UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND PRESS DEVELOPMENT DURING KHATAMI'S PRESIDENCY IN IRAN

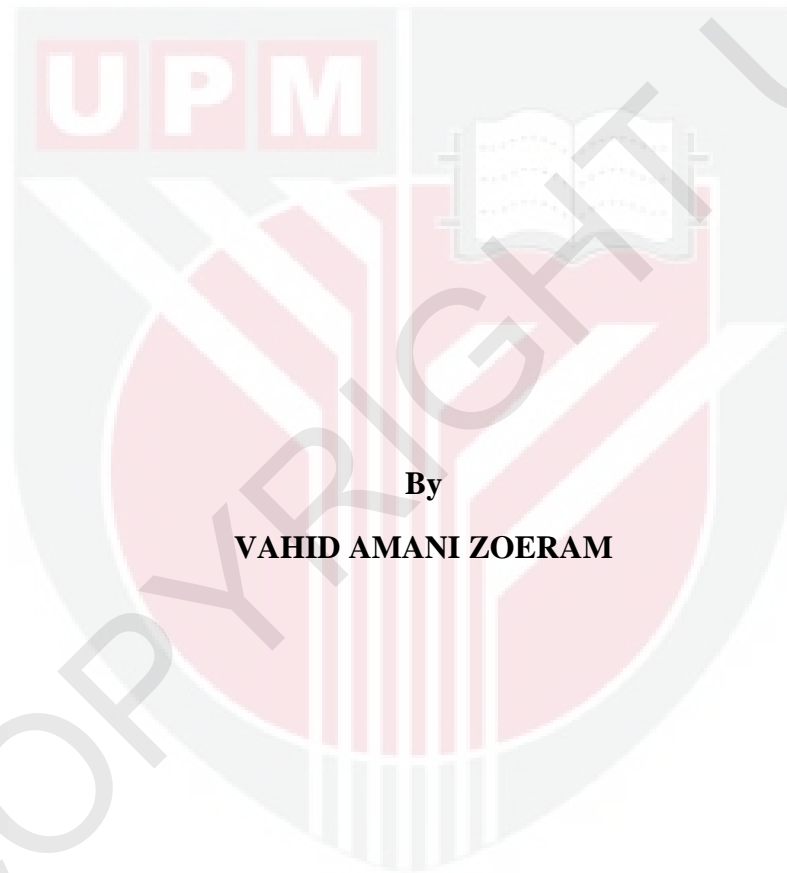*VAHID AMANI ZOERAM*

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**ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND PRESS DEVELOPMENT
DURING KHATAMI'S PRESIDENCY IN IRAN**

By

VAHID AMANI ZOERAM

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

September 2014

ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND PRESS DEVELOPMENT DURING HATAMI'S PRESIDENCY IN IRAN

By

VAHID AMANI ZOERAM

September 2014

Chairman: Lee Yok Fee, PhD

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The aim of this thesis is first, to investigate the evolution of the press as a component of civil society during the Khatami presidency, and second, to examine the role of the political system in these evolutions. The research uses Force Field Theory to analyze the relationships between advocate and opponent forces of civil society in Iran's political system during the Khatami presidency. The press, as a predominant component of civil society is a selected case in the thesis. The thesis examines the role of the Executive, the Legislature, and the Judiciary in Iran's political system in the changes of the press separately.

The research is an explanatory qualitative research. The primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews and secondary data includes international organization's reports and articles in independent journals the time in Iran. The informants are eleven persons who were chosen from three categories of the informants; journalists, experts, and officials. Likewise, the informants were chosen based on purposive sampling method and the study applied qualitative content analysis for analyzing of the data.

The outcomes demonstrate how the balance of political forces in the political system had determined the extent of press development in the Khatami era. While reformist forces in certain political institutions had performed as driving forces in the process of press development, conservative forces and some others were the restraining factor.

In addition, the results show that Iran's political system has two sources of legitimacy that led to a dichotomy inside the government and this dichotomy caused the formation of two types of elective and appointive institutions within the system. The dichotomy in the political system, on one hand, offered the potential to shape an authoritarian regime that was a barrier to press development. On the other hand, it presented the potential to form a democratic political structure such as during Khatami's era that facilitated development of civil society, especially the press.

