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Seyyed Hassan Taqizadeh: a political biography

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Chapter Two

Taqizadeh and Constitutionalism

The discussion of the previous chapter took a micro historical approach; Taqizadeh's life was assessed from different perspectives within the social and economic context of the place in which he was born and grew up, Tabriz. This chapter deals with Taqizadeh's move from Tabriz to Tehran and considers his life as a member of the First Parliament leading up to its bombardment by Mohammad Ali Shah and the forced departure of Taqizadeh to Europe. However, before turning to focus specifically upon Taqizadeh's life, we should first take a step back to view the general situation in Iran at the time and examine the global forces that were shaping the country and its people and politics. One of the main focal areas should be the Iranian Constitutional Revolution and its consequences. Within the Constitutional Revolution movement in which Taqizadeh played a crucial role, the development of the idea of modernity (*tajaddod*) was a key factor and as such attention needs to be paid to this concept. It is against this background that this chapter will narrate Taqizadeh's life story, focusing on the salient historical conditions which helped to form Taqizadeh's character as a young, ambitious politician. These focal points, and in particular the Constitutional Revolution have been chosen to highlight Taqizadeh's political and intellectual philosophy and to contextualise the independent forces which influenced and shaped Taqizadeh's character.

Importantly, the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906 leading to the establishment of a parliament and the restriction of the power of the absolute monarch was a turning point in Iranian contemporary history. An attempt to convert an autocratic monarchy to a more democratic system, although not fully successful, left a lasting effect on Iran and the region and on Iran's relationship with the European powers who had interests in the region. Much has been written about the different aspects of the Constitutional Revolution, the intellectual and ideological background and the events. Works by early historians such as Ahmad Kasravi, Edward Browne and later Fereydoon Adamiyat are among the most widely known and respected. More recently, the study of the Constitutional Revolution has developed using new sources, methodologies and different approaches. A full analysis of

such a broad and multi-dimensional field is well beyond the scope of this research. However, what this research does set out to do is use this critical period in Iranian history as a springboard to explore more deeply than previously the life and thought of Taqizadeh, one of the intellectual and political driving forces of the Constitutional Revolution and a key member the First Parliament and beyond. The background to this movement, an investigation of its roots and a consideration of the outcomes will be included in this chapter but importantly this will be through the lens of Taqizadeh. It is his perspective that will shape the unfolding of this and the chapters to follow, rather than that of other commentators or even this writer. Firstly, already existing works by historians of this period that include narratives of Taqizadeh as an eyewitness, activist and intellectual who expressed his thoughts and ideas regarding the Constitutional Revolution movement are worthy of attention and will be cited. Additionally, and what sets this research apart, is a narration and analysis of the movement as seen through Taqizadeh's eyes. Though his thought and approach were broadly consistent, a detailed investigation through the lens of Taqizadeh himself will allow the subtle and nuanced changes in his perspective to become evident and thus in turn provide a more nuanced overview of this critical event in contemporary Iranian history.

2:1 Taqizadeh and the Background of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran

When examining the rise of the various manifestations of modernity in Europe and considering the unfolding of historical events within a framework of conventional periodisation, many historians and intellectuals, among them Taqizadeh, took the French Revolution as a turning point in the spread of “modernity” into “Eastern countries”. In this view “the West”, or what we might take to be Western Europe, is considered as a place in which modernity originated and developed. By focusing on Taqizadeh's perspective, a more nuanced understanding of the concept of modernity and its practice in Iran is possible. Furthermore, I will argue that the narrative of modernity developed by Taqizadeh has emerged as the dominant, recurrent narrative of Iranian historiography throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries.⁸⁸ Indeed, Taqizadeh, though not a historian by profession,

⁸⁸ For an excellent account of the narrative of the enlightenment in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution see: Ali M. Ansari, ed., *Iran's Constitutional Revolution of 1906 and Narratives of the Enlightenment* (London: Gingko Library, 2016).

was an eyewitness to most of the key events of the Revolution and thus in a prime position to provide a coherent, succinct overview of the events as well as his ideas about those events.

Despite some criticism, Taqizadeh's narrative is important since it not only represents his own personal understanding of the emergence, development and practice of the idea of modernity in Iran, but also exemplifies the ideas of many contemporary intellectuals of that time. Since few politicians or even historians have tried to express in a systematic way their understanding of the concept of modernity and its history in Iran, Taqizadeh's writings provide an even more valuable source of reference. As Abbas Milani aptly writes: "The serious truth is that, more or less, not all aspects of Iranian culture, literature and history have yet been researched. The modern-minded intellectuals, obsessed with politics, evaded responsibility to carry out serious research. Rather than encouraging social reform in society they have been occupied with inciting the masses".⁸⁹ Judging by his remaining written works which span the different fields of journalism, history and literary criticism, Taqizadeh stands alone among other political figures as someone who attempted to analyse the situation as he saw it unfolding within his own lifetime. From these writings it is clear that Taqizadeh's approach to explaining the emergence of modernity in Iran typified a Eurocentric perspective. From such a perspective, modernisation and political development are seen as processes initiated from within Europe which are then "exported" to societies beyond Europe and thus to become modern, from this perspective, may be understood to mean to imitate the West.

This chapter seeks primarily to represent Taqizadeh's understanding of the background of the Constitutional Revolution and modernity in Iran rather than solely tracing historical events of this period. In a series of talks and written work, Taqizadeh explained the "background" of the Iranian constitution and tried to place it within the context of global forces acting on the country and events taking place there.⁹⁰ Salient points from one of his

⁸⁹ Abbas Milani, *Tajaddod va Tajaddod Setizi dar Iran* [Modernity and Anti-modernity in Iran], (Essen: Nima, 1998).

⁹⁰ Hassan Taqizadeh, "Tarikh-e Avayel-e Enqelab va Mashrutiyat-e Iran [The History of the Beginning of the Revolution and Iranian Constitution]," in *Maqalat-e Taqizadeh*, 1: 254-68.

fa speeches will be used to present his ideas in this regard. These will be interwoven with frequent references to his other writings, memoirs and talks mostly from the later period of his life in order to fill and expand upon the gaps in the narrative. It is the consistency of Taqizadeh's intellectual narrative that this chapter hopes to probe and consider.

Taqizadeh strongly supported the notion that the political revolutions of 1642 and 1688 in England, soon followed by the American independence movement, were the key events which led to the establishment of the idea that a national government ought to be based on sovereignty and liberty. The French Revolution of 1789 and the revolutions of 1830 and 1848 in Europe laid the foundations for national governments in Europe. To highlight the importance of the French Revolution Taqizadeh emphasised in his speech that before this event there had been no sign of political freedom in France nor of social equality, although he noted that a great intellectual and philosophical movement was being conceived and developed at this time.⁹¹ He considered that the works of great French writers such as Rousseau, Voltaire and Montesquieu had exerted a strong influence over the ordinary people, a view he inherited from a European intellectual tradition. Taqizadeh agreed with this received wisdom that the growing awareness of the physical and spiritual autarchy of royal rulers and catholic clergies was a pre-requisite for revolution. He had come to the conclusion that the major political aim of the Revolution, the granting of rights to the lower classes, was eventually achieved in the European context.⁹² Importantly, Taqizadeh took his analysis a step further, applying it to his own context. He commented on the way that the French Revolution had influenced social and political change not only in Europe but also how it had slowly permeated "the Eastern countries".

2:2 Modernity in the Islamic World

According to Taqizadeh, the intellectual heritage of Western civilisation alongside technical advancement came gradually to the Islamic East; some of the first manifestations of these influences had taken place in the Ottoman Empire during the early nineteenth century under the reign of Sultan Mahmud II. Throughout the Ottoman Empire, the

⁹¹ Ibid., 255.

⁹² Ibid., 258.

residence place of the Islamic caliphate, anti-modern (Zedd-e Tajaddod) elements, such as religious leaders and the force known as Yeni Cheri or Janissaries (new troops), were strongly opposed to any movement towards reform. On 26 June 1826 this Janissary force which had for centuries been the dominating power in the Ottoman Empire and had defeated the Sultans was finally overturned and Sultan Mahmud established the “Nezam-e Jadid” [New Order or New Army], setting up an army based on a European style. Taqizadeh compares these reforms with the “Nezam-e Jadid” initiated later in Iran by the Crown Prince Abbas Mirza. Nikki Keddie expresses a similar opinion, writing that:

The only Qajar to appreciate the need for a modernized military was Crown Prince Abbas Mirza, Governor General of Azerbaijan in the early nineteenth century. Abbas Mirza made use of the French and British instructors, who had been provided for by treaties, to introduce a Western-style armed force in Azerbaijan. Following the terminology of Muhammad Ali and Selim, he called this army Nezam-e Jadid.⁹³

Explaining the events in Turkey and their influences in Iran, Taqizadeh continues in his first speech under the title of “The History of the Beginning of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution” that the strike of theology students of religious schools, the Noble Edict of Gulhane and Tanzimat in the time of Sultan Majid and the establishment of Askariyeh, Roshdiyeh and Malekiyeh schools all culminated in the reforms of Medhat Pasha. Taqizadeh mentioned that these reforms were similar to those of Amir Kabir in Iran which finally evolved into the Constitutional Revolution in Iran.⁹⁴

Taqizadeh’s elaborations on his belief that the Iranian reforms and the constitutional structure of the Iranian government were influenced by the Ottoman reforms should be considered in more detail. Although the Turkish constitutional revolution of 1876 was short-lived, it was, writes Taqizadeh, the first national government in “the East” and was considered as an extremely significant historical process by those who were striving for “freedom and justice” in this part of the world. In Taqizadeh’s opinion, the Ottomans had,

⁹³ Nikki R. Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 27.

⁹⁴ Taqizadeh, “Tarikh-e Avayel-e Enqelab va Mashrutiyat-e Iran,” in *Maqalat-e Taqizadeh*, 1: 258-9.

to a large degree, provided the role model for the gradual transformation of the government and establishment of justice and national government in Iran from the late nineteenth century onwards. The new “Western” social establishments and political, civil and military reforms were filtering into Eastern Islamic countries from Europe at this time and it was in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt that they were initially received; as such, it was from these places that the ideas and practices eventually found their way into other Islamic countries, including Iran.⁹⁵

According to Taqizadeh, at that time more research was required on the intellectual influence of Turkey on Iran both before and during the Constitutional Revolution in order that its place in Iranian historiography be fully acknowledged. Taqizadeh’s perspective on what he sees as a paucity of investigation and reflection on this factor is interesting and highlights his point of view. His knowledge about Turkey was the result of many years of residing there and his regular contact with Turkish people and that nation’s intellectuals in particular. During his time as the Ambassador of Iran in London, in a confidential letter dated 16 February 1944, he wrote to the Foreign Ministry in Iran, expressing his views on Iranians’ weak knowledge about Turkey:

Because Persian speaking Iranians – whether they be high ranking and knowledgeable, ordinary people or educated, men of letters and sages, doctors in different sciences, the authorities of the State, Members of Parliament, the leaders of the country or those who claim they possess the full knowledge of the universe - do not read any publications, the press, magazines or books in Turkish, and do not know Turkish (and if some know they are not consistent in reading Turkish) they have little information about the Turkish nation and the opinions of its people and the literary, political and national movements there....⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Taqizadeh, “Tarikh-e Avayel-e Enqelab va Mashrutiyyat-e Iran,” in *Maqalat-e Taqizadeh*, 1: 259.

⁹⁶ Hassan Taqizadeh, *Nameh-hay-e Landan* [London Letters], ed., Iraj Afshar (Tehran: Farzan, 1996), 100.

On another occasion Taqizadeh concludes that the extreme nationalism of the twentieth century and the ensuing attempts to purify language on both sides, led to the two nations being culturally alienated.⁹⁷ However, in contrast to his other writing, in this letter he writes that sending students to Turkey must be strictly banned as it could threaten the unity of Iran.⁹⁸

2:3 European Influence

According to Taqizadeh, prior to the Fath Ali Shah period (1769-1834) no European country had any civil or intellectual influence in Iran. The Portuguese conquering of the Persian Gulf shores at the beginning of sixteenth century until 1623 and later the Dutch had not, according to him, been the source of much cultural or political influence as far as their encounters with Iranians were concerned. The first European impact on the consciousness of the governing bodies of Iran, in Taqizadeh's opinion, was the colonial rule of Britain in India in the mid-eighteenth century and the expansion of Russians into the areas to the north of the Caucasian mountains and the Black Sea shores and forests. The impact of the British Empire and the Russian wars with the Ottomans were, according to Taqizadeh, like waves being watched from a distance.⁹⁹

In later writings Taqizadeh elucidated his ideas, explaining that the arrival to the Safavid court of political commissions from European countries, for example the Shirley brothers in the late sixteenth century and the religious missionaries from Europe, were not a great source of influence in forging a civil connection between Iran and Europe. However, he did admit that these were the first small steps for the movement of change in Iran. According to Taqizadeh, after the Safavid period the small and isolated encounters which took place now and again between Iranian and European courts or Christian religious centres were still relatively insignificant in terms of impact. In his opinion, "a long deep sleep of total ignorance and lethargy dominated this land and a curtain of darkness

⁹⁷ Hassan Taqizadeh, "Ravabet-e Iran va Turkieh [The Relationship between Iran and Turkey]," in *Maqalat-e Taqizadeh*, 1: 239-46.

⁹⁸ Taqizadeh, *Nameh-hay-e Landan*, ed., Afshar, 106.

