

Review Article

From Modernization of *Daniel Lerner (1950s)* to Present Day Modernization of Tehran, Iran

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ABSTRACT

Modernization has currently become a global phenomenon that many countries cannot deny its influence from different angles on their societies. Among *Middle East* countries, Iran is known as one of the first countries to accept modernization to a considerable extent. The internal and external changes of Tehran, capital city of Iran, during last decades is something undeniable.

It has been six decades since *Daniel Lerner's* article on the condition of the Persian elite in Tehran, "*Toward a Communication Theory of Modernization; A Set of Considerations*" influenced by the modernization of that era. *Daniel Lerner* was an American scholar who is known for his researches about modernization theory. In fact he provided a mere picture of the situation in 1950s, when the young and graduated people were not able to find an occupation relevant to their field of study or profession and therefore with the consequence of frustration and failure, most of them invested in film industry and mass media, high class careers of those days. According to *Daniel Lerner*, it was as a result of inadequate or uncertain tempo of Iranian modernization. This is a review article, inspired by *Daniel Lerner's* article, and aims to provide a comparative view and express how the current modernization is different from that of 1950s and finally to consider its vast consequences on various layers of the society- particularly Tehran. Data used in this analysis is based on every 10 year national census and also surveys conducted in Iran.

Key words: Modernization, Growth, Urbanization, Metropolitan, Population, Mobility, immigration.

INTRODUCTION

To understand the impact of modernization, we need to see the major changes of Iranian society from different aspects as it stems from a multitude of reasons influenced by modernity such as rapid urbanization, physical mobility, better access to education etc. In fact Iran has been one of those with suitable ground to welcome modernity and great mobility among *Middle East* countries so that we have to consider different issues of

economy, demography, technology, education, media, and immigration to the capital city of Tehran inspired by the phenomenon of modernization.

The Portion of Modernization during Pahlavi Dynasty

The first Pahlavi flourished from 1925 and lasted till 1941. Many reforms, inspired by modernization, under both *Reza Shah* and his son, *Mohammad Reza Shah* (1941-1979) took place, such as *secularizing the education and legal systems, unveiling*

women, allowing co-educational universities, establishment of The University of Tehran (1934), railway expansion, eradication of malaria, creation of schoolbooks, creation of birth certificates for all Iranians etc. Modernization reforms under Mohammad Reza Shah attempted to limit the influence of the Islamic clergies in education and politics. For example, the shah established theological schools in state universities in order to counteract the influence of the Ulema's religious teachings. In addition, the growing signs of Western lifestyle, such as drinking and gambling, revealing women's clothing, and provocative films, linked Westernization to Iranian culture and lifestyle. In 1979 tensions resulted in Islamic Revolution, which transformed Iran from a monarchy to an Islamic republic.

The upper class of Iran, prior to 1978, was affected by the modernization policies implemented by the regime. The traditional and non-traditional elite of the upper class existed prior to social changes and modifications to Iran's social institutions, however, the mobility did not confine only to the elites but also social mobility developed upward for members of lower classes, such as bankers, industrialists, army generals and cabinet ministers.

The Population Growth and Modernization Process

On the principle that “the bigger the city, the faster its growth” it was mainly Tehran that experienced the most increases in population and concomitant expansion of their urban boundaries.

According to *Statistical Centre of Iran (SCI)*, city is defined as “each geographic locality that has a municipality”. In the *National Population and Housing Census in 2011*- the last conducted census- eight cities had population of over one million that Tehran

stood as the first one in this category with the total population of 12,183,391 and 2,640 households. There is a remarkable increase in the population from 18,954,704 with urbanization ratio of 31.4% in 1956 to 75,149,669, with urbanization ratio of 71% in 2011 (SCI). In fact Tehran province is divided into eight townships. They are; Tehran, Damavand, Tajrish, Islamshar, Karaj, varamin, shahre-Rey and Savejboolagh. Recently, Karaj and Savejboolagh separated from Tehran and have become as independent regions (Asgharpour, Zanjani, Taleghani, 2013). The growth of population in Tehran since 1930-2011- from first Pahlavi dynasty till current government of Islamic Republic of Iran- is shown in the following table.