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Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

PERANAN MASYARAKAT SIVIL DAN PERKEMBANGAN AKHBAR SEMASA KEPIMPINAN PRESIDEN KHATAMI DI IRAN

Oleh

VAHID AMANI ZOERAM

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Tesis ini mempunyai dua tujuan. Pertama, untuk menyiasat evolusi akhbar sebagai salah satu komponen masyarakat sivil semasa perjawatan presiden Khatami. Kedua, memeriksa peranan sistem politik ketika evolusi tersebut berlaku. Penyelidik menggunakan 'Force Field Theory' untuk menganalisis perhubungan antara kuasa penyokong dan pembangkang masyarakat sivil di dalam sistem politik Iran yang berada di bawah kuasa pentadbiran presiden Khatami. Akhbar sebagai satu komponen utama masyarakat sivil merupakan satu kes terpilih dalam tesis ini. Dengan itu, penyelidik memeriksa peranan Eksekutif, Badan Perundangan dan Badan Kehakiman dalam sistem politik Iran dan perubahan akhbar secara berasingan.

Penyelidikan ini adalah satu penyelidikan penjelasan kualitatif. Data prima dikutip melalui temu bual separa berstruktur dan data sekunder diperoleh melalui laporan dan artikel organisasi antarabangsa dalam jurnal-jurnal bebas di Iran. Sebelas orang responden telah dipilih dari tiga kategori pemberi maklumat, iaitu pemberita, pakar-pakar dalam bidang, dan pegawai kerajaan. Tambahan pula, responden dipilih berdasarkan kaedah pensampelan bertujuan dan kajian menggunakan analisis kandungan bersifat kualitatif untuk menganalisis data.

Hasil kajian menunjukkan bagaimana pembahagian kuasa politik dalam sistem politik telah memutuskan perkembangan akhbar pada era pentadbiran Khatami. Apabila reformis dalam institusi politik tertentu telah melaksanakan tugas sebagai pendesak proses perkembangan akhbar, kuasa konservatif yang lain telah melaksanakan tugas sebagai penghalang. Selain itu, hasil kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa terdapat dua sumber legitimasi dalam sistem politik Iran yang menyebabkan dikotomi berlaku dalam kerajaan. Dikotomi ini telah menyebabkan pembentukan dua jenis institusi, iaitu jenis pilihan dan lantikan dalam sistem itu. Dikotomi dalam sistem politik tersebut, pada satu pihak, ia berpotensi membentuk satu rejim authoritarian yang boleh menjadi halangan untuk perkembangan akhbar. Namun, pada satu pihak yang lain, ia berpotensi

membentuk struktur politik demokratik seperti semasa era Khatami yang memudahkan pembangunan masyarakat sivil terutamanya akhbar.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 2 September 2014 to conduct the final examination of Vahid Amani Zoeram on his thesis entitled "Role of Civil Society and Press Development During Khatami's Presidency In Iran" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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This thesis is submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee are as follows:

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Declaration by graduate student

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This is to confirm that:
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

