments such as unions, syndicates, parliament, parties and the press instead of individuals, tribes, government and religion. For twelve years (1940-52) and in other words, during the second constitution, the prevalent discourse was to a great extent the continuation of the first period but with further clarity and stability.

The 1953 coup against the government of Dr Mohammad Mossadeq and the establishment of an autocratic government created a long, historical split. The government which took shape after the coup controlled sources of scattered political power and created a centralised state. In this process, civil institutions, political parties and groups which had gained independent power in the past were suppressed one after the other and the civil society and democratic life which had taken shape during the second period of the constitution were shut down.

The third moment for transition into democracy and the establishment of the civil society in Iran's contemporary times came about with the 1979 Islamic revolution and the defeat of the disfigured modernity project of the Pahlavi regime. Once again the organisations of civil society such as political parties, syndicates, unions and the press emerged and prospered. This moment, like the other two historical moments, did not last long. In 1981, a full blown ideological government and a populist system dominated the Iranian society, the civil society and the political society, which were born out of the revolution. The government suppressed the vigour and life in the civil and political arenas and replaced them with silence and stagnation.

The end of the Iran-Iraq war in 1988 and the receding of revolutionary emotions and the eclipse of populism, crisis within the populist government and secularisation of the society and the prevalence of development discourses on the one hand, the collapse of the Communist world along with global transformations and the third wave of democracy on the other hand, brought about the slow return of the civil society and democracy discourse in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s. In the first few years and due to the clientalist and oligarchy relations in the society, this discourse was weak and bloodless.

The fourth moment of transition into democracy and the establishment of the civil society took shape after the presidential elections in June 1997 and lasted for 8 years. During this moment, social forces worked to control political power and to transform the dominant oligarchy into a limited democracy with emphasis on the constitution and the rule of law. As a result, the capacity for participation and political competition developed to some extent. This period witnessed the establishment of an independent press and the expansion of public opinion and the culture of political democracy. The Iranian society witnessed relative freedom of press and circulation of and access to information among the political-social forces.

During these years, further steps were taken to set up and strengthen the civil society and numerous programmes of capacity building for activists and organisations were carried out and the discourse of democracy and civil society stretched into the public domain. Despite limitations and strains and the existence of resistance centres during this transitional period, social forces were able to organise themselves into organisms of civil society. The organisations of civil society enjoyed extensive growth and experienced development as well as constraints and spread in various fields so much so that the years 1989-2003 can be called the years of “the establishment of civil society organisations” in post-revolution Iran.

The Emergence of a New Class of Politicians and the Infiltration of the Military into Politics

At the onset of this transitional moment, one of the issues that affected the future of civil society organisations was the 2003 presidential elections and consequently the 2009 elections, the latter accompanied by widespread vote rigging. As a result, a new class of politicians took to power supported by the garrison party; an incident that shaped the garrison-state and the return of populism into the political arena and the re-emergence of ideological discourses and marginalisation of the educated middle classes from society. One of the distinguished specifications of this new political class was its anti-democracy stance and civil society phobia viewed as a Trojan horse.

During the past five years, the new class of political power has strived to act as the only player in politics, society, economics and culture. It has interfered and reigned in all areas of the Iranian society according to its own trend of thought and has occupied all civil spaces and prevented other discourses. The result has been a curtailing of the political-social freedoms and constraints on civil society.

This new political force has used culture as a tool of civil dominance, through distortion in the identities and the minds of the individuals and political-social groups in order to harmonise thought and silence or sideline the voices opposed to it. In recent years, organised attacks on the media and universities have been based on such strategies.

This emerging political class is pursuing the strategy of controlling and monitoring the circulation of information and infusing the hegemonic culture of silence and stagnation in the Iranian society. Strategically, the policy of widespread suppression and replacement through encouraging mistrust in social relations and the atomisation and disintegration of society are two important objectives of this new political class.

Aims and Objectives

The principle aim of this study is to portray the present situation of the civil society organisations and activists in Iran. The study evaluates points of strength, weakness, opportunities and threats and offers tactics to combat and sterilise the suppressive policies and replacement strategies of the garrison state. It also endeavours to define strategies in order to prevent the premature death of the civil society by showing direction for transition from a weak civil society into a strong one.

Methodology and Scope of Analysis

This research is based on the SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats) methodology. Using this methodology the research gives a thorough picture of the internal strengths and weaknesses of civil society organisations and moreover, identifies opportunities as well as environmental threats. Due to the limitations in the methodology and the environment in which the research was carried out, boundaries are limited and do not cover all areas of the civil society such as social movements. The study only covers the non-governmental organisations, charities, religious and economic establishments, professional associations and labour and employers' unions. In other words, the centre point of the analysis in this study is the civil society organisation as an active social force and carrier of change in the Iranian society.

Situational Analysis

The Iranian civil society is in the epicentre of an organised invasion by the garrison state and passes through a hazardous transitional period. It is facing challenges from within and without. From the outside it is faced with widespread state violence and suppression and from the inside, it moves through brightness and darkness in hope and despair. If it passes through this stage successfully the next stage would "cement and institutionalise" its foundation. It would place the organisation of the civil society inside the landscape of power, where it can play a decisive role as a component of democracy and development and where other players in the political power will not longer be able to ignore, nor to suppress it.

In the current situation, the most important issues that would determine the future of the Iranian civil society are the ability to manage internal transformations and capabilities and to respond to the complex requirements in order to combat the policies of suppression and replacement of the garrison state and to employ strategies for transition into democracy and sustainable development in the political, social, cultural and cyber space. This is achievable should the leaders and activists possess a distinctive and clear analysis of internal and external situations and centres of resistance and anti-civil society philosophies and discourses outside their circles; and can employ specific strategies so their members and other supporting social forces and networks regardless of their group interests join forces and pass through the current hazardous situations.

Civil society activists must learn to tackle their way around and identify weaknesses and transform them into strength, make opportunities out of threats and come up with new instruments and techniques to consolidate an energetic, active, developmental and democratic society. That will not

be possible unless a precise and concrete analysis of strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and challenges is defined and a tangible plan of action is employed.

Internal Assessments: Strengths

Diversity and Plurality

The number, the expansion, the variety and the geographical dispersion of civil society organisations are the key indicators to measure the vigor and dynamic of civil society. Civil societies are the voice of the marginalised groups, those who are outside the centre of power. In recent years, civil society organisations had been able to represent various groups and social forces and respond to their needs in relation to democracy and development and demonstrate that their presence throughout the country is vital.

According to the statistics published by Iran's Statistical Centre, in 2004, out of 6914 non-governmental organisations, %92 had consistence activities and %8 did seasonal or interrupted work. Out of this number, %53 were officially registered and %47 were unregistered. Out of the above number, 3620 worked on issues such as children, social injuries, human rights, environment, youth, women and charities. The biggest number of NGOs were related to work with the youth. Out of this number, 2959 were able to renew their licenses in 2007 and continue their work. No official figure has yet been published but unofficial statistics indicate that there are 52000 religious organisations (religious delegations, Islamic associations, cultural and publicity centres). There are 4600 cultural and artistic associations out of which, 197 are scientific, 136 economic which are registered with Iran's Chamber of Commerce, 15061 unions related to the bazaar, 80,000 charities and 166 Islamic associations at the universities, 2000 scientific associations and 780 students' cultural centres.

Successful Experiences and Best Practices

In the past two decades of activity, civil society organisations were able to demonstrate successful, transparent and efficient models of management in responding to the nature of work: against poverty, empowerment, environment, charity, relief work and so on. They had played an important role in promoting the standards of living and people's participation in their communities. Of such projects, the Shirabad project in Zahedan, the Bam earthquake, construction of Rafahi hospital and welfare complex, Mahak for children with cancer, renovation of Siran Goli Talaab (pond) in the town of Naghadeh, dealing with the haemophilia patients at the haemophilia centre, working with single women (Zanjan Ruzbeh centre), working with the disabled (Ghazvin disabled centre) can be mentioned.

Bravery, Innovation and Creativity

It was due to the power of creativity and innovation, especially on women's issues against gender discrimination, development of local societies, tackling poverty and job creation that the Iranian civil society organisations were successful to gain relative acceptability. They managed to employ new methods of distribution of resources among social groups and in this way played a major role in the transitional period. The one Million Signature Campaign (taken from similar initiative in Morocco) was one of those innovations and its experiences travelled outside Iran. This Campaign targeted equality

for men and women and the “method” it used can be utilised in other areas such as social movements, syndicates, students and so on. The Campaign formed its strategy around specific women’s rights. It did not have a direction towards power and worked independent of political parties. It focused on the necessity of an internal transformation of society’s culture for human rights and citizens’ equality. The Campaign was the essence of decades of women’s activities which were used to shape it.

Another successful example is the resistance of Iran’s Higher Centre of the Professional Associations of Employers against its unlawful dissolve by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security in 2006. The Centre began an all-out legal battle in defence of freedom of association against the Islamic republic through the Iranian courts and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). For three and half years, the Centre pursued its case until in 2010 the court ruled against the Ministry of Labour and the ruling was affirmed by the appeal court. This was a huge success and a model to defend freedoms of associations in Iran.

The Emergence of Strong and Powerful Civil Society Organisation

In recent years, a number of organisations have emerged with relative structure and continuity in their activities. Organisations such as the National Council for Peace, Committee of Human Rights Reporters, Journalists Professional Association, Teachers Professional Association, Higher Centre of Professional Associations of Employers, Syndicate of Iran’s Electricity, The syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburb Bus Drivers (Vahed) can be named among some. These organisations were able to operate and sustain themselves under enormous pressures and limitations been.

In June 2009 and on the eve of the presidential elections a number of the civil society organisations formed an alliance and published a manifesto “Iran’s Civil Society Demands”. The manifesto had a list of minimum demands which consisted of: recognition of civil society as a social force, guarantee for freedom of association, respect for independence and non-interference in their internal affairs, review and reform of all laws and regulations which oversee the work of civil society organisations, and regards for human rights principles, guarantees for freedom of speech, press freedom and media variation, recognition of the right to free circulation of information, capacity building and empowerment of citizens and associations, ratifying and execution of conventions in labour laws, reform and review of Iran’s discriminatory civil code, joining the Commission on the Discrimination Against women (CEDAW), regard for gender equality and gender justice, response to professional demands and protection of environment and so on.

