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State and religion in contemporary Iran modernity, tradition, and political Islam (1979-2005)

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State and Religion in Contemporary Iran
Modernity, Tradition, and Political Islam
(1979-2005)

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State and Religion in Contemporary Iran

Modernity, Tradition and Political Islam, 1979-2005

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Acronyms & Abbreviations

ACC: Association of Combatant Clergy
AE: Assembly of Experts
CIR: Crusaders of Islamic Revolution
CIR: Council of Islamic Revolution
CS: Civil Society
GC: Guardian Council
IA: Islamic Association
IAS: Islamic Association of Students
IIPF: Islamic Iran Participation Front
IMF: International Monetary Fund
IRI: Islamic Republic of Iran
NGO: Non Governmental Organisations
OSU: Office of Strengthening Unity
REC: Regime's Expediency Council
SAP: Structural Adjustment Policy
SC: Servants of Constructions
SKF: Second Khordad Front
SQST: Society of Qum Seminary Teachers
UIA: University Islamic Association
WTO: World Trade Organisation

Introduction

The title of this study raises questions about the meaning and the significance of the words 'modernity', 'tradition' and 'Political Islam' in contemporary Iran. The purpose of this study is to reveal true meanings of the thoughts and practises of the post-revolution Iranian elites and intellectuals, in relations to and alongside the social events, to emphasize the existence of a modernisation process in the institution of state and the moderate re-interpretation of Islam in the religious establishment, which together have given rise to the distinctly Iranian features of political development. This study shall be in a socio-historical setting because political changes and social events in contemporary Iran are difficult to identify and impossible to understand unless their roots are discovered in their true locations.

The word 'modernity' in this study refers to the emerging post-revolution Iranian society, the socio-political institutions developing from a more traditional form and the rising pre-eminence in the political system - a particular type that is developing through the rational-legal authority through which the state institution follows its hierarchal principle; some democratic and plural ideologies have evolved through the post-revolution Republican model.¹ The word 'tradition' refers to those areas in which a jurisdictional system is not clearly specified and duties are delegated by absolutist jurisprudence and which can change at any time - diffuse in political authority where no explicit rules exist. The word 'contemporary' limits the scope of the study to the recent decades (from the 1979 Islamic revolution to the 2005 Iranian presidential election), with a greater emphasis on more recent years. The blanket term 'Pan-Islamist' is intended to cover all the various Islamic political groups and tendencies which have been using Political Islam as their worldview and which hold Ayatollah Khomeini as a symbol of their claim to power. However, it consists of many different, sometimes conflicting, political groups and tendencies, as well as individual elites competing for power. The word 'Republicanism' (although Islamic) refers to the ideology that governs the Iranian nation as a political system (republic), with an emphasis on liberty (as defined in the Iranian Constitution), rule of law (which cannot be arbitrarily ignored by the government), popular sovereignty, and the civic virtue (social responsibility) practiced by citizens.

The word 'narrative' in this study refers to a performative style of writing. 'Hermeneutic' refers to the method, spirit and approach of the study,

1 - Modernity, according to Giddens, at its simplest is a shorthand term for modern society or industrial civilization. Portrayed in more detail, it is associated with (1) a certain set of attitudes towards the world, the idea of the world as an open transformation by human intervention; (2) a complex of economic institutions, especially industrial production and a market economy; (3) a certain range of political institutions, including the nation-state and mass democracy. Largely as a result of these characteristics, modernity is vastly more dynamic than any previous type of social order. It is a society - more technically, a complex of institutions - which unlike any preceding cultures lives in the future rather than the past. See Anthony Giddens 'Conversations with Anthony Giddens: Making Sense of Modernity 1998, p.94.

as well as the knowledge of interpretation in order to disclose the system of meaning of the text and the communication. The concept of 'Text' in this study is extended beyond written documents to any number of objects subjected to interpretation, such as the literal event of speech and experiences. The term Pan-Islamist 'liberal' refers to individual or group of Muslims who support social liberalism (a political ideology that seeks to maximise individual liberties). The term Pan-Islamist 'conservative' refers to individual or groups of Muslims with political philosophies that favour tradition, where 'tradition' refers to religious, cultural or nationally defined beliefs and customs having an established values system and goals.

Some sociologists may note that some of the more rarefied sociological concepts are absent from the discussion in this research. Others may not be impressed because it does not demonstrate a sophisticated knowledge of Western philosophy. Still others may be disappointed with the absence of elementary Islamic theology. However, discussion of any of these absences would not have been helpful in clarifying the subjects in hand, or, they have already been extensively covered in other books and articles, the scientific value of those results may now be assessed against the present knowledge of the academic institutions concerning Iranian politics. Finally, in regards to the truthfulness of my ideas and methods, the sources of information and academic integrity of my research, I can only welcome any opinion based on scientific criticism.

This study is made up of six chapters, each comprising one main subject. Chapter One is about modernity, tradition and political Islam in contemporary Iran. It introduces two approaches (hermeneutics and traditions) of the post-revolution elite on models of governance. It then explains the perceived concepts on culture and political culture through the dominant politico-religious frame of the elites understanding of these concepts which is essential to a full understanding of the rest of study. The next goal is to explain the controversy over the instruments of domination of the elite culture and political culture of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) in philosophical and politico-religious terms. This explanation makes a great deal of difference to our understanding about the post-revolutionary dual nature and logic of power in the Islamic regime, whether or not the direction of Republic was basically towards intensification of modernisation or a return to the traditional way of governance in Iran. This leads this study, therefore, to explain three fundamental instruments of domination of the elite culture in the IRI (Unitarianism, essentialism, and dualism) and some instruments of domination of political culture in the IRI (ideology, organisation, and civic virtue) for further testing the efficacy about the above question.

Chapter Two is an evaluation of the ideologies in contemporary Iran, which include discussion of some of the critical ideological debates on political reform and reforms on politics, and in general, the meaning of modernisation in contemporary Iran. This chapter covers the ideologies behind recent political reforms as part of a larger discussion on an alternative model for a plural Islamic state dealing with its dual ideological setting and a moderate interpretation of the Political Islam that was assumed to have profound

effects on the political establishment. This chapter introduces the ideological aspects that eventually led to moderates' political triumph, the beginning of the end of absolutist restoration, the ideological supremacy of the so-called 'the rule of law' and the key issues such as why in the late 1980s some socio-economic reform and in late 1990s political reform were initiated in first place. This section will be followed by a discussion about the ideological struggle between the two main political factions (absolutist and moderate), which has resulted (though not inevitably) in the birth of some alternatives in politics, and consequently, the way that moderate groups conceived political modernity. An assessment of the alternative theories and ideological guidelines for political reforms together with some critical debates on the dilemma of modernity will be given in this section. An examination of the ideology of republicanism and modern institution building through leadership reform end this chapter with particular focus on the arena of the IRI's reform on politics, which hopefully should particularly make the overall ideological transformation in the IRI transparent.

Chapter Three is divided into two distinct parts, each of which consists of essential information about one category of socio-political groups involved in political and other reforms. Part one develops some preliminary information about the post-revolutionary organisations in the IRI such as *Anjoman*, *Shora*, and *Basidj*. This part consists of a broader definition about formal and informal groupings and gives an assessment to the impact of the personal basis on the IRI politics. This assessment also includes the effect of the public intervention in the IRI political life and the reform on politics. This part, therefore, will illustrate the basic feature that forms the formal and informal relations in these groupings. The next area of focus in this part provides information about moderate groups, which have played an important role in the contemporary political life of IRI, and covers their struggle against conservative groups. An evaluation of the moderate Pan-Islamist groups in this category, which in their turn have participated in the reform process, will follow. Some related observations on the events during this period will end this section. The second part of the chapter offers information about a second category of groups who were behind political reforms and provides extensive information on university students' movements and their associations. This chapter concludes with some discussions about the students' intervention in political events of the years between 1997 and 2000 in major universities in Tehran and other major cities.

As an instance of the elaboration, therefore, these three major chapters attempt to present a realistic perspective on the ideologies, organisations and working style associated with most political actors in Iran. A division of ideologies and organisations, which distinguishes between general, intermediate and concrete uses of political thought-practice in the IRI, will be examined and suggestions as to whether or not different kinds of ideas and actions ought to be valued differently will be discussed. Overall, it is hoped this information will give a correct impression of the range of organisations and opinions on a number of moderate and conservative

thought-actions and will offer an insight about the real place of certain ideologies and organisations within the Iranian political spectrum.

Chapter Four develops the stages through which the ideologies of modernity developed and now have a hold over Iranian contemporary political life. This chapter interprets the recent literature published in Iran that contain this political discourse adopted by the IRI elite on modernity. This section includes discussion of these debates, which were to search for a consensus on political reforms while centring their views from a mixed radical Islamic republic of the post-revolutionary period to a more moderate and plural stage. The next part of this chapter concludes with some ideological debates among the senior elites that centred on various aspects of modernity and tradition in early 1990s, together with some of the post-modern theories outlined by the secular political reformers.

Chapter Five is an attempt to show that there is a specific view on the nature of power and political power in Iranian politics that has exerted a formative influence on the way in which power-related issues are understood. This encompasses the perception on the mixed nature of supreme power in the IRI and the way in which some elites have altered political issues. This chapter sets forth an explanation on dual nature of power that has existed since the 1979 revolution in the Iranian Islamic republic. This dual nature has been presented through modern Republican institutions on the one hand and a traditional Iranian Absolutism on the one hand. Here it is pointed out that this dualism in the IRI is not about secularism on the one hand and religiosity on the one hand but rather it is intimately bound up with some of the elements of the IRI elite culture and political culture.

Chapter Six concludes the whole work by offering an exploration of three alternative concepts proposed during the reform process which has aimed to modernise the Islamic republic institutions and the Islamic regime as a whole. The chapter contains an interpretation of three main theories: firstly, the writings of first Soroush on a religiously democratic government, secondly, Shabestari's hermeneutic theory on a humane reading of religion, and thirdly, Babak Ahmadi's post-modern theories on modernity and critical thought. The remainder of the chapter will test these alternative theories, which were debated during the socio-political modernisation of Iran, and will conclude with Mohsen Kadivar's alternative theory on the Republican nature of supreme power.

The first part of the three last chapters looks mostly at the Pan-Islamist moderates' theories on political change, while the second looks at their theories on nature of power and political power. These chapters (4, 5, and 6) would assess the limited influence of the vision of the IRI elite and the doctrine on the process of modernisation as was manifested through the reform process within the framework of a scale of changes. It points out that, although ideological changes took place almost exclusively under the overall instruments of domination of IRI elite culture and political culture, a fundamental shift in their ideologies themselves is visible at the same time. Effectively in this respect we shall see ideological change can be gauged by asking which modern political theories were popular during these years to the

point of being adopted, and conversely, which of these theories were used as negative examples. This analysis shows how Islamic politics and ideologies have undergone changes since the 1979 revolution and what these changes have consisted of. And, moreover, based on those new findings, it seems the form and direction of alternatives for the future have been discussed and decided.

Overall, this study attempts to reveal the true meanings of the three instruments of domination of both IRI elite culture (Unitarianism, Essentialism, and Dualism) and political culture (ideologies, organisations, and working styles) in order to serve as a useful theoretical background through which one may better understand the changes in the institution of both the Islamic state and religion, the political system of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the elite political thought-practice, and, moreover, the modernisation of Iran as conceived by most intellectuals, and the political reforms as organised and executed from the early days of the 1979 Islamic revolution until the 2005 Iranian presidential election.²

Hypothesis: The Modernisation Process in Contemporary Iran

1. Modernity is a condition (and a term) which one may characterise or describe for two essentially different types of societies. The first is an 'advanced' or Western society, one in which socio-economic structure and socio-political institutions both differ from what they have fundamentally been and also what changes they were capable of generating come from within their own society. The second is a society which had originally been static or even stagnant - incapable of generating changes from within itself - but over the course of time and for various historical reasons, it become subject to the impact of one or more 'advanced' societies. In this case, change becomes a fundamental characteristic of the society; the interrelation between this society and those 'advanced' societies becomes crucial to an understanding of the development in the former. Iran, by virtue of her long interrelationship with the West, belongs to this second category, therefore, subject to socio-economic and socio-political development and thus modernisation.

2. The impact of the 'advanced' societies on Iran was revolutionary; it ultimately forced Iranian society to adopt a new form of socio-economic management and to undermine the traditional social hierarchy; it infected and transformed the existing elite; introducing new patterns of thought and throughout creating new comparative norms. The shift to modernity could have resulted solely from capital expansion or semi-colonialism, such as in the case of Iran, which remained politically independent. Yet, in any shift of this type, the effects could be far more fundamental and more rapid if the shift preceded the main period of the capital expansion. In this respect, the

2- The names of people and places, as well as other Farsi words and sentences, have been transliterated on the basis of the Thomas T. Pedersen simplified standard rules (<http://ee.www.ee/transliteration>) except in those cases when the transliterated form of a name has already been established by practice. Apart from that, in cases which, in the Farsi language words of Arabic origin are pronounced differently they have been transliterated in accordance with their Farsi, not Arabic, pronunciations.

very exigencies of the struggle for retaining independence led to a more extensive adoption of new socio-economic method and technological development - thus to a more widespread disintegration of the existing ways of life. The process whereby this occurred may now be traced.

3. The interrelation between Iran's modernising society and the advanced societies initially led the former to seek to adopt, in part at least, those aspects of the latter which were the sources of its strengths, since only in this way could the latter withstood on its own grounds. This involved primarily copying methods of socio-economic management and technological developments, however, the latter could not be affected without simultaneously copying those socio-political relationships which this model demanded. This necessity presented a dilemma to the Iranian political authority: how to change the method of socio-economic management and to develop technology without overly disturbing the existing socio-political relations and ways of life. The Iranian political authority meet the dilemma by pursuing the former model while attempting to take greater control of the latter model through bureaucratic interference, complete domination of socio-economic management - especially capital formation, prevention of the growth of independent socio-economic powers - and - finally - force and oppression. Nonetheless, new social relationships would not be completely suppressed or controlled; they would develop in spite of the political authority's efforts.

4. In copying an advanced model, Iranian society worked according to a ready-made model. This suggest that it necessarily must reproduce the path followed by the advanced model in reaching that model as well as the actual model itself. In fact, the advantage of being a modernising society, Iran moved directly towards the 'end-product,' avoiding some aspects of socio-economic and technological development and implementing only results it desired. This not only shortened the modernisation time-span, but also introduced a different process - ultimately creating a different model which subsumed the model of the more advanced societies and, in some aspects, went beyond it, as evidenced by the disruption of the existing ways of life, the innovative nature of the new way of life and the peculiar intermixing of the whole.

5. By avoiding some of the developmental passages of the Western societies, the new model created curious results by leaping over socio-economic and technological development, Iranian society also by-passed some social forms. Those social grouping which would have come into being and had there been no other ways, had there been an adoption of earlier forms, did not come into being. On the other hand, the social groupings which provided preconditions for latest model did crystallise. Simultaneously, the main elements of the older model remained: An absolutist political group together with the new political authority holding power accumulated via control over the socio-economic management alongside a religious socio-political group holding power accumulated via control over the traditional sectors of economy; a traditionalist petty-merchant population whose reorganisation only occurred to the extent required to make the new sectors

viable for immediate purposes. Thus, the overall curious result was institutional dualism, bureaucratic privileges, some advanced industries, a large population of petty-merchants, and – finally - a weak civil society.

6. This situation is characteristic of the unique process of modernisation through which the Iranian society has travelled. The situation may be broken down into the following attributes:

(a) The modernisation process in Iran, far from being complete, is in some ways as advanced as modern societies.

(b) Conversely, sectors of the society have not changed at all, ostensibly at least, so that the overall impact is that of lopsidedness, uneven distribution of wealth and power, the polarisation of society into various groups who are not directly or logically related to one another.

(c) The close proximity of very old and very new models has created stark anomalies in society and consequently has led to a general socio-political condition that is in some aspects progressist while in others self-defeating.

(d) The co-existence within one society of two conflicting socio-political models brought comparison, awareness of alternatives, and eventually a consciousness of modernity, which in some important senses is revolutionary.

(e) The new socio-economic management and socio-political institution have created new goals and aspirations, which are at variance with previous ones, but since the former model have not been wholly adopted and the latter model not wholly abandoned, there is confusion over the goals of the society and a clash between them.

(f) The contradictions inherent in an uneven socio-economic development, the growth of consciousness about modernity and alternatives, the conflict over the goals, and so on, all create disharmony and instability, and make for a political situation which is potentially explosive. In this respect, the peculiar nature and dynamics of novelty make changes inevitable, and the changes that have arisen in Iranian society have the character of an unprecedented, combined amalgam, one exhibiting both archaic and contemporary forms.

This hypothesis is based on dozens of extremely interesting essays, books and articles on the concepts and practice of modernity and related socio-political ideas that were published in Iran during the 1980s and 1990s. These works consist of an incisive account of the nature of the concepts or the place of the modernity in the writings of Europeans and Iranian political writers. The literature provides explanation of the socio-political concept about modernity, which is placed in the historical horizon and the contested experiences of the advanced societies, and moreover are compared to those socio-political peculiarities in Iran's development. These theories, while placed in their socio-historical setting, are examined in terms of their compatibilities and differences with post-revolution period ideologies. Therefore, in the following section, these works shall be reviewed and it will be shown that during the years when these works appeared, not only did the Iranian intellectuals and political activists (either Pan-Islamist or secular) become familiar with these concepts and the related ideas or experiences, but the IRI elite and state officials also actively explored and partly

implemented these ideas for the reorganisation of Islamic state institutions and for the reform on politics.

Hermeneutics Approach and Narrative Style of Writing

This study has an interdisciplinary approach suitable to the domain of political sciences as well as political development in contemporary Iran. The interdisciplinary approach in this study has two basic characteristics. It follows a hermeneutic approach: the process of deciphering that goes from manifest content and meaning to latent or hidden meaning. The 'text,' object of interpretation, is to be taken here in a very broad sense: symbols as in a dream, myths and symbols of society (as in religious, cultural, and social contexts), literary texts, encompassing everything in the interpretative process, and so forth. Alongside these are the verbal and nonverbal forms of communication as well as those prior aspects that impact communication, such as presuppositions, preunderstandings, signs, and metaphors.³ The second characteristic of this study is an explanatory approach: the state of things are written in a narrative style, and highlight, therefore, the human experience of time.

To pursue the above procedure, this study involves an interdisciplinary – although not imprecise or unrigorous – approach: it implies an orientation towards the real meanings, as opposed to abstract puzzling; it combines the use of theories and contemporary history in its arguments and exposition; it merges performance, interpretation, reflection, and explanation; and finally, uses qualitative as well as quantitative evidence in its evaluations.

Hermeneutic in this study is principally associated with the interpretation and the writings of the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur,⁴ the Iranian thinker Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari, and the secular writer Babak Ahmadi. The principal individuals responsible for hermeneutics teachings in contemporary Iran are Shabestari and Ahmadi. This study acknowledges its indebtedness to these key figures in the hermeneutics

3- In ancient Greek a hermeneus was an interpreter and the term probably originates from the name of Hermes, messenger of the gods and epitome of eloquence (Ahmadi, B. 1992, p.497). In all its nineteenth-century uses hermeneutics was agreed to be the art and science of interpretation, primarily, though not exclusively, of religious texts (Ibid. p. 497). A more specific implication was that hermeneutics was concerned with real and hidden meanings, quite different from the elucidation, and concern with practical application which was the concern of exegesis (Ibid. p. 497). Hermeneutics has also its roots in the Renaissance but in two parallel and partly interacting current thought: the Protestant analysis of the Bible and the humanist study of the ancient classics. In twentieth century hermeneutics has become one of many disciplines to shift from a primarily religious context into secular social theory (Ibid. p. 497). Hermeneutical thinkers argue that language is the primary condition for all experience and that linguistic forms (symbols, metaphors, texts) reveal dimensions of human beings in the world (Alvesson, N. & Skoldberg, K. 2000, p. 25). In this way many of the hermeneutics conventions found in European writing have persisted into the Iranian contemporary literature.

4 - Ricoeur's work is best understood as an interplay of three philosophical movements: reflexive philosophy, phenomenology, and hermeneutics. His original intention was to develop a comprehensive phenomenology of the will, and while not finished, this project was carried out through several works such as 'Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary' (1966) or 'Fallible Man' (1965) and 'The Symbolism of Evil' (1976). All of these works explore dimensions of human subjectivity and its world. As a student of phenomenology, Ricoeur acknowledged that consciousness has an intentional structure; consciousness is always consciousness of something. Given this, there is no immediate self-transparency of the self to itself, even by a reflexive act. Thus the journey to self-understanding must involve, in Ricoeur's terms, a detour of interpretation. The 'I think' knows itself only relative to the act of intending and the intended 'sense'. That is, the self knows itself reflexively relative to intentional objects of consciousness which must be interpreted to disclose their import for self-understanding.

tradition, most notably, to Shabestari and Ricoeur. In terms of this study, the most important aspects that hermeneutics teaches were how to read and understand in accordance to the socio-historical horizons of the texts and the presuppositions of the writers. This teaching enabled this study to focus on the communities concerned and to allow a productive imagination for a narrative style of writing.

This study acknowledges the influence of Hegelian dialectic on the process of identifying the key oppositional concepts and terms in the extracts from the debates found in the literature on this topic. In the process of identifying and examining key issues, these oppositional concepts or terms were first laid out and then synthesized and articulated as new, and sometimes more developed, concepts. The use of dialectic was essentially associated with the crucial elements of those subjects that represented tradition and modernity in the conflicting process of change in contemporary Iran. However, like Ricoeur's approach to the dialectic of Hegel, this study's synthesis is not about uniformity or universality, as the Hegelian model, but rather it serves to show how the meanings of two seemingly opposed terms are implicitly informed by - and borrow from - each other, while within the Hegelian dialectic, the terms remain distinct from each other even when a common ground is formed. The common ground in this study, however, is simply the ground of their mutual presupposition. Thus, for this study, like for Ricoeur, dialectic provides a unity of continuity and discontinuity.

For Mohammad Majtahed Shabestari, hermeneutics is the knowledge of interpretation, and he emphasizes that understanding is a kind of knowledge. Reading a text or listening to the literal event of speech does not necessarily mean one can understand them, simply because, he writes, one may read a text or listen to a speech and not understand what the writers or speakers had in mind. We read a text or listen to speech, Shabestari writes, in two possible ways. One is when we classify them as a phenomenon, and in this case with particular regulations, we try to explain those relations which created that phenomenon and portray how this phenomenon came into existence. The second way is through interpretation and understanding, the use of which means that the text or speech become transparent and reveal their real meanings (Shabestari, M.M. 2000. P. 13). For Shabestari, interpretation is based on the pre-supposition that when we read a text or listen to speech, although the structure of words and sentences might be recognisable for us, these do not reveal the hidden meaning, and only through interpretation does the meaning crystallise (Ibid. pp. 17-23). Shabestari's hermeneutic theory, therefore, is about fundamental questions of how we understand a text and what that understanding is. Understanding is a kind of cognition, he states, and while interpretation is subject to philosophical debate, cognition is also subject to interpretation. Interpretation relates us to history and cognition is a matter of history (Ibid. pp. 25-28). That means to understand what writers meant in their previous writing, we have to reconstruct in the present that which was understood in the past: in other words, the past has to be brought forward to the present and in order to

finally be interpreted. However, what Shabestari means is comprehension and understanding come through interpretation, which depends on the pre-suppositions of both the writer and the reader.

Like Paul Ricoeur, Shabestari believes that in order to understand a text, puts also the act of pre-reflection forward as a quest. Understanding begins with questioning (Ibid. pp. 25-28). Moreover, he emphasises, separating humans from history, society and social class is absurd. We ask questions based on our own interests and expectations, in other words, a particular way of questioning leads one to a particular way of understanding (Ibid. pp. 23-25). This is therefore the act of pre-reflection or expectation of the reader that determines the chains of questions being asked. The truth is, when a person questions a particular topic, the path to the answer becomes invisible, although there is a pre-reflection for a particular answer. This is because, while the attention is focused on one part of the truth, other parts will be missed. Occasionally one might be misled in his line of questioning due to the fact that his prereflection, interests, or expectations, fail to allow for other possible meanings. Questioning, prereflection, interests, and expectations led us to look for the meaning of words in text and ask: 'what this text is telling me?' (Ibid. pp. 28-29). In this way one is either asking within a historical horizon, or should take history in account (Ibid. pp. 29-31). By doing this, interpreters search for what the writers in their texts have said and attempt to ensure that the readers truly understand it. Shabestari is certain that the text has meaning, but this meaning becomes transparent only when one discovers the meaning a writer intended to convey at the time of the writing. Therefore, to discover the central meaning of a text is the next aspect of this theory. He points out that a text should be understood as a whole, as a total or uniform system with a centre, which means, however, only when the text is understood will the central meaning be discovered. The next aspect which Shabestari focuses on is translation of the meaning of the text in the readers' historical horizon. A text is produced in a given time and one will read it in a different time, which means the reader must deal with text that is not of their own time and has been written within a different historical horizon.

Paul Ricoeur is a post-structuralist hermeneutic philosopher who employs a model of textuality as the framework for his analysis of meaning, which extends across writing, speech, art and action. According to Ricoeur, all philosophies have some fundamental epistemology and must be interpreted in their own terms. Humans understand themselves through the linguistic world in which they find themselves (Ricoeur, p., trans. Ahmadi, B., 2001. pp. 63-70). Understanding is through the interpretation of manifold signs, symbols, and texts which reveal meaning, the characters of human life, and our world. Ricoeur's approach in this sense is open rather than closed and promotes the existence of differences rather than uniformity. His philosophy is a reflective one in which he considers the most fundamental philosophical problems to concern self-understanding. In this way, reflection is focused on writers, knowledge producers, the relevant research community and their particular society as a distinctive whole.

To read and understand about contemporary Iran, this study also employs Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic method and teachings. This approach considers human understanding to be cogent to the extent that it implicitly deploys structures and strategies characteristic of textuality. Ricoeur writes that our self-understanding - and history itself - are 'fictive', that is, subject to the productive effects of the imagination through interpretation. For Ricoeur human subjectivity - a subject is always a situated, embodied subject, being anchored in a named and dated physical, historical and social world - is primarily linguistically designated and mediated by symbols. He reminds his readers about the 'problematic of existence' that are found in language and must be worked out in language and discourse. He refers to his hermeneutic method as a 'hermeneutic of suspicions': discourse both reveals *and* conceals something about the nature of being.

His theoretical style can best be described as 'tensive'. He weaves together heterogeneous concepts and discourses to form a composite discourse in which new meanings are created without diminishing the specificity and difference of the constitutive terms. His works on metaphor and on the human experience of time are a good example of how this method is used. In the essay on *Explanation and Understanding* (1991), he discusses human behaviour in terms of the tension between concepts of material causation, and the language of actions and motives. The tensive style is in keeping with what Ricoeur regards as basic, ontological tensions inherent in the peculiar being that is human existence, namely, the ambiguity of belonging to both the natural world and the world of action (through freedom of the will). Ricoeur insists that philosophy must find a way to contain and express those tensions, and so his work ranges across diverse schools of philosophical thought, bringing together insights and analysis from literary studies, political science and history. Ricoeur's employment of a method that he describes as a 'refined dialectic' is a manifest of the influence of Hegel's method. For Ricoeur, the dialectic is a 'relative [moment] in a complex process called interpretation' as he writes in *Explanation and Understanding* (Ricoeur, p., 1991, p.150). In this work Ricoeur argues that scientific explanation implicitly deploys a background hermeneutic understanding that exceeds the resources of explanation. At the same time, hermeneutic understanding necessarily relies upon the systematic process of explanation. Thus, this study implies an orientation towards explanatory means of communication and opposes certain hermeneutical thinkers, and admits the importance of various explanatory disciplines, although he is adamant that the moment of explanation, while necessary, is not sufficient for understanding.

This study also follows Shabestari and Ricoeur's hermeneutic concept and remains in the tradition of reflexive philosophy. Reflexivity, Ricoeur emphasizes, is the act of thought turning back on itself in order to grasp the unifying principle of its operation. He also qualifies the focus of the knowledge producers and any pretence of immediate alternative knowledge (Ricoeur, p., in Ahmadi, b., 1992, p. 623). Another crucial aspect in Paul Ricoeur's concept is what he called the hermeneutical arch of understanding,

which is detailed in his work *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (1976). By 'arch' he means that interpretation begins with the pre-reflective dimensions of human life. In order to reach an understanding of our sources' pre-reflection of being in the world, it is thus necessary to undertake the interpretation of their texts, symbols, actions, and moreover, the events that reveal their human situation. Other aspects of Ricoeur's theory on the referential power of texts, which are central to this study's interpretation, are the studies of the metaphor (*The Rule of Metaphor*, 1976) and narrative (*Time and Narrative*, 1984). Babak Ahmadi argues that the main contention of Ricoeur's semantic theory, however, is that texts refer to the world, but do so in an indirect way, because they reveal a different vision of the world as possible for the reader (Ahmadi, B., 1992, p. 623).

A narrative style of writing on the state of things in this study constructs a suitable format for an interdisciplinary approach. The narrative style is central for interaction and alternative knowledge production, and is particularly suited to studies in which imagination plays an important role. The narrative style of writing incorporates two dimensions: the horizon of action (the plot) and the horizon of consciousness (the motivations). The former outlines the actions and the actors; the latter outlines their mental states (goals, beliefs, emotions). J.L. Austin (1971) in his work on philosophy of language attempts to distinguish between a constative and performative utterance. He pointed out that one initial distinction is that while the former reports something, the latter does something. Narratives are one of the most common forms of social interaction and are created in order to make sense of the world around us. We actively participate in the creation of culture and counter-culture by reading or listening to narratives and telling them to others, while by the same token, we learn about others' culture through their narratives. Narratives facilitate everyday communication between individuals or social groups and their community through literature, the media, and political groupings in both formal and informal ways. Narrative style is a natural form of writing and is found in abundance in the social sciences and in stories written to explain the state of things. For instance, asking people to write their opinions is a way of gathering performative utterance which are bound up with effects that are material, social, and historical even though these performative utterances do not necessarily pertain to existing practices and actions.

Political narratives are located in the domain of the possible and are potentially not yet realised; therefore, they can turn out to be useful in the process of bringing about change. However, there is no direct link between the imagined performatives and social action, although they both may provide creative solutions in the future. As a point of principle the role of researcher while collecting information is similar to that of editor who actively looks for interesting material and tries to express himself through that material. The point of this process is to bring the subjective sphere closer to ideas and imagination than to solid evidence. The researcher can initiate and write these imaginative texts because without taking this initiative, the texts

would probably not be presented in the form which they should be, even though the process looks more like initiating a debate rather than launching towards a fixed statement. Finally, the researcher cannot decide beforehand whether this information will or will not be used for creative knowledge production in a socially constructed environment.

CHAPTER ONE:

Modernity, Tradition, and Political Islam

The Iranian experience of modernity is a unique and complex one due to the fact that the Iranians have experienced, in succession, at least four distinct approaches to what could be defined as a modernisation model.⁵ Before the 1979 revolution, according to Homa Katouzian (1981, p.234) the Iranian regime adopted a 'pseudo-modernist'⁶ approach wholesale, but with the triumph of Islamic forces, the advisability of the entire Western perspective was placed in doubt and an 'Islamic model' replaced it completely. With the Republican-Absolutist split of the 1980s and the radicalisation of Iranian life, the 'Ayatollah Khomeini Line' (*Khate Imam*) became the new standard used to judge the worth of the modernisation, and this yardstick was applied to the 'Islamic Model'. In more recent years, the reforms of the late 1990s turned Iran onto yet another track: this time emphasis was on a 'Republican (Iranian-Islamic) model', which incorporated elements of the Western universalism.

Referring the pre-revolution experience of 'pseudo-modernist', to Katouzian (1981), the new approach started in early 1979, when a nation-state was established in Iran through a popular revolution. For the first time in Iranian modern history, through a politico-military campaign, moderate Pan-Islamists and layman traditionalists, together with some secular guerrilla forces, unified Iranian communities and engaged officially in the institution of state. The newly established nation-state, therefore, was characterised by a division between two political classes. Under the leadership of Islamic institution, almost the entire state bureaucracy was composed of moderate Pan-Islamists who had worked for the Islamic Republic and owed the clerical leadership a part of their political power and ideological services. The moderate Pan-Islamists were not free in decision-making; as liberals, they could not decide the key state's politics; high-ranking clerical leaders could still expel them from their official positions, but they enjoyed far greater rights and political guarantees than the secular or leftist forces. A smaller percentage of state bureaucracies were made up of layman traditionalists, who received fiefs from clerical dignitaries in exchange for providing the organisation of policing and military services to the latter. At the top of the

5- Modernism according to Katouzian (1981) is a synthetic vision of science and society which gradually emerged from European development in the past two centuries. It is a general attitude which reduces science to mechanistic or technological universal laws, and social progress to the purely quantitative growth of output and technology. In this respect, the modernist vision is not ideological, for a mechanistic and universal attitude to science, and purely quantitative and technological aspiration for society, may be contained and pursued within conflicting ideological frameworks. Ideological beliefs and issues do matter a great deal, but conflicting ideological theories and policies can be (and, indeed, have been) formulated within the spirit and vision of this European modernism. Katouzian, M. A. H., 1981, pp.101-2

6- The 'pseudo-modernism' refers to 'an implicit belief in the homogeneity of social experience everywhere in the world, and the related universality of scientific laws... pseudo-modernism in the Third World, however, is the product of this product: it is characteristic of men and women in those societies that – regardless of *formal* ideological divisions – are alienated from the culture and history of their own society, both in intellectual ideas and in social aspirations,... combines the European modernist's lack of regard for specific features of Third World societies with a lack of proper understanding of modern scientific and social development, their scope, limit, and implications, and whence they have emerged. Katouzian, M. A. H., 1981, pp.102-3.

pyramid of the state stood Ayatollah Khomeini, representing various Pan-Islamist groups of Iranian communities.

'Next' to these two fundamental forces was the Islamic institution; an organisation more powerful than the newly established Republic. The Islamic institution constituted a vast bureaucracy; it was the single largest political group. Its hierarchy was open in priority (but not exclusively) to the country's merchant and landlord families. The Islamic institution supplied the new nation-state with religious justification – an ideology – and intellectuals.

The newly established Islamic Republic combined the pre-revolution monarch-established state institution and the newly created institution of jurisprudence, although at the same time the Republic processed its own marginalization. The new political system, as a result, became highly parcellised: power was endlessly fragmented to the extent that it devolved into a myriad of ideological entities - traditionalist theocracy, religiously-nationalism, radical etatism, and other less significant ones - each subdivided into smaller groups existing in a maze of political titles, polity invention, and particular alliance relations. It was in the many pores of this political order, playing some against the others, often playing itself off against another, until the time in early 1990s, moderation in all aspects of life and labour developed. This became a condition for diminution in the censorship of the ideas and the increasing demand for a plural political model, which finally led to the result in May 1997 of the moderate Pan-Islamist republican groups enjoying a role of leadership.

The new phase in the post-revolutionary period for modernisation began at the Constitutional Assembly, where some members of the religious establishment made a concerted effort to determine the sources of legislation. Most representatives did recognise the principles of the Islamic religion as part of country's legislation; however, they made sure that the Islamic principles represented just one of its many provisions (Zubaida, S. in Beinini, J. & Stork, J., 1997. p.106). The next stage began in the late 1980s when the debates on the compatibility of the legislation and the Islamic principles brought tensions between the conservative Guardian Council⁷ and the radical members of Parliament. The seriousness of the conflict was to the extent that Ayatollah Khomeini was obliged to intervene and issue a historical

7 - The Guardian Council is an important organ of decision-making in the Islamic Republic of Iran. It composes of twelve jurists with a wide range of power that scrutinises and censors the legislations. The jurists are charged to ensure that the legislations are compatible to the tenets of Islamic Shari'a. Since the responsibilities of the jurists are not written in a codified form, they have unlimited scope and powers of intervention. The Supreme Leader appoints six of the twelve members, the other six are appointed by the Parliament from a list approved by the Supreme Judicial Council, itself composed of high-ranking Pan-Islamist elites. In practice, throughout the 1980s, the Council used the power to veto legislation, which interfered with private property rights, land reform, and nationalisation of foreign trade. They consistently ruled that such measures were compatible with the basic principles of Islam. These rulings were widely perceived to be politically conservative, while in the debates between conservatives and radicals on economic policy, the Guardian Council consistently favoured the conservatives. It should be noticed that these judgements were not inevitable because other jurists, also proceeding from the Islamic sources, reached more radical conclusions. While the stance of the Council was considered obstructive for most state policies, in 1988, pressure mounted on Ayatollah Khomeini and consequently he established a new organ called the Regime's Council of Expediency to arbitrate between the Council and the Parliament.

refutation that led to creation of an arbitrary organ called the *Shoraye Maslehate Nezam* (Regime Expediency Council). Ayatollah Khomeini declared:

An Islamic government acting in the general interest of a Muslim nation can, if necessary, abrogate religious principles and forbid the basic pillars of the Islamic faith, such as praying, fasting, and pilgrimage to Mecca.⁸

The above statement shows that in post-revolutionary Iran (even while Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine became the formative mode of the political system) from the early 1980s onwards, reforms in the institution of the Islamic state and a re-interpretation of the Islamic religion began within the religious establishment. The reform of the Islamic state and the re-interpretation of the Islamic religion towards an ideology advocating a plural Islamic Republic were definitely important steps towards modernization, although, over the course of time, the importance of Political Islam was reducing steadily (Baghi, E., 2004). Moreover, in the late 1990s, a more radical approach was initiated when some members of the IRI elite and the state officials formed a formal and relatively organised front of eighteen Pan-Islamist groups known as the Second Khordad Front (SKF). This front, while it emphasized more moderation in governing institutions, its greater dilemma was how to democratise the political system in the IRI, and at the same time, assure the conservative absolutist elite that the new governmental composition would enforce their political power and would legitimise their Islamic rule in the years to come.

In the late 1990s, to everyone's surprise a movement for political reform and change arose, which had not really been planned or foreseen. In these years the Islamic regime suddenly stopped being able to rule as before and its authority was no longer accepted as it had been previously. The regime, as a whole, entered this crisis under the weight of contradictions slowly accumulated over a long period, notably as a result of some conjunctural obstacle: Pan-Islamist elite dissatisfaction, Islamic economic policy, technological challenge, and bankruptcy of the state. The revolt of universities began with a vacillation of the Islamic government before a widespread opposition movement, reaching into all classes of society. Although it was not a well-planned revolt and was immediately repressed, it did cause the Islamic state to falter in the first stage of uprising, as the demand for changes expressed by the opposition and by broad layers of the population led to a situation of grave crisis and tension in society. The idea of political reform consequently appeared as a desire to avoid even a worse social explosion. The demand for changes, however, arose within a vast movement of new ideas, which had acquired a relative, albeit confused, hegemony among social layers of all kinds and once again de-legitimated the-powers-that-be, and laid bare the faults of the Islamic regime. The success of a new counter-culture, despite its ambiguities, prepared the minds of people for change; however, the public expectation was that the Pan-

8 - Ayatollah Khomeini quoted in Zubaida, S., 1997. Is Iran an Islamic State? in Beinini, J. & Stork, J. 'Political Islam', p. 107

Islamist elite and religious establishment would gradually accept these novelties in a smooth movement.

At its high point, the wave of moderation spread, according to sources, more or less successfully and with popular participation, to all institutions of the Islamic state and religious establishment. This wave, although not failing to produce lasting results, rarely produced unambiguous results. Due to the dual nature of the Islamic state, moderation lost some of its initial momentum in the years following, a situation which seems to have been directly linked to the elites' ambiguous interpretation of 'democracy and liberalisation' that has always produced strong feelings - whether enthusiasm, cynicism or hostility - in 20th century Iran.

1. The IRI's Elite Approaches: Hermeneutics and Traditions

From the early nineties onward notions such as 'culture' and 'political culture' versus 'return to tradition' and 'Islamisation' enjoyed a great deal of popularity amongst Iranian intellectuals as well as some members of political authority and the religious establishment in the IRI. This renewed attention formed part of a more fundamental criticism of the ideologies as well as legitimacy of the clerical leadership, and moreover questioned the rule of religiously jurisprudence in a Republican political system. Most importantly, this renewed attention brought challenges on the functional logic of the Political Islam ideology that is believed was extracted from the teaching of the exegesis (Aghajari, H., 2002). A theoretical debate, however, about culture and political culture next to some changes in the socio-economic composition of social classes as well as a gradual ideological moderation joined up with the introduction of hermeneutics and post-modernist critical thought to set up a series of discussions on the relative merits of different political alternatives and their various results towards accelerating modernisation.⁹ The importance of such a move, as Hussein Bashiriyeh, for instance, pointed out was that views on the notions such as tradition and modernity, culture and political culture in twenty-century Iran are not just the fruits of theoretical conjectures but reflect the state of political reality (Bashiriyeh, H., 2002, pp. 44-56). Moreover in post-revolutionary Iran despite the domination of the IRI Islamic political culture, the political philosophy of modernity continued to have an important influence on Iran's intellectual life.¹⁰ This factor consequently played an important role on a

9 - For these debates see *Eslahat dar barabare eslahat* (Reforms against Reforms), Hajjarian, Abdi, Tajzadeh, Djalaaee-Pur, Alavi-Taba'ar, Published by Tarh-e No, Tehran, 2003.

10 - Iranians, according to Soroush, are the inheritors and the carries of three cultures at once. According to Soroush the three cultures that form Iranians common heritage are national, religious, and Western origins culture. While steeped in an ancient national culture, Iranians are also immersed in their religious culture, and they are at the same time awash in successive waves coming from the Western shores. Whatever solutions that they divine for their problems must come from this mixed heritage to which their contemporary social thinkers, reformers, and modernizers have been heirs, often seeking the salvation of their people in the hegemony of one of these cultures over the other two'. See Abdul-Karim Soroush, 'Reason, Freedom, & Democracy in Islam', 2000, p. 156

range of new ideological debates and the ways they were perceived. Nonetheless while the older ideologies did not disappeared with the emergence of the new once, as the nineties wore on, other related topics such as constitutional reform, leadership reform, institutional reform, and finally technological development emerged that confronted the older ideologies with much the same importance as the ideologies of modernity. Therefore one could say political reform in the IRI formed only one of more reforms on politics. What then was the place of political reform among other reforms on politics? Although different circles of Pan-Islamist intellectual voiced preference for one or the other views, it seems in practice the majority were agreed that while they adduced the evidence in support of their arguments, their alternatives should be compatible and applicable to Iran's present political system (Armine, M., 2001). Within this setting, however, important differences remained, especially about the way political distinctions in a political system and cultural distinction in a religious context are to be appraised. Admittedly, the adapted hermeneutic proposed for this study has also been adopted on practical grounds by most reformers. For instance, in *Hermeneutic, ketab va sonnat* (Hermeneutic, the Scripture and the Tradition), Shabestari sketches the main differences between hermeneutic and traditional approaches. He points out:

Our knowledge is shaped in a socio-historical way with some sets of symbols and meanings and moreover the way to organise them... while the major concern of hermeneutic interpretation is... that disclose the hidden meanings in a text or in a religious scripture... this is a way to focus on a text and its inner structures and to understand evolution or behaviour.¹¹

In Shabestari's view, one cannot establish a political system purely based on the knowledge extracted from Islamic text of traditions, because, he said, they do not focus on cultural novelty and rather focuses on worship, transactions and trade.¹² He says:

Feq'h is not the best teaching to able us to answe the political issues and cultural novelty in our society because it has many limitations¹³ ...*Feegh'h* is a kind of knowledge that was flourished centuries ago... for this kind of knowledge scientific and natural laws or some rational behaviour are problematic... our traditionalists try to diminish the importance of social realities and cultural novelty and just put everything in a set of religious duties (*takleef*) which they believe should be imposed upon the public.¹⁴

By referring to cultural novelty and rejecting the tradition, it seem, Shabestari is endorsing Babak Ahmadi's remarks about a general endorsement of post-modernist objections and to reify separations between modernity and tradition. But Ahmadi in 'Modernity and Critical Thought' goes on to say, the hermeneutic circle is built on an open-ended interaction between tradition and modernity. It pertains to particular historical context and particular cultural view. It seems Ahmadi said that the projects of

11 - Shabestari, M.M., 2000. *Hermeneutic, ketab va sonnat* (Hermeneutic, the Scripture and the Tradition), pp. 15-17 & 25-28 & 29-31

12 - Shabestari, M. M., 2003. *Feq'h sye-ya-sye bastare aqlani'e kod ra az dast dadeh ast* (Political Feq'h has lost its rational pattern), in Edalat-Nejad, S., *andarbabe idjtehad* (On ijtehad: On the Effectiveness of the Islamic Jurisprudence in Today's World pp. 117-115, Iran

13 - Shabestari, M. M. , 2000. *Hermeneutic, ketab va sonnat* (Hermeneutic, the Scripture and the Tradition), pp. 56-66, published in Iran

14 - Ibid. p. 41

modernity however end up different from its initial conceptions (Ahmadi, B., 2002). In these words, therefore, both Shabestari and Ahmadi make clear that Pan-Islamist elite could profit to a large extent from the hermeneutic approach.

On the whole, however, Pan-Islamist favouring a traditionalist approach remained critical of the hermeneutic approach. Perhaps the most important criticism they voiced is that hermeneutics go further than Shabestari's moderate propositions and deny one can make a fruitful use of religious Jurisprudence as a model of Islamic leadership and also the Islamic tradition as a national identity to elucidate Iran's distinctive Islamic culture and its distinctive Islamic political system. In response to this however Shabestari quotes for instance the present conditions of IRI juridical and criminal system and to make his point, he writes:

Those Islamic concepts based on *Feq'h* did not work well to solve the expansion of crime and the repetition of criminality.¹⁵

Mohsen Kadivar in accordance with Shabestari states a similar view on epistemological foundations of Iran's Islamic government in his book *Dilemma of Religiously Government* (Kadivar, M., 2000, pp. 435-6). In Kadivar's views, the hermeneutic approach leads us to a correct view which concludes that there can be no religious government through a representative political model if it is independent of human based knowledge. Islam moreover, he said, encourages Muslims to choose their way of life as they wish and the way of life should remain a private affair (Ibid. p.442). In other words, he emphasises his version of religiosity through the existence of an external reality different and separate from the human subjectivity to religion, which casts some doubts, to say the least, on the possibility of verifying Pan-Islamist' divine findings. Islam has, Kadivar contends, encouraged in effect the human knowledge that is crucial to the practice of religion as well (Ibid. p.436).

Admittedly, for Shabestari at least part of the problem lies in what traditional Pan-Islamist emphasised as a hermeneutic conception of cultural pluralism. In this sense it is true by definition, not in the sense that it is obvious to the ignorant but in the sense that in this context cultural pluralism is a consequence of hermeneutical conceptualisation of the religion's textual meaning. In effect, such description is not finding about Iranian society's cultures – national, religious, and Western origins – in a comparative perspective, but finding about Pan-Islamist' way of defining the cultural complexities they have selected for their own conceptual comparison. The post-revolutionary conflicts already showed that two approaches are not identical when they identified themselves as two political cultures rather than one.¹⁶ Here, the question is how much do these two Islamic political cultures differ or how does the hermeneuticist Pan-Islamist compare them, rather

15 - Shabestari, M.M., 2003, *Feq'h sye-ya-sye bastare aqlani'e kod ra az dast dadeh ast* (Political Feq'h has lost its rational pattern), in Edalat-Nejad, S., *'andarababe idjtehad'* (On ijtehad: On the Effectiveness of the Islamic Jurisprudence in Today's World'), p. 109. Tehran-Iran

16 - See *Madj'moye bayaniy'e rohaniyon mobarez Tehran* (the collective manifestos of the Tehran Combatant Clergies), from March 1989 to May 1991: *Matneh pasokh hazrateh imam khomai va name'eh rohaniyune mobareze Tehran* (replying text of Holyness Imam Khomeini and the letter of combatant clergies of tehran) (67/1/25) 15-04-78 .

than how are they unique. In this sense, unlike the above mentioned, the attribute exists in both cultural approaches. Shabestari implies that through the contemporary Islamic history these two methods or cultural approaches are seen in conflict while also often ending up stressing uniqueness and overlooking the shared attributes (Shabestari, M.M., 2000, p. 104). Moreover, because both approaches and their findings of political culture somehow amount to divine findings about the way they conceptualise religion in general, they often do not assume causal links in their ideology, even with little proven relation to a specific time and place or to social conditions. Like Shabestari, therefore, Kadivar points to the weak methodological foundation of religious jurisprudence's rule that is based on the traditional knowledge of *Feq'h* and how to understand cultural novelty.

But, if the traditional method used for understanding the cultural novelty is not the basis of most IRI's elite, then what is if any? Because many Pan-Islamist' works are said to be based on an exercise of rational conceptualisation, hermeneutic critics are quick to point to a perceived implicit methodology that has given rise to this conceptualisation in the first place. After all, as Ayatollah Morteza Motahari admits, everyone's attraction to a worldview owes as much to their methodology as to their intellectual reasons (Motahari, M., 1997, pp. 49-55). Secular writer Babak Ahmadi in a post-modernists' context of hermeneutic approach quotes Hegel on the foundational uncertainties of modernisation thought and the will to power as well (Ahmadi, B., 2002, p.18). Simply put, hermeneutic conceptualisation, such as what we see in Shabestari's 'Reflections on A Humane Reading of Religion' (2004) and in Ahmadi's 'Modernity and Critical Thought' (1994), are derived from attempts to make empirical data conform to certain preconceived ideas of a generally more conservative kind and traditions.

The Pan-Islamist traditionalists' criticism of hermeneutics seems however to be due to an oversimplification of intuition or probably a lack of interest and familiarity with concerned theories. As, for example, shown by Grand Ayatollah Montazeri's approach to a hermeneutic interpretation of script in a collective work *Andarbabe Ijtihad* (About divine law on matters of theology and law), a traditionalist approach of dignitaries relies on a range of assumptions that are not necessarily those of Pan-Islamist moderates. By saying that, Grand Ayatollah Montazeri's views of propositions on *ijtihad* is:

Although wisdom is a religious plea and some of religious orders are limited to particular time and place ... but however the base of Islamic commandments is not only reason rather are the texts and tradition although their proof is through the reason.¹⁷

Sa'id Edalat-Nejad critics on Grand Ayatollah Montazeri's view is that,

By diminishing Soroush's ideas to a subjective and exclusively divine law Ayatollah Montazeri implicitly transform a practical and useful point of view from hermeneutic to a contingent framework. Is this the way that he defines

17 - Montazeri, H.A., 2003, '*andarbabe idjtehad*' (On *idjtihad*) response to Abdul Karim Soroush questions, in '*andarbabe idjtehad* (On *ijtihad*) on the effectiveness of the Islamic jurisprudence in today's world, in Edalati-Nejad, S. pp. 44-5, published in Iran

what could be a necessary condition for testing a hypothesis in religious teaching?¹⁸

Truly, within the assumptions of the hermeneutics approach, Edalat-Nejad makes a valid proposition. But, this is not to say it is the only valid one. There is no a priori reason to believe that the remarks by Soroush, to which Edalat-Nejad refers to prove his point, were intended as hermeneutic proposition and could be tested either by objectivist or alethic standards.¹⁹

Nonetheless, some Pan-Islamist stresses the importance of verifiable religious principles. As for instance Soroush has made clear,

Although the old religious principles are no longer applicable but we observe sometimes and in some places they are exceptionally used. Important differences exist between what was our understanding of the truth in the past and what it is in the modern world. For example, the practice of elimination of apostate in the ancient world was considered as a rational duty. An example is the case of Nasser Khosro who considered such an act as rational. Although such principles are abandoned by most societies however our dignitaries by using modern concepts do try to defend and justify these outdated acts.²⁰

In the same way, Shabestari's hermeneutic interpretation of Islamic principles is pictured as a contemporary and socially shared form of religious knowledge (Shabestari, M.M., in Edalati-Nejad, S., 2003. p. 106). Aside from some of the more secular views, however, the post-modernist seculars also point to the need for some form of socially shared frame of references in a contemporary approach on interpretation of tradition and those principles extracted by elegies (Ahmadi, B., 2002. P.9). In this sense, hermeneutic approaches are perfectly meaningful since one can at least read their interpretations to test their propositions. In sharp contrast to traditionalists who look at religious texts and invent a divine meaning, the Pan-Islamist hermeneuticists tried to interpret the same religious texts but base on human contemporary knowledge. In the words of Shahriyar Vaghfi-Pur:

Since the language is a historical phenomenon, understanding is also a historical phenomenon and its results are transformable.²¹

This means that, at the same time, far from isolating the description, it is imperative to place the sources in their social and historical setting. So far, on the issues concerning Feq'h and governance of jurisprudence, it seems Pan-Islamist hermeneuticists and secular post-modernist both fully agree with one another.

18 - Edalat-Nejad, S. 2003, *Babe masdode idjtehad* 'close gate to idjtehad' in (On ijtehad) On the effectiveness of the Islamic Jurisprudence in today's world , pp. 48-49, published in Iran

19 - The objectivist hermeneutics emphasis on the re-enactment of the meanings that the originators of the texts and acts – authors and agents – associate, that results in the understanding of underlying meaning, not the explanation of causal connections. The alethic hermeneutics focus on truth as an act of disclosure in which the polarity between subject and object – understanding and explanation – is dissolved in the radical light of a more original unity. See Alvesson, M. & Skoldberg, K. 2000, *Reflexive Methodology*, p. 52, SAGE Publications - London

20 - Soroush, A. K., 2003. *Feq'h dar tarazo* (Feq'h in Balance), in *Dar babe ijtehad* (On ijtehad) on the effectiveness of the Islamic jurisprudence in today's world, in Edalati-Nejad, S., p. 15, published in Iran

21 - Vaghfi-Pur, S., 1997. *Hermeneutic danesh tawill ast* (Hermeneutic is the Knowledge of Interpretation), in monthly review *Farhang tose'eh* (Developmental Culture), No 31, pp. 84, Tehran-Iran

It seems another partial misconception concerns a hidden agenda in the texts that traditionalist imputes to hermeneutic propositions. Admittedly, there are certainly those who appear to use hermeneutic approaches to indicate that the religious texts have been written with preconceived points. But, such practices are neither confined to hermeneutical approaches nor are immune from penetrating criticisms. In short, this should not fully invalidate a hermeneutic approach that attempts to present an understanding of the sources with different terms. At the same time, the point that hermeneutics adopts an approach which is different from the traditionalist does not automatically mean that it is possible to establish truth based on hermeneutic interpretation of Islamic principles extracted from elegies. The one real source of tension between the traditionalist and the hermeneutic approach therefore stems from their respective views about the conceptualisation of Islamic principles. As is already outlined in Soroush's views, conceptualisation of texts of tradition is a form of comparison between two Islamic cultural approaches. But, some hermeneutic approach, however, proposes a new kind of conceptualisation and emphasises a concept that may be defined within the range of different concepts of a single Islamic culture. The central idea behind this approach is that a text may best be understood on its own terms. It is based on such a conceptual relativism that Shabestari's approach on interpretation of exegies can be understood independent of traditionalist criticism of cultural relativism. As becomes clear from Shabestari's (2000) views, however, there can be no reading independent of preconception, while the knowledge of the socially shared representations of a particular culture makes one understand how a person from that culture may react to certain given circumstances. Shabestari does not deny anywhere the existence of divine teaching, but he shows that differences in culture make persons react differently to otherwise similar conceptualisation. Shabestari's (2004) views on cultural relativism also needlessly focus on the specific conceptualisation of cultures. As will be clarified in the coming sections, the alternative knowledge producers' definitions of culture in recent years does not result in a determinist conception of culture as a changeless absolutist set of values and attitudes, but it serves as a worldview to present the dimension of communication in which different opinions are possible. Simply put, culture in the IRI merely follows the rules of the game, and is not the game itself. Describing the rules of a game should in no way deter one from expressing one's views about the game itself or its players. On the contrary, an understanding of the rules improves one's appreciation and the qualities - though not necessarily the thrust - of one's views.

In ideological debates Shabestari demonstrated the dimensions of culture and political culture in the IRI's communications. For instance, in 'Hermeneutic, the Scripture and the Tradition' he offers a model of determining factors by which a written text is communicated by the author to a reader (Shabestari, M.M., 2000. p.14). According to Shabestari, the authors, either traditionalists or modernists, direct their text to a specific group of intended readers, while they seek to regulate their reader's reception of the text. Shabestari explains that such a narrowly directed text

is based on a complex way of communication and human knowledge, which consist of pre-reflexive of the author and the assumed knowledge of the reader. As such, the text becomes an instrument of communication that is based on an element of shared knowledge. The information that is being transferred in such a text is meant to be interpreted according to both the intention of the writer and to be used according to the expectation of the reader.

This theory promises to be of great use in approaching the politico-religious texts and sources of tradition as well. At the same time most contemporary literature in Iran, either about Political Islam or political reforms and criticisms of jurisprudence have been written by Pan-Islamist intellectuals primarily - and often exclusively - for those Iranian officials or the scholarly public. These literatures are borne out by the political nature of them and the pan-Islamist nature of authors and the readers (Ibid. pp. 42-47). As such, these texts should be viewed as politico-religious literature, which assume a large degree of shared knowledge between writers and the readers. Interpreting the documents on either Iran's path to modernity or Political Islam's ideology in this way requires knowledge of those contemporary exchanged views and debates that concerned modernity versus tradition, and conversely the background against which the texts have been written. On the other hand, the content of the Islamic traditional text is determined by what Shabestari calls the divine revelation, in other words subjective revelation, to which the human knowledge of the reader points (Ibid. p.34). One could say that in order to understand the intention of these texts, it is necessary to possess a certain amount of knowledge on the Islamic tradition in which they were written. Conversely, knowledge about this divine or subjective revelation may be acquired through reading these texts and perhaps some of the criticism that underlay them (Shirvani, A. 1997).

Shabestari's theory offers an overall understanding of recent politico-religious literature or writings on political events that the focus of attention is laid on the most possibly and socially shared knowledge. It is useful now to turn first to the authors and intended readers and then to their overall common knowledge they stand for. Because these writings have been identified as a source of communication and human knowledge, it is likely that their authors and the intended readers form part of the same social group or community. The topic at hand, namely officially sanctioned ideologies clearly suggests that this social group or community forms part of the Iranian political actors. After all, the political actors in Islamic regime rejects officially the notions such as individualism, and others such as liberalism and secularism remained a sensitive topic throughout the post-revolutionary period. Most of the political leadership, one may therefore assume, were persons the establishment trusted enough to let them engage in such sensitive matters.

As the writers, about Iran's modernity or Political Islam, this group of authors and their intended readers formed what the Pan-Islamists have termed an Islamic Shi'ia community of Iran. According to Wilfred Buchta in 'Who rule Iran', this Iranian Islamic Shi'ia community is loosely comprised of

the Pan-Islamists “who govern, those who advise, and those who aspire to advice” (Buchta, W. 2000, p. 81). In this study, they are referred as the Pan-Islamist elite, the officials, and the establishment intellectuals, respectively. Although at first sight this classification seems to some extent be similar to other classical institutional ones, one may draw a line between the Pan-Islamist elite and intellectuals within the establishment of the Republic and those in the parallel institution of *vilayet-i faqih* by pointing to their roles and activities in the various organs of decision-making. In other words, it is to say that in the patriarchal system of IRI, namely, the existence of leader-follower ties (ideological) between some groups of elite and intellectuals as opposed to purely political ties, matters. That means without the backing of some high-ranking clerical organs, it is nearly impossible for establishment Pan-Islamist intellectuals to create new public spaces for their thoughts and activities. Therefore, all Pan-Islamist intellectuals are those who by virtue of their backstage supporters are able to create the public space for their thoughts-activities, whereas for instance secular intellectuals aspire to obtain public sphere. This fact leads us to the internal mode of Islamic establishment socio-organisational thoughts-activities principle, which as an unwritten principle requires that everything, in particular thoughts and activities concerning political changes, must be expressed through the proper state institution or the Office of Leader channels and in accordance with their government assigned proper procedure (Ibid. p.49). As a part of the larger group of Pan-Islamist officials or establishment intellectuals, the group of authors and intended readers forms a group of political tendency, which encompasses both those who govern officially and those who advise or aspire to become officials or adviser, whereas the latter may be subdivided into establishment and semi-establishment intellectuals, based on whether or not the political faction they belong enjoyed political hegemony.

More specifically, the group of political reformers or moderate Republicans may be viewed as a politico-religious group within the Iranian regime as a whole. This is a group, whose members are identified with the reformer President Khatami and the Second Khordad Front groups, they gain support and solidarity from each other, use mostly a common discourse, regularly meet each other, and they publish their views often in the same magazine and publishing house.²² In a similar vein, conservative political groups whose members are identified with the institution of Supreme Leader rarely support Republican’s views openly and often publish their policies and criticisms of modernity in different magazines and publishing houses. But, nonetheless, the community of political debates they therefore form is an implicit one because they address the same concerning theoretical and polity issues mostly without mentioning their opponents, names or factions (Ganji, A. 1999).

An important element of this community is made up of the social sharing of what Shabestari (2000, pp. 100-108) calls its tradition, that is, the

22 - See for instance, *Eslahat dar barabare eslahat* (Reforms against Reformers), Sa’id Hajjarian, Abbas Abdi, Sayyed Mostafa Tajzadeh, Hamid-Reza Djalaaee-Pur, Ali-Reza Alavi-Tabaari, 2003, Tehran-Iran, published by Tarh-e No

knowledge of its past. In a different context Ali Shariati (1979 & 1986) has often spoken of differences between an "Alavite Shi'ia community" and a "Safavi Shi'ia community." The former socially constructs and the latter socially negotiates traditions (Ibid. 1981), and in using it, they both develop and re-create it.²³ Both of these notions accord well with Abdul Karim Soroush's view that,

Iranian Muslims are inheritors and the carriers of three cultures at once: national, religious, and Western origins.²⁴

He stresses qualitative and quantitative domination of Islamic culture in Iran and questions the place and status of Iranian cultural identity within this triple cultural heritage:

Now, the important question that arise is as follow: where among these three cultures does our identity lie ...is it possible or desirable to aspire to a true and pure cultural identity, and in that case which of our three cultures would be closer and more loyal to us, which more faithful to our 'true identity' ...is any nation permitted rebellion against parts of its own culture...is there an opportunity and an avenue for intercultural exchanges, or must cultures keep their windows closed to one another...is it right to advocate the hegemony of one culture over others.²⁵

A similar approach has led Mohammad Mokhtari (2000, p.9) to observe that knowledge of the elite instruments of domination is expressed as cultural characteristics that appear to arise from the style of political training and the educational requirements that distinguish the Iranian from other societies. In our particular case, the suggestion is not only that the sources on modernity and tradition are the fruit of a consensus of culture and political culture and thus enable a fruitful process of political changes, but also that these discussions reflect the contemporary characteristic set of the IRI's elite culture, which are socially constructed and socially negotiated (Ibid. p.9). In other words, it is assumed that from the debates and sources on modernity and tradition in the IRI it is possible to imagine a set of instruments of domination, which together form an outline of the elite culture and political culture. Based on the shared knowledge of this culture, the political establishment, and its political reformers in particular, shares the same 'imagination community' in political system. By using the word "imagination", one may suggest that knowledge of these instruments of domination is meant as a form of bonding, because modernity and tradition formed a part of an overall response to the problems facing the IRI during the period under consideration. At the same time, however, it allows secular intellectuals who do not belong to the IRI's establishment to partake from this community.

