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*Organisational Change in Political Parties in Iran  
after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. With Special  
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(Mosharekat)*

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**Organisational Change in Political Parties in Iran after the Islamic Revolution of 1979**

**With Special Reference to the Islamic Republic Party (IRP) and the Islamic Iran Participation Front Party (Mosharekat)**

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**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**By Ariabarzan Mohammadighalehtaki**

**Durham University**

**School of Government and International Affairs**

**2011**

## **Abstract:**

The aim of this study is to develop a historical analytical narrative of the development of political parties under the Islamic Republic of Iran, accounting for their organisational structures, ideological evolution and internal distributions of power; to provide an analysis of the change in Iranian political parties after 1979; to examine their intra-party dynamisms of power as well as the developments in the environment of the Iranian parties which stimulated their change. This study gives special reference to the Islamic Republic Party (IRP) and the Islamic Iran Participation Front Party (Mosharekat).

Also to address the problem of poor party institutionalisation in Iran after the revolution by examining a combination of factors that have contributed to the disruption of the institutionalisation process in the Iranian political parties such as at the hostility and uncertainty in party environment, the organisational zones of uncertainty in the Iranian political parties and the impact of state on party institutionalisation in Iran.

Finally to examine the typological similarities between at least one modern party in Iran (Mosharekat) and some parties in the Western Democracies to understand whether partial similarity in society dimensions such as advancements in technology and the emergence of a new social cleavage map instead of the old social stratification, have resulted in similarities in the party types in Iran and the West.

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that no portion of the work that appears in this study has been used in support of an application for another degree in qualification to this or any other university or institution of learning.

## **Statement of Copyright**

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## Introduction

Mohammad Taghi Bahar(1884-1951), widely known by his title *Malek ash-Shu'ara* (Poet Laureate), was a prominent Iranian writer, poet and politician. He was one of the founders of the Democrat party which was formed in 1908, a short time after the establishment of the parliamentary system in Iran. Years later, and after witnessing and experiencing first-hand the devastating disarray within the newly established democratic system that eventually led to the ascendance of a commoner (Reza Palanchi, later known as Reza Shah Pahlavi) to the Peacock throne, Bahar wrote his book on the history of the Iranian political parties.

While criticising the shakiness of Vothough's government, in his book Bahar regrets that "our prime minister (Vothugh ol Douleh) was not able or did not have the courage to act like Mussolini and Ataturk, until the job was eventually done by an uneducated Cossack" (Reza Shah).<sup>1</sup>

Bahar's regret that a "Mussolini" figure did not emerge in the rank and file of the Democrat party was a reflection of the general discontent among Iranian public opinion with the lack of "discipline and order" in the early twentieth-century Iranian society. This situation was created partly because of the lengthy conflict between the Constitutionalists and the Monarchists, which had ravaged the already fragile Iranian economy and caused a huge security deficit in many parts of the country.

After the Constitutionalists' victory over the Monarchists the immature Iranian parliamentary system was barely able to stand on its own feet before being hit by the devastating effects of World War 1. Despite Iran's declared position of neutrality and non-alliance, the Great War invited itself to Iran and created a situation in which security became people's primary demand and order and discipline became the most desired objects. Therefore it is understandable why the early founders of political parties in Iran favoured the enforcement of "discipline and order" over other party qualities and functions.

Not knowing what to expect from a political party was and still is one of the inadequacies of the Iranian partisanship culture. It is true that for an "assemblage" to be called a "party" a degree of internal discipline is the minimum requirement, otherwise the assembly will disintegrate, it is also correct that most political parties in the world strive to form the government. However, the

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<sup>1</sup> Malek ol Sho'ara Bahar, *Tarikhche mokhtasare ahzabe syasi dar Iran* [A Brief history of Political Parties in Iran], vol. 2, Tehran, AmirKabir, 1999, p. 18.

enforcement of an authoritarian discipline and order should by no means be viewed as the necessary or innate function or requirement of political parties.

A generation after Bahar, another Iranian intellectual – Jalal Ale Ahmad – made progress in identifying the sources of the historical failure of parties in Iran. In his influential book “Occidentosis: A Plague from the West” (1961), Ale Ahmad, a prominent Iranian intellectual and critic argued that in order to move beyond “political cabals” in Iran there must be an advanced Western style economy in place in the country, otherwise these cabals would not become more than “political factions”. He also recognises “freedom of speech, freedom of expression of belief, freedom of access to the media” as the preconditions of the Western democracy.<sup>3</sup>

Ale Ahmad then reemphasises the above-mentioned points when explaining what is needed in Iran in order to have a proper democracy.

One may speak of democracy in this country – that is, one may say that the will of the people has been expressed – only when the following conditions have been met:

1. The great local powers, the landlords, and the surviving tribal chieftains are denied free rein and influence to interfere with voting.
2. The media and propaganda organs are not monopolised by the governments of the time but are made available to their opposition.
3. Parties have appeared in their real form, not in the form of contemptible political factions, and have taken on a far broader scope.
4. The security forces, SAVAK in particular, have been severely restrained from intervention in the affairs of the nation.<sup>4</sup>

Although Ale Ahmad’s book was not about the historical failure of the party system in Iran, he illuminated some of the main areas of weakness in Iranian parties.

In an effort to answer the key question: “why party system has not consolidated in Iran?”, Iranian intellectuals and scholars so far mostly focused on the unaccommodating political culture and other domestic and adverse international factors. However none to date have looked at the problem from the angle of the organisational analysis. In this study the primary ambition is to treat the Iranian parties for what they really are, which are organisations. By studying the organisational order in the

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<sup>3</sup> Jalal Al-i Ahmad, *Occidentosis: A Plague From the West*, Translated by R. Campbell, Berkeley, Mizan Press, 1984, pp. 109-110.

<sup>4</sup> Al-i Ahmad, *Occidentosis: A Plague From the West*, p. 110.

Iranian parties, the specifications and the typology of these parties comes into the light and one can have a realistic expectation of political parties in Iran.

## Literature Review and Methodology

Most literature on the politics and political parties in Iran written by area specialists with a deep and incisive knowledge of the context e.g. Ervand Abrahamian<sup>5</sup>, Houchang Chehabi<sup>6</sup>, Kheirollah Esmaili<sup>7</sup> and Mozafar Shahedi<sup>8</sup> provide lengthy descriptions of single parties with little contribution to broader debates in the field of political party research and they largely ignore the relevant political science literature which deals with parties from the standpoint of their organisational core (e.g. Ostrogorski<sup>9</sup>, Weber<sup>10</sup>, Michels<sup>11</sup> and Duverger<sup>12</sup>). Therefore, I will rely on this observation (that political parties are organisations) as the starting point to provide a rigorous and novel account of the dynamics and trajectory of change in two political parties in Iran after the revolution IRP and Mosharekat, since Parties including those in authoritarian regimes are organisations

This study draws on a conceptual framework constructed from the works of Panebianco<sup>13</sup>, Katz & Mair<sup>14</sup>, Kirchheimer<sup>15</sup> and Harmel & Janda<sup>16</sup>. Kirchheimer and Katz & Mair argue that change in the party is incremental and responsive to changes in the environment, while Panebianco and Harmel & Janda suggest that party organisational change can be an abrupt process resulting from

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<sup>5</sup> Ervand Abrahamian, *The Iranian Mojahedin*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.

<sup>6</sup> Houchang. E. Chehabi, *Iranian politics and religious modernism: the liberation movement of Iran under the Shah and Khomeini*, London, I. B. Tauris, 1990.

<sup>7</sup> Khairollah Esmaili, *Hezbe jomhourie eslami*, [Islamic Republic Party], Tehran, The Centre for Islamic Revolution Documents, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Mozafar Shahedi, *Hezbe rastakhiz eshte bahe bozorg* [Rastakhiz Party: A Big Mistake], Tehran, PSRI, 2003.

<sup>9</sup> Moisei Ostrogorski, and Seymour Martin Lipset, *Democracy and the Organisation of Political Parties*. New Brunswick, Transaction books, 1982.

<sup>10</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, Berkley, University of California Press, 1978.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study Of The Oligarchical Tendencies Of Modern Democracy*, Glencoe, Free Press, 1915.

<sup>12</sup> Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organisation and Activity in the Modern State*, London, Methuen, 1954.

<sup>13</sup> Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organisation and Power*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Katz and Peter Mair, "Party Organisation, Party Democracy, and the Emergence of the Cartel Party", In Peter Mair (ed), *Party System Change*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997.

<sup>15</sup> Otto Kirchheimer, "The Transformation of the Western European Party System" In Joseph La Palombara and Mayron Weiner (eds), *Political Parties and Political Development*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1966, pp. 190-191.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Harmel and Kenneth Janda, "An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change", *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 6, no. 3 (1994), p. 264, [<http://jtp.sagepub.com/content/6/3/259>], 14 March 2011

decisions of the party elite as they in turn respond to either electoral defeats or other forms of failure to achieve main objectives. This doctoral research demonstrated the utility of combining these approaches to be inclusive of both incremental and abrupt change, environmental and elite decision-making factors. Furthermore, to put the decisions of party elites in their historical framework context and to address the problem of poor party institutionalisation in Iran this research will also draw on a number of other research streams such as Paul Pierson's<sup>17</sup> and B.Guy Peters's<sup>18</sup>. To explain the complexity of the Iranian case I draw on Katouzian's well-known theory of arbitrary state and short-term society<sup>19</sup> as well as Arang Keshavarzian's theory of fragmented authoritarianism<sup>20</sup>.

Party elites are generally more involved in politics than the mass public. The party's leadership is usually comprised of a group of party elites. In state-parties, the elites are the core elements in a legislator and the executive branches of the state. To better understand the role of elites in political parties this study is informed by hypothesis developed by social scientists such as Max Weber<sup>21</sup>, Joseph Schumpeter<sup>22</sup> and Seymour Martin Lipset<sup>23</sup>.

In the weakly institutionalised parties the role of the elites becomes ever more important. Those party elites who control the crucial "zones of uncertainty" have more influence on the party organisation in their respective fields. To apply theories of uncertainty and zones of organisational uncertainty to parties in Iran, this doctoral research also draws on Anthony Downs<sup>24</sup>, and Panebianco<sup>25</sup>.

Incentives in both "selective" and "collective" forms are important tools in the hands of party leaders (especially those who control the Financing and Recruitment zones of uncertainty) to pay for the desired form of participation from the grassroots and elites. I expanded this discussion by incorporating literature on incentives by Panebianco<sup>26</sup> and Chester Barnard.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Paul Pierson, *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2004.

<sup>18</sup> B. Guy Peters, *Institutional Theory in Political Science: The New Institutionalism*, London, Continuum, 2005.

<sup>19</sup> See Homa Katouzian, "The short-term society: a study in the problems of long-term political and economic development in Iran", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 40: 1. (2004), p.1-22. and Homa Katouzian, *State and Society in Iran: The Eclipse of the Qajar and the Emergence of the Pahlavies*, London, I.B. Tauris, 2006.

<sup>20</sup> Arang Keshavarzian, "Contestation Without Democracy: Elite Fragmentation In Iran", in. Marsha Pripstein Posusney and Michele Penner Angrist (eds), *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, Colorado, Rienner, 2005.

<sup>21</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, Berkley, University of California Press, 1978.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, London, Compton Printing Works, 1959

<sup>23</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*, London, Heinemann, 1960.

<sup>24</sup> Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, New York, Harper & Row, 1957.

<sup>25</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*.

<sup>26</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*.

The methodology that I use in my thesis is a qualitative method. According to Roger Pierce, “In the main, qualitative method is preferred because it is considered best suited to the study, understanding and explanation of the complexities of social and political life”.<sup>28</sup>

Using the conceptual frameworks of the literature I developed a historical analytical narrative of the development of the parties under the Islamic Republic of Iran, accounting for their organisational structures, ideological evolution and internal distributions of power. Data for this has been drawn primarily from secondary literature and party documentation.

In addition, I have conducted an in-depth study of the debates within the parties’ alterations in their internal organisation and structures, adjustments in the articulation of their discourses, their election campaigns and manifestos, their electoral performance and their subsequent performance in Majles and the government as well as alterations and adjustments in their strategies and policies. Data for this has been drawn from party documentation, campaign materials, party websites and on-line resources, semi-structured interviews with party officials, parliamentarians, political activists, independent and thirdparty analysis from local and international media sources and academia, and through personal observation.

The interviewees for this study, were chosen on the basis of their knowledge, experience and position in the fields of political parties in Post-Revolution Iran. However, because of the especial political situation in Iran it was very difficult to gain access to numerous potential interviewees in this field; many former IRP members have become key figures in the IRI regime (such as the Supreme Leader and Hashemi Rafsanjani), thus hardly accessible; on the other hand, some of the opposition party members were reluctant to give away important information fearing that it might be used against them by the regime. Therefore accessibility and willingness to be interviewed were important factors in the selection of interviewees.

I chose IRP and Mosharekat as case studies because they were parties in power or ruling parties in the Islamic Republic of Iran and both enjoyed enough organisational capabilities to be considered a *political party*. The other Post-Revolution, government “party”, *Kargozaran*, is not part of this study since, although it was established during Hashemi and by his direct support, it lacked organisational capabilities; the so-called party was only active during the election times

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<sup>27</sup> Chester I. Barnard, *The Functions of Executives*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1938.

<sup>28</sup> Roger Pierce, *Research Methods in Politics: A Practical Guide*, London, SAGE Publications, 2008, p. 45.

(introducing candidates and engaging in election campaigns); once elections were over, there remained little signs of Kargozaran as an organisation. Therefore, only IRP and Mosharekat are examined as cases studies in this doctoral research, although where relevant, discussion of Kargozaran and other minor parties is also included in the chapters that investigates IRP and Mosharekat party.

The IRP section of this study is more extensive than the section on Mosharekat. This is because Mosharekat is a more recent case than the IRP; the number of journal articles, monographs, and books with insightful information about IRP is much more than those with useful information about Mosharekat as an organisation. Because IRP belongs to the past, many of its former members felt safe to share their memories of the party's various competing factions with the public. This is while Mosharekat is a relatively young party and since 2004 when most of its members were barred from elections, it was continuously suppressed by the regime. That leads its members to be very careful not to give away information about their intra-party disputes or to confirm the existence of a variety of factions inside the party, fearing that this information might be used against them by their enemies.

For references and bibliography I have used the standard set out by the Chicago manual of style 15<sup>th</sup> edition. I have also employed a method of transliteration which is most compatible with the pronouncement of them in Farsi. Similar to the method employed by Ervand Abrahamian<sup>29</sup>, I have modified the version devised by the Library of Congress. In my modified version, place names well known in the English-speaking world (e.g. Tehran, Isfahan, and Mashad) and the well-established transliterations such as Poet Laureate, Fiqh, and Shia have been kept in their familiar form. Letters "o" and "e" have been introduced to denote their equivalent sounds in Persian and diacritical marks have been eliminated.

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<sup>29</sup> Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, Princeton , Princeton University, 1982.



## **Change in Party Organisation in Iran after the Revolution**

The aim of this study is to provide an analysis of the change in Iranian political parties after 1979; to examine the intra-party dynamics of power as well as the external environment of parties which stimulated their change after the revolution. The aim of this doctoral research is also to investigate the causes of the weak party institutionalisation in Iran after the revolution.

The organisational order of parties in Iran has seen much confusion. This instability in party development came as a result of three main factors:

1. The uncertainty and hostility in the party environment, including, but not exclusive to, the state's interference and coercion.
2. Iranian political parties' internal dynamics of power or organisational order.
3. The strong tendency for arbitrary rule in Post-Revolution Iran.

Therefore, when studying Iranian political parties, in addition to studying the social stratification, the external environment and the role of the state, the internal power dynamics or the organisational dimension of the parties must be examined to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the different types of parties and different stages of parties in Iran after the revolution.

In addition, because of the inevitable effects of the technological advancements and the partial modernisation in Iran, society has been through a lot of developments since the revolution of 1979. These changes have had direct and indirect effects on the nature of political contestation and participation in Iran. The developments that occurred during these three decades in the Iranian polity and society have resulted in the birth of a new party type, characterised by the *Mosharekat* party which is typologically different from a party like the Islamic Republic Party formed at the beginning of the revolution. These new developments shall be examined to determine the changes in post-revolution Iranian party typology in comparison to the typological developments of parties in the Western democracies.

However, before we proceed to the internal dynamics of parties in Iran, I would like to explain what I mean by the term "political party",

## Defining Political Party

I'm borrowing here Angelo Panebianco's definition of political party. In his book *Political Parties: Organisation and Power*, Panebianco invites us "to study the parties for what they obviously are: *organisations*". His view is in line with Max Weber's study of parties, who asserts that "By definition a party can exist only within an organisation, in order to influence its policy or gain control of it."<sup>30</sup>

Panebianco rejects two common prejudices in literature on parties, namely "sociological prejudice" and "teleological prejudice", as both jeopardise serious organisational analyses of parties.<sup>31</sup> Panebianco's criticism of these two types of prejudices is rather illuminating since he places a huge importance on dynamism of power inside the party itself as the main factor in shaping the fate of the political parties.

### The Sociological Prejudice in Party Definition

While for the "sociological prejudice" the reductionism involved in such an approach is criticised by Panebianco, in the case of "teleological prejudice" he raises a serious question as to whether it is reasonable to ascribe *a priori* goals for political parties and then analyse them with accordance to those so-called goals.<sup>32</sup> Those who hold the sociological prejudice believe that parties have to persistently adapt to their social base but they do not pay attention to parties' potential to actually influence and dominate their social base.

The sociological prejudice consists in the belief that the activities of parties are the product of the "demands" of social groups, and that, more generally, parties themselves are nothing other than manifestations of social divisions in the political arena. Expressions such as "workers parties," "bourgeois parties," "peasant parties," etc. are not only utilized in this perspective for sociographical aims, in order to describe the prevalent social composition of the electorate and/or membership of different parties, but to explain the behaviour of the parties as well. This orientation typically leads to reading internal party conflicts as though they were nothing but conflicts between representatives of different social interests.<sup>33</sup>

Panebianco asserts that those who hold the sociological prejudice see as important only the societal stratification in the study of party and hence their neglect of the "organisational inequalities" that are different from the "societal" ones and will not necessarily mirror it. Robert Michels' "iron law"

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<sup>30</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, Berkley, University of California Press, 1978, p. 285.

<sup>31</sup> Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organization and Power*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, pp. 1-20.

<sup>33</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 3.

of oligarchy is a manifestation of this argument. Michels explains how after successful completion of the institutionalisation phase in the life of a party, and after power become consolidated in the hands of party leaders, the priority shifts from protecting the interests of the social base to defending the leaders survival and interests. Michels explains the step by step process by which a typical mass party moves towards oligarchy; that when an “organ of collectivity” that was created originally because of the need for division of labour, is consolidated, starts creating interests peculiar to itself in contrast to the interests of the “collectivity”. Based on his “universally applicable social law” Michels argues that in the long run a new “dominant class” (elite class) will spring out of the mass party that will seek to protect its own interests, even at the expense of the interests of the masses.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, Panebianco would not be wrong to state that:

Qua organisation, the political party is a system which is at least partly autonomous vis-à-vis social inequalities, and the tensions that often persist within it are primarily the product of such a system. The sociological prejudice thus prevents us from correctly representing the complex relationships between the party and its electoral following, and from identifying the specific inequalities inherent in its organisational behaviour.<sup>37</sup>

## **The Teleological Prejudice in Party Definition**

With regard to the second type of prejudice the issue is more delicate. The teleological prejudice aims to predetermine *a priori* goals for an organisation whether “ideological” or “functional” and then assess the organisation’s behaviour according to the given goals. This approach to the problem leads to the definitions of parties as “bourgeois parties” “workers’ parties,” and so on to predetermine the direction and results of the analysis.<sup>38</sup>

## **Two Types of Teleological Prejudices**

According to Panebianco, there are two types of teleological prejudices: “the first privileges definitions related to the ideological aims of the party, while the second privileges so-called minimal definitions, i.e. based on those aims that all parties are supposed to share”.<sup>40</sup> In the case of the ideological version, a declared ideology of a party would determine its organisational aims and behaviour. Those who hold this proposition to be true divide the political parties into categories such as “revolutionary” or “democratic”, and based on this categorisation, attribute goals of revolution to the revolutionary party and those of democratisation to the Democratic Party.

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<sup>36</sup> Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study Of The Oligarchical Tendencies Of Modern Democracy*, Glencoe, Free Press, 1915, pp. 406-407.

<sup>37</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 4.

The problem with this kind of prejudice is that it holds *a priori* that parties are goal-oriented organisations, but holding such huge claims can never be justified solely as a self-evident basic fact. In other words, this hypothesis must be examined against empirical evidence. However, even if we accept that parties are “goal-oriented” organisations, why should a declared ideology constitute the real aims of the party? Couldn't there be other aims, more real aims pursued by the party which does not comply with its declared ideology?<sup>41</sup> Moreover couldn't different actors in the same party even at the rank of elites pursue different and sometimes opposing goals?

The second version of teleological prejudice, with attributing minimal aims to a party such as electoral victory or party survival.<sup>42</sup> But is this correct in all cases? Panebianco's answer is negative. In fact there are many political parties in the world that don't have the ambition to have a major electoral victory and gain power such as many small communist parties in Western European countries. In addition, as “Michels observed – parties so frequently adopt courses of action predictably destined to penalise them electorally, or at least act in ways which will not procure them electoral gains.”<sup>43</sup>

## **Why Parties Change?**

I agree with Panebianco's Minimalist definition of party because of Panebianco's focusing on parties as organisations and because his definition it is distant from the Sociological and Teleological prejudices. Panebianco defines parties as the only organisations that operate in the electoral arena and compete for votes, thus leaving open the question of their goals.<sup>44</sup>

Adopting Panebianco's approach is not to forget the role of Iran's civil society and social stratification in the study of the political parties. In fact Panebianco's emphasis on party environment means that organisations of civil society which are an important part of party environment and play an important role in party order. In addition, political economy and political culture are also important factors in the study of political parties. However I agree with Panebianco's emphasis on the Organisational and Power analysis of political parties, and the importance he attributes to the intra-party dynamism, which includes both elites and activists but

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<sup>41</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 5.

<sup>42</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 5.

<sup>43</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>44</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 6.

especially elites. Panebianco sees the power as relational, asymmetric and reciprocal, and for that reason he criticises the observation of some scholars who reduce power to “property which some possess and others don’t”.<sup>45</sup> Panebianco defines power as “the relation of unequal exchange”, which best illustrates the internal dynamism of power in a party organisation. Accordingly, the relation of exchange in the party is almost always unequally distributed between the leaders who provide “incentives” and the participators (activists, members and electorate) who provide the leaders with the “preferred forms of participation” ( not the kind that contests the leadership).<sup>46</sup>

Like Panebianco<sup>47</sup> and Harmel and Janda<sup>48</sup> I accept the premise that parties are basically conservative organisations, which will not change simply for the sake of change. Party change when it happens is either a choice (of the leaders or the party elites) or because of the circumstances that more or less are out of the party’s hands, for example the change in the technology (in the case of catch-all parties) or a change in the environment (for example a change in the hunting ground) but most changes according to Panebianco happen for a mixture of both internal and external stimulates.

In addition change is not a one way street; parties affect their environment as well as being effected by them. The party environment factors that are most relevant to its change can be divided into two broad categories: There are socioeconomic factors, such as the racial and occupational composition of the society, The cleavage map of the society, the degree of urbanization, and the educational level of its citizens and there are the political factors, such as the behavior of the state, the structure of the legislature, the type of electoral system, and the frequency of elections. Panebianco deals with the ways in which parties affect their environment when explaining the dilemma of “adaptation versus domination of the environment”.

Every organisation must, at least to some extent, develop a strategy of domination over its external environment. Such a strategy is generally manifested in a sort of “disguised” imperialism whose function is to reduce environmental uncertainty, i.e. to safeguard the organisation from surprises (e.g. the challenges made by other organisations) which may come from the environment. But a strategy of domination is at the same time likely to provoke violent reactions from the other organisations menaced by it. A strategy of domination adopted to *reduce* environmental uncertainty can thus turn out to be counterproductive: it can lead to an increase of environmental uncertainty. Every organisation will thus be pushed by its relations with the external world in two different directions at the same time: it will be tempted both to colonize its environment through domination, and to “reach a pact” with it through adaptation.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 21.

<sup>46</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, pp. 21-48.

<sup>47</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*.

<sup>48</sup> Harmel and Janda, “An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change”.

<sup>49</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, pp. 12-13.

Panebianco<sup>50</sup> identifies four organisational dilemmas that are important issues in the survival of political parties, i.e. the survival of political parties is dependent upon maintaining a clever balance between the components of these dilemmas, in other words counterbalancing the following contradictory needs,

1. The first dilemma: rational model versus natural systems model.
2. The second dilemma: collective versus selective incentives.
3. The third dilemma: adaptation versus domination of the environment.
4. The fourth dilemma: freedom of action versus organisational constraints.

In each of these four dilemmas Panebianco's position is in the middle; he provides a party change theory that comprises rational model and natural model, collective and selective incentives, adaptation and domination of environment and finally freedom of action and organisational constraints.

On the question of whether party change is determined or developmental. Panebianco associates the first the first view with the work of Robert Michels<sup>51</sup>. However the developmental view, to which Panebianco himself subscribes, finds "organisational change as the effect of change in alliances among organisational actors, not as stemming from an organisation's necessary development. There is no obligatory path to organisational change in this perspective"<sup>52</sup>.

On the topic of whether party change is internal or non-internal, Panebianco's answer comes in the form of a comparison between two organisational models: rational and natural. According to the rational model, organisations are goal-oriented systems. In other words everything happens in the organisation for a reason and that reason is the materialisation of a specific goal. However Panebianco brings three objections to this model, stating that aims of organisations are never fixed once and forever and that different actors in the organisation might pursue different aims.<sup>53</sup>

There is an alternative model which Panebianco investigated, and that is the natural model. In this model it is the internal "give and take" between the stakeholders themselves and the stakeholders and the manager of an organisation that determines the nature of the organisation

Panebianco stands somewhere between these two models (rational and natural) since he is not convinced that the goals are irrelevant to the path that an organisation might take. According to

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<sup>50</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*.

<sup>51</sup> Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study Of The Oligarchical Tendencies Of Modern Democracy*, Glencoe, Free Press, 1915.

<sup>52</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, 239-240

<sup>53</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 7.

Panbianco “the Organisations are initially created to realize certain aims shared by their creators, and are thus structured on the basis of these aims (according to the rational model). With the passing of time, however, organisations develop both a growing tendency towards self-preservation and a growing diversification of aims on the part of the actors (according to the natural systems model).”<sup>54</sup>

On the subject of whether the origins of change are exogenous or endogenous, Panbianco associates the first with the idea that party change is externally induced by changes in the environment and the second view with the idea that party changes result “mainly due to changes in the organisation’s internal distribution of power”.<sup>55</sup>

However parties according to Panbianco change only when both external stimulus and internal preconditions of change are met.

The most persuasive hypothesis, in our opinion, is that organisational change is, in most cases, the effect of an external stimulus (environmental and/or technological) which joins forces with internal factors which were themselves undermining the power structure (even, for example, generational changes). The external stimulus acts as a catalyser accelerating power structure transformation (e.g. of resource distribution among different groups) where the internal preconditions of this transformation already existed. And change in the power structure (according to the theory of political development) stimulates organisational innovation. When neither environmental challenges nor internal preconditions are present, organisational change cannot take place.<sup>56</sup>

Following Panbianco’s hypothesis Harmel and Janda explore a variety of possibilities according to which change can occur in parties. They differ with Panbianco in three ways. First, They believe that some party changes can be explained by internal factors alone i.e. without external stimulus. Second, they try to be more explicit about the concept of external stimulus according to Panbianco’s model. Finally they see failure in meeting party’s main objective as the most important force behind party change.<sup>57</sup>

Accordingly different parties might have different aims and various factions within one party may have different goals but the “dominant collation” of each party has one primary goal and according to Harmel and Janda failure in meeting that primary goal that may as well occur as a result of an external shock is the major reason why parties change.

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<sup>54</sup> Panbianco, *Political Parties*, p. 13.

<sup>55</sup> Panbianco, *Political Parties*, p. 242.

<sup>56</sup> Panbianco, *Political Parties*, p. 280.

<sup>57</sup> Harmel and Janda, “An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change”, p. 265.

Harmel and Janda put emphasis on the role of “External Shocks” (such as the Collapse of Berlin Wall for the Soviet Communist party) and internal stimulus (such as change in the party leadership) in the party change. However, they give the primacy to the meeting of the party’s primary goal:

The most potent external stimuli are those which cause a party to re-evaluate its effectiveness in meeting its primary goal, whether that be electoral success or something else. These externally induced “shocks” to the party’s internal system can catalyze a process of change that reaches more broadly and cuts more deeply than can occur as the result of internal changes (such as changes in leadership and/or the dominant faction) alone.<sup>58</sup>

They differentiate between Vote Seeking Parties, Office Seeking Parties, Internal Democracy Seeking Parties and Policy Seeking parties. While for the vote seeking parties “*those that pursue winning elections as their primary goal the more pronounced their electoral failures, the more likely they are to change*”, For the policy-seeking parties, “*those that advocate policies as their primary goal – the more pronounced their failures to satisfy their policy clientele, the more likely they are to change*”.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Harmel and Janda, “An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change”, p. 265.

<sup>59</sup> Harmel and Janda, “An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change”, p. 281.



# 1. Chapter One: The Organisational Order of Political Parties

To better understand Panebianco's organisational analysis of parties we should first understand which organisation theory he is using. In the following the organisation theory of Panebianco, which is a marriage between two schools of thought (Rational and Natural), is explained.

## 1.1. The Rational Model

Panebianco divides the organisational theories into two categories, rational and natural.<sup>62</sup> According to the rational model, organisations are goal-oriented systems. In other words everything happens in the organisation for a reason and that reason is the materialisation of a specific goal.<sup>63</sup>

According to the rational model, organisations are primarily instruments for the realization of specific (and specifiable) goals. The organisation's internal arrangement is comprehensible only in the light of its goals. Each of the organisation's members participates in the realization of the goals through his assigned role in the organisation's internal division of labor, and only this aspect of his behaviour is relevant for the functioning of the organisation. If the organisation is also a voluntary association, the identification of the participants with the organisation's goals is explained on the basis of a common "cause."<sup>64</sup>

However Panebianco brings three objections to this model, stating that aims of organisations are never fixed once and forever and that different actors in the organisation might pursue different aims.

First of all the "real" aims of an organisation are never determinable *a priori*. It has been widely demonstrated, for instance, that the aim of a firm is never the simple maximization of profits. The activities of the firm are often subordinated to other goals, whose elucidation requires *ad hoc* investigations. These goals may vary from the maintenance of the stability of internal lines of authority, to a simple defence of the portion of the market already conquered by the firm. Secondly, a plurality of aims are often pursued within an organisation, sometimes as many as there are actors in the organisation... Finally, as Michels has demonstrated, the true objective of an organisation leader often is not that of pursuing the manifest aims for which the organisation was established, but rather that of ensuring the organisation's survival (and with it the survival of their own power positions).<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> For an extensive explanation of different organisation theories see John McAuley, Joanne Duberley and Phil Johnson, *Organisation Theory: Challenges and Perspectives*, Essex, Financial Times Press, 2007.

<sup>63</sup> For this perspective see the influential article by Talcott Parsons, "Suggestions for a Sociological Approach to the Theory of Organisation," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, XVIII (1973) pp. 291-310.

<sup>64</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>65</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 7.

The art of a good manager is to reconcile these different aims that at times might contradict each other. Hence Panebianco's belief that party elites must have good entrepreneurial and mediation skills in order to survive the power game in the party at phase three of his ideal type. This will be mentioned later in this chapter.

## 1.2. The Natural Model

There is an alternative model which Panebianco, and Abrahamsson before him, investigated, and that is the natural model. In this model it is the internal "give and take" between the stakeholders themselves and the stakeholders and the manager of an organisation that determines the nature of the organisation.

In contrast to the basic ideas of the rationalistic tradition, the systems perspective does not see the organisation primarily as an instrument for the realization of the mandator's goals. Rather, the organisation is perceived as a structure which responds to, and adjusts itself to, a multitude of demands from various stakeholders, and which tries to maintain balance by reconciling these demands. The organisation's management acquires a kind of mediator role, i.e., a role of weighing the demands from different stakeholders against each other. One can contrast this role description to that forwarded by the rationalistic tradition, in which the organisational management is seen more as the "extended arm" of the mandatory.<sup>66</sup>

Panebianco stands somewhere between these two models (rational and natural). He lists the consequences of the natural system as follows:

The natural systems model implies, more specifically, three consequences concerning the problem of "organisational aims:" (1) The "official" aims are, in the majority of cases, but a façade behind which the real aims are concealed. (2) The real aims can be conceived only as a result of each successive equilibrium reached within the organisation between a plurality of demands and goals in a competitive context. (3) The only aim that the different participants have in common – and this isn't even always guaranteed – their lowest common denominator (which prevents an organisational "deflagration") is the survival of the organisation. This is precisely the condition that allows the different actors to continue to follow their own particular objectives.<sup>67</sup>

However, Panebianco is not convinced that the goals are irrelevant to the path that an organisation might take. According to Panebianco the purpose of an organisation changes from its early stages through to its maturity.

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<sup>66</sup> Bengt Abrahamsson, *Bureaucracy or Participation: The Logic of Organisation*, London, Sage Publications, 1977, p. 118.

<sup>67</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 8.

Organisations are initially created to realize certain aims shared by their creators, and are thus structured on the basis of these aims (according to the rational model). With the passing of time, however, organisations develop both a growing tendency towards self-preservation and a growing diversification of aims on the part of the actors (according to the natural systems model).<sup>68</sup>

Panbianco then moves on to suggest that once the organisation has matured, the initial aims lose some of their weight in favour of the aim of the organisation's survival. In this stage the need for a mediator who can balance on the one hand the different aims or interests of different stakeholders in the organisation, and on the other the organisation's survival and the organisation's original aims is evermore important.

In a well-established organisation, the importance attached to the survival of the organisation generally prevails over that attached to the pursuit of its original aims. It is also quite clear that the different organisational actors pursue a plurality of often contradictory aims. And, finally, there remains little doubt that organisational equilibrium depends on the way in which the leaders mediate the particular competing demands.<sup>69</sup>

### **1.3. Power, Incentives and Party Organisational Order**

The internal order of a party is maintained through several means and strategies which will be examined in what follows. To examine the party organisational order we must investigate the power structure of the party. In order to understand the organisational order it is important to understand exactly what "power" is and how it is distributed and reproduced within the organisation of a party. In an effort to provide an answer for these enquiries, Panbianco looks at the debates between proponents and opponents of the "iron law of oligarchy", arguing that leaders need to negotiate with other party actors and in most cases to reach an agreement with the followers on the political strategy to be pursued.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Panbianco, *Political Parties*, p. 13.

<sup>69</sup> Panbianco, *Political Parties*, p. 9.

<sup>70</sup> Panbianco, *Political Parties*, p. 21.

Panbianco points at an important weak spot in the Michels' theory regarding the nature of power in organisational order. He illustrates that advocates of the "iron law" see power as something very similar to "property" that some people have and others don't. But for Panbianco power is a relation of exchange.

Power can once again be defined as a relation of exchange, and therefore reciprocal, but in the sense that the exchange is more favourable for one of the parties involved. It is a relation of force, in that one is advantaged over the other, but where the one can, however, never totally be defenceless with respect to the other.<sup>72</sup>

Panbianco concludes that power is never absolute. It is by definition relational and reciprocal and in the context of an organisation such as party an unequal exchange exists between the leader/s of the party and the activists.

One can exercise power over others only by satisfying their needs and expectations; one thereby paradoxically submits oneself to their power. In other words, the power relation between a leader and his followers must be conceived as a relation of unequal exchange in which the leader gets more than the follower, but must nonetheless give something in return.<sup>73</sup>

The currency of this unequal exchange is of course the incentives i.e. in parties incentives are exchanged for participation. Panbianco's model of the system of incentives is similar to Max Weber's "pursuit of interests" in voluntary political organisations. Weber believes that since the business of a party is that of voluntary adherence, there must be an arrangement of "pursuit of interests" in place to keep the organisation going. He immediately reminds us that these are "by no means necessarily an economic category", that interests in party context are either on an ideological basis or on an interest in power as such.<sup>74</sup>

In studying the leadership of the mass party Weber arrives at an astonishing conclusion. "A political party, after all, exists for the very purpose of fighting for domination in the specific sense, and it thus necessarily tends toward a strict hierarchical structure, however carefully it may be trying to hide this fact".<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> M. Crazier, E. Friedberg, *L'Acteur et le systeme*, p.59. (as cited in Panbianco's *Political Parties: Organisation and Power*, p.22.).

<sup>73</sup> Panbianco, *Political Parties*, p. 22.

<sup>74</sup> Weber, *Economy and Society*, p. 285.

<sup>75</sup> Weber, *Economy and Society*, p. 251.

Weber believed that in politically-organised societies, “class”, “status” and “party” were three main aspects of power distribution. He distinguished between power in general (*Macht*) and power in the realm of political leadership or “domination”.<sup>76</sup>

Weber describes and legitimises domination from the point of view of leadership. The difficult situation in Germany after the Great War was partly, if not mainly, responsible for shaping Weber’s concept of domination and of a leadership whose main question was how to dominate its subjects.<sup>77</sup>

In conceptualising his domination theory in a party context, Weber starts by deliberating with the reciprocal quality of the power, according to which “the worker would have the power to command, i.e., “domination” over the entrepreneur to the extent of his wage claim, and the civil servant over the king to the extent of his salary claim.”<sup>78</sup>

However he quickly takes distance from this description and asserts that such a claim will be too general and render the term “domination” scientifically useless. Thus according to Weber “domination” will eventually become translated into authority. Therefore unlike the market relations of power, domination will be very much a one way authoritarian rule.

To be more specific, domination will thus mean the situation in which the manifested will (command) of the ruler or rulers is meant to influence the conduct of one or more others (the ruled) and actually does influence it in such a way that their conduct to a socially relevant degree occurs as if the ruled had made the content of the command the maxim of their conduct for its very own sake. Looked upon from the other end, this situation will be called obedience.<sup>81</sup>

Whether we call it obedience or exchange, in order to maintain control over an organisation such as a party the leaders of any given party would require a mechanism of maintaining their control and carrying on their leadership over the party. If this mechanism is not coercive, it must come as distributing incentives of some kind. The theory of incentives in organisations was first formulated by Chester I. Bernard. In his book *The Function of Executives* he stresses that,

The contributions of personal efforts which constitute the energies of organisations are yielded by individuals because of incentives. The egotistical motives of self-preservation and of self-satisfaction are dominating forces; on the whole, organisations can exist only when consistent with the satisfaction of these motives, unless, alternatively, they can change these motives. The

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<sup>76</sup> John Scott, *Stratification and Power: Structures of Class, Status and Command*, Cambridge, Polity, 1996, p. 22.

<sup>77</sup> Philip Gonon, *The Quest for Modern Vocational Education: Georg Kerschensteiner between Dewey, Weber and Simmel. Series: Studies in Vocational and Continuing Education*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2009, p. 161.

<sup>78</sup> Weber, *Economy and Society*, p. 942.

<sup>81</sup> Weber, *Economy and Society*, p. 246.

individual is always the basic strategic factor in organisation. Regardless of his history or his obligations he must be induced to cooperate, or there can be no cooperation.<sup>82</sup>

“Incentives” are the currency according to which the power exchange is exercised inside the organisation. According to Panebianco, the incentives could be collective or selective. The collective incentives are either “incentives of identity”, “ideology” or “solidarity”. At the beginning of the party’s life people join the party for identity. At the more developed stages when the party ideology and all the initial romanticism is faded the party leaders have to distribute selective “power”, “status” and “material incentives” in order to maintain the required balance inside the party. Accordingly, a careful balance must be maintained between the satisfaction of individual interests through selective incentives and the increase of organisational loyalty through collective incentives.<sup>83</sup>

In comparison, when writing about charismatic leadership, Weber asserts that it is the system of spiritual domination and not religious benefits that best explains the power dynamics of a hierocratic organisation like the church..<sup>85</sup>

Domination in the economic realm is based on the rules of market and it is through the exchange of goods and services that a capitalist gains domination over the market. In this sense no one has a duty to obey a major banker, for instance, but since the market is dominated by that bank the consumers can be manipulated by that banker. Admittedly, the consumer in this scenario has a slight influence over the banker depending on the amount of money in his/her account. However, what most concerned Weber was not domination on the basis of economy, but domination on the basis of authority. In this latter case the domination of the leader will turn into an obedience relationship between the ruler and the ruled. The ruled then will have a duty to obey the ruler. This relationship is certainly reinforced by material incentives, physical coercion and moral inducement, but domination will not become complete without willingness and moral support from the side of the ruled for the ruler.<sup>86</sup>

Panebianco’s political “power”, however, is more similar to Weber’s power on the basis of economy. Panebianco summarises his ideal type: three phases of the power relation or party order inside a party, which, as the figure below shows, is more incentive oriented compared to the duty-based system of domination in Weber’s thesis.

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<sup>82</sup> Chester I. Barnard, *The Functions of Executives*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University press, 1938, p.139.

<sup>83</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>85</sup> Weber, *Economy and Society*, p. 56.

<sup>86</sup> Frank Parkin, *Max Weber: Revisited Edition*, London, Rutledge, 2002, pp. 71-90.

**Figure 1: Panebianco Ideal Type**

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
System of solidarity 1. rational model: the goal is the realisation of the common cause. Ideology is manifest.	Institutionalisation	System of interests 1. natural systems model: the goal is survival and the counterbalancing of particular interests. Ideology is latent.
2. Collective incentives prevail (participation of the “social movement” type).		2. Selective incentives prevail (professional participation).
3. Broad freedom of movement for the leaders.		3. Restricted freedom of movement for the leaders.
4. Strategy: domination of the environment.		4. Strategy: adaptation to the environment.

**Source: Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organisation and Power*, p.20**

Panebianco attributes “domination of environment” to the phase one or the genesis phase of an organisation’s life, when it is in desperate need of accumulating resources and increasing in membership. But once the party has matured through the process of “institutionalisation” and has successfully passed the “survival threshold”, the organisation’s behaviour will shift toward “adaptation to the environment”.<sup>87</sup> It could be suggested that Weber was more concerned with the parties in “phase one” such as mass parties, hence his emphasis on domination. Had he lived long enough to see the “electoral-professional” or “catch-all” type parties( these party types will be discussed in chapter three) his views might have changed about the inevitability of authoritative domination as the foundation of political leadership.

<sup>87</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, pp. 11-20

## 2. Chapter Two: The Problems of Party Institutionalisation in Iran from Path Dependency Point of View

There is a consensus among experts of democratic transition that political parties play a major role in the consolidation of democracy (e.g. Pridham, 1990), As Pasquino (1990) has argued, “not all the processes of transition have been party dominated but all the processes of democratic consolidation have indeed been party dominated”. In other words party system institutionalisation has been viewed as a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the healthy functioning of democracy. In that order, the institutionalisation of individual party is a necessary yet not sufficient condition of party system institutionalisation.

In this chapter the concept of party institutionalisation is examined by drawing on the theory of Historical Institutionalisation in the context of Iranian party environment after the revolution. Panebianco’s conceptualisation of party institutionalisation is also examined to illuminate the similarities and differences with the theory of historical institutionalisation.

“Historical Institutionalism” which is now mostly known by the name “Path Dependency” holds that institutions become incredibly dependent on the historical paths chosen during the “critical junctures” of their institution history. These opportunities or critical junctures mostly occur at the beginning of institutions’ lives. The path that has been chosen at the critical juncture will be difficult to undo after time, money and other resources are invested on that path in an extended period of time. As a result the organisation becomes less dependent on the human agency and more suggestive of the autopilot status.

The “paths” or the choice of policies, although easily altered at the start of an institution, become extremely difficult to veer from once a course is set and considerable progress is made along the path. The path or policy that actors of an institution choose from among different alternatives at the infrequent “critical junctures” of the institution’s history will most probably influence them for a long time, and the longer the process is in place, the more complicated the reversing operation becomes.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> B. Guy Peters, *Institutional Theory in Political Science: The New Institutionalism*, London, Continuum, 2005, pp. 71-87.



Some conditions must be met for institutional performance to be labelled path dependent. First, the choices that are made during the critical junctures in the history of any institution, be it a party or a parliament, are more significant than the choices made before or after that juncture. For instance, the decisions made in the first two years of the Islamic revolution in Iran, such as inserting *Velayate faghih* in the constitution, the establishment of the IRGC and the nationalisation of all major industries could have been altered with less difficulty at the beginning of the IRI's life, but once a considerable amount of time passes and more resources invested on that path changing the routes taken proves to be more difficult, unless a *critical juncture* arrives again, for example the serious illness of Ayatollah Khomeini was one of these *critical junctures*.

Another necessary condition for the occurrence of a path dependence process in an institution is "Positive Feedback", which in simple words means "self-reinforcement process in institutions". This self-reinforcement dynamics is the main drive behind any given example of path dependency. Early decisions, choices and developments in institutions get deeply embedded in the structure of these institutions, and changing these embedded policies after years of investing on them would involve heavy costs on behalf of those who have benefited for so long from the old arrangements, especially when these benefits would feed back into the organisation as a benefactor which in turn reinforces the favoured path.

Positive feedback dynamics capture two key elements central to most analysts' intuitive sense of path dependence. First, they clearly reveal how the costs of switching from one alternative to another will, in certain social contexts, increase markedly over time. Second, and related, they draw attention to issues of timing and sequence, distinguishing formative moments or conjunctures from the periods that reinforce divergent paths. In a process involving positive feedback, it is not just a question of what happens, but of when it happens. Issues of temporality are at the heart of the analysis.<sup>89</sup>

Path dependency's main claim is that once solidified, institutions will have a life of their own that is somehow independent from the actors' short-term aims and deliberations.

In the context of political parties, the policies and the choices that party leaders make at the infant stage of a party are easier to change than when the party is solidified. These first measures can set a convention that after a while it would be hard to break, not because of dogma or the conservativeness of the party leaders, but because those policies will cause a chain reaction that would feed the path and cause a long lasting "inertia" in the system. For example, the reason why it is difficult to break the cycle of the Rentier State in many oil-producing countries is the fact that it

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<sup>89</sup> Paul Pierson, *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 19.

is less profitable to invest in other lines of industry than the oil sector. Therefore all the capital in the market shifts toward the oil industry, leaving other sections of the economy suffering from under-investment. What is more significant is that after a period of time most people will adapt their way of life, commerce and politics to the implications of the oil economy such as the Dutch Disease and Rentier state, and once the livelihood of the majority of people in the country becomes reliant on that kind of economy and state, it is difficult to alter course from the situation they are accustomed to.<sup>90</sup> Similar trajectories are found in path-dependency cases.

Paul Pierson explains the path-dependency course of action as below,

To summarize briefly, in settings where self-reinforcing processes are at work political life is likely to be marked by four features:

1. Multiple equilibria. Under a set of initial conditions conducive to positive feedback, a range of outcomes is generally possible.
2. Contingency. Relatively small events, if occurring at the right moment, can have large and enduring consequences.
3. A critical role for timing and sequencing. In these path-dependent processes, when an event occurs may be crucial. Because early parts of a sequence matter much more than later parts, an event that happens "too late" may have no effect, although it might have been of great consequence if the timing had been different.
4. Inertia. Once such a process has been established, positive feedback will generally lead to a single equilibrium. This equilibrium will in turn be resistant to change.<sup>91</sup>

It is important to note that it is possibly easier to correct mistakes in the economy than in politics. This is because usually in economic situations wrong decisions can be altered after a process of competition and learning. This is not the same for politics due to the "winner takes it all" quality that is involved in choices that are taken in politics. Therefore learning from mistakes might not result in a fast change of policy in politics.

Under circumstances where picking the wrong horse may have very high costs, actors must constantly adjust their behaviour in the light of expectations of how they expect others to act. Whether you put energy into developing a new party, join a potential coalition, or provide resources to an interest group may depend to a considerable degree on your confidence that a large number of other people will do the same. In addition, many types of collective action involve high start-up costs. Considerable resources (material or cultural) need to be expended on organizing before the group becomes self-sustaining.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> For more information about the impact of rentier economy on transition to democracy see Michael Dauderstadt, and Arne Schildberg, *Dead ends of Transition: Rentier Economies and Protectorates*, Frankfurt, Campus Verlag, 2006.

<sup>91</sup> Pierson, *Politics in Time*, p. 44.

<sup>92</sup> Pierson, *Politics in Time*, p. 33.

## 2.1. Party Institutionalisation According to Panebianco

One of Panebianco's limitations in his theory is that it is not clear what he exactly means by the term institutionalisation, since he loads the term with meanings from autonomy vis-à-vis the environment to the degree of the interdependence of its different internal actors.<sup>93</sup> While in "phase three" of his ideal type the party that passed the point of institutionalisation undertakes the strategy of "adaptation to the environment",<sup>94</sup> in chapter eleven of the same book he claims that "The greater the institutionalisation, the less the party tends to passively adapt itself to the environment, and the more it is able to dominate it; and vice-versa: the weaker the institutionalisation, the greater its passive adaptation tends to be."<sup>95</sup> In other words Panebianco believes that reverse move in the institutionalisation i.e. deinstitutionalisation, is a common theme in the case of recent European parties (parties in phase three of his ideal type). Panebianco draws upon Sartori in explaining that at the birth of a party the system of solidarity prevails but at the later stages and in time this system gives its place to a system of interests. He believes that parties which operate in predictable, stable environments tend to be more institutionalised than parties in "uncertain environments".

## 2.2. Freedom of Action versus Organisational Constraints

With regard to the leader's manoeuvrability, Panebianco's theory implies that at the genesis of a party, leaders have more freedom to act autonomously from the rest of the organisation. At "phase one" of the party life "...the leaders' freedom of choice is broad (they are expected to define the ideological goals of the party, to select the social base of the party, and to mould the organisation around these goals and social base)".<sup>97</sup> However, when the organisation reaches its maturity it becomes difficult for the leaders (who are part of the *dominant coalition*) to act on impulses. At this stage the ideology which is in fact a form of *collective incentive* as well, becomes concealed and weak, and leaders become more and more reliant on their entrepreneurial skills (which leaders of this phase must have) in addition to relying on the distribution of the *selective incentives* instead of the party ideology that one day was making ruling easier for them. In the third phase of Panebianco's ideal type, two utilities (entrepreneurship and selective incentives) are necessary to ensure the loyalty to the "dominant coalition" and to reach a consensus between the contesting

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<sup>93</sup> For more discussions on meaning of institutionalisation in Panebianco's book see Edward W. Lehman, "Bringing Political Parties Back In" Rev. of *Political Parties: Organisation and Power* by Angelo Panebianco, *Contemporary Sociology*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (March, 1990), pp. 235-237, [<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2072585>], 23 October 2010

<sup>94</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 19.

<sup>95</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 204.

<sup>97</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 19.

groups and coalitions inside the party. Panebianco's case-studies from which his ideal type emerged were parties in the West and Panebianco himself maintains that these ideal types are not fixed and divergence may occur because of the parties' interaction with other organisations and institutions such as church or unions or unpredicted changes in parties' environment in the future. However, in his own words, "An ideal type of organisational evolution provides, nonetheless, a first approximation which can help us understand the organisational evolution of specific parties."<sup>98</sup>

Panebianco also writes about the "survival threshold" of parties: "A survival threshold would represent the point below which, lacking resources necessary to institutionalise, a party is forced to fight for its survival".<sup>100</sup> However once the survival threshold passed the party can finally institutionalise and move from rational model of organisation to a natural model.

Institutionalisation is, in fact, the process by which an organisation incorporates its founders' values and aims. In the words of Philip Selznick, this process implies the passage from a "consumable" organisation (i.e. a pure means to certain ends) to an *institution*. The organisation slowly loses its character as a tool: it becomes valuable in and of itself, and its goals become inseparable and indistinguishable from it. In this way, its preservation and survival become a "goal" for a great number of its supporters.<sup>101</sup>

A major difference between Panebianco and the proponents of "Path Dependency" theory is that Panebianco puts the emphasis on the leader or what he calls the "dominant coalition" (even in the strongly institutionalised parties). This is while historical institutionalists like Pierson, King<sup>102</sup> and Skocpol<sup>103</sup> give the prominence to the institution itself. For the historical institutionalists the autopilot quality of the path dependent institution is the central idea.

Unlike several of the other approaches to institutionalism, historical institutionalists are not particularly concerned with how individuals relate to the institutions within which they function. There appears to be an implicit assumption of the approach that when individuals choose to participate in an institution they will accept the constraints imposed by that institution, but that linkage is not explored directly by the scholars working in the tradition. Indeed, there is a certain sense of *deus ex machine* in the historical institutionalist approach, with decisions taken at one time appearing to endure on autopilot, individual behaviour being shaped by the decisions made by members of an institution some years earlier.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 20.

<sup>100</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 193.

<sup>101</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 53.

<sup>102</sup> Desmond S. King, *Actively Seeking Work: The Politics of Unemployment and Welfare Policy in the United States*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

<sup>103</sup> Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992.

<sup>104</sup> Peters, *Institutional Theory in Political Science*, p. 80

However both theories hold that leaders at the formative stages of an organisation have more freedom of movement than the later stages when the organisation is institutionalised. Therefore even the historical institutionalists have to accept the prevailing role of the human agency or the role of elites, at least when the institution is being formed.

Now let us look at the Iranian polity from a historical perspective. In Iran normally organisations are short lived. Even crucial institutions such as the parliament and the judiciary system are subject to numerous demolition and reconstruction. This might explain why in Iran the role of elite and human agency is more significant in deciding the fate of the nation, than the role of the autopilot institutions. If we take the governments after the revolution, for instance, we can see that the authorities attributed to positions of Leader, President, Speaker of the Majles, Head of the Expediency Council, Minister and Majles Deputy were dependent, to a great extent, on the persons who were occupying them rather than the constitutional descriptions of the mentioned jobs. Nevertheless, the amount of political influence each politician has in the Islamic republic depends also on the Rentier State reciprocal relations of influence i.e. loyalty in exchange for incentives that mostly comes from oil revenue thus disrupting any chance of a meaningful institutionalisation of any political organisation independent from the state while reinforcing the institutionalisation of Rentier state authoritarianism albeit in its IRI style.

The post of president becomes everything or nothing depending on three variants:

1. Whether the person who occupies it is skilful in the art of politics; that is, does the individual in the place of power have entrepreneurial qualities related to his job?
2. How much incentive can he exchange vis-à-vis other IRI political elites?
3. The depth of uncertainty and hostility in the environment against his government and in the environment during his term in office.

Evidently, to be able to have a favourable relation of exchange i.e. more power, the elites in question should have had plenty of both collective and selective incentives at their disposal. If we take the state as an organisation consisting of different agencies led and coordinated by the leadership we can see that Ayatollah Khomeini, for example, had gigantic amounts of collective incentives to give out. Affiliation to the Imam's line in the IRP membership was the equal to obtaining collective "incentives of identity" and ideology in accordance to the mentioned "system of solidarity". In return, the members of the IRP were acting as Khomeini's muscles in materialising his doctrine of Islamic government. However, every unequal exchange has its sides.