Table 1-1: Population of Tehran from 1930-2011

Year	Government	Population
1930	First Pahlavi	250,000
1940	First Pahlavi	540,087
1956	Second Pahlavi	1,560,934
1966	Second Pahlavi	2,719,730
1976	Second Pahlavi	4,530,223
1986	Islamic Republic of Iran	6,057,207
1996	Islamic Republic of Iran	6,758,845
2006	Islamic Republic of Iran	7,711,230
2011	Islamic Republic of Iran	12,183,391

Tehran had the literacy rate of 92.4 in 2011 (SCI). Although during 1990s young couples were learning to have only two children- through some national family planning programs conducted by the *Ministry of Health and Medical Education*, today the population of those graduated and potential candidates due to external factors has increased to a great extent.

In fact rapid growth of Tehran population is due to many social and economic problems that governmental authorities, urban planners and demographers could apply new and effective strategies for controlling of population increase before it reaches to a critical stage (Asgharpour, Zanjani, Taleghani, 2013). *Environmental consultant of Tehran*

Municipality has stated that Tehran's most important predicament is overpopulation. Tehran has an ecological capacity for three million residents but now about ten million people are living in the metropolis. Tehran's population is several times higher than its urban ecological capacity, resulting in ailments amongst the residents arising from the pollution. According to *The head of Tehran Municipality's Environment and Sustainable Development Office*, Tehran has a capacity for 700,000 cars but currently more than 3 million cars are on the roads in the capital. Population concentration should be reduced in Tehran and people should be encouraged to move to other centers with enough capacity and infrastructure. According to the *Head of Tehran Municipality's Environment and Sustainable Development Office* it is not valid to say that "tomorrow a group of people should go out of Tehran", noting... the process needs a ten-year period.

Education & Employment Factors and the Impact of Modernity

It is said that education is very influential and an important factor in the way of society beings and development. Influenced by modernity and more number of universities in the capital city of Tehran, most of the graduated people go for higher studies of post graduation and PhD so that consequently leads to increased numbers of masters degree holders. In 2011 the number of people with theological and higher education in different fields of study was 10,498,675 that actually in compare with total population of Tehran is a remarkable number.

Higher education in Iran, like any other countries is considered to be very important in all aspects. It is responsible for developing a scientific base to achieve a dynamic economic status, which relies on knowledge and the promotion of scientific advancements and bridging the scientific

gap with developed countries. Currently, there are 1,795 higher education institutes in Iran. There are 1,200 public universities, which are financed, controlled and supported by the government. However, there are also 595 private often called "*free universities*" and non-profit institutions active in providing training at undergraduate and graduate levels (Karimi, Chizari, Harm J.A. Biemans, Mulder, 2010). Perhaps one of the greatest signals of modernist transformation in Iran and mostly in Tehran is the reflection of this educated and urbanized youth.

Nowadays employment stands as another effective factor for the tendency of the young to gain higher degrees. Governmental organizations and offices offer considerably but less job opportunities with an almost adequate salary to those with higher degrees (Master's & PhDs), which accordingly brings about competitive atmosphere and relationship among the candidates and employees. In one hand the huge number of qualified candidates looking for a job and on the other hand less job opportunities resulted in more unemployment of numerous qualified candidates.

Inspired by the modernity, families help and send their children to universities to gain higher educational degrees, holding a type of high or better class among the population but after completion of studies and due to failure in finding a proper job, not only the children but also their parents become depressed. Due to frustration among them, same as 1950s and even with much higher rates than 1950s; they try to solve their financial problems by going to new, seasonal or innovative jobs.

