

Iranian Presidential Election, 2009

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled “**Iranian Presidential Election, 2009**” submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this university or any other university.

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Syed Mohammad Raghif

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Chapter I

Introduction

The Iranian Presidential election of 2009 has been a significant political development. Dispute over alleged fraud in the election showed the sharp divisions within the Iranian political class divided along the liberal and conservative camps. This is not the first time that Iranian elections have been challenged by Iranian politicians themselves. However, protests and anti-establishment campaigns did not last this long in previous Iranian elections. The phenomenon marks weakening of the ideology of Iranian Revolution and its legitimacy proclaimed by its guardians. Satellite televisions and social media networks have been used to mobilise people for widespread protests across Iran and outside. Western governments used the opportunity to mount international pressure on Iran to accept demands of international community over the nuclear issue. The disputes over Iranian elections also uncovered many illusions and misconceptions attached towards the role of Iranian political system, especially with regard to extraordinary powers ceded to the institution of *Vilayat-e-faqih*. The role of state and its principal institutions, parliament, judiciary and executive have come into focus again among academics and observers.

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 successfully established a new order which the leaders of revolution preferred to call as Islamic Revolution. The new Islamic Republic was headed by a Supreme Leader who came from traditional Ayatollahs. With a complex power distribution among unelected institutions namely Assembly of Experts, Guardian's Council, Expediency Council and elected institutions like the presidency, the cabinet, and the parliament, there has always been intense power struggle in the Islamic Republic. On many occasions, they had to create parallel revolutionary organizations since they could not entirely trust the institutions they had inherited. So, for example, the Revolutionary Guards were formed along with the regular army. Over time, however, as they became

arenas for factional infighting, overlapping responsibilities, and conflicting policies, the government decided to consolidate the revolutionary organizations into more established and bureaucratic

The Iranian Political System since the Revolution

Many features of the Iranian political system are similar to other modern polities. There is a President and a unicameral legislature, both elected directly by voters. Originally, the system was loosely parliamentary, with a prime minister and a figurehead President. However, in 1989, amendment to the constitution took place. One of these amendments led to abolishing of the office of the Prime Minister and instead strengthened the office of the presidency. The President is elected by universal suffrage based on receiving an absolute majority of votes. His term of office is four years, and he is subject to a term limit of no more than eight years. The President chooses the members of his cabinet, presents legislation to the parliament, and is entrusted with the task of upholding the constitution and coordinating government decisions. This is the fact that the executive power is bifurcated between the President and the Supreme Leader.

It is obvious that the picture of the Iranian political system shows that Iran's complex and unusual political system combines elements of a modern Islamic theocracy with democracy. In an easy language, we can say that it is a network of elected and unelected institutions which influences each other in the government's power structure.

According to current election laws, the Guardian Council oversees and approves electoral candidates for most national elections in Iran. The Guardian Council has 12 members, six clerics, appointed by the Supreme Leader and six jurists, elected by the *Majlis* from among the Muslim jurists nominated by the Head of the Judicial System, who is appointed by the Supreme Leader. According to the current law, the Guardian Council

approves the Assembly of Experts candidates, which in turn supervise and elect the Supreme Leader.

The reformists say that this system creates a closed circle of power. Iranian reformists, such as Mohammad-Ali Abtahi, have considered this to be the core legal obstacle for the reform movement in Iran.

It is useful to look at the political history of the Islamic Republic as divided into three distinct periods. The first period might be referred to as the "first republic" or the period of revolutionary Islam, from 1979 to 1988. The second period, from 1988 to 1997, might be referred to as the "second republic" or the reconstruction period. The "third republic" or the period of searching for a more open society began with the election of Mohammed Khatami in 1997.

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini assigned Mehdi Bazargan the task of establishing a transitional regime in Iran following the Islamic revolution of 1979. Bazargan adopted a cautious approach, defending gradual, step by step change, opposing the use of any domestic violence so as to mobilize support for the new regime. He closed the revolutionary courts that had been founded following the Islamic revolution and sought to provide and strengthen the rule of law in Iran. He resigned, however, after the student attack on the U.S. embassy on November 4, 1979. The Iranian people voted Abulhassan Sadr for the presidency, but he was soon dismissed by Khomeini. The next President, Mohammed Ali Rejaee, was assassinated by the opposition Mojahedeen-i Khalq organization (Zibekelam 2000).

After 1981, control of the Iranian political system shifted to pro-revolutionary elites who closely followed Khomeini's line of thinking. Throughout this period, the state attempted to maintain society in a state of emergency with the help of radical religious factions,

declaring that their goal was not only to "free" Iranian society, but the whole world as well. All resources were mobilized to conduct this "war" and to provide the world with a more happy future founded upon religious principles. These elites sought to mobilize mass support for their cause of establishing a permanent Islamic regime in Iran (Khatami 2000).

This period was characterized by an attempt to stifle all divergent opinions, declaring all opposition to be "anti-revolutionary" and "agents of imperialism." Other salient characteristics of this period were a belief in a charismatic *vilayet-e-faqih* (the mandate of the jurist) and an overtly ideological character of the state machinery. Islam was seen as the only legitimate source of political thought and it completely dominated the public sphere; revolutionary elites accepted the politico-religious doctrines of neither East nor West and sought to struggle against what they saw as "global imperialism," especially as represented by the United States. As a result, virtually all forms of foreign investment were discouraged (Berzin 2000).

This period continued until the end of the Iran-Iraq war in 1988. The end of the war, however, along with Khomeini's death, laid the foundation for a political restructuring of the Iranian society. The recognition of the need to change the direction of state policy was mostly due to the regime's inability to cope with the massive problems that it faced as a result of its isolation. In addition, the revolutionary elite began to lose its ideological cohesiveness and profound differences began to emerge.

By 1988, the Iranian economy nearly collapsed and domestic production had decreased by five-fold. Iran continuously used up its resources during the war and at the same time population increased around 40 percent. Iranian economy was not in good shape even shortly after the revolution. A profound currency crisis, the loss of human life and

material damages that resulted from the war, a severe budget deficit, and floating petroleum prices presented extremely grave problems for Tehran.

The second republic began with Khamenei in a position of religious authority and the assumption of Rafsanjani to the presidency (Ehteshami 1995). In this era, the rights that accompanied religious leadership were extended by legal amendments and the office of the premier was merged with that of the presidency. The subsequent erosion of the legitimacy of the religious regime, the economic demands of the people, coupled with the collapse of the Soviet bloc led to the search for a new economic order in Iran (MERIA 2001).

Rafsanjani's tenacious personality and his progressive ideas concerning economic development were central factors that led to an eventual restructuring of the economy. Economic reconstruction became the central goal of this era. Other government objectives included a gradual separation of the economic realm from ideological elements, large-scale privatization, greater freedom with respect to foreign trade, and a restructuring of the legal framework in conformity with international laws and norms.

The Assembly of Experts (*Majlis-e-Khabergan*) is a 86 member male (no females allowed) assembly that drafted the 1979 revolution and is charged with evaluating the performance of the Supreme Leader. The Assembly of Experts is itself popularly elected, but consists overwhelmingly of clerics, because candidates must pass an examination on religious knowledge to be eligible.

The Iranian parliament is officially called the Islamic Consultative Assembly (*Majlis*). It is made up of some 290 deputies who are elected by direct and secret ballot for four year terms. In contrast to the pre-Revolutionary parliament under the Shah or its counterparts

in the former Communist states or most contemporary parliaments in the Arab world, the Iranian parliament is not a rubber stamp institution. The government is often obliged to lobby strongly to move legislation through this chamber. The regularity of elections has helped to institutionalize the place of parliament in Iranian political life. The parliamentary elections can also serve as a barometer of electoral sentiments in Iran.

Finally, mention should be made of the judiciary, which, along with the supreme leadership and the Guardian Council, is the third citadel of clerical political power. The Iranian judiciary is perhaps the most controversial of the three classical branches of government. The controversy starts with the fact that the Supreme Leader appoints the head of the judiciary, who by definition has to be a cleric. According to the constitution, the courts system is supposedly independent, but its political role in practice reflects the ideological composition of judges who are quite uniformly conservative clerics who are either wholly opposed to or rather suspicious of opening the floodgates of legal reform. The fear the removing brakes on dissent and personal behaviour will allow the public sphere, and eventually the state, to be hijacked by liberal opponents.

Concept of Elections in the Islamic Republic:

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran was adopted by a referendum on October 24, 1979, and went into force on December 3 of that year, replacing the Constitution of 1906. It was amended on July 28, 1989 (Website www.IranChamber.com). The constitution has been called a "hybrid" of "authoritarian, theocratic and democratic elements". While articles One and Two vest sovereignty in God, article Six "mandates popular elections for the presidency and the Majlis, or parliament." However, all democratic procedures and rights are subordinate to the Guardian Council and the Supreme Leader, whose powers are spelled out in Chapter Eight (Articles 107-112) (Website www.IranChamber.com).

According to very well-known Iranian jurist Hossein Mehrpoor, some of the articles of the present Iranian constitution are the Persian translation of French constitution of 1958. For example, article 75 of Iranian constitution reads as follows: “Bills, proposals and amendments to governments to government’s bills proposed by members of the parliament and its outcome are reduction of the public income or increase of public expenditures must be predicting the ways of compensation of the expenditures”.

The above articles are a translation of the Article 40 of the French constitution. Similarly, article 113 of the Iranian constitution (After the office of Leadership, the President is the highest official in the country. He is the responsibility for implementing the Constitution and acting as the head of the executive, except in matters directly concerned with the office of the Leadership) is also borrowed from the article Five of French constitution (Mehrpoor 2002).

All these articles were borrowed from the French constitution because most of the clerics who were against the Shah’s regime and other political figure of Iran were French educated and were familiar with the French constitution’s positive and negative aspects. That’s why they adopted some of the articles from the French constitution which is still helpful to run the political setup of Iran.

The first Assembly of Experts (also known as Assembly of Experts for Constitution) was elected in the summer of 1979 to write a new constitution for the Islamic Republic. It was convened on August 18 to consider the draft constitution written earlier, completed its deliberations rewriting the constitution on November 15, and saw to it that the constitution it had written was approved by a referendum on December 2nd and 3rd, 1979, by over 98 percent of the vote. Prior to its election a "Revolutionary Council" had unveiled a draft constitution on June 18th which was written by Hasan Habibi. Aside from substituting a strong President for the monarchy, the constitution did not differ markedly

from Iran's 1906 constitution and did not give the clerics an important role in the new state structure. Ayatollah Khomeini was prepared to submit this draft, virtually unmodified, to a national referendum or, barring that, to an appointed council of forty representatives who could advise on, but not revise, the document. Ironically, as it turned out, it was the leftists who most vehemently rejected this procedure and demanded that the constitution be submitted for full-scale review by a constituent assembly. Ayatollah Shariatmadari supported these demands.

The seventy-three-member Assembly of Experts was made up of 55 clerics, 50 of whom were candidates of the Islamic Republic Party. About a dozen members were independents or represented other parties and voted against the controversial articles of the constitution. The controversial articles in question were ones that revamped the draft constitution to include principles of Guardianship of the Islamic Jurists (*Velayat-e-faqih*) and establish the basis for a state dominated by the Shia clergy.

There is much repetition of the concept of election in the Islamic Republic's constitution. The Iranian political system emphasised on the term to demonstrate an electoral politics in order to have a mixture of theocratic as well as democratic setup.

The first article in the constitution explains how Representatives of Presidential candidates can be present at polling stations, their rights and how these representatives are to deal with responsible people and bodies. Certain articles (Article 113 to 132) are relevant to the position of President.

Article 113 regarding the President is borrowed from the French Constitution. After the office of Leadership, the President is the highest official in the country. He has the responsibility for implementing the Constitution and acting as the head of the executive, except in matters directly concerned with the Leadership. Similarly, Article 114 discusses the tenure of the President: "The President is elected for a four-year term by the direct vote of the people. His re-election for a successive term is permissible only once."

The Article 115 of the Iranian Constitution says:

The President must be elected from among religious and political personalities possessing the following qualifications: Iranian origin; Iranian nationality; administrative capacity and resourcefulness; a good past-record; trustworthiness and piety; convinced belief in the fundamental principles of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the official *madhhab* of the country.

Article 116 highlights about nomination of the candidate: “Candidates nominated for the post of President must declare their candidature officially. Law lays down the manner in which the President is to be elected.”

Article 117 states the following:

The President is elected by an absolute majority of votes polled by the voters. But if none of the candidates is able to win such a majority in the first round, voting will take place a second time on Friday of the following week. In the second round only the two candidates who received greatest number of votes in the first round will participate. If, however, some of the candidates securing greatest votes in the first round withdraw from the elections, the final choice will be between the two candidates who won greater number of votes than all the remaining candidates.

Article 118 also discusses the “Responsibility for the supervision of the election, of the President lies with the Guardian Council, as stipulated in Article 99. But before the establishment of the first Guardian Council, however, it lies with a supervisory body to be constituted by law.

Article 120 highlighted the qualification of the President as follows:

In case any of the candidates whose suitability is established in terms of the qualifications listed above should die within ten days before polling day, the elections will be postponed for two weeks. If one of the candidates securing greatest number of votes dies in the intervening period between the first and second rounds of voting, the period for holding (the second round of) the election will be extended for two weeks and finally

Article 122 discuss the limit of President “The President, within the limits of his powers and duties, which he has by virtue of this Constitution or other laws, is responsible to the people, the Leader and the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Jahangir 1997).

The Guardian Council must approve all candidates. Article 115 of the Iranian Constitution stipulates that, “the President must be elected from among religious and political personalities possessing the following qualifications: Iranian origin; Iranian nationality; administrative capacity and resourcefulness; a good past- record; trustworthiness and piety; convinced belief in the fundamental principles of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the official madhhab of the country.” The Guardian Council has seven to ten days after registration and no later than eight days before the election, to approve or reject candidates. Aspirants cannot appeal the Council’s decisions (Jahangir 1997).

Iran has had an election of some type almost every year since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The administration of these elections is decentralized and has a grass-roots operation. Iran’s various elections are governed by both the constitution and specific electoral laws. According to the Presidential Election Law, Iran has two main bodies

involved in the electoral process – the Guardian Council and the Ministry of Interior (MoI). The MoI is responsible for administration of elections while the Guardian Council is mandated with a broad supervisory role (MERIA 2009).