I.R.I.	Islamic Republic of Iran
M.C.I.G.	Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance
NGOs	Non- Governmental Organizations
H.R.W.	Human Right Watch
P.S.B.	Press Supervisory Board
R.W.B.	Reporters without Borders
O.C.U.	Office for Consolidation of Unity
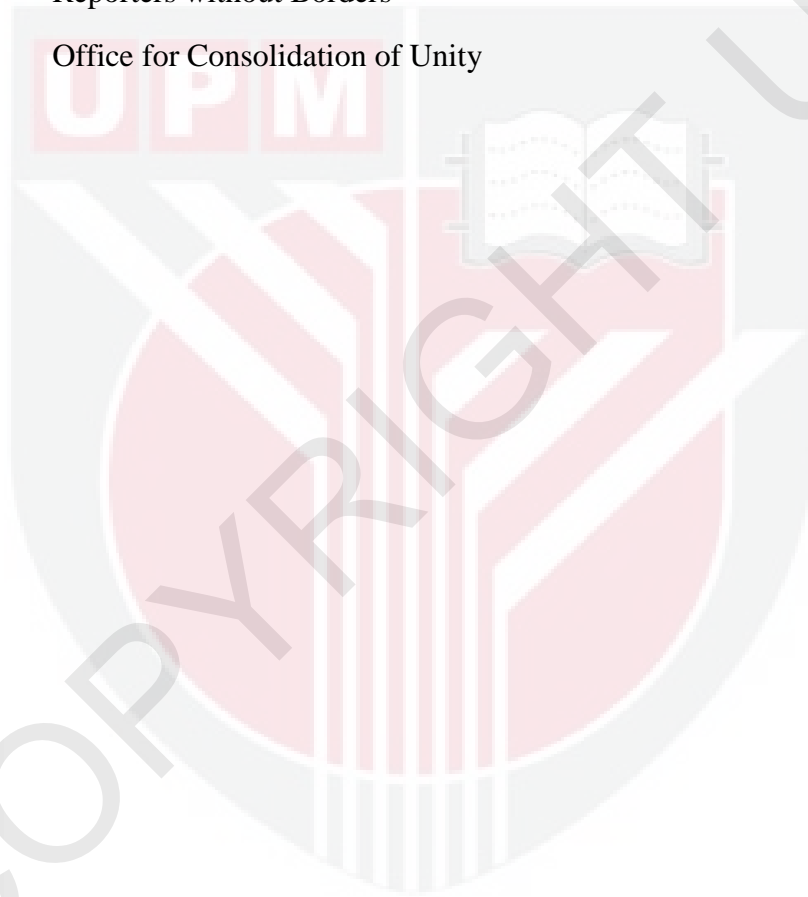
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> *"Civil society is a Utopian ideal that has never been fully realized in any actually existing social system, and never will be."* *(Alexander, 1998)*

1.1 Introduction

Such as a classless society in Marxism, civil society is an ideal society in liberalism that is supposed the best structure of society for preservation of fundamental liberal-democracy values. In last decades, it has been changed to ideal society for advocates of democracy around the entire world, even in Third world. Alexander truly reminds that a real civil society never will be attainable. Therefore, it is just an ideal type of appropriate society for a democratic society.

This introductory chapter presents the background of the research, which introduces the concept of civil society and democratization in the historical background of Iran. This leads to the identification of the problem which is the core of the thesis. It is followed by the research objectives and the questions of the study. Following that will be a discussion on the importance of the study includes some possible contributions of the study that justifies doing this research. The scope and limitations of study and the organization of the thesis are then illustrated as the last parts of the chapter.

1.2 Background of the Study

Historical review on contemporary Iran indicates a century attempts to make a sustainable democracy (Ansari, 2006; Foran, 1993; Gheisari & Nasr, 2006). The Constitutional Revolution in 1906 was the first attempt for establishing of a democratic government in Iran. It tried to change an absolute monarchy political system to a democratic system and succeeded to create a democratic constitution and elective parliament (Foran, 1991). Nevertheless, the Reza Shah's coup returned it to dictatorship regime. Islamic Revolution in 1979 was a new struggle for democracy that led to a religious government under the sovereignty of *Shi'a*[1] clerics. Although, it is more than one hundred years that the political development in Iran has been started but despite the

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[1] Shi'a is a contraction of the phrase 'Shiat Ali', meaning 'advocators of Ali'. It refers to the group of Moslems who believe Ali should have been the Prophet's successor. The leadership of the Shi'a community continued with 'Imams' believed to be divinely appointed from the Prophet's Family.

existence of institutions such as Parliament, elections, councils and political parties, the characteristic of the state is non-democratic yet. For instance, several selective officials have a significant role in the process of policymaking, which are impediments for democracy in Iran. In addition, the judiciary arrests political opponents and journalists who criticize the state ("Freedom House Report - Iran," 2002). There is a system of censorship and control in the press and books, and the state has limited social freedoms for the past 30 years ("Freedom House Report - Iran," 2003). The government has curtailed free speech in the name of national security or Islamic values (Hicks, 2001). All these evidences indicate Iran has not attained a stable democracy yet.