⁹⁹ Taqizadeh, "Tarikh-e Avayel-e Enqelab va Mashrutiyat-e Iran," in *Maqalat-e Taqizadeh*, 1: 260.

separated Iran from the West.”¹⁰⁰ Other than the hostile relationship between Iran and the Ottoman Empire there was no connection between Iran and the West. Taqizadeh continued by suggesting that the fundamental civil changes, reforms and progress of the European countries and the discovery of the American continent had had no impact on how the ruling class treated their subjects in the “East”.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, little difference was made in the way the ruling classes behaved towards their subjects by major political and philosophical works such as *Adab al-Moluk* and *Siyasat al-Modon* written by scientists and intellectual thinkers like Farabi, Maskoyeh, Nezam al-Molk and Nasir al-Din-e Tusi. Equally, little effect was caused by the works of any other Islamic scientists and scholars who were influenced by the theories of Aristotle or the scientific regulations of Anushirvan.¹⁰²

Wanting to emphasise the dysfunctionality of Iranian society in order to prompt a change within itself, Taqizadeh wrote that the advice of the sages, poets and prophets had not been able to diminish the selfishness and tyranny of those in power, except on a few occasions. The positive influence of Islam on the piety of Ghazan Khan in the thirteenth century was an example of one such occasion. Another is the taking of the caliphate of Rashedin [The Rightly Guided Successors] as role models by such rulers as Omar ibn-e Abd al-Aziz.¹⁰³ In Taqizadeh’s words, “the very winsome, pleasant, courageous and even impetuous exhortations of the writers or poets were read but no real or inward effects were perceived from them. The exceptions were the occasional optional self-control, favour or pity towards the inferiors by the rulers.”¹⁰⁴

The essence of Taqizadeh’s argument is found in his quotation of Mirza Malkam Khan who suggested that sages, poets and prophets had been offering advice on many issues to rulers over the last centuries but with little favourable result. The change only took place, he agrees, in the eighteenth century when the French nation chose to stand against the tyranny and overthrew the monarchy.¹⁰⁵ Taqizadeh believed that the French Revolution

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 261.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid., 260.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 261.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 262.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

indeed shook the world; it was a light, he said, which rose from the French horizon and gradually illuminated other parts of the world. We see the same line of thought in Mehdi Malekzadeh's narration of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran using a similar metaphor;

The shining star of liberty appeared in the horizon of France and the revolution exploded like a volcano. It gave light and warmth to all countries of the world. Every country based on its natural predisposition and intellectual education, in a distance or close by was benefited from this immense gift.¹⁰⁶

However, evidently to Taqizadeh's mind, the light and energy of the French Revolution did not have an immediate impact on Iran. Rather, for him, it was the defeat of Iran by Russia, leading to a significant loss of land and the signing of the two humiliating treaties of Golestan (1813) and Torkamanchai (1828) which had caused shockwaves in Iran and was the catalyst for the Constitutional Revolution Movement. The Iranian government became aware of its weakness in comparison to the European countries and considered itself bereft of any resort to power and progress. Taqizadeh mentioned that later this feeling of weakness increased as a result of the war with the British Empire in 1856. The on-going pressure of invading Russia and an increasing number of one-sided concessions took Iran to the verge of annihilation. Iran's other neighbouring country in the East, the British Empire, acted similarly. All these aspects, claims Taqizadeh, had an immense psychological effect on the Iranian people who were watching the decline of their country in front of their eyes.¹⁰⁷

2:3 Economic Influences

Taqizadeh focused on economic influences when he highlighted the link between the Constitutional Revolution and the increasing adverse economic situation of Iran after the Iran-Russian wars. He explained that from the Torkamanchai Treaty until about the middle of the nineteenth century, despite the increasing pressure and domination of Russia, the Iranian government had managed to maintain a balance in its relationship with Russia and

¹⁰⁶ Mehdi Malekzadeh, *Tarikh-e Enqelab-e Mashrutiyat Iran* [The History of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution], (Tehran: 'Elmi, 1994), 1: 111.

¹⁰⁷ Taqizadeh, "Tarikh-e Avayel-e Enqelab va Mashrutiyat-e Iran", 265.

Britain. Gradually the power and political domination of Russia increased and as a result the economic and commercial influence of Russia began to impact further into the south of Iran. According to Taqizadeh, following the establishment of the Russian Loan Bank in Iran in 1899 and the issuing of two hefty loans in 1900 and 1903 with crippling interest rates, Russian political and economic domination increased dramatically. As Taqizadeh himself witnessed, at the beginning of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution 60 to 64 percent of Iranian commerce was conducted with Russia.¹⁰⁸ Taqizadeh believed incompetency in foreign affairs together with the injustice, tyranny and disorder in the administrative and internal affairs which were regulated, according to him, in the same way they had been in the Middle Ages, were what had triggered the Constitutional Revolution in Iran.¹⁰⁹ Edward Browne, a friend of Taqizadeh who made a study of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, added nationalism to this list when he stated that:

My own conviction is that the mere tyranny of an autocrat would have hardly driven the patient and tractable people of Persia into revolt had tyranny at home been combined with any maintenance of prestige abroad or only moderately effective guardianship of Persian independence. It was the combination of inefficiency, extravagance and lack of patriotic feeling with tyranny which proved insupportable, and a constitutional form of government was sought not so much for its own sake as for the urgent necessity of creating a more honest, effective, and patriotic government than the existing one.¹¹⁰

As mentioned before, in Taqizadeh's opinion, the awakening happened gradually with the rudimentary steps taken by Abbas Mirza, the Crown Prince. Under him, some European knowledge and technology was acquired; he established factories, a printing-house,

¹⁰⁸ Ervand Abrahamian in explaining the causes of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution writes: "The revolution's long-term causes were rooted in 1904-05 by an economic crisis brought about by government bankruptcy and spiralling inflation. Unable to meet government expenditures, Mozaffar al-Din Shah threatened to raise land taxes and default on loans from local creditors. He also turned to British and Russian banks for new loans on top of the 4 million he had already borrowed from them." See: Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 41.

¹⁰⁹ Taqizadeh, "Tarikh-e Avayel-e Enqelab va Mashrutiyyat-e Iran", 266-7.

¹¹⁰ Edward G. Browne, "The Persian Constitutional Movement," *Proceedings of the British Academy* (London, 1917-18), 8: 323-324.

vaccination programmes and even sent students to Britain to study. One of the most significant developments was the establishment of the first technical school (Dar al-Fonoun) in Tehran in 1852.¹¹¹ This was accompanied by an invitation to Austrian and French teachers to help provide technical knowledge to the students. The establishment of telegraph lines in Iran, beginning from 1864, was a major factor leading to the centralisation of power in Iran.¹¹²

Taqizadeh goes on to elaborate on the intellectual awaking of Iran and people who were influential in this regard. Again, he considers the writings of Mirza Malkam Khan as the most significant. Malkam Khan who was in exile in England published his newspaper *Qanun* [Law] in London. His numerous and insightful treatises caused a revolution in the minds of Iranians who were seeking reform. In Taqizadeh's opinion, after Mirza Malkam Khan the works of Talebov among them *Ketab-e Ahmad* [The Book of Ahmad], *Masalek al-Mohsenin* and *Masael al-Hayat* [The Book of the Pious and Challenges of Life] were highly influential and were circulated widely throughout Iran. *Siyahat Nameh-e Ebrahim Beyg* and Persian newspapers published in Egypt and India, especially *Soraya*, *Parvareh*, *Hekmat* and *Habl al-Matin* also influenced public opinion. Taqizadeh comments that the coming of the famous Seyyed Jamal al-Din Asadabadi (Afghani) in 1887 and 1890 and his oral propaganda against the dictatorship and the necessity for reform was influential. This was especially evident at the protest against the exclusive tobacco concession granted by the Shah to a British company on 8 March 1890.¹¹³

Alongside these external influences which played a part in Iran's Constitutional Revolution, such as the expansion of European scientific knowledge and the spread of these ideas through neighbouring Russia and the Ottoman Empire to Iran, Taqizadeh also elaborated on the reaction that some Iranians had to monumental events that were taking place in these countries, the Russo-Japanese War and the Russian Revolution. As

¹¹¹ Javad Tabatabaei writes: "The opening of Dar al-Funun and the efforts made to transfer new knowledge to Iran was the first step to fill the gap which had existed for a hundred years." Seyyed Javad Tabatabaei, *T'amoli Darbareh-e Iran: Nazariyeh-e Hokomat-e Qanun dar Iran* [Reflections on Iran: Theory of the Rule of Law in Iran], (Tabriz: Sotudeh, 2007), 139.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 270.

¹¹³ Taqizadeh, "Tarikh-e Avayel-e Enqelab va Mashrutiyat-e Iran", 272.

Malekzadeh wrote; “The Russo-Japanese war was one of the most important factors which led to the independence of Iran and the emergence of the Constitutional Revolution.”¹¹⁴

Hekmat, a Persian newspaper then published in Egypt, highlighted the significant effect the Russo-Japanese War had upon the awakening of the Iranian mind and also on the clergy’s opinions regarding the acquisition of modern science and style from Europe. It is worth quoting an extract from it at length:

Until recently, high ranking clergies in Iran were against any new style reforms. Their ridiculous behaviours in Tehran are still not forgotten. They would beat helpless Iranian youths and slapped them on the face with their own hands. They prevented the youth from wearing new style clothes such as redingotes, trousers, starched collared shirts and neckties in which the latter had been used by their own ancestors several thousand years ago. Today Iranian youth are free to wear what they wish. Even the clergies, themselves not only have abandoned the old way, but also act according to the new style. The Russo-Japanese war had also been a useful lesson for them. In one instance a famous preacher in a Tehran mosque on the Manbar (tribune) declared ‘Oh people of Iran; may our eyes and insights be blinded if we do not understand and see that Japan defeated Russia with the power of European science. The day will come when with the use of this science we will also become powerful and mighty and able to protect our own existence. So, we must try hard and learn and act in order to survive.’¹¹⁵

2:4 Internal Causes

In addition to external forces, Taqizadeh did not ignore the impact of internal events on the Constitutional Revolution. According to him, one of the major internal shifts contributing to the Revolution was the influence of religious innovations and reforms, in particular from Sufism. He considered the emergence of the Babi movement as the most

¹¹⁴ Malekzadeh, 1: 170.

¹¹⁵ “Jonbesh-e Iranian va Khaheshhai-e Anan [The Movement of Iranians and Their Wishes],” *Hekmat*, September 4, 1906.

important among all religious movements in Iran at this time. Whilst A.K.S. Lambton identifies that “the intellectual bases” of the Babi movement “go back to the medieval Islamic movements of revolt and heresy, rather than to western liberal movements of reform”,¹¹⁶ Taqizadeh refers to it as a “modern religious revolution”.¹¹⁷

Taqizadeh analyses the influences of this movement from different perspectives showing how it played a role in enhancing the practice of modernity in Iran. The Babi Riot which took place at the beginning of the reign of Naser al-Din Shah in 1850 and the large-scale battles of Mazandaran, Zanzan and Darab which concluded with the defeat of the Babis were, according to Taqizadeh, of utmost importance. Following the defeat, all Babis became hostile to the rule of the Qajars. On one hand, those who had accepted the new religion were, as Taqizadeh commented, released from Islamic fanaticism and were increasingly against the dictatorship of the Mullahs and corruption of the religion in Iran. Taqizadeh considered the Babi Movement as one of the most influential factors behind the Constitutional Revolution and believed that not enough research had been done about it; he went so far as to call the influence of the Babi Movement on the process of change in Iran one of the “hidden causes”. More recently, Abbas Amanat has written that there is a “visible absence in the narratives of the period of any non-Islamic or anti-Islamic dissident elements, and least of all the Babi influence”. Amanat refers to this absence as “a conspiracy of silence”.¹¹⁸ Malekzadeh has also commented on this factor of minorities:

The pressure of the clergy and ordinary people on the minorities naturally made them favour a liberal and constitutional government. They wished to be safe from the tyranny under the umbrella of a codified law so that one day they could be free to practice their beliefs and voice their opinions. They wanted to rid themselves of the limitations that the hypocritical clergy had placed on them. That was why the intellectuals of these minorities, although powerless

¹¹⁶ Ann Lambton, *Qajar Persia*, (London: I.B Tauris & Co Ltd, 1987), 284.

¹¹⁷ Hassan Taqizadeh, “Yek Moqaddameh-e Mokhtasar-e Tarikhi [A Brief Historical Introduction],” in *Maqalat-e Taqizadeh*, 2: 232.

¹¹⁸ Abbas Amanat, “Historiography of the Constitutional Revolution,” in *Iran in the 20th Century: Historiography and Political Culture*, ed., Touraj Atabaki (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2009), 36.

and in need of protection by the others, were opposed to the dictatorship of the government and worked as hard as they could to help establish the Constitution. They considered the leaders of the Constitution as their saviors and respected and followed them.¹¹⁹

2:5 Taqizadeh's Theoretical Outlook

Taqizadeh's opinions about the background of the Constitutional Revolution and his stance towards the advent of modernity in Iran are based on the premise that gradual, step by step change towards an "ideal" situation was necessary; this was what Taqizadeh believed in and advocated for. He links these social changes to developments in science and technology; in his theory of history "progress" is closely identified with technology. He fiercely believed almost everything in the world began with "insignificant" steps, and then followed a linear progression. The examples he used when describing the social changes in Iran often contained references to science and progress:

The airplane which has developed as far as it has and is about to conquer the space beyond Earth may have begun with the balloon of the Montgolfier brothers in 1783 and the same goes for all other large- and small-scale changes in the world. If one asks about the beginning of progress, modernity, revolution, change and Westernization in Iran and where they started and on what date, the answer is that small and scattered clouds accumulated in the air gradually 100 years before the Revolution until eventually there was an explosion of Revolutionary light.¹²⁰

What Ervand Abrahamian wrote about the intelligentsia of the late Qajar period in general could also be used to illustrate Taqizadeh's view; "Exposure to the ideas of the West, especially the ideas of the French Enlightenment, persuaded them that history was the March of Human Progress, not the revelation of God's Will as the Muslim '*ulama*'

¹¹⁹ Malekzadeh, 1: 120.