Presidential elections are held in Iran every four years. After the Revolution, there have been ten presidential elections starting from 1980 in which Abulhassan Banisadar had won as the first President of the Islamic Republic with 76 percent of votes. Other elections were held in 1981 (July), 1981 (October), 1985, 1989, 1993, 1997, 2001, 2005 and 2009. Differences with Iranian revolutionary establishment widened after the demise of Khomeini, Supreme Leader of the revolution, in June 1989. The conservative leadership continued till 1997 which was challenged by moderate leader Mohammed Khatami who won the presidential election in two consecutive terms from 1997 to 2005. The era is marked by opening of Iranian society and politics towards the outside world and putting forward an agenda of liberalisation within the country. Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the two time President of Iran lost to him. Khatami allowed liberal forces to challenge the conservative camp. The period is also marked by stiff resistance from conservative forces and differences within leaders of revolution came in for public debate. Clashes between liberal and conservative voices first started when Ayatollah Khomeini introduced the post *Vilayat-e-Faqih* for himself, a concept which was fiercely opposed by major liberal and secular leaders. Constitutionalist liberals like Mehdi Bazargan, Marxist Tudeh Party and Ayatollahs like Mahmoud Taleghani and Shariat Madari were among the opponents. The widespread protests in the wake of 2009 Presidential elections are of a wider scale as Iran since the revolution never faced such kind of religious, political and social resistance from within and without.

Iran's tenth Presidential election was held on 12th June 2009, in which Ahmadinejad (Alliance of Builders), the incumbent President, got the highest number of votes (62.23 percent) as against his three rivals, Mir Hussein Mousavi (Independent Reformists), who secured 33.75 percent votes, Mohsen Rezaee (Moderation and Development), former

Commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, who secured 1.73 percent votes and Mehdi Karroubi (National Trust), leader of reformist *Ettemad-e-Milli* Party, who got 0.85 percent votes. There were allegations of fraud by the defeated candidates. This is not the first time that rival reformist candidates alleged fraud against the ruling conservatives; fraud charges were levelled in the Presidential election of 2005 also, but this time the charges were of serious proportions (Addis 2009).

After the announcement of the victory of Ahmadinejad with a huge margin, Mousavi urged his supporters to fight the decision alleging election fraud. Mousavi supporters marched in a human chain and blocked the main Tehran Street starting June 13, 2009. The protests were given several titles by their proponents including Green Revolution, Green Wave or Sea of Green, reflecting presidential candidate Mousavi's campaign color, and also Persian Awakening. The events have also been nicknamed the "Twitter Revolution" because of the protesters' reliance on twitter and other social-networking Internet sites to communicate with each other. Islamic politician Ayatollah Mohajerani blasted the election as the end of the Islamic Republic. In response to the protests, other groups rallied in Tehran to support Ahmadinejad. The protestors raised slogans against Ahmadinejad by shouting "down with the dictator", "death to the dictator" and "gives us our votes" and burnt tyres in front of the Interior Ministry. In many places, clashes broke out between police and protesters. Media like Al-Jazeera described the situation as one of the biggest unrests in Iranian history after the 1979 revolution. Protests were also organised not only inside Iran but outside the country as well, particularly in front of Iranian Embassies in Berlin, Dubai, London, Paris, Rome, Sydney, Ankara, Vienna and Washington, as there are an estimated five million strong Iranian Diaspora living abroad, mainly in North America, Europe, Turkey, the Gulf and Australia. Protests intensified after Western governments sought to support Mousavi's claim. Social networking sites like Twitter and Face Book, blogs, SMSs and email helped opposition leaders to reach out to millions of Iranians within Iran and outside. The role of women, the youth and civil society in general is a significant aspect of the protests surrounding the election.

Rafsanjani and Khatami, two significant figures of the 1979 Revolution, also challenged the legitimacy of 2009 election, with Khatami even calling for a popular referendum. Grand Ayatollah Ali Montazeri, the most senior cleric in Iran, issued a fatwa stating that the Supreme Leader is no longer fit to rule, which arguably was the greatest verbal challenge to Khamenei's leadership. Thus not only that President Ahmadinejad's legitimacy is challenged by the reformist opposition, but also the very role of the Supreme Leader. But, the government stuck to its position that the election was perfectly in order and it gained upper hand within few weeks of post-election protests.

After the final result which declared and clean chit given to Ahmadinejad by the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei, and several month of tussle between the two camps, some of the outcome of rivalry is still visible in Iranian politics. Ahmadinejad has also somehow got sour relation with the Supreme Leader due to the latter's action of sacking the intelligence chief of Iran. The opposition to the government has been getting the some kind of political and media support from the US and the Western world due to their long rivalry with the conservative government of Iran since the Iranian revolution of 1979.

Iran is also very much under pressure due to the recent uprisings in West Asian countries, especially, Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen, Oman, and Syria. Some incidents happened in Iran in the name of freedom, liberty and against atrocities, suppression of liberal voices and absence of democracy by pro-liberal people.

The Supreme Leader and Electoral Politics:

The Supreme Leader is the country's most powerful political figure and is expected to act as a trustee of the community by supervising politics and ensuring that laws conform to Islam. He has the authority to overrule or dismiss the President, appoint the head of the

judiciary and half of the members of the Guardian Council, and appoint the top echelons of the military all in the name of upholding the Islamic state. Initially, the Supreme Leader was required to be one of the highest ranking Shiite clerics who was elected and periodically reconfirmed by the Assembly of Experts. While Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was alive, he was the undisputed Supreme Leader. Upon Khomeini's death in 1989, another important amendment besides the abolishment of the office of prime minister was introduced. In a triumph of political convenience over doctrinal coherence, the qualification for the Supreme Leader was changed from being the highest ranking Shiite cleric to whoever was merely an established member of the clergy. In other words, charisma yielded to formal office holding as the basis of legitimacy, as the outgoing President Ayatollah Syed Ali Khamenei, a long-time lieutenant of Ayatollah Khomeini, was chosen by the Assembly of Experts as the successor (Boroujerdi 2005).

The doctrine of the *Velayat-e-Faqih* as enunciated by the late Imam caused some serious difficulties for his politico-religious successors, who were by and large of a more junior religious rank and status. Indeed, this was the case largely because the concept clearly assigned the responsibility of leading the nation to the *Marja-e-Taqlid* (source of emulation in Shiism), and not to the junior clerics themselves. "The just *fuqaha*", wrote Khomeini, "must be the leaders and rulers, implementing divine ordinance and establishing the institution of Islam" (Algar 1982). As Irfani points out, the 'just *fuqaha* are none other than the *Marja'a-e Taqlid*' (Irfani 1986). Omid also stresses the plurality of (religious) leadership in Ayatollah Khomeini's conceptualization of an Islamic government. In his writings, Ayatollah Khomeini normally referred to the '*Fuqaha*' (religious leaders) and not the '*Faqih*' (religious leader) (Omid 1992). Milani notes that the framers of the 1979 constitution deliberately established an organic relationship between the institution of the *Faqih* and the *Marja'aiyat* (Milani 1992). In 1989, therefore, when Khomeini's death resulted in the post of *Faqih* being transferred to his successor, the question was left open as to when the new *Faqih*, only recently promoted to the rank of Ayatollah, might become a *Marja'a*. This has since become a highly controversial political issue and a source of great tension within the system, being

exacerbated by the passing away of the established *Ayatollah Ozmas* (Grand Ayatollahs) in recent years (Jahanpour 1994).

The Council of Guardians is a 12 member council that jointly with the Supreme Leader has veto power over any legislation passed by the parliament that they deem to be at odds with the basic tenants of the Islamic faith. In a sense, the Guardian Council operates like an upper house of parliament. Another important power granted to this Council is the right to determine who can run in local, presidential, parliamentary, and Assembly or Religious Experts elections. The council is made up of six clerical members who are appointed by the Supreme Leader and six lay members (lawyers) who are recommended by the head of the judiciary, subject to the approval of the parliament. While the six lawyers vote mainly on the question of the constitutionality of legislations, the clerical members consider the conformity of legislation to Islamic principles. Each member serves six year terms in the council.

The Iranian Presidential election comes at the end of a long political and constitutional process which authorised the candidate to start their election campaign, debate and issue the manifesto according to the rule of law. Despite all these complicated processes, the Constitution and selection procedure of the candidate for the post of President, the election is a unique one which gives the citizens the right to vote directly and elect a Constitutional head of the government.

Chapter II

The Conservative-Liberal Divide in Iranian Politics

The Iranian political leaders who have been from the religious background came from the Shii religious seminaries of Qom or Mashhad in Iran or Najaf in Iraq. These three seminaries played a very important role in formation of Iranian leadership during the Constitutional Revolution of the first decade of the twentieth century. Qom has provided a leader like Ayatollah Khomeini, who has been in a massive way responsible for the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran after the historic Revolution in 1979. Many of the secular leadership of the previous century on the other hand had their master and higher studies from European countries, and a maximum number of them belonged to the French educated group. These two classes always have had some sort of differences on the ground of ideology which is religiously or politically based.

Main Factions in the Islamic Republic of Iran

In Iran, the main factions of the Islamic are those who have deep Islamic ideology on the extreme level and secondly those who support the moderate view in their ideological framework. “The Iranian Revolution of 1979 was a broad based movement which included groups of every social, political and economic hue” (Abrahmian 2009). After the overthrow of the old regime, the Islamists under Khomeini began a steady process of eliminating non-Islamist groups to bring about the second “Islamic” phase of the Iranian Revolution.

The Islamist under Khomeini was mainly represented by the Islamic Republican Party (IRP), which contained the seeds of the IRI’s factional fault lines, between the Islamic Right/Principalists and the Islamic Left/Reformists, for the next three

decades. But, since 2003, a third fault line has become clearly visible with no roots in the IRP which we have called the Neo-Principalists (Moslem 2002).

Religious and political conservatives in Iran are often collectively referred to as “the Right,” and the two labels are at times used interchangeably here. Nevertheless, the Right does need to be disaggregated since it includes a diverse array of political and doctrinal persuasions. Kamrava suggests that

there are a number of ways to classify the different groups and individuals, who collectively comprise the Right, and various typologies based on theological arguments, institutional affiliations, or political alignments are likely to yield differing though equally valid classifications. One reason for this is the fluid institutional and ideological contexts within which these groups operate and their changing political and doctrinal positions over time. Adding to the difficulty in deciphering their orientation and significance is the fact that some groups are at times politically eclipsed, or cease operations altogether, only to re-emerge with renewed vigor at a later point. Moreover, most of these groups maintain deep, organic ties to one another, thus making clear and consistent distinctions between them difficult and not always applicable (Kamrava 2008).

The IRI was primarily made up of clergymen with deeply traditional social and political attitudes based on *Shari'a* and the Shii tradition. Even though there exists a group of clergy who have an economically liberal ideology, most clergy historically had strong ties with the *bazaaris*, Iran's petty bourgeois merchant class. This meant an economy with moderately little state intervention and ownership, which they saw as being consistent with Islamic principles. They were a strong faction in the Islamic government in 1979, and held the Presidency under Ali Khamenei from 1981-1989.

The political system of Iran that took shape in those formative years included two structures: first, a strong theocratic structure with the supreme power; and second, a weaker, but democratic structure, which includes the presidency and the parliament. The Supreme Leader holds his position for life and is not accountable to any person or body. He controls the regular Army, the Revolutionary Guards (a paramilitary force) and the

Basij (Militia) organizations charged with safeguarding the principles of the Revolution, as well as the head of the judiciary and state monopolized media. The twelve members of the Guardian Council, who oversee the elected parliament, ensure that any laws passed by parliament do not deviate from the Guardian Council's interpretation of Islam (Sadeghi 2009).

The second half of the 1980s saw the process of political institutionalization of the Islamic Republic move in a new and much deeper direction. Shortly prior to his death on 3rd June 1989, Ayatollah Khomeini set into motion several dynamics aimed at strengthening the institutional unity of the system he had founded. As early as December of the previous year, key figures within the regime had openly talked about the need to reform and amend the 1979 constitution, which, they maintained was proving inadequate in dealing with the country's evolving political circumstances. With Khomeini's blessing, a process of constitutional review was undertaken and a new document was soon drafted. What followed was nothing short of a fundamental overhauling of the primary political institutions of the Islamic Republic.

The new constitution featured, among other things, a greater concentration of power in the hands of an executive President, the dismantling of the office of the Prime Minister, codification of the mediatory Expediency Council (as an arbitrator between the *Majles* and the Guardian Council), and removal of the provision for a Leadership Council in the absence of consensus on a *Faqih*. Perhaps most significantly, the 1989 constitution also removed the requirement that the *Faqih* must also be a *Marja* (Ehteshami, 1995).

After the death of Khomeini in 1989, which was another turning point for Iranian political landscape, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei became the Supreme Leader, tilting the balance of power in the IRI towards the Islamic Right. Since then, they have come to dominate key positions of unelected power including the Judiciary, Guardian Council, Bonyads and more. One of the most prominent examples of a group from this faction is the Combatant Clergy Association.

The extensive changes in Iran's domestic and international situation transformed politics in Iran in multiple directions. Domestically the death of Khomeini and internationally the fall of the Soviet Union and rise of the United States as global hegemon really effected Iran's position a lot. The Islamic Left redefined itself as "Reformist" as a result of these changes, advocating a re-interpretation of Islam compatible with modern realities. As a reaction to the Left's redefinition, the Islamic Right re-branded themselves Principalists, in order to signify their promise to traditional Islamic principles and unwillingness to change.

Due to the world geo-political changes, the Iranian Neo-Principalist ideology has key features that distinguish it from other factions in the IRI. Their political ideology is influenced by the jurisprudence of Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi; it has strong anti-clerical, authoritarian, patriotic, and realistic tendencies and wanted to dismantle clerical influence from the Iranian political setup. During this period, some members of the clergy, namely Shaykh Falollah Nouri, took this one step further and claimed that not only should the clergy enter politics, but they should have absolute decision-making authority over the legislative process. The implications of this school of thought, whose biggest supporter was Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazari, who is a very influential Ayatollah of Iran, was that the clergy could now rely on the state, rather than the people, for its economic source of revenue.

With the maturity of Islamic Revolution and consolidation of Islamic Republic of Iran, Khomeini along with his loyal followers exterminated all the oppositional ideological factors in the Iranian political system. But the Islamic party as a unipolar faction did not remain a united association they very much fragmented. Very soon, the members of the Islamic Republic separated into two main political factions. There has been a historical legacy for the division between traditionalism and modernism which today is coined as conservatism and liberalism.

Religious Factors

Religion has never been completely separate from the state in Iran, particularly since the establishment of the Safavid dynasty (1501-1722) when Shi'a Islam became the official religion of the country. However, the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and the consequent establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran provided a new context for religion and state to come together.