Therefor there have been several struggles for changing Iran's authoritarian political structure to a democratic state but all of them failed. Scholars (Huntington, 1968, 1991; Sharp, 1967, 1994) believe one of the essential reasons for failure of the process of democratization in developing countries such as Iran is the weakness of the civil society. This reality tends Iranian prodemocracy reformers to improvement of the condition for civil society and the press in Iran the time. In fact from 1997 the civil society as a western concept turned into a common debate in Iran's political sphere.

From Plato to Habermas, civil society has been understood in different interpretations. Taylor (1995, p. 208) summarizes the broad range of interpretations of civil society in two groups: "in a minimal sense, civil society exists where there are free associations, not under the tutelage of state power. In a stronger sense, civil society only exists where society as a whole can structure itself and co-ordinate its action through such associations, which are free of state tutelage". In the minimal sense, Aratu and Cohen(1992, p. ix), "understand civil society as a sphere of social interaction between economy and state, composed above all of the intimate sphere (especially the family), the sphere of associations (especially voluntary associations), social movements, and forms of public communication". In contrast to minimal sense, the extensive interpretation of the concept refers to "a platform of institutions outside the state sphere, encompassing the market economy and its institutions, public opinion, political parties, public and private associations and the wide variety of forms of social co-operation" (Müller, 2006, p. 313). However, in both interpretations, independent press and social associations are crucial institutions in civil society sphere (Chandhoke, 2004).

The role of civil society in survival of the democratic state has increasingly led to popular debates in western contemporary political sociology studies on civil society. Putnam's study on democracy and civic traditions in Italy shows that participation and the action of citizens in the sphere of civil society involve them in public policies and increase the civic culture in democratic societies (Putnam, 1993). Moreover, many theories (Baker, 1998; Jean Cohen & Arato, 1992; Finlay, 2004; Habermas, 2006; Tusalem, 2007) on civil society and democracy have emphasized on the strength of civil society, which not only play a significant role in the deepening of political freedoms and civil liberties among citizens, but also leads to better institutional performance in democracies than others. In addition, the experiences of newly independent countries

show democratic institutions are not enough for democracy, but a strong civil society is necessary for protecting against the excessive power of the state. Therefore, theory of civil society challenges the "top down" notion of society-state relations, and it struggles to limit the boundaries of the state power (Chandhoke, 2004). All the above points indicate the essential relationship between civil society and democratization, which Iranians have sought for more than a century (Abrahamian, 1982, 2008; Foran, 1993).

Furthermore, the press development as an element of civil society has been considered by scholars (Lippmann, 2008; Mill, 1978) as an essential requirement for democratization process. Gurevitch and Blumer (1990) explain the main functions of media in a democratic society including surveillance of sociopolitical developments; identifying the most relevant issues; providing a platform for debate across a diverse range of views; holding official accountable; provide incentives for citizens to learn; choose, and become involved in the political process, and resist efforts of forces outside the media to subvert their independence. In addition, a modern democratic society cannot exist without communication media, which makes available information for citizens to make informed choices about their lives and their communities, and provide the means whereby the public debate which underpins free and democratic societies can take place. Finally, there is an essential relationship among the press freedom development, strong civil society, and stable democracy.

The experience of democracy in Iran indicates that the structure of society and its relation with the state had not yet been suitable for protecting a democratic government. Therefore, in recent years, Iranian scholars have formed a new approach on democratization in Iran. According to this approach, social changes are supposed prerequisite of the democratic state. The intellectuals (Abootalebi, 2001; Bashiriyeh, 1999; Chaichian, 2003; Ganji, 2000b; Ghanizadeh, 1998; Hajjarian, 1998; Jalaeipoor, 1999; Kamrava, 2001; Khatami, 2008; Mohammadi, 1999; Saei, 2007) believe existing of developed voluntary social groups and independent press in a strong civil society are essential conditions for democracy in Iran. The effect of the revival of the concept of civil society in the western study through 1980s and 1990s and the interior requests for democracy in Iran led to expanding of the concept as a new solution for the crisis of democracy in Iran. It became a popular concept when the reformists led by Khatami proposed the civil society as their chief propaganda in the Seventh presidency election. With regards to 69.1% of the total votes cast (Cronin, 2004), majority of people protected Khatami's program for development of the civil society. The new political space prepared conditions for development of civil society elements, particularly the press, and prompted the conservatives to oppose them too.