The Emergence of a New Generation of Social Activists

In recent years, along with the fundamental social transformations, secularisation of the society, the emergence of a educated middle class due to the rise in the level of education and marginalisation of a number of social groups and forces from the political scene, a new generation of activists have emerged who can be identified as the third generation in the post-Islamic society. This new generation distanced from the ideological symbols and meta-narratives and follows the philosophy of: “Think globally and act locally; think locally and act globally”. They look at the civil society as a

central power of the Iranian society for transition into democracy which possesses an element of liberty as opposed to the state dominance. This generation reflect the ideological erosion of political power which had dominated the Iranian society for 30 years. Movement for civil and political rights or in other words the Green Movement replicates the emergence of this new generation of Iranians.

Resistance and Persistence

Despite strategies of suppression and limitations and in comparison to earlier decades, organisations of civil society have gained more self confidence in their activities and social battles against the state. They had managed to provide platforms of opportunities for those marginalised groups and to put their demands forward and to defend citizens' rights and human rights and carry out campaigns to change general policies.

The resistance of Lawyers Bar Association against its independence, continued work of the Defenders of Human Rights Centre, the formation of a group to oversee and reform laws which govern the organisation of civil society, the Campaign Against Stoning, the Women's Coalition to Demand Women's Rights, the establishment of the Council to Coordinate Civil Society organisations, and the continuation of campaigning by the Teachers Professional Association and the resistance of workers at the Syndicate of workers of Tehran and Suburb Bus Drivers (Vahed) are among such broader campaigns.

Grounds for Cooperation, Convergence and Solidarity among Civil Society Activists

At present, the dominance of the anti-civil society discourse and the imposition of limitations and pressures by the government, have provided grounds for solidarity and cooperation among civil society activists. It is agreed that they have to disregard their differences and work with each other to stop the premature death of the civil society.

In 2009, in the pre-election period, various groups of women formed a broad coalition around their demands and for the first time appeared as an independent force to put those demands to the presidential candidates. This coalition, apart from its specific demands bore significance, as for the first time, women from various trends of thought; from religious to secular worked together in such a manner. In a similar action in 2007, civil and political activists set up a national council for peace. The 72 founders of this council were civil activists, politicians, artists, women, students, trade unionists, and other activists. The aim of this broad-based coalition was the creation and establishment of principles of peace in Iran, cancellation of sanctions, prevention of further tensions, prevention of a possible war against Iran and an end to the situation of no peace, no war.

Opportunity for Re-thinking, Re-examining and Reviewing Strategies

In the past few years, the government's limitations and pressures has created an opportunity for the civil society and activists to re-think and review their past strategies and plans, and learn from their weaknesses and strengths to produce new strategies.

Emergence and Expansion of Cooperation Networks and Membership in the Global Network

In the past few years, along the expansion of civil society organisations some networks in the non-governmental sector were established. These networks can be classified as below:

1) Independent networks set up by activists and organisations of the civil society such as Friends of Children, Network of Solidarity of Non-Governmental Educational, Supportive and Health Care Institutions (AHAD), Council of Coordination Crisis Management (SHAHAB), Network in Support of Child Labour and Street Children, and Council for Coordination of Civil society Organisations.

2) Networks which were set up under the initiative of some government institutions. These include: Network of Communication of Non-Governmental Women's Organisations, Network of Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations, Network of Non-Governmental Youth Organisations, House of Non - Governmental Organizations, House of Industry and Mining, Higher Centre of Professional Employers Associations.

3) Networks which were established in Iran with the support from the United Nations. In 2006, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) set up a 4 year programme (2005-2009) for the non-government organisations to work on public health, health care and reproductive services and set up a network among them

Along with cooperation and the establishment of networks in the country, a number of civil society organisations have affiliated to the international networks and organisations. Iranian Journalist Association became a member of International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), Teachers Professional Association joined Education International (EI); the Syndicate of workers of Tehran and Suburb Bus Drivers (Vahed) affiliated to the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) and The Higher Centre of Professional Employers Association joined the International Organisation of Employers (IOE).

Growth of the Civil Society in the Cyber Space

In the past decades, revolution in technology and information, media and digital social networks have provided important tools at the hand of the activists and organisations. The internet and cyber space networks in Iran have expanded enormously and offered a public space for activists to communicate and transform social and political actions, where they can reach out and have their voice heard. The internet has transformed the Iranian civil society from a pacifist consumer one to an active producer.

New information technology has given a fresh shape to the culture of politics. Activists believe that foundations of civil society in the new millennium and the continuation of civil discourses depend on the internet and other means of communications. Against limitations and bottlenecks and censorship they have been able to use the internet as a tool for preparation, organisation and communication and to challenge the government and the dominant power. Cyber civil society in Iran has grown

enormously and the internet users are on the rise. The Iranian cyber civil society is now able to a great extent to bring about political and social transformations for transition to democracy in Iran.

Establishment and Formation of Civil Society Organisations

In the past two decades, government institutions and organisations have played a major role in the establishment and continuation of the civil society organisations. In the 1990s, two major international conferences convened, one in Rio de Janeiro (1992) and the other in Beijing (1995). Both these conferences played a major role in raising Iran's statesmen's consciousness and made them aware of the importance and the role of the civil society. The politicians encouraged their relatives and close associates to set up and work in these areas. In the first years of the 1990s, the first generation of activists of civil society were relations of men in political power, which set up and worked in such areas. Government funds were the major financial source or in some cases the only source of these people.

During the years of relative political freedoms (1997-2005) an important part of the second generation of non-governmental organisations were supported by the government institutions, such as Centre for Women's Participation and National Youth Organisation which functioned with the government funds and very few were independent of such assistance. Even in recent years (2009) Ahmadinejad's government has established an organ in the Interior Affairs Ministry to support some sort of non-government organisations.

Split and Rupture in the Civil Society

Split and rupture is one of the important specifications of Iran's civil society. It is driven from the various gaps in the society, including between traditional civil society and modern civil society, between religious and secular civil society, organisations of civil society in capital city (Tehran) and those in other cities. As a result of the actual and potential gaps and ruptures, civil society has been divided and grouped all of which cause disputes and conflicts and prevent them from action.

Limited Civil Society

Limited association life is one of Iran's civil society shortcomings. Despite growth and expansion in the recent last decades, considering Iran's 70 millions populations, the civil society has not developed nor gained necessary depth. Therefore, the traditional civil society which lacks democratic values, human rights and gender specific principles has occupied a big space.

Unbalanced Civil Society

Another specification of Iran's civil society is its unbalanced and un-harmonious growth. The scattered and un-even distribution of the civil society in terms of geography and thematic makes its growth as a caricature of the actual civil society. This has resulted in the formation of a phenomena recognized as "centre" and its "surrounding". Facelessness and identity crisis is another characteristic of civil society in Iran; which empties it of a defined and clear identity.

Isolation

Isolation from the process of development and the drive to participate in power is another specification of the civil society in Iran. Most of the time, it chooses to step aside and isolate itself from social developments and rarely challenges the dominant power. At the international level the same strategy prevails. It seldom reacts to the regional or international developments and does not engage in dialogue or expand relations with other international civil societies and for that reason it does not have a presence and voice at the regional or international level.

Inefficiency and Ineffectiveness

Inefficiency and ineffectiveness is another specification of Iran's civil society. In other words, it lacks awareness of its role, place, responsibilities and duties and cannot define itself. For this reason, it cannot identify nor represent the needs and demands of the society and is unable to respond to the requirements of social and local groups as it does not operate professionally.

Inability to Apply Change Management and Management for Change

Iranian society is going through rapid and complex changes and the civil society organisations are unable to adapt themselves to these organisational and environmental challenges. This is mainly due to the traditional style of management which is incompatible to the needs of the present day society. It is unable to restructure and take a leading role according to the requirements of the changing society. A need assessment on Iran's civil society demonstrates weaknesses and shortcomings in many areas including gender based approach, human resource management, organisation, volunteer force, project management, utilising and use of ITC, project developing and proposal writing, outreach and social marketing, Advocacy and lobbying, resource allocation, budgeting and fundraising, and evaluation.

Lack of Innovation, Creativity and Initiative

Organs of civil society in Iran like similar groups use the traditional literature and phrases and are not able to create a new language to distinguish themselves from other social and political groups. In response to organisational or environmental challenges, they resort to the ready-made prescriptions and lack the courage to take initiative and experience new trends and break the boundaries. For these reasons, during the stagnation period of the 9th government, a large number of activists left non-governmental organisations.

Lack of Efficient and Effective Leadership

Strong and capable leadership can play a big role in the success of the civil society while in transition to democracy and development and participation in the new landscape of power. Unfortunately, in these hazardous situations, Iran's civil society lacks strong and powerful leaders to facilitate its plans and policies and for that reason it is engaged in day to day matters and lacks a concrete strategy and plan of action to execute and work with other interested parties.

Bad Governance

Bad governance is one of the problems and challenges facing Iran's civil society. Lack or weakness of participation of members in agenda making, decision taking and implementation of decisions, lack or weakness of transparency and accountability to the stakeholders, ambiguity in duties and responsibilities of executive board, director, staff, and volunteer forces, lack or weakness of organisational culture and social audit of activities all derive from the unsuitable traditional methods of utilizing resources, which ultimately result in the erosion and the ruin of organisational resources.

Communication Weakness

Iran's civil society organisations suffer from a number of fundamental communication weaknesses. Not having an independent media to reflect their voice is one of them. In the past few years, the press have dealt with the issue of civil society as a marginal matter. Media preference is politics not civil issues. The civil society suffers the inability to advocacy and negotiation, and is unable to mobilize the public to its favour. Public knowledge of civil society is limited as it is unable to reach out to the people and target groups.

Another challenge is the weakness to tie relations with the universities and intellectual circles and make the issue of civil society an essential part of the intellectual and university discourse. Even the lecturers and students of human sciences are unfamiliar with the civil society discourse and it does not have a place in the academic texts.

Due to the unfamiliarity with the international environment, language barrier and lack of skills to make effective connections, Iran's civil society has not utilised opportunities to make use of international resources. According to the Islamic republic's statistics only %15 of the NGOs connects to the international organisations and agencies. In the past, Iran's civil society had a weak and shadowy presence at the international gatherings. Nowadays, with the exception of the World Summit of Information Session (WSIS), it is absent from almost all global gatherings. Up to now only 15 NGOs have been able to reach to the advisory position in the United Nations Economic and Social Council. Also, and despite common regional problems, it has not been able to open dialogue at the regional level.