It was during the Qajar dynasty (1795-1924) that the rivalry between the monarchs and the *Ulema* began to surface. The *Ulema*, who had grown considerably in number, could be divided into two main groups. The first and the larger group consisted of ordinary Ulemas who instructed rural children in religious matters. In return for their services, they received free board and lodging and a government stipend. The second group, consisting of a smaller number of religious scholars, was engaged in teaching and academic research in isolated seminaries without any direct contact with the people. The change in the economic and political power of the clergy, as we understand it today, is a recent phenomenon having a history of not more than a century and a half behind it. The clergy secured this power following a series of crises in the wake of Iran's political and economic relations with the West, the emergence of a merchant bourgeoisie, and the suppression of peasant and urban movements triggered from time to time. So these are the initial phases where the foundation of division between the *Ulema* is clearly able to be seen, which is shaped from time to time according to the circumstances.

During the Pahlavi period (1925-1979), *Ulema* were well organized in Iran, and they influence the society through their religious duties. *Ulema* had lots of agricultural land from which they maintained their seminary and day to day life in Iran. They also got special sum of amount from the ruler from time to time to keep the religious duties smoothly. After the Revolution of 1979, the role of *Ulema* became very much influential in all sectors of life and state affairs. During these long periods of Pahlavi rule and the Islamic Republic, there were so many segments of liberal and conservative clashes inside Iranian religious circles, manly the clash between the conservative bloc and the liberal

bloc. The division between the conservatives and the liberals was openly noticeable in Iran from the mid 1960s.

The revolutionary movement against the Shah consisted of three forces in the Islamic spectrum that brought about the Revolution: Khomeini, Shariati, and Mujahideen-e-Khalq. These three forces almost had their own view and ideology which widened the division among the clergy, intellectuals and the other forces who were part of Revolution. Khomeini represented the politicized Shia clergy. Khomeini's main accomplishment was to successfully place the struggle against the Pahlavi dictatorship in an anti-imperialist framework and give the struggle religious sanctity by invoking his position as a *Marja-e-Taqlid* (Source of Imitation), one of the highest religious ranks possible in the informal hierarchy of Shia Islam. Khomeini also followed the anti-imperialist approach of Syed Jamal-Uddin Afghani, the 19th Century Muslim intellectual who believed in emphasizing the social and political dimensions of Islam and mobilizing the Muslim masses (Buchta 2000).

One of the very famous Islamic scholars of Iran Mohsin Kadivar said in an interview to BBC regarding the religion and political involvement in Iran:

There are three different views about the relationship between religion and politics. The first theory is one of the differences between religion and politics. It says that religion and politics are essentially different and there should be no relationship between them. This theory sees religion as part of ethics and private life. Based on this view, religion is about man's relationship with God; while politics is about man's life in general. On the other hand, there is a second theory of objectivity, which believes in the homogeneity of religion and politics. It says there is no difference between the two. This theory argues for the unity of the two realms of politics and religion and those who work in these areas. It believes that political affairs should be administered by men of religion or politics. This view has no strong basis as there is an evident difference between the world of religion and that of politics. This difference sometimes reaches the point of

contradiction. Sometimes, something is essentially based on political expediency, but religious criteria cannot accept it. Sometimes it is the other way round. Furthermore, experts in the two areas are not the same. Scholars of divinity are competent in religion but politicians may or may not be as competent. The third point of view reflects my own thoughts on the subject. This theory recognizes a balance between the two points of view. It maintains that religion and politics are different but there is a relationship between them. Religion includes areas which do not exist in politics. There are some political affairs that fall outside the domain of religion (Kadivar 2005).

The linkage of religion and politics in Islam means that a devoted religious man should try to co-ordinate his political reactions with his religious values. Religion is a set of general rules and principles which are free from the boundaries of time and location. On the other hand, politics is precisely defined as making decisions on details in a certain time and location. One must note that a major part of human activity takes place outside the domain of religion and it should not bias towards others religion or faith. An attentive Muslim needs to abide by the general values of religion and should be aware of balanced knowledge such as politics, law and so on, which have their own criteria. Application of the general principles of religion to life should take place based on human rationality.

Therefore, there is no need for politicians and economists to be expert in religious matters. Those who believe in the unlimited interference of religion in political matters practically demand the domination of religion over politics. The despotic understanding of religious rules would eventually lead to a form of theocracy or rule of clerics in Iran or else where in the world and such form of religious despotic understanding may be varied as per the socio-religious structure of the country.

Religious Factions

Islamic thinkers and ideologues in the Iranian society can be categorized mainly in three classes which are mentioned along the following lines:

- 1- Traditionalists (Ayatollah Muddaris and Ayatollah Khomeini)
- 2- Modernists (Ali Shariati and Mahdi Bazargan)
- 3- Anti-Westernists (Ayatollah Muthahari)

Traditionalist *Ulema* like Ayatollah Muddarris and Imam Khomeini maintain the Shia political theology for which there should be a rightful imam or the guidance of the religious leader who can supervise and direct the affairs of the Muslims in the absence of the twelfth Imam.

Shariati and Mujahideen-e-Khalq in pursuing the ideological direction of anti-imperialist movement were able to develop a revolutionary Islamic ideology to form the basis for a progressive Islamic movement. This movement is progressive not only because of its anti-imperialist and anti-exploitive way, nor because it has developed separately of the traditional Islam of formalist *Ulema* and the doctrine of theological schools, but also because of its dynamic approach to Islam and the Quran.

Ali Shariati, who provided the intellectual dimension for Iran's Revolution, has logically stated in one of his opening lectures on Islamology. He said:

Which Islam do we have in mind when we speak of an Islamic Ideology? It is difficult for me to explain what I wish to say.....because when I speak about Islam, I must use words and terms which have lost their meaning. This is why I am compelled to continuously explain in order to identify the Islam I am speaking of: it is the Islam of justice and leadership, not of leaders, classes and aristocracy, it is the Islam of freedom, awareness, and movement, not the Islam of bondage, stagnation, and ignorance, it is the Islam of *mujahid* (holy warrior), not that of a *rouhani* (clergyman). In short, the Islam I have in mind is one which leads to holy

battle for shaping society, for scientific *ijtehad*, (principle of reconstruction and renewal in Islamic thought) and for illuminating belief. It is not the Islam of imitation, prejudice, and resignation. Therefore, in speaking about Islam, the major problem stems from the fact that the general impression people have about Islam (a reactionary weapon wielded by the decadent ruling classes) acts as a deterrent to its reintroduction in the Muslim society. Hence, it is no easy task to speak about the un-comprehended spirit and the forgotten contents of Islam. What I wish and hope for, am a return to Islam and its acceptance as an ideology. As an ideology, Islam can be grasped and applied through a scientific, analytical, and comparative understanding of its basic principles (Shariati 1979).

According to a scholar, politics in the Islamic Republic of Iran "are largely defined by attempts to claim Khomeini's legacy" and that "staying faithful to his ideology has been the litmus test for all political activity" there (Davari 2005). Throughout his many writings and speeches, Khomeini's views on governance evolved. Originally declaring rule by monarchs or others permissible so long as Sharia law was followed, Khomeini later inflexibly opposed monarchy, arguing that only rule by a leading Islamic jurist (a Marja), would insure *Sharia* was properly followed (*Vilayat-e Faqih*), before finally insisting that Sharia rule could be overruled by that jurist if necessary to serve the interests of Islam and the "divine government" of the Islamic state.

Khomeini's concept of Guardianship of the Islamic Jurists (*Vilayat-e faqih*) did not win the support of the leading Iranian Shi'i clergy of the time. Towards the 1979 Revolution, many clerics gradually became disappointed with the rule of the Shah, although none came around to supporting Khomeini's vision of a theocratic Islamic Republic. Actually the idea of Khomeini was to establish strong Shia country which follow the Sharia (Quran and Sunna), and based on Twelver Shii ideology. This was unacceptable to some of the *Ulema* and they have maintained their own position on the entire political and religious discourse on Islam and politics.

There is much debate as to whether Khomeini's ideas are or are not compatible with democracy and whether he proposed the Islamic Republic to be a democratic republic. According to the state-run *Aftab News*, both ultraconservative (Mohammad Taghi Mesbah Yazdi) and reformist opponents of the regime (Akbar Ganji and Abdolkarim Soroush) believe he did not, while regime officials and supporters like Ali Khamenei, Mohammad Khatami and Mortaza Motahhari believe Khomeini projected the Islamic republic to be democratic and that it is so. Khomeini himself also made statements at different times indicating both in support and in opposition to democracy (Ehteshami 1995).

Morteza Motahhari opposed what he called groups who "depend on other schools, especially materialistic schools" but who present these "foreign ideas with Islamic emblems". In a June 1977 article he wrote to warn "all great Islamic authorities" of the danger of "these external influential ideas under the pretext and banner of Islam." It is thought he was referring to the People's Mujahideen of Iran and the Furqan Group (*Guruh-i Furqan*). As Davari points out,

Ayatollah Murtaza Mutahhari was a significant figure in the movement which brought the Islamic Republic of Iran into being. Mutahhari, a student of Ayatollah Khomeini and particularly close to his mentor, had broad theoretical concerns regarding religion, society and economy. He is generally considered as a prominent contemporary intellectual figure among the Iranian and Shiite scholars of the time (Davari 2005).

Despite all these frictions between groups of Traditionalists, Modernists and Anti-Westernists, some other close traditionalists have their own frictions at different levels. On 6th May 2011, extraordinary confrontation came to light between the President and Supreme Leader after Ahmadinejad declined to officially support Khamenei's reinstatement of a Minister whom the President had initially asked to resign. "The rift between the two men grew when the president stages an 11 day walkout in an apparent protest at Khamenei's decision. In the first cabinet meeting since ending his protest, the intelligence minister at the centre of the row, Heydar Moslehi, was absent and in the second one on Wednesday 4th of May 2011, he was reportedly asked by Ahmadinejad to leave "(Guardian, 6 May 2011).

Although Khamenei is not constitutionally allowed to intervene in cabinet appointments, an unwritten law requires all officials to always abide by the Supreme Leader without showing any opposition. Later, the confrontation reached to some normalcy, but such things show that the inside the domain of traditionalists also factionalism is very much developing. This tendency is nothing but a mechanism to secure the power with some special tools and powerful lobby in the political circle of a particular domain.

The Intellectual Discourse

Intellectual movements in Iran engage the Iranian experience of modernity and its associated art, science, literature, poetry, and political structures that have been changing since the 19th century.

First generation of Iranian intellectuals faced widespread opposition from the ruling court and the Ulama. Abd al-Rahim Talebof, Fath-'Ali Akhoundzadeh and Sani-o-Doleh are considered first generation intellectuals of modern Iran. The second generation proposed to introduce modern civilization to Persia, not by imitating the West, but through a coherent and systematic approach to European culture. Mohammad Taqi Bahar, Ali Dashti, Ali Akbar Davar, Mohammad Ali Foroughi, Sadeq Hedayat, Bozorg Alavi, Ahmad Kasravi, Saeed Nafisi, Hasan Tqizadeh, Abdol-hosseini Teymourash and Abdul Baha belong to this generation. The third generation of intellectuals consists of figures like Jalal Al-e-Ahmad, who is the famous face of well educated intellectual who had very good knowledge of Persian (Abidi 1979).

The fourth generation of Iranian intellectuals tries to move away from master ideologies. Javad Tabatabaei and Abdulkarim Soroush are among many others belonging to the fourth generation. These intellectuals of Iran have influence on the day to day life and politics, internal dynamics of the country and they also reject the unnecessary fanatical approach of *Ulema*. Most of them are well educated from the West specially France and

England and their philosophical approach is incompatible with that of the conservative *Ulema*.

There are so many Iranian intellectuals in the twentieth century that played important roles to setup the political and liberal identity of the Iranian political system. Some of them are very close to the ruling class but never accepted their view on each and every political discourse of Iranian politics. Ali Shariati and Jalal al-e Ahmed are among them whose orientation have been widely accepted and proved to be very relevant in difficult times.

Al-e Ahmad had the conviction that Iranian politics is impossible without the symbolic power of Islam. He wrote:

One can be effective in politics, or in the affairs of a society, when you have weighed the degree of acceptability or resistance of that society in respect of your ideas. And in order to achieve this measure, you should have known that society, its traditions, its history, and those factors that are essential in shaping its collective belief, forces that mobilize its masses in the streets, and then its silence and its sitting quietly at home (Rehnema 1994).

At the closing stages of his life, Al-e Ahmad prepared an account of his travels to the “West” (Western Europe and the US), the Soviet Union, Israel, and Mecca. He called it “Four Kaaba” (Four Directions of Prayer), and gave an account of each place, its merits and flaws. Mecca symbolized the possibility of Muslim renewal in the modern world, the final commitment of Al-e Ahmad’s unsettled life. The Islamic Republic praised his contribution to the Revolution. In the early 1980s, the government named a boulevard, a high school, and a neighborhood in Tehran in his honour. On the thirteenth anniversary of Al-e Ahmad’s death, the Tehran magazine *E’tesam* wrote that: “He was a Marxist, then

[he found] socialism in the National Front organization, but eventually he realized that his lost soul belonged in righteous Islam, period. He tried to become alienated from himself and drown himself in the abyss of intellectualism. Motivated by confrontation with his pure Islamic mentality and his authentic Islamic nature, he returned to his true self“(Mirsepassi 2004).

Shari’ati was involved in pro-Mosaddeq demonstrations and other nationalist political activities since his early age and he was a very good orator on the religious and social issues. In 1959, he won a scholarship to study philosophy in France. He became familiar with the political activities and movements of France, particularly French responses to the Algerian national liberation movement. Shari’ati joined the Iranian Students’ Confederation in Paris and helped with the publication of *Nameh-e Parsi* , the theoretical journal of the anti-Shah students in exile, and *Iran-e Azad*, a publication of the National Front abroad. He translated Frantz Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth* into Persian. Shari’ati tried to synthesize Marxism and Islam in new radical ways (Ghaeissari 1998). While at the Sorbonne, Shari’ati attended lectures by Louis Massignon and Henri Corbin (two prominent Orientalists), Raymond Aron, Roger Garaudy, Georges Politzer (the orthodox Marxist philosopher), Michel Foucault, and Georges Guirvitch. He later wrote a chapter on Massignon and his other teachers in Paris in his autobiography and titled that chapter “My Idols” (Mirsepassi 2004).

Iranian intellectuals of this sort have been playing a unique role in society not only with the help of modern and religious thinking but Marxist thinking as well in their political and social life. Their aim was to create awareness among the people against the clergy’s domination in the intellectual sphere. The religious intellectuals presented a wide spectrum of views as reflected from the foregoing discussion.