Despite the efforts done by Khatami's administration to develop the press freedoms, they encountered many challenges to develop the time. While reformists in the political system were attempting to improve better condition for the press, conservatives in the same political system were trying to made barriers for the development of the press. In fact one political system was playing two different roles on the press freedoms that time.

1.3   Statement of the Problem

As Huntington (1968) mentioned formal democratic organization such as parliament and constitution are not adequate for transformation a dictatorship state to a democratic state. It is claimed that a vital factor for democracy is the existence of some institutions and adjustment mechanisms that force the governments to adopt and respond to other viewpoints (Lawrence, 1992). Moreover, a healthy and vibrant civil society as an autonomous sphere is necessary while it is also a precondition for effective democracy (O'Connell, 2000). The significant role of the civil society in the process of democratization has attracted considerable attentions to the concept in the western political thought during the last two decades. Particularly, the independent press known as the fourth pillar of democracy enables the citizens to discuss matters of public importance as well as shaping the public opinion. In fact, the independent and developed press upholds the civil society versus the state and such a strong civil society can monitor the government accordingly.

Iran' society as a developing country, from one hundred years ago, has endeavored to attain a stable democracy but even a democratic constitution and elective parliament has not succeeded to change the non-democratic state to a stable democratic state (Abrahamian, 1982). The reality causes Iranian scholars consider other factors in the process of democratization such as a strong civil society to protect democratic rights (Hajjarian, 1998; Mohammadi, 1999). Regarding the crucial role of the civil society particularly the press in the democratization process, it is necessary to understand the reasons behind the development or not sufficient development of the press in Iran. Lake of a strong and critical press to monitor the government and raise public awareness on social and political issues in Iran's society has led to a weakness and suppressed civil society versus the state power.

When reformers as advocates of the civil society came to power in 1997 in Iran, they attempted to develop the civil society components particularly the press. It was the first era in the recent history of Iran during which a part of the political system provided facilities for the enlargement of civil associations and non-governmental organizations, especially the press. The statistics on the performance of the first three years of Khatami's presidency indicates an increase in some elements of the civil society. For instance, according to the president's report, the number of labor councils increased from 2261 to 2727. There was also a rise in the number of labor syndicates from 126 to 163, the employer syndicates from 147 to 229, the environmentalist organizations from 20 to 231, and student associations from 42 to 90 (*The Evolutions of Country and Government's Actions 1997-2000; The President Report to People*, 2000). Furthermore, the report demonstrated that just in the first three years of Khatami's era, there was a surge in the number of independent newspapers increasing to more than four times compared with the previous period. All these evidences substantiate the reformers' determination on the state to reinforce the civil society.

In contrast with the measures taken by Khatami's cabinet between 1997 and 2005 to develop the civil society particularly the press, some of the governmental organizations which controlled by the opponents, had tried to obstruct such measures against the plan, directly or indirectly. For instance, after the first three years known as the "Spring of Freedom", closure of more than one hundred newspapers by the Judiciary was observed during Khatami's remaining five years (Shahidi, 2008). Indeed, a struggle was formed between the organizations in the political system conducted by the reformists and the ones controlled by the conservatives. The rivalry on the civil society area between the above said organizations through the political system made challenges and facilities throughout the democratization process in Iran. Whereas, the reformist organizations' efforts for developing a strong civil society predisposed the conditions for political development and democracy, the attempts driven by the conservative organizations against the civil society led to some challenges for democracy in Iran. The press as an essential component of civil society was affected by the struggle than others.

The press evolutions inside the civil society during Khatami's era were a unique phenomenon in contemporary Iran. Nevertheless it encountered several challenges in its hard journey it played a significant role in the process of democratization in Khatami's presidency era. Despite of the determined role of the press that time in Iran there is no sufficient deep scientific study on the issue yet. Because of the high-risk political situation in Iran, most research in this field has been written overseas while such research is essentially documentary. Therefore, a qualitative research based on direct experiences of journalists in Iran is required to examine the issue scientifically. In order to fill this scientific gap, the researcher among all effective factors seeks the role of Iran's political system on evolutions of the press as an important element of the civil society in Khatami's era. Contrary to the strong theoretical literature in the West on the civil society, the concept was brought up in the running of the Seventh presidential election (1997) in Iran. Therefore, Iranian scholars have attempted to interpret and indigenize the concept to be applied into the situation in Iran. In fact, there were two main political groups: the reformers that believed that a strong civil society is necessary for stable democracy in Iran while the conservatives considered it as a great hazard for the Islamic state (Tarock, 2001).