Nowadays Unemployment has reached a critical level not only in Tehran but in Iran. The Statistical Center of Iran has announced that the average unemployment rate for the past Iranian year hit 10.4

percent. According to Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister *Ali Tayyebnia*, to make the situation better, Iran must create 8.5 million new jobs in the next two years, therefore there is a tendency or a kind of challenge in directing human capital toward private sector which is as a result of structural unemployment that has been referred to a lack or mismatch of skills presented to the labour market (Nils Ivar Lahlum, 2007).

The rate of university graduates in Tehran has rocketed during the recent years. Statistically, number of students has increased from 175,600 in 1979- since revolution of Iran- to 2,146,895 in 2004 and 3,400,000 in 2007 (Memariani, 2008). These group of educated people based on universal criteria and knowledge, have created a new class and social ecology in Tehran who are familiar with Western life style and ideology. Therefore, teachings of this group influence their life style.

Industrial & Economical Growth Influenced by Modernization

Throughout 20th century, carpet manufacturing has been, from the point of view of both native and foreign market demand, by far the most important Persian industry after oil refining. Although it had been to a large extent organized by foreign capital in the 19th century, after World War I it was gradually taken over by Persian entrepreneurs as a result of the *Iranization* policy instituted by Reza Shah. The carpet market did remain largely geared to exports, however, and therefore it was affected by worldwide economic cycles.

Between 1921 and 1941, Reza Shah Pahlavi orchestrated the transformation of Tehran from a traditional Iranian Islamic city into a modern capital. The urban grid, public spaces, state institutions and housing typologies introduced during his reign permanently altered the character of Tehran (Ma'refat, 1988).

Reza Shah initiated a rapid and irrevocable process of change that began in the public domain at the city scale and filtered into the private domain of the house. A grid of wide boulevards, traffic circles, and planned public spaces were superimposed on the traditional city. The public building program enabled a first generation of Iranian architects to define a modern profession and, ultimately, to expand beyond the symbolic, monumental requirements of state architecture. In Tehran's private architecture both Iranian and foreign architects found their most creative expression. Original surveys of traditional Iranian courtyard houses and mid-twentieth century row houses, apartments and villas demonstrated the many ways in which architects integrated traditional and modern features into new housing forms (Ma'refat, 1988). There were two features in Reza Shah's efforts for the modernization of Iran related to architectural construction of the period. One was his reference to the country's ancient history and the other was his desire to adopt aspects of Western civilization in such a fashion that Iran would become equal to the West.

During Reza shah, foreign and native architects designed new state institutions including *ministries, banks, museums, universities and schools*. They introduced modern materials and a variety of forms incorporating both historical and modern influences (Mina Ma'refat, 1988), but how is it nowadays?

Tehran has currently opened its gates for global investments. It has been the host of many big international companies such as *F.A.C, Hanswell, P.O.C, N.E.C*, and had co-operated with prestigious construction companies such as *Perlit* in building *Tohid Tunnel* and other projects. Increasing foreign investments up to \$ 143,427,000 from 1993 to 2007 and achieving the 9th position in terms of foreign investment in Asia, show

the economic progress in international scale. Even though a considerable part of these investments are in oil and gas industry, presence of many famous brands such as *Nike, Adidas, Benton, Sony Ericson, Samsung etc* are all symbols of economic growth and stabilizing this growth in recent years (Mirgholami, 2011).

Currently, more than half of Iran's industry and economy is based in Tehran. Industries include the *manufacturing of automobiles, electronics and electrical equipment, military weaponry, textiles, sugar, cement, and chemical products*. It is also a leading center for the sale of *carpets and furniture*. There is an oil refinery south of the city (Tehran Municipality Website).

Construction of skyscrapers to create spatial contrast and in urban structures is another movement in recent transformation process of Tehran's urban form.



Figure 1-1: Modernized city of Tehran

Erecting towers such as *ASP and Milad Communication Tower* are evidences of this new urban form (Mirgholami, 2011). The height of *Milad Tower* is neither due to its communication or satellite role nor functional reasons but rather a symbolic and iconic role in the urban landscape. A survey of 1,180 Tehrani citizens revealed that *Azadi Tower* is the symbol of Tehran's identity

which was built before revolution but Tehran's technological symbols are highways and *Milad Tower*.