23 - Shariati writes: "For eight centuries Alavite Shi'ism was more than a revolutionary movement in our history. It opposed all autocratic and class-conscious regimes. It opposed those who established a version of government based upon the Sunni School of thought and their official religion. It waged a secret struggle of ideas and action against them. Like a revolutionary party, Shi'ism had a well-organised, deep-rooted, and well-defined ideology, a discipline, and well-groomed organisation. Shi'ism led deprive oppressed in their struggle for freedom and justice. For these people Shi'ism was a rallying-point for their demands, their distress, and their rebellious. Shi'ism was an ideology for intellectuals who seek rights and the masses who seek justice." See Ali Shariati 'Red Shi'ia vs. Black Shi'ia', in Ali Shariati.com

24 - Soroush, A. K., 2000. Reason, Freedom, & Democracy in Islam, p. 162

25 - Soroush, A. K., 2000, Reason, Freedom, & Democracy in Islam, pp. 156-170.

Before discussing the precise form of the instruments of domination, some additional remarks about the way in which the notion of culture and political culture is used in this study will be made. Following Mohammad Mokhtari, the IRI elite culture is presented as a set of rules that enable or facilitate a form of socially shared ideas-practice communication (Ibid. p.23). To put it slightly differently, culture in this sense offers a medium through which, or an arena within which, different actions and ideas may take form. As a social reality, any culture is assumed to present an informal, but relatively organised set of codes that are normally understood by any member belonging to that culture. As an object of study, however, culture may be formally understood. To offer an articulation with political culture, one could think of ideas and practice of culture. In this respect, culture and political culture in this view can be easily confused. Ali Shariati's concept of Shi'ia Alavite and Safavi communities in this sense does serve to distinguish cross-cultural groups practising different ideas and marks a cultural difference in political culture use. He is referring moreover to the historical development of Iranian Islamic society and their culture and political culture.

The possibility of describing culture as a set of formal instruments of domination suggests a change from the comparative and external way one normally view culture to an independent and internal one. Because, for example, culture is usually only taken notice of due to the occurrence of cultural differences between groups, the primary function of culture, namely that of facilitating communication within a group is often overlooked (Ibid. p. 11). On the other hand, the issue that culture offers a complete dimension of communication within a given group does not mean that it is inaccessible to outsiders. On the contrary, since culture is the product of socialisation and education, anyone who invests the time and effort can learn the ingredient and also the instruments of domination of another culture (Ibid. p.14). Nor is one culture always completely different from other cultures. On the contrary, different cultures usually contain many elements that are to be found in other cultures as well. It is in the precise mix of elements that a culture may be said to be unique or distinct from other cultures (Ibid. p.16).

Then, how should the instruments of domination in the IRI's elite culture and political culture be viewed? Since Ali Shariati refers to the elements of Shi'ia community and its culture as constructed and negotiated, therefore the instruments of domination in the IRI should not be viewed as immutable divine laws. At the same time, since they form part of the socially shared code used to communicate within a group, they should present certain features, which enable strangers belonging to that group to understand each other. Based on the assumption that each cultural situation may be expressed as a spatial arena, this study proposes the following kinds: chosen approaches, inherent variation, and prohibition.

A distinctive form of cultural thought-behaviour is thus called chosen approaches, which this study refers to as an instrument of domination to which one instinctively reverts when socially acceptable religiously thought-behaviour is called for. Broadly speaking there are two kinds of cultural chosen approaches: traditional and normative. The traditional chosen

approach of the IRI cultural rule is what one would do in a given situation without further explanation. Because culture is mostly an implicit affair, the traditional chosen approach is what one would usually expect to be the meaning of thought-behaviour or an utterance without further explanation. A normative approach is relatively speaking much more explicit and conscious affair. If the traditional approach offers the vague and overall setting of the IRI cultural rules, the normative approach is the set of explicit rules that serve to define social sub-groups within that culture. For example, in Iranian political culture certain religious thought-behaviour may be said to form enduring traditional approaches, but as it has been mentioned before, the refutation proposed by Ayatollah Khomeini on conflict between Islamic principles and interests of an Islamic government or those recent innovations proposed by the reformers, such as an end to clerical reading of scripture, may be called normative chosen approaches. In other words, in today's Iran, refutation of Islamic principles and what Ayatollah Khomeini proposed in his refutation are traditions, and once an end to clerical reading of scripture has become fully accepted, it turns into a traditional approach as well.

The notion of chosen approach for the IRI does not suggest that other thought-behaviour is impossible, but rather that in a given situation, another form of thought-behaviour would have to be explained or would seem out of context. When in doubt, therefore, chosen approach religious thought-behaviour is also the kind of thought-behaviour one would tend to fall back on. In the case of a traditional chosen approach in the IRI, thus, it is a form of religious common sense thought-behaviour. In the case of a normative chosen approach, it is an attempt at conforming to the social requirements of the moment. Acting otherwise would raise questions or suspicions.

Still, the nature of many formal and relatively organised rules and regulations is rarely uniform. Often there are several options making up a rule of which one is the typically preferred form in the IRI chosen approach. But, no single person always adheres solely to the cultural chosen approach of his political institution or social situation. Sometimes another option is chosen instead. In other words, it is called the inherent variability of a cultural rule. This is to say that the way in which something in the IRI is defined in a context of political culture is usually optional. Through the inherently variable nature of an instrument of domination in the IRI, a survey may be made of all the culturally acceptable forms of that instrument of domination.

Finally, IRI culture is similar to every culture in that the concept of prohibition is present. As an arena for social intercourse and communication, culture naturally also lays down the limits of the permissible. This in the IRI often takes on the form of a graduated sequence of signs, which start with such devices as warnings and threats and end up with prohibitions and punishments. In the IRI, therefore, there are different kinds of prohibitions. Generally, the more quiet and implicit prohibitions are the more structural prohibitions. In Iranian culture such a prohibition is disloyalty to the religious institution or divinity and also national patricide. Conversely, there are more explicit normative prohibitions, which point to elite's attempts at changes in

the cultural chosen approach or even the arena itself. The common purpose of both kinds of prohibitions is to delineate the limits of acceptable cultural thought-behaviour. If the chosen approach focuses attention on preferred thought-behaviour, prohibitions and punishments serve to warn against actions or utterances that are not tolerated.

In the following the post-revolution instruments of domination of the IRI elite culture and political culture will be outlined. The approach to the IRI's culture and political culture combines, amongst others, Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic vision and doctrine (Doctrine) as the foundation of his theory on governance of jurisprudence and Ali Shariati theory of an Islamic state that is based on his concept of religious reformation (an Islamic intellectual leadership and an awakened Muslim community). By means of what has said before on the instruments of domination, this study proposes an overview of the political philosophy in the IRI that will not only enumerate its features, but that will also offer a verifiable approximation of the cultural setting within which the Iranians themselves place these features. Therefore, two different levels of the instruments of domination are explored: first, three fundamental instruments of domination in IRI elite culture of the post-revolutionary arena will set out, and in a separate section, some of the main instruments of domination of the political culture will then be discussed. The purpose of such detail is to show that the more general instruments of domination function as overall arenas, in which, the more specifically political instruments of domination are fitted.

1.1. Three Fundamental Instruments of Domination of the IRI's Elite Culture

In the following, three fundamental instruments of domination of the IRI's elite culture will be proposed: Unitarianism, essentialism, and dualism. Because Political Islam ideologies and the Ayatollah Khomeini doctrine may be considered the main architects of the new IRI, these instruments of domination will be highlighted in the writings of few Ayatollahs specially Ayatollah Khomeini and some other Pan-Islamist intellectuals. In order to show that they have enjoyed a more general acceptance among the Iranian elite, several other sources will also be indicated. Given the propagandist nature of these instruments of domination, they will be selected from politico-religious literature and Islamic propaganda materials that have served as formal instruments for the dissemination of elite cultural thought-behaviour in the post-revolution period. Although this study is aware of certain differences between the normative chosen approach of elite culture in post-revolutionary era, and a more general traditional Political Islam chosen approach, for instance the Ali Shariati's and the Ayatollah Morteza Motahari's ideas, for the present purposes it is expedient to treat all these elements as inherent variables of elite culture. Moreover, in spite of the fact that to the reader many of the topics addressed here may be seem overly philosophico-theological and unusual to a classic traditional discussion of political science, this study intends to show in passing that these topics form practical

elements of elite culture and politics that are in use in the IRI and thus important for discussion within this context.

1.1.1. Unitarianism

In contemporary Iranian society, probably few elements of culture are more fundamental than those making up the post-revolutionary IRI's elite worldview. In the words of Pan-Islamist intellectual Abdul Karim Soroush,

All cultures and ideologies do adopt a definite method for their thought-practice which is determined by a definite worldview. A worldview does refer to an overall understanding of an individual about the entire existence.²⁶

In the same vein, Ayatollah Morteza Motahari, known as the chief ideologue of the Islamic revolution, set a definition for the IRI's elite Unitarian worldview, he says

A discipline or a philosophy of life consists of a series of ideas and believes. They are a kind of understanding; a way of interpretation, analysis and evaluation, for all existence; a way to present a 'school of thought' and the ideological foundation and standpoints of that 'school of thought'. These create a world of existence and therefore a worldview.²⁷

On Islamic worldview he then infuses some considerable social and political forces:

When the society is divided into two classes of tyrants and tyrannised – one saturated, ill at ease with overindulgence, and yet another famished, distressed with hunger, Islam does not permit one to sit idle and be a mere spectator.²⁸

Ayatollah Sayyed Mahmoud Talegani, known as the father of Iranian revolution, while rejecting secular worldview, opposes also a mere ritualistic one in which believers should exclude temporal affairs from their pieties.

What is the point in heartfelt and sincere belief? Tyrannical and despotic regimes have always opposed Prophets and religious authorities. If religion and politics were separated – religion for worshippers, politics for citizens – Nimrod would not have thrown Abraham into the fire, Pharaoh would not have struggled against Moses, Pontius Pilate would not have ordered Jesus killed, Neron would not have burned the Christians, and the Persian and Roman emperors would not have fought against the call of Islam.²⁹

Ayatollah Rohollah Khomeini in his book '*sahye-fehe nour*' adopts a definite method to determine a Unitarian worldview, he writes:

Islam has teaching for individuals since their birth. It has principles for governance and family life, and moreover it imposes upon individual some imperatives to how they should live their life. These imperatives would help

26 - Soroush, A. K., 1996. '*farbehtar az ideology*' (Sturdier than Ideology), fourth edition, p. 122, published in Iran

27 - Motahari, M. 1997. '*djahan byenye'e elahie*' (Divine Worldview), pp. 5-20 quoted in '*ma'arehe Islami dar asare shahid motahari*' (Islamic Principles in Shahid Motahari's Works), second edition, 1997: p. 49, published in Iran

28 - Motahari, M. quoted in Dabashi, 1993, p. 190

29 - Taliqani, M., quoted in Dabashi, 1993, p. 231

Muslims in their private and public life. This is the unique way that Muslims perceive Islamic worldview.³⁰

But Ayatollah Khomeini did not limit Islamic worldview to a spiritual relation between individuals and their divine, he emphasises,

Islamic worldview is not just about praying, education, holy teaching and as such; Islam is politics, Islam and politics are not separate; Islam created a great government; Islam created a great country; Islam is a regime, a political regime.³¹ ...Islam is not only about praying and pilgrims rather politics, management of a society, government, culture, environment, material and spiritual for human needs.³²

Ali Shariati adopts a radical definite method based on two elementary notions of Muslim nation and leadership to determine his Unitarian worldview. He defines Um'ma as the ideal society for which Islam has struggled.³³ He believed that divine unity was the foundation for all affairs of Muslim society. He stressed the possibility of social changes based on a combined upbringing in Islamic tradition with modern human knowledge, because, he said, Islam has a dynamic, progressive, and scientific nature, and the Muslim community only need a thorough reinterpretation in order to be revitalised. Answering the questions of 'Where shall we begin?' and 'What is to be done?' he maintains that

Such questions are raised when a society is in the process of evolving from one state to another. The social conscience warrants that certain steps be taken to free the society from domineering effects of the existing social order and the status quo on the actual, intellectual and religious life of its members, and to replace that order with another. The question of where to begin, then, is a matter of 'social strategy' and not of 'ideology'.³⁴

30 - Khomaiini, R., '*sahye-fehe nour*' Vol. 1. p. 119, Vol. 2. p. 232, quoted in '*slame Nab dar kalam va payane imam khomaiini*' (Pure Islam in Imam Khomaiini Words and Messages), Vol. 5, p. 10, second edition 1995, Teheran Iran

31 - Ibid. p. 46

32 - Ibid. pp. 46-48

33 - This ideal society according to Shariati is "Where its infrastructure is the economy, because whoever has no worldly life has no spiritual life... its social system is based on equity and justice and ownership by the people...the society of human equality and thus also of brotherhood... its political philosophy and form of regime is not democracy of heads, not irresponsible and direction - less liberalism which is a plaything of contesting social factors, not putrid aristocracy, not anti-popular dictatorship, not a self-imposing oligarchy... it consists rather of 'purity of leadership' (not the leader, for that would be fascism), committed and revolutionary leadership, responsible for the movement and growth of society on the basis of its worldview and ideology, and for the realisation of the divine destiny of man in the plan of creation." Ali Shariati 'On Sociology of Islam', 1979, pp. 119-120, version by Hamid Alger, (Berkeley, CA): Mirza Press

34 - Ali Shariati in 'What is to be done' and in 'The Enlightened Thinkers and an Islamic Renaissance', emphasises that "This social strategy in traditional societies in general and in the Muslim societies in particular is narrowing the present large gap between the intellectuals and the general public. He raises the question "for what purpose must these acts be done?" and he replies: "An enlightened soul should play the role of the prophet for his society. He should preach the call for awareness, freedom and salvation to the deaf and unhearing ears of the people, inflame the fire of a new faith in their hearts, and show them the social direction in their stagnant society. Enlightened souls ...[should] teach their society how to be 'change' and toward what direction. They foster a mission of 'becoming' and pave the way by providing an answer to the question, 'What should we become?' He constructs a vanguard character for an enlightened person: " To guide the caravan of humanity, shows us the right path, invites us to initiate a journey, and leads us to our final destination." He distinguishes the intellectual vanguard and scientist, "Science is power and enlightenment light, from time to time, the scientist serves the interests of oppression and ignorance; but the enlightened person, of necessity and definition, opposes tyranny and darkness." He views the present condition of the Muslim societies as a time similar to the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of Renaissance in Western societies. His revolutionary elements in his Unitarian worldview, he emphasises, shall be through: "constant striving (jihad) and justice (adalat) ...Islam pays attention to bread, its eschatology is based on active life in the world, its God

Because Islam in these definitions is viewed as a worldview that encompasses a vision and doctrine, therefore accordingly it is believed to be the truth of an objective world. In other words, as Ayatollah Khomeini highlighted:

Islam is the worldview that best explains the way in which reality as a whole function.³⁵

The logical approach that transpires from these passages is that in order to understand the reality correctly, it is necessary to have a complete picture of Islamic worldview as a whole. Ayatollah Khomeini applies this precept in 'Principles of Jurisprudence and Governing System of *Vilayet-i Faqih*, where he emphasises:

The believers must understand the logic of subordinating the Islamic principles to the needs of Islamic government.³⁶

Conversely this logic contrasts to the necessary comprehending of other views with an isolated, satanic, and partial nature of wrong ones. Ayatollah Khomeini then emphasises that Western secular evolutionist worldview looks at the world from a wrong viewpoint. He explains:

Those who ask for democracy have a different path from us... those who do not associate their thought with Islam or even avoid to use the word 'Islam' look at the world from an isolated hypocrite viewpoint³⁷... Muslims must avoid subjectivity and superficiality, and adopt an objective and complete approach towards Islam [Islamic worldview].³⁸

This logical chosen approach, according to what Islamic worldview is a precondition for an understanding of the truth of an objective world, and therefore more than the sum of its spiritual aspects, I suggest to be called the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine, which aims to establish an Islamic Republic and the government of God (*Khalifat-allah*).³⁹ Although the discourse of Political Islam does find a place within this worldview, it is prohibited to

respects human dignity and its messenger is armed. Justice is not simply a religious principle but the spirit that governs all aspects of Islam, and is considered the very objective for which all the prophets were sent." He summarise such a worldview in an action plan which:" begin by an Islamic Protestantism similar to that of Christianity in the Middle Ages, destroying all the degenerating factors which, in the name of Islam, have stymied and stupefied the process of thinking and the fate of the society, and giving birth to new thoughts and new movements." His plan of action contains: "Mobilising resources into energy and movement; transformation of social and class conflicts into conscious awareness of social responsibility; bridging between intellectuals and the masses; ideologisation of religion and society; renaissance in religion by returning it back to life and motion, power and justice; returning to and relying on the authentic culture of the society allowing the revival and rebirth of cultural independence in the face of Western culture; and finally elimination of the spirit of imitation and obedience and replace it with a critical revolutionary, aggressive spirit of independence reasoning (*ijtihad*)." See Ali Shariati, 1986, p. 2. edited and annotated by Farhang Rajaee, The Institute for Research and Islamic

35 - Khomeini, R., quoted in '*slame Nab dar kalam va payane imam khomai*' (Pure Islam in Imam Khomeini Words and Messages), Vol. 5, p. 3, second edition 1995, Teheran Iran

36 - Ibid. p. 203

37 - Ibid. p. 443

38 - Ibid. p. 443

39 - *Khalifat- allah* is a *Qur'anic* term. For this see Kadivar, M., 1998. '*Hokomat-i velaye*' (The Governance of Jurisprudence) (pp. 335-353, published in Iran

consider a traditionalist viewpoint arrived at through it as a religious worldview.⁴⁰

By contrast, moderate Pan-Islamist Abdul Karim Soroush in 'Reason, Freedom, & Democracy in Islam' points out that

It is up to God to reveal a religion, but up to us to understand and realise it. It is at this point that religious knowledge is born, entirely human and subject to all the dictates of human knowledge.⁴¹

Soroush's view does not limit itself to traditional Islamic knowledge: in the same passage on reformation and revival, he emphasises:

Unlike the revivalists of the past who were profoundly indignant about the dominance of the Greek spirit over the religious scholars ...strives to distinguish essence from appearance and root from branch so that each can take its rightful place...the revivalists of today confront a greater challenge...everywhere we are confronted with religious knowledge that concerns and observes religion but is not religion...this verdict covers all branches of human knowledge...to treat religious knowledge, a branch of human knowledge, as incomplete, impure, insufficient, and culture-bound; to try to mend and darn its wears and tears is, in itself, an admirable and hallowed undertaking...it is this exercise that is called religious reform and revival'.⁴²

Although these passages were all taken from works of Islamic philosophy, this does not mean they are to be considered as mere theory since Ayatollah Khomeini on the practice of Prophets includes

He [Prophet Mohammad] never divided life into two sections, one consisting exclusively of talk and other exclusively of action.⁴³

This seems to be an injunction to unify politico-religious knowledge and action. In other words, Unitarianism is perceived not as some abstruse philosophical concept, but as a practical chosen approach that serves as a way to solve temporal problems and to act upon in everyday life.

Practical Unitarianism leads to three important assumptions. First, a reason why Islam is more than the sum of its spiritual principles is that the Islamic leadership needs to stand in a certain relation with each aspect of its principles to form a worldview. At times it is therefore implied that clarifying the relation between Islamic principles (this-worldly and other-worldly) is more important than the principles themselves. For example, Mohammad Mokhtari exemplifies this approach,

In Iranian society the defining attribute of elite is not his individual qualities, rather the set of his social relations to other elite.⁴⁴

The need to clarify relations between principles rather than principles themselves is an important feature of Iranian elite culture.

A second assumption is that in the path of both this-worldly and other-worldly salvation the fundamental unity of reality should direct Muslims' action towards as much unity as possible. As Ayatollah Khomeini emphasises:

40 - Rizvi, S. Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, 'Liberal metaphysics versus conservative politics: The Paradoxical cases of Ayatollahs Abdullah Javadi Amoli and Mohammed Taghi Mesbah-i Yazdi', published for seminar on 'Authority in Contemporary Shi'ism', ISIM, Leiden, 1 March 2002.

41 - Soroush, A.K., 2000. 'Reason, Freedom, & Democracy in Islam', p. 31, published in Iran

42 - Ibid. pp. 30-32

43 - See *slame Nab dar kalam va payane imam khomai* (Pure Islam: in Imam Khomeini words and messages), Vol. 5, 1995, p. 51

44 - Mokhtari, M., 1998. *Tamrine Modara* (Exercising Moderation), p. 322, published in Iran

All activities that are based on an Islamic thought are the righteous divine actions.⁴⁵

Therefore, in post-revolutionary Iran there is an urge to unite thought and action. Conversely, in 'Reason, Freedom, & Democracy in Islam' Soroush speaks of the early revivalists of the past and quotes Rumi on the need to separate thought and action. He emphasises a certain difference between thought and action should be allowed, because otherwise one cannot have real spiritual salvation:

One favour from heavens is better than a hundred efforts; A hundred corruptions lurk in each one of our efforts.⁴⁶

In another context, Grand Ayatollah Montazeri (2003, p.38) on *ijtihad* and the effectiveness of the Islamic jurisprudence in today's world discusses the nature of thought and action in relation to the newest findings of modern science and points out that thought and action are to be considered as a new unified factor in the *ijtihad*. This unity is also expressed by using several synonymous terms to express a difference in degree. A good example of this is a set of terms denoting unity of thought and action in the Iranian constitution of 1981. So far these examples are relatively straightforward, but the Unitarianism logic also runs counter to the chosen approach of modernity's logic according to which, for instance, it is impossible that something is subjective and material at the same time. In a passage describing the unity of politico-religious thought and action in the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine, Mohsen Kadivar (2001, p. 215) describes how other Islamic philosophers explicitly rejected this rule as abstract unity and how IRI's elite adopted this viewpoint. Ayatollah Khomeini (1995, p.60) elaborated upon these principles and stressed Muslims involvement in the unity of politico-religious thought and action.

In the everyday political practice of the Iranian elite thought-action is frequently used although perhaps not everyone agrees with the rules issued from it. This principle however ends to some sets of rules that often linked the elite to each other. From the late eighties until the late nineties, for example, there was a great deal of discussion between the Pan-Islamist intellectuals and the state officials about the correct way in which one may approach to Political Islam principles and separate these thoughts from their associate practices. Pan-Islamist intellectuals talked about modernising both and the state officials wanted to hold on to the Islamic values. But while Political Islam's sets of principle form a unity between thought and action and they were often mentioned together, the only indication of the preference in these discussions becomes the order of the principles. Pan-Islamist intellectuals wrote thought-action while the state officials wrote action-thought.⁴⁷ This principle will be dealt with in more detail below with the politico-moral dualism.

45 - Khomeini, R. 1995. *slame Nab dar kalam va payane imam khomai* (Pure Islam: collective words and messages), vol. 5, p. 12, published in Iran

46 - See Rumi Mathnavi, Vol, 6, verses 3839-41, quoted in Soroush, A. K. 2000. 'Reason, Freedom, & Democracy in Islam', p. 41

47 - Shirvani, A. 1997. *Ma'arehe Islami dar asare shahid motahar* (the principles of Islam in Shahid Motahari works), pp. 87-88, published in Iran.

A third assumption is that the best kind of ethics is the one that is based on the solidarity between the Islamic communities (groups and factions). This attitude is well exemplified by the expression of martyrdom which Ayatollah Khomeini brought to mind, when he remarked that

During the years of revolution and imposed-war the moral quality of our people was so high that as such has rarely been seen in the world.⁴⁸

In 'Is Iran an Islamic State' Sami Zubaida explores the practical extent of this,

The war with Iraq (1980-88) sharpened the national identity of the revolution as Iranian and Shi'ia, against a hostile Arab Sunni world. Khomeini and the other Islamic leaders spoke more frequently of the Muslim nation of Iran. While not abandoning its theoretical internationalist commitment to the Islamic Um'ma, or the Mostazafin, the oppressed of the world, the emphasis was more clearly on the Iranian nation as the vanguard of the Islamic revolution.⁴⁹

It is this ethical basis upon which the Iranian Islamic State rules the country. As the 1981 Islamic Constitution proudly emphasised, the leadership of the Islamic Republic is the loyal representative of the interests of all social groups in Iran. In this respect and in a broad sense the masses of the people do not have their own particular group interests outside the interests of the IRI. All political grouping therefore has to place themselves and their interests in the service of IRI establishment. As it was shown through general propositions taken from Ayatollah Khomeini's writing and other Pan-Islamist and specified examples from the elite literature of the post-revolutionary area, the Unitarianism chosen approach serves to order the form of political discourse and discussions, rather than determine their outcomes and results. To offer an example on the basis of what has been said, it is that if an Islamic rule puts a form on to Political Islam and proceeds to address political issues, it is more likely that Islamic rule is understood as a form of governing method than as a form of religious guideline.

1.1.2. Essentialism

The second instrument of domination that may be derived from the worldview of the Iranian elite culture in the post-revolutionary arena is concerned with the structure of reality. The term essentialism here refers to any characteristic that is inherently a part of, reflects the 'essence' of, is necessary to the definition of, the person/things of which it is a characteristic. As most IRI elite stressed, Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine particularly have pointed to essence principles in the state of affairs and functioning of the things. As Ayatollah Khomeini remarked,

Islamic principles imply that the greatness of salvation comes along with the order of human life and the function of things.⁵⁰

48 - Khomeini, R. 1995. *slame Nab dar kalam va payane imam khomai* (Pure Islam: collective words and messages of Imam Khomeini), Vol. 5, p. 60

49 - Zubaida, S. 1997. 'Is Iran an Islamic state' in 'Political Islam: essays from Middle East Report', edited by Joel Beinin and Joe Stork, pp. 105-106

50 - Khomeini, R., 1995. '*sahefeye nour*', Vol. 17, p. 128, quoted in '*slame Nab dar kalam va payane imam khomai*' (Pure Islam in words and messages of Imam Khomeini), pp. 337-338; 98-99-100

Ayatollah Motahari in this regard includes,

The composition of this world which consist of structure and tradition, thought and reflection, has basically divine essence, and this essence is the direct reflects of the God almighty in human life and function of things.⁵¹

This view was explained through the principle of religiously essential characteristics of divine unity, according to which,

All creations contain a divine essence; without having such a characteristic there will be no movement in any of this-worldly things.⁵²

Moreover, this divine unity is sharply distinguished from the idealist secularism (Ibid. pp. 216-221-225). According to Ayatollah Khomeini,

For secularist material values are the only existing motives of the human force [internal and external].⁵³

Against secularist views, Ayatollah Khomeini advances his essentialism, which regards the things as pre-settled and deemed, which accordingly, it is neither possible nor desirable to be changed; the essence of that thing is design by God's creation. Instead, on the path towards spiritual evolution one has to be satisfied with the temporal adjustment of affairs and social relations. Thus, Islamic theory of divine unity stresses that all things have essence and appearance; therefore, the divine order of the things should not be disturbed.⁵⁴ At the same time as Abdul Karim Soroush makes clear,

This belief is evident in allegories in which society was compared to a body with the rulers as the head and the workers as the feet, or metaphors in which politics is likened to medicine for the social body.⁵⁵

Soroush cites the Qur'anic verse:

Everything is created with divine purpose. Things that get distance from its divine essence have a tendency to return to its origin.⁵⁶

What is then meant by the 'essence' of a thing? According to Ayatollah Motahari's Islamic worldview,

The essence of the things is the divine gifted aspect of that things; it includes the relations that that things has with the God Almighty. If the order of the essence of the things changes, all movement will cease; things have both appearance and essence.⁵⁷

Ayatollah Motahari (2003 pp.138-145) makes clear that in order to discover the changing pattern of these worldly human and social affairs, we must look at divine essence of things and consider its appearance as only an initial guideline. In other words, behind the appearance of this worldly human, social and material life, Ayatollah Motahari points to a divine realm of essence that forms the real motive force of reality. That is, more specifically, the motive of person's action in his private and public aspects (Ibid. pp. 144-5).

51 - Shirvani, A. 1997. '*ma'arehe Islami dar asare shahid motahari*' (the principles of Islam in Shahid Motahari works), p. 92, published in Iran

52 - Khomeini, R. 1995. '*slame Nab dar kalam va payane imam khomai*' (Pure Islam: collective words and messages), vol. 5, pp. 87-90, published in Iran

53 - Ibid. pp. 112-113

54 - Ibid. p. 327

55 - Soroush, A. K. 2000. Reason, Freedom. & Democracy in Islam, p. 54, published in Iran

56 - Ibid. p. 66

57 - Shirvani, A. 1997. '*ma-arefe Islami dar asare shahid motahar*' (The principles of Islam in Shahid Motahari works), pp. 49-55. Also Khomeini, R. '*sahefehe-i nour*', Vol. 17, p. 128, quoted in '*slame Nab dar kalam va payane imam khomai*' (Pure Islam in words and messages of Imam Khomeini), 1995. pp. 337-338

In this way, Ayatollah Motahari presents a picture of reality that encompasses two different but related aspects of things: this-worldly material appearance and other-worldly divine essence. The former is subject to change and the later is subject to numerous limitations. The change in appearance seems to be rather shallow and limited in value, whereas the change in essence is said to form a more reliable indication of a lasting human progress (salvation), which may be fitted into a general view of reality. In this respect, Ayatollah Motahari in regards to universal and particular aspects distinguishes between divine and temporal aspects of things in human private affairs and social actions. The picture, which emerges from this exploration, is an exclusively dualistic conception of reality. The concrete appearance of things is presented as an initial guide; nonetheless, for the determination of reality, the divine essence of the things is clearly more important (Ibid. pp. 153-155).

Although stated slightly differently, Soroush's views also include these terms and offer a lucid overview of the meaning of all the different terms of Ayatollah Motahari's theory of essence as it was taught to IRI Pan-Islamist. While the Islamic principles in Soroush (1997, p. 207 & 2000, p.66) discussion are identified as religious concepts, they represent the reflection of the essence of things and religiously principles of all objective things. In Soroush's essentialism, these religiously concepts are contrasted with views, which are mere thoughts one has from observing things, but which do not necessarily reflect the essence of those things,

When it is said these things are not related to religion, it means that their essence is secular and has some practical relation to religion.⁵⁸

In other words, it is religious essence that represents the knowledge of all human affairs (Soroush, 2001, p. 206). Soroush (Ibid. pp.206-7) defines categories as basic religious concepts, which means the correct discourse does not refer to the appearance of things, but to their divine essence.

Soroush's exposition then links his classification of terms to Ayatollah Motahari's distinction. In this way, accordingly, two assumptions of concept may be identified, that of universal and particular.⁵⁹ At the same time in Soroush's view we may identify the human and divine aspects of concepts that while universal may be used in a relative ways; the particular is more concrete and the divine aspects of the concept are more fundamental (Ibid. p. 181). Divine concept, however, is also used in a more specific sense to refer to its spiritual objective or situation, which contains the manifold appearances. In this sense, it falls outside the two assumptions in previously defined concepts that reflect the divine essence. On the other hand, human concept is divided into divine abstraction and human knowledge, which is a faithful reflection of the essence of a thing and temporal non-divine human knowledge (Soroush, 1996, pp. 97, 157, 171, 285, 367). The picture that emerges from the above is an exclusively dualistic conception of existence.

58 - Soroush, A. K. 1997. '*modara va moderiyat*' (Moderation and Management), p. 207, 1997, Tehran- Iran

59 - ...regardless of our belief, the universal level for human are about eating, marriage, entertainment, and customs, while the particular level encompasses religious concepts within a certain scope or a type of human life. Ibid. p. 208

Although the appearance of a thing is presented as an initial guide for divine unity, the essence is clearly more important for determination of human divinely-oriented knowledge and practice.

This view of existence is parallel to Ayatollah Motahari's concept of religiously oriented thought-practice that he stressed:

There is continuity in our religiously oriented thought and practice. There is also continuity in things that make believers to experience and relate them to this life... From early days of life human thought and practice continued until a sudden transformation took place in pattern of cognition. The change that comes through this transformation is the divine gifted essence which relates human to God Almighty.⁶⁰

Thus, religious essentialism is:

Cognition of the things either subjectivity or objectivity do manifest through the individuals' internal or external relation with existence. In other words, the reality which our cognition perceives is reflects of the essence of the things.⁶¹

Therefore, essence has to deepen the human perceptual cognition, which in turn has evolved into a worldview (Ibid. p. 65), but this is only the minor part of the entire journey, because the problem that Motahari's worldview considers of special importance does not lie in being able to understand the objective reality of this world, but rather in being able to use that objective reality to achieve the Islamic version of divine salvation (Ibid. p.155). Islamic thought-practice starts with religiously oriented essence, through which individuals acquire divinity, and should then return to perceptual cognition. Such thought-practice, which is based on religious principles, Ayatollah Motahari (Ibid. p. 79) stresses, must be applied in private life, governing systems, and the interests of Muslims as a whole. Thus a constant journey of perceptual cognition, religiously thought-practice, and cognition is demonstrated. Therefore, religious thought-practice is the criterion of truth, because all cognition has to be continuously verified by divinity (Motahari, 2003, pp. 241-2). Ayatollah Motahari's theory of politico-religious thought-practice paints a picture of reality that calls for constant effort, because things are not determined by their appearance, rather by their God's gifted essence. Finally, Ayatollah Motahari suggests that temporal things will somehow drift away from their essence, therefore, a constant journey of deepening religious understanding and carrying out divine practice prescribed by Ulama is the particular approach to make one's reality compatible with his God's gifted essence.⁶²

1.1.3. Dualism

Next to Unitarianism and essentialism, dualism formed an important chosen approach of the Iranian elite culture during the post-revolutionary

60 - Motahari, M. 2003. *'fetrat'* (Essence), 14th edition, pp. 138-145, published in Iran; & Shirvani, A. 1997. *'ma-arefe Islami dar asare shahid motahari'* ('the principles of Islam in Shahid Motahari works), pp. 76-77-78

61 - Ibid. p. 79

62 - For more on this issue see Shariati, A. *'mazhab chyet'* (What is religion), in monthly review *Farhang-i Toseeh* (Developmental Culture), 1996, No. 22, p. 2, published in Iran

Islamic Iran. This instrument has already been briefly referred to, but some important aspects remain to be addressed.

The effects of divine unity in post-revolutionary Islamic Iran were portrayed as the very logic of the religious force upon both human and social reality. In this regard Ayatollah Khomeini emphasised that this reality was driven along through a complex intermediation of divine wish. This concept was nowhere more apparent than in his political theory, where he portrayed a continuous struggle between those whose essence is religiously-altruistic (*en'sane'motealee*) and their oppressors whose essence is rebellious (*ta'qou'tee*), those faithful to Islamic state and those who separated governance from Islamic principles (Khomeini, 1995, pp. 296,304). A number of practical lessons may be derived from this theory. First, although Ayatollah Khomeini uses *Mostazafin* (oppressed) and *Mostakberin* (oppressor), Qur'anic terms to describe the different social groups, he suggests to looking at the social and economic appearance of the groups through their essence (Ibid. pp. 307,309). Ayatollah Khomeini's concern was not with social or economic development, but with the politico-moral stance of groups in and out of society towards the establishment of an Islamic state, that is a transitional stage towards other-worldly salvation (Ibid. pp. 327,329). No point proves this more clearly than Ayatollah Khomeini's refusal to allow for economic or social changes, which would be accordingly rebellious (Ibid. p.329). Second is Ayatollah Khomeini's theory of Islamic governance, which forms a literal application of his theory of religious practice that represents the Islamic perceptual cognition, where the politico-moral of Islamic leadership (Ulama) is used as an initial guideline for mass conviction. In this way attention is focused on essence of social group and the practice of Islamic institution is highlighted as the leadership towards other-worldly salvation (Ibid. pp. 395, 396). This means, thirdly, that change is pictured as belonging to an Islamic worldview in which both the oppressed and the oppressor in a society depend on each other for their existence, and under certain circumstances, the faithful may transform the society towards the divine path of salvation (Ibid. pp. 363, 368). This kind of approach, which stands much closer to traditional Islamic worldview, is highlighted by the IRI's elite, where they remained the same in essence but changed in appearance when they turned their back on the democratic aspects of Iranian Republic and thereby the course of 1979 Revolution (Ibid. pp. 423, 425,426).

Because of the perceived unity between Islamic politics and thought-practice, Ayatollah Khomeini's approach to social conflict was not merely important for IRI government but also for the more practical business of combining two concepts. But, as has been shown earlier, concepts in this worldview reflected the essence of things, therefore, a description of things would have to take the internal conflicts of the things for changes into account as well. In post-revolution Iran the theory of an Islamic government was explicitly linked to this theory of cognition. Moreover, while the ordering of the Islamic values and principles for establishment of an Islamic state is explained subjectively and objectively it is also discussed in this theory of Islamic cognition (Khomeini, 1995, pp.46,48,51). In this theory, for example,

a change that has been used correctly in both politics and thought-practice would become the extension of the concept, because it too reflects the essence of a thing. According to the Islamic principles as described by Ayatollah Motahari (2003, pp. 220-221), the conceptual conflicts are never evenly matched, because one of the two aspects of a conflict possess their own divine connections. In other words, one aspect is always dominant or more important than the other is. This means also that in mentioning a divine side and a rebellious side of conflict, in practice, the order in which these two are mentioned is of great importance.

Although politico-moral dualism reflected for instance in the conflict of *Mostazafin* (oppressed) versus *Mostakberin* (rebellious) as an instrument of domination offered a practical normative chosen approach that was used to describe social change and political reforms by almost all post-revolution governing elite, but since the late eighties it was far less apparent in elite political discourse than their 'Unitarianism' and 'essentialism'. Instead of an explicitly religiously monistic politico-moral or a unifying chosen approach, there was often a dual and less explicit form of approach. In this case, it may be said, an inherently variable dualism centred on the normative chosen approach of divine unity.

The three fundamental instruments of domination that have been explored here outline a number of practical chosen approaches of the Iranian elite culture of the post-revolutionary Iran. In sum, the instrument of domination of Unitarianism expresses a preference for totalitarian approaches and solutions; essentialism directs work not towards a merely human approach but towards a perceived essence of things and situations. Politico-moral dualism requires both essence and appearance to reflect the groups' conflict. As practical instruments of domination of the IRI elite culture in the post-revolutionary arena, they are clearly normative chosen approaches with a certain basis in Iranian despotic tradition. Therefore, in the context of political modernisation the degree to which political reforms adhered to these instruments of domination will be interpreted as an indication to which extent political reformers adhered to the normative chosen approach of the post-revolutionary elite, or conversely, to which extent reformers tried to introduce changes through an alternative moderate instruments of domination.

1.2. Some Instruments of Domination of the IRI's Political Culture

Within the context of the Iranian elite culture of the post-revolutionary arena, there was necessarily a political culture. In this section, an attempt will be made to outline some of its main instruments that help the elite to dominate the post-revolutionary Iranian society.

In the political culture of the IRI, there are a few ways through which the main elements of Iranian Islamic politics may be classified: Ideology, politics, and organisation. Moreover, there are the Pan-Islamist divisions of categories into radicals, moderates, and conservatives, with differences in politico-religious stance, viewpoint, and governing model. Finally, there is the

ideology, organisation, and civic virtue (practising social responsibility). Typically, in an Unitarianism setting these terms are meant to convey the impression of integrated and overlapping spheres, rather than strictly separated categories.

For the purpose at hand, the classification of ideology, organisation, and civic virtue is perhaps a convenient way of covering the main aspects of Iranian politics: ideology outlines the aims of politics, organisation the instrument by which it is achieved, civic virtue the way in which it is achieved. The coming sections present a proposed outline of the way in which this has been done.

1.2.1. Ideology

Although the term “ideology” used by the IRI elite refers to a cluster of politico-religious ideas and meanings, but they all are nonetheless related to a secular definition of the notion of ideology. In practice, these politico-religious ideas and meanings while sometimes interchangeable possess a broad definition of the relationship between individuals and public. The term “ideology” in this given context also encompasses the meaning of theory and thought as well. Ayatollah Motahari in his ‘Islamic Principles’ defines “ideology” as a necessary result of a qualified worldview,

A worldview explicitly should be qualified by reason... the worldview of a School of Thought is the foundation for an ideology; and an ideology is the need and necessary result of a worldview.⁶³

Ideology, accordingly, in order to become a systematised conclusion about the worldview, it should be supported by human rational and logical knowledge which is generalised by human understanding. In the standard of Pan-Islamism, Ali Shariati defines ideology as the knowledge that expresses human-society relationships.⁶⁴ At the same time, in all occasions Pan-Islamist Abdul Karim Soroush himself has criticised Political Islam for ideologisation of Islamic religion, while proposing an ideology for temporal affairs and a religion for salvation:

In recent years the word ideology’ is very much honoured. The late Shariati, Motahari, and other ideologues used the word ‘ideology’ when talking about Islam.⁶⁵ Today, ‘ideology’ is often used for a well-established set of ideas. The word ideology is qualified with a meaning for a school of thought and its principles. It has also been used as a platform for an ethnic group, political party, or a nation while willing to be armed with a weapon. The groups armed with ideology determine their position in a materialistic way with the existence, other societies and school of thought. The ideology however is used as a sharp weapon in the hand of some groups’ followers against opponents. This

63 - Shirvani, A. 1997. ‘*ma’arehe Islami dar asare shahid motahari*’ (The Principles of Islam in Shahid Motahari Works) pp. 50-54, published in Iran

64 -“Shariati generally considered religion as a culture repository and called for a distillation and utilisation of this resource...he had a sociological appreciation of the interpenetration of form and substance, religious culture and ethic culture...he, therefore, encouraged Muslims to ideologies religion and liberate it from the grips of stultifying and falsifying cultures...he advocated a restoration of the spirit of religion and a reform of its appearance.” Soroush, A. K. 2000. Reason, Freedom, & Democracy in Islam, p. 30, published in Iran

65 - Soroush, A. K. 1997, ‘*modara va modiriat*’ (Moderation and Management), pp. 178-179, published in Iran

meaning of 'ideology' is charming. It is with this meaning that many asked if religion could be an ideology and if ideologisation of religion with such a meaning is directed towards the good causes?⁶⁶

According to Soroush, ideologisation of religion is the fruit of Shariati's theory of Islamic thought-practice as described in the preceding section and the civic virtue (practising social responsibility) that will be explored next.⁶⁷ He then distinguishes between ideology and religion.⁶⁸ On the other hand Jahangir Salih-Pour in his article on religion and ideology supports ideologisation of religion and rejects Soroush's notion of separation.⁶⁹

Based on the foregoing, one could say, that ideologised religion in this context is not a theological term that encompasses mere spiritual and practical thought (Baghi, 2004, p.34). This is the result of the Political Islam theory of thought-practice and civic virtue (practising social responsibility) that will be addressed in next section. In Pan-Islamist political terminology, it must be said, ideology as a thought-practice is not as common as the other politico-religious terms. Ideology is rather a technical term, where some Pan-Islamist would prefer to use 'worldview'. The difference in popularity may be explained by the Pan-Islamist origins of the term worldview, as compared to the more secular origins of the term ideology.

In both institutions of state and religion the official ideology of the elite is called Political Islam with its particularity of the Ayatollah Khomeini Line. During the late seventies a debate raged about the relative merits of different names for the official ideology, but by the eighties the Ayatollah Khomeini Line was firmly recognised as the only appropriate name. Ideology is commonly broken down into the aforementioned major elements that Ali Shariati and Ayatollah Motahari had put forward: divine unity, divine justice,

66 - Ibid. p. 179

67 - "The late Shariati has a very good sentence that clarifies the aims and objective of his movement. He said "a religion which is not useful before death is useless for after it". This famous sentence is quite clear, and my point on "ideologisation of religion" is stated exactly here; it means a religion, which for this world has objectives. Here the affairs of the other world is not neglected but is subjected to happiness of this-worldly salvation. Therefore, once the happiness in this-worldly affairs is achieved, we could have other-worldly salvation as well. One with such a view is not an infidel but the relation between this-worldly affairs and other-worldly salvation is explained in the way that other-worldly salvation is dependent on this-worldly salvation...here between this worldly and other-worldly salvation a particular relation is established which has to be properly explained." Ibid. pp. 190-191

68 - "In principle the aims and objectives of all religions are spiritual and for human salvation. Thus, religion is subject to this purpose. But if the path to salvation is disturbed by this-worldly condition then one has to take initials and solve the problems. Here we should distinguish between this-worldly human affair and spiritual salvation." Ibid. pp. 191-192

69 - "In the sixties and seventies some Muslim intellectual ideologised many aspects of religious culture. Ali Shariati was one of the prominent among others who concentrated his work on this subject. Ideologisation of religion in those years was along with a movement for deconstruction of the Islamic tradition. According to Shariati, Islamic texts should be reclassify and refine. One has to interpret these texts with a modern perception and purify them from outdated subjects. Naturally some elements which have no spirit of the age should remain in shadow and the weight of other elements should be increased. In order to fill the gap created by this, if necessary, the elements of other ideologies should be selected and added to this new structure. By doing so, the new ideology will be a combination of structure and superstructure of the old and the new ideologies. The outcome would imitate a general model because we deconstruct the traditional one and reconstruct it in a new form. In practical aspect our actions need to be in harmony with the latest model". See Salihpour, J. 1994. '*mazhabe asre dar asre ideology*' (Era of Religion in Ideological Era) published in Keyan, No. 18, March-April 1994, Iran, quoted in Soroush '*modara va moderiate*' ('Moderation and Management'), 1997, pp. 563-575, published in Iran

and civic virtue. The term divine unity has two different meanings. In its wider sense, it is a religious name for the philosophical foundation of Political Islam. More commonly, it is the theory regarding the condition of the liberation of the faithful (Ibid. p.36). It describes the necessary tendency for Muslims to develop a path to temporal freedom and divine salvation. More specifically, divine unity encompasses the history of the Muslim nation: that is to say, the history of an Islamic social cohesion. Mostly divine justice is defined as the model that describes the fairness in society's social group relations. It is a model that sets forth the principles of human development and the relations between social groups of every kind in a Muslim society (Ibid. p.39). More to the point, divine justice necessitates a process of empowerment of the faithful and the contribution to the common welfare by the Islamic State system. Finally, civic virtue is defined as the politico-religious behaviour and actions for change and progress that concern the individuals most general principles related to society: it is said to be the basic logic behind Islamic ideology.

How one can picture religion as an ideology, and ideology itself, as a set of instruments of domination? In this respect, considering the ideological justification received by the Islamic state from some members of religious institution such a view in Iran in the late seventies was by no means evident. Space does not permit us to discuss all details here, but from the late seventies until the early eighties Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Line had the unique advantage among other ideologies of being able to express popular demands in no uncertain terms, and moreover the Pan-Islamist realised that the establishment of an Islamic state would not be possible without a total rejection of the existing pseudo-modern ideology intermingled with a monarchical political dictatorship. One has to notice that Political Islam against pseudo-modernism was not a fight for purely 'idealistic' reasons – that is, merely because the Pan-Islamist disliked monarchy and preferred an Islamic system – rather its triumph promised real social and economic justice, and personal gains for the participating groups and individuals in the process of revolution. Again, after almost two decades of domination, initially, in late nineties the Pan-Islamist reformers who considered the official ideology as an absolutist interpretation of Political Islam viewed IRI as out of tune with Iran's modern reality. In the late nineties Akbar Ganji considered Political Islam as an ideology that, though still invoked by many justifiable causes, had lost contact with the major realities of the country (Shabestari, 2000, pp. 107, 116). Among Iranian Pan-Islamists, ideology formed the object of attention from the early days of revolution onwards. For instance already in early nineties Kadivar in 'The Principles of Islamic Thought' pointed to important differences between his interpretation of Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Line. With Soroush's serious rejection of an ideologised religion, criticism of Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine started. His 'Sturdier than Ideology' is still the most authoritative critical study of the foundations of the IRI's Political Islam ideology. Over the years, he has continued to criticise the impact of an ideologised religion on the IRI's political life. In this respect,

Kadivar and Soroush have laid down the framework for nearly all the late interpretation of Political Islam ideology in the IRI. The Kadivar framework presents Ayatollah Khomeini Line as a version of Political Islam with little or no systematic influence from any other Islamic or modern philosophical sources. But the late nineties ideological debates kept to the framework and the views of the first generation of Republicans who cropped up after the 1979 Islamic Revolution (Baghi, 2004, p.40). Recently, this portrayal has implicitly been advanced by Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari and others, who have for the first time analysed the practical aspects of Political Islam and Ayatollah Khomeini Line on an Islamic state and society.

Mehdi Moslem has highlighted an important aspect of the post-revolution ideology that has so far largely been neglected,

Ayatollah Khomeini's political power was based upon a tacit consensus among the IRI elite, that he alone possessed a unique insight into Islamic philosophy.⁷⁰

During the eighties, in the interest of the regime, Ayatollah Khomeini Line (*khate-e Imam*) was officially called the ultimate source and guidance and ideology of purity (Baghi, 2004, p.58). This only became more apparent when ideology drove him in the impatience of old-age to turn the country into an Islamic state. As the attempt was to show, other elite such as Mohammad Khatami in turn became the ideological fountainhead during the late eighties and nineties, although in a different and more moderate way (Ibid. p.68). As Mehdi Moslem has contended in spite of the manoeuvrings of all the institutional interests before his death, Ayatollah Khomeini - and not the Islamic Republic - was the decisive policy maker. Similar explanations may be attached to Mohammad Khatami's remarks about moderate Islamic ideology in post 1997 Iran and his famous moderate ideological interpretation for the rule of law. Thus, ideology was the basis for the widespread use of Political Islam as the framework for all model of Islamic thought-practice (Ibid. p.77). Whatever the causality of leadership and ideological insight, it is clear that in the IRI so far, the two stable paramount have created such an important ideological impact. Ayatollah Khomeini provided the philosophical basis and the theory of Islamic revolution; Mohammad Khatami was the architect of an Islamic government with moderate characteristics (Ibid. p. 138). Based on the chosen approach of religiously essentialism, both may be said to have combined the general principles of Political Islam with the more concrete circumstances of Iranian nationalist culture to grasp the true essence of their governing periods.

1.2.2. Organisation

The second in the proposed aspects of instruments of domination of the IRI elite political culture is organisation, which is rendered by *Nahaad*. *Nahaad* is meant here not quite as the organisation described in social science terminology, but rather the Islamic elite organisational line (Hajjarian, 2001, p. 81). Nevertheless, *Nahad* is not the only term associated

70 - Moslem, M. 2002. Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran, p. 99, Syracuse University Press, New York

with organisation in Iranian political terminology. Other institutional terms such as *Bonyad*, *Shora*, *Madjma*, *Daftar*, *Anjoman* and *Sazman* are also commonly encountered. Different organisations dealing with political subjects all describe organisation in such similar terms that it is quite likely they share a common model. According to Emad'aldeen Baghi,

Nahad is the organisational form of the IRI. The purpose of Nahad is to direct the regime's direction and organise everyday works while stipulated according to the political line by the regime's highest political elite.⁷¹

Moreover and accordingly, the organisational line encompasses the Islamic government's principles of organisation, building of an organisation, the elite organisational system and organisation of Islamic institution's members, as well as the control of the conditions under which the government's political line, decisions, and disciplines are implemented (Baghi, 2004, pp. 14, 135, 325, 465, 470-1). Among other things, he adds, the *Nahad* as the organisation of the official line should hold the Islamic morality and unity (Ibid. p.136). Therefore, *Nahad* is a governing body or foundation, which provides the basic direction and principles concerning institutional work that has been stipulated according to the official ideology or political line under the supervision of the Islamic government or Supreme Leader. Mehdi Moslem also gives a list of elements of the organisational line that a *Nahad* contains. These elements are, for instance, structural centralism or the need for organised intervention to hold to general policies and principles, morality and unity, amongst other things.⁷²

Two other frequently encountered organisational terms are *Basyedj* used for mobilisation of militias, and *Anjoman* (Association). In some sources, these two concepts and organisations are considered equal (Ibid. pp. 23-24). As Mehdi Moslem shows, however, originally *basyedj* was derived from the military term for mobilisation, which meant something like militia (Ibid. p.24). It was adopted by the Islamic institution to denote anyone engaging in revolutionary movement, the military and political personal above the clerical level in the IRI. After the war when this organisation was institutionalised, the meaning of the term *Basiji* was broadened from merely referring to low-level Islamic State officials to various individuals in the work place up to the ministries (Ibid. p.24). In recent years, the terms 'state servants' or 'system servants' have increasingly replaced *basiji* to refer to Islamic regime officials. Mehdi Moslem points out that although *Basyedji(s)* forms the most important part of the state's work personnel, some groups such as simple state employees should not be considered to be *Basyedji* (Ibid. p. 24). *Basyedji* are only those who fall under the militia or system of authorised strength of organs and perform leading and managing functions. Formally, the defining feature of the *Basyedj* organisation is the principle of which the Islamic State manages the supporters. Compared to the *Basiji*

71 - Baghi, E. 2004. *Rohaniyat va ghodrat* (clergies and Power), p. 244, published in Iran

72 - Mehdi Moslem in 'Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran' on structure and function of Nahad noted that: 'Headed by prominent clergy, Nahad increased the institutional and ideological influence of the pro-Khomeini forces throughout the country. Through their Islamic and revolutionary credentials, these bodies accelerated the process of indoctrination and the Islamisation of society'. See Mehdi Moslem in 'Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran' 2002, p. 23, New York,

system, the state personal system encompasses a much wider group of individuals. According to Mehdi Moslem all members of *Basyedj* and management of their different relationships nevertheless fall under the overall state personnel system (Ibid. p. 24).

Next to *Nahad*, focusing on state personnel there are a number of frequently encountered terms. One of the most general of these is the organisational term *Modiriyat* (management) which in the late eighties replaced *Maktabeyat* (religiosity) as part of state managerial reorganisation and economic reform. *Modiriyat* is a term that may be traced to pre-revolution as times, when it referred to the high ranks structure of organisation of the higher ranks and the guidelines of their operation. In a more recent description it is defined as the group or individual that organises the state organs in production and service units, and the division of management prerogatives. A slightly more specific organisational term is *Rahbariyat*, which denotes a vertically organised functional system. Although no Iranian document specifically refers to *Rahbariyat* (leadership) as a form of organisation, in practice it constitutes important functions within the Islamic State. Traditionally, it forms an important component of one of the central principles behind the organisation of the Iranian Islamic state: that of uniform leadership and responsibility according to rank and file.⁷³

Two other important organisational terms are *Shora* (Council) and *Anjoman* (Association). In Islamic political discourse, a *Shora* is the basic institutional unit of an Islamic model of governance. In most documents, it is defined as an Islamic council to conduct the affairs of particular groups. Although the term usually designates administrative units failing under the executive, strictly speaking, all Islamic State controlling or policing units may be called *Anjoman-e Islamie* (Islamic Association). Interestingly, *Sazman* is defined both as a general term for state organs and as a term for the inner structure of Ministries. The latter meaning links them to the organisational

73 - According to Mehdi Moslem "the most powerful and influential of all revolutionary bodies today is the Bonyad-e Mostazafin'...from the very beginning, the Bonyad was essentially an independent organisation, and it often made a point of stating that it only took orders from the faqih [supreme leader] and the Revolutionary Council. According to articles 4 and 9 of the Bonyad ('s) constitution, the Bonyad "is a financial and legally independent body, and only the Imam [Ayatollah Khomeini] has total power over its activities. The elite reinforced such claims. Prime Minister Musavi, the Imam's representative to the Bonyad during the first decade of the revolution, reaffirmed its independence: "because the Bonyad is a revolutionary body, it is free from restrictive government and bureaucratic re tape." The second director of the Bonyad, Sadeq Tabatabai, rebuffed accusations that government should investigate the Bonyad and request an accounting of their management of the extensive property and wealth: "Only the Imam can ascertain what should happen to the confiscated things." In accordance with Musavi's statement, Tabatabai agreed that: "Revolutionary Nahad (s) belong to the people and should be administered by them rather than by inflexible bureaucratic rules and regulations. Therefore, if there is misuse and irregularity [in the Bonyad] it is the people's. We are against the Bonyad becoming governmental, because this will strip its revolutionary spirit. The difference between this revolutionary body and other similar organisations is that, based on the Imam's rulings, the assets of the Bonyad belong to the people and are under the supervision of the vilayet-i faqih. Thus, the holding of Bonyad differ from [other] public possession." This rhetoric was supported by Prime Minister Musavi, who on more than one occasion defended the Bonyad and its activities against accusations of corruption and accumulated wealth, and spoke against the fact that some people called the Bonyad the Foundation of the Affluent (Bonyad-e Mostakberin). All prominent figures supported the Bonyad and its actions, including Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, Speaker of the Majles [Parliament], who believed that "the Bonyad is another helpful arm for the government." With such support, the Bonyad gradually became more and more wealthy, and its increasing wealth was accompanied by power." See Moslem, M. 2002. Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran', pp. 42-43

term *Nahad*, which has already been referred to above. *Sazman* is said to derive from the older term 'office-holder system'. This is a general term for the establishment of sets of organs while the quota of persons and the distribution of functions are assigned to them (Ibid. p.43).

The question is then how is the organisation in the IRI perceived? In some literature on the topic, one broad approach views the IRI's organisation primarily as rational and institutional. But Mehdi Moslem portrays contemporary Iran as the outcome of the replacement of the ethos and structure of traditional Iranian society. Moreover, the institution of Supreme Leader (*vilayet-i faqih*) as a phenomenon that Iran has never known before intermingles with the new organisation of republic that functions in a relatively modern way. He implied, however, the Islamic government formed the modern aspect of Iranian society. By the late eighties, the process of regularisation and institutionalisation of the parallel organisations had partly reached its finalisation. Moreover, all leading positions in the ministries were ordered after a variant of the modern system. During the years that followed, the competing contests and proposals of different positions seem to be based very largely, although not entirely, on one's position in the political system as a whole and the interests of the informal groups and organisations they represented. In this view, after the enthusiasm of the revolutionary years, bureaucracy fell prey to a gradual process of institutional entropy, degeneration from the pursuit of the post-revolutionary period to the simple pursuit of the interests of one's organ and one's own individual interests. This scheme is the main approach but others have discussed this institutionalisation in the nineties by focusing on the formal and legal grants of authority and status of Islamic State personnel (Ganji, 1999, & Goochani, 2004, & Abdi, 2003).

In difference to these approaches, some have criticised these assumptions and proposed alternative description on state bureaucracy. Without denying the importance of formal institutions, they have tended to highlight the importance of informal grouping as well. Mostafa Tajzadeh (2003) has made attention to the enduring of the accumulation of power on top in Iranian political system. Others, such as Emad'aldeen Baghi (2004), Mohsen Armine (2001), Akbar Ganji (2000), and recently Saeid Hajjarian (2003), to name but a few, have proposed different ways of classifying formal and informal groups and interest relations in the IRI. These views have presented a bewildering variety of generation groups, factional groups, informal groups, social networks and their practices (Armin, 2002).

In part, Mostafa Tajzadeh's remarks about the accumulation of power, show even some informal groups have continued to undergo the influence of the IRI's chosen approach. In that way informal grouping was shown to exist, but was immediately categorised as a form of factional practices. From a hermeneutic standpoint, however, for an understanding of the way in which such groupings will affect the IRI's actual behaviour, the way in which these groupings are organised is of greater importance than the opinion and perception of opposite factions about each other (Shabestari, 2002). If there is no tradition about the need to limit power in the IRI, how can there be a

common perception of power accumulation that is based on such a premise? Of course, Iranian reformers do complain about the misuse of power, but in public discourse they usually ascribe other reasons to it than the accumulation of power in the hands of either state bureaucracy or institution of leadership (Baghi, 2004). Logically speaking, this means that they will seek out other solutions than would be suggested by the logic of imposing a limit to bureaucracy or leadership power. Therefore, it is perhaps useful to look at ways in which the networking of Iranian political grouping takes place. For our purposes, the two elements of outward appearance (*hefze-zaher*) and informal ties (*rabete*) merit attention.

Mohammad Mokhtari (1998) has drawn attention to the central importance of outward appearance, which provides indisputable testimony of the extent to which the individual is not only defined by others in Iranian culture but also excruciatingly vulnerable. He points out that the individual exists only along a continuum from the person to other. In other words, individuals are taught to view themselves above all as the servant of state. If one acts out one's different roles properly, one will have *hefze-zaher*. This notion generally encompasses such diverse notions as sincerity, consensus and outward harmony, but entails different elements according to the role that is fulfilled (Ibid. p.177). The Iranian notion of *hefze'zaher* draws attention to the distinction between behaviour in public and private spheres. That means, while Pan-Islamist state officials have repeatedly stressed the need for being seen as united in the public sphere, which is their typical political behaviour, in the private sphere, however, personal animosities and policy differences form the basis of conflicts that particularly is transparent among informal groups (Ibid. p. 180).