¹²⁰ Hassan Taqizadeh, "Serayat-e Afkar-e Gharbi dar Iran [The Spread of Western Ideas in Iran]," in *Maqalat-e Taqizadeh* [The Essays of Taqizadeh], ed., Iraj Afshar (Tehran: Shokofan, 1978), 9: 309.

believed, nor the cyclic rise and fall of royal dynasties such as court chronicles narrated.”¹²¹

Taqizadeh's narrative about the background to the Constitutional Revolution is characterised by his imagining a continuous history for Iran by linking the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods and differentiating Iranian people from the neighbouring Arabs or Turks. Notably, in his narrative Taqizadeh did not at times make any specific distinctions when referring to the countries, and simply described the different nations as “the East”. Taqizadeh's narrative is inclined to give great importance to the role of the rulers and governments. What he seems to be missing in this narrative is any consideration of the role of different cultures and subcultures and the forces which were not necessarily controlled by the state in Iran. Taqizadeh often ignores the agency of subaltern groups which had little contact with or influence from the ruling class and the role those groups played in either welcoming a new outlook towards the rest of the world or resisting influence from that world. However, many would eventually agree with Taqizadeh that “undoubtedly the Iranian Constitution changed the political and social situation fundamentally, changing it to the better. It blew the spirit of “tajaddod” (modernity), civilization, patriotism and following of the world of progress into Iran”.¹²²

2:6 A Rising Man

When Taqizadeh returned to Tabriz from his trip to the Caucasus, Egypt and Turkey in October of 1905, the movement pressing for the Constitutional Revolution movement had begun in Tehran; a movement that would eventually succeed in establishing the Majles (National Assembly/Parliament). After fourteen months travelling, Taqizadeh had returned to Tabriz full of knowledge and brimming with information; he was now a well-travelled and educated man who had met many prominent men of the East and was well-versed in their ideas.¹²³ After his return he spent most of his time studying and became increasingly

¹²¹ Ervand Abrahamian, “The Causes of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, August 1979, 10, no. 3, 381-414.

¹²² Hassan Taqizadeh, “Mokhtasar Tarikh-e Majles-e Melli-e Iran [A Brief History of the Iranian National Parliament],” in *Maqalat-e Taqizadeh*, ed., Iraj Afshar (Tehran: Shokofan, 1976), 5:7.

¹²³ Yahya Aryanpur, *Az Saba ta Nima* [From Saba to Nima], (Tehran: Zavvar, 1995), 113.

immersed in politics and gave talks at public gatherings.¹²⁴ As he himself writes, after returning to Tabriz, he began to engage in politics more and to propagate ideas relating to freedom and anti-despotism.¹²⁵ During this time some clandestine groups were active in Tabriz which published announcements calling for revolution and inviting people to revolt; Taqizadeh was involved with several of these groups. All of these activities were precursors to the revolution which took place in Tabriz on 18 September 1906. On that day the activists succeeded in inciting a large number of the people of Tabriz. They closed the Bazar and gathered together in the British consulate until the Crown Prince, Mohammad Ali Mirza, agreed to their demands: the most important of which were the acceptance of the rule of the Constitution in the provinces and the formation of a local assembly to begin the process leading to parliamentary elections in Tabriz.¹²⁶

The harsh treatment of the local populace and despotism of Mohammad Ali Mirza, the crown prince and governor of Azerbaijan, had meant that political gatherings and the establishment of organisations in Tabriz had been close to impossible prior to the revolution in Tabriz. Things were a little different in Tehran in the aftermath of the Constitutional Revolution, where elections had already been held for the forming of the Parliament. However, in Tabriz a severe dictatorship continued to hinder any election process. The majority of people in Tabriz were not even aware of the fact that elections were taking place in the capital. The only way that information could be passed on to the activists in Tabriz was by means of letters and even these were secretly scrutinised.¹²⁷

The well-documented harshness of Mohammad Ali Mirza's leadership as Governor of Azerbaijan became an additional point of grievance for the people of Tabriz who reacted against him by demanding the rule of law more fervently.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Ebrahim Safa'i, *Tarikh-e Mashrutiyyat be Ravayat-e Asnad* [The History of the Constitution According to Documents], (Tehran: Iranian, 2002), 684.

¹²⁵ Taqizadeh, *Tufani*, 49.

¹²⁶ For more information see: Nazem al-Eslam Kermani, *Tarikh-e Bidari-e Iraniyan* [The History of the Awakening of Iranians], (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1984), 530-9.

¹²⁷ Ahmad Kasravi, *History of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, trans. Evan Siegel (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 2006), 182.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

Taqizadeh writes in his autobiography that when he came back to Tabriz, he found no constitution and no sign of freedom; disappointed by the situation he decided to go to Tehran through Russia. Although he clarifies that the reason that he decided to go to Tehran was because he was feeling disappointed in Tabriz, Mojtehedī puts forward that friends had in fact encouraged him to go in order to establish a better connection between Tabriz and Tehran; they wanted Taqizadeh to represent the area in Tehran. Since he was young, seeking fame and had no family, he was considered a suitable candidate. “They told him, “Dear friend, go to Tehran. Be our speaker there. We are here supporting you and we will select you as our deputy in the parliament and will send your credentials”.¹²⁹ Ahmad Kasravi, argues that Taqizadeh was on his way to Egypt when he found out about his selection for parliament, “[he] had left for Egypt several days before the Tabriz movement. When he found out that he had been elected, he headed straight for Tehran and was already in the Majles.”¹³⁰ According to Taqizadeh, however, he received the news about being elected when he was already in Tehran.

Taqizadeh’s return to Tabriz in October 1905 could be considered as marking the beginning of a period in his life in which we see him as having grown in confidence, sufficiently knowledgeable to become involved in politics in a more practical way. Up until this point he had been positioning himself, exploring ideas and striving to understand the political situation. But from the time he returned to Tabriz he began to actively challenge the ruling power. Later in his life it will become evident that he transformed his approach again; moving from being a critical opponent to one who decides to co-operate with the government to further pursue the actualization of his ideas. Taqizadeh’s fluctuating desire to be practical and then enter a period of learning and study is a feature throughout his life. As an intellectual who sought a change in the political and social structure of Iran, he felt obliged to keep abreast of events and developments in the “modern” world in order to fully comprehend the nature of “modernity” (*tajaddod*). Since he believed in the linearity of history and human development, his later decision to leave Tabriz was also due to his eagerness to do something practical in order to push Iranians in

¹²⁹ Mojtehedī, 51.

¹³⁰ Kasravi, Siegel, 219.

the direction of “progress”. He saw the Iranian social and political system as a passive one. He regularly referred to European societies as being advanced in comparison to Iranian society. He referred to himself as the well-wisher of the Iranian nation and like many other intellectuals of the time he believed that it was his duty and moral obligation to inform people and improve their situation.¹³¹ It was due to the adverse political climate in Tabriz, where such goals were less likely to be achieved, that he turned his attention towards more viable contexts outside of his home city.

2:7 Towards Tehran

Taqizadeh left Tabriz on 3 September 1906. During the journey, Mirza Ali Mohammad Khan Tarbiat was under Taqizadeh’s guardianship and education. When they passed Jolfa, Taqizadeh wanted to visit his father’s village, Vanand. This was during the war between Muslims and Armenians and the ensuing security issues on the roads meant that Taqizadeh’s planned short visit to Vanand took longer than expected and he had to remain there for sixteen days, witnessing the war first hand.¹³² Here it might be interesting to note what Taqizadeh thought about the fighting between the Armenians and Muslims and its influence on the Iranian Constitutional Revolution. This may also help us to understand better Taqizadeh’s later interest in investing in organised political work.

Alongside the revolution in Russia, the propagation of independent newspapers, and the emergence of revolutionary groups and committees, Taqizadeh believed that the wars between the Armenians and Muslims played a fundamental role in the changing political atmosphere. He writes:

¹³¹ On the first page of Taqizadeh’s treaty called *Tahqiq-e Ahval-e Kononi-e Iran ba Mohakemat-e Tarikhi* [Study on Current Affairs in Iran with Historical Trials] the writer is introduced as “The well-wisher of the Iranian nation; Seyyed Hassan Taqizadeh-e Tabrizi.”

¹³² Kasravi argues that the wars between Armenians and Muslims in the Caucasus had a bitter though enlightening effect on the people in Tabriz. As he describes, many innocent Iranians, among them businessmen and workers, were killed indiscriminately. The Iranian government paid no attention to this and made no attempts to question it. This aroused anger in the people and revealed to them the uselessness and indifference of the Iranian governments towards its own subjects. Regarding Taqizadeh, witnessing these events could have added to his great dislike towards Russians. It was believed that the Russian government was galvanizing both sides to fight because there was a fear that the people of Caucasia would rebel against the Russians since the central government had become weakened due to their defeat in the war with Japan. The war between Armenian and Muslims would keep them busy and would divert their attention. Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Mashruteh-e Iran*, 1: 145-7.

During the war with Armenians, with great sorrow the Muslims realized that although both the Armenians and Muslims were peasants and powerless, Armenians everywhere, even in the small villages, had the means to defend themselves with good arms, grenades and dynamite. This was due to their revolutionary and secret organizations which had been active for twenty years. The young people were very belligerent and devoted to their organization and because of that even in the villages where Muslims outnumbered them, Armenians were able to defeat them. Caucasian Muslims became extremely zealous because of this domestic war and they organized devotee groups. They collected arms and warfare and brought many devotees to defend themselves against the Armenians. These, spread to Iran because of the connection of these parts to the borders of Gilan, Khorasan and Azerbaijan and caused uproar in the Northern provinces before permeating to Tehran as well.¹³³

2:8 Uprising in Tabriz

Based on Taqizadeh's own account, when he reached Russian controlled Jolfa, he was informed that the previous day an uprising had taken place in Tabriz prompting many people to go to the British consulate to seek sanctuary. On hearing this news Taqizadeh was so joyful that he considered instead crossing the Aras River and returning to Tabriz in order to participate in the revolution. But because of the difficulties of renewing his passport and other preparations he decided to continue his trip as previously planned.¹³⁴ He first went to Nakhjavan and then took the train to Tbilisi.¹³⁵

After visiting his friends in Tbilisi, Taqizadeh continued on to Baku where some Iranians had been busy setting up a revolutionary committee called "Ejtema'iyun,

¹³³ Taqizadeh, "Tarikh-e Enqelab-e Iran [The History of the Iranian Revolution]," in *Maqalat-e Taqizadeh*, 1: 321-388.

¹³⁴ Taqizadeh, *Tufani*, 55-6.

¹³⁵ Taqizadeh had a number of revolutionary and modern-minded friends in Tbilisi. The most prominent one was Mirza Jalil Mohammad Qoli Zadeh, the founder and chief editor of the famous Azeri-language *Molla Nasreddin* newspaper. Molla Nasreddin is also written Mullah Nasreddin or Nasraddin. According to popular belief, he was a satirical character who lived in the Ottoman Empire in the 13th century and about whom many stories have been written.

‘Amiyun” (Social Democrats), closely connected with the Muslim Caucasian revolutionaries. The Russian Revolution prompted them to take action themselves. Social Democrats who Taqizadeh had close connections with later helped to establish the first political party in Iran.¹³⁶ Taqizadeh writes:

After the Russian Revolution, Baku and Tbilisi emerged as passionate revolutionary centres. Especially in Baku where there was a huge (Iranian) population, in winter there numbered around 80000 and in summer some 50000 people were living in the city or in the suburbs. They were mainly occupied working in the oil industry and business. Under the influence of Turkish speaking revolutionary groups from the Caucasus who were working closely with the Russian revolutionaries these people, alongside other committees, established a committee called “Ejtema‘iyun, ‘Amiyun” and they were in constant touch with Iran, especially with Azerbaijan and Gilan.¹³⁷

This trip to the Caucasus was an important event in Taqizadeh’s political career as it enabled him to renew connections with friends and revolutionaries from these areas; a connection which would later become crucially important for him during the time he was a Member of Parliament in Tehran. Remaining correspondence between Taqizadeh and his friends in Tbilisi shows his influence in the revolutionary centres in the Caucasus. While Taqizadeh was a member of Parliament, Mir Baqer Mir Heydar Zadeh from Tbilisi wrote to him; “The major expectation from your Excellency is that you maintain contact with the centre here and inform us about events in Tehran and developments in the Parliament...”

¹³⁶ The Social Democrats played a significant role in fighting despotism in Iran. They helped in the development of the workers’ and peasant movements in Iran. They were active in organising the people of Tabriz when the city was sieged. They joined supporters of the Constitution in the north of Iran and played a crucial role in the removal from power of Mohammad Ali Shah. See: Sohrab Yazdani, *Ejtema‘iyun, ‘Amiyun* [The Social Democrats], (Tehran: Ney, 2012), 13.

¹³⁷ Taqizadeh, “‘Avamel-e Asasi-e Mashrutiyat-e Iran [The Main Factors of the Constitution],” in *Maqalat-e Taqizadeh*, 9: 249.

¹³⁸ He even offered to send some fighters (mojaheds) to Tehran should Taqizadeh be in need of them.¹³⁹

Whilst in Baku, Taqizadeh received a letter from Talebov inviting him to his house in Tamir-Khan-Shura, an invitation which Taqizadeh accepted. During his four night stay they discussed various things, the details of which are unclear from the documents we have; all that Taqizadeh writes in his autobiography about his conversation with Talebov is: "We stayed there for four nights and days, me and Mirza Ali Mohammad Khan who was accompanying me. We talked to that wise and experienced man for days and nights."¹⁴⁰ Talebov and Taqizadeh were later both elected as the deputies of Azerbaijan to the first Iranian Parliament. It is unclear why, Talebov decided not to attend the Parliament.¹⁴¹ However, he did invite Taqizadeh to meet him at his house, perhaps suggesting that he knew that Taqizadeh would eventually become a Member of Parliament and was eager to share his ideas with him before he took up this position. Talebov also did the same when the other seven deputies of Azerbaijan travelled via Baku from Tabriz to Tehran to attend the Parliament.

Taqizadeh suggests that Talebov did not take his seat in the Parliament because he was becoming blind and in poor health, but Fereydoon Adamiyat argues that his change of mind was more likely due to his concern for his safety in Tehran; at this stage the ulama of Tehran had condemned Talebov's activities and writings in which he directly attacked the Shia clergy.¹⁴² During his tenure in the First Parliament, Taqizadeh also had to deal with similar accusations of heresy due to his promotion of secular ideas on various occasions. Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh witnessed that, at least once in that period, Taqizadeh had to perform his prayers in public to quash the rumours that he was not a firm believer.¹⁴³

¹³⁸ Mir Baqer Mir Heydar Zadeh to Taqizadeh, Tbilisi, 4 May 1907, in *Nameh-hay-e Mashrutiyat va Mohajerat*, ed., Afshar, 22-3.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Taqizadeh, *Tufani*, 56.