Figure 1-2: Azadi Tower, completed in 1971



Figure 1-3: Milad Tower, completed in 2007

The new urban settings that have come into existence since 1960s are entirely dominated by Western-style architecture and infrastructural features. Department stores, cinemas, and various kinds of public facilities have become typical, not only of the national metropolis and leading provincial centers but also of minor cities and towns. Such development enhanced the contrast between the older parts of the cities, which were often economically and socially stagnant and modern, Western-style suburbs.

Immigration, a Symbol of Modernity

Many of the migrants to Tehran are those with the hope of gaining better life and searching for a job even with least expectation so that they find themselves satisfied with even low paid jobs just to fulfill the dream of being employed. Sometimes they might not be with higher degrees but taking job opportunities and chances of those residents of Tehran with the same level of education, therefore one of the main reasons of rapid growth of Tehran is based on immigration factor. In 2011, the total number of immigration from village to cities was 3,259,040 with 14.9% of seeking for better work or transferring, 14% for education, 10.6% for getting better housing, 46.2% for accompanying household, and 5.8% for serving military service (SCI).

The Public Relations of General Office of National Registration Organization reported that during 1986-1996, five hundred sixty eight thousand people have migrated to Tehran from different provinces of the country. Most of them came to Tehran either looking for job or continuing their education. Tehran city was considered the main migrant-receptive province comparing with other provinces. It is said that over 67% of total migrants of country were attracted to this city, so Tehran is known as the main magnetic pole for migrants (Asgharpour, Zanjani, Taleghani, 2013).

Tehran is located in the main routes of the *Middle East* countries connecting the east to the west and suitable climate, selection for capital has made many people to be attracted to this city. Moreover, many migrants think that Tehran is an ideal city, utopia that they can access all urban amenities and services without considering the high cost of living conditions. Thus their expectations fail. They have to live on marginal areas. The expansion of marginal areas of Tehran is the result of unrestrained

and illegal migrations that must be controlled by governmental authorities. Concentration of investments in Tehran has attracted the large numbers of migrants looking for employment (Asgharpour, Zanjani, Taleghani, 2013).

It is clear that immigration plays an effective role on population growth rate and urbanization development. Actually there is mutual relation between urbanization and population growth in the metropolitan city of Tehran.

Globalization & Urbanization and Social Mobility

Distribution of technology across Iran is another dimension of globalization process. Ownership of cell phones is higher than land line phones. 15 millions cell phone devices were sold in 2008 which has reached to 53 million now (Iranian Students News agency, 2010). According to statistics of the *Ministry of Science, Research and Technology*, the number of graduated students in technologic majors in 2006 was 46,053, a manifestation of the tendencies for being global. Despite limitations in accessing Internet and its low speed, number of Internet users is about 24.5 millions which is the highest number in the *Middle East*. Also, Tehran Municipality's effort to join ICT network is another evidence of technologic improvement in recent years.

After experiencing modernization and its effects on urban forms, the recent attempts of Tehran to represent its potentials in global system via constructing highways, iconic building and focus on cultural and financial aspects such as holding artistic and scientific anniversaries show that they have the same international challenges of the developing countries during globalization. Initially, comparing Tehran with global cities such as *New York, London or Tokyo* may seem uncommon but as the world is undergoing a process of mobility, Tehran cannot be an exception and is on a new

direction varied from its previous modernization stage (Mirgholami, 2011). Evolution of new urban phenomena such as electronic services, supporting the economic privatization, defining new urban projects such as Virtual Tehran, dominance of shopping centers by international brands and finally emergence of a new urban culture practiced by different classes all signify the entrance of Iran into a new phase distinctive from previous modernism (Mirgholami, 2011) so that great concentration and impact of this modernization is seen in the metropolitan Tehran. Spread of *Pop music, Hollywood movies, TV shows, computer games, fashion and tourism* have led to another global consequence unprecedented in the history of mankind (Mirgholami, 2011).