Since individual identity in Iran is dependent on one's social relationships, it is logical to ask what these social relationships are. Traditionally, the basic social relationship has been between elder and younger, and by extension between the ruler and subject. In the 'Exercise of Moderateness' on the spirit of Iranian politics, Mohammad Mokhtari describes the crisis of legitimacy in Iran and the revolt against patriarch authority (Ibid. pp. 315-332). Because Iran's traditional social structure, which was based on the ruler-subject relationship and seemingly, the cause of despotism in Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini tried to foster new social ideals, fatherhood and brotherhood under the Islamic rule. This new relationship has often been mistaken amongst the Pan-Islamist as a form of egalitarianism. After all, in Iran the ruler-subject relationships exist between employer and employees as well. Mokhtari remarks on the traditional form of Iranian politics are enlightening particularly in this context. He pointed out that in Iranian tradition, any device which communities across a social grouping, whether family or classes can be seen as one more way of strengthening the structure of the society against its individual or weakest parts (Ibid. p.319). In other words, if employees had to betray their employer, disregard his intellectuals, and subordinate their leaders, they would destroy the smaller units that weaken the society as a whole. Ideally, then, all Iranians had to form one national will rather than subscribe to their social groups (Ibid. p.321). This

proposes a plausible explanation for the novel and omnipresent requirement within and outside the Islamic institution to unify and a credible corollary to the Ayatollah Khomeini's prohibition against factionalism in the Iranian political system. By striving after the ideological unification, Islamic leadership hoped that Political Islam and Ayatollah Khomeini Line would impress a unity of politico-moral purpose and thus, civic virtue (practising social responsibility) traditionally valued above the coercive procedures of formal institution (Ibid. p.322).

Still, fatherhood and brotherhood, the need to unify thought-practice clearly pertained to the notion of *hefze'zاهر*. Behind the *hefze zاهر* lies the deeper reality of the primacy of human relations (Ibid. p.291). In traditional Iran, informal ties (*rabeteه*) consisted of networks of relationships, based on some form of shared particularistic experience; that is persons who shared kinship relations or came from the same social group: for instance the religious community of Shi'ia the same caste of Clergies, the same School of Thought, and in the same unit of *Basyedج*. In fact, however, as Akbar Ganji (1999, pp. 244-249) points out in any situation everyone would be able to know who is networked with whom because networking is less a private relationship than the performing of a role expected of one because of one's past or present situation. Next to networking in this traditional sense, it seems, a new form called *aqa-zadeه-hا* practice has emerged since the beginning of the economic reform era in early nineties, which consists of a high rank direct son or family who uses the instrumental manipulation of these relations and sentiments (Ibid. pp. 236-238). It is hard to see, however, whether that is a new form of relationship or is merely considered to be an excess of the more traditional Islamic networking.

Finally, most Pan-Islamist intellectuals agree that something one might call informal groups or factions does play an important role in Iranian Islamic politics (Ibid. pp. 16-18). Informal groups are made up of leader-follower relations based on forms of shared trust and loyalties and not on such casual features as shared ethnical, class or gender interests (Ibid. pp. 22-25). In this sense, the backbones of the Islamic state since 1979 has been formed first by the informal groups centring around Ayatollah Khomeini and later on Mohammad Khatami (Ibid. pp. 268-270). These discussions suggest that informal groups and formal institutions partly overlap, because the leaders at each level are the followers of the level above them and serve in turn as leaders for the members of state within their level, not necessarily the same organ, and for the leading members of state at the lower level. At the top of the Islamic state, at least, informal groups are the decisive factor in Iranian Islamic politics, because they constitute power bases one can rely on. Since leading state members obviously possess great discretion in the appointment of subordinates, one may conjecture that in the IRI most of the fury is clearly aroused by methods of handling personnel (Nouri, 1999). Indeed, as the cases of Mostafa Tajzadeه and Abdullah Nuri have shown, their role in state institution was a hot issue throughout most of the late nineties. It was also an issue that, as will be shown, involved extensive political conflicts.

In an attempt to outline a possible set of instruments of domination for political organisations, it is necessary first to take both the formal and informal features into account. Formally, there is a bureaucratic structure based on vertical functional systems and a Supreme Leadership structure of *vilayet-i faqih* outlined at the top by a clerical list. Publicly, considerations of *hefze-zaher* or outward appearance are important. But, the informal side of Iranian Islamic politics, which is formed by networks and especially informal groupings of shared loyalties, often decisively influences the course of events. Therefore, it is the interplay of all these factors that make up the arena of the IRI's organisation.

1.2.3. Civic Virtue: Social Responsibilities

The third instrument of domination of the IRI's political culture is the 'civic virtue', or in other words, practising social responsibility. In post-revolution Iran this term referred to a revolutionary socio-political attitude or behaviour that through which individuals could express or manifest their acts of solidarity in their communities. In this respect, this instrument of domination of the IRI's elite political culture has a slightly different meaning from the pre-revolution practice of politico-religious 'duties' that also concerned with some thought-actions of social responsibilities. From the early eighties onwards this change of attitude took place and becomes a dominant notion about socio-political activities among the Pan-Islamist who precisely constituted the bulk of culturally ideologised groups. This term and its meaning were originally copied from Ali Shariati's (1974) works where he defines the Political Islam's thought-practice as a model for 'civic virtue' which should reflect 'a revolutionised attitude and behaviour' (Shariati, trans. Alger, 1979). At the same time, the term admittedly fits into the theory of thought-practice in the Ayatollah Khomeini Line. Nonetheless until the nineties this term meant primarily an expression of socio-political action and the ambiguity behind that was supported by the aforementioned divine unity and divine justice, which, in the chosen approach of Iranian Pan-Islamist elite, meant an ideologised behaviour that reflects a correct attitude.

This term in Political Islam incites that people in their social relations do good things. Ayatollah Khomeini mentions this expressly in his work (collective volume five 1993), in which he contrasts the evil practice of some Muslims who merely pray Islam. He compares these Muslims with those who proceed from the correct stance and practice and engages in some kind of social actions. The 'civic virtue' or practising social responsibility is therefore viewed as the result of the rightful attitude and the behaviour of Muslims, and the unity of Islamic thought and action, which he mentioned expressly in annual message to Mecca pilgrims (*hadje*).⁷⁴ The compilation of debates on

74 - "You [Muslims] should pay attention to this great gathering which by the order of God Almighty take place in that holy land. This gathering oblige Muslim nations to act in a correct way that led us to Islam's recommendations. These recommendation would help the Muslim nations to progress if they are united and solid. These will help Islamic societies in their path to independence. Your united actions can bring colonialism to defeat and solve our difficulties. This gathering has other purposes as well. Muslims should collect information about political difficulties that other

politico-religious thought-action and the broader meaning of 'civic virtue' will be discussed in the following section.

Pan-Islamist intellectuals have only recently started to pay serious attention to the practical importance of the civic virtue in the political discourse of the Iranian elite that is associated with their political culture. This is not to say that before there was no consideration on the special nature of this notion. On the contrary, already in the early nineties Mohammad Mokhtari remarked that

It is a norm in our society that the ideas change to some acts and the stance change to some practice without being challenged.⁷⁵

The idea about civic virtue defined by Ali Shariati (1974) as a revolutionised attitude and behaviour was rather puzzled by the way in which the IRI elite method of thought-practice functioned. The IRI elite, despite great precision in the use of practising social responsibility (encouraging right-doing and negating of wrong-doing), shows a consistent reluctance to define it in a modern model of social solidarity predicament, while Joel Beinin and Joe Stork in their collective essays on the practice of Pan-Islamist describes slightly differently:

Today's Islamist thinkers and activists are creatively deploying selected elements of the Islamic tradition, combined with ideas, technique, institutions, and commodities of the present and recent past, to cope with specifically modern predicaments: political, social, economic, and cultural issues that emerged in the Middle East as a result of the expansion of the world capitalist market ... and the hybridisation of culture and identity in the course of the wide range of contacts and interactions among Europeans and their cultures and the people of the Middle East.⁷⁶

Although the IRI elite explained the lack of precision by referring to the practice of holding political momentum at which this notion could be determined further, they stopped short of providing an explanation on social solidarity. Jamileh Kadeevan (2000) in 'The Development of Shiite Political Discourse in Iran' points out that until the late eighties few groups of Pan-Islamist focused on the notion of civic virtue as a method to explain their inter-social group communication. This notion, however, was more the fruit of the rather colourful events of the revolutionary period, while the post-war discourses on social solidarity could be said to have undergone fundamental changes.

On the other hand, in the late nineties, the new debates about civic virtue took place based on the IRI's elite moderate thought-practice discourses: modernisation of thought-practice through an alternative

Muslim nations struggling to solve. Our clergymen, intellectuals, and officials in this gathering, while exposing the difficulties and consulting with others, should find some solutions to solve those problems. When the pilgrims return home, they have to bring these debates in seminars and do concentrate on those issues and find a correct solution. Everyone in this gathering has to invite all Islamic nations to unite. We shall provide facilities to all Islamic nations to solve their differences. In this respect, our speakers and writers should act and create a united front of oppressed people. Based on unity of stance and Qur'anic teaching of 'there is no other object for worship except Allah' this united front should fight against super powers and colonialism, and hopefully Islamic countries will prevail." Ibid. p. 73

75 - Mohammad Mokhtari, *Farhange bechera* (Unquestionable Culture), monthly review *Farhange Toseeh* (Developmental Culture) 1997, p. 8, No. 27, Teheran-Iran

76 - Beinin, J. & Stork, J., 1997. Political Islam, Essays from Middle East Report, p. 4

interpretation of social responsibility. Early example of the works on moderate thought-practice and an alternative interpretation was the work of Mohsen Kadivar. His work was a discussion about the origin of the notion of thought-practice in the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine and the reformation of the traditional principles of an Islamic state. Other works soon followed, a sizeable portion of which focused on the modernisation of Islamic government social solidarity policies. The debates about interpretation of civic virtue carried out by Mohsen Arami (2001) and Abbas Abdi (2002) have advanced a very useful overview of the different concepts for practicing social responsibility in a Republican system and religiously democratic context of Islamic government.

Another important work is Saeid Hajjarian's 'From the Sacred Witness to the Profane Witness' (2001, pp. 179-198) that focused on a coherent concept of civic virtue or practising social responsibility in the IRI through a moderate thought-practice. Unlike Armine, who departed from philosophical terminology, cultural colourfulness or desire for inventories, Hajjarian was the first Pan-Islamist intellectual who turned attention to the communication system behind this notion, in other words, the widespread IRI's elite thought-practice and the usefulness of a modern thought-practice in their discourse. For Hajjarian (2001, p.188) traditional Islamic thought-practice is elemental in a political system whose defining characteristic is fixed and it concerns the Iranian elite communication system. Hajjarian points out, that although the moderate elite is yet beyond an explicit theory to found a democratic model for social solidarity, nonetheless, it is already possible to extract some of the main components such a theory would have to contain. The IRI's thought-practice has to contribute to the attainment of specific goals that facilitate the accession or implementation of social solidarity policies, and offer a new guideline on the kind of social attitude and behaviour the IRI's elite should use to express themselves (Ibid. p. 183). But, above all, Hajjarian points out that the IRI's elite thought-practice is an effective means of establishing communication, not so much in respect to content as in respect to form. This leads to a system that can be shown to include only a selection of the many different kinds of statements and incantations that are socially possible. It has the particular quality of communication system impoverishment (Ibid. p. 188). Through the pervasive influence of the communication system on the affairs of society, Hajjarian presents Shariati's (1974) view of practising social responsibility as a form of power. The origins of this power are traced to the IRI elite, and because of their ideological domination, also to moderate's paramount leader former president Rafsanjani and to a lesser degree Mohammad Khatami. As it will be shown in this study, the same may be said of other groups of Pan-Islamist. Moreover, Hajjarian also shows the importance of the effects of the civic virtue on political system and for establishment intellectuals as well (Ibid. p. 160).

The notion of civic virtue and its redefinition by Hajjarian as 'a form of communication system' inaugurated a totally fresh and fruitful debate among establishment intellectuals on the IRI elite chosen approach that certainly developed a considerable amount of criticism on the IRI's political culture

among the reformers in the late nineties. Moreover, Hajjarian views the practicing social responsibility primarily as a particular form of populism and repression. Although in practice the populism and repression are indeed the side effect of the IRI's elite political culture, it seems Hajjarian did not primarily meant as such. What Hajjarian meant was that the populism and repression in Iran resulted from a change in the early plural politics of the Islamic government. This change was in communication system as well whereby the unity of a democratic thought-practise could change the Pan-Islamists' actions.

As was disclose in the discussion of the instruments of domination of religiously essentialism, Iranian Pan-Islamist hold that a rightful concept is a direct reflection of the essence of the reality. The practicing social responsibility, therefore, seems to be seen as the religiously correct theory that IRI elite were looking for to justify their thought-practice (Soroush, 2000). This view would explain the seemingly strange uses of those methods deemed necessary to bring about political change. After all, as part of the ideological organisation, practicing social responsibility belongs to a more concrete and contingent level of politics. The IRI elite need to indicate a civic virtue for social solidarity only applies to a limited area and a relatively stabile situation. Unlike the way religiously essentialism is practiced, in which general actions has been made, civic virtue that follow to a more recent activities may change as policies shift and attempt is made to realise new realities.

Another aspect of this instrument of domination that Pan-Islamist and secular intellectuals rightly draws attention to is the hierarchic practice in which social policies and groups are placed. Although the clerical institution often comes up with bits and pieces of ideas, their lower rank entourage is called upon to work out the greater details. State officials should then check the working correctness of such social polities. Usually, policies are then sent down to a lower level, which treats the concepts of the higher level as a form of complex stances which needs to be simplified and fit to contingent circumstances of the lower strata. In this way, a policy can be sent down over various levels and each time becomes reformulated in a more concrete or meaningless thought-practice. Because policies come with a general discourse, in practice this often amounts to adding more precision to the existing one.

There is little doubt that within the elaboration of Islamic ideological organisation, civic virtue constitutes an instrument of domination in the IRI. More generally, practicing social responsibility is understood as encompassing all aspects in life and labour of the entire groups of society and its individual members. Civic virtue in this sense comes close to a practical ethic. In post-revolutionary Iran Ayatollah Khomeini precisely tried to transform the way the government dealt with itself and with hierarchic society. During the eighties he launched Islamic method of civic virtue to link Islamic ideas to mass practice, to carry out the populist line, and to engage the Pan-Islamist intellectuals in criticism of the secular way of life. According to his method, Islamic way of life must give rise to a revolutionised form of civic virtue.

Apart from its practical basis, this method was presented as a form of politics as well. In effect during the 1979 revolution clerical institution set forth their famous populist Islamic line as a form of religiously practicing social responsibility.

Through the populist line, Ayatollah Khomeini similar to others presented different steps and views that a leading Pan-Islamist must take and understand to arrive at an Islamic thought-practice for social action. Although he does not say so in the direct quotation, Ayatollah Khomeini makes clear that through Islamic worldview the IRI officials must start off by outlining a correct method of civic virtue that encourage Islamic thought-practice. After all, one cannot act Political Islam without the ideological viewpoint, organisation, and method of thought-practice. Secondly, the leading clergies and Pan-Islamist laymen must carry out works among the fellow Muslims to refine their actions. In this way the chosen approach towards an Islamic state means that some thought-practice can be retained and others rejected. For example, secularism should be rejected while some secular elements can be critically adopted. Once they are adopted, in order to become inclusive, they are to be turned into synthesised and systematic politico-religious ideas. Finally, in the IRI because Islamic worldview is the final word on a matter, it is often equated with the power to decide. True to this method of practicing, the Islamic political line always requires the actions that the entire process of that practice requires Islamic thought.

As it will be shown in this study, ideology, organisation, and civic virtue are important elements in Iranian political culture and should be understood against the background of the theory of state and thought-practice that Ali Shariati and later Ayatollah Khomeini and other Pan-Islamist have formulated. In this study, it will be shown that these three major instruments of domination of IRI political culture have exerted a formative influence on the polity and practice of political system in the IRI during the eighties and nineties.

Conclusion

The introduction to this study started with an outline about the meaning and significance of the notion of modernity in contemporary intellectual's life in Iran. It followed with the hermeneutic interpretation of the text of traditions and manuscripts, and the post-modern critical thought that dealt with Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine which formed the theoretical subjects of the debates in recent years on the Islamic state's official ideologies, organisation, and working style. This introduction moreover recognises that due to Iran's modernising force some members of the leadership of the Islamic state had to place post-revolutionary ideologies and organisations accordingly in time with the ongoing global modernity and technological development, thus, an external condition for the IRI's elite to adhere to a new political setting that comprised some democratic standards. In this chapter an attempt was made to explain how and why the culture and political culture together

have influenced the way that the establishment and non-establishment reformers have perceived, organised and exercised moderation in both Islamic state and religious establishment in contemporary Iran. For this study a narrative, a hermeneutic methodology, and an extracted interpretation of the theoretical materials published in Iran are used. In first part there was number of remarks about the three fundamental instruments of domination of the IRI's elite culture – Unitarianism, Essentialism, and Dualism – and some instruments of domination of the IRI's political culture – ideology, organisation, and civic virtue (practicing social responsibility). This will led the next chapter to a detail assessment about the ideologies and organisations behind the political reforms that comprised the theoretical debates on the post-revolutionary political institution and the changing pattern towards a plural moderate Republican model. Moreover, a detailed discussion about the political discourse of the IRI's elite, establishment and semi-establishment intellectuals on the concepts and meaning of modernity and the tradition that included a great deal of theoretical debates on a variation of the political philosophies and their practices in an inter-state group political pluralism, thus their developments in contemporary Iran was presented. This prepared the work for the discussion of alternative theories presented by both the Pan-Islamist and secular intellectuals and their revision of Political Islam its relations to Islamic state, and the changes in the theories of alternative politics towards a religiously democratic government and their elaboration. This chapter assumed that the debates on moderation started far ealier than the 1997 political reform processes that become known as the Iran's 'Second Revolution' with the same objectives as the 1979 Revolution begun twenty years earlier.

Similar to Iran's political reformers the method to read, understand and to write this narrative is hermeneutic, therefore, an attempt is made to understand and explain a varieties of published materials which they all interpret the recent reformation ideologies and the reformers activities, their various theories on democratisation and methods of decentralisation, which finally stressed on a period of transition for political system as an hypotheses of the process of modernity and changes that destined both the Islamic state and Iranian society in contemporary Iran. This was rather an outcome of the consensus held by a number of moderate political writers amongst whom the IRI elite and officials, the Pan-Islamist and secular intellectuals were noticeable. This framework proposed an intended approach and reflections in which the Iranian political system and political changes were interpreted in literatures published in contemporary Iran. That includes moreover the ways in which some Pan-Islamist and secular intellectuals expressed their views on the transitional stage of Iran's socio-political system, which in other words was a collective debate on modernisation and an alternative political model. This is to say, it was assumed that the theories and ideas on politics and socio-political reforms were intended somehow by their advocates to allow all parties and social classes involved in the political practice to participate in the debates and

moreover to organise the activities of political reform in this process. In this way therefore an attempt was made to offer an explanation about those instruments of domination of the IRI's elite culture within the context of what has been described by the political reformers as the Iran's post-revolutionary imagined community. At the same time this framework expressed the Iran's elite culture and political culture, which relates this study to the notion of what Mohammad Mokhtari described as the "unquestionable culture" (*farhange be-che-ra*). Therefore, culture and political culture in this sense has been explained as the instruments of domination of the Iranian elite that is the result of the prior and informal process of social and political education, communication, and the post-revolutionary thought-practice in Iran. The arenas that form the elements of the IRI's elite culture and political culture may be said to be of a number of different levels. In coming chapters, tradition and norms, inherently variable, thought- practice as general levels of these elements that serve to measure the values and effects of communication in organisational and personal networks shall be proposed.

Therefore, the culture and political culture that have structured institution of political reforms in the IRI came from two different levels of Iranian elite and intellectuals. At their general level, a number of approaches have been discussed: Unitarianism, Essentialism, and Dualism. At the more particular level: this chapter outlined both the traditionalist and modernist ways in which ideologies, organisations, and the notion of practicing social responsibility were viewed in the IRI. All of these approaches have been described in some detail in coming chapters, to offer political arenas in which political institution of contemporary political reforms could be meaningfully placed.

CHAPTER TWO

The Ideologies and Modernity in Contemporary Iran

1. The Ideologies behind Political Reform

In February 1979 with triumph of Islamic revolution a new approach to modernisation in contemporary Iran officially started. Although this approach was not publicly recognised by some Pan-Islamist actors and most members of religious institution at the time, but this event represent an important turnabout of the post-revolutionary Iranian socio-political life. In early 1980s the new regime's "Islamic " approach and its restoration policies this process was abandoned and the modernisers were branded somehow 'liberals', 'outsiders', 'infidels', and 'unpatriotic'. Most IRI's elite praised this view and confirmed an "Islamic" approach while some attempts were made to revive it however until the late 1980s the Guardian Council and the conservative leadership put a hold to those modest attempts. Thus, within the Unitarian worldview of the official ideology, somehow, for nearly one decade the IRI's political institutions felt no urgent need to start a different approach to modernisation and reform of political institution. Therefore, from the 1980s onwards the ideological arena of Iranian politics was formed by theories of Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine. This was to make the imagined Islamic community within which contemporary Iranian society was to find a fresh and vital expression. After the clear inability of the Pan-Islamist elite to come up with some "Islamic" solutions clerical institution decided to give a chance to pragmatist groups. This worked together with general feeling of national crisis and hoped to create a ready atmosphere within which the new ideology was adopted and adhered to. Therefore, in the field of ideology the pragmatist interpretation of Political Islam gained a formative influence on the Iran's political life (Alinejad, 1999).

A new political philosophy that was made up of the three major components: Divine Unity, Vicegerency, and Divine Justice, formed the instruments of domination of the IRI elite ideology of this period and replaced all post-revolutionary radical stance. In other words, the new political philosophy became the normative approach of the Iranian political elite's thought-practice. But, one can say these three components were the exact replacement of the three corresponding in modern ideologies. Divine Unity, for instance, offered a theory about the way reality, both objective and subjective, function (Motahari, 1997, pp. 50-1-2). Vicegerency offered an overall theory of the leadership and history (Ibid. p. 261) that contains elements of public management (Ibid. pp. 288-291) in both state and society (Ibid. pp. 292-294). Divine Justice came close to form a theory of political economy that encompassed elements of law and customs (Ibid. p. 118), perfection of essence of truth (Ibid. p. 114), the principles of management and sociology (Ibid. p.119). True to the chosen religiously essentialist worldview of the IRI elite, their ideology replaced what they believed to be the existing Western ideology (Ale-ahmad, in Alinejad, 1999). Part of the latter was believed to be an overall modernisation.

An important aspect of the new ideology was its approach to populism (Abrahamian, 1993). Next to the more religiously demanding conservatism, the new ideology was also propagated in a simple and more practical form. Following post-revolutionary politics that paralleled earlier politics under the liberal government (1979-1981), the new ideology was presented through political thought-action as an ethical ideas-practice of 'Perfect Goodness'.¹ In this respect, unlike earlier practice of Islamic institution, popularisation of this new interpretation of Political Islam was consciously intended to foster the beginnings of a newly imagined Muslim community of Iran. In this way, for nearly one decade the new ideology was spread at all levels of Iranian Pan-Islamist intellectual life as the new meaning of the national identity. This was to the extent that every unit in Iranian society contained the ideologised organisation (*Anjoman-e Islamie*), which watched the ideological awareness of their fellow members and communities' way of life (Moslem, 2002, pp. 42-46).

But, despite this influence, modern ideologies continued to have an important influence on intellectual life in post-revolutionary period. As an important part of the ideologies making up the Iranian imagined community, no ideology was more influential than the ideology of Republicanism. The reasons why political reform started, the way in which modernity was viewed, and the place alternative models occupied in post-revolution intellectual life, however, all underwent the formative influence of a new Republican ideology. The Republican ideology moreover founds and accelerated the debates on all different approaches on modernity in early 1990s. In next section four basic factors which prepared these debates will be outlined and additionally the overall political train of events preceding the late 1990s reform process will be evaluated. This may disclose the way both Pan-Islamist and secular intellectuals have conceived the new ideologies in their writings, however, when with the emergence of the new ideologies the older ideologies have not disappeared, as the 1990s wore on, other ideologies have emerged, and confronted the IRI elite with much the same topics as the ideology for political reform. As should become clear, therefore, debates on Republican ideologies in the IRI brought about more discussions on political reforms and the place modernity has occupied in relation to reforms on politics as a whole.

1.1. Why Political Reform Started

Almost one decade after the Revolution in the late 1980s the notions such as 'modernity' and 'political changes' remained very much the main topics of the discussions and differences between the Pan-Islamist elite as well as some scholars in religious institutions. At first sight, within the ideological setting of Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine, any initials to debate these subjects presented an insurmountable task. For

1 - See '*qaeleh-e dahom-e esfand-e 1359*' (The incident of 10 March 1981) published by the Islamic Republic propaganda department in December 1983: IRI Ministry of Justice, introduction by Abdul Karim Musavi, 1985, p. 8. Tehran-Iran.

almost ten years (1979-89) the new ideologies were considered to be the divinely correct as well as revolutionary approach to the new political life (Alinejad, 1999). While the judgment about the correctness of an ideology does not take place overnight, for the Iranians have imagined and live under the new ideologies never truly took place. After Ayatollah Khomeini's death in 1989 a new approach to modernisation was first discussed and the changes in early 1990s with pragmatist reformers in power started.

How could this important occurrence take place? The reason for the new approach was manifold. Among them, four important factors were definitely noticeable. First of all, there was a penetrating criticism of the performance of the IRI, at least from the late 1980s, among influential elite and some scholars at Islamic institution (Hajjarian, 1998, p.307). Secondly, after Ayatollah Khomeini's death, it became more widely known that the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine, particularly the concept and practice of an 'Islamic' model was based in a significant ways misunderstanding of a Republican system, a fact that had been for some time embarrassingly obvious to some of the IRI's leading officials (Kadivar, 1998). Thirdly, as the economic stagnation of the IRI showed, the entire experiment of an 'Islamic' economy model stood in need of a real structural reform (Alizadeh, 2000). Finally, the modern technology and its revolutionised effects in the secular societies presented the Iranian political leadership with a reality, which Political Islam and Ayatollah Khomeini himself had theoretically ruled out for several years: that progress in living standards and technologies occurred in secular societies and not in the Islamic world.

Still, taken together even four factors will not suffice to expose why the process of political reform was actually begun. At best these factors formed the background against which more than a decade of deviation took place. However, there are few direct reasons for the idea and acceleration of debates on a reform process as Ali-Reza Alavi-Tabaar emphasises:

A fundamental and strategic change in the leadership of the IRI, a fundamental socio-cultural change in the IRI, a non-victorious end to the Iraq-imposed war, changes in the regional and international geo-politics, and some progress in the IRI's political debates.²

Nonetheless, without former president Rafsanjani and later President Khatami's rise to power which led to policy of socio-economic modernisation – IMF and WB structural adjustment policy with an attempt to integrate Iran into the WTO – and privatisation of state owned productive lands and industries, the process of political reform might never have been started and it would certainly not have taken on the form as it finally did. Before a detailed exploration of the debates on political reform and how it emerged, a result of the ascendancy of the reformers in IRI politics, each of these four factors will be outlined.

2 - Alireza Alavi-Tabar, '*molahezatye rahbordye baraye ayandeh*' (Some leading observation for future) in '*slahat darbarabari slahat*' (Reform against Reform), publish by Tarh-I No, pp. 40-41 in diagram 1, 2003, Tehran-Iran.

1.1.1. Pan-Islamist Elite Dissatisfaction

The first important factor that initiated the debates and the process of political reform was the widespread dissatisfaction with the ideologically inspired attainments of the IRI. To a growing group of elite during the late 1980s and early 1990s, the IRI had under-performed to the extent that could not be even defined as an underdeveloped regime on the path to modernity, stability and progress (Abdi, 2002). A good example of this view is to be found in several long essays written in late 1980s and then in 1990s by some members of government such as Sayyed Mostafa Tajzadeh, Mohammad Abtahi, some members of parliamentary commissions such as Hojjatol-Islam Abdullah Nuri, and some high-ranking members of clerical institution such as Grand Ayatollah Hussein-Ali Montazeri, Mohamed Mojtahed Shabestari, and Hojjatol-Islam Mohsen Kadivar.³ Mohsen Kadivar, who was close to top clerical officials had lived through most of the post-revolutionary political events and observed the results, which he described. Aware of the political problems that awaited him if he openly criticised his opponents, he offered his essay 'The Governance of *vilayet-i faqih*' to Ayatollah Khomeini when it was published. Doubtless, he discussed its contents previously with other members of the IRI establishment and those Pan-Islamist intellectuals who somehow had relations to the state's institution. His several essays are therefore a good indication of the intellectual atmosphere among Pan-Islamist intellectuals prior to the process of political reform, and merit an extended disclosure throughout this research (Kadivar, 1998, p. 211).

In 'The Political Thought in Islam' volume 2 'The Governance of Jurisprudence' Mohsen Kadivar offers an interpretation of ideology and governing model in Political Islam that includes a related explanation on doctrine of *vilayet-i faqih* from its early 1979 official announcement to its later absolute form and function. His underlying theme is that the politico-ideological interpretation of Political Islam by Ayatollah Khomeini was entirely correct, but due to serious and recurring mistakes by state officials, and to some extent Ayatollah Khomeini himself (concept on leadership of *vilayet-i faqih*), the IRI establishment did not adhere to those appropriate principle of Islamic model which they should have followed (Ibid. p. 211). In this view, however, Kadivar by no means stood alone. Other members of the IRI elite, such as Saeed Hajjarian, Abbas Abdi, Sayyed Mostafa Tajzadeh, Hamid-Reza Jalali-pour, Ali-Reza Alavi-Taba'ar and many others shared some of his ideas and voiced them during the late 1990s.⁴ Kadivar's works, however, were already written in several articles in '*Rah-e No*' (New Path) magazine in the 1980s and provide a good insight into the discussions of this earlier period.

Kadivar's (1988-2000) work is essentially about the basic realm of the elite's chosen approach in the IRI. First of all, like other moderate Pan-Islamists, he affirms the IRI official discourse that there should be an Islamic

3 - See for instance weekly paper '*Rah-e No*' (New Path), Kadivar's articles on '*vilayet*', '*vilayet-i faqih*', and '*islam va dowlat*' (Islam and State), 1999.

4 - For an extensive discussion see '*slahat darbarabariEslahat*' (Reform against Reform), 2003, published by Tarh-e No, Tehran-Iran.

political authority. But, he makes a distinction between the meaning of Ayatollah Khomeini's early writings and speeches about an Islamic state, which includes the discourse of other members of clerical institution such as Grand Ayatollah Montazeri, some members of Assembly of Experts and Council of Islamic Revolution⁵, and explains their early intention to synthesis the adopted Islamic principles with a modern model of Republic in a compatible way. In that way, he explains, this was the objective of Islamic movement, and emphasises that it was to present a democratic Republican model for a revitalised Islamic society in Iran. Still, he emphasises, in spite of all these good intentions the officials failed to stay the right course largely due to their insufficient understanding of the concept of 'Islamic Republic' and their remaining too attached to a conservative interpretation of Islamic political authority, that of the Absolute rule of the religious jurist (*vilayet-i Mot'lagh'eh-i faqih*). He concludes that the lack of a good understanding of the religiously democratic government within the IRI political system resulted in absolutism and cost the system several conflicts and clashes.

Accordingly, a first indication of this lack of understanding was the imposition by the higher ranks and conservatives of their traditional Islamic thought for the method of completion of the country's Islamisation at Constitutional Assembly. Kadivar points out effectively that:

To reject such a strategy, which did not goes along with the country's reality, in fact, real revitalisation was still very far removed from the current level of Islamic knowledge among the IRI leadership. They had limited understanding about the content and the meaning of the Islamic Commendatory (Kalami), Gnosticism (Erfani) and Jurisprudence (fagh'hi) principles.⁶

In spite of Ayatollah Khomeini's initial transgression against deviation, according to Kadivar, the IRI leadership and the conservatism within the Guardian Council after Ayatollah Khomeini, as most observers also noticed, were not able to prevail (Moslem, 2002, pp. 170-175). He emphasises that Ayatollah Khomeini asserted that the Islamisation of Iranian society had been basically completed, while he was forced to adopt the ideological consequence of this stance, and admitted:

Vilayet-i faqih obtains its legitimacy by illumination, which means, once one conceived the divine concept then an explanation of the logic or the reasons for the legitimacy is not necessary. In other words, when this concept is explained then surly it would legitimise the practice of the rules which are established by that concept.⁷

Along this line, Ayatollah Khomeini even criticised some members of Ulama and Pan-Islamists elite for failing to recognise this point when they found themselves at the same dilemma in the 1980s. To bring this issue to public attention and to gain popular support, in late 1979 Ayatollah Khomeini indicates that:

5 - These two organs drafted the final version of constitution that dealt with the issue of Vilayet.

6 - Kadivar, M. 1998, pp. 23 & 158

7- Khomeini, R. 'vilayet-i faqih', p. 3; or 'Ketab-e Albayh', vol. 2, p. 467 (Persian Language), Quoted in Kadivar, 1998, p.17.

A democratic debate should be held to discuss the elementary principles of an Islamic state and these subjects should be added to the future plans of our Islamic revolution [government].⁸

From then on, one of the main subject of debates among the IRI elite and Pan-Islamist intellectuals was how to create an 'Islamic' model of modernity capable of maintaining the principles of the newly established Republic and at the same time to execute the doctrine of *vilayet-i faqih* in country's political life. In other words, how to run an 'Islamic' society by newly established Republic that itself is led by a clerical institution.

What Kadivar (1998, pp. 160-1) indicates to be the first of several serious errors of the IRI establishment was their misconception about an imaginative counter-revolutionary process, which as a result, undermined and alienated the moderate members of elite from their active participation in the state institution (Katouzian, 1981, p.363). By the late 1980s, Kadivar complains that the earlier democratic vision of Islamic revolution had given way to an absolute form of political relations in the IRI, in which there was one Supreme Leader at the top and all others fall into Imam Khomeini's Line (*Khat-i Imam*) without reservation. This set up the Republic for a whole series of crises. Kadivar highlights several key questions that he assumes to be fundamental to this deviation. First of all he remarks that the idea and content of *vilayet-i faqih* as one of the founding principles of Islamic Republic was not explained to people in April 1979 before a referendum in which they were asked to decide about their future political system (Kadivar, 1998, pp. 160-1 & katouzian, 1981, p. 363). Kadivar then questions:

When do the concepts such as '*vilayet*' and the government of '*faqhi'h*' were in our contemporary political history propounded? What was the peculiarity of the Monarch regime in the past? What are the differences between that regime and the government of jurisprudence?⁹

Kadivar remarks that these issues finally crystallised the main conflict concerning the division in the Islamic governing system, which during the entire post-revolutionary period struggled on two versions of governance: one based on Jurisprudence rule and other an Islamic government organised under a moderate Republican structure (Ibid. pp. 160-1). Kadivar's criticisms, however, were shacked in the May 1997 presidential election and endorsed in the 2000 parliamentary election. In this way the fundamental principles of the IRI's ideology, which had been up to that point the correct version of Political Islam, were seemingly going to be entirely abandoned.

This ideology in the following years in the IRI, Kadivar emphasises, was characterised by an ill-conceived notion of governance which combined

8 - In this regards Ayatollah Khomeini writes that "The debates between Ulama and experts is a scientific need and should be public. Since early days of Islamic revolution however it has been already started. The subjects of these debates should concern the issues such as individualism and social freedom... the application of the rule of *vilayet-i faqih* in our governing institution and society. Some of these subjects were abandoned in the past, but now Ulama have to revive them. Our Islamic system should always provides an ideal environment for debates and explains the nature of this revolution, the exegesis on matters of theology and law (*ijtihad*), and the notion of jurisprudence (*faqih*). These debates should be encouraged and be presented freely, although they may contradict each others." Ibid.

9 - Kadivar, M. 998, pp. 160-1.

vilayet in an Islamic Republic. The conflict in these difficult years for the IRI was already implicit in a remark by Grand Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri:

We must avoid empty slogans, celebrations and deceptive shows... we must learn from our mistakes that we committed in the past... for some years we had slogans that turned out to be wrong ... although Islamic government has shown that can govern a society but because Islamic jurisprudence was not involved in any government in the past and even did not think that one day may government will be in their disposal...therefore they did study less about modern economy, politics, and sociology and put more importance on spiritual issues... hence, these responsibilities should be carry out by our scientists and experts...¹⁰

This is what moderate elite explores as some institutional problematic of a government based on Islamic ideology in relation to what was to be a correct model for institution in the IRI (Nouri, 1999, p.51). While in early days the inclusion of Islamic ideology in an Islamic Republic had been relatively easy, the practice of an Absolutist leadership in the political and ideological domains had only been attained around the late 1980s. But, unlike Grand Ayatollah Montazeri, who according to Hojjatol-Islam Abdullah Nuri correctly stressed the importance of creating a democratic basis for Islamic government and its modernisation, Ayatollah Khomeini spoke more frequently of the detoxification of the country from outsider imposed ideologies and of not abandoning the theoretical commitment to principles of Vicegerency, even though his emphasis was more clearly on the Islamic government as the vanguard of the changes through a process of Islamisation and the paramount need for expansion (Zubaida, 1997, p.106). Thus, in the course of the 1980s, the Islamic ideology which included the rule of *vilayet-i faqih* was presented as an attainable stage to post-revolutionary Islamic Republic. The decision of Ayatollah Khomeini to set up a larger leadership institution (*Nahade Rahbari*) focused attention on two fundamental ideological problems, whether a mixed institution of leadership was possible or whether transition to the Absolute Guardianship of the Jurisprudence (*vilayet-i mot-laq'eh faqih*) ought to be made public. Kadivar made clear that the first decision was ideologically sensitive, because it amounted to sidelining the people's Republic. This was something that Grand Ayatollah Montazeri had previously said was possible. The second point was politically sensitive, Kadivar mentioned, since the moderate and radical members of Parliament had publicly announced that this decision would throw the Republic into a despotic system. As the comparison between two models showed, the former was said to be far more acceptable for an outdated 'Islamic' model (Montazeri, quoted in Moslem, 2002, p.72).

According to Mehdi Moslem, the failure of a Republican model badly hurt many Pan-Islamist intellectuals and reduced the level of public support for the Islamic State to almost that of the pre-Revolutionary regime. Moreover, unlike Grand Ayatollah Montazeri, Ayatollah Khomeini was not one to admit to regime's political mistakes, and even in 1985 had Grand Ayatollah Shariatmadari purged from the clerical institution for speaking out against his model. In the midst of these conflicts, only the former president Hojjatol-

10 - Montazeri, H. A. quoted in Mahdi Moslem, 2002. Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran, p. 72

Islam Rafsanjani (a member of the Revolutionary Council, later the head of Regime's Expediency Council and head of Parliament at the time) used this opportunity to increase elite's attention to economic reform (Moslem, 2002, p.142). Nonetheless, at the time with lack of inner-state group pluralism, the mixed model continued to be favourable. As Saeed Hajjarian point it out,

The leadership lacked the courage to own up to their ideological mistakes.¹¹

As a result, when the public forced the officials to discard their ideology, each groups tried to blame other factions (Hajjarian, 1998, p.321).

In the late 1980s many Pan-Islamist intellectuals begin to establish some independent ideological and organisational links. This was especially due to IRI's elite new approach from which it seemed that learned lessons form their ideological mistakes committed in the past. During the last days of his life in 1989, Ayatollah Khomeini held what Kadivar viewed as his last ideological speech, and finally admitted the failure of his regime in many aspects. Although no one dared to mention as many as he committed. But, Kadivar laments that this ideology later turned out to be no more than a ploy used to establish the Islamic state's restorative political power. In the following months Ayatollah Khomeini started to turn on Hojjatol-Islam Ali Khomeini (later Supreme Leader), who according to Mehdi Moslem, had remained throughout loyal to the doctrinal principle of *vilayet-i faqih*. After Ayatollah Khomeini the new Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khomeini had first called for the reintegration of those purged in the early 1980s, but who had not been worked with anti-Islamist foreign powers. By this, Mehdi Moslem pointed out, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had clearly meant the liberal nationalist moderate groups, and had also consistently opposed the leftist line. In this context, the late 1980s re-organisation of Pan-Islamist elite and reformers in particular, which took place on the advice of former president Rafsanjani, was viewed as a clear provocation by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who warned against all kinds of movement for political reforms. These arbitrary decisions, Mehdi Moslem (2002, pp.70-78) claims, had started earlier once Ayatollah Khomeini decides to purge Grand Ayatollah Montazeri who in public opinion was the next Supreme Leader and led directly to the conflicts of the coming years.

In the late 1990s, Hojjatol-Islam Mohammad Khatami's message was clear. Although, according to Khatami's arguments, Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Line offered the correct way to ensuring Iran's Islamic future, but especially after the conservatives' disregards for rule of law and forced Islamisation of society, the IRI had not been able to carry out the revolution's basic promises for political modernisation. Therefore, in his view, part of the blame lay with the inability of the Islamic State to reform itself from its undemocratic interpretation of Political Islam's ideology. He saw other part of the trouble lay in the lack of knowledge about and experience with Republican system - which was after all the most advanced form of political organisation known. But, it was somehow mentioned that most of the blame lay with Ayatollah Khomeini's successful quest for absolute power

11- Hajjarian, S. 2001, *Az shahede qodsi ta shahede bazari* (From The Sacred Witness to the Profane Witness: The Secularisation of Religion in the Sphere of Politics) pp. 123-131, publisher Tarh-e No, Tehran-Iran

to Ulama and the inability of his peers to enforce the principles of a moderate government and political pluralism within an Islamic Republic. At the same time the implication was that if the political leadership would start to adhere to the moderate principles of Political Islam, the mistakes of the past would then be corrected (Khatami, 1999). And in concrete terms, that meant reverting back to the early promises of the 1979 revolutionary arena.

1.1.2. Ayatollah Khomeini's Death

After Ayatollah Khomeini's death, a long suppressed debate on the ideological soundness of Republicanism resurfaced with a vengeance. Among Iranian moderates it was not generally accepted that Ayatollah Khomeini's arguments on Islamic Republic during the previous years left a lot to be desired. Practically, as opposed to most moderates and Pan-Islamist intellectuals who led the political system in the post-revolutionary arena, Ayatollah Khomeini faced the insurmountable problem of not being able to compromise with the vast bulk of ideas about a Republican political system, which dominated the intellectual environment of the time (Kadeevar, 2000, pp. 253-327). He was, in this respect, personally unable to recognise anything but the rule of jurisprudence on the top of the pyramid of an Islamic State. Apart from Ayatollah Khomeini dualism ideas, moreover, other thinkers of Political Islam in contemporary Iran such as Ali Shariati and Ayatollah Motahari came before and after him had also expressed their major concern emphasising the need for establishment of a modern but Islamic political system. Indeed, as recent publications reveal, Ayatollah Khomeini's main political ideas from 1979 onwards (Moslem, 2002, p.47) involved not only the struggle against despotic monarchy, but also the establishment of an Islamic regime next to the institution of Republic, and the defending of an undefined Islamic political system (Kavivar, 1998, p.166). In '*Albei*' (Convention) volume 2 and '*Tahrir Alvasilah*' (Writing the Means) volume 1, he explores a traditional political discourse on political theory or theory of state in Islam based on three pillars. First,

To practice Islamic law we shall establish an Islamic government. Islam has foreseen government and institution. Islam is a government with all its dignities. The commandments extracted from Shari'a law are not only a desirable tool for establishment of an Islamic state but also they are to expand the divine justice as well.¹²

Second,

The call for establishment of an Islamic state and implementation of Islamic law is part of our activities against rebellion; it is an obligation for all righteous *Ulama* to act in this direction.¹³

Third,

An Islamic political system is the governance of the righteous *Ulama*; they are appointed from divine legislator to guardianship the people.¹⁴

12 - See Khomeini, R. '*Albei*', vol. 2, pp. 461, 472, quoted in Kadivar, 1998, p. 167.

13 - See Khomeini, R. '*Tahrir alvasilah*', vol. 1, p. 472-483, quoted in Kadivar, 1998, p. 167.

14 - See Khomeini, R. '*Albei*', vol. 2, p. 465, and '*Tahrir alvasilah*', vol. 1, p. 482, quoted in Kadivar 1998, p. 167.

Importantly, moreover, Ayatollah Khomeini's writings on Islamic State were limited almost exclusively to the theories of *Immamat* (Vicegerency) and *Vilayet* (Guardianship). And even in these domains he was forced to reconsider some of key traditional issues. Interestingly, Ayatollah Khomeini knew very little about political economy prior to or even after the 1979 revolution.¹⁵ Since the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine increasingly became the normative chosen approach during the late 1970s and 1980s, it is clear that the improved moderate writers of the major ideas of Islamic state in that period were liable to challenge the existing traditional orthodoxy. In this respect, starting from the late 1980s, Pan-Islamist and secular intellectuals set up a massive project to publish books and articles about Republican model of government, political philosophy of modernity, civil society and modern sociology. This was an undertaking that was completed after the 1997 presidential election of Mohammad Khatami. By then, however, it was clear that for the modernisation of Iranian society based on a Republican model, the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine was ideologically distorted.

One of the first moderate Pan-Islamist in the 1990s to point out these distortions was the prominent intellectual Mohammed Mojtahed Shabestari. As a well-known Pan-Islamist and moderate intellectual, Shabestari possessed both the status and the knowledge to discuss political philosophy, philosophy of right and alike as he did, and still remained politically and religiously acceptable. After all, as a Pan-Islamist intellectual, his loyalty towards the Islamic faith went unquestioned. Through his work, moreover, Shabestari had read many of Ayatollah Khomeini's philosophical predecessors and had gained a new and disturbing insight to the context within which much of Pan-Islamist writing had to be placed. He had been particularly interested in a humane reading of religion, rational political philosophy, and a hermeneutic interpretation of texts and the tradition. His critique of Ayatollah Khomeini's doctrine of *vilayet-i faqih* was harsh (Shabestari, 2000). Typically for Iranian practice, Shabestari had expressed this criticism in several articles and books, which were only published much later. Still, as a reliable source, it should be stressed that the contents of his major writing date from the early 1990s. In his writing, he drew attention to the traditional Islamic assumptions behind Ayatollah Khomeini's version of Political Islam, and centred his critique on Ayatollah Khomeini's views on issues such as the official reading of religion, faith and freedom, universal human rights, and rational political philosophy and power.

According to Shabestari, establishment officials, including Ayatollah Khomeini, had mistaken the Shi'ia version of Vicegerency for Iranian traditional absolutism. These, he claimed, were fundamentally different from the political philosophy of Shi'ia Islam.¹⁶ This mistake had led the

15 - In early days of revolution Ayatollah Khomeini did speak about economy and mentioned the critical condition of Iranian economy when the workers demanded for a fair distribution of country's wealth. He declared: 'economy is the affairs of donkey and our revolution is not about economy'. See '*Islame nab dar kalam va payam imam khomai*' (Pure Islam in Words and Messages of Imam Khomeini), Vol. 5, 1996

16 - Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari in '*Iman va azadie*' (Faith and Freedom) stress: 'We can not deny the post-revolutionary social and political reality that led a great majority of the Iranian people to have confidence on Ayatollah Khomeini and to follow his advices. By this, they offered a

establishment to see the rule of jurisprudence as a continuation of divine representative, in which, firstly the nature and functions of Islamic state could oppose a democratic transformation of the political system, and secondly, the Islamic laws in the constitution could contradict the modern juridical conventions (Ibid. p.22). In this respect Ayatollah Khomeini had thereby maintained that:

There will be contradiction in the Islamic government if and when the Islamic principles are not according to divine commands correctly understood or properly perceived.¹⁷

In the same vein, Mohsen Kadivar pointed out that the contradiction and then further mistakes took place when:

In 1978, in an interview in France on the form and content of an Islamic government, Ayatollah Khomeini mentioned that our Islamic government is an 'Islamic Republic', while previously he never explained the philosophy behind such a change in Islamic political philosophy.¹⁸

It seems while Ayatollah Khomeini's perception of Islam State has rather a particular political system in itself, his concept of Islamic Republic is not more than a transitional stage towards an absolutism form. Juxtaposition of the stages was extremely important for Ayatollah Khomeini, because as opposed to his predecessor Grand Ayatollah Brojerdi, for him a legitimised government in Muslim lands in the age of absence of Allah's direct messengers (Prophet or Imams) is the rule of Jurisprudence (*Vilayet-i faqih*), while a monarchy, a republic, or any other form of political system are perceived in final analysis as usurpation (Khomeini quoted in Kadivar, 1998, p.171). The contradiction between Ayatollah Khomeini's pre-revolution concept of the Islamic government that is led by jurisprudence and the post-revolution Republican model turned the Iranian political system into a dual situation (Sorush, 1997, p.115). In reality, Ayatollah Khomeini's two standpoints had been fostered on the one hand by his long years of political opposition to a monarch form of regime in Iran and on the other by the influence he had undergone from traditional Islamic thinkers as Mirza Mohammad Taghi Shirazi, Sheikh Jafar Kashef Algha, and Mirza Mohammad Hussein Gharavi Naeinie (Kadeevar, 2000, p.374).

Next to his erroneous views of Republicanism, Ayatollah Khomeini had entertained the notions like divine unity and divine justice as essential for making an Islamic political system (Kadivar, 1998, p.242). Along with his teaching of the philosophy of Mullah Sadra and Mir Damad, he had expressed these two notions and not that of the divine morality and divine motivation as the measures for the principles that should be adopted in an Islamic

difficult responsibility to those religious expert and Ulama who were assigned for codification of constitutional laws in the Assembly of Experts. But, the result was fundamentally different from what they expected and also was not the objective of the revolution: a rational-humanist reading of religion'. 2000, p. 21.

17 - In '*sahifah nour*' Ayatollah Khomeini writes: 'the form of our government is an Islamic Republic. It is a Republic in the sense that it rely on the decision of majority. It is Islamic in the sense that it rely on the Islamic law (vol. 2 pp. 162, 244, 319, 349, 351, 382, and 517). 'An Islamic government rely hundred percent on the people's choice in the way that each Iranian will be certain that through their votes they construct the future of their country... That is obvious since majority of this nation is Muslim and thereby the Islamic values and laws in all aspects should be respected (vol. 2 pages 545, 568, 584 and in vol. 3 pages 20-21, and 36-37). For more see pp. 70-71, 102, 115, quoted in Kadivar 1998, p. 172.

18 - Khomeini, R. '*sahifah nour*', interview with Figaro Magazine, vol. 2, p. 36, quoted in Kadivar, 1998, p. 170-171.

government (Soroush, 1997, pp. 116-7). His religiously essentialist had been largely centred on the post-revolution behavioural qualities of the Iranians as the essence of a revived Islamic community in Iran (Shabestari, 2002, p.23). He had thereby blurred the distinction between principles, which belongs to Political Islam ideology and the human desires for modernity (Shabestari, 2000, p.33). That is to say, he had mistaken the motive force behind 1979 revolution, which was the Iranian's desire for a just and democratic form of political system when they toppled the monarch despotic rule, while not rejecting conservative clerical institution's support. In accordance with this belief and by emphasising on Islamic principles Ayatollah Khomeini had thought he would make the Islamisation of Iran possible (Khomeini, cited in Kadivar, 1998, p.174). According to Shabestari, this approach relates the elite's official reading of religion with their slight respect for morality and constitutional rights (Shabestari, 2002, p.13 & 2004, p.226). According to Shabestari, the establishment's elite in the IRI had failed to grasp the humanist proposition of Islam and political change was primarily dependent on the rationalisation of political leadership and its system. Instead, they had idealistically stressed the importance of the traditions, and contrary to earlier assurances, prematurely led Iran into forced Islamisation, and from there on without the necessary consultation and consensus declared a self-created rule of jurisprudence that latter developed to an absolute rule (*vilayet-i Mot'lagh'eh faqih*).

Shabestari agrees with Mohsen Kadivar, that Ayatollah Khomeini's deeds had been done over and against the principles of a modern Republic at the Assembly of Experts, where they added to the new constitution an undemocratic institution parallel to government proposed for the IRI. Already in the early 1980s, Ayatollah Khomeini had attacked those who criticised his decision to limit the new theocracy and to make the transition to rule of jurisprudence. Similarly, from 1982 onwards no real discussion was possible within the establishment and parliament. This increasingly resulted in an emergence of personality cults around Ayatollah Khomeini, which had admittedly been fostered by opportunists in his entourage. For many years, an ideological situation persisted under which one could say that there was only Imam Khomeini's Line (*Khate-i Imam*) which had millions of followers, either volunteer or by force.

Like Mohsen Kadivar, Shabestari's frame of mind remained within the framework of a progressive Islamic political philosophy. Therefore, by opposing Ayatollah Khomeini's claim to an exclusive Islamic insight, Shabestari, like Kadivar, remained committed to the political right of the Iranian citizens to interpret a rational political philosophy for Islam. Unlike Kadivar, however, Shabestari cast doubts on the soundness of ideological extremism itself in the IRI. Instead of Ayatollah Khomeini's Line, or even Political Islam, he proposed a reflection on a humane reading of religion through debates and discussion of the 'origins of Islam' (Shabestari, 2004). While not abandoning the essentialist nature of Islamic philosophy, Shabestari rejected an essence that was directly tied to traditionalist Islamic philosophy. He rather opted for a modern scientific form of political

philosophy along the lines of Western human rights theories (Ibid. p.181). In this view, the essence of reality was more tightly linked to the force of progress and pluralism. Shabestari held that in a long and protracted process, humankind eventually would reach a point where both the human rights and mutual understanding between Pan-Islamists and secularists would be completed (Shabestari, 2002, p.312). In short, Shabestari advocated nothing short of a reconsideration, which means a hermeneutic reading of the religious texts and the tradition, and a change in the normative approach of the IRI's elite on Political Islam ideology.

1.1.3. Islamic Economy Policy

The persisting crisis of a so-called 'Islamic' economic model in late 1980s served to undermine confidence in the IRI officials in the effectiveness of their traditional Islamic merchant economy.¹⁹ As Amir Ahmadi and Tayeb in their work 'The State and Civil Society in Developmental Perspective' put it forward:

Iran's political reform is related to country's economic ability. That means to an increase of production and to modernisation of technology.²⁰

An economist, who traces this need back as early as the 1980s, is Parvin Alizadeh. She notes:

The performance of the Iranian economy in the 1980s and 1990s has witnessed a marked deterioration, in absolute terms as well as relative to other countries in the region. The growth of the economy has slackened drastically. The economy, with a rapidly expanding population, has experienced a marked decline in investment, low labour productivity, a widening trade gap, and a fast accumulation of debt and, above all, a sharp decline in the standard of living.²¹

In the late 1980s, larger groups of the Iranian elite, Pan-Islamist intellectuals, and clerical scholars in all probability only became fully aware of this critical state of affairs during a series of public protests against state mismanagement, corruption among high-ranking officials, and massive poverty. The IRI-nationalised corporations had also developed an inward perspective since the early 1980s, and therefore, government had to develop a so-called national 'Islamic' economic policy. The main concern of the nationalised corporations was extensive profits and economic hegemony; therefore, most economic development that took place was as a result of those private sector activities, both independently or in relation to activity within state sectors. These private sectors were sponsored first by the government during the late 1980s, or by private individuals.

Predictably, the sole country in the region to have opted for alternative economic structure and mixed economy provided a negative attention for this model. Shortly afterward, as mixed economy weakness and the new policy

19 - See 'eqtesade 1995' (Economy of 1995 :Critics of Planning, Practical Results)' in monthly paper 'Farhange tose'eh' (developmental Culture) pp. 22-26, fourth year, No.17, 1995, Teheran Iran.

20 - Ahmadi, A. & Tayeb, A.R. 1998. 'Dolat va jame'ehe madani dar cheshmandaze tose'eh' (The State and Civil Society in Developmental Perspective), p. 267- 280, in *jame-ehe madanye va Irane moa-ser* (Civil Society and Contemporary Iran), Tehran.

21- Alizadeh, P. 2000. The Economy of Iran: Dilemmas of an Islamic State p. 1

crisis become better known, the structural adjustment policy (SAP) came into fashion. On SAP it was said that it had adopted elsewhere without its dangerous political consequences.²² The transition to SAP as a new model, perhaps, also reflected the internal power struggle, as radical Mir Hussin Mosavi was gradually removed from his prime minister post and President Rafsanjani's star rose, but this is speculation (Behdad, S. in Alizadeh, P. 2005. pp.100-150). The fact remains that many elements of the Iranian reforms are pre-figured in the famous SAP of these years. It can also hardly have been lost upon the Iranian that SAP economists had concluded by the early 1990s that even in a relatively small country, a mixed alternative economy was practically impossible. The Iranian Islamic market economy of the 1990s formed a rather belated recognition of this respect. Moreover, criticism of the rigid centralisation of the state-owned model became a standard ingredient of Iranian writing both on the politics of economy and on the need for political reform in late 1980s Hakimian, H. & Karshenas, M. 2000. pp. 29-63).

1.1.4. Technological Challenge

The last technological revolution that took place in the secular countries presented an ideologically baffling problem to the IRI elite in more than one respect (Melkan, M. & Haydarzadeh, T. 1995, pp.25-26). As a prominent reformist intellectual, Abbas Qazvandjaye, openly pointed out:

In the late 1980s it was a clear indication of the ideological crisis of Islamic state that development and innovation came from the same secular and non-Islamic countries that according to all their religious scripture, texts, and contemporary publications were doomed to perish.²³

Apart from the disturbing implications of this development for the overall traditional theories of an Islamic civilisation, the technological revolution in secular countries served to alert the IRI officials to this respect that Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine had been unable to match their secular opponents in scientific and technological progress.

On a larger scale, IRI's increased attention in working with several associations of corporations in the Persian Gulf and with Russian and European corporations reflected a similar awareness among the lower ranks of Pan-Islamist intellectuals and their fellow militants. Even before their fellow Muslim merchant in the private sector had started to import technology from secular (non-Islamic) countries, most state officials had decided to adopt similar policies, not always to their ideological advantage.²⁴

22- See '*Eqtesade iran - keshvarhaye arabi khavar miyaneh - mozakerate solhe dar khavare miyaneh*' ('Economy of Iran - The Middle Eastern Arabic Countries - The Middle East Peace Negotiation') article in *Farhange tose'eh* (Developmental Culture) p. 57, fourth years, No. 18, Teheran Iran.

23 - Abbas Qazvanjaie, '*Hekayate aghlagi dar asre technology*' (Moral Anecdote in the Age of Technology), in '*farhange tose'eh*' (Developmental Culture), Fifth year, No 22, 1996, pp.26-30, Teheran-Iran.

24 - See '*Eqtesade iran - keshvarhaye arabi khavar miyaneh - mozakerate solhe dar khavare miyaneh*' (Economy of Iran - The Middle Eastern Arabic Countries - Peace Negotiation in the Middle East) in '*farhange tose'eh*' (developmental Culture) fourth year, No. 18, 1995, pp. 56-63, Teheran Iran.

The speed with which the Islamic State chose to implement these changes in the service of economic modernisation, however, went unparalleled to its political reform. On the other hand, the state very quickly surpassed the private sectors in the extent and the importance with which it decided to link its new technological policy with the requirements of international standards through internal economic modernisation (Ibid. pp. 56-63). Could it indeed be otherwise? The overthrow of the monarch regime did not achieve, but only completely revealed, an all-embracing view that Iran needs to rise from technological backwardness to modernisation. In this respect, for the IRI elite the wholesale success in achieving or producing modern technology meant a gigantic ideological conquest.

Taken as a whole, these four factors showed the basis of consensus for political reform and changes in the IRI's policies of modernisation. In this respect, the imagined Islamic community of moderation had succeeded where paradoxically the ideology of Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine had failed. At the early years of the 1990s, many officials and Pan-Islamist intellectuals had been convinced that the post-revolution ideological experiment, which had started so promisingly more than a decade before, stood in urgent need of an overall modernisation. But, more knowledge about theories and practices of modernity was necessary to realise this. The alternative could well be a period of serious stagnation, as was taking place in the country, or even the downfall of the government itself, and lead a new period of prolonged turmoil for Iran. Still, it should be stressed that much the same case could have been made in 1981 with the resignation of the first post-revolution prime minister Mahdi Bazargan, or perhaps even at the downfall of the first post-revolution president Bani-Sadr in 1983. After all, for most of the 1980s the IRI had experienced poor modernisation performance (Ibid. pp.56-63). The main reason why the process of political reform could be started in the 1990s and not earlier, however, lay in the change in leadership and the overall political atmosphere that had prevailed in the preceding years.

2. Power Struggle and Political Modernity

Ayatollah Khomeini was the foremost leader of the world's first Islamic revolution, which swept Iran in 1979 and continues to reverberate down to our own time. Most Muslim people throughout the Middle East – longing for an end to injustice and oppression – have looked with hope to the example of Political Islam as a guide for liberation, struggle and social change in their own countries (Kadivar, 1988, p.164). As a Pan-Islamist member of the Islamic movement, Abdul Karim Soroush, emphasises:

The most important work of Ayatollah Khomeini in his life was to organise an Islamic organisation to become capable of carrying out the 1979 Islamic revolution and guiding the establishment of an Islamic state.²⁵

While Ayatollah Khomeini was still alive, it was unthinkable that *vilayet-i faqih*, the key element of Islamic State and the structural framework of

25 - Soroush A. K. 1997, *Modara va Modiriyat* (Moderation and Management) pp. 115, 116, Tehran.

Islamic regime would be discarded. But, as soon as he was gone and Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, a less powerful Supreme Leader, took office, a range of questions were raised on the correctness of Political Islam and the compatibility of the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine of *vilayet-i faqih* within a Republican, although Islamic, model of government.

With Ayatollah Khomeini's death in 1989, therefore, the main obstacle to the process of political moderation disappeared. All his political life as Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khomeini had opposed all kinds of secular politics, and had imposed the ideological application of Political Islam and his doctrine to every aspect of country's life and labour (Bazargan, 1984. p.225). During the early days of revolution there had been some room for discussion about the application of a moderate Islamic ideology, but increasingly, Ayatollah Khomeini had presented his model as the only correct approach to Political Islam. The result had predictably been a gradual impoverishment of ideological debates, as the scope for inherent variability on key points of all other alternatives was reduced (Ibid. p.242). As has been discussed, serious criticism of Ayatollah Khomeini's political theory pre-dated his death. In itself, however, this criticism did not automatically lead to the process of political reform rather than extreme suppression. After Ayatollah Khomeini's death, many of the officials who had acted to avoid conflicts in the 1980s were still in power. Many were still occupying the key offices in both the state and parliament. Obviously, even if the ideas of political reform were to be discussed, there would be severe resistance in most state institutions dominated by conservatives. For the discussion to be started, nonetheless, a consistent patronage at the highest levels was clearly imperative (Ibid. p.246).

