

## An analytical prologue to the Supreme Leader's political thought on the Iranian Constitutional Movement

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### Abstract

Constitutionality, as a significant and influential event in Iran's contemporary history, has been repeatedly mentioned in the speeches of the Supreme Leader. His perspective on this critical historical phenomenon is the main subject of this article. This research aims to explore the Supreme Leader's opinions and views regarding constitutionalism, and the researcher used qualitative content analysis to explain and understand his opinions in this context. The primary question of this article is: What is the Supreme Leader's intellectual viewpoint on constitutionalism? To address this question, we analyzed the leader's statements and speeches from the onset of his leadership to the present and reached the following conclusions: The findings from this approach indicate that his three main perspectives on constitutionalism are "the religious and popular roots of the revolutionaries in Iran," "the deviation of constitutionalism during the Iranians' transformation," and "British colonialism as the main obstacle to Iran's evolution".

### Keywords:

Constitutionalism, Iranians' evolutionism, people, colonialism, qualitative content analysis.

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## Introduction

**Problem definition:** For a long time, examining the dimensions, contexts, and consequences of one of the most critical and fundamental turning points in Iran's history, namely the Constitutional Revolution, has been of interest to both domestic and foreign researchers and scholars. The Constitutional Revolution, with all its core goals and ideals—freedom, anti-authoritarianism, anti-colonialism, and a focus on legalism—was soon followed by one of the most severe and brutal dictatorships in Iranian history, resulting from subsequent events. Nothing remained except the name of the achievements of constitutionalism: parliament, people's government, constitution, and freedom. This reality embodies one of the complexities of history, underscoring the need to explore constitutionalism and the reasons for its failure. Researchers and scholars in the field of constitutionalism emphasize three fundamental levels more than anything else: first, the contexts and backgrounds of constitutionalism, which refer to how the initial reformist ideas of Iranian society were formed (see Ajoudani, 1403; Abedikhah et al., 1402; and Haeri, 1355). Second, the emphasis is placed on the intellectual and political currents and groups that influenced constitutionalism, including which intellectual and political spectrums shaped the constitutionalism process, and to what extent each spectrum played a role in this process (see Shahbazi, 2002; Najafi et al., 2013; and Khorramshad et al., 2009). The third issue of concern for researchers is the effects, results, and achievements of constitutionalism, which have garnered significant attention, especially considering the subsequent political and social developments within Iranian society and Reza Shah's authoritarian government (see Homayoun Katouzian, 1402; and Abrahamian, 1383).

**Importance:** The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, as the first and most significant successful popular movement in the contemporary history of Iran, introduced a political system based on new ideas and perspectives, ultimately resulting in the creation of a new political and social system featuring popular, public, and legal institutions. This led to the development of numerous sources and texts on the subject, although most of these studies were authored from a Western viewpoint. This trend is also because the primary sources of Iranian history during the Constitutional Revolution were penned by Westerners, which became a crucial factor in shaping and directing historical narratives. For instance, regarding the contributions of the forces involved in the Constitutional Revolution, the role of educated intellectuals was emphasized above all else. At the same time, little attention was given to other groups and intellectual movements. The theoretical weaknesses of these obstacles and texts can largely overcome by examining

non-Western texts, sources, and perspectives on constitutionalism. Accordingly, we turned to the political thoughts of the Supreme Leader regarding this issue. He is among those who have approached the phenomenon of constitutionalism with a native perspective and insight based on national and religious teachings, presenting his viewpoints in speeches on various occasions. His particular focus on this matter and the content of his speeches highlights the status and importance of constitutionalism in his view.

**Necessity:** The absence of a native perspective on the Iranian constitutional phenomenon and merely having analyses based on the Western perspective presents difficulties in evaluating and explaining the model of Iranian movements in contemporary history. To properly analyze and clarify mass movements in Iran, it is necessary to form new models of scientific approaches that reflect the phenomena within the country, particularly since the Islamic Revolution of 1979 underscored the importance of understanding and explaining the overall collective movements of Iranians. This context is significant, as Iranian society witnessed the development of two remarkable social revolutions in the twentieth century. Consequently, this study is strategically necessary to deeply understand and elucidate the Iranian constitutional phenomenon precisely and mass movements more broadly through a native lens.

**Objectives:** This article provides necessary literature and content regarding the Iranian constitutional movement from a local perspective and the Supreme Leader's approach. In addition to this objective, the secondary objectives of this article include the Iranian constitutional phenomenon, the importance of the Constitutional Revolution and its intellectual, leadership, and publicity foundations, and a comprehensive analytical model and pattern to better understand popular movements in Iran.