It is admitted by now that the crucial struggle between the two dominant organizations was on the area of the press development (Kamrava, 2001). In the absence or under performance of other components of the civil society such as NGOs and syndicates, the press, independent dailies in particular, played a notable role in the process of improving the civil society. Therefore, both reformers and conservatives in the political system regarded the press as an essential factor for the democratization process in Iran. In this way, even though the pro-democracy organizations attempted to develop the press, the anti-democracy organizations tried to restrict the press freedom and independence. Then after an eight-year struggle, the reformers eventually left the power despite the fact that they failed to improve the civil society and develop the press adequately. Consequently, the process of democratization in Iran failed to flourish once more. Such a failure gives rise to the subsequent question: why did the press which was an effective element of the

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civil society and stable democracy consequently face restricts and suppressions despite some improvements in the earlier years of the time? Restricts and suppressions of the press resulted in the civil society decline in Iran and consequently the process of democratization faced challenge. This study among all other effective factors on the press evolutions focuses on the role of the political system. In other words, because of the main role that the political system has in evolutions of the developing countries such as Iran, this study focuses on the role of the political system without ignoring or even underestimating the impact of other factors such as the social, cultural and economic factors on the press changes.

Political system facilitates the press development by approving appropriate law, free political space, giving subsidy and some other protections. In developing countries such as Iran, due to the weakness of the civil society, the press freedoms are so fragile therefor it needs more support by the political system to get stronger. The effects of the political system on the changes of journalism can explain some fundamental reasons lying behind the failure of the press to develop as well as the existence of such a weak civil society, in addition to the current instability of democracy in Iran which is a brilliant political problem in contemporary Iran.

1.4 The Research Questions

Regarding the statement of problem, this study is going to answer two questions:

1. How was the development of the press as an element of civil society in the process of democratization in Khatami era?

2. How did the roles of the political system bring changes to the press as an element of civil society in the process of democratization in the period of Khatami presidency?

1.5 Research Objectives

In order to attain the role of the political systems (the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary) on the changes of the press as the predominant element of the civil society in Iran, this study has two objectives.

1. To elaborate the concepts of civil society and the press
2. To examine the process of development of the press, in the numbers and quality, as predominant component of civil society in the duration of Khatami presidency in Iran.

3. To determine the role of the political system on the development of the press in the process of democratization, in Iran.

1.6   Significance of Study

Commonly the research is significant because it focuses on civil society that performs the most notable role in retaining of democracy (Newton, 2001). The outcomes of this research can help Iranian intellectuals and politicians, who are seeking stable democracy in Iran because it investigates two decisive factors of political development in Iran; the press as the fourth pillar of democracy and the role of the political system. In addition, the research is essential for the reasons that follow:

Firstly, this study seeks to analyze the relation between social structure and political structure and tries to answer the question why Iran has not attained a stable democracy yet? The answer is crucial for future of democracy in Iran.

Secondly, the research examines the nature of journalism and its changes in Iran that plays the main role in the process of democratization. The outcomes of research reveal weaknesses and strengths of the press in Iran. It indicates why the periods of free press in Iran are extremely short. The press situation as an important element of civil society shows the general conditions for development of civil society in Iran.

Thirdly, this study will contribute to extend studies on democracy in developing countries. It examines the role of the political system as main social institution on the changes of the press as an essential factor in the process of democratization. Particularly it focuses on the role of an ideological Islamic state by a democratic constitution. It is vital that how an Islamic state deals with the press freedoms and civil society.

Finally, the study is noteworthy because of its intended contribution to the knowledge of political sociology particularly on the obstacles of civil society and the press in the process of democratization, in Iran. The research is going to fill the gap that exists among studies on the role of the political system in the development of civil society particularly the press in Iran. The results will indicate to what extent an Islamic state can accept or promote civil society and the press freedoms, and it also reveals the barriers and obstacles of democratization in ideological political system. Thus, the research both broadens and deepens our understanding of the factors leading to democracy, broadens our analysis to social factors such as civil society and deepens our analysis to identify the mechanisms such as democratic constitution necessary to the democratic state.