Reduction or Cessation of Capacity Building Centres

In recent years (1997-2010), supporting organisations such as HAMYARAN GHADA, NOAVARAN Pars , NGOTC (NGO Training Centre), Institute of Women Studies and ICTRC (Iran Civil Society Organization Training and Research Center) Iran have been established by the civil society activists and the Center to Empower Civil Society in Ministry of Interior Affairs to implement the civil society capacity building programs. But in the last few years, HAMYARAN GHADA left its capacity building projects and shifted towards implementing the empowerment of community projects on poverty eradication. The NOAVARAN Pars and the Institute of Women's Studies, two capacity building institutions, are not fully functional. These never had the concrete strategic programmes for capacity

building in the past but ran sporadic workshops on education. The two institutes of ICTRC and NGOTC were both closed down in 2006 and their offices were sealed by the order of public prosecutor's office. Centre to Empower the Civil Society Organisations was a 2 year co- project of the Islamic republic and Development Programme of the United Nations for the empowerment of civil society organisations and was run by the Ministry of Interior Affairs. During the ninth government, after Ahmadinejad got to office, the programme was transferred to the Organisation to Defend the Victims of Violence, which is an human rights NGO but related to the Ministry of Intelligence. At the moment this organisation coordinates the civil society organisations in Iran. It has employed a number of civil society activists and attends the international conferences, such as United Nations Human Rights Commission. As Iranian government has limited UN activities in Iran, most of the projects on civil society are carried out by this NGO.

Weak Theoretical Knowledge

Lack of interest in theory is one of the specifications of the civil society activists in Iran. For this, the production of knowledge and literature on civil society had been unsuccessful and minimal. There is also an inability to learn from others' experiences. Some of the activists refrain from learning and see it unnecessary. In the past few years at the Open Islamic University, the subject of "Management of Non-governmental Organisations" has been introduced at the Masters level but due to the theoretical weakness and lack of experienced lecturers it had not been able to fill the gap in theory and meet the students' expectations.

Weakness in the Effective Capacity-Building and Lack of Investment

Iranian civil society organisations don't properly understand organisational capacity building which requires regular and systematic investment in the development of national and foreign relations in order to achieve their goals and have a more effective impact. They believe organisational capacity building is an expensive project and for that reason, most of them lack programmes of organisational capacity building, while every organisation needs to have efficient employers and strong management in order to be effective and establish good relations with stockholders and financial supporters.

Inefficiency of Networks of Cooperation

At present, the networks which were established by the government institutions and organisations have ceased activity and have no presence in the civil society. The only network that still functions to some extent is the Network of Communication of Women's NGOs. In 2005, this network split and a group of NGOs who had reformist ideas established a separate network but that is facing serious problems as well. Other networks are also in crisis and not influential in the civil society arena.

Lack of coordination between members' expectations and realities, lack of clear vision and transparent mission statement, domination of bad governance among the networks, lack of transparency and accountability, lack of respect for team work, discipline and democratic relations among members, lack of representation, lack of free circulation of information among networks and intervention by the government institutions and the networks' connections to the political parties,

groups, military and para-military institutions are some of the important factors affecting the inefficiency of the networks in the civil society. Another important factor is the absence of any supportive institution or self-regulatory body to defend the civil society activists or organisations against government interferences.

Internal Assessment: Weaknesses

Lack of Ethical Codes and Self-Regulation Mechanisms

Iranian civil society is an immoral civil society and lacks civil moral norms. It is infested with patriarchal, over-supportive behaviour and suffers from mistrust, slander, personality-assassination and elimination, egoism, self centred, monopolizing, superiority vision, tolerance and compromise, especially with dissent. It also lacks commitment to team work and has other negative factors which create serious problems for its proper function. Moreover, lack of self regulating mechanisms to ensure accountability to stakeholders is a serious weakness of the civil society in Iran. This is despite the fact that in the past decades, incorporation of systems of volunteering behaviour and programmes of qualitative licensing as measures to promote transparency and accountability had considerable growth. According to statistics self-regulatory programmes are implemented in more than 40 countries.-

Fear and Conservatism

There is considerable fear, conservation and self-censorship in the civil society organisations which is manifested in their plans of action and mission statements. Many are not prepared to stand up to government's pressures and threats, and pay for it. In the post-presidential elections of 2009 the majority of civil society organisations followed the policy of silence instead of support the movement for civil and political rights. This has led to passivism and cost dearly for a specific group of civil society activists.

External Assessment: Demands and Opportunities

Political

Government and Tehran' s City Council Policies and Programs

In recent years, the government has taken some steps towards civil society. In 2005, a proposal was tabled by the National Youth Organisation and approved by the organisation of Encyclopaedias of Persian Language and Literature, to replace the English abbreviated term NGOs with “Sazeman Mardom Nehad-SAMAN”

In 2006, the interior ministry set up an organisation to organise and regulate the non-governmental organisations. The main responsibilities and work of this organisation were:

- 1- To establish a website for the public to access information about SAMAN.
- 2- To regulate the registration and licensing and disseminate the information in the website to inform the applicants
- 3- To set down mechanisms of control and supervision in the cities and towns in order to evaluate the functions of the SAMAN organisations and review the grievances against SAMANs.
- 4- To prepare a draft bill regarding the establishment and regulations of SAMANs and get its approval.
- 5- To provide rules and standards to improve and promote the quality and quantity of SAMANs.
- 6- To study and initiate methods of encouragement and promotion the function of SAMANs by providing social opportunities and allocating government resources based on rules and regulations.
- 7- To provide educational leaflets and programmes in order to transfer the experiences of successful SAMANs.
- 8- To develop empowerment programmes and define SAMANs' roles in the society and prepare provisions to legalize their activities.
- 9- To proceed with applications for setting up a SAMAN and to facilitate the process of licensing.
- 10- To coordinate and cooperate with provinces and governors to develop and increase social participation of the SAMANs in the provinces and to establish methods suitable to the relevant organisation.

In 2009, the Ministry of Interior Affairs set up a section called “Centre to Support the SAMANs”.

In 2005, Tehran's city council set up “Centre of Cultural Organisations of Tehran City Council”.

According to endorsement no 160/1057/702 of 2008, the Islamic council of Tehran's city council set up a “division to coordinate SAMANs functions” and provide necessary grounds for use of capacity participation and cooperation among Tehran SAMANs. These two organisations did not have much activity until 2010, where they executed a number of schemes for NGOs capacity building.

The Arrival of New Political Forces into the Civil Society Arena

The end of relative political freedoms of 1983-1997 and the return of populism and authoritarianism and the emergence of a new class of politicians shifted some of the political forces into the field of civil society. These forces realised that without a strong civil society Iran will not be able to overcome the two major historical obstacles of under-development and lack of sustainable democracy. In other words, if politics do not possess a civil source in the Iranian society, it will get nowhere. This new force is able to transfer its valuable political experiences into the field of the civil society.

Emergence of a Strong Opposition

The formation of a strong opposition from within the regime; its connection with other social groups and collaboration with marginalised opposition groups and challenging regime's credibility has provided great opportunity for the civil society as a whole. In the past, the Islamic Republic had the capacity to consistently drive the opposition into margin through ideological institutions and suppressive measures under the discourse of preserving public moral and the revolution. At present and for the first time, an opposition has emerged from within the regime which none of the suppressive measures are able to drive it into the margin. This opposition is getting increasingly stronger and has created splits among the Iranian society; the clergy establishment, the government and the people.

Legal:

The Capacity of the Islamic Republic Constitution

Despite limitations and barriers in the constitution and the establishment of an autocratic rule, some articles in the constitution emphasize on the principle rights of people. Civil society activists can utilise these articles to argue their case and strengthen the civil society. Civil and political rights of people are recognised and mentioned in the constitution in various ways:

1- Political and social rights of citizens are confirmed in the constitution and mentioned in Article 6 which states "Elimination of all forms of despotism and autocracy and all attempts to monopolize power" and Article 7 which "Ensures political and social freedoms within the framework of the law". Therefore, it is the duty of the lawmaker to incorporate these principles in the law.

The abolition of all forms of undesirable discrimination and the provision of equitable opportunities for all, in both the material and intellectual spheres is clearly stipulated in Article 9 of the constitution and therefore people's freedoms cannot be curtailed even in the name of preserving country's integrity and independence. Also in Article 8 it calls for the participation of the entire people in determining their political, economic, social, and cultural destiny. The state and the people have mutual rights and responsibilities to each other.

People's rights are stipulated in other articles as well. Article 19 states that all people of Iran, whatever the ethnic group or tribe to which they belong, enjoy equal rights; and colour, race,

language, and the like, do not bestow any privilege. Also Article 20 states that all citizens of the country, both men and women, equally enjoy the protection of the law and enjoy all human, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, in conformity with Islamic criteria. In Article 23 the investigation of individuals' beliefs is forbidden, and no one may be molested or taken to task simply for holding a certain belief.

As with freedom of press, publications and freedom of expression they are stipulated in Article 24. Article 25 which state "inspection of letters and disclosure of telephone conversations and other communications, censorship and eavesdropping are banned".

The formation of parties, societies, political or professional associations, as well as religious societies, whether Islamic or pertaining to one of the recognized religious minorities, is permitted under Article 26 which states are permitted provided they do not violate the principles of independence, freedom, national unity, the criteria of Islam, or the basis of the Islamic republic. No one may be prevented from participating in the aforementioned groups, or be compelled to participate in them. Public gatherings and marches may be freely held, provided arms are not carried and that they are not detrimental to the fundamental principles of Islam are mentioned in Article 27.

2- The right to Economic and social welfare, jobs and residence are set in Article 28 where it states that everyone has the right to choose any occupation he wishes, if it is not contrary to Islam and the public interests, and does not infringe the rights of others. The government has the duty, with due consideration of the need of society for different kinds of work, to provide every citizen with the opportunity to work, and to create equal conditions for obtaining it. Other economic benefits such as social security with respect to retirement, unemployment, old age, disability, absence of a guardian, and benefits relating to being stranded, accidents, health services, and medical care and treatment, provided through insurance or other means, is accepted as a universal right are stipulated in Article 29 of the constitution. The government must provide the foregoing services and financial support for every individual citizen by drawing, in accordance with the law, on the national revenues and funds obtained through public contributions.