After the death of Khomeini, the sign of fragmentation was clearly emerging from the religious and political circles of Iran. Most of the clergy were trying to start their own groups in order to influence the way government will be run in the Islamic Republic. The

ideological and political divide creates rigidity in the clergy class which propels the Iranian political system in complex directions. There were many studies on the ideological division within the clerical establishment in Iran.

These ideological divides became especially sharp after the emergence of the so-called “second republic” that followed the end of the war with Iraq in 1988 and the death of Ayatollah Khomeini the following year, when the post-revolutionary system lost some of the institutional and ideological unity. There have also been a few works on the appearance of “reformist” political figures within the Islamic Republic, and, more significantly, on Shi’a thinkers whose theories present alternative interpretations of religion’s role in the polity, figures such as Abdolkarim Soroush, Mohsen Kadivar, and Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari (Kamrava 2003).

After the demise of Ayatollah Khomeini, as noted above, there was clear cut division within the ruling class clearly visible around the *Ulema* and clergy. Some of them are having old difference with Khomeini but never hinted it during his life time, but there are some who were openly critical from time to time and at various significant occasions.

The leadership of the Neo-Principalists generally came from obscurity in the middle ranks of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) to prominence in the 2003 City and Village Council elections and onwards . Leading figures of this faction include President Mahmud Ahmadinejad, head of the Office of the President Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei, IRGC Generals Mohammad Ali Jafari and Yadollah Javani, an ex-Basij commander and current IRGC Intelligence deputy chief Hossein Taeb. The Islamic Revolution Guard Corps began as a militia called to arms by the Ayatollah Khomeini to protect the nascent Iranian Revolution (Montajabi 2008). In the chaos that ensued, the IRGC under the command of Khomeini was critical in eliminating the non-Islamist opposition and keeping the Islamists in power. The end of Iran-Iraq war and death of Khomeini created widespread changes in the Iranian political landscape. In the Rafsanjani or Reconstruction era (1989-1997), the IRGC once again underwent an enormous transformation, expanding into the economy. The regime understood the importance of

rebuilding the country and creating economic opportunity for returning war veterans in order to maintain domestic stability of Iran. It is important here to distinguish between Neo-Principalists and ex-IRGC leaders who have also entered politics. The likes of Mohsen Rezai, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, and Ali Larjani are not Neo-Principalists, but rather they are Principalists without any formal ties to or power over the IRGC. The bitter conflict that exists between President Ahmadinejad and these three prominent former Guardsmen can thus be understood in the context of the break within the right initiated by the Neo-Principalist (Deutsche: 2009).

The period 1997-2005 is important as it exhibited slow but steady departure of Iranian politics from revolutionary rhetoric to discussing socio-economic problems faced by the country. Mohammed Khatami argued for economic and social reforms along with political openness in the country's polity. However, Khatami's efforts were met with serious opposition from conservative camp who blamed Khatami for undermining Islamic Revolution and safeguarding western interests in Iran. He is one of the Presidents who prefer not only liberalisation inside country but outside as well, but the conservatives blamed him that he is selling the nation. These things led Iran into an uncertain stage where both camps behaved in an extreme manner. Finally, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, an icon of the conservatives won the Presidential Election in 2005 against Akbar Hashmi Rafsanjani with 62 percent votes. He took the office on 3rd August 2005, and started to reverse the reform efforts of his predecessor. Thus, the differences between the conservative and the liberal camps widened quickly. Ahmadinejad became popular particularly in rural areas but got very less support from among the people of big cities due to his anti-reform stand.

Ideological Dissent

According to Abidi "Two kinds of dissent were manifest in Iran. One was between the secular moderates and the Islamic extremists and the other was the intra-secular/liberal and intra clerical" (Abidi 1989). At the ideological level represented by the left which, with the exception of the Tudeh Party of Iran, entertained no illusions about the Islamic

regime established after the Revolution. The principal constituents of the Left in Iran were the Fidain-e-Khalq, the Mojahedin-e-Khalq, Paykar, the Tudeh Party of Iran and the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP). The first three were guerilla organizations which came up in the early 1970s. The Fidain and the Mojahedin were the largest in terms of following and they bore the major brunt of the Shah's repression. The *Fidain* came out of the left wing of the Tudeh Party and the Marxist wing of the National Front. It soon developed the theories of "catalyzing the mass movement", "propaganda by deed", and of "heroic action" which would inspire defiance against the Shah's government. It recruited mainly from among the university intelligentsia, largely from the Northern provinces, secular minded and often non Shi'i. The Mojahedin emerged from among the religious wing of the National Front especially from the *Nehzat-e-Azadi-e Iran* (Liberation Movement of Iran). The Mojahedin were recruited mainly from the younger generation of the intellectuals and students in the central provinces. Their revolutionary interpretation of Islam brought them very close to Marxism. So close did the Mojahedin come to Marxism that one segment split off in 1975 declaring itself Marxist-Leninist and calling itself *Paykar*. Islam was no longer a revolutionary ideology for them (Tehran Times, 6 June 1979).

The Fedaiyan, the Mojahedin and the Paykar entered the revolutionary fray as separate organizations. "The Tudeh Party was born in 1941. It died in the late fifties and was resurrected in 1979 when the core of the political activists returned from their self imposed exile and rapidly built up their organization. In the midst of the emerging situation a change was brought about at the top when Iskandari was replaced by Nouruddin Kianouri as the new Secretary General of the Tudeh Party on 4th January 1979. Kianouri was reportedly the son of a cleric. Its following was much less as compared to its earlier strength. Since its regeneration, it has been urging for an alliance of "all democratic forces" including peasants, mullahs, and middle classes and anti imperialist elements. Initially, the Fidain did not work with the Tudeh which, it considered, was not independent. The Mojahedin also kept them selves away from the Tudeh and they did not support the autonomy struggle of the ethnic minorities" (Abidi 1989).

As Abidi rightly notes,

The Fedaiyan-e-Khalq Organisation (FKO) was a major Marxist Leninist organization which started its activities in Iran's countryside in the early 1970s. The Organisation was founded by university graduates and students. Prominent among them were Amir Parviz Poyan, Bizhan Jazani, Masoud Ahmadzadeh, Hamid Ashraf, Behrooz Dehqani and Ashraf Dehqani. The Fedayin believed that the complete liberation of the Iranian people from oppression and exploitation lay in overthrowing the reactionary and dependent capitalist system (Abidi 1989).

Although the Fedain approved the activities of all leaders like Ayatollahs Khomeini and Taleqani and organizations like the Mojahedin-e Khalq, they warned that religious leaders like Ayatollah Mohammad Husain Beheshti and Hojjatul Islam Hashmi Rafsanjani were paving the way for "a civil war whether they know it or not through their unwarranted provocations". There was some restraint on outright attack on the father figure of Ayatollah Khomeini. There was a marked pattern of criticizing the process of Islamisation but since there was some hope of diverting the course through political processes and co-operation with the government, Khomeini's position seemed unassailable and it was a desirable strategy not to eliminate him. There was a clear divergence in the understanding of concepts, as well as activities of the two sides. The differences between the two widened.

The basic point of split was the attitude towards ideology in terms of objectives, organization and activities. But during the confrontation between President Bani Sadr and the "followers of the Imam's Line", the Fedain supported Khomeini's efforts for keeping the calm and implementing the Constitution. In view of the war, they urged for harmonious resolution of differences and unity among all the people and respect for the politico-legal institutions of the county. So the ups and downs of relations between two political rivals were also created some sort of rift.

The oldest party of Iran was the Tudeh Party, and only consistently well organized political party in Iran. In the wake of the Revolution it again surfaced and, like others, it was also allowed freedom of activity and publicity. It is important to observe that along

with its distinct ideology and objectives the Tudeh identified itself with the revolutionary mainstream and the revolution was interpreted as a people's national liberation movement.

The period of harmony between the Tudeh Party of Iran and the Islamic regime ended by 1982 and, in the couple of years, the party was in the dock. Under the severe attack and repression thousands of Tudehis were either imprisoned or forced to leave the country. The attitude of the Tudeh Party towards the Islamic revolution and leadership also underwent a radical change (Abidi 1989).

As noted by an observer, given the current composition and structure of the Iranian political system, there is an intimate set of ideological and institutional connections between highly conservative, high-ranking Shi'a clerics, all senior Ayatollahs, and the most significant political office in the land, namely the Leader (*Rahbar*). These organic links between the two are institutionalized through the Assembly of Experts, a popularly elected body of senior Ayatollahs who in turn select the Leader. The primary concern of the Assembly of Experts and the current Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has been to preserve the doctrinal and institutional legacy of the regime's founder, Ayatollah Khomeini. Therefore, it is observed that in the current system political and religious conservatism have assumed a symbiotic, mutually reinforcing relationship, often overlapping and completing one another. Much of the current religious conservative thought, therefore, is directed toward sustaining the prevailing political arrangements as designed by Khomeini. Nevertheless, as we shall see below, there are important strands within the conservative theological current as, for example, represented by Ayatollah Hoseinali Montazeri that are parallel to but remain very much outside of the political establishment. At the same time, in addition to political issues, most conservative clerics continue to pay attention to those issues on which they have focused traditionally, such as morality (*Akhlaq*) and ethics. (Mesbah 1999)

The Iranian society is basically divided along social, economic and political levels. Since the election in 2005 when Ahmadinejad was elected as the President of Iran, the clash and political battle across Iran between the conservatives and the liberals intensified.

Differences occur on issues like economical liberalization, social liberalization, interference of religious class in day to day life of civilians and the full democratic right to the public and over all external issues, sanctions and nuclear issue. The results of political clash did not stop with the leadership. It also transformed the young generation which is very much active to support both the groups and ideologies as evidenced by the campaign of the 2009 Presidential election.

Chapter III

The Presidential Election of 2009: Campaigns and Debates

Iranian presidential election of 2009 was a unique event which was replete with various types of high-voltage incidents and controversies in the entire process. After more than 30 years of Islamic Republic of Iran, the presidential election went to the second round for the second time; previously it happened in 2005. The previous presidential elections in general were always won in the first round and often by a landslide and the results were pretty much unsurprising long before the election, with the exception of 1997 in which, Mohammad Khatami, a reformist candidate won but again in the first round and with a big margin.

There were many other factors in the 2009 election which made it special and led to an almost unpredictable result. The 2009 Iranian presidential election is controversial and confusing due to different types of pro -government as well as anti-government media reports and opinions. Most Iranians both in Iran and among the Diaspora ensured that they participate in this election one way or the other. It also invited the Western media to evaluate the whole election process with the critical ink of journalism.

The election was primarily held between four candidates. Ahmadinejad who was the incumbent President being elected in 2005 defeated his arch rival Khatami who was also supported by Rafsanjani. Rafsanjani, who was also the President for eight years, was a very influential figure in the last thirty years of the Islamic Republic of Iran. He was believed to have a moderate view on social and political issues, being in favor of more

market oriented economy and in favor of better relations with the outside world. As opposed to this, Ahmadinejad was viewed as a new face among high ranking politicians. He was appointed as the Governor of Ardabil province during Rafsanjani Presidency and was the Mayor of the capital city of Tehran at the time of election to the Presidency for the first time. He was known to have radical views, especially in the stand over nuclear issue. His economic position was in favor of redistributive policies and his announced view on many social issues was moderate even though his main supporters among hardliners and *Basij* were giving an opposite signal to many voters.

If the incumbent President Ahmadinejad was the first candidate, the second one was Mir-Hossein Mousavi, a politician with a non-clergy background and a former Prime Minister of Iran, who entered second time in the political field after a gap of approximately 20 years. He is very much popular among big cities and elite class due to his moderate stand. The third candidate was Mehdi Karroubi, the former Speaker of the Parliament who was the Deputy Speaker when Rafsanjani held that position. He had close relations with the reformists, had a history of being hardliner in the first decade of the Revolution and his main theme of campaign was redistribution of the oil revenue by giving out cash. Karroubi and Rafsanjani were the only clergy who could make themselves popular among the old generation with traditional preferences. The fourth candidate was Mohsen Rezaee, who was an economist, politician and former Commander of the Revolutionary Guard for many years. He was not very popular among common people.

All the four candidates who contested for the post of President debated with each other in the given time frame and this debate was live telecast all over the world. It was for the first time that Iran experimented with this open debate involving all the candidates. All these candidates asked questions to each other related to the current situation, problems of the country, domestic issues, economy, unemployment, sanctions, nuclear issue and foreign policy. During the debate around a table, some candidates also asked personal questions to each other which not only sparked high competition and tension among the

candidates but was also taken in negative ways. The 2009 election also invited young and first-time voters to participate in a big way in a different and very new kind of election atmosphere.

The election campaign was accompanied by a storm of statements, reports, articles and posters expressing the ideas and slogans of the candidates, especially in some of the big cities of Iran. In Tehran and other large cities, the presidential candidates organized meetings and addressed thousands of gatherings and explored their manifesto among the public and their future road map for the Iranian people and the nation. Political parties, trade unions and religious organizations pledged their support for their favorite candidates in official statements.

The live televised broadcasts of the debates among the various presidential candidates injected enormous vitality into the election campaign. The first debate of candidates took place on June 1 and the last on 7th June, 2009. The ratings for these debates were the highest in the history of Iranian television. The fervor of the debates was transmitted to the socio-political temperature in the streets and people talked with one another about matters that had been discussed on television. This political debate led to an intensified politicization of public life and an unequalled participation of the population in the election campaign. For instance, on June 7, the adherents of the candidate, Mir Hossein Mousavi, dressed in green formed a human chain which was as long as 25 kilometers in Tehran. In others cities, similar kind of campaigns and political discussions were conducted, even though the media focused only on some big cities, especially Tehran.

One week before the elections, the streets in Tehran were transformed into a battle ground among the adherents of the various presidential candidates. The daily rituals of masses of supporters of Mousavi waving banners on the street, yelling slogans and debating with each other lasted until dark as per the code of conduct of Iranian election.

This dazzling climate attracted more and more people as active proponents for their favorite candidate. The presence of the candidates themselves in the streets and squares gave the campaign a lucrative face.

The massive participation of the population and their manifestations in the streets were more widespread than earlier Iranian election campaigns. The intense participation of the middle classes and young people was particularly noticeable. Despite the enormous unhappiness about the political system among the middle classes and the young generation, they hoped that this election would enable social and political change in day to day life in Iran. The peaceful debates in the streets and the large amount of tolerance for people with dissenting opinions marked the development of a new direction among an increasing segment of the population. Approximately 90 million text messages were sent every day in the week before the elections which is also a record in Iranian elections. This represented an increase of 38 percent over the average messages before the elections. This is really a great achievement by the opposition camp and their joint struggle to defeat the incumbent President Ahmadinejad.