**Questions and Hypothesis:** The present study is exploratory and does not have a hypothesis. The main question of this article is: What is the Supreme Leader's intellectual perspective on constitutionalism? Also, sub-questions such as: What is the epistemological basis for explaining the Iranian constitutional phenomenon in existing research approaches? What factors contributed to the formation of the constitutional movement and, ultimately, the Iranian constitutional revolution? What were the reasons for the failure of the constitutional revolution? The researcher has given attention to these issues in this article.

**Research Method:** This article uses qualitative content analysis to explain and examine the Supreme Leader's political thoughts on constitutionalism. The Supreme Leader has been interested in issues such as the intellectual

currents influenced by constitutionalism, the factors behind this philosophical movement's failure and deviation, its effects and consequences, and the role of the people and religious scholars in this movement, which we will discuss below.

### **1. Research Background**

In searching for background, no source on the subject of this article was found among scientific research works. However, articles have been published on topics close to this topic, such as constitutionalism, the desire for change in Iran, the role of scholars in constitutionalism, and Islamic awakening, which are mentioned below.

Bahram Akhavan Kazemi et al. (1391) have aimed to present a model to explain the leadership's perspective in an article titled "Islamic Awakening and Its Causes with an Emphasis on the Leader's Views." The findings indicate that the causes and roots of the Islamic Awakening, as well as related developments in the Middle East and North Africa, should be sought in two groups of endogenous factors: first, "issues" such as the failure of non-Islamic models, the rise of Islamism, feelings of disillusionment, historical humiliation, and a return to Islamic identity; and second, the efforts of significant intellectual and jihadist figures, as well as Islamic current-makers. Exogenous factors, referred to as "incidents," include the Islamic Revolution of Iran, the colonial past, the presence of Western powers in the region, the Palestinian crisis, and corrupt, Western-oriented, and unpopular governments.

Jalal Derakhsheh (1380), in an article titled "A Study of the Political Thought of Shiite Scholars from the Constitutional Revolution to 1941," examined the role of scholars in the political and social developments in Iranian society from the Constitutional Revolution to the first Pahlavi regime. Alireza Zargar and Javad Kiani (1397), in an article titled "Analysis of the Role of Ayatollah Na'ini in the Constitutional Revolution Movement and Laying the Groundwork for the Formation of the Islamic State with Emphasis on His Political Thought," argue that Ayatollah Na'ini supported the Constitutional Revolution during the period of constitutionalism. Ayatollah Na'ini presented the Shiite Imamate political system as a preferable alternative to the monarchy and outlined the type of government and ruler during the occultation period, which would be the Islamic state led by the Supreme Leader.

Nasser Jamalzadeh (2001) examines and explains the role of religious scholars in the Constitutional Revolution in an article titled "Religious Democracy in the Political Thought of Shiite Scholars in Constitutionalism." He points out that religious scholars had assumed that in

a constitutional and legal system, people would be less oppressed, have more comfort, and be able to carry out their religious duties with complete freedom; therefore, there is no problem in committing to a constitutional government that is both legitimate and religious during the occultation of the infallible Imam.

Mohsen Khaliji (1385), in an article titled "The Roots of the Political Thoughts of the Islamic Revolution in the Constitutional Movement," asserts that the intellectual, spiritual, religious, political, and social conditions for a social movement were present during the Constitutional era. In this environment, people understood what they wanted to reject but were uncertain about what they truly desired, striving to fulfill all these demands.

This study differs from previous research in its methodology and its focus on the political thought of the Supreme Leader. It aims to offer a unique perspective on constitutionalism through a methodological and analytical approach.

## **2. An Introduction to Constitutionalism and Its Significance in Iranian History**

The Constitutional Revolution of the 20th century is regarded as the peak of Iranian political and social transformation. To understand the importance of this significant movement, it is best to examine the latter half of the 19th century and the circumstances in Iran. The era of privilege hunting, which Curzon aptly refers to as the international nightmare, began in 1872 (Abrahamian, 2004, p. 71). It was a time when the colonial governments of Russia and England, by acquiring various privileges from Iran, effectively compromised the country's independence. A host of privileges in the north and south of the nation, as well as the division of its territory, were on the colonialists' agenda. Additionally, chaos was a defining characteristic of the situation in Iran during the reigns of Nasser al-Din Shah and Mozaffar al-Din Shah, as documented in various historical accounts. Numerous books have described the circumstances in Iran during the era of constitutionalism and the events leading up to it.

According to some researchers, this growing chaos has consistently served as a foundation for uprisings in Iran (Homayoon Katouzian, 1402, p. 37). This chaos was not limited to the period before the constitutional era; it persisted in the following years. Additionally, one cannot overlook the significant role of foreign interventions in the country. The governments of England and Russia directly executed these interventions during various events while indirectly introducing new European ideas, ranging from

nationalism to socialism, modernism, and humanism (Katouzian, 1995, p. 22).