¹⁴¹ Despite the condemnation of his books by prominent members of the Shia ulama, Talebov was elected by fifty-four votes as one of the twelve deputies from Azerbaijan to the first Iranian Parliament, which convened on 7 October 1906.

¹⁴² Fereydoon Adamiyat, *Andishhay-e Talebov-e Tabrizi [The ideas of Talebov -e Tabrizi]* (Tehran: Damavand), 9-11.

¹⁴³ Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh, "Taqizadeh," in *Yadnameh*, ed., Yaghmaei, 204-236.

2:9 The Correct Way of Things

After visiting Talebov, Taqizadeh's autobiography reveals that he continued his trip, stopping in Rasht for a few days after arriving there on 21 October 1906. In Rasht he details that he participated in a meeting, by chance taking place during his visit, which had been convened in order to select the deputies of the city to send to the fledgling parliament in Tehran, a process which they were finding hard to organise effectively. This was the time that the process of elections for the first Parliament in the provinces had started. Taqizadeh writes that this was a significant opportunity to explain to them how the selection process was conducted in other foreign countries; they took his advice on board and after hearing him speak decided to apply "the correct way of election".¹⁴⁴ This could mark the beginning of Taqizadeh's popularity among the revolutionary circles of Gilan. Taqizadeh's various correspondences with the constitutionalists of Rasht during the time he was a member of the First Parliament represent the beginning of his growing relationship with famous characters such as Mirza Karim Khan Rashti¹⁴⁵ and his influence on other revolutionaries of Rasht and Gilan in that period.¹⁴⁶ From letters written during this period, Iraj Afshar has come to the conclusion that at this time Taqizadeh was certainly "one of the most popular Iranian constitutionalists in Gilan".¹⁴⁷

As will be evident when looking at Taqizadeh's later life story, "the correct way" of doing things for him often involved some imitation of European ways and Western political traditions. This influence is particularly evident in his parliamentary speeches, even within his very early addresses there. Arguing about creating a platform for the speaker just as the European countries had, he said:

...unless people grasp that inventing everything (by ourselves) hinders the process of progress, nothing will improve. Nowadays we must completely

¹⁴⁴ Taqizadeh, *Tufani*, 57.

¹⁴⁵ Died 19 April 1947.

¹⁴⁶ See: Iraj Afshar, ed. "Asnadi Darbareh Enqelab-e Gilan va Hamleh-e Mojahedin be Tehran," [Some Documents about the Revolution of Gilan and the Attack of Tehran by the Mojahedin] in *Oraq-e Tazeh Yab-e Mashrutiyyat va Naqsh-e Taqizadeh* [The Newly Found Notes of the Constitution and the Role of Taqizadeh], ed., Iraj Afshar (Tehran: Javidan, 1980), 1-57.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

surrender and imitate others in these worldly matters. This is because these issues (the order of things in the Parliament) have been corrected after many years of experience and our experiences are useless and absurd. The order of the seats and allocation of a place for the speaker is not just because they have done it and we should imitate them. It is because there is no other way for reform. They were thoughtful people who did these things.¹⁴⁸

The imitation of these European institutions and thought does not, however, represent Taqizadeh's only approach to political progress. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that when necessary he was willing to compromise on these attitudes. One such incident during the period of the First Parliament when the necessity for regulations within the assemblies was being discussed, demonstrates this pragmatism. Knowing that the Azerbaijan assembly was a crucial centre of power for him outside the parliament, Taqizadeh argued for more freedom for these assemblies by encouraging parliament to think flexibly about institutional change. Though he usually advocated secular ideas for institutions based on a European model, here because of his own political interests he posited:

In all countries, within national assemblies and parliaments, laws are not written spontaneously; the time and spirit of the nation are considered. This Parliament must also be like that. Sometimes you may see that one incident requires a certain law. As far as the structure of our assemblies are concerned, the principles are written in constitutional law and in this we cannot simply...follow the foreign countries because they have their own background. Here (in the Parliament) we have had regulations (for things) as much as it was needed. Likewise, these regulations could be applied to other issues considering the situation. But I can claim even during the era of despotism the assemblies in the Islamic societies have been more in number comparing to the countries with constitutions or even in the republic countries. They have been also more free and they always came together to talk about the religious and worldly matters. Nowadays we also see that the

¹⁴⁸ Proceedings of the First Parliament, 19 January 1907, 55.

beginning title of our politicians and speakers is this so there is no need for a regulation anymore....¹⁴⁹

This was not the only occasion when Taqizadeh compromised on his European democratic ideals. Adamiyat, a well-known critic of Taqizadeh, wrote that he sometimes spoke against the fundamental nature of democracy, as well as the Constitution, and he quotes one of Taqizadeh's speeches in the First Parliament as evidence for this:

We should not compare this parliament to the other parliamentary constitutional countries who have a history of two or three hundred years old where the governments just ask for supervision and votes from the Parliaments...this Parliament cannot deal with issues through the usual ways. But the Parliament must reform the country by an extraordinary force and an iron hand...like Mohammad Ali Pasha did in Egypt and Napoleon in France.¹⁵⁰

Adamiyat saw this as an example of how Taqizadeh defended a government based on an individual's superiority, and observed that this was not the only time that he did so. Based on a speech Taqizadeh made later in his life in London on 30 May 1934 where he is clearly referring to Reza Shah, Adamiyat highlights this passage to prove his point: "God helped Iran... a great leader emerged and took the destiny of the nation in his hand...his leadership and guidance actualised plenty of the ideals of the First Parliament".¹⁵¹

2:10 The Election Process for the First Parliament

Before focusing on Taqizadeh's eventual arrival in Tehran, it is important to have an overview of his activities as deputy of the newly established parliament. It is also useful to briefly explain the procedure of election for the First Parliament. This is helpful as we build a picture of how Taqizadeh came to sit in the Parliament, and allows us to identify which

¹⁴⁹ *Majles*, 1: 883.

¹⁵⁰ Fereydoon Adamiyat, *Ideolozhi-e Nehzat-e Mashrutiyyat-e Iran [The Ideology of the Iranian Constitutional Movement]* (Tehran: Payam, 1976), 367.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 367.

groups of society he was representing. This relationship between the electorate and those they elected is important as we continue to build a picture of Taqizadeh's political milieu as he entered the Parliament as deputy representing Tabriz.

Following the Constitutional Revolution in Iran, an official copy of the new Constitution was signed by Mozaffar al-Din Shah on 5 August 1906. An electoral law was drafted soon afterwards by a provisional assembly in Tehran and was eventually signed by the Shah on 23 August before being publicly announced on 9 September 1906. The new law laid out the voting franchise which included six social classes: high ranking clergies and religious scholars, noblemen and aristocrats, merchants, guildsmen; voters had to be over twenty-five years old and neither women nor those serving in the military had any voting rights.¹⁵² The eligible classes had to choose their own representatives, 62 selected from Tehran and the rest from the other provinces. In Azerbaijan 12 seats were allocated. It was decided that there should be no more than 200 parliamentary seats in total;¹⁵³ one of those seats would be taken by Taqizadeh.

Included in the requirements for elected members was that candidates had to be aged between 30 and 70 years old and literate in the Persian language.¹⁵⁴ According to Article Nine of the regulation, in every place where an election was to take place a committee had to be formed of members from all six eligible groups under the supervision of the governor to monitor the process of the election. Article Nineteen stated that the deputies of the provinces must come to Tehran as soon as possible and, since it would take a while before they arrived, the elected deputies from Tehran would hold the parliament.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² *Majles*, 1: 883.

¹⁵³ "Fasl-e Aval-e Qava'ed-e Entekhabat [The First Chapter of the Election Regulations]," in *Shahanshahi* [Royal], September 25, 1906.

¹⁵⁴ Among these conditions the one concerning familiarity with the Persian language could prevent many erudite Azerbaijanis who were not fluent in Persian from taking part although they might have been of great assistance to people of the province if they had taken up positions in parliament. Being more fluent in Persian could be one of the reasons that Taqizadeh was considered a more suitable candidate for the position.

¹⁵⁵ "Fasl-e Aval-e Qava'ed-e Entekhabat," in *Shahanshahi*, September 25, 1906.

Election proceedings had not been finalised but there was also fear that a delay in the parliament commencing its duties might encourage the Shah to change his mind and rescind the order. It was important for the national legitimacy of the parliament that the deputies of the provinces join it as quickly as possible. As was mentioned, although the Constitution law was signed by the Shah in Tehran, it was kept secret in Tabriz by the Crown Prince. It was only after the day of the Revolution in Tabriz that the Shah sent a telegram on 27 September 1906 to Tabriz and obliged the Crown Prince to begin the process of elections. Consequently, a provisional assembly was formed by the revolutionary people in Tabriz. Twenty people from the leaders of revolutionaries were chosen to start the process of elections together with the high-ranking clergy. Meanwhile some revolutionary leaders including Ali Monsieur (given this epithet due to his interest in the French Revolution), Rasoul Sadaqiani, Ali Davaforoush, Seyyed Hassan Sharifzadeh and Mirza Mohammad Tarbiat established a clandestine group called “Markaz-e Gheybi” [Communion Centre] and organised a group of Mojaheds (fighters).¹⁵⁶ At least two of the founders of this centre were very close to Taqizadeh. Sharifzadeh was a student of Taqizadeh and Tarbiat his best friend, companion and brother-in-law. Taqizadeh’s friends had great influence in Tabriz and they were in touch with him constantly during the time he was in Tehran.¹⁵⁷

After the regulations for these elections were sent to Tabriz, six people were chosen to supervise the election process. Mohammad Ali Mirza, the Crown Prince, also sent his representative to the assembly. The assembly began publishing its own newspaper titled “Anjoman” on 19 October 1906. The election went well and each class chose its own deputies.¹⁵⁸

The Tabriz Provisional Assembly (Anjoman) was the first in its kind in Iran and its importance grew so significantly that before long it had become the unofficial electoral power institute in Tabriz; it was so powerful that Mohammad Ali Mirza had no choice but to accept and respect its activities as well as its supervision of the government in

¹⁵⁶ Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Mashruteh-e Iran*, 1: 167.

¹⁵⁷ Mojtehed, 118.

¹⁵⁸ Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Mashruteh-e Iran*, 1: 174.

Azerbaijan.¹⁵⁹ Two competing groups were now governing in Tabriz; the official government and the Assembly. The Tabriz Assembly was significant because it allowed Taqizadeh and various other deputies of Tabriz to influence the decision making in the central parliament.

On 24 August 1908, the Russian Ambassador in Iran wrote about the situation he had encountered in Tabriz at the end of July 1907: "In practice, for a long period of time all power has been in the hands of the provincial assembly. This assembly is more influential than the other assemblies in Iran and all the Members of the Parliament are ready to obey its orders."¹⁶⁰

The Tabriz Assembly supervised the establishment of assemblies in the different towns of Azerbaijan, sending some propagandists to other towns of the province to help resolve any issues and familiarise people with the Constitution.

Later, this assembly established a branch and became the most important provincial assembly in Tehran. Taqizadeh would later become its leader. His importance steadily grew after strategically strengthening relationships with the Azerbaijani business community; as representative of the Tabriz Bazaar, the most powerful business centre in Iran which consequently influenced the Bazaar in Tehran as well, he was in a key position. Many Azerbaijani businessmen who resided in Tehran supported the Assembly and aided it financially,¹⁶¹ and it allowed Taqizadeh the opportunity to disseminate his ideas both within the Parliament and outside it during his time as a member of the first Parliament. In February 1908 the Azerbaijan Assembly had 2962 members.¹⁶² In the words of Mehdi Qoli

¹⁵⁹ M. S. Ivanov, *Enqelab-e Mashrutiyyat-e Iran* [Iranian Constitutional Revolution], trans. Azar Tabrizi (Tehran: Shabgir, 1978), 52-3.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Mojtehed, 119.

¹⁶² Ahmad Bashiri, trans., *Ketab-e Abi: Gozareshhay-e Mahramaneh-e Vezarat-e Omur-e Kharej-e Englis darbare-e Enqelab-e Mashruteh* [The Blue Book: Secret Reports of the English Foreign Ministry about the Constitutional Revolution], (Tehran: Nashr-e Now, 1984), 1: 165.

Khan Hedayat, at that time the centre of the nation was the Azerbaijan Assembly and Taqizadeh was its head.¹⁶³

2:11 Taqizadeh in Tehran

After spending a few days in Rasht Taqizadeh, whose only thought was visiting the newly established parliament as soon as possible, departed towards Tehran on the first possible means of transport, a post wagon, reaching Tehran on the evening of 28 October 1906.¹⁶⁴ This was a memorable moment in Taqizadeh's life:

The sight of Tehran on that day is still before my eyes. When the wagon reached the Tupkhaneh square, the cart-driver dropped me off and I was left alone there. I sat on the steps of the Shahi Bank for a while, like a lonely stranger, watching the people coming and going and the traffic of horse wagons. I was thinking for a place to spend the night.¹⁶⁵

On that day, by chance, Taqizadeh met his brother who had come from Tabriz earlier. He took Taqizadeh and Mirza Ali Mohammad Khan, who was travelling with him, to his house where they would later reside. The Parliament had opened just a few weeks earlier on 7 October. Taqizadeh's political life in Tehran began immediately; waking up the day after his arrival this young man of 29, dressed in a black turban and long cloak, immediately went out to locate his new political home. He writes: "I was so enthusiastic to find the Parliament. I had come from Tabriz for that very reason."¹⁶⁶

The Parliament, however, was far from the ideal image he had of a European like parliament. Seeing the piles of shoes at the door to the parliament he reflects that he had thought it was a mosque at first, but after taking his shoes off and entering the building he realised once he heard the heated discussions that he was in fact in the parliament. He watched and listened and enjoyed the bitter criticisms of the deputies. When the session

¹⁶³ Mehdi Qoli Mokhber al-Saltaneh Hedayat, *Gozarash-e Iran [Iran Report]*, ed., Mohammad Ali Soti (Tehran: Noqreh, 1984).

