



## The Foundations and Necessities of Parliamentarism in the *Parvaresh* Newspaper, Published in Cairo

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### Abstract

### Introduction

The simultaneous rule of the Qajar dynasty in Iran and the transformations in 18th- and 19th-century Europe led Qajar Iran, like many other nations, to be influenced by new Western ideas and developments. During this period, Iranian journalists of the Qajar era—particularly those who emigrated from Iran and worked outside the strict censorship governing domestic publications—played a crucial role in transmitting and interpreting these transformations and modern Western concepts to their Iranian audience. Among these, Persian-language newspapers published in Egypt held a unique position. Beyond the reach of Iran's censorship apparatus, they served as a platform for conveying modern Western ideas and documenting the transformations taking place in the West. The *Parvaresh* newspaper holds a distinctive position among Persian-language newspapers published in Egypt, owing to its editor-in-chief's extensive journalistic background and his familiarity with Western culture, gained through his presence in Ottoman and Egyptian territories as well as a three-month journey to Europe. Scholars have assessed *Parvaresh* as playing a significant role in familiarizing Iranians with global developments, shaping the Constitutional Revolution, spreading progressive ideas, and strengthening the theoretical foundation of the constitutional movement. The newspaper's emphasis on modern concepts such as freedom, law, equality, public participation in national affairs, and the necessity of establishing a parliamentary institution are key factors contributing to its influence. The focus on parliamentarism in *Parvaresh* as the subject of this study is significant from multiple perspectives. As a Western concept, parliamentarism needed to be introduced to 19th-century Iranian society in the context of the religious and political ideologies of the time. Its compatibility or incompatibility with Islamic principles, as well as its necessity and relevance to society, had to be examined and explained.

### Materials and Methods

This study aims to analyze *Parvaresh* newspaper's approach to parliamentarism in relation to Islamic principles and Iranian societal traditions. Using content analysis as its



method, the research seeks to answer a fundamental question: How did the newspaper reconcile parliamentarism with Islamic principles and Iranian traditions, and how did it promote this concept? To address this, all issues of the newspaper have been examined

### Discussion

The Persian-language newspaper *Parvaresh* was published in Egypt under the editorship of Mirza Ali-Mohammad Khan Kashani (Rabino, 2001: 94). Before founding this newspaper, Kashani contributed to several publications, including *Ettelaat*, *Iran*, *Akhtar*, and *Sorayya*, where he also served as editor for a time. From its inaugural issue on the 10th of Safar 1318 AH until Kashani's death from tuberculosis, a total of 33 issues were published. Due to its significant role in raising awareness among Iranians, *Parvaresh* has been described as "the most liberal Iranian newspaper before the Constitutional Revolution" (Browne, 1957: 2/3-272).

From the Naseri era onward, as Iranian intellectuals—drawing inspiration from Western constitutional systems—recognized constitutional governance as essential for Iran's progress, the debate over how to adopt and adapt these systems, particularly parliamentarism, became a serious issue among thinkers, leading to various proposed solutions. Among both proponents and opponents of this idea, *Parvaresh* did not advocate for the wholesale adoption of Western civilization's principles, including Western-style parliamentarism. Instead, it aimed to reconcile these concepts with Islamic principles and societal traditions. The most detailed discussion of Western parliaments in *Parvaresh* pertains to the Austrian parliament. While terms such as 'parliament,' 'representatives of the people,' and 'protection of the nation's rights' appear in this extensive report, the newspaper does not provide definitions for these terms, nor does the writer examine the foundations of Austria's governing system.

The editor of *Parvaresh*, who visited the Austrian parliament during his trip to Vienna, provided detailed accounts of the parliament's duties, the role of national representatives, the external structure of the parliament building and its various sections, the Senate chamber, parliamentary representatives, the timing of sessions, and the public's presence during proceedings. Among the topics discussed in *Parvaresh* relevant to this research is 'Parliament and the Principle of Consultation.' One approach employed by Qajar-era intellectuals and newspapers to introduce new concepts to Iran was to trace their religious roots and align them with Western principles. *Parvaresh* also employed the concept of "consultation" (*Shura*) for this purpose, advocating for the transformation of traditional consultation into a modern framework under the name of "parliament." In this context, religiously derived laws would be formulated through consultation, aiming to resolve interpretative disagreements and establish unified legislation. Another issue *Parvaresh* addressed was the replacement of religious laws with laws derived from the will of the people. While *Parvaresh* supported the parliamentary system, it avoided discussing the foundations of law or the concept of governance based on the rule of law. Similarly, it refrained from addressing secular laws rooted in the will of the people, merely praising Europeans for their adherence to the law.

Parliament and the Continuity of Monarchy: *Parvaresh* argued for the necessity of



establishing a parliament in Iran and explained the role of the king within such a structure. It did not view the creation of a parliament as conflicting with the continuation of Iran's monarchy and traditional kingship.

**Parliament and Resistance to Colonialism:** To introduce the concept of parliament to its audience, Parvaresh highlighted its positive functions while also emphasizing the potential negative consequences for Iranians in the absence of a parliamentary system. This juxtaposition served as a strategy to underscore the importance of parliament as a tool for resisting colonial domination. The newspaper asserted that with the establishment of a parliament and the rule of law in Iran, the country's independence would be guaranteed.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this research indicate that *Parvaresh*, due to its reluctance to fully embrace the principles of Western civilization—and, consequently, Western-style parliamentarism—attempted to align this modern concept with Islamic principles and the traditions of Iranian society at the time. This approach led the newspaper to focus on describing the external features of Western parliaments, along with their functions and benefits for both the public and the monarchy, without engaging with the foundations of constitutional systems. By simplifying the Western notion of parliament, *Parvaresh* sought to present it within a framework of religious concepts and deeply rooted Iranian traditions, thereby facilitating the introduction of this idea to its audience.

**Keywords:** Parliament, Parliamentarism, Islam, Parvaresh, Mirza Ali Mohammad Khan Kashani.

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