Khomeini occasionally faced difficulties trying to modify his own “line” which many of its die-hard followers regarded as sacred and untouchable. In other words, he had to escape from being a prisoner of his own words, but each time he escaped this “prison” he was alienating a segment of his followers in the process. Therefore, repeatedly he had to switch from one position to another so he could appease as many of his followers as possible.

In contrast, Khomeini’s successor Ali Khamenei did not possess a large amount of “collective incentives” to distribute among his supporters since by the time he became the supreme leader of the Islamic republic the ideology of the revolution was exhausted and latent.

When Khamenei became the supreme leader, the IRP was already closed. Therefore, he had to use his own court *beyte rahbari* as his personalised organisation. In the scarcity of collective incentives he had to distribute huge amounts of “selective incentives” to his supporters within the IRGC, Majles, Friday prayer leaders and Basij, to maintain the relation of unequal exchange in his favour.

However, too much distribution of selective incentives will eventually result in a crisis of legitimacy.

The first internal function of ideology is that of maintaining the identity of the organisation in the eyes of its supporters. The organisational ideology is thus the primary source of collective incentives. The second internal function of ideology is that of concealing the distribution of selective incentives, not only from the eyes of those who do not benefit from them within the organisation, but often even from the eyes of those who do. This dissimulation is of the utmost importance, because excessively visible selective incentives would weaken the credibility of the party as an organisation dedicated to a “cause”, and therefore adversely affect its distribution of collective incentives.<sup>105</sup>

Khamenei tried to compensate for the deficit in his legitimacy with the creation of a new dogma that was especially tailored for him. He was not a Grand Ayatollah or a prominent *marja* when he became leader, therefore the media which was under his command was galvanised to forge him some kind of credibility that was more like a cult of personality than ideology. Efforts were made to portray him as a contemporary Imam Ali and the heir to the Hidden Imam. Slogans such as “we are not the people of Kufa (ancient city in Iraq), to leave our Ali unaided” were repeatedly used, and the distribution of hundreds of thousands of posters, CDs and publication materials which depicted him as some kind of holiness are testimony to this analysis. Also the rates of recurrence of his images in the national TV are persistently more than those of Khomeini during his leadership, which shows Khamenei’s desperate need for the aura of holiness. However, more than anything

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<sup>105</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 11.

else it is the lavish spending of selective incentives, especially to the IRGC and Basiji commanders, in addition of the weakness of opposition groups, that helped him remain in power for so long.

### **2.3. The Relevance of Historical Institutionalism in a Short-Term Society such as Iran**

According to Katouzian, “arbitrary rule” and “short-term society”<sup>106</sup> are the two-fold negative characteristics of the Iranian polity that dramatically hindered the rule of law and the entrenchment of democratic institutions in Iran throughout its history. Katouzian argues that arbitrary rule prevailed throughout different stages of Iran’s history regardless of the strength of the government at any given time. He sees that arbitrary rule is both the cause and the effect of Iran’s backwardness..<sup>107</sup>

Since the democratic institutions in Iran have never had the chance to endure for an “extended period of time”, they could never reach the institutionalisation threshold after which the path dependency could have been attained. In other words, until now the history of most political organisations in Iran consisted of a series of failed attempts of reaching organisational institutionalisation.

Katouzian extends “arbitrary rule” to society as well. In his view “unaccountable state and ungovernable society are two sides of the same coin”.<sup>108</sup> He mentions cases in Iranian history where the ruler’s power was disintegrated and the arbitrary rule that was exercised by the ruler was spread among many actors. Each actor then exercised his share of arbitrary rule according to his real power.

As with feudal and capitalist states and societies, an arbitrary state represented an arbitrary society. Indeed, unaccountable state and ungovernable society are two sides of the same coin.<sup>109</sup>

This ungovernable society then, in turn, would create a breeding ground for a despotic ruler who could save society from the chaos caused by the arbitrary exercise of many. In other words, through trial and error people have learned that one tyrant is better than many and “better the devil you know than the devil you don’t.”

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<sup>106</sup>Homa Katouzian, “The short-term society: a study in the problems of long-term political and economic development in Iran”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 40: 1. (2004), p.1-22.

<sup>107</sup> Homa Katouzian, *State and Society in Iran: The Eclipse of the Qajar and the Emergence of the Pahlavies*, London, I.B. Tauris, 2006, p. 2.

<sup>108</sup> Katouzian, , *State and Society in Iran*, p. 14.

<sup>109</sup> Katouzian, *State and Society in Iran*, p. 14.

If the implications of such a system of political parties in Iran are questioned, they could be answered by the short-term society pattern that Katouzian explains.

Hence the long cycles of arbitrary rule-chaos-arbitrary rule. Compared to the long-term society of Europe, the three main features of the short-term society were: the problems of legitimacy and succession; the tenuous nature of life and possessions; and the great difficulty of long-term capital accumulation as a necessary condition for modern social and economic development. Therefore, history was made up of a series of connected short terms.<sup>110</sup>

According to Katouzian the Iranian “history was made up of a series of connected short terms” and this in itself is an anti-institutionalisation factor. Those who advocate historical institutionalism believe that path dependency process occurs only if “extended period of time” is given to the “positive feedback” to reinforce the path. In other words, inertia and positive feedback complement each other in path dependency and they need time to fully function. Proponents of historical institutionalism believe that resilience over time and growing costs of revision for one chosen path will make the return from the path taken at the critical juncture very difficult. What is central in this theory is the time factor.

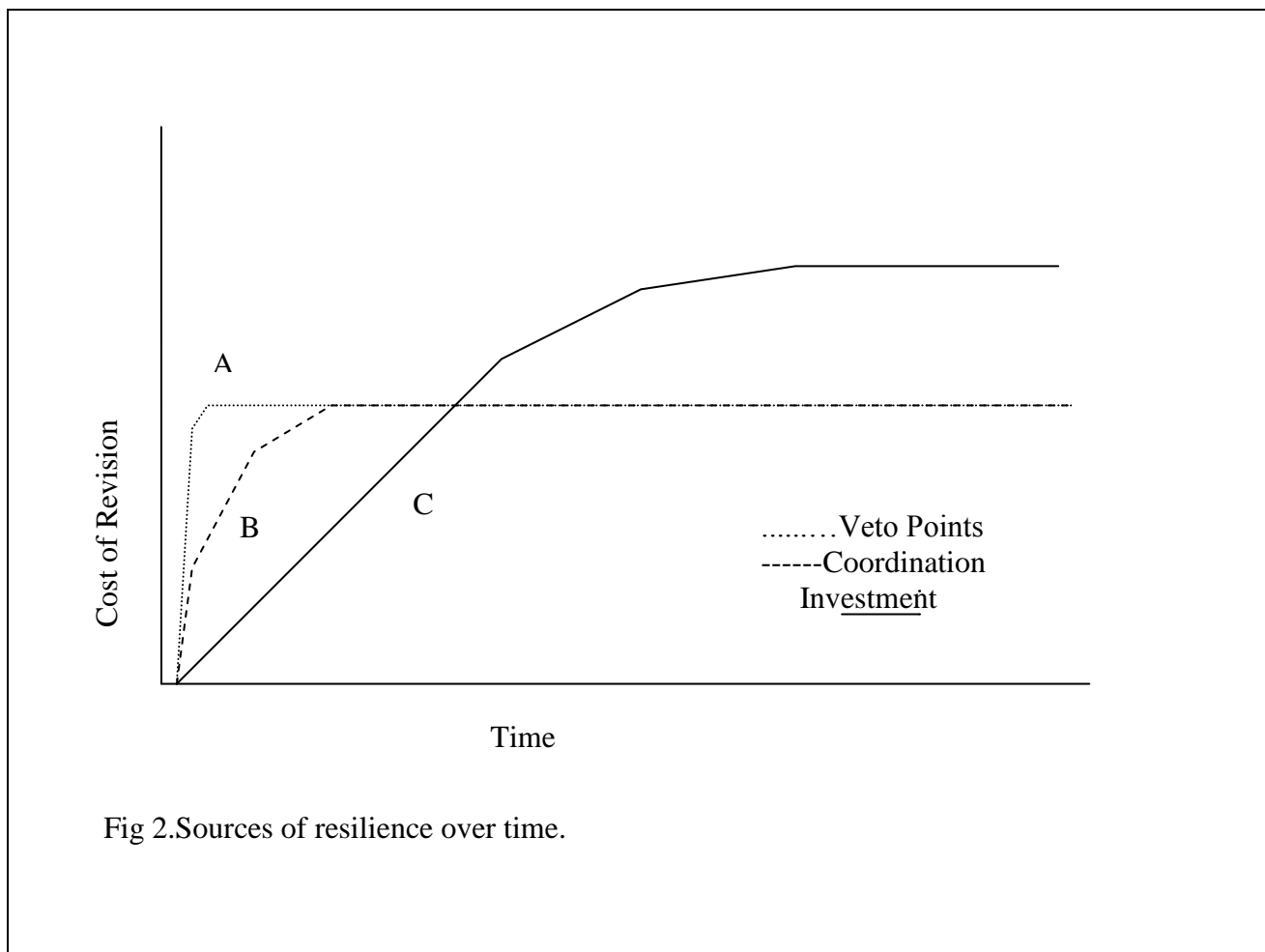
This is best explained in Pierson’s diagram below, which shows that while the costs of coordination and veto point reach a plateau after a period of time, the cost of investment and positive feedback will grow by a long way.

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<sup>110</sup> Homa Katouzian, “The short-term society: a study in the problems of long-term political and economic development in Iran”, p. 19.



Figure 2: Sources of resilience over time



Source: Pierson, *Politics in Time*, p. 151

It can be seen from the above figure that, “In short, while arguments about vetoes and (to a lesser extent) coordination imply stable costs of institutional revision over time, arguments about investment and positive feedback see these costs as dynamic: institutions are typically not only self-enforcing but self-reinforcing”.<sup>111</sup>

An extended period of time on one path would mean more investment, and more investment will make the cost of revision higher. With higher costs change will be less favourable. In other words, stability over a relatively long period of time will ensure a secure path dependent institutionalisation process. Path dependent systems rely less on the actors and more on the institution itself. “Once institutions are in place, they facilitate the adoption of other, complementary institutions.

<sup>111</sup> Pierson, *Politics In Time*, p. 151.

All these arrangements place pressure on actors to adjust, often in fundamental ways, to a new context".<sup>112</sup> While comparing the newly democratising countries in Eastern Europe to the established democracies of the West, Lijphart states that:

For democratizing countries, these choices are particularly crucial because the success of the newly-founded democratic system may depend on it. In addition, if the new democracy does prove to be viable, the initial choices are likely to last for a long time. Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan (1967) have pointed out that the party system established at the beginning of a country's democratic experience tends to become virtually "frozen". This applies even more strongly to the fundamental constitutional structure: drastic changes in electoral systems and shifts from presidentialism to parliamentarism or vice versa are extremely rare in established democracies.<sup>113</sup>

However, stability in an "extended period of time" was a luxury that the Iranian society could not afford. This is one area where Iran is different from the cases studied by Lijphart. A classic example is the change from parliamentarism to presidentialism in 1989, yet the Iranian history has had the hasty alteration of many institutions in the last hundred years. The Qajar dynasty was deposed by Reza Pahlavi who in turn was ousted by the allies, and finally Mohammad Reza Shah was removed from power by the 1979 revolution.

Hannan and Freeman believe that if organisations are fast-changing, i.e. lacking inertia, then only the intentions of organisational elites matter.<sup>114</sup> Pierson relates Hannan and Freeman's observation to the study of institutions and concludes that without inertia there is no institution.

Institutions are typically not plastic. They do not adapt swiftly and effortlessly. They are subject to change, but the multiple sources of resilience suggest that in many circumstances they will exhibit very substantial inertia. It is this inertial quality that makes them important contributors to an understanding of long-term processes of institutional development.<sup>115</sup>

The "arbitrary rule" and "short-term society" continued after the revolution. What Katouzian calls "the pick-axe society" could be detected even in the most recent decisions of the current president of IRI. For instance, during his first term of office, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has carried on a massive discharge of personnel from tens of state organisations. Tens if not hundreds of bureaucrats who were in top positions since the time of Rafsanjani and before, were discharged without any right to appeal. Most of these jobs were either scrapped altogether or given to the cronies of the new president and his closest men. In 2007, with a stroke of a pen, he dismantled the

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<sup>112</sup> Pierson, *Politics In Time*, p. 150.

<sup>113</sup> Arend Lijphart, "Democratization and Constitutional Choices in Czecho-Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland" *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, Vol. 4, (1992), p. 208.

<sup>114</sup> Michael T. Hannan and John Freeman, *Organisational Ecology*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 33.

<sup>115</sup> Pierson, *Politics In Time*, pp. 156-157.

Management and Planning Organisation of Iran, a grand institution which, despite going through a lot of evolution, had been responsible for preparing the country's budget since 1948.

This behaviour was not exclusive to Ahmadinejad of course; the political elites before him were also good at reinforcing the “the pick-axe society”. For example, the dismantling of the position of prime minister in the Republic's constitution and granting all its authorities to the president in 1989 was performed hastily and without enough deliberation with experts and the political forces of the time.

During Khatami's rule, although his government placed a great emphasis on adherence to the constitution, the constitutional clause was breached time after time by forces above the president's control. For example, in 1999 when the reformist Majles tried to amend the rigid laws on the freedom of the press, the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei intervened with a *hokme hokumati* [the executive decree] withdrawing the proposed bill from the Majles agenda.

The history of issuing extra-constitutional decrees in the IRI did not start with Khamenei. Below are instances where this arbitrary rule was exercised by both Khomeini and Khamenei.

- The decree by Khomeini assigning the head of Iran's central bank in January 1987.
- A decree in May 1987 by Khomeini allowing Prime Minister Mousavi to set fixed prices for necessary goods.
- Khomeini permits the closure of the IRP.
- Ayatollah Khomeini's extra-constitutional decree to appoint the Expediency Council in February 1988.
- Ayatollah Ali Khamenei approved the validity of the Sixth Majles elections (May 2000) despite the Guardian Council's statement doubting the validity of the election in Tehran.
- In 2005 Ayatollah Ali Khamenei reinstated reformist presidential nominees Mostafa Moein and Mohsen Mehr-Alizadeh after their competence had been ruled upon by the Guardian Council.
- A *hokm e hokumati* [decree of the ruler] issued by Khamenei in 2009 demanding Ahmadinejad to remove Esfandiar Rahim Mashai from the position of vice president.

If we accept the hypothesis by Katouzian that Iranian “history was made up of a series of connected short terms” it could be concluded that since the democratic institutions in Iran have never had the chance to endure for an “extended period of time”, they could never reach the institutionalisation threshold after which the path dependency could have been attained. In other

words, until now the history of most political organisations in Iran consisted of a series of failed attempts of reaching organisational institutionalisation.

In such an uncertain environment, human agency becomes more significant than the institution itself. This is while Iranian party elites were more inclined towards the arbitrary exercise of power than following their formal organisation's decision making process that involved respect for the chain of command and the party constitution. I will demonstrate in the coming chapters that the strong inclination of party leaders to act arbitrarily instead of acting within the organisational boundaries was an essential reason behind the failure of parties such as IRP.

Historically speaking, the political parties in Iran are suffering from a great organisational chaos, lack of strong leadership and the lack of internal democracy. When Ali Amini, an independently-minded western-educated reformist who was striving to limit the Shah's greed for power, became the prime minister, the Second National Front (as an organisation) failed to appreciate the opportunity that was provided for them by Amini's premiership, and instead of accepting Amini's repeated offers of cooperation, conducted a vicious propaganda campaign against his programmes.<sup>116</sup> Finally the Front's error of judgment, the Shah's clever manoeuvres and the Americans' change of heart forced Amini to resign.<sup>117</sup>

With Amini's resignation the last obstacle to the shah's move towards absolute power was removed. Ironically, the Second NF was instrumental in this process, but why should the Front commit such an obvious mistake that would harm itself? Katouzian's answer is revealing:

If the Shah himself had been in charge of its operations, he could not have used the Front more skilfully in his own favour and against his entire opposition (including the Front itself)! Why did this National Front – in whose hands the fate of a nation – and the trust of a large body of its political public had been put – embark on such an unmitigated suicide mission? The short answer is, because of a combination of analytical feebleness, political and organisational chaos. The political body which had inherited the great legacy of Musaddiq and the Popular Movement was thus an empty bluff which led another popular movement to a perfectly avoidable defeat, and paved the way for the predictable disaster of the Shah's personal despotism.<sup>118</sup>

However, the modest but critical progress that was seen in the case of Mosharekat is evidence to the fact that the arbitrary society is not an innate quality of the Iranian society and that it will eventually evolve into a more orderly society. It is worth mentioning that if only the state coercion was not there, the Mosharekat party, as a model of an Iranian modern political party, could

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<sup>116</sup>Homa Katouzian, *The Political Economy of Modern Iran*, New York, New York University Press, 1981, pp. 220-223.

<sup>117</sup>Masoud Behnoud, *Az seid zia ta bakhtiar*, [From Seid Zia to Bakhtiar], Tehran, Javidan, 1998.

<sup>118</sup> Katouzian, *The Political Economy of Modern Iran*, p. 221.

continue its life and act as a pioneer political organisation in modernising and democratising the Iranian polity.

The short-term nature of the Iranian society and the lack of continuity in many political organisations, including the political parties, have halted their natural organisational and institutional evolution and maturity. However, in recent years the less controllable public sphere such as cyber space (including social networks such as facebook) has provided some kind of safe haven for at least partial continuity of the banned political parties. It is my belief that these safe havens will play an effective role in maintaining the continuity of at least some aspects of the banned parties such as Mosharekat and MII. Cyber space provides a virtual arena for the banned parties to keep their relations with their social base alive; in addition it will increase the party's chances of pulling together their rank-and-file after being scattered around by the state coercion (by imprisonment or self-imposed exile). Interestingly it will also increase the reliance on specialists in the cyber arena.

Katouzian's mentioned theory can without a doubt find its application in the behaviour of many political elites in the first decade of the IRI. Banisadr, Khamenei and Rafsanjani in their roles as party elites and Presidents each have preferred to have maximum freedom and uncontested unaccountable authority. If we see Banisadr's relation with the Office of President and People Cooperation or Khamenei's relation with IRP or Rafsanjani with Kargozaran , we realise that the inclination of these leaders toward arbitrary rule has hugely damaged their respective parties' organisational qualities.

These party leaders (whether director general in the case of Khamenei or spiritual leaders in the case of Banisadr and Rafsanjani) preferred personal dealings with Ayatollah Khomeini than going through the party channels to get things done. Consulting their party first would have cost them a lot of time and effort. We can not help but to think about the arbitrary nature of political power in Iran that was elaborated by Katouzian.

## 2.4. Has Party Institutionalisation reached a Dead-end in Iran?

Some scholars have described Katouzian use of essentialised and eternal Iran versus an idealised democratic society of Europe, as an exaggeration and indict that he was adopting an orientalist approach. In addition they criticised his thesis for having self evident short comings.<sup>119</sup>

However Katouzian's account of the Iranian history during the Pahlavi dynasty could lay the ground for a path dependency model albeit in the state organisations. I mentioned before that in the post revolution Iran political parties could not reach the survival threshold point of institutionalisation; however, what became well-institutionalised in a past dependent manner in Iran during the Islamic republic era was the type of authoritarianism that is against party system. In that sense it could be argued that careful study of Iran's modern history does not suggest that party institutionalisation and eventually democratisation has reached a dead-end, instead it indicates a historical trajectory framework from which a path dependent type of party-resistant authoritarianism could be detected. This will be discussed in more details in the final conclusion of this study.

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<sup>119</sup> See Yann Richard Rev. of *State and Society in Iran: The Eclipse of the Qajars and the Emergence of the Pahlavis* by Homa Katouzian, *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Sep., 2003), pp. 417-420, [<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4311559>] and Haggai Ram, Rev. of *Iranian History and Politics: The Dialectic of State and Society* by Homa Katouzian, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (Nov., 2004), pp. 692-694, [<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3880022>]

### 3. Chapter Three: Party Typology in the Western Democracies

Throughout its modern history the Western democracies have seen different types of party, starting from caucus parties of the nineteenth century to the Cadre parties of the twenty first. The change in party types was caused both by changes in the Western societies and the developments in technology especially the advances in the media. The Iranian society has also changed dramatically since the revolution and the advents of media technology have reached Iran as well. Therefore by studying the process by which different types of parties have emerged in the Western democracies we can understand the ways in which the party types have evolved in Iran after the revolution (from IRP to Mosharekat).

According to Katz and Mair party development in the Western democracies underwent four stages: cadre, mass, catch-all and cartel party.<sup>120</sup>

#### 3.1. Cadre or Caucus Party

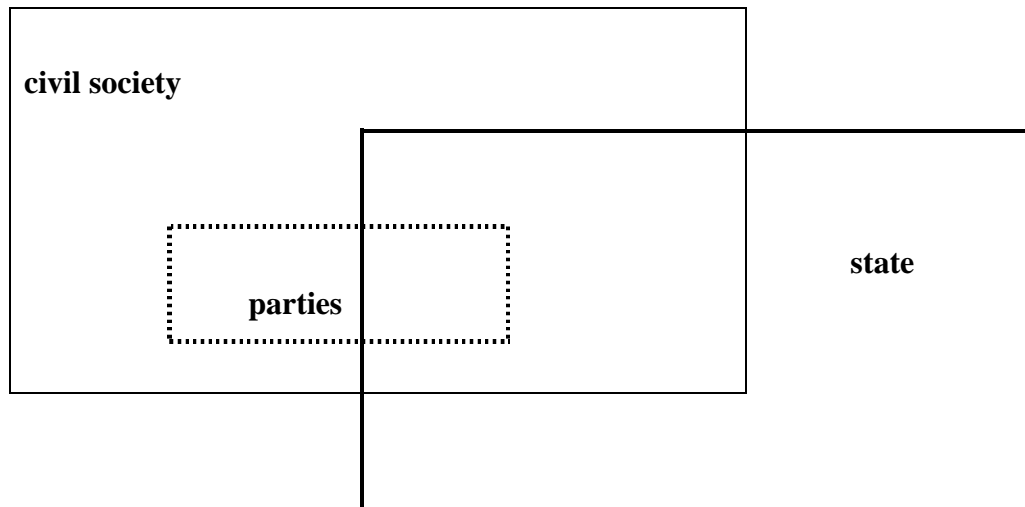
The first period in the life of party politics in the West was that of “cadre or caucus” type that was the dominant form of party in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Europe, when suffrage was restricted to the property owners and the nature of the state was liberal. The cadre parties were formed by circles of loosely organised but highly influential groups of bourgeoisie elites. Existing in a context where the assumed role of the government was that of implementing “single national interest”, the implicit role of cadre parties was to work together with the state and civil society to protect the public interest. Another characteristic of the cadre party was that while it represented the grievances of civil society for demand such as universal suffrage, it was at the same time connected by family and shared business interests ties to the men of state. Therefore the boundaries of party with both the state and the civil society were blurred.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Richard Katz and Peter Mair, “Party Organisation, Party Democracy, and the Emergence of the Cartel Party”, In Peter Mair (ed), *Party System Change*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 93-120

<sup>121</sup> Katz and Mair, “Party Organisation, Party Democracy, and the Emergence of the Cartel Party”, pp. 93-120.

**Figure 3. Parties of The Cadre or Caucus Type**



Source: Peter Mair, *Party System Change, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p.98*

### **3.2. Mass Party**

When suffrage that had been exclusive to the property owners became universal, an army of formerly disenfranchised people, mostly working class, were allowed to enter politics from its widest doors. Quickly the workers started organising themselves in parties which later took the name of “mass party” by scholars such as Maurice Duverger. The relation between the society and party in any given case requires an investigation into the relations between the party and its associated class or stratum. Duverger emphasises this relation in conceptualising his theory of the mass party. The mass party arose historically in opposition to the established elite or caucus party system of eighteenth to nineteenth centuries. According to Duverger,

Only in mass parties is there any formal machinery of enrolment, comprising the signing of a definitive undertaking and the payment of an annual subscription. Cadre parties know neither the one nor the other; admission is accompanied by no official formalities, the periodic subscription is replaced by occasional donations; there are in consequence no precise criteria of membership and only the adherent’s activity within the party can determine the degree of participation.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organisation and Activity in the Modern State*, London, Methuen, 1954, p. 71.



The size of the membership and organic relations to the civil society are essential in recognising the model described by Duverger as mass party.<sup>123</sup> Unlike the cadre or elite party, which is financed by few wealthy members and therefore susceptible to the negative effects of oligarchy, the mass party membership subscription is regularised and periodic and supported by small contributions from the many grassroots members. The ordinary members who belong to a certain social class (working class or middle class) can exercise influence in the party in return for the time, effort or the money they contribute to the party. The difference between the cadre and mass party is best explained by Duverger in his examination of the different methods of financing of the working-class and middle-class political press.

The middle-class Right had no need, financial or political, to seek the organized support of the masses: it already had its elites, its personages, and its financial backers. It considered its own political education to be adequate. For these reasons, until the coming of Fascism, attempts to create mass Conservative parties have generally failed.<sup>124</sup>

The organisational demands in mass parties are much bigger and more complex than the elite parties, and because the mass party always represents a certain social base, the leaders would have to comply with the demands of that base. In other words, it appears that the mass parties enjoy a larger amount of internal democracy than elite parties did.<sup>125</sup> Nevertheless, Duverger shares Michels' conclusion that the mass party is not immune to oligarchy. That while in theory a party might enjoy internal democracy, in practice decisions were made by the elites.<sup>126</sup>

In other words, the mass party will eventually move towards oligarchy. Michels explains how an "organ of collectivity" (e.g. a party) that is created out of the need for division of labour, once consolidated, starts creating interests peculiar to itself in contrast to the interests of the collectivity or the class. Based on his "universally applicable social law" Michels argues that in the long run a new "dominant class" will spring out of the mass party that will seek to protect its own interests even at the expense of the interests of the masses.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Peter Mair, "Party Organisation from Civil Society to the State", In Richard Katz and Peter Mair (eds), *How Parties Organize: Change and Adaptation in Party Organisations in Western Democracies*, London, Sage, 1994, p. 2.

<sup>124</sup> Duverger, *Political Parties*, p. 67.

<sup>125</sup> Alan Ware, *Political Parties and Party Systems*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 108.

<sup>126</sup> Duverger, *Political Parties*, p. 151-182.

<sup>127</sup> Michels, *Political Parties*, p. 406-407.

### 3.3. Catch-All and Electoral-Professional Parties

The catch-all and electoral-professional party are products of the age of television and the electronic media. Yet the appearance of this breed of party should not exclusively be attributed to the development in the world of information technology; other developments such as the expansion of middle-income strata and the materialisation of new forms of collective identification are also responsible for the evolution of the old mass party model to the new catch-all/electoral-professional parties.

Kirchheimer's (1966) proposal of "catch all party" has severely challenged the pre-existing concepts of a party as a representative of pre-defined sectors of society. His arguments are made in three-folds. First, he attributes the weakening of highly-distinctive collective identities, to the wearing of traditional social stratifications that emerged in the late 1950's and 1960's. A consequential outcome of this social phenomenon was the complication in identifying separate sectors of the electorate and their mutual long-term interests. Second, with the mounting influence of the welfare state and economic growth elaborate programs emerged to facilitate the interests of a large sector of society. Third, the development of mass media enabled the party leaders to penetrate into a larger segment of society and attract more electorates. This in turn transformed the active role of participants into mere consumers of political schemes of party leaders.<sup>128</sup>

Before Panebianco, Kirchheimer identified the recent shift in the party centre of gravity from social base to an association of party elites, election campaign professionals and interest-groups' leaders. Kirchheimer's observation of party development in the 1950s and 1960s in Western democracies has illustrated that due to substantial quality- and quantity-wise changes in the social stratification, civil society, culture, and technology in the Western countries, the old mass party type has lost its important position in the Western polity and a newer style of party organisation which Kirchheimer calls the "catch-all party" has emerged to comply with the changes in the recent society. According to Kirchheimer the accredited changes are as follows:

- a) Drastic reduction of the party's ideological baggage...
- b) Further strengthening of top leadership groups, whose actions and omissions are now judged from the viewpoint of their contribution to the efficiency of the entire social system rather than identification with the goals of their particular organisation,
- c) downgrading of the role of the individual party member, a role considered a historical relic which may obscure the newly built-up catch-all party image.
- d) De-emphasise of the *classe gardée*, specific social-class or denominational clientele, in favour of recruiting voters among the population at large.
- e) Securing access to a variety of interest groups.

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<sup>128</sup> Katz and Mair, "Party Organisation, Party Democracy, and the Emergence of the Cartel Party", pp. 95-96.

The financial reasons are obvious, but they are most important where official financing is available, as in Germany, or where access to the most important media of communication is fairly open, as in England and Germany. The chief reason is to secure electoral support via interest-group intercession.<sup>129</sup>

With the advent of television and the outburst of other types of mass media from the 1950s, the parties had to renovate themselves in order to accommodate the implications of televised campaigning that was becoming increasingly dominant in the West. According to Kirchheimer television was an important factor in shaping the catch-all party era, however Kirchheimer warns us that mass media can act as a double-edged sword and be used against the idea of political party in ways more destructive than the old style of printed propaganda. However a negative consequence was that voters might have been encouraged to switch to another party as a consumer switches to a competitive brand.<sup>130</sup>

The recent threats to the establishment parties in America by the loosely-organised group of conservatives ironically calling themselves the Tea Party were an example of how television and the internet could be used for the aggregation of demands and interests outside the control of the parties. Large numbers of dissatisfied republican voters who lost their belief in the establishment party (Republican) found refuge in this apparently leaderless popular movement.

In the 2010 mid-term elections the anti-party “Tea Party” achieved considerable gains that made it a force to be reckoned with.<sup>131</sup> However and despite its relative success, it is yet to be seen how this wobbly model of political movement could organise itself inside the Congress.

...how does the movement translate its core values into political action for change? How does a leaderless movement get legislators and the executive to consider its policy alternative seriously? Do they need to appoint a leader or group of leaders? How do they go forward? The Tea Party movement has a viable message, but let’s see how they put their words into action.<sup>132</sup>

The early signs about the Tea Party behaviour after the election show that it organised itself in caucuses in the House but wouldn’t that be the start of a new “establishment” or a new mainstream? In other words, becoming what they hated most.

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<sup>129</sup> Otto Kirchheimer, “The Transformation of the Western European Party System” In Joseph La Palombara and Mayron Weiner (eds), *Political Parties and Political Development*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1966, pp. 190-191.

<sup>130</sup> Kirchheimer, “The Transformation of the Western European Party System”, p. 192.

<sup>131</sup> Lisa Lerer and Alison Fitzgerald, “Tea Party Wins House for Republicans, Wants Rewards”, *Businessweek*, November 4, 2010, [ [http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/content/nov2010/db2010114\\_239223.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/content/nov2010/db2010114_239223.htm) ], 16 March 2011

<sup>132</sup> Michelle Caruso-Cabrera, *You Know I’m Right: More Prosperity Less Government*, New York, Threshold Editions, 2010, p. 227.

### 3.4. Electoral –Professional Party

Based on his observation and analysis Panebianco articulated a type of party he calls “electoral-professional”, which in many ways is similar to the catch-all party. He presents the major differences between his proposed typology and the older mass party type as follows:

**Figure 4: Comparing Mass parties with Electoral-professional parties**

Mass bureaucratic parties	Electoral-professional parties
(a) Central role of the bureaucracy (political administrative tasks).	Central role of the professionals (specialized tasks).
(b) Membership party, strong vertical organisational ties, appeal to the “electorate of belonging”.	Electoral party, weak vertical ties, appeal to the “opinion electorate”.
(c) Pre-eminence of internal leaders, collegial leadership.	Pre-eminence of the public representatives, personalized leadership.
(d) Financing through membership and collateral activities (party cooperatives, trade unions etc.).	Financing through interest groups and public funds.
(e) Stress on ideology, central role of the believers within the organisation.	Stress on issues and leadership, central role of the careerists and representatives of interest groups within the organisation.

Source: Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organisation and Power*, p. 264.

### 3.5. Cartel Party

Katz and Mair agree with Panebianco's electoral-professional party and Kirchheimer's catch-all party in that the elite's role is becoming ever more significant in the party's decision making. However, their observation has illustrated additional developments in the political party progress in Western democracies, particularly the decrease of the role of the party in central office (headquarters) in favour of its increase in public office (parliament).

In a similar way to Kirchheimer, Katz and Mair (1997) see party changes in the Western societies as a gradual process of adaptation that has resulted in the emergence of a new type of party in the Western Democracies which they call "cadre party". In cadre party the role of experts and consultants becomes more important than the traditional party bureaucrats. The most important expertise is the know-how of winning elections and running successful election campaigns; therefore the conventional connection between the civil society and the state gives its place to an association between leader/s in the public office (parliament and the executive) and the consultants, speechwriters, campaign managers and all other professionals who can guarantee the leader/s a smooth election victory. In many cases, the professionals are "Saatchi and Saatchi" style advertising experts who might come from outside the party and offer their services in exchange for huge sums of money. Consequently, the ability of the party leader/s to secure enough state-party subsidies via parliamentary legislation becomes very vital. First of all substantial state subsidies will involve becoming financially free from the influence of the central office of the party. Second, the state financial support for the ruling party would mean easy money with no, or little, civil society supervision over the manner in which the budget is spent. The party leader/s in the public office then can use this money to win elections and boost their own position in the party. <sup>133</sup>

To borrow Panebianco's terms for explaining this hypothesis, the selective incentives at the leader's disposal would grant him more autonomy vis-à-vis the party on the ground. When the central office loses its significance the mass membership is no longer a priority; therefore the total number of members will shrink and fewer bureaucrats will be employed in the party in central office while the number of staff members who are working directly with the party in public office will grow noticeably. Nevertheless the overall number of party bureaucrats and ordinary members will decrease dramatically. <sup>134</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Katz and Mair, "Party Organisation, Party Democracy, and the Emergence of the Cartel Party", pp. 7-8.

<sup>134</sup> Katz and Mair, "Party Organisation, Party Democracy, and the Emergence of the Cartel Party", pp. 1-20

## 4. Chapter Four: The Party Order and the Significance of the Elites in Iran

The average member in the party is important but not as important as the elites or the activists when it comes to explaining the party's internal order. Therefore, in the study of party order, it is important to look at the literature on social stratification and the social cleavage map in order to better understand the importance of elites in the party order in relation to these important factors.

Karl Marx considered class conflict to be the engine of history yet he thought that there will be no class conflict in the communist society. But for Lipset, however, conflict and consensus were both needed for a functioning democracy. Anthony Giddens describes how, according to Marx, class conflict will move society forward in history until it reaches its final stage. Class conflict, according to Marx, is the motor of history but this motor will eventually rest peacefully with the realisation of the communist society.<sup>135</sup>

However Lipset disagrees with Marx. According to Lipset, cleavages in any given society could be an integrative or divisive force depending on whether these cleavages are regarded as legitimate by the political system or not. According to Seymour Martin Lipset, "Cleavage – where it is legitimate – contributes to the integration of societies and organisations. Trade unions, for example, help to integrate their members in the larger body politic and give them a basis for loyalty to the system".<sup>136</sup> Lipset disagrees with Marx's focus on unions and workers' parties as expeditors of revolutionary tension, claiming instead that:

It is precisely in those countries where workers have been able to form strong unions and obtain representation in politics that the disintegrative forms of political cleavage are least likely to be found. And various studies have suggested that those trade- unions which allow legitimate internal opposition retain more loyalty from their members than do the more dictatorial and seemingly more unified organisations. Consensus on the norms of tolerance which a society or organisation accepts has often developed only as a result of basic conflict, and requires the continuation of conflict to sustain it.<sup>137</sup>

Lipset believes that social conflict and consensus can exist simultaneously in one society and keeping a balance between these two will contribute to a healthy democracy.<sup>138</sup> In contrast Karl Marx saw consensus as only present in the communist society. All other stages of the human

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<sup>135</sup> Anthony Giddens and David Held (ed.), *Class Power and Conflict: Classical and Contemporary Debates*, London, Macmillan, 1982, pp. 3-4.

<sup>136</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*, London, Heinemann, 1960, p. 1.

<sup>137</sup> Lipset, *Political Man*, pp.1-2.

<sup>138</sup> Lipset, *Political Man*, pp. 1-4

history that lay in between the primitive communist society and the ultimate proletarian revolution would be driven by conflicts between antagonistic class interests.<sup>139</sup>

Max Weber on the other hand thought that conflicts in the society are not exclusive to class conflicts, and his conception of the “class” was not merely a group of people who shared the same economic interests. The Weberian class, in itself, did not constitute a “group”. He instead articulates a more inclusive structure in order to explain the distribution of “power” within a community. This composition includes “classes” in addition to “status groups”, “parties”, ethnic communities and states.

Max Weber was one of the pioneers of extending the conflicts within the society beyond the Marxian class. Weber accepted that the emergence of masses of property-less workers as a result of the accumulation of wealth and the element of rationality that distinguishes the modern capitalist class in the West from the ancient models of capitalism. Yet he does not share Marx’s optimism that class conflict will eventually disappear in the communist society. His observation explains that modern-nation states are dependent on a strong bureaucracy for their survival. Not only because of the class conflict between capital and wage labour but also because of the constant need of a nation state to defend its borders against its rival enemies. Strong bureaucracy divides the state into a group of strong bureaucrats and a mass of individuals whose fate is decided for them by their leaders.

Weber accepts; and he agrees with much of what Marx has to say about the specific significance of class conflict between capital and wage labour in industrial capitalism. But class conflict is not for Weber the main ‘motor’ of historical change. Conflicts between states, ethnic communities, and what Weber calls ‘status groups’ have been at least as important.<sup>140</sup>

Weber defined parties as not limited to a certain social class or status group. People of different social class and status group milieu might join the same party. According to Weber parties reside in the sphere of power. Parties, Class, status groups and ethnic communities influence each other for the “acquisition of social power”.

In any individual case, parties may represent interests determined through class situation or status situation, and they may recruit their following respectively from one or the other. But they need be neither purely class nor purely status parties; in fact, they are more likely to be mixed types, and sometimes they are neither. They may represent ephemeral or enduring structures. Their means of attaining power may be quite varied, ranging from naked violence of any sort to canvassing for

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<sup>139</sup> See Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist party*, New York, International Publishers, 1948, pp. 22-31. and Ali Ashraf and L.N. Sharma, *Political Sociology*, Hyderabad, University Press, 1983, pp. 32-35.

<sup>140</sup> Anthony Giddens and David Held (ed.), *Class Power and Conflict*, p. 9.

votes with coarse or subtle means: money, social influence, the force of speech, suggestion; clumsy hoax, and so on to the rougher or more artful tactics of obstruction in parliamentary bodies.<sup>141</sup>

It was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that Panebianco criticises those who hold the “social prejudice” in their articulation of the concept of parties, i.e. are under the assumption that the activities of parties are the product of the “demands” of social groups, and that, more generally, parties themselves are nothing other than manifestations of social divisions in the political arena.<sup>142</sup> Weber surely does not hold such prejudice, and before Panebianco, he examined the nature of power in an organisation such as party. Panebianco differs with Weber on the latter’s emphasis on party bureaucrats, while Panebianco sees the role of party elites (especially entrepreneurs) as well as the external stimulus as the two most important factors in defining the organisational change in parties. Finally there is a difference between Weber and Panebianco on the definition of political professionals. While Weber sees political professionals as those who live politics, Panebianco attributes a more entrepreneurial role to these types of actors.

In another place, when scrutinising the nature of representative elected bodies such as parliaments, Max Weber writes that groups governed by representative bodies are “by no means necessarily democratic in the sense that all their members have equal rights. Quite the contrary, it can be shown that the classic soil for the growth of parliamentary government has tended to be an aristocratic or plutocratic society. This was true of England”.<sup>144</sup>

Weber shared Michels’ pessimism about the fate of mass parties and like him believed that a group of oligarchy will control the mass parties.

Another important factor in the change has been the bureaucratization of party organisations, with its specifically plebiscitary character. The member of parliament thereby ceases to be “master” of the electors and becomes merely a “servant” of the leaders of the party machine.<sup>145</sup>

Weber believed that political parties existed to win elections and seize political power. Therefore domination was in the nature of party leaders.

Max Weber distinguished between the “professional politician” and occasional politician. The professional politicians were those who lived for politics and not from it. In other words, Weber

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<sup>141</sup> Max Weber, *Essays in Economic Sociology*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1999, p. 94.

<sup>142</sup> For future reading on the definition of the social prejudice according to Angelo Panebianco, see Panebianco, *Political Parties*, pp. 1-20.

<sup>144</sup> Weber, *Economy and Society*, p. 296.

<sup>145</sup> Weber, *Economy and Society*, p. 297



did not consider the party bureaucrats who were preoccupied with the operation and administration of the party suitable candidates for the title of professional politicians. Instead he attributed the term to those who live materially “off” the party and political activities.<sup>146</sup>

Weber acknowledges that living for politics is easier for the well-to-do and well-educated members of party, who are not dependent on the party for their livelihood, but are not members of major aristocracy, who think that all other members of the party should obey them. In other words, Weber clearly sees the role of elite as more important in the party order than the mass members or the bureaucrat clerks who do not have the aspiration for risk at all. However, Weber’s elites or professional politician is a member of the well-to-do middle class rather than a capitalist or a feudal lord, and to be more precise, Weber thought that lawyers who hold private office as well as their position in the party are the most suitable candidates for the title of professional politician.<sup>147</sup>

... although idealism is far from being a function of a person’s financial situation, living “for” politics is cheaper for the well-to-do party member. Precisely this element – persons who are economically independent of those above and below them – is most desirable for party life and hopefully will not completely vanish, especially not from the radical parties. Of course, the party enterprise proper can nowadays not be operated by them alone – the bulk of the work outside of parliament will always be carried by the party bureaucrats. However, because of their very preoccupation with the operation of the enterprise, these officials are by no means always the most suitable candidates for parliament.<sup>148</sup>

Similar to Weber, Joseph Schumpeter conceptualised an elite theory of democracy, according to which, the average citizen is not sophisticated enough to appreciate complex political matters. He believed the public to be highly emotional, irrational, ignorant and apathetic. The weakness of the general public’s rational process leaves them defenceless against most irrational and misleading propaganda of the leaders. Therefore Schumpeter felt the need for a new stratum that was equipped with the qualities necessary to understand politics and exercise it in the polity.<sup>149</sup>

The bureaucracies of Europe, in spite of the fact that they have drawn enough hostile criticism to blur their records, exemplify very well what I am trying to convey. They are the product of a long development that started with the ministeriales of medieval magnates (originally serfs selected for administrative and military purposes who thereby acquired the status of petty nobles) and went on through the centuries until the powerful engine emerged which we behold today. It cannot be created in a hurry. It cannot be “hired” with money. But it grows everywhere, whatever the political method a nation may adopt. Its expansion is the one certain thing about our future.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Weber, *Economy and Society*, p. 1447.

<sup>147</sup> See Max Weber’s *Complete Writings on Academic and Political Vocations*, In John Derijmanis (ed), New York, Algora, 2008. See also Peter Hamilton, *Max Weber: Critical Analysis*, London, Routledge, 1991, pp. 240-250.

<sup>148</sup> Weber, *Economy and Society*, pp. 1447-1448.

<sup>149</sup> Tom DeLuca, *The Two Faces of Political Apathy*, Philadelphia, Temple, 1995, pp. 64-65 also

Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, London, Compton Printing Works, 1959, pp. 256-268.

<sup>150</sup> Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, p. 294.

Lipset believed that the people's voting behaviour was not be predefined by their economic situation. Instead, he suggested that the existing "cleavages" indicated the issues that the candidates will pick up and which the electorate will vote for or against.

Similar to Weber and Schumpeter, Lipset also thought that the masses and the ordinary working-class party members and members of the trade union can easily be manipulated and controlled by the leaders of those organisations. The exceptions he made were those in the working class who were active union or party members of the societies and clubs run by their parties.

However, he believed that the general public's apathy in politics is not always unhealthy and could be a positive happening for democracy.

The middle-class recruits "tended to come to the party with more complex value patterns and expectations which were more likely to obstruct assimilation into the party. . . The working-class member, on the other hand, is relatively untroubled by doctrinal apparatus, less exposed to the media of communication, and his imagination and logical powers are relatively undeveloped."<sup>151</sup>

Panbianco provides a broader classification of party bureaucracy than Ostrogorski, Weber, Schumpeter and Michels. He subdivides the bureaucrats into three typologies:

- (1) The bureaucracy as an administrative component, the proportion of bureaucrats responsible for the maintenance of the organisation to the total membership.
- (2) Bureaucracy as an organisation whose characteristics are defined by the Weberian ideal-type.
- (3) Bureaucracy as the "domination of the bureaucrats".<sup>152</sup>

In his view, the replacement of the cadre party's notables by the mass party's administrative bureaucrats was characteristic of the new working-class parties. However, by the time when electoral-professional parties emerged, the increasing need for extra-political expertise inside the parliament and in the party headquarters meant that the role of experts became evermore important.

Panbianco does not use the term elite circle to describe parties' small-group real decision-makers. Instead he prefers the term "dominant coalition" for three reasons.

a)even when a single leader seems to exercise an almost absolute power over an organisation, observation often reveals a more complicated power structure: the leader, even if he leads because he controls crucial zones of uncertainty, must (more often than not) negotiate with other

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<sup>151</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Base of Politics*, London, Heinemann Educational Books, 1969, p. 112.

<sup>152</sup> Panbianco, *Political Parties*, p. 223.

organisational actors: he is at the centre of a coalition of internal party forces with which he must at least to a certain degree negotiate.<sup>153</sup>

It is worth mentioning here that in the Islamic Republic Party the concept of dominant coalition is very relevant as it will be explained in the coming chapters.

#### **4.1. The Significance of the Political Elites in Iran after the Revolution**

Many theorists working on problems of democratisation in the last three decades have devoted particular attention to the rule of ruling elites.<sup>154</sup> According to these theories, the achievement of consensus among different factions of elites is a breakthrough in the process of transition to democracy. For example, Juan Linz and Larry Diamond argue that in many Latin American states “the choice of democracy by political elites clearly preceded the presence of democratic values among the general public”.<sup>155</sup> Equally, it can be argued that the ruling elites’ resistance to demands for the creation of a democratic system can considerably delay the process of transition to democracy. Following the same line of thought, Linz mentions that even in countries with weak parties, the party elites may play an essential role in fostering the legitimacy of the new democratic institutions and in supporting the process of democratic consolidation..<sup>156</sup>

It could be suggested that in countries with weak civil society, although at the first sight the weakness of civil society in a democratising country might deem the role of the party elites as insignificant, however on a second thought the role is still important, since the weakness of linkage with the society is compensated with the benefits of the legitimacy that reaching a consensus with the party elite could bring to the incumbent group.

In the context of the Iran of today, the lack of strong political parties should be added to the problems of democratisation. However, when there were some instances of strong parties in the past, it enhanced the patron client order. According to Shahroukh Akhavi

Whereas the single most important function of political parties historically has been the mobilization and aggregation of political interests, Iranian political parties have more often served

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<sup>153</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 37

<sup>154</sup> L. Field, J. Higley and G. Burton, “A New Elite Framework for Political Sociology”, *Revue Européenne des Sciences Sociales*, vol. 28, (1990), pp. 149-182.

<sup>155</sup> Larry Diamond and Juan Linz, “Introduction”, In Larry Diamond, Juan Linz, and Seymour M. Lipset (eds), *Democracy in Developing Countries*, Volume 4: Latin America, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1989, p. 12.

<sup>156</sup> Leonardo Morlino, *Democracy between Consolidation and Crisis: Parties, Groups and Citizens in Southern Europe*, Oxford, Oxford University, 1998, p. 253.

as convenient milieus for the evolution of patron-client relations. That is to say, influential political leaders amalgamate support for themselves as dispensers of patronage to particular individuals. One thinks of Sayyid Zia al-Din Tabatabai's National Will Party, Qavam al-Saltaneh's Democrat Party, the various parties introduced by the shah – such as the Nationalists' Party, the People's Party, the New Iran Party, and the Resurgence Party – and the clergy's IRP.<sup>157</sup>

After the dissolution of the IRP in 1987, even the incomplete form of strong party vanished from the Iranian political arena. When Khatami became a president, the Number 10 Commission, the official body responsible for issuing licenses for political parties, started issuing licenses with less restriction. As a result many newcomers, including Khatami's brother, could establish political parties. None however could become successful in mobilising support for the process of democratisation when it was most needed, as none could even touch the membership levels which either the IRP or the Tudeh party had reached.<sup>158</sup>

In Iran we face several problems with regard to party consolidation. First the civil society in Iran has gone through many transformations since the 1950s. Back then most parties were divided along class bases. At its height, the Tudeh party (Iran's first and last mass party) was a party of the workers. It is true that the Tudeh party's membership was not exclusive to the working class; it is also true that the party elite were not workers and belonged to the middle and upper strata. However, what gave Tudeh its effectiveness was the bulk membership of the workers' unions. It was these unions who could mobilise numbers in demonstrations that were not seen before even in the Middle East.

But the society cleavages have changed dramatically since the glorious days of the Tudeh party. Civil society is not the same as it was in the 1950s and the cleavages in the current Iranian society are not based on class so much as based on identity. Moreover, the elite who master the art of representing the various demands that are derived from the cleavages in the society and can act as a consensus-maker between different cleavages will become indispensable assets for the stability and democratisation of the country. Lipset and Rokkan explain why a successful party has to harvest the demand caused from the conflict of the cleavages in society.

Parties have an expressive function; they develop a rhetoric for the translation of contrasts in the social and the cultural structure into demands and pressures for action or inaction. But they also have instrumental and representative functions: they force the spokesmen for the many contrasting interests and outlooks to strike bargains, to stagger demands, and to aggregate pressures. Small

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<sup>157</sup> Shahrough Akhavi, "Iran", In Frank Tachau (ed) *Political Parties of Middle East and North Africa*, London, Mansell, 1994.

<sup>158</sup> See Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, Princeton, Princeton University, 1982, pp. 290-305 and Abdollah Jasbi, *Tashakole faragir*, [The Encompassing Organisation], Azad University Press, Tehran, 2001, pp. 115-116.

parties may content themselves with expressive functions, but no party can hope to gain decisive influence on the affairs of a community without some willingness to cut across existing cleavages to establish common fronts with potential enemies and opponents. This was true at the early stage of embryonic party formations around cliques and clubs of notables and legislators, but the need for such broad alliances became even more pronounced with the extension of the rights of participation to new strata of the citizenry.<sup>159</sup>

However in the case of IRI where parties are weakly institutionalised the position of the leader/s is more similar to Downs description in the following paragraph.

Leadership we define as the ability to influence voters to adopt certain views as expressing their own will. Leaders are men with influence over voters – usually not full control of their votes, but at least some impact on their views about the best policies for parties to espouse. Leadership in this sense can exist only under conditions of uncertainty, because whenever men know the repercussions of every conceivable act, they need no advice to discover what is best for them. True, even under certainty men need leaders to decide what to do in the absence of universal consensus, and to coordinate the division of labour. But this is different from deciding what should be done, i.e., what policies are most beneficial to the individual voters.<sup>160</sup>

Khomeini although was not a party leader was the master of influencing people in the Downsian sense. At the start of the revolution people knew that they did not want the Shah's regime yet were uncertain about the shape and the content of their future regime. Even after the establishment of the Islamic republic Khomeini was great in hijacking the anti-American and the egalitarian agenda from the secular left and Mojahedin and bring under control and dominating the bulk of their social base

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<sup>159</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction", In Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan (eds), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*, New York, Free Press, 1967, p. 5.

<sup>160</sup> Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, New York, Harper & Row, 1957, p. 87.

## **4.2.Does the Behaviour of the Party Elites in Iran Follows a Rational Choice?**

If we look at Iranian parties merely as the representatives of a specific social base or in the case of cynics as the puppets of the regime, many decisions taken by the party elites would be impossible to explain. While the changes in the IRP and Mosharekat (Iran Participation Front Party) demonstrate clear correspondence with the organisation and power dynamics according to Panebianco's theory the behaviour of Iranian state and the uncertainty in the parties' environment were equally influential in shaping the elites' strategies in the critical junctures of the these parties' histories. In the coming chapters these parameters will be investigated by looking at two important case studies.

- **IRP ( Founded 1979- Dissolved 1987)**

**and**

- **Mosharekat (Founded 1998 -Present)**

## 5. Chapter Five: Social Stratification and The State in Relation to Parties in Iran

In Iran there is a general acceptance among most political scientists and politicians that the only true political party that ever existed in Iran is the Tudeh Party. This myth prevails in spite of the disapproval of the organisations' Marxist ideology by the current day Iranian intelligentsia.

The majority of the thinkers who wrote on Iranian political parties admire the "party-ness" in Tudeh, a quality they see absent in all other political groups with the title "political party".

As a result, it is not surprising to see that the success and failure of the Iranian parties was always measured against the strong points of the Tudeh, namely the organisational competence, the large membership and the ability to mobilise massive numbers of the party loyalists to the streets.

However, the common belief that the Tudeh was Iran's only real party gave way to the misguided proposition that no party in Iran will become worthy of the title "real party" unless it resembles the Tudeh in its so-called strong points, i.e. mass membership. In an interview panel, Ezatollah Sahabi, a prominent *Melli-Mazhabi* [Nationalist/Islamist] theorist, states that

In the last half-c a century, freedom, political development and political parties have become important issues in our society and many have highlighted the need for parties and the benefits of having them. [However] In no time in Iran was there was a serious party, only Tudeh was recognized as a pervasive party according to the present time standards but even that [party] could not continue because of problems it had...<sup>161</sup>

Following a similar line of thought, the former President Mohammad Khatami, in his book entitled *Ahزاب-و شوراها* [Parties and Councils], asserts that

The civil society organisations must be popular. One of the wrong experiments that happened in a country such as ours was that organisations were made from the above and for some [peculiar] purposes; therefore their link with the people was superficial. For instance a party was formed [Rastakhiz] and everyone was told to join it. Amidst this, a number of opportunist people have gained some bread and butter from it and many have joined it for security reasons. Other There were other organisations existed before, that acted as mercenaries of the foreigners and some have set a bad impression in people's minds. For example, the Tudeh party was acting as a fifth column of one of the superpowers in Iran and thus exercising many treacherous activities. This party has engaged many young people, many of them good human beings who even sacrificed their own lives. However, their party has failed them since it was decadent and subservient [to the Soviet Union]. Some other parties like the nationalists have had good intentions but could not make the connection with the people. We live in a religious society and the parties must become familiar with people's norms and standards. How come our intellectual currents could not build a correlation with the masses and people like Ale Ahmad and Shariati could? I am not in a position

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<sup>161</sup>Interview with Ezatollah Sahabi by Abolfazl Shakori, in *Ahzaabe syasi dar iran* [Political Parties in Iran], Qom, Islamic Revolution History Foundation, 1999, p. 81.

here to examine their every word or to suggest that whatever they have said was true, nevertheless they could understand people's identity and the people could identify with them.<sup>162</sup>

As it could be seen from Khatami's remarks, he holds that the Tudeh was a successful party in enrolling the youth, yet failed its members for depending on the Soviet Union. He also criticises intellectuals for their failure in appealing to the masses.

Mass enrolment and large membership has been the longing and the aspiration of many political party leaders since the Tudeh.