In such circumstances, the constitutional movement—motivated by anti-authoritarian and anti-colonial ideas rooted in the essence and text of Islam's holy law—was led by religious leaders and evolved from its origins during the Tobacco Movement into a popular movement that became the primary focus of Iranian society. The Constitutional Movement represents a significant turning point in Iranian history and has been crucial in establishing the foundations for societal transformation. Some researchers perceive Iran's constitutionalism as lagging behind that of other regional countries and are influenced by them. For instance, one author observes that Western intervention prompted a degree of self-awareness among a small group of intellectuals and contemporaries of older nations. These intellectuals began to seek the root of their distress (Sheikh Nouri, 2007, p. 59). In addition, Iranian intellectuals' mere influence on constitutionalism and ignoring the fundamental role of the clergy in the anti-authoritarian and anti-colonial movement in contemporary Iran is a reductionist and superficial perspective (see Haeri, 1364). Some researchers, however, emphasize the importance of both intellectuals and the clergy in the leadership of constitutionalism. For instance, John Foran, in his book “Fragile Resistance: A History of Social Developments in Iran”, addresses this issue, stating that “Iranian intellectuals and clergy also played an active role in leading the movement” (Foran, 1392, p. 276). He also references the analyses of Edward Brown and Hamed Elgar regarding the clergy's role in the constitutional movement: “Brown considers them constitutionalists, and Elgar is anti-Shah” (Foran, 2013, p. 277). On the other hand, the importance and centrality of the people's role in seeking change in Iran have been regarded as highly insignificant and weak. The notion that the significance of the Constitutional Movement was linked to the fundamental role of the people is not prominently reflected in the research conducted by scholars. However, it cannot be denied that the Constitutional Movement nurtured the belief that the government is essentially the nation's representative and that the people choose their path and method. They can select the best course based on national and social interests. (Navaei, 1999).

Regardless of the outcomes and short-term effects of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran, what is crucial is the process of this transformation and the future of Iran following constitutionalism, which has somehow connected Iranian society between two significant revolutions in the 20th century. Therefore, the importance of studying and analyzing the Constitutional Revolution is evident.

### **3. Research Method: Qualitative Content Analysis**

The qualitative content analysis method was used in this study. Welizer and Wiener define content analysis as any systematic procedure created to examine the content of recorded data (Wimmer et al., 1384, p. 217). Additionally, content analysis is a method through which researchers investigate the achievements of human social communication, typically through documents. Researchers can analyze the content of letters, diaries, articles, magazines, meeting minutes, books, newspapers, poems, songs, speeches, and any other type of text or document (Qaedi et al., 1395, p. 58). Barden asserts that content analysis comprises a range of techniques for analyzing communication used to describe a message's content and objectives in a systematic manner (Barden, 1375, p. 38). Content analysis is widely utilized in the field of political science. It involves examining political content in news media, speeches, advertisements, campaigns, and, more recently, social media and blogs, as well as articles in this discipline (Neuendorf, 2015). As a result, this method is regarded as one of the most critical approaches for research in political thought. Content analysis serves as a primary method of document observation, enabling the evaluation and analysis of documentary evidence and any recorded documents and materials, whether related to the past or the present, more systematically, accurately, and, most importantly, with a higher degree of finality. Researchers identify two methods for content analysis: qualitative and quantitative, each rooted in different paradigmatic foundations. Quantitative content analysis is primarily known for quantifying text using statistics, figures, and percentages. However, as defined by Perlson, qualitative content analysis is a research technique for systematically and qualitatively describing the explicit content of a message (Krippendorff, 1402, p. 26). The goal of content analysis—whether of a text, interview, document, etc.—is to identify the goals, values, culture, perspectives, and insights of the speaker, writer, or interviewee (Freud, 1989). This scientific method aims to objectively describe the content of a message from both internal and external Dimensions.

This study will examine and explain the Supreme Leader's political views on constitutionalism through qualitative content analysis. We have collected and analyzed his statements and speeches on the subject since the beginning of his leadership, expressed in various ways. We will discuss these in the following section.

#### 4. Content analysis of the Supreme Leader's statements on constitutionalism

Using the conventional qualitative content analysis method, one of the three content analysis approaches, we apply this method in this article to analyze the statements and extract the Supreme Leader's perspective on constitutionalism in Iran. The steps of this content analysis are as follows (Ghahraman et al., 1395, 145).