There is no clear indication where, when, or by whom the cause of political reform was first espoused. The first time it is mentioned in an official document published by IRI Ministry of Justice in 1985:

In March 1981 God protected our Islamic revolution from the inauspicious and dangerous incident.²⁶

This attempt was almost certainly carried out under the patronage of some high-ranking leaders, particularly first post-revolution president Bani Sadr and first Prime Minister Mahdi Bazargan. In the case of Bazargan and in that of Bani Sadr, good arguments may therefore be advanced to show they both could have been first to lend their support for both structural and political reform in the post-revolution Iran. In Bazargan's case, this would have been during the period of his first cabinet as provisional Prime Minister between February 1979 and mid-1980 (Bazargan, 1984. pp.77-8). In Bani Sadr's case, it would have been during his short tenure as president.²⁷ There is other assumption that the initiation of this process began under the former president Rafsanjani, just after Ayatollah Khomeini's death. Nevertheless, the consensus among most Iranian intellectuals, officials, and the public indicates

26 - IRI Ministry of Justice '*qaeleh-e dahom-e esfand-e 1359*' (the incident of March 1981), introduction by Abdul Karim Mossavi, 1985, p. 8.

27 - IRI Ministry of Justice, 1985, p. 19

that a new process of modernisation officially began when Mohammad Khatami was elected as president in 1997.

Mohammad Khatami's political views and reform policies were believed to have great influence on IRI officials. Out of his authority as the main popular actor of the Islamic state, President Khatami boldly ordered the cabinet to work closely with intellectuals, writers, and civil society groups, which represented a return to the technocratic modernisation drive, which was to become the Islamic state line after 1997. As has been well documented, among Pan-Islamist intellectuals, many of whom were disappointed with the state official ideology, switched to the reform movement and began to advocate plural ideas such as a religiously democratic government, universal human rights, or even separation of religion from the state. They wrote several articles and books on the importance of modernisation, of political culture and drafted proposals for new policies. One of the most out-spoken of them was Hojjatol-Islam Abdullah Nuri, a former minister of the interior and a close associate of president Khatami. But, the unstable pattern of political development after the 1997 presidential election cost political reformers a great deal. As such for instance, Hojjatol-Islam Abdullah Nuri was arrested and condemned by a special court for the clergy (an extra-constitutional judicial body whose procedures are not public and fall far short of international standards for fair trial) to five years prison for critical articles published in his newspaper *Khordad* (Ganji, 2000). Hojjatol-Islam Abdullah Nuri was convicted on charges that his newspaper published articles that 'defamed the system' and spread lies and propaganda against Ayatollah Khomeini, the Islamic system and state officials. Charges against him included insulting the country's religious leadership and supporting renewed ties to the United States of America (Nouri, 1999).

Many Pan-Islamist intellectuals and some IRI officials wrote that Hojjatol-Islam Nuri's prosecution and conviction was aimed at punishing him for exercising fundamental human rights and freedom of expression, and intended to exclude him from running as a candidate in the February 2000 parliamentary elections (Ganji, 1999). Some officials have predicted he would not only win the elections if eligible to stand but could also become the Speaker of Parliament. In February of that year he obtained the highest vote in the election for local municipalities. Nuri's prosecution was based on Iranian legislation, which is open to interpretation, allowing sweeping and arbitrary restrictions on freedom of expression. This situation, they wrote, reflects the urgent need to institute legal and administrative safeguards to protect free speech and press freedom in the IRI. Two items are of particular concern: Article 24 of the constitution, which allows broadly conceived limits on expression by declaring that restrictions are appropriate when the material in question is detrimental to the fundamentals of Islam, and the Press Law of 1985, which contains similar broadly-worded language giving

the government licence to clamp down on press freedom more or less at will.²⁸

While the trial of Hojjatol-Islam Abdullah Nuri was exceptional in that it was in large part held in public and he was allowed to have the services of an attorney, the jury reached their verdict even before Hojjatol-Islam Abdullah Nuri had completed his defence, calling into question whether he benefited from the presumption of innocence. A further cause of concern was the composition of the nine-person jury, appointed solely by the judge, which included several prominent political figures (notably anti-reform officials such as Hojjatol-Islam Hosseinian, director general of the Islamic Propagation Society) who are known for their personal antipathy to proponents of political reform (Nouri, 1999). This case represented the latest in a series in which members of the clerical institution were prosecuted for their critical opinions on the concept and practice of *vilayat-i faqih* by this exceptional court. As a matter of constitutional rights the only person who has a particular constitutional responsibility to ensure the basic conditions for a free and fair trial of clergymen is the Supreme Leader himself.

The message behind this move was that President Khatami like former President Rafsanjani wanted to set the clock back to the 1979 revolutionary arena. Of all the things hard-liner conservatives did, this was by far the most provocative. According to Saeed Hajjarian,

For those who have a clericalism reading of the faith and the government, pluralism is a sign of dualism or multilateralism and will not tolerate the publication of critical newspapers and had Hojjatol-Islam Nuori purged.²⁹

Although there is no direct proof, it may just be possible that the idea behind the publication of articles about political reform in newspapers incidentally goes along with other reformers' activities which were first raised as part of the efforts by President Khatami to build a moderate government. After all, the new reform movement (*djonbesheh dovom-e Khordad*) was associated with Khatami's moderate ideas and later policies. This could be taken to mean that there was a movement within the leadership, of course with mass support, which began seriously to discuss ways to bring a reform concerning the official political system. If this was so, that means there was an attempt to put aside Political Islam and Ayatollah Khomeini Line and the institution of *vilayet-i faqih* when President Khatami (after Rafsanjani got the second chance in 1997) was entrusted with political establishment. Around this time, a group of reformers in parliament presented programmes on preparing for the political reform within the next five years. In it, the reformers mentioned publicly their will to reform the political system for the first time. It is therefore improbable - yet possible - that the idea of political reform was first

28 - The sweeping restrictions imposed through such laws are in clear violation of the Article 19 (2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Iran is a party, which states: 'everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice'. See 'Mehdi Moslem, 'Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran'. 2002, p. 260

29 - Hajarian, S. 1998. '*djame-ehe madany va irane moaser*' (Civil Society and Contemporary Iran) in collective essays '*djame-ehe madany va irane moaser*' (Civil Society and Contemporary Iran), p.320, Teheran Iran.

endorsed by President Khatami around this time (Moslem, 2002, pp.252-265).

A third and more probable possibility is that former President Rafsanjani first championed economic reform, and that subsequently, President Khatami extended it to political reform. As was deemed proper, for the first few months after Ayatollah Khomeini's death, apart from the purge of the Pan-Islamist of the left, there was no change in policy. Suddenly, however, state media and newspapers published a new series of articles, which to everyone except a small group of public it was not known that some years earlier the left-leaning Pan-Islamist dominated parliament had objected to the Western modernisation models while Rafsanjani was speaker of parliament. All the appearance of the new publications signalled to the general public that Rafsanjani perhaps wanted a more consensual leadership style, and modernisation might once more be placed on the agenda as state policy. However, with parliament in disgrace, few people interpreted the new ideas as a sign that the Ayatollah Khomeini Line of the 1980s was about to be reviewed. On the contrary, all signs suggested that, for the time being, the main orientation would remain centred on the regime's survival. At the time, hard-liner Nategh-Nouri, who has been called one of the policy makers behind Rafsanjani, was put in charge of parliament and formed a new conservative group out of some of the members of clerical institutions and laymen organisations. Under his supervision, conservatives formulated the famous version of all embracing privatisation that launched the slogans of decentralisation and changes. The new formula somewhat revived a traditional Islamic practice, according to which the regulations promulgated by the founding Ulama's regulation were to remain inviolate as long as it was an Islamic rule (Kaveevar, 2000). Ideologically, this turned out to be a blunder of the system as a whole. Apart from the obvious links to a market oriented model, and therefore, despised past, the conservatives effectively served to tie the state's hands to the politics of the new approach. No doubt, a unique insight into the country's reality, it was to remain the only major official IRI ideological policy to appear during Rafsanjani's presidential years as 'Iran's Leader of Reconstruction' (*Sardar-e Sazandegye*) (Ehteshami, 1995, p.73). Such a change in the Islamic Republic line was clearly not to the liking of powerful state modernisers, even though officials saw the need for a strong leadership to carry state decentralisation. The argument for President Rafsanjani's case is therefore that he listened to the warnings of senior clerics such as Ayatollah Khamenei and Hojjatol-Islam Karrubi, and tried to start formulating new state policies and a relaxed political model of his own. Since Rafsanjani's modernisation was began in early 1987, it may well be that it pre-dated Khatami's political reform. These arguments are all the more plausible since it is well known that Rafsanjani took a liking to an Islamic moderate model. This was the only reform model or solution at the time to revive the Islamic system after eight years of war, crisis and destruction.

Whoever championed the initial of new modernisation process at this very early stage knew that they would meet with resistance from Pan-Islamist radicals and other conservative quarters. The first and crucial step

towards this aim was to enlarge the arena of political debate, and that it would take some time before conservative supporters could realise this. The approach that was adopted was a gradual one. It was to take more than ten years before political reform could be addressed directly in public. In the end, regardless of who was the first to champion it, President Khatami deserves the credit for seeing the process of political reforms through by a drawn-out, patient pattern of dialogue about civilisation not only with outsiders but also among Iranians of differing backgrounds.

First the more feasible steps were to be taken, although the state was duly split off from its final decision-making bodies on the one side the Guardian Council and the Assembly of Experts (*Majlis Khobregan*), and on the other side the first group of majority reformers under Hojjatol-Islam Karrubi as speaker of parliament, a political reform policy could not be seen yet in Khatami's agenda (Moslem, 2002, pp.155-6,186). After a decade of Ayatollah Khomeini's Line, moderation views in the Islamic State got off to a slow start. In general, only those moderate projects, which could be easily started, received the necessary attention and funds. Other programmes for decentralisation of state institutions, especially those that had been abandoned during the early years after revolution in 1980-81, had to wait for some years before they too could be heeded. This did not mean that political reform had been discarded. On the contrary, as an especially sensitive projects it was subject to special attention from the IRI's leaders (Ibid. pp.200-1). Importantly, political moderation was mentioned officially for the first time in 1992 in President Rafsanjani's official report to the parliament which called for reform in Islamic politics. In 1989 he had already made economic reform a major programme of the Islamic state. Although President Rafsanjani's speech presented a compromise reflecting the complex political realities, the influence of the moderation was limited to such standard phrases as 'always act on Imam's Line' (Ibid. pp.202-3). Predictably, Rafsanjani repeated the endorsement of the economic reform as a major policy. But, when he spoke on politics, Rafsanjani aired some of Khatami's later views as well. He called for a better administration system and more development of technology. In a show of support for his proposals, new members of parliament not only stressed the need for better economy, administration, and technology, but also explicitly mentioned both organisational and political reforms as official democratic approaches that deserved to be revived. Breaking out of the ideological uniformity of conservatism, they pleaded for a spirited democratic reform discussion, thereby implicitly showing their support for a new mobilisation. In his annual speeches in parliament, he remarked that where there is controversy in political discussions and economic criticism, we should avoid drawing hasty conclusions. We should seek solutions not through such simple measures as a return to conservatism and tradition, but through full discussion and practical experience (Ibid. pp. 204-5).

With similar words few years later President Khatami was trying to enlarge the arena for ideological discussions. If the conservatives were trying to restrict the arena of political debate to the normative approach of the

Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine, Khatami was obviously seeking to relax the political discussions on more general discussions of a contemporary Republican model of political system. His proposals for the process of social and political reforms were part and parcel of this attempt (Ibid. p.205). This not only went against the conservative stance, but also antagonised senior officials, who had worked hard to undermine such moderately-oriented policies in the early 1990s. Processing such reforms would not only run counter to Ayatollah Khomeini's Line but also reverse some of the most crucial verdicts of the anti-liberal campaign of the 1980s. Hojjatol-Islam Nategh-Nouri, the chair of parliament, was one of those officials who opposed this trend. The content of his parliamentary speeches on the socio-economic reform from the 1980s was deliberately discussed among conservatives in 1990s. In it, Hojjatol-Islam Nategh-Nouri presented by now the traditional Ayatollah Khomeini view that liberalism, and particularly political reform, were the reflection of the corrupted Westernised groups and were inherently antithetical to their Islamic regime (Ibid. pp.206-7). Therefore, restoring them amounted to a call for the restoration of Western liberalism. Thus, while conceding implicitly that Ayatollah Khomeini's Line might perhaps be too narrow of an arena for political change, Nategh-Nouri warned against allowing non traditionalist theories to form part of the theoretical arena of Iran's politics. In doing so, Nategh Nouri was pleading the cause of Ayatollah Khomeini's doctrinal approach that was accordingly enriched within a larger Political Islam arena, but not by any liberal theory, therefore political reform and modernisation had to remain subject to the discourse of the post-revolutionary past (Ganji, 1999. pp.216-221).

After the 1997 Khatami electoral victory against policies of conservative alliance and for modernisation of state institution, Hojjatol-Islam Abdullah Nuri launched a campaign to enlarge the arena of theoretical and political debates (Ganji, 2000, p.11). In these years Abdullah Nuri, together with his political ideas, had fallen and resurfaced a few times. In 1998 he was appointed minister of home affairs in charge of the daily workings of the office of President, and in the following months he became the head and speaker of the main faction of political reformers. As the head of the reformers he lost no time in replacing most of the conservatives (thus, the Supreme Leader's adherents) and placing his own people. In the newly-established office of president Khatami, Abdullah Nuri formed a group of reformers who were to be his and Khatami's policy-makers (Moslem, 2002. p.205). Operationally, he succeeded in establishing a degree of normality and technocratic order, something many Iranians elite must have been craving. A few months later, an official inauguration ceremony was held at which reformer members of parliament optimistically urged the cabinet to devote some of its time to planning policies for new political and trade relations with Western countries, particularly the United States. This proved too sensitive a task for the office of president in latter part of 1998. The outcome of the power struggle for the position of supreme leader was still too much in doubt. Abdullah Nuri obviously planned to advance a different project less traditional from the one presented by President Khatami, although he was able to do

rather less than he wanted in the office of president, because President Khatami kept firm control over a number of especially sensitive governing positions. But even President Khatami could not prevent an increasing number of political debates from taking place. In political and organisational levels, however, Abdullah Nuri attempted to increase the measure of political tolerance and enlarge the arena for democratic debates (Ibid. p.213). On the issues concerning how political reform should proceed, it was clear that he supported reformers' attempts against the conservatives' repressive discourse and conservative views such as those held by Hojjatol-Islam Nategh Nouri.

This conflict of rivalling views about the extent of the political reform, particularly of ideology, came to a head in the course of 1998. At the beginning of the year, the political establishment still accepted that the political reform would continue to provide the permissible approach for official ideology. Although some radical groups were clearly losing ground, was not yet a spent force, and among the IRI elite, possessed a formidable organisational strength (Ibid. p.224). Procedurally, without the agreement of the Guardian Council and the Regime Expediency Council, no practical steps could be taken while their members dominated the key state positions. As in early 1990, when President Rafsanjani was to present his economic reform projects, he had to find a way of getting them passed by the Guardian Council and Parliament. Ultimately, finding this way proved to be the key to President Khatami's success. As the person responsible for daily affairs at the state office, Abdullah Nuri was relatively free to run the political reform as he saw fit. Internally and within certain limits, he was allowed to lay down his own guidelines for theoretical debates. This is just what he done in 1999, when he realised his associate reformer lacked the courage to advance even a minimal project for political reform. Advocating liberal Islamic thought, Abdullah Nuri laid down two criteria by which the office of president could present a new political reform project. One was President Khatami's formulation calling for a comprehensive and accurate understanding of Ayatollah Khomeini's relevant instructions, and the other was to use the participatory model to practice in municipalities as the criterion for testing the reforms and for determining their pros and cons, and for seeking future reform measures to be taken (Ibid. p.252).

Upon hearing of Abdullah Nuri's criteria, some alert reformers in Khatami circles were quick to realise the model of participatory practice criterion was the ideal line along which to attack moderate policies. The events lead up to the implementation of a new approach of what appears to be mainly Abdullah Nuri's plan in all the major governing institutions, which is well documented by several sources.³⁰ However, whether this affair was restricted to what has been termed Abdullah Nuri's intellectual network, is subject to doubt. The conservative's attack came at a time when Abdullah

30 - See '*dJame-ehe madany va irane moaser*' (Civil Society and Contemporary Iran), 1998, Abdul-Karim Soroush, Hassien Bashirieh, Ali-Reza Alavi-Taba'ar, Mosa Ghanye-nedjad, Fakhredin Aziemi, Saeed Hajjarian, Ezatollah Sahabi, Hoshang Amir-Ahmadi, Parviz Piran, Ali Rezaie, Morad Farhad-pour, and Davod Hermidas-Yavand, published by Naghsh va Negar, Tehran-Iran.

Nuri too was taking his distance from the parliament's modest reformers (Ganji, 2000, p.7). It is also a fact that most of the intellectual reformers close to President Khatami, such as Khashayar Dayhimi, wrote several articles on the meaning of political modernisation at a fairly early stage (Dayhimye, 2002). It is therefore likely that the debate on the model of participatory practice criterion of reforms served as a clever rallying point for more than one group (Moslem, 2002, p.248). This was all the more a practical necessity, since the reformers initially held the upper hand.

The choice of a Pan-Islamist model of participatory practice criterion was very fitting (Tajzadeh, 2003, p.86). On the one hand, although the concept of participation in municipalities was widely known, it seems that under Ayatollah Khomeini it was not one of the most favourite criteria for political participation. Moreover, saying that participatory practice was the criterion for testing true Islamic method of practice was also not the position of President Khatami. The inclusion of the idea of participation served to highlight the fallacies that the people do participate in decision-making within an Islamic system, because Khatami had called for an ongoing relation between Umma (community of faithful) and Ulama (community of leadership) practices. The addition of the idea of participatory practice, although strictly speaking is debatable, did not significantly alter Khatami's Line. It did draw attention to the contingent nature of the political reform's outcomes. Indirectly, it also provided a theoretical justification for shifting the emphasis from Islamic political participation to the cultural sphere of activities (Moslem, 2002, p.213). Moreover, because it came from Khatami's Line, it was of such impeccable provenance, that even the more pragmatic intellectuals could eventually subscribe to it. The net result, however, was a widening of the arena for ideological debates (Tajzadeh, 2003, p.86).

Still, as suggested by the previously mentioned reformer groups, the main thing about the participatory practice criterion was clearly not its pure ideological import, but its function within the context of the factional power struggle. First of all, the presentation of participatory model of practice as the sole criterion for testing true participation supported President Khatami's call for a complete and accurate understanding of Political Islam. In other words, it presented President Khatami as a president with both modern Republicanism and Islamic ideological insight. Moreover, in the IRI it is generally known that high-level officials often debate policies themselves. At the very least, they may be assumed to convey an officially sanctioned view. Until this debate was presented, reformer groups had not been able to propose a single important alternative expressing their views. Its presentation showed that Abdullah Nuri's position among conservative, and even liberal, reformer groups could be circumvented. To outsiders, it made crystal clear Abdullah Nuri was losing his grip on both traditional Islamic ideology and the Pan-Islamist intellectuals, who called for a direct intervention of public opinion on the country's political decision-making. Most of the stir surrounding the appearance of the ideas of reform, then, may have been caused by the mere fact that they were presented at all. Rather than the elite providing a positive contribution to the pressing problem of an

ideological framework, on the basis of which debates could be formed, the participatory practice model served to reveal Abdullah Nuri's ideological weakness. Ideologically the entire affair discredited some reformers, and won an important battle for the conservatives. In spite of the elite's belated support for the pro-reformers, Abdullah Nuri's ideas were soon to lose ground, and President Khatami fell behind conservatism.

The sixth parliament in 1999 started with Khatami's reform ideological package, which clearly broke with Ayatollah Khomeini's Line of pure Islam. Most importantly, the conservatives dropped their line of taking the Ayatollah Khomeini Line as the key link, and the major debates on political reform through an Islamic Republic were upgraded to become the new Islamic-state's line. President Khatami's new ideological ascendancy was confirmed through the adoption of his interpretation of Iran's place in an objective world as the new Islamic-state line. By the rules of the Republican model, it meant President Khatami became the country's dominant leader.

To stress on the continuity of the new state's line, the sixth parliament emphasised explicitly Republicanism as the Ayatollah Khomeini's correct summary of the Political Islam in 1979 revolutionary situation (Kadivar, 1997, p.18). This officially stated that in political matters the parliament had set the clock back to the revolutionary arena. A small, but ideologically important phrase was to be found at the very end of President Khatami's speeches:

The troubled appearance of our Islamic Iran had to be change.³¹ Barely implicitly, it seemed, the sixth parliament conceded that two decades had been lost due to errors of traditionalism. Although the sixth parliament contained some general and critical approaches to Ayatollah Khomeini's period, the reformers proposed publishing a more detailed plan for political modernisation and projects for later discussions. In this way, the question of a moderate ideology, which was too sensitive to be drafted by the majority members of sixth parliament, was acknowledged. By implicitly adopting President Khatami's views on such crucial matters, his right to paramount power was also accepted. Although President Khatami promised to advance a more participatory plural leadership, ultimate decisions were to remain vested in his person. In theoretical matters the moderation practice criterion was applauded and the radical revolutionary actions were discarded. In an attempt to stress both the need for unity and pluralism, it was stressed that:

Under the guidance of President Khatami Iranian people unanimously felt that only through their Republic and its institution could liberate their moderate thought and exerted themselves in searching new way of life and new things and new challenges, hold to the principles of seeking divine truth through toleration and begin from their new reality and linking moderate ideas to practice as a measure of their modernisation, which are all not suited to a speedy political changes.³²

31- Dayhimi, K. 2002. *In abrha khahad barid* (These Clouds will bring Rain), Collected Political Notes, p. 29, published by Tarh-e No, Tehran-Iran.

32 - Ibid. p.29

With this direction the basis for a new ideological arena had been offered which was to serve as the basis for President Khatami's political reform. Leading former development groups under President Rafsanjani development, such as *Mo-talefeh* (Alliance), Society of Islamic Engineers, and clergy from the Association of Combatants Clerics (*djame-eh Rohaniun-e Mobarez*) - and remarkably not conservatives or radicals such as Society of Tehran Preachers - lost their posts. But lower officials were given the chance to adapt themselves to new political arena. It was a sign of the new tolerance that the conservative Ayatollah Meshkini was even supported President Khatami in parliament for saying the participatory form of practice criterion was nothing less than a matter of state-line.

During the late 1990s, not only had the approach of the former President Rafsanjani's groups been replaced by the pro-Khatami moderate criterion, but also the arena of ideological debate on the whole had been greatly enlarged. In this respect, some of the erstwhile supporters of President Khatami's causes now started to have second thoughts about the changes in ideological climate. Among them, none was more prominent than Abdullah Nuri, who in the wake of the sixth parliament rapidly became the foremost ideological spokesman. It is probable that Abdullah Nuri hitched onto President Khatami's series of reformers groups, because the main ideologists under the Guardian Council and the Office of Leader³³ were clearly aiming at Abdullah Nuri's arrest or even early exclusion from the parliament. Perhaps this was not entirely unrelated to public disorder of the first massive dissident movement in the IRI, the university student accident. But, Abdullah Nuri mainly directed his arrows favouring the debates concerning media freedoms, which he thought to be far more important. He now sought to wield his new found power as a minister of home affairs in an effort to expand the arena of political debate to the issue of participation model of practice criteria. The implication of all these events and changes was that President Khatami was to be the leader with a unique insight to lead Islamic Iran out of the chaos of the Absolutism to its era of modernisation. This called for a new look at the theoretical underpinnings of Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine that had been suggested the year before, but could also refer to the need for a new policy approach to initiate political as well as administrative reforms. Abdullah Nuri reiterated President Khatami's plea for a comprehensive and accurate view of Islamic ideology, thereby implying one should be guided by President Khatami's general views on moderate Political Islam. He set two tasks for his ministry. One task was to review the basic experiences and lessons of the post-revolutionary Islamic political theory and practice. The other was to interpret Political Islam on the basic task of democratisation and confronting traditional orthodoxy after the shift in focus on the participatory model of practice as the sole criterion for testing true action. In other words, an appraisal of the past and a theoretical framework for the future would have to be discussed. The only correct way to

33 - The Expediency Council is literally an organisation that determines what is the best interests of the regime; an arbitrary body that settles disputes between Parliament and the Guardian Council. Moslem, M. 2002. Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran, p. 332.

proceed with these new proposals was to study and understand the works on Islamic philosophy, to look hermeneutically at history and social reality. In this way, Abdullah Nuri believed that Islamic philosophy would be continuously enriched and developed in democratic practice. To Iranian intellectuals well versed in the intricacies of Islamic ideology, this amounted to nothing less than a call for a general overhaul of Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine.

This is exactly what happened in the first period after the 1997 presidential election. One after another, reformist intellectuals presented the fruits of a decade of bitterness. Many of the ideas were developed in the first years after revolution and aired publicly for the first time. Although some small violent groups, such as Hezb-Allah, served to limit the circles of reformers, discussion of the content of their articles and books soon spread to other participants of the movement. In this respect, each small circle counted at least one bold intellectual willing to speak out. In the most pragmatic of circles, the journalist Akbar Ganji stated publicly for the first time that the period of repression had ended (Ganji, 2000, p.51). In the Pan-Islamist left intellectual circles, Hashem Aghajari, an influential figure from university student organisation *Tahkim*, read a speech in which he said plainly that it was the disgrace of revolutionary Iran to propagate publicly that the people of the entire country must unconditionally follow the authority of one clergyman called *faqih* (Djalaaee-Pur, 2003, p.110). The relation between government officials and the citizens, he added, was not a relation of personal dependency, but a relation of equality. The principle of loyalty to the Supreme Leader had already severely hampered Iran's democratic feature and progress. It was not the people who should be loyal to the ruler, but the ruler to the people.³⁴ Aghajari's speech was not merely astounding for its contents, but also because it dispensed of all formal terminology as set out by the Islamic tradition of *Imamate* (prophecy in Shi'ia Islam) and plainly stated its case (Alavitabar, 2003, pp.39-64). In the traditional left circle, Behzad Nabavi echoed the radical view that economic reforms needed to be accompanied by political reform. For saying much the same thing in the street, many dissidents were sentenced to ten years imprisonment. As in other conditions, it was clear status, timing, and the way one expressed oneself in the parliament that determined whether or not one could afford to speak out freely. Shirin Ebadi, who was a member of Association of Iranian Lawyer Group, pleaded for a sound legal system under which people enjoyed civil rights, rather than waiting for them to be granted by the Islamic state. In the Islamic moderate circle, Abdul-Karim Soroush characterised the outcomes of the post-revolution cultural change as mistaken, which

34 - Moslem, M. in 'Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran', 2002, pp. 248, 249 points out: 'The debate over the issue of vilayet-i faqih remained civil until late January when, in an interview with Mobin, Hashem Aqajari, an influence figure from Tahkim, made an extremely controversial observation. When discussing "political participation in the thoughts of Imam Ali," Aqajari maintained, "Legitimacy and rightfulness are two [different] matters. Rightfulness is an inner matter. The Imam Ali of course thought of himself as having the divine right [haq] to rule...but he never allowed himself to impose his rule on the people without their consent...Political legitimacy is an exterior matter, and it stems only from the people's allegiance." Aqajari had provided a highly controversial analysis of one the basic tents of Imamate.

implemented mistaken methods for mistaken objectives (Soroush, 1997, p.301). Finally, in religious nationalist circles, Abraham Yazdi outlined at least part of an earlier vision on their religiously nationalist ideal form of government under an Islamic state. His call for an end to capital punishment of political prisoners made him one of the reformist stars of the early years after President Khatami's "Second Revolution" of 1997. Reportedly, noted intellectuals, such as Shabestari, Soroush, Kadivar, Abdullah Nuri, and many others openly backed his position. Although these were some of the more prominent ideas to be voiced during these years, they were by no means the only ones.

In some important ways, the involvement of independent intellectuals in the new era was more worrying to the Iranian Islamic leadership than those decisions by moderate members of parliament. These intellectuals simply lacked the institutional status or the formal relationships to realise their demands. Many were soon behind bars or reduced to silence. Such a treatment, however, could not be meted out to respectable and often well-entrenched intellectuals, whose loyalty to the Islamic State was generally beyond doubt. In a way, the political reform represented a refined, more controlled version of the religiously democratic government campaign. Religiously knowledgeable dignitaries and those loyal to the Islamic state were allowed to speak out publicly, but for others mostly in private circles, they avoided a public awareness and loss of dignity for the regime. This was what many in the establishment considered being an acceptable form of freedom. Although one has the feeling that the reform process was organised at least in part to enable many prominent intellectuals to vent their frustrations about the last years of Ayatollah Khomeini's rule, the level and the intensity of the criticisms clearly took many in the IRI leadership by surprise. It had still not dawned on them that the seemingly revolutionary days of the 1979 could never return. Instead of the expected reasonable complaints about the ideology emerging, nasty criticisms about the despotic nature of the Islamic rule and the continuing system of clerical privileges surfaced. Abdullah Nuri's call for an end to political persecution and Shabestari's attack on the nature of leadership especially struck at the heart of the highly personalised political culture of the Islamic state.

The first aspect of the reform process made clear to the conservative Pan-Islamist leadership that a further enlargement of the Islamic ideological arena was a potentially hazardous step (Shabestari, 2004). Some sort of religiously ideological accommodation had to be found to keep reform discussions within the limits as set by the political framework of the Islamic State. In this situation, the moderate's earlier suggestions suddenly acquired a new found appeal, while the officials were asked to implement a new direction which President Khatami held at the end of 1997 period of election (Moslem, 2002, p.252). The state's adapted views therefore presented Khatami's own synthesis of the entire process of current political reform. According to the head of President Office Abtahi, 1997 was like 1979 and needed a similar revolutionary step (Ibid. p.266). Next to the modernisation process, he stated through President Khatami, Islamic Iran needed some

measure of plural democratic political order. If in 1979 Islamic institution encapsulating the ideologically permissible had provided the idea for Ayatollah Khomeini's ideological criteria, the latter now served as an example for the basic principles of committing to the newly democratic road, to the decentralisation of the state institution, to the plural model of leadership, and to a religiously democratic governing system.

At the same time, however, the moderate government decisions did not inaugurate a new anti-conservative campaign. In ideological matters, it laid down an important principle of President Khatami's rule that there was to be considerably more space than before for debate within the Islamic state establishment, but such debate continued to be subject to certain limits (Mirsepassi, 2002, p.173). Only some of the most conservative and few radical elite, such as members of The Society of Qum Seminary Teachers or The Association of Combatant Clergy circles, who lacked a strong base of support, were excluded. The process of political reform could be seen as an example of President Khatami's comprehensive and accurate thought-practice for Islamic unity, democratic but Islamic criticism, while also leading towards the principles of a new stage of the same Islamic Republic. In political matters, President Khatami's policy stressed the need for a new approach to social and economic development, and therefore, reforms. Amongst others, President Khatami expressly indicates that the rule of law, modernisation of culture, and dialogue with the world's politicians have been neglected in the past (Alavitabar, 2003, pp.44-6).

Now, President Khatami too had officially used the term reformation, which allowed for the expression of critical ideas and the elaboration upon the terms of political reform. In the following years, whenever the ideas of political reform was attacked or slighted, a simple reference to President Khatami was enough to impress everyone with their official status.

By the late 1990s, the process of political reform in an ideological arena had been outlined, reflecting the new style of President Khatami's Islamic leadership. Unlike the ageing Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine, President Khatami did not seek to monopolise Islamic ideology. On the contrary, although President Khatami had successfully laid claim to the unique insight of the paramount leader, he encouraged his audience and their advisors to assist him in elaborating that insight in ideologically acceptable ways. This was something Ayatollah Khomeini had increasingly discouraged after 1979. Under President Khatami, room for a dialogue and debate of ideological and political ideas suddenly returned, which was reminiscent of the days of the revolution and the early 1980s. For all its perceived shortcomings, it gave a decisive impetus to the intellectual foundation upon which Iran's political and social reforms were to bloom.

Thus, ideological modernisation was started because the reformist leadership by the late 1990s had come to the conclusion that the traditional Pan-Islamist ideological disciplines forming Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine were incapable of yielding the practical knowledge necessary for the implementation of the changes that had to accompany their ambitious blueprint for socio-economic modernisation. The debate over civil

society, the participatory model of practice criterion, and the slogan to rationalise thought-practice, created the necessary space within the ideological arena. Finally, the principles for reform movement laid down the negation that suspicious conservative officials thought was necessary to keep the new political approach within the pale of the dominant, acceptable political culture. Within this new arena, political reform had to make its way.

3. Conceiving Political Modernity

From the early 1990s, political reform was presented as the political corollary to economic modernisation. In order to carry out its economic reform, the Islamic State needed to adjust its organisation and policies. The change in state economic policies brought about important changes in organisational and policy matters, which particularly affected the structure of state managerial institutions. Political reform was to provide the concrete policies to realise this aim. According to Hakimian and Karshenass (2000, pp.29-30) after more than a decade of revolutionary turmoil and external war (with Iraq), in the late 1980s the Iranian government embarked on an extensive economic reform and adjustment programme. The First Five-Year Development Plan, introduced in 1989, provided a framework for liberalising the economy and dismantling the centrally-administered model of resource allocation that had evolved during the war years. The market reforms in this phase were intertwined with a broader, state-led, reconstruction drive to resuscitate the economy. After a short success phase in the early 1990s, the liberalisation effort stalled in the face of heightened macroeconomic instability and a severe foreign exchange crisis that came to a head in 1993. As emergency measures were adopted to deal with the debt crisis, the reformers were scaled back and the familiar spectre of stagflation – the malaise of the 1980s – came back to haunt the Iranian economy. Approaching the late 1990s, a combination of economic populism and another severe slump in international oil prices during 1997-99, has again blurred the prospects for economic reform in the country. Therefore, political reform had to start from within (Djalaei-pour, 2003, pp. 94-96). The very first problem that confronted officials and elite engaging in political reform was the question of what political reform really was and how they should conceive political modernisation.

The different ways in which political reform in the IRI was conceived of were typical of President Khatami's style of governing (Alavitabar, 2003, p.44). First, the conception of political reform was not decreed from the top, as had increasingly been the practice for political affairs during the Ayatollah Khomeini years. Instead, general guidelines were laid down at the lower levels of the state management and administration, which were to be elaborated upon progressively by establishment elite, Pan-Islamist intellectuals, and Islamic scholars. As the late 1990s wore on, these guidelines became progressively less compelling for different reasons. Secondly, unlike in previous years, the different conceptions of political reform among officials were not thrashed out into a single view, but were left

standing as possible alternatives. In other words, a broad arena of debate was purposively left open throughout. In the course of the years, some sort of new terminological discourse arose among Pan-Islamist intellectuals (Kadeevar, 2000). Finally, as the contours of an emerging political reform became clearer, its democratic components led many officials and elite to search for other compatible political approaches more to their technocratic liking.

3.1. The Ideological Guidelines for Political Reform

The term 'Ideology' as an important instrument of domination of the IRI political culture, given its suspicious past, was subject - perhaps more than any of the other reforms - to the ideological suspicions of unconvinced conservative elite. From the very start it was obvious to moderate reformers that the new political process had to be encapsulated and integrated into a body of safe Islamic ideological guidelines, so that it could be harnessed to the uplifting pursuits of Islamic state (Alavitabar, 2003, p.51). The problem, however, was that in the early days at least moderate reformers and officials alike did not know exactly what political reform really was. Because President Khatami had actually used the concept of 'rule of law' for political reform, it did not mean that everything had been settled. True, there were those reformers and even Islamic scholars who wasted no time in saying that at the time it had been wrong to abandon the political pluralism of early post-revolutionary days and to stop debates about political modernisation as a crucial aspect of Islamic Republic (Shabestari, 1994, p.94). But, they had not explicitly added that the existing political modernisation in the transitional context, although of great merit, was clearly far better than the "Islamic" model. A huge gap, therefore, yawned between the safe territory of the principles of moderation and the concrete contours of a practical political modernisation.

The extreme uncertainty about the precise nature of political modernisation was reflected in the first President Khatami discourse that grappled with the first concrete details of the political reform. From the early days of 1997 and onwards, he limited himself to offering an idea of possible areas with which debates of political modernisation could take place (Khatami, 1996, p.3).³⁵ These reflected the political mood of the day as much as any serious attempt at establishing the more general principles of a stable modern Islamic state. Mainly these principles contained such topics as austerity to conflict and crisis, reconstruction of the regime's legitimacy, changes in methods of decision-making and decision-building, reduction of conflicts with the outside world, and ideas in the past and present (Alavitabar, 2003, p.44). In 1997, a great number of reformer groups under the Second Khordad Front naturally referred to such popular topics as the development within and help of civil society, or the strength of Republicanism

35 - See *Majmoeh nazarate hojato-islam val-muslimin sayyed mohammad khatami* (Selected Views of Hjatol-Islam val-muslimin Sayyed Mohammad Khatami), in monthly review *Farhange Tose'eh* (Developmental Culture), sixth year, No. 27, 1996, p. 3, published in Iran

and progress (Mollahzadeh, 1996, p.2). By the late 1997, times had changed and the list contained much more practical approach to reform in the civil service systems and to attention of the functions and prerogatives of government organs. In early 1998 President Khatami referred explicitly to management reforms and complained that the state institution failed to instruct officials in administrative work. The latter remark was directed against officials at the Ministry of Justice, who strongly opposed the process of political reform. But, as Mehdi Moslem points out

Unable to mark the president's popular image or his democratic message, the conservatives decided to make use of their institutional-legal privileges and weaken Khatami by purging those close to him. Tehran's mayor Gholam-hossein Karbaschi was the first victim. Charged with embezzling billion and wasting public money on what the rightist court called 'dubious developmental projects,' he was arrested in April 1998.³⁶

By late 1998, some conservative officials suddenly took an even more critical and surprising tone on the necessary ideological contents of political modernisation. An important instance of this change is to be found in speeches held by Mahdavi-Kani who was president of The Society of Combatant Clerical. He was one of the leading conservative voices strongly opposing the modernisation process in the early 1980s and later in early 1990s. By provoking Hashem Aghajari on the issue of Imamate and legitimacy of *vilayet-i faqih*, however, Mahdavi-Kani stressed 'all our work should be guided by *vilayet-i faqih*'.

He emphasised that

After the 1997 election some people who 'call themselves supporter of the Line of Imam' had wondered whether the regime of *vilayet-i faqih* still had a future and that these doubts still persisted in some institutions. Doubting the principle of *vilayet-i faqih*, its foundations, and the disbelief in its all-encompassing character, [giving] precedence to republicanism of the regime over its Islamicity, [speaking about] the sovereignty of the regime from the top to bottom, abstruse religious debates, bring to the public fore the issues of expertise [over doctrination] under the pretext of support for the rule of law, suggesting that the constitution is the pivot of the regime and speaking about national covenant and championing popular sovereignty and political participation, as if the people have not being partaking in the affairs of the country; all appeal to the alternative thinkers and the enemy...I fear that the episode of the Constitutional Revolution [1905-11] might be repeated.³⁷

Contrary to Khatami's ideological framework, Mahdavi-Kani remarks that allowing the religiously democratic model to guide the government would not necessary guarantee the IRI modernity model. After all, among conservatives there were also different opinions. Therefore, Pan-Islamist reformers, officials and Islamic scholars who did not believe in *vilayet-i faqih* began to speak out and felt no longer forced to pretend that the clerical institution could decide which views on Islamic state are correct. As a result, conservatives had to unwillingly engage in a debate to convince those who did not favour *vilayet-i faqih*. After all, it should be acknowledged that there was some elite, who, although they did not consciously use factional politics to engage in reforms,

36 - Moslem, M. 2002. Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran, p. 259, New York.

37 - Moslem, M., 2002. Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran, pp. 248, 249

still makes a contribution to the enrichment of debate. Such debate even comes to a point where the result was higher than the results of previous attempts. Thus, as long as these reformers patriotically adhered to the principles of the regime, or in other words, opposed neither the foundation of Islamic State nor the clerical institution, they were free to espouse their own theory. But, if the Guardian Council and Supreme Leader saw their views as inappropriate, they could not be presented publicly. Similarly, President Khatami made clear that both political modernisation and the reform process were important but a new approach was definitely necessary. This meant that one still had to adhere to the principle of linking modernisation theory to Islamic practice, and new approach need not conflict with the foundations of Islamic regime.

Mahdavi-Kani's intervention marked a decisive turning point in the way ideology was meant to steer the process of modernisation in general and political reform in particular. As Mehdi Moslem points out:

The words of Mahdavi-Kani instigated a heated round of factional outbursts. The response of Khatami was to ridicule the politically unenlightened conservatives: 'The idea of putting the leadership and the law [constitution] face to face, which some people are trying to do, is dangerous and has its roots in not understanding the civil society...In a civil society people must be free and no one has the right to accuse anyone of being liberal and anti-vilayet-i faqih. We must accept the general will.' A few days latter Khatami maintained, 'If the people are [allowed] to be present [on the political stage], the Constitutional Revolution will not be repeated... Anyone who accepted Republic has also accepted republicanism, Islamicity, and vilayet-i faqih'.³⁸

Although a year later in 1999, Khatami held a position in which he stressed the enormous guiding function of Supreme Leader as spiritual figure for the country he basically restated his views of the year before. In this speech, Khatami for the first time pointed out that the very view of 'Islamic regime' had changed. But the quest for a positive answer to the precise contents of the political modernisation was extended in late 1998. For the first time, Islamic scholars, moderate intellectuals and state officials were engaging in political reform debates and publicly asked the Supreme Leader to consider their views on the country's affairs (Ibid. p.249).

Such a large measure of popular input, however, quickly called for some form of ideological control. To begin with, political modernisation was naturally subject to the political anxiety of the Islamic State. These were the democratic principles proposed by President Khatami in May 1997. But, this did not bring a useful conception any nearer. What was needed according to most reformers was a positive formulation of the most general aspects and components of political modernisation. In this way, some order could be impressed upon the disparate approach to ideas that had been debated.

President Khatami formulated a first version of such a political reform framework in 1997 (Khatami, 1997, p.3). The completed copy of the reform ideas is found in Sayyed Mostafa Tajzadeh's article 'Active Prevention' in a collective work of reformers titled 'Reforms against Reforms' from early 1998. In this year, the Khatami's Second Khordad Front had charged Tajzadeh with

working out the details of a democratic process for political modernisation. His idea, which was probably strongly suggested by Khatami himself, consisted of a set of politically balanced proposals. These were designed to channel the development of the political reform in a direction that was in the best interests of the Islamic regime itself. As President Khatami emphasised, Iranian society was to engage in political modernisation under the leadership of the Islamic state, taking the doctrine of Ayatollah Khomeini as their guide, uniting and organising the state officials, creating the civil society and mobilising them together with intellectuals and university students, contributing to the principle of linking modern theories to Islamic practice, and to the major policies of the state, help the private sectors to bloom, reducing the conflicts between civilisations, would make the past Iranian and Islamic glories to serve its present (Khatami, 1997, p.52).

This work was to be conducted with a democratic attitude that seeks the Islamic truth through tolerance and in a democratically plural method. According to the ideas, this was to lead to a thoroughly democratic and systematic method of political participation, which stood in service of the country's modernisation. The platform of ideas was formed of three elements, in which the first element of free discussion and public security was encapsulated with ideological pincers. In this way, both free discussion and public security during the process of political change were to be confined within the ideological crises as set out by the second element: the rational behaviour of state's officials groups, in other words, "the rule of law".

In view of President Khatami's more general political sympathies, it is quite likely that he would have remained content with such a rigidly defined framework during potentially collapsible process of political modernity. From the very start, however, different senior moderate officials offered slightly different wordings of the same ideas. Next to the optimistic proposal of Tajzadeh, another reformer, Hamid-Reza Djalaee-Pur presented a more flexible idea (Djalaee-pur, 2003, p.82). This was a new practice that was probably encouraged by Khatami himself, and moreover, could hardly have been lost upon an audience that had grown up with such pluralistic strictures. Indeed, it took little time to realise that these differences served to show to which extent political reformers were free to pursue their strategies within a vaguely defined arena of the officially acceptable (Ibid. p.83).

Despite the disorder during the meeting at Arak University, which was organised by group of reformers, Hamid-Reza Djalaee-Pur's speech there explored the limits of the officially acceptable. He merely spoke of reforming politics from a moderate Islamic viewpoint (Ibid. p.95). The basis of political reform, Djalaee-Pur felt, had to be on politics under the "rule of law" model, especially under the current Islamic Republic. The key approach here, as Djalaee-Pur stressed, was a model of a religiously democratic system under the rule of law, although, there was not even one mention of the *vilayet-e faqih* as the leadership of the Islamic state. The Djalaee-Pur advice to supreme leader was just a viewpoint and not guidance (Ibid. pp.94 & 101). He only mentioned 'religiously democratic government' and left out 'Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine'. In this way, Djalaee-Pur

skilfully enlarged the arena for political debate to larger forms of uncertainty and free of Political Islam. In this way, establishment elite and Pan-Islamist reformers would be freer to engage with alternative words and theories. Djalaaee-Pur even skipped the issue of the Islamic credentials of political modernity by especially directing alternative ideas to issues under the Republican system.

Between the two kinds of approaches, a space for potential alternative discourse was created. Tajzadeh's reading of the 1997 events marked both the moderate view, such as held by the Islamic Iran Participation Front, and the traditional left view, such as held by the Crusaders of the Islamic Revolution, and Djalaaee-Pur's pragmatist view, such as that held by the Servers of Constructiveness (Alavitabar, 2003, p.43). Behind the two sets of ideas lay an entirely different conception towards the implementation of reform policies, which were targeted towards political changes. The moderate and traditional left attitudes were that of a fundamentally correct mould of ideological principles to which political reform would be subjected, and if needed, should be redirected (Armin, 1999). The pragmatist attitude relied on the creative dialogue between politics and ideology to obtain a pragmatist practice of moderate politics.

Djalaaee-Pur's more ideological style did not fail to have its impact. Typically, Seyyed Mostafa Tajzadeh's position was slightly more radical than the moderate or the traditional left approach was (Tajzadeh, 2003, pp.9-22). For example, he started off by insisting that one could not take the principles of Republicanism as one's guide in politics some of the time and simply discard it other times. But, this did not mean that one had to base oneself entirely on the religiously democratic government model. One only needed to adopt a democratic stance, viewpoint, and methodology. In this Tajzadeh drew closer to Djalaaee-Pur. Later, however, in the introduction of the 2003 book that presented these articles, Tajzadeh adopted an approach more tunes with that of President Khatami. He was clearly still looking for a position that both fitted his views and agreed with his entourage feeling.

As if he felt the need to restrain the influence of the newly variable political approach, President Khatami himself delivered a long speech in 1998 on the dangers that beset Iran's revolutionary regime and political modernity. In it he made clear that:

The decision-making mechanism in our country is suffering; our priority should be an effort to rationalise the political system and involve our people in decision-making and decision-building; major aspects of Islamic state policies should be based on rebooting regime's legitimacy in serving people and Islamic Republic; these decisions require legitimacy that is feasible only through the reduction of tension between us and depends on our social behaviours that links our ideological belief to our practice.³⁹

In other words, while leaving space for new and useful ideas, Khatami's view of political modernisation was one in which these new ideas were continuously subjected and fitted into the prior ideological mould as outlined

39 - Alavitabar, A., 2003. 'Molahezate rahbordi baraye ayandeh' (Observation for Future Leading) in collective essays *Eslahat darbarabare eslahat* ('Reforms against Reforms'), pp. 44,45,46, published by Tarh-e No, Tehran-Iran.

in the official policy. By referring to active participation in civil society sectors, the rule of law, the participatory practice, the plural politics among Islamic groups, a religiously democratic government, and the like, Khatami impressed upon his audience the need for reforms and subjection to the basic ideology of modernity (Khatami, 1999). The abstract principle of his political philosophy was to stand above and guide the modernisation process through the more concrete concepts. It was a theme to which he was to adhere in subsequent political organisation and policies.

From the very start, however, this ideological stance proved difficult to maintain. Part of the reason was perhaps due to Khatami's obligation towards the Guardian Council, pressing him to take measures that finally forced him to relinquish at least part of his previous strategy of modernisation in favour of conservatism. Nonetheless, he tried to maintain ideological control, but he was presumably too much involved in other matters to exert effective control. Part of the reason was also the media's active tolerance of a larger measure of political freedom. Together, these two important ideological ideas formed the overall framework within which President Khatami sought to place his coming government.

Seyyed Mostafa Tajzadeh stressed:

In order to hold a successful modernisation we must enable all political organisations to make their due contribution to the comprehensive starting construction of the new Iran.⁴⁰

This meant above all that an Islamic political modernisation was to be an eminently practical reform for all, which would focus on:

First is tolerance and then investing in the pressing problems of society.⁴¹ To be part of reform movement in future, those traditional organisations which merely hold to the guidance of the basic teaching of the leadership have to start from Iran's reality.⁴²

This meant, of course, that reformers, establishment officials, and public as a whole should not follow the leadership that do not emphasis on Iran's particular characteristics as the basis for their guidance. At the same time, however, Tajzadeh pointed out that:

This is a new approach and we cannot obtain unanimity from the very start about the aims and the methods used by political leadership or about the content that concretely they encompass. Democracy is a new affair in Iran. In the past our political system did not use such a model, thus, by using a democratic method as a guide we ought to establish modernity step by step and on the basis of actual experience and through an ongoing process.⁴³

Tajzadeh was using perfectly religiously democratic language to express a large measure of tolerance. By referring to democratic theory and practice, he made clear that discussions on political modernisation were still in the earliest phases of its investment. To be sure, in this phase the 'religiously democratic' theories could be used to serve as references for modernity (Ibid.

40 - Tajzadeh, M. 2003. '*Chera khoroj az hakemiyat?*' (Why Abandoning the Government?) in collective essays '*Eslahat darbarabare eslahat*' (Reforms against Reforms), pp. 85- 6, Tarhe No, Iran.

41 - Ibid. p. 85

42 - Ibid. p. 85

43 - Ibid. p. 86

p.86). After all, Khatami himself had said that the proponents of modernisation in Islamic Iran had to learn from and base their principles on the principles and experiences of Iran's past civilisation. He points out:

Political reformers should learn from democratic thought and relationships between the state institution and pluralism... They should not forget that pragmatism is a necessary fruit of our realities in this Islamic society.⁴⁴

In other words, it was all right to invest plural theories, but to use them one had to understand the concrete problems of Islamic government. Moreover, he added:

In their concrete contingency, reformers could not only aspire from a plural application. Their successful reform movement has to result in a form of condition to which a correct and objective process of political development could be envisaged.⁴⁵

Isolated elements could come from 'others' theories, but the whole had to be in accordance with a plural Islamic political system.

At this early stage, political modernisation still had to be largely invented. Paradoxically, reformers had to be careful not to base their approach too much on liberal ideas. After all, they had to perform a pluralistic approach to solve practical problems on the basis of an Islamic political model, not just a theoretical and general one. In other words, because Iran lacked a reliable earlier political system to synthesise democratic theory with its actual political system, it was important to engage in some ways a plural practice and religiously democratic ideas altogether. If one proceeded from the theoretical framework, for instance, of liberalism and 'secular' ideas, practice would be flawed from the beginning. Tajzadeh implied,

Better start off and try to understand real conditions, heighten understanding, a great deal of experiences, and master the objective condition before one gradually felt able to formulate a theoretical proposal for the political reform.⁴⁶

At the same time, however, it was necessary not to focus exclusively or indiscriminately on the cry of the day. Participation and basic modernisation, Tajzadeh countered, were necessary as well to improve the state political institution. Reformers, he writes, had to avoid their natural propensity to 'generalise' by dividing factions and co-operating with one another. Moreover, as Tajzadeh pointed out, in the post-revolutionary years Ayatollah Khomeini himself had called for more modernisation in the Iran's politics. If reformers proceeded in this balanced way, Tajzadeh assured that, in spite of what some persons hostile to the political modernisation maintained, the democratic quality of the reform would be enhanced. Such a reliable modernisation could offer valuable solutions to the pressing problems of the Islamic State. On the other hand, he warned that:

If we cannot fulfil our responsibilities as the supporters of government, then it is not to be wondered that the people do not think highly of political modernisation and its reformers.⁴⁷

44 - Khatami, M., 1997. '*dJame-ehe madanye va madaniat djame-eh*' (Civil Society and civilisation in Society), p. 18

45 - Ibid. p. 38

46- Tajzadeh, M., 2003. '*Bazdarandeg'e fa-al*' (Active Prevention), in collective articles '*Eslahat darbarabare eslahat*' (Reforms against Reforms), pp. 9-22.

47 - Ibid. p.22

Above all, political reform had follow the policies of other reforms in concentrating on those practical problems which promised quick results, such as the reform in civic service, administration and management, and leave more difficult issues for later. Although Tajzadeh did not mention this, it seems liberal policies was such a more difficult issue.

Tajzadeh ended by outlining a number of practical issues. Because political reform was meant to assist the Islamic State in solving its problems, some prominent reformers were discouraged from contribution and using it to express themselves, although the alternative modernising proposed would, of course, be implemented. But Tajzadeh was at pains to stress that Khatami's alternative was not the only goal and aim of political reform. Moreover, other new policies had to be limited specifically to the problem at hand and would only be implemented if they were good enough and allowed. As the Iranian constitution stipulated, subjects that had already been decided upon by the Supreme Leader and Guardian Council could not be debated any more in the state institutions. If one wanted to adjust, nevertheless, it had to be done through the appropriate channels. Finally, Tajzadeh noted dutifully that as President Khatami had ordered, next to modernisation, political reformers also faced the responsibility of popularising their subjects. This and other less thorough responsibilities could be done with the help of reformist media (Ibid. p.22).

In the coming year the official approach of what constituted the arena for political reform became even more vague and ambiguous. Tajzadeh held a position in which he put forward three ways in which the reformers could generally act (Tajzadeh, 2003, p.15). The first was from a reform that solely guided factional interests to one that guides national interests; the second was from one that fettered people's minds in frames to one that liberated people's minds and restored a moderate Islamic spirit; the third was reform from a closed state of modernisation to an open one. Tajzadeh basically described the gradual transformation of ideology from a mould, within which modernisation should be conducted, through forming one side of a democratic relationship with the practice of the reforms, to a general setting that most moderates were merely engaged. Increasingly then, instead of forming the criterion from which to gauge politics, politics had been increasingly invoked to alter the ideological framework. Thereby, Islamic ideology had become subjected to a debate with other competing theories, which had caused it to change in ways that were inconceivable at the beginning. This had consequently strengthened calls for basic reform, as the premises on which the ideological framework rested became more open to doubt.

Thus, the ideological guidelines that were formulated to delimit the fears around political modernisation between the 1989 President Rafsanjani era and the 1998 President Khatami era gradually changed in character. If at first they had served to keep the approach of political reform within the Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine, the increasing doubts about the value of these ideologies made establishment officials more and more tolerant towards alternative ideologies. As shown by the change in the

ideological framework of the move in the IRI from the Pure Islam of Ayatollah Khomeini to a plural Islam and then finally to seeking truth through the political conditions presented by president Khatami, the ideological basis of political reform grew more and more open. In this sense, the arena of political debate, which prior to 1997 had been virtually reduced to the Ayatollah Khomeini Line, kept on growing. By 1998 the ideology with which the Islamic state sought to structure its political reform had been reduced to the Republican principles, of which the survival of the regime, that of the reformers and the quality of their pluralistic insight, that of the democratic road, alone really stood upright.

3.2. Definition of Politics and Political Modernity

As has been shown in the preceding section, state officials, establishment elite, and Pan-Islamist intellectuals were encouraged within the arena of the ideological debates to offer personal definitions of both politics and political modernity. If the guidelines offered both an indication of the dilemmas of political reform and a delimitation of the arena for debate, the quest for definitions amounted to an attempt at outlining a possible normative approach to reflect the range of views on politics and political modernisation among reformers. Within the Iranian political culture it was expected that such informal and inherently variable definitions of political modernisation would be transformed into a single, formal and normative, which would clarify what exactly was to be the object of politics in the process of modernisation.

Some senior officials put forward this approach in a general way in the first few years. In 1998 President Khatami warned that Parliament should not become a platform for factional politics. Parliament, according to President Khatami, was not a forum in which to debate factional politics: rather, it was to be used for making decisions on current modernisation affairs. Thus, political reforms would have to be debated as a part of government programmes. What meant by this was outlined in Tajzadeh's article that:

Political reform should have its own independent function and organisation in each branch of government.⁴⁸

The idea was that as a part of the project of modernisation, political reform should find its natural structure and well-defined place, and aims. Initially, the IRI elite, state officials and Pan-Islamist intellectuals adopted the traditional approach of searching for modernisation in the canons of 'Democratic Islam' and applying them to Iran's concrete context (Soroush, 1994). Politically, this approach may have been suggested out of caution in some cases. Political reform was thereby presented as a concrete example of linking the general project of modernity with the concrete practice of Islamic Republic. According to Mehdi Moslem, conservative reaction to reformer Aqajari's statements was that reformers should not disregard all the assertions of the Ayatollah Khomeini that 'I select government with the

48 - Ibid. p. 18

support of people,' or 'the guideline is the will of people'. By using Ayatollah Khomeini's quote to justify project of modernisation, one could say that the reformers at the time were in their deepest crisis. If this approach was the only one followed by the reform movement, political reform would merely become another elaboration of Political Islam. At the same time, however, such elaboration amounted to little more than verbal reconstruction. The new political reformers' approach had to be of a rather more democratic nature. This would call for new and uncharted forms of political process.

There were clear indications of the uncertainties about the future course in the IRI that were to be adopted towards political modernity. From the very start, leading officials pointed out that it was not their intention to urge political establishment to arrive at such a normative definition of politics any time soon. Already after the 1997 election, President Khatami made this amply clear. Using a familiar rhetorical technique through which to suggest there were room for debates. Hussein Bashiriyeh pointed out that "one could distinguish a broad and a narrow view of politics" (Bashiriyeh, 2002. p.44). Because of the unclear state of political reform, therefore, it was best to adhere to a broad view for the time being. This would foster mutual discussion, although such a discussion would have to be based on a synthesis of twenty years of post-revolution Islamic politics under the IRI. In *Reforms against Reform* Tajzadeh discussed the difficulties of arriving at a clear definition for political reform in early 1999, and remarked that:

We do not need to be hasty in our quest for a perfect definition in this starting period.⁴⁹

The result of this view was that by 1999, when some university students organised a forum on the subject of the meanings of political reform and modernity, opinions remained as far apart as ever. Although the majority of the participants agreed that Islam and Islamic Republic remained important features of political reform, several did not mention it at all, and some, such as Hashem Aghajari, even explicitly rejected any role for *vilayet-i faqih* and denied this to be a need (Moslem, 2002. p.19). According to Ali-Reza Alavitar,

The rule of iron wall is no longer an issue of interest in our society and politics. It is now quite clear that the political modernisation could not be an issue or a concept extracted from the past. In recent years, in fact, the essence of politics has changed and now it is the time for Iranian politics to open space for democracy and pluralism.⁵⁰

As was shown above, by 1999 even such a senior official as Mohammad Ali Abtahi made clear that the clerical institution would no longer determine what is right or wrong in the social, political and economic affairs. Nonetheless Pan-Islamist of all kinds would have to convince their opponents through dialogue and arguments. Obviously the political leadership of the IRI

49 - Tajzadeh, M. 2003. '*Bazdarandegye fa-al*' (Active Prevention), in collective articles '*Eslahat darbarabare eslahat*' (Reforms against Reforms), p. 19

50 - Alavitar, A. 2003. '*Molahezate rahbordi baraye ayandeh*' (Leading consideration for future), in collective articles '*Eslahat darbarabare eslahat*' (Reforms against Reforms), pp. 48-9

had decided that it was necessary to tolerate a certain measure of inherent variability among Pan-Islamist intellectuals on political issues.

What, then, were the different definitions that were offered for political modernity? Of politics and political modernity, the two were discussed together, since politics was generally viewed as the policy aim or object of political modernisation. Regularly more than one definition was put forward in the same debates. Conversely, over time, different articles by the same Pan-Islamist intellectuals inevitably repeated earlier views. Importantly, the vast majorities of the definitions assumed a Republican model, and at the same time a vaguely democratic Political Islam background. This implication is important because it affects the way in which the definitions ought to be viewed. Three general remarks may therefore be made.

First of all, since democratic Political Islam was implicitly the normative approach against which definitions were to be measured, the vast majority of the definitions referred to aspects of Islamic ideology. Even those intellectuals, many of whom were known to be less enthusiastic about Political Islam, included the normative approach of Islamic ideology as well (Ashtiyani, M. in Abdi, A. 2002, p.190). An accurate appraisal of those definitions was therefore more dependent on the way things were stated and on what was omitted than on what exactly was being said. Moderates defining politics in democratic Islamic ways, for instance, could be said to do so consciously and purposefully. Often they would try to mix an element of democratic reasoning into their discourse. The less enthusiastic moderate left would only use the necessary Islamic quotes and present their case to public opinion (Ghaninejad, M. in Abdi, A. 2002, p.156).

Secondly, based on available documents, the definitions that pragmatists offered on political modernity were based on two assumptions. The first was that, initially at least, each group proposed its definition in the hope that it would be favoured above all others. That is to say, each group hoped to see its definition promoted to the status of official line. In this sense the debates among reformers involved both a common and consensual search for acceptable formulations and a more principled and less confrontational presentation of one's preferences. On the one hand, therefore, those definitions presented in 'Reforms Against Reforms' offers a fair impression of the range of views about politics and political modernisation that existed among political reformers in Second Khordad Front associations at the time. On the other hand, uncertainty probably steered most reformers in the direction of a consensual definition. That is to say, part of the definitions may have been presented because reformers felt this was what one wanted to hear. The second assumption was that the proposed definitions had to fit into the conceptual framework discussed in the President Khatami's political views. Different kinds of definitions implied different aspects but perhaps also different levels of abstraction or concreteness. Unlike the general principles of pluralism, the definition that reformers produced was not to be generally democratic, but rather democratic in the particular case of Islamic Iran. Seemingly different definitions could therefore

be linked to each other, because their perceived essence was the same. Conversely, similar definitions could be traced to entirely different essences.

Thirdly, the democratic context in which these definitions were coined served to impress upon the reformers that differences between their views about political modernity were often prompted more by a degree in emphasis on the different parts of similar assumptions than by radical breaks. This often made discussions rather confusing and sometimes rather implicit: it was sometimes just as important to know what was missing as what was being said (Shabestari, M. M. in Edalat-nejad, S. 2003).

On the basis of these remarks, the discourses or different definitions of politics and political modernity may be divided into one of four general dimensions: ideological, developmental, organisational, and philosophical. Each of these dimensions forms an arena for the inherently variable views of politics and political modernity, which allows for a temporal development and range of different views.