The Shah, proud of creating the Rastakhiz, declared that:

Whoever does not want to be part of Rastakhiz... has two options, either he is a member of an unlawful illegal organisation, or in our terms a *Tudehie*, thus disloyal to the fatherland and worthy of imprisonment, or he can get his passport without any costs and leave the country;. Since he is not Iranian and he has no country and his actions is are against the law.<sup>163</sup>

By this decree the shah made it compulsory for millions of state employees to join the party. In addition hundreds of thousands of people from other lines of work, from farmers to steel plant workers, were persuaded or forced to announce their membership of Rastakhiz via the state-sanctioned newspapers, including the Village Rastakhiz Magazine *Rastakhize Roosta* that was printed and published specifically for the rural communities.

Similarly, but on another level, from the beginning the IRP started enrolment on a massive scale. Millions of Iranians, mostly from the inferior strata, joined the party in Tehran and other provinces. However, in both cases (Rastakhiz and IRP) the mass membership was superficial and could not prevent the party from disintegrating.

Even now, many politicians and political activists from across the political spectrum in Iran express their longing for a "mass membership" party, not realising that maybe the era of such an organisation has passed. They neglect the fact that new forms of parties have emerged in the West that interrelate to its current polity and society. Similarly, the new type of Iranian party should correlate and correspond to the new stratification and cleavage system of the Iranian society and the requirements of the age of mass communication.

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<sup>162</sup> Sayyed Mohammad Khatami, *Ahزاب-o showraha*, [The Political Parties and Councils], Tehran, Tarh-e No, 2001, pp. 37-38.

<sup>163</sup> *Ettela'at*, Esfand 12/March 3, 1975.



Moreover, parties operating in Iran have to survive the interventions and meddling of a totalitarian state that is extremely hostile to any independent institution aiming at influencing the environment which the state itself is trying to dominate. In other words, newly-born parties in Iran have to compete with the mighty state for the domination of the environment.

### **5.1. The Changing Social Stratification in Iran**

Houchang Chehabi explained the dual society in Iran along modern/traditional segments of the society. Accordingly The modernisation of Reza Shah and his son transformed the old equilibrium in the Iranian polity and caused a division based on the lifestyle, employment status, education and ideologies, all of which have been the cause and the effect of the traditional/modern dual society.

At the height of the Shah's rule in the 1970s, at the top of the modern segment were the entrepreneurs who maintained close contact with international capitalism and who were often closely connected with the Shah's court; the upper echelons of the government apparatus; and the highest leadership of the army. The middle stratum consisted of government employees, professionals, academics. One cannot really talk about a "lower class" among the members of the modern segment, but teachers, and intellectuals who returned from Europe or America in the 1970s only to find that their salaries could hardly pay the rent of a small apartment, were an economically disadvantaged group, especially since their desired patterns of consumption reflected their membership in the modern segment. Perhaps one could also include in this segment the oil-workers of southern Iran, among whom the ... At that time the leading traditional figures were the richest Bazaar merchants and some industrialists whose roots were in the Bazaar. Below these were other tradesmen and lesser members of the Bazaar community. The lowest traditional social groups included peasants as well as urban workers, many of whom worked in the modern sector of the economy while retaining their traditional outlook. What integrated the various classes, rich and poor, was the clergy, another key element in the traditional segment.<sup>164</sup>

While the land reform of 1960s forced the big landowners to vanish as an influential class, the events that took place after the revaluation transformed the class structure and the cleavages in the Iranian society. For instance, if we look at the historical role of the Bazaaries in the Iranian society and polity and compare it with the current rule, we can safely conclude that this strata has lost its historical significance within the dynamism of power in the Iranian polity and society. If we take the Bazaaries in the crucial events of the last 150 years in Iran such as the tobacco strike, the constitutional revolution, the premiership of Mosaddegh, the 15<sup>th</sup> of Khordad revolt and finally the revolution of 1979, and then we compare it with the Bazaaries in today's Iran we arrive at the striking conclusion that the role of Bazaaries as a pioneering strata capable of changing the course of history has come to an end.

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<sup>164</sup> Houchang Chehabi, *Iranian Politics and Religious Modernism: The Liberation Movement of Iran Under the Shah and Khomeini*, London, I.B. Tauris, 1990, pp. 21-22.

In what follows I will explain how this happened, but more important than the reasons for this rearranging of the role of Bazaaries is the fact that Iranian society as a developing world society is fast changing. In order to be capable of constituting a functioning political party in Iran one must understand the new developments of the cleavage variations in Iran.

Most Bazaaries were very religious and their religious endowments constituted a major contribution to the cause of the revolution. In the 1970s, the shah was extremely unpopular among most Bazaaries. The introduction of modern chain retailers that were stealing the Bazaaries' market and livelihood, and the frequent interference in the Bazaar's way of commerce by sending young student inspectors to report hoarders and profiteers are two examples of the shah's irresponsible actions toward the Bazaar. The Shah's modernist policies and his little regard for the traditional and Islamic background of the Bazaar only worsened his already difficult relationship with the Bazaaries, who still remembered his aggressive reaction to the Bazaar protest against the white revolution and the arrest of Ayatollah Khomeini.<sup>165</sup>

According to Moaddel, "On the eve of the revolution, despite its relative decline under the late shah, the Bazaar controlled a third of imports and two-thirds of retail trade".<sup>166</sup> However, after the revolution the Islamic left started pushing for policies aimed at limiting the Bazaar and strengthening state supervision over all economic activity in the country. According to the Islamic republic's constitution, the government became in control of all banks, major industries and mines, in addition to foreign commerce and import/export businesses, leaving only a small share of the market for the private sector.

However, these significant transformations of the economic policies in the new revolutionary state could not singly break the Bazaar and the Bazaaries. The Bazaar was not only a marketplace, but also a traditional institution that benefited from a high level of social capital and could easily mobilise grievances and aggregate demands. The Bazaar was not a mere guild that could mobilise only its own members; it was a public space that granted the Bazaari notables an easy daily access to large segments of the Iranian society. In addition to the Ulama, whose livelihood depended on the Bazaar, and the craft and crop producers who depended on the Bazaar for retailing and distribution to the customers who came regularly to the Bazaar for their usual shopping and socialisation, all were somehow situated in the Bazaar's web of networking and all contributed to the increase of the surplus of social capital in the Bazaar.

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<sup>165</sup> Arang Keshavarzaian, *Bazaar and State in Iran*, Cambridge, Cambridge University, 2007.

<sup>166</sup> Mansoor Moaddel, "Class Struggle in Post Revolutionary Iran", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 3, (Aug., 1991), [<http://www.jstor.org/stable/164485>], 01 August 2008.

To sum up, in 1979 and 1980, despite the hostile attitude of the Maktabi's of IRP against the Bazaar, the Bazaar had still retained some power. The Bazaar at the beginning of the realm of Khomeini was by no means a homogenous religiously conservative institution. It is true that some Bazaaries joined the Motalefeh to prove their loyalty to the IRP, but President Banisadr, the Freedom Movement and the National Front also had their own supporters in the Bazaar. For example, Khomeini declared that strikes in the Bazaar were un-Islamic during Banisadr.<sup>167</sup>

However, after the ousting of Banisadr and the execution of two of the pro-Banisadr's Bazaar notables, Dasmalci and Javaherian, the bulk of Bazaar has become depoliticised while a minority that was following the Motalefeh remained politically active. Avoiding politics and being consumed by profit-making and brokerage became the characteristic of most of Bazaaries. Since the ousting of Banisadr, the Bazaaries lost their weight as a significant heterogenic politicised strata in the Iranian society and have since failed to regain their position.<sup>168</sup>

Nowadays, more than 60 percent of the Iranian economy is controlled by the government, and 10-15 percent by the *bonyads*.<sup>169</sup> Subsequently only 25-30 percent of the economy is left for the private sector. It is true that elements of Motalefeh have been controlling the disinherited *bonyad* and Iran's chamber of commerce. However, this could hardly be counted as a proof of the Bazaar's strength since these elements have distanced themselves from the traditional Bazaar and look more like modern capitalists. The fact is that both the economic and political power of the Bazaar has reduced dramatically in recent years.

The Bazaaries now don't have the same status they enjoyed at the eve of the revolution. The cleavage map in Iran has changed dramatically since the revolution of 1979 and is still fast evolving. However, the diminishing role of the Bazaar in the Iranian polity is only one example of the changing society.

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<sup>167</sup> Keshavarzian, *Bazaar and State in Iran*, pp. 254.

<sup>168</sup> Keshavarzian, *Bazaar and State in Iran*, pp. 254-255.

<sup>169</sup> *The Economist*, Saturday, 18 January 2003, p. 11.

According to Mattei Dogan, the Lipset and Rokans' theory of "frozen cleavage"<sup>170</sup> is not valid for today's democracies. He argues that the cleavage map of these societies has changed several times since WW2 and in many democracies religion and ethnicity became a more decisive factor in voters alignment than class and other horizontal cleavages.

Contemporary pluralist democracies are complex societies characterized by many cleavages. Their equilibrium is founded on the criss-crossing of economic, social, religious and cultural cleavages. There are two types of cleavages. Vertical cleavages divide society according to cultural criteria, such as religion, language, ethnicity and social memory. Horizontal cleavages relate to economic and social layers, such as social class, income, level of education, urban or rural environment, type of job, etc.<sup>171</sup>

## 5.2. The Current Crucial Cleavages in Iran

In the last thirty years the cleavage map of Iran has evolved as well and some cleavages have become more important than others in defining voters' alignment at the Election Day. Below, there are some of the significant cleavages in today's Iranian society.

- Tehrani-Shahrestani
- Centre of the Province-Periphery of the Provinces
- The City Northerners-The City Southerners
- Nationalism-Ethnic minorities
- Secular-Religious
- Men-Women
- Older generation-Younger generation

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<sup>170</sup> Lipset, S.M. and Rokkan S. *Party Systems and Voter Alignments. Cross-National Perspectives*, New York, The Free Press, 1967, p. 50.

<sup>171</sup> Mattei Dogan, "Class, religion, party: triple decline of electoral cleavages in Western Europe", In *Party Systems and Voter Alignments Revisited*, In Lauri Karvonen and Stein Kuhnle (eds), New York, Routledge, 2001, p. 93.

### **5.2.1. Tehrani-Shahrestani:**

Geographically speaking, people who are not Tehranians are called Shahrestani. However, the term Shahrestani is also used as a label to describe any newcomer to Tehran who does not comply with the norms and the way of life of a veteran Tehrani. Usually the title Shahrestani is given to the people of provinces other than Tehran who, in general, are more conservative-minded than the average Tehranis. Also Shahrestanis are believed to be less influenced in their lifestyle by the latest Western trends and fashions. The cleavage between Tehranis and Shahrestanis is best manifested in the student friendships at the Universities in Iran, where Tehrani students are less interested in mingling with the students of Shahrestan. Also, the fact that the majority of conveniences, services and job opportunities are concentrated in Tehran makes the Sharestanis feel forgotten and pushed aside by the state and the Tehranis in the similar way.

In the UK, for instance, one can find the same chain-shops and retailers everywhere in the country and not just in London. Even governmental bureaus are scattered across the country and Britons do not have to travel to London every time they request an administrative service from a governmental organisation. In addition, most of the services that once required physical attendance in civil offices are now done through the internet and attendance by the person is no longer necessary.

Iran has centralist administrative divisions. All the ministry offices and other governmental head offices are situated in Tehran. Even simple legal or administrative disputes are usually finally sorted in Tehran since the administrative ladder will eventually bring the clients to the capital. With regard to the private sector things are even more dramatic; the majority of jobs are located either in Tehran or at its suburbs. Tehran also is the Mecca of books in Iran, and books which could not be found anywhere else in the country can be found in that market opposite Tehran University. The same goes for many other consumer products.

The concentration of facilities, resources and services in Tehran has made the capital city an Iran within Iran. Tehran's political, economic and social weight overshadows that of all other cities and provinces. Therefore, in the eye of the average Iranian person the social status of Tehranis exceeds that of Shahrestanis. It would not be surprising then to see how many people, who live far from Tehran, feel betrayed and outclassed by the capital city and its residents.

This collective feeling of resentment among millions of Shahrestanis has contributed to the widening of the Tehrani-Shahrestani cleavage, which in a sense is a mode of centre-periphery cleavage.

### **5.2.2. Centre of the Province-Outer Cities of the Provinces:**

This cleavage is similar to the Tehrani-Shahrestani cleavage, except here it is the centre or the capital of the province which plays a role similar to Tehran.

### **5.2.3. The City Northerners-The City Southerners:**

This is a very critical cleavage due to its recent weight in the last two presidential elections in Iran. In the 2005 election, Ahmadinejad was successful in appealing to the City Southerners. A City Southerner *jonoubshahri* is not merely defined by his/her income level – there are many rich people in the City South *jonoubshahr* – instead it is a particular social status and collective identity found among the less-developed neighbourhoods of the city in Iran that gives inhabitants the sense of belonging to the same entity, and being a *jonoubshahri*. Thus a *jonoubshahri* does not merely vote for Ahmadinejad merely because he gives “bread and butter” promises or because he promises to put oil money on their table, but also because he can identify with Ahmadinejad’s literature, body language and slang words. This is of course different from Khomeini-style populism. Khomeini’s literature was very populist but Khomeini was not a *jonoubshahri*, in fact his father was a wealthy landowner and he came from a prominent landowner clergy family. Ahmadinejad, with his cheap coat, his zesty slang words and his ruffian behaviour was more like the favourite uncle or brother from the *jonoubshahr*. A proper *jonoubshahri* that would stand his ground no matter what and would not ditch his comrade even if all odds were against him.

### **5.2.4. Nationalism-Ethnic Minorities:**

After the failure of Khatami and the reformists to materialise their pivotal slogan “Iran for all Iranians”, many ethnic minority leaders and activists lost hope in the central government. The development of the feeling that the central governments in Iran, regardless of their ideological

base, will not approve the ethnic agenda, has deepened the Nationalism-Ethnic minorities cleavage that existed from the time of Reza Shah Pahlavi. Reza Shah's state building endeavour was accomplished through the suppression of ethnic minorities' subcultures and their languages. Farsi became the only language of instruction in education centres from primary schools to universities and the pre-Islam history of Iran was used as a unifying myth to combine all different Iranian subcultures and ethnicities in one ultimate identity; the Pahlavi style of pre-Islam identity. The lavish spending on celebrating the 2500 years of monarchy in Iran was another effort to spread the ideology of ultra-nationalism among the Iranians.

However, as with the Islamic revolution, the ultra-nationalist project was aborted and was replaced with the revolutionary Islam ideology. Since its start the Islamic revolution was regarded by the minorities with suspicion and doubt. The unrest at Gonbad, Kurdistan and Khuzestan at the eve of the revolution is a testimony to that. The military might of the central government and the lengthy war with Iraq had turned eyes away from Iran's ethnic minorities to the more immediate problems of war.

With the end of the war and the start of the reconstruction phase glimmers of optimism emerged among some intellectuals that the moderate policies of Rafsanjani would eventually result in an Iran that provided a better place for ethnic minorities. This feeling was intensified with the victory of the reformist President Mohammad Khatami. The great level of turnout of voters in the near borders provinces was a sign that the majority of ethnic minorities had decided to open a new chapter in their relations vis-à-vis the central government.

However, this initial optimism gradually gave its place to resentment. When the minorities realised that Khatami and his allies in the Majles were not capable of fulfilling their promises and changing the discriminatory state of affairs, they shifted their attention toward centrifugal currents. The occasional gaffes that politicians and journalists made in their official statements, or casual remarks that offended the minorities, added fuel to this already-heated cleavage conflict. In 2006 a comic strip in the state-owned Iran newspaper unleashed a wave of unrest and demonstration by Iranian Turks who felt offended by the cartoons in the paper and felt angry about the state cultural policy regarding their ethnic culture and language.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> "Iranian paper banned over cartoon", BBC News, [[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/5008420.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/5008420.stm)], 7 April 2011.

The fact that the ethnic cleavage has deepened in Iran during the recent years does not imply that the secessionist ideologies have become favourable among the majority of the ethnic minorities.. Nevertheless, the Nationalism-Ethnic minority's cleavage continues to lay its shadows on the future of the stability of the country, especially with recent reappearance of the ultra-nationalist ideology by Ahmadinejad's mentor and associate Esfandiyar Rahim Mashaie. The political significance of this essential cleavage is expected to increase in the future.

### **5.2.5. Secular-Religious:**

Iranians' first influential encounter with secularism was in the mid-nineteenth century through the works of intellectuals who visited Europe or, as the Iranians used to call it, *Farang*. Iranians by and large were influenced in their perception of the European thought by the works of Fathali Akhondzadeh, Agha Khan Kermani, Talebof and Mirza Malkom Khan. The Iranian understanding of secularism was constructed by their readings of the concept.

From the above mentioned intellectuals, Talebof and Malkom were inclined to the idea of "soft secularism", while the other two were more akin to the "hard secularists". I am referring here to the binary concepts introduced by Barry Kosmin who asserts that among the soft secularists:

The mainstream consensus is that it is crucial to a free society to respect the religious convictions of its citizens; it is crucial to a pluralistic, differentiated, secular political order to carve out a sphere for freedom of religion and to let that sphere be autonomous, to the greatest extent possible, of pressures emanating from government.<sup>173</sup>

Hard secularism, according to Kosmin,

refers to a worldview, a system of beliefs, or a modality of sense-making that is determinedly non-religious. A disenchanted universe is a purely physical and material one. It gives no support to either moral ideals which are the result of evolutionary processes or to religious beliefs which are the perversely lingering products of more naïve ages, eventually to be swept away by the triumph of a properly scientific outlook.<sup>174</sup>

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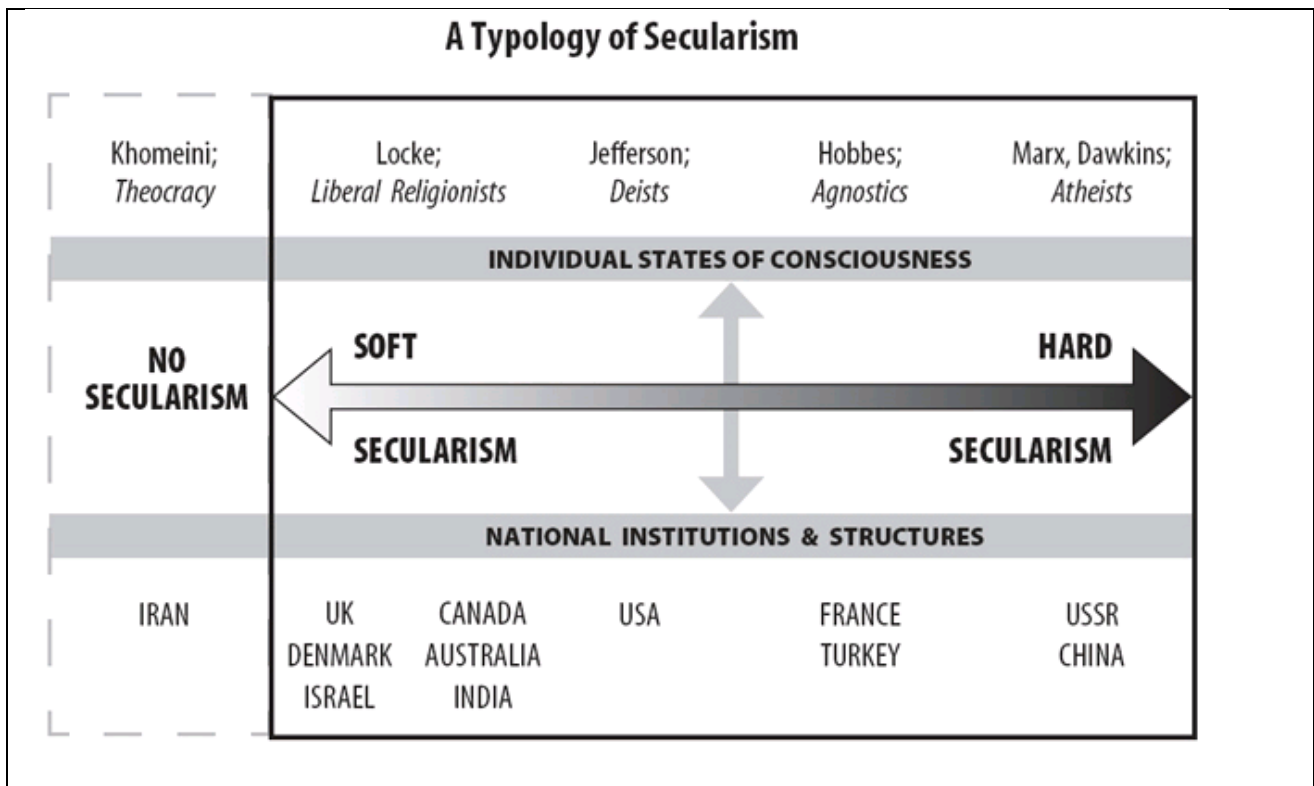
<sup>173</sup> Barry A. Kosmin "Contemporary Secularity and Secularism" In Barry A. Kosmin and Ariela Keysar (eds), *Secularism and Secularity: Contemporary International Perspectives*, Hartford, ISSSC, 2007 p. 6.

<sup>174</sup> Kosmin, "Contemporary Secularity and Secularism", pp. 6-7.



In the figure below Kosmin illustrates the position of different countries and individuals in his binary spectrum of soft-hard secularism.

Figure 5: A Typology of Secularism



Sources: Kosmin, *Contemporary Secularity and Secularism*, p. 3.

Ali Asghar Haghdar divides the ages of intellectuality in Iran into three stages.

- a. The era of becoming aware of the West.
- b. The era of hating the West.
- c. The era of self-evaluation and [furthermore] understanding of the West.<sup>175</sup>

<sup>175</sup> Ali Asghar Haghdar, *Dariushe shayegan va bohrane ma'naviate sonnati* [Dariush Shayegan and the Crisis of Traditional Sperituality], Tehran, Kavir, 2003, p. 12.

### 1. The era of becoming conscious of the West.

Akhondzadeh, Kermani, Malkom and Talebof belong to this era. It was an era in which the vast majority of Iranians were illiterate. For those who were educated the only viable sources of information and enlightenment were the small number of publications that were printed outside Iran and then transported, or at times smuggled, to Persia. Among these publications were *Akhtar* in Istanbul and *Habl al Matin* in Delhi.

From 1876 to the Constitutional Revolution a number of newspapers were published outside Iran, where they enjoyed comparative freedom of expression. These were Akhtar, Hekmat, Habl al-Matin, Soraya and Parvaresh. Qanun was not a strictly a newspaper strictly put as its articles were more akin to political pamphlets. These papers were generally moderate, their dominant ideologies being secularism, nationalism and a belief in modernism, Islam and the unity of Moslems taking a secondary place.<sup>176</sup>

This era of the Iranian intellectual history is marked by ruthless criticism of the tradition in, and suggestion by, the first generation of the Iranian intellectuals such as Akhondzadeh for replacement of the Persian alphabet by a European one, Mirza Malkom's assertion on the rule of law and the praise of critical rationality by Agha Khan Kermani.<sup>177</sup>

### 2. The era of hating the West.

This era starts with the fall of Reza Shah in 1941 and the spread of the Marxist/Socialists' ideology in Iran. The main features of the intellectuals of this era are: ideologised opinions, hatred of the West, political speculation, pseudo-nativism, and spiritual thinking. Ahmad Fardid, Ehsan Naraghi, early Shayegan and Jalal Al Ahmad were the pioneers of this episode of intellectual thought in Iran.<sup>178</sup>

### 3. The era of self evaluation and [furthermore] understanding of the West.

Haghdar mentions only the later Shayegan as an embodiment of this era but we can also add Babak Ahmadi and Ramin Jahanbaglou to this definition.

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<sup>176</sup> Mansoureh Etehadieh, "Letters to the Editor - Newspapers of the Diaspora and their Role in the Rise of National Consciousness", Abstracts of a Lecture presented in The Iranian Constitutional Revolution 1906-1911 Centenary Conference, Iran Heritage, [ <http://www.iranheritage.org/mashrutehconference/abstractsbiographies.htm> ], 5 April 2011

<sup>177</sup> Haghdar, *Dariushe shayegan va bohrane ma'naviate sonnati*, p. 13.

<sup>178</sup> Haghdar, *Dariushe shayegan va bohrane ma'naviate sonnati*, pp. 14-15.

In spite of efforts among the intellectuals of the third era to reach an equilibrium between Secularism and Tradition, the advocates of the previous ages of intellectual discourse in Iran are still on the ball in the Iranian polity and are aspiring to hegemonise their own discourse. Moreover, the legacy of the implemented hard secularism of Reza Shah's overshadows other types of Secularisms in Iran. Therefore the gap between advocates of a secular state and those who support a religious state is widening further.

In addition, after the revolution of 1979, the Islamic regime made it its primary goal to undo the secularisation process in Iran. According to Afaari,

After the revolution, the government of the Islamic Republic revamped a number of the Pahlavi institutions. Mosques, theological seminaries, and religious courts became the new centercentres of power. The state closed mixed secular schools, and segregated institutions of learning by sex. Religious bodies of knowledge (the Qur'an, the shari'a, the writings of Khomeini) came to dominate other forms of knowledge (humanities, social sciences, modern law, and even math and science). As a result, students could no longer enter the university without passing an extra exam in religious subjects. The courts of the Pahlavi era were shut down. Secular judges were replaced by clerics, and female judges were altogether removed from the bench. The state tried to reverse a process of secularization that had begun with the Constitutional Revolution.<sup>179</sup>

The process of desecularisation by the Islamic regime did not work as well as the founders of the Islamic republic had hoped. In many institutions such as universities the secular identity eventually prevailed. This is despite the group dismissal of hundreds of secular professors during the Cultural Revolution and the setting up of tough procedures for the employment of new recruits. The expectation was that the secular discourse in universities would be marginalised.

At another level, in the public sphere, although the Iranian city youth participate in the religious festivals such as Ashura seems to be in large numbers, the content of these rituals have become less ideological and more of a secular spirituality. Many of the young Iranians who participate in the Moharam street carnivals called *daste* do not even know how to perform their daily prayer according to the Islamic *shia fiqh* and insist on presuming a Western lifestyle. Nevertheless, as liberal-minded Muslims, they do not see any contradiction between participating in these traditional rituals while keeping a firm belief that Islam should not interfere in the matters of their private lives.

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<sup>179</sup> Janet Afary, *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 269.

Maghsoud Ferasatkah pointed out that the Islamic republic gained much legitimacy from the Muharram mourning which was heavily politicised during the 1960s and 1970s under the influence of the contemporary ideological discourses. He also noted how the commemoration was used in the 1980s to mobilise people for the Iran-Iraq war. In the 1990s the events were used for political/factional mobilisation functions but in the new century the young generation has changed the processions and the mourning of Muharram into something primarily ritualistic. After running a survey among the youth who participated in Muharram rituals in Tehran, Ferasatkah places today's Tehranian youth in a grey area between secularist and traditionalist and asserts that although the religious sentiments are still strong for most of the younger generation in urban Iran it is the social and cultural functions of the Muharram rituals that attracts the young generation of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussein.<sup>180</sup>

All these examples give us more reason to accept the reality that the conflicts of Religious-Secular cleavage will become tougher in the coming years in Iran. The intensification of this conflict so far has stood in the way of thinkers like Soruosh and Kadivar who strive for reconciliation between religiosity and modernity.

### **5.2.6. Gender Cleavage:**

After the revolution women in Iran have lost many of the rights and privileges they obtained since the Constitutional Revolution. Some of these rights such as suffrage were granted as a package as part of the Shah's White Revolution referendum. Educated women protested at the loss of rights but the pro-Khomeini forces deemed the protests counter-revolutionary riots and crushed it with brutality. Therefore the women's rights demonstrations at the beginning of the revolution failed in altering the prejudicial position of the pro-Khomeini forces, and at the end it was the radical Islamic agenda which imposed itself on the society as a whole and on the legislation specifically.

According to Janet Afary,

Soon the state and ordinary men gained immense authority over women's sexual and reproductive capacities. Fathers, grandfathers, and paternal uncles (as male guardians) were given extensive guardianship powers over female relatives. Once again, a father or *vali* could choose to marry off a pre-pubescent girl to a much older man of his choice (Article 1041 of the Civil Code). While the *'ulama* had historically differed on whether a woman needed her *vali*'s permission for first

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<sup>180</sup> Maghsoud Ferasatkah, *Namaaie az dean varzie tabagheie mutavasete jadid* [An overview of the religious practice of urban youth in the new millennium], [<http://farasatkah.blogspot.com/1389/09/25/post-26/>], 8 April 2011.

marriage, the state now established the more restrictive version of *shari'a* on this question (article 1044 of the Civil Code). With so many limits on interactions between single men and women, semi-arranged marriages became increasingly necessary. Accordingly, extended family gatherings again became a crucial arena for finding spouses.<sup>181</sup>

These retrogressive laws and their implementation and practice have, as Afary writes, reduced women to second-class citizens.<sup>182</sup>

Yet the Islamic government was not all negative for women's rights. For example, it empowered many impoverished women, as the following outlines.

Paradoxically, some of the Islamic Republic's accomplishments in literacy, health, and family planning had helped give rise to this new generation of dissidents. The government faced a more urbanized, mobile, and politically aware population. The pre-revolutionary belief that secular public spaces were amoral and unethical environments for women had faded. Many religious families had felt comfortable with segregation requirements and sent their daughters to the university. This increased level of participation by women altered many old gender expectations and culminated in new demands for civil liberties and a more open relationship to the Western world. Muslim intellectuals who had previously supported the revolution gradually formed the nucleus of what became known as the reform movement. The dream of an Islamic Utopia was shelved and replaced with a more sober understanding of reality. Many still held on to the legacy of Khomeini and the revolution, but wanted a kinder, gentler, and more diverse Islamic Republic.<sup>183</sup>

The moderate reformist government of Mohammad Khatami paved the way for the enhancement of the women movements in Iran. He encouraged the establishment of NGO's Khatami-appointed Zahra Rahnavad as the head of the Women Participation Centre and Masoumeh Ebtekar as the head of the Organisation of Safeguarding the Environment to signify his intention of allowing women in Iranian society to have a stronger voice. In addition, the spring of publications that was initiated by Khatami's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Dr. Ataollah Mohajerani, has increased awareness about women's rights and grievances.

Little by little, women's rights activists found their way to the Majles corridors where they lobbied and persuaded MPs not to vote against women in crucial family bills such as the 2008 family bill.<sup>184</sup> However, with the start of Ahmadinejad's second term in office, the radicalised MPs decided to once again review the proposed bill and this time the efforts of women campaigners did not bear any fruit.

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<sup>181</sup> Afary, *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran*, p. 281.

<sup>182</sup> Afary, *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran*, p. 281.

<sup>183</sup> Afary, *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran*, p. 322.

<sup>184</sup> Afary, *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran*, p. 371.

Ahmadinejad is aware that women's rights have become an essential concern for the majority of Iranians. Complete disregard of women's demands will cost him gravely, yet, Ahmadinejad is not ready to pay any credit to the women's leaders who criticised his policies before and in general supported the reformist camp. Therefore, he decided to appeal to the masses of women instead and thus bypass the civil society. He appointed a woman MP, Mis Marzieh Vahid Dastjerdi, as the Minister of Healthcare, the first female Minister after the revolution. But this was an insincere operation since Mis Dastjerdi was an ultra-conservative MP who repeatedly voted against women in the parliament and was one of the strongest advocates of segregation, according to gender, in the hospitals across the country.

### **5.2.7. Generational Cleavage**

Not all generational cleavages will necessarily result in generational conflict, since a certain amount of space between the young and old generation is healthy and normal. However, when the generation gap couples with politics things can start to differ.

The cognitive abilities and reasoning skills of different age groups is not similar of course, and the youth culture is usually more liberal while the old culture is more prone to adhere to traditions. However, what makes the generational gap more interesting in a case such as Iran's are the demographic explosion, the massive youth unemployment and the social exclusion because of a big gap between the paternalist culture of the old generation and the cosmopolitan culture of the young in Iran.

In transitional societies rapid change probably became integral to cultural myths about intergenerational relations. In such settings, we would also expect to find larger generational gaps in attitude and behaviour. Young people will have markedly different experiences from their parents, as schooling replaces illiteracy and global ideas impinge on local values. This generational gap in exposure and experience will probably result in divergent attitudes and preferences, which may in turn spur conflicted relations within families and communities.<sup>185</sup>

It is true that during the honeymoon of the Islamic revolution two young men, Masoud Rajavi and Farokh Negahdar, respectively headed the opposition leftists' parties Mojahedin and Fadaieen and

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<sup>185</sup> Sahar El Tawila, Barbara Ibrahim, and Hind Wassef, "Social change and parent-adolescent dynamics in Egypt", In Kathryn M. Yount and Hoda Rashad (eds), *Family in the Middle East: Ideational change in Egypt, Iran, and Tunisia*, Oxon, Routledge, 2008, p. 152.

it is also a historical fact that due to the burst of the untamed young energy which exhilarated the revolutionary course, the younger generation (especially Student Following the Line of Imam) could occupy many posts previously held only by veteran politicians and technocrats. However, Iranians are by and large prisoners of their patrimonial and paternalist culture in which the older generation always associates being younger with being naïve and inexperienced. Therefore, the initial milestones that were achieved by young rebels in the first decade of the Islamic republic were lost once the euphoria of the revolution was gone and the opposition and the system were no longer in urgent need of young people to fight off each other. Again, the old paternalist political culture prevailed and imposed itself on the society, and soon the younger generation were not in control anymore.

In the last two decades the regime and opposition alike have kept the key positions in the hands of senior politicians; thus one could no longer see a young Foreign Minister or a young opposition in Iran. Among the opposition parties Mosharekat was on the whole the most internally-democratic party. Yet even Mosharekat was unsuccessful when it came to sharing the power with its junior party members. The party, of course, set up a youth wing *Shakheie javanan* that preformed most of the party's legwork and public activities but the share of this youth wing in the party's decision making was very small.

While the youth represent the majority in MENA, the majority of the established government and opposition leaders are old and out of touch with the demands and grievances of the young population. The Arab world democratic spring of 2010, which is also known in Yemen by the name *Thaurat al-shabab* [revolution of the youth], gained much legitimacy from the youthfulness of its participants. Because of their age, the activated and mobilised young Arab individuals could not be part of the old paternalist and patrimonialist elites and regimes of the MENA. Nor were they involved in the financial corruption of the tamed official "opposition" groups. This younger generation have thus far secured their position as natural shareholders in any future political deal in their countries. Indeed, several newly-formed political parties in the revolution-struck Arab countries such as Egypt or Yemen have claimed legitimacy from the young age of their founders and members. These parties, in Panebianco's terms, are distributing their collective "incentive of identity" from their founders and members' fountain of youth.

In Iran, however, up till now "the third generation" has not claimed a political identity for itself that is separate from the conventional opposition. Despite the fact that generational conflict is detected

and has been spoken about widely in Iran, this conflict never been transformed into a united political action by the young strata aimed at protecting their own interests.

In today's Iran junior activists continue their existence as a secondary entity to the established older generation who occupy most of the managerial and leadership posts in the important government and opposition organisations. While the older generation of leaders are in power the underprivileged young activists will never have the chance to be promoted to occupy the rank of leadership. The older generation in turn will never hand in their posts unless causes such as illness and natural death force them to. However by that time, the younger generation will have become old and a new "old" generation will occupy the place of the retired or deceased leaders and elites.

This vicious circle could continue forever, but the recent self-consciousness of the young stratum in Iran, who comprise about seventy percent of the population, will rebelliously change the general perception about the younger people in the near future.

### **5.2.8. Concluding Remarks**

If "environmental uncertainty"<sup>186</sup> has anything to do with unpredictability then the Iranian example is a perfect example of a very uncertain electorate . Before 2005 no one could predict Ahmadinejad's victory. It is as if Ralph Nader became president in 2000 instead of George Bush or Al Gore. The effects of the short-term society and the arbitrary rule adds to the unpredictability of the future of the Iranian political parties, their policies, their pledges and even their survival.

In the 2005 presidential elections Ahmadinejad won by focusing on fighting corruption and chanting "bread-and-butter" issues. According to Ehteshami and Zweiri, Ahmadinejad's electoral campaign was fought on the basis of social and economic issues rather than ideology and political opinion.<sup>187</sup> Ahmadinejad of course lacked conventional party machinery. Nevertheless, he was assisted by the IRGC and Basij. Like a well-organised party the IRGC and Basij mobilised the voters and galvanised support for the populist Tehran mayor, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

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<sup>186</sup> The concept of party environmental uncertainty will be discussed in chapter 7

<sup>187</sup> Anoushirvan Ehteshami and Mahjoob Zweiri, *Iran and the Rise of its Neoconservatives: The Politics of Tehran Silent Revolution*, London, I.B. Tauris, 2007, p. 77.



However, all the might and discipline of the IRGC and Basij could not repeat the same victory for Ahmadinejad in the 2009 presidential election, an election that has proved that the Iranian electorate could be reached, persuaded and mobilised effectively by the means of mass media, thus throwing serious doubts as to whether mass membership organisations such as Tudeh in the 1950s is even necessary for winning elections in Iran.

In addition, it is vital to understand the social cleavages that gave rise to the Tudeh party have changed dramatically during the last decades. The Iranian society is no longer divided along the old social lines and new cleavages came in into view while the old ones were fading. The class-based cleavage was rendered obsolete by the recent developments in the social stratification in Iran. In addition, the role of the media and television in shaping the voters' opinions makes mass party type look ineffective and slow.

With the long-lasting significance of the parliamentary factions in the Iranian politics and the drastic changes of technology and society that came as a result of the partial modernisation of the country, it seems that the workable type for today's Iran is certainly not a mass party. An ideal type similar to Panebianco's electoral-professional, Kirchheimer's catch-all or Katz Mair's cartel party is a more accommodating model for Iran's complex society and polity than the mass party.

### **5.3. The Complexity of the Iranian Political System and its Effects on Partisanship in Iran**

What adds to the uncertainty in the parties' environment in Iran is that the Iranian parliamentary system is more current/faction based than party based. This is in part because of the comfort factions take in the arbitrariness of ruling, something that a mature organisation such as a consolidated political party, one that has successfully completed the institutionalisation level, would not tolerate. Samuel Huntington explains why some political elites in developing countries tend to oppose political parties: "The conservative sees party as a challenge to the established hierarchy; the administrators see it as a threat to rationalized rule; the populists as an obstacle to the expression of the general will".<sup>188</sup>

This disarray in the Iranian parliament brings us to the vital question; what is the form of government in Iran? Answering this question will explain Why the Iranian system is not welcoming the institutionalisation of strong political parties.

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<sup>188</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, London, Yale University Press, 1968, p. 404.

An theocracy? An autocracy? A Sultanic regime? A totalitarian regime? A divine oligarchy? There is no consensus among the scholars of Middle East studies about the nature of the Iranian government. This confusion has been caused partly because of the several overlapping and parallel institutions that existed side by side in the Islamic republic. For instance, while the country is officially called a republic, the president is only second-in-command after the Supreme Leader. And while, according to the constitution, the parliament is supposed to be the sole legislative power, other institutions such as the Expediency Council, the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution and the House of The Leader put forward their own legislation from time to time. Even at the provincial levels the governors appointed by the interior minister compete with the Friday prayer leaders and the local IRGC commanders appointed by the Leader for real influence and power.

However apart from the extra-constitutional influences that some personalities and organs enjoy in the IRI, the constitution itself is contradictory and paradoxical. While explaining the circumstances of the early days of the revolution that presided over the ratification of the new constitution, Fakhreddin Azimi explains that:

The new Constitution contained antinomies that reflected the conflicting forces, interests, and aspirations involved in the revolution. The Constitution's republican components, though opaque and subdued, indicated the democratic yearnings underlying the revolution. The symbolically significant choice of a republican form of government revealed recognition of democratic aspirations, which were among the core motivating ideals of the revolution. However, meaningful republicanism would in practice prove incongruent with the leading role and privileged status of the clergy as the unchallengeable heirs of the revolution. Republicanism was eclipsed, if not abrogated by, the Constitution's theocratic tenor, which was designed to ensure clerical hegemony.<sup>189</sup>

It must be noted that the 1989 amendment of the constitution not only did not remove any of the above-mentioned antinomies, but in fact added more confusion and contradiction to the already confusing text. The amendment of article 57, which made the Supreme Jurist's authorities absolute, in fact has created a constitutional deadlock for the reformist elements within the IRI, who wanted to move towards the institutionalisation of the rule of law.

Another cause for confusion in the Iranian system have been the social and political developments in Iran since the 1979 revolution. The ongoing evolution of the Iranian polity forces the scholars of Iranian studies to review their classifications of the Iranian regime over and over. Keshavarzian for

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<sup>189</sup> Fakhreddin Azimi, *The Quest for Democracy in Iran*, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 2008, p. 361.

instance believes that the disarray in the IRI system is the result of the fragmented nature of the Iranian system, which in itself has been caused by the lack of a unifying revolutionary party in exile before 1979.

The mass revolution brought together nationalists, Islamists, and leftists into an effective weight to topple the Pahlavi monarchy. Yet once that objective was achieved, little organisational or ideological glue united the disparate revolutionary leaders or classes; consequently, the Pahlavi regime was not replaced with a robust, single party or a ready-made government in exile... A strong single party might have added cohesion to this decentralized form of authoritarianism, but no such organisation emerged. The Islamic Republic Party was established shortly after the revolution by clerics who were close confidants of Khomeini in order to unify the revolutionary forces. This party, however, did not develop into a single party regime such as those of the Institutional Revolutionary Party like (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, or PRI) in Mexico or the Baath Party in Syria.<sup>190</sup>

In India the ingenuity of the Indian political elites prevented a disastrous outcome after its independence from Britain. Developing the unshakable Congress Party equipped the Indian politicians with the vehicle necessary for an orderly transition from colonial rule to a modernising democracy. Moreover, in the case of the Congress Party, the organisation was able to quickly change its function from fighting for independence to the task of becoming an all-encompassing party.

A party that is unable to change constituencies or to acquire power is less of an institution than one that is able to make these changes. A nationalist party whose function has been the promotion of independence from colonial rule faces a major crisis when it achieves its goal and has to adapt itself to the somewhat different function of governing a country. It may find this functional transition so difficult that it will, even after independence, continue to devote a large portion of its efforts to fighting colonialism. A party which acts this way is less of an institution than one, like the Congress Party, which drops its anticolonialism after achieving independence and quite rapidly adapts itself to the tasks of governing.<sup>191</sup>

In contrast, Iran after the 1979 revolution had no unifying organisation available to unite the dispersive revolutionary factions under one umbrella. Unluckily for Iran, the few political parties which survived the oppression of the shah and started their activities after the revolution had a very narrow political perspective accompanied by weak organisational competence, and were thus incapable of appealing to all the cleavages in the revolution-hit Iranian society. However what remains challenging to explain is the survival of the authoritarian regime in Iran despite its lack of a unifying political party.

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<sup>190</sup> Arang Keshavarzian, "Contestation Without Democracy: Elite Fragmentation In Iran", in. Marsha Pripstein Posusney and Michele Penner Angrist (eds), *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, Colorado, Rienner, 2005, pp.75-76.

<sup>191</sup> Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Society*, p. 17.

Following Aristotle's argument in the *Politics*, Samuel Huntington asserts that complex states have better chances of survival than the simple ones. Of course Huntington was looking at the democratic systems which had a complex rather than simple constitution. However this deduction could be expended to include the less democratic regimes as well. According to Hantington:

The classical political theorists, preoccupied as they were with the problem of stability, arrived at similar conclusions. The simple forms of government were most likely to degenerate; the "mixed state" was more likely to be stable. Both Plato and Aristotle suggested that the most practical state was the "polity" combining the institutions of democracy and oligarchy. A "constitutional system based absolutely, and at all points," Aristotle argued, "on either the oligarchical or the democratic conception of equality is a poor sort of thing. The facts are evidence enough: constitutions of this sort never endure." A "constitution is better when it is composed of more numerous elements." Such a constitution is more likely to head off sedition and revolution.<sup>193</sup>

Drawing upon Huntington's above mentioned hypothesis, it could be argued that complexity in non-democratic systems is equally beneficial for the survival of that system. This is where Keshavarzian's argument comes into picture. Arang Keshavarzian points out that the fragmentation of power in Iran via the "segmentation of the state agents" has contributed to regime survival in spite of serious disparities among the IRI elite.<sup>194</sup>

Let us look at the challenges between the elite in the following entities,

- The IRGC and the Army
- The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and The Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution
- the Majles and the Expediency Council
- The Guardian Council and the Majles
- The Guardian Council and the Expediency Council
- the President's office and the Supreme Leader's office
- the State Universities and the Azad Universities
- The Bonyads and the Khatam al Anbia Construction.

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<sup>193</sup> Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Society*, p. 19

<sup>194</sup> See Keshavarzian, "Contestation Without Democracy: Elite Fragmentation In Iran", pp. 63-87

The real power of the organisations mentioned above depends to a large extent on the elites who reside in them. If they are controlled by what Keshavarzian calls the “winner elites” then the importance of that particular organisation will rise in the IRI hierarchy. If they are sheltering the “looser elites” then the above mentioned organisations will serve as an incubators for cadre building and a safe haven for the defeated elites to reconsider their previous positions and build a new strategy for winning the next election

The varied state apparatus has housed and created clusters and circles of political elites with differing interpretations of the regime, working relations, and immediate institutional interests. In the Islamic Republic the production of political elites takes place within a diverse array of state organisations, rather than a single party or military hierarchy. The topography of the state, however, is such that elites differentiate themselves from one another and electoral losers remain active within the state. These auxiliary organisations allow elite conflict to persist by preventing one faction from completely suffocating opposing elites even if they are marginalized.<sup>195</sup>

In addition to the winner/loser criteria of the elites, a given organisation’s leader’s personal abilities such as shrewdness and entrepreneurship are very important elements in deciding the political weight of that particular organisation in the relations and dynamics of power within the IRI.

Even the chief bodies such as the Commandership of IRGC, that seem to have significant institutionalised power regardless of the human agency that occupies them, are indeed bound by a large extent to the entrepreneurial qualities of the human agency controlling it.

Khomeini and Khamenei both shared the same constitutional mandates but they did not have the same real power in the IRI complex dynamism. Hashemi Rafsanjani and Mohammad Khatami were both two-term presidents but their real power differed greatly. Since most of the auxiliary organisations in IRI are weakly institutionalised, the political weight of these organisations depends partly on the personal skills of the elites in power at the time.

Finally some theorists of democratisation believe that the elite fragmentation contributed to the collapse of authoritarian regimes in the past.<sup>196</sup> However, in the Iranian case, the fragmentation of the elite during Khatami’s era did not have the same outcome. The reformists’ legal power and authority, in elected bodies, was overridden by their counterparts’ real power in parallel state organisations. The disarray inside the reformist alliance, of course, has worked against them. The reformist alliance which, at times, appeared like a hotchpotch of compromise among several inconsistent factions, and which was lacking a strong organisation, failed to mobilise popular support when it most needed it. In addition, the discontented elites like Rafsanjani were

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<sup>195</sup> Keshavarzian, “Contestation Without Democracy: Elite Fragmentation In Iran”, p. 79

<sup>196</sup> Nick Bisley, *The End of the Cold War and the Causes of Soviet Collapse*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p. 21.

contaminated by being attached to positions in auxiliary organisations such as the Expediency Council and the Assembly of Experts.

...the lack of a party or strong set of opposition institutions made it difficult to rejuvenate the energies of supporters at key moments. This was obvious in January 2004 when dozens of parliamentary members participated in a month-long sit-in at the parliament in protest against the Guardian Council's disqualification of almost half the candidates for the Seventh Parliament, including eighty reformist candidates who were sitting members of parliament (MPs). Despite these dramatic events, threats of mass resignation by government ministers, and verbal support from university professors, students, newspaper writers, and other groups, there were no large demonstrations in front of the parliament, strikes, or other forms of collective action at the societal level... Institutionalised political organisations will always help coordinate activities of group members. In the context of democratization, opposition groups that are centralized and hierarchical, even autocratic, tend to be better able to signal commitments to the rules of the game and thus negotiate an elite pact with hard-liners.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Keshavarzian, "Contestation Without Democracy: Elite Fragmentation In Iran", p. 86.

## 6. Chapter Six: The Emergence of IRP

Following the 1979 revolution, in order to answer the deficit of human resources at political and managerial levels, the Islamic Republic Party was created. The founders were a group of pro-Khomeini clerics who believed in the merits of having a strong single party, notwithstanding the adoption of a pluralist multiparty political system. The initiators of the idea were, Ayatollah Dr Beheshti, Hojatoleslam Ali Khamenei, Hojatoleslam Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Dr Hojatoleslam Bahonar and Ayatollah Mosavi Ardebili. Their position regarding active involvement in real politics and political partisanship was contradictory to that of the traditionalist clergy, some of whom were close to Ayatollah Khomeini at the time. Before 1979 even Ayatollah Khomeini himself did not approve of clergy initiating a political party. However, later on, in a tactical U-turn he sanctioned the proposal. Thus Khomeini's agreement to the establishment of IRP was a tactical rather than in-principle decision.

IRP was run by Khomeini's most loyal clerics. The party's adherence to Shiism and *Velayate faghih* [jurisprudential guardianship] was adamant. According to articles 28 to 30 of IRP's constitution the party's conducts must be watched over by a council of jurists 'Shourai' *iftaa'* to make sure that everything remains Islamic.<sup>198</sup> In addition, with the help of the revolutionary organs such as IRGC and the *komitehs*, the IRP had started a campaign to diminish all non-Khomeinist groups and parties in the country.

Khomeini supported IRP's actions most of the time, until there was no potential threat left to be eliminated and the internal power struggle inside IRP started surfacing. When the IRP elites turned against each other and brought their disputes into the daylight of the public sphere, Ayatollah Khomeini wanted the party no more.

### 6.1. Islamic Republic Party: The Genesis

The creation of the Islamic Republic Party (IRP) was a major development in a chain of events after the revolution that led to the consolidation of power in Khomeinists' hands. It was the pro-Khomeini clerics who had been supporting him before and during his time in exile that came up with the idea of forming a party. An idea that was unconventional for the Shia clergy at the time.

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<sup>198</sup> Abdollah Jasbi, *Tashakole faragir*, [The Encompassing Organisation], Azad University Press, Tehran, 2001, p. 393.

The events that preceded the revolution of 1979 have demonstrated the fact that pro-Khomeini clerics were good in networking and had mastered the art of populist propaganda via the network of mosques and other religious venues. It showed that they had no difficulties whatsoever in utilising the vast network of mosques, seminaries and other religious locations in order to besiege the religious-minded people of Iran behind Ayatollah Khomeini's appeal for the overthrowing of the Shah's regime. Nevertheless these events manifested that pro-Khomeini clerics suffered from a big deficit in organisation. Not having a political party exclusively for Khomeinists and by them was their Achilles' heel; mosques and seminaries were good in rallying the masses behind Khomeini but fell short when answering demands such as, articulation of ideology, cadre building, bureaucratic and administrative tasks and most importantly a mechanism for reinforcement of loyalty to Imam Khomeini and his so-called *Maktab*.

A customised political party could help build revolutionary institutions. It could provide a recruitment pool for the governments that would come after the revolution. It could unify the different pro-Khomeini factions under the umbrella of one major organisation. In a nutshell, a pro-Khomeini political party could provide the pro-Khomeini clerics and, to a lesser extent, the pro-Khomeini-laymen a considerable lead and an upper hand over other competing groups and factions in the Iranian political scene at the time. Moreover it was providing them with an organisation through which they could exercise their power through exchange. The elites and the ordinary members of such a party would enjoy the collective incentive of sharing the *Maktabi* identity and Imam Khomeini's blessing. The elite then would reassure themselves of a foot in the executive, legislative and judiciary branches of the Iranian regime as well as access to other state selective incentives. The political capital of Khomeini's charisma was in a way exchanged with the loyalty of the masses who join the party but for the elite selective incentives were necessary to keep them united in the face of their rival groups.

The will to make a party is one matter, getting it actually built is a different matter. Institutionalisation needed an extended period of time, a luxury that the Khomeinists did not have. The power vacuum that followed the fall of the Shah and the huge administrative hole that was caused by the demise of the old regime had to be filled immediately. The pro-Khomeini clergy weren't ready yet to replace the old regime's top officials in all areas of government. They simply lacked the skills and the cadre necessary for such critical positions. The Khomeini-loyalist cadre that was supposed to replace the old regime's elites was not ready yet.



The next best thing at that time were sister Islamist political parties who participated in the Revolution plus some of the old regime's men who had some level of trustworthiness. While the interim government was formed by Mehdi Bazargan and his fellow members of the Liberation Movement of Iran (LMI), key institutions such as the national army had to be trusted into the hands of generals appointed by the Shah.

Ayatollah Khomeini was not ignorant of these risks, but for the sake of starting off the new revolutionary interim government and getting the state administration on its feet, he had to trust individuals who, despite their revolutionary credentials and their personal affection to the Imam's character, were not strong advocates of his doctrine of *velayate faghih*. When he felt secure enough, in order to stop the adversary groups from taking over the revolution and to prevent a *coup* similar to that of 1958, he took a number of decisions aimed at counterbalancing the active opposition and to defuse the possible threats to his ideal Islamic system. The steps that Khomeini took were as follows,

- i. A major decision that Khomeini took even before arriving in Tehran was the establishment of the Council of Islamic Revolution (CIR) which later became part of the "parallel government".
- ii. Another crucial step that Khomeini and his devotees took was the creation of a number of revolutionary organs. Namely: the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps IRGC, the Tehran Revolutionary Committee and the Revolutionary Tribunals. These organisations acted as a decisive tool/vehicle in the hands of Khomeinists in order to first contain and afterwards destroy all rival groups from Marxists and supporters of the MKO to liberals and supporters of the National Front of Iran.
- iii. Finally, showing the green light for the creation of Islamic Republic Party (IRP) just a few months before the fall of the Shah's regime, aimed at building the needed loyal cadres to control the post-revolution regime.

## 6.2. Khomeini's Support and Patronage of the Party

IRP articulated Ayatollah Khomeini's political vision about the characteristics of an Islamic government and it used Khomeini's endorsement of the party to recruit members.<sup>199</sup>

Moreover Ayatollah Khomeini's appointment of provincial Friday Imams leaning toward IRP had given the IRP a major advantage in networking and popular support. Khomeini of course was not always satisfied about the idea of a party representing his views.

According to Hashemi Rafsanjani, Ayatollah Khomeini was not happy with the idea of partisanship at the beginning. However, when the success of Islamic Revolution became observable, Khomeini realised the advantages of a loyalist political party was far more than its possible costs and threats. Therefore, he changed his initial position and decided to go along with the idea of party building. Hashemi recalls that critical juncture in the revolution's history.<sup>200</sup> According to the dialogue between Khomeini and Rafsanjani, Ayatollah Khomeini's initial disapproval of party politics had two main reasons. First, he regarded the "natural organisation of the Shia clergy" as the optimum form of an institution capable of encompassing any political endeavour within the framework of the Islamic government, thus making any other form of organisation unnecessary. Second, if clergy was to be involved in party making and party politics, he thought, the image that ordinary people had in mind from the clergy, was going to be tainted. The image of fatherhood, benevolence and impartiality was the clergy's biggest political capital and the essence of their social status, losing it was making them vulnerable in the face of the secular forces' criticism and would eventually cast them out from Iranian politics.