3- Legal rights of citizens are confirmed in articles 32, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38 and 39. A person is presumed innocence and no one is to be held guilty of a charge unless his or her guilt has been established by a competent court. The aim of the legal rights is providing legal security for all citizens. In Article 14 these rights are clearly mentioned for all citizens, men and women. Article 37 stipulates legal security. And Article 32 use of lawyer in the court of law. Article 38 stipulates that all forms of torture for the purpose of extracting confession or acquiring information are forbidden. Compulsion of individuals to testify, confess, or take an oath is not permissible; and any testimony, confession, or oath obtained under duress is devoid of value and credence. Violation of this article is liable to punishment in accordance with the law.

4- Cultural rights are set in article 20 of the constitution with regards to the Islamic principles but these had not been verified in detail. For example, the right of ethnic minorities to use their languages in the media, schools and literature, alongside the national language which is Persian is

mentioned. Also, free and public education, physical education is emphasised in Article 30 of the constitution

Cultural

Expansion of Democratic Idea and the Discourse on Democracy, Human Rights and Peace

In recent decades the philosophies of the Left and religious fundamentalism have moved to the margin and secularist tendencies have increased in the Iranian society and this has contributed to the expansion of the discourse of democracy, human rights and peace among many civil society activists. These democratic discourses had existed in the intellectual and political-social circles for the past hundred years but in the past decades, advocates and activists of political civil society have been able to move them from the margin to text.

Two great experiences of the constitutional revolution in 1905 and the Islamic revolution of 1979 has taught the activists that Iran's problems stem from the structure of power and mechanisms of control and distribution of power and the way forward is to democratise the society and not merely transfer the power from one to the other. Therefore, control and distribution of power must take priority and that cannot be achieved through the language of violence. Rather, implementation of such methods will contribute to the growth of power structure. Control of power through the use of non-violent and peaceful methods, expansion the culture of democratic discourse, human rights and peace are major requirements of the present Iranian society. Democracy is a "right" and precondition for development, therefore civil activists have reached the conclusion that to achieve democratic aims they have to use democratic means.

Discourse of Post-Islamic Intellectuals

The discourse of post-Islamic intellectuals took shape after the end of Iran-Iraq war and receding revolutionary excitements and secularisation of the society and was influenced by the paradigm of neo-liberal modernity in the Iranian society and provided a golden opportunity for the expansion of democracy in the Iranian society. The discourse of the post-Islamic intellectuals was the result of the hesitations and non-hegemonic discourse of the Islamic revolution in relation to the individual and the society. The critical stage of this discourse is breaking the boundaries of the Islamic discourse and the negation of the religious fundamentalism and its failure to meet aspirations of the society.

The post-Islamic intellectuals appear among various groups without any prior plan or concrete ideology. The carriers of this discourse are not a homogenous group nor do they believe in a homogenous and "popular" society under the leadership of a vanguard group. They do not carry the message of a new revolution or a utopia, nor believe in libratory philosophies. They can rightly be called "post-Islamist intellectuals".

The post-Islamist intellectuals decline any philosophy that does not consider Iranian society's specifications and combat generalisation. They emphasise on the non-homogenous nature of

societies, instead of the analysis of place-time “everywhere”, “anytime”. They have placed their analysis on “here”, “now” and the multiplicity of “cultures”.

Based on these definitions, post-Islamist intellectuals have questioned the Islamic discourse of deconstruction, decentralisation, demystification, de-totalitarianism, decomposition and prepared appropriate grounds for growth and expansion of democracy and the civil society.

In the past decade, post-Islamist intellectuals have concentrated on the discourses of the past hundred years and the discourses which some carried liberation away from “the self” and “the past” while others preached “return to the past” and “the self”. They have concluded that “critic of the fundamentals of religion is a pre-requisite to any other critic”. They have also concluded that without serious critic of structure-breaking and deconstructing the old philosophies, law and political philosophy it will not be possible to reach the concepts of “rights” and “new politics” and modern government and civil society.

Expansion of Cyber Space and Access to Information

In the past decades, expansion of the information technology and the cyber space has moved so fast that it can rightly be named the “new era of information”. In this new era, information is considered not as an element alongside other elements but as a dominant element of production, action and social-human activities whose ultimate production is the expansion of cyber space and the birth of a new society called “ the society of information”. The centralisation of knowledge and fundamental structural transformations, change in mechanisms and the production technology and data collection and distribution have fundamentally transformed the basis of civilisation and human society. Technological revolution has provided a unique opportunity for the civil society like the private sector and other players to access information and utilise it in the service of democratisation and development of the society.

Social

Emergence of the Green movement

In the past year, the Iranian society has witnessed the emergence of a widespread social movement called the Green Movement. This movement was born out of a wider movement, which can be named movement for political and civil rights. This movement took shape in reaction to the style of governance, imposition of special way of life, widespread abuse of human and social rights, corruption, and crisis in the Iranian society. This movement was a coalition of various homogenous and heterogeneous social groups and in other words, the rise of marginalised groups and those who had been driven out of political, social, cultural and economical arena; against the “the government of lies”. The movement for political and civil rights is a reflection of people’s despair and hopelessness especially the educated middle classes against the structure of political power, dominant ideology and political processes in Iran. Its platform of action is the rule of law, expansion of democratic relations, respect human rights and peace. After the 12 June 2009, Iranian society entered a new era which cannot be compared to the past. Despite crackdown and extensive violence and detention of many activists, the Green Movement demonstrated its power in various settings and continued its

existence and gathered large number of social forces and organised them as we have witnessed so far.

Expansion of a Cultural Middle Class

After the revolution and due to population growth, educational centres and centres of higher education expanded throughout the country and the literacy rate increased and as a result a class of educated, cultured people emerged which is still on the rise. The expansion of middle classes brought about consciousness to the role and action of civil society and the relative power to citizens. The carrier and main player of the current Green movement is the middle class which is crossing over its own class and carry a mission to play a role in the transformation of the Iranian society.

In the past decades, the cultural middle class had occupied an important place in the structure of social, political and cultural power. The civil society has expanded on the road that the middle classes have directed it. Current social movements of women, students and intellectual have their roots in the middle classes. This class is ready more than other classes to embrace democracy, human rights and peace. Access to media makes it possible to produce dialogue and behaviour paradigms in the Iranian society. Its extensive participation in the protests against civil rights contributes to the foundation of the civil society and spread of democracy and human rights. The culture that it produces or has produced is the main rival to the imposed dominant ideology and for that the Islamic regime has systematically humiliated this class of citizens. Yet, in the past 30 years, this class has caused the biggest erosion in the foundation of the culture of Islamic ideology.

Tradition of Volunteer Actions and Charity Work in the Iranian Society

The Iranian society has a long tradition of volunteer work and networks of participation and cooperation. Various forms and types of such tradition in various times and places; towns and villages have existed through time. In the rural areas various forms of “partnership”, “self-help”, “cooperation” and “traditional co-ops” exist. In the cities there are many forms of charity work. Charities are the most common form which are well organised and more than 80,000 of them are operational all over the country. Vaghf, or leaving capital to a charity or a cause is an ancient tradition whose main aim is better life and standard of living for the people. Vaghf covers many areas including, building school, educational centre, books, library, health, treatment, religious affairs, water irrigation, building caravanserai, taking care of animals and the needy. Another tradition in Iran is voluntary funds (Gharz al- Hassaneh fund) to cover the needs of the society. These funds are set up by groups or social forces to help the people in times of hardship. There are more than 4500 Gharz al-Hassaneh funds operating all over the country.

Economy

Privatization; Implementation of Article 44 of the Constitution

In 2006, the principles mentioned in Article 44 of the constitution were approved by the Expediency Council and sent to the heads of the country's three ruling bodies by the supreme leader. This was a great step towards privatisation and free economy and the change of government role from direct ownership and management to policy-making, directing and supervision. It provided the civil society organisations with a unique opportunity to expand the civil society.

Objectives of the economic macro-policies:

1. Government change of role from ownership and direct management to policy-making, setting strategy and supervision.
2. Empowerment of private and cooperative sectors and support of national production to compete at the international markets.
3. Preparing national companies to learn global trade in a gradual process.
4. Development of human resources, expertise and knowledge.
5. Development of national standards and their compatibility in the international market.
6. Direction towards privatisation to increase efficiency and competition and the expansion of public ownership. According to this policy, the state should not engage in new economic ventures outside what is specified in the Article 44 of the constitution. The state has to transfer all economic activities (including previous ventures) which fall outside Article 44, to the private and cooperative sector. The deadline for this decision is the end of the fifth four year economic plan (%20 decrease annually). The implementation of Article 44 minimises the state's role and provides a valuable opportunity for the activists and organisations of the civil society to expand the civil society.

International

Role of International Organisations and United Nation's Agencies

At the international level, international agencies and organisations play a major role in civil society building. In recent years, international agencies and organisations have increasingly shown interest to cooperate with the Iranian civil society. They have executed a number of projects for capacity-building and empowerment of civil society in Iran. One such project was the project of capacity building for the promotion and protection of human rights and greater access to justice. This project was carried out through the United Nations programme of Good Governance and under the direction of Development Programmes for a period of 5 years (2005-2009).

This project was carried out with the cooperation from universities, human rights centres, national institutions, non-government organisations and government institutions. Centre for Human rights of Tehran University, the branch of human rights, peace and democracy of Beheshti University, Centre for Human Right Studies at Mofid University, under secretary at the justice department, Islamic Commission for Human Rights, Lawyers Bar Association, Journalists Association and the Organisation to Defend Victims of Violence were the initial participants of this programme.

In the second year, Journalists Association was dismissed from the project. The main and long term objectives of this project were promotion of human rights and access to justice, empowerment and capacity-building of human rights institutions. Other objectives were the expansion of justice and rejecting all forms of violence, promotion of freedoms of speech and thought and cooperation with the Islamic republic to fulfil its international obligations.

The budget for this programmes was \$ 2,811, 756, out of which, the Dutch government paid \$ 795,756, European Commission, \$ 1,324,000, Norway, \$42,000 and the united Nations Development Programme paid \$ 650,000.