All the major institutions of government, including those with oversight of the election were in the hands of the government faction. At least three members of the Guardian Council, the Chief of the General Staff, and the Supreme Leader, all voiced support for Ahmadinejad. In such a climate the burden of proof and accountability lies with the government, not the people (Ansari 2010).

Campaigns by Various Political Groups

The campaign of the Presidential election of 2009 was very competitive because all the four candidates who were contesting the election did have a good and strong background;

some of them are from the clerical background, some from top non clerics, but all have strong supporters in their respective cities and provinces. Ahmadinejad was Mayor of Tehran city; so people know him well and he is not from clerical background but he has some strong clerical affiliation and he was very close to the Supreme Leader. Mousavi was also a very strong candidate despite his twenty three years absence from political life; he was very popular among youngsters during the campaign and he reached his targeted audience in a short period of official campaign especially in Tehran. Mousavi's younger voters did a lot of campaign for Mousavi from street to street. The two other candidates Karroubi and Rezaee also did well in the Presidential election of 2009 but they were not the real competitors due to their prior support for Mousavi before the final day of campaigning.

The campaigning officially stopped at eight o'clock on 11th June 2009. The Director of the Election Campaign Headquarters, Kamran Daneshjou, declared that there will be 45,713 voting centers open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. all over the country. Outside the country, 304 polling stations would be set up for voters. Thirty-two polling stations were being set up in the United States while the rest are being dispersed in 130 countries.

Commenting on the previous elections, Mr. Daneshjou pointed out that the lowest turnout occurred in 1993 for the 6th Presidential election. However, the turnout for the 10th Presidential election was expected to be one of the highest, with over 46.7 million citizens eligible to vote. The Interior Minister Sadeq Mahsouli has declared that the ten hours allocated for voting could be extended depending on how busy the polling stations get. But by midnight on Friday, all the polling stations would be closed and the results would be announced within 24 hours. The four presidential candidates approved by the Guardian Council were, as noted above, incumbent President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and three challengers, Mir-Hussein Mousavi, Mahdi Karroubi, and Mohsen Rezaee. "Initially, the polls had indicated that President Ahmadinejad would be re-

elected for a second term. However, the latest polls, taken after the campaigning heated up and the live television debates, indicate a tight and unpredictable race” (Tehran Times 2009).

Presidential candidate Mir-Hussein Mousavi stated during his campaign on 1st of June 2009 that any policy which undermines Iran’s status in the world must be abolished. *Tehran Times* reported that Mousavi indirectly said that the incumbent President talks of global management while he cannot resolve problems at home. Talking in Hamadan, he noted that country should focus on increasing domestic production and create a dynamic economy instead of distributing money among people. He also said that Iran as a resource-rich country should not suffer from poverty (Tehran Times 2009).

During the campaign, every candidate was accusing each other, privately, personally and officially. All the three opposition candidates accused Ahmadinejad for his failure and wrong internal and external policies. Mousavi also criticized Ahmadinejad for diplomatically isolating Iran by denying the Holocaust and making anti-Western speeches. He opposed the government's current strict enforcement of Islamic dress and social behaviour, calling for an end to the regime's moral policing. He advocated letting private individuals and groups own Iranian media.

Even though Ahmadinejd and Mousavi strongly supported further development of the Iranian nuclear program, Mousavi advocated a less combative and tense tone with other nations about the program. He also floated the idea of an international consortium overseeing uranium enrichment in Iran

The campaign was the most expensive in the Islamic republic's history, with the two main candidates spending tens of millions of dollars in a bid to convince voters to support

them. Funds were spent on, among other things, a mass distribution of computerized propaganda, such as CDs and DVDs. Mousavi adopted the traditional Islamic color, green, as a campaign symbol. Young male supporters wore green ribbons tied around their wrists and young female supporters wore green headscarves. Activists used the term “Change” as his main slogan, chanting phrases such as "Green change for Iran", "Together for change", and "Vote for change".

Political Debates on Various Issues

During the whole election, there were debates on a variety of themes in the Iranian cities, countryside and in the media of all kinds. Political and religious figures were busy arguing with each other about the policies, candidates and the political atmosphere of the country. Iranian political and intellectual circles were very well updated and their concerns were not only economic development but socio-cultural development as well. Due to the multiple layers of society, while many in the Iranian political circles are very much influenced by the country’s religious orientation (Twelver Shiism), many others are of liberal orientation.

Elections in Iran are a good opportunity for more than just Iranian voters. They also offer researchers a rare window into the workings of an often opaque political system. The Islamic Republic, as a rule, safeguards even ordinary news as state secrets; but during elections, it opens somewhat and reveals hidden information. To limit such disclosures, the law limits candidates to just one week of campaigning. Nonetheless, leaks, interviews, and written appeals and, in 2009 for the first time ever, televised debates increase political transparency and help reduce the gap between the state and the people. It was also good for the voters to know the real face of candidates and their agenda for next four years for prosperity and development of Iran. All four candidates in this election were bona fide members of the country's ruling elite and none offered concrete

new proposals for Iranian economic or social transformation. But the campaign has been unusual in that all three challengers have been harsh and relentless in their criticism of Ahmadinejad (Nafisi 2009).

In the debates in Iranian Presidential election of 2009, the core issue which was discussed among the Presidential candidates and among the people was economy. Economy played the biggest role in the campaign with the global economic recession looming in people's minds. About one in five Iranians live under the poverty line, inflation was at about 25 percent, and unemployment stood at over 12.5 percent (some unofficial estimates reported it as 30 percent). Mousavi advocated further privatization of the economy towards a free market with a tight monetary policy in comparison to Ahmadinejad's populist fiscal policy that emphasized on measures to fight poverty. Generally speaking, Mousavi drew his electoral base from the middle and upper classes while Ahmadinejad drew support from the urban poor and rural residents. Civil servants, police officers, pensioners, and others dependent on the government also contributed to Ahmadinejad's base. He made financial support from the business class against him into a theme of attack.

The core issue of economy was picked up during the debate not only by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Mir Hussein Mousavi but the other two presidential candidates also. They questioned the policies of the incumbent President that resulted in the slowdown and inflation of economy. Due to the sanctions on Iran, its economy is not running up to the mark and the inflation rate was going high day by day but the government and the independent sources have given different data on the actual economic situation of Iran.

Iran's economy may not be on life-support, but it is in pretty terrible shape (Askari 2010). While the statistics reported by the Iranian government paint a rosy picture, the reality is quite different. Iran's real per capita growth rate was 3.5 percent per annum during 2002-

2009, but this period of growth coincided with a period of a steady rise in oil prices, suggesting the "government has not been very successful in achieving diversification of the economy." Inflation was also on the rise, reaching 10.4 percent in April 2009. Ahmadinejd's government has consistently struggled to contain rising inflation and President Ahmadinejad's redistribution of oil revenues helped in the process. But, actual inflation might have been much higher around 20 percent. As pointed out by Askari,

Most non-economists who survey the Iranian economic landscape tout the regime's recent successes. They invariably cite some of the following statistics reported by the Iranian government: rapid GDP growth of about 5.5 percent per year in the period from 2002 to 2008 (although it declined about 2 percent last year); declining unemployment, from about 12 percent to about 10 percent; declining inflation, as measured by consumer prices, from about 30 percent to less than 10 percent in the past year; and a comfortable level of foreign exchange reserves, exceeding 75 billion dollar. Such conclusions about Iran's economic conditions are distorted summary and present U.S. policymakers with a false picture of Iran's economic realities (Askari 2010).

Debate on Social Issues

Iran's social problems are as acute as, but not separate from, its economic challenges. Iran since the Islamic Revolution adopted the *Sharia* Law in which the female should use the full *Hijab* covering the whole body except the face. The imposition of "Islamic" dress code and behavior has meant a practical end to all public exhibition of affection and the prohibition of interaction between the genders in such spaces. Economic problems and a shortage of affordable housing have led most couples to postpone their marriages. As a result, the average age of marriage in Iran has risen to the late twenties. Unemployment, shortage of recreational facilities, entertainment and creative artistic activities, and an abundance of state and private sponsored religious activities, have resulted in thousands of a frustrated post-revolution generation abandoning their religious beliefs.

The perception of widespread corruption among the top Iranian political leadership has also resulted in millions of energetic and yet frustrated young people in Tehran and other major cities becoming disillusioned with both politics and religion. In one of the nationally televised 2009 presidential debates, President Ahmadinejad openly admitted to corruption among the top-level political leadership. He pointed out that they include a number of Mousavi's supporters, including the millionaire sons of Rafsanjani and Nateq Nuri (former Speaker).

He also questioned the former mayor of Tehran, Karbaschi, and his wife, for acquiring "Rasht Electric" without auction and later liquidating the company and supported corruption.

During the campaign, Mousavi complained about Ahmadinejad's dictatorial tendencies which were evident in his dismantling of the national Budget and Planning Organization and in his trying to control the Central Bank. He also accused Ahmadinejad of disregarding laws when deemed inconvenient to the government and of endangering Iran's national security through adventurous policies.

Mousavi also expressed his reformist tendencies when he told an audience of female supporters in Tehran: "We should reform laws that are unfair to women. We should prepare the ground for an Iran where women are treated without discrimination." He further said: "We should reform laws that treat women unequally. We should empower women financially, women should be able to choose their professions according to their merits, and Iranian women should be able to reach the highest level of decision making bodies" (Mousavi 2009).

Ahmadinejad, on the other hand claimed that he was facing not just Mousavi, but the past three governments of Hashemi Rafsanjani, Khatami, and Mousavi, who deviated from the true values of the revolution.

The supporters of Ahmadinejad were also quick to point out that Mousavi's government during the early years of the revolution was not, contrary to his claims, one of sound management. Rather, they argued that Mousavi's 1981-1987 government saw an expansion of bureaucracy and corruption, an increase in imports of agricultural products, higher unemployment, an expansion of "underground economic activities," higher inflation, a rapid migration of farmers to cities, and overall inefficiencies in economic activities. Such criticisms, however, failed to take into account the impact of the war on Mousavi's economic policies (Askari 2010).

Debate on the Foreign Policy and Nuclear Issue

Iran has been under sanction of US, UN and other European countries since the Iranian Revolution of 1979. During these thirty two years, Iran was always under severe attack by Western powers for reason or the other. During Iran-Iraq war, the US and other European countries openly supported Iraq to contain Iran and Saudi Arabia was the pioneer who helped Iraq a lot. When Ahmadinejad took power in 2005 after the departure of the moderate Khatami regime, it was regarded as a kind of setback to the new directions of Iranian foreign policy. Khatami had good relations with Iran's neighbours as well as Western powers despite their core differences on various issues.

Ahmadinejad also tried his best to repair the relations with arch rival Saudi Arabia. Ahmadinejad visited Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Syria, and UAE close each other. Despite all these efforts, Iranian foreign policy under Ahmadinejad drew heavy criticism from many quarters including his rival presidential candidates because they thought that the reputation of Iran in international arena got a setback due to Ahmadinejad's crude remarks and hard-line posture. One of the core issues raised was that the Iranian nuclear programme also brought trouble due to poor foreign policy of Ahmadinejad government. Iranian nuclear enrichment and the relations with their friendly countries like India soured because India voted against Iran in the IAEA. Ahmadinejad claims that Iran has good relations with all neighbours along with Iraq and Turkey. But some long pending issues with some neighbours are still remain like the issue of Greater Tumb with UAE. Iran has also been having good relations with the current Iraqi government despite US presence in Iraq since 2003.

While conservatives praise Ahmadinejad for his aggressive foreign policy that propelled Iran's nuclear program beyond a negotiable halt, the reformists focus their fire on exactly the same point. They have criticized Ahmadinejad's stance, saying such policies have brought Iran five UN Security Council sanction resolutions which have, in turn, hit the country's oil-dependent economy hard.

Despite this, the President never missed a chance to magnify his government's achievements where he said past governments have failed. In his trip to his home town of Semnan, Ahmadinejad told thousands of his supporters that his government had stood up for the Iranian people's right to nuclear technology and forced the world powers to retreat. He described the policies of the former reformist President, Mohammad Khatami, as cowardly. "The Islamic government must be the symbol of the nation's bravery... no one has the right to attribute their own weakness and cowardice on the great Iranian nation," Ahmadinejad said. He was greeted by people shouting the slogan: "Nuclear energy is our certain right."

Ahmadinejad's holocaust comments have brought him harsh criticism rather than praise from Iran. His call to wipe off Israel from the world map and his questioning the truth

about the Jewish holocaust were particularly picked up by the critics of the regime. During the Presidential debate also the opposition candidates raised objections to his statement. Reformists said that such remarks of Ahmedinejad have served Israel's interests best, enabling Tel Aviv to drive home the point that Iran was seeking confrontation with the West. They also served to fuel anti-Iranian sentiments abroad. Karroubi has been vocal in his questioning of holocaust-related remarks. Karroubi said that "We have heard the question about the holocaust, but we have never seen the blessings that it has brought for us," he said in a question and answer session held in Amir Kabir University in Tehran last year. Ahmadinejad has fired back by accusing his critics of being affiliated to the Zionist regime. "I asked that question to anger the Zionists, so why are you so angry?" Ahmadinejad asked in a speech delivered to a gathering of his supporters.

The other reformist candidate, Mousavi, said in a campaign speech that Ahmadinejad's call for Israel to be wiped off the map was an autonomous remark made above and beyond the Islamic Republic's official position regarding Palestine. Iran has called for a referendum in the occupied lands, in which Palestinians from all religions would vote for a particular political system. Iran maintains that all originally Palestinian people who have been displaced after the Israeli occupation must take part in such a referendum, knowing that Israel's outright rejection of that call may label it as an anti-democratic state.

The Main Issues of Presidential Election, 2009

Iran suffers from widespread socioeconomic problems, exacerbated by intense political struggles among its ruling elites and severe international sanctions imposed because of its "outspoken" foreign policy in general and its nuclear program in particular. Other contributing factors include the eight-year war with Iraq, population displacement, the influx of Iraqi and Afghani refugees, rapid urbanization, rapid population growth to over 71 million, and an oil-dependent public-sector-dominated economy. It is common for

ordinary people to hold two or three jobs just to make ends meet, something that is new to most older-generation Iranians who grew up prior to the revolution. All of this is true, regardless of the makeup of the presiding administration and/or the parliament.(Gheissari 2009).