However, in his memoirs<sup>202</sup>, Hashemi makes it clear that Khomeini, who was not in favour of party at the beginning, had changed his mind once he was confronted with the tough realities on the ground. All other competing groups such as LMI, Tudeh Party and People's Mujahedin of Iran (MKO) were organised in the form of political parties. Even Khomeini's competitor Ayatollah, Ayatollah Mohammad Kazem Shariatmadari, who did not believe in the doctrine of *velayate faghih* and wanted clergy out of the government, had linkage with the Muslim People's Republican Party (Hezb-e Jomhuri-ye Khalq-e Mosalman). It was only Khomeini and his most loyal cleric friends who did not have a political party. Moreover, the usual network of clergy and mosques, although capable of mobilising the masses, could not by itself maintain people's dedication and loyalty to

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<sup>199</sup> Mohsen Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution from Monarchy to Islamic Republic*, Colorado, Westview, 1988, p. 244.

<sup>200</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>202</sup> *ibid*

the Khomeinists and their ideology (Maktab). Furthermore it could build the appropriate cadres for exercising governmental responsibilities.

In an interview published a short time after his assassination, the IRP's first general director and founder Ayatollah Beheshti was asked about the financing of the party. He replied:

The party's budget is granted by enthusiasts and you may know that the founders of the Party were five familiar cleric faces who for years have worked side by side with the benevolent people in building mosques, bridges, schools, public baths, publishing books, building libraries and doing missionary work. As a consequence they [the founders] enjoyed a considerable acceptability by the people for collecting the religiously motivated funding. The party is Islamic and endorses Islamic activities, so it has *ejaze* [authorisation] to spend from *vojouhat shar'ieh* [the Shia almsgivings] for these purposes. Part of the budget has been utilised by these methods and some of it was borrowed, a segment of which is repaid until now, but basically the party is funded by the membership fees and as you know we have already started this and I must add that currently our student headquarters are charging 100 Toomans per month for membership.<sup>203</sup>

The almsgivings that Beheshti mentions were mostly provided by Khomeini himself or by his permit. In an interview conducted in July 1999, Hashemi recalls that in one instance Ayatollah Khomeini provided a suitcase full of cash to the party.

I mentioned to Imam that we have started our work but there are setbacks; we have financial difficulties. There was a suitcase containing cash in His Eminence's possession. He said: for the party. When I arrived at the party headquarters in the theology department of the University, the central council members were in a meeting, we counted the cash, was more than five million Toomans. It was precious for us from two perspectives. First, the Imam had invested his trust in the party in such a short period of time and gave us from his *Vojouhat*. Second that our problems were resolved. A point to mention is that Imam has permitted us to use the *Sahme Imam* for the informative and cultural interaction of the party. Most of our expenditure was for cultural and informative activities so we could spend from *Sahme Imam*.<sup>204</sup>

After the ousting of president Banisdr and the assassination of Ayatollah Beheshti, Khomeini had noticeably increased his endorsement of IRP and in a meeting with the party's Central Council he refuses the assumption that party monopoly is necessarily a bad thing, adding that; "...as a matter of fact if declaring there must be Islam and nothing but Islam a monopoly, we all are monopolists and Islam itself likewise. The Messenger of Islam's 'no god but god' meant that among all other monopolies we choose this one and nothing else".<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, special issue, Bahman 29/ February 18, 1982

<sup>204</sup> Abdolmajid Moadikhah (ed), *Ahzabe siyasi dar iran* [Political Parties in Iran], Qom, History of the Islamic Revolution of Iran Foundation, 1999, p. 282.

<sup>205</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, special issue, Bahman 29/ February 18, 1982

### 6.3. The Council of Islamic Revolution (CIR)

Before proceeding any further it is crucial to examine another organisation that, similar to IRP, was born out of the necessity of safeguarding the achievements of the Islamic revolution. This organisation was the Council of Islamic Revolution (CIR). Understanding the nature of the correlation between IRP and CIR will provide us with more insight into the pro-Khomeini elites' behaviour and will enable us to better understand the organisational order/disorder of IRP.

#### 6.3.1. The Process of Creating The Council of Islamic Revolution (CIR)

After the mass rallies of ninth and tenth of Muharram 1978, the Shah's fall was foreseeable. Consequently the idea of establishing an interim organisation that was going to take charge in the aftermath of regime collapse had become the common theme among the pro-Khomeini clerics. The idea was translated into action when Ayatollah Morteza Motahari Khomeini's most cherished pupils went to Paris only to return with Imam's blessings and directions on how to build this organisation, a system of government that was named, most plausibly, the Council of Islamic Revolution (CIR).

The CIR support for IRP was a fact;. In times the two acted as parts of the same body. CIR's constitution granted the organisation immense powers that were used by CIR clerics to solidify the position of IRP in the post-revolution Iranian system. In the second article of the CIR constitution we read:

Until the constitution is written and approved and the desired Islamic government is established, the Council of Revolution temporarily will have the same authorities and responsibilities that which according to the previous constitution [constitutional monarchy] and its amendment, belonged to the two houses of parliament and the institution of monarchy.<sup>206</sup>

The high position which CIR enjoyed during the interim period was inconsistent with Bazargan's professional government mandate. However, Bazargan tried to defy this authority and criticised CIR for acting beyond its mandate. However with constitutional rights similar to those of the previous monarch and the twin parliaments put together, it is not clear what the CIR could possibly do to be considered as acting beyond its legal remits. The constitutional boundaries of CIR were so

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Majid Sa'eli Kordehdeh, *Shouraaie enghelabe eslamie iran* [The Council of Islamic Revolution of Iran], Tehran, 2005, The Centre for Islamic Revolution Documents, p. 251.

immense that almost no decision they took could have been labelled unconstitutional or extra-constitutional. The only thing that could limit this organ was that it was supposed to be interim and temporary due to its lack of electoral legitimacy.

Initially CIR was supposed to be an interim organisation, accountable to Khomeini and in charge of three major assignments. First, to oversee the progress of the revolution so even in the case of Khomeini's death, the revolution will continue its correct Islamic path. Second, to provide the logistics necessary for the success of the revolutionary government. And third, to supervise the transitional period between the fall of the monarchy and the establishment of a new legitimate system based on elections.<sup>207</sup>

However just like many other revolutionary bodies in the history of Islamic revolution, CIR exceeded its term of office and became part of what was later known as the "parallel government". According to Nikki Keddie,

Khomeinists dominated what could be called the parallel Islamic government, especially The Council of the Islamic Revolution (CIR), which passed laws and competed with the PRG (Provisional Revolutionary Government) on many matters, though they worked together to defeat rebellious ethnic minorities and to impose financial order by nationalizing major industries and banks.<sup>208</sup>

CIR activities were not consistent to the efforts of PRG that was aimed at bringing calm and stability to the revolution-tormented Iran. Therefore it would not be wrong to blame CIR, partially at least, for the resignation of Bazargan's provisional cabinet.

In a public speech given back then by Hojatoleslam Ali Khamenei in Imam Reza's shrine at Mashad (Aug 1980), Khamenei reveals his account of CIR's internal disputes.<sup>209</sup> He divided the members of CIR into two sub-categories, 1.) those who strive for maximum implementation of Islam into the society and 2.) those who were cynical about the success of such a project.

He told the audience in Mashhad how their faction in the CIR have managed, albeit with the help of Imam Khomeini, to stop prime minister Bazargan from dissolving the Constitutional Assembly. He also revealed for the first time that there were several "verbal arguments" between their

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<sup>207</sup> Saeli Kordehdeh, *Shouraaie enghelabe eslamie iran*, pp. 33-35.

<sup>208</sup> Nikki R. Keddie and Yann Richard, *Modern Iran : roots and results of revolution / with a section by Yann Richard*, Updated edition, London, Yale University Press, 2006, p. 245.

<sup>209</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Esfand 25/ March 16, 1981 and *Jomhourie eslami*, Esfand 26/ March 17, 1981

(Khomeinist) faction and Bazargan on the issue of the latter's selection of assistants especially his persistence in choosing Amir Entezam as his deputy, who "was once Shahpor Bakhtiar's close friend". Khamenei added that Bazargan was reluctant to increase the scope of the activities aimed at removing the old regime personnel from their posts after the revolution. In addition Khamenei announced that that he and a few more of his colleagues in CIR were active in rejecting the plans for handing over the American hostages to the CIR. In this revealing speech Khamenei asserts that:

The day when the American advocates and statesmen, alongside their international brokers, were insisting that the American hostages should be in the custody of CIR and those two days during which this matter was discussed in the council were the most difficult days that we ever had during that era. The Western- educated, Western- oriented gentlemen who came from the West could not comprehend that CIR did not have the right to take the hostages from the students to keep them in its own foreign ministry. The days when these issues were discussed, some of the foreign press (the translation and original pieces of which we have read) were saying that: American statesmen have happily announcing that the problem of hostage taking will be resolved as soon as CIR, who is the acting executive power in the country, accepts the responsibility of the hostages. We stood firmly in the face of such actions. Me personally and two of the brothers have issued a warning and proclaimed that if the CIR took in the hostages we will make our objection public and we shall discuss the issue with Imam.<sup>210</sup>

During CIR's short life, (from 12 January 1979 when Khomeini announced its establishment until 20 July 1980)<sup>211</sup> the Council of Islamic Revolution has played an important role in securing the power in the hands of Ayatollah Khomeini and his loyal clergy. At first and in the absence of an elected parliament, the CIR was thought to act as a legislative power but the CIR have circulated the PRG's executive power and become the most powerful revolutionary organisation in the country.

It must be acknowledged that Khomeini had originally invested a lot of trust in Mehdi Bazargan's capabilities. Bazargan was the first Prime Minister after the revolution, a man whose adherence to Islam and trustworthiness were well-known; otherwise Khomeini was not going to ask him to form the Provisional Revolutionary Government. Furthermore, Mr. Bazargan was appointed by Khomeini as a member of the CIR before and after his job as a Prime Minister which shows that until the last days of the CIR's life, Bazargan enjoyed a considerable level of Khomeini's trust. According to Shaul Bakhash, initially the IRP clerics on CIR were in agreement with the Bazargan on the need to contain the revolutionary committees and courts and to impose a degree of central control.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Esfand 26/ March 17, 1981

<sup>211</sup> Saeli Kordehdeh, *Shaurai e enghelabe eslami e iran*, p. 21-76.

<sup>212</sup> Shaul Bakhash, *Reign of the Ayatollahs*, London, I.B. Tauris, 1985, p. 65.

During his term in office, Bazargan was doing what he could to prevent collision between PRG and CIR; he went as far as inviting CIR members to become partners in his government, a proposal that met the acceptance of CIR's clergy members. Yet for reasons that were obvious from Khamenei's speech, mentioned earlier in this chapter, the conducts of CIR were contradicting PRG's activities. There was a clear conflict between the IRP clerics in the CIR and the other faction. It was this conflict of interests and ideologies together with other misfortunate events such as the hostage-taking that eventually resulted in the collective resignation of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of Mehdi Bazargan.

### 6.3.2. The Ages of CIR

Many lessons can be learned from studying the different Ages of CIR, i.e. analysing the different in-house developments in the Council of Islamic Revolution. The developments that accrued in the composition of CIR is a good starting point to look at the elite behaviour in the Islamic republic also to understand if they had leadership skills and to evaluate their survival tactics. Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani mentions the progression of these developments as follows,

After the victory of the revolution, Messrs Bazargan, Sahabi, Katiraie, Haj Sayed Javadi and Gharani have been reassigned to move to the provisional government and the army and Messrs Dr Habibi, Engineer Sahabi [Dr Sahabi's son], Dr Sheybani, Banisadr and Qutbzadeh have been elected in their place. After the martyrdom of maestro Motahari, Messrs Engineer Mir Hossein Mosavi, Ahmad Jalali and Dr Peyman were elected and Mr Masoudi went to hold an executive job. After the capture of the "Spying Nest" [US embassy in Tehran] and when Provisional Government gave its resignation, the Council of the Revolution which up until then had a legislative function in contrast to other authorities, received orders from Imam [Khomeini] to hold the executive role as well. Thus the composition of the Council changed [once again]. In the new composition Messrs Bazargan and Moeinfar were added to the Council and Messrs Peyman, Jalali and Mosavi held other responsibilities.<sup>213</sup>

Rafsanjani's above remarks, the extended version of which is included in the appendixes of this study, give credence to three stages of CIR.

- The first being the time in which CIR was established as an underground organisation.
- The transition period between the victory of revolution and the hostage taking situation.
- The final stage as the post Bazargan era.

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<sup>213</sup> Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, *Dorane mobarezeh* [The Time of Resistance], Tehran, Nashre Ma'arefe Eslami, 1997, p. 361-362.

From a simple look at the names involved as members of CIR during its different stages, it could be understood that the pro-Khomeini clerics did not have the numerical upper hand in the Council. At first, this looks paradoxical to the account that says CIR was controlled by the pro-Khomeini clerics. However, as shall be discussed later, the supposed pluralism in the Council was superficial since the Khomeinist elites who received substantial collective and selective incentives from Khomeini himself and had better entrepreneurial skills, could in the process, control the Council and dictate their will upon other members of CIR despite the others' numerical advantage in the Council. The assassination of the non-IRP affiliated Ayatollah Motahari and the Army general Gharani and last ,but not least, the sudden departure of the powerful outspoken cleric, Ayatollah Taleghani have further strengthened the IRP faction in the CIR.



### 6.3.3. The Real Decision Makers in CIR

Hashemi's account of CIR members is not the only narration available. Because of the difference of narrations and due to the importance of the matter all available narrations are cited here.

**Figure 6: Different narration of the CIR members' identity**

Narrations Members	Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani	Mehdi Bazargan	Ebrahim Yazdi	Ezatollah Sahabi First Narration	Ezatollah Sahabi Second Narration	Sayed Mohammad Hosssein Beheshti
Sayed Mahmood Taleghani	+	+	+	+	-	+
Morteza Motahari	+	+	+	+	+	+
Sayed Mohammad Hosssein Beheshti	+	+	+	+	+	+
Sayed Abdulkarim Mosavi Ardebili	+	+	-	+	+	+
Mohammad Javad Bahonar	+	+	+	+	+	+
Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani	+	+	+	-	+	+
Mohammad Reza Mahdavi Kani	+	+	-	+	+	+
Sayed Ali	+	-	+	+	+	+

Khamenei						
Mehdi Bazargan	+	+	+	+	+	+
Ahmad Sadr Haj-Sayed- Javadi	+	+	+	+	+	-
Yadollah Sahabi	+	+	+	+	+	+
Mostafa Katiraie	+	+	+	+	+	-
Valiollah Gharani	+	+	-	-	-	-
Ali Asghar Masoudi	+	+	+	-	-	-
Ezatollah Sahabi	-	+	+	+	+	+
Abbas Sheybani	-	+	+	-	-	-
Ebrahim Yazdi	-	+	+	+	-	-
Karim Sanjabi	-	-	-	+	+	-
Abolhassan Banisadr	-	-	-	+	-	-
Sadegh Ghotbzadeh	-	-	-	+	-	-
Hassan Habibi	-	-	-	+	-	-
Sayed Abolfazl Mosavi Zanjani	-	-	-	-	+	-

Source: Majid Saeli Kordehdeh, *Shouraaie enghelabe eslamie Iran*, pp. 47-48

As can be understood from Table 1, there are several accounts regarding who was and was not a member of CIR. Part of this variation is inevitable due to the hectic circumstances during which CIR was established (starting before the revolution being successful). During that time, because of the fear of being arrested by the notorious intelligence service police known as SAVAK, all meetings of CIR were held in secret locations and no records were kept of the meetings, hence the chaos in remembering who was who during those difficult times.

After the revolution however, although the threat of SAVAK was not there anymore, for political and security reasons the membership of CIR was wrapped in secrecy and anonymity. The main reason was the security threats caused by the terrorist activities of some opposition groups. Two of the CIR members, Morteza Motahari and General Gharani were killed by a terrorist organisation *Forghan*. There was an attempt on Hashemi Rafsanjani's life as well but he escaped with a bullet injury and gained recovery in hospital. However, there is no doubt that some of the narrations are biased. For instance, because of Banisadr's alleged "treason" to the revolution, some of the narrators have intentionally not mentioned his name.

All that being said, what remains unchanged in all the narrations, is the fact that CIR membership was not exclusive to the Khomeinists; Yadollah Sahabi, Mehdi Bazargan and Ahmad Sadr Haj Sayed Javadi were from the liberal-minded Liberation Movement Of Iran (LMI), Mustafa Katirai was a member of the moderate "Islamic Society of Engineers", Ezatollah Sahabi a Muslim Socialist, Valiollah Gharani and Ali Asghar Masoudi army and police officers. What is more, even the clerics did not all belong to Khomeini's close circle. For instance, Ayatollah Taleghani was an intellectual cleric with socialist views and Ayatollah Abolfazl Zanjani was a clergyman close to Mehdi Bazargan.

It is a fact that CIR was reshuffled several times to adjust to the fact of changing realities on the ground. However, despite all the changes in the membership, Khomeini's loyal clerics and laymen had never exceeded more than half of the seats in CIR. Therefore if it was left to the numerical majority alone, the control of CIR would not be in the hands of IRP clerics.

It is the successful control over "zones of uncertainty"<sup>214</sup> that will define who are the leaders in any given organisation; numerical majority does not necessarily translate itself into more power for those who hold the majority. It is those who hold the crucial zones of organisational uncertainty who lead the organisation. This is the main reason why IRP clerics had the most control over CIR

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<sup>214</sup> See Panebianco, *Political Parties*, pp. 33-40.

despite being minority. In the next chapter I explore the possibility that control over crucial zones of uncertainty could be pivotal in deciding who leads the party. In the Conclusion of this study the zones of uncertainty in case of IRP will be explored in more depth.

The allegation of dictatorship against the IRP clerics in CIR was even reflected in the IRP organ. In an editorial article in *Jomhourie eslami* in an attempt to respond to the various doubts about the IRP's behaviour, it was claimed that the "Western Imperialists" and their cronies inside the country have started a propaganda war against the Islamic republic party:

...by employing the people's repulsion of despotism, empty rumours are spread of the tyranny of the party clergy. This is while all decisions in the party are made in a group and these decisions are made after voting on them in the party's interim council, consisted of thirty people from whom only six are clerics and the clerics in the party exercise the same right as laymen...By exploiting people's hatred of despotism stories are told about the tyranny of the clerics inside the CIR. This is while in the CIR there are four laymen PRG members (there are no clerics in the PRG!!) who are participating with the right to vote. With the presence of several laymen inside the council, the clergy are the minority not the majority ...<sup>215</sup>

Despite what the IRP paper wrote, the IRP was the most organised caucus inside CIR. IRP at the time had an acceptable level of organisation, ample membership and could mobilise the masses via the network of mosques. The IRP clerics in CIR could use the Khomeini's levy and the support of their party to rise above the other members who, by the way, were disunited and not all of them were close to Khomeini. In addition, it must be mentioned that Khomeini's financial contribution to the party, the support of the "parallel government" and extra-judiciary organisations (Revolutionary Guard, the Revolutionary Committees and the Revolutionary Tribunals), shows that IRP was not a party that respected fairness and the rule of law; nevertheless it was a party that could survive and work as an organisation in a very hostile and unpredictable environment at that critical juncture of the Iranian revolution.

Khomeini's support in terms of collective and selective incentives in addition to IRP's mobilisation and organisational capacity was at hand for the IRP clerics in the CIR and they could use these opportunities to proceed with their projects inside CIR.

In an effort to accommodate with the IRP clerics in CIR and, for greater cooperation between the PRG and CIR, Bazargan asked the clerics to join his cabinet. In July 1979, with Khomeini's green light, Khamenei, Hashemi Rafsanjani and Bahonar joined the government as undersecretaries, ,in

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<sup>215</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Mehr 17/ October 09, 1979

the ministries of interior, defence and education respectively.<sup>216</sup> By holding both legislative and executive portfolios the IRP became more powerful than before, Bazargan's resignation increased the role of CIR and IRP in the executive branch of the regime. Later on the presidential election hopeful, Abulhassan Banisadr, joined Bazargan in accusing CIR of monopoly of power.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Bakhash, *Reign of the Ayatollahs*, p. 66.

<sup>217</sup> Saeli Kordehdeh, *Shouraaie enghelabe eslamie Iran*, p. 130.

## 7. Chapter Seven: Environmental Uncertainty in The Case of IRP

According to Panebianco, domination and adaptation both could be extremely powerful tools if used by experts; A competent leader or a strong dominant coalition thus could use each strategy in its own place and time to reduce the negative effects of environmental uncertainty on the party's cohesion. In this chapter the IRP had to dominate other organisations and the social base in order to survive as a party i.e. to reduce the negative effects of organisational uncertainty and hostility.

To make things clearer let us imagine a hypothetical situation in which king A rules in a region where all neighbouring kingdoms are either enemies or unpredictable impartial kings who might turn against king A or form alliances with his enemies in future. If king A is very powerful he will probably strike first and invade all the neighbouring kingdoms to insure his kingdoms' survival and expand his territory. If he is too weak he will adapt to the environment and try to seek alliances with the stronger kingdoms. If king A however, is neither too strong nor weak he will probably try to make alliances with some neutral kingdoms and invade the enemy territories before turning back and invading the friend kingdoms as well. The IRP case was closer to the last example. IRP elites used both domination and adaptation strategies to survive against the environmental uncertainty and hostility but because the extreme environmental unpredictability and hostility they preferred domination more than adaptation. Although as we see in Chapter eight, the IRP elites utilised adaptation strategies in their dealing with the social base they chose for their party.<sup>218</sup>

Every organisation must, at least to some extent, develop a strategy of domination over its external environment. Such a strategy is generally manifested in a sort of "disguised" imperialism whose function is to reduce environmental uncertainty, i.e. to safeguard the organisation from surprises (e.g. the challenges made by other organisations) which may come from the environment. But a strategy of domination is at the same time likely to provoke violent reactions from the other organisations menaced by it. A strategy of domination adopted to *reduce* environmental uncertainty can thus turn out to be counterproductive: it can lead to an increase of environmental uncertainty. Every organisation will thus be pushed by its relations with the external world in two different directions at the same time: it will be tempted both to colonize its environment through domination, and to "reach a pact" with it through adaptation.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> For examples of game theory applied to political science see Todd Landman, *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics: An Introduction*, Oxon, Routledge, 2000, pp. 208-219.

<sup>219</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, pp. 12-13.

## 7.1. The Zones of Organisational Uncertainty.

Those who are uncertain about the outcome of an election or the feasibility of the announced policy of the government or the opposition usually suffer from the lack of sufficient information, contextual knowledge or both. Obtaining information in the form of the data and facts is both easier and cheaper than obtaining contextual knowledge which requires education and dedication. All men possess reason, i.e. all people have the ability to think logically and engage in causal analysis. However contextual knowledge which is an understanding of the relations among variables such as economics, mathematics and sociology, is not common to all men, since it requires an upper degree of education and specialisation.<sup>220</sup>

But what does this “uncertainty” mean in the contexts of the voters? Downs explanation can be summarised as follows,

They may be uncertain how much influence their own views have on the formation of government policy... They may be uncertain about how other citizens plan to vote. In short, voters are not always aware of what the government is or could be doing, and often they do not know the relationship between government actions and their own utility incomes.<sup>221</sup>

Uncertainty however is not limited to the electoral arena, The entire society is every organisation’s environment. To reduce the negative effects of “organisational uncertainty”, the leader or the dominant coalition of the party should have satisfactory control over the “zones of uncertainty”. Accordingly “the leaders are those who control the crucial zones of uncertainty for the organisation, and can capitalize on these resources in internal negotiations (in power games), swinging them to their own advantage”.<sup>223</sup>

In other words to find out where the locus of power resides in a given party it is not enough to find out who the official leaders of the party are, instead we should find out who controls the fundamental zones of uncertainty in the party. The leader/s are those who have more control crucial over zones of uncertainty, who might not be the same as official leader/s. The zones of uncertainty according to Panebianco are those of Competence, Environmental relations, Communications, Formal Rule, Financing and Recruitment, the concepts of which is summarised in below:

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<sup>220</sup> Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, p.79.

<sup>221</sup> Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, p, 80.

<sup>223</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, pp. 22-23.

- a) Competence: It defines the “power of the expert,” he who possesses a specialized knowledge as a result of the organisational division of labor, and thus controls a fundamental zone of uncertainty.
- b) Environmental relations: Organisations almost always face an external world over which they can exert but limited control and from which serious threats can arise. To control environmental relations is thus to control a decisive zone of organisational uncertainty.
- c) Communications: he who can distribute, manipulate, delay or suppress information controls a fundamental zone of uncertainty, holds in his hands a decisive resource in power relations <sup>224</sup>

The same of course goes for “Formal Rule”, “Financing” and “Recruitment”. In a nutshell the substantial controllers over above mentioned zones are the real leaders and decision makers in any given party. Therefore to understand the how much real power each IRP elite enjoyed it is of vital impotence to find out who had more control over the above mentioned zones in the IRP.

## **7.2. The Hostility and Uncertainty in the Party Environment and Organisational arenas, in the Post-Revolution Iran**

According to Panebianco “environmental hostility produces environmental uncertainty”.<sup>227</sup> After the revolution in Iran environmental uncertainty that was resulted from a hostile political environment have had unbearable consequences for the survival of all parties including the state sanctioned ones. Keeping this in mind let us examine IRP’s environment.

To understand IRP’s position in the revolution-hit Iran, it is essential to comprehend that, although IRP members like Beheshti and Rafsanjani were not exactly what we call today “radical clerics”, the vigour of the revolution and the uncertainty of the environment forced them to take decisions they might not have been taking in another time or place. This is not an attempt to justify their actions rather an impartial analysis of the motives of their political behaviour. To make this clearer let us look at the Iranian party environment as it was in 1979 after the revolution. Only then can we have a better understanding of the reasons behind the actions of the leaders of IRP.

The Shah’s departure from the country on 16 January 1979 had infuriated the masses and people on the streets and political parties behind them started taking more drastic steps toward the revolution. They became more “revolutionary” both in their rhetoric and action. Few, like the Liberation Movement and the National Front, were advocates of moderation in the midst of the Post-revolution anarchy, the majority on the other hand had developed an obsession with revolutionist

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<sup>224</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, pp. 33-37.

<sup>227</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 206



and leftist slogans and ideas. The masses were asking for vengeful wrath for “revolutionary justice” against the so called counterrevolutionaries.

In order to implement “justice” Ayatollah Khomeini had charged Hojatoleslam Sadigh Khalkhali with the mandate of the establishing of the revolutionary courts *Daadghah-ha-ye enghelab*. Khalkhali soon became famous for his brutal methods and the ordering of the execution of hundreds if not thousands of the “counterrevolutionaries”.

The establishment of the Revolutionary Courts was a step back from Reza Shah’s secular reforms in the Iranian judiciary system. High ranking members of the old regime were hanged for “corruption on the earth” and “war against God”, loose “religious” accusations that could apply to anyone who was not happy about the revolution.

Khalkhali himself describes the meeting, in which he receives the decree from Khomeini as follows,

I said I am grateful but this job involves blood and it’s a heavy burden.

HE stated: it is not heavy for you, I am supporting you

I replied: I have done a lot and have a humble knowledge; I fear that my image would be portrayed as carnage maker in the history of the revolution. Moreover the enemies of Islam might use propaganda against me especially since I have to try masters of corruption and distortion in Iran.

The Imam stated: I am supporting you, besides whom else can I trust to give this responsibility?<sup>228</sup>

Iran’s left-wing parties like Tudeh and MKO were delighted to see the execution of many of the old regime’s elite ordered by Khalkhali and it is ironic that later they themselves became victims of these courts and were put on trial by their authority. Again, another example of extremism that was affecting almost every political party that was considering itself a shareholder in the revolution.

According to Bakhsh In the early months of the revolution, the left-wing parties, including the Fadayan, the MKO, and Tudeh party applauded the exercise of “revolutionary justice” by the Revolutionary Courts and were harshly criticised any signs of leniency on the part of the courts.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Ayatollah Sadegh Khalkhali, *Khaterate ayatollah khalkhali*, [the memoirs of Ayatollah Khalkhali], Tehran, 2000, Sayeh, pp. 290-291.

<sup>229</sup> Bakhsh, *Reign of the Ayatollahs*, p. 62.

### 7.3. The Critical Junctures of IRP

We can divide the critical moments of IRP into three turning points.

- From the victory of revolution to the resignation of PRG;
- From appointing Banisadr as a member in CIR to his removal from presidency.
- The domination of Iranian political spectrum and the subsequent intensification of Left and Right division within IRP.

#### 7.3.1. From the Victory of the Revolution to the Resignation of Bazargan

In the aftermath of the revolution, the rival factions became dependent more and more on the people in the streets i.e. the people who were participating in demonstrations and street violence; those who were motivated and fearless enough to march on the streets, break building glass and even beat some rival group members if necessary.

In those times the party's muscles and club wielders and not their ideologies and intellectuals could give the party an upper hand. That was most evident considering the fact that the national army and the police forces were reluctant to enter an alliance with one party against another leaving the arena empty for the rival groups such as IRP and MKO to fight each other off. So each party had to make its own army or depend on the army of another to survive. In this situation of security vacuum, IRP and its rival parties entered a race against time to equip their loyal supporters with resources necessary for their survival.

On 29 May 1979 Ayatollah Beheshti gave a fiery speech at *Kanoune Tohid* during which he sent an aggressive ultimatum to participants of a conference organised by the secular *Kanoune Vokala* (lawyers' union) calling them to "stop their efforts for hijacking leadership of the revolution" and threatening them with digging out their backgrounds to see if they were among the collaborators of the Shah's regime. Beheshti then asked the crowd to "march on the streets and renew your pledge of allegiance to Ayatollah Khomeini and send a strong message to the traitors and those intellectuals who aren't traitors or foes but are following a path that is different from your revolution, saying to them that this is who the defenders of Revolution look like."<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Khordad 10/ May 31, 1979

However, the encouraged street violence was a doubled-edged sword. As Party officials were brutalising and militarising their supporters they themselves were becoming consumed by the militant environment they were creating or contributing to its creation. The IRP was raising the expectations in terms of radical actions and revolutionary punishment to a level of no return and by destabilising the environment made the normal party organisational development an improbability.

In other words, the IRP clerics like many of their rivals' leftist parties were mostly reacting to the radical demands on the streets instead of behaving according to their original beliefs or remaining loyal to their authentic ethical principles. Populism and opportunism were the ethos of the day and Khomeinists and Leftists in a similar way, were competing for the constituency of the streets.

At another stage the urban poor strata and the conservative religious people were showing an ever-increasing passion to "Islamise" every conduct of the nation and the country. Also, through holding the medium of the pulpit in many urban poor areas, the IRP partisan clergy were campaigning for the "Islamisation" of the government, the judiciary system, the university and the economy.

Sadegh Zibakalam, who was a student and a political activist at that time and is now a senior lecturer in the Tehran University, acknowledges that the revolutionary discourse that had charmed everyone made it impossible for the moderate Bazargan to carry on his mandate.

I believe now, if Bazargan had refrained from resigning, we would be in a better situation now. First of all, a war might not have happened. Second, many fanatic actions would not happen since the government was mild, moderate, and pragmatic. But unfortunately no one in 1979 was thinking like this. In 1979 we were all charmed by the revolutionary discourse...you couldn't say to the people trapped in the revolutionary discourse that you will be better off with Engineer Bazargan.<sup>231</sup>

What was causing further deterioration to the situation was the fragile security status of the country that was caused by the collapse of the old regime. In the after effects of the revolution in 1979, many policemen and gendarmeries had abandoned their posts and left their headquarters. This security gap was taken advantage of by various groups from the left-wing militia to the mosque-attending religious youth. They started occupying the police stations and seizing any guns and ammunitions they found. Soon this phenomenon got a name - the *komiteh*. According to Bakhash Most of the 300,000 rifles, submachine guns, and light arms seized from military arsenals on 10

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<sup>231</sup> Gholam-Ali Saffarian and Faramarz Moatamed Dezfuli, *Soghoote doulate bazargan* [ the fall of Bazargan's Cabinet], Tehran, Ghalam, 2003, p. 155.

and 11 February fell into the hands of the young revolutionaries who found their way into the local *komitehs*.<sup>232</sup>

Members of these *komitehs* were confiscating properties, cars and valuable objects, putting people into jail or killing them without a trial. The justification was that they punished those who had been collaborating with the Shah or SAVAK, but in reality, very often personal scores were settled under the name of the revolutionary action.

Khomeini's response toward these organisations was not decisive. At the beginning he supported prime minister Bazargan's call to disarm the committees and dissolve their members in the police force, but when he realised that these committees were stronger than could be closed in one go, he tried to bring them under his own wings. Thus he appointed Ayatollah Mahdavi Kani, a prominent conservative and one of his closest clerics, as the head of the revolutionary committee, Tehran branch. The assumption was that Mahdavi Kani would bring all committees under one order yet Ayatollah Mahdavi Kani added more complexity to this already difficult matter. Although he introduced some level of regulation and order into the committees in Tehran, many committees in other cities were still showing more loyalty to the local clerics with whom they had created a strong relation during the hard times of the revolution in 1978-79. In addition he intensified the very behaviours that Bazargan was trying to eliminate .i.e. the illegal confiscation and arresting. Mahdavi-Kani executed even more illegal confiscations and arrests using the power of *komitehs* under his command in Tehran.<sup>233</sup>

The IRP leaders were people from the top ranks of the new state. Emerging from the Revolutionary Council, this leadership was able to put its people in charge of important posts. Thus, from the very beginning such organs as the Pasdaran (Islamic Revolutionary Guards), Basij (the Volunteers Corp), Mostazafan Foundation and the Majles as well as the Islamic Societies (grass-roots Islamic organs loyal to the IRP) throughout the country came under IRP's control. The IRP was therefore able to resist, influence and sabotage Bazargan's Government by building a state apparatus parallel to what remained of the old regime's apparatus which were controlled by the Bazargan Cabinet..<sup>234</sup>

One might rightly ask why the army was not given the task of dealing with this disarray? The answer is simple, the lack of trust. The Iranian national army chose to be politically neutral after the arrival of Ayatollah Khomeini from exile in Praise. After the victory of revolution the army was quick to show loyalty to Khomeini. In return Khomeini did not agree to demands of groups like

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<sup>232</sup> Bakhsh, *Reign of the Ayatollahs*, p. 56.

<sup>233</sup> Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution from Monarchy to Islamic Republic*, p. 256.

<sup>234</sup> Maziar Behrooz, "Factionalism in Iran under Khomeini", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Oct., 1991), p. 601, [ <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4283464> ], 18 July 2011

MKO to dissolve the army. However, neither Khomeini nor Bazargan was confident enough to put full trust in what once was the pillar of the Shah's regime. Many army generals and high-ranking officers were executed, jailed or made redundant by the orders of the revolutionary courts, many others left the country to avoid retribution. This made the leaders of revolution even more concerned about the army and its possible retaliation. The high ranking officers of the army were aggravated about what took place but did not want to confront the angry revolutionaries either. The main point is that the army was not trusted enough to be given the task of countering the *komitehs*. After all, many *komitehs* were a safe haven for thousands of Khomeini's militant supporters.

The mood of the country in 1979 was one of turmoil and unrest. The army was ostracised, the cities were in the hands of Friday Imams and *komitehs*. The demands for Islamisation of the country were ever high as it included the demands for redistribution of wealth and social justice. Moreover, people in the streets were crying for revenge and revolutionary punishment. A request that only few in power (like Prime Minister Bazargan) could dare to oppose. As Mohammad Mohsen Sazegara asserts,

Our revolution have started leaning to the left and becoming more radical after the demise of Shah. It went far away from moderation and become very drastic and aggressive. In history, let us go back to the summer of 1979; it is from this time that the race for extremism takes momentum. He who was more extreme in his speech was regarded as having more revolutionary credentials. In this competition the revolutionary council clerics have by far outmanoeuvred everyone else.<sup>235</sup>

Bazargan's assertion that he was "not a bulldozer but a delicate Volkswagen", that he was "a knife without a blade"<sup>236</sup> did not satisfy the angry crowds on the streets of Tehran. People and many political organisations wanted to see radicalism and Bazargan by no means was a radical man. He was truly a moderate Muslim who believed in the principles of human rights, but he was the right man in the wrong time and place.

In an effort to answer some of the accusations against his government at the time (Sep 1979), Bazargan told the press:

The third allegation that they charge us with is that Government does not act revolutionary. If what is meant by revolutionary is beating and killing and running over all the principles and laws, then that is a different matter and me and my government we are not revolutionary [ in this sense]. But if the criterion was the implementation of law and order and doing things orderly, which a positive revolutionary action, as I said many times before, can not be any thing but this, then we are revolutionary and even ultra revolutionary.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Saffarian and Moatamed Dezfuli, *Soghute daolate bazargan*, pp. 169-170.

<sup>236</sup> Baqer Moin, *Khomeini: The life of Ayatollah*, Londo, I.B.Tauris, 1999, p. 215.

<sup>237</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Shahrivar 11/ September 02, 1979

But the provisional government's toothless decrees and statements could not stop the revolutionary trials. Neither could it stop the confiscations of private properties by the revolutionary committees or public harassment by the *hezbollahies*.

By the summer, Bazargan felt hemmed in from all sides. He had no control over the Revolutionary Guards, courts, or committees. He could not prevent arrests, confiscations, executions, the suppression of the press, or the disruption of political meetings by the *hezbollahies*. Lawyers' groups, judges, professional associations, and university professors were demanding from him guarantees for individual rights he was powerless to give. The left-wing parties were pressing for radical measures he believed would only further disrupt the economy. His influence with Khomeini was not equal to the influence exerted by the revolutionary organisations or Khomeini's clerical associates. His government, he said, was powerless, "a knife without the blade."<sup>238</sup>

However Bazargan and his LMI friends are to be blamed also for the failure of PRG. One of Bazargan's biggest mistakes was that he invited most of the influential LMI elites to join the government thus leaving the LMI headquarters empty of talented people who had free time to work on important tasks such as organisation-making, enhancing and expanding the LMI branches and increasing the total number of party members.<sup>239</sup> In addition, Bazargan did not take into account the importance of having a major newspaper capable of propagating the party line and countering the propaganda war of IRP and other rival groups. Bazargan and LMI became absolutely defenceless in the face of the vicious propaganda war against them when the head of National TV and radio, Mr Sadegh Qotbzadeh decided to join the critics of Bazargan.<sup>240</sup>

In comparison, the IRP leaders were more than happy to close their eyes on any unlawful and unfair act as long as their popularity rate among the masses was growing in exchange. In addition, Ayatollah Beheshti's refusal to join the PRG meant that he would have more time to spend on the entrepreneurial job of building the party. Beheshti was always encouraging other IRP clerics to take the organisation-building seriously.<sup>241</sup> Finally, the IRP paper, *Jomhourie eslami* was very successful in convincing the masses that the line of the party was in fact the Imam's line.

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<sup>238</sup> Bakhash, *Reign of the Ayatollahs*, p. 69.

<sup>239</sup> Chehabi, *Iranian Politics and Religious Modernism*, p. 273.

<sup>240</sup> Chehabi, *Iranian Politics and Religious Modernism*, p. 268.

<sup>241</sup> Sa'eli Kordehdeh, *Shouraaie enghelabe eslamie Iran*, p. 116.

### 7.3.2. The Hostage-Taking Incident and Bazargan's Resignation

The Iran hostage-taking incident caused by a group of Islamist students who called themselves "Students of Imam Line" is a classical example of the IRP's "go with the tide" attitude. Ezzatollah Sahabi recalls that when the hostage taking crisis took place, the CIR clerics' (also IRP members) initial reaction was not in support of students and indeed they disapproved of the action yet when they realised that the action had become extremely popular in the streets, they switched position under the justification that "there has been a wave formed and we should ride on it".<sup>242</sup>

It was in this environment that members of IRP caucus in the Council of Islamic Revolution or the revolutionary council had decided to go with the tide and ride on the wave in order to remain popular and powerful. Indeed Khomeini himself was mastering this game, switching from one position to another in order to keep the masses loyal.

One example of Khomeini's switching positions occurred in the case of general amnesty. Prime Minister Bazargan's relentless efforts to secure an amnesty from Imam Khomeini was successful. On 10 July 1979, Khomeini issued a general amnesty for members of the old regime.<sup>243</sup> However in mid-March of the same year, when radical clerics including Tehran's notorious revolutionary prosecutor Sadeq Khalkhali criticised Khomeini's decision, Khomeini had abandoned his earlier stance.

Khomeini took the view that the insistence on open trials, defence lawyers, and proper procedures was a reflection of "the Western sickness among us" that those on trial were criminals, and "criminals should not be tried; they should be killed." He also believed that trials were an expression of the popular will. "If the revolutionary courts did not prosecute them," he said of those brought to trial, "the people would have gone on a rampage and killed them all." Radical clerics around Khomeini encouraged this view.<sup>244</sup>

For IRP however no instance demonstrates the hypocritical attitude better than the process in which the Islamic Republic's Constitution was passed. The first version of the constitution was drafted in Paris by Dr Habibi. At that time Khomeini thought it was good but needed some improvements.<sup>245</sup> After the revolution an assembly was constituted under the supervision of the provisional government of Bazargan by the name of "the Scheme of Revolution's Assembly" that was headed by Dr Yadollah Sahabi, the Paris Draft of the constitution was amended by this assembly. The

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<sup>242</sup> Ezzatollah Sahabi *Nagoftehaie enghelab mabahese bonyadi melli*, [The untold stories of the revolution], Tehran, Gaame-No, 2004, p. 238.

<sup>243</sup> Bakhash, *Reign of the Ayatollahs*, p. 62.

<sup>244</sup> Bakhash, *Reign of the Ayatollahs*, p. 62.

<sup>245</sup> Chehabi, *Iranian Politics and Religious Modernism*, p. 264.

main alteration at this stage was to reduce from the powers of the president and give it to the prime minister.<sup>246</sup>

Then the draft was sent to CIR. Beheshti, who was then the vice president of CIR, took the lead on conducting the changes to the draft. The most important changes were economic ones. The constitution became more socialist and leaned to the left. Yet no word of *velayate faghih* was mentioned.

The hostage-taking gave the IRP and all the Khomeinists an upper hand in all political matters. The draft constitution with the added *velayate faghih* articles was easily passed through a referendum despite the boycott of many opposition groups of the election. The opposition groups and parties that boycotted the election included the Shoura Revolutionary Organisation, Muslim People's Republican Party, The MKO, The National Democratic Front, Iran Kurdistan Democrat Party, The Komola, and Organisation of Iranian People's Fada'i Guerrillas.<sup>247</sup> The anti-imperialist agenda that constituted the leftists' image and identity was stolen from them alongside their hunting ground by the act of occupying the embassy of USA. In other words the momentum that the pro-Khomeini forces gathered as a result of hostage taking, increased their chances of winning the majority of seats in the first IRI Majles and gave them the self confidence to put the Velayate faghih added constitution into a referendum, without fearing an opposition boycott.

Said Saffari makes it clear the IRP members wasted no time in legitimatising the doctrine of *velayae faghih* and securing Khomeini's place as the definite leader of the country and by doing so they also secured the party's place as the most important and influential political party in Iran after the revolution.

During the first year of the revolution, a number of influential political parties became closely involved with political decisions in Iran. However, no party was more instrumental in the institutionalisation of Khomeini's political doctrine than Hezb-e Jomhuri-e Eslami (the Islamic Republican Party, IRP). Without the leadership of the IRP, the Assembly of Experts might have produced a radically different constitution, without any mention of velayat-e faqih. Soon after it was founded in February 1979, in close association with Ayatollah Khomeini and the 'radical' elements within the 'ulama' camp, the IRP began to wield considerable influence over the affairs of the country. It mainly comprised Ayatollah Khomeini's faithful pupils and ideologically committed followers. The party's chief goal was to represent the radical 'ulama' in the post-revolutionary political arena. As the IRP gained momentum, party members included future Majles deputies, bureaucrats, and judges.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Bakhash, *Reign of the Ayatollahs*, p. 74.

<sup>247</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Azar 13/ December 04, 1979

<sup>248</sup> Said Saffari, "The Legitimation of the Clergy's Right to Rule in the Iranian Constitution of 1979," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1, (1993), p. 65.



Bazargan and his government were overwhelmed by the intervention of the parallel government but what put the final nail in PRG's coffin was the Iran hostage-taking situation.

As we mentioned before, in the competition between leftist and Islamist, each was trying to show himself more "anti-imperialist" and thus closer to the masses in the streets. Therefore, in a clever move to hijack the position of "anti-imperialism" from the leftist parties, a group called Students of the Line of Imam, led by a radical cleric Hojatolislam Mousavi Khomeini, planned the takeover of the U.S. embassy in Tehran.

Bazargan's trip to Algeria to meet with Brzezinski gave the radical students the excuse they had been waiting for. At the time that Iranians were demanding the Shah's extradition from the U.S. government, Bazargan's meeting with the Americans was portrayed as a betrayal to the revolution. The students of Imam's Line stormed the embassy taking every American that was inside hostage.<sup>249</sup> Bazargan was shocked when he heard the news of hostage taking. The efforts by his foreign minister Ebrahim Yazdi to ask for the Imam's intervention were ineffective. In fact Khomeini, in a speech shortly after the incident, praised the move calling it the "second revolution", leaving Bazargan no choice but to resign.

### **7.3.3. From Appointing Banisadr as a Member in CIR to His Removal from Presidency**

Born into a conservative middle-class family, Abolhassan Banisadr was a son of a middle-rank cleric in Hamedan. Despite his father's wishes for him to study at Qom's seminary, Banisadr went to the Tehran University where he began his higher education in both the faculties of law and theology. At university he became politically active in the student branch of the National Front. His acquaintance with the French Marxist sociologist, Paul Vielle at the university-affiliated school of social research was said to have greatly influenced his intellectual formation. Banisadr left Iran for Paris to pursue his doctorate thesis on "the destruction of Iranian society under the impact of the Shah's absolutism and Western domination", a doctorate that he never completed. He began writing essays and books that were showing Islamic government and Islamic economy as a solution for Iran's "dependency" on foreign countries such as the "Imperialist" America. He saw in the teachings of the Shia Islam an answer to the despotism and absolutism of the Shah. Soon he

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<sup>249</sup> Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution from Monarchy to Islamic Republic*, p. 275.

became famous for his works. Banisadr was first captivated by Khomeini's strong opposition to Shah's policies in 1962-63 an opposition that resulted in Khomeini's exile. Later on, while in Iraq for his father's funeral, he had his first encounter with Khomeini.<sup>252</sup> According to Bakhsh,

He saw in Khomeini a spiritual leader devoid of personal ambition and the means through which the Shah could be overthrown. He came to regard himself as Khomeini's disciple, his "devoted son." He sent copies of his writings to Khomeini, urged him to speak out more openly, and to make known his views on Islamic government. He worked to promote Khomeini's reputation abroad and to buttress his position as the leading religious authority at home.<sup>253</sup>

According to Milani "he [Banisadr] was an obscure figure in Iran until becoming Ayatollah Khomeini's adviser in Paris in 1978."<sup>254</sup> Imam's emigration to Paris provided Banisadr a chance to become closer to the Ayatollah. Soon after, Banisadr, Dr.Ebrahim Yazdi and Sadegh Ghotbzadeh became Khomeini's closest advisers in Paris. Khomeini called Banisadr his "spiritual son" and it is said that Khomeini's last-minute withdrawal from a power-sharing deal that was proposed by Shahpour Bakhtiar was based on Banisadr's advice.<sup>255</sup>

Banisadr arrived in Tehran together with Khomeini and upon arrival was appointed by Imam as a member of CIR. His pro working-class activities in CIR such as the engineering of many early nationalisations in the post-revolution Iranian industry had gained him a reputation with many low-income Iranian people. Ironically his character as a western-educated Islamist and intellectual made him popular among many middle-class intelligentsias.

However his reputation alone could not make him president. Other major factors were involved, such as Khomeini's unofficial endorsement of Banisadr and IRP's failure to find a popular replacement for their original nominee Ayatollah Beheshti. Beheshti gave up running for president when it became clear that Khomeini would not support a "cleric" candidate running for president.<sup>256</sup>

As a result, on 25 January 1980 Banisadr was elected as the first president in the history of the Islamic republic. He was also appointed as the head of the CIR an organisation he was once criticising. When he saw himself chairing this institute he ceased his criticism against CIR directing his attacks to IRP instead.

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<sup>252</sup> Bakhsh, *Reign of the Ayatollahs*, p. 92-97.

<sup>253</sup> Bakhsh, *Reign of the Ayatollahs*, p. 95.

<sup>254</sup> Milni, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution from Monarchy to Islamic Republic*, p. 281.

<sup>255</sup> Bakhsh, *Reign of the Ayatollahs*, p. 96.

<sup>256</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, January 02/ Dey 12, 1358

Banisadr's first real confrontation with IRP after becoming elected as president occurred in the juncture of his affirmation. Banisadr was really hoping to be able to name his prime minister and appoint his cabinet prior to the first Majles elections. In the absence of Majles, Banisadr argued, he can take the oath of office in before Khomeini. This is while the IRP clerics were insisting on "respect for the constitution" and to wait for the Majles elections to be held so the president can take the oath in front of the Majles. Banisadr refused IRP's argument on the grounds that the country was in an exceptional situation and in unusual situations extraordinary measures must be taken.

It seems that Banisadr feared that IRP's sweeping victory in the Constitutional Assembly election would repeat itself in the first Majles election, thus leaving him with less power in choosing members of cabinet after the election. When he realised that negotiation with IRP clerics was ineffective, he started focusing on Khomeini's son Ahmad. He knew that the IRP clerics would not dare to defy Imam Khomeini's decision. Therefore, with the help of Ahmad Khomeini he could finally secure an affirmation ceremony. Finally on 4 February 1980, Banisadr took the oath in Reza'i hospital<sup>257</sup> where Imam Khomeini was recovering from a mild heart attack.

Banisadr was appointed as the chairman of CIR on 7 February 1980. Although Khomeini did not allow him to appoint a prime minister until the Majles was convened, nevertheless he transferred to Banisadr his powers as the commander-in-chief of armed forces and allowed him to propose ministers and legislations to the Revolutionary Council. Moreover Banisadr was permitted to appoint the head of the national radio and television.

Banisadr did not have a Party supporting him and although the Combatant Clergy Association endorsed him during the presidential election, they were not in the form or shape of a proper party nor were they in agreement with Banisadr's liberal mentality to continue their backing of him during his presidency. Therefore he decided to build an organisation that would fulfil some of the functions of a political party, if not all of it. The solution for Banisadr came in the form of the Office of President and People Cooperation. He actually managed to secure a budget for it from CIR.

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<sup>257</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, February 05/ Bahman 16, 1358

#### 7.4. The President and People's Coordination Office: a Failed Experiment

As was mentioned before, Banisadr's basis of support in the society was very diverse. The orthodox Shia clergy were backing him because they shared with him the idea that clergy should restrain from direct involvement in politics. IRP clerics' persistence on possessing an executive role in the country was against the main tradition of the Qom Seminary. Furthermore, the actions of the mobs associated with the IRP had provoked a number of traditional ayatollahs against the IRP. Banisadr's antagonism towards IRP was providing these ayatollahs with a window of opportunity to settle personal scores with IRP leaders. Among these high-ranking clerics were Ayatollahs, Qomi Tabatabai and Shirazi of Mashhad and Zanjani in Tehran.<sup>258</sup> Banisadr was a Western-educated economist and a Muslim intellectual whose articles in the daily *Enghelab-e Eslami* maintained intellectual qualities. Therefore the middle-class intelligentsia could identify with Banisadr more than they could identify with any of IRP leaders.

Many working-class people were also among his supporters; the industrial workers were praising Banisadr for engineering the early stage of nationalisation of the industry when he was a member of CIR (before being elected as a president).

However and in spite of his wide-ranging social base, Banisadr was unsuccessful in utilising this broad base of support for his benefit. The IRP clerics were constantly challenging his authority and he needed to organise his scattered supporters, yet the president was reluctant to establish a political party in order to counter the IRP offensives. Milani argues that: "Banisadr's greatest weakness was his inability to institutionalise his support. A loner, he did not, or perhaps could not, create a party. Politically arrogant, he did not seriously attempt to forge a formal coalition with the moderates."<sup>259</sup>

Faced with the threat of submitting the political battle to IRP, Banisadr initiated an organisation named "The President and People's Coordination Office" (PPCO), an "office" that was created out of necessity to fulfil some, if not all, of the functions of a political party. Yet even he was hesitant in showing approval of the PPCO's actions.

As its first real test, Banisadr's "Coordination Office" was to find the same-minded and trustworthy nominees for the first Majles elections. To accomplish this task the office arranged for a conference

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<sup>258</sup> Bakhash, *The Reign of the Ayatollahs*, p. 141.

<sup>259</sup> Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution from Monarchy to Islamic Republic*, p. 293.

named “The Congregation of the Islamic Revolution”. As its final product the congregation was expected to elect a list of candidates from among the hopefuls.

The hopefuls, in their turn, were elected in committees at mosques and religious associations in different provinces and cities. They were supposed to participate in a voting ceremony at the congregation to choose among themselves the candidates who believed in the President’s targets and plans and had the highest chances of winning. The chosen candidates then were told to go back to their constituencies and mobilise the electorate.

The President’s so-called supporters from all over Iran gathered in this congregation. The Combatant Cleric Association was present at the congregation as well. But most significantly Ayatollah Khomeini issued a public statement endorsing the Congregation’s mandate and asked its delegation to put aside disparity and succeed in nominating the candidates for Majles who are “committed, wise and considerate towards the nation in general and the *mostazafin* [impoverished] in particular”.<sup>260</sup>

Everything was ready for the materialisation of the plan when, at the final days before the congregation, the CCA decided to launch a joint list of candidates with IRP. Yet all the preparations and the Office have failed to reach its first and most important objective. However, Banisadr’s overconfidence of his popular support made him reluctant in supporting his own Coordination Office. He did not realise the significance of a political organisation in the battle against IRP.

For instance, although in February 1980, in an article published at *Enghelabe Eslami*, he sanctioned Coordination Office plans to produce a list of Majles nominees who are in compliance with the president<sup>261</sup> A month later when faced with criticism, Banisadr decided to draw back stating that “it is appropriate now as it was before that the president should not endorse any election list even the one produced by the voluntarily formed Office of Coordination.”<sup>262</sup>

In a personal interview Banisadr mentioned that as a newly-elected president he did not wish to project an image of himself as being a power-hungry president who soon after the victory in the

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<sup>260</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Bahman 29/ February 18, 1980

<sup>261</sup> Abul Hassan Banisadr, “*Entekhabat-e Majles* [Majles election]” in *Sad maghaleh* [One Hundred Articles], Tehran, 1980, p. 251-253.