In other words, during the first stage, the researcher begins the analysis by extracting meaning units from the collected data, which in this study consists of the statements from the Supreme Leader. A meaning unit can be defined as words, sentences, or paragraphs that relate to each other through their content and context (Graneheim and Lundman, 2003, 106). Thus, a meaning unit represents a segment of the text or collected data that conveys a semantic result, and the analyst initiates content analysis by identifying these units (Ghahraman et al., 1395, 146). In the present study, we first gathered the leader's statements in the context of constitutionalism by utilizing this method. Next, we separated the sentences and propositions that share a semantic relationship and convey the same meaning units. The following stage involves coding these meaning units. Codes serve as labels and tags that differentiate units of meaning from one another and facilitate analysis and classification. The table below displays the leadership's statements regarding elections, coded according to these stages:

| Meaning Unit                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Code                                                                         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| In our opinion, all of this is due to the lack of first-class [scholars] there; otherwise, if the first-class scholars envisaged in the constitutional amendment were present and could play their role, we would be much further ahead than we are today. | Constitutional deviation is the cause of the backwardness of Iranian society |
| But after the victory, when the scholars were pushed aside, constitutionalism deviated from its path. At that point, Bully Reza Khan, a person who was against all constitutional ideals, came to power.                                                   | removing the clerics who are responsible for constitutional deviation        |
| If constitutionalism had progressed following the wishes of the true, sincere, and faithful leaders of that movement—the                                                                                                                                   | Constitutional deviation is the cause of the backwardness of Iranian society |

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| greatest of whom were undoubtedly the great scholars—whoever denies this truth has denied the necessities and the obvious. As some deny—and today write history for our past and deny the truths—our country would not have been left behind for fifty years during the most sensitive periods of world history.                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                   |
| We, the Iranian nation, have suffered losses and have been harmed due to the domination of that illiterate bully and his family, children, relatives, and companions, namely, the rule of the powers that governed this country—first the British and later the Americans—over the last half-century before the revolution, as well as due to the inaction of the parliament.                                                                                                                                       | The effects and consequences of Reza Shah's authoritarian rule and colonialism                    |
| Constitutionalism has existed in this country for decades. Still, during the reign of the infamous, harmful, humiliating Pahlavi dynasty over Iran, the parliament practically did not exist, except when the late Ayatollah Kashani and the National Movement made a move, and the parliament came to life.                                                                                                                                                                                                        | The weak and dependent parliament during the Pahlavi regime                                       |
| In those early years, before the Parliament became influenced by the Sultan, the Sardar, the Doula, the Sultanate, and foreign embassies, it was a Parliament that, despite its rudimentary nature, impacted the country's situation. The Parliament stood with full power wherever there was the slightest sign of foreign domination. There was a Russian ultimatum: the Parliament stood. There was borrowing from foreigners, and the Parliament stood. There was a Vosough al-Doula, and the Parliament stood. | An influential and powerful parliament during the independence era                                |
| That parliament was one that stood firm; it energized the nation and strengthened the government. Although the governments of that time were inherently weak and frail, many were essentially built on a mentality                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | The dignity and happiness of the people from the existence of a strong and independent parliament |

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| of paying tribute to Western tyrants, this parliament ultimately preserved them as much as possible.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                           |
| Although the foundation of constitutionalism was rooted in religion, it was largely disregarded, and the insights of leading scholars were overlooked. Subsequently, religion faced opposition, and the religious aspects of that system were stripped away; conversely, its secular elements were reinforced, resulting in the damage observed: the harm inflicted upon a country and its people during the few decades of the constitutional era leading up to the victory of the Islamic Revolution. Among its most significant losses was the reign of the Pahlavi dynasty. | Pahlavi dependent government, the fruit of constitutionalism              |
| Looking at the collection of newspapers from the Constitutional era and shortly before will reveal excellent content. Such newspapers feature sophisticated humor, high-quality literature, and content that shows compassion and interest in the country's fate.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Public concern and interest in the country's future                       |
| In the post-constitutional era, these words were also utilized in our country. They spoke of parliament, law, and election, yet there were significant gaps between the truth, what was occurring, the reality of the situation, and what was being articulated.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Dependence of constitutional institutions on the orders of the Shah       |
| Our people had not genuinely experienced their presence in the country's administration through legislation since the constitutional era until the victory of the Islamic Revolution. Perhaps only one or two two-year terms in the early days of the National Assembly, such as the second or third term, carried these meanings to some extent. Even that, with some disputes and flaws, carried these meanings to some extent. But what they had amounted to mere words. It only existed on paper. It was on the airwaves. Finally, it gradually faded                       | Lack of influence of the people on the legislative process in the country |