Not surprisingly, Iran's demography, in which two thirds of the population is below 30 years old, has a direct bearing on elections. The younger population is principally concerned with the high levels of unemployment and inflation. Unemployment was estimated at 12.5 percent in 2008, but it was actually around 25 percent among the younger demographic. Of the 3 million unemployed in 2006, three-quarters (2.3 million) were below age 30. Unemployment rates for young people in their early twenties were above 20 percent for men and 40 percent for women. Azadeh Kian, Professor of Sociology at the University of Paris VII, has stressed the importance of these young voters in the composition of Mousavi's electoral support:

They belong to the structured social groups, notably the middle classes, workers, traders and entrepreneurs who suffer, more than others, the consequences of a soaring monopolization of the economy for political ends, of an inflation between 27 percent and 30 percent, of a huge unemployment rate (between 30 percent and 50 percent amidst the young, according to estimates), and the flight of Iranian and foreign capital. No jobs are being created for the 800,000 young people who enter the Iranian job market every year (Javad 2009).

Karroubi, the two-time former Majlis Speaker, proposed plans to offer shares in Iran's state oil and gas industry to the public. Gholam Hossein Karbaschi, Karroubi's pick for Vice-President, claimed that an "oil share" policy would enable the government to pay every Iranian some \$200 per month if oil prices rose to \$150-per-barrel. Karroubi's overall stand on issues paralleled his fellow reformist. As his head of campaign, Gholam

Hossein Karbaschi, a former mayor of Tehran said, "There is not that much distinction between the two challengers. Both want a change from this government" (Askari 2010).

Mohsen Rezaee, on the other hand, has claimed that

“The root of Iran’s economic problems [are] structural but during the government of Ahmadinejad [they] have become worse: President Ahmadinejad's economic management has made these structural problems deeper. That is why I talk of an economic revolution” (Askari 2010).

Rezaee has sounded conciliatory, portraying himself as a pragmatist principlist with a centrist approach to Iran’s domestic and foreign policy problems. Rezaee said if elected President, he would select a female Foreign Minister and employ the expertise of prominent figures from the two main rival camps in the country to promote Iranian interests abroad. He also said during the campaign that he would seek the help of former reformist President, Khatami, on both domestic and European affairs and to further develop ties with the Arab world with the help of former President Hashemi-Rafsanjani. He also suggested a former principlist parliament speaker, Ali-Akbar Nategh-Nouri, as one of his Foreign Ministry personnel to consult on developing relations with Asia and Russia. Nevertheless, he has also succumbed to sloganeering similar to Ahmadinejad’s, at one stage during campaigning contending that if he were elected, his government would be capable of stopping an Israeli attack with "one strike."

Iran’s foreign policy posture and direction was a major point of contention between President Ahmadinejad and the other presidential contenders. Ahmadinejad defended his nuclear policy during the first four years of his presidency and claimed that, "Certain individuals inside the country put the government under pressure to surrender to the enemy and suspend uranium enrichment activities," adding that "officials inside the

country imposed heavier pressure on the government rather than foreigners." Ahmadinejad also claimed that

the three previous administrations had to beg the West for three centrifuges and now we are in possession of seven thousands of them... the West continued threatening Iran then, place Iran among the Axis of Evil for its good gestures... now they are not talking about regime change anymore... today's threat against Iran has been removed forever (Press TV 2009).

Ahmadinejad's challengers were backed by a coalition of prominent Muslim clerics and veteran Iranian politicians who oppose his policies both at home and abroad, thus turning the election into an unusually stark confrontation between two political factions with opposing views on the future of Iran. The challengers advocated better relations with the United States. They also promised to ensure that Iran's nuclear program would have strictly peaceful purposes and argued that the Holocaust should not be an issue in Iranian politics. President Ahmadinejad came under harsh criticism during the campaign for "actually harming Iran's national interests". The reformist camp accused the President's foreign policy as overly aggressive and even unnecessarily bellicose, rhetorical, and misdirected.

All of the candidates have pledged to continue Iran's efforts to enrich uranium, despite U.N. sanctions. None of them have challenged the regime's stand on Israel. The three principal challengers agreed that Iran should reach out to other nations and soften the tone of its foreign policy, which is largely set by the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Mousavi stressed that he would calm international opposition to Iran's nuclear program by providing guarantees that Iran would not turn its research on atomic energy into an effort to build nuclear weapons. Mohsen Rezaee said he would talk to President Obama if conditions were right. During a visit to Iran's Kurdish region in May, Khamenei urged

voters not to support "pro-Western" candidates. The reality, however, is that as the former nuclear negotiator under President Khatami pointed out, Khamenei supported the 2003 deal two weeks after it was signed and described it as "an appropriate political move" despite having, in effect, a veto power (MERIA 2009).

Between 2 and 8 June 2009, Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting broadcast nightly debates on TV channel IRIB 3 between two Presidential candidates at a time, with each candidate facing the others once. As noted earlier, this was the first time Iran had held televised debates between candidates. Each debate lasted for around one and a half hours.

In the live television debates between the candidates, the main topic of discussion was the economy, as discussed previously. In all the debates he participated in, incumbent President Ahmadinejad defended the economic policies pursued during his tenure. From all the demonstrations and fanfare on the streets of Tehran, the gatherings can be divided into two main camps, the reformist camp of Mousavi and the "Principlist" camp of Ahmadinejad. The pre-election polls suggested that the competition between these two candidates would be so close that no one will be able to get more than 50 percent of the votes cast.

According to Article 117 of the Constitution, the President is elected by an absolute majority of votes polled (50 percent plus one). But if none of the candidates is able to win such a majority during the first round, a second round of voting will be held on the next Friday, 19th June in this case.

In the second round runoff, only the two candidates who receive the greatest number of votes in the first round will participate. If, however, any of the top two candidates from the first round withdraws from the election, the final choice will be between the two candidates who won the greatest number of votes from among the remaining candidates.

With seven candidates, the 2005 presidential election was the first race in the history of the Islamic Republic that went to a second round. Some 29.4 million voted, indicating a turnout of 62.84 percent. The top two vote getters were Mr. Ahmadinejad and Expediency Council Chairman Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, with 5.71 million (19.5 percent) and 6.16 million (21 percent) votes respectively from the first round. Mr. Karroubi trailed close behind with 5 million votes or 17.3 percent. “In the second and final round, 27,958,931 voters went to the polls for a turnout of 59.76 percent. Mr. Ahmadinejad was elected President with more than 17 million votes (62 percent) against Mr. Rafsanjani’s 10.04 million votes (38 percent)” (Ministry of Interior 2009).

Most of the reformist rallies and gatherings have been observed only in the major cities. Mr. Ahmadinejad’s base support was in the rural areas, where it was hard to take a poll or get a general opinion. An estimated 15 million of the eligible voters reside in rural areas. Studies from previous elections have shown that election turnout in rural areas is higher than in urban areas.

The campaign was the most expensive in the Islamic republic's history, with the two main candidates spending more than tens of millions of dollars in bid to convince voters to support them.

In religious circles of Iran, some of the clerics have been pro- Ahmadinejad government and conservative but some of the clergy have been supporting the liberalization process in Iran in terms of internal liberalization and economic liberalization initiated by Rafsanjani and Khatami. Other influential figures have opposed Khatami’s brand of liberalism, arguing that it undermines the morality of the Iranian state and threatens its Islamic virtue. According to the former head of the Iranian judiciary, Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi, “Islam does not accept absolute freedom, and the activities of both the private and public spheres therefore must conform to the limits set by Islamic

principles.” To make matters more perplexing, there are a host of interpretations besides these of the various policies of the regime.

These contrasting positions highlight the predicament facing the Islamic Republic of Iran today: more than thirty years after revolution, the very essence, objectives, and the modus operandi of the regime are still being contested and debated by the leadership. Such ideological divisions among the Iranian elite date back to the early days of Revolution when Khomeini’s disciples disagreed on some key issues and policies (Ray 2010).

Social networking sites like Twitter and Face Book, blogs, SMSs and email helped opposition leaders to reach out to millions of Iranians within Iran and outside. The role of women, the youth and civil society in general is a significant aspect of the campaigns and protests surrounding the election. Due to all these social networking sites, day to day and minute by minute updates on issues and developments were available to voters especially of the younger generation. These sites also served as a significant mobilising tool for demonstrators. But another side of the story was that the poor people who lived in the small cities or villages hardly get internet connection easily. The digital divide also reflected the way people looked at major issues in Iranian politics and vote for candidates.

Chapter IV

Presidential Election of 2009 and Its Aftermath

Iranian Presidential election of 2009 was the tenth Presidential election of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This election basically gave a repeat mandate and Ahmadinejad, who was the incumbent President, assumed the second term of his office. Iran's tenth Presidential election was held on 12th June 2009, in which the turnout was recorded as 85 percent, which was extremely high both for Iran and internationally. Ahmadinejad, the incumbent President, got the highest number of votes (62.23 percent) against his three rivals, Mir Hussein Mousavi, an independent reformist, who secured 33.75 percent votes, Mohsen Rezaee, former commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, who secured 1.73 percent votes and Mehdi Karroubi, leader of reformist *Ettemad-e-Milli* Party, who got 0.85 percent votes.

There were allegations of fraud by the defeated candidates. This is not the first time that rival reformist candidates alleged fraud against the ruling conservatives; fraud charges were levelled in the Presidential election of 2005, but this time the charges were of serious proportions.

Presidential elections are held in Iran every four years. Iranian Interior Ministry confirmed that, there are around 46.2 million eligible voters for the 2009 elections. The candidate for presidency must be approved by the Guardian Council and it also has the right to reject any candidate. On 20 May 2009, the Guardian Council announced a list of approved candidates. Only four candidates were short-listed for the president's post out of 476 applicants including 42 women. Those rejected include both female and male candidates from conservative and reformist sides. Rafat Bayat, a female Majlis representative from Zanjan was the most prominent women candidate who was rejected due to the some conservative norms of the state. In Iran, there was no female candidate elected for the Presidentship, but the other political post are for open for them.

After the announcement of the victory of Ahmadinejad with a huge margin, Mousavi and his reformist camp were upset and they urged their supporters to fight the decision alleging election fraud. Mousavi supporters marched in a human chain and blocked the main Tehran thoroughfares starting June 13, 2009 which created chaos in the entire country. The protests were given several titles by their proponents including Green Revolution, Green Wave or Sea of Green, reflecting presidential candidate Mousavi's campaign colour, and also the Persian Awakening. The events have also been nicknamed the "Twitter Revolution" because of the protesters' reliance on Twitter and other social-networking Internet sites to communicate with each other. Islamic politician Ata'ollah Mohajerani blasted the election as the end of the Islamic Republic. In response to the protests, other groups rallied in Tehran to support Ahmadinejad and street clashes between them occurred in various places.

The protestors raised slogans against Ahmadinejad by shouting "down with the dictator", "death to the dictator" and "gives us our votes" and burnt tyres in front of the Interior Ministry. In many places, clashes broke out between police and protesters. Media like Al-Jazeera described the situation as one of the biggest unrests in Iranian history after the 1979 Revolution. Protests were also organised not only inside Iran but outside the country as well, particularly in front of Iranian Embassies in Berlin, Dubai, London, Paris, Rome, Sydney, Ankara, Vienna and Washington, as there are an estimated five million strong Iranian Diaspora living abroad, mainly in North America, Europe, Turkey, the Gulf and Australia. Protests intensified after Western governments sought to support Mousavi's claim. Social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook, blogs, SMSs and email helped opposition leaders to reach out to millions of Iranians within Iran and outside. The role of women, the youth and civil society in general is a significant aspect of the protests surrounding the election controversy.

After the Ministry of Home announced the results that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had won, there were widespread protests by the supporters of the other candidates alleging serious fraud in the election. Tens of thousands of people, mainly Mousavi's supporters, the most important competitor of Ahmadinejad, demonstrated on June 13 and 14. Tehran witnessed the most massive protests, but in others cities such as Isfahan, Shiraz, Tabriz

and Orumiyeh, many thousands of people took the streets. Between 1 and 3 million people demonstrated in Tehran on June 14, the largest demonstration since 1979. The demonstration ended with shooting by the riot police and the paramilitary Basij. Dozens of people were killed or wounded (the death figure differ from government and private sources). The next morning, militias entered the dormitories of Tehran University campus and arrested many students. On June 16, 17 and 18, protest again took place and they chanted many slogans like “Ahmedni-bye-bye” and “*marg bar dictator*” (death to the dictator) , *azadi barae Iran* (freedom for Iran) and *mimirim, mimirim: harfesh nemipazirim* (we will die but never compromise) (Ansari 2009).

Clashes broke out between police and groups protesting the election results. Initially, as noted above, the protestors were largely blocking most of the Tehran main roads. However, as time passed, they became increasingly violent. Angry crowds in Tehran broke into shops, tore down signs, and smashed windows. Civil unrest took place as protestors set fire to tyres outside the Interior Ministry building and others formed a human chain of around 300 people to close off a major Tehran street, scenes which are never seen in any election in Iran.

The demonstrations grew bigger and more heated than the 1999 student protests. Al Jazeera English described the 13 June situation, as noted previously, as the “biggest unrest since the 1979 revolution” and also reported that protest seemed unstructured with any formal organization. Two hundred people protested outside Iran’s embassy in London on 13 June. *Ynet* reported on 14 June that two people had died in the rioting so far. That day, protests had been organized in front of the Iranian embassies in various countries as stated earlier. In response to the reformist protests, tens of thousands of people rallied in Tehran on 14 June to support the victory of Ahmadinejad.

On 15th of June, Mousavi rallied, with anywhere from hundreds of thousands to three million of his supporters in Tehran, despite being warned by state officials that any such

rally would be illegal. The demonstration, the largest in the Islamic Republic of Iran's 30-year history, was Mousavi's first public appearance after the election. Protests focused around Azadi Tower, around which lines of people stretched for more than nine kilometers. Gunshots were reported to have been fired at the rally, where Mousavi had spoken to his supporters. He said: "The vote of the people is more important than Mousavi or any other person." All three opposition candidates also appeared in the rallies but their tone was not as vocal as that of Mousavi.

The clashes between the protesters and police were common during the whole day but government also tried to control the situation and criticized the foreign journalists and the Western media for bias and inciting the protesters with wrong reporting. The Iranian Government also criticized the role of Al-Jazeera and BBC News for their pro-Mousavi support and accused them of trying to destabilize the nation.

The opposition also blamed the government that the election was not free and fair and in many places where the leading candidate got less votes due to change in ballot boxes. Here are some official data on the votes received by the Presidential candidates:

IRANAINA PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, 2009

Party	Candidate	Votes	Percentage
<u>Alliance of Builders</u>	<u>Mahmoud Ahmadinejad</u>	24,527,516	62.63%
<u>Green Movement</u>	<u>Mir-Hossein Mousavi</u>	13,216,411	33.75%
<u>Moderation and Development</u>	<u>Mohsen Rezaee</u>	678,240	1.73%
<u>National Trust</u>	<u>Mehdi Karroubi</u>	333,635	0.85%
	Valid votes	38,755,802	98.95%
	Blank or invalid votes	409,389	1.05%
	Totals	39,165,191	100.00%
	Voter turnout		85%

Source: *Vazarat-e-Kishwar* (Ministry of Interior) <http://www.moi.ir>

Province wise and candidate votes and percentage are given here in this table.