<sup>262</sup> Abul Hassan Banisadr, “*Entekhabat* [Elections]” in *Sad maghaleh* [One Hundred Articles], p 307-309

presidential election is striving to dominate the Majles and thus resemble the Shah who was meddling in the parliamentary elections and appointing his own men as MPs.<sup>263</sup>

Ahmad Salamatian, a member of the first Majles and a long time supporter of Banisadr, highlighted three reasons for the failure of the Congregation in reaching its original goal, a summary of his explanation are as follows,

1. In comparison to his concentration on spontaneous and periodic motions Banisadr did not pay enough attention to the organisational and administrative work which by definition required following the chain of command for the decision- making process.
2. The scarcity and the inexperience of the activist cadre who were around Banisadr. They were mostly too young, if not, they were University- educated cadre who despite their honesty and devotion did not have the capability and the motivation to build a nation-wide organic linkage with the social and electoral base in the country.
3. Banisadr, although was successful in gaining the strong backing and support of a wide-ranging stratum and winning the Presidential election, was always subject to severe criticism by a great number of political and intellectual elites of the society.<sup>265</sup>

Eventually the Offices of Cooperation did not introduce an exclusive list for the first Majles election and thus left the local branches to choose for themselves. As a result many who did not have any proximity with the Banisadr's ideas and ideals used Banisadr's name as a brand to enter the Majles. The very same people came head to head with the president when he fell out of grace with Khomeini.

Completing a task through the party bureaucracy ladder is a time-consuming and complex job. Banisadr's charismatic personality and his inclination towards *avant-garde* action did not endure the teamwork in party politics. In addition, as an intellectual politician he had his own interpretation of political organisation and its functions. In a personal interview he mentioned that: "Then as now, I did not think about party in its Western approach, every society has its own traditions, foundations and organisational facilities... The grand movements that our society has

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<sup>263</sup> Abul Hassan Banisadr, in a discussion with the author, October 2010

<sup>265</sup> Appendix 2.

experienced in its history were all in the *Jabhavi* [an adjective referring to *Jabha* meaning front] shape and content, that includes the (1979) Iran revolution.”<sup>266</sup>

However, despite his Nativist approach to the concept of political partisanship, Banisadr in the critical juncture of the Iranian revolution was in desperate need of an organisation that could work things out in a scale of a country. This was necessary to mobilise his social base when needed, also to propose candidates for Majles elections and articulate policies for the government.

In his book “Betrayal of Hope”, written shortly after being unseated from the presidency, Banisadr recognises that his negligence of organisation-making was one of his major mistakes during his presidency.<sup>267</sup> It is true that he did not consider political party as the right answer to the problems of the revolution-hit Iran, nevertheless, he was confident that popular organisations that can carry the load of great social movements are ideal for Iran. Fronts, he thought, can accommodate a range of diverse political and intellectual currents and political groups to work for the materialisation of the same goal, something that a political party accordingly was not capable of.<sup>268</sup>

To sum up, Banisadr took PPCO lightly, and overestimated his own power because he was over confident about a number of matters:

- His direct consultation with Khomeini and his good relations with members of Khomeini’s family
- His close and special relations with the army
- Relying on his own image, his post as a president, his high percentage of vote and his public speeches to the masses.
- Relying on his newspaper *Enghlabe eslami* and televised debates to have direct conversation with his social base

In countries where party system is institutionalised the use of “party whip system” can ensure members within a party vote along party lines, however, Banisadr’s respective organisation was far from such sophistication. PPCO at best was an association of pockets of president supporters that lacked a clear hierarchy and chain of command. Banisadr was using PPCO as a tool to build a linkage between his own character and his social base. In other words, the Office was used for mobilisation of the masses in times of need however it was never meant to become a fully-fledged

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<sup>266</sup> Abul Hassan Banisadr, in a discussion with the author, October 2010

<sup>267</sup> Abul Hassan Banisadr, *Khianat be omid* [Betrayal of Hope], Islamic Revolution Publications, 1981, p. 185

<sup>268</sup> Abul Hassan Banisadr, in a discussion with the author, October 2010

political party, consequently it did not pass the threshold of institutionalisation as a political organisation. The arbitrary rule of Khomeini and the disbelief in the conventional party politics from Banisadr's part were two major obstacles in the way of convening the President's support base in a major organisation that acted as a major political party. In addition, the incentives that working in the President's PPCO was providing for its members, were little while the costs of membership (repression) were high. In comparison the members of IRP were receiving plentiful collective and selective incentives.

## **7.5. Concluding Remarks**

The combination of Khomeini's support and the backing of the parallel government organisations gave IRP an advantage over other parties that was difficult to defuse. Bazargan and Banisadr although once enjoyed very good relations with Khomeini and had his confidence and trust, could not benefit much from their closeness with Khomeini mainly because they did not have a strong organisation with large enough capacity to absorb Khomeini's support and turn it into policy and action.

Both Bazargan and Banisadr have largely ignored the tactical advantages of having a strong party organization, a party that could appeal to the "silent majority", a party that could mobilise its social base effectively, a party that could have a dramatic impact on the outcome of the elections, a party that could institutionalise the Revolution and integrate all forces of moderation under its umbrella, a strong political party that could gain power through parliamentary means and use a political majority to secure a more equitable distribution of resources, a strong party organisation that could challenge the parallel government via formal-legal means and finally a strong political party that could put up a credible challenge to IRP. Needless to remind that Bazargan's LMI and Banisadr's PPCO were not what we regard as a strong political party.

In CIR, Constitutional Assembly and in the first Majles, the lack of strong party meant that Bazargan and Banisadr supporters would be driven out of the competition by the better organised IRP caucus.



## 8. Chapter Eight: The Articulation of the Party Ideology in the Case of IRP

In this chapter the conception of ideology as a form of political domination/adaptation will be examined in the case of IRP to understand how did the IRP leaders made use of both adaptation and domination strategies to lead their programs and in articulation of their party ideology.

According to Anthony Downs, the party is consisted of a group of self-interested rational individuals who are motivated by their personal desire for the income, prestige, and power which come from holding office and since, accordingly, holding office is not possible without winning elections, “the main goal of every party is the winning of elections. Thus all its actions are aimed at maximizing votes, and it treats policies merely as means towards this end.”<sup>269</sup>

However in the case of Islamic Republic Party (IRP), holding and keeping “office” required more than winning elections. If this important point is missed, rational choice analysis of the IRP behaviour would not be possible since the behaviour of IRP elites can not solely be interpreted from the narrow angle of vote maximisation. Due to the well-known theory of the “fragmented nature of the Iranian state”<sup>270</sup>, IRP could not rely only on one type of institutions i.e. the elected ones (Majles and President). To survive the uncertainty and hostility of the “after-the- evolution” environment, the IRP elites articulated strategies that went beyond vote maximisation and explored and exhausted all the possible opportunities of domination including the use of armed militia as pressure groups to eliminate the rival parties. Therefore I see IRP closer to Harmel and Janda’s Office Seeking Party<sup>271</sup> rather than a Vote Seeking Party, both of which will be discussed in Chapter Nine of this study.

Power, as was mentioned before, is not similar to property that could be accumulated in the hand of one person or one party without the others. Realising this important point through political life experience, the IRP leaders conducted an “exchange” exercise with the important external players such as Ayatollah Khomeini, IRGC in order to ensure that the unequal exchange existed in IRP’s favour.

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<sup>269</sup> Dawns, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>270</sup> For this theory see Arang Keshavarzian, “Contestation Without Democracy: Elite Fragmentation In Iran”, In Marsha Pripstein Posusney and Michele Penner Angrist (eds), *Authoritarianism in the Middle East*, Colorado, Rienner, 2005.

<sup>271</sup> Robert Harmel and Kenneth Janda, “An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change”, *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 6, no. 3 (1994), p. 264, [<http://jtp.sagepub.com/content/6/3/259>], 14 March 2011

According to Panebianco's three-phase ideal type (genesis, institutionalisation, maturity) parties at their genesis stage, tend towards the domination of their environment through crystallisation of ideology into a dominant or hegemonic worldview. Accordingly leaders of this phase have a extended and powerful influence for the articulation of the party ideology and selecting of the party social base.

The party goes from a phase in which collective incentives – related to the formation of organisational identity – prevail (involving participation of the social movement type), to a phase in which selective incentives – related to the development of a bureaucracy – prevail (involving participation of the professional type); from a phase in which organisational ideology is manifest (the objectives being explicit and coherent), to a phase in which organisational ideology is 'latent' (the objectives being vague, implicit, and contradictory); from a phase in which the leaders' freedom of choice is broad (they are expected to define the ideological goals of the party, to select the social base of the party, and to mold the organisation around these goals and social base) to a phase in which the leaders' freedom of choice is drastically reduced (conditioned as it is by the organisational constraints in a well-established party); from a phase in which an aggressive strategy that tends to dominate/transform its environment prevails (characteristic of an organisation in formation that must pave its own way amongst rival organisations and gain for itself a stable portion of the market), to a phase in which a strategy of adaptation prevails (characteristic of an organisation already transformed into a system of interests, i.e. that has too much to lose by adopting an aggressive and adventurous policy).<sup>272</sup>

However he remind us these ideal types are models which allows us to establish a standard with respect to which we can measure differences and deviations due to concrete historical developments.<sup>273</sup> Therefore Panebianco asserts that defining organisations on the basis of the strict alternative adaptation or domination misses the point,

First of all, the fact that the organisation tends to adapt to or dominate its environment depends obviously on the environmental features. Certain environments are rather easily dominated, while others force the organisation to adopt a strategy of adaptation. Secondly, the so called "environment" is, in reality, a metaphor used to indicate the numerous environments or arenas in which each organisation operates; these arenas are generally interdependent and related to one another, but they are nonetheless distinct. This means that an organisation can easily develop strategies of domination in certain arenas, and of adaptation in others.<sup>274</sup>

In other words although the strive for domination is the characteristic of parties in their formative years, it is by no means a necessary implication that parties in phase one use only strategies of domination. In fact both domination and adaptation strategies are used by parties in various stages of their maturity however it is the ration of each strategy in respect to the other that changes from one phase to another.

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<sup>272</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 19.

<sup>273</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 17.

<sup>274</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 12.

IRP elites developed strategies of adaptation in some arenas and domination in other; this is manifest from the way the party leaders chose the party hunting ground and articulated the party's ideology. In the following these strategies are examined.

## **8.1. The Sources of IRP Ideology**

To understand IRP ideology the intellectual currents that created the bedrock for the articulation of such ideology must be looked at, most importantly the ironic amalgamation of Islam and Marxism. Keeping in mind Panebianco's comparison between the Rational and Natural models of organisation, we consider whether the IRP leaders were true to themselves when articulating their party's ideology and to what extent IRP's formative era leader, Ayatollah Behshti, had a free hand "to define the ideological goals of the party, to select the social base of the party, and to mould the organisation around these goals and social base"<sup>275</sup>

### **8.1.1. The Emergence of Islamomarxism**

The nationalisation of Anglo Persian Oil Company on 1 May 1951 has intensified the confrontation between Mossadegh and the National Front from one side and the Shah and the British from the other. With both sides showing inflexibility the conspiracy against Mossadegh's government has entered a critical phase. The British boycott against the newly-born Iranian Oil Company alongside the secret deals with a number of politicians within Mossadegh's camp has intensified the internal conflict within the National Front. Some groups and individuals regarded Mossadegh as a reckless old man who was driving the country to the edge of a cliff. Others believed that the prime minister was an honest and patriotic leader but did not like the way he dealt with the after effects of the nationalisation.<sup>276</sup>

Finally the foreign powers and the Pahlawi court's plotting became successful in depriving Mossadegh of his two main winning cards, the counsel of his friends and the support of his social

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<sup>275</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 19.

<sup>276</sup> For more information see Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Confrontation Between Iran and America*, New York, Random House, 2004, pp. 52-71.

base. Weak and isolated, Mossadegh, who once defied an empire could not stand against the rebellion of a regiment and was overthrown a few hours after the rebels reached his compound.

On August 19, while the Tudeh was taken back by Mossadeq's blow against them, Zahedi, commanding thirty-five Sherman tanks, surrounded the premier's residence, and after a nine-hour battle captured Mossadeq. Acoustical effects for the event were provided both by Sha'yban "the Brainless," who led a noisy demonstration from the red-light district to the Bazaar, and by the gendarmerie, who transported some eight hundred farm hands from the royal stables in Veramin to central Tehran.<sup>277</sup>

After the return of the Shah and the consolidation of his dictatorial regime, many started doubting the National Front's capacity and efficiency to act as a serious challenge to the Shah's despotic rule. Mossadegh's house arrest made it difficult for him to direct NFI and this has further demoralised the supporters inside the organisation. As a result the NFI entered an era of inactivity and decline and many of its members started separating from the front.

A number of devoted Muslims who believed in Islam as a liberating ideology left the NFI to make their own political party. They formed a party called the Liberation Movement of Iran (LMI) or *Nezhate Azadi*. The founding fathers of the Liberation Movement namely Ayatollah Mahmood Taleghani, Yadollah Sahabi and Mehdi Bazargan have reached a conclusion that their former organisation was not in tune with the Islamic aspect of the Iranian society. The LMI blended Islam with liberal democracy and Mossadegh's version of Nationalism. The LMI leaders did not see Islam as a religion that was merely taking care of the spiritual matters but a religion which could give guidance in the struggle against the Shah's regime. In a meeting announcing the establishment of the Liberation Movement Bazargan was quoted saying "Quran is not a book only for reciting in the cemetery"<sup>278</sup>.

However, Mahmood Taleghani was more akin with a version of Islam that was corresponding with Marxism than an Islam that was close to liberalism.<sup>279</sup> In 1960s Iran, the Marxist/Socialist ideas were becoming evermore popular amongst lower middle-class Iranians and university students. Ali Gheissari and Vali Nasr believe that Marxist utopianism inspired the Iranian revolution with an egalitarianism that in turn influenced the Islamic revolutionary order.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, Princeton, Princeton University, 1982, pp. 280.

<sup>278</sup> Lotfollah Meysami, *Khaterate lotfollah meysami az nezhateazadi ta mojahedin* [Memoirs of Lotfollah Meysami: from Liberation Movement to Mojahedin], Tehran, Samadieh, 2001, p. 72.

<sup>279</sup> For more information about Islamomarxism see Stephanie Cronin, *Reformers and Revolutionaries in Modern Iran: New Perspectives on the Iranian Left*, London, Routledge, 2004, pp. 44-46

<sup>280</sup> Ali Gheissari and Vali Nasr, *Democracy in Iran: History and the Quest for Liberty*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 28.

According to Abrahamian, Mohammad Nakhshab was the first Iranian political activist to attempt converging Islam with Marxism.<sup>281</sup> However Rasul Jafarian believes that Nakhshab's mention of Islam in his works, has never gone beyond the basic principle of *Tuhid* [monotheism] and *Khudaparasti* [worshipping god].<sup>282</sup> The initiator of the Marxist interpretation of Shi'ism according to Gheissari and Nasr is Ayatollah Mahmood Taleghani, one of the founding fathers of *Nehzate Azadi*. However they correctly point out that it was Shariati who popularised the concept.

The trend initiated by Taleqani culminated in Shariati's works and in the revolutionary teachings of the leftist-fundamentalist urban guerrilla group Mojahedin-e Khalq (People's Mojahedin). The two would represent a Marxist approach to Islamic modernism. Though the Mojahedin echoed Shariati's teachings, they also related religious modernism to armed struggle. Shariati did more than any other Shia modernist thinker to fuse religion with a modern worldview, in his case Marxism. Shariati's works systematically read Marxism into Islam but not by simply comparing Islam and Marxism to find common points. Rather, he presented Marxism as Islam and Islam as Marxism.<sup>283</sup>

The IRP clerics were aware of the influence of Shariati's teachings. Shariati's ideas were extremely popular among lower middle-class youth and especially the college and university students; the young educated Iranians who were fascinated by Marxist ideology but did not want to abandon their Islamic values either, found in Shariati's lecture the answer to their puzzlement.<sup>284</sup>

The IRP's organ *Jomhourie eslami* periodically has printed parts of Dr Ali Shariati's works alongside articles and interviews about the man, his works and his legacy. For instance Zahra Rahnavard, Mir-Hossein Mousavi's wife has given an extensive interview to the daily *Jomhourie eslami*<sup>285</sup> in which she tries to classify Shariati's greatest intellectual achievements, Rahnavard talks about seven entries. In the sixth entry she mentions: "Shariati has revitalised the essential terms of Maktab, such as the red Shisim, *Imam and Ummat* [community of believers], *Marjaiyat* [The referee of religious imitation, a Grand Ayatollah], *Shahadat* [martyrdom], *Shoura* [seeking the counsel of the Ummat], Taghlid [religious emulation], Taghieh [discretion], Mourning and Velayt."<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, Princeton, Princeton University, 1982, p. 463.

<sup>282</sup> Rasul Jafarian, *Jaryanha va سازمانها یسی mazhabie iran* [Religio-Political Currents and Organisations in Iran], Tehran, Movarekh, 2007, p. 85.

<sup>283</sup> Gheissari and Nasr, *Democracy in Iran*, p. 49.

<sup>284</sup> Gheissari and Nasr, *Democracy in Iran*, p. 70.

<sup>285</sup> Zahra Rahnavard, "Eslam shariati va tavalodi digar [Islam, shariati and being born again]", *Jomhourie eslami special edition*, June 19, 1980.

<sup>286</sup> Zahra Rahnavard, "Eslam shariati va tavalodi digar [Islam, shariati and being born again]", *Jomhourie eslami special edition*, June 19, 1980

Many terms and expressions coined by Shariati were used in the IRP newspaper. The tripartite of “gold, power and hypocrisy” or *Zaro zooro tazvir* is still popular among many political critics in Iran. The popularisation and politicisation of the Quranic term *Mostazafin* [impoverished] and giving it a modern usage, is also attributed to Shariati. Furthermore the idolisation of Imam Hussein as the champion of the impoverished class<sup>287</sup> was yet another of Shariati’s innovations that became integral part of his philosophy and ideology.

Shariati died in 1977, and so he was not personally a force in the revolutionary period. However, his ideas helped mobilize many Iranians in the struggle against the Pahlavi state, and they provided the foundation for a grand alliance between the Left and fundamentalists that paved the way for Khomeini’s domination of the revolution. Although traditional ulama disliked Shariati, and revolutionary religious activists who followed Khomeini viewed his ideology as a rival to that of their own, Islamic fundamentalism in Iran was nonetheless greatly influenced by Shariati’s vision. For instance, the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was close to Shariati before the revolution and continues to express admiration for him. Although Khomeini never endorsed Shariati, and many of Khomeini’s followers remained ill at ease with his views, still there is no doubt that many aspects of revolutionary activism, particularly its populism after 1979, bore the mark of Shariati’s ideas.<sup>288</sup>

Taleghani and Shariati were both pioneers of mixing Islam with Marxism. In August 1979 a Cuban ministerial delegation went to Iran on an official visit. They decided to meet with Ayatollah Taleghani who, at the time, was one of the most influential people in Iran after Khomeini. In this interesting meeting Ayatollah Taleghani spent an hour explaining Islam to the Cuban delegation and telling them how similar Islam is to Marxism. Taleghani’s lecture was such that one of the delegates said “if this is Islam then long live Islam”.<sup>289</sup>

Shariati was not alive to pick the fruits of his work after the revolution, however, Taleghani was very much alive and active in preaching his own socialist interpretation of Islam. Furthermore he strongly endorsed a *Shoraie* [councilist] model of governance which involved delegating substantial authority to the local councils.

The IRP clerics became fully aware of Taleghani’s huge popularity among the Tehranis in general and members of opposition specifically, when they saw people’s reaction to the detention of the Ayatollah’s sons.

In March 1980 members of the Saltanatabad *komiteh* that was directed by Mohammad Gharazi, stopped a car which had two of Taleghani’s sons along with his daughter-in-law on board.

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<sup>287</sup> see Ali Shariati *Hossein varese adam*, [Hossein the heir of Adam: a selection of works], Tehran, Ghalam, 2001

<sup>288</sup> Gheissari and Nasr, *Democracy in Iran*, p. 71.

<sup>289</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Mordad 15/ August 06, 1979

Members of Taleghani's family were returning from an unofficial visit to the Palestinian embassy to receive and then deliver a letter sent from Yasser Arafat for Ayatollah Taleghani. When armed hezbollahi's started using force to take the Taleghani family away to detention, the Taleghani brothers shouted "we are Taleghani's sons" asking desperately for help from bystanders and the shopkeepers in the area but the armed men started biting them and dragged them to another place despite their outcry. While in detention at Lavizan prison, the members of Taleghani family received hostile treatment from their unfriendly interrogators.<sup>290</sup>

Soon after learning about the incident, prime minister Bazargan asked the relevant *pasdars* to immediately free the prisoners but they refused to take orders from Bazargan. Eventually a group of Taleghani's followers took control of this lawlessness and arrested Mohammad Gharazi. The issue was temporarily handled by freeing both the arrested members of the Taleghani family and Mohammad Gharazi. However Taleghani, who felt that this incident was designed to undermine his authority as one of the main pillars of the revolution, decided to leave Tehran temporarily as a show of protest asking for all his offices in Tehran to be closed and the staff dismissed. This political move triggered massive demonstrations of hundreds of thousands of Taleghani supporters in Tehran. What was supposed to humiliate Taleghani produced a counter effect and strengthened his position as the father of the people instead. Frightened that this crisis might turn into an untimely conflict between the revolutionary forces, Ahmad Khomeini, Khomeini's son, was sent to Taleghani's resort outside Tehran to apologise for the unfortunate incident.

Ahmad's effort resulted in a reconciliatory meeting between Ayatollah Taleghani and Ayatollah Khomeini. The result of this meeting was that Taleghani showed full support of Khomeini and indirectly criticised the radicalism of MKO and other leftist groups in his Friday sermons. In return, Ayatollah Taleghani's initiative for the consultative *Shoraie* model of governance received a welcome gesture from Ayatollah Khomeini and the IRP clerics.

Ayatollah Taleghani's delegates drafted a bye-law for the regulation of the councils and handed it to the interim government of Bazargan. In this statute the councils would have enjoyed significant remits and substantial authority. The councils, in the case of the provincial assembly of councillors, could even elect the governor-general of the province of *Ostandar*.<sup>291</sup>

At the beginning it appeared to be a win-win situation, Ayatollah Taleghani seemed happy with the general acceptance of his initiative. Khomeini endorsed the idea of the local governments in more

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<sup>290</sup> *Ettela'at*, Farvardin 25/ April 14, 1979

<sup>291</sup> *Kayhan*, Ordibehesht 20/ May 10, 1979

than one speech. The interim government produced a bye-law that was very close to the original proposal suggested by Taleghani's team and the interior minister Ahmad Sadr Haj-seid Javadi went as far as recommending a Federal system of governance for the country. All the major newspapers including the daily *Jomhourie eslami* were praising the idea of having city councils although each looking at it from their own perspective.

However as days passed the initial optimism about the realisation of the councils started fading. Taleghani may have realised that there will be lots of "ifs and buts" in the way of actual implementation of the idea. Tired and furious, Ayatollah then took all his disappointment to the Friday sermon where he objected to the delays in holding the municipality elections and for the first time protested that some colleagues in the newly-elected Constitutional Assembly were doing what they could to stop the materialisation of the *Shoura*.

However, Taleghani's controversial death a day after the above-mentioned Friday sermon, sent the councils fate into interlunar. Although Taleghani's efforts guaranteed a place for the councils in the Islamic republic's constitution, his death meant that the implementation of those articles was going to face many obstacles.

Ayatollah Taleghani, whose death in 1979 brought the concept into public discourse. Radio, TV, and the print media, not to mention public speeches, began to focus extensively on the merits of shuraism, and on how this notion originated with Islam. For the most part shuraism was conceived of as some degree of popular participation, but its extent and mechanism remained vague. Some even went so far as to propose restructuring the country's political system along the principle of shuraism. The left joined many others to support Taleghani who had called in, April 1979, for the constitution local associations as well as city and regional councils. Sympathetic figures in the municipality followed suit and began implementing the idea from above.<sup>292</sup>

The harsh lesson that IRP learned from the first rural and municipality elections was that in an election where the districts are stretched across the country and thousands of candidates are competing for more than 500 seats, a landslide victory will not be an easy task. According to the councils' election regulations, each city council was to have at least seven seats for cities with a population larger than three hundred thousand such as Tehran where there would be one extra councillor for every one hundred thousand people.<sup>293</sup> The councils were numerous and expanded all over the country; moreover according to the law, candidates must have been living in their constituency for at least a year before their actual nomination.<sup>294</sup> Therefore unlike the constitutional

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<sup>292</sup> Asef Bayat, *Street Politics: Poor People's Movement in Iran*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1997, pp. 90-91.

<sup>293</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Mehr 04/September 26, 1979

<sup>294</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Mehr 04/, September 26, 1979



assembly election, it was difficult for the IRP to introduce candidates who had high chances of winning in every single district. Furthermore, since the election was done in one round, (proportional system), small parties also had the chance to win a few seats. In any case although candidates close to IRP won many seats across the country (more than 60% overall<sup>295</sup>), the result was not what IRP was hoping for.

IRP's first reaction was to undermine the election by issuing allegations of fraud against their opponents and demanding that the interior minister should allow an independent inquiry into the whole electoral process. Second, IRP wasted no time in weakening the councils and stripping them from any real authority they could have had. Moreover, the obstruction of councils had started before the election itself when behind the scenes pressures forced the interim government to announce its decision of not holding elections in five major cities, namely Tehran, Mashhad, Tabriz and Shiraz.<sup>296</sup> In addition holding an election in most of the Kurdish cities was not possible due to the ongoing conflict between the Army and the Kurdish parties in the region. All these impediments meant that only half of the cities in the country were going to have councils. However despite these deterrent measures and despite cancelling the election results in an important city such as Rasht, the IRP leaders were still upset about those council seats that slipped through their fingers. Finally, as was mentioned before, the Shoura's were denied real power and soon these councils were going to face extinction by the overriding hands of the pro IRP governors and Friday Imams.

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<sup>295</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Mehr 27/ October 19, 1979

<sup>296</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Mehr 05/ September 27, 1979

### 8.1.2. The Enhancement of Islamomarxism in Iranian Politics

The union of Islam and Marxism in various forms was the ideological backbone of many political groups at the time. Islamomarxism was present in the ideology of people like Taleghani, Shariati and Nakhshab and organisations such as Mojahedine Khalgh Organisation (MKO) and JAMA and it fascinated many of the young educated Iranians who had strong religious views, to the cause of the revolution. Millions of Iranians gathered under the umbrella of the convergence of Islam and Marxism in its various forms. Therefore no viable political force in the country was able to survive without winning at least some of this hybrid constituency. This convergence affected the secular Marxist groups too; in other words, similar to the Islamic parties such as IRP who were influenced by the Marxist tendencies imbedded in Shariati's ideas, the Marxist organisations were also influenced by the Islamic discourse of the Islamomarxism. Abdolrahim Javadzadeh points out that after the revolution it was Islam that gained the upper hand in the convergence between Islam and Marxism and even Marxist groups like the Tudeh party were very much under the influence of the Islamic discourse of that time.<sup>297</sup>

Islam prevailed in political resistance, fighting the Shah's tyranny, mobilization of the people, and more importantly, the ability of Muslims (clerics) to organize a state – all of which Iranian Marxists failed to achieve. As a result, Marxists had to follow in the footsteps of Muslims in these major realms of political life, mainly due to the legacy of resistance left by Muslims in the Iranian political movement. Marxists converted to and accepted Islam in three areas: 1) radicalism and resistance, 2) martyrdom, and 3) formation of an Islamic state under the notion of Shia Islam's authority of the Jurist (velayat-e faghih).<sup>298</sup>

However what appears even more paradoxical than the marriage between Islam and Marxism is that in Iran, the leftist agenda aimed at protecting the interests of the proletariat, was championed by the lower middle-class, another example of the little relevance of class-based stratification in the post-revolution Iranian polity. In other words the middle-class stratum was following an ideology that if translated into action, would be counterproductive for the interests of the middle-class people. According to Mohammad Borghei:

The 1979 revolution occurred in an atmosphere in which the Marxist class definition and Marxist literature was prevalent in the thinking sphere of Iran and the second and third world. There was little known about the transformations Marxism experienced in the West, instead the Leninist version of Marxism was dominant in Iran's intellectual culture. This was not limited to the leftist Tudeh or Fadaee guerrilla forces but included the public secular intellectuals like Ahmad Shamlu, Esmail Khoi, Saieed Soltanpour and Gholam-Hosseini Saedi. The Islamists were largely influenced

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<sup>297</sup> Abdolrahim Javadzadeh, "Marxists into Muslims: The Iranian Irony", PhD diss, Florida International University, 2007

<sup>298</sup> Javadzadeh, "Marxists into Muslims: The Iranian Irony", pp. 53-54

by the same trend; from the MEK in its different segments to the God- Worshipping Socialists and "JAMA" and so on. Ali Shariati expressed his religious views from this angle. He saw in "Abazr" a champion who stood with the oppressed against the Arab aristocracy, Imam Hussein, Hazrat Zainab and Ammar Yasser all were people's heroes. In doctor Peyman's case even the choice of words for a conversation was Marxist, same goes for MKO and doctor Nakhshab. Ayatollah Taleghani's book "Property in Islam" borrowed from the same vision and so did the book "Monotheism" by Ayatollah Ashouri. Many such as Ayatollah Mousavi Khomeini and Lahouti were also heavily influenced by this school of thought.<sup>299</sup>

Respectively, with regard to the lower strata, Asef Bayat rejects the claims that the urban poor were instrumental in the making of the revolution and expresses that more than anything the urban poor were concerned about the difficulties of their everyday life rather than thinking of changing the regime. In other words he suggests that strata other than urban poor were active after regime change.

By focusing on the city of Tehran, I argue here that the urban poor were not revolutionary in the conventional sense of wanting to transform the existing macro power structure. Indeed the disfranchised remained on the margins of the revolutionary campaign nearly until the end. Yet, I will suggest, they were not passive. Rather, the poor were involved in a parallel struggle to bring about change in their own lives and communities. They were engaged in the kind of struggles — quiet encroachment at the localities — that, unlike that of the revolution, seemed to them both meaningful and manageable.<sup>300</sup>

That said, the urban poor became the centre of attention after the fall of the Shah's regime. Asef Bayat states that after the revolution the Islamic regime was successful in using the poor against the poor.<sup>301</sup> In other words in recruiting a segment of the urban poor people in organisations like IRP (at grassroots level), *komitehs* and IRGC to repress those activists who were not part of the above mentioned organisations.

In his last speech in Qom before coming to stay in Tehran, Ayatollah Khomeini stated that, "We will come to Tehran and act revolutionary." In the speech that was given at his residence, in Feyzieh in front of thousands of marchers returned from the Quds day demonstration, Khomeini added: "The day of Quds was an Islamic occasion and a public mobilisation and I hope that this event will act as the commencement of a worldwide Mostazafin party...it is in agreement with the will of the Almighty that the Mostazafin shall inherit the earth."<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> Mohammad Borghei, *Paygah tabaghatie jonbeshe sabz bakshe I va 2*, [The Social base of the Green Movement 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> part], [<http://news.gooya.com/politics/archives/2010/03/101422.php>], 20 April 2010

<sup>300</sup> Bayat, *Street Politics*, p. 38.

<sup>301</sup> Bayat, *Street Politics*, p. 127.

<sup>302</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Mordad 27/August 18, 1979

Not surprisingly, the IRP officials announced the formation of the “Islamic Mostazafin Front” a day after Khomeini’s questionable public appeal. This symbolic act was announced through a declaration published in the daily *Jomhourie eslami*, the party’s organ.<sup>303</sup>

All IRP clerics have intensified their sympathy for Mostazafin in their public speeches. While this intensification was coherent with the beliefs of the Makati faction of the IRP, the pro-Mostazafin charade of the Motalefeh branch of the party hardly could convince anyone. The cry for Mostazafin remained the official party discourse and articulated its official ideology until the last day of its operation and the Mostazafin discourse remained the official policy motivation of IRI until the death of Khomeini.

It must be acknowledged that in compliance with the City Northerners-City Southerners cleavage, the urban poor, who were kept on the periphery for so long, were striving to take the positions that normally went to the professional middle class. In many cities rich people’s property was confiscated under the allegation of collaboration with the old regime. Although there is no scholar consensus over the urban poor’s significance in the fall of the Shah, the fact that large numbers of IRGC, *komitehs* and hezbollah members were from among the urban poor people is unquestionable. The three mentioned organisations acted as IRP’s military wing in its crusade against *Gheire khodiha* [the outsiders]. Therefore they consolidated the power into the hands of IRP and by definition the IRI.

In a *jomhourie eslami* editorial titled: “who votes to whom?” we see how important the winning of the constituency of the impoverished was for IRP. In this editorial we read:

After announcing the results of the Majles elections it has become clear that the constituencies situate south of the Enghelab street axe have predominantly voted to the shared list of Islamic Republic Party, the Combatant Clergy and the Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution. While the constituencies situated at the north of thee mentioned axe in an interpretable order have voted to Mojahedin Khalgh Organisation, The People Fadaian Guerrillas and the Tudeh Party.<sup>304</sup>

The IRP editorial then goes on to attack the rival groups for receiving votes from the “liberal bourgeoisie” and “wealthy bureaucrats” who have stakes in the old regime.<sup>305</sup> This shows how serious the discourse of Mostazafin and the pro-Mostazafin ideology was for IRP’s survival in an environment in which the Mostazafin discourse was the dominant discourse. Moreover, the IRP was in need of thousands of foot soldiers to balance the numbers of MKO and Banisadr’s

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<sup>303</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Mordad 28/August 19, 1979

<sup>304</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Farvardin 16/ April 05, 1980

<sup>305</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Farvardin 16/ April 05, 1980

followers, therefore they needed to put their social base among the poor. The less-educated inferior strata, who did not question the religious and political authority of Khomeini and were more eager for the collective and selective incentives provided by their joining of IRP, was an ideal hunting ground for IRP leaders. In a press conference given prior to the launch of IRP's inaugural general congress (1983), Hojatoleslam Ali Khamenei, the general director of IRP, told the press about the size of their membership.

You may know it or not, that the point in time we have predicated in our constitution for the arrangement of our first general congress was when the party reaches 300 hundred members. The congress, we would have thought will be held when 300 hundred members were registered, we never thought that by the first day of party's onset around ten thousand applicants will be enrolled but this has happened and right away after people saw our adds in the papers and knew about time and place of the registration, they swarmed the place in a way that in the first half a day we registered thousands ... we have continued like this for a few months and despite not being ready for it, the numbers reached about two millions.<sup>306</sup>

## **8.2. The Paradoxical Social Base: Bazaaris and the Mostazafin both Support the Islamic Republic Party**

IRP leader's endorsement of state socialism and state-controlled economy was a political necessity more than a principle-based policy, since obviously it was the Bazaaris and not the impoverished who were the main allies of the clerics throughout the history. Over the last 200 years the Bazaaries were the main supporters of the clergy in Iran. The Bazaar-Clergy alliance had demonstrated itself in incidents such as the tobacco protest of 1890. The protest came after exclusive tobacco concessions were granted to a British company for buying, selling and manufacturing of all tobacco in Iran for fifty years. Ayatollah Mirza Shirazi disputed the Qajar king's decision and called for a religious ban on the product. The Bazaaries predominantly followed the ruling of their esteemed *marja'* and before long the Qajar shah was forced to cancel the contract. Another case in point was the migration of Ulama from Tehran to Shah-Abdulazim that came after well-known Bazaaries were beaten by the orders of Ain-ol-Doleh, the governor of Tehran. The two high-status Bazaaries were accused of stockpiling large quantities of sugar and causing a massive shortage of the material in the market. This migration played a great role in the constitutionalist movement that eventually convinced the ailing Mozafar-ol-Din Shah of Qajar to sign the decree of constitutional monarchy.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> Jasbi, *Tashakole faragir*, Tehran, pp. 115-116.

<sup>307</sup> for an extensive study of the role of Bazaar in the modern Iran see Arang Keshavarzaian, *Bazaar and State in Iran*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

During the reign of the second Pahlavi the Bazaaries continued their strong relation with clergy by sponsoring many clergy-initiated endeavours. For instance Haj Ali Haghani a wealthy Bazaari had conferred a building to Ayatollah Beheshti so the latter could establish a new religious school that was named Haghani School in remembrance of its donor.<sup>308</sup> Another case in point was sponsoring seminary periodicals such as *Maktabe Islam* which was funded by famous Bazaaries such as Haj Mohammad Kolahi, Haj Mousa Abrishamchi and Seid Mostafa Aliinasab.<sup>309</sup>

Moreover the Motalefeh, a radical Islamic group which was the organising force behind the unrests of 15 Khordad (equivalent to 3 June 1963) consisted of Bazaaries and clerics who mostly were regular attendees of three Bazaar associated heyats, namely 1. The heyat of Amin-ol-Douleh mosque, 2. The Esfahanies heyat, 3. The heyat of Sheikh Ali mosque.<sup>310</sup>

The Motalefeh Bazaaries were instructed by Khomeini to arrange a council of clerics within their party. The aims and objectives of this council were

1. in the event of Ayatollah Khomeini's arrest the council would act to fill the gap in Khomeini's directions
2. To present theological lessons for the pious Bazaaries who were members of the party and
3. To provide jurisprudence for the matters that were in need of a religious ruling
4. To ensure that Motalefeh as an organisation does not deviate from the Islamic path that was set by its founders.<sup>311</sup>

The members of this council who all were approved by Khomeini were Ayatollah Motahari, Ayatollah Besheshti, Ayatollah Anvaari and Hojatoleslam Ahmad Molaie. Hojatoleslam Hashemi Rafsanjani and Bahonar, although being closely associated with the council of clerics, never officially joined it.<sup>312</sup>

Three of the five clerics who later founded the IRP were either members or closely associated with the council of clerics in Motalefeh. Hashemi was acting as a link between the Hawza and Motalefeh; Beheshti and Bahonar were two Motalefeh clerics who consecutively became the leaders of the IRP party before being killed in terrorist actions. Rafsanjani, another high ranking IRP cleric was also associated although to a lesser extent with the Motalefeh cleric council.

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<sup>308</sup> Rasul Jafarian, *Jaryanha va sazmanhaie mazhabi siyasie Iran (1320-1357)* [Religio-Political Currents and Organisations in Iran] (1941-1979), Qom, Movarekh, 2007, p. 324.

<sup>309</sup> Jafarian, *Jaryanha va sazmanhaie mazhabi siyasie Iran*, p. 341.

<sup>310</sup> Asadollah Badamchian and Ali Banaie, *Heyathaie mo'talefeie eslami* [The Allied Islamic Heyates], Tehran, Oaj Publishers, 1983, pp. 136-157.

<sup>311</sup> Badamchian and Banaie, *Heyathaie mo'talefeie eslami*, pp. 177-184.

<sup>312</sup> Asadollah Badamchian, *Ashnaie ba jamiyate motalefeh eslami* [Introducing the Allied Islamic Association], Tehran, Shoma, 2006, pp. 47-48.

In summary, the Bazaars and especially the Tehran Bazaar were the financial pillars that kept the political clerics from falling. It was the Bazaar's Zakat, Khoms and gifts which sustained the livelihood of Khomeinist's networks. Moreover the heyats which were situated in the Bazaar of Tehran were places where messages of Ayatollah Khomeini were spread, initially to his devotees and finally to the public. In the protests and demonstrations of 15 of Khordad (June 1963) many of those involved in the riots were Bazaaries.<sup>313</sup> For years Khomeini and his clerics were receiving *Khoms* and *Zakat* from the Bazaar and most of the bills of the revolution were cleared by the Bazaaries. It was only natural if the IRP clerics decided to protect the interest of the Bazaaries. However if they were a Bazaar party, they were going to narrow down their social base. This was while the IRP clerics wanted to expand their support base, not only because they needed to win elections but also because they were in need of foot soldiers who could win them the battle of the streets.

The ruling clergy, seeking a reliable social base, made the *mustaz'afin* the champions of struggle for Islam and the Islamic revolution. Within this broad category, urban marginals, or *koukhnishinan* (literally hut-dwellers, the destitutes), acquired a central position. "This Islamic revolution is indebted to the efforts of this class, the class of shanty dwellers," declared Ayatollah Khomeini. "These South Tehranies, these footbearers, as we call them, they are our masters [vali-ne'mat] . . . They were the ones who brought us to where we are".<sup>314</sup>

The IRP clerics were caught in a dilemma; if they had favoured the Bazaar over the impoverished, the urban poor were going to be alienated from the party. On the other hand if it reduced itself to the party of Mostazafin it was going to upset the Motalefeh who for long had supported Imam Khomeini and had very good relations with him.

In a crucial speech in which Ayatollah Khomeini promised to "comeback to Tehran and act revolutionary", Khomeini made his strongest public endorsement of the Mostazafin calling for the formation of the *hezbe jahanie mostazafin* [International Party of the Impoverished] to empower the impoverished people worldwide.<sup>315</sup> A day after that, IRP announced the formation of the Mostazafin Islamic Front.<sup>316</sup> This "Front" of course existed only on paper. However the Mostazafin discourse was so popular that even Khomeini could not go without it, let alone the IRP. Therefore the IRP had to follow suit, ostensibly at least, to be able to appeal to this politicised lower strata that was called the Mostazafin. The IRP was looking at these "footbearers" as a constituency for the upcoming elections, as a social base for its expansion and a recruitment pool of club-wielders that it was desperately in need of.

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<sup>313</sup> Arang Keshavarzaian, *Bazaar and State in Iran*, p. 239.

<sup>314</sup> Asef Bayat, *Street Politics*, p. 99.

<sup>315</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Mordad 1358/ Aug 18, 1979

<sup>316</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Mordad 1358/ Aug 19, 1979

In the IRP's published manifesto called *Mavaze Ma* and in Beheshti's lectures in the IRP headquarters the discourse of Mostazafin was dominant.<sup>317</sup> Beheshti's clarification classes on *Mavaze ma* continued until he was killed in a terrorist attack on 28 June 1981. During these seminars Beheshti clearly praises the stratum of Mostazafin and encourages the party cadre in general, and the IRP clerics specifically, to mingle with the masses and avoid selectiveness.<sup>318</sup> In his seminars and debates he always refers to verses from the Holy Quran, however on top of being a cleric, Beheshti had received an Masters degree from the University of Tehran. In addition, during his stay in Germany, he became acquainted with the works of Western philosophers. In his lectures Beheshti gave references to Hegel, Heidegger and Karl Marx, and explained the determinism in Marxist theory.<sup>319</sup> He offers a philosophical account of realism and idealism which is similar to the Western philosophy point of view and then goes on to explain a *Maktabi* view of realism and idealism which brings the two concepts together. In one of his speeches he claims "whoever is well-versed in Mullah Sadra's philosophy, if he reads an accurate translation of Hegel, can understand Hegel very well and whoever knows Hegel will understand Mullah Sadra very well"<sup>320</sup>

In his discussions on IRP's worldview, he explains how a human being is prone to his own *Takaathor* (a term borrowed from Quran, basic translation of which is the desire to have more). Accordingly, the deriving force of human race throughout the history from the invention of a simple boat to the pioneering of civilisations is his *takathor*. Beheshti had the opinion that all humans are, by nature, prone to *takaathor* but while recognising this as a basic instinct in the human nature, he divides between good *takaathor* and bad *takathor*. The bad *takaathor* is when an individual or a political party is striving for possession of power and wealth for bad intentions. The good *takaathor* on the other hand is when an individual or a political party strives for more wealth and power to promote the ideal Islamic Maktabi society. In addition, according to Beheshti *takaathor* exists even in the spiritual realm and the desire to acquire oneself with more spirituality is most of the time a positive and virtuous phenomenon. Giving precedence to the promotion of Maktab and adopting a Mostazafin discourse clearly this is not serving the Bazaar interests. The irony was that these words were coming from a man who owed his life to the Bazaar.

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<sup>317</sup> For a collection of Ayatollah Beheshti's speeches on the topic of *Mostazafin* see Mohammad Hossein Beheshti, *Hezbe jomhourie eslami: Mavaze'e tafsili* [Islamic republic party: detailed positions], Tehran, The Foundation for The Safeguard and Publication of Martyr Ayatollah Beheshti's Works, 2009.

<sup>318</sup> Beheshti, *Hezbe jomhourie eslami: Mavaze'e tafsili*, pp. 304-307.

<sup>319</sup> Beheshti, *Hezbe jomhourie eslami: Mavaze'e tafsili*, pp. 219-220.

<sup>320</sup> Beheshti, *Hezbe jomhourie eslami: Mavaze'e tafsili*, pp. 181-182.



### 8.3. Ideology Education in IRP

To express their differences with other parties and in order to dominate their party environment, the IRP leaders took it on themselves to provide their fellow party members and the masses with a set of ideological guidelines. They placed a high value on ideology education as the most effective method of maintaining party loyalty among all members.

Hojatoleslam Rafsanjani, Ayatollah Behesti and Hojatoleslam Khamenei started presenting lectures for the members of the IRP Central Council and in some cases for a larger audience. For those who did not have the chance of attending these classes, the party thought of a substitute. The proceedings of the ideology classes were published in the Islamic Republic newspaper, the organ of the party. Later, the IRP clerics collected the outline of their lectures in a single book called *Mavaze'e ma* [our stances or our positions]. Rafsanjani specifically gives a big portion of his memoirs to the proceedings of the lectures he provided for the IRP Central Council. These lectures were convened in his office as well as party headquarters, sometimes even in his office in the Majles.

In an environment where most political groups were claiming ultimate revolutionary credentials, it was vital for the IRP to show to the public that they alone were the possessors and the holders of the true revolutionary legitimacy. In order to achieve this goal they had to mark their ideological territory and make known their ideological differences with the other parties in a noticeable way. The IRP wanted to show a clear-cut disparity with all the other political organisations. If they were to rule without the others, the public opinion in general and their targeted social base in particular had to know what made the party so outstanding and what did they have in their ideological baggage, that wasn't already provided by the opposition such as the MKO, secular nationalists, Marxists, and the non-Khomeinist Islamists such as the People's Islamic Republic Party (PIRP).

### 8.3.1. Mavaze Ma [Our Positions]

Our Positions, or *Mavaze ma*, was an important account of IRP's position in the beginning of the revolution. This 86-page booklet gives details of the party's beliefs, principles and aims and objectives in the matters of governance. The book is divided into eight<sup>321</sup> topic areas which explains IRP's position.

1. Worldview and ideology
2. Understanding of the Iranian social structure
3. Position on the cultural revolution
4. Administrative and educational policies
5. Ideal judiciary system
6. Views on policing and defence
7. Economic policy
8. Foreign policy

All the mentioned positions in this manifesto booklet have a striking resemblance with the Iranian constitution. This should not surprise us given that the majority of the constitutional assembly members were from IRP. In addition IRP controlled CIR, the legislative body with vast authority that pre-existed the constitutional assembly that arranged the draft constitution. In other words *Mavaze ma* was IRP's version of the aims and objectives of the Islamic republic's constitution.

Hashemi Rafsanjani explains the process through which the IRP clerics have worked together to produce *Mavaze ma*.

One of the valuable outcomes of the ideology classes in the party was the *Mavaze hezb* [party stances] booklet. The *Mavaze* was produced by five of us, Ayatollah Beheshti, Ayatollah Khamenei, Ayatollah Mousavi Ardabili, Dr. Bahonar and me. Our work method involved that each of us specify a section of the Islamic and ideological studies for his research, and then we bring the assignments to our official meeting. In that meeting each of us presented the findings of his research so if there was any inadequacy in the work, it would be resolved. At the end we have approved the final draft and passed it to the respective section of the party to be put in use as an educational reference.<sup>322</sup>

In the book *Mavaze ma* they put emphasise on the role of clergy in the society.

The clergy were at the forefront of all the liberation movements that took place in our country during the last hundred years and were an effective part of the leadership, however in the period of

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<sup>321</sup> *Mavaze ma*, Tehran, The Islamic Republic Party Publications, 1979.

<sup>322</sup> Hashemi Rafsanjani, *Enghelab va pirooz*, p. 286.

our people's recent revolution that started in 1962 and concluded in victory in 1979, the leadership was defiantly in the hand of a grand *marja'* and a maestro and a great tutor and a distinguished cleric who was Imam Khomeini. Many other clerics were assisting him in this grave duty and the heroic people have trusted them with this role and with a great selflessness [the heroic people] have succeeded in their movement.<sup>323</sup>

To increase their social base the IRP leaders had no choice but to take on a position that incorporated the socialist ideals into the Islamic ones. The difficulty was how to do this without falling into what the IRP leaders considered the category of *Elteghati* (ideologically not pure). In addition they did not want to put the interests of Bazaaris of Motalefeh at risk.

The IRP manifesto declared as its aims and objectives, the eradication of poverty in terms of providing the essential provisions, housing, health service and education for everyone.<sup>324</sup> About a quarter of the eighty-six pages in the book *Mavaze ma* is allocated to the economic policies and guidelines. In short IRP's economic policies were in support of a state-controlled economy. The manifesto, in what looks like a duplicate from the article 44 of the Islamic Republic's constitution, leaves little scope for the private section.

The Islamic Republic must decisively reject the precedence of capital over social relations; moreover it must eliminate the entire socioeconomic basis that allows the capitalists to exploit workers. Recognizing the ownership of wealth and profit, within certain limits, should never result in accepting the supremacy of the capital and the capitalist over social relations, for this represents the ominous Western system from which we are distant and of which we are disgusted.<sup>325</sup>

Ayatollah Beheshti was able to select the fitting ideology and subsequently appeal to the social base he desired, enabling IRP to dominate the environment and enhance its collective incentive capital. The IRP ideology that was coming with Khomeini's blessings enabled IRP to increase its power in a relation of favourable exchange with their social base; IRP gave collective and selective incentives in return for participation, however, IRPs leader (Ayatollah Behesti) who was himself under the influence of a charismatic leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, knew well that he and his party would lose a lot if they did not have Khomeini's blessings.

In the preparations for entering the Constitutional Assembly election, Khomeini asked IRP to merge the Motalefeh party into itself. This was an illogical decision that was not going well with the party's chosen ideology and hunting ground and would interrupt the party's institutionalisation in the coming years. However what was most essential for Khomeini was the survival of the

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<sup>323</sup> *Mavaze ma*, p. 34.

<sup>324</sup> *Mavaze ma*, p. 64.

<sup>325</sup> *Mavaze ma*, pp. 72-73.

Islamic *Nezam* [regime or system] and not the survival of a political party. At that *critical juncture* in the Iranian post-revolution history he felt that a Grand Coalition between the Khomeinists was necessary for the survival and consolidation of his regime; what would be the consequences of such a merger for IRP was secondary for him.

Despite what seemed like a non-negotiable position over the legitimacy of the state's absolute control over the economy, the IRP leaders did not want to alienate the Bazaar especially when they have merged with the Motalefeh. They did not want to limit the Bazaar that had controlled the retailer business in Iran for many centuries. But for sectors such as oil, foreign commerce and heavy industry they adopted a statist policy and have championed a policy of grand nationalisation. It could be suggested that the conservative IRP clerics, in addition to the Motalefeh elites who joined the party by Khomeini's orders, preferred a model that was authoritarian and rentier in nature with room for semi-autonomous crony Bazaaris. However, the party could not hold its consensus for a long time over the role of state in the economy after the catastrophic death of both Beheshti and, shortly after, Bahonar. In addition the eradication of the secular and religious opposition (the external enemy that was making the party members put their differences aside) meant that party elites could now turn against each other. Those IRP members who were gathered around Mir-Hossein Mousavi started to show claws at the more conservative elements gathered around Khamenei and Rafsanjani.

#### **8.4. Summery and Concluding remarks**

The discourse of Islamomarxism developed by people like Ali Shariati was so popular at the time of the revolution that even Khomeini could not escape from its gravity. Therefore in line with the implications of such ideology the IRP had no choice but to put forward policies that protect the interests of the so-called Mostazafin. Yet these policies which were mostly statist, were at odds with the interests of the Motalefeh members of IRP. The historical bond between clergy and the bazaar and the part that Motalefeh bazaaries in specific had taken in the financing of the revolution have made them an invaluable part of Khomeini's team. Thus In order to minimise the damage to the interest of their bazaari friends, IRP leaders had to justify between their pro-Mostazafin policies and their lenience toward the loyal bazaaries. However, this conflict between ideology and practice has created lot of friction between the left and right wings of IRP. These tensions contributed to the eventual disintegration of the party.

Parties in post revolution Iran couldn't pass the survival threshold therefore the implications suggested by Panebianco for the "third phase" of parties lives did not apply to them. however if we take the state as an organisation consisting of different agencies led and coordinated by the state's leadership, many of the characteristics listed for the *third phase* become relevant.

During the later phase of Panebianco's ideal type, when the ideology is latent, leaders need to negotiate with groups inside their own party and interest groups and the parliamentary factions outside the party if they want to survive. The endurance of the leaders in their positions becomes more reliant on successful control over zones of uncertainty and the art of negotiation with the contesting groups inside and outside the party.<sup>326</sup>

The ideology which once provided both the goal and the collective incentives for the leaders is concealed; instead the parties' aims will be articulated in a new manner to fit its new circumstance. This view is in sharp contrast to Michels' theory of "the substitution of the ends" according to which the ends, aims, goals or ideologies which were once the reason why the party came to existence will eventually become replaced by a single aim: survival. According to Panebianco the original ideologies are never totally abandoned but they are bent and twisted to serve the requirements of the new era and ensure the survival of the leaders and the party itself.

The relation between aims and behaviour never completely disappears; it attenuates. The correspondence of a party's behaviour to its official aims is constantly reaffirmed by its leaders, but only these courses of action – amongst the many possible that the party may choose to achieve its official aims – which are compatible with the organisation's stability will be selected. For instance, that recurrent pattern we find in the history of socialist and communist parties, i.e. the split between reformist praxis and revolutionary language, is better understood as the result of an articulation, rather than a substitution, of aims: on the one hand the original goal (the revolution/socialism) is constantly evoked as it is the basis of the movement's collective identity; but on the other hand, the chosen courses of action, pragmatic and reformist, guarantee organisational stability without taking credibility away from the notion that one is still "working" towards the official aims: daily reformist praxis is, in fact, always justified with the explanation that reforms do not deviate from, but are rather intermediate steps towards socialism.<sup>327</sup>

Most insider reformists in Iran have rejected the claim that they were deviating from the original aims of the revolution. They always argued that according to Imam Khomeini's theology they were the true revolutionists. They were in fact articulating the Islamic republic's official aims in compliance to Panebianco's above-mentioned argument.

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<sup>326</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 16.

<sup>327</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, pp. 16-17.

According to Mehdi Moslim, the conflict between those who reinforce the revolutionary aspects of the regime in Iran and those who strive to rationalise and institutionalise the system defines the dynamism of post-revolutionary Iran. Accordingly, the interaction of the subsystems of religion, revolution, populism and republicanism constitutes the greater subsystems of post-revolution Iran. The Islamic left, at the first decade of the Islamic republic's life, was mainly in control of most organisations that took legitimacy from the revolutionary subsystems such as the Revolutionary Courts and *komitehs*. The traditional Right enjoyed a good deal of religious influence since the majority of the prominent *foqaha* and *marja*'s were in its camp, except Khomeini of course, who followed a populist agenda. After the departure of Khomeini, Rafsanjani and the modern Right started a political battle on two fronts. First, closing down the revolutionary organs that were in the hand of Islamic left, and second, reducing the power of traditional Right by opening up the socio-cultural environment in Iran.<sup>328</sup>

The de-revolutionisation of the Islamic Republic by Rafsanjani took place on two levels: ideological and institutional. On the ideological level, Rafsanjani attempted to moderate the prevailing extremist discourses of the first decade of the revolution. On the institutional level, while pushing for a more decentralized style of administration, Rafsanjani aimed at increasing the infrastructural powers of the central government, and hence of the republican institutions.<sup>329</sup>

However unlike Moslem I believe Rafsanjani's moderation was indeed the articulation of revolutionary aims in accordance with Panebianco's theory, rather than de-revolutionisation as Moslem suggested.