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| away.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                        |
| In many other years, even the name of the people's opinions and the claim and pride in these words were no longer an issue; everything was formal and false; it was artificial and fabricated, both in the era of explicit dictatorship, which included the era of Reza Khan and the end of the era of Mohammad Reza; and in the middle era, which was somewhat hidden and secretive, the people had no vote, there was no parliament, there were no representatives; it was a matter of command and decree.                       | Lack of real public presence and participation in running the country's affairs                        |
| The Iranian nation was among the first to achieve a significant political and social transformation this century. In 1905 or 1906, equivalent to 1324 or 1325 AH, the Iranian nation approached a political and social transformation earlier than most nations during the constitutional era.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Iranians' leadership in evolution compared to other nations                                            |
| Negligence on the part of politicians affiliated with England at that time allowed Western and foreign powers to exploit this movement of the Muslim nation to cast the Iranian nation's quest for justice in a pre-fabricated form according to their ideas and to divert the movement of the Iranian nation; and after a few years, to bring the Pahlavi dynasty to power. They set back the movement of the Iranian nation and the country's transformation for nearly sixty years. The British did this to the Iranian nation. | Colonialism and its dependence are the factors that are distorting the Iranian revolutionary movement. |
| Religious scholars and community benevolent were the leaders of that movement.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | The prominence of the role of scholars in constitutionalism                                            |
| Before India, Russia, Algeria, and other significant revolutions of the 20th century, we entered the arena of social transformation to change our country, government, and social system.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Iranians' leadership in evolution compared to other nations                                            |
| Our nation made significant sacrifices in                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Western-affiliated politicians are                                                                     |

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| Tehran, Tabriz, Khorasan, Fars, and many other regions; however, foreigners hindered our efforts. The culprits were politicians associated with the West.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | an obstacle to the nation's evolutionism.                                     |
| Those who maintained a warm and friendly relationship with Westerners and the British government that day diverted the course of the Iranian nation. They subsequently brought Reza Khan to power, delaying the development of the Iranian nation by sixty years!                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | The British's Obstruction of the Iranians' Coherent Movement for Change       |
| One example is constitutionalism. The Qajar dictatorship era brought people to their knees, but the public rose up, with supporters from all walks of society joining them. Their leaders were also religious scholars.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Scholars Pioneer fighting tyranny                                             |
| What did they want? They wanted justice to be established in Iran; that is, tyranny to be abolished. When the people's agitation was observed, the British government, which held significant influence in Iran and had connections among intellectuals, recognized this and imposed its version on them. Naturally, some of those sympathizers included intellectuals. Their rights should not be overlooked, but several intellectuals had compromised themselves and were viewed as agents of England. After all, the Constitution was the British government's structure and framework. | The gradual distortion of the Iranian movement for justice by the British     |
| Instead of seeking a system of justice and creating an Iranian composition and formula for creating justice, the intellectuals brought constitutionalism into effect.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Neglecting the indigenous model of justice-seeking                            |
| The outcome was that this significant movement of the people, which supported the scholars, acted in the name of religion with the slogan of pursuing faith, ultimately resulting in the hanging of Sheikh Fazlullah Nouri, a great martyr who is buried here in                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Taking control of the indigenous and genuine justice-seeking movement in Iran |

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| Tehran. Soon after, Seyyed Abdullah Behbahani was assassinated in his home. Following that, Seyyed Mohammad Tabatabaei died in isolation and loneliness. During that period, they also reinstated the constitutional system as they preferred, a constitutional system that eventually led to the reign of Reza Khan! |                                                                                                  |
| Their presence imposed constitutionalism on the Qajar dictator. Otherwise, Mozaffar al-Din Shah would not have accepted it. The people's presence and pressure forced him to do so. The great clerics and scholars brought the people to the scene.                                                                   | The people are the reason for the victory of the Constitutional Revolution.                      |
| The justice movement that emerged in the Iranian constitution a hundred years ago was popular and religious.                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Being popular and religious is essential for the ongoing success of the constitutional movement. |
| The outcome was that the Constitutional Movement—an anti-authoritarian movement—ultimately led to the Reza Khan dictatorship, which was harsher, more cruel, and more brutal than the Qajar tyrannies.                                                                                                                | Deviation from the initial line of seeking justice and the return of violent tyranny             |
| In the constitutional movement, the British, with their cunning trickery and deceit, came and rode the waves of constitutionalism, pushing aside the populace and their leaders.                                                                                                                                      | The ousting of constitutional leaders by England                                                 |
| When you enter the category of freedom in constitutionalism – which is also a very controversial and crowded category—you notice that the same anti-church sentiment presents in the West, which is a defining feature of freedom, also appears here as anti-mosque, anti-clergy, and anti-religion.                  | Restrictions on religious freedom through mimicking Western ideals of liberty                    |
| Constitutionalism was a significant development closely tied to the issue of freedom.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | The relationship between evolutionism and freedom                                                |
| Be proud of the Constitutional Revolution and consider it one of the turning points in Iranian history.                                                                                                                                                                                                               | The Importance of Constitutionalism in Iranian History                                           |

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Be proud of the Constitutional Revolution and consider it one of the turning points in Iranian history.                                                | Pride in Constitutionalism                         |
| In the case of the Constitutional Revolution, if it had not been for the scholars, it would not have been created and would not have achieved victory. | Leading Scholars of the Constitutionalist Movement |