1.7 Definition of the Concepts

Concepts do have various meanings in different fields of social sciences and also there are many interpretations on the scientific terms. Hence, clarifying the specific meaning of some essential concepts in this research seems needed. The civil society, the press, democratization, and political system are explained as significant concepts in this research.

Civil Society: In an attempt to answer the research questions, the civil society refers as a sphere of social interaction located out of the market, state and private spheres that include non-governmental organizations, social movements, independent media and voluntary associations. In this study, this definition of the concept is used since it is the nearest view to the Iranian interpretation of the civil society explained throughout the literature review. Moreover, this definition determines the researcher's perspective on the concept and sets up the elements of the civil society. According to this definition, the researcher can consider independent press as a component of the civil society. The researcher intends to limit the discussion of the civil society components to the independent press. There is no tendency to examine NGOs, social movements and other elements of the civil society in this study, although they are of high importance. The press is chosen for three reasons: firstly, paying attention to all elements of the civil society in one study is impossible. For instance, it is impossible to investigate of all NGOs, voluntary associations and other components of civil society in Iran in a PhD thesis. Secondly due to the weakness of other elements of civil society such as NGOs the time the press performed the principal role in the civil society in Iran. In fact except the press most of other elements of civil society in Iran have not been performed a significant role in the sphere of civil society the time yet. Thirdly developed and free independent press indicates the degree of real democracy in Iran.

The Press: The press is one of the central components of mass media. Based on the press law of Iran "the press means publications which are published regularly and under a permanent name, date and serial numbers on different subjects such as news, commentary, as well as social, political, economic, agricultural, cultural, religious, scientific, technical, military, and artistic matters, sports, etc. In this study, the press contains only the printed newspapers and magazines that were independent of the government and located in the sphere of the civil society. Electronic magazines and online media were not common the time in Iran. In fact, they became widespread after Khatami due to a new strict sphere for the printed press. The focus of the study is on the press in civil society sphere, therefore; governmental magazines and newspapers are not investigated.

Democratization: Democracy is a method of decision making on policies and regulations that are obligatory for all and people supervise the government (Beetham, 1999). Democratization is the process of transition from the forms of totalitarianism and/or authoritarianism, to some form of democracy. There are three phases in the

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process of democratization: (1) the breakdown of authoritarian rule (2) the installation of a democratic regime and; (3) democratic consolidation (Huntington, 1991). Like the concept of the civil society, there are two primary groups in the democracy theories: the maximalist and the minimalist theories. The maximalist theories offer a radical, comprehensive and substantive definition of the democracy consisting not only of the political rights but the social, economic, gender, and cultural rights. Political arrangements such as the constitution and parliament are minimal conditions of democracy. The notion of discursive democracy in Habermas's theory founded on a self-organizing community of free and equal citizens is one of the maximalist theory (1999). In the minimalist definition, the democracy originates from the people and works through such institutions as constitutions, political parties and parliaments. For instance, Schumpeter argued that the democracy "means that only the people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to rule them" (Schumpeter, 1976, p. 270). In this study, because of Iran's social-cultural attributes, particularly the role of religion in the social and political areas, the maximalist theories on democracy are not applicable. Therefore, a minimalist version of democracy is considered in this study which is a responsible political system originating from people with some essential institutions such as constitution, parliament and political parties, and it entails basic human rights such as freedom of expression, and so on.

Political System: Political system in Parson's view is regarded as one of the subsystems of the overall social system (Calvert, 1993). In turn, the social system is the structure of the relations between the activists involved in the interactive processes; therefore, the social system is a network of such interactions (Parsons, 1979). Moreover, the social system is claimed to have four chief functions including the integration, pattern maintenance, goal attainment, and adaptation. In accordance with the above mentioned four prerequisite functions, a social system is divisible into four primary subsystems: the societal community, the pattern maintenance, the polity, and the economy. The main function of the polity as a subsystem is to organize and mobilize the resources for attaining the society's goals (Parsons, 1971). Easton (1965, p. 57) treated the political system as a set of social interactions, isolated from the other social behaviors, through which values are "authoritatively allocated for a society". In his view, the boundary of a political system is determined by all those actions more or less directly related to the making of binding decisions for a society. All the other social interactions that have no relation with the process of authoritatively decision making are not included in such a political system. Indeed, such social interactions are regarded as external variables in the environment out of the political system (Easton, 1957).