¹⁶⁴ Taqizadeh, "Khaterat-e Gozashteh [Memoirs of the Past]," in *Maqalat-e Taqizadeh*, 9: 282.

¹⁶⁵ Taqizadeh, "Khaterat-e Yek Hafteh-e Man [A Week of my Memoirs]," in *Maqalat-e Taqizadeh*, 5: 118.

¹⁶⁶ Taqizadeh, *Tufani*, 58.

was over at noon, he had to leave without his shoes which he could not find at the door where he had left them: "Although that day I remained barefoot, I was in fact so joyful that I could hardly stand on my feet. The sorrow of losing my shoes was nothing compared to the excitement and pleasure of visiting the Parliament."¹⁶⁷

During the first few visits to the Parliament Taqizadeh was only a spectator. Though he was not yet a Member of Parliament, he enjoyed witnessing and hearing the discussions. Impressing him in these sessions was Mirza Javad Khan S'ad al-Dowleh, a key character in the Parliament and a man who would become one of Taqizadeh's rivals.¹⁶⁸

Taqizadeh found out that he had been chosen as a deputy by telegram at the beginning of December. He had been elected by the merchants with 51 votes; an aspect that should be given further attention.¹⁶⁹ Since merchants travelled widely for trade, they tended to be more aware of what was happening outside Iran. They were more likely to have been impressed with the advancement and scientific achievements of Europeans and perhaps even the liberating movements in the Eastern countries. So, in comparison with the other five voting classes it was the merchants who were most supportive of a character like Taqizadeh whose education and travel experiences had given him a broader perspective, looking beyond the local setting, considering Europe as a role model of change and modernisation.

Ebrahim Safa'i, one of the critics of Taqizadeh, believes that at a time when elite education in Iran was for the most part limited to grammar, poetry and literature, Taqizadeh's brief studies in the socio-political situation of European countries showed itself to be noteworthy. His oratory skills were such that the businessmen of Tabriz felt

¹⁶⁷ Taqizadeh, "Khaterat-e Yek Hafteh-e Man", in *Maqalat-e Taqizadeh*, 5: 118.

¹⁶⁸ Mirza Javad Khan S'ad al-Dowleh was a Minister at Brussels, 1892-1902. Minister of Commerce, 1905. Exiled 1906 to Yazd, where he took refuge at the British Consulate. Returned to Tehran in November and took his seat as a Member of Parliament. See: R. M. Burrell, ed. *Iran Political Diaries, 1881 - 1965: 1906 - 1907*, (Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1997), 3: 119.

¹⁶⁹ Taqizadeh was elected both as the representative of the guilds and businessmen but he accepted the position of deputy of the business class. Mashallah Ajoudani, *Mashruteh-e Irani* [Constitution; Iranian Style], (Tehran: Akhtaran, 2003), 345.

confident he could be their spokesman in Tehran.¹⁷⁰ Taqizadeh's own conclusion as to why he had been elected suggests that he caught the attention of voters in Tabriz through his treaty *Tahqiq-e Ahval-e Kononi-e Iran ba Mohakemat-e Tarikhi* [Research on Current Affairs in Iran with Historical Trials]; this was published around the time of the election and had caught the attention of Constitutionalists in Tabriz.¹⁷¹ As mentioned in Chapter One, Mojtehedī compares this treatise to the Social Contract, Taqizadeh to Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution to the French Revolution.¹⁷²

The other deputies of Tabriz were elected at this time but since they had not yet departed for Tehran Taqizadeh was the first representative from Azerbaijan to attend the Parliament, and only the second one from the provinces outside of Tehran. Still only 29 at this time, it was only on account of the fact that his age was calculated with the lunar calendar that he had qualified to join. Furthermore, he looked young for his age; according to his own account, he describes himself as looking like an eighteen-year-old.¹⁷³ During his first days in the Parliament one of the influential Members of Parliament remarked caustically to an Azerbaijani Member of Parliament: "What kind of a province do you have? Didn't you find anyone better to send to the Parliament than this kid?"¹⁷⁴

Taqizadeh attended the Parliament as a deputy of Azerbaijan on 8 December and the other members congratulated him.¹⁷⁵ Carefully listening and choosing not to speak for the first seven sessions, he was the subject of rumours. At that time the deputies of Tehran were more respected than those from the provinces;¹⁷⁶ one such member, proud of coming from Tehran and with a feeling of superiority said to an Azerbaijani acquaintance; "Your deputy is a child and does not have a tongue".¹⁷⁷ Taqizadeh finally broke his silence on 22 December, orating his first speech which showcased his talent.

¹⁷⁰ Safa'i, 684.

¹⁷¹ Taqizadeh, "Kholasei az Sharh-e Hal-e Seyyed Hassan Taqizadeh az mian-e Owraq-e Chap Nashodeh [A Brief Biography of Hassan Taqizadeh from the Unpublished Papers]," in *Maqalat-e Taqizadeh*, 2: 262.

¹⁷² Mojtehedī, 31.

¹⁷³ Taqizadeh, *Tufani*, 62.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Proceedings of the Parliament, Session 10, 8 December 1906.

¹⁷⁶ Taqizadeh, "Khaterat-e Gozashteh," in *Maqalat-e Taqizadeh*, 9: 283.

¹⁷⁷ Taqizadeh, *Tufani*, 63.

2:12 Cultural Activities

Taqizadeh's career as a politician did not prevent him from pursuing his cultural interests. He established a branch of Tarbiat bookshop in Tehran and also wrote articles for newspapers such as *Neday-e Vatan* [Call of the Motherland]. An essay published in *Neday-e Vatan* titled "Melal-e Hayeyh va Melal-e Meyeteh" [Living and Dead Nations] reveals Taqizadeh's ideas from this time. In this essay Taqizadeh divided the nations of the world into two clear categories "living nations" and "dead nations", arguing that the distinction between the two was not in political independence or in military power but had its roots in the individual's national feeling which was moulded in the nature of individuals. He believed the existence of a nation was rooted in the independent individuality of each member of that nation and this feeling must be inherent and independent.¹⁷⁸ Ali Ansari has highlighted Taqizadeh's ideas, which he developed further later in his life, stressing that "imposed patriotism [nationalism] cannot take root".¹⁷⁹ So it can be seen that even at the early stages of his political career Taqizadeh had understood that to become modern does not solely mean modernisation and the establishment of modern institutions but rather that every individual must become conscious and eager for the essence of modernity.

¹⁷⁸ Hassan Taqizadeh, "Melal-e Hayeyh va Melal-e Meyeteh [Living and Dead Nations]," in *Maqalat-e Taqizadeh* [The Essays of Taqizadeh], ed., Iraj Afshar (Tehran: Shokofan, 1974), 4: 337-44.

¹⁷⁹ Ansari, *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran*, 49.

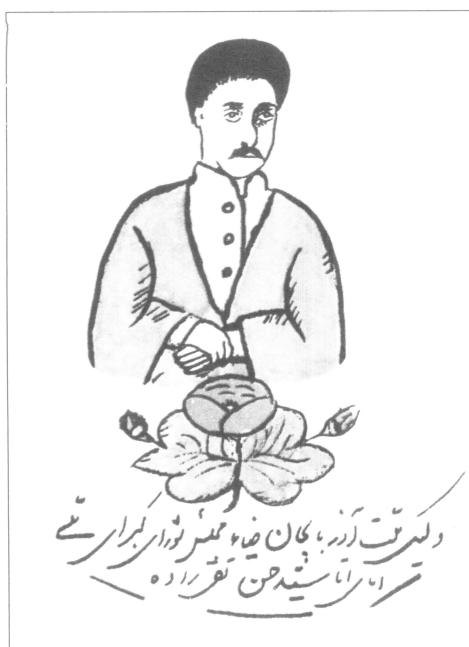


Figure 3: A drawing of Taqizadeh as a deputy of the First Parliament in a newly discovered manuscript. It reads: “The deputy of the nation of Azerbaijan, the light of the great national parliament.”¹⁸⁰

2:13 Taqizadeh’s First Parliamentary Speech

Taqizadeh’s first speech illuminates the intellectual foundations on which he was trying to build his political career at this time. In it he chose to highlight the importance of certain parliamentary regulations which were needed, and to emphasise how parliamentarians should now be acting according to the codified law. As he had mentioned in his letter to Taqiev as well as in his treaty, *Research on Current Affairs in Iran with Historical Trials*, the influence that the theories of Social Darwinism were having on him are clear; human history was driven, so he extols, by the forces of progress. As many in Europe believed, Taqizadeh saw this progressive element as a competitive drive not only emanating from individual struggles but also from collective national struggles. Deemed a seminal speech, Taqizadeh’s first address to Parliament was later published in pamphlet form with his photo gracing the front cover. The speech starts:

¹⁸⁰ Reza Kheyri Motlaq, ed., *Tarikh-e Yek Saleh Vaqaya’ Mashruteh-e Tabriz* [The History of One Year of the Constitution in Tabriz] (Tehran: Omid Saba, 2018), 307.

Our Parliament is very rudimentary and worse of all it does not strive toward progress. If we consider the progress and degradation of different governments and nations of the world and make some distinctions between those in the highest and lowest positions we can see that at the bottom end are nations such as Russia and the Ottoman Empire who don't have any organized constitution, moving up we come to governments with constitutions like Austria, Germany and England, above these we reach the French, Swiss and United States governments. As nations progress, the shortcomings become fewer and are often corrected. Imagine a government beyond these nations, where even these shortcomings are removed; this is the pinnacle of mankind's. However, when that pinnacle is turned on its head, that is where one would find our government....¹⁸¹

As Mojtehedī put it, this young speaker lived up to his writings (for example in *Research on Current Affairs*) in which he emphasised that the solution to all problems was to accept “Western civilisation”; in other words, that Iranians should strive to accept a constitution similar to that in Europe. The focus that Taqizadeh would have as future chief editor of *Kaveh* was also in evidence in this speech; this was a man fascinated by Europe, who held the performative elements of their parliamentary etiquette as important, suggesting that the members of Parliament must sit on chairs and deliver their speeches from behind a tribune. In other words, Iranian parliamentarians ought to alter the essence of themselves to become more fully “Western”. Nevertheless, it ought not be overlooked that Taqizadeh also attacked the aristocracy and nobility in this speech; this is a new aspect of a man who has been clearly influenced by the Russian social democrats and was advocating for the rights of the working and marginalised classes.¹⁸²

Taqizadeh believed, and orated in this first speech, that Western democratic practice needed to be accepted fully, in all its details and components; Iranians should not be selective when it came to this new form of government:

¹⁸¹ Proceedings of the First Parliament, Session 18, 22 December 1906.

¹⁸² Mojtehedī, 57.

I want to say, in the other parts of the world hundreds of years of effort have been put into enabling the invention of constitutional democracy. If we want to take any invented thing from its origin, we must take it with all its components and details. If we accept the clock as our way of determining the time but leave out one of its cogs it will not function and the purpose for which it is invented - which is determining the time - will not be fulfilled. In these cases, having nothing is better than having an incomplete thing.¹⁸³

Although it is Taqizadeh's name which is most often associated with these Western ideas, it is important to note that he was not the only one advocating such imitation. Adamiyat insists that Talebov also criticised Members of Parliament who did not want to accept these methods and quotes him directly:

Some deputies do not want to accept what is appropriate for the current situation and what guarantees the interests of the country. They ask for constitutional law but they do not accept that this also requires imitation of the Westerners. There is no one to ask them: but isn't this parliament itself a product from the West? From which language is the constitutional law translated? Are not all these things coming from the West? We were astray for a thousand years on account of ignorance, and if now we imitate the science what wrong doing does it bring to our ignorance?¹⁸⁴

However, while Talebov and others such as Malkam Khan had encouraged this imitation and advocated the acquisition of the codified law and political infrastructure of Western Europe, Taqizadeh was certainly the most strident in his insistence that Iranians should follow their lead in every aspect of governance, except perhaps for language.

This speech undoubtedly made Taqizadeh famous and he gradually became one of the most influential characters in the parliament; he was even recognised as the best speaker

¹⁸³ Proceedings of the Parliament, Session 18, 22 December 1906.

¹⁸⁴ Fereydoon Adamiyat, *Andishehay-e Talebov-e Tabrizi* [The Ideas of Talebov-e Tabrizi], (Tehran: Damavand, 1984), 58.

of the House.¹⁸⁵ In the notes which George P. Churchill made in a report detailing biographical notes concerning Persian Statesmen and notables, he writes about Taqizadeh:

During the First Parliament his speeches, and his alone among the babel of voices at Baharistan, were always sensible, judicious, and directed to the point at issue. He often called his fellow deputies to order for digressions or for pointless discussions on matters properly outside the scope of the duties of a Parliament. When early in 1907 the Cabinet Ministers were reluctantly forced to attend the House, he lectured them on their responsibility to Parliament and gradually brought the succeeding Cabinets to recognize this responsibility. His great ability and fearlessness is undoubted.¹⁸⁶

An eyewitness writes about Taqizadeh, giving some useful details about his appearance and outfit at that time:

I was greatly struck by the famous Tabriz member Taqizdda [Taqizadeh], who was sitting quite close to me on the tribune. He has won deserved fame by his fearless independence and his wonderful grasp of political affairs. There is something so sympathetic in his face, so attractive, that it escapes all definition. Imagine a man of barely twenty-five years of age, slightly built, just over the middle height, with a handsome, boyish face and eyes sparkling with cheerful animation, but dimmed at times, especially as he leaned forward to look at the crowd, by that expression which belongs to the dreamer beneath the man of action. He was dressed, as a Persian should be, in a light, bluish-grey 'aba (cloak), with a white and blue turban, the emblem of his birth (for he is a Sayyid [Seyyed]). His clothes were spotlessly clean, but there was nothing of the ' Firangi-mddb'[sic] (Europeanized Persian) about him. He has a cheerful face, a face which inspires confidence. If I am not mistaken, he is of those whose genius is

¹⁸⁵ Abdollah Mostofi, *Sharh-e Zendegi-e Man* [The Story of My Life], (Tehran: Zavvar, 1998), 250.

