



The Emergence and Development of Technocracy Discourse in the Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi's State

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Extended abstract

Introduction

After the Industrial Revolution, with the increasing growth of industries, the question of which individuals or groups were competent to govern industrial societies prompted many sociologists to create new social categories to account for the effects of such a revolution. They realized that in these societies, experts would occupy a superior position compared to politicians and those in power. Saint-Simon, a French sociologist, predicted the formation of such a group in the 19th century, and by the 20th century, discussions about the role of this group became the dominant discourse among Western sociologists. As these ideas spread globally, the need for industrial management by experts was proposed by several engineering graduates from Western universities in Iran, particularly at the beginning of Mohammad Reza Shah's reign.

These powers, inspired by managerial developments in the West, sought to prove the importance of their role in economic and industrial management through trade union activities. At the beginning of this period, Iran was still far from becoming an industrial society, despite the efforts made during the reign of Reza Shah. Moreover, in Iran's constitutional political system, economic management and the development of industries were entirely under the government's authority. At the same time, the political thinking of the authorities regarding the delegation of power to this new group lacked the necessary readiness. However, historical sources indicate that during the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah, at two key points (the early 1950s and early 1960s), technocrats extensively entered the government and occupied the highest managerial positions. This descriptive-analytical study seeks to explore how this discourse was proposed and accepted during these two periods.

This study, focusing particularly on the emergence and development of the technocracy discourse during the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah, lacks independent literature. Specifically, the early activities of technocrats during this period, the formation of the Engineers Association, and the role played by this managerial group in the 1950s under the Mossadegh government have received limited attention from



researchers. For example, the performance of the Engineers Association is briefly discussed in studies on the Iranian Party, such as the book *The Iranian Party: A Collection of Documents and Statements* (Shirazeh: 2000) by Masoud Kohestani Nejad, or in the memoirs of some prominent members of this association, including *Merchant Memories: Sixty Years of Service and Resistance, Talks with Gholamreza Nejadi* (Rasa: 1996). The impact of the technocrats' entry into government is reflected in analyses of Mossadegh's economic policies in works such as *Iran's Economy in the National Government* (Tehran: Institutional, 2015), written by Farshad Momeni and Bahram Naghsh Tabrizi, *Economy Without Oil* (Tehran: Publishing Company, 1980), written by Anvar Khame'i, and *Mossadegh, the Savior of the Economy and the Herald of Reform* (Tehran: Sound of the Foot of the Water, 2017), written by Morteza Fayyazi and Najmeh Karampour.

More studies have been conducted on the management of technocrats in the 1960s. For example, the Progressive Association's activity as the origin of a new generation of technocratic managers is explored in *Three Parties: People, Millions, and the New Iran* by Mozaffar Shahedi (Institute for Political Studies and Research: 2008). The performance of economic institutions under technocratic management has been examined in articles such as "The Economic Strategy of the Second Pahlavi Dynasty 1962-1968" (Zamaneh, February 2003, No. 17) by Vali Nasr, and the treatise *The Formation of the Planning and Budget Organization and Its Impact on Political and Economic Developments in the Second Pahlavi Dynasty* (Persian Gulf University: 2019) by Ali Shahvand. Additionally, numerous works have been published in the form of interviews with technocrats from this period. *Development in Iran 1940-1978: Interview with Manouchehr Goodarzi, Khodadad Farmanfarmaian, and Abdul Majid Majidi* (Game Nou: 2002), *Politics and Economic Policymaking in Iran 1961-1978: Interview with Alineghi Alikhani* (Abi: 2005), *Technocracy and Economic Policymaking in Iran as Narrated by Reza Nimanazed* (Lohe Fekr: 2015), *Memoirs of Jafar Sharif Emami* (Neghe Emrooz: 2001), and *Memoirs of Abdul Majid Majidi* (Game Nou: 2002) are examples of these works.

However, despite these studies, the presence of this social group in the economic and industrial management sector did not receive significant attention during the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah, particularly regarding the expansion of technocratic discourse and the delegation of authority to technocrats. The distinction of the present study lies in its investigation of the emergence and development of this discourse by distinguishing between the two key points in this period.

Methodology

The methodology of this study is descriptive-analytical. The researcher, by consulting underutilized library resources, examining existing documents, and extracting historical data, first describes how the technocracy discourse was introduced in Iran during the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah. Then, relying on the information obtained, the researcher analyzes and evaluates the reasons for the acceptance and expansion of this discourse at two key stages of this period.



Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the study of the entry and expansion of the technocracy discourse during the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah, only two periods—namely the early 1950s and the early 1960s—are considered for the acceptance of this discourse. In the first period, technocrats entered Mossadegh's government through party and political activities. In contrast, the government sought to address the economic crisis resulting from the oil sanctions by adopting their managerial thinking. In the second period, technocrats once again succeeded in obtaining managerial positions through party activities, this time with the support of foreign powers (the United States). In contrast, the monarchy benefited from their presence to overcome the economic recession and ensure its survival. The acceptance of this discourse was the result of the governments' need for new managerial ideas to overcome crises or economic recessions, as well as to maintain or advance their political interests during that period. In this context, the influence of political changes and the behavior of government entities was a recurring element in the position of this social group. This sometimes led to their inclusion and at other times to their exclusion from the economic and industrial management of the country.

Keywords: Discourse of Technocracy, Industrialization, Industrial Management, Economic History, Second Pahlavi.



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