Women and Fashion, Before and Now

On January 7th 1936 Reza shah “declared the abolition of the veil and made modern education available to women on a mass scale”. On that day, at the *Teacher Training College* all female teachers had been invited to attend without their veils together with the ministers and generals. Reza shah next to his unveiled wife and daughters delivered a historic speech: “*Ladies, know that this is a great day, use the opportunities which are now yours to help the country advance.*”

This was part of a series of actions taken by Reza shah in an effort to "modernize" Iran, what about now?

Even though the current Iranian women must follow the rule and regulation of dressing set by the government, including the veil (hijab) and full body covering by chador or mantou (different from Burqa), they never sit back in fashion.

Tehranis started making underground businesses out of importing fashion from Europe, Turkey, China and the States. Today Iranians, especially those in larger cities like Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz and

the like, are as committed to fashion as they ever were. Regardless of limitations imposed and due to modernization, Iranian women and particularly Tehranis are in a league of their own when it comes to style and fashion interpretation (pinterest.com).

As a result of modernization (Americanization), young women in Tehran, some as young as 14, are having cosmetic surgery in the hope of attaining the Hollywood ‘*doll face*’. Iran has been known as the nose job capital of the world with seven times more operations carried out than in America, despite the high cost of the surgery that reaches to £1,100-£2,200. In Tehran there are only 157 licensed plastic surgeons but due to huge demand, there are 7,000 unlicensed surgeons as well.

Media impact on Modernization

On Media landscape, a vast amount of information is distributed via Medias such as *newspapers, magazines, TV programs, music* etc. Despite resistance of public media against broadcasting foreign movies, TV as the first communication tool, is the main medium through which global culture is transferred to homes. A vast volume of global culture is transmitted via programs and soap operas such as *Friends, Lost, TV Shows* such as Dallas etc. Many people in Tehran have easy access to *satellite TV, Internet programs and Hollywood movies* now. Widespread use of *films, programs and foreign songs* in English language by Iranian society has imported many terms into their everyday conversations. Moreover, publication of English language newspapers has risen in recent years as 215 representatives of foreign Medias from 5 continents and 295 of foreign reporters are active in Iran now. Cultural forces specially in religious areas, which are top-down and implemented to combat the cultural invasion of the West, are present everywhere in Tehran from formal advertisement to green spaces,

billboards and vehicles, banks and bazaar etc.

Transportation and Modernization

A report on evaluation of performance of BRT buses (Bus Rapid Transit) which is prepared in accordance with the latest international standards shows that three Tehran BRT lines are among the top lines in the world. The report has been released by the International BRT Information System.

Tehran has such a claim on having one of the most convenient and cleanest subway systems, in terms of accessibility to different parts of the city, in the region. Moreover and according to website information of *Shahrnevesht*, in the past eight years Tehran witnessed to the construction of 30.75km of highways annually. According to the statistics released up to the year 2006, Tehran possessed 304km of highway network which currently has reached 550km with the addition of 246 kilometers (Tehran Municipality Website).

CONCLUSION

In spite of limitations and international sanctions against Iran- during past years and due to nuclear program- the process of modernization is intensively continuing in different areas of Industry, technology, health, education and although there is a *Tsunami* of unemployment among the educated, modernization has not stopped. It has entered into each and every Iranian life from social to personal spheres and vice versa. There is a significant change and difference in people's lifestyle- particularly Tehrani- from that of 1950s. There is significant change in the number of Tehran residents and citizens from that of 1950s due to immigration that plays an important role in the current overpopulation of Tehran. In order to run away from the sense of frustration among the educated and unemployed youth, they do some seasonal,

innovative or temporary jobs so that during recent years the number of new jobs has increased to a considerable extent.

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