After the coding stage, it is time to determine the categories. As Barden points out, categorization involves classifying the elements of a set by identifying their differences and regrouping them based on similarities. Thus, categories are classes or topics that unite a group of similar elements under a generic heading, and these elements share common characteristics (Barden, 1374, p. 135). Subsequently, they were organized into five categories based on extracting semantic units from the Supreme Leader's statements on the Constitutional Revolution and their coding. Notably, in the section of each category, the number and titles of the associated codes are displayed in the relevant table. By combining concepts such as public concern for the future of the country, the pioneering efforts of Iranians in evolutionism compared to other nations, public sensitivity towards the nation's fate, the joy of having a strong and independent parliament, the dignity and happiness derived from this parliamentary strength, and the pride in constitutionalism—along with the connection between evolutionism and freedom and the historical significance of constitutionalism in Iran, as noted in the table above—we can extract a brief and concise key phrase that encapsulates these shared characteristics: the Iranian revolutionary movement. This key phrase is represented in the first category below. These concepts collectively highlight a central theme: the contexts and foundations of the constitutional movement within Iranian society.

#### **4.1. Category 1 / Iranian Revolutionary Movement;**

A set of codes can be categorized as the Iranian Revolutionary Movement.

| <b>Iranian Revolutionary Movement</b>                |                                                                |                                                         |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Public concern and interest in the country's future. | Iranians' pioneering in evolutionism compared to other nations | Public sensitivity to determining the country's destiny |

|                                                         |                                                                                          |                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Public enthusiasm for a strong, independent parliament. | People's dignity and happiness from the existence of a strong and independent parliament | Influential and powerful parliament during the independence era |
| Pride in constitutionalism.                             | The relationship between evolutionism and Liberty                                        | Importance of constitutionalism in Iranian history              |

#### **4.2. Category 2 / The role of scholars and people in the Iranian movement for evolution**

| <b>The role of scholars and people in the Iranian movement for evolution;</b> |                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Scholars, the Pioneers in the Fight Against Tyranny                       | The role of scholars in constitutionalism, publicity, and religiousness is essential for the continuation of the constitutionalist movement. |
| The People, the Cause of the Victory of the Constitutional Revolution         | The role of scholars in constitutionalism, publicity, and religiousness is essential for the continuation of the constitutionalist movement. |

#### **4.3. Category 3 / Constitutional deviation**

The constitutional deviation and associated factors have also been highlighted in the Supreme Leader's political thought outlines. The number of codes related to this theme can be found in the table below.

| <b>Constitutional deviation</b>                                           |                                                                        |                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Neglecting the Indigenous approach to seeking justice,                    | Taking charge of the authentic Indigenous justice movement in Iran     | Deviation from the original quest for justice and the resurgence of violent tyranny.  |
| the removal of scholars contributes to a deviation from the constitution. | The lack of public influence on the legislative process in the country | Absence of genuine public presence and involvement in managing the country's affairs. |
| Neglecting the Indigenous approach to seeking justice                     |                                                                        |                                                                                       |

**4.4. Category 4 / Colonialism and constitutionalism**

| <b>Colonialism and constitutionalism</b>                            |                                                                                               |                                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| The British Preventing Iranians from a Coherent Movement for Change | The gradual distortion of the Iranian movement for justice by the British                     | Britain's Removal of Constitutional Leaders    |
| Anti-Religious Liberty Through Imitating Western Freedom            | colonialism and its dependence, a factor that distorted the Iranian movement for evolutionism | Western-Led Politicians: An Obstacle to Reform |

**4.5. Category 5 / Effects and results of constitutional deviation**

| <b>Effects and results of constitutional deviation</b>                      |                                                                          |                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Determinism of Constitutional Institutions to the King's Will           | The people's lack of influence on the legislative process in the country | Limited public presence and participation in the management of national affairs. |
| Constitutional Deviation as a Factor in the Backwardness of Iranian Society | The authoritarian rule of Reza Shah                                      | Weak and dependent parliament during the Pahlavi regime.                         |

Based on the content analysis of the Supreme Leader's statements regarding constitutionalism, the identified categories can be classified into three fundamental patterns and approaches: 1—the revolutionary movement of the Iranian people led by religious scholars in the 20th century (the religious and popular originality of the reform movement in Iran); 2—the deviation of constitutionalism during the Iranian evolution process; and 3—British colonialism as the primary obstacle to Iran's reform.