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<sup>328</sup> Mehdi Moslem, *Factional Politics in Post Khomeini Iran*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 2002.

<sup>329</sup> Moslem, *Factional Politics in Post Khomeini Iran*, p. 144.

## 9. Chapter Nine: Change and Crisis in the IRP

The IRP's closure was prompted by the uncertainty in its environment and the changes which occurred in its internal distribution of power. Parties according to Panebianco are conservative organisations, which will not change simply for the sake of change.<sup>330</sup> The question remains that change when it happens, is a choice (the leader's preference for instance) or because of the circumstances that more or less were out of the party's hands, for example the change in the technology (in the case of catch-all parties) or a change in the environment (for example a change in the hunting ground or the social base of the party). According to Panebianco change happens both intentionally and unintentionally.

Neither of the two schools is... entirely wrong: organisational change is the fruit of both choices and, because of the actor's bounded rationality and the multiplicity of organisational pressures, unforeseeable effects. Change is the result of deliberate choices (made within the dominant coalition) influenced by bounded rationality and anonymous pressures (e.g. resistance to change, environmental changes, technological changes, etc.) which interact with the choices to produce both desired innovations and counter-intuitive effects.<sup>331</sup>

The parties according to Panebianco change only when both external stimulus and internal preconditions of change are met.

The most persuasive hypothesis, in our opinion, is that organisational change is, in most cases, the effect of an external stimulus (environmental and/or technological) which joins forces with internal factors which were themselves undermining the power structure (even, for example, generational changes). The external stimulus acts as a catalyser accelerating power structure transformation (e.g. of resource distribution among different groups) where the internal preconditions of this transformation already existed. And change in the power structure (according to the theory of political development) stimulates organisational innovation. When neither environmental challenges nor internal preconditions are present, organisational change cannot take place.<sup>332</sup>

However Panebianco is not explicit enough about the external environment stimulus. Following Panebianco's hypothesis Harmel and Janda explore a variety of possibilities according to which change can occur in parties. They differ with Panebianco in two ways. 1. They believe that some party changes can be explained by internal factors alone i.e. without external stimulus. 2. They try to be more explicit about the concept of external stimulus according to Panebianco's model.<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> For this aspect of Panebianco's hypothesis see Robert Harmel and Kenneth Janda, "An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change", *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 6, no. 3 (1994), p. 264,

[<http://jtp.sagepub.com/content/6/3/259>], 16 May 2011

<sup>331</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, pp. 241-242.

<sup>332</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 242.

<sup>333</sup> Harmel and Janda, "An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change", p. 265.

Following Panebianco's hypothesis Harmel and Janda explore a variety of possibilities according to which change can occur in parties. They differ with Panebianco in three ways. First, They believe that some party changes can be explained by internal factors alone i.e. without external stimulus. Second, they try to be more explicit about the concept of external stimulus according to Panebianco's model. Finally they see failure in meeting party's main objective as the most important force behind party change.<sup>334</sup>

Accordingly different parties might have different aims and various factions within one party may have different goals but the "dominant collation" of each party has one primary goal and according to Harmel and Janda failure in meeting that primary goal, that may as well occur as a result of an external shock, causes the party to re-evaluate its effectiveness in meeting its primary goal and this important re-evaluation is the major reason why parties change.<sup>335</sup>

The most potent external stimuli are those which cause a party to re-evaluate its effectiveness in meeting its primary goal, whether that be electoral success or something else. These externally induced "shocks" to the party's internal system can catalyze a process of change that reaches more broadly and cuts more deeply than can occur as the result of internal changes (such as changes in leadership and/or the dominant faction) alone.<sup>336</sup>

They differentiate between Vote Seeking Parties, Office Seeking Parties, Internal Democracy Seeking Parties and Policy Seeking parties. While for the vote seeking parties "*those that pursue winning elections as their primary goal the more pronounced their electoral failures, the more likely they are to change*", For the policy-seeking parties, "*those that advocate policies as their primary goal – the more pronounced their failures to satisfy their policy clientele, the more likely they are to change*".<sup>337</sup>

Drawing on Harmel and Janda's typology I see IRP as closer to the Office Seeking model, "*For office-seeking parties – those that pursue executive office as their primary goal – the more pronounced their failures to achieve executive office, the more likely they are to change*".<sup>338</sup>

In what follows we explore the possibility that changes occurred in IRP were so severe that it could not survive. These overwhelming changes came as a result of uncertainty and hostility in the external environment of the party, the rearrangement of the party's internal order as a result of

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<sup>334</sup> Harmel and Janda, "An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change", p. 265.

<sup>335</sup> Harmel and Janda, "An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change", p. 265.

<sup>336</sup> Harmel and Janda, "An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change", p. 265.

<sup>337</sup> Harmel and Janda, "An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change", p. 281.

<sup>338</sup> Harmel and Janda, "An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change", p. 281.



sudden leadership losses and one or more “shocks” that caused the dominant faction of the party to re-evaluate its effectiveness in meeting its primary goal.

The factors that destabilised IRP could be sub-divided as follows:

1. The Bad Influence of the Leftists
2. Assassination of IRP Leaders and Cadre
3. The Iran Hostage-Taking Crisis
4. The Iran-Iraq war
5. The Obstructive Role of Ayatollah Montazeri
6. The Demise of all Rivals
7. The Interventions of Ayatollah Khomeini
8. Intensification of Left and Right Divisions within IRP

As IRP grew in size and power it became more and more aggressive and uncompromising and strived to dominate its environment both ideologically and by force. The reasons for this increase of radicalism in the organisation is partly attributed to the militant approach adopted by the leftist groups such as MKO and OIPFG minority (Organisation of Iranian People’s Fadayan Guerrillas Minority) that had left a bad influence on IRP. In other words the IRP was operating in a hostile, complex and unpredictable environment and this environment had unconstructive effects on the party. According to Panebianco, too much hostility and complexity in party environment can threaten the very existence of the organisation.

Beyond a certain threshold, a very complex and unstable environment becomes (or is perceived by the organisation’s members as being) hostile; it threatens not only the organisation’s order but its survival. Environmental hostility can, of course, be caused by factors unrelated to complexity or instability (for example: state repression). More often, however, a clear tie exists.<sup>339</sup>

However it would be misleading to put all the blame on the militant opposition groups while the IRP was a monopolist political party which did not tolerate even the most moderate groups such as LMI and the National Front. In fact, if given the chance, the conservatives of the party were aiming to oust the *Maktabis* from the party and the political sense forever. In the following sections, we examine how internal and external factors forced change on IRP.

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<sup>339</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 206

### 9.1. The Bad Influence of the Leftists

In the process of the revolution in 1978, the Iranian Left had developed a love-hate relationship with the clergy. On the one hand it recognised their power to mobilise the masses in a way that no Marxist organisation was able to; on the other hand they did not want the clergy to exclude them from power. After all, the Iranian leftists have made lots of sacrifices for the advent of the revolution and presented hundreds of martyrs in the arms struggle against the Shah's regime, therefore they regarded themselves as shareholders of the revolution. The most influential Left parties at the eve of the revolution were MKO, Fadayan and Tudeh. From these three the first two did not participate in the constitution referendum but Tudeh decided to take the path of appeasement and cooperation with IRP. However despite all the leniency and collaboration that Tudeh leaders showed on behalf of their party, the later on consolidated, strong IRI decided to pull their curtain down two years after Banisadr was unseated. Tudeh was crushed on the basis of allegations that the Tudeh leaders had been conspiring with USSR against the Islamic republic.<sup>340</sup> In what looked like a sham televised confession, Ehsan Tabari, the greatest Marxist ideologue in Iran was forced to condemn all his Marxist beliefs and announce that he found truth in the works of Ayatollah Motahari.<sup>341</sup>

MKO took a path different from Tudeh. MKO was disappointed from the beginning for being totally excluded from the power-sharing deals after the fall of the Shah, therefore the People's Mojahedin Organisation decided to play the role of the active and vocal opposition to IRP. Shortly after the revolution the organisation which had millions of followers and thousands of militia continued its protest in the form of massive street rallies and pressure group activities until it united forces with Banisadr and his followers in a desperate struggle against IRP. They decided to bring their followers into the streets hoping that the Khomeini and IRP clerics would retreat after being confronted with millions of angry demonstrators but MKO was wrong in its calculation since the Khomeinists decided to crush the demonstrators at any cost. The Khomeinists proceeded with their armed campaign until they succeeded in rooting out the whole armed wing of the MKO. Banisadr and Rajavi fled the country and the MKO was left to enter a bloody urban guerrilla war with the Khomeinists who, by combining the mobilisation supremacy of IRP, the military strength of IRGC, *komitehs* and *hezbollahies*, were far more superior to MKO. However the Mojahedin inflicted great harm and caused lots of damage on IRP and IRI and created massive terror before being completely outmanoeuvred by them.

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<sup>340</sup> Maziar Behrooz, *Rebels With A Cause: The Failure of The Left in Iran*, I. B. Tauris, New York, 1999, pp. 124-130.

<sup>341</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Shahrivar 23/ September 14, 1984

The alleged involvement of MKO in the assassinations of Ayatollah Beheshti, Prime Minister Hojatoleslam Bahonar, President Rajaie and hundreds of lower-rank Khomeinists, and the collateral damage they caused to hundreds of passers-by and ordinary people, in their operations, made them lose their popularity among the masses.

Fadayan although had a fiery start, gradually becoming closer to the moderate approach adopted by Tudeh, of course, after going through internal problems and partition. With regard to Fadayan it must be noticed that immediately after the collapse of the old regime the Turkaman autonomists in the north east and Kurdish parties in the west of Iran started a series of military actions aimed at reducing or terminating the power of the central government in the respective regions. On 19 March 1979 the Kurdish armed guerrillas attacked the army and police headquarters in Sanandaj and occupied the local radio station.<sup>342</sup> Khomeini was quick to send an emissary consisting of Ayatollah Taleghani, Ayatollah Beheshti, Hojatoleslam Rafsanjani, Dr. Banisadr and Sadr Haj-Said-Javadi, the interior minister, to the region to find a way out. However Taleghani's unforeseen departure and the IRP's mistrust of the Kurdish major parties that boycotted the Islamic Republic referendum was an indication of the murky prospect of the future of the Kurdish rebellion incident.

On the Kurdish question, Shari'atmadari aligned himself with the RC emissary, Ayatollah Taliqani, who stood for negotiation and reconciliation with the Khomeini, however, rejected Taliqani's recommendations, linked the Maoist Komela with the Kurdish Democratic Party in an undifferentiated "communist" alliance, and sent the Iranian revolutionary guards into the Kurdish cities. His feelings on this issue were so strong that he threatened to bring these guards before the revolutionary courts should they fail to suppress the Kurdish movement.<sup>343</sup>

These unrests coincided with the rebellion in Gonbad where the Turkamans' cultivators' council had defied the authority of the interim government and started taking control of strategic positions in the region. In both areas the militant Leftists' groups were involved assisting the rebels. While in Turkaman Sahra the involvement was minimal and exclusive to a small faction within the Fadayan, in the case of Kurdistan, most of the Leftist groups were mixed up in the turmoil one way or the other. The Left's involvement in Kurdistan can be divided into two periods, before and after the unseating of Banisadr. After Khordad 60/ June 1981, the confrontation between the IRP and the Left entered its yet deadliest phase and turned from sporadic fighting into a fully-fledged urban

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<sup>342</sup> *Ettela'at*, Farvardin 6/ March 26, 1979

<sup>343</sup> Shahrough Akhavi, *The Ideology and Praxis of Shi'ism in the Iranian Revolution*, Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol. 25, No. 2. (Apr, 1983), p.13, [<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=00104175%28198304%2925%3A2%3C195%3ATIAPOS%3E2.0.CO%3B2-H>], 01 August 2008

warfare, with IRP emerging victorious because of its gun power and its power of mobilisation. The IRGC, Komitehs, Friday imams and all the other revolutionary institutions were at IRP's disposal.

The post-Banisadr terror had far-reaching consequences for the opposition movement and the government. First, the guerrilla groups emerged from two years of armed struggle with their ranks decimated, their printing presses and weapons in government hands, their organisational networks ruptured, and their leaders eliminated. The Paykar chief and his deputy, and the leading figures of the Fadayan movement, were arrested or killed in confrontations in 1981 and 1982. Several of the smaller guerrilla movements were for all practical purposes annihilated. In August 1982, one year after the dramatic raid on Amol, 100 members of the Etehadiyyeh-ye Kommunist-ha were captured. Twenty-two were subsequently sentenced to death, most of the others to prison terms.<sup>344</sup>

However the period previous to the incidents of June 1981 is the period which the Iranian leftists can carry some of the blame for helping create an environment in which the muscled at the streets mattered more than the brains at the negotiating table. The IRP and the leftist groups were without a doubt contributing to the radicalisation of the political environment, changing the rules of the game from election contestation to street gun fight. We do not know if the radical leftists such as MKO had become victorious in their violent contest with IRP, the regime that would have been created as a result of such a hypothetical victory was, better or worse than the current Iranian state in its human rights record. What we do know however, is that the current regime, that in a way is the product of IRP's triumph, has a controversial record of human rights. Abrahamian lists some of regimes human rights violation that occurred from 1979 to 1985.

In the twenty-eight months between February 1979 and June 1981, revolutionary courts had executed 497 political opponents as "counterrevolutionaries" and "sowers of corruption on earth." They included Hoveida, the former premier; 6 cabinet ministers – one of whom was accused of nourishing "cultural imperialism"; 3 chiefs and 90 operatives of SAVAK; 33 Bahais and 1 Jewish businessman accused of spying for Israel; 35 generals, 25 colonels, 20 majors, and 125 non-commissioned officers. In the next four years from June 1981 until June 1985, revolutionary courts executed more than 8,000 opponents.<sup>345</sup>

## 9.2. The Assassination of Party Leaders and Cadre

On 28 June 1981 a bomb explosion in the IRP headquarters killed Beheshti the formative era leader of the party and more than seventy party members. Ayatollah Beheshti was a shrewd figure who had a strong belief in IRP. He famously said "for me, party is a temple"<sup>346</sup> to emphasis the ideological/religious importance of IRP.

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<sup>344</sup> Bakhash, *Reign of the Ayatollahs*, p. 222.

<sup>345</sup> Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p.181.

<sup>346</sup> Jasbi, *Tashakole faragir*, p. 143.

With his death another cleric Mohammad Javad Bahonar replaced him. Bahonar became Prime Minister in Rajaie's short-lived administration. But another explosion, this time in the office of the prime minister, killed both men in the August of the same year. For a second time a big shock was delivered to the party headquarters; Losing two of its best talents and leaders in less than one year was not something that IRP or indeed any other political party could recover from easily.

After Bahonar, Hojatoleslam Ali Khamenei (the current Supreme Leader) became the Secretary General by the IRP Central Council's vote and Khomeini's blessing. However Khamenei was later elected the third president of IRI and his new position as a president made him less keen in keeping up with the party affairs and its day to day businesses.

The explosion in the IRP headquarters in June 1981 that resulted in the death of Ayatollah Beheshti and more than seventy high ranking members of the party, that was allegedly carried out by a member of MKO, completed the vicious circle of violent conflict between IRP and its opponents. According to Saied Shahsavandi, a former member of MKO, the MKO's underestimation of IRI's retaliation made the MKO make fatal mistakes and take disastrous political decisions at a time when, according to Shahsavandi, with a "little bit of self restrain and negotiation", the MKO could save the lives of many of its members. According to Shahsavandi when Khomeini accepted MKO's offer of direct negotiation on the condition that the Organisation lay down its weapons, the MKO refused to do that, lowering thus its level of negotiation from direct talks with the Leader himself to sending complaint letters to the President.<sup>347</sup>

The short-lived alliance between MKO and Banisadr has harmed both sides in many ways. It made Banisadr an easy target for the IRP MPs in the Majles, it further alienated Banisadr from Ayatollah Khomeini who once called him "my son". Last but not least, for many years and even to date the IRI officials are justifying their breach of human rights by suggesting that they only resort to violence to protect the people of Iran and the Iranian national interests from the terrorist attacks of "Monafeghin" (a the term used by the Iranian regime meaning the hypocrites). It is clear that if the MKO and other smaller militant leftist groups had decided to take a similar strategy to LMI they first, would have saved hundreds if not thousands of innocent lives and second, they would have contributed to the creation of a calmer (less hostile) and more predictable political environment.

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<sup>347</sup>Saied Shahsavandi, *Gaam be gaam ta faj'eh*, [Step by Step to the Disaster], bbcpersian, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2011/06/110625\_178\_30khordad60\_shahsavandi2.shtml], 4 July 2011

The assassination of two party leaders in one year has deprived IRP of two of its shrewd leaders. The death of Beheshti in particular was the biggest loss for the Party. Among the IRP clerics, Ayatollah Beheshti was the strongest believer in the merits of a political party, he famously called the IRP his “temple”. In addition, because of Beheshti’s acquaintance with Western thought, his broad knowledge of Iranian culture and society and his indisputable cleverness, his era of leadership was the smoothest; the party started to show signs of split when an entrepreneurial figure like Beheshti was not there to create consensus between the rival factions in the IRP. The dominant coalition of the party has suffered greatly as well and the party was divided along left–right axes. Mir-Hossein Mousavi was leading the left wing of the party and his rivalry with the party’s general director, Khamenei has contributed to the party’s termination.

### **9.3. The Hostage-Taking Crisis Impact on IRP’s Behaviour Toward other Parties**

It would not be an exaggeration if it was claimed that the hostage-taking crisis was the most important turning point or critical juncture in the history of the Islamic republic of Iran. This phenomenon was not restricted to the international consequences of imprisonment of the American diplomats for 444 days. In fact this catastrophe had another side, a domestic dimension, that to a large extent has defined the IRP and in a larger scale the IRI relation with the opposition ever since .

After confiscating the embassy’s possessions, the Students Following the Line of Imam (SFLI) started disclosing what they claimed to be the top-secret U.S. embassy documents in relation to the revolution. What the SFLI was most interested in were the official correspondences between the embassy diplomats and members of the interim cabinets. In addition they were looking for the reports, analysis and advice-giving letters by the embassy officials to their superiors in Washington so they could prove the conspiracy theory that they had in their mind about American intentions for a coup similar to the 1953 Ajax operation.

Now that we look back to the history we realise that the vast majority of the seized documents were nothing more than normal ambassadorial correspondences between the American embassy staff members and Iranian officials especially from the foreign ministry, a type of interaction which is part of the job of all the embassies around the world including the IRI embassies. However in the midst of Tehran’s anti-imperialist fever, being called “dear” by the Americans was to be labelled spy or guilty of espionage by the SFLI.

Countless shredded sheets from the shredders in the embassy were recovered by the SFLI and consequently used by them as well as by IRP to discredit the non-Maktabi opposition personalities including Bazargan, Abbas Amir-Entezam, Hassan Nazih (former oil minister), Ayatollah Shariatmadari, Mozaffar Baghai (leader of the Toilers party) and many other opposition elites.

One of the first victims of this modern-day witch hunting that was followed by a purge was the former spokesman and deputy prime minister in the interim cabinet of Bazargan, Mr. Abbas Amir Entezam. His arrest and later trial and imprisonment were based on letters revealed by SFLI and then propagated by IRP's propaganda machine the daily *Jomhourie eslami*. According to the published notes from the trial, Entezam's mortal sin was helping American diplomats with airport customs formalities before leaving Iran. It must be stressed none of this was illegal or unusual for a diplomats to do. It is very customary for a man in Entezam's capacity to assist a foreign diplomat with the hassles of paperwork before leaving the country but in the eyes of the radical students and the readers of *Jomhourie eslami* that was an unforgivable felony.

One of the very first "disclosures" that SFLI made was CIA's analysis of *Pasdaran* or IRGC. The Students claimed that "CIA classified documents" has acknowledged and confirmed "the role of IRGC in safeguarding the revolution" and that the Agency has predicted "the corps numbers will soon reach 30,000 strong men".<sup>348</sup>

It is obvious that gaining the "enemy's" recognition as a strong force was an important credit which the IRGC received as a result of the cooperation between SFLI and IRP. The value of "the acknowledgment" becomes clearer when it is placed in a 1979 Iran context. When Jimmy Carter allowed the Shah the entry to receive medical treatment in the U.S the anti-American sentiments reached an unprecedented level on the streets of Tehran. Many in Iran started making comparisons in their mind, putting side by side this controversial American action with the proceedings of the 1953 coup against Mosaddegh. When angry students finally stormed the embassy in Tehran, Khomeini called it a second revolution and the majority of personalities across the political spectrum praised the reckless move. Prime Minister Bazargan and his LMI colleagues were an exception and they denounced the move. The Leftist opposition including MKO and Fdaiyan praised the action on the grounds that this was a strong blow to the American imperialist interests in the region. They continued their public admiration of the SFLI and their decision to publish the classified documents found at the embassy building at Takhte Jamshid Avenue.

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<sup>348</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Abaan 20/ November 11, 1979

In the midst of anti-imperialism fever, whoever was emerging as a threat to the American interest in the documents was going to receive hero treatment from the excited politicised masses, in contrast those who were admired or even thanked by an official in the embassy were going to lose credibility and possibly even prosecuted. This is why CIA's alleged acknowledgment of the IRGC's role<sup>349</sup> in the revolution was extremely important for all the Khomeinists including SFLI and IRP. For them this was an admission of desperation from the "arch enemy".

The trend continued with charging Abbas Amir-Entezam the former interim government and a close friend of Bazargan of spying for CIA. On 11 November 1979 the SFLI published six translations of documents in support of their allegations. None of these documents indicated that Amir-Entezam was a spy. In fact the content of the correspondences between the embassy and Amir-Entezam was merely normal protocol. A simple compliment by Mr. Laingen, the U.S. charge d'affaires in Tehran, in which he describes Amir as a "bright, skilful diplomat who is very interested that mutual relations improve once again"<sup>350</sup> was used against Entezam as evidence of his treason. Amir Entezam was put on trial in what was one of the lengthiest court procedures in IRI history and was finally condemned with a life sentence. The proceedings of his court sessions were used as a campaign against the FMI and Bazargan. Countless allegations were made by students against FMI, Bazargan, Ebrahim Yazdi, National Front, Qutb Zadeh, Shariatmadari, the Leftists and the Kurdish parties on the basis of spying for the Americans or conspiring against Khomeini. The students' words were treated as prima facie evidence. SFLI had a free hand in labelling opposition personalities and charging their organisations with treason and making unproven cases against them, before any of the scandals were investigated in a court of law. Despite all this, they were never impeached or prosecuted by the judiciary system. On the contrary the SFLI were encouraged by IRP to "publish more".

As was mentioned previously, the CIR received executive portfolios after the resignation of Bazargan. The CIR with first Banisadr and later Qutbzadeh as its foreign minister had tried to take the hostages from the students and resolve the matter through diplomatic channels. However Khomeini's frequent change of heart and SFLI's disruption resulted in their efforts ending with failure. Moreover, the UN Sanctions Commission, that was formed after Banisadr became president and went to Iran to look at Iran's and America's claims and counter claims with regard to

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<sup>349</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Aban 20/ 11 November, 1979

<sup>350</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Azar 29/ 20 December, 1979



the hostage crisis, left Iran empty handed after the SFLI refused to cooperate with CIR and the delegation.<sup>351</sup>

The IRP and CIR did not initiate the hostage taking but IRP has eaten most of its fruits. Using the revolutionary momentum gained by the hostage-taking act the IRP elites have adapted themselves to the environment. Since they realised that Khomeini was not going to seek a quick resolution of the crisis through diplomacy (only two weeks after the incident Khomeini announced that he would not retreat even a single step on the matter),<sup>352</sup>, the IRP elites tried their best to hijack the agenda and take on the role of SFLI's voice. In addition, the IRP utilised the revolutionary and anti-imperialism momentum that occurred in the society as a result of the hostage taking, in order to win the Inaugural Constitutional Assembly election and insert the *Velayate faghih* doctrine into the IRI draft constitution. Moreover via "disclosing" embassy documents it discredited one of the most vocal anti *Velayate faghih* deputies in the Assembly.

The resignation of Bazargan and his cabinet, influencing the result of presidential election by disclosing documents against admiral Madani one of the presidential candidates and Banisadr's main contender a day before the presidential election, discrediting and prosecuting many opposition figures and independent intellectuals under allegations that confiscated documents show their covert connection with the Americans, was part of SFLI and IRP's exploitation and/or abuse of the embassy documents . It would not be exaggerating to suggest that the hostage-taking crisis not only further radicalised the IRP's political behaviour but also transformed the entire political map of the post-revolution Iran.

#### **9.4. The Iran-Iraq War**

The eight-year war between Iran and Iraq was one of the longest and costliest wars in the Twentieth-century, one that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives from both sides and caused hundreds of billions of dollars of damage to the infrastructure of both countries. The war that started in September 1980 and lasted until August 1988 has had devastating effects for the Iranian polity and economy and it further infuriated the already irritated political environment in the revolution- tormented Iran.

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<sup>351</sup> For more information see Mohammad Jafari, *Grogangiri va janeshinane enghelab* [Hostage taking and the revolution replacements], Frankfurt, Baezavand, 2007.

<sup>352</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Azar 01/ 22 November, 1979

A war of such scale would defiantly influence the political environment of IRI and, by definition, the IRP, that after the unseating of Banisadr and the semi civil war that followed it has emerged as the victorious ruling party in the Iranian political scene. IRP was both influencing, and influenced by, the war. The Iran-Iraq war had created unusual conditions in the country and disrupted the natural course of events in Iran. For IRP, holding a Congregation became a big security concern since the attendees could be targeted by Iraqi aerial bombardment. When, finally, they convened their first Congress (1983), strict security measures were taken to minimise any loss of life. For example, the Martyr Bahonar Complex was chosen as the venue for the meeting due to its proximity to Khomeini's headquarters which provided an strong air defence against any possible Iraqi bombardment.<sup>353</sup>

The nation was at war and the IRP alongside the IRI were exposing, producing and reproducing the concept and the image of *Ithar* [altruism] and *Shahadat* [martyrdom] in order to boost the morals of the Iranian regular, and irregular armed forces and to dominate the war agenda or, as the Khomeinists named it, *defa'e moghaddass* [the sacred resistance or the holy defence].

When the news of Iranian "martyrs'" bravery and self-sacrifice came to the nation, the IRP organ *Jomhourie eslami* then further intensified its war propaganda efforts by expropriating the deceased soldiers' last wills and testaments. The common stereotype of these testaments was a young man's sensational note, advising his fellow brothers and sisters not to mourn for him if he dies in the battle, be always supportive of *velayate faghih* , avoid materialistic lifestyle and political dispute and "fight for Imam and Islam to the last drop of your blood"<sup>354</sup>. This exercise of taking interpretative control of the martyrs' last testaments to prove a political point or to support the "Imam line" continued until the last days of the IRP's official existence and the IRP. through its paper and the public speeches of its elite. has mass-produced this kind of paradigm.

The by-product of this mass production was that it raised the expectations of the masses from the party. People expected the IRP to practice what it preached and not to deviate from the path of martyrs. The noticeable accumulation of wealth in the hand of state officials and the visible change in their lifestyle has portrayed many of them as hypocrites in the public eye. The public wanted their politicians to show the same amount of self-sacrifice and lack of material life that was advocated in the "martyrs' last will" but the luxurious lifestyle and the loud struggle for political

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<sup>353</sup> Jasbi, *Tashakole faragir*, p. 67.

<sup>354</sup>For example see "*Vasyatnameh shahid mahmoude oastegarpanah*" [The Last Will of Martyr Mahmoud Rastegarpanah], *Jomhourie eslami*, Aban 12/ November 3, 1982

power and earthly positions they have seen from their politicians reduced the popularity of many IRI officials including many members of IRP.

### 9.5. The Obstructive Role of Ayatollah Montazeri

Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri was one of Khomeini's brightest students in the subjects of theology and Islamic philosophy. In Ayatollah Fazel Lankarani's words "Ayatollah Montazeri was among the first group of Imam Khomeini's best students. He and the late Ayatollah Motahari had acknowledged Ayatollah Montazeri's greatness before others. In Imam Khomeini's *Khareje Fiqh va Osul* teaching circle, Ayatollah Montazeri and the late Motahhari were among the few students. I remember he participated in Imam Khomeini's teaching and usually discussed the issues with Imam Khomeini afterwards."<sup>355</sup> When the grand Ayatollah Boroujerdi was departed Montazeri began working tirelessly for the acknowledgment of his master Ayatollah Khomeini as a *Marja'*. He published the *Tahrir-ol-Vasilah* Khomeini's book in religious practice and convinced the reluctant Ayatollah Khomeini to start giving monthly payments or *Shahrieh* to the clerics. Each Shia *marja'* pays a monthly sum to the clerics in Qom and Najaf, in return those clerics promote the *marja'* and publicise his *Resaleh tozih ol masael* (the basic book of religious practice). As a result, Shias who chose that *marja' e taghlid* as their point of reference would pay their alms to that Ayatollah. It could be seen how everyone would benefit within this religious network. If we look at this procedure merely from the financial point of view, we can visualise it as a big business in which novice and middle-rank clerics act as salesmen for the Ayatollahs who, in return, give them a commission but of course matters of religion must not be simply evaluated only by material examples. We can see the accumulation of Social Capital as a result of this cycle. The trust builds up little by little between a number of imitators or *moghaleidin*, the accessible cleric in their local mosque and the Ayatollah in Qom or Najaf or other cities. The supposedly virtuous *marja' taghlid* should spend the money collected by the above-mentioned method only in charitable and "righteous" causes. By doing this the *marjas* are winning the *moghaleidin* hearts and they strengthen their own social status and increase the collective incentives capital.

After Khomeini began his direct campaign against the Shah and his policies, difficult days started for Hossein Ali Montazeri. After Khomeini exile to Iraq Montazeri was expelled from Qom to the remote cities of Tabas and Saghez but the dissident cleric was determined to continue his anti-regime activities even in exile. Montazeri was organising Friday prayers wherever he was and the

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<sup>355</sup> [ <http://www.amontazeri.com/farsi/fl.asp> ], 02 September 2010

people of the host cities in which he was spending his days were receiving him like a hero. Finally the regime decided to put an end to this and he was arrested along with his son Mohammad and other high-ranking clerics.

Despite spending five years of his life in prison and being expelled to remote parts of the country for another three years, Ayatollah Montazeri managed to keep Khomeini's links with the Iranian people alive.

After the revolution Ayatollah Montazeri played a crucial role in theorising the doctrine of *velayate faghih*. As the president of the first Council of Experts, Ayatollah Montazeri took the lead in embedding the principle of Guardianship of Jurisprudent or *velayate faghih* in the Islamic republic's constitution. In accomplishing his mission Montazeri was assisted especially by Ayatollah Beheshti, his deputy and Mr Hassan Ayat, a member of the Council and who was an IRP member and a former member of *Zahmatkeshan* [strugglers] party. In 1981 by the order of the Assembly of Experts, Montazeri was officially announced as Khomeini's locum. After Ayatollah Taleghani's sudden death, Ayatollah Montazeri was appointed as Tehran's Friday leader, a position he left to Ali Khamenei before leaving Tehran to Qom. In Qom he became the holy city's Friday leader. He was also the president of the Friday leaders' seminar.

Montazeri returned to Qom when clerics with half of his revolutionary credentials favoured staying in the capital and being present at the heart of the political scene rather than spending time with theology students in Qom. Ayatollah Montazeri avoided official positions and tried to keep himself away from governmental responsibilities in the Islamic republic.<sup>356</sup> Most of his activities were cultural and civic in nature, such as announcing the unity or *Vahdat* week as a mark of unity between Shia and Sunnis in Iran and sending preachers to countries like Lebanon and Afghanistan. However, in a few cases he played a key role in the IRI politics. One of these cases was the establishment of the Higher Revolutionary Court and establishing the Committee for Dividing Uncultivated Lands.<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> Eric Hooglund, "The Search for Iran's "Moderates"", MERIP Middle East Report, No. 144, Jan - Feb., (1987), p. 5, [<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0888-0328%28198701%2F02%290%3A144%3C4%3ATSFI%22%3E2.0.CO%3B2-S>], 18 January 2008

<sup>357</sup> [<http://www.amontazeri.com/farsi/fl.asp>], 02 September 2010

### 9.5.1. Ayatollah Montazeri and Party Politics

Montazeri had his own reservations about IRP and party politics in general. In his website-biography we read, “In his meetings with officials, Ayatollah Montazeri always recommended that choosing and assigning people for positions should be based on their capability, prior knowledge, and piety, not based on friendship or partisanship. Sometime in the past, he had felt that the original revolutionary forces were being omitted; therefore he mentioned a crawling coup against revolutionary forces, in his guidelines to the masses.”<sup>358</sup>

### 9.5.2. The Mehdi Hashemi Affair

In Montazeri’s eyes the intense actions of the party ultimately resulted in the exclusion of the non-partisan revolutionary forces from power. That included many of the clerics and laymen who were loyal to him at that time. One of these loyal men was Mehdi Hashemi, the brother of his son-in-law and a close friend of his, Montazeri’s, departed son Mohammad.

The brother of Montazeri's son-in-law, Sayyid Mehdi Hashemi, was the director of the Office for Islamic Liberation. Hashemi is a flamboyant personality who has been involved in theological controversies since the early 1970s. His close political ally was Montazeri's son, Muhammad, who was assassinated in 1981. Hashemi was implicated before the revolution in the murder of Ayatollah Shamsabadi, a rival of Montazeri, and after the revolution Hashemi was one of Montazeri's bodyguards. The exact nature of Hashemi's relationship with the elder Montazeri is unclear. Some claim that Montazeri regarded him as a son and had a close relationship with him; others allege that the two saw each other only occasionally and only for business purposes. In any case, Montazeri is perceived as a patron of Hashemi and Hashemi's arrest in October must have distressed Montazeri.<sup>359</sup>

Apparently the arrest and, soon after, the execution of Mehdi Hashemi left its mark on Montazeri’s perception of the IRP and its activities.<sup>360</sup>

In his autobiography, Montazeri mentions his dissatisfaction with the overall performance of the IRP. In addition, he does not rule out the possibility that party leaders at the time, Khamenei and Rafsanjani, might have held a grudge with him because of that.

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<sup>358</sup> [<http://www.amontazeri.com/farsi/f1.asp>], 02 September 2010

<sup>359</sup> Eric Hooglund, “The Search for Iran's "Moderates"”, MERIP Middle East Report, No. 144, Jan. - Feb., (1987), p. 6, [<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0888-0328%28198701%2F02%290%3A144%3C4%3ATSFI%22%3E2.0.CO%3B2-S>], 18 January 2008

<sup>360</sup> Bahman Bakhtiari, *Parliamentary Politics in Revolutionary Iran*, Florida, University Press of Florida, 1996, p. 140.

In the cities inapplicable personnel found their way to the party and began their nepotism games by using the party as their power base while having other intentions in mind. After a while I was fed up with the party and perhaps Mr Khamenei and Hashemi's recent bitterness with my house was because it did not promote the party. Gradually the matter was escalated to an extent that Imam took a position and told Mr Khamenei to turn down the party's wick.<sup>361</sup>

### 9.5.3. Conflict of Authorities in Isfahan

After the revolution the decision was made to revive the long time suspended Islamic ritual of Friday prayer. Khomeini asked Montazeri to find the suitable candidates for Friday prayer leadership in Tehran and the provinces appointing them as his "representatives" in the major cities.

As Khomains's personal representatives, the Friday prayer leaders in the major cities often overshadowed the authority of the provincial governors. They in turn appointed Friday prayer leaders of the smaller towns in their districts. This network of preachers and mosques served to spread the official doctrine; to mobilize the crowds; to dispense patronage and ration cards; to indoctrinate the young; to recruit "volunteers" for the war; to issue character references for local residents applying for jobs or admission to schools; and to keep an eye on the local inhabitants.<sup>362</sup>

In most cases the Friday leaders became members of IRP. After all it was a party controlled by clerics and sanctioned by the Imam. However in some cases there were clerics who refrained from partisanship. IRP's collision with the non-partisan Friday prayer leaders was another reason for Montazeri to become alarmed about the party's long-term plans for the country. Isfahan was a classic example in which Ayatollah Taheri, the Friday prayer leader of the city, was competing with the IRP and their man Mr Ali Akbar Parvaresh, back then the Minister of Education. This created tensions between the two sides over who should have the ascendancy in Isfahan. None of the two senior officials was willing to follow the other one.

Among the Friday leaders many were against the party, a number of party branches had very bad performances. The Isfahan branch was among of the most biased offices of the party whose actions created a lot of tensions with the Combatant Clergy of Isfahan and Ayatollah Taheri. In addition Imam was disappointed when he learned about the disputed and asked me to take action. I convened a meeting in Mr Rabani Amlashi's house in Tehran inviting gentlemen, Taheri Isfahani, Nategh Nouri, Taheri Khorram-Abadi, Abbas Ali Rohani, Abdullah Nouri, Parvaresh and Hajj Ahmad Agha (Khomeini's son). I spoke to both sides, giving them some words of warning. Later I wrote letters to Messrs Taheri and Parvaresh and forwarded a report of the work done to Imam.<sup>363</sup>

Montazeri acknowledges his criticisms of IRP might have caused the later bitterness from Khamenei and Hashemi Rafsanjani's side. However, Montazeri, as a traditionalist faghih had his

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<sup>361</sup> Hossein Ali Montazeri, *Khaterat* [Memoirs], 2000, p.450, [<http://www.amontazeri.com/farsi/frame3.asp>], 02 September 2010

<sup>362</sup> Bakhsh, *Reign of the Ayatollahs*, p. 244.

<sup>363</sup> Montazeri, *Khaterat* [Memoirs], p. 352.

own conventional ways of networking and benefited from the long-established religious institutions like *hawza* and the network of mosques in addition to the revitalised Friday prayers. Therefore he did not see any need for a political party and did not become a member of IRP. Not only because he regarded himself higher in religious status than the IRP leaders, Beheshti, Bahonar and Khamenei but more importantly because similar to Ayatollah Mahdavi-Kani, he did not believe that partisanship was the best way for political conduct in Iran. For this reason, when Banisadr asked his opinion on forming a new party with him, he did not accept the invitation.<sup>364</sup>

## **9.6. The Demise of all Rivals**

It might not be a coincidence that the IRP's first Congress was held a few months after the last surviving opposition party (Tudeh) was suppressed and its leaders were forced to confess against themselves in front of TV cameras. Having no contender party left in the environment meant that party factions could compete against each other without the fear of an external competitor that might benefit from their arguments. Moreover the conservatives within the party were not that worried that the intensification of their factionalism might result in the collapse of the party since they had their own organisations (Motalefeh and Combatant Clergy Association) where they could always go back to. The left-wing members however, were fortunate that Khomeini preferred to maintain a balance between the two factions; besides, Khomeini's personal inclination and that of his son Ahmad was to the left tendency in IRP.

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<sup>364</sup> Montazeri, *Khaterat* [Memoirs], p. 351.

## 9.7. Khomeini's Interventionism and Arbitrary Rule

Khomeini's arbitrary style of ruling and frequent change of heart meant that IRP elites had a difficult task of tuning the party to the desire of a short-tempered, temperamental leader. However Khomeini's general resolution was to endorse the party and provide financial aid for it. The loyalty of IRP members to Imam Khomeini also remained uninterrupted even after the closure of the party.

Khomeini's frequent disrupting of the party rank and file did not let the party develop its processes (to institutionalise). In the instances of factional disagreements, many party elites preferred to deal directly with Khomeini rather than pursuing their demands through official party channels. This frequent disruption of the party hierarchy had greatly destabilised the party's coherence. Besides, Khomeini's main target was the perseverance of his *Nezam* (Islamic government based on Velayate faghih ) and not the survival of IRP. IRP for Khomeini was only a useful apparatus which, if it could be replaced with other devices, was no longer necessary to keep. This is why, when the factional conflict within the party reached its limits, Khomeini did not oppose its closure.



## **9.8. Intensification of Left and Right Divisions within IRP**

### **9.8.1. Disagreement over the Precedence of Imam Khomeini's Decrees over the Past Tradition of Islam**

Inside the IRP Ayatollah Beheshti, Mir-Hossein Mousavi and many of the members of Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution believed in the doctrine of innovative jurisprudence or *Fiqhe poya*. Others like Khamenei followed the traditional *fiqh* or *fiqhe Sonati* school of thought. According to the first group Ayatollah Khomeini as a *Valayate faghih* had almost unlimited powers in jurisprudence and he was free to provide a completely new interpretation of the Islamic texts but the second group did not see how Khomeini could change rulings that had for centuries been deeply rooted into the tradition of Shia jurisprudence.

Mir-Hossein's faction, representing the left wing of the party, believes that Khomeini had the legitimacy to issue unprecedented fatwa. In other words Khomeini had the right to be innovative in issuing fatwa. The other group that included clerics like Khamenei and Azari Qomi believed that Islamic decrees were two in type, the preliminary and the secondary. While a qualified faghih could and should use his innovation to issue the secondary decrees, the preliminary rulings must only be drawn from the past tradition of Fiqh i.e. rulings of the departed renowned Shia Ulamas. In addition they believed in *Molavi* (commanding) and *Ershadi* (advising) variation in Khomeini's statements. While the first type, according to the Conservatives, should be obeyed without more ado the second type is not obligatory. For instance they regarded Khomeini's decree for reappointment of Mir-Hossein Mousavi as a prime minister in 1985 as Ershadi in nature and thus non-obligatory. This disagreement over matters of religious jurisprudence turned into a political disagreement over the limits of Imam Khomeini's power. The right wing of IRP did not hide its dissatisfaction of Khomeini's special treatment of Mir-Hossein but did not dare defying Khomeini.

As was mentioned before, after the assassination of Beheshti, the disagreements between the rival coalitions inside the party came to the surface. Mir-Hossein Mousavi, Ayatollah Mousavi Ardabili in addition to those members who were associated with MIRO and many of the Friday prayer leaders, constituted the left wing of the party, this while Khomeini in conjunction with Motalefeh, represented the right wing of IRP. Hashemi Rafsanjani, a maverick political man and the speaker of the parliament, did not fall into any of the two categories although in his economic views he was closer to the right bloc of the organisation.

IRP's first general congress and internal elections were held in May 1983 and the election outcome was as follows:

**Figure 7: The IRP Central Council Members 1983**

Number of votes order	Name	Votes
1	Hashemi Rafsanjani	647
2	Ali Khamenei	646
3	Rabani Amlashi	637
4	Mohammad Ali Movahedi Kermani	634
5	Ali Akbar Velayati	624
6	Abbas Vae'ez Tabassi	623
7	Ali Akbar Nategh Nouri	612
8	Akbar Parvaresh	589
9	Abbas Sheibani	579
10	Mohamma Reza Beheshti	578
11	Ghorbanali Dorrie Najafabaadi	574
12	Masih Mohajeri	570
13	Hassan Ghaforifard	550
14	Mir Hossein Mousavi	554
15	Habibollah Asgaroladi	542
16	Mohsen Doagou Feizabaadi	500
17	Abolghasem Sarhaddizadeh	499
18	Gholamhossein Sharifkhani	460
19	Mohammad Reza Bahonar	453
20	Asadollah Lajevardi	430
21	Asadollah Badaamchian	428
22	Javad Mansouri	414
23	Reza Zavarehi	410
24	Abdollah Jassbi	375
25	Morteza Nabavi	372
26	Said Amani	310

27	Mohioldin Fazel Harandi	276
28	Mostafa Mirsalim	260
29	Mohammad Hossein Asgharnia	231
30	Javad Ejehi	223

Source: Abdollah Jasbi, *Tashakole faragir*, [The Encompassing Organisation], 2001, Tehran, pp.180-181

It is clear from the names above that the lefties weren't the numerical majority in the IRP Central Council. However, the lefties were able to take the initiative in organising themselves to maximise the influence inside the party. One reason why they became successful was because they had total control over the IRP newspaper thus had more control over the crucial "communications zone of uncertainty" in the party. *Jomhourie eslami* was first run by Mir-Hossein Mousavi and when he went to the government to hold the foreign ministry portfolio it was run by Masih Mohajeri, both gentlemen belonged to the left wing of the party. Although nominally Ali Khomeini was the managing director of the daily Islamic Republic, he wouldn't or couldn't change the editorial style of the paper.

We should keep in mind also, that at that time, the Iran-Iraq war was still going on and the devoted IRGC and Basij members who were engaged in a "Holy Defence" and were full of revolutionary and Islamic zeal, were greatly in favour of Mousavi's radical policies. They demanded greater restriction on people's public and private life and were in favour of state controlled economy. For example, they were pleased to see that Mousavi's government was implementing more censorship on the films, TV programmes and books and also they were mostly in favour of heavier penalties for those who breached the Islamic codes of behaviour in the society and supported the government as they promised tough reaction to the wealthy Bazaaries who were blamed for hoarding the essential goods and thus creating severe inflation in the goods market. According to Maziar Behrooz, eventually the outcome of IRP Congress elections had disastrous effects for the party's cohesion.

The IRP congress (1983), which was supposed to reduce the tensions, only added fuel to it. The outcome of the Congress and the election of the new members of the new council of leadership showed that the conservative faction had consolidated its position within the party. In fact, from this point on, the only factor that saved the reformist faction from total and overwhelming defeat was Ayatollah Khomeini's support. His support for the Mousavi Cabinet - as the most evident manifestation of the reformist faction - was the major factor in saving it when a group of conservative Majles members tried to oust the Cabinet (September 1986). Conservative control of the IRP was met by strong resistance from the other faction. The rivalry between the two was so strong that by 1986-1987, the IRP was unable to function as a political party. Although the paralyzing effect of this rivalry was one reason behind the abolition of the IRP, the fact that the

request for the abolition was put forward by Rafsanjani and Khamenei was a sign of a compromise with this reality.<sup>365</sup>

When Khamenei in his second term in office (1985) asked for Ayatollah Khomeini's permission to remove Mousavi from his office, one of the powerful IRI elites, who strongly opposed such action was the IRGC commander-in-chief General Mohsen Rezaii. General Rezaii went to Ayatollah Khomeini and told him that a change of prime minister in the middle of a war would weaken the morale of soldiers and would have harmful effects for the war efforts.<sup>366</sup> Khomeini and his son Ahmad were already partial towards the left current of the IRI.<sup>367</sup> The pleading of General Rezaii, therefore, only made him insistent on his genuine decision to support Mousavi. Khomeini decided to support Mousavi's premiership against all odds and when Ayatollah Mahdavi Kani and Hojatoleslam Nategh Nouri visited him and tried to persuade him to change his mind, he said "electing anyone but him (Mousavi) is a treason to Islam".<sup>368</sup> The newly re-elected president Khamenei reluctantly accepted the Imam's decision.

In a speech given prior to the Friday sermon in Tehran, immediately after his appointment as the prime minister, Mir Hossein emphasised that his government's economic procession is that of protecting the impoverished (Mostazafin). Moreover, he warned the private sector "be careful not to give the hoarders and profiteers the chance to sneak into their ranks, or else, God forbid, they would be seen by the masses as exploiters and will be subject to their [masses] wrath".<sup>369</sup>

This was while another IRP member, Mr Ali Akbar Velayati, who belonged to the right wing of the IRP and was President Khomeini's preferred candidate for the job of prime minister, believed that "Unlike parties in the West the IRP members are not over regimented, that is to say what is essential for them is advocating Islamic republic and the *feghahati* Islam".<sup>370</sup>

The doctrine of "feghahati Islam" of course was opposed by the left wing, who were advocators of the dynamic figh. Velayati and many of the IRI elites were members of Hojjatiya, a conservative

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<sup>365</sup> Maziar Behrooz, "Factionalism in Iran under Khomeini", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 4, (Oct., 1991), p. 601, [ <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4283464> ], 18 July 2011

<sup>366</sup> Ali Akbar Nategh Nouri, *Khaterat hojatoleslam nateghe nouri* [Nategh Nouri memoirs], Tehran, The Centre for Islamic Revolution Documents, 2006, p. 75.

<sup>367</sup> Ataollah Mohajerani, (former IRI Majles deputy and former Minister of Culture) In discussion with the author, June 2010

<sup>368</sup> Nategh Nouri, *Khaterat hojatoleslam nateghe nouri*, p. 77.

<sup>369</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Aban 09/ 31 October 1981

<sup>370</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, special issue, Bahman 28/ February 17, 1983

Shia organisation that was despised by Ayatollah Khomeini and many of the pro-Khomeini clerics and laymen hence his emphasis on the feqhahati Islam instead of dynamic figh.

The quietist conservative interpretation of Hojjatiya is akin to a pre-millenarian world-view that, while advocating the ardent and pious practice of “awaiting” the savior, discourages active revolt in order to hasten the appearance of the “Mahdi” or any attempt to build the promised Islamic utopia in the absence of the awaited one. The revolutionary activism of Khomeini, on the other hand, is reminiscent of the post-millenarian tendencies in Christianity and Judaism in that it advocates taking an active role in bringing about the just Islamic society prior to the appearance of the Mahdi in order to hasten his coming. A telling incident illustrates the aforementioned contrast: in the months following the success of the 1979 Islamic revolution, the gatherings with Hojjatiya affiliation had adopted the slogan of “O Mahdi, make your appearance” (*Mahdi biā Mahdi biā*). In response, the pro-Khomeini crowds composed a slogan of their own “O God, O God preserve Khomeini until Mahdi appears; preserve him even alongside Mahdi” (*Kodāyā, Kodāyā tā enqelāb-e Mahdi, ḥattā kenār-e Mahdi, Ko-meyni rā negahdār*).<sup>371</sup>

The disagreement over economic outlook and policy continued between the members of the two camps. However not all the conflicts were based on doctrinal differences, some of the Motalefeh pragmatists were simply trying to protect their Bazaar-based private business from the encroaching tendencies of the government of Mir-Hosseini Mousavi. They were, of course, concerned that too much power in the hand of the statist government would result in their total marginalisation.

In September 1984, President Khamenei, in a Friday sermon rejected the idea that Islam sanctions statism and stating that “...statism does not exist in Islam. That is to say preventing people participating in manufacturing, education, commerce and services and channelling everything to the state is not associated with Islam at all.”<sup>372</sup> A few months earlier, in a speech he gave to the members of the Mazandaran branch of IRP, President Khamenei announced to the party members that the revolutionary fellow-feeling should be more important than the partisan one.<sup>373</sup>

In 1981 Khamenei nominated Velayati for prime minister but the left wing of the Majles that included the left wing of the IRP did not vote for him. Khamenei was forced to accept the left wing’s preferred candidate as his prime minister. In the next eight years whenever Khamenei wanted to break free from Mir-Hosseini, the left wing of the Majles and Ayatollah Khomeini disagreed with his decision and forced him to accept Mousavi’s premiership. Eventually Khamenei realised that the left wing of the party would not leave him much room for manoeuvre. In addition, Ayatollah Khomeini’s leaning towards Mousavi’s statist and leftist policies had further

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<sup>371</sup> Mahmoud Sadri, “Hojjatiya”, Encyclopaedia Iranica, [http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hojjatiya], 08 June 2011

<sup>372</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Aban 10/ September 01, 1984

<sup>373</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Tir 12/ July 03, 1984

disheartened Khomeini from working within the IRP framework. Instead he preferred working with the right wing CCA and Motalefeh as that could serve his political agenda better than the IRP.

### **9.8.2. The Parties within the Party**

Members of IRP could be divided into two main subgroups, those whose membership was acquired individually and those who automatically became members of the IRP after their existing political party or club has decided to merge into the IRP.

After the revolution, in an effort to bring together the pro-Khomeini front in the face of the opposition groups, Ayatollah Khomeini asked all Islamic groups who were following his command to join IRP. However most of the groups which answered Khomeini's call managed to keep some of their original organisation's affiliation alive, despite the official joining of the Islamic Republic Party.

All IRP members were united around the leadership of Imam Khomeini and the doctrine of *velayat-e faghih* [Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist]. The other factor that was holding them together was the threat from their opponents. Therefore the IRP members did their utmost to oust any competition. However, when they finally succeeded in their mission and drove out all the opposition groups and personalities, such as MKO, Fadayan , Liberation Movement, Shariatmadari and his followers, Ghotbzadeh and Banisadr and his Office, when the real threat of "enemy" parties did not exist , the differences among the members came to the surface.

IRP was an amalgamate of different religio-political groups and viewpoints and unions, while Motalefeh was representing the religious Bazaaries who advocated the minimisation of state intervention in the economy. Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution MIRO were supporting a social welfare programme based on the distribution of the wealth and state controlled economy.

### 9.8.2.1. Parties that Merged or Formed an Alliance with IRP

- **Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution Organisation (MIRO)**
- **The Combatant Clergy Association] (CCA) also known by the abbreviation (JRM) for *Jame'eye Rowhaniyate Mobaraz***
- **The Islamic Coalition or *Heyate Motalefeh***
- **The Workers House *Khane Kargar***

#### 9.8.2.1.1. Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution Organisation (MIRO)

Unlike Motalefeh that merged with IRP, the MIRO kept its independence and formed an alliance or a coalition with the party instead. According to Panebianco the alliance between two ideologically similar parties will remain stable only if at least one of the following conditions is met:

(1) The two parties are only competitors in appearance: though their symbol systems (i.e. the ideological goals defining their domains) are similar, they appeal to electorates which are sociologically and politically distinct. An example of this could be that of an alliance (white collar) and a “new left” party (whose hunting ground is students and intellectuals of radical orientation).

(2) One of the partners in the alliance is too weak and thus incapable of attracting the other's hunting ground. In this case, the stronger party's identity is not threatened: its environment is relatively simple and environmental uncertainty is minimal and easily controlled. The weak party, due to its extreme vulnerability, finds itself in a very hostile environment (maximum complexity and instability). The curvilinear relationship between environmental uncertainty and organisational stability insures that its dominant coalition will tend to be cohesive and stable. Neither partner being threatened (though for opposite reasons), the alliance will remain stable.<sup>374</sup>

The MIRO's alliance with IRP satisfied the second condition since MIRO was so small in size and internally fragmented that by itself did not stand the chance of survival in the hostile and uncertain environment of the revolution-hit Iran. Therefore it entered an alliance with IRP. In addition the general image and identity of both parties was statist, leftist and pro-Mostazafin. It should not be surprising then to see that in the competitions for the Constitutional Assembly election one of the groups that publicly announced its endorsement of the Grand Coalition election list was the newly-formed armed force, IRGC.<sup>375</sup> That had organic relations with the MIRO (a number of MIRO elites such as Mohsen Rezaii and Zolghadr were among the first generation commanders of the IRGC).

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<sup>374</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, pp. 218-219.

<sup>375</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Mordad 04/ July 26, 1979

### 9.8.2.1.1.1. MIRO, a Historical Background

During their struggle against the Shah's regime some Khomeinists became aware of their lack of guerrilla fighting skills in comparison to the leftist groups such as Organisation of Iranian People's Fada'i Guerrillas (OIFPRG) and MKO. However, not all the Khomeinists believed in the workability of the armed struggle. In order to mobilise the masses we have to use whatever social network that is available; resorting to violence they say, is going to force the Islamist movement underground and out of the masses' reach. Moreover, the Iranian army at that time was one of the most privileged and well equipped armies in the whole Middle East and North Africa. Waging an open war against such an army was a suicide mission and an unfavourable strategy according to those who rejected the idea of the Islamist militia.