Globalisation and Democracy

The process of globalisation, expansion of democracy, disintegration of totalitarian, dynastic and autocratic regimes in central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and Southern Africa, and Asia played a great role in the emergence and the establishment of the civil society; while at the same time they themselves had been the outcome of such democratic processes in recent decades. The societies that had not gone through this transition, organisations of the civil society play a greater and vanguard role for the transition to democracy.

Domination of Civil Society Discourse in the Global Society

In the past recent decades civil societies have enjoyed rapid growth and development throughout the world. Some experts identify this process as "global revolution of guild". If the last years of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century were the eras of government and nations; the beginning of the 21st century is the era of civil society organisations. These organisations are the main players

and carriers of development in the social battle to transform the definition of traditional power and create a new landscape of power.

The change in the paradigm of development is transition from nation-building to civil society-building which is the result of the power and the dominance of civil society discourse.

External Assessment: Threats and Constraints

Political

Nature of Government in Iran

The Iranian government is Behemoth-like and autocrat. One of the tragedies of social life in modern times in Iran is the hegemony of government over all areas of human and social life. In contemporary Iran, apart from short, passing periods of transition to democracy, the cancerous growth of the government has coupled with decrease in people's power. To adopt Antonio Gramsci's philosophy, it can be said that 'civil society in Iran has perished; the government has the monopoly over all resources and instruments and occupies all civil spaces where there is no breathing space left for other players. The government is relatively independent of others social groups and not accountable to them'.

Attitude of Iran's Ninth and Tenth Government Towards Civil Society

The ninth term presidential elections in 2005 which followed after 8 years of relative political liberalisation (1997-2005) brought a new class of politicians to power who were backed by the military. In the tenth presidential elections they consolidated their power through massive vote rigging. The specifications of this new class of politicians are civil society phobia, anti-democracy and non-commitment to human rights measures. They see the civil society as an intrusive element which ruins government's relations with the people. They want to deal with the people directly and push them in any direction and for any purpose they want. They have pursued the policy of strengthening their power base through suppression, limitation and replacement on the one hand, and destruction and sterilisation of the real and cyber networks of the civil society on the other hand. They see the civil society as a Western project, especially the United States to overthrow the government through a velvet revolution and are pessimistic of it and its activities. They believe that in the absence of political forces, social forces will decide the future of the Iranian society. They see the Iranian civil society as a centre of resistance against the established order. Since the civil society is the only setting for social renovation and creativity and represents and reflects the people's voices and those marginalised groups, the government endeavours to occupy and control all its spaces such as universities, professional institutions, and voluntary organisations and so on. It also tries to allocate resources to civil society organisations in order to empty them of their independence and for that many of such institutions have lost their originality.

Hegemonic and Dominance of Intelligence Approach

The emergence of garrison-state government and its stabilisation during the tenth presidential elections, positioned the Iranian society under surveillance and intelligence. The strategy of enforcing suppression and barrier and replacement to manufacture tamed and obedient civil society developed further.

To neutralise the so-called velvet revolution following strategies were implemented:

- 1- Closing all windows to the civil and political freedoms and civil society organisations by creating limitations, cancelling work permits, closing down their activities and interference in the affairs of professional associations such as Journalists Association; political parties such as Islamic

Participation Party, Etemad Meli Party, Iran Freedom Movement and civil society organisations such as; ICTRC, Lawyers Bar Association, Defenders of Human Rights Centre, Association to Defend Prisoners' Rights, Association for Freedom of Press and hundreds of non-governmental institutions.

- 2- Creating fear and terror by widespread detention of activists and driving them out of the scene. This policy was successful as many left the civil society activities and transferred to other areas or left the country altogether. A number of activists moved into the shadow in waiting and some adjusted to the new situation and followed government's orders. A large number of activists were sentenced to prison by the judiciary or freed on bail. At present, about 800 civil society activists are either in prison or banned from travel abroad.
- 3- Interference in the internal affairs and taking away the independence of some of the professional associations such as lawyers, engineers and construction architects associations, creating bogus civil society organisations and enforcing the policy of replacement. Developing religious institutions and expansion of the Militia Basij corpse are all parts of these initiatives. At present, there are forty thousand (40,000) such Basiji Militia bases active throughout the country and according to the new plan (2009) another 7,000 are due to be established.
- 4- Encouraging and directing civil society organisations towards charity and relief work through relief committees and the youth organisations and the creation of obedient organisations as opposed to the independent civil society organisations are parts of the garrison-state policies to control the situation.
- 5- Cutting relations between the Iranian and the international civil society. A list of international scientific organisations and centres (60 centres) has been published where connecting with them is considered a felony. Under the same pretext, a number of human rights activists were detained or their activities limited and their offices closed down and they were banned to travel abroad to attend seminars and conferences. Even the United Nations offices in Tehran were ordered to work with the organisations and individual approved by the government and they are not permitted to work with the independent civil society organisations.
- 6- Destruction and sterilisation of cooperation among civil society organisations is another policy as any accumulation of power is considered a security threat. Dissolution of Network of Non-Governmental Houses in more than 30 provinces in the past year has been part of this accumulation of power phobia. The right to assembly even for environmental issues is denied for the same reason.
- 7- Narrowing the cyber space society and prevention of circulation of information in the society is another strategy which has been vigorously pursued. This is carried out through filtering, hacking and shutting down websites and mobile phone networks which in the days after the disputed elections continued regularly. Reducing the internet speed in sensitive moments and interference in the network of communications where the speed is slow in normal times serves the same purpose. Iran has the lowest rate of speed among the world and ranks at 187 among the 204 countries. The government claims that restrictions of 128 kpbs for domestic internet users are due to the insufficient means to clean the web contents! Interestingly, Tehran as the capital is not among the 10 cities which enjoy relatively faster internet access!

During the 2009-2010 upheavals, networks such as facebook, twitter and Youtube were not accessible for days. Even filter-breaking devices had problem to open emails. The government had also filtered hundreds of site for prevention purposes. Revolutionary Guards Corpse has organised a group of hackers called “the Cyber Army” whose main task is attacking the websites and hacking them and creating insecurity and psychological war in the cyber space. Since the government owns the communications company which is the main internet provider in Iran, it can close down access to information and free circulation of information whenever it decides. Last year, Revolutionary Guards Corpse bought Iran’s telecommunications company and allocated a large budget to combat soft war and occupy the cyber space.

Military in Politics and Economy

In the past two decades, the military has entered into various fields of the Iranian society and expanded its influence and presence over many areas and created serious obstacles to the development of the civil society and the private sector. The arrival of military element into the power structure has created fundamental transformations in the political and economical basis of the Islamic Republic and given it a new character which can be called the “Military oligarchy”.

In the first few years after the revolution, Revolutionary Guards Corpse carried a political-ideological dimension. The start of Iran-Iraq war protruded its military-intelligence character. With the establishment of the Ministry of Intelligence and redirecting security into it, Revolutionary Guards were banned from politics by the leader of the Islamic Revolution. During the war years, the Guard’s military dimension dominated its function.

This was during the first generation of the Revolutionary Guards. By the end of Iran-war and in the 1990s, the second generation of Revolutionary Guards got to the power and with government’s encouragement under the pretext of reconstruction, military entered into the economy sphere. The Guards used Article 147 of the constitution which states “use of army in peace times” and established sections for reconstruction such as “Ghorb” and “Khatam al-Anbia” and registered a number of companies and prepared grounds for its arrival into the economy.

The Guard’s activities continued throughout the past decades and increased in dimension. After two decades of work in the economy the Guards have taken over vital and important sectors of the economy such as oil, communications, mother industries, transportation, financial and credit establishments and many more.

In the 1990s, an attempt was made for their entrance into politics but social and political grounds were not prepared. The most important action taken by the influential elements in the Guards was a letter sent to the then president Khatami, regarding the 8 July 2001 incidents (Appendix no 1). This letter was signed by 24 top high ranking commanders and had a threatening and criticising tone covered in words, portraying the Guards’ sufferings as victims. The letter spoke of the Guard’s concerns of disrespect towards the supreme leader and their ability to answer and mentioned that their patience was running out to witness such situations.

In 2005, the military engineered the presidential elections and brought a new class of politicians to power. These years had been the golden years for the Revolutionary Guards. They consolidated their power in the 2009 elections and played a major role in the suppression of the people after the June 2010 elections.

However, the involvement of military in the economy in the 1990s and politics in the new century is the result of the weak and bloodless private and civil sector of Iran. With the developments of the past year, it makes it even harder for the civil society to expand and pass through such a barrier.

Civil Society as an Instrument in the Hand of Political and Social Groups

In recent years, some of the political groups have established their strategies on the development of the civil society in order to achieve their political goals. Others claim that the political arena has shifted into the civil sphere and for that they want to be more involved in civil activities, while in practice they had not taken any steps to strengthen the civil society nor has there been any change in their behaviour towards civil matters. To view the matter from a pessimistic perspective, one must say that these are the same old politics of creating confusion between the boundaries of civil society and use it as a ladder to reach the centre of political power. Optimistically speaking, one must say that they are careless in writing their demands. Either way, such approaches by the political groups has cost the civil society dearly.

Legal

Lack of Transparent and Powerful Legal Structure

Lack of a transparent legal structure which can guarantee the right to set up and work in the civil society and provide guarantees for free association and free circulation of information are major obstacles for the growth and development of the civil society.

The main problem of the Iranian civil society is lack of transparency and incorporation of multiple legislations governing their activities. Existing holes in the legislation and multiplicity of regulations governing the setting up and registration of an organisation on the one hand, and control and limitation to access information, personal preferences and discriminatory practices against the civil society institutions on the other hand, are the principle practical legal barriers.

At present, following rules and regulations deals with civil society:

- A legislation which dates back to 1910 and reform Articles of 584 and 585 of 1938 are Iran's law of commerce which deal with non-profitable and voluntary organisations. The importance of this legislation lies in its history as the beginning of the civil society and secondly, it deals with non-commercial institutions and can be referred to in courts of law as the original legislation.

1. Legislation governing the activities of political parties, professional associations and Islamic associations was approved by the government in 1981. Its detailed articles were approved

by the cabinet in 1989. According to this legislation, all associations, professional syndicates and unions are established to defend the rights of their profession and must work within the law. According to article 10 of this legislation, a commission comprising representatives of general prosecutor, judiciary, ministry of internal affairs and two appointees from the Islamic parliament oversee the application, licensing and the activities of such organisations.