In other words, the spirit that governs the Supreme Leader's statements evokes the theme of the Iranian revolutionary movement led by religious scholars in the 20th century. This movement encompasses subcategories such as public compassion and interest in the nation's future,

the pioneering role of Iranians in pursuing revolution compared to other nations, public sensitivity to determining the country's destiny, the widespread enthusiasm of the people during a time when they had a strong and independent parliament, the connection between the quest for revolution and freedom, the leading scholars in the struggle against tyranny, the significant role of scholars in constitutionalism, the people as the driving force behind the victory of the constitutional revolution, and the importance of being popular and religious as prerequisites for the continuation of the constitutional movement.

These categories are interconnected within the chain, leading to a logical conclusion: the "religious and popular originality of evolutionism in Iran." This desire for change, which began in the last decades of the nineteenth century—especially after 1870—was shaped mainly in response to the internal tyranny of the Qajar rulers, the growing colonialism of foreign powers, and the privileges granted to them. However, before this, during the Iran-Russia wars, scholars encouraged the people to fight the foreign enemy and issued fatwas of jihad, demonstrating that they had a significant social base to guide the populace. This issue became even more pronounced in the following decades. The tobacco movement in the Naseri era, the fatwa of the late Mirza Shirazi, and ultimately, the cancellation of the relevant treaty marked the peak of the victory of the popular movement led by scholars against internal tyranny and foreign colonialism (see Hodayoun Katouzian, 1402).

Another fundamental issue in the Supreme Leader's political thought regarding constitutionalism is the attention given to the quality of the revolutionary movement. In numerous statements, he has used the keyword "deviation" to describe constitutionalism, believing that the revolutionary movement of Iranians was accompanied by the concept of constitutionalism, which ultimately strayed from its original desires and path. In this context, the indigenous model of justice-seeking that existed in the Justice House Movement was initially neglected, and the genuine justice-seeking movement in Iran was co-opted by individuals outside the circle of the people and scholars. Ultimately, "... after the victory, when the scholars were pushed aside, it deviated from the path..." (Statement at a meeting with the people of Qom, 1371/10/19) and "the justice-seeking movement that

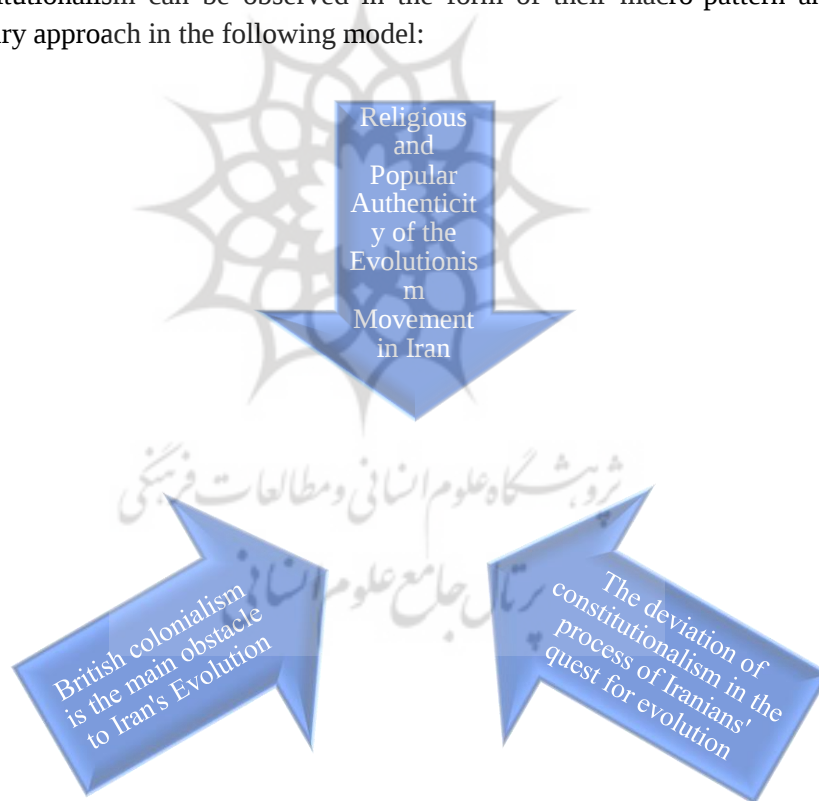
occurred a hundred years ago in Constitutional Iran was both popular and religious". "On that day, the dominant political force in the world—specifically the British—poured this justice-seeking movement founded on Islamic principles into their political and cultural framework; they transformed and distorted it into a form of constitutionalism resembling that of the English" (Statement at the ceremony of the 13th anniversary of the passing of Imam Khomeini, 1381/03/14). He believed that the removal of scholars was the primary factor leading to the deviation of constitutionalism and the Iranian revolutionary movement. Ultimately, by changing the nature of this indigenous revolutionary movement into Western constitutionalism, several negative consequences arose for Iranian society, including the ineffectiveness and coercive nature of constitutional institutions, the lack of public influence on the legislative process, the absence of genuine presence and participation of the people in the management of national affairs, and, most importantly, the rise of the harsh tyranny of Reza Shah.