The ideological dimension concerns the explicit views from which the definitions are to be taken. These could usually be linked to some kind of faith in the special insight of reformers into the social reality of Iran. In the first years of the second half of the 1990s, a large number of references to Abdul Karim Soroush, Mohammad Mojtabeh Shabestari and Mohsen Kadivar (much less to Ayatollah Khomeini) showed that as the political situations ordered at the time, Pan-Islamist intellectual reformers were trying to let themselves to be guided by modern discourse of Islamic view in their quest for a definition of politics. In this approach, they were continuing the trend of the late 1980s of enlarging the arena of debate from Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine to the vaster discourse of religiously democratic government and Republicanism. Typical quotations such as politics is 'the management of conflict between social groups', and 'politics is the expression of social cohesion' (ascribed to Mohammad Khatami) are used until far into the late 1990s. Among Pan-Islamist semi-establishment intellectual reformers, such as Abbas Abdi and Hajjarian, this phrase is used quite often. For them it is even the theoretical basis for their Political Islam contention, that politics determines social management more than the other way round. As Soroush noted,

Our dignitaries often stressed that the religious law holds higher place compare to those human-made law that deals with social affairs and governing management.⁵¹

Against this assertion, first Tajzadeh briefly and then Alavi-Taba'ar more fully pointed out that this kind of idea had not intended its words as a fundamental theoretical proposition, but were uttered after Islamic revolution had defeated a despotic monarchy when it was found necessary to address the critical situation in post-revolution Iran. Other quotes, they held, could similarly be ascribed to the circumstances under which they had been formulated. At stake here was the value that should be ascribed to these quotations. Should they be seen as the insightful remarks of reformers uncovering the essence of reality, as Hajjarian or Abdi seemed to believe, or

51 - Soroush, A. K. 1998. '*Modara va modireyat*' (Moderation and Management), p. 319.

should they be ascribed to a mere one-time reaction to a concrete and fleeting moment, as Tajzadeh or Alavi-Taba'ar maintained? Whatever the merits of Alavi-Taba'ar's case, towards the end of the 1990s quotes from the Ayatollah Khomeini version of Political Islam and Islamic Republicanism were used far less as an infallible proof for some proposition. In a way, everything suddenly appeared much more complicated than the safe formulations of officials' views had suggested.

Moreover, President Khatami's version of Political Islam was not the only ideological source that was proposed. Almost from the very start, other theories were also proposed as possible bases for valuable approaches. Although fewer in number, these ideas suggested that even the larger arena of Khatami's version of Political Islam was not appropriated enough for a healthy political modernisation. In the beginning, such remarks were safely confined to daily publications although it was clear to most informed intellectual reformers that political modernisation had precisely been started because the Islamic system in the traditional way of Political Islam was obviously not perfect enough. Gradually, as more ideas started to appear publicly in the second half of the 1990s, these other views became more widely known as well.

From the beginning, many intellectual reformers of both Pan-Islamist and secular groups called for more attention to modern political theories and practices. Voicing a steady revival of the modern political theories among establishment intellectual reformers since the 1990s, Ali-Reza Alavi-Taba'ar made a call for modern political theory in these years. He emphasised that:

Since the Mashruteh Revolution a popular view in the Iranian political thought expressed there is no problem of historical links between democracy and Islam or a cultural conflict between these two way of life.⁵²

Indirectly, this was a criticism of the all-Islamisation of political theories in the 1980s. It also looked critically at Ayatollah Khomeini's intolerance towards Iran's secular nationalist and Western theories, which could only be reviewed critically. In the past, this had been interpreted to mean that they only contained Western liberal, anti-Islamic and anti-revolutionary ideas. Now that calls arose to reform the old Pan-Islamist system, it was time to take a fresh look at both past and modern political theories and philosophy established in early twentieth-century Iran.

Some years earlier, Hojjatol-Islam Mohsen Kadivar also drew attention to the value of democracy and Iran's modern political tradition, often suggesting a slightly more balanced approach to Islamic political system and Republicanism. Implicitly, he echoed Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic governing system complaining that:

Our dignitaries often quoted the Islamic philosophers but they did not pay attention to those democratic aspects that these philosophies contained.⁵³

On the other hand, Kadivar also attacked those who claimed that the Western political theories have all the necessary information about the kind a

52 - Alavitaba'ar, A. R. 1997. '*eydeolozhy va eqtedargaraye*' (Ideology and Totalitarianism) in Soroush '*modara va moderiyat*' (Moderation and Management), p. 575, Tehran-Iran

53- Kadivar, M. 1998. '*hokomat-i vela-ye*' (The Governance of Jurisprudence), Tehran-Iran

political system that Iran needed. Instead of falling into one or the other extreme, Kadivar proposed that intellectuals should acknowledge both the merits and the drawbacks of any political philosophies. But, primarily the merits of Islamic political ideas had to be squarely acknowledged. It was important for instance to realise that the theories associated with political modernity were not antagonist to official political line. He emphasises, although there is an ongoing discussion about the merit of political modernity in Iran, but the core of our attention is about administrative and management modernisation. No one can deny the fact that this has been the central theme of Iranian thinkers in recent decades. While some of the blame for the relative anonymity of democratic political ideas had to go to the liberal religiously nationalists of the past, in Kadivar's view, the main responsibility had to be borne by the reformer intellectuals, who espoused rejection of those progressive aspects of the traditional political system. Kadivar, therefore, called upon his Pan-Islamist colleagues to change their attitudes and to include the traditional values to their democratic political thought for political modernity.

Finally, there was a group of political reformers who suggested that the ideas of Western secular democracy could be used as the basis for political modernisation (Darkeshideh, 1997). At first, this was mostly done implicitly by publishing some of the main ideas of political philosophy used in the Western political systems (Ahmadi, 1998, p.330). By the mid-1990s, however, some intellectuals started to define politics according to these Western ideas. To Babak Ahmadi, for instance, the political philosophy as put forward by Martin Heidegger and School of Frankfurt was clearly a very appealing way of conducting political modernisation. Around the same time, Khashayar Dayhimi quoted the philosophy of existentialist to define politics as the 'authoritative distribution of values' (Dayhimi, 2002). There were others as well, but the groups that explicitly proposed to define politics on the basis purely Western political philosophy always remained relatively small. Usually, elements of Western theories were fitted into a larger nationalist-moderate ideas, such as was the case with economic and management theories. In this latter category, a nationalist-moderate definition of politics - and not a secular Western one - was adhered to.

A second dimension was formed by the developmental definitions of politics and modernisation. These definitions referred to the objective laws of history as the single most important aspect of politics (Darkeshideh, 1997, pp.3-4). If the first dimension stressed the unique insight, this second dimension sought to coin its definition as a reflection of the essence of social reality. After Babak Ahmadi's 1994 'Modernity and Critical Thought', Asghar Mahdizadeh in 1997 formulated politics (based on Antonio Gramsci's political philosophy) as 'the science of the developmental laws of the political relations of society' (Ahmadi, 1994, p.124). A few months before this, some secular intellectuals, such as Fariborze Reisdana, stressed that they had often tried to protect democracy through their theories. The modernists, he added, had to delve deeper to lay bare the very essence of political development (Reisdana, 1997, pp.72-76). As Hoshank Mahroyan made clear in 1997, however,

among secular reformers too there was an arena of different views within a single dimension (Mahrouyan, 1997, pp.6-11).

There are two reasons why the political reform and the modernisation of political system after the parliamentary election of the 1996 started. First reason is an Islamic revolution in 1979, and the second is an Islamic state that should hold responsibility towards the requirements of a newly established Republican political system.⁵⁴

Indeed, in 'Reforms Against Reforms' both Ali-Reza Alavi-Taba'ar and Mostafa Tajzadeh had mentioned political modernisation as a way to avoid a future revolt or revolution from taking place. Likewise, other intellectuals such as Mohammed-Jafar Puyandeh and Nasser Zar'afshan had drawn attention to the political reform as part of the developmental approach to modernisation (Puyandeh, M.J. 1997, pp.29-30 & Zarafshan, N. 1997, pp. 77-80). Importantly, Mohammad Mokhtari had left out a third focus of developmental theories, that of the gradual democratisation of Iranian politics, which was advocated by secular reformist as well.

A third dimension was formed by definitions that associated politics with the possession and exercise of power to order human relations in society (Ahmadi, 1998, p.330). This dimension formed the practical aspect. It was made up of a complex addition of slightly different views on the main purpose of politics. These views basically portrayed politics as the way the state governs society. Some reformers simply stated that politics is the wielding of power. Others explicitly equated politics with commanding or ruling. Typically, more traditional definitions of politics were also put forward, such as that of 'managing society and harmonising or regulating social relations' (Azimi, 1997, pp.45-78). A closely related approach towards politics was the one that stressed the importance of and even equated politics to such matters as 'legislation and policy-making' (Hajjarian, 1997, pp.141-191). Moreover, as was to be expected in a political culture stressing a 'moral obligation', more structurally oriented views of politics were presented as well (Rezaie, 1997, pp.7-45). If the preceding views of politics all assumed a top-down process in politics, some intellectual reformers called for a view of politics that was more interactive. Both Hoshang Amir-Ahmadi (1997, pp.79-105) and Ali-Reza Tayeb (1997, pp. 267-306) proposed views of politics that would take the activities of interest groups and civil society as well as participation into account.

A possible fourth dimension to the definition of politics is philosophical, which was perhaps the most fundamental aspect in that it tested the limits of Iranian political culture. On the whole, the vast majority of the definitions of politics implicitly or explicitly emphasised pluralistic approach: they either stressed on kind of social democracy or the liberal democracy. They also implied a religiously moral essentialist to politics. They were based on a certain use of morality. A good example is offered by the definitions of politics concerning moral essence. A majority of the intellectual reformers seemed to adhere to some kind of moral political essence, which was of

54 - Alavitabar, A.R. 2003. 'Molahezat rahbordi baraye ayandeh' (Leading consideration for Future) in collective articles 'Eslahat darbarabare eslahat' (Reforms against Reforms), pp.49, 50, published by Tarh-e No, Tehran-Iran.

crucial importance to the progressive assumptions behind politics at the time (Edalatnezhad, 2003, pp.48-64). These kinds of statements pointed out that the difference in moral essence constituted a fundamental difference between their politics with a secular foundation of politics (Soroush, 2003, pp.15-34). Similarly, reformer Ayatollah Hussein-Ali Montazeri pointed out that one of the main shortcomings of secular political modernisation was that it lacked an awareness of the moral essence of reality (Mantazeri, 2003, pp. 35-47). According to some reformers, the distinction between the notions which explain the form of the Muslim nation and the ones which explain the form of their government also lay in the deeper essential nature of the former and the more apparent, organisational nature of the latter. Here moral essence, therefore, constituted an important aspect of most definitions of politics. Against this background, one or two Iranian political reformers proffered dissenting views. Intellectual reformers Mohammad Mokhtari and Ali-Ashraf Darvishyan denied that there was such a thing as moral essence. Instead, they adopted an approach toward politics that was less ethical and more formal and institutional (Mokhtari, M. & Darvishyan, A. A. 1997, pp. 6-20).

During the late 1990s a large number of different definitions of politics and of modernisation were put forward. As has been shown above, often definitions were closely linked to the particular interests of particular elite. Numerically, the definitions associating politics with the dimension of plural religious power, plural management, and the ordering of social relations constituted by far the biggest single group of definitions. This may be said to be the traditional definition of politics in contemporary Iranian political culture. After all, presumably even under President Rafsanjani in late eighties one would have encountered roughly the same. Next to those new approaches, the definitions associated with developmental theories stand much closer to the left-wing Political Islam normative approach. In numbers, this definition stands second. Both approaches towards politics clearly form the main dimensional arenas for the way politics is viewed and debated in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In the following chapters, the approaches towards politics that stressed the religion and power dimensions will be highlighted through discussions of some of the main debates and ideas on these topics during the late 1990s. In other words, together with other chapters the role of reformer elite in the selection of political theories will be explored. They, in this respect, form the detailed elaboration of the definitions of politics and political modernity, as they have been outlined in the preceding passages.

3.3. Dilemma of Modernity and Critical Thought

Within the strict political rules of the Islamic state, the discussions centring on definitions for politics and political modernity, and therefore, the process of reforms were conducted within a relatively tolerant atmosphere. In a sense, within the parameters as set out by the dilemma of the ideological mode of Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine, these definitions presented many different views on politics and debates for political

modernisation. Importantly, in public discussions no attempt was made by the Supreme Leader and the Guardian Council to impose a single and generally obeyed approach to theoretical definitions or to political debates. In the IRI political establishment on the other hand there was a different climate. As shown in the following overview of some of the main official positions on political reform, the political leadership of the IRI establishment did put forward a fairly uniform approach for politics and political modernity. It was clear that if fairly free discussions were tolerated by both elite circles and political reformers, lower ranking members of establishment, who were at that time not yet allowed to express their views, would present different views than Khatami's version of political reforms had.

During the 1990s, a small number of intellectual reformers published dozens of books, daily newspapers, and magazines debating a large number of ideas on political modernity. They presented a wide range of ideas from the old version of liberal political philosophy to the latest version of post-modernity, which obviously formed a basis for later reformers' discussion. Although the establishment reformers went through many fundamental issues, their subject remained virtually unaltered into the late 1990s. As the immediate issues they proposed was debate on 'a law-based society', freedom for media, on subjects such as 'an end to absolute power of Supreme Leader', support for the 'separation of state and religion or their institutions', and finally 'empowering the President and the institutions of Republic'. Typically, those later discussions of the 1990s (which had mobilisation objectives) were all compiled by establishment reformers upon whom Islamic moderation line had had a relative influence. There were a number of reasons for this. First of all, advocating secularist ideas in the IRI was mostly a forbidden affair. Expression of these ideas was restricted to the elite and rarely reached other establishment strata in a sufficient proportion. Secondly, these ideas were first of their kind for many decades to appear, and soon other Pan-Islamist intellectuals deemed the secular contents to be deficient in one way or another. Lastly in practical terms, among those reformers involved in compiling the later ideas, it became clear that there was also many other differences in opinions.

For all their limited perception and shortcomings, during the late 1990s and beyond, these intellectuals laid down the theoretical groundwork for Iran's political and social modernisation. Among others secularist Babak Ahmadi's works on 'Modernity and Critical Thought' in 1994 and 'The Dilemma of Modernity' in 1998 were the first to be published. The introduction in these two books presented a theoretical structure on modernity, which in general terms reappeared in all later debates on the topics by reforms, even though some elements were expanded or stressed at the expense of political condition. In the following, a short overview of these two books, which had great influence among intellectual reformers, will be presented.

The introduction to these two books both discuss the terms 'politics' and 'political modernisation'. Reflecting the early stages of the debates on the reform process, Babak Ahmadi pointed out that one could notice that the

meanings often used for terms such as politics and modernisation is extremely broad. Still, as a theoretical work on modernity, it was posited that the most important element of modern politics was its democratic essence, which emphasises free relations between all social groups, which in turn enables, the society to begin to grasp the essence of modernity (Ahmadi, 1998, pp. 3-34). As for political modernity, the main content of these books present a comprehensive model and include the study of the theory and method experimented in the past and present European nation-state, together with discussion of the theory and the practice to control the political power while engaging in politics (Ibid. pp.3-34). The first parts of both books predictably deal with the dilemmas and crises of tradition and modernity. In 'Modernity and Critical Thought', Ahmadi describes the orthodox liberal views that modernity emerged everywhere where groups of people with a similar socio-economic base developed a political awareness (Ahmadi, 1994, pp.8-12). Therefore, unlike Khatami's notion of political modernisation, this idea stresses the primacy of the social group forces over the political relations and the rule of law that should determine those relations between state and society (Ibid. pp.12-18). Importantly as well, although it does state explicitly that at present the main conflict was between state and society, it emphasises the conflict between the democratic forces of the society as a whole and the forces of absolutism. Babak Ahmadi uses extensive space to make clear that during the period of modernisation the social interests would wither away, group interests would be transformed into individual interests, and group conflict would on the whole and inevitably grow more relaxed (Ibid. pp.42-48). Adopting the hermeneutist framework, Babak Ahmadi assured his readers that, once democratisation began, the social conflicts would increasingly become mild among the groups and would be solved through political means, political participation and legal institutions. The traditional political models, as a result, were to become something of the past (Ibid. p.42).

In 'The Dilemma of Modernity', the effects of modernity on political life dominated by liberal theories of the nation-state and socio-political philosophy are outlined (Ahmadi, 1994, pp.267-275). Ahmadi quotes Rosa Luxemburg 'The Accumulation of Capital', and reminds his readers that the state in modern discipline is the organisation of class interests and its essence is determined by the kind of interest pursued (Ibid. p.269). In the same vein, he emphasise implicitly, based on the liberal theories combined with the notion of pluralism, the nation-state is above the social classes because, under modernity, it is assumed that it represents the interest of the entire community and serves the majority's interests (Ibid. p.269). The functions of the nation-state are divided into internal and external, of which the implementation of the policies of the ruling groups was the most important. Historically, because the institution of civil society (as opposed to the institution of the state) is empowered, state total domination on political life is therefore gradually whither away. Under lawful social relations and increased importance of individualism, moreover, with the realisation of humane rationalism a democratic state shall appear (Ahmadi, 1994, p.18).

To this end, it is necessary to gradually improve democratic institutions in the political, economic, and social spheres. As Babak Ahmadi points out, liberal democracy, or people's democracy, does not merely encompass the institutional rationalism as its basic aspect. In this respect, in its essence, democracy comes with modernisation and cannot be separated from the ration and political knowledge of the people.

After the functions of the nation-state, Babak Ahmadi deals with other dilemmas of modernity: the theories of modern governing institution and political changes (Ibid. pp.7-49). In rapid succession the different theories of the modern government, which also has to encompass the legislative and judicial organs, are described and differentiated according to their political or their social functions (Ibid. p.24). According to liberal political theory, he mentions for example, there ought to be a division of powers, but the opposition among political forces is described at some length (Ibid. p.25). Moreover, since the nature of the modern governing institutions is already such that it serves the interests of the people, they can adopt the more efficient system of service, deliberation and execution (Ibid. p.25). The latter system is the post-modern forms of politics, which according to Babak Ahmadi, modern democracies at present are witnessing a great increase in the power of civil society at the expense of the institution of the nation-state (Ibid. p.42).

The post-modern political philosophy and criticism of the modern political system are described in Babak Ahmadi's next work: *Memories of Darkness* on three philosophers of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research (Ahmadi, 1997). He explores that they proudly in a critical fashion proclaimed that the post-modernists were the first to point out the crisis of modern democracy and stressed the end of direct political rule. In overall the book emphasises that under the political systems of modernity, there were many political groupings, which conversely conducted corrupt deals to protect their group interests and when a strong position was necessary, for instance during the second world-war against German Nazism, they often possessed a weak form of political alliance (Ibid. p.84). Both under capitalism and socialism, the strong and disciplined institutions of the state deny the rights of group interests (Ibid. p.90). This book offers a description of Walter Benjamin and *Freedom Thought*; Max Horkheimer and *Critical Theory*, and, Theodore W. Adorno *Negative Dialectic* political philosophy and ends up with a short discussion of modernism and post-modernism.

With the critics of modernity, these books on political modernisation make a short foray into Marxism ideology (Ibid. p.133). Although the authors of the books acknowledge that political reform may constitute a form of peaceful progress, it is always carried out with a view to preserve the power of a particular group and will not change the basic essence of the political system. Therefore, group conflict remains a contradiction that no modern society can solve without a deep transformation. In the remainder of these books the histories of the twenty-century modern societies are briefly described.

In 'The Dilemma of Modernity', the theory of nationalism, and the criticism of rational-based Euro-centrism, is discussed (Ahmadi, 1994, pp.263-303). Referring to Native Americans and their radical understanding and practice of democracy, Babak Ahmadi defines the condition of 'nationality' as having stable communities of people historically based upon a common language, a common area, a common economic life, and a common understanding, all of which find expression in the common cultural characteristics of nationalities. Most of the rest of this section of Ahmadi's book covers eighteenth-century European philosophers who contributed to the discussion of nationality and rationalism. Significantly, the main European policies towards other nationalities, as defined by Hegel in 'Reason in the History', are mentioned (Ibid. p.282). In Babak Ahmadi's view nationalities possess self-determination, which means they can pursue separatist goals within global society. However, it is stressed that unlike the practice in eighteenth-century Western countries, the majority and the minorities should co-operate with one another while also possessing local autonomy. A colonial kind of relation as exists between the Westerners and minority nationalities in the North America, it is maintained, does not exist in the European situation (Ibid. p.287). In the Middle-Eastern countries all minority groups had suffered under colonial imperialism and now lived in tension with one another. In Babak Ahmadi's view, the principle of the equality of the nationalities is thus affirmed. This equality is based on the assumption that each nation possesses its own essence, that each nationality undergoes exploitation as a result of the system of imperialism, and that each minority should develop itself under a rational political system (Ibid. p.303).

The last section of his book covers political democracy within the Western modernity, in which Ahmadi first describes a classic model of political philosophy that sets the social relations between the forces of political groups (Ibid. p.304). A following section is devoted to dilemmas of this model of modernity, which is based on representation and hegemonic power. Finally an analysis of social democracy based on the rule of law and the politics of equal opportunity are given as an alternative to neo-liberalism, which threatens classical democracy with its hegemonic aspirations (Ibid. pp.309-317).

Probably, 'The Dilemma of Modernity' was in many respects the book that President Khatami must have wished was written by Pan-Islamist intellectuals, because although it was not the first, it was the foremost elaboration of Western democratic ideology within a surprisingly critical portrayal of its political philosophy. Many of its topics, such as the theories on conflict amongst social groups, rationalism, and the ultimate belief in social justice are ideological in tone and are not found in Islamic Republicanism. Conversely, some of the central concerns of a political reform were not to be found in this book: democratisation of administrative system, organisation of civil society, and management of interest groups. As a first in its genre, the work represented an important first step for officials and intellectual reformers alike in their quest for an advanced but critical model on modernity for political reforms. Its cautious but radical approach was probably intended

as a means to introduce political modernity into the elite world in Iran. More exciting publications could always come later. The only clear stance that could be discovered in this work was the downplaying of religion and its carefully phrased plea for more secularism.

In the years that followed these publications, Pan-Islamist intellectuals and other reformers felt an increasing need for new ideological materials. Although the books that were presented during the 1990s differed on some points from Babak Ahmadi's, their basic framework remained identical. In the coming literature, all the subjects of Babak Ahmadi's 'Dilemma of Modernity' are repeated sometimes even on structure and hermeneutic reading of the texts. In Emad'aldeen Baghi's 'Power and Clerics' for instance, the state is similarly described as the system of group interest and Western definition is used as the starting point for a rational democratic government (Baghi, 2001, p.11). These similarities were no coincidence, but derived from the thought-practice of Pan-Islamist intellectual reformers. The only difference between Babak Ahmadi's and Baghi's work lies in the relative religiously orientation of the latter, which probably allowed his readers for more political intervention in a near future. In other words, their tone is distinctly religious.

Still, for all the overall similarities among intellectual reformers, it was felt that they had to improve and elaborate their vision and theories on politics and modernity. Moreover, as time went by, new topics on politics appeared which needed more theoretical and practical knowledge. First, a more dynamic portrayal of an institutional reform was felt to be necessary. Typically, within the Pan-Islamist mind-set the theories were formulated by changing the emphasis. In Ali-Reza Alavi-Taba'ar words in 'Observation for Future Leading', for instance, an institutional modernisation is precisely a structural reform, because the emergence and development of theories undergoes with the restrictions in political institution (Alavitabar, 2003, pp.39-64). In other words, it underlies the control of a definite Islamic system. Likewise, in Mostafa Tajzadeh's 'Active Resistance', the aim of political reform is to 'discover and change the defects of political relations in society' (Tajzadeh, 2003, pp.9-22). Both approaches, furthermore, stress the democratic tasks of politics in the sphere of state and society. In Ali-Reza Alavi-Taba'ar's view, the heritage of President Khatami as a determining factor of political modernisation would survive even if he places them above the interests of society. Secondly, political reform intended to enrich the Islamic state in its attempts at changing and adapting itself to the needs of socio-economic modernisation, was made to encompass less ideological but more structural subjects. Both the approaches of Ali-Reza Alavi-Taba'ar and Seyyed Mostafa Tajzadeh contain discussion of institutional management. Reflecting the limited understanding of this new approach, however, both views limit themselves to outlining broad principles and aims. Thirdly, it is remarkable that many books published after the beginning of the reform process include much discussion of pluralistic political opinion and the need to raise the quality of public awareness. This addition reflected the perceived need to balance the public's knowledge of moderate Islam with some form of democratic and plural awareness. It also presented a further attempt at

introducing a political reform that was acceptable to a larger audience than just the officials of the IRI introduce. Finally, a number of traditional subjects from Iranian patriotism and radical Political Islam were infused into debates, reflecting a general and rarely mentioned trend: several debates contained issues on strategies and tactics much in the vein of the writings of the Ali Shariati pre-Revolutionary period (Alinejad, 1999). This trend combined Shariati's idea of politics being about both thought and practice with more traditional concepts of identifying the social essence of a given situation and possessing the faith-based insight to 'grasp the final truth' (Shariati, 1979 ed. Alger, H. & 1986, ed. Rajaei, F. & 1974, Trans. Marjani, F. 1981).

On the whole, however, the late 1990s debates on politics and political modernity remained remarkably close to the moderate Pan-Islamist ideology of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In other words, it was precisely through these debates that the Islamic State sought to disseminate its normative approach on concepts of politics and political reform among its younger officials. Furthermore, through their very pragmatism, these debates strongly suggested that even if the political leadership was intended to enlarge the arena for political modernity, pro-secularism and radical left were definitely not yet to be among those included in the process. A measure of tolerance in these debates was only found among the select circles of those Pan-Islamist establishment intellectuals, as was indicated previously in 'Reforms against Reform'. These circles possessed both the social connections and the state confidence to engage in political affairs. As will become clear in the next section, political reform was but one of more reforms on politics that was debated in these years.

4. The Political Reform and the other Political Changes

During the late 1990s, political reform was by no means the only officially sanctioned policy that engaged the IRI elite, Pan-Islamist intellectual reformers, members of establishment and the officials in the debates and actions for changes of politics. A number of other issues, in this respect, vied with political reform for modern institution-building and reform of the leadership within the constitution. But, underlying the superficial similarities in their theoretical debates, it laid important differences that caused to spark the intense discussions of the late 1990s. These differences mainly referred to absolute or moderate rule of jurisprudence, and to the official reading of religion to which the later reform on leadership and technological modernisation were soon added.

In the first part of this chapter the reasons for the start of political reform in the IRI have been outlined. In early 1990s, the pragmatist elite had begun to realise that the IRI lacked the kind of knowledge necessary to deal with the challenges of Western economic expansion and technological development. According to Abbas Abdi (2000, pp.38-41), both the ideology and leadership reforms were rather the consequence of post-cold war Western economic expansion that became an important component for modernisation of Iran. Thus the ideological and leadership reforms were

about nothing else than the changes in thought-practice of Islamic politics, Republicanism and reform of an absolutist rule of jurisprudence, changes for modern institution-building, and finally the reform of post-revolutionary model of leadership. Until the emergence of reform movement in the late 1990s, these issues had formed the canonical subject of debates on politics in the IRI.

Soon after the final initial of process of political reform in 1997 was begun, the debates about the official reading of religion and the place of jurisprudence started. As independent process, the debates on these subjects presented a more fundamental challenge in the political establishment of the IRI. As shown below, by the early 1990s certain establishment reformist elite found that those engaging in these debates wanted an unconditioned democratic change and were too infatuated with Western models. Although most of the establishment reformers did not deny that Iran needed to learn from modern democratic theories to govern its institutions, they wanted to introduce only those theories with practical elements that would improve the efficiency of the Islamic state in its socio-economy development and policies of managerial sectors.

The following section presents these different reform processes alongside each other. It is noticeable that in practice the distinction between the paths was often vague. For instance, while Pan-Islamist elite reformers took critical positions on an official reading of religion and the governance of jurisprudence, their Unitarianist approach and consensual considerations of Islamic religion served to blur rather than accentuate differences. For all these different views, reform on politics remained a part of the overall challenge of the IRI establishment. This issue however only formed one element in an increasingly open and complex arena of political changes (Ganji, 1999, pp.16-17-18). In the following, each of these reform subjects on politics will be briefly discussed. In this way, a better insight about the precise position that reform on politics occupied within the overall political modernisation during the late 1990s will be gained.

4.1. The ideological Practice in Islamic Politics and Political Modernity

During Ayatollah Khomeini's years in power, the ideological practice in Islamic politics had formed one of the main instruments of domination of the IRI's elite political culture to educate the imagined community in the values of its official ideology (Shabestari, 2002). As has been remarked before, a serious attempt on behalf of the Iranian revolution was made to introduce the ideological thought-practice into popular culture. In the words of Hajjarian, this behavioural method was considered as an ideal instrument to create an ideologised Iranian society (Shariati, 1986 ed. Rajaei, F.). This attempt fit admirably into the divine pretensions of Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine, and the emphasis on the Iranian Islamic community as the vanguard of the worldwide Islamic revolution (Zubaida, 1997, p.106). According to the logic of their thought-practice, if Iranian society was to be

ideologised in Islamic terms, it needed to overcome the social fragmentation deplored by 1979 revolution and instil knowledge of the Islamic ideology into the Iranian culture (Irfani, 1983, pp.116-148). At least until Ayatollah Khomeini's death, and to many committed Pan-Islamist even beyond those years, the ideological practice constituted a vital instrument through which the IRI elite could educate and raise the Islamic quality of the Iranian culture. As was expected, Ayatollah Khomeini emphasised that without Islamic ideology, Iranians would never achieve the required consciousness to actually manage their revolutionary affairs (Khomeini, 1994, p.140).

Already during the early 1980s however the approach to ideological thought-practice had been a source of constant conflicts. These by and large persisted into the 1990s. First of all, there was an endemic lack of good understanding of the meaning of Islamic ideology. Oddly enough, even clergymen had suffered from their bad performance in the 1980s. Moreover, even by the ideological standards of the Ayatollah Khomeini Line, the IRI's elite working on political thought-practice was considered to be ideologically weak. Their works lacked persistence and other theoretical arguments. To a large extent, this latter defect was caused by Ayatollah Khomeini himself who so monopolised ideologies in post-revolutionary era that no one dared to present slightly different views. At the same time, however, as has been remarked, since even knowledge of an ideologised Islam among scholars was far from perfect, it can be imagined what the quality of ideological thought-practice was by and large.

For all its defects, however, the Ayatollah Khomeini Line virtually constituted the only method of ideological thought-practice during the 1980s period. In this respect, it suited Ayatollah Khomeini's attempts at direct clerical rule admirably and soon became the chosen approach of those committed to his line. But the poor ideological performance and practical record served to discredit this method in the late 1980s. By the early 1990s, intellectual Pan-Islamist had been demoralised and the limited conservatives' credit was largely spent. President Khatami's famous moderation was, in this respect, directed against the ideological sway that the post-revolution ideological thought-practice held over Iranian society. In the power struggle between Guardian Council defending the rule of jurisprudence and Parliament associated with reformers, Pan-Islamist intellectuals had massively sided with the Khatami's moderation. The moderate political leadership naturally sought to get rid of the more intransigent conservatives and attempt to reform their old method, so that new moderate method would better serve the challenging conditions created by socio-economic and political stagnation (Moslem, 2002, p.52).

With the more moderate approach on politics and technocratic to economy and the downplaying of social conflict, the importance of ideological thought-practice was also clearly downgraded. After Ayatollah Khomeini's death, Pan-Islamist intellectuals laid low as they regrouped during the period between 1989 and 1994. This is not to say that the ideological thought-practice based on Ayatollah Khomeini Line disappeared from the scene altogether. Already in 1992, after the moderates' victory in parliamentary

elections, conservative Ayatollah Khamenei expressed the need for an ideologised approach in parliament that would form an Islamic safeguard for the enrichment of the IRI's political institution (Ibid. p.181). Moreover, other conservative members of Islamic institution were strongly supportive of the old ideological thought-practice that basically remained so even after it was relatively reformed in the late 1990s (Ganji, 1999, p.19).

The problem, however, was what the ideological thought-practice would actually encompass. On the whole, the particular materials written in these years and in this regard could tell us little more than merely what was stated in the overall elements of official ideology. A good example of this is 'The Reviver Truth of Religion', in Khatami's (1999) work. In this book he modernise what was described already in the collective speeches of Ayatollah Khomeini, with the promising title of moderation in words and messages of Imam Khomeini (1994). Even more than Ayatollah Khomeini's collective writing of '*Sahefehe Nour*', this work represents the very Islamic method of ideological thought-practice use in the IRI. The book is divided into several sections; each one dealing with one of the basic components of the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine as was described under the Unitarianism, religiously essentialism, and politico-moral dualism. Only one component of this book reflects a change from the early Ayatollah Khomeini doctrine to a moderate ideological thought-practice (Khatami, 1999, pp.168-175). Since the old version of ideological thought-practice in post-revolutionary Islamic politics concerned itself with the rights of community rather than the rights of individual, thus, the new message was that community is more important than formal IRI's leaderships. Khatami presents moderate ideological thought-practice as a daily ethic to which one should adhere. In this section Khatami points out that the bitter religious history has proven that results gained in any thought or success gained from any practice are always due to Muslims ideological adherence to and the application of moderation (Ibid. pp.208-210). The new version of ideological thought-practice is presented as an ascending philosophy of insight, which culminates in Islamic action. The section on the characteristics of Islamic philosophy illustrate the application of divine unity and divine justice in the new version of ideological thought-practice in a way that implicitly rejects orthodox approaches (Ibid. pp.32-54), and seems to come from moderate interpretation that is engaged and experienced (Ibid. pp.195-207). The Khatami's view, therefore, should be read as a form of moderate ideological thought-practice for re-Islamisation of Iranian society with a moderate approach.

From 1997, however, the new ideological thought-practice through a moderate interpretation started once more. True to its political nature, it comprised both theoretical and practical aspects. Although IRI elite had relegated ideological debates to the background of factional concerns and had more or less outlawed any attempts for public gathering, the following publications opened the way to a new wave of debates. This new wave not only resulted in, for instance, the campaign against such views as those held by religiously nationalist groups, but also in a much less publicised successful attempt to restart indoctrination amongst new generation of reformers.

Already in 1997 several university associations had no inclination to speak of any particular ideological thought-practice (Dad, 2001, p.172). In the years that followed, different groups of intellectuals saw the creation of affiliated associations, which pledged to apply moderation to their particular public actions. Universities, which made special contributions to the cause of moderate ideological thought-practice, received a special attention much like the municipalities in period of political reform's initiation.

Together with this new approach, theories were compiled to put some new ideas in what has to become a moderate ideological thought-practice. In 1998, for instance, hundreds of books were published that offered an overview of moderate Islamic ideology (Mirsepassi, 2002 & Hajjarian, 2001). To put it differently, it was a new reading of Islamic religion something like the post-revolutionary Political Islam for the new public audience (Shabestari, 2004). In Shabestari's 'A Humane Reading of Religion' there are eleven sections containing a clear-cut criticism of the official reading of religion. This criticism is based on hermeneutic reading of religious scriptures, reading of texts of tradition in the modern age, the public morality under modernity, people's sovereignty and religion, people's sovereignty and Islam, human rights and Islam, morality and freedom, and responding to the request for a true Islamic moral. Mainly, he attempts to introduce two ideas: that the contemporary reading of religion must be humanist and that state officials should put the interest of the society and of religion before their own individual interests. The intellectuals should therefore be disciplined in religiously humanist and religiously democratic ways while abiding the social reality. The book also contains a lengthy overview on the politico-religious currents before revolution, which explores their various interpretations of Islam and politics. In short, the new ideological thought-practice is presented as the method necessary to implement a moderate indoctrination to intellectual life.

In 1999, former President Rafsanjani, who consistently supported pragmatist pleas to this end, made a call for even more moderation in ideological thought-practice. The main reformist faction Islamic Iran Participation Front (IIPF), however, did not favour paying any attention to this new ideological indoctrination. However, as revealed in articles written by some Pan-Islamist intellectuals engaging in political reforms, the moderate ideological thought-practice had profoundly altered the social realities (Hashem Pesam, 2000, p.63).

The late 1990s this new approach to ideological thought-practice by both moderates and the pragmatist reformers clearly pushed back most Pan-Islamist conservative groups in their policies of repression. On the other hand, since they had propagated a democratic approach to Islamic politics during these years, their publication become consequently more popular among the public. Ideologically, the reformers continued to adhere to President Khatami's views of a moderate interpretation of Islamic government and the rule of law, allowing no room for any additional elements from a Western secular ideological model.

4.2. The Islamic Republicanism and Political Modernity

In 1998 a series of articles appeared in the reformer press that debated the relative merits of an Islamic Republic over the traditional concept of an Islamic Caliphate. The first critical article to engage in this seemingly loose debate was written by Mohsen Kadivar, who emphasised putting the Iranian government in its right Republican concept. Mohsen Kadivar replied that the 'Republic' had up to then been the Ayatollah Khomeini's favoured term for the post-revolutionary Islamic government:

For political groups an "Islamic Republic" is an unknown concept and in a way some people may mistakenly interpret as a secular Republican model... in mid 1978 Imam Khomeini outlined his governing model as an "Islamic Republic", but he did not mention what was the philosophy for this ideological change.⁵⁵

Although this debate at least received support from moderate factions, most establishment officials later on pushed this subject aside. Since the term 'Islamic Republic' had been increasingly used after the 1979 revolution to refer to modern political system, the use of 'Islamic Caliphate' could be considered as an attempt by some conservative circles at marking their ideological domination against an eventual secularism process.

With the 1979 revolution, when new ideology replaced the components of the monarchy's pseudo-modernism, a Republic in its narrow definition was the one that seemed most to resemble to a post-revolutionary regime in general, and to Iran's new political life in particular. The basic components of this Republic, according to Mohsen Kadivar, should consist of the modern institutions, which are in accordance with the objective conditions of an underdeveloped but revolutionised country (Kadivar, 1998, p.56). In other words, the Republican model was the governing system of an Islamic leadership to reach Islamic version of modernism for sustainable development in a religious way.

As such, during the first few post-revolutionary years, the institution of the new Republic was the province of some brightest individuals. If the Islamic institution was meant as an intellectual structure of the new regime, the institution of Republic was its colourful officials. In theory, the two were but different institution of a single ideological structure. In practice, more often than not, they were pitted against each other. There was considerably less esteem for Islamic institute than for the more refined Republic. Moreover, due to the endemic lack of basic knowledge and experience about Republican institution during the early 1980s, officials relied almost entirely on the vision of Western Republicanism (Armene, 1999, pp.222-243 & 285-292). The vast organisational efforts undertaken by officials, however, made them extremely wary of clerical institution. But from the early 1980s onwards with the beginning of war the two parallel governing institutions rapidly parted company. At the same years when the Islamisation campaign begun and the purge of religiously liberal groups has successfully ended, the two institutions were engaged in the same politics of liquidization of seculars and the left organisations, which were among the hardest hit (Omid, 1994). By

55 - Kadivar, M., 1999, p. 171

1982, Pan-Islamist radicals involved in institution of state formed the ideological mainstay of regime's forces and had taken over most of the governing positions.

With the rise of Mohammad Khatami to power, the function of Islamic Republic underwent a subtle, but important shift (Kadivar, 1988, pp.177-187). If political reform was to cater to the needs of the Islamic State, Republic was to be the institutional basis for theoretical reform within the regime as a whole. As was the case for political reform, to many different Pan-Islamist intellectuals this could mean many different things. For example, the members of *Daftar-e Tah-kim-e Vahdat* (The Office of Strengthening of Unity) and *Madjmaye Ruha-nyeune Mobarez* (The Association of Combatant Clergy), who led the Second Khordad Front leadership, gradually came to pursue the ideas that strongly favoured real inter-state group pluralism (ACC, 1997, No.12, p.9). This view was supported by new insights into the philosophical writings on modernity and important work on the Republicanism model. Alongside these reformist voices, there were more pragmatists Pan-Islamist, who asked for a gradual increase in democratisation through public involvement in politics and the application of the rule of law, and even radical members of Parliament, who wrote sympathetically about the importance of an Iranian modern 'Republic' (Ibid. pp.72-73).

Naturally, by start of political reform in the late 1990s, many Pan-Islamist intellectuals wondered what the exact theoretical difference between the two models would be (Kadivar, 1998, pp.168-170). As is clear from remarks on both sides, for a while there were fears on the part of moderate reformers engaging in political reform that Republicanism alone would bypass some of the positions of their religiosity. Predictably, the result of these fears sparked a flurry of debates about the relative claims of the two models. According to an overview of these debates, there were at least two questions to be dealt with: first, is the model of Republicanism part of Islamic political thought, and secondly, does Islamic Republic encompass such political philosophies as modern politics, universal human rights, and social justice?

In the first case, whether the model of Republic could be interpreted as a form of Islamic political thought, there were two general answers. The first posited that Islamic Republic was indeed an Islamic political system in the narrow sense, because it was a kind of Islamic political model in content according to Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine (Kadivar, 1998). Moreover, an Islamic Republic model in the broad sense would encompass the entire democratic political philosophy, and therefore, it could deliver modern politics, universal human rights and social justice. This view includes that Islamic Republic precisely formed the political model that covered the revolutionary objectives of Iran's development in the post-revolutionary period (Kadeevan, 2000). Another answer disagreed completely with the first. Admittedly, Islamic Republic dealt with the period of transition from monarchy to pure Islamic government, but according to this view, it not only could encompass modern politics, but also elements of religiously principles,

that include law and justice. Thus, it could not be simply equated with a narrow definition of traditional Islamic political thought.

In the second case, whether Islamic political philosophy encompassed the modern politics, universal human rights, and social justice, there were no fewer than three different views. The first claimed Republic encompassed such models as political system, society, and law, because the object of its policy and political organisation lay in the same domain, because it based itself on actual social and political life, and finally, because it developed itself through the actual modernisation movement. In this view, modern political system, society, and law enriched the Islamic Republic as long as they were guided by Islamic principles and leadership. The second view denied that Republic encompassed the Islamic principles, because all theories on politics and society were based on secular models. In other words, although doubtless there might be areas in which the different systems overlapped each model in principle could form a self-contained whole. Nonetheless as President Khatami mentioned 'the question of which model encompasses others does not exist' (Khatami, 1999, pp.92-113). Finally, there was a view that held that the two preceding views were wrong, because they erroneously thought Republicanism could in one way or another replace the pillars of an Islamic traditional government with any of its political models or social systems (Gabel, 2000, pp.91-94). In reality, however, the relation of Republicanism with the political models and social systems was one of guiding and being guided, was abstract and concrete, one of general and particular.

In spite of the theoretical disquisition about the relative relations of Islamic political thought-practice and the Republic, Pan-Islamists from all political groups could easily debate the same problem. In practice, these groups shared a commitment to finding ways in which the Islamic state could best adapt itself to the new requirements of country's political, social, and economic changes. At times, therefore, it was difficult to tell the exact characteristics of the two political models. But, overall, while political reformers devoted attention to secular sources and techniques from the very start, IRI's elite, out of their regime's dual nature looked more towards the mixed and modern institutions for their inspiration. Again, here the difference was relative, but not unimportant.

4.3. The Islamic Institution-Building and Political Modernity

During the first few years of the 1990s, President Rafsanjani continued his institutional reforms (*Tamarkoz-zodaye*) which had started in 1988 as a part of state policy under the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). In a sense his policy could be interpreted as a deepening of socio-economic reform. Already in the late 1980s he had expressly mentioned that structural adjustment programme is a condition for international normalisation. Obtaining a majority after parliamentary election in 1992, as yet unofficial, pragmatist reformers in Parliament had from the very beginning proclaimed institutional reform to be one of their main concerns. But, some influential

officials of both conservatives and the traditional left soon began to envisage that the institutional reform, although a comprehensive policy, in such a method is distinct from their interpretation of Islamic governing system. This most notably gave rise to a new institutional debate, which will be discussed in the next chapters. Next to the theoretical efforts, officials and Pan-Islamist intellectuals alike worked hard to layout policies of institutional reform having a structural basis of their own ideological practices.

Nematzadeh, a former minister of industries and a proponent of economic liberalisation, made the following comments in 1996:

The state would like to pursue the modern economic management and that would necessitate the reform within the institution of government.⁵⁶

In other words, institutional reform was to perform much the same task, as some years later had been assigned to political reform. But, it was to stand much closer to Islamic State managerial policies and than political reformers. This was immediately clear from the members of the cabinet, which was abundantly filled to convince the high-ranking officials. Although in his criticism, Nematzadeh managed to mention that:

Our approach to institutional modernisation, specially the state organised managerial model, have been overlooked in the past.⁵⁷

Therefore, the official backing and the contents of the conservatives' criticism made clear the institutional reform at the time was generally rejected. But in coming years, institutional reform put itself much less problematically under the leadership of President Khatami and in service of political reform for the sake of mere political efficiency.

Almost directly after the 1997 presidential election, the official policies of the reformers on institutional modernisation began to appear. They naturally carried policies that sought to establish a new institutional management and reform as a form of liberalisation approach. Prominent officials published several articles on the new approach. Although some works continued to present institutional reform merely as a more practical approach to economic reform, there were also others, which pointedly denied it was a part of political modernisation. For instance, in 'Reforms against Reforms' on institutional reform, Mostafa Tajzadeh puts it as following:

Political reform should deal with the phenomena that the state consists of, such as ideology, government, political system, political structure, and the structure of political power. This reform should encompass partly the institutional reform as well, that includes the structure of administration, the function of government, and the power structure in the government. We can see there are differences between political reform and institutional reform. The institutional reform does not merely want to change the functions of administration, but more importantly wants to express how the function of the government is. Here the main focus of attention is to change the activities in the state management that would in its turn changes the functions of government.⁵⁸

Mostafa Tajzadeh views institutional reform as a distinctive part of political reform while being a moderate managerial method as well. In line

56 - See monthly paper Payam-e Emruz, No. 14 September/October 1996, p. 23

57 - Ibid.

58 - Tajzadeh, M. 2001. *Eslahat darbarabare eslahat* ('Reforms against Reforms'), 99. 9-22, first edition, published in Iran

with President Khatami's ideas, he furthermore stressed that institutional reform was to be the most important aspect of political reform. He emphasises institutional reform by positing it not as a mere administrative reform, while not divorcing it from the present practice of political reformers. One then could apply that there was a kind of approach to institutional reform that is viewed as both sub-activity of political reform and considered as a moderate managerial model. In political terms, this view was clearly held by those who were more in favour of democratic politics or political participation. As Alavi-Taba'ar puts it,

Institutional reform that was conducted by the Islamic State meant a new approach to democratisation of state bureaucracy from within. Those, who wanted to divorce institutional reform from political reform, had less faith in the merits of democratic politics.⁵⁹

As Tajzadeh hints,

An institutional reform could be lanced while in actual practice Iran was ready for a decentralisation of its administration.⁶⁰

Nonetheless, in the late 1990s, institutional reform progressively secured the support of important parts of the moderate elite within the Iranian political establishment. This was mainly because those in charge of management of the state thought they had found the solutions for institutional stagnation. Due to the overly supportive stance of the public and to the rather successful attempts by political reformers in general at keeping institutional reform isolated from clerical institution, by the end of the 1997 the conservative members of establishment had largely turned their back on decentralisation and administrative reform.

4.4. The Islamic Leadership Reform and Political Modernity

From about 1998, another reform process emerged out of the reform on politics in the governing system that targeted the nature of Iran's dual political leadership - an Islamic rule under the institution of jurisprudence and an official Islamic Republic, two centres of political power, a Supreme Leader and a President. In political terms, the institution of leadership was mainly represented by the absolutist authoritarian conservatives who historically combined the traditional Islamic high-ranks with a charismatic penchant (Bashieh, H. 2002, ed. Abdi, A. p.47). As Soroush Irfani points out,

The special position and influence the Ulama enjoy in the Shi'ia community giving them power not only to control religious expression but also to influence the affairs of the State. The power and influence, which the clergy wields in religious, political, and social matters in Iran far surpasses that of their counterparts in Sunni societies. This is borne out by the fact that during the past hundred years in Iran the clergy has played an important role in the major popular movements against despotism and colonialism. While at one stage in these movements this role has been constructive, at other stages it has become regressive and has positively contributed to the destruction and neutralisation of these movements.⁶¹

59 - Ibid. pp. 28-30

60 - Ibid. pp. 9-22

61 - Irfani, S. 1983. 'Revolutionary Islam in Iran', pp. 3-4, London.

This statement clarifies conservative political leadership during the post-revolution life in Iran, which by oscillating and changing views on major issues, particularly on sovereignty and legitimacy, offered differing, and at times, conflicting explanations on how an Islamic state should govern. That is why the moderate factions, by disregarding all the assertion of conservatives on an absolute form of leadership, quote Ayatollah Khomeini's statement that 'I assign government with the support of people' or 'the guideline is the will of people'. They argue that:

The supremacy of leadership urgently needs the guidance of people, especially on macro policy. The people's guidance is as efficient as their active participation in process of decision-making.⁶²

In the same vein conservatives quote Ayatollah Khomeini's doctrine of *vilayet-i faqih* as the true model of Islamic state (Ibid. pp.49-53). Mehdi Moslem expresses this dualism in the context of 'Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran' and points out:

Pivotal to Iranian factional politics has been 'doctrinarism'. Each faction claims its own interpretation of a religiously sanctioned Islamic state is an authentic and genuine model. Support for one reading or another of the Islamic state serves many purposes: it distinguished one faction from another, provides an opportunity to discredit other factions' views while justifying one's own often abstract and ideological positions on issues, and it clouds the real political motives of each faction.⁶³

More than just an institutional reform, this dualism stressed the central importance of a constitutional reform, while conservative Ayatollah Mahdavi-Kani emphasised,

These are the same words that were uttered in the early days of revolution by liberals...who wanted completely exclude *vilayet-i faqih* from the constitution.⁶⁴

In the Iranian constitution the leader derives his wisdom from,

The crystallisation of political ideal in a nation that has both ideology and religion to organise and to move them forwards in the process of ideological evolution, towards the final goal... in creating a political foundation on the basis of ideological interpretation which in itself is the basis of organisation of a society, the pious men shall bear the responsibility of government and management of such a country. Legislation, which is indicative of standards of social management, shall follow on the path of Koran and tradition of the prophet. Therefore, a serious and minute-supervisory by just pious and committed Islamic scholars (just faqih) is necessary and indispensable. Whereas the objective of government is to foster the growth of Man in such way that he progresses towards the establishment of the Divine Rule...The Constitution, in view of this direction, shall lay the ground for such participation by all members of society in all stages of political and fateful decision-making so that in the course of evolution of Man, every individual would be involved in growth, development and leadership.⁶⁵

In his statement Ayatollah Mahdavi-Kani launched a barely veiled attack against both political and institutional reforms. Theoretically, however, his revamped absolute rule of leadership lacked coherence and appeal. In this

62 - Bashyer-reyeh, H. 2002. '*Carisma, sonnat va qanon manabeh mashroiyyat si-ya-sye*' (Charisma, Tradition and the Source of law for Political Legitimacy) in '*Moamaye hakemiyat ghanon dar iran*' (The Enigma of the Rule of Law in Iran), edited by Abdi, A. p. 54, Tarh-e No, Tehran-Iran

63 - Moslem, M. 2002. 'Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran', pp. 3-4.

64 - Ibid. p. 248

65 - Ibid. pp. 277-278

respect, a fairly widely advocated position of moderate groups stands for different and modern leadership views under the flag of an Islamic Republic. Most officials simply shared a preference for the reform and above all a moderate leadership within a framework of Political Islam and the Islamic Republic.

A more radical approach towards the leadership reform was conveyed in Saeed Hajjarian's 'From the Sacred Witness to the Profane Witness' on the secularisation of leadership in the sphere of politics (Hajjarian, 2001). Hajjarian's emphasises:

The Islamic Republic leadership should assume pluralism and encourage for social management and responsibilities... Such a political system must be thoroughly versed in the democratic leadership and universal human rights.⁶⁶

All of this is necessary, he mentions, because:

It must be acknowledged that the leadership must dispose not only the religious knowledge but also the knowledge of modern sciences and management.⁶⁷

He makes clear that:

This point must be acknowledged at the outset because: based on Islamic traditional knowledge one can presents just a highly summarised form of juridical knowledge. It therefore cannot be posited in place of the governing knowledge that concerns the state and society.⁶⁸

In Hajjarian's view, political reform presented a new practical requirement for Islamic Republic that urges the leadership to be both 'Islamic' and 'democratic'. His book offers at times both a kind of respect and intense dislike of the 'Western-imposed modernisation', which is coupled to a strong sense of Iranian patriotism. The tone remains somehow distinctly authoritarian. A people participation model is required to form a real part of the policy making process. In short, in his view the modern Republic in Iran is to be viewed as a land of progress, which is managed by a combination of Islamic insight and modernised management.

From the above discussion, it is clear that reform of leadership formed a rival political model to both political and institutional reforms. On one side, it constituted an adaptation of certain political doctrine to the requirements of socio-economic reform. On the other, through its ideological stance, it succeeded in adopting the newest managerial views from a Republicanism perspective without raising doubt on some of the more conservative factions. Through its moderate management approach and traditional Islamic philosophy, it presented a religiously appealing idea of Republican radicalism (Ibid. p.224).

4.5. The Arena of Reforms on Politics in the IRI

In the preceding pages an overview has been given on the different approaches and theories of reforms about the politics of the IRI. This part will be used to paint a general picture of the arena of these reforms and the place

66 - Ibid. pp. 242-262

67 - Ibid. pp. 242-243

68 - Ibid. p. 252

political modernity occupied in it. Originally, prior to the 1990s, an Islamic version of Republic and an Islamic leadership office parallel to it had formed the entire institution of politics in the IRI. By the late 1990s, however, the moderate groups had grown convinced that these models and their backup theories were not capable of providing the practical instruments and knowledge that the officials needed to manage their Islamic state. However, true to post-revolutionary conditions, the two institutions and their political approaches were assigned different roles within the IRI framework. Republic was to concern itself with modernising the Iranian political institution and the revived Office of Leadership was to keep the Islamic Revolution of Iran in move, and once together they had to build the new Iranian Islamic nation-state.

Political reform in 1997 was introduced as a comprehensive transitional stage to all-embracing modernity. As shown in previous sections, although the attempt was a top-down reform process, this did not prevent the public from debating the merit of an alternative political system. Soon the IRI leadership discovered that apart from yielding the socio-economic reform, which was badly needed, political reform also contained dangerous elements of modern ethics, such as democracy, political participation, and universal human rights. The leadership, therefore, quickly marginalized the radical reformers and mobilised the masses for an upgraded Islamic government, and officially favoured the moderate's instance. But, reformer President Khatami had officially stated that for too long political reform was neglected, and the decision to proceed with reform could not now be reversed (Khatami, 1999, p.80). Finally, even some of the most radical members of establishment came round to agreeing that the political system needed a more practical component to its ideological perfectionism credentials (Armine, 1999). With the reformers' defeat in the parliamentary election of May 2004 and the presidential election of May 2005, the state-organised reform began to disappear, and an authoritarian leadership, which was based on a mixture of Islamic-Iranian nationalism, reassumed the control of the political system. In spite of the theoretical divisions on an alternative political system among the different reformer groups, it is important to point to the unifying function of Islamic ideology within the political elite as a whole. Underlying their divisions, most moderate Pan-Islamist elite, officials, and intellectuals engaging in the political reforms shares Islamic ideology and set of assumptions that served to place them within their unifying religiously imagined community.

Conclusion

In this chapter the ideologies behind the political reform and reform on politics has been demonstrated. This has been done by offering answers to three key questions on the ideology of political reform, the reason why political reform was started, how the establishment and others conceived it, and what its position was among the other reforms that dealt with politics. These were all intimately connected with the specific way in which Iranian

Islamic culture deals with ideological matters. In the following, the answers to each of the three reasons will be summed up.

First of all, there are four basic reasons why political reform was started. First, there was a wide dissatisfaction with the Political Islam ideology and Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine. Secondly, it had been discovered that conservative interpretation of Political Islam was far from flawless. Thirdly, almost two decades of experiencing international isolation and internal economic crisis suggested that the time for following the conservative version of Islamic socio-economic policies had passed. Four, the technological revolution of the secular countries and increasing demand for modern technology in Iran's dependent industries forced the Iranian leadership to reconsider its relations with advanced countries. Still, these four factors alone were not sufficient to explain the impetus behind political reform. A key element behind this was formed by the change in leadership after Ayatollah Khomeini's death in 1989. Political reform emerged from the competing economic policy packages of former President Rafsanjani, and was subsequently fitted into the new Islamic state structure, through which the moderate President Khatami sought to implement his political reform plans.

Secondly, it was unclear at first what exactly political reform was going to be. Therefore, moderates responsible for the running process of political reform formulated successive ideological guidelines through which they rather unsuccessfully tried to keep working in political modernity within increasingly large arenas of politics and ideological requirements. The initial requirement of the rule of law soon gave way to the larger arena of decentralisation, which by 1998 had become an arena for democratisation. Within these guidelines, establishment officials and reformer intellectuals throughout the late 1990s debated the different views they espoused of politics and political modernity. During this period, there did not emerge a clear-cut and generally accepted approach to and definition for politics or political modernity. Instead, a profusion of definitions coexisted, which may be divided into five dimensions: ideologies, state structure and functions, civil society domains, power and rationalisation, and international relations. In the literature on political reform, however, a far more charismatic version of modernity as an elaboration of ideology was set forth. Although there were some differences in the contents and models between the different approaches, they all adhered to the contents of Mohammad Khatami's early moderation, which contained notions on the definition of politics and political modernity in general, the theories of reconstruction of religious ideas, of the modern nation state, of good governance, of political parties, of universal human rights, of rationalism, and of international relations. Later proposals placed more stress on the dynamic aspects of a religiously democratic government, on cultural modernisation, and on the moderation and management.

Thirdly, within the overall arena of reform on politics, the political reform was the reform of state institutions, of the relatively moderate elite, and Pan-Islamist intellectuals of the establishment. As such, together with the more radical Pan-Islamist of the Republic, a political group was formed

within the Iranian establishment that favoured more direct involvement of the people and an introduction of pluralism in the political life of the country. In the middle of the political events, those supporting institutional reform joined the radical and moderate reformers professing a third-way road of Republicanism, with a touch of critical thought on the governance of jurisprudence. At the other end of the political arena, the adherents of governance of jurisprudence joined forces with the hard-liners of the pro-Ayatollah Khomeini Line in subscribing to the authoritarian approach of the Supreme Leader. The discussions that surrounded the emergence, definition, and place of political reforms revealed that there was a shared ideological arena forming the basis of a democratic plural Iranian community. Initially, political reform precisely represented an attempt at reviving and strengthening the moderate ideology of the Islamic State. Although at the early stages the precise contents of political reform was rather vague, Islamic political culture served as a pre-determined arena that worked against political reform as soon as the political leadership discovered the radical implications of the reforms. By the end of the 1990s, other reforms issues, such as institutional reform and reform within the institution of leadership that fitted better with the cultural preferences of the moderate were favoured above concepts of political modernity.

CHAPTER THREE

The IRI Organisations and Modernity in Contemporary Iran

In the IRI, the political organisations have mainly been managed by those organs and associations that are by and large affiliated to the IRI's establishment. Broadly speaking, since early nineties onwards, most socio-political organisations and associations involved in reform process were spread over two main categories. The first was an alliance of eighteen groups called the *djebheye dovome khordad* (Second Khordad Front), which mainly consisted of the *madjmae rouhanyeune mobarez* (Association of Combatant Clergy),¹ the *modjahedyne enqelabe islami* (Crusaders of the Islamic Revolution), the *djebheye mosharekate irane islami* (Islamic Iran Participation Front), and partly the *kargozarane sazandegye* (Servers of Constructions). The second category was a coalition of several student groups which consisted of various associations of universities, mainly the *daftare tah-kime vahdat* (Office of Strengthening of Unity) and the *andjomane islami* (Islamic Associations), which both fell directly or indirectly under the Ministry of Education and Information. These two categories of organisations, in their political grouping, as Ali-Reza Alavi-Tabaar emphasises, are the organisations of three different political forces. The first force is SKF, which consists of a combination of Pan-Islamist moderates of new-left, traditional-left and pragmatists. The second force consists of moderate religious nationalists. Finally, the third are Pan-Islamist moderate Republicans, which together are defined as the "*eslah-talaban va mardom-salariye-garayan*" (Reformers and Democrats) (Alavitabar, 2003, p.43). Although both categories attempted to form socio-political facilities for the IRI reforms, there is an important difference in their status and functions.

The SKF associations are the joint creation of a number of important political personalities linked to President Khatami, such as Abdullah Nuri, Mostafa Tajzadeh, and Saeed Hajjarian, to name a few. The SKF leadership also contributed to construction of newly established bodies in the IRI, and together from 1979 onwards they were promoted to the ministerial level (Moslem, 2002, p.143 & Dad, 2001, pp.234-5)). In this category, for instance, the ACC leadership in the post-revolutionary arena led the construction of newly established bodies in the IRI (*Nahad*), such as the organisation of the *dja-had sazandegye* (Holly-Action for Reconstruction), the *sepah pasdaran enqelab islami* (Islamic Republic Guard Corps), and the *sazmane ershade islami* (Organisation of Islamic Propaganda), to name a

1 - Until the presidential election of 1997, the Society of Combatant Clergy (SCC) was considered to be the most powerful politico-religious organisation in the Islamic Republic. Member of the SCC, which originally included conservatives, moderate and radicals, have occupied the most prominent positions in the post-revolutionary regime. But, just before the third Parliamentary in April 1988, a group of SCC members announced the creation of the Association of Combatant Clergy (ACC). In a letter to Ayatollah Khomeini asking his permission to form the party, members of the new association maintained that they had struggled with other respected clergymen in the SCC to reach a consensus but no avail. Consequently, in order to serve the Imam and the people better, they had decided to create another organisation. Quoted from Mehdi Moslem, 'Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran', 2002.

few. However, as a clerical political organisation, it wasn't formed until a decade later in 1988 in Tehran.² In short, SKF formed an integral part of the IRI establishment, and its leadership ranked along with the ACC the personnel of Iran's ministries, municipalities, and parliament. Moreover, both top leaders President Khatami and Mehdi Karrubi, both men with outstanding, complex behaviour and abilities, were placed far above any organisational level (Alavitabar, 2003, p.42). When in 1997 Mohammad Khatami became President, this could not but reflect the crucial place of both ACC and SKF members in the IRI establishment. However, since 1997 the main function of SKF associations was to organise and support 'the rule of law' through the processes of political reform and modernisation.