2. Chamber of Commerce, Mining and Industry regulates licensing and activities of exporting companies and the Chamber supervises their performance.

3. The legislation relating to the aims and responsibilities of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance passed in 1986, supervises the issue of culture in the country. According to Article 2, sections 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22, the Ministry is the institution to oversee the work of cultural and artistic organisations. Based on this article, in 1996, the Higher Council of Cultural Revolution set out regulations and criteria governing this legislation.

4. Labour law, passed by Council of the Consultative Assembly in 1990 and its regulations were approved in 1992. According to article 131 of this legislation and its executive directives, all workers and employers in any profession and guild are allowed to work within the framework of this legislation and its directives.

According to the Labour Law, three labour organizations have been recognized in Islamic Republic of Iran:

- 1- Islamic Labour Councils which are neither council nor professional association or syndicate but have the responsibility of both.
 - 2- Islamic labour associations and
 - 3- Professional associations.
- Legislation for professional guilds passed in 1983. This legislation oversees all activities of professional unions and the country's higher council of guilds.
 - Legislation regarding responsibilities and organisation of Ministry of Science, Research and Technology approved in 1984. Articles 1 & 2 and its executive directives set the code of practice.
 - Ministry of Science, Research and Technology is one of the important institutions to issue permission for students unions, associations and university scientists and other higher education and civil society institutions which work in the educational fields.
 - Legislation for the establishment and operation of non-government organisations passed in 1985 by the cabinet. Based on article 130 of the constitution, the government passed legislation on the establishment and activities of non-government organisations. According to section B, of Article 1 of this legislation a commission comprising of representatives of Ministry of Interior Affairs (the Deputy of Social Affairs), Higher Council of the Provinces, and representative of the non-government organisations convene either in the Ministry of Interior Affairs or governors' offices to issue licenses.

Cultural

Discourse of Ideological Traditionalism

Despite cultural transformations of the Iranian society in the past decades, traditional, ideological discourse backed by and through an entire ideological machinery still dominates the Iranian society. These discourses contain various elements of political Shiaism and trends of traditional patrimonialism, and populism. This discourse views the modern world and democratic way of life as the main enemy and liberalism as a dangerous ideology. Supporters of such discourse have enmity to pluralism, civil society and tradition of Western intellectualism. They emphasise on leadership, social and moral discipline, traditional values, political elitisms and control of culture. This discourse is one of the important barriers to the development of civil society in Iran. The weakness of urban culture, lack of democratic mentality and democratic forces are other restraining factors to the growth of the civil society.

Alongside these restrictive factors, intellectuals and the university establishment are not interested in the civil society and this issue has not been transformed into a public issue in such institutions.

Lack of Civil Religion and Moral

Lack of civil religion and morals are other restraining factors for the growth of the civil society in Iran. Civil religion stands opposed to traditional religion. Civil religion accepts pluralism, tolerance, civil responsibility and reinforces these principles. Civil religion is the religion of life and the intertwined world. In the present situation, traditional morality is unable to organise and shape human bounds. The lack of civil moral to regulate human relations has turned the Iranian society, a society without civility. This factor prevents the Iranian society to acquire and develop the sense of civil responsibility which is the basis of civil moral.

Economy

Renting-Economy

The structure of the Iranian economy prevents the formation of a strong civil society and makes the government unaccountable to the people. The government can continue its existence despite opposition from social forces and people. Iran's economy is a renting economy. The character of such economy reduces government's dependency on taxes. It can sustain itself by the sale of natural resources especially the oil. Therefore, the government does not meet the needs and demands of the people and imposes its policies on them. With relative independence from social groups and forces and having the monopoly of resources and instruments of power, the government does not allow the formation of an independent and strong civil society and private sector and for that reason, these sectors remain weak and sidelined. The private sector does not invest in industry due to insecurity and late return. Its biggest investment is concentrated in commerce and trade and it is reluctant to invest in social ventures and feels no responsibility towards the society and the people.

Poverty

Expansion of poverty among social groups is another problem of the Iranian society. According to head of Iran's Statistics Centre " despite country's huge resources, unemployment, inflation and uncontrollable cash flow has driven 10 million Iranians under poverty line and more than 30 million relatively near to the line." The concept of "voluntary work" has lost its importance since social groups use all their efforts to meet their basic needs and that leaves little space to respond to other needs and voluntary work.

Lack of Strong Private Sector

One of the reasons for the under-development of the civil society in Iran is the lack of strong private sector. Apart from rare occasions, private sector, had never been independent of power and had always acted as an indicator of the Behemoth government's demands. In the past two decades, the private sector experienced growth and gained some of its power but comparing to the power of the government it has minimal share.

The proportion of the private sector in the banking is %12-15; insurance, %15 and in big industries, less than %10. Companies which enter contracting tenders such as gas, oil and petrochemical, dam building, power stations all belong to the government or semi-government institutions. Iran's private sector has no participation in the naval, rail or air transport. The size of private share in these sectors is small scale and scattered. Private sector's influence in the structure of government is as small as the economy.

In culture, art and social affairs and the media such as newspapers and magazines, private sector lacks power. The biggest selling papers belong to the government and private sector's share is limited to giving commercial adverts in these papers.

Private sector owns hundreds of professional, commercial and industrial establishments but their power of influence is minimal even among their own members. These hundreds active institutions have no influence even in the middle or lower structure of political power.

In recent years, the government has allocated a number of industrial and economic establishments to the private sector in order to execute Article 44 of the constitution but this has not strengthened the private sector. Rather, a new phenomenon of unidentified ownership in the economy has emerged which will ultimately reproduces government domination over economy.

Social

Weakness of the Middle Classes

In the social arena, Iranian society faces numerous challenges which if continued will seriously threaten the civil society.

The first challenge is the weakness of the middle class due to historical factors and the existence of Behemoth and renting government. In the past two decades the educated middle class was able to emerge in the society and reach to an important social, political and cultural status. The relation between the middle class and the dominant power is not an ultimate conflict. The overlap between the society and the government sometimes demonstrates in cooperation between the middle classes and the government. Many of the agent-employers and engineers in the government come from the middle classes without whom the government would not be able to function.

The second challenge is the ideological influence of the dominant power among the middle classes. The problem of the educated middle class is not the fact that it has not cut off from the regime's ideology but in current situation this class does not have the ability to even organise a strike on its own. A universal strike is manifestation of conflict and struggle.

Reduction and Erosion of Social Capital

The erosion and reduction of social capital in the past years is one of the challenges in the Iranian society. Mistrust among groups and social forces and their inability to form networks and volunteer cooperation is a major indicator of social erosion of social capital. Another challenge is the expansion of clientelism (protectorate relations) relations due to political under-development in the past years. As a result, individuals and groups engage in deals with centres of power, and gangs and clubs have become the main players in the political-social life of the Iranians. Lack of transparency, secretiveness and unaccountability are the main indicators of clientelism relations and corruption. Favourism and sectarian relations are the results of the expansion of such relations in the society.

Expansion of "Hobbesian" Situation

The expansion of "Hobbesian" situation in the country is another challenge of the civil society in Iran. Lack of political, social and economic security is an indicator of such situation. In a Hobbsian situation people feel unsafe in their private and public lives. Fear and lack of hope for the future and mistrust are major indicators of a Hobbesian situation as it will cause the biggest obstacles to growth of the civil society.

International

Change in United Nation's Agencies Policies

At the international level the Iranian civil society is facing many challenges. The first challenge is the pressure by the government on the UN agencies to operate all their programmes through official government agencies and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. To comply with these policies, the UN agencies have abandoned their cooperation with the independent organisations of the civil society and only work with the government and the civil society organisations created by the government or its agencies. During the events that followed in the disputed presidential elections, the UN agencies put pressure on some of their local personnel for their connections with the civil society protests and dismissed some of them. The consequences of the United Nations agencies in Iran is the promotion of the non-government or semi-government organisations and the civil society connected to the government as opposed to the independent civil society.

Nuclear Issue and the Sanctions

The nuclear issue and sanctions by the United Nations Council against the Islamic Republic had placed this issue on top of other issues such as human rights and is directing the society towards an emergency situation and is driving the issue of civil liberties to the sideline. The Revolutionary Guards Corpse and their relatives are benefiting from the sanctions and are accumulating wealth.

The Shadow of War in the Region and Iran

The shadow of war in the region and Iran is another challenge facing the civil society in Iran. Occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq resulted in increase in militarism, anti-democracy traditions, and growth in fundamentalism and expansion of terrorism. Civil society needs a calm and stable environment to bloom and continue. The shadow of war over the region provides a suitable environment for the growth of anti-civil society and anti-democratic sentiments and the dominance of the authoritarian forces and military in the political sphere of the civil society.

Receding Third Wave of Democracy

The process of the downfall of third wave of democracy in the world is another challenge facing the civil society. Since 1974, more than 90 countries moved towards democracy. At the beginning of the 21st century about %60 of the countries were independent with democratic governments. Democratisation of Mexico and Indonesia at the end of the 1990s and the colourful revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine were some of these democratic developments.

The ecstasy over such victories did not last long. In recent years this wave has receded and autocratic governments have emerged here and there and democracy has gone into recession. Of such countries, Nigeria, Russia, Ukraine, Thailand, Venezuela Bangladesh, Philippines, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are going backwards. Kenya is in chaos. Many countries in the democracy club have not had much success. Even countries which are called model of the third wave democracy such as Chile and South Africa, Poland and Ghana, are

facing management problems and corruption. This downfall in democracy is a challenge for the development of civil society and the movement for democracy in Iran.