Yet there were a number of young enthusiastic Khomeinists who believed in the value of armed struggle and the need to draw level with the secular leftists' armed muscle. They eventually gathered in small guerrilla teams and started their own resistance by acquiring arms and combat skills from wherever they could.

After the revolution, in order to combine their efforts, seven of these insurgent groups came together and made a party called Mojahedin of Islamic Revolution Organisation (MIRO). The groups that formed MIRO in an alphabetical order were: 1. Falah, 2. Khalgh, 3. Mansooroun, 4. Movahedin, 5. Tawhidi-Badr, 6. Tawhidi-Saf, 7. Ummate Vahede.<sup>376</sup> MIRO borrowed the "Mojahedin" part of its name from MKO to show its militant aspect. Also to amplify that they were the Khomeinist "Mojahedin" as opposed to the leftist Mojahedin MKO.

Many of MIRO members became commanders in *komiteh* and IRGC. The organisation had a great role in the elimination of counter-revolutionary insurgency groups such as Forghan. Moreover they helped to neutralise the Nojheh coup d'état.<sup>377</sup>

However, despite the considerable contribution of the MIRO elites to the IRI the organisation was too small and fragmented to act independently from the IRP and in public it was regarded as IRP's satellite rather than an independent organisation. The majority of MIRO's public statements were published in conjunction with IRP's public statements, usually in the same page of the IRP organ

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<sup>376</sup> Gholamreza Khadjehsarvi, *Reghabat syasi va sobate syasi dar jomhourie eslami Iran* [Political Competition and Political Stability in the Islamic Republic of Iran], Tehran, The Center for Islamic Revolution Documents, 2003. p. 226.

<sup>377</sup> Abbas Shadlou, *Ahزاب va jenahai-e syasi-e iran-e emrouz*, [Political Factions and Parties in Today Iran], Tehran, Shadlou, 2005, pp. 408-409.



*Jomhourie eslami*. In the elections they acted as a part of a grand coalition headed by IRP, but what makes MIRO special is the influence of some of its elites on the economic policies of the government of Mir-Hossein Mousavi.

In its loyalty to Khomeini and adherence to the doctrine of Velayate Faghih, MIRO was not that different from the other pro-Khomeini organisations such as CCA or the Motalefeh. However, when the matter in question was the economy, MIRO had fundamental differences with the two other mentioned organisations.

MIRO's main disagreement with the conservative Khomeinists was over the economic policy that should be followed by a revolutionary government. The organisation was regarded by the conservatives as having Marxist-socialist tendencies that was opposed to the pro-Bazaar policies of CCA and Motalefeh. Moreover MIRO was not a cohesive body and many of its elites did not trust each other. Mohammad Salamati the general director of MIRO believes that MIRO was suffering from a discrepancy due to the rashness of its formation, (a few months after the revolution).<sup>378</sup>

One of the occasions that acted as a catalyst to disclose the domestic disagreements in MIRO was the event of the Labour Day or May Day in 1980 when MIRO issued an announcement praising the event. This did not please the conservative coalition within the IRP. The coalition feared that MIRO was distancing itself from the "true teachings of Islam", thus it accused its cadres of falling in the category of the *Elteghati*, [not ideologically pure]. In this case *Elteghati* meant influenced by Marxist-Socialism.<sup>379</sup>

Another difficult position was when MIRO decided to issue an official statement for the anniversary of Dr. Ali Shariati's death and called Ali Shariati's natural death "martyrdom". MIRO had a high regard for Dr. Shariati as a revolutionary intellectual while the conservatives saw him as a controversial and *Elteghati* figure and condemned his antipathy towards the traditional clergy.

#### **9.8.2.1.1.2. Khomeini Intervention in the Affairs of MIRO**

In an act which is the manifestation of tendency for arbitrary rule in Khomeini, Ayatollah Khomeini appointed Hojatoleslam Rasti Kashani as his representative in the organisation. This was allegedly a move by the leader to resolve the disputes inside the party. However, as a result of this

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<sup>378</sup> Khairollah Esmaili, *Hezbe jomhourie eslami*, [Islamic Republic Party], Tehran, The Center for Islamic Revolution Documents, 2007, pp. 73-74.

<sup>379</sup> Hamid Reza Zarifinia, *Kalbod shekafe jenahaie syasie iran* [Analysing Iranian Political Factions], Tehran, Azadieh Andisheh, 1999, p. 61.

appointment, not only were MIRO internal disputes not resolved but also became more visible to the public eye. The difference of opinion among party elites manifested itself into the formation of three groups or blocs.

1. The left wing, who thought Mr Rasti was merely a spokesperson for Ayatollah Khomeini with no executive power. The well-known personalities in this bloc were Mohsen Armin, Behzad Nabavi and Mohammad Salamati
2. The Moderates who saw Hojatoleslam Rasti as a mediator whose recommendations should be taken seriously. Mohsen Rezaii and Morteza Alviri belonged to this group.
3. The Right wing, who believed that Rasti should have the final say in any Party decision-making process. Famous members of this faction were Ali Asgari, Hussein Fadaie and Zolghadr.

It was clear that MIRO's problems were not going to vanish overnight. In a desperate act, Hojatoleslam Rasti tried to utilise Khomeini's backing in order to bring everyone under his command. Rasti pleaded for Imam Khomeini's intervention in order to enhance his own position inside the party's power order.

Khomeini's response came in the form of a letter in which he asked those MIRO members who were not happy with Rasti's job to resign and leave the organisation. This was yet again another example of Khomeini's arbitrary rule. Consequently many of the party's high-ranking members such as Mohammad Salamati and Behzad Nabavi resigned. The resignations resulted in the decline of MIRO's role in the Iranian political spectrum at that time. Finally in 1986 Hojatoleslam Rasti decided to bring the organisation to an end. In a letter he asked Khomeini to accept both his resignation and the dissolution of MIRO. Khomeini's answer to both requests was affirmative.

### 9.8.2.1.1.3. MIRO's Legacy

The organisation had a socialist economic policy. This was that was reflected in their constitution where under the headline "social justice" we read "One of the structures of social philosophy in Islam is justice."<sup>380</sup>

Furthermore MIRO believed that government is responsible for bringing about social and economic justice for the people. In addition it is the government's duty to avoid favouritism in its economic schemes. Ending any monopoly in the private sector was yet another government responsibility according to the party's constitution.<sup>381</sup>

The story of MIRO by no means ended in 1986. In fact from 1991 the Party started a new life with the domination of its former leftist members. However for the purpose of this paper what I would like to clarify is MIRO's influence on IRP and whether the former was responsible at least in part for the closure of the latter.

Prime Minister Mousavi belonged to the left wing of IRP. His economic policies were close to those of Behzad Nabavi and Mohammad Salamati. Behzad Nabavi, the most prominent figure of MIRO, had played a key role in the planning and implementation of food and basic commodities rationing policies during Mousavi's years as prime minister.

Both Mosavi and Nabavi believed in the merits of a statist welfare system especially during the time of the war. Behzad Nabavi was the Consultant Minister *Vazir-e Moshaver* in Mousavi's first cabinet and held the Heavy Industry portfolio in the second one. Behzad Nabavi and Hassan Abedi-Jaffari were the pioneers of state-controlled economy and rationing systems (*kopon*) during Mousavi's period in office.

In an interview with Tehran Radio conducted in February 1981, Behzad Nabavi, the minister of state for executive affairs and chief government spokesman was asked about the government's economic policies.

**What practical steps has the government taken to combat inflation taken to combat inflation?** What you mean in fact is the high cost of living. Incidentally, we have been following this very issue closely in the economic mobilization headquarters for a week now. We have discovered its roots and causes and we are trying to eliminate them. The government has decided

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<sup>380</sup> Shadlou, *Ahزاب va jenaha-e syasie irane emrouz*, p. 411.

<sup>381</sup> Shadlou, *Ahزاب va jenahaie syasie irane emrouz*, p. 410.

to freeze the prices of goods of which there are market shortages. We have reviewed 20 twenty such commodities and in 2 two weeks we will reveal the outcome of this review. In practice, the prices of these essential public commodities will be controlled by the government, The government, at the very least, will not allow any increase in the prices of these commodities and they will be provided to the public at a set price; in some cases they may be rationed. This will contribute to reducing the prices of other commodities. Another issue concerns profiteering, the government is determined to combat it, but it cannot achieve its objective unless the public cooperates. The public should avoid purchasing any goods they consider to be exorbitant and should report those who ask exorbitant prices.<sup>382</sup>

#### **9.8.2.1.2. Islamic Coalition Association: Heyate Motalefeh Eslami**

In 1961 the Shah and his Prime Minister Alam announced their intention for major reforms in the country according to a plan later known as the White Revolution or the Shah-People Revolution. The Grand Ayatollah Broujerdi opposed the proposal despite his general attitude of keeping away from politics but his opposition was not very vocal. When Ayatollah Broujerdi died a year later the regime became confident that no single cleric would be strong enough to halt their mission.

Despite the suppression of dissident groups after his return to power, the Shah had not formed a social base for his regime, and therefore in 1961 he appointed a liberal prime minister to appease internal and external political criticism. Key among the changes was land reform. The Land Reform Law of 1962 was envisioned as a method to prepare the agricultural sector for modern techniques of production, and simultaneously to undermine the political power of landowning families and attempt directly to mobilize the peasantry via state institutions. This limited program became the first plank of the Shah's White Revolution, which was to be approved in a plebiscite in January 1963. All the major political factions opposed the plebiscite, including the second National Front, the Liberation Movement of Iran (LMI), and the many members of the clergy. The Tehran Bazaar staged a strike for three days prior to the plebiscite. The state responded by arresting the leadership of the National Front and the LMI, including a number of activists from the Tehran Bazaar. With the liberal nationalist organisations stifled, Bazaaries turned to a new protest network, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's seminary circle in Qom.<sup>383</sup>

In an effort to show the popularity of the regime the government announced a referendum on a six-point reform plan. (1) land reform; (2) sale of government-owned factories to finance land reform; (3) a new election law including women suffrages; (4) the nationalisation of forests; (5) a national literacy corps; (6) a plan to give workers a share of industrial profits.<sup>384</sup>

The Bazaar started sending letters to Ayatollah Khomeini asking for guidance and action. Encouraged by the support of many Bazaaries and heyat attendees Khomeini gave an infuriated sermon in which he fiercely criticised the Shah's new referendum bill, He also issued a statement

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<sup>382</sup> *Government's Nabavi on Inflation and Labor Unrest*, MERIP Reports, No. 98, Iran Two Years After (Jul. - Aug., 1981), pp. 25-26, [<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3011357>], 14 July 2011

<sup>383</sup> Arang Keshavarzian, *Bazaar and State in Iran*, p. 238.

<sup>384</sup> Keddie and Richard, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, p. 144.

known as *Estensar* [call for assistance]. A group of religious Bazaaries who attended the same heyats in Tehran decided to visit Khomeini and show their support for his brave stance. This group called themselves the Chivalrous Muslims Front *Jebhei-e Mosalmanan-e Azadeh*.

A year after the formation of Motalefeh, Khomeini noticed that there were a considerable number of devotees around him yet the problem was they were scattered. There were other Bazaaries who were pro-Khomeini but did not have any organic relation with Motalefeh therefore Ayatollah Khomeini took the initiative and asked them to unite around the axis in their heyats. Three main groupings joined together and formed a new organisation. They called themselves the Islamic Coalition Association or Heyathai-e Motalefeh Eslami as a show of obedience to Khomeini's request. Immediately the Motalefeh started its activities spreading Khomeini's words against the regime. They were copying Ayatollah Rohollah's letters and sermons and distributing them around in the mosques and Bazaars round Iran, holding demonstration when called by Khomeini and announcing Bazaar strikes in Tehran to show their support to Khomeini's agenda. Khomeini's infuriated sermons were usually followed by a mass protest and strike in Tehran and Qom. Eventually after a number of successive demonstrations and protests, the unrest reached its climax in the 15<sup>th</sup> of Khordad [5 June 1963] when Khomeini was arrested and put into the Qassr prison. The Shah regime resorted to violence in the face of thousands of angry demonstrators who protested against the arrest of Ayatollah Khomeini and tens of people were killed.

The June protests were suppressed but the regime released Khomeini after a while hoping that the dissident cleric would remain silent, after his followers were crushed. However the regime soon realised that this was wishful thinking, since it was only a matter of time before Khomeini restarted his campaign against the Shah, this time in opposition to passing a law that gave a statute similar to diplomatic immunity to every American in Iran. Khomeini was arrested again and this time he was sent to exile in Turkey.

When their Spiritual Leader Ayatollah Khomeini was sent to exile, Motalefeh turned to terrorist methods to show anger and revenge. However after the assassination of prime minister Hassan Ali Mansour, most of the key members of the party were arrested, put on trial and given long prison sentences.

After that the Motalefeh activities decreased and they could not operate in public any more. Two decades later, the Shah, in an effort to appease the young Democrat American President,

announced his “Open Door Policy” according to which many political prisoners were pardoned and restrictions on freedom of expression were reduced.

Like many other opposition parties Motalefeh came out of its political marginalisation and intensified its activities to catch up for the lost time. After the victory of the revolution Motalefeh put all its resources in Khomeini’s service. Consequently the Ayatollah asked them to converge into IRP, in order to coordinate their steps with the other pro-Khomeini parties in a larger, more powerful organisation.

#### **9.8.2.1.2.1. Party loyalty, to IRP or Motalefeh?**

Panebianco explains that parties are conservative in nature and do not change for the sake of change. He ascribes a few factors that account for change in the party such as leadership change, changes in the dominant factions within the parties and external stimuli such as electoral shocks. Party merger, thus like any other change in the party, must happen for one of the above-mentioned reasons. However there is little theoretical work on the specific subject of party merger. A theoretical investigation is conducted by Bélanger and Godbout through their case study of the recent merger between the Progressive-Conservative Party and the Reform/Canadian Alliance parties. The conclusion they reached was as follows,

The explanatory framework outlined in this article squarely rests on a rational-choice approach, just like party coalition theory does. There may be other, less rational factors that might help in accounting for whether parties decide to merge or not. We can think of different leadership styles, of an overestimation of a party’s chances of survival (perhaps simply due to wishful thinking on the part of party members), or of growing hopelessness in the face of continued adversity. While affect and emotions are factors that stand somewhat outside the basic theoretical approach adopted herein, they too may advance our understanding of party mergers. That said, we do think that parties may want to merge to gain access to new resources (money, votes and members) and that they will not be interested to merge if they are over-represented in parliament, or if a merger will not significantly alter their party’s image or brand.<sup>385</sup>

Following the above theory line we can suggest that Motalefeh’s merger with the IRP was the rational choice of Motalefeh elites. It was a decision to maximise their representation in the Majles and to increase their presence in the state apparatus. However, it is not clear that entering into this

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<sup>385</sup> Éric Bélanger and Jean-François Godbout “Why Do Parties Merge? The Case of the Conservative Party of Canada”, *Parliam Aff*, (2010) 63(1), p. 41-65, [<http://pa.oxfordjournals.org/content/63/1/41.full>], 6 July 2011

merger was a rational choice on the part of IRP. It is very possible that the elites of the left wing of IRP would not have accepted the merger if it wasn't for Khomeini's order.

After joining IRP the Motalefeh members developed a conflict between loyalty to their former organisation and their loyalty to their new home, the IRP. The Motalefeh elites kept most of their former structure as a party alive; they had their own meeting on Tuesdays which made them look arranged as a block whenever taking part in the IRP meetings. In addition they never abandoned their organic relationship with Bazaar. The Motalefeh was a party within the party and this double identity and mixed loyalty did not appease those IRP elites who were aspiring for IRP's maturity as a party, like Rafsanjani who believed in the precedence of IRP party loyalty over other organisational affiliations.<sup>386</sup>

During the premiership of Mousavi, Motalefeh's criticism of the way Mir-Hossein Mousavi handled the economy made the conflict between the two affiliations even more obvious. Mousavi, who had to deal with war with Iraq and the inflation and shortage of goods inside the country at the same time, could not tolerate the Motalefeh organ Resalat's harsh criticisms of his government. Motalefeh's attitude frustrated Ayatollah Khomeini who thought that criticising the government at the time of war without taking into consideration its complicated situation was not acceptable.<sup>387</sup> Khomeini repeatedly criticised Resalat's editorials for its disrupting of the "unity of word". For a while, Khomeini even banned the distribution of the paper in the front lines.<sup>388</sup> Even after the closing down of IRP, in a harsh criticism focused on the high-ranking Motalefeh members, Ayatollah Khomeini told the Prime Minister: "Mr Mousavi, those who are against you couldn't run a bakery." This was a warning sign to the Motalefeh director general, Habibollah Asgaroladi the minister of commerce in Mousavi's first cabinet, during whose time in office the country experienced shortage of bread.<sup>389</sup>

The fact that Motalefeh was the only party that had an organic relationship with its social base, which was the Bazaar, had obliged its leaders to protect the interests of the Bazaaries. This is while the Prime Minister, who was also the leader of the left wing of the IRP, had other plans in mind.

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<sup>386</sup> Kheirollah Esmaili, *Hezbe jomhourie eslami* [Islamic Republic Party], Tehran, The Centre for Islamic Revolution Documents, 2007, pp. 82-83.

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<sup>388</sup> *Ebtekar*, Shahrivar 03, [<http://www.ebtekarnews.com/ebtekar/News.aspx?NID=19030>], 25 August 2007

<sup>389</sup> *Imam ebarate marofe kasani ke nemitavanand ik nunvaii* [Imam's Famous Comment, "Those who can not run a Bakery" ], [<http://www.khabaronline.ir/news-122642.aspx>], 28 January 2011

This severe conflict of interests and visions among the IRP elites was among the reasons that persuaded Khomeini, Khamenie and Hashemi to end IRP's life.



### 9.8.2.1.3. The Combatant Clergy Association (CCA)

From 1961 until 1978 the pro-Khomeini clerics had been trying to establish an organisation that would represent the Khomeinist clerics. In one of these attempts they even managed to establish a modest group consisting of eleven clerics. The most prominent members of that group were Hojatolislam Khamenei, Montazeri, Rafsanjani, Azari and Meshkini. They decided to work under the cover of a charity for the progress of Hauwza and managed to publish two periodicals namely *Bethat* [Resurrection] which had politically contentious and *Entegham* [Revenge] with theoretical articles. However “the eleven-member group” was cut down after SAVAK had found a copy of its constitution in a library belonging to one of the group members.<sup>390</sup>

For over a decade the suppression of SAVAK and other regime security forces had stood between the pro-Khomeini clerics and their goal of having an organisation of their own. However with the anti-regime struggle gaining momentum in 1977-78, the political scene was getting ready for the appearance of a new clergy organisation. Moreover, in 1978 President Jimmy Carter’s human rights agenda persuaded the Shah to announce his “Open Political Space”, an opening which, in turn, created a window of opportunity for the pro-Khomeini clerics to fulfil their aspirations and set the cornerstone for a political organisation for the clergy and by the clergy. Finally, The Combatant Clergy Association (CCA) was formed in 1978.

All IRP clerics were members of CCA but not all CCA founders were members of IRP. CCA, although a regular partner in the Grand Coalition, was never registered as a political organisation or society in the interior ministry. CCA’s first general director, Ayatollah Mahalati, was adamant that Jame’eh was not a party.<sup>391</sup> This tradition continued throughout these years and the CCA current leader Ayatollah Mohammad Reza Mahdavi-Kani, who was always among the most prominent figures in the revolution and CCA, never believed in the merits of the party system for the Islamic republic.<sup>392</sup> Despite Ayatollah Beheshti’s insistent invitation for Mahdavi-Kani to join the party’s founders’ club, Mahdavi-Kani was unwilling to take any position in the IRP board of directors.<sup>393</sup> He even refused Beheshti’s offer to take part in the weekly gathering of the IRP council of *foghah*. In his memoirs, Mahdavi-Kani explains why he rejected Beheshti’s offers.

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<sup>390</sup> Hashemi Rafsanjani, *Dorane mobarezeh*, p. 195.

<sup>391</sup> *Kayhan*, Khordad 18/ June 08, 1979

<sup>392</sup> Gholam Reza Khajeh-Sarvi, *Khaterate Ayatollah Mahdavi Kani* [memoirs of Ayatollah Mahdavi-Kani], Tehran, The Centre for Islamic Revolution Documents, 2007, p. 309.

<sup>393</sup> Khajeh-Sarvi, *Khaterate Ayatollah Mahdavi Kani*, pp. 187-188.

I genuinely and principally am not in agreement with partisanship and anything that is related to party... With regard to the clergy, I believe in communication and interaction but do not think that party is well-suited with the clergy status. The party structure by its definition is exclusionary; it teams up with some people while rejecting others, this isn't in line with the clergy structure. A cleric is [like] a father, a compassionate advisor to everyone. Parties are thirsty for power, the true clergy is keen to serve the people and has always been where commoners are, guiding them and advising them while avoiding factionalism.<sup>394</sup>

Despite Mahdavi-Kani's above-mentioned suggestions, the CCA was a political organisation that operated in the electoral arena, and which competed for votes. Thus, according to Panebianco's minimalist definition of party,<sup>395</sup> the CCA could be classed as a political party. Faced with the question that CCA acts as a party and looks like one, Ayatollah Mahdavi-Kani explained his understanding of the role CCA should play in the Iranian society and polity.

A question might arise in your mind: if we aren't a party why then do we enter elections and propose candidates? In response I must say that if an assemblage performs one of party functions it does not make it a party.

A party must fulfil all party functions. It is usual that a given assemblage might produce one of the party effects and we do not deny that we [CCA] have made some of these effects. Everywhere in the world there exist influential groups who take part in politics. It is also possible that an influential personality whom people trust would advise the public to vote for someone. This wouldn't make it a party. If by party we mean having an influence, yes the influence is there, but if by party we mean an entity that has all the characteristics and functions of a party, then no this isn't it... We have always enjoyed a good appeal among the people, and at times we advised them to go and act [vote]. We use our authority but our objective is not to control the candidates. We do not tell the [majles] deputies what to do, we do not instruct them or force them to do what we say. This has never been our intention, even when we had the majority in the majles; It was very common that the same people [candidates] whom we backed to get into majles, once there disagreed with us on economic and political policies, yet a common denomination is always bringing us together.<sup>396</sup>

Ayatollah Mahdavi-Kani was not an IRP member neither did he believe in the merits of the party system, however, he was a strong believer in the clergy itself as a benevolent religious entity.

However the fact of the matter was that CCA had mainly acted as a caucus party; it introduced election lists and endorsed candidates in various election campaigns, it opposed or proposed different governmental policies and most of its elite had high-ranking positions in IRI and IRP. It is important to note that one reason why the IRP conservatives had agreed with the party's closure was that they had an auxiliary organisation waiting for them (CCA).

However, we must add that CCA had never gone beyond a fragmented caucus or elite party. There are many instances in the organisation's history such as the fifth Majles election (1996), the 1997 presidential election and the 2009 presidential election that the elites of CCA could not reach consensus on who to endorse for Majles or president. In 1995 Mahdavi-Kani and Azari Ghomi

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<sup>394</sup> Khajeh-Sarvi, *Khaterate Ayatollah Mahdavi Kani*, p. 188.

<sup>395</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 6.

<sup>396</sup> Khajeh-Sarvi, *Khaterate Ayatollah Mahdavi Kani*, pp. 308-309.

resigned from their posts in CCA over in-house disputes with Nategh Nouri and Motalefeh.<sup>397</sup> According to Nategh-Noori, the 1995 disagreement between him and Mahdavi-Kani occurred because of the former's persistence on developing the organisational capacities of CCA while Mahdavi-Kani insisted that CCA was a clergy organisation and not a party. Another point of disagreement, according to Nategh Nouri, was the financial problems of the organisation and Mahdavi-Kani's reluctance to deal with them resourcefully.<sup>398</sup>

Currently the CCA is suffering from unresolved contention between its elites. A number of the CCA founders such as Nategh-Nouri, Hashemi Rafsanjani and Hassan Rohani have not attended the customary meetings of the organisation in long time.<sup>399</sup> Ayatollah Mahdavi-Kani, although recently elected chairman of the Assembly of Experts, is of old age and ill health. The non-attendance of the prominent elites and the illness and the periodic absence of its leader have created an opportunity for the lower-rank members of CCA to exercise some authority in the absence of its strong men. These second-rate elites who entered the organisation later than its founders and with Ali Khamenei's backing, do not enjoy the same acceptance and magnetism that the old guard of CCA had, and owe their status largely to their submission to the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. Seied Reza Taghavi, Alam ol Hoda, Abdous and Said Mohsen Hezavehi all fall into this latter category.<sup>400</sup>

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<sup>397</sup> Moslim, *Factional Politics in Post Khomeini Iran*, pp. 234-250.

<sup>398</sup> Nategh Nouri, *Khaterat Hojatoleslam nateghe nouri*, pp. 98-105.

<sup>399</sup> Masoud Rafi'I Taleghani, *Jame'ie rohanyat ekhtelaaf ya ensheaab* [CCA divergence or separation], [<http://new.parlemannews.net/index.aspx?n=8377>], 23 July 2011

<sup>400</sup> For CCA members names see Ali Akbar Nategh Nouri, *Khaterat Hojatoleslam nateghe nouri*, p. 101.

## 10. Chapter Ten: Mosharekat as an Incomplete Experience of a Modern Party

Mosharekat is a party of the Thermidor period which is moderate in politics in comparison to IRP that was a party built at the midst of the 1979 revolution. Adaptation more than domination is observable in the party's strategies vis-à-vis its external environment. Having said that it must be remembered that there is no party that uses only one of these two strategies.<sup>401</sup> Before proceeding to the strategies that the party adopted for survival and domination let us first have a look at the circumstances that facilitated the creation of Mosharekat .

The presidential election of 1997 in Iran was won by a surprise candidate. Two weeks before the election few would have predicted that the Sayyed Mohammad Khatami, the head of Iran's national library, would win the race against all odds. This was especially so, when keeping in mind that the establishment's distinct runner was the fifth Majles speaker, leader of the conservative camp, *de facto* leader of CCA and the former Interior Minister, Hojatoleslam Ali Akbar Nategh Nouri, who reportedly enjoyed the endorsement of the IRI leader Ali Khamenei.<sup>402</sup> Moreover Khatami was not the loyal opposition's original candidate; the IRI left-current resorted to Khatami after all efforts to convince Mir-Hossein Mousavi were met with failure. Khatami was a last-minute choice, He was approached by the leftists only to demonstrate that they were a vibrant opposition capable of partially challenging the conservatives who dominated the fifth Majles. However, neither the leftists nor the conservatives would have imagined in their wildest dreams that the former Minister of Culture Sayyed Mohammad Khatami would become the Islamic Republic's seventh president.

By 1997 the IRI left-current had gone through ideological revision and many of the political current's once-radical elites had abandoned or at least softened the edges to their radical positions regarding support for state-controlled economy and the anti-Americanism dogma. This is why at the critical juncture of 1997, the left was ideologically ready to forge an alliance with the modern conservatives i.e. Kargozaran and run a joint campaign for presidential hopeful Sayyed Mohammad Khatami. The Kargozaran on the other hand, entered the alliance for three main reasons:

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<sup>401</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>402</sup> Abrar, *Ordibehesht* 31/May 21, 1997

1. The Kargozaran could not reach a similar deal with the traditional conservatives, mainly because the conservatives were confident of winning with or without help from the “Modern Right” (Kargozaran’s title in the Iranian press).
2. Kargozaran MPs in the fifth Majles had failed to pave the way for another term of Hashemi’s presidency. It looked that the so-called Modern Right or Kargozaran had entered the alliance with the Left including CCL, MIRO and Students of the Office of Unity, to secure their jobs in post-Hashemi government.
3. The technocrat elites of Kargozaran wanted to see a continuation of Hashemi Rafsanjani’s economic adjustment known as *Ta’dil eghtesadi*.

However, before nominating Khatami for the president the left-current’s elites including Mousavi-Khoiniha, Mehdi Karrobi and Khatami himself made a lot of effort to convince Mir-Hossein Mousavi to nominate himself for president but Mousavi’s reluctance and the conservative-dominated Guardian Council’s indication that it would not let Mousavi pass through their filtering system, put the left-current in an embarrassing situation. The final blow was delivered by Mousavi himself when he announced in October 1996 that he was not going to run for president. The announcement came as a major shock for the left-current’s elites who put all their hopes on Mousavi and forced them to consider a contingency plan that came in the form of nominating Mohammad Khatami, a candidate whose victory in the election no one would have predicted at the time. In an interview with Professor Hossein Salimi, Dr. Mohammad Reza Khatami (Sayyed Mohammad Khatami’s brother and Mosharekat party’s former leader) testifies that many who endorsed Khatami in the 1997 election did not expect him to win.

In the election day of Khordad the second [23 June] we became sure that Khatami wins but before it we were sure he won’t. Until end of March/beginning of April we were confident that the election is going to have a second run, in the last one or two weeks before the election we became certain that Khatami will gain the majority of votes cast but did not know whether his name will be announced [as the elected president]. We had two major plans: the first one was Khatami expresses his gratitude to the people and congratulates his victorious contender, the other, in the case of Khatami victory, to go to the Imam’s [Khomeini] shrine and... We were so uncertain about the winning that I went to a conference in Australia to present a paper the same day that election was taking place. It was Friday eight in the morning when I cast my vote in the airport and flew to Australia. I followed the news there and could not believe that Khatami has won. Prior to the election day we did not have any conversation on the topic of cabinet selection and policy implementation.<sup>403</sup>

The sociological explanation for the 1997 high turn-out and strong vote for Khatami is best explained by Hossein Bashiriyeh, a prominent Iranian professor, whose book and ideas had

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<sup>403</sup> Hossein Salimi, *Kalbodshekafie zehniyate eslahgarayan* [The Anatomy of the Reformists’ Mindset], Tehran, Game-no, 2005, p. 47.

influenced the reformist elites who later formed the Mosharekat party. He explains how IRI's first two decades' policies have alienated large sectors of its social base among the traditionalists and the poor, leaving the establishment's candidate venerable against the sudden activeness of the long time marginalised modern classes.

The main support for the political mobilisation after the revolution and during the war was coming from poor villagers, city's marginalised, inferior migrants, inferior classes, and the merchants of Bazaar. The system proceeded via the support of these classes and strata. In contrast, a political alienation has emerged vis-à-vis the modern middle classes, the intelligentsia and the modern upper bourgeoisie. Yet the process of self-imposed modernisation by the regime in addition to the international obligations of the development have contributed effectively toward the weakening of the foundations of the tradition. With the inclination towards the ascendancy of capital, the poor and the inferior class that constituted the previous support base of the regime have scattered. The inflationary policies of the recent administrations [during Hashemi] are to blame for the political passiveness of the mentioned strata... In comparison, for the more modern classes who used to be in a status of pretend inactiveness while waiting for a right moment to express their demands, the election has provided the opportunity they have been waiting for. Therefore this election is a turning point in contrast to all elections in the past and the coming future.<sup>404</sup>

Mohammad Reza Tajik, on the other hand, gives a more diverse cleavage map of the Iranian society and includes cultural and epistemological dimensions in his analysis of the Iranian people/society ahead of Khatami's surprise before giving major credit to Khatami's "consensus-making discourse".

In a general observation we might enlist the cleavages of societal, political, economic, and epistemological aspects in the frameworks below:

- Cleavage between tradition and modern
- Cleavage between insider and outsider
- Cleavage between religion and religions
- Cleavage between the regime and the people
- Cleavage between rich and poor
- Cleavage between religion and the public sphere
- Cleavage between the dominant discourse and the requirement of the time epoch
- Cleavage between change and reservations
- Cleavage between subculture and dominant culture
- Cleavage between the action and the behaviour in particular among elites
- Cleavage between societal pluralism and unifying discourse
- Cleavage between democracy and authoritarianism
- Cleavage between mass society and civil society
- Cleavage between revolution discourse and the discourse of reform
- Cleavage between the modern state and the traditional state
- Cleavage between the government elites (dual government)

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<sup>404</sup> Hossein Bashiriyeh, "Bohrane Mosharekat e syasi va entekhabate khordade 76" [The Crisis of Political Participation and the June 1997 Election], In Abdolali Rezaei and Abbas Abdi (eds), *Entekhabe noe, tahlilhaie jame'e shenakhti az vagheie dovome khordad* [The Innovative Election: Sociological Analysis of the Event of Khordad the Second], Tehran, Tarhe-No, 1998, pp. 73-74.

- Cleavage between the input and the output of the political activities; more costs less results
- Cleavage between the words and the acts of elites
- Cleavage between the younger generation demands and the demands of the older generation
- Cleavage between social system and political system

The above-mentioned cleavages have portrayed a paradoxical picture of the Iranian regime and society, as a result even the merits and values and the function of the regime will be seen distortedly.<sup>405</sup>

Tajik goes on to suggest that Khatami and his “discourse” were over and beyond the mentioned cleavages. He provides an illustration of Khatami’s “discourse” that not only criss-crosses all cleavages in the Iranian society but also pulls contradictory notions together; notions such as “tradition” and “modern”, the “civil society” and the “ruler’s society” and “young” and “old”.<sup>406</sup>

According to Lipset “Continued class cleavage does not imply any destructive consequences for the system.... a stable democracy requires consensus on the nature of the political struggle, and this includes the assumption that different groups are best served by different parties.”<sup>407</sup> However it must be noted that many of the social cleavages in 1997 Iran were not recognised by the regime and in the eyes of the IRI political system many cleavages were illegitimate. In addition most of these cleavages did not have a voice or representative organisation, interest group, pressure group or a party who could negotiate on their behalf and reach a consensus with other cleavages. In fact Khatami was a pseudo-consensus maker between various cleavages, many of which were unlawful in the eyes of the regime. In other words Khatami’s discourse was a populist one that appealed to the masses at large.

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<sup>405</sup> Mohammad Reza Tajik, “Epozisione Irani va esterategy ubour az shekaf [Iranian opposition and the strategy of going beyond the cleavage]”, In Mohammad Reza Tajik (ed), *Hamayeshe reghabathaie syasi va amniate melli* [Political contestation and national security symposium], Tehran, Farhage Goftehan, 2003, pp. 130-131.

<sup>406</sup> Mohammad Reza Tajik, “Epozisione Irani va esterategy ubour az shekaf”, p. 135.

<sup>407</sup> Lipset, *Political Man*, p. 444.

## 10.1. Mosharekat the Genesis

Mosharekat was created approximately six months after the astonishing victory of Mohammad Khatami in the 1997 presidential election. The party at the time was regarded as a top-down organisation formed by Khatami's men (his brother was the head of the party) to help Khatami pass his government's bills in the sixth parliament. President Khatami was a veteran member of *Majma' Rohaniyune Mobarez* (the Combatant Clerics League) but his old organisation was a clergy association annexed from CCA incapable of encompassing the aspirations and the participation of the millions of voters, especially women and youth, who hung their hopes on Mohammad Khatami's government's performance. It was clear, with the after-Khomeini changes in the Iranian society taken into consideration, that Khatami and his friends needed a more modern, all-encompassing organisation than CCL.

At first it was thought that Kargozaran might take on this role since the party was consisted of open-minded technocrats and pragmatic politicians with a good deal of governing experience. However, soon this choice was deemed unsuitable because of Kargozaran's well-known allegiances to Hashemi Rafsanjani, to whom they looked as the grand advisor in any unresolved intra-party dispute. For instance, when the possibility of endorsing Khatami was first raised in the Kargozaran's central council, a key party figure (Mohammad Hashemi) disagreed. Since the protocol of the party demanded a unanimous vote for crucial decisions, the party members decided to send Mohammad Hashemi and Ataollah Mohajerani to seek advice from the then president Hashemi who, in turn, asked both gentlemen to submit to the majority vote i.e. to endorse Khatami.<sup>408</sup> In addition, the focal point in Khatami's election campaign was putting emphasis on *Jame'ie Madani* (literary meaning civil society) and full commitment to the rule of law and the constitution (constitutionalism). For Khatami's agenda the political development of the country had precedence over its economic growth, while the Kargozaran's priority during Rafsanjani had been the Hashemi-branded economic reform known as *ta'dil* [adjustment]. Therefore a number of people who were regulars in the *Kian* and *Aeen* circles, in addition to a number of the prominent figures of the second MIRO and a few members of Kargozaran, came together and formed a "reformist" party named *Hezbe jebhe Mosharekat e irane eslami* [The Islamic Iran Participation Front Party]. The fact that the interior ministry's No 10 commission of parties (in charge of issuing party licences) was in the hand of Khatami's interior minister Mousavi Lari had facilitated the legal registration of the new establishment. The Mosharekat Party was initially established to support

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<sup>408</sup> Ataollah Mohajerani, (former IRI Majles deputy and former Minister of Culture). In discussion with the author, December 2010



Khatami's reformist agenda in the Sixth Majles but it is interesting to note that many of its founding fathers had SFLI background..

Many of those who later were known as the reformist elites were in fact members of Students Following the Line of Imam (SFLI) who occupied the American embassy. Ibrahim Asgharzadeh (after Khordad the 2<sup>nd</sup>, became member of the city council and head of Hambastegi party), Mohsen Mirdamadi (the chairman of National Security Commission in the Majles and the director of a banned newspaper), Habibollah Bitaraf (Minister of Energy after Khordad the 2<sup>nd</sup>), Abbas Abdi (Prominent Khordad the 2<sup>nd</sup> intellectual), Mohammad Naimi Pour (an MP and the head of a banned daily paper), Shamsoldean Vahabi (an MP after Khordad the 2<sup>nd</sup>), Mohsen Aminzadeh (a key figure in Khatami's presidential campaign and his Deputy Foreign Minister), Mohammad Reza Khatami (Deputy Speaker of Majles and Head of Mosharekat party after Khordad the 2<sup>nd</sup>) were among the most significant figures who invaded the American embassy.<sup>409</sup>

However, by the time of its formation, most of the Mosharekat party elites had abandoned their former revolutionary fanaticism. For example, in a bridge-building effort organised by Khatami's Centre for World Dialogue, one of the Mosharekat elites and a former hostage taker, Mr Abbas Abdi, shook hands and exchanged words with Mr. Barry Rosen who was the press attaché in the US embassy in Tehran at the time when the hostage-taking took place. Barry Rosen told the press that he decided to see Mr Abdi "because I sensed the time had come to put "closed" on 444 days that brought me great pain - partly because I want to enjoy the anticipation that a new page in Iranian-American history may soon be turned"<sup>410</sup>

This ideological revision among the left-current goes back to the time of the fourth Majles election when many leftist hopefuls were barred from the election either by legal methods (the Guardian Council rejection of the nominee's competence) or illegal methods (systematic spreading of rumours and false allegations about the candidates' moral and financial status). As a result the MIRO and SFLI members who were part of the left-current were pushed to the outer edge of the IRI political structure, a position that forced them to redefine their ideology.

Crucial in the genesis of the legitimacy crisis was the post-Khomeini exclusion of the left from political life during the first Rafsanjani presidency. Leftists were first expelled from the judiciary, leaving it in the hands of conservative clerics, and were then squeezed out of other branches of the state. Later on, a climate was created in which a major portion of the left did not participate in the elections for the Assembly of Experts (which appoints the Supreme Leader and monitors his performance). Ultimately, leftist deputies who formed the majority in the third parliament (1988–92) were disqualified from standing for the fourth parliament. The conservatives were thus able to

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<sup>409</sup> Salimi, *Kalbodshekafie zehniyate eslahgarayan*, p. 11.

<sup>410</sup> "Tehran Embassy Reunion Pushes Peace", [[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/142917.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/142917.stm)], 18 April 2011

seize the legislature and bring it within their authoritative domain. For the first time, a major sector of the political class was excluded from government and participation in the affairs of the state.<sup>411</sup>

However there were a few establishments where the left-current could still claim sanctuary until the wind changed. The most important of these sanctuary retreats were:

1. The Presidential Centre for Strategic Research
2. Periodicals such as the daily *Salaam* and the monthly *Kian*.

In Hashemi Rafsanjani's era The Presidential Centre for Strategic Research was one of the important sanctuaries in which those later known as reformists (including the founders of *Mosharekat*) had a chance to flourish intellectually and endure financially. This centre was first established by Rafsanjani in 1992 to facilitate political reforms in accordance with his economic adjustment programme. The centre was run by board of directors and its inaugural manager was Hojatoleslam Mohammad Mousavi Khoeiniha. The most influential personalities of the centre, who were actively pursuing the project of political reform were Sa'id Hajjarian, Alireza Alavi-Tabar, Abbas Abdi and Majid Mohammadi<sup>412</sup>

*Salaam*, *Kian* and *Later Aeen* periodicals have also provided spheres where, according to Abbas Abdi, the reformist discourse was enriched. In 1992 Khatami resigned as culture minister. Later he established a circle to enrich and lead the emerging cultural–ideological movement before turning his energies to the creation of a political party<sup>413</sup>

For these conquered but not defeated leftist elites, the above-mentioned venues acted as an intellectual academy for interaction and contemplation. This unwanted banishment provided them with an opportunity of self-criticism and self-reflection. In addition, most of these people decided to use the opportunity to continue their studies in Human Sciences. During these years of academic education and intellectual deliberation the previously-labelled radicals in the Iranian political spectrum started modifying their views and stances. Little by little they went from zealous defenders of state socialism to advocates of democracy and personal liberties. It must be noted that the teachings and the works of scholars such as Dr. Abdulkarim Soroush, Dr. Javad Tabatabaie and

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<sup>411</sup> Abbas Abdi, "The Reform Movement: Background and Vulnerability", [http://www.worlddialogue.org/content.php?id=144], 15 September 2011

<sup>412</sup> Salman Alavi-Nik, *Asib shenasie hezbe Mosharekat e irane eslami* [the Pathology of the Islamic Iran Participation Front Party], Tehran, The Centre for Islamic Revolution Documents, 2009, p. 171.

<sup>413</sup> Abdi, Abdi, "The Reform Movement: Background and Vulnerability", [http://www.worlddialogue.org/content.php?id=144], 15 September 2011

Dr Hosein Bashryeh were instrumental in this ideological revision of the left-current's young elites. In his works Dr. Soroush used Islamic and classic literature to domesticate the modern concepts of democracy, human rights and toleration. This was to suggest that Iranians and Muslims need not look to the West to find rationalisation for noble maxims. Sufficient justifications could be found at home, if contemporary interpretations of the Islamic texts and new readings of the classic Iranian literature that is the product of the Islamic/Iranian historical reasoning were sought after.<sup>414</sup> Bashiriyeh was a political sociologist whose teaching and works revealed the impediments to the transition to democracy in Iran from the point of view of the political sociology. Javad Tabatabaie contributed significantly to the understanding of Western political philosophy in comparison to the history of political thought in Iran.

In a press conference in December 1998, the Mosharekat representatives, Morteza Hajji, Ali Shakori-Raad and Mohammad Reza Khatami while denying allegations of Mosharekat being a state-run party, explained the party's aims as: increasing people's participation to rise above the country's chronic economic and social irregularities and supporting Khatami yet at the same time scrutinising his government's performance. They also announce that the core of Mosharekat's economic programme was Khatami's economic plan.<sup>415</sup>

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<sup>414</sup> For further reading see Abdolkarim Soroush, *Ghabz va baste teorike shariat* [The Shrinkage and Extension of Theory in Religion], Tehran, Serat, 1990 also see by Abdolkarim Soroush, *Farbehtar az ideolozhy* [Sturdier than Ideology], Tehran, Serat, 1993 and read Abdolkarim Soroush, *Baste tajrobeh nabavi* [Spreading the Prophetic Experience], Tehran, Serat, 1999.

<sup>415</sup> *Khordaad*, Dey 09/December 30, 1998

## 10.2. President Khatami: I am Not the Leader of the Reformists

Despite his supporters' demands that he assumes the position of leadership, Khatami has repeatedly rejected this offer and asserted that "I am not the leader of reformism and do not believe in such title."<sup>416</sup> It is a historical fact that during his 1997 presidential campaign Khatami never used the words *Eslahat* [reforms] and/or *eslahtalabi* [reformism] as part of his campaign manifesto. These crucial terms, or rather concepts, first appeared in articles in the innovative reformist newspapers such as *Jame'eh* some six months after Khomeini the Second.<sup>417</sup>

Khatami's 1997 campaign had five major slogans,

1. Promoting respect for law
2. Respecting and fully implementing the IRI constitution
3. Promoting *Jame'ie madani* (literally meaning civil society)
4. Promoting equal opportunity for women
5. Promising to continue the economic development of the Rafsanjani era with more attention to the poor and social justice

Khatami had his own reading of the term *Jame'ie madani* (literally meaning civil society) that was at odds with its conventional meaning. During his 1997 election campaign and in an interview with the daily *Ettela'at* he told the newspaper correspondent what he meant by *Jame'ie madani*: "the emerging process of "nation" and "civil society" among Muslims and in specific Iranians has emanated from the focal point of religion and religiosity; in contrast to the West where the people of the West founded nation by turning their back to religion."<sup>418</sup>

Even today Khatami insists on his unclear position regarding democracy and human rights and vague statements such as "those who believe in freedom without respect for the religion and those who endanger freedom in the name of religion, place our society in danger."<sup>420</sup> have become his catchphrases. This has remained Khatami's mantra since his election as president in 1997. When the discourse of reformism became dominant thanks to the reformist press, Khatami was quick in absorbing the reformist agenda. However, in doing so he was articulating the aims of the Islamic revolution instead of substituting them with new aims.

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<sup>416</sup> "Khatami says will not run for parliament", [[http://old.tehrantimes.com/index\\_View.asp?code=143299](http://old.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=143299)], 12 October 2010

<sup>417</sup> Salimi, *Kalbodshekafie zehniyate eslahgarayan*, p. 45.

<sup>418</sup> See Appendix 3.

<sup>420</sup> Seyed Mohammad Khatami, *Mardomsalari* [Democracy], Tehran, Tarh-e No, 2009, p.28.

According to Ehteshami and Zweiri, Khatami was always alongside the people and not in front of them.

All the evidence suggests that it has been the majority of Iranian people who have been pushing open the doors of debate and reform in the country, egging the reformers on, and, by virtue of asking for a better future, demanding change at all levels of society, culture and government. In many ways, it is they and their actions that had given substance and a sense of purpose to the reform agenda of the Khatami administration.<sup>421</sup>

For the success of the reformist agenda the merits of a strong, initiative-taking leader are undeniable, a role that Khatami stayed away from nonetheless because he lacked the temperament of a leader. In 2003, Dr. Abdulkarim Souroush issued an open letter to Khatami in which he strongly criticised President Khatami as wasting the historical opportunity that the people gave him in order to curb the religious despotism of the regime. “The present generation as well as generations to come must never forget this ominous message of religious despotism, that in Iran today, the best newspaper is the one that is closed, the best pen is the one that is broken and the best thinker is the one that is non-existent.”<sup>422</sup>

Throughout his eight years in office, Khatami turned down numerous appeals by the reformist parties and personalities to assume the leadership of the reformist camp, arguing that the president of the republic should not take on the role of the leader of the opposition. In other words the president should seek to remain the president of all Iranians. He remained true to his argument until the last day of his presidency. Below are a few instances that show how Khatami distanced himself from his expected role as the leader of the reformist camp.

- Khatami remained silent when Abbas Abdi, a prominent member of the reformist camp and member of the Mosharekat party’s central council, was arrested in 2002 for conducting a questioner survey sponsored by the Gallup organisation.<sup>423</sup> This attitude became a trend that repeated itself in the many other cases when reformist elites and other free-thinking intelligentsia and activists were prosecuted for their political and cultural activities. Occasionally when there was a sign of Khatami’s reaction it was always in the form of behind-the-scenes negotiations.
- Time after time he refused to consider the idea of changing the IRI constitution. In a speech in the Tarbiat Modarres University he told the audience “today speaking of change in the

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<sup>421</sup> Anoushirvan Ehteshami and Mahjoob Zweiri, *Iran and the Rise of its Neoconservatives*, London, I. B. Tauris, 2007, p. 6.

<sup>422</sup> Laura Secor, “The democrat Iran's leading reformist intellectual tries to reconcile religious duties and human rights”, [ [http://www.dr.soroush.com/English/On\\_DrSoroush/E-CMO-20040314-1.html](http://www.dr.soroush.com/English/On_DrSoroush/E-CMO-20040314-1.html)], 12 August 2011

<sup>423</sup> *Abbas Abdi bazdasht shod* [Abbas Abdi was Arrested], [ [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/021104\\_mf-abdi.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/021104_mf-abdi.shtml)], 05 August 2011

constitution is a treason to the system and the people”<sup>424</sup> to demonstrate that he did not change his mind on this issue. Four years later in a symposium entitled “Implementing the constitution: procedures and obstacles”, Khatami had strongly rejected the idea of changing the Islamic republic constitution stating that “the constitution is not a toy to be played with every now and then.”<sup>425</sup>

- He did not support the Sixth Majles MPs strike or *Tahason* that was the reformist MPs collective protest against the Guardian Council’s decision to reject their competence for the seventh Majles elections.
- In the 2004 presidential election he did not publicly endorse any of the reformists’ candidates and did not react to the allegations of election fraud and irregularities raised by Mehdi Karrobi and Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, two of the defeated candidates.

Two years after Sayyed Mohammad Khatami’s overwhelming victory in the 1997 presidential election in Iran his conservative adversaries who had since been in a state of shock, started licking their wounds and putting together a new strategy aimed at dismantling and dragging to failure the modernisation efforts of Khatami. In the absence of strong will to use the power of the masses to protect the interests of the reformist camp, the conservatives took the initiative by gathering their most loyal elements inside and outside the Majles in a formation later nicknamed *Setade Zedde Eslahat* [The Counter-Reform Headquarter].<sup>426</sup> At the centre of this so called “Counter-Reform Headquarter” stood highly motivated conservatives determined to use every legal and extra-legal authority in their hands in order to bring the reformist president and his team to a political deadlock. This headquarter included Majles deputies such as Mohammad Reza Bahonar, high profile members of Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps such as Major-General Rahim Safavi, high ranking officials from Office of Supreme Leader like Sardar Vahid and powerful judges such as Golam-Hossein Mohseni-Ejeie and, last but not least, fundamentalist clerics such as Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi.

Unluckily for the reformists the eager conservatives involved in the so-called Headquarter were very successful in their mission. They (the reformists) lost the Seventh Majles, the City Councils and the presidential elections to their conservative opponents. After the student uprising of July 1999 and the “mass closure of pro-reform papers” in the subsequent years, Khatami became a

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<sup>424</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, 17 Azar/December 07,2000

<sup>425</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, 24 Azar/December 14/2004

<sup>426</sup> Ariabarzan Mohammadighalehtaki, “Slogan vs. Manifesto: Analyzing Election Campaigning in Iran”, In Anoush Ehteshami, Reza Molavi and Jennifer Tompson (eds), *Policy Brief: Iranian Presidential Elections June 2009*, Durham, Centre for Iranian Studies, 2009, pp. 4-10.

handicapped politician who could not even protect his own Ministers, let alone ordinary Iranians. The reformists lost the Majles, the city councils and the presidential elections to their opponents.

Only this time it was not the ordinary conservatives they had to deal with. If that was the case then life was becoming much easier for the reformists and their supporters. It was rather a new breed of conservatives who won the elections: *Osoulgarayan* [Fundamentalists] they called themselves. Reformist commentators added “militant”, “religious zealot” and “hungry for power” to their characteristics. These Fundamentalists or *Osoulgarayan* were the product of the “Counter-Reform Headquarter”. Many took this breed’s name “*Osloulgarayan*”, literally and thought that they sought a return to the principles and values of the Islamic Revolution.

Ahmadinejad is thought to be the offshoot of such fundamentalism. Many believe that his triumph was the product of more than six years of anti-reformism practice instructed by the leaders of Counter-Reform Headquarter. Therefore it was not surprising at all, once in power seeing him reversing every progress made during Khatami’s period in office.

### 10.3. Over-Reliance on the Parliamentary Arena

Mosharekat was formed in 1998 and Mohammad Reza Khatami was its first general director. He was succeeded by Mohsen Mirdamadi in 2006. In an interview with the daily *E'temad*, Mohammad Reza Khatami mentioned the names of the founding fathers of the party as: Mohammad Reza Khatami, Mohsen Mirdamadi, Mohammad Na'imi-Pour, Abbas Abdi, Sa'id Hajjarian and Hadi Khaniki.<sup>427</sup>

The current members of the central council of Mosharekat as of its eleventh General Congress in December 2007 are: 1. Karim Arghandeh-Pour, 2. Seyed Mostafa Tajzadeh, 3. Hamid Reza Djalaee-Pour, 4. Jalal Jalali-Zadeh, 5. Sa'id Hajjarian, 6. Seyed Safdar Hosseini, 7. Mahmoud Hojjati, 8. Seyed Mohammad Reza Khatami, 9. Hadi Khaniki, 10. Mostafa Deratyati, 11. Abdullah Ramezanzadeh, 12. Fatemeh Rake'i, 13. Davoud Sulaymani, 14. Mostafa Sebti, 15. Ali Shirakvand, 16. Ali Shakouri Raad, 17. Said Shariati, 18. Mohsen Safai Farahani, 19. Hadi Ghabel, 20. Ali Gholami, 21. Hossein Kashefi, 22. Elahe Koolaie, 23. Ali Kyanoosh Raad, 24. Mohsen Mirdamadi, 25. Azar Mansouri, 26. Fakhrolsadat Mohtashami-Pour, 27. Farideh Mashini, 28. Uroojali Mohammadi, 29. Mohammad Na'imi-Pour, 30. Shamsoldin Vahabi. Also the members-in-waiting of the party's Central Council are: Seyed Shahaboldin Tabatabai, Zohreh Aghajari, Mohammad Hossein Sharifzadegan, Zahra Mojarradi and Seyed Bagher Nabavi.<sup>428</sup>

Since its first general congress on 20 July 2000, the central council members of the Mosharekat party are elected by the general congress. Mosharekat has held eleven general congresses until now, nearly one for each year since its establishment. Efforts to organise its twelfth congress in March 2009 were aborted by the intervention of the authorities.<sup>429</sup>

In comparison to IRP which held only one general congress during its existence and Kargozaran that held none, Mosharekat enjoys a greater amount of internal party democracy. It is noteworthy that until today it has always been the case that the majority of the members of the central council of Mosharekat were Human Sciences graduates, a number of whom also held teaching positions in Tehran universities. Moreover, many of the Mosharekat elites are among the most influential Iranian public intellectuals whose words and writings have greatly influenced the political thinking of Iranians. Mosharekat thus is a progressive intellectual circle as well as a political party.