The next organisation in this category is the CIR, which has quite a similar curriculum, and since 1994, has been publishing *Asre-ma*, a daily newspaper, and recently *Asre-no*, through which its leadership such as Behzad Nabavi, Mohsen Armin, and Mohammad Salamati, represent the political standpoints of the left-leaning Pan-Islamists in post-revolutionary Iran. Finally, the last in this first category are some factions of the SC, which consists of an alliance of the rightist Pan-Islamist pragmatists and some new-left groups under former president Rafsanjani. While the election of Mohammad Khatami impaired the domination of the conservatives, however, it illustrated also the success of those pro-reform members of this alliance.

The second category is the university associations, where the debates on political reforms and political culture were started in the mid-1990s to present a different picture. In organisational terms, one main participatory association of both Pan-Islamists and secular intellectuals formed this category, which often directly or indirectly worked under the OSU, and after May 1997 worked in accordance with the *daftare reyasat djom-howre* (Office of President of Republic), led by vice president of cultural affairs, Hojjatol-Islam Mohammad Ali Abtahi. The OSU is a Pan-Islamist left organisation that has been ideologically in line with ACC and CIR. Its organisational background and political history has roots dating back to May 1980, a time that marked the beginning of the purges in Iranian universities, as was the case of the *andjomane islamie daneshdjoyan* (Islamic Associations of Students). They contributed actively to the combat against the spread of Marxist views among university students, professors and staff in the IRI (Moslem, 2002). From the outset, some of these associations held more progressive views, while others, such as the *djhade daneshgahye* (Universities Jihad), held far more reactionary conservative views. The former associations were unified under the name of OSU, while others gradually diverged and formed the more religiously oriented UdJ. The conflicts between these two groups of associations eventually reflect the same conflicts among officials in the IRI. Since 1991 OSU leaders, such as Abraham Asgharzadeh, Ali Mohammad Ghorbani and Hashem Aqajari, have advanced through their weekly newspaper *Mobin* a series of debates on

2 - See '*madj-mo-eh baya-neye-haye rohanye-une mobareze tehran*' (collective of the Manifestos of the Association of tehran Combatant Clergy), april 1987until 1989, published in Iran

political reforms and political culture by propagating modernity and have supported intellectuals such as Abdul-Karim Soroush's stance among university students.

Soroush, who led Iran's Cultural Revolution in 1980 after the overthrow of the shah, has long been on the fringes of the system. For years he was considered a dissident. He was removed from his post as a professor at Tehran University and often denied permission to leave Iran in order to give lectures in the United States and Europe. Over the last six months he has been rehabilitated to some extent. He is now allowed to give public lectures, albeit at the risk of violent disruption by the hard-line Ansar-e Hezbollah, and to travel abroad. But Soroush's new liberation is made possible only through President Khatami's indirect support for Soroush, which is never discussed publicly. For the clerical establishment, Soroush's ideas are a serious threat to their legitimacy, to say nothing of their very existence. His direct challenge provides an example for the youth to act likewise.³

Among these associations only their top officials figured in the political stage and with personalities. Their atmosphere was naturally much less religious than the associations of the SKF. Unlike the latter, and with the exception of one or two events, these university associations initially concentrated more on the mobilisation and debate of political reforms and modernity than on actual political events in the IRI establishment.

In the coming pages the organisational aspects of political reforms in the IRI will be outlined, and, discussed against the background of the elite' approach on political culture as presented above. In the first part, some of the personal aspects of organisations for political reforms will be dealt with. First, the informal aspects of Iranian political culture will be explored through an introduction on the career of SKF leaderships and their political experiences, such as Hojjatol-Islam Abdullah Nouri, a well-known and steadfast reformer who was in charge of the government's most important executive body, the Ministry of State in the second half of the 1990s, and who had the potential of becoming a real threat to the conservative Supreme Leader and institution of *vilayet-i faqih* (Moslem, 2002, p.260). In second section, some remarks on the socio-cultural composition of the ACC, SKF, CIR, and OSU will be made. The remainder of this chapter will be concerned with commentary statements on the formal organisation and organisational histories of the two categories that have been mentioned above.

1. Politics and the Informal Grouping in the IRI

Few political careers in the post-revolution arena were more spectacular than that of Hojjatol-Islam Abdullah Nouri during the late 1990s when he was a leading member of the SKF. When he arrived at the head of Ministry of State for the second time in 1997 (he was in charge of the same position for a short period of time in the former president Rafsanjani's cabinet), President Khatami selected him as his first deputy advisor for political affairs. Halfway through the year, his political opinion and position was best appreciated among the Pan-Islamist intellectuals, some elites and

3 - Abdo, G. in 'Days of Rage in Tehran' in journal of Middle East Policy Council, Volume VII, October 1999, Number 1.

official reformers, and university students. Thus, he offered his reforms plans and views for change to the state officials of the Islamic Republic. In June 1998, thirty-one members of parliament, headed by the conservative Mohammad Reza Bahonar, asked for his impeachment, accusing him of three main faults: an inability to maintain social order during the Grand Ayatollah Montazeri incident, causing unrest and destabilising the political situation in the country through his support for Karbaschi as mayor of Tehran, and making unsuitable appointments in the interior ministry (Ibid. p.260). One hundred and thirty-seven members of parliament voted for his removal, while one hundred and seventeen voted against the motion, with eleven abstentions. In late July, his replacement, Hojjatol-Islam Abdulvahed Musavi-Lari, an ACC moderate member, secured a vote of confidence from the Parliament despite conservative reservations (Ibid. pp.260-1). In May 1998 Nouri published a daily newspaper called *Khordad* in which moderates debated and defended political modernisation. In early 1999 a few conservative organisations, such as the Army of Propagation of Virtue and Prohibition of Vice (*setade amr'e be ma'ruf va nah'ye az monkar*), the secret service of the military force, the organisation of State television and radio, and some individuals submitted complaints to a special clerical court accusing his newspaper of supporting Mohsen Kadivar's anti-*vilayet'i-faqih* publications. The complaints also included his support for the reformist National Front organisation, his support for the propagation of the reformist Freedom Movement political opinions, the recognition of the state of Israel, his use of the daily paper to advise the public to resist some principles of Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine, and his calling for normalisation of state diplomatic relations with the United State of America (Nouri, 1999).

Nouri's political opinion is not really remarkable for its religiously moderate contents, but rather for becoming so well-established within the context of a modern political philosophy. Even now, he is not by any standards a traditional clergyman. Hojjatol-Islam Abdullah Nouri has already written several essays, which mostly reject all forms of violence organised by the IRI and its pressure groups, such as *Hezb-Allah* or *Ansar'e Hezb-Allah*, which have advocated Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine in recent years. Besides these articles, in this respect, Nouri developed a political model in this politico-religious transitional period that contained many episodes which must reflect or sympathise with the views of secular intellectuals. Among all these articles there is enough information to disclose the merits of the institutional and informal approaches of the elites towards political reform and its organisation. In the following section I will attempt to show that the formal organisation of the Islamic state, while not unimportant, is not the primary factor in its operation. Informal relations based on ties of ideas and informal groups are often more important for an understanding of the political events that take place. Formal organisation is only really important where it can serve as an institutionalised factor of informal relations. In fact, in the interplay between formal organisation and informal relations, the latter will prevail if necessary.

In this piece, I distinguish two kinds of informal relations: ties of ideas and informal groups/factions. It is therefore perhaps useful first to make a distinction between 'idea' as related to 'informal group' or 'political faction' and 'informal groups and factions' on their own. In contemporary Iran to have ties of ideas is a general form of social relationship, whereas an informal group is a politically motivated relationship. According to Akbar Ganji, most ties of ideas in Iran stem from particularistic relationships that have an objective situational context (Ganji, 1999, pp.29-32). In 'Who Rules Iran: The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic', Wilfried Buchta (2000, pp.6-10) defines informal groups in the IRI as groups based on personal loyalties rather than on institutional or organisational criteria, which undergo formal constraints in direct proportion to the vigour and legitimacy of formal organisations and which strive after the power to eliminate all rivalling informal groups. The difference between having ties of ideas and being part of an informal group is that the latter is a specific form of leader-follower relation, whose sole purpose is to accumulate power.

In Political Islam and particularly in the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine, unity is an important principle and factionalism is in this respect prohibited. Ayatollah Khomeini built his Islamic movement based on 'unity of discourse' (*vahdat'e kalameh*) (Khomeini, 1995, pp.607-616). In Jamileh Kadeevar (2000) 'The Development of Shi'ite Political Discourse in Iran', it is stated clearly that in Shi'ia political history, factionalism and the unity are fundamentally incompatible. On the other hand, it is crystal clear that informal groups or factions do exist within the IRI (Moslem, 2002). Thus, there seems to be a contradiction between the stated prohibition and actual practice. But, is there really such a contradiction? The Islamic term 'divine unity', or Ayatollah Khomeini's well-known term *vahdat-e kalameh*, shows a uniformity that is evident in the factionalist politics practiced in the post-Ayatollah Khomeini arena in the IRI. Within the Islamic conservative approach, the opposition to *vilayet-i faqih* and faction is one between the unity of discourse and a partition (Nouri, & Ganji, 2000, p.73). Moreover, both terms denote not its appearance but its essence. Therefore, it is plausible to say that the existence of groups is not forbidden: only those groups deemed by common consent to harm the unity of the Islamic as a whole are. I propose to call the groups that are accepted to share power within the Islamic State as 'informal groups' and those that are not 'factions'. This interpretation - it is hoped - should facilitate a better understanding of the complex aspects of organisational relations within the IRI and the process of political reforms.

Unfortunately, the socio-cultural data about the background of the political reformers such as Abdullah Nouri and others have been hard to obtain. Although a considerable amount of information may be gleaned from different sources about anyone, but, they are nonetheless too diverse, unreliable, and haphazard to warrant a systematic enquiry. Still, some remarks on the socio-cultural composition of the members of the ACC, SKF, CIR, and OSU may prove to be rewarding. These are the organisations engaging in political reform, about which most is known; therefore, some of

the known socio-cultural attributes of members will additionally be used to form an overall picture of the kind of person who served in these groups during the late 1990s until the May 2004 parliamentary election. In this way, an insight into some of the personal aspects of political reformers may be gained.

2. Formal Organisation and Political Reforms

Although leader-follower relations under a non-uniform leadership formed a crucial component of political reforms organisations, the need to divide functions ensured that complex and formal bureaucratic operations were needed to realise their aims. Almost all organisations which engaged in political reforms during the 1990s formed an integral part of the Islamic regime as a whole (Tajzadeh, 2003, p.35). As such, they formed part of the political establishment. Although, and as has been pointed out in the preceding chapter, university students under the OSU especially advocated a certain measure of organisational independence from the Islamic state. This was more a tolerated deviation from the establishment moderates' normative approach, because their political reform ought to be viewed as a plural instrument in their effort for the modernisation of the political structure. Formally, political reform was a project for a limited socio-economic modernisation and the creation of a new governing institution and civil society. Therefore, it naturally found a place within the political organs of the state apparatus and the organisations of civil society. For instance, between the May 1997 presidential election and the May 2004 parliamentary election, crucial changes took place in most municipalities and city councils under the Ministry of the State on the one hand, while on the other, new mobilisation of the civil society started within the university associations under the OSU (Nouri & Ganji, 2000, pp.84-109 & Dad, 2001, pp.190-231).

In the following sections, the main associations of each category will be described. Although on the whole, the first category was intended as a high-level reforms institution for the state, and the second was primarily intended as an organisation of cultural facilities, such clear-cut distinctions are rarely encountered in Iranian politics. For one thing, the first category seriously tried to mobilise the elite and officials under the SKF organisations, and even attempted for a new international relations (Kadeevar, 2000). Indeed, through its political activities, the SKF engaged in political affairs and the universities associations soon compiled political reformers' theories. Moreover, members of SKF organisations even partly consisted of some university professors. Bearing this in mind, however, during the late 1990s at least the main emphasis of SKF affiliated associations was on polity of political reforms, while the university associations focused on debates over political culture, tradition and modernity.

Based on the overall model of Islamic-national political culture, we may advance a hypothetical question and ask: once political reforms were started, either through the SKF organisations or by university associations, what would be the general principles of formal organisations to which reformers of

all kinds would feel compelled to adhere? To put it rather more technically, what is the active force that has made the formal organisation of political reforms in these categories as they are? This question will be answered provisionally in the introductory sections containing overall organisational structures, and will be disclosed in the wider ranging explanations of the way in which political changes were actually organised. Only in this way can the organisation of political reforms in the IRI be placed within a meaningful arena of political culture in the IRI. It will enable us to ascertain important details such as how political reform was organised as compared for instance to economic reform during former president Rafsanjani's period, how it was nourished, and also how closely it adhered to the IRI normative approach as opposed to the traditional one, an approach which was valid for the political relaxation and counter-cultural expansion in general.

2.1. The First Category of Groups behind Political Reform

Like their ideological guidelines, the organisational approach for the political reformers at the SKF (ACC, CIR, SC, and IIPF) delineated the arena within which they could be formally organised. Administratively, the apparatus of SKF was a unit that equalled a decentralised political party. As a whole, however, its various organisations were intended to comprise more than just the apparatus of the SKF. This organisational category for reforms was meant to stand on top of a pyramid network of political groups, first at the governmental level and subsequently at the lower civil society organisational levels. In practice, not all small groups or associations had their own circle of intellectuals in the leadership of the SKF. Some merely had few courteous associations, while others even lacked such groupings. As a matter of formal organisational principle, it was expected that the local circles and associations would mirror the set-up of the central organisation. Therefore, only the set-up of the central organisation will be described.

The SKF basically consisted of the indispensable state officials' circle, a number of affiliated work organs at municipalities and city councils, an association of lawyers, of writers, of teachers, of artists, publishing houses, provincial circles and associations based on courteous recognition, and a number of ministerial institutes, each involved with different aspects of the political reforms. The state officials' circles encompassed the Office of President on top, the Ministry of State, the Ministry of Culture and Arts, Parliament (the commissions in which 117 reformers MPs were active), and other organs. In 1997, when SKF activities officially started, it expanded and covered several state institutes. In the late 1990s this had risen to thousands of associations, and by 2000 the number was unaccountable. These associations mostly had been established around the early days of the sixth parliamentary election. Typically, a Pan-Islamist reformer who was state elite or the most powerful official within the related institute usually led an association which published magazines and newspapers, contained a publishing office with an editorial board for publications, and provided its

concrete strategy for reform and environment for debate (Motamednejad, 2000, pp.24-5).

Next to these associations, however, there was a network of professional politicians or political organs that were closely linked to and based in the SKF. In this respect, the SKF was the organising unit where all such organs could be expressed.⁴ Eventually, some smaller political organs joined together in an overall front for actions, which formed a mosaics model for similar bodies of the other social organisations (Ibid. pp.13-16). By 2000, many other smaller political groupings had been formed, which were managed and controlled by the network of SKF general organisation (Ibid. pp.13-16). Unfortunately, the detailed information on the activities of SKF associations, organs, circles and networks in most sources concerning politics of the years are limited to ministerial or municipal groups, while other activities or personalities are left unmentioned and some unpublished. The only source to covers all was the Khordad daily newspaper, which was published by Abdullah Nouri for a short period of time. However, besides these internal organs of the SKF and their circles of political elite, there existed a network of civil society associations and their leaderships, which included the associations of each professional group, such as workers, nurses, teachers and engineers.

Being part of a theocratic state, the contribution of the clergies and their associations is not really an affair of civil society or even of the public in Iran (Abdi, 2000, p.235). Although the clergymen are regularly mentioned the only clerical association that was actively involved in the context of political reforms and contributed to this process is the ACC. From the statutes of this association, it is obvious that they offered a way through allowing the establishment to continue exercising informal control over the political affairs, an idea they mentioned at all occasions. In its statutes, in this respect, this clerical group is presented as an organisation involved in political modernisation under the leadership of the IRI elite and President Khatami himself. Among this association's activities, the foremost was their political contribution and organisational coordination of the network of all kind of reformers associations. These activities were taken seriously and were underscored by the presence of the ACC high-ranking clergyman Hojjatol-Islam Karrubi, who was the well-known supporter of the president Mohammad Khatami. Karrubi and other high-ranking members of the ACC are without doubt the prominent leadership of the political reforms. A list of activities organised by several prominent reformers or their associations falling under the SKF was usually included in the news bulletin of the ACC.⁵ This association pointedly included a branch of the pro-National Front movement, while other associations and sympathisers were more cautious to boast affiliation or support with any religious nationalist groups. The

4 - See '*bayanye-ha va mavaze-he dжебhe-ye mosha-rekate irane islami ta konge-re-he aval*' (Manifestos and Positions of the Islamic Iran Participation Front (until the first Convention), 2001, pp. 13-16, published in Iran

5 - See the Association of Combatant Clergy of Tehran's news bulletins Number. 3, 6, 7, 10, 12,13,14,and 20, published in Iran, Tehran, post Box 11365

importance of the SKF organisation and the activities of the ACC became clear through the presence of their high-ranking members such as Mohammad Khatami as president of the Republic and other members in Iranian parliament.

Next to the organisation of ACC, there were a growing number of politico-religious associations affiliated to CIR, SC, and later IIPF, which were linked to SKF. If the ACC associations formed the specialist reformer clerical units, these associations formed its traditional-left, pragmatist and moderate components. Through this model of organisation, Pan-Islamist reformers from different political spectrums could meet each other and also organise exchanges of ideas in a direct way. By 1999, close to a hundred of such associations were already affiliated to SKF. According to Alavi-Tabaar, most of Iran's civil society associations had been founded during 1998 and 1999 and were integrated in to SKF (Alavitabar, 2003, p.39).

The civil society associations, the ACC clerical groups, the CIR and SC associations, IIPF, then, formed the overall setting in which political reforms within the institution of state and the overall IRI establishment was situated. In the following sections this setting will provide the backdrop against which the actual events where these associations were involved will be placed. In other words, the actual events will be presented as the possible variables of the organisational forces of the first category that have been outlined in this section. Once the two settings of the two categories are explained and the events are explored it is hoped that the understanding of the interplay between the two will help to provide an insight into the total organisational set-up of the political reforms.

2.2. The Second Khordad Front (SKF) Associations

It has already been mentioned that, right from the very start after the 1997 election, President Khatami, in his moderation programme for implementing state institutional reforms, included the political reformers organised through the SKF (Ganji, A. & Nouri, A. 2000, pp.110-238). According to Abdullah Nouri, in August 1997, the SKF members first started a concrete re-organisation of municipalities in provinces, districts, towns and villages. Then, they delegated the preparatory organisation to the Minister of State, who was in charge of governmental administrative reforms (Nouri, 1999, p.12). Thus, within a few months from June 1997 onwards, the Office of Home Affairs organised the decentralisation of state governing institutions under Nouri's direction. In all, 75 high-ranking state managers, including governors, vice-governors and vice-ministers, 146 state managers and presidents of home offices and provinces, 340 governors and presidents of districts, 80 mayors, 45 ministerial and provincial advisors, and 942 village mayors were replaced and their post and responsibilities were reorganised particularly by members of SKF (Ganji, A. & Nouri, A. 2000, p.128). In total, 1689 persons were replaced by reformers who were invited to assume these posts while a report was prepared for the President's Office, Parliament commissions and other leading clergymen concerned. Because of this action,

among other things, conservatives in parliament impeached Abdullah Nouri and consequently he resigned. In 1998 the new Minister of State proposed an amendment to specify the limits of the two groups of authorities, an amendment which allowed the observation of the transparency and lawfulness of electoral process in the sixth parliamentary election. The Vice-Minister Sayyed Mostafa Tajzadeh under Sayyed Abdulvahed Mosavi Lari oversaw its initiation.⁶ The state adopted and submitted this proposal to the Parliamentary special commission. When the parliament did not respond to that amendment, the Ministry of State proposed a tripartite committee organised by representative of the state, parliament and the Guardian Council (GC) to start preparatory work for establishing the means for reform of the electoral laws and to prepare for the coming election. On the whole, this work consisted of gathering materials and preparing an initial plan for abolishment of the restrictive electoral law, to carry out elections, to link up with the political groups and individual candidates concerned, and to address the most pressing problem of the moment - permitting suitable candidates to take part in the electoral process. The tasks of preparation were to be divided amongst the tripartite committee members. The following month their preparatory work was submitted to and adopted by parliament. Whereas the conservative GC decided first to veto the new law, and then under pressure from the Expediency Council, was obliged to adopt it. To this end, a preparatory electoral committee numbering over thousands members from different parts of country was established. In practice, however, the transparent work was to be effectively carried out by the preparatory electoral committee.

While preparations for election went on, some SKF reformers candidates running for the new parliament met with some setbacks. In Mostafa Tajzadeh's view, endorsement of the candidateship could not be based on their lack of commitment to institution of vilayet-i faqih, but rather on the constitutional foundation values of the Islamic Republic. Although it is possible that the SKF backed off from their political opinion of the institution of vilayet-i faqih, (because the members of this institution were busy setting up their own factional interests) this cannot have been an important reason for the GC to refuse SKF reformer candidates. Selecting suitable candidates, however, proved to be more the choice of the people than the GC had expected. In practice, many potential SKF candidates found President Khatami too weak to engage in struggle. The Pan-Islamist left of the CIR within the SKF itself mounted a quite effective resistance to the mainstream groups and formed another major front. In their reports to the first congress of the ACC at the end of October 2003, members of the leading committee were forced to admit that there were some reformers who firmly believed that too many groups, including secular ones, were being involved in the reforms process.⁷ In the end, Khatami's lack of authority would prove

6 - See '*ra-ye mellat*' (Nation Vote), the Correspondence Between Ministry of State and Council of Guardian on Sixth Parliamentary Election, 2003, p. 24, edited by Mostafa Tajzadeh and Sadegh Zieba-kalam, published by Layla, Tehran-Iran

7 - See the ACC first Congress Manifesto. January 2003, no publisher is mentioned.

sufficient to recognise a defeat in May 2004. The Pan-Islamist reformers official victory was to be delayed for some more years.

Generally, the start of political reforms is illustrative by the way in which modern policies could be set up through the SKF in the years after the 1997 presidential election. Once the government had decided to reform its institutions, the leadership of the SKF and the ACC started preparations. Soon they handed the task over to the officials below them, who were in charge of the specific field in which the reforms were to be placed. The officials then proceeded first to set up preparatory committees formed by moderates whose aims were to establish both an official reform association among themselves and an official reformed institute for the IRI. At the same time, the SKF was to make a reform plan, find personnel, gather materials, compile a curriculum for policies, and lay the necessary contacts. To these ends, they held new debates and published them in an internal or external public magazine.

Concretely, however, the start of political reforms met with some serious obstacles. Perhaps the most obvious one was a lack of elite determination for a theoretical disconnection with Political Islam. After the 1979 Islamic Revolution, this was a problem encountered by all pro-democracy political groups. As mentioned earlier, however, reform of religious ideology was perhaps the single riskiest political pursuit one could think of in the IRI. There was presumably considerable threat and pressure against anyone involving it. Grand Ayatollah Montazeri, Mohsen Kadivar, Abdullah Nuri, Mostafa Tajzadeh, and many others are good examples of people under this pressure and threat in these years. When, for instance Tajzadeh decided to switch from a Political Islam perspective to that of political modernity in the 1990s, a Pan-Islamist conservative Asadullah Badamchie warned him against this step and urged him to keep his work to the exact line of Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Line, pleading that, 'political reform fundamentally is not a right choice' (Dad, 2001, pp.170-3). Badamchie emphasises that he also warned other reformers such as Mosa Kheyabani, a leading member of an Islamic guerrilla group, Abol-Hassan Bani-Sadr, former president of the IRI, Mehdi Bazargan, post-revolutionary provisional prime minister, to stay where they were, since he believed 'West-toxicity' did not have a future in Iran. What he was trying to impress upon Tajzadeh was that the act of political reform was a potentially dangerous pursuit in the IRI. Anyone, who engaged in such activities ran a great risk of meeting with professional and personal disaster. After so many years of repression and inactivity, to take such a risk, furthermore, there were few or no more professionally competent political elite in the IRI.⁸ As was pointed out in the post-revolutionary arena, those Pan-Islamist intellectuals who were once active for political changes now in later years were hopeless and outdated in their theories. Moreover, now they were too few and sometimes too weak to fulfil the needs of the new movement.

8 - See 'ra-ye mellat' (Nation Vote), the Correspondence Between Ministry of State and Council of Guardian on Sixth Parliamentary Election, 2003, p. 17, edited by Mostafa Tajzadeh and Sadegh Zieba-kalam, published by Layla, Tehran-Iran

Younger generations were needed who would be prepared to be trained in new ideas or determined to switch from Political Islam to political modernity. The political repression and the professional hurdles effectively combined to discourage many. Another problem was that there were very few theoretical alternatives, primarily new ideas, for the transitional stage, and in a financial aspect, secular intellectuals were very limited. Already during the 1980s, they had experienced great difficulties in finding alternative theories that goes alongside with Iran's characteristics of political modernity. In late 1980s the newly started economic modernisation under the former president Rafsanjani experienced different problems with theoretical alternatives, for instance, how to decentralise the state-controlled economy to a free market economy, and in late 1990s the politically sensitive nature of the personnel problems became rather unique to political modernisation.

Precisely because of the politically sensitive nature of the personnel political modernisation, there was also a systematic reactionary and bureaucratic opposition in many institutes to political reforms. In this respect, as was clear from Khatami's remarks quoted above, opposition to some aspects of political reforms existed among the mainstream members of the SKF. A comparison with the events surrounding the state of economic reforms highlights this even more clearly. Traditionally among some high-ranking elites in the IRI, economic liberalisation had been eyed no less inimically than political reforms. After 1989, however, opposition to economic liberalisation swiftly vanished. To a certain extent this may have been due to the influence of the former president Rafsanjani. Already in March 1989, a committee preparing a planning meeting for privatisation and economic liberalisation had held a forum at which Rafsanjani had restored privatisation to its good name and hundreds of private corporations had been immediately founded.

In September 1996, a few SKF reformers had officially founded the Future Research Institute just in time to start some new theoretical discussions.⁹ One year later, a mere proposal for the beginning of an alternative institutional reform in the IRI had been brought forward. In light of the rapid formation of the political reform organisations, after a few months, progress was slow and there were problems with the initial proposal to carry out the necessary plan and investigation. Khatami's remark a few months later confirms this view (Khatami, 2000, p.166). It was clear that certain influential officials in conservative organisations were attempting to organise some activities against the express wishes of the public and President Khatami's programmes. Still, in the end they were unable to stop both the official plans and the participatory movement that started in the same year. For five years, however, the SKF and some of its associations and branches were the only officially recognised organisations of political reformers, and in spite of the popular opposition against some reformers, the SKF groups and associations nonetheless formed a relatively positive image in the IRI when compared to other groups of policy makers.

9 - Nabavi, E. 2001. '*haqyeqat ya azadi*' (Truth or Freedom) an interview with Abbas Abdi, in Hamshahri news paper No. 54, p. 140, Tehran-Iran

From the very beginning, the project of political reform was a hotly contested issue. But, it was clear to all those concerned that first the Guardian Council's and then the Supreme Leader's will continue to reject its democratic values and make its existence unassailable. Once its return to the democratic principles had been mentioned, some form of official promises could no longer be settled. But, this did not mean that its opponents would bow back in its progress. Instead, the establishment reverted to delaying tactics of what they had promised and were to plague the process until well into the years after. For a few years, however, the SKF virtually remained the main and officially recognised grouping of the political reforms in contemporary Iran.

2.3. The Association of Combatant Clergy

The first congress for an official Association of Combatant Clergy (ACC) in Iran was held on 4 December 2002. From the very beginning in April 1988, the ACC as a clerical association was established only in the Tehran region to lead the radical clergymen to a precarious existence in political life in the IRI. Although the ACC published its first written manifesto in 2002, the association expresses its views through its monthly newsletters and particularly its official daily newspaper called Salaam. Since April 1988 its secretary general was Hojjatol-Islam Mehdi Karrubi and prominent members of its central committee are Mohammad Tavassoli, Mohammad Musavi Khoeiniha, Ali Akbar Mohtashami, Mohammad Khatami, Mohammad Hassan Rahimian, Mahmoud Doai, Rasul Mostajabnia, Asadullah Bayat, Majid Ansari, Mohammad Ali Abtahi, and Abdulvahed Musavi-Lari.¹⁰ There is lack of material available describing the inner-organisational structure of the ACC. The documents that are available, coupled with information from interviews with these individuals, suggest that since the 1997 election and victory of Mohammad Khatami, the role of the ACC has been ascending in Iranian political life. Between 1997 and 2004 the ACC in joining with the SKF also succeeded in holding a number of extra seats in the parliament and positions at the ministerial level. They have organised several conferences and forums on relations between Islam and modernity, as well as publishing books and magazines. The activities of the ACC, however, were primarily dictated by the political ups and downs of the moment. As the logic behind the ideas dictated, and Iranian intellectuals themselves complained, the political establishment tried to use the ACC as an informal administrative organ to meet certain specific ends (Ghochani, 2004, p.54). From the late 1980s onwards, a number of factors combined to make the ACC less important. To the knowledge of the author of this thesis, no ACC pressure was held against the purge policy in early 1980s nor against former president Rafsanjani's economic liberalisation in the late 1980s; therefore, its influential function as a radical organisation was gradually taken over by other political groups, but

10 - See daily newspaper Ettela'at, April 14, 1988.

this may also have been the result of the general political organisation and socio-economic crisis of the post-war period (Hajarian, 2001, p.201).

Initial spirits were running high, however, during the final days of December 2002. A number of central organs were established during the ACC congress, and except for some towns, representatives from the various provinces and regions attended.¹¹ This was a clear success for Mehdi Kahrubi, who had been charged with laying contacts with SKF political groups and associations, civil society NGOs, professional groups, and others involved in the country's political reforms. In this respect, those unofficial ACC members in the provinces were allowed to join its official organisation. The congress was a combination of the official founding ceremony and ACC's first national strategic conference. On the morning of the 4 December 2002, the official speeches were given by Kahrubi, Musavi Bijnourdi, Ansari, Rahmani Khalili, Shahidi, Arab Damghani, and Mohtashami-Pour, in the presence of members of the central committee and representatives of provincial offices, SKF political parties and organisations, independent prominent clergymen, scientists, politicians and members of Iran's educational board (Ibid. p.5). According to this source (congress manifesto), Kahrubi, as a representative of the preparatory committee, read a report on the conditions under which ACC had been prepared, and Musavi Bijnourdi gave an explanation of the congress draft for national strategy on political reforms between 1997 and 2002. Since Mohammad Khatami had been unable to come, that same afternoon the congress listened to the speech by Ansari. Rahmani Khalili himself appeared in the afternoon to hold his speech. It is unclear whether this was planned. It is quite possible the others decided to hold their speeches after hearing the alternative approach that was clear in Kahrubi's speech (Ibid. p.6).

Their topics included the aims and tasks of political reforms, the place of political reforms within the society, the relation between factions in political reforms and overall the reform of the political institution, and the contents of the congress draft for national modernisation. The first three general topics, which were also previously presented in papers, were included in the aforementioned list of topics published in the first congress manifesto. The topics on the whole suggested that Iranian political reformers were intent on reconciliation between the tenets of the current ideology and the practical advantages of modern political system. This modern base was clearly revealed by the presence of certain secular political activists from the universities. These stipulated that the ACC was to unite all first- and second-generations of Pan-Islamist intellectuals in the country and to incite its members under the leadership of moderate Political Islam, to respect the principle of linking Ayatollah Khomeini Line to the country's reality (Ibid. pp.8,10,11). Other stipulations were to implement the direction of letting a revolutionary and religiously democratic contend with 'outsiders', to hold fast to the religiously democratic attitude of seeking truth through facts, and to engage in creative reforms on the political organisation of Iran's political institution, the Islamic political thought, Islamic political system, the Pan-

11 - See the ACC first Congress and Manifesto. January 2003, no publisher is mentioned.

Islamist political grouping, the administrative management of the country, international affairs, and other matters falling within the scope of political reforms. Further it was urged to make the cause of Iran's reforms of politics prosper, to reform and perfect its political system, and in service of building Iran into a modernised and strong Islamic nation with a high level of Islamic culture and a high level of GDP (Ibid. p.12). Its other tasks were to draft a plan for programmes in political transparency, to require the Assembly of Experts to publish its meetings, to establish links between academics and clergies, and to compile and publish materials or offer them for publication. The supreme organ of the country was the choice of people and of its representatives, which was to meet an Islamic—yet modern—criterion.

This attention for political participation and the merits of introduction of pluralism must have set off alarm bells in the minds of many less pro-democratic or even anti-democratic government officials (Ibid. p.13). As a clerical association, the ACC formed part of the Islamic state and was therefore expected to cater to the needs of the larger political establishment (Ibid. p.14). Officially, its primary use had been intended to be that of an intermediate clerical organisation between inter-state groups and to bring together Pan-Islamists of all kinds who sought for ways to facilitate political modernisation through political reforms (Ibid. p.15). Put this way, political reformers amounted mainly to administrative and technocratic reforms, and clerical associations were viewed as an integral part of the political system (Ibid. pp.15-6). To a considerable extent, therefore, the use of the ACC lay in its ability to bring officials and Pan-Islamist intellectuals together. Another important aim behind the ACC lay in the acquisition of international contacts and the knowledge for the desired modernisation it could gain from them (Ibid. pp.29-30). In the first few years after the 1997 election, the ACC was accepted as the main clerical organ of reforms and thereby fulfilled one of its main objectives.¹² But, already in the course of the preceding years between 2000 and 2004, domestic politics took a turn towards a more radical stance. This change in atmosphere caused the ACC to be increasingly shunned by public. In the years to come, it slowly lost out in the official favour to a powerful rival, the Society of Qom Seminary Teachers (SQST), and gradually diminished in importance in the official institutions of the IRI.

In a way, the ACC was on a governing track before political reforms really got started. Shortly before the movement got under way, the ACC had successfully held a major position in IRI institutions on the aims and tasks of political reforms - a topic that showed political modernisation was still being explored as an Islamic policy.¹³ At the state institutional levels, several speeches by ACC members were presented in which an important change in atmosphere was signalled (Ibid. p.159). These speeches noted that if in the

12 - See *'matne pasokhe haz-rate imam khomai va namehe rohaniyeune mobareze Tehran'* (The Responding Text of Honourable Imam Khomeini and the letter of Tehran Combatant Clergies), published by ACC, 1989, published in Iran.

13 - See the second speech of Mohamad Khatami in gathering of Islamic Iran Participation Front members' 1999, in *'ba-ya-nye-ha va mavazehe djeb-heye mosharekat irane islami ta kongrehe aval'* (Manifestos and Positions of Islamic Iran Participation Front until the first convention)', 2001, pp. 158-172, published in Iran

years before, criticisms of democracy had been stressed in order to combat the National Front and Freedom Movement, after economic reform, political reform was now on the agenda requiring more attention to be given to political modernisation, that is, the democratisation of government and state management (Ibid. p.161).

In the months that followed, this new and more moderate course was followed up. In September 1999, ACC president Hojjatol-Islam Karrubi had spoken in a meeting called by Ayatollah Meshkini, president of the Society of Qom Seminary Teachers (SQST) - a conservative clerical organisation - and criticised the post-revolution policies and sent a message to the executive board of institution to review their conservative politics. Kahrubi's plea for more attention for not only administrative reforms, but also for the newly emerging and more democratic leadership was published in the ACC monthly newsletter as worthy of attention.¹⁴ Clearly, the attention for democracy and modern political organisation was deemed a threat, and the SQST leadership was urged to direct its attention towards less controversial and more plural topics (Ibid. p.7).

It is quite probable, however, that a part of the SQST membership resisted such official injunctions by stressing its non-Islamic credentials. It is sure that ACC activities were put on hold for a time during 1999. Whether this was a direct consequence of the general political climate created by the conservatives is probable, but uncertain. As the statutes required, the executive board held a meeting in October 1999 with the SKF at which a committee had been established to prepare for Khatami's second presidential campaign in the following year. The topics of meeting were to be confirmed at the upcoming second presidential election round. In March 2000, however, the executive board suddenly decided to form an alliance with the traditional-left CIR and the moderate-right SC until the end of the year, while calling for the establishment of civil society organisations and other socio-economic associations. The point that their position on absolute rule of vilayet-i faqih was in some form vague, the political trouble in this regards has contributed to this alliance (Armine, 2001, p.247). In any case, they believed that support of the absolute rule of vilayet-i faqih was in clear violation of the IRI constitution (Ganji, 2000, p.51).

The new alliance also revealed a gradual shift of official favour away from the ACC moderate leadership to those traditional associations contributing to the SKF. The new alliance preparatory committee for parliamentary election was set up the same year that presented mostly laymen candidates who since, unlike SKF the ACC candidates, were high-ranking clerical officials. On the other hand, in the presidential election of 2001, the SKF board of associations could only boast one representative in election, who was the same candidate as the ACC's. They both agreed upon Mohammad Khatami, who had to plead for the start of political reform in the institution of IRI. The ACC was to become the kind of semi-official organisation, while some lower-ranking officials had probably wanted the SKF

14 - ACC newsletter October 1998, No. 14, pp. 3-7, published in Tehran-Iran.

to be in the first place. Surprisingly, being an official reform organ, the same issue of the ACC's newsletter opened up conspicuously with three pages of news on the arrest of three members of a Pan-Iranist party.¹⁵ Still, it would take another couple of years before the ACC understood the importance of defending freedom of expression not only for its association but for all. This and other similar approaches to other secular groups did prevent the reform of the political structure to become gradually replaced in some ways by the reform of the juridical structure.

When Khatami's second cabinet was finally held in May 2001, the results of election gave a couple of subtle indications of the diminishing importance of the ACC leadership. Although Khatami as a member of the ACC executive committee was elected, and it was proclaimed that his support for the deepening of the reform process was more than expected, in his second term no major differences were held in the policy of the state. Mohammad Khatami optimistically emphasised that political reforms had struck roots in Iran's Pan-Islamist intellectual groups, but could not say the same thing about the IRI political institution (Armire, 2001, pp.276,361). Unlike in May 1997, instead of a national ceremony, a much smaller one was held within SKF associations. The very result confirmed the ACC's predilection for subjects related to a limited democracy and an inter-state group pluralistic model. This time, no compilation of electoral numbers was seriously discussed nor published. To a public intent on the results and procedure, it was a clear downscaling of the event. To preserve moderate face, ACC made public that it had been decided to concentrate the main attention of the coming years on the issues such as the nature of power in Islamic Republic, struggle against violence, and establishment of the rule of law. From this point onwards, the ACC increasingly became a moderate liberal association, which was cold-shouldered by Islamic state organs. Soon President Khatami fulfilled the official role, SKF associations had refused to play a bi-partisan role, and the ACC started to function as an official think-tank. In the second cabinet of President Khatami, the ACC also participated in a number of important ministerial offices. They clearly retained some function in the policy process, the ministerial work programmes, and of the political reforms as a whole, and most importantly, in international relations.

To conclude, it may be safe to state that through the ACC, some Iranian clerical leadership attempted to turn the IRI's religiously government into a truly comprehensive plural model. This meant all organs of political system would enjoy a certain measure of autonomy from the conservative leaders and the institution of vilayet-i faqih. During an initial period between 1997 and 1999, the ACC enjoyed official support because the conservative political leadership had not yet become fully aware of the consequences of the reform process. Moreover, its pro-democratic undertones had not yet been fully understood. As the sole clerical institution to represent the political reforms, ACC clerical members had successfully organised political modernisation in the face of stiff conservative or bureaucratic oppositions.

15 - ACC newsletter October 1998, No. 14, pp. 46-48, published in Tehran-Iran.

That it succeeded in doing so depended to a large extent on the will of Mohammad Khatami and the direct patronage of such powerful officials as Mehdi Karrubi, Mohammad Mosavi Khoeiniha, and Ali Akbar Mohtashami. Gradually, as the second Khatami cabinet in 2001 showed, the ACC was increasingly associated with pro-reform and pro-democratic currents within the IRI establishment. This predilection flew directly in the face of some officials who wished to direct the reform process so that would concentrate directly on the practical necessities of the state administration. By 2003, the ACC officials had concluded that association had largely overvalued its direct use and should be reorganised by bringing the semi-official provincial, district, and small town associations into existence. Around the same time, conservatives mounted their own offensive by founding several militia groups for the protection of vilayet-i faqih and its institution of leadership (Tajzadeh, 2002, p.177). In spite of quite successful activities, the Tehran association of the ACC managed to publish a daily newspaper and some magazines. Together these new activities gradually upgraded the ACC as the official favourite of some pan-Islamist intellectuals. It was clear that the conservative political leadership would not accept an autonomous clerical association involved in political affairs. Politically, the precedent was simply too dangerous. By 2003, the ACC probably owed its continued survival only to its partnership activities and alliance with the SKF. If anything, the story of the ACC serves to show that in the realm of politics in contemporary Iran at least, there was an emergence of a reformation within the institution of religion.

3. The SKF Struggles with the Guardian Council

One of the main reasons behind almost all SKF associations was to use this front as a conduit of organisational contact with the public, so that the moderates in the IRI might acquire the support needed to carry out the desired political reforms.¹⁶ To this end, contacts amongst associations were laid even before SKF groups were officially founded. In July 1998, Hojatol-Islam Mohtashami visited supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in the office of leader and both expressed their wishes that SKF groups should have an active role in the institutional reorganisation of the IRI.¹⁷ But, despite such agreement, the conflicting affairs started when Abdullah Nouri, Minister of Home Affairs, officially assigned members of the SKF for governing positions (Nouri, 1998). In principle, there seemed to be little in the way of SKF groups at the beginning. After all, at the same time the SC pragmatist political groups joined the activities to start reforms process. In August 1998, the office of the president had even hosted several meetings shortly after SKF members became part of the governing institution and became the leading officials.

16 - See '*djeb-heye mosharekat irane islami*' (the Islamic Iran Participation Front) 5th Congress 16 & 17 October 2003

17 - See '*madjma-eh rohanyeune mobareze tehran*' (the Association of Combatant Clergies of Tehran) news bulletin, 1998, No. 7, p. 100, published in Iran

SKF members in the high-ranking IRI institutions, however, posed one serious problem. As part of the overall Islamic regime, SKF members of government were expected to adhere to the principles of *vilayet-i faqih* and the supremacy of Guardian Council. This meant that they had to adhere to conservative principles that they themselves supposedly had come into government to change. Almost from the very start, the SKF leadership demanded that the GC recognise the institution of Republic as the sole legitimate representative of the country. In practice this meant that the SKF distance itself from institution of *vilayet-i faqih*, which its leadership in all fairness had for many years been loyal and useful to. In the hope of finding a compromising solution on this issue, the Society of Qom Seminary Teachers (SQST) organised several meetings and seminars for all parties involved in holy city Qom in the coming months.¹⁸ In these meetings the SKF representative demanded that the GC not be allowed to interfere in governing affairs as a decision-making institute, but only as an organisation limited to what has been originally assigned for it in the constitution. This meant, among other things, the GC would be barred from its arbitrary decision-making position in the IRI affairs. Although this was unacceptable to both the GC and the conservative institution of supreme leader and influential IRI officials, by no means could any agreement be reached by all contenders. Still, in an attempt at compromise, President Khatami, as the most influential governing official and reformist representative, abandoned this important issue and advised both parties to work together for a collective institution that represented the interests of all.¹⁹

President Khatami wanted to solve the matter as soon as possible, however, it seems he was unaware that there was a difference in opinion within his cabinet ranks as well (Dad, 2001, p.9). A month later, two groups of clergymen were assigned to work together on the issues such as Republican position of the SKF and the position of the GC on supremacy of the Republic. Each group comprised two senior Expediency Council members. The Expediency chairman Rafsanjani and a member of the executive council of the ACC, Musavi Khoeyniha, begin a dialogue with the GC. Since then, according to Tajzadeh, there is a lasting impression that the GC would not cause serious problems in state affairs (Tajzadeh & Zibakalam, 2003). They held talks as well with Ayatollah Mahajerani and Ayatollah Montazeri, who expressed their admiration for Iran's political reformers and hailed them as an example for Islamic practices. GC also explicitly stated that they recognised President Khatami as the sole legitimate political representative of the country, which is in contrast to their earlier public remarks to the Iranian people that they would reject an unqualified clergyman as supreme leader and promised to exert themselves on behalf of the IRI constitution (Moslem, 2002, p.256). On the other hand what the SKF merely tried to achieve was to

18 - See the Association of Combatant Clergies of Tehran news bulletin, 1999, No. 14, pp. 3-7, published in Iran

19 - See the Second Speech of Khatami in gathering of the Islamic Iran Participation Front members year 1999 in '*baya-neyeha va mavazehe djebheye mosharekate irane islami ta avalin congreh* (Manifestos and Positions of Islamic Iran Participation Front until the first convention), 2001, pp. 158-172, published in Iran

raise the quality of the IRI political structure somewhat. The state officials also extended some institutional offices for a number of prominent SKF members in order to attend the upcoming moderate government and to solve differences. According to the same source, however, at the same time, these prominent were persuaded that if they would stick to their moderate stance, they would be able to maintain their positions. In this way, President Khatami created a problem for himself by confusing SKF associations into believing that their conflicts with GC could easily be solved along lines the state favoured.

In February 1999, the country's sixth parliamentary election took place and thirty SKF candidates attended. After few weeks of heated debates 726,000 votes were rendered null and a special court opened a procedure against the Home Office vice Minister Mostafa Tajzadeh for his negligence and his involvement in electoral fraud (Tajzadeh, 2002). The SKF leadership held informal talks with both state officials and a GC delegate, Ayatollah Ostadie. Hopes for an easy solution were soon dashed as the GC realised that the electoral procedure run by Ministry of state, particularly in Tehran, was poorly performed (Ganji & Nouri, 2000, p.p.13,131). The SKF officials promptly stated their defensive position. Tajzadeh retorted GC's standpoint that GC could not make a decision without some credible evidence. But pointedly he refrained from expressing his disagreement. He even went further by pointing out the value that political reform could contribute to maintaining the IRI establishment. He proposed that the control commission should follow a precedent set by the constitution, according to which, both state officials and complainants shall present their cases to a judicial body, but Ministry of Justice had been under the control of conservative members of the clerical institution since 1979. Nonetheless, in his address to the tribunal, vice minister and member of SKF, Tajzadeh expressed the hope that the problems surrounding President Khatami's cabinet could be solved during his tenure. He also proposed that the Home Office and the GC jointly publish the correspondence they had had preceding the sixth parliamentary election.²⁰ Again, the SKF and the GC failed to reach an agreement. The GC officials furthermore interpreted Tajzadeh's proposal as an attempt to belittle their institution, since such a document was viewed as a means by which the public could gain an insight into the organisational quality of the IRI.

To all sides involved, the court decision must have been a bitter disappointment. Part of the failure to reach an early agreement must surely be sought in the reformers failure to speak with one voice. Clearly, associations affiliated to the ACC and the CIR mostly backed Tajzadeh's stance, whereas pragmatists were relatively more mindful of Islamic regime long-term interests. A large majority of SKF members, however, wanted to find some sort of accommodation, but there was another side to the problem as well. Although the SKF was formally an organisation for political reforms, it had grown to be widely viewed primarily as an IRI institution. In the past,

20 - Tajzadeh.M & Zeba-kalam, S. '*ra-ye mellat*' (Nation Vote) Home Office and Council of Guardian in Sixth parliamentary election, 2003, published by Layla, Tehran-Iran

other inner-state problems had been solved with a certain degree of flexibility, through which the Expediency Council had sought to preserve this character. In the aftermath of the election, this was precisely the approach adopted by President Khatami in his attempts to solve the continued stalemate. On 29 July 1999, State Minister Sayyed Abdulvahed Mosavi Lari wrote a letter to the GC, in which he offered a solution along the lines of Tajzadeh's earlier remarks (Ibid. pp.220-4). A month later, Ayatollah Rafsanjani, who garnered great respect among GC members, expressed his concerns over the disagreement between the SKF and the GC during the election. Significantly, however, he did not propose any concrete solution.

If the SKF thought that the GC was willing to compromise, however, their hopes were dashed in the summer of 2000. First in an July 1999 interview with state news agency Seeda va Siema, Ayatollah Ostadie sent a message to sixth parliamentary election candidates in which he officially explained the GC's Islamic-principled standpoints about Ministry of State officials and their acts which could confuse many if they were allowed to question the status and authority of the GC. The Guardian Council, Ostadie insisted, was to be the sole and final decision-making body for Iran's parliamentary election candidates (Ibid. pp.247). In other words, there was no room for compromise, let alone reform of its institution, if the GC was to become a recognised IRI leading institution. This interview was followed on 29 July 1999 by a similar interview by Ayatollah Jannatie (Ibid. pp.32-7). The interviews, it seems, took the SKF rather by surprise. By using the terms 'Islamic-principled standpoints', Ostadie, and presumably Jannatie, had made clear that the GC would not offer any concessions on the matter of representatives in the IRI institutions. In this respect, this stance reflected a more general shift in the IRI's views towards the SC, which ruled out the need for such a compromise that the SKF was attempting to reach.

In December Home Office Secretary Tajzadeh signalled he had received the message, but that the election's executive committee could not agree with the GC's standpoint, which according to the IRI electoral statutes, stated that the GC ought to be the sole governing institution to observe electoral transparency (Ibid. PP, 30-1). Based on article 138 of the IRI constitution, Tajzadeh explained, the statutes and criteria should be sent to the parliament chairman while being processed by the state, and if parliament sees any constitutional conflict, they would ask the state ministerial commission for reconsideration. That is why the Ministry of State required the GC to set up a joint commission of which they both could observe the election procedure that could become a collective IRI organ. This meant at least two or even several organisations from the same ministry led by SKF could be allowed to participate in the observation process. In the present case, Tajzadeh added, an alternative option also laid open that the GC could simply join the Home Office commissions and that further problems would be solved as they arose.

This last proposal was obviously unacceptable to the GC. It amounted to a defacto recognition of the GC, where as the SKF was calling for an official solution. In a letter dated December 1999, Mostafa Tajzadeh reiterated GC's Islamic-principled standpoints. He tried to sound flexible himself by

conceding that, once the GC's demands were met, there SKF associations would be permitted to play a role in the IRI if they still wished to do so. But, they would then only be considered as an IRI parallel organisation. No IRI official or unofficial organisation would carry any mention of sole *vilayet-i faqih* or simply Islamic Republic, so as to avoid any reference to a dual political system: one an Islamic system and one a Republic. Neither, for that matter, would any unconstitutional organisation be tolerated. Moreover, no officials from the IRI would enjoy the right to decide the characteristic combination of the GC and the SKF's legislative institution. Significantly, he added, it was hoped that the above points be acknowledged by the GC's executive and be stipulated in a practical form. With this last addition, Tajzadeh slammed the door on any kind of undemocratic, informal solution. He concludes the 'Ministry of State wanted the problem settled in an official and definitive way' (Ibid. pp.374, 392).

After a short while, Ayatollah Rezvani, president of the Central Committee for Observation on Election, returned a letter reiterating his increasingly vain hope that the issue be settled along the lines and laws adopted by the IRI parliament. He hoped a favourable decision on the GC's criticisms could be reached, so that the newly elected candidates would be able to attend the parliament soon. The SKF candidates had still failed to appreciate the shift in the IRI's leading institutions. At the same time, however, Ayatollah Rezvani disclosed that Home Office officials were willing to misuse electoral process. He offered a chance to the Ministry of State to come to a new agreement with the GC (Ibid. p.392).

From December 1999 to February 2000, Ayatollah Rezvani and Tajzadeh continued their talks with the electoral committee and the GC members on the way election had been processed. On the reformers' side, Mostafa Tajzadeh, Sayyed Abdulvahed Mosavi Lari, and Ayatollah Azarmi took part. The first two officials clearly participated as senior SKF and ACC members. Ayatollah Azarmi belonged to the Home Office bureau of the ACC and SKF. Nonetheless Tajzadeh and Ayatollah Azarmi were asked to sit in court because of their mismanagement and falsification of the votes in electoral boxes. After a year of heated juridical debates, the GC's demands were essentially met, and in March 2001, a court decision was pronounced on all convictions. The sentence for Tajzadeh and Ayatollah Azarmi were as follows: for the first accusation Tajzadeh was sentenced to one year in prison, a six-month discharge from official positions, for his second accusation, he was given a nine-month discharge from all state positions, and for his third accusation, a thirty-month discharge from all state positions. For Ayatollah Azarmi's first accusation, he was given a six-month discharge from all state positions, for his second accusation, five months, for the third accusation a one-year prison sentence, for the forth accusation, a ten-month discharge from official positions, and for his fifth accusation, a two-year discharge from all official IRI positions. Finally, they would both have to give up their seats in the Home Office Executive Committees for Internal Affairs (Dad, 2001, p.178). Even after all this, the SKF would retain their parliamentary seats and would be allowed to attend the next election, like

other establishment members. On 6 April, after their appeal to higher court, Ayatollah Azarmi and Tajzadeh received their new sentences of 24 months and 30 months exclusion from all official positions in the IRI, including the Electoral Executive Committee. Both men agreed to this ruling and welcomed the recognition of fairness of the electoral process by the court, a decision went against the collective efforts of the GC (Ibid. p.350).

In the first instance, the SKF won an important victory. As mentioned in the preceding section, towards the end of the decade their membership in the IRI was indeed important for their continued political reforms. Both in the 1997 and 2001 presidential elections and in the 1999 parliamentary election, SKF representatives enjoyed the pleasure of attending IRI offices. Abdullah Nouri, after his parliamentary impeachment as Minister of State, was even elected to the position of governor in Tehran province in 1998. In several ways, moreover, the SKF offered assistance and support in the new institution building in the IRI. Ultimately, the SKF's participation in the institutional affairs of the IRI proved to be a historic victory for Iran's political system democratisation. However, in the eyes of a sizeable group of SKF supporters, the obstinate attitude adopted by their leadership in obtaining IRI positions contrasted unfavourably with their accommodating stance to IRI. SKF officials had clearly underestimated the widespread discredit of their support for the regime as a whole. Additionally, the slow pattern of democratic reforms in juridical institutions and the crackdown at Tehran University furthermore created an atmosphere in the second half of 2000 which quickly undid the painstaking successes SKF had reached five years earlier. Between early 2001 and May 2004, more SKF officials were unceremoniously expelled from the IRI establishment, allowing the conservatives to quietly retake their official positions.

4. The CIR and the SKF-IIPF

With the foundation of the official SKF after May 1997, the Crusaders of the Islamic Revolution (CIR) also became part of an official and preparatory organisation for political reform. But no less an left-leaning entity than the SKF. Between its foundation at 1979 and 1997, its status within the IRI and the strategy adopted by the personal approach of its top leaderships the organisation went through different periods, depending on changes in the IRI policies. In 'Islam, Society, Politics', as Mohsen Armine attempts to show, to become an official association of the SKF after the 1997 presidential election was the best reason for the CIR to change its political foundation, not only because of the change in the world of politics but also because of the recognition of a popular demand for democracy in Iran.

In the first period from December 1978 to April 1979, the organisation virtually remained a network of unofficial preparatory group with largely the same Pan-Islamist guerrilla strategy as had existed in the pre-revolutionary period. After its official foundation as a guerrilla group of the followers of the Ayatollah Khomeini Line, the CIR claimed to have as its goal the protection and spread of the principles of the Islamic revolution (Moslem, 2002, p.60).

On the second anniversary of its foundation, and while stressing its support for leftist policies such as nationalisation of trade and commerce and land reform, the CIR announced that the organisation was experiencing serious difficulties with the representatives of Ayatollah Khomeini assigned in the organisation, conservative members of JMHEQ. After a short period of internal debates, they then decided to dissolve the organisation at the advice of Ayatollah Khomeini. Apparently the more senior and generalist personalities, such as Mohammad Salamati and Mohsen Armine, took a backseat to Behzad Nabavi and others. Some observers describe the CIR as the third major grouping during the 1996 parliamentary campaign (after the ACC and the SC) and as having been supported by a number of leftist associations and former parties. The CIR was reportedly aligned to a certain degree with the ACC in 1996, although its support was considered feeble in contrast to conservative Hezbollah's efforts on behalf of the institution of vilayet-i faqih, the ACC's main rival. The CIR supported Mohammad Khatami in the 1997 presidential election and served as one of the most radical components of the political reform process until the 2004 parliamentary election (Armine, 2001, p.375). Although the CIR supported Khatami in his re-election effort in 2001, the group subsequently distanced itself from the government by insisting upon more active resistance to the liberal influence of moderate circles (Ibid. p.334). In practice, the CIR mainly derived its very *raison d'être* from its support for the IRI (Ibid. p.97). All its leaders were at the same time senior leaders within the IRI, occupied ministerial levels in almost all post-revolutionary cabinet positions, and had some members in parliament. The group published at least one newspaper, *Asr-e Ma*, and contributed to the ACC publication, *Salam*, under both their own name and that of the ACC. In other words, CIR membership in the SKF existed if only because it minimally served as the repository for the leftist members within the administration of the official SKF in the IRI. Before May 1997, however, the organisation did not possess its own independent faction within the establishment. Instead, its officials used the premises of the Parliament, state ministerial positions, and House of Workers. Although direct evidence is lacking, this state of inertia only had contributed to a combination of effective bureaucratic resistance to IRI conservative policies and a crippling lack of a moderate leadership. On top of this, Behzad Nabavi's failing social democratic policies must have deprived the fledgling associations of the political clout necessary to gain a concrete foothold within the post-Khatami institutional complex in the IRI.

Organisationally, the period from 1988 to May 1997 was entirely dominated by the debates and inner discussions that accompanied the drafting of a new political strategy (Ibid. p.417). Once the CIR was officially involved in the reform process, the political events in the post-Khatami era served to speed up organisational and political activities. In this period, political debates on three major subjects took up most of the time of officials and internal factions alike: the interpretation of a moderate Political Islam ideology, the function of an Islamic Republic, and moderate Islamic politics (Ibid. p.470). Still, there is some evidence of uncertainty performed at the

organisational level (Ibid. p.478). Mohsen Armine emphasised in the early 1990s that top leaders, such as Behzad Nabavi, Mohammad Salamati, and Asghari, published articles on the importance of political reforms for the survival of the IRI as a whole (Ibid. p.378). Apart from Behzad Nabavi and few other leaders, however, it is not clear whether their Pan-Islamist members worked directly under the state institute or not at the time. Moreover, compared to the surprisingly large amount of articles on the subject published by reformers, the output by the CIR publications was indeed meagre. This provides an indirect indication of the organisation's lack of competent leadership in this sphere. If debates on reform process was carried out within the SKF during this period, within the CIR discussions was very limited both in amount and in scope.

By the summer of 1997, however, a number of factors combined to improve conditions for the involvement of various organisations in the reform process. First of all, at this time the first pro-reform front, which became established later as 'The Islamic Iran Participation Front' (IIPF), came on the scene, a situation that solved the SKF's most acute lack of internal elite support. Mohammad Reza Khatami, Massoomeh Ebtekar, Abbas Abdi, Saeed Hajjarian and Mohsen Miramadi were some of those who led the front around this time. Secondly, most of the preparatory internal discussions within SKF had finished by this time, which freed IIPF to turn to new tasks. As was to become clear, there was an increasing demand for new policies on the reform of huge structural system of the Islamic state.²¹ The front also at last obtained its own premises at Parliament and within Khatami's cabinet. Finally, around this time the conservative team of elites in government changed, allowing new reformer groups to take positions. In 1998, Mohammad Reza Khatami was formally elected as the head of the IIPF. The coming of Mohammad Reza Khatami as the Secretary General and Deputy Speaker of the Parliament in 1998 must certainly have improved IIPF chances for the future. Unlike any of the previous leaders, Mohammad Reza Khatami was relatively young, extremely well connected, and fairly well versed in political reform. Mohammad Reza Khatami, who was born in 1959 and is the younger brother of President Mohammad Khatami, is also the son of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khatami. He was elected in March 2000 for the sixth term of the parliament as the first representative of Tehran with 1,794,365 votes. Before that, he had been a vice minister in the Ministry of Health for two years. He has also acted as the manager in charge of the reformist daily Mosharekat. He is educated in medicine, and before entering politics was a practicing urologist for a number of years. In 1983, he married women's rights activist, Zahra Eshraghi, granddaughter of Ayatollah Khomeini.

The reasons why Reza Khatami personally decided to become the chairman of the IIPF remain unclear. Indubitably other leaders were asked and refused. As some newspapers have mentioned, many of his friends, including Vice-President of the Republic for Environmental Protection,

21 - See '*bayaneyeha va mavazehe djebheye mosharekate irane islami ta avalin congreh*' (the Manifestos and Positions of the Islamic Iran Participation Front until the first Congress), 2001, pp. 13-16, published in Iran

Massoomeh Ebtekar, advised him on some IIPF decisions. But, Reza Khatami was probably driven by the traditional ambition of Pan-Islamist intellectuals to become an advisor to the government. Moreover, as discussed at some length in the IIPF news-brief, Reza Khatami was close to both the powerful and reformist President Khatami and the rising theorist Mostafa Tajzadeh, both of whose pupils Reza Khatami had been at parliament. Moreover, as has also been pointed out, President Khatami was closely involved in the establishment of political reform organisations. Mohammad Reza Khatami clearly enjoyed the support of Mohammad Khatami and obtained some assurances he would receive the political credit to fulfil his duties in parliament. Once Mohammad Reza Khatami was elected as the head of the IIPF, he reportedly proceeded to choose his closest collaborators and added on more reformers to the existing SKF groups for state administrative reforms. As the head of the IIPF, Reza Khatami was reportedly entitled to choose his own lieutenants. Instead of the old guard, he chose Mostafa Tajzadeh, a reformer from the Ministry of State, and reportedly a collaborator of Abdullah Nouri's, as the group theoretical front runner. The reason for his choice may have been that Reza Khatami thought Tajzadeh to be an intellectual ally. In the winter of 1999, Tajzadeh had published a special edition on the communication between the GC and the Ministry of State concerning the sixth parliamentary election. Tajzadeh later also succeeded others as the main theorist of the IIPF. Because he worked as the Secretary of State, it seems that he would be appointed this position. As far as can be ascertained, he seems to have taken little or no part in corrupt electoral activities. Rather unusually, however, Minister Nouri reportedly also chose the other IIPF members, of whom little more is known and whom were rather more radicalised than Abdullah Nuri must have first realized. Unfortunate for reformers, the three men (Nouri, Reza Khatami, and Tajzadeh) failed to form the team President Mohammad Khatami must have hoped for. In 1998, when Nouri stepped down as the Minister of State, Mostafa Tajzadeh even went on in his post to serve under the far more pragmatist minister Lari.