The idea of the political system in Parsons and Easton's theory has largely influenced the comparative politics studies. In comparative politics, the concept is a particular type of the social system which contains a set of institutions, such as parliaments, bureaucracies, and courts, which formulate and implement the collective goals of a society or groups within such a system. In this respect, the government, which is the core of the political system, is the policy-making part in that political system (Almond, Powell, Strom, & Dalton, 2000). In fact, the political system in comparative politics

studies is a synonym of the government which shapes the basic control mechanism within a society (Calvert, 1993). Nevertheless, the political system concept in this research study is limited to the government structures in Iran which include the executive, legislature and judiciary. Regarding this view, in this study the Islamic Republic of Iran is considered as the political system that includes the legislature, the executive and the judiciary.

1.8   Scope and Limitations of the Study

Since this research engages a wide range of concepts and social phenomena such as the civil society, democracy, and political system so it needs to indicate its scope and limitations concerning different subjects in this research.

First, among all components of civil society, the scope of this research is the non-governmental press. The press is chosen because most of challenges in the political system were on the independent press and moreover, Khatami's government was focused on the press more than other parts of civil society.

Second, this study focuses on the role of the political system including the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary; therefore, other organizations out of these three branches such as leadership were not examined in this research. The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (M.C.I.G.) and the presidency from the Executive, the Parliament from Legislature and judiciary were selected from the political system because of their main role on the changes of the press in this study.

Third, it is possible to examine the role of the political system on the press over a long period. However, because of more in-depth understanding about the relationship between the political system and the press development the focus of this study is on the period of Khatami presidency (1997-2005). This era of the time was chosen because it was the first time that a part of state in Iran modified conditions for extending of civil society, but it faced many challenges.

Finally concerning generalization of this study, the result of this research is not able to generalize because of two reasons. Firstly it focuses just on the specific issue, time and place such as the political system, the press, and Khatami presidency era in Iran (1997-2005) so it is not generalizable to other countries and times. Secondly the data are collected by purposive sampling method; therefore, the results cannot generalize to other situation or populations. Finally as Blaikie (2000, p. 253) has noted "qualitative data do not lend themselves to the kind of generalization commonly used in quantitative research, such as using statistical techniques that are based on probability theory". Therefore; due to the nature of this study, results are not generalizable to other times or societies.

1.9   Organization of the Thesis

Regarding the research objectives, this thesis includes the following chapters that each chapter covers specific part of the research objectives and finally all chapters create an entire image on interaction between the political system and civil society especially the press in Iran the time.

First chapter contains the introductory issues of the study including the statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, significance of study, definition of the concepts, scope and limitations of study, and organization of the thesis.

Second chapter is the review of the available literature on the concept of civil society, which reviews main related theories and also academic studies, regarding this research. The review contains a genealogy of the concept of civil society, Iranian scholar's interpretation of civil society, components of civil society in Iran, the impediments of civil society, relationship between the press and state, studies on journalism in Iran, Iran's political system, and theoretical framework,.

The third chapter discusses the methodological consideration of the study. It contains the research strategy, research method, methods of data collection, method of data analysis and finally ethical considerations.

The fourth chapter as research finding presents various interpretations on the civil society and the press functions likewise the process of development of the press as predominant component of civil society in the duration of Khatami's presidency in Iran. It begins with a brief debate on the concept of civil society and Iranian interpretations and investigates qualitative and numerical changes of the press in two parts the time. Then regarding to second objective the chapter in three sections clarifies the role of the political system (the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary) on the development of the press in the process of democratization in Iran in the duration of Khatami's presidency and role of each part of the political system is discussed in a separate section.

Fifth chapter encompasses discussion on the research findings in four sections and the final chapter consists of the summary of the research findings and conclusions. The research finally recommends some further studies and measures to develop a stable civil society and more democratization in Iran.

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