Province	Mahmoud Ahmadinejad	Mehdi Karroubi	Mir-Hossein Mousavi	Mohsen Rezaee	Spoiled ballots	Total votes
<u>Ardabil</u>	325,911	2,319	302,825	6,578	4,372	642,005
<u>Azarbaijan, East</u>	1,131,111	7,246	837,858	16,920	17,205	2,010,340
<u>Azarbaijan,</u>	623,946	21,609	656,508	12,199	20,094	1,334,356

<u>West</u>						
<u>Bushehr</u>	299,357	3,563	177,268	7,607	6,193	493,989
<u>Chahar Mahaal and Bakhtiari</u>	359,578	4,127	106,099	22,689	2,953	495,446
<u>Fars</u>	1,758,026	16,277	706,764	23,871	18,359	2,523,300
<u>Gilan</u>	998,573	7,183	453,806	12,022	11,674	1,483,258
<u>Golestan</u>	515,211	10,097	325,806	5,987	14,266	869,453
<u>Hamadan</u>	765,723	12,032	218,481	13,117	9,816	1,019,169
<u>Hormozgan</u>	482,990	5,126	241,988	7,237	5,683	843,024
<u>Ilam</u>	199,654	7,471	96,826	5,221	3,495	312,667
<u>Isfahan</u>	1,799,255	14,579	746,697	51,788	25,162	2,637,482
<u>Kerman</u>	1,160,446	4,977	318,250	12,016	10,125	1,505,814
<u>Kermanshah</u>	573,568	10,798	374,188	11,258	13,610	983,422
<u>Khorasan, North</u>	341,104	2,478	113,218	4,129	3,072	464,001
<u>Khorasan, Razavi</u>	2,214,801	13,561	884,570	44,809	24,240	3,181,990
<u>Khorasan, South</u>	285,983	928	90,363	3,962	1,920	383,157
<u>Khuzestan</u>	1,303,129	15,934	552,636	139,124	28,022	2,038,845
<u>Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad</u>	253,962	4,274	98,937	8,542	2,311	368,707

<u>Kurdistan</u>	315,689	13,862	261,772	7,140	12,293	610,757
<u> Lorestan</u>	677,829	44,036	219,156	14,920	8,329	964,270
<u>Markazi</u>	572,988	4,675	190,349	10,057	7,889	785,961
<u>Mazandaran</u>	1,289,257	10,050	585,373	19,587	15,571	1,919,838
<u>Qazvin</u>	498,061	2,690	177,542	7,978	6,084	692,355
<u>Qom</u>	422,457	2,314	148,467	16,297	9,505	599,040
<u>Semnan</u>	295,177	2,147	77,754	4,440	3,790	383,308
<u>Sistan and Baluchestan</u>	450,269	12,504	507,946	6,616	5,585	982,920
<u>Tehran</u>	3,819,945	67,334	3,371,523	147,487	115,701	7,521,540
<u>Yazd</u>	337,178	2,565	255,799	8,406	5,908	609,856
<u>Zanjan</u>	444,480	2,223	126,561	7,276	5,181	585,721

Source: Press TV

While Iranian presidential elections have always resulted in highly charged feelings, the 10th election in 2009 stands out as the most hotly contested. Never before has such a vast crowd participated in the campaign, hoping for change to occur. Never before have so many people demonstrated in the streets against the government but this time they did in very large numbers. Many political taboos were broken, including the branding of the President as a “dictator” and the condemnation of the Supreme Leader. The campaign and the subsequent revolt represent very special moments in the political and social history of Iran. Thousands of photographs, videos, films, leaflets, posters and weblogs

were made during the campaign, documenting the massive demonstrations shortly after the elections as well as during the bloody repression of these protests.

Green Wave in Iranian Election 2009

The best way to view the organization and make up of the Green Wave during the period leading up to June 12 is through the lens provided by Musavi's slogan *har shahrvand, yek setaad* (for each citizen, one camp). The idea is that all Iranian, regardless of class, ethnicity, religion, or background, should have a "camp". The internet played a very important role, whether through well-known social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, or through large e-mail list serves such as 88 camp (88 being the then Iranian year), which boasted nearly four hundred thousands subscribers. Established civil society organizations (CSOs) and political activists did important work in encouraging people to vote, while Khatami and other political figures helped to convince reform minded citizens that Mousavi was worth backing. Given the various "camps" that were all wearing green, what "change" was supposed to mean was never precisely defined. The candidates spoke of strengthening civil society as well as protection for the rights of women and minorities, securing economic empowerment and a range of other rights.

Since the election, the street protests and the crackdown, the Green Wave has entered a new stage due to support of the other candidates against Ahmadinejad. Before June 12, these were heavily upper class or elite movements which were basically from urban areas. After the elections, many members of the lower and middle classes joined its ranks. There were protests and scuffles with security forces in parts of Tehran and members of a sizeable middle class with little record of political activity become mobilized overnight.

The generational shift is obvious too. Now the young population's voice is becoming more powerful and united because they represent approx 54 percent of the total population of Iran. Their presence in the streets and leading roles in the Green Wave show that they are no longer politically indifferent and have gone beyond personal,

apolitical signs of defiance. Indeed, what people were witnessing was the demise of the relative lack of concern that had plagued this generation after Khatami left office in 2005 with so many reformist hopes unrealized.

Neda Aga Soltan, the 27 year old woman whose videotaped gunshot death (government denying the charges) on June 20, 2009 became the protests' iconic image, was but one example of a younger, apolitical Iranian (she did not vote on June 12) who turned out to protest the regime's action but some of the government sources also deny her killing by the forces. When authorities rounded up leading activists or cut their communication, young people rose to new distinction as organizers of the biggest demonstrations that Iran has never seen in thirty years. The idea behind this great demonstration was nothing but to pressurize the government and accept their defeat and announce the Mousavi victory, which was really a strong determination by the government not to accept the opposition demand except 10 percent ballot count. Abbas Amanat has written during the time of the movement thus:

Even though the outcome is uncertain, the ongoing protests reflect a remarkable phenomenon: the rise of a new middle class whose demands stand in contrast to the radicalism of the incumbent President Ahmadinejad and the core conservative values of the clerical elite, which no doubt has the backing of a religiously conservative sector of the population...Nevertheless, this new middle class, a product of the Islamic Revolution that supports Mir Hussein Moussavi and the reformist cleric Mehdi Karroubi, the two moderate opponents of Mr. Ahmadinejad, is a force to be reckoned with. This middle class has a different vision for the Iranian society and state. It is much larger in size and younger in age, politically more engaged and less timid...Nearly 80 percent of today's Iranians are urban or semi-urban and with a substantial percentage of them residing in provincial centers with populations over one million. In the 1950's urban population was around 25 percent and at the time of the Islamic

Revolution in 1979 barely exceeded 50 percent. The new middle class wants to participate in the discourse of democracy and create its own indigenous secularism....It is more articulate, better educated, technologically savvy, and more confident of its own place...If the conservative forces within the Iranian regime crush the peaceful protest movement they stand to alienate the largest, the most productive sector of the population. This may severally paralyze, even destroy, Iran's chances to emerge as a prosperous and stable country pivotal to the stability of the whole region (Amanat 2009).

In the 2009 Presidential election, Mousavi grew into his role as the face of opposition, but even he admits that he was an “accidental leader” who was not guiding the protest movement. It was Khamenei's quite hostile words and action that gave the opposition strength and a common cause. The Supreme Leader's warnings against a “velvet revolution” and labeling of protesters as foreign agents and rioters backfired, bringing people into the streets in greater numbers. Above all, the Green Wave widely and intensely emerged in Iran after the election result which somehow disturbed the Supreme Leader because his first Friday sermon after the vote, in which he addressed opposition leaders and “Agitators” for the violence and said it's a threat for the unity of Iran.

The Iranian government has blamed the unrest on a variety of targets including the Baha'i faith. The Speaker of the Iranian Parliament even claimed that BBC stands for *Bahá'í Broadcasting Company* and other allegations of Bahá'í involvement with other powers like the Israeli, British and American governments. Though these accusations have little to do with the religion and rather seem to be a part of an Islamic repertoire of what a heresy is supposed to look like. Such allegations were categorically rejected by the Bahá'ís.

Due to protests from the opposition, the Supreme Leader approved a partial recount of the results to somehow give them calm. The recount was random counting of 10 percent of the ballots. In order to create transparency, a 12 member council showed the recount on television, and concluded that President Ahmadinejad still led Mousavi after the recount. After the recount, the Guardian Council certified the election, and concluded no evidence of irregularities, and matter was officially closed.

Ideas of Modernists and Religious Ulema

Abulhassan Banisadr was the first president of Iran from 4th of February 1980 until his impeachment in 21st June 1981 by the Iranian Parliament (Majlis). He was a politician, economist and good human right activist. He was elected for a four year term as the President of Iran on 25th of January 1980 in which he secured 78.9 percent of the vote. When Khomeini reclaimed the power of Commander in Chief on 10th of June 1981, Banisadr soon was no more powerful. When Banisadr was out of Iran, the *Majlis* impeached him suddenly in his absence on 21st June 1981, because of his moves against the clerics in power, in particular Mohammad Beheshti, the then head of the judicial system. Khomeini himself appears to have instigated the impeachment, which he signed the next day. Many supporters, especially writers who were close to Banisadr, were also imprisoned. Over the next few days, they executed several of his closest friends, including Hossein Navab, Rashid Sadarolhefazi, and Manouchehr Massoudi. Ayatollah Montazeri was among the few people in the government in support of Banisadr, but he was soon stripped of his powers. Banisadr was also hiding inside western Iran and contacted People's Mujahedin (PMOI) and Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and he also attempted to contact pro-Shah exile groups against Khomeini of which he later dropped the idea due to his own safety issues inside Iran and ultimately left Iran (Buchta 2000).

Mehdi Bazargan was the scholar academic and long term pro-democracy activist and head of Iran's interim government, and he was the first Prime Minister after the Iranian

Revolution of 1979 appointed by Ayatollah Khomeini. He was seen as one of the democratic and liberal figures of the revolution. Bazargan initially disputed the name Islamic Republic, wanting an Islamic Democratic Republic. Bazargan resigned along with his cabinet on November 4, 1979 following the US Embassy hostage crisis. His resignation was considered a protest against the hostage-taking and recognition of his government's inability to free the hostages, but it was also clear that his hopes for liberal democracy and an accommodation with the West would not prevail.

Bazargan continued in Iranian politics as a member of the first Parliament (Majlis) of the newly formed Islamic Republic. He openly opposed Iran's Cultural Revolution and continued to advocate civil rule and democracy. In November 1982, he expressed his frustration with the direction the Islamic Revolution had taken in an open letter to the then Speaker of Parliament, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani:

The government has created an atmosphere of terror, fear, revenge and national disintegration. What has the ruling elite done in nearly four years, besides bringing death and destruction, packing the prisons and the cemeteries in every city, creating long queues, shortages, high prices, unemployment, poverty, homeless people, repetitious slogans and a dark future? (Abidi 1989).

In 1985, the Guardian Council denied Bazargan's petition to run for the President. He died of a heart attack on January 20, 1995 while traveling from Tehran to Zurich, Switzerland. He was the head of the first engineering department of Tehran University. "A well respected religious intellectual, known for his honesty and expertise in the Islamic and secular science, he is credited with being one of the founders of the contemporary Islamic intellectual movement in Iran" (Buchta 2000).

The period 1997-2005 is important as it exhibited slow but steady departure of Iranian politics from revolutionary rhetoric to socio-economic problems faced by the country.

Mohammed Khatami argued for economic and social reforms along with political openness in the country's polity. However, Khatami's efforts were met with serious opposition from conservative camps who blamed Khatami for undermining Islamic revolution and safeguarding western interests in Iran.

Khatami's second term in office was a very crucial period because the conservative pressure from the clergy class was clearly visible and the supreme authority was not in favour of continuing the reform process. These things led Iran into an uncertain stage where both camps behaved in an extreme manner. Finally, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, an icon of the conservatives, won the Presidential election in 2005 against Akbar Hashmi Rafsanjani with 62 percent votes. He took the office on 3rd August 2005, and started to reverse the reform efforts of his predecessor. Thus the differences between the conservative and the liberal camps widened quickly. Ahmadinejad became popular particularly in rural areas but got very less support from among the people of big cities due to his anti-reforms stand.

Factional Competition

The Supreme Leader encouraged factional rivalry as long as it does not threaten the system. The factions, in turn, operate within the limits needed to preserve the Islamic regime, but when survival of the regime is in question, that is the point at which the so-called consensus ends. Factional maneuvering is a key manifestation of the competition for power and influence, and foreign and domestic policy issues are used as tools and extensions of this competition. The 2009 election dispute showed, however, that factional disputes can destabilize the system and that consensus on regime survival may not be enough to prevent elite conflicts in the future. The impact of events following the disputed presidential election of 12 June 2009 will be felt in Iran for years to come, whatever the short-term outcome.

Disputes over Election

On 1st June 2009, a campaign office of Ahmadinejad's primary opponent, Mir-Hossein Mousavi, was torched. The office was located in the city of Qum, in northwest Iran. No group claimed responsibility for the attack. At the same time, it was reported that an assassination had been attempted against former President Mohammad Khatami by means of a bomb placed on an aircraft he was to board. But this kind of news always travelled around the media, but there was no specific report by the Ministry of Interior or any government agencies regarding this news.

Mobile phone communications were interrupted in Tehran on election day and the BBC has stated that "heavy electronic jamming" was being used to halt their broadcasts. On 23 May 2009, the Iranian government temporarily blocked access to facebook across the country. Gulfnews.com reported that this move was a response to the use of facebook by candidates running against Ahmadinejad. PC World reported that Mousavi's facebook page had more than 6,600 supporters. Access was restored by 26 May 2009.