¹⁸⁶ George Percy Churchill, *Biographical notices of Persian statesmen and notables: September 1909*, (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1910), 567.

capable of inspiring great enthusiasms, great sacrifices, and whose influence leaves a lasting impression on the history of nations. What was he doing, this boy of twenty-five, during the long, bitter years of humiliating despotism? ¹⁸⁷

This was a turning point in Taqizadeh's political life; something that he himself admits: "I became gradually famous after I gave my first talk. My influence increased outside the Parliament. Although people did not know me by sight, they read in the newspapers that Taqizadeh had said this and that."¹⁸⁸ Hassan E'zam al-Saltaneh's notes about the first days of Taqizadeh in the Parliament testify to the fact that his young age and the fact that he was from the provinces was not looked upon favorably and he was even initially mocked. However, he goes on to describe how Taqizadeh's presence was a catalyst for change:

A young man from Tabriz entered the National Assembly. The speaker asked: "Boy, what is your name?" At this point the Members of Parliament began laughing. The young man who was addressed by the Speaker of the Parliament while his face coloured, stuttering in a mix of Persian and Turkish replied: "My name...My name is Seyyed Hassan!" The members laughed again at the young man with his boyish demeanor who introduced himself as the representative of the people of Tabriz. That day and the next coming days the presence of the young representative of Tabriz was an object of laughing and ridicule for the elder Members of the Parliament. Furthermore, there was a protest regarding his age which came to the point that young Hassan's letter of credit was about to be rejected. But the Azerbaijanis made serious efforts which managed on the whole to fix the problem and Seyyed Hassan was settled in the special place (platform) of the Parliamentary Members. One day shortly after this he asked for permission from the Speaker of the Parliament to give a speech and mounted

¹⁸⁷ Edward G. Browne, *The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910). It should be noted that Taqizadeh was about thirty at that time but most probably because of his youthful appearance the narrator thought he was twenty-five.

¹⁸⁸ Taqizadeh, *Tufani*, 64.

the rostrum. He talked with such a passion and enthusiasm that all the other members were surprised and shouted bravo which reverberated around the house. That day was one of the most enthusiastic and exciting days of the Parliament since all the freedom fighters who were referred to as revolutionaries meaning they were hardliners or what might be called these days "leftists" had gathered in the Parliament and were chanting in support of the representative of Tabriz. The same day the Parliament was overwhelmed and Seyyed Hassan's letter of credit was accepted. I worked actively to ensure his letter of credit was accepted. Before him S'ad al-Dowleh had been the pivotal one who had been able to achieve exactly what he wanted in the Parliament. But it soon became that people forgot S'ad al-Dowleh and instead it was the speeches of the young Azerbaijani man that became the topic of conversation in gatherings. Before the Constitutional Revolution nobody had heard of him. His father was also not well known in the field of politics.¹⁸⁹

2:14 The First Parliament (Majles)

The establishment of a national parliament created the foundations of a modern government in Iran which was based on a state-nation structure. The concept of Iran as having a strong geographical position, a national language, concentrated economical and judicial systems with a Constitution transformed to socio-political concepts was completely different to what it had been in the past.¹⁹⁰ The First Parliament (7 October 1906 to 23 June 1908) as Taqizadeh puts it, was not only the national parliament but the mother of the Iranian Constitution. Taqizadeh described the First Parliament as one of the greatest, largest and most enthusiastic national parliaments in Iran. This parliament, besides passing laws, had numerous other tasks and had to institutionalise the Constitution in Iran. It had to get rid of all the old political administration and many other social orders and substitute something new in its place. From the beginning, The First Parliament was

¹⁸⁹ Hassan E'zam Qodsi, *Khaterat-e Man ya Roshan Shodan-e Tarikh-e Sad Saleh* [My Memoirs of and Elucidations on the Hundred Years' History], (Tehran: Aboureyhan, 1970), 2: 1182-3.

¹⁹⁰ Ali Asghar Haqdar, *Majles-e Aval va Nahadhay-e Mashrutiyyat* [The First Parliament and the Constitutional Establishments], (Tehran: Mehr Namag, 2004), 27-8.

determined to prove itself to the government and acquire its necessary rights and put much energy into trying to achieve this. The government, however, with the utmost indifference wanted only to assign this Parliament the same privileges as a courthouse. Nevertheless, the strong voice of the deputies forced the government to accept the Parliament and the first part of the Constitution consisting of 51 articles was signed by the dying Shah and the Crown Prince on 30 December 1906. The Crown Prince had come to Tehran when the Shah died on 9 January 1907. There was strong suspicion about the new Shah and an atmosphere of anxiety and trepidation in the air. The deputies of Tehran attended the parliament followed gradually by the deputies of the provinces and thus the parliament began to grow in power. Taqizadeh believed strongly that the ministers should be accountable to the parliament and that the formation of a Western-like cabinet was one of Parliament's most pressing tasks. Mohammad Ali Shah who had shown his contempt towards the Parliament by not inviting its members to his coronation and was avoiding assigning more power to the Parliament, did not want the ministers to be beholden to the Parliament. He went to great lengths to make sure that this did not happen and initially was successful. Kasravi writes: "Mohammad Ali Mirza had put his plan into practice masterfully and the courtiers considered themselves victorious. But it was the sudden movement of Tabriz which changed things and neutralised the plot."¹⁹¹ This was achieved after much struggle following an ultimatum given by the Parliament to the government in January 1906 in which Taqizadeh played a leading role. For someone like Taqizadeh who strongly advocated for a Western-like parliament it was unacceptable that the ministers would only be responsible to the Shah. Taqizadeh, with this in mind, wrote a letter to his intimate friend Mirza Mohammad Ali Khan Tarbiat in Tabriz explaining that the ministers did not respect the parliament and did not come to the parliament to be questioned. On 5 February 1907 this letter was read in the provisional assembly and caused uproar in Tabriz, especially among people who were hostile towards Mohammad Ali Mirza. The result was that the Shah accepted the Constitution and its stipulations such as establishing a committee to pass the Constitution law. Later this culminated in a dispute between people who were advocating for *Mashrue'h* or a political system based on Islamic law and those who were in favour of a Western-like constitution. According to Taqizadeh the Parliament was

¹⁹¹ Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Mashruteh-e Iran*, 1: 209.

insistent on establishing all the articles of the Constitution exactly as it was in the West.¹⁹² Eventually, although the Shah was advocating Mashru‘eh, under pressure he had to agree with Mashruteh or a more Western-style constitutional system. But, as will be evident later, whilst preparing the supplements to the Constitutional law, it became clear that there were potential conflicts when Parliament sought to pass laws that were not seen as conforming to the stipulations of Islamic laws.

In addition, the First Parliament specified a fixed budget for the government for the first time and made a distinction between the expenses of the Shah and those of the government.¹⁹³ Taqizadeh was a member of the Budget Committee of the Parliament.¹⁹⁴ Dismissing and sending the local rulers and tribal leaders into exile in different provinces was another achievement of the First Parliament.¹⁹⁵

The speakers of the First Parliament were: Moretza Qoli Khan Sani‘ al-Dowleh from 8 October 1906 until 6 September 1907; Mahmoud Khan Ehtesham al-Saltaneh from 9 September to 29 March 1908 and Mirza Esma‘il Khan Momtaz al Dowleh from 4 April 1908 until the end of the First Parliament on 23 June 1908.¹⁹⁶

Apart from the supplementary law of the Constitution which will be discussed separately the most important laws passed in the First Parliament were as follows:

1. The regulations of guild elections.
2. The regulation of elections.
3. The internal regulation of the Parliament.
4. The law for the provincial assemblies.
5. The municipality laws.
6. The convention for establishing provinces.

¹⁹² Taqizadeh, *Tufani*, 64.

¹⁹³ Mojtehed, 48.

¹⁹⁴ Mirza Ebrahim Khan Kalantari Baghmisheh, *Ruznameh-e Khaterat-e Sharf al-Dowleh* [Diary of Sharf al-Dowleh], ed., Yahya Zaka (Tehran: Fekr-e Ruz, 1998), 104.

¹⁹⁵ *Kaveh*, February 15, 1918.

¹⁹⁶ Adamiyat, *Ideolozhi*, 370.

7. The press laws.
8. The regulations for duties.

In January 1908, according to Charles Marling, the British Minister in Tehran, the First Parliament in fact was divided into three groups. One was the group of the chairman (Ehtesham al-Dowleh) with 62 members which held the majority, the second was Seyyed Abdollah's with fewer members than the first and the third was Taqizadeh's group with 25 members.¹⁹⁷

Adamiyat provided a more nuanced division. He divided the members into four groups based on their political policies: traditionalists, moderates, progressives, and the more radical elements; extremists or revolutionaries. He believed the traditionalists considered that the Constitution invaded their traditional heritage. This group consisted mainly of clergymen and was in the majority. The moderates generally consisted of high-ranking clergy (mojtahed), businessmen and members of the guilds. This group supported the progressives on most occasions. According to Adamiyat, the progressives and radical elements were generally educated and intellectual.¹⁹⁸

In the First Parliament the minorities, Armenians, Jews and Zoroastrians, had the right to send their deputies to the Parliament. But only Zoroastrians used this right, sending one deputy, Arbab Jamshid, to the Parliament. The Armenians and Jews did not send any direct members and made the high-ranking Muslim clergies of the Parliament, Behbahani and Tabatabaei as their deputy. In the later Parliaments all three main minorities had members in the Parliament and Armenians were allowed two members.¹⁹⁹

This First Parliament was nothing like a European one in terms of the way parliamentary business was carried out. In the beginning the Parliament was chaotic and with no set

¹⁹⁷ Marling to Sir Edward Grey, Tehran 30 January 1908, in *Persia No. 1 (1909) Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Persia: December 1906 to November 1908* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1909), 100.

¹⁹⁸ Adamiyat, *Ideolozhi*, 362.

¹⁹⁹ Mahmoud Setayesh, ed., "Khaterat-e Hassan Taqizadeh" in *Mashrutiyyat-e Iran* [The Iranian Constitution], (Tehran: Sales, 2006), 71.

procedures and most of its member had no knowledge of parliamentary regulations.²⁰⁰ At that time the deputies used to sit on the ground, the first row of the spectators used to squat and this had even been reflected in European newspapers and ridiculed by some. In a letter to Taqizadeh, Aboul Ghafar Tabrizi, the First Secretary of the Iranian legation in London, writes that this situation in the Parliament decreased the rank and value of the Iranian parliament as he believed that respect from foreigners was one of the fundamentals necessary for progress in national and state affairs.²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ Adamiyat, *Ideolozhi*, 369.

²⁰¹ *Nameh-hay-e Mashrutiyyat va Mohajerat*, ed., Afshar, 30.

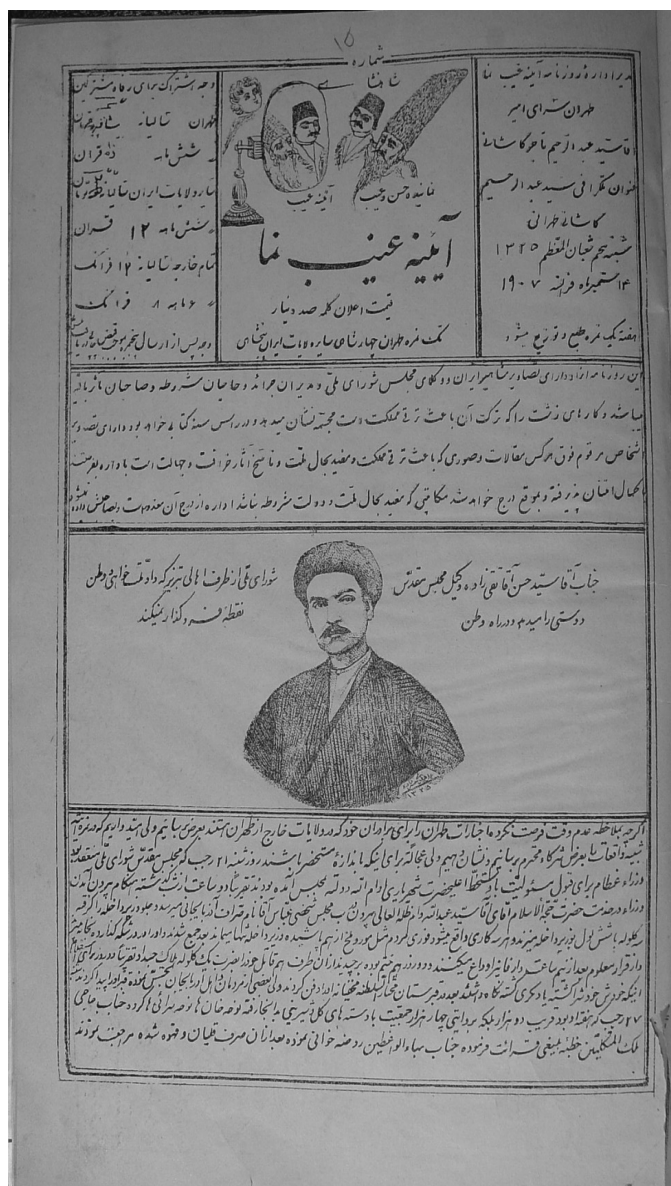


Figure 4: Taqizadeh depicted on the first page of the *Ayeneh-e Gheyb Nama* [Mirror to the Unseen] newspaper (September 14, 1907).

2:15 Taqizadeh and Amin al-Soltan (Atabak-e Azam)

Amin al-Soltan's return to the political arena of Iran marks a turning point in the constitutional history of Iran. He was an elderly and conservative politician but became Prime Minister in a period of revolutionary fervour within the new parliament; members such as Taqizadeh were eager to do things in a new way, the appointment of Amin al-Soltan contrasted significantly with the direction in which certain members of parliament wanted the government to go, and this possibly led to a strengthening of their resolve to create change. As the spearhead of this movement Taqizadeh found himself in face-to-face opposition with Amin al-Soltan. This position and the consequences it had on Taqizadeh's political life are important and should be analysed in depth.

