To Be A Constitutional Revolution:

THE IRANIAN CONSTITUTIONAL MOVEMENT OF 1906-1907 AND ITS FAILURE TO BECOME A CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION
Iranian Constitutional Movement

Thesis:

Though the Iranian Constitutional Movement of 1906-1907 did manage to create a constitution it cannot be considered a Constitutional Revolution because of its lack of secularization of the government.
What is a Constitutional Revolution?

- Jack Goldstone’s definition
  - Constitutional revolutions come out of Enlightenment thinking
  - Remove divine authority and allowing reason to dictate government

- Gary Jacobsohn’s definition
  - A governing set of rules and principles establishing a constitutional order based on a revolution that has over turned a previous order.

- Overall
  - A constitutional revolution establishes a set governing set of rules and principles with power derived from the constitutional body and not religion.
Social Structure of Iran

- **Shah**
  - Secular
    - Most of social elite in cities
  - Religious
    - Ulama
      - Held power throughout Iran
    - Bazaari
Background

- Mozaffar ad-Din Shah
  - Shah of Iran from 1896 to 1907
  - Absolute monarch
  - Absent and financially irresponsible

- Social Elites
  - Schooled in Europe
  - Radical notion of Constitutionalism
  - Spread ideas through bast

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Constitution and Assembly 1906

- Tensions mounting
  - Social Elite call for National Consultative Assembly - majlis
  - *Ulama* not interested in constitution
    - Will not follow Islamic law – *shari’a*
  - Political infighting → botched Constitution
Supplementary Fundamental Law 1907

- The second attempt at a constitution
  - It articles attempt to fix the issue of *shari’a* law

- Radical elite squared off with conservative *ulama*
  - Lost moderate elite

- The main issue: *Shari’a* law
  - Constitution grant the freedom of religion
  - Make all citizens before the law
  - Radicals wished to see the removal of Islamic law
  - *Ulama* final push
    - Amendment calling for the shah to uphold the legislature, which must be within Islamic law
Conclusion

The Goal:
- Secularize the government
- Reign in the shah
- Establish a constitutional government

The Result:
- Creation of the National Consultative Assembly
  - Representative government
  - Wrote constituion
- The reaffirmation of *shari’a* law within the government
- Not a constitutional revolution