Although it is unclear to what extent IIPF could boast any form of reforms before Reza Khatami took over as its head, by early 1998 they had three definite main strategic objectives: economic reform, administrative reform, and political reform. According to Ali Shakori-Rad, the first two reforms could not be processed before the last. Since Mostafa Tajzadeh conducted reform on civil service systems - the main goal of the Ministry of the State from mid-1997 onwards - it is uncertain, but quite likely, that the first two issues preceded Khatami's cabinet. Of the three, the strategy on political reform was about change in the IRI political setting to begin with. The other two reforms contained far less popularity. Although the members of the respective IIPF tended to concentrate on their broad orientation, this was not necessarily what the public and their followers expected. Moreover, reformers from different perspectives, together with intellectuals from the secular spectrum, began to conduct serious political discussions. Under President Mohammad Khatami, intellectuals of the IIPF enjoyed a large

measure of freedom in their actual work.²² Rather than offering tightly circumscribed reform agendas, the front functioned as President Khatami's overall organisational divisions, which were very flexible. In the beginning, their work was also largely supported by the mainstream leadership. But, although their work could boast economic and administrative reforms, the political constraints of the conservatives' unofficial status served to reduce their broad managerial activities to a small number of assignments. In this respect, officially these elites did not even work to the advantage of the state ministries, but rather to the advantage of the new private sectors. Until somewhere in 1999, it seems these mixed managerial models were mainly limited to the improvement of the work of the private sector. In the course of 1999, however, through their activities, funds became available for the private management to expand. Around this time, or in early 2000, they were also affiliated with the privatisation policies and started to engage in their own commercial activities.²³ Finally, next to the managerial boards and the private sector, the membership of IIPF included the inevitable elites who were led by some CS groups and the members of parliament of which Reza Khatami seems to have been the head (Ibid. pp.124-7).

From the very start, Reza Khatami ran the SKF-IIPF primarily as a potential think-tank for the Iranian state institution. Already in June 1998, the IIPF declared their main focus would be on the organisation of the civil society in Iran. In August and September of that same year, the IIPF organised its conference in Tehran to advise its membership on how to proceed in their objectives (Ibid. pp.13-6). Probably between the start of 1998 and the end of 1999, one of the main attentions of the leadership at SKF-IIPF was directed towards the task of re-organisation of the civil society groups. In July 2000, SKF-IIPF managed to organise its first major convention in Tehran on the country's political topics (Ibid. p.305). The new leadership, which had gained the advice of President Khatami, sponsored this convention. It debated an entire series of topics including the political organisation in the IRI, political forces, the organisational challenges, civil society, the organisation's perspective, the economy, the politics of trade, and finance. By September 2000, reformer officials at SKF-IIPF were taken seriously enough for officials of the Ministries of State and Education to hold talks with them at the vice-ministerial level. Still, there were important differences between IIPF reformer officials and SC pragmatist officials and IRI conservatives. Vice-Minister Tajzadeh pointed these out when he called for more attention on municipality elections. But contact between the SKF-IIPF and the ministerial level would continue in the coming years. The event offered an occasion for senior IIPF members and Pan-Islamist intellectuals to reflect on the previous years and to offer advice on the future function of the

22 - Amir Ahmadi, H. Hirmidasbavand, D. Bashyriyeh, H. Piran, P. and Hajjarian, S. 1998. '*djame-ehe madanye dar partove rouye-dad dovome khordad*' (Civil Society with in the horizon of the Second Khordad Event) in '*djame-ehe madanye va irane imrouze*' (Civil Society and Contemporary Iran), p. 252, Tehran-Iran

23 - See *bayanye-ha va mavaze-he djebheye mosharekate irane islami ta avalin congreh*' (Manifestos and Positions of the Islamic Iran Participation Front until the first Congress), 2001, pp. 271-273, published in Iran

state institution (Ibid. pp.310-1). Officials, such as Abbas Abdi, Saeed Hajjarian and Mohsen Miramadi, set out the main policy lines behind the organisation. Hajjarian set out a few of the main policy directions: leadership reform, reform of the administrative system, improvement of the economy and trade, and the initiation of new international relations (Hajjarian, 2002, pp.257, 169). On the whole, Hajjarian stressed the need for a practical strategy for political reforms and close contact with the public. Abbas Abdi pointed to the central role of participatory politics in Iranian society and called for an integral political reform approach that would offer solutions as to how a democratic Islamic state ought to continue to manage society successfully (Ibid. pp.7, 38). On the whole, Saeed Hajjarian echoed this approach and underlined the importance of democracy for institutional reform. Interestingly, this is not what most Pan-Islamist pragmatists had to say. Reza Khatami, Massoomeh Ebtekar, Abbas Abdi, Saeed Hajjarian, and Mohsen Miramadi all explicitly or implicitly called on the IIPF to play a bigger role within the SKF and to remain primarily a participatory—and not a IRI's bureaucratic—organisation. In this view, the relation of the SKF and the IIPF was to be one in which the IIPF fulfilled the role of backup force to the organisation, whereas the SKF would provide a centre of support to all activities of the reformer groups. According to Saeed Hajjarian, of the two, the SKF was to be the more important, because of its national scope. Ali Marzuie also complained of the lack of interest in contacts with other reformers organisations amongst the traditional Pan-Islamist-left. Clearly, senior political reformers outside the IIPF wished the organisation to play a different role from the one Saeed Hajjarian had assigned to it. In this, however, IIPF leaders, such as Mostafa Tajzadeh, Abbas Abdi, and many others supported Hajjarian.

Still, in some other important respects, Hajjarian agreed with his fellow IIPF leaders. Unlike officials such as Mostafa Tajzadeh and Reza Khatami, for example, Hajjarian stressed the need for basic changes for finding practical solutions for Iran's most pressing political problems. Central to this view was Hajjarian's theory of the religiously democratic government (Hajjarian, 2001, pp.131,150). According to this theory, modern politics did not know forbidden topics, held no single theory to be exclusively true, and did not derive knowledge from some idolised faqih or religious dignitary. Instead, modern politics had to stand in service of the people and be based on contact with the entire public. In other words, some basic knowledge about what the rest of the citizens thought about problems and a certain measure of public awareness were necessary if one was to engage seriously in political institutions. He criticised the conservative clerical leadership for viewing political reformers as a mere problem-creating individuals. According to Hajjarian, such institution clung to backward methods and obstructed moderate policies by saying these policies infringed on the security of the IRI (Ibid. 134). Indirectly, then, Hajjarian called for the same kind of openness and debates as SKF did (Ibid. p.135). The real difference between Hajjarian and many other reformers, however, lay in the direct way he stated his case. Many of Iranian political reformers similarly advocated a reformist idea for

the future, but they did so in carefully couched discourse. Hajjarian, on the other hand, often resorted to a form of plain discourse that clearly broke some the unwritten rules of Islamic politics and provoked conservative clerical leadership.

The official founding of the IIPF as a political party could change little in the way it was organised or operated. The delay in its official foundation was principally caused by those officials who thought the IIPF would deprive the government of the necessary leadership to carry out its reforms tasks in its institution. Moreover, once the organisation had been officially founded, according to the constitutional regulations, it could be titled as a political party rather than a front because in the Iranian constitution the title of 'Front' as a political grouping does not exist. The organisation quickly expanded its activities into two areas: institution of government and civil society associations for re-grouping. Over the next few years they also gradually enlisted the support of more Pan-Islamist intellectuals and the public. Second only to President Khatami's office, the IIPF leadership ran the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the Ministry of Environment. In practice their greatly enlarged leadership committees functioned to a certain extent like extra ministry sections. This was especially so in the case of the Ministry of State, one of whose ministers, Abdullah Nouri, was also a prominent moderate reformer of the late 1990s.

The main function of the IIPF, however, continued to be as contributor to the establishment organs for government policy of administrative reform. This was borne out, among other things, by the organisation's leadership, who were involved in the affairs of Ministry of the State. According to their published documents, its five most prominent leaders – Abdi, Marzuie, Tajzadeh, Shakorie-rad, and Hajjarian – all worked largely or exclusively in one way or another on administrative reform of the ministries during the 1990s (Ghouchani, 2002, pp.46,68). Unfortunately, only some limited materials from this period have been published, but it is said that the high-ranking members of the organisation were closely involved in the IRI political management and information gathering and of policy-making on administrative reform that preceded the 2001 presidential election. Under Reza Khatami, the real politics of the SKF-IIPF became exactly the kind of Pan-Islamist liberal politics that many other intellectual reformers had warned against.²⁴ But, when President Mohammad Khatami started his policy on reform of political structure, Reza Khatami, as a member of parliament, and several members of the ACC, most notably Karrubi, Mossavi Khoeyniha and Jamarani, provided and conducted supporting activities. A list of majority members of parliament supported President Khatami's plan of reform policies, which included the members of the SKF-IIPF in 2001. The plan stood for a re-organisation of Islamic state organs, and it was clear that the IIPF stood closer to the actual practice of Islamic politics than many reformist organisations within the SKF thought desirable. In the end, as Mostafa Tajzadeh was proud to say, IIPF's influence on administrative reform in

24 - See IIPF second convention manifesto, October 2001 Tehran, p. 24, published in Iran

President Khatami's political plan was largely compiled by its leadership (Tajzadeh, 2000, pp.53,122).

This official role of the SKF-IIPF, however, also had a shady side. Mostafa Tajzadeh's prediction that the needs for institutional reform alongside Khatami's impressive ideas could foster other politically oriented pursuits, were deprived of the necessary support (Ibid. pp.60-1). The organisation never became the centre for public involvement in politics as it was perhaps at first meant to be. In this respect, Tajzadeh and other IIPF leaders, perhaps in spite of their wishes, contributed significantly to the demise of the SKF in the second term of President Khatami between 2001 and 2005. Worse still, they confirmed conservative fears about the use of a Western like social democracy as a form of socio-political perspective (Mazrouie, 2000, pp.30-1). Such trends were precipitated by the problems of a more political nature between a democratic interpretation of Political Islam and a conservative one (Ibid. p.31). According to these sources, there seems especially to have been a struggle for political power between the IIPF leadership and conservative GC members, which sought to use their position as the highest organ of the IRI to strengthen their position in political spheres. Against this background it is logical that the IIPF lacked a sufficiently clear ideological alternative to offer to the SKF and its supporters.

At the same time, other governmental activities were also conducted at the IIPF leadership level. In summer of 1999, for example, during the six parliamentary elections, the IIPF leadership in Ministry of the State conducted a confusing electoral procedure in both national and in local offices, particularly in Tehran, and thus, was accused of mismanagement. Tajzadeh continued to use his position as the Vice Minister to satisfy the establishment on the correctness of the procedure and the recent accusation of the GC against Ayatollah Azarmi, governor of Tehran. Moreover, none of the high-ranking members of the IIPF seriously joined the power struggle between Tajzadeh and the GC in this electoral procedure as was expected; although, some may have had personal preferences. Importantly, a minority leaders from purely inter-family relations survived to serve the IIPF after the 2004 parliamentary election, whereas exactly the reverse happened to the more radically engaged organisation of the SKF, such as the CIR led by Behzad Nabavi and Mohsen Armine.

Throughout the second half of the 1990s, nonetheless, the SKF as a whole and the IIPF in particular offered unique opportunities to anyone who wished to engage in political reform.²⁵ Although formally part of popular reforms movement, the IIPF organisation was subordinated directly to President Khatami's office, to which the detail decisions had to be sent before any action. The SKF predominantly organised the civil society's activities through the Pan-Islamist reformers, whereas the IIPF organised its members within the governing institutions for administrative reforms. Compared to other post-Khatami organisations, however, they both ranked amongst the

25 - See '*baya-neye-ha va mavazehe djebehe mosharekat-e irani islami ta avalin congreh*' (Manifestos and Positions of the Islamic Iran Participation Front until the first convention) 2001, published in Iran

most tolerant and open-minded Pan-Islamist intellectuals. Both fulfilled the supportive function for the reform movement that many Pan-Islamist intellectuals found missing at the office of President Khatami. In this way, they were among the first organisations in the IRI to offer a careful and restricted opportunity for open debate within the country's political establishment. At the same time, they introduced a selected but influential idea to the political reform process and the organisations of university students. Although towards the end of the decade they were no longer the only organisations to do so, they did fulfil a pioneer role in these respects.

In the late 1990s and the early years of the next decade, two developments caused the SKF-IIPF to lose some of the official lustre and popular support it had enjoyed during the years prior to the Tehran University Incident in 1999. The first development was Mostafa Tajzadeh's continuing political problems and eventual demise (Dad, 2001). Already immediately after the fall of Abdullah Nouri, Mostafa Tajzadeh increasingly came under attack from the IRI conservative leadership. The term 'Winter of Reform' was added to Iran's political vocabulary after a wave of arrests in the winter of 2001. A few months prior to this, the GC, a bastion of conservative IRI leaders led by Ahmad Djanati, published an abolition list of 534 ballot boxes that had been deemed to have been forged during the parliamentary election in Tehran. The implication of this decision was that these ballot boxes, which contained a majority for the support of the most prominent reformist politicians, were rendered null from the counted result. Tajzadeh was cleared only after he got thirty-month suspension from working in state institutions, but his public credibility was seriously damaged. Therefore, Tajzadeh was admitted as a member of the SKF-IIPF to work for reform of the political structure, but this did not take place without some trouble, and ultimately, Khatami was unable to have Tajzadeh accepted as one of his vice-ministers. The main reason for Tajzadeh's recurrent troubles had always lain in his provocative opinions and activities. This case concerned a campaign that Tajzadeh had organised during the 2000 election to support political reform and to limit the power of the GC in the process. He had been outcast from his establishment post in December 2001 (Ibid. pp.226-7). Urged by President Khatami to do nothing foolish, it seems, Tajzadeh lay low during his trial. Once the official debates surrounding the reform of the political structure had ended, however, he felt free to speak out once more. In March 2002, Tajzadeh made a trip to Shiraz and gave a couple of interviews which were rapidly published by the reformer press where he proposed extensive amendments to the Iranian constitution and the adoption of a democratic political system. In May 2004, the authorities saw that reformers did not regain their seats in parliament, and by that summer many reformers even resigned as officials in the IRI political establishment, although they remained members of the SKF-IIPF (Ghochani, 2004, p.89). A more conservative official, however, succeeded Tajzadeh, from the Ministry of the state.

The second development was the growing disagreement from 1999 onwards amongst reformers at the SKF-IIPF over whether or not a Western model of democracy was suitable to Iran's political culture. This debate, the

contents of which will be dealt with more at length in coming pages, caused a rift between those favouring some form of democracy and those who believed it was entirely new to Iran's Islamic political culture. Before 1997, such key reformers as Abdullah Nouri, Mostafa Tajzadeh, Mohammad Abtahi, and Mohammad Khatami had always advocated reform of the administrative system as a way to democratise politics. In this way, they hoped to make Iran's administration both more participatory and accountable. By 2001, however, at least Abdullah Nouri, and probably Mohammad Abtahi and others, had come to the conclusion that Western democracy without moderation in Political Islam would not work for Islamic Iran. Consistent with trends to be found elsewhere, they turned to more frankly Islamic theories, among which a religiously democratic government was particularly popular (Kadivar, 2000). This change of heart led to acrimonious disputes at the SKF-IIPF.

Little specific information is known about SKF PFII activities within the institution of the IRI during the last year before the 2004 parliamentary election and after it. The organisation, it seems, was expanded through the addition of some student associations involved in political reforms. Mostafa Tajzadeh took up a defensive position as a defender of the political system, while Mostafa Moein stepped down as a minister and continued his Pan-Islamist strategy for reforms on the question of Iran's political culture and development. Mostafa Moein, the organisation's new presidential candidate, was often politically confused and showed no interest in a radical dealing against conservatives for sake of regime's interests (Ziebakalam, 2004). For all it was worth, Moein's candidacy in 2005 had at least brought some purpose to the organisation. But Mostafa Moein was not a political strategist and was clearly put in place as a brake on the radical reformist intellectuals. Unlike Mostafa Tajzadeh, he brought no positive strategy that could offer an alternative to reformers' position. On the contrary, his strategy was rightly viewed as a mainstream attempt to stifle the pro-democratic tendencies, which underlay Tajzadeh's approach to reform in political institution, by affiliating them more closely with the quest for administrative efficiency.

Internally, the intensity grew among Pan-Islamist intellectuals at the SKF-IIPF and lasted even until the May 2004 parliamentary election. Tajzadeh for his part wisely decided to be present and spent a large part of 2005 campaigning for political reform and Moein's candidacy. Since early 2005, the political elites and the lower ranks of the organisation became increasingly more involved in the general mobilisation that swept across Iran's main cities. Under conservative hegemony, the moderates' activities became more and more difficult. Generally, during the months close to Moein's electoral campaign in May 2005, the IIPF was viewed as staunchly on the side of the opposition groups, although this did not apply to its entire leadership. Consequently, with a serious setback for the SKF and the arrest of many pro-Western democracy activists, the organisation lost some of its most prominent supporters.

5. The Civil Society Associations and Political Reform

The view that a strong civil society represents the structure of plural progress is one of the most influential ideas in Iran's contemporary political thought: one of its best-known proponents is President Khatami, in his 'Civil Society and Social Civilisation' (Khatami, 1997). From 1988 onwards most officials in President Rafsanjani's government presented the civil society associations as the primary agency of Iran's modernisation (Soroush, 1998 & Amir-Ahmad, 1998). In 1997 President Khatami declared the civil society associations as the social base for a new undertaking of the modernising and a force capable of restraining both the conservative and radical Pan-Islamists, and, in the process, for developing a modern Islamic society. Khatami proclaimed that since 1997 presidential election a second revolution in the Islamic Republic has taken place and that the civil society was the agency of its handling and is now affecting Iran's political transformation (Ganji, 1999). He presented a conditional place for these associations by telling 'Rather in Islamic Iran it is the interests of the civil society that coincide with the interests of citizens as a whole' (Khatami, 1997, p.5). The idea of civil society association is encountered in one form or another in the works of a number of writers who regard themselves as moderate reformers (Ganji, 1999, pp.16-9).

The political role of civil society associations in these years had little in common with the mission that President Khatami prescribes for them. The emergence of the civil society associations in the post-war period did without doubt disclosed first of all the need for reforms in IRI's institutions, a different approach to technological modernisation, a new way of sustained economic development and growth, and a consciousness of citizenship rights among the masses of the people. Although the Islamic ideal CS model that Khatami has presented earlier has resulted in a greater public political participation but not to an efficient and rational socio-economic model for their empowerment (Alizadeh, 2002). Least of all were civil society associations themselves able to introduce an alternative model through a meaningful social measures and opportunities for public attention. Nonetheless, the crucial problem facing the civil society associations in these years was that independently, they could not accumulate the necessary power to create the sphere and opportunities for their own political and social advancements. In this respect, although the growth of CS inchoate a political protest movement but while seeking representation, they presented organisations to those religiously moderate politicians as an instrument for increasing opportunity and mobility within the framework of Islamic state. Consequently, in the power struggle between two main factions, in order to challenge the conservatives and clerical oligarchy, the moderates introduced civil society associations as a new style of political mobilisation (Ganji, 1999). But this mobilisation was distinctly limited. In the first place, the new established NGOs mobilised only a small fraction of the population in major cities. To this day, unfortunately, many of these NGOs were discriminated for their commitment to Islamic authority. Secondly, again many of these CS

associations from the start were reconciled to the maintenance of the IRI political organisation and socio-economic structures (Moslem, 2002). Partial power sharing was sufficient in bringing these associations to stand behind the election of President Khatami, but once there, they generally shared power with the state institutions. Through socio-economic modernisation some of these CS associations created a financial complex and a national entrepreneurial group. Unfortunately, a related phenomenon is the tendency of some of these associations in their pursuit of higher living standards often to join the state bureaucracy in squeezing the lower strata. Frequently this behaviour expresses itself in political alliance with pragmatist groups, which has root in their common merchandise socio-religious agreement.

During the early years of 1990s, long before the SKF was created, there had already been a great deal of pressure upon the IRI at the grass-roots organisational level. As has been pointed out above, the SKF, CIR, CS, IIPF, and some other smaller Pan-Islamist organisations were merely the apexes of a national pyramid of these grass-roots associations that together made up the political organisations of the reform movement in later years. Since the early 1990s, on the civil society level, at least thousands of associations were engaged in the process of socio-socio-economic modernisation. But, since these associations in a national level had minor effects on political arenas for changes, they had to stand by and wait for a greater movement that could facilitate their involvement in political process. However, here there was an indication of those grass-roots organisations, which in 1997 initiated the SKF and reform movements' activities.²⁶

In the course of the 1990s a great number of civil society associations were created to contribute to the socio-economic modernisation plans of the former president Rafsanjani. Like other grass-roots organisations, these associations looked to the policies of the dominant political groupings and possibly their organisations for support of socio-economic reform. Since the early days of the 1997 presidential election, these organisations additionally looked towards the political organisations in national level, which fell under their respective moderate candidate, Mohammad Khatami. Unlike state-created organisations, each civil society association was meant as a citizens-organisation through which all political reformers of all kinds could come into contact with one another. An overview of these associations will provide useful information about the extent and the modality of the spread of the reform movement at the civil society level during this period.

As mentioned above, the first such CS associations were already founded in Iran during the early 1990s. It is unclear, however, to what extent these SC associations fitted into or contributed to the initiation of the political reform process, since a described document on CS activities of before and during their involvement at the SKF do not yet exist. One possible explanation for their early existence may lie in the fact that Iran's civil society associations at the time were fiefs to pragmatist group. They wished to show

26 - Azadeh Reiesdana interview with Saeed Madani *'eydjade sazmanhaye qeyr-re dowlati va amal-karde-shan dar iran'* (NGO building and their function in Iran), in Asre-No newspaper, 20 March 2004, published in Iran

their support to President Khatami through their attempts for socio-economic modernisation and through getting political reform accepted as a new IRI moderation path. At any rate, judging from the events, their integration into the SKF took place around the 1997 presidential election, while they were more an association of socio-economic activities under the economic decentralisation policies than for any political intervention (Amir-Ahmadi, 1998, p.87).

On the other hand, probably the first CS association involved in political reform was the Society for Protecting the Rights of Children led by Shirin Ebadi, which was founded on 1994. The association of writers, intellectuals, lawyers, university professors and judges, women's associations, environmental protection groups (NGOs), teachers and parents associations, and many others followed this pattern. Several associations went through longer or shorter periods of preparation. This was the case with the workers and peasant associations, while the associations of writers and artists, which first initiated the SKF preparatory group in these years remained quiet throughout the decade.²⁷

Most of these associations from a moderate point of view were clearly in opposition to political authority. For the Society for Protecting the Rights of Children it took more than seven years before an official recognition was founded under international pressure.²⁸ In the meantime, the environmental associations experienced considerably less trouble in acquiring official recognition. Many other political associations did not even make it to the preparatory stage. Clearly Parviz Salarvand mentioned that industrial workers, together with their associations, were planning to establish their respective Iranian trade union associations, but these plans apparently never materialised. Instead, half of them followed the example of Shirin Ebadi of bringing an international pressure through the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to establish their free worker association.²⁹

In order to gain a better understanding of the Republic's and the reformers' approach to such associations, it is perhaps interesting to mention that the Pan-Islamist elite almost never supported the foundation of these associations either officially or unofficially. Unfortunately, of all these reformers, only few of them mentioned the importance of these NGOs. But such information gives an indication of the contacts and influence of these associations among the youth and public as a whole. In this respect, there is a surprisingly uniform support for the founding of such associations by the ordinary citizens.³⁰ For instance, very often when a NGO is established, and has popularity among the public, junior state officials occasionally attend its official founding meetings, although these officials were usually assured that

27 - Molahzadeh, A. 1997. '*mardom dar djostedju-ye badl-lye no*' (People in Search of New Alternative), in monthly review Farhang Toseeh (Developmental Culture), pp. 3-6, No. 28, published in Iran

28 - Ebadi, S. 2004. 'People's support makes democracy successful' in Daily News North western May 24, published in Iran

29 - Payvand's Iran News 'NGO Concerned Violence Against Iranian Workers', May 14, 2005

30 - Reiesdana, A. interview with Madani, S. 2004. '*edjade sazmah-ye qeye-re dowlatye va amal-karde-shan dar iran*' (NGO building and their Function in Iran), in Asre-No newspaper, March 20, published in Iran

their assigned low-ranking sympathisers would be integrated into the associations. These junior state officials who attended the founding meetings were also usually someone from the Ministry of Islamic Information and Propaganda or Islamic militia groups. The ways these officials intervened, for instance, in associations of writers or artists was more arbitrary and often resulted in violent confrontations. Some officials often denounced these associations at various occasions by accusing them of establishing the counter-revolution dark-house with the founding purpose of toppling the Islamic regime (Ganji, 2000, pp.98-108). But members of associations often rejected these accusations and tried to compromise with officials on their associations' very existence. On the whole, not many members of these associations could be trusted by government's officials to attend any kind of official consultancy nor could they hold a decision-making position. In a number of cases some members of parliament also occasionally attended meetings of women's associations. Interestingly, Faezeh Rafsanjani is nearly the only members of parliament to be exhaustively mentioned in the list of women associations. There are instances of members of the Ministry of Labour attending the meetings of worker associations, but these are clearly exceptions.

A similar story may be told about any other CS associations as well. For instance in women's associations' public meetings often a junior official from one of the dominant factions would start the first speeches. Then, the chairman of these associations would adopt an Islamic interpretation of the topics related to women or family issues. Frequently government officials would send over a message on the latest decisions on the associations' working subjects. The meeting of these associations would then proceed to draft a statement for public awareness and to pass on the association's messages. Most likely, in socio-economic associations some of these junior officials were also members of the board of directors, and the messages would be closely modelled after those of their political faction as well.

As becomes clear from the above, like other socio-economic organisations in private sectors some CS associations are also founded as the semi-bureaucratic model next to the state structure for such purposes. Although they looked up towards their private sector counterpart for their ideological guidelines, mostly they looked sideways towards the political authorities. In turn, as one of the very few examples, the Society for Protecting the Rights of Children led by Shirin Ebadi, shows, a CS association could also play the role that concerns a democratic political alternative as well. Consistent with this view, SPRC chairwoman Shirin Ebadi used occasions such as fund-raising meetings and international conferences to give guidelines to other CS associations. A good example of this is furnished by her speech from a meeting where she declared that she would provide legal representation for the family of the freelance photographer Zahra Kazemi, who was murdered by security forces during her interrogation in Evin prison.³¹ In other interviews, Ebadi stressed the importance of the support

31 - See Middle East Times 'Murdered photographer case still open, Iranian judiciary says' May 17, 2005

for democracy and human rights, and congratulated the CS associations for their persisting involvement in political reform process.³² Still, Ebadi pointed out that on the issue of human rights and women's rights, Iranian elite need to deal more with their political culture and that the governing reformers had so far failed to come up with sufficient reform plans, policies and proposals for reforms in the juridical organs of the Islamic state.

Nonetheless, in this overall reforms framework, the CS association involved in political reforms had two main tasks. The first was to support the moderate elites so that they would advance the political reforms at the public level and mobilise public pressure against the conservatives' stance. This could help the reform process to expand its length to administrative structure, state bureaucracy, and management in the state-controlled sector of economy. Like private sector associations, the CS associations had to adapt themselves to the country's new conditions for fulfilling the alternative modernisation model. The government, on the other hand, by setting up policies that allowed CS associations to freely organise their conferences, meetings, and work on public awareness, was to establish the support mechanism for their sustained development. In doing so, government had to distinguish these CS associations' stances from private sector and especially from the leadership's favoured selected economic groups. In this way, for instance, the CS associations' intervention in political reforms provided guidance to all who opposed the conservatives' repression, and to the juridical and ideological pollution of clerical institution. Therefore, like Ebadi's association, most CS associations had also given views on the importance of political reforms at this level and adopted an open critical voice.³³

In principle, during the late 1990s once the more moderate CS associations were officially founded, then, the more direction of political elite was changed to moderation. Consequently, the younger generation of leadership were appointed, current modernisation issues were discussed, and the guidelines in other associations were democratised as well. During these years one of the main function of CS associations seem to have been the organisation of the third generation of the post-revolution period while building public confidence in accordance with other SKF organisations. An example of this was the Shirin Ebadi's association, which together with other women's associations organised several seminars on democracy and human rights. Next to making political freedom visible to a larger group of people, these activities helped to introduce CS associations to one another. This opened new ways in which intellectual reformers could cooperate and exchange opinions and information. Examples of such exchanges are the many unofficial shared political topics and co-operations at SKF. Although networking at SKF through the CS associations was not the only way in which such contacts could be fostered, the CS contribution must be by no means negligible.

32 - Amitabh Pal 'The Progressive interview with Shirin Ebadi', September 2004, The Progressive.

33 - See 'Youth Iranian' NGOs call for National Youth Parliament, in Payvand's Iran News. 16. September 2003

In both governmental and private domains, therefore, CS associations have fulfilled the role of a think-tank, and at the same time, fulfilled the task of public mobilisation in service of political reforms. Unlike the political domain, where the distinction between moderates and conservatives was delineated more clearly, at the CS domain, almost all associations assisted the political reform process. This becomes clear from the presence of the CS associations at the SKF governmental activities. Paradoxically, such a role would also explain why organisations such as the association of lawyers and writers could be slighted for so long. The reformer government obviously preferred to see the CS association just as a think-tank organisation. For instance when Shirin Ebadi's association was internationally recognised and she was rewarded, only representatives from the opposition and the universities attended in her ceremony. Foolishly, Khatami said:

This achievement could be more significant if she was awarded for scientific or literature.³⁴

Nonetheless since no concrete information on juridical advice by this association on the rights of children and women has so far come to light, however, it remains unclear to what extent the association actually fulfilled its so-called think-tank task in advancing the IRI's family laws.

Concluding remarks here is that during the late 1990s, the SKF as the organisation of political reforms clearly provided the most extensive and most important basis for the changes. Interestingly, that the SKF associations, parties, and networks provided a sound framework within which the formal organisation of political reform could be both anticipated and evaluated. As was to be expected, the political reformers strategy at the SKF was to work with IRI moderate elite, all sectors of civil society, and other organisations which possessed influence possibly at the lower levels of state institutions. By comparing the SKF as the organisation of political reform with the other mainstream organisations, it is clear that it encountered far more resistance to conservative factions than was expected while at the same time competing with mainstream reformers groups. Both the SKF organisations and the civil society associations were much more involved in political levels than was the case for the other important Pan-Islamist social organisations. Moreover, by the end of the decade, many Pan-Islamist groups established clear links to SKF organs and CS associations than before.

By 2004, the IRI political elite had apparently decided that the SKF would have to be either isolated and deprived from public support in favour of less threatening and more mainstream moderate Islamic groups, or would have to be merged with pragmatist reformers to form a new faction for less political but more administrative and economic reforms. This latter trend was exemplified by former President Rafsanjani, who in reality lead Iran's highest authority, that of the Regime Expediency Council. As the organisational struggles surrounding the SKF groups show, the reformers had viewed civil society associations as an ideal instrument of intervention and pressure for political reforms from the very start. Finally, to a large extent the political

34 - Amitabh Pal 'The Progressive interview with Shirin Ebadi', September 2004, The Progressive

reform for a majority of IRI elite was meant to instigate administrative changes that would enable the Islamic state to carry out its new socio-economic modernisation successfully.

6. Political Reform and the Universities

6.1. The Second Category of Groups behind Political Reforms

Within the formal organisation of political reforms, the university associations belong to a completely different category than those of the SKF political groups, networks and fronts. The university groups (the OSU and the IA) are mostly famous for their contributions to the post-revolutionary reconstruction needed in the villages and countryside, alongside land reform, active participation during the eight-years war against Iraq, the hostage taking of the US embassy, and cooperation with the regime's Cultural Revolution (purge of secular and leftist professors, students and staff).³⁵ When one considers that the repression in universities was amongst the Islamic regime's main policies these types of contributions seems controversial. Moreover, much like other Pan-Islamist associations in post-revolution eras, university associations kept very tight control on the students' political life, through which students sometimes questioned the authority of the Islamic state and the legitimacy of a clerical leadership. Like any other sphere of society, the institution of education was also subject to official Islamisation after a thorough overhaul on 20 April 1980. In this sense, until early 1990s the universities' Islamic associations mostly functioned much like an Islamisation enterprise, where the IRI hoped to establish repressive law and orders through these associations within the intellectual life and to cleanse the educational sphere from the secular and leftist forces (Ibid. p.205).

In the Iran's modern political history, universities and educational institutions occupied a special and rebellious place. In the first years of the IRI, there had been a repressive attitude towards universities largely due to Ayatollah Khomeini's aversion against secular and leftist intellectuals. He declared 'all the sufferings of humanity could be attributed to the universities' (Ibid. p.209). During the 1980s and early 1990s, student associations, which were known as the 'Islamic Associations', were managed by the Office of Strengthening Unity and their activities were to support the Islamic state policies inside and outside of the universities. Until the end of war, students did not forget this dependence on Islamic regime. In the early 1990s an ongoing friction started between more moderate professors and pro-democracy students on one side and some of the conservative members of these Islamic associations. The professors' rejection of conservative interpretation of Islamic political thought and students' rejection of conservative religious education become a hotbed of negation towards

35 - According to official figures published by hospital in Tehran and the three provincial capitals of Ahwas, Rasht, and Zahedan, over three thousand persons had been wounded and over 37 killed during the first three days of the 'Cultural Revolution'. See Suroosh Irfani 'Revolutionary Islam in Iran', 1983, p. 208, Published in U.K.

Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine. This friction was exacerbated during the years of 1990s and onwards by the deepening of the factional conflicts between the political reformers and the conservatives in the IRI establishment.³⁶ The new student movement that was organised by seculars and pro-reforms Pan-Islamist radical and moderate factions were especially viewed with suspicion from both the high-rank members of Islamic government and universities' Islamic associations. Although in many cases the influence of the SKF reform movement at universities could not be ignored, at least until the incidents of the July 1999, Khatami's direct influence served to keep the student voice infused with his interpretation of Political Islam ideology. At the same time, to counter the effects of the new movement, the Islamic associations tried vainly to step-up their own version for a 'democratic Islamic political thought'.

Under the Office of Strengthening Unity, there was a combination of different associations, which mainly reflected the radicals, moderates, conservatives, and pragmatists' factions of the IRI. This was one of the main results of the 1980 Islamic unity model inspired by the 'cultural revolution'. Members of moderates and radicals associations were those offering a fairly complete range of political options. They were often the largest and politically most prestigious. As their names suggested, the members of conservatives and pragmatists associations offered some traditional model of thought-practice for the Islamic education and the Islamisation of the entire universities. In view of the importance of ideology, these associations also formed a network of relations, which was topped by the clergymen seminaries at which the leaders for Islamic political institutions were trained. On the other hand, the moderates and pragmatist associations consist of those members who were specialised in one general field of the Islamic state institutions: low-ranks in management, in technology, and economy or development policies. Additionally, some secular and leftist individuals, a relatively small and qualitatively more modest group, that were often called student circles existed in an underground position in the leadership of these associations. Due to the endemic shortages of qualified Pan-Islamist leadership, such student circles were established to alleviate some of the most pressing political issues. Among the associations' members, a small number always received special treatment, such as those under the 'Imam's Line' identification. Although the composition of these associations varied over the years, some of those established in major cities such as Tehran, Mash'had, Shiraz, and Tabriz formed the backbone and regular membership of the Office of Strengthening Unity.

Between 1981 and 1984, the academic life and political debates in the Iranian universities largely ground to a halt (Irfani, 1983, p.208). Not surprisingly, the associations that did not follow the Imam's Line were heavily attacked and soon abolished. During the years of Islamic 'cultural revolution', the students, professors and university staff of leftist and secular leanings were thoroughly purged (Ibid. pp.206-7-8). Most student associations and

36 - See Bahar, M. 2003, 'Iranian Student Movement: What's in the Cards?' in Znet 06 July.

intellectual circles were shut down for longer or shorter periods. Their members were often expelled or sent to prisons; some were able to escape to countryside in Kurdistan and live under the protection of Kurdish guerrilla groups. The remaining academic education contained a strong element of Islamic political thought, and enrolment was based on students' commitment to the Islamic regime and religious background, rather than on intellectual prowess. From 1984 onwards, the academic system gradually returned to the practices of the period before the revolution.

As had been the case during the early 1980s, control by the Islamic associations remained very tight throughout most of the 1980s. The Islamisation plan, which was set up and implemented directly by the ministry of education and Islamic associations, provided both the organisational composition and the related ideological materials for most associations' political life. Due to a number of reasons, in the early 1990s, these associations were quite unsuccessful in securing their ideological positions for the new generation of university students. As a result, many of the old Pan-Islamist associations were lacking adequate ideological materials and leadership while the new networks were slow to emerge as the leading organisations in the coming years. In 1989 some official publications suggested the government should review its policies concerning universities, where an explicit, public plea was made to speed up the indoctrination of new moderate policies and relaxation in various universities in Tehran, and in other districts such as Mash'had, Shiraz, and Tabriz.³⁷ In other words, the Islamic associations were being encouraged to obstruct the older policies which, as state publications had prominently pointed out, were in urgent need of evaluation, while it seemed that the associations' directions were to become in the service of political liberalism (Ibid. p.78). Typically, then, one of the main points in the student requests that concerned the increased autonomy of their associations was the IRI confused political line (Ibid. p.78). Naturally, this view had effects on the shapes of the 1997 reformers movements, as was exposed above in the SKF category. In the years between 1989 and 1997, university associations were to be subject to a systematic change through the policies which the new pragmatist state had adopted. This was an alarming situation for conservatives in that the associations were becoming increasingly independent from Islamic traditional education and religious imposed rule in their socio-political activities. At the same time, however, the degree of this autonomy was relative, since the directives of associations had to be centralised and united; therefore, their debates on political reforms and an alternative governing model ought to have been lively and manifold. An example is the debate on the former President Rafsanjani vision for a liberal model of economic modernisation which evidently was too short in content to catch on.

At least prior to the 1997 reforms movement, the tight ideological control in universities ensured the IRI leaders that the students associations

37 - See '*madjmo-ehe bayaniye-ha-ye rohanyeune mobareze Tehran*' (Tehran Combatant Clergies Collective Manifestoes), between 1988 and 1999, pp. 74-80, published in Iran

as their basic units in universities, which united different student factions, could not get involve in politics without the permission of the Ministry of Education and Religious Department. But nonetheless those associations which needed no specific ideological control could become active in universities' affairs, of course, as the ways the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Information saw fit. One of the major changes when the political reforms process started was that Pan-Islamist students could establish alternative intellectual circles as they themselves saw fit. In part, this was made possible also because before the 1997 presidential election, members of universities' associations were increasingly allowed to moderately voice their own developmental opinions. Between 1997 and the July 1999 universities incident, however, students associations and intellectual circles in universities were free to pursue their own political objectives - as long as their overall activities met the criteria of President Khatami's political reforms vision (Baghi, 1994, pp.422-3). In the following sections I shall expose the universities associations' organisational models together with the actual political debates amongst members, and place it implicitly within the context of the IRI political reforms.

As the preceding passages suggest prior to the 1997 presidential election a new and somehow organised intellectual movement and political debates experienced problems in getting off the ground, while from the early 1997 conditions have improved. Based on this therefore, the topic and content of the following sections will form the exact ways in which that improvement took place and the subjects of political debates has developed.

6.2. Political Reform and the University Associations

6.2.1. An Overview of the Events

Prior to 1997, there had been no discussion about a new student movement or serious debates for political changes in the IRI at any universities. During the early 1990s, some students undertook a new theoretical discussions similar to that of the late 1970s: they began debates concerning some unofficial discourse, mainly the position expressed by Mohsen Kadivar and Abdul Karim Soroush about democracy in Islamic politics, human rights and Islam, the nature of supreme power in the IRI constitution, and on the Islamic political model as a whole (Kadivar, 2000). This was the case at most major universities, and probably also at some peripheral ones as well. In 1996, under the framework of an Islamic model for socio-economic development, as a part of an overall state modernisation plan, these debates created a sphere for forthcoming discussions on the IRI political and legal systems. This was necessarily so, since state privatisation plan did not gain any support among the majority of the citizens and particularly students at universities. Although the debates on political and juridical affairs within the student association were formally subject to the permission of the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, it is possible that the debate on economic modernisation was not subjected to such a

procedure. Nonetheless, from the very beginning, the state authority systematically opposed all kinds of political debates at universities and violently oppressed the students' leading groups.

In late 1996, as some political elites started discussing their visions for both economic and political modernisation, Mohammad Khatami urged student associations to convince the student opinion to support him and to run his presidential campaign from universities. In this respect Abdo points out:

On December 28, 1996, Mohammad Khatami gathered with university students in a courtyard in downtown Tehran to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Ali, one of the holiest figures in Shiite Islam. The meeting took place at the headquarters of the Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat, a 20-year-old student organisation whose founders helped take U.S. diplomats hostage in 1979. Khatami pulled out of his pocket a small copy of the Iranian constitution and promised his audience that, if elected president, he would create a society based on the rule of law. It was the beginning of Khatami's close affiliation with Iran's youth, who comprise more than half of the population. From that day forward, student groups vowed to help elect him president. They campaigned for him in their towns and on their campuses. When Khatami won in a landslide victory five months later with 70 percent of the vote, he owed much of his victory to Iran's students.³⁸

Khatami assures the Pan-Islamist students and pointed out that this reform had become necessary if Iran was to come to terms with the Republican and moderation principles aspects of Islamic revolution and of course to avoid such an event (revolution) from taking place again.³⁹ While brushing aside some unspecified dissatisfactions, which were made by students associations, Khatami remarked that process of political reforms only brings advantages for all and no disadvantages. There were real dissatisfactions among students' associations and most intellectual circles against the continuation of the former president liberal politics of economic modernisation by President Khatami, dissatisfactions which were naturally to be expected. But the public support for political reforms must have made the students' associations and intellectual circles aware that outright opposition to this government was suicidal. Predictably, they resorted to unifying tactics for some times (Nabavi, 2001, p.25).

One year after the 1997 election, several university associations held meetings at which they addressed President Khatami on the issue of freedom of expression and freedom of assembly for all political groups at a number of universities. The recognition and support of such a demand by students' associations then allow the more moderate students to establish their own independent associations in a gradual and organised way at universities. At the same time, the OSU's leadership called also for freedom of expression and organised debates on the institutional reforms in the political establishment, which became a part of their political standards (Ibid. p.24). Starting from the winter of 1998, it was clear that the students and the

38 - Abdo, G. 1999. 'Days of Rage in Tehran' in journal of Middle East Policy Council, Volume VII, October , Number 1.

39 - See '*bayanye-ye-ha va mavaze djebheye mosharekate irane islami ta kongreh aval*' (Manifestos and Positions of the Islamic Iran Participation Front until the first convention), 2001, pp. 148-157, published in Iran

society as a whole would achieve nothing more by waiting for Khatami's uncertain reform project and political modernity than what they achieved under former President Rafsanjani's economic modernisation.⁴⁰ A change of tactics become observable amongst students' associations from both the elder and new generations of intellectual circles or even from different sectors of the public that for a while was started.⁴¹ But before having concrete plan about a protest movement, the students had to confirm their ideas with OSU's leaderships in order to gain the support of their experienced SKF members. As times passed because students and their associations did not receive the support of government and other SKF elite, they later on become a protest movement in their own right.⁴²

Through Khatami's bi-partisan prodding, the students' protest movement did not fall entirely on deaf ears. In the end of protest days, officials from the Ministries of Education and SKF organised a joint meeting with the Office of the President in order to establish law and order in universities, a meeting at which it was possibly decided to set up a commission to investigate the incidents in universities' dormitories. In this meeting possibly it was agreed they would compile an ideological outline for the universities students on the meaning of reforms movement in the IRI.⁴³

Almost all university associations from the main cities, together with some SKF reformers and intellectual circles, were involved in the protest movement. Both Pan-Islamist associations and secular networks were involved at Tehran universities and other major cities where they took care of organisational affairs (of which OSU was put in charge) assisted by OSU

40 - According to Abdo "This relationship between Iran's president and its youth prompted university students to demonstrate July 8-14 in support of the very policies Khatami advocates. Over the two years he has been in power, the country's youth have embraced his reformist agenda with high expectations for social and political change. The days of unrest were sparked by the closing of the liberal newspaper Salaam, a publication that symbolised freedom of expression. But the students underlying motivation was in fact their own liberation from cultural and political pressures. This would require modernising the Islamic system that now restricts their social and moral behaviour. So when they shouted Freedom or Death in their rallies, which began on university campuses and then spilled into the streets, they were thinking of the freedom that Khatami had first promised that cold December afternoon in 1996." Abdo, G. 1999. 'Days of Rage in Tehran' in journal of Middle East Policy Council, Volume VII, October, Number 1.

41 - See '*bayanye-ye-ha va mavaze djebheye mosharekate irane islami ta kongreh aval*' (Manifestos and Positions of the Islamic Iran Participation Front until the first convention), 2001, pp. 148-157, published in Iran

42 -Abdo writes "By the third day of the July unrest, the protests grew more violent. As students felt the pain of the brutal and, in some cases, deadly blows of the Islamic militia, and plainclothes police and vigilantes took swipes at them on the campuses and in the streets, they became inflamed. At some rallies, there was no way to know if the armed men beating the students were police, members of the right-wing Basij militia, the secret intelligence service, or the Ansar-e Hezbollah, Iran's most prominent militant extremists. It appeared the aggression was unauthorized at times; yet the authorities failed to stop it. When calm had returned to the capital and major cities such as Tabriz, where clashes between students and law-enforcement agencies were reportedly bloodier than in Tehran, the question on the students' minds was: Where was the 'rule of law' Khatami had promised?" Abdo, G. 1999. 'Days of Rage in Tehran' in journal of Middle East Policy Council, Volume VII, October, Number 1.

43 - Abdo continues "The student unrest, the worst since the aftermath of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, raised the political stakes to a level unseen since the president took office in August 1997. Their courage to cross the line from peaceful protest to public rage came from a determination to chart their own destiny. If at one time they doted on Khatami's every word, now they were willing to risk leaving him behind. The students and youth in general believe the pace of reform has been too slow. Their patience has grown shorter each time their weddings are broken up by aggressive vigilantes who are given law-enforcement powers, or they are stopped in their cars and taken into custody for being in mixed company, or when they sit, boyfriend and girlfriend, in cafes." Ibid.

leaders Afshari and Sahabi. By concentrating political pressure on Khatami, the process of mobilisation was presumably speeded up. It was optimistically forecast that the students would obtain their requests for institutional changes and for the freedom for political prisoners and activists in all universities. Indeed, barely a few days later, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei spoke of changes, which was positively received. In the end, however, it was to take until August 1999 before the mobilisation came to a halt. This mobilisation was important, however, because it signalled that President Khatami had been forced to take the first steps in to serious political reform.⁴⁴

As a result of this conflict, some Islamic associations under the OSU criticised the student movement's tactics, which was believed to be influenced by those religiously nationalist and Pan-Iranist opposition groups. A week later, the OSU at Tehran University announced their support for political reforms due to their democratic nature after the May 1997 presidential election. A similar development took place a little earlier at university campuses, where they called for restriction on political mobilisations, which had begun in towns and cities.⁴⁵ At Tehran University, a Select Committee amongst students was even established before July, as mentioned in Akbar Ganji's *Ghosts' Dark-house: Pathology of Transition to the Developmental Democratic State* on political reforms (Ganji, 1999. pp.280-4). Ganji claims that by the summer of 1999 after a series of killings, the hardliners' 'Mohar'ram project' was realised through the new regulations on the press, the closing of the *Salaam* newspaper, and the attack on Tehran University campuses (Ibid. pp.271-2). This means that initially, at least, Khatami's popularity lasted a mere two years, with two more years from his first four. Nationwide, however, the level of protest and the apex of students' political mobilisation was probably the highest at Tehran, and its return to normality and regular control lasted not more than a month. Abdo shares Ganji's view,

Change of generation plays an important role in these differing approaches toward the reform. Students are today very young to carry the baggage of the 1979 revolution and they are less ideological than their elders who stormed

44 - Abdo points out "If modernists fail to answer this call for fast reform, they risk being done in by the very people who helped bring them to power. But how can they accelerate the pace, when President Khatami himself seems powerless at times to undo the damage his hardline rivals have inflicted on his government? Unlike the chief executive of a Western government, Khatami's power as president is severely circumscribed. In all matters of state, he must defer to Iran's supreme clerical leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who is backed by conservatives. Khamenei and his loyalists effectively control most branches of law enforcement, which include the police, the Revolutionary Guards (Sepah) and the Basij militia. They also dominate the judiciary and have used their powers to close reformist newspapers, attempting to choke off the growing independent media that represent one of the president's greatest achievements to date." Ibid.

45 - Abdo says "In the heat of the unrest, when fears were rampant that students might try to take over Tehran streets and get themselves killed while doing so, the Daftar [OSU] called on all students to restrict their rallies to the university campuses. But the young students refused to obey. One evening, they left the gates of Tehran University and began marching in the streets. Soon they were chased back into the university by Islamic vigilantes. The students were so frightened they took refuge in the university mosque, which the vigilantes then tried to storm. The Daftar issued a statement disassociating itself from the student demonstrators. The protestors then elected the so-called Select Committee, including several members of Daftar, to act as their representatives. This split showed their ultimate difference: the Daftar as a whole had become part of the system; but the younger students were content to remain outside it if rebellion was the only avenue to rapid social freedom." Ibid.

the U.S. embassy and founded the OSU. The most important change they ask is to remove the prying eyes of the law enforcement and its intelligence agencies from the private life of Iranians. However the key issue which both the OSU and the young generation agree upon is that Iran should remain an Islamic state. During their protests the students made it clear that they were fighting for reform and not for dismantling the system as a whole.⁴⁶

Moreover, most of the early supporters of political reforms, such as Tajzadeh, Abdullah Nouri, Kadivar, held the similar position.

Some may think Islamic system in Iran is dysfunctional. What we want to say is that some have tried to install a system, which is not a real Islamic system. Everyone should be able to express their ideas in a clear way and freely in an Islamic system; one student leader said in an interview.⁴⁷

During the spring and summer of 1999, therefore, the OSU and the SKF, including the IIPF, turned to their Pan-Islamist roots of the post-revolutionary politics for the support and survival of President Khatami, and to organise an all-embracing Islamic state. In this process, the OSU leaders for protest mobilisation received full support, but they decided to comply with establishment officials' rules, based on their ideological conviction, as Abdo emphasises:

Ideologically, the Daftar [OSU] backs President Khatami's political agenda even if he disappoints them. Khatami is the system's last hope for survival, said one of the organisations' leaders during a press conference at the height of the July mayhem. This is why we must support him. It is a message many students do not want to hear.⁴⁸

Between 1999 and 2000, more than one hundred student leaders from Tehran and other provinces were arrested. Other student associations, which were not directly under the OSU, such as Amir-Kabir University, also started similar unrest by calling for political freedom. Nevertheless, the characteristic of the hostility towards them was not in the same way as it was for the others. As mentioned previously, they set up a kind of platform on political reforms under the OSU former leaderships who organised the 1980 cultural-revolution in accordance with Khatami's modernisation (Baghi, 2004, pp.181-189). During the same period, as Abdo has pointed out, other associations nominally engaging in political modernisation were, in reality, centres for indoctrination or Islamic political thought at universities.⁴⁹

46 - Abdo, G. 1999. 'Days of Rage in Tehran' in journal of Middle East Policy Council, Volume VII, October, Number 1.

47 - Ibid.

48 - Ibid.

49 - Abdo says "Intellectually, the student movement understands the limitations of Khatami's presidency. But rather than waiting for change within the institutions beyond his control, the students have decided to apply their own pressure from outside. In pressuring their hard-line rivals, they are also forcing the man they helped elect to sit on a time bomb. This volatility has made Iran a more dangerous place than it was before the riots occurred. The students have become a powerful force on the political scene, yet they have neither the organisation nor the leaders to direct their movement. With its long history of working against secularist dissent lodged at the Islamic regime shortly after the revolution, the Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat, or Office to Consolidate Unity, was once the students' guiding light. But the July demonstrations illustrated the organisation's shortcomings. Its almost exclusive focus on political affairs leaves many of today's students cold, as does its impeccable revolutionary heritage. Its original mentors are now seasoned politicians and journalists in their 40s. And its loyalty to the Khatami government has left it struggling to keep up with the rising demands of the campuses for accelerated change." Abdo, G. 1999. 'Days of Rage in Tehran' in journal of Middle East Policy Council, Volume VII, October, Number 1.

The conservatives' hostility towards the student movement and their demands for political freedom may be reduced to two basic reasons in general. First, many political elites and Pan-Islamists involved in Islamic political thought shared a profound conviction that vilayet-i faqih and modernity are two mutually exclusive worldviews (Nabavi, 2001, p.22). Introducing political freedom to Iranian society was tantamount to fostering new secular elements within the frame of the Islamic state. As concrete evidence of their fears, many officials pointed to the quite spectacular loss of faith in Political Islam among the Iranian people (Ibid. p.22). From 1999 onwards, students had indeed become increasingly critical of the Islamic regime and its official ideology. In 1999 several university students were more or less openly anti-vilayet-i faqih and came out against Supreme Leader particularly those who were candidates at the elections for the local municipalities or parliament. Earlier in late 1997, some daily newspapers published articles in which they criticised the moderate political elites, who had used the results of the presidential election to change the Islamic institution and its Islamic ideology. Later on these newspapers even quoted from some activist such as university professor Hashem Aghajari, who said 'the Islamic institution originally consisted of a group of professional merchants, who did not represent the basic interests of the Iranian people, that they were separated from the public, and therefore, should be isolated'.⁵⁰ Needless to say, such opinions only became known through more open and critical debates on the subjects such as Political Islam.⁵¹

Secondly, there was, quite concretely, some concern amongst Pan-Islamists involved in Islamic political thought, mainly the clergies, for the continued existence of their social, political, and economic position as professionals. They were generally not a profession that could count on social esteem. Added to this, there was a conflict in feelings about the superiority of Islamic thought on the one hand and the uneasiness that they lacked modern ways of thinking. Pan-Islamist reformer intellectuals actively felt this concern.

50 - See BBC News, Middle East, Profile Hashem Aghajari, Wednesday, 9 July, 2003, UK. Hashem Aghajari is a history professor at one of Tehran's universities and a disabled veteran of the 1980-88 war with Iraq. He is an active member of the reformist Organisation of the Mujahideen of the Islamic Revolution (Mujahideen-e Enqelab-e Eslami). He was sentenced to death for apostasy in November 2002. He had enraged conservatives in June that year, when he questioned the rule of clerics and the principle of emulating religious leaders. He said Muslims should not follow Islamic clerics 'like monkeys'. Many accused him of being Iran's Salman Rushdie. The sentence sparked off a month of student protests. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei then ordered a judicial review of the case.

51 - Abdo says "The depth and scope of Tehran's days of rage clearly caught the reformist camp off-guard. Students, after all, hold a near-sacred status in modern Iran. It was the students who did much of the heavy lifting during the Islamic Revolution. Later, they watered the homeland with their martyrs' blood to defend Iran from Iraq. And it was the students who revelled in their new political power with the election of Khatami and then were among the first to enjoy the tentative fruits of his social and cultural reforms. Surely, no true student would seek to destabilize the existing order. The conservative establishment suffered from no such illusions. It was not that they were any less starry-eyed over the students. Rather, they grasped at once the immediate political implications to what was essentially a release of pent-up demand for cultural and social normalization after 20 years of permanent revolution. If competing versions of Islam were allowed in the name of expanded freedom, then the role of the clerical hierarchy could be called into question. To freeze the momentum created by the protests, senior religious figures ran to their pulpits to denounce Western-style personal and intellectual freedom. The right to resort to violence in defence of the existing orthodoxy was asserted from one end of the country to the other." Abdo, G. 1999. 'Days of Rage in Tehran' in journal of Middle East Policy Council, Volume VII, October Number 1.

No one less than Abdul Karim Soroush, one of Ayatollah Khomeini's representatives on the Cultural Revolution Committee, proposed to modernise Islamic political thought at basic levels, because he claimed traditional interpretation of Islam hindered rationalism (Soroush, 2000, pp.156-160). The opposition to the *vilayet-i faqih*, therefore, may be traced back to both terms of the perceived threat to an indispensable measure of moral crowd control that ensured the survival of the regime and of concrete personal interest.⁵²

In spite of this opposition, however, political reformers lobbied hard to get the process off the ground in the universities. Presumably, the SKF would have offered a useful organisational base from which the reform movement at universities could have operated. In any event, political debate was put on the agenda, next to political mobilisation. Somewhere early in 1999, President Khatami presented two speeches to political reformers, which were to become a part of the already running nationwide strategy.⁵³ This strategy offered an overall forecast for the rule of law to be conducted at the governmental level and in state institutions. It is more than likely that the state institutions mentioned in this regard formed the main centres of political movement for reforms at the time. Among them, the Ministry of Education, the state-organised university associations, and the new organisation of the Select Committee in universities were perhaps the most conspicuous. Nevertheless, they were by no means the only organs involved. An active political organisation of the Islamic seminaries schools also was listed (Ibid. pp.155-6). Paradoxically, Islamic institutes offering strategies on Islamic political thought or Political Islam were also possible centres for mobilisation of political reforms. The political organisation of the Association of Combatant Clergies and the Crusades of Islamic Revolution provide good examples. Importantly, the SKF or OSU did not figure in the speeches. It is unclear whether this was due to its unofficial status or because officials wanted to use it solely as a practical association of the state at universities. At the same time, however, the speeches revealed that for all the delaying

52 - According to Abdo "The monopoly the conservative establishment claims to hold on Islamic interpretation collides with the thinking of the students' guiding light, the philosopher Abdul Karim Soroush. In his theory of the contraction and expansion of religious laws, Soroush rejects the idea that the clergy maintains the exclusive religious knowledge required to interpret Islamic texts. To adopt such a view, according to Soroush, is to deprive an individual of free thought. And such deprivation does not produce true believers. For the clerical establishment, Soroush's ideas are a serious threat to their legitimacy, to say nothing of their very existence. His direct challenge provides an example for the youth to act likewise. One of the fundamental differences between thinkers such as Soroush and those of the conservative establishment lies in their interpretation of the velayat-e faqih, the concept of supreme clerical rule. The main problem of the principle of velayat, according to Soroush, is its imposition on the people of obligation to the state. In a republic, the state should be governed according to the rights of the people. What has become the establishment political reading of the velayat was first introduced by Ayatollah Khomeini, but many senior theologians argue there is insufficient evidence in the Quran or other sacred texts to support its existence. Islamic intellectuals such as Soroush argue it is the people who give legitimacy to political rule. The conservative establishment, however, believes the state's legitimacy rests within the divine rule of the supreme leader." Abdo, G. 1999. 'Days of Rage in Tehran' in journal of Middle East Policy Council, Volume VII, October, Number 1.

53 - See Mohammad Khatami speeches in '*bayanye-ye-ha va mavaze djebheye mosharekate irane islami ta kongreh aval*' (Manifestos and Positions of Islamic Iran Participation Front until the first convention), 2001, pp. 148-157, published in Iran

tactics imposed by the conservative groups, the reforms movement had conquered a positive place in the overall public opinion.⁵⁴

Geographically, the student unrest was mostly concentrated at universities in Tehran, where most universities in Iran are situated. Given the political importance of the capital city Tehran within the Iranian political culture, this went a long way towards revealing the combined obstruction of the political reformers and the moderate elite in Islamic state apparatus. The obstruction and delaying tactics did not pass unnoticed by the student's political leadership. On October 1999, President Khatami himself obliquely reiterated his support for the student movement and political reforms. In an official statement, he stated that Iran must be faced towards modernisation, towards the world, and towards the future.⁵⁵ From December 1999 on, the SKF and OSU duly organised the first nationwide campaign on reforms of both juridical and political institutions during the early days of the campaign for the sixth parliamentary election.⁵⁶ A great number of SKF reformers and several candidates from the IIPF and OSU obtained the necessary votes to attend the sixth parliament. These new members of parliament called for the immediate reform of political and juridical institutions.⁵⁷ In a continued display of hostility towards the possible harmful effects of political reform, the new parliament expressly pointed out that ample importance should be attached to Islamic political thought. Apparently, however, little effort was made to give political reform a firmer foundation. In fact, the bureaucratic indifference of the new members of parliament was so obvious that an internal university newspaper report on the conditions in political reform openly criticised President Khatami for not being able to strengthen the leadership and to quickly bring about reforms in the executive institution.⁵⁸

54 - Abdo says "The conservatives, on the other hand, appear incapable of surrendering their revolutionary mentality. They interpreted as heretical the students' anti-clerical protest. The debate over religious interpretation heated up in the weeks following the student unrest. In mid-September, Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi, the leading ideologue of the right, gave a speech before Friday prayers in central Tehran and clearly articulated the conservatives' position: 'If everyone is allowed to make his own interpretation of the holy Quran, nothing would be left for Islam. What would you do if in the future someone claims that according to his reading there is no God? He would base his words on his interpretation of Islam. If you plan to be Martin Luther, invent a new religion for yourself. The religion we have inherited from the Prophet and his household is not adaptive to different readings and has no other interpretation but that of the Prophet.... If anyone tells you he has a new interpretation of Islam, slug him in the mouth' he concluded." Abdo, G. 1999. 'Days of Rage in Tehran' in journal of Middle East Policy Council, Volume VII, October, Number 1.

55 - Abdo points out that "The current crisis of defining the 'true Islam' certainly is not new in Iran. But the student demonstrations have pushed both the extreme left and right to new heights, regenerating a cycle of debate that has put President Khatami in a no-win situation. During the days of unrest, Khatami called upon the students to stop demonstrations in the streets. By the time the students called off their marches, they felt betrayed by a president they had worked hard to elect. They never heard the words of support and sympathy they had expected from President Khatami; some said they just wanted to see him shed a sympathetic tear or two. In his first public appearance after the unrest, in the western town of Hamadan, he referred to the police and Islamic vigilantes who had attacked students in their dormitories the first night as 'supporters of violence'. But he drew a clear separation between the injustice committed that night and the following days of unrest. 'The attack on the university dormitory was a crime. Why did they attack the university? Why did they beat up students? Because students and academics are dynamic and active members of society and the greatest supporters of the progress and development of this country.'" Ibid.