Amin al-Soltan was one of the most outstanding statesmen of the Qajar period.²⁰² He had become Prime Minister under both Naser al-Din Shah and Mozaffar al-Din Shah in the past and by early 1907, as the opposition groups to the national government were trying to oust Moshir al-Dowleh, the incumbent Prime Minister, the supporters of Amin al-Soltan, among them certain influential Members of Parliament like Seyyed Abdollah Behbahani, were manoeuvring him into position to once again take over.

Under the Naser al-Din Shah reign (1848–1896), Amin al-Soltan had been Prime Minister during the height of Russo-British rivalry in Iran (1885-1896). It was during his tenure that several important concessions were granted to Britain: the opening of the Karun river to navigation, the launching in September 1889 of the British-owned Imperial Bank of Persia. The most important among these was the granting of a fifty-year monopoly on the production, sale and export of Iran's entire tobacco crop to a British citizen in March 1890. This led to the first successful uprising of the people against Qajar rule.²⁰³

During his second tenure (1898-1903), under Mozaffar al-Din Shah, Amin al-Soltan had turned to Russia to obtain a loan (25.5 million Rubles) which was used mainly to finance the Shah's trip to Europe. The repayment of the loan was guaranteed by the income of all

²⁰² "Atabak-e A'zam, Amin-al-Soltan," in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online edition, 2013, available online: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/atabak-e-azam> (accessed 29 November, 2013).

²⁰³ Ibid.

Iranian customs except those in the south of the country. “The British strongly protested against the Russian loan and there was a considerable religious and popular discontent”.²⁰⁴ In May 1901, with the help of Amin al-Soltan (who now had the title of Atabak-e Azam), a British citizen named William Knox D’Arcy acquired a sixty-year oil concession. In November, despite the increasing pressure of the opponents, Atabak signed a Russo-Persian convention for customs and commerce which favoured Russian trade in Iran. He signed for another big Russian loan (10 million Rubles) in April the following year and then accompanied the Shah during his second European tour. “Despite British protests, a tariff agreement with Russia signed in December 1902 added to the popular and other opponents’ excitement.”²⁰⁵ Atabak had eventually been forced to resign in September 1903 due to the increasing riots and unrest mainly in Tehran and Tabriz and because of the opposition of the high-ranking clergies in Najaf.²⁰⁶ Following his resignation Atabak had decided to go to Mecca. He first travelled to Russia and from there to China, Japan and after that to Mecca. He eventually ended up residing in Europe. It was this trip that some believed had changed Atabak’s political outlook.²⁰⁷

Mohammad Ali Shah was convinced that an experienced man like Atabak could assist him in getting rid of the Parliament, which is why he invited him back to Iran to become Prime Minister. As Kasravi writes, Atabak’s return to Iran opened a new chapter in the history of the Constitution in Iran:

Despite his seemingly positive attitude, Atabak was malevolent and hostile. Despite all his promises and oaths, he wanted nothing more than to get rid of the Constitution. Mohammad Ali Mirza and his teachers had noticed his cleverness and experience and they had called him to come to Iran to try to extinguish the institution of the movement leading to revolt.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ For more about this trip see: Hedayat, *Gozaresh-e Iran*, 159-63.

²⁰⁸ Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Mashruteh-e Iran*, 1: 281.

However, not everyone thought like Kasravi and there is diversity in opinion about the intention of Atabak after his return to Iran. Some people like Mehdi Qoli Hedayat believed the attitude of Atabak had changed after his last trip and he was not given sufficient opportunity to prove himself.²⁰⁹ Talebov went further, calling Atabak “a hand blessed by God”. He believed Atabak was on the side of the people rather than the Shah.²¹⁰ Malkam was also among those who believed that Atabak had changed; “Amin al-Soltan is not the person he used to be. With the experience that he now brings, Iran’s future happiness is ensured and should be celebrated.”²¹¹ Fereydoon Adamiyat also posits extensive arguments about Atabak’s change of policy and his intentions to co-operate with the Parliament and respect the Constitution.²¹² Despite this, the recalling of Atabak to Iran upset the Constitutionalists.²¹³ Taqizadeh was among the most furious opponents of his calling him “Kha‘en al-Soltan” (the Kings’s traitor). To fully appreciate the strength of Taqizadeh’s disapproval of this man it is worth quoting him at length:

How can the offspring of the mother country witness someone who has sold the rights of their country return to the bosom of that kind mother? Someone who has increased the burden of the government and brought forward its extinction by 50 years through massive loans. Someone who has given away the chastity of the motherland to unprincipled opponents, someone who has deprived the children who were raised in that mother’s bosom of their beloved one and thrown them to the nearby wolves, someone who has made the country unofficially the protectorate of foreign countries by the means of secret documents and destructive concessions which are still covered under the foreign ministry’s curtain of corruption. Someone who is the origin of all the miseries of this unlucky land. Yes! I claim that the treachery of Mirza Ali Asghar [Atabak]

²⁰⁹ Hedayat, 209.

²¹⁰ Talebov to Mirza Fazl Ali Aqa, 4 May 1907, in *Bohran-e Demokrasi dar Majles-e Aval* [The Crisis of Democracy in the First Parliament], ed. Gholam Hossein Mirza Saleh (Tehran: Negah-e Mo‘aser, 2005), 72-7.

²¹¹ Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Mashruteh-e Iran*, 1: 252.

²¹² Adamiyat, *Ideolozhi*, 149-201.

²¹³ Mostofi, 172.

carried out against this unfortunate beloved helpless country exceeds a one hundred volume encyclopaedia....²¹⁴

Despite all the opposition, Atabak accepted the Shah's proposal and set off for Iran travelling through Baku where he was saved from assassination by the revolutionaries there only on account of misidentification. Boarding a Russian warship, he reached Anzali on 19 April 1907 and had to face more opposition, organised this time by the Mojaheds who were waiting for him in order to block his arrival and succeeded in forcing him back onto the ship. It was an incident that had to be discussed urgently in the Parliament. Taqizadeh, whilst not as angry as he had been about Atabak, vehemently opposed his return to Iran whilst others in Parliament believed he should be welcomed back. Sharf al-Dowleh, a deputy of Azerbaijan in the Parliament, writes in his diaries that only Taqizadeh and one other member voted against the arrival of Atabak.²¹⁵ He even mentions that the rest of the Parliament strongly criticised Taqizadeh.²¹⁶ Finally, the Parliament decided to reply to the Rasht assembly which had requested Tehran's approval for Atabak to disembark.²¹⁷ When Atabak finally arrived in Tehran and introduced his cabinet to the Parliament on 8 May 1907, he made a speech promising to be loyal to the Constitution and co-operative with the Parliament. The Constitutionalists in other towns, especially in Tabriz, remained suspicious of him and his motives.²¹⁸

Kasravi considered Atabak's return a turning point in the history of the Constitution in Iran. The energy and enthusiasm of the Constitutional Movement had decreased over time and a diversity of opinions was emerging within it. Furthermore, the clergy and the rich who had been in favour of change had become less sympathetic. It could be argued that it is from this point that Taqizadeh's popularity began to wane, a decline which turned into a dramatic fall after he was accused of Atabak's death.

²¹⁴ Hassan Taqizadeh, "Yaddasht-hay-e Chap Nashodeh [The Unpublished Notes]," in *Oraq-e Tazeh Yab-e Mashrutiyat*, ed., Afshar, 69.

²¹⁵ The other deputy was Haji Mirza Hassan.

²¹⁶ Kalantari Baghmishah, *Ruznameh-e Khaterat-e Sharf al-Dowleh*, 87.

²¹⁷ Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Mashruteh-e Iran*, 1: 255.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 258.

There is little doubt that Taqizadeh retained much power and influence among the revolutionaries in Tabriz and he is the only one to whom the Mojaheds in Tabriz listened.²¹⁹ However, from this point he began to face heavy criticism. Two days after Atabak's arrival to Iran, Nezam al-Eslam writes to his father Mirza Fazl Ali, a deputy based in Tehran, about the happenings in Tabriz: "the ulama and members of the elite are not very pleased with Taqizadeh and his followers. They have lost their confidence in him. They say that these people have no religion and they are always riotous."²²⁰

It was only nine months since the Constitution had been signed. It is clear that any consensus which had been achieved was falling apart; the relationship between parliament, Atabak and Taqizadeh was becoming increasingly difficult and gaps were widening between the various groups in the Parliament. As Dolatabadi wrote:

Some groups in the Parliament and among them the group of Aqa Seyyed Abdollah Behbahani which is the most powerful one, support Amin al-Soltan because of money, personal bonds or just for the sake of following the others. After only some days the majority of the Parliament is with Amin al-Soltan who has a close acquaintance with Aqa Seyyed Abdolla, Hajis and clergies and has control of the Parliament in the palm of his hand. There were only a few people in the Parliament who were against Amin al-Soltan's return and they are still against him. Amin al-Soltan is unable to get their approval by any means. These people have formed a small group called the minority in opposition and they are standing against the large majority of the Parliament. Among them is Aqa Seyyed Hassan Taqizadeh, the deputy of Azerbaijan, a young man of around thirty years old. He is knowledgeable about current affairs and relatively aware of the situation in the world. Since this group are known as patriots and do not have any private motive, the Constitutionals are supporting them. But as the influence of Amin al-

²¹⁹ Naqi Azar Moqaddam, ed. *Vaqay'-e Mashrutiyyat: Be Ravayat-e Nameh-hay-e Seyyed Reza be Haj Mirza Aqa Farshi* [Events around the Constitution: According to Correspondence of Seyyed Reza to Haj Mirza Aqa Farshi], (Tabriz: Yaran, 2007), 348.

²²⁰ Nezam al-Eslam to Mirza Fazl Ali Aqa, 21 April 1907, in Mirza Saleh, 84-5.

Soltan increases, the voice of this group goes increasingly unheard. It has reached the point where they do not let Taqizadeh nor his friends speak in the Parliament.²²¹

Atabak who believed that the so called “minority group” had organised the attack against him while he was returning to Iran tried to oust Taqizadeh from the Parliament but he was unable to succeed.²²² In reports sent from Tehran to Tabriz the Parliament was described as chaotic with most deputies accepting bribes; Taqizadeh was the only one among all Tabriz deputies who resisted whilst the rest co-operated with the government.²²³ According to Cecil Spring Rice, the majority of the Parliament stood with Atabak; public opinion, however, considered that Parliament’s support of Atabak was part of a conspiracy.²²⁴

It is unlikely that Taqizadeh was seeking personal enrichment; Ehtesham al-Saltaneh one of the chairmen of the First Parliament writes that Taqizadeh was patriotic, young and full of fire. He sought fame without any limits but not on account of the money.²²⁵ The group of Azerbaijani deputies, to which Taqizadeh belonged, are described by Ehtesham al-Saltaneh as opposing everything with fiery speeches, wanting to eradicate the routine regulations and principles without thought as to what might replace them.

Whilst Atabak was alive the revolutionaries who were in the minority were unable to make any changes; forced instead to be active outside the Parliament. They put the government under pressure by means of the assemblies, riots and newspapers which all gradually came to focus on Atabak. This would lead first to demands for his resignation and eventually his assassination.²²⁶

²²¹ Yahya Dolatabadi, *Hayat-e Yahya* [The Life of Yahya] (Tehran: Attar, 1982), 2: 125-6.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Hedayat, 209.

²²⁴ Sir Cecil Spring Rice to Sir Edward Grey, Qolhak, 13 September 1907, in *Ketab-e Abi*, 78.

²²⁵ Mohammad Mehdi Mousavi, ed., *Khaterat-e Ehtesham al-Saltaneh*, (Tehran: Zavvar, 1986), 595.

²²⁶ Mansoureh Ettehadiieh, *Peydayesh va Tahavol-e Ahzab-e Siyasi-e Mashrutiyyat: Doreh-e Aval va Dovvom-e Majles-e Shoraey-e Melli* [The Birth and Development of the Constitutional Political Parties: First and Second Parliaments], (Tehran: Gostareh, 1982), 130.

Before going into the issue of Atabak's death, another happening in the Parliament needs to be considered. At this time one of the most important issues facing Parliament was the preparation of the Supplementary Law of the Constitution with which Taqizadeh's name is linked.

Although the Constitution law signed by Mozaffar al-Din Shah had resulted in the opening of the Parliament, it had not made clear many issues like the jurisdictions and duties of the Parliament, the Shah or the ministers. The assembly in Tabriz was also critical of the Constitution law and sought for additional laws to be added. A committee was formed in the Parliament to prepare the Supplementary Law which Taqizadeh was chosen to be a member. Taqizadeh soon became a distinguished member of the committee, defending its content in front of the majority of the Iranian clergies.²²⁷ The Parliament spent six months preparing the Supplementary Law of the Constitution.²²⁸ Article eight of the Supplementary Law which specified the rights of different minorities was controversial. According to this article all the people of Iran were equal in the eyes of the law regardless of their religion. This article provided the pretext for attacking the Parliament. The clergy in the name of Sharia law began to attack the Parliament with Sheikh Fazl al-Allah Nuri the prominent clergyman in Tehran as the leader of this opposition force outside the Parliament. The passing of this law was a strong warning sign to the clergy that the new political system would restrict their power.

2:16 The Assassination of Atabak

On 31 August 1907 Atabak attended Parliament and read out a letter from the Shah in which he had promised that he would sign the Supplementary Law of the Constitution,²²⁹ and that he would assist the Government and the Parliament in their activities.²³⁰ Kasravi, however, finds this hard to believe, and is more inclined to think that this was a ruse by Atabak to enable him to achieve his own ambitions. In any event there was no opportunity for these ambitions to be realised for as Atabak left the Parliament after reading out this

²²⁷ Sir Cecil Spring Rice to Sir Edward Grey, Qolhak, 18 June 1907, in *Ketab-e Abi*, 49.

²²⁸ Hedayat, 200.

²²⁹ *Majles*, August 26, 1907, no. 167.

²³⁰ *Iran Political Diaries*, 3: 119.

letter he was shot by a member of a radical group by the name of Abbas Aqa Saraf of Tabriz who then turned the gun on himself.