CSOs Internal and External Assessment Outline

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diversity and plurality 2. Successful experiences and best practices 3. <i>Bravery, innovation and creativity</i> 4. The emergence of strong and powerful civil society organization 5. The emergence of a new generation of social activists 6. Resistance and persistence 7. Grounds for cooperation, convergence and solidarity among civil society activists 8. Opportunity for re-thinking, re-examining and reviewing strategies 9. Emergence and expansion of cooperation networks and membership in the global network 10. Growth of the civil society in the cyber space 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establishment and formation of civil society organizations 2. Split and rupture in the civil society 3. Limited civil society 4. <i>Unbalanced</i> civil society 5. <i>Isolation</i> 6. <i>Inefficiency and ineffectiveness</i> 7. Inability to apply change management and management for change 8. Lack of innovation, creativity and initiative 9. Lack of efficient and effective leadership 10. <i>Bad governance</i> 11. Communication weakness 12. Reduction or cessation of capacity building centers 13. Weak theoretical knowledge 14. Weakness in the effective capacity-building and lack of investment 15. Inefficiency of networks of cooperation 16. Lack of ethical <i>codes</i> and self-regulation mechanisms 17. <i>Fear and conservatism</i>

Opportunities	Threats
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Political environment: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. Government and Tehran' s city council Policies and programs 1.2. The arrival of new political forces into the civil society arena 1.3. <i>Emergence of strong opposition</i> 2. Legal structure <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1. <i>The capacity of the Islamic Republic Constitution</i> 3. Cultural environment: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1. Expansion of democratic idea and the discourse on democracy, human rights and peace 3.2. Discourse of post-Islamic intellectuals 3.3. <i>Expansion of cyberspace and increased access to information</i> 4. Social environment: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1. Emergence of the Green movement 4.2. <i>Expansion of a cultural middle class</i> 4.3. Tradition of volunteer actions and charity work in the Iranian society 5. Economy <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. 1. Privatization; implementation of Article of the constitution 6. International environment: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. 1. Role of international organizations and United Nation's agencies 6. 2. Globalization and Democracy 6. 3. Domination of civil society discourse in the global society 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Political environment: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. Nature of government in Iran 1.2. Attitude of Iran's ninth and tenth government towards civil society 1.3. Hegemonic and Dominance of intelligence approach 1.4. Military in politics and economy 1.5. Civil society as an instrument in the hand of political and social groups 2. Legal structure: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1. <i>Lack of transparent and powerful legal structure</i> 3. Cultural environment: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1. Discourse of ideological traditionalism 3.2. Lack of civil religion and moral 4. Economy environment: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1. Renting-economy 4.2. <i>Poverty</i> 4.3. Lack of strong private sector 5. Social environment: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5.1. Weakness of the middle classes 5.2. Reduction and erosion of social capital 5.3. Expansion of "Hobbesian" situation 6. International environment: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6.1. Change in United Nation's Agencies policies 6.2. Nuclear issue and the sanctions 6.3. The shadow of war in the region and Iran 6.4. Receding third wave of democracy

Conclusion

Considering strength, opportunities, weakness and breaking points of the civil society in Iran and the existing struggles and developments in the society, 5 scenarios can be predicted:

1. Suppression and the premature death of the civil society. The government suppresses the civil-political movement through strategies of thorough cleansing the political system and the dominance of the garrison-state in the Iranian society.
2. Despair and disappointment drives the civil society into isolation and engagement in relief and charity work and away from politics and the responsibilities which it brings with it.
3. A weak and limited civil society, which plays little role in the political-social transformations, alongside a bureaucratic and autocratic government
4. Erosion of the social battles. Neither players; the garrison-state nor the civil society will not be able to drive the other out and both conflicting parties are in stalemate.
5. Expansion of an independent, vigorous, democratic and developmental civil society as the best scenario which will bring democracy to Iran.

Any of these scenarios depend on the creativity, ability, resources, opportunities and capabilities of the social forces. Internal as well as international conditions for capacity building and empowerment of civil activists, effective strategies, plans and programmes for civil society building all depend on the power and determination of suppression of the garrison state.

Recommended Strategies

At the present hazardous situation, considering possible scenarios to prevent the premature death of the civil society and its successful transition to a strong and sustained civil society, the following strategies and action plans are suggested:

Strategy . 1:

Civil society resistance against widespread suppression and replacement policies.

Measures:

1. To establish an umbrella network to defend civil society organisations and activists at the national and international level.
2. To mobilise the public against suppressive strategies through campaigns for the defence of civil society and freedom of associations at the national and international level.
3. To utilise the strategy of repair and restructuring social networks and the expansion of cyber civil society alongside real civil society.
4. To establish a joint fund to guarantee financial stability of the civil society organisations and to support their activists.
5. To implement transparent and refined policies in approaching the government or semi-government civil society, especially in the non-governmental field.
6. To utilise strategy of rejection and marginalisation of dependent civil societies (GOCSOs) and to prevent them from occupying civil spaces at the national and international level.
7. To use strategy of alliance and cooperation among civil society organisations in order to create a strong, united and influential front against suppression and replacement strategies.

Strategy . 2:

Expansion and development the discourse on democracy, civil society, human rights and peace in the Iranian civil society.

Measures:

1. Establishment of centres for production, publication and spread of civil and democratic philosophies, values, morals and actions of a civil society.
2. Establishment of cyber as well as real schools to educate and train civil activists and defenders of the civil society and human rights.
3. Development of peace-making skills, publicity and advocacy, leadership, civil resistance and democratisation among activists and organisations of civil society.
4. Facilitating access, exchange and transition of information and knowledge among activists and the civil society organisations.

Strategy . 3:

Establishment and restructuring energetic, vigorous, democratic and developmental civil society organisations and association life.

Measures:

1. Expansion and development of online capacity building as well as real programmes for civil society organisations and activists. Capacity building in this strategy requires investment in the internal systems through organisational development, strong and skilful management and manpower, facilities on the ground, technology, advocacy, public relations, external relations with financial supporters and volunteer workforce and interested parties; and also, utilising opportunities, resources and coordination in the battle for social transformations.
2. Implementing capacity building strategies to increase theoretical knowledge and level of operation of the centres and institutions responsible for promoting capacity building of civil society organizations.
3. Employing strategies of expansion and operation and sound management of civil society organisations such as participation of all members and volunteer forces in shaping agendas, decision-making and executing decisions. Developing gender-related attitudes and democratic relations among activists and organisations. Taking unambiguous and transparent approaches in responding to interested parties by using self-discipline and taking responsibility through programmes of qualitative licensing operations (self-regulation).
4. Development and expansion of social base and power of representation through knitting close relations with and responding to the needs of local societies and social groups.
5. Utilising variable methods of investment, resource variation, encouragement of private sector and multinationals to invest. Creating a financial fund to guarantee the stability of the civil society organisations.
6. Implementing strategies of expansion and variability of activities to influence the public.
7. Implementing strategies of media variability through setting up television and radio networks and other means of communications in order to reflect voices of the civil society.

Strategy . 4:

Empowerment of political, social and cultural environment and cyber space for the expansion and development of civil society.

Measures:

1. Programmes of publicity and advocacy for culture-building and institutionalising civil culture. Transforming vision, practice and behaviour towards the civil society amongst policy-makers, agent-employers, political-social activists and intellectuals. Turning civil society issue into a public issue at the public level.

2. Implementing citizen's empowerment projects in order to play their role in the landscape of power in transition to democracy and development. This can be achieved through expansion of culture of citizenship, civil resistance, awareness-raising and educating citizens to their rights and responsibilities and the expansion of association life among citizens.
3. Implementing strategies of constructive dialogue among civil society organisations aimed at reducing existing splits and ruptures in transition to a consistent and operational civil society.
4. Seeking strategic alliances from among groups, social and political forces, especially in the private sector and encouraging the private sector to invest in these areas, while in transition from a weak civil society to a strong one
5. Expansion of cooperation with the media in order to access free circulation of information and development of democratic and civil ideas by educating civil journalists.
6. Employing strategies of dialogue with the private sector, political society and the United Nations agencies in order to play an effective role in the process of development and democracy and to break away from the existing hazardous situation.
7. Strengthening relations and cooperation with the universities, scientific and religious centres in order to exchange and produce the knowledge and literature of democracy, civil society, peace and human rights among them.

Strategy . 5:

Expansion and development of communications with the international civil societies and organisations.

Measures:

1. Expansion, development and exchange of knowledge, experiences and technical cooperation between the Iranian and the International civil society organisation.
2. Expansion of regional and international cooperation and communications and exchange of experiences and dialogue on common issues. Attending international gatherings and membership in the international networks.
3. Identifying and utilising existing resources and possibilities in the United Nations agencies and international organisations for the empowerment and capacity building of activists and organisations.
4. Forming coalitions among the Iranian civil society activists and organisations and the international organisations aimed at peace-making activities and elimination of violence and discrimination among all social groups. Advocacy and support for the Iranian movement for political-civil rights and to further projects of democracy and civil society building in Iran and the region.

Glossary

Civil Society:

An area in the society, where independent and self-structured movements, groups and social forces work to control political power, defend human and citizens' rights and their professional interests.

Strong Civil Society:

A strong, consistent, extensive and efficient society, with the power to act and enjoy widespread popular support; representing social groups and forces at different times and settings and aware of its role and responsibilities among the landscape of power. A civil society for itself and capable to limit and expose political power and government and make them accountable to the people.

Weak Civil Society:

An inconsistency, ruptured, inefficient and loose society which lacks determination to act and does not enjoy wide-spread popular base and representation; not aware of role and responsibilities in the landscape of power. A civil society in itself which lacks the capability to limit political power and make the government accountable to the people.

Garrison State:

A state in which, real power lays in the hand of a network of non-so-organised military men, dressed as civil representative who work in close cooperation with the non-military political elite. They possess modern scientific and technological instruments and tend to resort to violence to combat internal challenges and conflicts. In a garrison-state, all political and social activities are controlled and organised through the government. The state occupies all civil spaces and the role of the civil society organisations, except those connected to the state are minimised. In other words, there is no economical, social, political or cultural life outside the limits of the official state.

Political Society:

An area of social life, where groups and political forces compete over control of government machinery.

Non-governmental Organisations:

Establishments which are set up by independent groups or individuals and work voluntarily for non-profitable, non-commercial, non-political goals. Non-governmental organisations work for humanistic purposes such as women's issues, human rights, civil rights, environment, charity, social injuries, advocacy, health and hygiene, empowerment, development, scientific, cultural, social and similar activities.

Mass-society:

A homogenous society, which is also floating and in particles and in which the concept of grouping and association life is discoloured and individuals lack defence mechanisms of the civil society groups to be protected against direct and indirect pressures of those who are in control of political and economical power. Populism is the ideology of a mass-society.