So far, no credible evidence has been published which would indicate that a major fraud has happened in fact. Most of official objections to the election filed by Mousavi are related to issues before election like misuse of government resources by Ahmadinejad in his election campaign. Several analyses have been published rejecting the claims that Ahmadinejad did not win the election. A comprehensive analysis by Eric A. Brill claimed evidence published by Mousavi and other activists has concluded that there are no grounds to suspect the occurrence of fraud. For example, Mousavi claimed that over 10 million people had voted without proper identification, but his official complaint mentioned only 31 such voters. Widespread ballot-box stuffing was alleged, but no single stuffed box has ever been identified. Buying and selling of votes was alleged, but Mousavi has identified only four instances, and failed to provide any evidence. Thousands or millions of Mousavi votes were claimed to have been thrown away and replaced by Ahmadinejad votes, but no one has identified any of the perpetrators, nor mentioned exactly where or how this was accomplished. Vote counts from the field, approved in writing by Mousavi's observers, were said to have been altered by the

Interior Ministry, but nobody has identified a single ballot box where this occurred even though the data has long been available to compare the counts for all 45,692 ballot boxes. *The Guardian* reported on 17 June 2009 that an Iranian news website identified at least 30 polling sites with turnout over 100 percent and 200 sites with turnout over 95 percent. On 21 June 2009, a spokesman from the Guardian Council (an organ of the Iranian government) stated that the number of votes cast exceeded the number of eligible voters in no more than 50 cities, something the Council argued was a normal phenomenon which had taken place in previous elections as people are not obliged to vote where registered (when they have been born). Even though such official defence of the election by the Government dismisses all claims of fraud, it become practically difficult for the opposition to pursue genuine areas of wrong-doing due to intimidation, arrest and threats even on the opposition leadership.

The crisis of authority to handle the whole Presidential election of 2009 was discussed widely in media and in academic world, but political uncertainty was clearly visible in Iran despite the authority's media and administrative management. The incumbent President and the Supreme Leader and the Ministry of Interior, the three main pillars as well as the Guardian Council- all came under severe criticism by the people and the media. The Iranian authority was in full action to minimize the public outrage which sparked off after the declaration of results. The way in which government was trying to defuse the political hurricane after the Iranian election was to assert itself and to use force against the protestors.

Neither a dictator nor a democrat but with traits of both, Khamenei is the single most powerful individual in a highly factionalized, autocratic regime. Though he does not take national decisions on his own, neither can any major decisions be taken without his consent (Sadjadjpour 2008).

The election presented an opportunity for the reformists to make a comeback and for the 'principalists' of the conservative camp in Iranian politics (their own description as adherents of the basic principles of the Revolution) to consolidate their power by gaining popular legitimacy. What the election campaign showed was that the disappointment of

the reform-inclined voters that so weakened them in the 2005 presidential elections (boycott and voter apathy) could be remedied, partly through vigorous campaigning by Mousavi and partly as a reaction against President Ahmadinejad's policies. "Iran had never before had presidential candidates debate live on TV. It allowed for the candidates to battle it out and thus also reveal the huge differences in style and political ambition that exist between them. That the gloves were off became apparent as the incumbent attacked several high-ranking members of the regime as corrupt and his challengers, in turn, severely criticized his foreign policy and handling of the ailing economy" (Kamrava 2010).

The candidates and the campaign of 2009 Presidential election provided the people of Iran to witness significant discussions and diverse opinions on the future of Iran.

The incumbent president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is associated with the hardliners within the panoply of conservative factions. He is controversial both internationally and domestically. While his Holocaust comments are seen as hurtful for Iran by the other candidates, he has successfully made the nuclear issue a matter of national pride and security. He is a consummate populist who has tried to deliver on his promise of spreading the oil wealth among the general population by distributing cash and other short-term solutions (Naji 2008).

The main rival for the presidency was Mir Hossein Musavi, the Prime Minister during 1980-88. He campaigned on a platform of reform as a bona fide revolutionary; he was the Prime Minister in the 1980s when the present Leader Ali Khamenei was the President. In his bid for the presidency, Mousavi had the support not only of the former President Khatami and large parts of the reformist camp but also the consummate insider and chairman of the Assembly of Experts and Expediency Discernment Council, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. The two other contenders were the conservative Mohsen Rezaï, a former Revolutionary Guards commander, who has now withdrawn his complaint of

election fraud (probably after very heavy pressure from the principalists), and the reformist cleric *Hojat-ol-Islam* Mehdi Karroubi.

The Outcome of the Presidential Election 2009:

The Supreme Leader quickly endorsed the results as fair and accurate, thus contradicting the carefully nurtured image of him as an honest broker of sorts and his office as above the political fray and thus beyond reproach. The quick endorsement was a miscalculation in public relations terms. The people did not end their protests and the reformist leaders did not defer humbly to his authority. By upping the ante and demanding submission, the demonstrators' calls for a new election has partly come to expand into a general show of mistrust against the appointed instances of officialdom in the Islamic Republic. Thus the legitimacy of the office of the *velayat-e faqih* (Guardianship of the jurists), which uneasily rests on both theological (*Sharia*-based legitimacy) as well as republican (popular sovereignty) pillars, has diminished while its authority is upheld on the streets with violence. By deferring complaints of fraud to the Guardian Council, the Leader tried to show the protestors that there are institutional channels for redress.

More importantly, however, the suggestion was aimed at allowing for things to calm down on the streets and giving the leadership time to analyse the situation, before subsequently allowing for harsher measures by depicting those refusing letting go of the street as troublemakers.

The streets have calmed down, but primarily because of repression rather than diminishing anger and interest on the part of the demonstrators. Severe pressure has also been applied to the reformist camp leadership, circumscribing their communications as well as imprisoning them and people vaguely associated with their organizations or the general notion of reformism itself. The election debacle exacerbated the continuous

competition on ideological, policy and personal grounds within the elite to a degree that makes a return to the

Co-habitation of pre-election Islamic republic doubtful, thus constituting the greatest political shift in the country since the death of Ayatollah Khomeini. The circle of people and opinions partaking in the stewardship of the country is narrowing significantly. Simultaneously, the rift between a leadership that demands the loyalty of the population while also craving the legitimacy that popular elections can bestow on the one hand and an increasing portion of the population, is widening. In short, another chapter of the Islamic Republic is about to close and a new, very uncertain one, begins.

While Khomeini was alive, any ideological tension resulting from the differences was, by and large, successfully diffused through his timely and commanding interventions. Since his death in June 1989, however, these differences have both solidified and intensified to the extent that ideological discord among the governing elite has become the most salient feature of ideological blocs with each bloc sharing and advancing its own particular interpretation of issues and policies. Today, these blocs are known as “factions” who are engaged in a struggle for more power and influence recognized as factional politics or factionalism. Factions in Iran comprise groups, organizations, and classes, clergy as well as non-clergy, who supported Khomeini, the Revolution of 1979, and the idea of Islamic state, but who disagree on the nature of the theocracy’s political system and its policies in different spheres. Factional politics signify the ongoing “politicking” among various factions, where each group strives to promote and advances its own interpretation of policies.

We can’t say here that only the ideological and secular-liberal debate is existing in Iranian society or political system, but the other factor also responsible like ethnic minority is one of the big issues here which give fuel to the Iranian political division. During the revolutionary days, distinct voices and low key cries for autonomy were heard all over Iran and this, in course of time, developed into a distinct point of dissent. All ethnic groups, Baluchis in the trouble region of East, Azeri Turks and the Kurds in the

North West, Turkomans in the North East, and Arabs in the South all of whom constituted more than one third of the total population of Iran, demanded local autonomy. All these ethnic groups demanded local autonomy within the framework of national sovereignty of Iran. With exception of national defence, foreign policy, and long term economic plans they demanded the right to determine their own language, wear their diverse national dresses, preserve their traditional culture, and manage their local affairs themselves without the interference of the central government. Provincial autonomy and a fair share in the oil wealth were two of their manor demands.

The rivalry in Iranian politics that is running between President Ahmadinejad, the icon of the conservative camp that was getting support of Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei and Reformist camp led by Mir Hussein Mousavi who was also getting the support of former President Akbar Hashmi Rafsanjani, is not the result of a single Presidential election. The last two decades were very crucial for Iranian politics after the demise of Ayatollah Khomeini. The political vacuum is very much visible; many clerics who were united now started speaking out openly against each other and a the current political setup is also not much effective to unite such kind of fragmentation and opposition voices. But a very important fact to be mentioned here is that the lack of leadership quality of new Ayatollah Khamenei is clearly visible. He is not much strong to curb or to unite the different factions of Iranian politics. Sectarian voices are also clearly heard across the Iranian landscape.

Recently, after the gap of one year of Presidential election 2009, the differences between the President and the Supreme Leader are discussed in media and other political stages very frequently due to their sharp differences. On 19 April 2011, Hindustan Times wrote:

Iran's intelligence minister was caught in an apparent high level political dispute on Sunday 17th of April, 2011 after offering his resignation from the President Ahmadinejad's government but later being ordered to remain by Iran's top leader. The conflicting signals over Heidar Moslehi suggested another point of friction between Ahmadinejad and Iran's Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei over control of key posts. Khamenei, who has the

last word on all key decisions, is considered a supporter of Ahmadinejad's government but has stepped in before to overrule his political appointments.

Thus the 2009 Presidential election, which was held in more intense political and religious competitions, where different groups and different ideology directly stood for each other and mobilized the masses in the name of reform and liberalization, has also created the ground for a significant political future of Iran. Ahmadinejad did well in this election; this was his second term which created the rift between him and the Supreme Leader and the tussle was totally political. This election also provided a wide public participation, especially for the youth and women. It also provided a variety of campaigning tools such as the Internet and social networking tools like Twitter and Facebook. The Presidential election was very free and fair according to the government version. But some kind of fraud cannot be denied because of the nature of the Iranian political system. One cannot be absolutely sure. Even though many disturbing trends emerged in the aftermath of the 2009 Presidential election, the overall picture that emerges is one of optimism for a brighter democratic future for Iran.

Chapter V

Conclusion

The discussion of the Iranian Presidential election of 2009 shows the strengths and weaknesses of the Iranian political system. The complexities of the Iranian political institutions of the Islamic Republic of Iran give ample opportunities for rivalry among the religious and political figures of the country. The positions of the Supreme Leader, Guardian Council and the Assembly of Experts etc. are inhabited by religious leaders. Only a very small window of real opportunity in politics is given to the non-religious figures in the political discourses and institutions. A critical examination of the role of the *Ulema* in the political decision-making in Iran enlightens us to the extent of influence they wield in the system.

The Constitutional provisions regarding the position of the President reveal both the powers assigned to, and the constraints within which, the office of the President functions. The scrutiny of the Constitutional provision of the Guardian Council is also very important in that it allows us to know how it functions as a censor in selecting candidates for contesting for Presidentship. The role of *Vilayat-e- Faqih* was also critically examined and the way it matters on decisions concerning all major issues including domestic and international affairs is deciphered from the foregoing analysis. The Supreme Leader has the final word on all state affairs.

The study looked into the past to examine the root of ideological and political fragmentation in the Iranian landscape. The majority of Iranian people including the *Ulema* belong to Twelver Imam Shiism. The current differences is the result of lack of strong political and religious figures like Ayatollah Khomeini who took all the power in

his hands and crushed other sources of power in order to set up a strong socio-political and religious ground for the Islamic Republic to grow.

The study of the Iranian Presidential election of 2009 was difficult not only because it is a very recent event, but also because it has to be carried out by considering the whole of Iran as one entity, in spite of all the differences the nation entails. The fragmentation along conservative and liberal lines is analysed in detail in the study. The ideological differences and the variety of religio-political positions advocated by factions within the religious establishment are significant in understanding the controversies regarding the 2009 election.

The way in which the whole election was conducted and the differences between the Iranian political class which invited a big battle outside the parliament specially on the streets to solve the problem of alleged election irregularities did not auger well for the Islamic Republic and its unitary ideological ethos. The Iranian religious and political elite's role and their responsibility towards the society were also under question. The ruling class or the class of *Ulema* is so fragmented in various sub-domains in such a way that they find it difficult to address the conflicts such as the one emanating from the dispute over election. Their differences become part of the problem than being part of the solution.

The liberal-conservative divide in Iran has a fairly long past and has tremendous implications for future. The ideas of Hamid Dabashi, the contributions of such figures as Jalal Ale-e Ahmad, Ali Shariati, Mortaza Motahhari, Sayyad Abolhasan Bani-Sadr and finally Ayatollah Khomeini contributed to the sharpening of liberal, radical and conservative thought. An analysis of the larger historical and theoretical implications of any construction of Islamic ideology is looked into. The study proves that liberal conservative divide is very much in there in the society polity and especially among the *Ulema*. The study discussed the classification of the Islamic thinkers and ideologues in the Iranian society by focusing on new thinkers and ideologues who are feeding the

Iranian society with ideas that influence for example contemporary events and debates like those associated with the 2009 Presidential election.

The power of the elected President is restricted by the power of the Supreme Leader, who is not directly elected by the people. The President's executive power may be defined strongly in Constitution but he has very little authority to execute his power, the real power is in the hands of the Supreme Leader who cannot be silent during times of crisis.

The presidential debates in 2009 were a unique thing, as televised debates between the candidates were aired for the first time in the history of presidential elections. Mahmud Ahmadinejad's policies at the internal as well as the external levels invited many criticisms. His conservative vision of an unaccountable Islamic autocracy is faced with growing dissatisfaction. The ideas of Ali Ansari helped this author a lot to look into the depth of the internal and external policies of Ahmadinejad that sparked the criticism by political rivals and the common people of Iran. The personal attacks by the candidates on each other during the debates were harming the attractiveness of Iranian election debate and were taking the focus away from real issues facing Iran.

The dispute of 2009 Presidential election emanate from the already existing liberal conservative divide in Iran. The role of media during the whole election IRNA and ISNA was the government mouth organs but the others use critical approach to look at the regime. The "green wave" was a movement which was limited in the big cities only but the media propagated lot to cover this wave towards the whole world where the Iranian people are living and in that way the wave was successful. The role of several media including western media like Al-Jazeera, BBC, Al Arabia, CNN and others during the period of the election of 2009 is looked into. More important was the role of the Internet and social media like Twitter and Facebook. The youth was in a big way mobilized by the use of these media.

Ahmadinejad's internal and external policies were scrutinized thoroughly during the 2009 election campaign. He visited Saudi Arabia, UAE, Syria, Turkey, and even Iraq several times to strengthen neighbourly relations. Iran's nuclear programme and the embargo by US, EU and the United Nations on Iran are also issues of serious concern. The UN nuclear watchdog IAEA also criticized the current regime due to its non-constant approach to solve the current nuclear standoff.

Finally, the outcome of the Presidential election of 2009 was mixed and the vote share of incumbent President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was 62.63 percent and the opposition leader Mir Hossein Mousavi got 33.75 percent which is not bad because he was not very popular in remote areas having sympathizers mostly in big cities. The other two opposition candidates Mohsen Rezaee got 1.73 percent of vote and Mehdi Karroubi got the 0.85 percent of vote.

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