The death of Atabak is still an issue of dispute among historians. Some believe that it was Mohammad Ali Shah who had ordered his death, fearing that Atabak had become too close to the Parliament. Mehdi Qoli Hedayat, a close friend of Atabak, believed that this was the case, and that the Shah had hired a gunman to kill him. More recent historians like Keddie, however, think there is persuasive evidence to show that the Shah was also planning Atabak's assassination and possibly even penetrated the assassin's group.²³¹ Another view is presented by Kasravi and many others who considered Heydar Khan Amoqli to be responsible for planning the assassination; crucially, according to Kasravi's account, Taqizadeh was also informed.²³² In addition to this he goes as far as accusing the British of having a part in this assassination since Atabak was considered to have been a puppet of the Russian authorities. Kasravi even states that Taqizadeh had most likely informed them about the plan.²³³

These activities were always denied by Taqizadeh, but he does write that he thought the Shah was also incapable of ordering such an act; according to Taqizadeh it was most likely to have been carried out by Heydar Khan.²³⁴

Suspicion arose around Taqizadeh's involvement in the assassination after a note was discovered in the pocket of Abbas Aqa. In this letter the murderer identified himself as a Fada'i [devotee] member of the Anjoman [assembly]. Connections were made with the Azerbaijani assembly and assumptions drawn that Taqizadeh, being a member of this assembly, belonged to a secret branch of it. It was he who had ordered the death of Atabak, they claimed.

²³¹ Keddie, 69.

²³² Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Mashruteh-e Iran*, 1: 448.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Taqizadeh, "Darbareh-e Qatl-e Atabak [About Atabak's Death]" in *Maqalat-e Taqizadeh*, 2: 209-214.

This theory has remained strong; 58 years after the death of Atabak, Javad Sheikh al-Eslami wrote an article based on the reports of the British embassy in Tehran and other documents in an effort to solve the enigma. He implied in his article that he too believed that it was highly likely that Taqizadeh knew about the plan.²³⁵ Taqizadeh's response to this article is worth considering since it was the last time that he really talked about the incident, having completely omitted it from his own autobiography. In answer to these conclusions, he wrote that he had no idea about this plan and furthermore that the Assembly which Sheikh al-Eslami was referring to had no terrorist agenda and had not planned the assassination.²³⁶ It is a very consciously written response, and it is clear that Taqizadeh was extremely reluctant to discuss the incident. According to Mashallah Ajoudani, this view of the assembly is simply untrue. Contrary to Taqizadeh's word some members had revolutionary and terrorist ideas. His attempt to exempt this assembly from such intentions was, he argued, a desperate way for Taqizadeh to demonstrate his innocence.²³⁷

Mansoureh Ettehadieh has written that, "The death of Atabak was an influential phase for the freedom-seekers. When Atabak was in power these revolutionaries were generally weak but after his death the situation changed. Taqizadeh and his group became powerful and even some of the supporters of Atabak joined them, among them Seyyed Abdollah Behbahani."²³⁸

The death of Atabak could have had serious consequences for Taqizadeh's future political career yet he also represented a threat to the progress that Taqizadeh was in pursuit of.²³⁹ Whether Taqizadeh was involved in the murder or not, it is unlikely that he was terribly upset by the death of this politician. The Shah, on the other hand, hoped perhaps to use the assassination as a pretext to suppress the revolutionaries. In fact, it can be seen that this incident only served to increase these revolutionaries' strength and boldness.²⁴⁰

²³⁵ Javad Sheikh al-Eslami, "Majeray-e Qatl-e Atabak [The Story of Atabak's Death]" in *Qatl-e Atabak va Shanzdah Maqaleh-e Tahqiqi-e Digar* [The Death of Atabak and Sixteen other Investigative Articles] (Tehran: Keyhan, 1987), 3-18.

²³⁶ Taqizadeh, "Darbareh-e Qatl-e Atabak," in *Maqalat-e Taqizadeh*, 2: 209-214.

²³⁷ Ajoudani, *Mashruteh-e Irani*, 345.

²³⁸ Ettehadieh, *Paydayesh va Tahavol-e Ahzab-e Siyasi-e Mashrutiyyat*, 131.

²³⁹ Ajoudani, *Mashruteh-e Irani*, 345.

²⁴⁰ Keddie, 69.

2:17 The Event of Tupkhaneh Square

One of the most significant events which happened during the time of the First Parliament was the incident of Tupkhaneh square. Taqizadeh had a crucial role in resolving this incident. Mohammad Ali Shah who wanted to get rid of the Parliament and regain the kind of power he had inherited from his father, organised groups of people to attack the Parliament. Historians such as Kasravi, Malekzadeh and Browne described these groups as; “hired hooligans”, “gamblers”, “paid ruffians”²⁴¹ although Abrahamian reframes them as people who had more likely come from “the lower classes” and who had not achieved any rights in the elections, the conservative clergies, or certain rich people who were afraid they would lose their positions in the reforms. He writes: “Three elements can be identified in the royalist demonstrations: aristocrats, merchants, craftsmen and unskilled labourers tied to the bazaar economy; the conservative ‘ulama’ and their theology students; and, at times, the “lower classes.”²⁴²

In a moment of unity these groups made an attempt to attack the Parliament; an attack that Taqizadeh said was unsuccessful because it had not been well enough thought through.²⁴³ In response to the threats the supporters of Parliament, rallied by Taqizadeh’s rousing speeches, had gathered in front of the building in order to physically defend it. Taqizadeh writes in his autobiography:

All of a sudden, we noticed a big confused noise like thousands of people were coming. We became very, very scared. This crowd came closer and reached the Parliament. They came and said “no they are people who want to support the Parliament”. It was an extraordinary thing. Those inside the Parliament became very happy.²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ Ervand Abrahamian, “The Crowd in the Persian Revolution.” *Iranian Studies* 2, no. 4, 128-150.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Taqizadeh, *Tufani*, 67.

²⁴⁴ Taqizadeh, *Tufani*, 68.

To make peace between the Parliament and the Shah, Medi Qoli Hedayat who was acting as a mediator suggested the Shah write two letters to reassure both parties gathered in the Parliament and people in the Square that the Shah would maintain order and to demand that the crowds disperse. He received the letter and went to the Parliament. Taqizadeh took the issue to the War Commission of the Parliament and they agreed to end the dispute. Taqizadeh, Seyyed Abdollah and Ehtesham al-Saltaneh went to the mosque where Taqizadeh talked to people. Hedayat writes, "With all honesty Taqizadeh made an eloquent speech and better than I had expected. The people dispersed and the deputies also went home". This unsuccessful attack had unnerved the Constitutionalists and in compensation they launched a bomb at the Shah's carriage.²⁴⁵

After the escalation of the dispute between the Shah and the Parliament, the Shah asked for four people to leave Tehran; one of them was Taqizadeh. It is alleged that he sent a message to Taqizadeh, advising him to go to Khorasan, but Taqizadeh refused.²⁴⁶ It was probably at this time that Mohammad Ali Shah suggested that Taqizadeh marry a high-ranking princess, accept some villages from the private property of the Shah as a wedding present and go to Mashad to take up the directorship of the holy shrine there. Mojtchedi writes that Taqizadeh rejected this offer although he did not have that much money and was living on only limited income from his brother's small bookshop in Tehran.²⁴⁷

2:18 Mohammad Ali Shah's Coup d'état and the End of the First Parliament

When the news of what had happened in Tupkhaneh Square reached the other provinces and cities, the Constitutionalists started to react by sending supportive telegrams to Tehran. The Tabriz Assembly showed a strong disapproval and announced that Mohammad Ali Shah should no longer be King as he had broken his oath of loyalty to the Parliament. Kasravi concludes that this had been a wise move as soon after other city assemblies followed suit, sending telegrams to the Shah himself calling for his dismissal.²⁴⁸ In Tabriz, meanwhile, they upped the stakes by threatening to secede Azerbaijan province if the

²⁴⁵ Mostufi, 248.

²⁴⁶ Hedayat, *Khaterat*, 213.

²⁴⁷ Mojtchedi, *Taqizadeh*, 114-5.

²⁴⁸ Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Mashruteh-e Iran*, 2: 518

Constitution was harmed in any way.²⁴⁹ As has been detailed, Taqizadeh played an important role in this process; he was constantly in touch with Tabriz, sending and receiving telegrams. Under these growing pressures the Shah finally agreed to make peace with the Parliament, sending a Koran sealed with an oath that he would respect the Constitution and co-operate with the Parliament.

However, criticism of the Shah continued. The newspapers openly and sometimes rudely undermined the Shah. Whilst he tried to force the Parliament to punish those responsible, including a number of famous preachers and journalists, his demands went unheeded. It was during this time that his dislike of Taqizadeh grew; he had wanted the Parliament to oust him because although Taqizadeh had never openly criticised the Shah, his activities with the radical Tabriz Assembly troubled the Shah.²⁵⁰ Nevertheless, getting rid of a Member of Parliament was something he was unable to do.

The Shah may have signed an oath guaranteeing his support for the Parliament, but it was not genuine. The Shah had been against the Constitution since the beginning, and maintained his plans to get rid of the Parliament; a feeling that was heightened after an attempt was made on his life. He began devising a new way of attacking the Parliament with the help of the Russian embassy and the commander of the Cossack brigade, Colonel Liakhov. The Cossack brigade, established in 1879, was a unit of the Iranian army which had been formed based on the model of Cossack units in the Russian army. The Russians had trained the soldiers in such a way that they would blindly follow the orders of the Russians.²⁵¹ According to Kasravi, Mohammad Ali Shah had already begun talks with the Russian embassy at the beginning of June 1908.

On 4 June 1908, the Shah decided to put his new plan into action; he left Tehran and travelled to Baq-e Shah whilst sending Moshir al-Dowleh to Tehran with the intention of forming a new Cabinet. Having become anxious about what the Shah might attempt to do,

²⁴⁹ Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Mashruteh-e Iran*, 2: 519.

²⁵⁰ Taqizadeh, *Tufani*, 71.

²⁵¹ "Cossack Brigade," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2013, available at <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/cossack-brigade> (accessed, 29 January 2014).

some constitutionalists and journalists who had developed bad relations with the Shah moved in to the Parliament building on 22 June. Taqizadeh was not among them as he had been running a fever and was unable to stay the night there.²⁵² He writes in his autobiography that he was awoken the next morning, the 23 June, by the sound of guns. The attack on Parliament had begun. On his way to the Parliament Taqizadeh's path was blocked by the Cossacks who would not permit anyone to pass. The fighting intensified over the day, with the Cossack troops bombing the Parliament²⁵³, whilst fighters from the Azerbaijan Assembly tried, in vain, to defend it. It was eventually completely destroyed.

This destruction left Taqizadeh terrified; the Shah had ordered his capture and it was said that he had even wanted to kill him with his own hands.²⁵⁴ Along with some friends, Taqizadeh hid in a house where they plotted their next move; they talked about taking refuge in an embassy.²⁵⁵ Taqizadeh writes that at that time he did not know any foreigners; he had been avoiding them during the time he was serving in the Parliament. Eventually, however, he was able to take refuge at the British Legation, and was followed by 70 other people who feared for their lives. There could well have been more but for the fact that the Iranian government asked the Legation to stop offering sanctuary to these dissidents.

The Shah "demanded (Taqizadeh's) delivery into the hands of the authorities, which was naturally 'refused'. An amnesty was obtained for him on the condition that he should leave the country for a year and half."²⁵⁶ On receiving this information, Taqizadeh stayed just another 25 days in the British Legation before starting out on a journey to Europe through Rasht and Baku; it was a journey which would have huge consequences for his personal and political life.

Taqizadeh's taking refuge in the British Legation has been criticised by many, among them Kasravi who thought he should have stayed and encouraged the others to defend the

²⁵² Taqizadeh, *Tufani*, 73.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ George Percy Churchill, 567.

Parliament. This would, no doubt, have radically changed the story with his probable capture and death. His decision to flee to British protection had a lasting influence on public opinion about Taqizadeh.

This chapter has presented what was a turbulent period in Taqizadeh's life; it was a time in which he was involved in practical ways in political life. It has been evidenced that throughout this time he tried hard to bring his theoretical ideas into reality, but that ultimately it was a task that he found hard to achieve. As he strove to translate his abstract ideas into the reality of the political arena, he soon learned to reconsider and sometimes compromise on his ideals. Nevertheless, the influence which the historical experiences of Europe had upon him, and especially the methods used during the French Revolution, remained important to his approach. It is notable that these methods were not always necessarily democratic or peacefully achieved.

Taqizadeh quickly became famous during this period; his education, close interaction with intellectuals and his experiences outside of Iran impressed his peers and, to some extent, the general population who were galvanized by his extraordinary oratory skills. He capitalized upon a feeling that was growing within the country and tried to use his popularity to push the country towards "progress". It was progress and development that he had often articulated as being necessarily gradual, a "step by step" approach.

In both his own autobiography and in others' descriptions of him, Taqizadeh is depicted as a fiery and hot-tempered politician. He associates this temper with his young age, but it ought not to be forgotten that the socio-political climate of Iran at that time rather pressured him to act in these ways. The Provisional Assembly of Tabriz, which had elected Taqizadeh to the Parliament, itself was a radical body and demanded that its ideas be represented by Taqizadeh in the national Parliament. In this context it could be argued that his open hostility towards Mohammad Ali Shah or Atabak represented rather more the hostility of the revolutionaries in Tabriz; Taqizadeh was, perhaps, merely a representative of them.

This chapter has shown how Taqizadeh's character was shaped and developed through a series of political struggles and personal experiences. His influence during this period was so powerful that his footsteps can be seen clearly in the political scene of contemporary Iran; the foundations of the modern state were undeniably formed in part through his ideas and struggles. Furthermore, the ways in which Taqizadeh has narrated the movement of change and advent of modernity in Iran remains a dominant discourse among historians and people who carry out research in this field, both inside Iran and beyond its borders. Taqizadeh did not write a specific monograph on the background of the Constitutional Revolution, but as discussed at the beginning of the chapter, as his fragmented but consistent ideas are woven together a good sense of how he thought about these things is discernible.