Ultimately, what is crucial in the leadership's political thought about constitutionalism is the significant role of British colonialism in hindering the success of the Iranian revolution. Several aspects of this issue can be drawn from his statements: Britain's removal of constitutional leaders, the gradual distortion of the Iranian movement for justice by the British, the promotion and emphasis on anti-religious freedom by emulating Western freedoms, Britain's obstruction of the Iranian movement for a coherent revolution, and the involvement of Iranian politicians aligned with the West in this process. All these factors can be categorized under British colonialism as the primary obstacle to Iran's revolution. In the following speech, he thoroughly explained all the stages of British colonialism regarding this matter:

"What did they accomplish in those fourteen years? First, they were opportunistic and, through their agents, closely monitored the constitutional justice movement in Iran. They skillfully took control of this movement. One of their initial actions was to remove the main pillars of this movement, which were its religious and national aspects. Then, by exploiting the chaos that erupted in Iran—it's possible that many of these turmoil incidents (the events in Azerbaijan, the occurrences in the northwest of the country, and the situation in Urmia) were fueled by them, for which there is some

evidence. Incidentally, "Kasravi" describes events in the country's northwest very well. One can observe what transpired there—they set the stage for an absolute tyrannical government, precisely what the Constitutionalist had opposed. Then, in 1299, they elevated this tyrant to power; it took fourteen years to transform the already tyrannical society, which was being undermined by the national and Islamic movement of the people, into an indestructible tyrannical society, thanks to the preparations they made (Statement at the meeting of the Central Council and Scientific Committees of the Conference on the Centennial of the Constitutionalist Constitution, 1385/02/09).

Finally, the key issues of concern for leadership regarding constitutionalism can be observed in the form of their macro-pattern and primary approach in the following model:



## Conclusion

The subject of this article is to examine the Supreme Leader's views and opinions on constitutionalism. Using the qualitative content analysis method, his statements regarding this topic were first collected as meaning units and then coded to highlight the main points and issues of constitutionalism from his perspective. The findings indicate that the Iranians' pioneering efforts in pursuing evolution, compared to other nations, represent a key leadership issue. History shows that the Iranian people have consistently been among the region's leading countries in progress and development, characterized by compassion and genuine concern for the country's future, as noted in the leadership's statements. The constitutionalism movement in Iran's history is significant and is often referenced with pride. What is essential in the leadership's thinking is that in this crucial event, the scholars played a decisive role, and the people were also the factors behind the victory of the Constitutional Revolution. In any case, considering the connection between the desire for change and freedom, scholars were always the pioneers in the fight against tyranny. Another critical issue is the events of the early days of the Constitutional Revolution and the creation of powerful and independent popular institutions, including the National Consultative Assembly, in which the people felt happy and honored by the existence of such an institution. In particular, the historical role of the Assembly in not ratifying the 1919 agreement despite British pressure and the obstruction of the court is prominent in the contemporary history of Iran. However, in the future, the Iranian constitutional movement was deviated, and the Iranians' movement for justice was distorted by the British. By reviewing the Supreme Leader's statements, it can be concluded that issues such as: "ignorance of the indigenous model of justice seeking," "removal of scholars from the constitutional process," "emergence of politicians dependent on the West," "preventing the British from the coherent movement of Iranians seeking evolution," "taking over the indigenous and genuine movement for justice in Iran," "removing constitutional leaders by England," "deviation from the initial line of justice seeking and the return of violent tyranny," "anti-religious freedom by imitating freedom in the West," "lack of real presence and participation of the people in the administration of the country's affairs during the constitutional era," "lack of influence of the people on the legislative process in the country during the constitutional era," and "the dictates of constitutional institutions" were the main factors and reasons for the deviation of Iranians' constitutionalism, which ultimately resulted in the establishment of a dependent and authoritarian government known as Pahlavi, completely straying from its original goals and ideals.

The final summary of the findings indicates that, while further examining similar topics, the political thought of the leadership can be organized into five main themes: "the Iranian revolutionary movement, the role of scholars and the public in the Iranian revolutionary movement, constitutional deviation, colonialism and constitutionalism, and the effects and consequences of constitutional deviation."

In his speeches on constitutionalism, while focusing on the orderly progression and developments within this field, the Supreme Leader shared his insights on the subject through five main topics. Ultimately, one can gain a comprehensive understanding of the Supreme Leader's political views on constitutionalism and categorize the identified themes into three fundamental patterns and approaches: 1- The revolutionary movement of the Iranian people led by religious scholars in the 20th century (the religious and popular authenticity of evolutionism in Iran), 2- The deviation of constitutionalism during the Iranians' evolutionism, and 3- British colonialism, the primary obstacle to Iran's evolutionism.



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