Appendixes

Annex 1

Number of NGOs and their Branches in Different Provinces (2004)

Province	NGO	NGO Branch
E. Azerbaijan	240	17
W. Azerbaijan	177	49
Ardebil	109	24
Isfahan	948	174
Ilam	124	26
Booshehr	154	4
Tehran	1114	111
Charmahal Bakhtiari	166	25
Khorasan	460	51
Khuzestan	220	20
Zanjan	90	14
Semnan	149	14
Sistan Baloochestan	106	13
Fars	496	86
Ghazvin	103	17
Ghom	129	8
Kordestan	124	14
Kerman	87	56
Kermanshah	153	26
Kohkiluyeh Boyerahmad	59	6
Golestan	261	29
Gilan	118	26
Lorestan	120	11
Mazandaran	494	151
Markazi	169	4
Hormozgan	129	8
Hamedan	138	27
Yazd	277	18
Total (across country)	6914	1039

<http://amar.sci.org.ir/PlanList.aspx>

Appendix 2

Exactions from an analytical report on the performance of the representatives of the first NGOs to the Central Supervisory Board (6 March 2008)

..... In 2005, the reform government was replaced by Ahmadinejad administration and changes occurred at the managerial levels in the Ministry of Interior Affairs. Under Dr. Majidi and while Mr. Amini was the Director General, a sudden recession took over—a sign of fundamental change and an absolute different approach compared to the past. Subsequently, all the licences issued towards the end of the last administration came under review. Most of these licences were invalidated because it was alleged they have violated the rule. The approaches of the previous managers were examined with suspicion and a security-oriented approach to their administration persuaded the newly arrival officials to take measures in compiling new set of rules that best served their own plans and trend of thought.

..... Within a year of the new administration, 90 licences which were already approved and issued but not delivered to the SAMAN applicants were cancelled. Efforts to review the files which had minor shortcomings were ignored. More over, what is damaging is the lack of proper understanding of the functions of SAMANs (voluntary organisations) or in other words volunteer work. The new administration which has successfully conducted an intelligence oriented management style has little understanding of the essence and spirit of volunteer work. To them, it is implausible that a group of people dedicate their financial assets and their time into a cause and request assistance from the authorities without expecting any return. It is hard for them to understand that clients who resort to the voluntary organisations are not ordinary people. They go there to heal the pains and sufferings of other people.

However, the first term of the Supervisory Delegation is nearing its end while problems of coordination among organisations for licensing, the ever-lasting NAJA differences with the interior ministry still exist. Other obstacles such as disregard for circulars and approvals, even the ruling of administrative court of justice, multiple and scattered function of the Company's House and non-coordination with the SAMANs, lack of clear definition and directive on charities has caused discrepancies. Lack of proper definition of boundaries of responsibilities at the national, regional and town's level and lack of guarantees to implement directives, lack of directive on the use of international financial resources, confusion between social and political realm still exists. SAMANs are accused of political activity and the widespread interference of government in this realm which is against the structure of volunteer organisations; lack of proper internal education on the culture and role of the elite and the those in charge in the organisations alongside the birth of government-sponsored SAMANs and negative publicity against independent SAMANs have all caused extensive problems for the honest and hardworking people in the SAMANs.

These organisations have gathered a contingent of concerned people who work to identify and deal with people's problems and instead they face obstacles at every step and are branded, agents of America, and Zionists who want to create a velvet revolution by a group of shallow people. However,

they will not be driven out, nor frightened of such accusations and are determined to concentrate on their goals and take some burden off the society.

Appendix 3

- Letter of IRGC Commanders to President Khatami (1999)

Complete Text of the Letter of IRGC Commanders to Khatami after the attack by the Basij and the IRGC on Tehran university dormitories in July of 1999.

Esteemed President of the Republic Hojjatoleslam Mr.Seyyed Mohammad Khatami

With wishes of peace and hope for your continued health, we present to you:

Following the recent events, as a group of public servants from the Holy Defense [Iran Iraq War] who defended the esteemed people of Iran, we considered it our duty to present this document to His Excellency the esteemed scholar. We hope that with great tolerance and valuable slogans, coupled with the message that you are advocating (we are willing to listen to every opposition speech and idea) you can address this issue. This issue represents, perhaps, the pain of thousands who have sacrificed for the Revolution, who nowadays – far away from any political line or party – see the problems and events of the Revolution with anxious eyes. And they are astonished and surprised at the silence, negligence, and simplistic views of Iranian officials, who are sitting on their seats with the blessing of the blood of thousands of martyrs.

Esteemed Mr. Khatami, certainly all of us have considered and do consider His Excellency pious, revolutionary, faithful, and possessing deep religious roots in the field of commitment to the Revolution. But your response to the events that we all have witnessed, which brought about the happiness and rejoicing of the enemy, and the priority you give to following up on some of the mistakes and transgressions, making them worse than they really are, compared with the lack of attention and downplaying the significance of other mistakes, such as law-breaking, desecration of Islam, and other pressures, have caused currents that hate the Revolution to become more confident. In contrast, they have caused defendants of the Revolution to become more conservative, with their apathy coupled with despair. Every day they have been humiliated, and because of this, they have seen blood, and with regret and sorrow, they bite their own fingers.

Esteemed Mr. President, the attack on the University dorms was, just as the honorable and innocent Leader of the Revolution said, an abominable, ugly, and bad event. Despite the fact that the harshest and most critical retaliatory measures were taken against those responsible, the Iranian people, because of the abominable actions that took place, not only accepted these confrontations but endorsed them as well. Yet an important question, remains unclear: in your opinion, was that the only catastrophe?

Only this issue is worth following up, paying attention to, opposing, and taking corrective measures against, such that a few Ministers resigned and the National Security Council organized a meeting and created a Special Research Group. But doesn't the desecration and disparagement of the foundations of the system call for regret and following up? Do you think the sanctity of the Velayat-e Faqih [Guardianship of the Jurisprudent] is less than that of the Tehran University dorms? Is the

sanctity of the Imam, that rarefied individual, worth less than effrontery towards one student? Do you think that disrupting the security of the nation for a few days, attacking every faithful and religious Iranian, and starting public fires is not a catastrophe?

Do you think bringing the entire Islamic Republic under question, the very legacy of tens of thousands of martyrs, and shouting slogans against it does not constitute a catastrophe?

Esteemed Mr. Khatami, when it was said a few nights ago that a minority were shouting slogans against the Supreme Leader, moving towards the “Shahid Mottahari Collection,” our small children looked us in the eyes. It was as if they were asking us where our bravery had gone.

Esteemed Mr. President, today when we saw the face of the Supreme Leader, we wished for God to put us out of our misery. It is because our shoulders have locked up, and with itching eyes and lumps in our throats, we must observe the withering away of the product of 14 centuries of the torment and persecution of Shi'ism and Islam.

Esteemed Mr. Khatami, you know well, despite all of our power, we are rendered incapable because of our friends' Reform-mindedness. Who is the person who does not know that today the hypocrites and opponents are gathering in regiments in the name of the “Students,” and joining this line of battle? And vindictive, short-sighted, and profit-seeking insiders are adding fuel to the fire. They will not refrain from any form of speech or writing in order to incite more [chaos]!

Esteemed Mr. Khatami, how long should we watch with tears and regurgitate our own blood while we practice “democracy,” laden with chaos and insults, and have Revolutionary patience at the cost of our own system?

Esteemed Mr. President, thousands of families of martyrs and soldiers and militants gave their votes to you, and their votes represent the (Presidential) medal upon your chest. They have the expectation that you will confront these problems judiciously. And today we see the footprint of the enemy in these recent events and hear them drunkenly laughing. Seize control of today for tomorrow will be much too late and your regret will be impossible to eliminate.

Honorable Seyyed, listen to the speech of those who appear to be friends and insiders in the Student movement, do not all of their sayings approve and promote chaos and law breaking?

Was this supposed to be the meaning of the Year of the Imam [1999, the 20th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution]? Do you think that this was the proper way to preserve his grandeur and legacy? And do you think that the inattention of a small group called “Hezbollah” constitutes permission for [the opposition] to break the head of every religious Iranian and destroying the respect of religion?

Esteemed Mr. Khatami, listen to the periodicals and radio stations of the world, does not the sound of the foreigners' Daf and Dohol [two particularly upbeat Iranian musical instruments] come to mind?

Esteemed President, if you do not make a Revolutionary decision today and do not fulfill your Islamic and national mission, tomorrow will be so late, and the problems so unsolvable, that it will be unimaginable.

In conclusion, with complete respect and endearment towards His Excellency, we declare that our patience has come to an end, and we will not permit ourselves any more tolerance in the face of your inaction.

Commanders and public servants of the respected people of Iran during the Holy Defense (Iran Iraq War): *Gholamali Rashid, Aziz Jafari, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, Ghasem Soleymani, Jafar Asadi, Ahmad Kazemi, Mohammad Kowsari, Asadollah Naseh, Mohammad Bagheri, Gholamreza Mehrabi, Abdolhamid Riufinejad, Noor Ali Shushtari, Dr. Ali Ahmadian, Ahmad Gholampour, Yaghoub Zahedi, Nabiollah Roodaki, Ali Fadavi, Gholamreza Jalali, Amin Shariati, Hossein Hamedani, Esmail Gha'ani, Ali Fazli, Ali Zahedi, Morteza Ghorbani.*

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Sohrab Razzaghi has a PhD in political science from the University of Tehran and was a professor at Allameh Tabatabaei University from 1997 until 2005 when he was fired in the first wave of academic expulsions following the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. He is a human rights defender who worked in past decades to promote and develop civil society in Iran. In Iran he was co-founder and worked as Executive Director of the non-profit - Iran Civil Society Organization Training and Research Center (ICTRC) - known as Koneshgaran Davtalab.

After the June elections 2009, threats against his personal safety forced him to leave the country for a fellowship in the Netherlands. Currently, he works as a researcher for the Knowledge Programme Civil Society in West Asia at the University of Amsterdam. Furthermore, he is co-founder of Arseh Sevom (Third Sphere). This organisation was established in the Netherlands in early 2010 to promote peace, democracy and human rights in Iran.

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The paper is produced in the framework of the Knowledge Programme on Civil Society in West Asia. This is a joint initiative by Hivos and the University of Amsterdam with the purpose of generating and integrating knowledge on the roles and opportunities for civil society actors in democratization processes in politically challenging environments. This programme integrates academic knowledge and practitioner's knowledge from around the world to develop new insights and strategies on how civil society actors in Syria and Iran can contribute to various processes of democratization and how international actors can support this.

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