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<sup>427</sup> *E'temad*, Azar 05/November 26, 2009

<sup>428</sup> [<http://norooznews.info/news/9782.php>] (Last accessed March 2008)

<sup>429</sup> *Laghve davazdahomin congereie jebhe Mosharekat Iran eslami* [Cancellation of Mosharekat 'e twelve congress], [<http://www.rahesabz.net/story/11787/>], 10 April 2010



Mosharekat was formed in 1998 but it won the majority of Tehran city council seats in 1999 and the Sixth Majles seats in the 2000 elections. The rapid electoral success of Mosharekat coincided with five main developments in its environment:

1. The reformists' newspapers were successful in gaining nationwide attention to the significance of reformism, civil society and democracy. The most popular of these papers were either run by the Mosharekat elites or were closely associated with them.
2. At the time of the Sixth Majles election, President Khatami was at the peak of his popularity. The fact that President Mohammad Khatami's brother was the leader of Mosharekat helped the party gain more votes.
3. The Interior Ministry (in charge of running the elections) was in the hands of the reformist cleric Mousavi-Lari. Therefore it was not possible for the conservatives to use this apparatus for their own benefit.
4. The conservative-dominated Guardian Council had not yet recovered from the shock of Khatami's victory in Khordad the Second. Therefore most prominent reformist elites could safely pass their arbitrary assessment and get competence approval, *Taide Salahiat*, for entering the elections.
5. The Guardian Council's last-minute adventure to suspend the announcement of results hoping that the election would be called off was not successful; after three months of resistance it had to recognise the results.

The reformist candidates won about 200 seats from the total 290 in the Sixth Majles. The share of Mosharekat faction in the Sixth Majles reformist bloc was more than 120 MPs.<sup>430</sup> Although we have to keep in mind that many of those elected by Mosharekat's endorsement (especially from small cities) were not members of the party.<sup>431</sup> However nearly all members of Mosharekat's central council went inside the city councils, the Majles or took governmental portfolios, leaving thus no one behind to take care of the institutionalisation of the party in the headquarters and on the ground.<sup>432</sup> In a way Mosharekat made the same mistake that LMI committed at the beginning of the revolution. Although with regard to access to the printed media, Mosharekat was in a much better-off position than LMI in 1979. *Jame'eh* was the first of a series of newspapers closely linked

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<sup>430</sup> Hossein Baastani, *Shish saal pas az tahasone namayandegane majlese sheshom* [Six years after the strike of the Sixth Majles MPs], [[http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2010/02/100205\\_139\\_r88\\_tahason\\_majlese6.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2010/02/100205_139_r88_tahason_majlese6.shtml)], 22 March 2010

<sup>431</sup> Elaheh Koolae (former MP and member of Mosharekat party central council) In discussion with the author, June 2008

<sup>432</sup> Elaheh Koolae (former MP and member of Mosharekat party central council) In discussion with the author, June 2008

to Mosharekat; Hamid Reza Djalaee-Pour, professor in sociology at Tehran University and a member of Mosharekat party, was the newspaper's editor-in-chief. *Jame'eh* started publishing in February 1998 and lasted for six months before being closed down by the judiciary system that was in the hands of the conservatives. Without any delay the pro-Mosharekat elites organised another daily with similar format to that of *Jame'eh* and named it *Toos*. *Toos* lasted for forty-five issues only, before being barred from publication by yet another court judgment; the newspaper's interview with the former French president Valery Giscard d'Estaing in which the latter made candid comments about Ayatollah Khomeini has been used as an excuse for the closure of the daily. The third newspaper in this sequence was *Neshaat* which lasted for seven months from February 1999 to September 1999. This time the head of the newspaper was accused of insulting the Leader and insulting the sacred matters of Islam.

Whenever the The Counter-Reform Headquarter (CRH) was successful in closing down a newspaper, it was only a few days before another paper rose from its ashes like a phoenix. Dr. Ataollah Mohajerani, the Minister of Culture and his deputy in charge of the press, Ahmad Borghani, were the pioneers of this period that was named the Spring of Iranian Press. This era started with Khatami's first-term presidency and lasted about three years. The main characteristic of this period was the visible increase in the quantity and quality of the periodicals, publications, music records and cinematic productions.

The reformist papers fulfilled some of the functions normally expected from the political parties. However this unexpected role of the printed media had its own uncertainties. Abbas Abdi gives an interesting observation and evaluation of the function of the reformist papers in comparison with the reformist parties. He mentions that although reformist newspapers have many advantages over political parties in that they could be set up quickly, they had a rapid output and they could swiftly recruit supporters, yet these strengths eventually became weaknesses.

Before the state-ordered closure of several newspapers in May 2000, sixty dailies were published regularly, with a combined circulation of 3.35 million. After the closure of twenty-three reformist periodicals, circulation dropped by 2.3 million to stand at 1.05 million. This clearly demonstrates the vulnerability for a political reform movement of relying merely on the press. In contrast, Iranian political parties have shown a greater capacity to withstand adverse circumstances than the press. Despite the pressures exerted by the conservatives, reformist parties, especially the Islamic Iran Participation Front, were able not only to defend themselves but also to shape the climate of the 2001 presidential campaign through their organisational activities.<sup>433</sup>

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<sup>433</sup> Abdi, "The Reform Movement: Background and Vulnerability", [http://www.worlddialogue.org/content.php?id=144], 15 September 2011

Eventually Ayatollah Ali Khamenei decided to deal with the criticising newspapers, all at the same time. Khamenei made his famous April 2000 speech in which he accused the press of becoming the enemy's centre of operations.<sup>434</sup> The next day, the conservative-dominated judiciary closed down twelve periodicals and the spring of publications reached its fall. This development in the anti-reformist camp did not come out of the blue. Two months before Khamenei's speech against the reformist press, the reformists' intelligentsia who came back from a conference in Berlin, faced prosecution and were accused of conspiracy against national security. The Berlin conference's aims and objectives were to create scope for a constructive dialogue between the reformists and the inside-Iran intelligentsia from one side and the political activists who lived outside Iran from another.<sup>435</sup> That initiative was thought to pave the way for the future return of the outside opposition to Iran in order to exercise their political activities through gradual, step-by-step methods similar to those of the reformists. More importantly, if the conference objectives were met it could have helped legitimising some of the cleavages in the Iranian society that is the prerequisite for reaching a consensus among different social cleavages.

#### **10.4. The Crisis of Mosharekat**

After investigating the organisational change and adaptation in the case of major political parties in the Western democracies, Katz and Mair remind us that these party organisations have three faces or elements.

The first of these faces is the party in public office, that is, the party organisation in government and in parliament. The second is the party on the ground, that is, the membership organisation, and also potentially the loyal party voters. The third face is the party in central office, which is organisationally distinct from the party in public office, and which, at least in the traditional mass-party model, organizes and is usually representative of the party on the ground.<sup>436</sup>

During the Sixth Majles, Mosharekat's face as a party in public office was overriding its face as a party in central office and definitely its face as a party on the ground. In addition the innovative interaction of its elite with the printed media and the internet-based media gave this party an aspect of Kirchheimer's "catch-all" party in which media technology plays a big part. Moreover, the votes given to Khatami and Mosharekat showed little signs of class-society voter-alignment, (another aspect similar to the catch-all party environment). Instead cleavages along the lines of generation,

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<sup>434</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Ordibehesht 03/ April 22, 2000

<sup>435</sup> Jamileh Kadivar, *Ik tiro chand neshaneh* [One Arrow and Many Targets], [http://kadivar.maktuob.net/archives/2007/04/26/829.php], 02 September 2011

<sup>436</sup> Peter Mair, "Party Organisation from Civil Society to the State", p. 5.

ethnicity, sex and traditionalist/modern were the most decisive factors in his election. Also in the votes for Khatami the significance of ethnic cleavage is easily demonstrable since most provinces dominated by the marginalised ethnic minorities like Kurdistan, Azarbijan and Sistan and Balouchestan voted for Khatami. Kaveh Bayat studied the effects of ethnic grievances on people's voting in four subsequent presidential elections in Iran and made interesting observations.

Recent elections indicate perceptible voting patterns based on ethnic identity. During presidential races, for example, the Sunni regions of Kurdistan cast an overwhelming vote for Ahmad Tavakoli, a relatively obscure rival of President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, in 1993, and then voted heavily for Khatami in 1997 and 2001, before abstaining in large numbers in 2005. A similar cohesion can be perceived in the mainly Sunni Sistan and Baluchestan, where in 2005 voters favored the reformist candidate Mustafa Moin at the behest of their religious leaders. But as the case of Mohsen Mehralizadeh in the 2005 election indicates, adopting a noticeably ethnic stance does not necessarily ensure electoral success. He emphasized a sense of "Azeriness" in his campaign, winning many votes in heavily Azeri provinces, but failing to break through on the national level.<sup>437</sup>

Vertical Cleavages are becoming more important than social class in the voting behaviour in today's Iran. However, even vertical cleavage alone can not explain the voting behaviour of the Iranian electorate in the last four presidential elections (since 1977). Throughout its life Mosharekat appealed to the centre of the society thus Mosharekat is not a working-class or a bourgeoisie party i.e. its proposed programmes and policies are for the interest of all Iranians and not a specific social class or denomination group. Moreover Mosharekat's communication with its supporters were mainly via its papers and through the intellectual writings of its elites and rarely by member-organisation apparatus.

Although the Mosharekat party enjoys a women's wing and a youth wing, the grassroots members did not enjoy the same weight as the old-guard elites of the party. Even when the reformists were in the government and the Majles, one could not differentiate between the Mosharekat parliamentary bloc and the Mosharekat party. The party's general director was the Sixth Majles deputy speaker and many other members of Mosharekat were inside the Majles which made it more convenient to be a parliamentary party rather than a party with a strong organic relationship with the different cleavages or social classes in the society. In explaining the society that created the Cadre party type, Katz and Mair point out that voters in the West behave more like consumers than active participants.<sup>438</sup> A similar pattern of behaviour is observable of the Iranian electorate in the case of voting for Mosharekat .

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<sup>437</sup> Kaveh Bayat, "The Ethnic Question in Iran", *Middle East Report*, No. 237 (Winter, 2005), p. 45, [http://www.jstor.org/pss/30042475], 01 September 2011

<sup>438</sup> Katz and Mair, "Party Organisation, Party Democracy, and the Emergence of the Cartel Party", pp. 95-96.

## 10.5. Adaptation or Domination? Trial-and-Error in Mosharekat Strategies

Parties use both adaptation and domination in relation to their environment and to other organisations; this is a compromise between the survival of the party and the implementation of the party aims. *Mardomsalary* [Democracy] has been Mosharekat's official aim.<sup>439</sup> In order to realise this goal, the party needed to dominate its environment in correspondence to the rational model of organisational theory. However this project provoked the conservatives and united them against the reformist camp. Thus, to fend off the attacks by the CRH, Mosharekat elites had to develop an adaptation strategy as well. In the following, different strategies that were developed by the party elites are examined to understand how Mosharekat elites dealt with the domination-adaptation dilemma in their relation with the party environment.

Sa'id Hajjarian is one of the Mosharekat party's key figures. Hamid Reza Djalaee-Pour another Mosharekat intellectual elite describes Hajjarian as follows:

From one aspect Hajjarian is the architect behind Khatami's government thus what were the government's concerns in these three years, were his concerns too; he is not a reformist who untroubled with the government's apprehensions. He takes responsibility for what occurs to the government; therefore he provides solutions in his own right. From another aspect Hajjarian has a significant position in *Sobhe emrooz* [newspaper] as well as Mosharekat party and the Office of Unity. Only when one compares Hajjarian with other reformist figures, the "twofold" character of his reformism is better acknowledged. For example, Tajzadeh is also a successful reformist whose name is well known in the government bureaus including the interior ministry, Akbar Ganji is ahead of his time in the realm of media and civil society, however he [Hajjarian] is the only reformist who shines in both dominions<sup>440</sup>

With the start of Mosharekat party's activities, Hajjarian as the mastermind of the reformists has developed the theory of "Pressure from below, negotiations at the top."<sup>441</sup> This was the basis of the reformists' strategy during most of Khatami's first-term presidency. In addition Mosharekat as the majority party in the Sixth Majles has adopted a adaptation strategy called *Arameshe fa'al*<sup>442</sup> [Active Tranquillity] which like "Pressure from below, negotiations at the top" was a defensive reaction to the impediments and aggravation of the CRH. More than it being a proactive (domination) strategy that was expected from a party that won two consecutive elections. The Mosharekat elites thought that as the winners of the electoral game they should practice the "ethics

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<sup>439</sup> Shadlou, *Ahزاب va jenahai-e syasi-e iran-e emrouz*, p. 386.

<sup>440</sup> Hamid Reza Djalaee-Pour, *Dolote penhan* [The Hidden State], Tehran, Tarh-e No, 2000, p. 206.

<sup>441</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Khordad 03/May 24,2005

<sup>442</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Aban 18/ November 08, 2000

of winning” and avoid bringing the conflict with the conservatives into the public. This was the Mosharekat’s sanctioned-approved strategy until its third general congress (July 2002).

While in the government, the Mosharekat elites did not really believe calling their supporters into the streets. The only favourite type of participation that they expected from their grassroots members and their wider social base, was to vote for them in the elections. Yet they bluffed about bringing the masses into the streets from time to time, the idea was that the mere threatening is sufficient to cause their contenders to back off. In addition there was little real presence for the Mosharekat “party on the ground” and a modest presence of “the party in the central office” in the Iranian polity. Once in the Majles, the city councils and the government, there was little effort by the Mosharekat elites for organising the “pressure from below” part of the twofold strategy, as Hajjarian had hoped for. Instead what remained from this defective strategy was compliance at the top and no pressure from below which, after all, did not bear any fruits for the reformists and their social base. The CRH discovered reformists’ inability and lack of genuine interest to mobilise their social base behind them in the time of need. The CRH did not take the Mosharekat elites’ “now and then” threats of referendum and/or strike or other forms of collective action seriously. However the CRH used these woolly threats as a justification for further containment of the reformists and the civil society activists, claiming contenders are in fact conspiring for overthrowing the regime. In October 2000 Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi told the Friday prayers in Tehran University “the essence of the American brand of reformism is to overthrow the religious government and those who are after American reformism are uttering it by the names such as Active Tranquillity”.<sup>443</sup>

When, at the end of the four-year term of the Sixth Majles, the majority of the reformists’ MPs went on strike objecting to the Guardian Council decision to reject their candidacy competence for the Seventh Majles elections, there were no demonstrations outside the Majles building in support of the reformist MPs. What’s more, there were no efforts on behalf of reformists to mobilise the masses anywhere else in the country. The truth of the matter was, even if they wanted to mobilise their social base, the reformists lacked the organisation necessary for such an action. The events of 18 *Tir* (July 1999 student uprising) proved that in the absence of the *second face* of the party (party on the ground) calling the masses onto the streets can easily get out of hand and produce counter-effective results. On 8 July 1999 when a group of students demonstrated against the decision to close down the daily *Salam*, the security forces and the pro-CRH band of Bsiji’s raided their halls of residence. Many students were attacked and their campus belongings smashed. In the next few days tens of thousands of the angry students went on rallies to protest at the brutality at which the

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<sup>443</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Mehr 30/ October 21, 2000

student action was dealt with. The reformists' papers praised the revolutionary mood and encouraged the demonstrators to stay on the streets until they got tangible results. However Khatami's avoidance of playing the role of the leader of the protesters and the organisational weakness of the reformists (on the ground organisation) and their difference of opinion with the pro-reform student union *Daftare tahkime vahdat* [Office for Strengthening Unity] have worked against the whole movement. While Mosharekat and President Khatami could not keep on top of the 18 Tir Movement (because of deficit in organisational capabilities), the lack of mutual understanding between them and the Office for Strengthening Unity (OSU) left the protesting students defenceless against the attacks from the supporters of the CRH. The result was a big defeat for the reformist camp as a whole. The CRH was successful in containing the protests and arresting the activists of the OSU. The security forces who entered the Amir Abad street student dormitory *Kouye daneshgah* and have violently attacked and injured the helpless students were either released without charges or received very light sentences. When the dust settled, the conservatives who were in defensive mode before July 1999, became confident that they will completely contain the reformists in the near future.

It was under these circumstances and in the light of these facts that Abbas Abdi, another Mosharekat elite and thinker, proposed his famous strategy of *Khorooj az hakemiat* (Walking out from the system or the regime) days before the start of the Mosharekat party's third General Congress proceedings in July 2002.<sup>444</sup>

Walking out from the system is not the same as sitting at home and doing nothing. Basically the opponents of reformism can not turn back the conditions to what they were before Khomeini the Second. Didn't those who were outside the regime since the beginning of revolution function? They were effective in the universities and other places. By the same token, those reformists whose time and energy is now wasted in the current political deadlock will be soon freed to work efficiently. When the reformists can not pursue their announced targets, then their staying in the regime has no justification and gradually they might be looked at as the people who just love their posts. This is an important ethical dilemma. If we do nothing, the day will come when reformists' credit and dignity will be taken from them and after they lose all their dignity and purpose they will be ousted with the least of all costs.<sup>445</sup>

However this strategy did not work as had been hoped by its architect either. Less than four months after the public announcement of the new strategy, Mosharekat's semi-official organ *Norouz* was closed down and Abbas Abdi arrested and put in prison. To make matters worse, President Khatami refused to play according to Mosharekat's script. In a press conference on the occasion of

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<sup>444</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Tir 26/July 17, 2002

<sup>445</sup> Abbas Abdi, "Khorooj az hakemiyat" [Departing the regime], In Sa'id Hajjarian, Abbas Abdi, Seyyed Mostafa Tajzadeh, Hamid Reza Djalaee-Pour, Ali Reza Alavi Tabaar (eds), *Eslahat dar barabare Eslahat goftegooye enteghad* [Reforms against Reforms: a Critical Dialogue], Tehran, Tarh-e No, 2006, p. 80.

the Government's Commemorative Week *hafteie doulat*, President Khatami was asked a question about the strategy of "walking out from the regime" to which Khatami answered: "Walking out from the system is not the right thing to do but if one current imposes its will on others, then it has already expelled the other currents from the system".<sup>446</sup> It was not only Khatami who did not abide by Mosharekat's tactic; the majority of the eighteen groups and parties that made up the Khordad the Second Front did not endorse the idea either. For instance Mohammad Hashemi, the director of Kargozaran's political wing at the time and former president Rafsanjani's brother supported Mohammad Khatami in the distance he took from the strategy of "walking out from the system".<sup>447</sup>

The Mosharekat party failed to publicise its strategy of "walking out from the regime" in the society. This was while the CRH press team was carrying out a vicious propaganda war against the reformists and their plans, accusing them of treason and calling them puppets of America.

Another disaster for Mosharekat happened when President Khatami's twin bills aimed at reforming the election system and increasing the powers of president were blocked by the Guardian Council and Khatami despite his earlier indication that he would not give up on these bills, avoided confrontation and gave up.

The recall of the twin bills proved that a popular president who was awesomely elected on two occasions alongside a reformist Majlis was simply unable to pursue his mandate in the framework of the constitution. The IIPP [Mosharekat] at its Third Congress the then ruling party issued a resolution describing the current situation of the Islamic regime as at its most critical state when both elected government and parliament are unable to exercise their right on governance.<sup>448</sup>

Mosharekat was overwhelmed with all these disappointments. The Mosharekat elites, who did not have the decisiveness to walk out and put the CRH on the defensive, were now being thrown out of the system by force. The party lost the Seventh Majles because the Guardian Council refused the competence of its candidates. Even before that, Mosharekat had received a heavy defeat in the second city council election from the *Osoulgarayan*. It was then when the mastermind of reformists, Sai'd Hajjarian, took the initiative from Abbas Abdi and announced his strategy of waiting to "be sacked from the regime" instead of "walking out from the system", a strategy which defines Mosharekat's conduct even today.

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<sup>446</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Shahrivar 07/ August 29, 2002

<sup>447</sup> *Jomhourie eslami*, Shahrivar 17/ September 08,2002

<sup>448</sup> Ali Mohammad Pedram, "The Institution of Parliament and Democratisation Process in the Islamic Republic of Iran", PhD diss, Durham University, 2007, p. 321.



1. Being sacked from the regime will cause *Tamhis*, “*Va eza Mohessoo bel-bala’ ghalla al-dayanoon*” [from Arabic: when there is a hardship, the number of faithful decreases]. When the reformists pass through a quest, the opportunists will go away and the true reformism will be purified and revealed.
2. Sacking is costly for the regime’s legitimacy, while walking out does not impose such costs. Sacking, like a coup is very costly, it is delegitimising [for them] and proactive [for reformists] while walking out is submissive and blameworthy and will be associated with defeatism, cowardliness, fear, and leaving the barracks.
3. Being Sacked will reactivate the reformists and prevent isolation and passivity. Sacking will be accompanied by prison, prosecution and detention which will make the reformists energetic and better organised while walking out would mean retirement.
4. Being Sacked brings with itself the international recognition, people will look at the reformists with respect and admiration but they will not approve the *walking out*...in the case of being sacked, the reformists will have the initiative and they will choose the tactics, we will choose the initiatives and the actions ...in my proposed strategy people will not be spectators but become actors. In the strategies of “active quietude”, moderation and deterrence, people are only observers this is while I believe that people are our most precious assets and we should bring them into the action scene.<sup>449</sup>

Mosharekat was a policy/ideology seeking party therefore winning elections was not its primary goal. According to Harmel and Janda in policy/ideology seeking parties, policy purity is more important than winning votes or gaining access to benefits of office, therefore electoral failures and even loss of government positions will be of less significance than shocks challenges the prominence of party’s policy or ideology. An example would be the impact that the fall of the Berlin Wall and failure of Soviet communism had on other communist parties, such as in Italy.<sup>450</sup>

This explains why Dr. Mostafa Moein who was Mosharekat’s candidate in 2005 presidential election did not even bother to touch on economic issues. His election campaign focused instead on safeguarding human rights and democracy through reformist methods. Mosharekat’s candidate became fifth while Mehdi Karroubi who promised monthly payment of 500000 Iranian rial (about 50 US dollars at the time) to every Iranian citizen if he was elected, came third in the race and Ahmadinejad who promised to tackle bread and butter issues won the race. In other words policy purity was much more important for Mosharekat elites than gaining votes. Therefore, knowing that they will lose vote, the Mosharekat elites refused to focus on an economic election programme instead of their usual reformist agendas. It seems only a shock to the virtues of the reformist policy/ideology that can result into the Mosharekat elites losing their confidence in the

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<sup>449</sup> Sa’id Hajjarian, “Mashrooteh talabi” [Conditional Rule], In Sa’id Hajjarian, Abbas Abdi, Seyyed Mostafa Tajzadeh, Hamid Reza Djalaee-Pour, Ali Reza Alavi Tabaar (eds), *Eslahat dar barabare Eslahat goftegooie enteghadi* [Reforms against Reforms: a Critical Dialogue], Tehran, Tarh-e No, 2006, pp.132-133.

<sup>450</sup> Harmel and Janda, “An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change”, p. 265.

correctness or importance of key positions of the party, can cause the Mosharekat elites to consider changing the party's identity and thus behaviour.

## 10.6. Mosharekat as a New Party Type

During Khatami's period in office Mosharekat and all other registered parties were receiving funds from the government, an aspect that draws parallels to Katz and Mair's Cadre party. However the amount of funding was very modest; in 2002, the first year of the funding programme, between 600 to 800 million *Tomans* (600 to 800 thousand U.S. dollars) was distributed between more than 70 registered political parties.<sup>451</sup> However most of these parties existed only on paper. Few, like Mosharekat, MIRO and Motalefeh had the minimum requirements for being named as a political party. To be more precise, few of these paper parties were even an organisation. Therefore they lacked what makes a political party different from a loose political crowd. These paper parties were acting as a banner under which short-term election-time alliances were forged. The endurance of these paper parties was in direct relation to the life of the election alliance, which in most cases was very short-lived. Despite all the disarray that was seen in *Khanehe ahzaab* (Parties' House: the guild union of all registered Iranian political parties), the state funding has further enhanced Mosharekat's status as a party in the public office. When a party receives regular financial support from the government, it automatically becomes less reliant on the members' financial contributions.

The "multidimensional cleavage society" in the Iran and the fading of the old social stratification increases the significance of the control over "zones of uncertainty" in Mosharekat. The party depended on public funding and later on party elite donations for most of its financing, which is in sharp contrast with the mass party model which relies on the mass memberships for their financing. Therefore, the role of elected party members in the parliament became more important than the role of other party officials in the headquarter, since the parliamentary elites were responsible for maintaining the flow of public funding and securing mutually beneficial deals with interest groups. The ascendancy of television and new media in political campaigning for elections and shaping the public opinion has also added to the role of professionals who worked with the party. Therefore it could be suggested that during the Six Majles, the crucial zones of uncertainty such as the competence, environmental relations and financing zone of uncertainty in the party resided in the

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<sup>451</sup> *Ahzaabe syasie Iran: kalafe sardargom* [Iranian political parties lost in a labyrinth], [<http://www.iraneconomics.net/fa/articles.asp?id=3013>], 28 September, 2011

hands of party elites who were inside the Majles as well as those who were in charge of reformist newspapers.

However after Ahmadinejad became the president he stopped the state funding of the parties<sup>452</sup> and Mosharekat faced a lot of financial hardship. The fact that since then the party became more reliant on a number of its elites to pay for the party's expenses now that the state subsidies weren't available anymore strengthened the role of donor elites in the party.

The Mosharekat grassroots (ordinary members) are usually not expected to pay any membership fees since joining the party has little selective incentive while the disincentives such as state harassment and prosecution are very high. In addition, after being expelled from the system, the party had only collective incentives of identity to pay in exchange for the desired form of participation. Therefore, not many grassroots were eager joining the party let alone paying membership fees. Those who joined however, joined the party for a cause they believe in (democracy). In a conversation with the daily *E'temad*, the former general director of Mosharekat, Mohammad Reza Khatami asserts that after losing the ninth presidential election, it was only Mosharekat's legitimacy and identity that attracted the grassroots to join the party. This was while many personalities, who were after the party's membership in its heyday, were put off or discouraged when they realised that there was no longer any benefit in joining the party.

**One of the occurrences that happened during the peak of Mosharekat's period in power was the incident of the strike in the sixth Majles. The negative and positive effects of which are still observable in the political environment, whether for the reformists or the incumbents. You were the general director of Mosharekat and the deputy speaker of Majles at that time. From the point of view of the party and from your own personal viewpoint, was this action a plausible and beneficial act? And was it really the right thing to do?**

Well as you see because of the specific circumstances that we have I might get you bored if I start explaining the small details of those incidents. So let's have a polemic instead and ask ourselves what would have happened if we did not carry on the strike? Some of our friends were telling us at that time: if you had not gone on strike, the rejections of the competence were going to be resolved, elections were held and we would have won. I would say that after seeing what happened in the Seventh and Eighths Majleses and after what we learned from the ninth and tenth presidential elections, our experience tell us that if we had entered the election, nothing would have changed and we still would be seeing the same Seventh Majles [as it is now], but this time in our name and if we had approved of it, the identity and the legitimacy of the reformists would have vanished. Today if the reformists have credibility among the people it is because of the resistances they made in different historical junctures. This is why we have reached the conclusion that some people from within this revolution should stand against the wrong and destructive deviations that were becoming a part of the history of the revolution.<sup>453</sup>

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<sup>452</sup> *Tehrane emrooz*, Shahrivar 13/ September 04, 2011

<sup>453</sup> Keivan Mehregan, *Nagoftehaie ta'sise hezbe Mosharekat dar goftego ba Dr Mohammad Reza Khatami* [the untold story of Mosharekat's birth in discussion with Dr. Mohammad Reza Khatami], *E'temad*, Azar 05/November 26, 2009

Since its establishment Mosharekat has had a relatively active youth and women strands or wings. During the election time most of the leg-work during campaigning is carried out by the party's youth wing. After being thrown out of their political jobs, the Mosharekat elites had more time to spend on party building. This is why the activities of party offices in different areas of Tehran and in the central areas of major cities increased noticeably after 2005. For instance, in June 2007 Mosharekat's youth wing sent an aid convoy to those affected by floods in the remote city of Gono in the Sistan and Baluchestan provinces.<sup>454</sup> However the political weight of the young party members is not at all proportionate with their contribution to the party; in terms of the time and energy they put into party activities. For example, the head of the party's youth wing, Mr. Shahaboldin Tabatabai, is elected only as "member in waiting", *ozve alalbadal*, of the party's central council.

Mosharekat introduced and, until recently, maintained a very innovative relation with the printed press. At times Mosharekat's different newspapers were paying part of the party's expenses. In addition the party's organ paper *Mosharekat*, played an important role in the election victory of the Sixth Majles when it was only two months old.<sup>455</sup>

In the 2009 presidential election at first Mosharekat supported Khatami for president but when Khatami withdrew from the race in favour of Mir-Hossein Mousavi, the party did its best to make sure that Mir-Hossein Mousavi won the election. In view of the fact that in the recent years the number of internet users in Iran has increased rapidly (from 3.8% in year 2000 to 48.5% in 2009),<sup>456</sup> and after learning from successful online election campaigns such as the Obama campaign in the U.S presidential election of 2008, the younger generation of reformists in Iran were encouraged to use similar techniques for Mousavi's 2009 campaign. Therefore for the first time in the history of the reformist parties Mosharekat used the professional help of young pro-reformists experts who acted independently from the reformists' parties.

One of the most successful groups of experts in this regard was a group of young boys and girls who established the *Mowje sevom* [the third wave] campaign and website.<sup>457</sup> This campaign was initially formed to persuade former president Khatami to enter the election. However, in the same manner that Mosharekat and MIRO, came to the conclusion to endorse Mousavi, after Khatami's withdrawal from the race, the enthusiastic members of *Mowje sevom* also decided to support

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<sup>454</sup> [<http://norooznews.ir/news/1282.php>], (Last assessed 19 July 2007)

<sup>455</sup> Hanif Mazro'i (Member of the Mosharekat party), In discussion with the author, October 2010

<sup>456</sup> [<http://www.internetworldstats.com/me/ir.htm>], (Last assessed 24 September 2011)

<sup>457</sup> [www.mowj.ir](http://www.mowj.ir)

Mousavi when it became clear that Khatami was not going to change his mind about his own withdrawal from the election race. In addition Khatami put his full weight behind Mir-Hossein Mousavi, a move that convinced many sceptics who were not sure that Mousavi was going to continue the reformist agenda and increased Mousavi's chances of winning. The members of *Mowje sevom* were university students with backgrounds varying from graphic design and computer science to sociology and politics.<sup>458</sup> This variety helped them become one of the most multi-talented election campaign groups in the history of Iranian elections. For instance they have identified the most effective target groups in society to whom they could appeal for the maximisation of Mousavi's vote. The *Mowje sevom* website approached various social strata through tactics named *Pooyesh yari* [partaking in the movement] and made detailed online instructions on how to persuade members of each stratum to vote for Mousavi. These target groups that were approached varied from the category of religious preachers to the category of taxi drivers and hairdressers. The production of distinctive campaign anthems and telephone campaigning were among many creative methods that *Mowje sevom* used for vote gathering.

Resorting to experts from outside the party for election campaigning is a characteristic of Katz and Mair's Cadre party. One can draw other parallels with Panebianco's Electoral-Professional type and Katz and Mair's Cadre party in that Mosharekat was mostly dependent on its characteristic as the party in the public office both for financial reasons and because the social stratification and voter-alignment in Iran has changed a lot since 1979. In my view, even if the Mosharekat or any other party were given a free hand to do whatever they like in terms of party activities, the most effective way of mobilisation and vote-gathering for Mosharekat was through methods similar to those used in the case of the *Mowje* website and not through mass membership organisation methods.

If we take into account Panebianco's definition of zones of organisational uncertainty, those elites in Mosharekat who run newspapers and those who organised interest groups and those who paid most of expenses have had a considerable control over an important zone of organisational uncertainty (Financing). We know that the daily *Sobhe Emrooz* was managed by Hajjarian, *Norouz* by Arghandeh-Pour, *Jame'eh* by Djalaee-Pour, *Mosharekat* by Mirdamadi and *Yaase-no* by Naimi-Pour. These Mosharekat elites controlled an important organisational zone of uncertainty. Thus they had a considerable control over the Communications zone of organisational uncertainty.

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<sup>458</sup> Fatemeh Shams (Founding member of the *Mowje sevom* election campaign website) in discussion with the author, October 2010

Last but not least, the number of women in the party's central council increased from two members in the second congress (2002) to five in the eleventh general congress (2008). Mosharekat women elites such as Farideh Mashini, Azar Mansouri and Fakhrolsadat Mohtashami-Pour were among the pioneers of NGO's and interest groups that worked for equal rights for women. They were also members of the One Million Signature Campaign that included secular as well as religious women activists from all over the country. In addition Mohtashami-Pour headed the *Anjoman Zanan Pajoheshgare Tarikh*[Women Researchers of History] NGO and Farideh Mashini is a key member of *Majm'e Zanane Eslahtalab* [The Reformists Women Association]. Since its expel from the government posts, Mosharekat has carried on and maintained a constructive relation with many NGO's as well as members of artistic, athletic or cultural organisations. In 2009 presidential election women interest groups lobbied for women rights with Mosharekat elites, offering their participation in exchange of the party's promise that it will promote women's equality demands.

The recent developments in the Mosharekat's relations with the interest groups and experts and the way the party appealed to the voters in recent elections shows that partial similarity between the Western and Iranian social conditions such as advancements in technology and the emergence of a new social cleavage map instead of the old social stratification has resulted in partial similarities between at least one modern party in Iran (Mosharekat ) and the parties in the European countries.

## Conclusion

The IRP legitimacy and power of IRP was largely derived from two main sources,

1. The support and the backing of Ayatollah Khomeini.
2. An ideology derived from a radical interpretation of Islamic governance that was generally known by the name *Maktab* and its holders by the title *Maktabi*

In opposition to the Islamic Liberals were those with a stricter interpretation of the Islamic state. Better known as *Maktabis* and dominant role for the clergy, and viewed the role of non-clerics as marginal. During the period 1979-83, the *Maktabis* had a more strict interpretation of 'neither East nor West', and opted for more independence vis-à-vis superpowers and a more clearly anti-American line. Personalities such as Ayatollah Muhammad Hosein Beheshti, Ayatollah Hussein All Montazeri, Hoj Muhammad Javad Bahonar, Hoj Ali Akbar Hashemi-rafsanjani and Hoj All Khamenei belonged to this faction, and dominated the revolutionary council and the Islamic Republic Party (IRP).<sup>459</sup>

The Islamic ideology that IRP represented at the beginning was a version of a political Islam that insisted on implementing the rule of Shia Islam or *fiqh* through advocating the doctrine of *velayate faghih*. However, while the party membership grew in size and the party expanded to embrace most Khomeinist's organisations, other readings of Islam such as the fusion of Islam and Marxism found its way inside the ideological boundaries of the IRP. To embrace the inferior strata as a social base, the protection and the welfare of the Mostazafin became the official aim of the party and the pro-Mostazafin discourse dominated the language of the IRP elites and the IRP official publication, *Jomhourie eslami*. This was both an *adaptation* strategy seeking to gain the participation of the inferior strata and a *domination* strategy to fend off the other organisations who claimed representing the interest of the impoverished.

During Ayatollah Beheshti's lifetime intra-party disputes did not have much chance to come to the surface except for some jurisprudence variations within the framework of *Velayate faghih*. Beheshti was the party's leader who enjoyed some charisma (yet not as much as Khomeini). He was extremely popular and well respected among the party members. He had plenty of *collective* (ideology) and *selective* (jobs, positions) incentives in his disposal to exchange for members' loyalty. As a result Ayatollah Beheshti's position as a party leader was more than secure. This great level of job security gave Beheshti a self-assurance that allowed him to tolerate a degree of

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<sup>459</sup> Behrooz, *Rebels With A Cause*, p. 102.

interpretative freedom and freedom of expression among the party elites without the fear of losing his position or losing the party. In addition all members of the IRP dominant coalition have showed their loyalty to him, to Khomeini and to the doctrine of *velayate faghih*. This is why, despite Beheshti's own belief in the validity of *fiqhe poya* as the best method for governing the Islamic society, the supporters of *Sonati fiqh* in the party were also allowed to express their views without the fear of being expelled from IRP. Besides, because of the challenges and threats existing from rival political groups and parties (environmental hostility) in the immediate post-revolutionary period, the IRP's in-house disagreements and disputes were tolerated and were not disclosed to outsiders.

Ayatollah Beheshti, in particular, was instrumental in the articulation of IRP ideology that was summarised in *Mavaze'e ma*. The essence of IRP ideology was Islamomaxism and pro-Mostazafin populism. In the party manifesto, as well as Beheshti's later works, there are many references to protecting the interests of the Mostazafin and implementing Islamic social justice. Above all else, the party's manifesto totally rejects the capitalist model of economy. Beheshti as the leader of the party in its formative phase had the freedom of choosing the hunting ground (Mostazafin) and the ideological aims of the party. Articulating a pro-Mostazafin ideology was an *adaptation* strategy to appeal to the chosen social base of the party. However, by claiming to be a party of Mostazafin the party that was competing against other organisations that hunt in the same territory. IRP thus adopted strategies of *domination* toward its territory and any organisations that laid claims over that constituency, namely the leftists parties. According to Panebianco,

Parties which define themselves as "workers' parties" "catholic parties," etc., for example, delimit electoral territories – workers, Catholics – and accordingly establish conflictual and/or cooperative relations with all other organisations that "hunt" in the same territories. In delimiting the territory or domain, the ideology pushes the organization to control dominate this territory (over and against competing organizations). This is of the utmost importance, for success in the control over territory is intimately tied to the party's organizational identity.<sup>460</sup>

At the formative stage of the party, Beheshti's role was crucial in moulding the party's ideology that was in conflict with the interests of IRP's right wing including the majority of the Motalefeh members who joined the party.

Organisational stasis and strategies of environmental adaptation precede institutionalisation ... In dealing with weak institutions, founding leaders (e.g. Mussolini and the Maximalists after 1912, Morandi in the PSI after 1949, and Paul Faure in the SFIO after 1920) always have incomparably more freedom of manoeuvrability than their successors. This occurs, of course, because weak

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<sup>460</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 13.



institutions are less “cumbersome” than strong institutions, and organisational game rules can thus be more easily modified.<sup>461</sup>

However, IRP despite having a popular leader in its formative phase was endorsed by Khomeini as an external charismatic body. In other words it was the strong support and endorsement of Ayatollah Khomeini that made IRP different from organisations with similar ideology. The party elites were enjoying huge collective and selective incentives from their link to Khomeini and this disrupted any chance of a strong institutionalisation that the party might have had. However and despite the weak institutionalisation of the party Beheshti as a popular person who was the first general director of the party was able to keep the dominant coalition cohesive.

Yet the internally-secure (cohesive dominant coalition but weak institutionalisation) era of Beheshti did not last for long. On 28 June 1981 Beheshti was killed alongside more than seventy party members in a bomb explosion at the IRP headquarters at Sarcheshmeh. Although no one has ever claimed responsibility for the terrorist attack, fingers were pointed at Mojahedin Khalgh Organisation (MKO) and the unseated president Abolhassan Banisadr who was hiding in a MKO safe house when the terrorist act happened. The loss was great for IRP yet without any delay, Hojatoleslam Bahonar was appointed director general in place of Beheshti.

Bahonar became the first prime minister in the history of the Islamic Republic who held also the leadership of IRP simultaneously. In the history of the organisation this was the first time that the party leader also became prime minister. Some disagreements occurred between Mohammad Ali Rajaie the president who, despite being endorsed by the IRP in the election, was not a member of the party and Bahonar who was IRP’s director-general. However, before these differences of opinion had the chance of turning into a serious challenge for the regime or the party, both politicians were killed in yet another deadly explosion in 30 August 1981, this time in the office of the prime minister where the cabinet meetings were usually held.

After Bahonar’s death, Hojatoleslam Khamenei became IRP leader. The country was in turmoil and the remaining IRP clerics wanted to show that the system was united against all enemies. Therefore they went to Khomeini and begged him to reconsider his original position of “no cleric for president” and urged him to endorse the nomination of Hojatoleslam Khamenei for presidential election. Until that day Khomeini was resistant to the idea of a cleric becoming the president, fearing that public opinion would accuse the clergy of planning the total domination of the state.

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<sup>461</sup> Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 166.

Moreover, in his role as the supreme leader, Khomeini was very cautious not to give his absolute support to one faction without the other. His tactic in dealing with the so-called pro-Khomeini factions was to maintain a balance among his loyal followers not allowing one faction a total supremacy above the others, thus he as a leader, could remain above factions and free from the charges of factional politics and could maintain the image of the father of the nation that was bestowed upon him by millions of Iranians in the course of the revolution.

Khomeini's other concern was an ethical one. He did not want the clergy to occupy all the important positions in the country and expose itself to all sorts of corruption. The old Ayatollah was worried for the reputation of the cleric stratum. He wanted the clergy to participate in the government but stay clear from the accusations of monopoly.

The IRP clerics however argued that there was no suitable successor left for the job of the president who was not a cleric. They believed the last layman who had the charisma and the merits of a president was the "martyred" president Mohammad Ali Rajaie. In addition after a series of bomb blasts and assassinations the IRP needed to project an image of an organisation fully in control. It needed to select a prominent nominee for president in order to send a powerful message to the militant leftist resistance, especially the MKO, that everything was under control. Therefore Ayatollah Khomeini was convinced to nominate Ayatollah Khamenei, the leader of IRP for the October 1981 presidential election. It appears that Khomeini's principles had evolved with the new developments on the ground.

By 1983 the very last lingering opposition groups such as the Tudeh party were crushed and their offices closed down, leaving no one to oppose the consolidation of power in the hands of IRP elites. Having no natural enemies, the members of IRP felt safe enough to publicly express some of their own inter-party factional differences. Gradually, the victorious IRP leaders who felt no threat from the outsiders, started turning against each other but not in the same vicious manner that they dealt with the "outsider" opposition. The factional rivalry started showing itself within the party elites with Khamenei, Heyate Motalefeh and a number of party elites supporting the traditional or *Sonati* School of jurisprudence and showing sympathy to the Bazaar while Mousavi Ardebily and many of the younger generation elites endorsed what was known as the *poya* or dynamic school of jurisprudence and showing commitment to protect the interests of the impoverished via the method of state-controlled economy.

During Khamenei's time as the head of the party, the party's left wing, known for their support of "dynamic fiqh" and radical state-socialism was at odds with the members of the right wing of the party who were in favour of the safeguarding of the traditional values and keen in protecting the interests of Bazaar. The left-current assumed the name Maktabi for themselves; in contrast, their conservative comrades were labelled Hojjatiya.

The intra-party conflicts of interest and divergence of views reached its peak in 1985 when Khamenei, who was elected for the second time as president, strongly refused Mir-Hossein Mousavi as a choice for prime minister. The IRP party was divided over who to support as the next prime minister. Both the President and the Prime Minister were from IRP but belonging to two dissimilar wings or factions of the party. While Mousavi was a central figure of the left of the party, Hojatolislam Khamenei was the leader of the party and a champion of the traditionalist conservatives or right faction of IRP.

Panbianco points at the behaviour of a party with divided unstable internal coalitions (factions) which provides a perfect explanation of the IRP behaviour during Khamenei's leadership.

Different types of dominant coalitions are, moreover, associated with significant differences in organisation-environment relations and in the members' level of participation/mobilization...The third type (divided-unstable coalition) refers to an organisation in which the drive towards expansion and organisational reinforcement is due less to a deliberate central strategy than the strategies of competing internal groups. This type is characterized by periodic participation alternating from mobilization to immobility in accordance with the political movement. ...The third case illustrates a condition of "every faction for itself" where the compromises between factions are extremely precarious: since long-term agreements cannot be reached, each individual faction tries to augment its power by expanding. The result is an expansionistic organisational strategy which is not the fruit of stability and cohesion, but rather of extreme instability and division... Internal participation tends to grow when there is a show-down between different factions (at congresses and general elections, for example): it is only at such moments that a faction mobilizes its whole following. Participation tends to decrease subsequently, and is at its lowest between one test and another.<sup>462</sup>

It must be added that IRP was closer to the "Office seeking model" described by Hamel and Janda thus when the party could not bring the office of Prime Minister under the control of the party leader (Khamenei) it has lost its purpose for Khamenei. Since from an office seeking point of view there is no use for a party that despite winning the majority of seats in the Majles, could not elect the Prime Minister that its general director, Ali Khamenei, wanted.

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<sup>462</sup> Panbianco, *Political Parties*, p.170.

In addition it must be reminded that Khamenei as the party's official leader did not have ample control over all the party's "zones of uncertainty". The left wing of the party exercised more influence over the Competence, the Communications and Environmental Relations zones of organisational uncertainty and the Financial zone was in the hand of Ayatollah Khomeini. Thus despite the fact that after the party's first general congress the majority of the party's elected central council went to the conservative camp, control over the crucial zones of organisational uncertainty was divided between the left and the conservative wings of the party, what created a case of a divided unstable elite coalition inside the party.

Finally, Ayatollah Khomeini intervened in favour of Mousavi. Ali Khamenei had no choice other than obeying the command of the supreme leader. However this intervention and Khamenei's dissatisfaction with the Imam's decision left an open wound in the party that never healed. The damage this incident caused to the already weakened party was fatal. Finally, in 1987 Khamenei and Hashemi Rafsanjani asked Ayatollah Khomeini, in a letter, to accept the halt of all activities in IRP, a request that met Khomeini's acceptance. However, the fact is the party was stock-still and de-facto dead from 1985.

A year after closing down the party, Khamenei's Friday sermon, in which he spoke about the boundaries of *valyate faghih* and the precedence the fundamental Islamic rulings over Khomeini's decrees have cost him an angry warning letter from Khomeini who believed that the Supreme Jurist could stop fundamental Islamic obligation such as Hajj pilgrimage and daily prayer if he sees it necessary. Khamenei, who did not see this coming, was quick in sending a letter of appeasement and expressing devotion to Khomeini, withdrawing what he said and declaring that he always followed the leader's guidance. Although Khamenei was successful in damage control, this incident proved to the outside world that power struggles among the IRI elites would not end with the closure of the country's largest single party, the IRP.

A decade later when the revolutionary zeal was latent a new party emerged in Iran that was typologically different from its predecessor. Mosharekat was lacking a strong on the ground organisation yet being able to win elections. The party emerged in an era where the old social stratifications have changed dramatically and the very diverse cleavage map of the society meant it was useless to claim a Mostazafin identity or even a middle class identity. Instead Mosharekat tried to appeal to the nation as a whole. Moreover, the progresses in media technology and internet communication opened new opportunities in front of Mosharekat that was not available for IRP.

In addition Mosharekat was a party that started using the help of experts as well as interest groups from outside the party to win elections. These characteristics brought Mosharekat closer to Kirchhiemer's catch all, Panebianco's electoral-professional and Katz and Mair's cadre party. Although Mosharekat was not operating in a Western democracy, the fact that it could reach similar sophistication to the Western ideal types of its time, shows that the main reason for the underachievement of political parties in Iran is not the society per se but is the Iranian regime. The state coercion creates a hostile environment for the political parties. With such an environment of hostility and repression parties would not have the chance to become well-institutionalised and will not reach the survival threshold at all.

The complex and fragmented Iranian state is against parties and party system in a path-dependant manner. The fragmented nature of the IRI state<sup>463</sup> and the void of party system are the decisions that IRI leaders made in a "critical juncture" of IRI history. Now with much investment and time spent on the "fragmented state", "auxiliary organisations"<sup>464</sup> and non-party system, it is very difficult to change the course and go for a single or multi party system of governance. The path dependant IRI authoritarianism becomes clearer when considering few examples. The *fragmented state* and weakly institutionalised parties are completing each other; weakly institutionalised parties are no challenge to Khamenei's authoritarian rule and fragmented state and auxiliary organisations prevents elite defection. With so much investment of time, and money (thanks to the Rentier economy) in the bureaucracy of office of leader *beyte rahbari* [the office of leader], The Expediency Council, IRGC, Basij, the network of *heyats* and Friday prayers organs, the regime does not see any need for a ruling party similar to the case of Egypt under Mubarak or Syria under Bashar al-Asad, let alone allowing the safe institutionalisation and consolidation of opposition political parties that might challenge its rule in future.

Changing the party-resistant system of IRI is very difficult and costly. Even election laws do not encourage party institutionalisation since it is a first past the post system. Parties rarely receive state funding and seldom survive their founding fathers' walk out of office. Instead auxiliary organisations of the fragmented state carry the weight of not having parties and go well with short term society and arbitrary rule. The auxiliary organisations are financed by the state from oil incomes, when a group of elites falls out of grace they seeks refuge in one of these safe heavens thus they have to tolerate the Leader's arbitrary rule so they can survive in these out of harm's way

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<sup>463</sup> Arang Keshavarzian's theory of fragmented authoritarianism is discussed in details in chapter 5

<sup>464</sup>For more information about auxiliary organisation and fragmented state in Iran see Arang Keshavarzian, "Contestation Without Democracy: Elite Fragmentation In Iran".

auxiliary organisations. The livelihood of loyal opposition party elites will be protected at the expense of their co-option. Therefore they would not resist too much the closer of their parties. IRP elites did not fight against the closer of their party, Hashemi did not stand firm against the collapse of Kargozaran and Mohammad Khatami did not resist against the suppression of Mosharekat.

## Appendix 1.

In a frank conversation with Imam I said “up until now we were engaged in the struggle, but from now on, we are being held accountable for the administration of the country. To start with, you witnessed how one small party formed the government and all the outsider parties are active.”

Hashemi: Meanwhile, the majority of political parties held newspapers and meetings, [they] were introducing themselves and recruited new members. They were many.

I said: “as you can see, part of the society is in use by these groups [and] we are nowhere organisationally. This is when we are everywhere [individually]. In these circumstances having a party is a prerequisite for accepting the task of governance, besides, even if we do not acquire one, the others still keep their own parties. Your self, do not want to stop the others from keeping their own parties and it is only your friends who are denied a party.”

Hashemi: It was his [Khomeini’s] assumption that clergy was a natural organisation. He had enough reasons to believe that this was the case.

In any case I said: “The clergy lacks the consistency that you [Khomeini] describe them with. Even if it possesses some of the positive characteristics of political parties without the negative ones, it is not ready for holding responsibility for a vast and complex society, [moreover] further we go, worse things get; Bottom-line is that we need a party”

Hashemi: His Eminence [Khomeini] when asked for the reasons of his disagreement with establishing a party replied

“A party is an ongoing dynamic matter. I can not approve of something that can switch to any form at any given time.” And HE added “you (plural) I can approve since I know you and I have knowledge of your good deeds but party is an ongoing organisation that has an independent mind of itself, I would not be able to predict what happens [inside the party] in the future.

In my own terms I replied “you are not supposed to endorse the party to the end of the world. Now in your time when we are in charge of the affairs you endorse us and we do our job. In the future if the party sanctioned a wrong policy or took an improper shape and form, we would not support it either. Based on this, it is clear that your support is subject to the terms and conditions of competency. If an unexpected occurred, you withdrew your endorsement.”

HE’s other reservation was that “you [as clergymen] aspire to become party-men yet you are fathers of the nation. The party represents only a narrow segment of the society. It is not appropriate for personalities who have broad recognition to tie themselves to one party.”

My answer was “far from representing narrow ideas and rigid factions the party is to encompass a cluster of Islamic, Revolutionary thoughts. By this the party keeps for itself the fatherly figure in the society.”

Finally, HE showed consent and agreed that we establish a party.

After receiving Imam's blessing, I passed the message to the friends who were waiting for an answer. It was after that, when our assembly that was consisted of Ayatollahs Beheshti, Khamenei and Mosavi Ardebili in addition to Dr Bahonar and myself, started doing the groundwork. It was as such that one week after the revolution we officially announced the launch of Islamic Republic Party. This was accompanied with publishing the party constitution.<sup>465</sup>

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<sup>465</sup> Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, *Enghelab va piroozi*, [Revolution and Victory: The Memoirs and Testimony of Hashemi Rafsanjani], Tehran, Nashre Ma'arefe Eslami, 2004, p. 216-218.



## Appendix 2.

1. Banisadr's inattention of the priority and necessity of such action. Unlike the well-organized party leaders in the democratic countries who appreciate the fact that consolidating the victory is more important than the winning itself, Banisadr did not have the required partisan experience. In comparison to his concentration on spontaneous and periodic motions he did not pay enough attention to the organisational and administrative work which by definition required following the chain of command for the decision-making process. Moreover he was under the false analogy that heading a political party is in contradiction with being president since president's job is to lead the society as a whole. Based on this he was avoiding the role of mediator in conflicts of power in the organisation, conflicts that were the natural and inevitable parts of any political enterprise.
2. The scarcity and the inexperience of the activist cadre who were around Banisadr and were comprising the newspaper and his election campaign headquarters. They were mostly too young, if not, they were University- educated cadre who despite their honesty and devotion did not have the capability and the motivation to build a nation-wide organic linkage with the social and electoral base in the country. I am emphasising this point because when I and Mr Ghazanfarpour were both young and inexperienced upon arrival from overseas but somehow similar to Banisadr we could introduce ourselves as political activists and potential election nominees to the people at local level. Because of the family ties and familiarity we had with our birthplace regions we were elected for the first Majles from the competitive constituencies such as Isfahan, Lenjan and Falavarjan. This was in spite of the strong opposition of IRP and the other newly- activated allegedly *hezbollahi* groups and in spite of the strong contestation of the well-known parties and cabals from Tudeh to the Liberation Movement and MKO and even sometimes the Friday prayer leaders who had ties with the newly- organised IRP or the Militant Clergy Association.
3. Mr Banisadr, although was successful in gaining the strong backing and support of a wide-ranging stratum and winning the Presidential election, unfortunately was always subject to profanities by a significant part of the so-called political and intellectual elites of the day. Although their proclamation did not influence the popular base as much it derived away a big part of the alike elites from cooperating and assisting the President. Thus Banisadr was empty handed when it came to the elites who were willing or capable of cooperation with him, being introduced to the President's electorate and being elected for the Majles. Based on the above mentioned rationale, at the national level the Offices of Cooperation did not introduce an exclusive and cohesive list of candidates for the first Majles election and thus left the local coalitions to choose for themselves. It was at this stage when many who did not have any proximity with the President's plans and targets have entered the Majles by using Banisadr's popularity. The very same people have later come head to head with the president.<sup>466</sup>

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<sup>466</sup> Ahmad Slamatian ( Ex-deputy in the first Majles after the revolution), in a email discussion with the author, April 2009

### Appendix 3.

**Ettela'at correspondent]: In your view, what are the most treacherous menaces that could put the spirituality and popularity characters of the revolution in jeopardy? And basically from the point of pathology, which of these hazards must be dealt with as a matter of urgency?**

[Mohammad Khatami]: We must take into account that the role of religiosity in the making of our cultural and collective identity and preserving it against the terrible storms is undeniable, especially in recent eras. To begin with, the emerging process of “nation” and “civil society” among Muslims and in specific Iranians has emanated from the focal point of religion and religiosity; in contrast to the West where the people of the West founded nation by turning their back to religion. Secondly, our people’s religiosity played an important part in the success of the revolution and resistance against all conspiracies. This factor must be insisted upon, especially the aspect of rationality in the religion must be strengthened and we must contribute to the society’s religious intellect and religious thought. Keeping in mind the pivotal role of religion, in my view two factors are the chief menaces [in answer to your question]. One is the ideologies and the methods that God forbid might lead into corruption and immorality especially among our younger generation, the other is the backward-looking that makes religion seem powerless and impatient in dealing with the realities of the time. The thoughtfulness and deliberation in the religious field must be emphasised upon, at the same time the two menaces of *Elteghat* [ideological hybridisation] and Tahajor [reactionism] should not be taken lightly.<sup>467</sup>

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<sup>467</sup> *Ettela'at*, Ordibehesht 31/ May 21, 1997

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