56 - See 'Manifestos and Positions of Islamic Iran Participation Front (IIPF) (until the first convention)', 2001, pp. 98-101, published in Iran

57 - See the first convention manifesto of The Islamic Iran Participation Front (IIPF), 2000, published in Iran

58 - See the ACC newsletter, 1999, No. 14, pp. 30-31, published in Iran

Before the reform process started in the executive system, the state authority made ample use of its extensive powers to obstruct and delay the implementation of any changes. Clearly for Khatami, total opposition was out of the question, as the Guardian Council had repeatedly sanctioned the pro-political reforms establishment officials.⁵⁹ The OSU association and a few Islamic associations that had conceded, however, were kept as small and as critical as was bureaucratically possible. In the long run, even this level of obstruction was neither possible nor acceptable to Iran's political reformers. For one thing, the new university-educated management was urgently needed if the Islamic state was to be able to manage its process of socio-economic modernisation.

The presence of the late 1990s student movements marked an important turning point in the organisational fortunes of political reforms. As noted above, the institutions needing special attention, as mentioned explicitly in Khatami's speeches, were the political and educational institutions. In winter of that year, the new judiciary chief gave a public speech on changes needed in the Ministries, media, and at universities. At last, it was decided officially to start up modernisation under the pressure of mobilisation at some key state institutions and some universities' organisation such as in Tehran, Mash' had, Tabriz, and Shiraz. In a move that exemplified the continued distrust on student associations among Pan-Islamist officials and conservative leaderships, however, in early 2000 they announced the Revolutionary Court decision on the arrested university student leaders:

The Revolutionary Court announced that four people were handed the death penalty for their involvement in the July demonstrations. There was no evidence a trial had taken place, and the names of the accused were not released. The announcement sparked outrage in the international community. The European Union registered a formal complaint with Iran's foreign minister, and international human rights groups issued stinging letters of criticism. Shahrudi's staff made it clear the new chief was unaware of the sentences ahead of the announcement. The sentences were not only a direct challenge to his authority, but handed him a most difficult predicament during his first weeks in office. The conservatives are clearly using the judiciary as a means for settling their political scores. For example, in cases such as those involving the press, conservatives have sidestepped the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, the institution with formal authority over the press, and have taken their objections directly to the judiciary. They prefer to be heard in the courts, which they dominate, rather than in the ministry, which is under Khatami's influence.⁶⁰

59 - Abdo writes "For now, Khatami's strategy appears to have worked. There are no signs that his popularity plummeted as a result of the unrest. But the long-term political implications depend upon the very promise the president made to students back in December 1996. The pace of reform and Khatami's ultimate success depend upon the judiciary. If Khatami's administration can manage to force judicial reform and create a modicum of law and order, his supporters will tolerate change at a gradual pace. In August, a new judiciary chief was appointed by Ayatollah Khamenei. Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi, a little-known scholarly cleric, has a record of conservative policies. But upon taking office, he vowed to remove the judicial system from factional infighting. This has encouraged the reformers. But shortly after he took office, hardliners made a point of showing their strength and underscored the difficulty Shahroudi will face in instituting any profound change." Abdo, G. 1999. 'Days of Rage in Tehran' in *Journal of Middle East Policy Council*, Volume VII, October Number 1.

60 - Ibid.

To regain their hegemony over the political situations, the conservatives swiftly absorbed the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. Furthermore, the other institutions, such as the educational ministry, succeeded in dragging their feet for awhile. Late in 2000, Tehran University officially established an independent association of students. Other universities followed suit only in 2001 and combined their Islamic associations with oppositional religiously national groups. Many other universities established free associations or intellectual circles around the same time. As was the case in the SKF organisation, the university organisations experienced great difficulties in starting political mobilisation in the late 1990s. Once they started to become officially active at several universities, many officials and elites thought it best to merge them with the up-and-coming political groups. Still, although political reforms continued to be regarded with suspicion and hampered out of ideological and economic considerations, slowly but surely, the idea of reform had gained a definite place within the Iranian political life. This was not something that the conservatives could change while Mohammad Khatami remained in power, even after the Tehran University Incident.

6.3. The Political Discourse of the OSU and Student Debates

In order to gain a more concrete idea of how political reform was perceived at universities during the late 1990s, it is perhaps useful to offer a description of the political discourse of the OSU leadership. There is no evidence that the OSU presented an official political manifesto. However, due to its reported communications through the media, student press, tracts, and meetings, one may present a description of the direction of both the politics and the organisation of the OSU during the late 1990s. On the whole, it is wise to say that the ideas of the OSU are based on two Pan-Islamist tendencies of semi-establishment, advocated by Soroush, and the recently renovated ideas in the CIR, advocated by Mohsen Armine, while on an organisational level, these ideas are to be expected from an optimistic experience of contemporary political movement. At the early stage, its radical ideas were probably the reflection of an ambitious student movement, but the Tehran University associations' initial support for press freedom, for instance around the Salaam daily newspaper, was rather a sharp political demand. However, the student movement's importance lies in its crucial function as an indispensable element for the mobilisation of students. Moreover, given the important functions of university student associations during the revolutionary events of the late 1970s, their mobilisation in the 1980s during the eight-year war against Iraq, and their post-revolutionary movement for the reconstruction of the countryside, an overview of their political ideas will give a good impression of how the first, second, and third generation of university students and their associations in the political affairs of the IRI were positioned (Armine, 2001, pp.253,261).

As was the case with most other political reformers' discourse, the OSU's ideas contained such specific topics as press freedom and freedom of expression, freedom for grouping and of assembly, and liberation from cultural and political pressures (Ibid. pp.334,342). In their public debates unsurprising, their support for President Khatami and other Pan-Islamist political reformers were also noticeable. Their request was often divided into two demands: short-term political reforms and long-term social justice, with some additional subjects concerning universities management. The main subject in almost every publication was spread out over three topics and each was classified according to the request of public attention: political reform, social justice, and defending the Islamic revolution.⁶¹

After the May 1997 presidential election, their debates in universities contained several topics such as the dilemmas of an Islamic model of civil society, the structure of a religiously democratic government, the history of Islamic political ideas, and overall Iranian history. Then, next to their theoretical concern was the process of reforms, which consisted of decentralisation of the Islamic state's bureaucratic institutions, new inter-Islamic political groupings, and the democratisation of university management.⁶² In other words, the topic of the first discourse was to familiarise students with a democratic theoretical framework within which political debates and reforms ought to be placed. Through such subjects as Republicanism and the structure of a democratic government, they delved into the details of Islamic political thought, which were placed within the larger context of Iran's post-revolutionary political culture.⁶³ This Republican approach was consonant both with Iranian religious-nationalist opposition, such as National Front, and with more Western model approaches to political modernity (Armine, 2001, pp.215-6). Besides these two theoretical approaches, in organisational aspects the OSU was encouraged to contribute to institutional changes and get involved in the electoral activities of the municipalities and city council. The two first topics point to the importance attached to the use of modern forms of discourse, both at the ideological and at the higher, structural levels. The discourse on civil society was primarily deemed necessary to enable the students to place their ideas into active practice.

A few years earlier, along with former President Rafsanjani's modernisation plan, the debates of university students and professors on an Islamic model of economy and private sector, the reading of Islamic traditional texts and their hermeneutic interpretation, the arena of development, and the theories on religiously democratic government were started.⁶⁴ The main focus during late 1995 and early 1996 was on the political economy and the organisation of political power. These two were

61 - See 'Iranian Students End Sit-In, Economists Urge Change' in Freedom Work, Payvan.com. 12 May 2005

62 - Ehsan Nick-Aeein 'Strengthening the Smaller Unities' in News Goya.com, 2005

63 - See BBC News, Middle East, Profile Hashem Aghajari, Wednesday, 9 July, 2003, UK

64 - Soroush, A. K. 1996. '*Ba djahane djad-yed shodja-aneh robero shavim*' (Dealing Bravely with the Modern World) in monthly review *forhange Toseeh* (Developmental Culture), pp. 4-7, No. 22, published in Iran

closely related, as was the end of eight years of economic privatisation, when the state was deemed to have managed an economic modernisation.⁶⁵ Next to questions on Supreme Power and Republicanism, the interpretation of a moderate Islamic political thought pointed to the need for modern theories on the authority of certain Islamic sources (ibid. p.43). After civil society and democracy, these new interpretations were therefore meant as a further dilemma in debates on the nature of political authority. Similarly, after having dealt with Islamic political thought in the beginning, some serious attention was later paid to modern political theories (Ibid. p.44).

Hashem Aghajari started a new debate on Islamic political philosophy with specific attention to Iran's constitution of post-revolutionary eras, which brought the legitimacy of an official reading of religion by the IRI's Islamic ideology and method under scrutiny. Naturally, his new approach on the merit of the modern ideologies for legislation through a moderate Islamic political thought was discussed. In a sense, most of the forbidden topics from preceding years came together in these debates. As a topic for political reform, the constitutional change presented an excellent example of both reformation within the state official ideology and clerical institution.⁶⁶ More importantly, Western political ideas were discussed since they came later and were placed in the context of the debates on the nature of Supreme Power in the Republic (Armine, 2001, pp.357,375). In accordance with Khatami's interpretation of the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine and the process of cognition of *vilayet-i faqih*, some OSU leaderships finally engaged in a debate with the pro-conservative media (Ibid. pp.222,243).

After this debate, the OSU leadership also debated different additional subjects, which the organisation and the SKF then followed. These ranged from international relations and human rights, and politics and modernity, to more general social reforms—and remarkably—Western new-left political philosophy from the School of Frankfurt (Ghochani, 2004, pp.11-14). Such extraordinary debates were initiated by students such as Ali Afshari and by Professor Hashem Aghajari, who wished to question directly the foundation of IRI political authority. At Tehran University, at least, debates were started by the first and second generation of leaderships within the OSU. Given the rudimentary state of knowledge among the third generation of OSU members in these years, these debates in many aspects probably reflected democratic aspirations of society rather than actual political reform of leadership.⁶⁷

On the whole, the debate on political reforms was discussed according to the three components of Khatami's interpretation of Political Islam: Ayatollah Khomeini's political thought, the rule of law, and civil society

65 - Soroush, A. K. 1996. '*d'yan va Toseeh*' (Religion and Development) in monthly review *Farhange Toseeh* (Developmental Culture), pp.42-47, No. 25, published in Iran

66 - See BBC News, Middle East, Profile Hashem Aghajari, Wednesday, 9 July, 2003, UK

67 - According to Abdo "A few weeks after a court closed Salaam, Khatami, making a public appearance, was asked by a journalist what action he might take: What about Salaam? the journalist asked. The president grinned from a distance. Mr. Khatami, why are you grinning? the journalist asked. What do you want me to do, cry? Khatami replied. I mean, what have you done for Salaam? What can I do? the president answered." Abdo, G. 1999. 'Days of Rage in Tehran' in journal of Middle East Policy Council, Volume VII, October, Number 1.

(Khatami, 2001). In this way, the student associations underwent an experience that familiarised them with Khatami's reformist worldview. They also acquired a number of indispensable ideological and organisational skills that in future could enable them to function in a leadership capacity. Finally, the last months of the debates in July 1999 led the students unwillingly to mobilise the discussions against the violent logic of officials and their Islamic principles in universities, and the evermore concrete level of protest and unrest. In fact, their mobilisation closely questioned the general principles of Islamic ideology and Islamic political power. Behind this progressive façade, however, discourse on political modernity could also skim the limits of the politically acceptable. As Abdul-Karin Soroush made clear, discourse on moderate Islamic philosophy could be used to introduce students to an unorthodox Islamic religion (Soroush, 2000). Likewise, the discourse on Western political philosophy, and even human rights, were at the very least bound to arouse curiosity towards previously forbidden debates. Nonetheless, modernity in itself formed a direct threat to the Islamic Republic as the favoured method for governance among university students, while calling for an alternative political strategy, social organisation, and probably a cautious revolution in the IRI.

Conclusion

Until the 1997 presidential election in post-revolutionary Iran, the ACC and the university associations OSU particularly perhaps played an important and spectacular role in political life of IRI as did other reformist organisations. Because of the strong presence of pro-Ayatollah Khomeini groups and militia forces in universities, the moderate ideas and moderate groups played a marginal role for most of the 1980s and the early 1990s. For many years at most universities very few intellectual circles existed that could mobilise moderate students in order to bring an effective protest movement against their establishment. Instead, therefore, most students chose to become participating members of Islamic associations under the OSU. When at last the pressure of state officials was relaxed with the 1997 presidential election, the political climate had changed in such a way that the Islamic associations in many universities combined Khatami's political reform message with their newly emerged moderate leadership. The result of this combination and flexible attitude of the elites was that the emerged political reformers and student associations successfully mobilised a democratic movement at the end of the 1990s in a way that the SKF as the main organisation of reform did not. In the meantime, however, students succeeded in setting up both activities and debates on the political system that helped to enlighten both entirely new and old generations of political reformers.

In matters of ideas, the evidence presented suggests that political reform at the universities strongly paralleled the more cautious presentation of the SKF manifestos, as described in the preceding chapter. Political reform was clearly presented to students as an elaboration force for political system and as a practical instrument of change. The political reformers adopted

Islamic political thought as their basic approach to Islamic social justice, and the rule of law placed student discourse within the tradition of Political Islam. This ideologically impeccable basis was meant as the encouraging framework limit, within which students could acquire their ideological needs by the virtue of which, they will be able to appreciate the moderate ideas of their particular interpretation from a proper Islamic standpoint. At the same time, it was assumed, the moderate leadership promised some official positions to student leaders so that they could pursue a successful career in the Islamic state bureaucracy.

In this chapter it has been shown that IRI's political culture possessed influence on the way in which the organisational aspects of political reforms were organised. Most importantly, it has been shown that reforms organisations shared with the rest of the Islamic state the typical dual structures of personal networks and formal grouping. By taking Mostafa Tajzadeh and Abdullah Nouri's cases as examples, it has been shown that such informal relations, such as ties of networks and informal groups, often play a central role in Iranian politics. Under the present organisation of state, there is a constant struggle for supremacy between the different factions of the IRI elites. This struggle is especially acute when it concerns the positions in the highest organisation of Republic or post-revolutionary parallel governing posts. As it has become apparent, by the balancing and contending roles of moderate elites and student leaders, there may have been an element of purposeful mixing around of persons from different categories to keep the reform organisation in service of the state and society as a whole. In other words, political loyalties and organisational deference often do not overlap in Iranian politics. Furthermore, when there is discord and conflict about the strategies in pro-reforms organisations, for example, ideas such as holding a meeting for consensus to settle the matters is hardly applicable. Strategies, therefore, are decided as a matter of consent rather than through organisational agreements.

The personal networks may also be partly discerned in the social background of the SKF, IIPF, CIR, and OSU associations. The most apparent socio-cultural difference within the reform movement and organisation existed between the generations. In view of the pervading effects of the past twenty-five years on all Iranians, this is hardly a remarkable result. Moreover, the mix of social backgrounds found amongst the two categories of reformers is understandable once one realises that political modernisation was supposedly set up by the establishment elites. The formal organisation of political reform, both the SKF organisations and the OSU associations, obeyed the state's overall policy of a formal organisational approach. Within the reforms' organisational possibilities, however, it is clear that political grouping was not based on ideological differences. Popular support for reform contrasted sharply with the continued personal struggle at high levels in the political system. It was shown that there was a superior importance placed by the Guardian Council on its theocratic will to obstruct the considerable will of reformers in staying in line with the state bureaucracy. While conservatives discovered the dangers of political reform and while the

bureaucracy was patiently removed into submission, a typical compromise emerged in the Republic institutional sphere. After a number of experimenting and organising years, the political reform of the late 1990s become increasingly a jumping-off point for economic modernisation, the strategy that the pragmatists had established in late 1980s in the first place.

CHAPTER FOUR

Debates on Political Modernity and its Development in the IRI

This chapter will explore two main subjects: first, the influence of political culture on political discourse of modernity, and second, how the intellectual circles amongst either secular groups or within the IRI establishment viewed the transition towards modernity and its development towards a democratic plural political system. It is essential to notice that almost all debates on Iran's transition towards modernity do refer in one way or another to historical events, materials and forces, and theoretical assumptions. This is the natural consequence of the fundamentally historical approach of all contemporary ideologies in Iran. The main theoretical assumption behind all approaches is that Iran is somehow in a period of transition - from a political system of despotism in a traditional society towards a democratic plural political system in a modern society.

In the first part of this chapter, the debates preceding the late 1990s reforms process and the contents of the reformer's programme within the framework of contemporary political debates will be explained. The subject of these debates was mainly centred on the political discourse of the post-revolutionary modernity and the establishment of an Islamic Republic, which most believed would provide the rule of law in Iran.¹ This runs contrary to the general perception among most observers, which was that the subject of these debates was on forming an alternative religiously democratic government (Jahanbakhsh, 2004). Although at this stage some discussion on the content of an alternative model of government was presented, the reformers failed to cement a real consensus.

The second part of this chapter will deal with other views that voiced a well-founded doubt about the correctness of an alternative (although based on Political Islam) interpretation for a modern political system in the IRI. After the 1997 presidential election, the views on the development of a plural political discourse in Iran formed an open debate on the flexibility of Islamic system as a whole. Since the elder generation in Islamic institution itself remained deeply divided, and since President Khatami shied away from something like a new anti-conservative campaign, these theoretical debates went unpunished. These resulted in subtle, but at the same time important adaptations by mainstream Pan-Islamist theorists who had found their ways into the debates yet to come. Still, a precedent of tolerating division had been set.

Finally, in the third part of this chapter, two of the main secular theories by reformer intellectuals from the 1990s will be detailed, even though their secular content put them outside the pale of the normative approach of the political establishment. It was indicative of the atmosphere of the late 1990s that secular reformer intellectuals were permitted to air such

1 - See 'Ha-qye-qat ya Azadi' (Truth or Freedom) interview with Abbas Abdi by Seyed Ebrahim Nabavi in Hamshahri No 54.

views at all. But, after the 2001 student protest at Tehran University, some of these views were banned.

These three important subjects together served to highlight the gradual shift in ideological approach of the reformers from narrowly defined moderate Political Islam and debates on the convening modernisation theories to Western political philosophy and a democratic government in a modern society. At the very start, however, it should be pointed out, that these views were largely restricted to Pan-Islamist intellectual circles. Even though many of the theories mentioned here were generally available for some years, their expansion was limited and their contents were often rather arcane to official researchers, university students, writers and intellectuals. As has been clearly shown in the chapter three on the organisation behind political reform, in this respect, such interesting theoretical debates were only meant to be held among officials, elites and Pan-Islamist intellectuals. In most cases these debates belonged to the level of concrete polity change, at which, intellectual reformers experimented with new and as yet unsanctioned ideas. As long as these ideas remained within the confines of Pan-Islamist intellectual circles, nevertheless, the authorities seemed to tolerate them.

As if to underline a continued critical commitment to the ideological approach of moderate values, in 2000 reformer intellectual Jamileh Kadeevar published a new sequel to the earlier interpretation and the development of the Shi'ia political discourse in Iran (Kadeevar, 2000). This work and her later attendance of a seminar in Berlin, for instance, made clear that the tolerance in political discourse should not be extended to the intermediate level of public use, and this situation applied for the reforms spheres of protesters and the general contenders (Kadeevar, 2000). Indeed, after the 2001 presidential election, it was even to take intellectual circles some time before the same kind of tolerance would be allowed at the concrete level as was in the late 1997 and early 1998.

Few academic debates about the post-revolutionary Iranian politics, however, can match the importance of the debates on a 'transitional stage' for Iran's political system. The period is assumed to be between the time when the traditional political system begun to crumble and the time when the sprouts of a new and democratic government have flourished (Ahmadi, 1994 & 1998). Broadly speaking, by the period of transition some intellectuals take a historical stance and refer to the period starting with the Constitutional Revolution (1905-11) and its later development into a national struggle for nationalisation of the oil industries (1949-1953), which came to a new stage with the 1979 Revolution (Abrahamian, 1983 & Alizadeh, 2000). Others more escapism refers to the period between the monarch's White Revolution of 1962 and the 1979 Islamic Revolution (Azari, 1983 & azimie, 1989). Pan-Islamist intellectuals on the other hand take this period particularly to refer primarily to the triumph of clerical authority over the pseudo-modernist monarch institution, a triumph which started with Ayatollah Khomeini's 1963 uprising and his 1979 consolidation of political power (Gochani, 2004 & Armine 1991 & Baghi, 2004). Recently the last version of this period is stated to be between the 1997 reforms movement and the defeat of Pan-Islamist

reformers in the May 2004 parliamentary election (Abdi, 2000 & Dad, 2001 & Ganji, 1999). Nevertheless, the importance of these debates however lay in the concrete consequences that could be derived from the different political organisations' proposals.

In the diverse discourse of the post-revolutionary era, however, there are two obvious reasons why the debates on the ways for transition to a democratic political system did not play a very prominent role.² Firstly, Iran's political elites and establishment officials had always authoritatively settled the debates concerning the models and political system, as had always been according to their heritage under a patriarchal system.³ Therefore, after the 1979 revolution and Ayatollah Khomeini's consolidation of political power, most political groups and intellectuals knew that the approach which was being stipulated by the new leadership was not a topic that could freely be commented on (Shabestari, 2002). It was therefore clearly a very sensitive topic. Thus, the proposal of an alternative view on the overall Islamic political system amounted to a comprehensive criticism of the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine as the official line (Shabestari, 2004). Secondly, within the new division of functions within the Iranian state, the issues on modernity belonged more to the policy aims of the state managerial spheres (Hajjarian, 2003). As a subject of politics of the state, the issues concerning modernity were therefore more prone to deal with the matter of the elites' approach to Islamic socio-economic structure (Alizadeh, 2000) an approach which served to orient the debates more in the direction of inner-state Pan-Islamist group political pluralism.

Yet, during the 1990s, some of the most prominent elites were to be found amongst those who did comment on Iran's transition to political modernity. This was not entirely surprising, since within the reformist framework of reformer groups, it was also of crucial importance to know at which point Iran's political institutions found itself on the objective scale of reformation (Kadeevar, 2000). Only in this way, intellectual reformers point out, was it possible to find out rationally what kind of political model was best suited to Islamic Iran's actual circumstances (Shabestari, 2000). As has been shown, through the changes in ideological guidelines after Ayatollah Khomeini's death (Gochani (2004), tolerance for the views of intellectual reformist circles grew, and even discussions on Iran's political system became less subject to Islamic ideological limits during the 1990s. Theories other than those narrowly defined by Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine found a way into debates and publications. Gradually, the discourse on the period of transition to democracy and modern society developed from the initial concepts to a just as vaguely defined 'modernisation' (Ganji, 1999). Through these debates on political theories and alternatives, some secular intellectuals offered a chance to discuss

2 - Mahroyan, H. 1997. '*Payane Meta-fye-syek va Shoureshe alyeihe Aqle*' (End of Metaphysic and Rebellion against Ration), published in Farhang-e Toseeh (Developmental Culture), Sixth year, No 28, pp. 34-39, Tehran-Iran

3 - Mokhtari, M. 1997. '*Farhange be chera*' (Unquestionable Culture), published in Farhange Toseeh (Culture of Development), Sixth year, No 27, pp. 9-14, Tehran-Iran

questions of contemporary political reforms without referring to the religiously nature of the Iranian state, or even directly to Islamic institution. Towards the end of 1990s, in these debates both more traditional secular and overly liberal discourse on Iran's political system started to resurface, discourse which rapidly grew more diverse and open. Although limited on new alternatives or ideas, the discourse on Iran's transition to a modern political system and reforms on politics theoretically constituted an important part of the output of all these debates.

Debate on Iran's political modernisation, however, cannot be limited to the confines of the approach on recent political reform alone. It must be viewed within the larger context of the overall ideological framework and what may be called here the overall ideological approaches used to discuss the topic. In short, it must be viewed as part of the practice and overall ideological approach in the political culture of the establishment intellectuals and of the secular groups. Chapter Two showed that political reform only formed one of more reforms on politics in the IRI. The views that were expressed by political reformers only formed a part, and often a relatively moderate mainstream reformist one, of the larger informal debates on politics. Nonetheless, the Iranian political reformers mostly remained Pan-Islamist throughout the 1990s.

In the early 1990s, the role of the official ideology of Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine was still important enough to relatively narrow any debate on Iran's political system. In later years, this way became less ensnaring, but any public view on Iran's political system still had to adhere to an overall framework of the official line.⁴ At the time, although the state officials, Pan-Islamist intellectuals, and secular intellectuals from the different political spectrum did not directly or publicly discuss about alternatives amongst each other, it is certain in most particular cases and events they were aware of each other's views.

The point is that even if the debates on Iran's political system or the transition to a modern society and democratic government did not form any public and direct debates, this did nothing to impede a uniform perception among the different approaches. Clearly the importance of acquiring the mechanism of change for transition to a democratic political system formed an essential part of the socially shared political culture of Iranian intellectuals. In other words, if anyone wanted to discuss a topic on Iran's political system, it was imperative to address the issues of democracy and political modernity in a certain way whether explicit or implicit. Even if one did not adhere to the premise of democracy and political modernity, it was still necessary to use this premise as the argument for the formulation of one's views. Moreover, one can say the issue of transition to a democratic political system and modern society formed a prerequisite for the structure of the intellectuals'

4 - See interview by members of *Madjma-ye Rouhanyeh-une Mobarez Tehran* (The Association of Combatant Clergy of Tehran) from March 1988 to May 1990: Hojjatol-Islam Mosavi Khomeiniha, 1988, pp. 184-186 and 211-219 and 231-242; Hojjatol-Islam Khatami, 1988, pp. 187-193; Hojjatol-Islam Saraje-aldeen Mosavi, 1988, pp. 196-199; Hojjatol-Islam Ashtieyani, 1988, pp. 200-205; Hojjatol-Islam Kahrubi, 1988, pp. 206-210 and 220-223 and 224-230, published by Offset, Iran

organisation and the establishment of public ideological consensus for all discussions on contemporary Iran's political and social models.

Their discourses contained a number of generally shared aspects such as most notably, their discourses assumed that Iran's contemporary political system has to be legitimised through a democratic electoral system, to which it was imperative to adhere if Iran was to survive, let alone to be modernised quickly and smoothly (Tajzadeh & Ziebakalam, 2001). According to these discourses, Iran's political system had to adopt a series of political steps through which some indeterminate traditional aspects should be developed to a future state of modernity, the empowerment of the people, social harmony, universal human rights, and prosperity. These steps, through the interplay of the tradition and modernity, moreover, should cause and be the basis for the people's rational decisions.⁵ It was therefore of crucial importance for the reformers to identify the main underlying conflicts between tradition and modernity, because, logically, each different set of conflicts in this matter stemmed from a particular set of political forces. In this way, one may assume, a rational basis for the selection of political forces that would modernise Iranian state could be found.

In practice, the consensus on the transition to modernity within the establishment intellectuals ended here. Important differences existed amongst the elite, both regarding the precise framework that should be adopted and the place an Islamic system occupied within it.⁶ At the beginning of the 1990s, the overall framework of Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine formed the unvoiced Iranian political system's chosen framework for all forms of changes in politics. As the years progressed, during the 1990s, tolerance increased and serious doubts were expressed about the reliability of this framework (Abdi, 2000). By the mid-1990s, other vaguely liberal or even post-modern secular frameworks appeared which could never be publicly accepted, but nonetheless were also tolerated (Ahmadi, 1994, p.4 & Goochani, 2004, p. 26). Importantly, some of these came from establishment intellectuals who were active in political reforms (Baghi, 2003). Throughout the 1990s, furthermore, there remained an important political difference between those who believed that Iran's political system was rather more traditional than had officially been admitted, and conversely, those who optimistically believed that the IRI was nearing political modernity (Khatami, 1999).

As will become apparent in this chapter, the elite generational differences formed a useful indication of the kind of ideological and intellectual frameworks one chose and also the place one believed Iran's political system occupied in the overall scale towards modernisation (Ganji & Nouri, 2000). Looking back on the past, older establishment officials quarrelled bitterly over the earlier achievements of the IRI political system.

5 - Mahroyan, H. 1997. '*Payane Metafiye-sik va Shoureshe alye-he Aql*' (End of Metaphysic and Rebellion against Ration), published in Farhange Toseeh (Developmental culture), Sixth year, No 28, pp. 34-39, Tehran-Iran

6 - In daily newspaper Kayhan interview with Mosavi Khomeiniha on the importance of the people's participation in parliamentary election and The Combatant Clergies values for presenting candidates, 1988, pp. 231-240, published by Offset, Iran

This resulted in the shaky compromise formulated during and after the 1997 presidential election. Uncharacteristically for the IRI officials, their apparent compromises did not last long. Mostly a younger generation of Pan-Islamist intellectuals, some of those engaged prominently in political reform, publicly voiced criticism on the post-revolutionary establishment policies and efficiency. They were however quite down by the older generation who belongs to clerical institution. This discussion resulted in a slightly modified political statement of President Khatami in his second programme during the 2002 presidential election on the main principles of political reform. In reformist circles, however, the Political Islam ideology had suffered badly enough for liberal views to appear towards the end of the 1990s. A number of moderate political reformers at the SKF-IIPF, for instance, also put forward alternative theories for political modernity, such as a model for social democracy.

1. Searching for a Consensus on Political Modernity

The debate on the development of Iran's political system was waged in early 1990s almost exclusively by Pan-Islamist reformers. In line with the practice of Islamic state, reformers had to coin the general theories and particular concepts which would make further Pan-Islamism and moderation possible.⁷ As has been described in Chapter Two, their internal discussions were sparked off by a need to come to some clarification with the experiences of the post-revolutionary Islamic regime and to make a clear picture of the IRI's political development. These discussions covered more than some basic issues such as political groups setting or socio-economic policies of these years. In fact, as publications from this period reveal, the political uncertainty begun from the time when the provisional government in 1980 has resigned until the time when Khatami was elected president, a period of at least seventeen years. For a post-revolutionary political system that stressed the need to link Truth to Freedom, however, such a dramatic period was the indication of weakness in much of its elite ideological values. While other socio-economic issues were of more acute importance, surprisingly perhaps, these did not concern the polity adopted during the period. Ideologically, in fact, this period was singularly unimportant as the developmental policies dealt especially with those socio-economic issues which had preceded the 1997 reform movement. During this period of the early 1980s to 1997, many of the now older political elites had actually played insignificant roles. On the other hand to the new generation of Pan-Islamist reformers, the post 1997 political discussions concerned more on political development than ideological theories of the past. Now that conservatives' forbidding presence had almost disappeared, it presented them with a chance to advance their moderate alternative political views.

7 - See '*djadyedtarin tahryeke nehzate azadi*' (the latest instigation of Freedom Movement) in the Association of Combatant Clergies of Tehran's newsletter, 1995, No 20, pp. 37-39, Tehran-Iran

True to their convictions, the reformer intellectuals firmly placed their discussion within the context of the post-revolution Islamic Republic era. There was ample reason to do so. Accordingly, in 1997 the Pan-Islamist moderates found themselves in the same position as the Pan-Islamist liberals in 1979 in that it had acquired pre-existing political institutions. Both cases had then needed a few years of political consolidation before they could embark upon setting up a roughly new political system. In many ways the approach of the 1979 liberals was like moderates the rule of law in 1997. Subsequently, both cases had gone through restoration and declared to be basically a religiously moderate political model. The Pan-Islamist liberals of 1979 did so in their revolutionary order, and moderates of 1997 in their reformist policies. In both cases, however, an authoritarian institution led by the conservatives placed a number of restrictions that left the institution of leadership as the supreme position above the Republic. It could be said that only the times of the same events were entirely different. After all, the liberals of 1979 started to take some democratic steps before the conservatives' domination in 1981 had been declared, whereas moderates of 1997 unleashed their controversial policies - as a part of regime's interests - only in 1998, almost two years after their government had been in control of the institution of power.

The problem, however, was that different groups of Pan-Islamist intellectuals drew entirely different, even opposing, interpretations about the same period of political events. If one is to believe the scant evidence available, there were no less than three or more major different views (Hajjarian & el. 2003). In the following, three views for which there is sufficient evidence will be discussed. The first view was that of the young mainstream reformers, of whom the Pan-Islamist Emad'aldeen Baghi was clearly the most prominent exponent. They clung on to views widespread in the Islamic state apparatus that the state line of political modernisation had been mostly correct until Ayatollah Khomeini's 1989 death (Baghi, 2003). A second group radically opposed this view by stating that things had gone wrong almost as soon as the IRI was founded. That is when Ayatollah Khomeini had wrongly proclaimed Iran as a modern Republic, while the regime was basically governed through Islamic institution. One of the prominent Pan-Islamist intellectuals who also inspired political reform, Mohsen Kadivar, espoused this view (Kadivar, 1997). Finally, there was a middle group, led by a group associated with Ayatollah Khomeini's early years of rule (*Imam's line*), which held on to the basically Republican status of the IRI and the developmental policies adopted in the period of Ayatollah Khomeini, but maintained that soon after his death, things had gone badly wrong (Abdi, 2000).

The Pan-Islamist mainstream group, to which Emad'aldeen Baghi belonged, used the relatively short post-revolutionary period of the modernisation in the IRI (1979-82) as the confirmation of its belief in the democratic interpretation of Political Islam. According to Emad'aldeen Baghi, democracy had only existed some years between the 1979 revolution and the regime's final legitimisation in 1982, where the absolute rule of jurisprudence

had never been legitimised. After 1989, to be sure, some unfortunate errors had inevitably been committed, such as the exclusion of Grand Ayatollah Montazeri from political life in the IRI, the separation of clerical institution from universities, and political repression. These events, however, should not detract one from the basic soundness of the overall state line on modernisation up to then. Nonetheless, as events had shown, the IRI, through its officials, constantly tried to correct its own mistakes. In reality, Baghi assures, the late 1970s and early 1980s had represented a golden era of IRI and the Islamic state plural cohesion (Baghi, 2003). In this view, dissatisfaction rates in this period, for instance, had been far lower than in the early 1990s. Moreover, according to Baghi, although economics was certainly not all, by 1991 the IRI did not lag far behind other countries in the region. Therefore, things had really only started to go wrong with the outbreak of state privatisation policy and with the following purges of the committed Pan-Islamist left within the Islamic Republic institution. Even then, those misguided individuals who had surrounded leadership at the time had continually tried to improve their images, making changes in their practice as late as 1997.

Ideologically, Baghi's views represented a continuation of the Pan-Islamists' views of the religiously liberal (1979-82) state officials. A fundamental assumption behind these views was that the religiously liberal afforded a superior insight into the political life in Iran. According to these views, Iranian political life was fundamentally driven by the practice of a liberal Islamic worldview in which the Pan-Islamist political groups constantly ran the risk of being confronted by opposing conservative groups. Although conservatives' intervention no longer constituted the main threat in society, the practice of religiously liberals constantly forced the government to be aware of possible relapses in the form of newly created conflicts amongst political groups. Moreover, in this chain of political events, the secular groups' elimination was of more basic importance than the cohesion of the revolutionary forces. The difference between religiously liberals and other Pan-Islamist forces at the time was about the values that lay at the basis of their remarkable success of the early transformation of the country into a basically modern Republic. Baghi emphasises that once the elimination of political opponents had been successfully accomplished, government's problems lay not so much in its mixed economic policies but in the need to heighten the political quality of the social groups. By allowing moderate political grouping with a heightened political consciousness, modernisation could have proceeded smoothly. Again Baghi emphasises during liberals' era, a model armed with the truth of Islam would have a superior mastery over any other form of political system.

Within the mainstream approach to political reforms, the group around Baghi optimistically placed liberals' IRI at a relatively high level of modernisation. Obviously, politically speaking, liberals' IRI left much to be desired. But, the political development during these years in the view of this group was primarily a question of inter-state group plural relations. If these relations were handled correctly, political democracy could exist and the

conservative groups during these years could not present major difficulties. As Baghi states in *The Democratic Reforms Movement in Iran* (2003, pp. 32-57), Iran has entered the era of change, that is, the first stage of modernity. A whole range of policy choices resulted from this entrance: adherence to a modern market economy, opposition to the state's centralised institution, doubts about the need to enlarge the Islamic traditional legal system, advocacy of more rather than less work on democratic political culture, and opposition to the introduction of a full indoctrination in both politics and society.

On the other end of the political spectrum, the group to which Mohsen Kadivar belonged conversely viewed the post revolutionary political system as a transitional model with fatally flawed rule and also as the proof of the fact that the IRI under the rule of jurisprudence could impossibly be considered as a plural political system. This view, a watered-down version of which has already been described in the Chapter Two, flatly declared the ideological conservative basis of the IRI to be flawed. In this view, it was not the political culture among the IRI's elite, but rather their political conflicts that formed the main element of the overall development in the Republic. Although the logical conclusion of this view was the politically unacceptable premise that the IRI was a plural political system, its practical suggestions carried great weight with the 1997 reform movement as a new chance of modernisation.

Towards the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s, Mohsen Kadivar published several articles and a two-volume book on *Political Thought in Islam and Government of Jurisprudence*, while others published some criticisms on the practice of the IRI's officials and their modernisation policies. Kadivar's view was obviously not officially approved, but it was seen as an academic view that constituted the use of concrete modern Republican concepts. These publications were comprised of several issues containing much inside information on the ideological struggles between two main factions of the IRI (Kadivar, 1997). Although available for the public only in later years, the views expressed in these texts have formed part of the same discussions of establishment around the late 1980s about Iran's socio-economic modernisation. This content, therefore, forms a reliable indication of some of the crucial arguments among Pan-Islamist reformers of the establishment officials at the time.

The starting point of Kadivar's arguments concerns Ayatollah Khomeini's invented concept of an 'Islamic' Republic in 1979. Accordingly, this was the first time he expressed his model of government as a Republican system similar to all other Republics (Ibid. 1997, Vol.2). This was because, as he had emphasised, the Islamic revolution decidedly was not a new monarchy nor could it establish a new monarchy as its governing model, nor was it a state formed with secular values for governing Iran (Ibid. 1997, Vol.2). In other words, as Kadivar made clear, for Ayatollah Khomeini, Iran's new Islamic Republic was to be nothing less than an entire modern political system. At the time, the new leadership had thought this theory had merely constituted an application of the general principles of a modern Republic to

the concrete realities of Iran. When Pan-Islamist intellectuals and many others had experienced this theory in later years, they suspiciously realised that his model would apply the general Islamic principles to a modern model of Republic in all aspects of governing matters and society (Shabestari, 2002). In the process of establishing his model in the post-revolutionary era, he had based the practice of his model not on a traditional Islamic system as what existed among other Islamic countries but quite extensively on his new invented model only for Iran, as Sami Zubaida emphasis:

While not abandoning its theoretical internationalist commitment to the Islamic Um'ma, or Mostazafin, the oppressed of the world, the emphasis was more clearly on the Iranian nation as the vanguard of the Islamic revolution'.⁸

Ayatollah Khomeini had stressed that the Iranian nation could not avoid Islamic principles while creating a modern Republic; moreover, they must take the Islamic institution as their leadership in this process of revolutionary changes (Khomeini, 1997, Vol.5). He had also said that the Mostazafin, who defeated Shah and overturned his despotic regime, would no longer belong to the old category of the backwardness, ignorant nations, but to a modern and revolutionary category. Against this background, it was logical that he believed the secular models would separate the new Republic from its Islamic values.

Importantly, in Pure Islam Ayatollah Khomeini never referred to the stage of Republic as a period of transition to the absolute rule of vilayet-i faqih. On the contrary, he referred to it as the basis for a democratic, although Islamic, government. In this, it differed fundamentally from the traditional political theory of Shi'ia Islam (Kadeevar, 2000). The reason for this difference, one may assume, is laid in those democratic requirements of the 1979 revolution.⁹ In other words, it is suggested that in the 1979 uprising, Ayatollah Khomeini at first correctly held that Iran was ready for a transition towards a modern republican political system. At the time of the revolution, the facts led him to declare that democracy had to be allowed to continue to exist under new Islamic Republic, even against the doubts of other members of clerical institution (Khomeini, 1997, Vol.5, pp. 12-13). This New Islamic Republic, in short, would form nothing less than an alternative to secular modernity and to absolute monarchy.¹⁰ This remained the unchanged view of all the establishment intellectuals at least until 1982 (Salehi, 1988).

Soon this began to change. Between 1982 and 1988 when democracy is said to have been an integral part of the newly established Republic, this view was gradually reformulated to mean a transitional model from a Republican government to the absolute rule of Islamic institution. The establishment of a conservative faction, breaking out across the entire nation, and the presentation of the rule of jurisprudence in later years were the first steps in this process. In it conservatives went a long way towards equating Republican model to the pre-revolution secular regime. This had

8 - Zubaida, S. 1997. 'Is Iran an Islamic State?' in 'Political Islam', essays from Middle East Report edited by Beinun, J. and Stork, J. p. 106

9 - Nabavi, E. 2001. '*haqye-qat ya azadi*' (Truth or Freedom) interview with Abbas Abdi, pp. 69-70, in Hamshahri No 54, published by Hamshahri, Tehran-Iran

10 - Ibid. pp. 69-70

ostensibly been done because those highest decision-makers in the Republic establishment came to agreement over the intentions of clerical leadership (Moslem, 2002). Political authority then, in various statements made reference to an Iranian regime and political system as government under the absolute rule of leadership, but not to a modern Republic. A dual thought-practice subsequently ensued, according to which the existence of the Islamic Republic was referred to as a complete Islamic system of post-revolutionary Iran, but stood open to the interpretation of various elite under which the institution of Republic had to be modernised. Still, all establishment officials, particularly those members of Association of Combatant Clergies, did not share this dualistic view.¹¹ Hojjatol-Islam Karrubi, for one, singularly held on to the need for a democratic Republican model and described conservative attempts at the elimination of moderate groups as the fruits of mistaken, dangerous, and idealist thoughts of reactionary politics. Conservative groups, on the other side, could not agree with these words. Slowly but surely, conservatives proceeded to undermine the institution of Republic. In coming years, they implicitly hesitated to use the term Islamic Republic by describing the regime as government of jurisprudence where *Caliphate-Allah* would be basically established in near future (Moslem, 2002). According to Kadivar, at the time, this defective idea was not merely held by some in the conservative clerical institution, but was quite widespread in the IRI establishment as well. Some senior leaders of the establishment promptly fell in line with the conservatives (Kadivar, 1997, Vol.2). Soon the official line received new impetus from the unexpected sources with which the modernisation of political system had been betrayed. Kadivar's detailed analysis, therefore, succeeds admirably in pointing out in considerable detail that for all his revolutionary genius, Ayatollah Khomeini had been a leader of the revolution's degeneration. At the same time, he sought to refute the officials' claim, that the 1980s had constituted a golden era of establishment harmony and correct state policies. In sharp contradiction to this rosy picture, he described a theocratic Republican regime, which had failed to model their leader's doctrine on the correct discourse of Political Islam. Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine, in short, was not a superior form of modernity, but a particular Islamic one. Therefore, it ought to be acknowledged that his theory was basically restorative in the practical aspect.

From the mid 1990s onwards, Pan-Islamist journalist Abbas Abdi, whose ideas were quite close to the reformers' views, published several articles and a few books in which he defined the Islamic model of power, law, and culture in which Iran found itself as undemocratic (Abdi, 2000). His works were probably derived from moderates' confident assertion that the IRI should advance on the path to a modern Republican model. By locating Iran in the category of undemocratic regimes, therefore, Abbas Abdi could not but highlight Iran's political backwardness vis-à-vis the plural and democratic models. At the same time, since his articles revealed that, in

11 - See '*ba-ya-nye-yehe nakhostin kongrehe madjmae rohanyeune mobarez* (first congress' manifesto of the Association of Combatant Clergies) organised and published in 2003, Tehran-Iran

reality, Islamic Iran could not be considered as a modern system at all, the already unflattering label of undemocratic regime was even made to sound like something of truth. Unsurprisingly, his articles quietly dropped out of Pan-Islamist intellectual sight, but the idea itself was to return some years later.

After the 1997 election it was a sign of the new style of partnership under President Khatami that not one of the two opposing views was chosen approach of the official line, but rather the golden mean of consensus was. To this end, the consensual pragmatist faction was charged with drafting a consolidator platform of different political strategy for the coming governing institution (Mirsepassi, 2002). As a matter of fact, the Regime Expediency Council was very well suited for this task. They were few of the most senior of Ayatollah Khomeini's surviving representatives in a number of post-revolutionary state organisations. Although they too had felt something of the leader's ire in the early post-revolutionary years of the purge of the liberals, they had remained staunchly loyal to institution of Supreme Leader. Although it is more than likely that in private they stood quite close to the Pan-Islamist members of reformers organisations in opinion, if not in style, in public they skilfully mapped out a middle position. From some of the comments made during the 1997 presidential election, it is even clear they did this in the face of the opposition of conservative officials, who must have known they agreed with them. For instance, they pointed out from the beginning that, even though Ayatollah Khomeini admitted political pluralism, still modernity held importance for them (Khatami, 1999). They also cautioned the political establishment against being smug towards reformer groups emphasising that the establishment was still in the stage of infancy. This flew directly in the face of the old assertions about the superior way in which moderate groups had guided Iran into revolution and liberated an oppressed nation. The fact that it was the Regime Expediency Council which said these things must have made them more acceptable to many young intellectuals. On the other hand, however, in May 1997, they said that Iran's modernisation must proceed from a national-Islamic characteristic.¹² This was to become an important theoretical instrument in the hands of the religiously liberal and mainstream reformers to explain the reasons for the religiously democratic characteristic of Iranian government.¹³

Behind the Regime Expediency Council's consensus, in fact, loomed the powerful and pragmatic figure of President Khatami himself. President Khatami was not half as interested in ideology as his predecessor had been. He only wanted to restore Islamic Iran to its lawful place in the international community through the dialogue of civilisation, wealth, and power.¹⁴ From many different sources, it is obvious to see that President Khatami in 1997 strongly favoured a political return to the Republican line of the 1979 Revolution, and especially the Republican doctrine that Ayatollah Khomeini

12 - See Newsletter published by the Association of Combatant Clerics, 1999, No. 14, pp. 62-63-64, and No. 12, p. 69, Tehran-Iran

13 - Ibid. No. 12, p. 15

14 - Ibid. No. 12, p. 91

had put forward in the Iranian constitution. President Khatami's weak political alliance stood close to former president Rafsanjani's stance. Other reformist leaders and officials, such as Mehdi Karrubi, Sayyed Mahdi Imam Jamarani, Sayyed Ali-Akbar Mohtashami, Sayyed Mohammad Abtahi, prominently supported this very stance, and it is unclear to what extent President Khatami admitted that the concept of the Republic of the 1981 constitution had been misconceived. After all, for President Khatami there was an element of moderation because he had played a major part in the post-revolutionary constructions.¹⁵ Still, the conservatives did not stop President Khatami's massive re-organisation of state institution and social relaxation until the student movement and riots in several major cities exonerated a hard-line intervention. In this case, President Khatami demanded that the conservatives' verdict against university students not be overturned. However, while dialogue and rule of law offered a public basis for President Khatami's politics and his reformist actions, the conservatives' Political Islam, which offered the theoretical justification for the concept of an absolute leadership was an insurance against political disorder.¹⁶

The SKF-ACC organisations around President Khatami was important since through its authoritative activities it officially rounded off the past period and provided an ideological basis for the ambitious programme of political reforms (Hajjarian, & el. 2003). The reform programme was concretely built up of strategic policies classified into different aspects.¹⁷ The first aspect, for instance, was an overall introduction to a Republican essence of the political system that followed with a few discussions in which those undemocratically thought-practice of the IRI were challenged. The programme then ended with an appraisal of the person and the ideology of Ayatollah Khomeini and the strategic tasks for the future of both the elites and the government.

For obvious political reasons, the events that followed the 1997 reform movement were first of all an attempt to place the IRI back within the context of the Republican essence of Iran's modernisation.¹⁸ An ideological victory, a new period for democratisation, a period for political participation, decentralisation of state institutions, and ultimately modernisation itself were clearly viewed as the Iranian instances of the post 1997 presidential election. In this context, of course, Ayatollah Khomeini was implicitly considered as a mythical figure, and more explicitly so, similarly valued as partly right and partly vague. Naturally, the effect of this attempt could be found at the detailed ideological level, but this could serve to confirm the transitional nature of Iran's concrete political reality.

15 - See '*madjmoehe bayanye-ye-haye rohanyeune mobareze tehran*' (collective manifesto of the Association of Combatant Clerics of Tehran), between 1988 and 1989, pp. 187-192, Tehran-Iran

16 - See Newsletter published by the Association of Combatant Clerics, 1999, No. 12, p. 14

17 - See '*bayaneyeh nakhostin kongrehe madjmae rohanyeune mobarez*' (the first congress' manifesto of the Association of Combatant Clergies) organised and published in 2003, Tehran-Iran

18 - Ibid. p. 15

The specific character of Iran's transitional stage resulted automatically in this overall ideological framework. At the essential level, the reform movement presented Iran's political transition while moving forward through the conflict between the moderate and conservative interpretation of both ideology and politics. The reformer circles were formed by the new generation, which, through their moderate political insight, had first rejected the conservative interpretation and then wrested political power from elite's Islamic hierarchy. By steadfastly promoting the rights of citizenship, the new generation had created an alternative form of political power in which for instance the civil society associations played a more active participatory role. After a brief three years of intense group conflicts and compromises (1997-1999), the new generation had proceeded to carry out political transformation and institutional modernisation. Seven years after the first initial when the conservatives at the controversial parliamentary election of the 2004 succeeded, the general perception about the period of transition was viciously declared to have ended. Ideologically, the replacement of the inter-state group participation for the requirements of political modernisation represented an epochal transformation of the Islamic political system. This meant that the moderate government abandoned its antagonistic stance towards conservative part of state institution in favour of a more co-operative but constructive one. In spite of a number of errors, after 1997, the Pan-Islamist reformers of the establishment therefore started to build a comprehensive modernised institution. At the same time, it has been suggested by most moderate reformers that the state institution also fell prey to the rising influence of the positive aspects of political modernity. Due to a lack of concrete experience with the building of democratic institutions, serious errors were committed in its guiding directives. But, as the discourse suggested, such errors were merely the less important side of this process, which was the unavoidable result of the IRI's intellectuals' quest for faster political change. Although Khatami and his government tried to correct the mistakes of the post-revolutionary repressive policies, they erroneously isolated all radicals and religiously nationalist groups at the coming parliamentary elections. In 2000, they continued their effort at the institutional level to restore the regime's chaotic management. But, they were unable to correct the leadership guiding line in public political participation. The government, and in particular Khatami himself, persisted in overemphasising the importance of the rule of law and dialogue between interest groups instead of targeting the public basic needs against the critical state of their economy. In line with his moderate approach, Khatami repeatedly and erroneously suggested that the reform movement be entirely focused on the rule of law under the clerical leadership in taking the moderate Islamic road. In a final appraisal of the period, the reformers declared that all modernisation successes in these years were obtained under the hegemony of the Republic, of which Khatami was the head. Likewise, the errors of this period were also the responsibility of the government of the Republic. Khatami bore the main responsibility, but one cannot ascribe all errors to Khatami alone. During this period, as time progressed, Khatami's

mistakes became standard and more serious. His top-down style and inefficient thought-practice increasingly damaged the ideas of a democratic plural political participation, while the phenomena of adoration of the leadership and individualism gradually developed. His government proved unable to correct these mistakes in a timely way. Careerists, such as most high-ranking state officials, also had their ulterior motives to exploit and enlarge such mistakes.¹⁹ This confused policies and likewise led to the outbreak of unrest in cities and to protests led by youth and university students. Having settled the question of uncertainty,²⁰ the main task confronting the political system now was to isolate the radicalisation of political groups. Khatami therefore indicated that the government's socio-economic line would by and large form a continuation of the policies of the former governments of the 1980s and 1990s. True to its consensual approach, however, Khatami's programme also showed there was room for differing moderate alternatives through listing some of the main criticism of his opponents of the time. Some of the discourse used by his opponents at least formed the basis of polity preferences of important sectors of society.²¹ In one respect, for reformers, the coming parliamentary election (2000) was inflexible. Although Khatami received some criticism, it was made abundantly clear that to save the reform movement, his merits largely exceeded his errors. Moreover, since the Islamic government adhered to the principle of having a clerical leadership, most mistakes fell under this authority as well. Nonetheless, in the eyes of new generation, unlike what had happened to first post-revolutionary President Bani-Sadr under the old generation in spite of what both had done during their few years of modernisation, Mohammad Khatami was not to be criticised any further (Moslem, 2002).

The 2002 government policies of Khatami presented a carefully balanced compromise between the different groups within the Iranian factionalised political elite. It confirmed the Republican nature of Iranian state, but stressed that modernisation was still in a very young phase. It drew some important lessons both from Iran's undemocratic past and that of the modernisation of the period between 1997 and 2000. One lesson was not to revile deceased leaders and not to judge in the same way as Republic had once been by Ayatollah Khomeini himself when he was leader of the Republic (Zubaida, 1997, p.107). Another lesson was that in the future, political modernisation was to take precedence over particular group interests.

The years after the 1997 presidential election were to show that the Islamic state modernisation policies largely failed to live up to the expectation of new generation. Initially the reformers and a large part of the radicals must have been satisfied that IRI was not criticised too harshly and that the Islamic Republic was still considered as a model moving towards modernisation. Likewise, religiously nationalist groups must have welcomed

19 - See Newsletter published by the Association of Combatant Clerics, 1999, No. 13, p. 86, Tehran-Iran

20 - Ibid. p. 89

21 - See '*bayaneyeh nakhostin kongrehe madjmae rohaniyane mobarez*' (the manifesto of the first congress of the Association of Combatant Clergies) organised and published in 2003, pp. 26, 27, 28, and 29, Tehran-Iran

the belated attention for political participation and opening the country to 'outsiders'. But the conservatives wished badly to put soon the reformers on the defensive position. Simply put, the moderate government's all-embracing inter-state group pluralism did not fit into the conservative thought-practice of an Islamic values oriented society. Soon the youth, students, women, intellectuals, writers, and workers were to break with Khatami's moderation and renewed the post-revolutionary ideological debates on an alternative politics.

2. Pan-Islamist Intellectuals' Critiques of the Political Reforms

Officially, the restriction on organised debates about political modernity ended after the May 1997 presidential election. Of course, official debate was permitted since early 1989, but only within the intermediate framework of the IRI establishment. As Mostafa Tajzadeh and Sadegh Zieba Kalam made clear in 2003, once a matter had been officially decided on, the Islamic conservative leadership required all establishment intellectuals to refrain from discussing the matter in public (Tajzadeh & Zebakalam, 1982, p.12). Now that the political outline of modernity since 1997 had been laid down, publicly there was only room to fill in the concrete details.

Quite early on, the public fear of post-revolutionary establishment repression was broken. Already from the beginning of the reform movement in 1997 some political reformers published several lengthy articles and books that openly criticised the state socio-economic and hard-line press policies. A year later, these criticisms were followed by senior officials and reformist elites engaging in political reforms, among which Mohammad Abtahi and Abdullah Nuri were well-known. The effect of the successive public criticisms on elite circles by these and other respected and trusted Pan-Islamist intellectuals must have been immense. This was especially so due to the fact that their arguments were based on generally acknowledged findings of moderate policies in an Islamic Republic. Moreover, the early successes of political reforms served to virtually wipe out the appeal of the radicals' social movement.

For their part, the Pan-Islamist radicals, known as the traditional left such as Behzad Nabavi, Mohsen Armin, and Asgar Agajari, also turned away from the government restrictions and previous repressive decisions.²² They gradually started to turn their back on an Islamic approach to the matter of Republic, which had even formed the basis for Khatami's original reforms theories. They also began to favour the adaptation of the Republicanism with Iranian characteristics. Reformist criticisms, they seemed to concede, had made a continued adherence to such a Republicanism impossible, if the existing system of an authoritarian Islamic state was to be retained. Instead, they started to advance an alternative radical way to modernity and pluralism (Tajzadeh, 2002, p.41). This new approach culminated in the publication of books and newspapers under new public consensus, an approach that

22 - See Newsletter published by the Association of Combatant Clerics, 1999, No. 14, Tehran-Iran

merged reformist and radical views. Although this new ideological stance served the purposes of the moment, among many establishment intellectuals, it questioned the credibility of Political Islam as a complete ideology.

How could almost two decades of Islamic traditionalism (1979-1997) be swept aside to this extent so easily? What did this mean for the agreed approach on political reform? First of all, Khatami was probably unwilling to impose the traditionalist decisions of the government onto his establishment intellectuals, if only because such a step would kill his overall project for political modernisation. Hadn't he just downplayed the role of secular, Pan-Islamist radicals and liberal nationalist groups and their participation in a modern society? Secondly, as Chapter Two of this paper shows, from 1997 onwards, the ideological guidelines had been gradually relaxed and to some extent unmistakably transformed. Moreover, it was clear that senior officials like Abdullah Nouri, Mehdi Karrubi, Mosavi Bojnourdi, Ansari, Rahmani Khalili, Shahidi, Arab Damghani, and Mohtashami-Pur, mostly all members of the Regime Expediency Council, disagreed about the strict adherence to the arguments of official guidelines. Likewise, Khatami's approach to ideological reform failed to unite in consensus the main ideological groups within the elite. As long as Supreme Leader refused to interfere in ideological affairs, there was room for a certain measure of dissent and many of Iran's reformers knew it.

Establishment's intellectuals were the first to challenge the state officials' consensus on the modernisation policies of 1997 onwards. The timing of articles first published in early 1998 by Sa'id Hajjarian, Ali-Reza Alavitabaar and many others was excellent. At the time, the general political climate in Iran was of unprecedented tolerance (Goochani, 2004, pp.9-10). Under the ideological supervision of Abdullah Nouri's Ministry of the Home Office, free debate within the establishment was possible for awhile. As it happened, a number of other publications, the topics of which were considered more sensitive at the time, drew away much of the official attention from these lengthier articles (Ganji, 1999). Furthermore, the new methods of communication were couched in a language that was both lucid in its presentation and careful in its assertions. In a way, everyone knew what the new discourses were saying, but nobody could pin them down on specific points. These and other articles gave Sa'id Hajjarian, Akbar Ganji and other reformers a deserved reputation as well-known Pan-Islamist reformers who knew how to say certain things without getting into trouble, at least for while.

With officials, such as Abdullah Nouri and Mostafa Tajzadeh, and journalists, such as Hajjarian and Ganji, therefore, a new era in Iranian political debate opened. Abdullah Nouri came from a slightly different background than such journalists as Abbas Abdi, Sa'id Hajjarian and Akbar Ganji. Mostafa Tajzadeh was even less experienced. Moreover, if this may be as sharply stated, strictly speaking neither Nouri nor Tajzadeh were elites in the regime, but rather state officials. They were the first in a long line of intellectuals and officials during the late 1990s to debate the merits of the political modernity in public. In doing so, they at once signalled the

enlargement of the arena for political debate during the period and the relative loss of importance of such hitherto crucial topics. In their approach, too, they differed from the older establishment intellectuals in that in their political discussions they did not describe some distant past, but obviously referred to the present. Moreover, a novelty in the political debates amongst IRI officials was that although they were committed Pan-Islamists, they viewed the official Political Islam ideology in a far more critical light than any establishment intellectual had dared before them. In short, with Nuri and Tajzadeh's public debate on contemporary reforms and modernisation, the Islamic Republic became markedly less dogmatic.

In their discourse, Ganji and Abdi went over the same period of post-revolution history and concluded that Iran's present political system was not yet based on a Republican model. In the process, they offered a more negative view of the quality of Political Islam's ideology and its roots than older reformers, such as Nouri, did. This negative view was based on their belief that Political Islam had gradually strayed from the rationally correct views of revolutionaries. As they pointed out, in the past, with the notable exception of Grand Ayatollah Montazeri, only moderate officials had committed to defend the values of Republicanism for political system. By Republican system they, being orthodox reformers, meant a country whose political and cultural levels were rather democratic. Therefore this was a political system, which according to its traditionalist origin and its present institution, was not yet on the path towards democratisation. They emphasised that Grand Ayatollah Montazeri explicitly stated that the establishing of an Islamic system could only take place as a result of the development of moderate forces with the institution of the Republic. They, however, pointed out that with Ayatollah Khomeini's doctrine of *vilayet-e faqih* they could not form a free and democratic Islamic Republic. In fact, they added, Ayatollah Khomeini's views on the rule of jurisprudence in forming a democratic system had been proven mistaken. Such an Islamic Republic can only take place in culturally democratic society, in which more progress than damage is brought about. In other words, due to the present conservative leadership, the Iranian state and society is politically and culturally even further away from a transition to a religiously democratic political system than before. The establishment's intellectuals notice that, Ayatollah Montazeri had gone one step further, and even he had thought it was impossible for a country like Iran to establish a democratic Republican system under the leadership of its present Islamic government. Just after the Islamic revolution, Ayatollah Montazeri may have thought that, even while the revolution faced complex social and political problems, the establishment of a democratic Republican system was possible, if the moderate elites who were especially prone to revolution could intimately join together with revolutionary forces. This could make the insight of the moderate elite higher than what it was. From this reasoning, it became clear that the Iranian Islamic Republic had a modernisation mission to fulfil, a mission which stood very far from the present state (Ghabel, 2002).

The IRI's ideological dualism and the elite temporary solution for the modernisation of state management under the leadership of jurisprudence led the political institution not to adhere to an alternative version of Republic. In this misconception, the rule of jurisprudence on the top of the Republic could not but lead the political system to an absolute model. Both Ganji and Abdi said that while Ayatollah Khomeini pretended that Islamic Iran had been a Republic as any other, in fact it was not. Using an interesting formula, they had explained that such a false interpretation for an Islamic Republic in Iran was a mistake and a waste of time. They emphasised that differences in this respect could not be avoided, and while facing the modern world, Islamic Iran would inevitably reach a point at which the political system would have to go forward in its relation to the international community. Moreover, through the compulsory process of political reform, this step had to be achieved before contemplating political modernity (Ibid. p.165). Building modern political institutions, in other words, took realism and time. The recent progress and fruitful political reform did not mean it was not a form of modernisation, but because Iran has a complex political and social system, the coming democratic political system has a lot to learn from its older moderate generations (Tajzadeh, 2002, pp. 44, 55, 69,163,171).

Iran's modernisation and reform process was the work of a number of moderate intellectual groups, who through their contacts were well aware of the room for dissent. Sensing that even the ideological authorities continued to disagree on important subjects amongst each other, they knew their movement would pass unscathed (Ghabel, 2002, p.256). Like the liberal reformers before them, Ganji and Abdi aptly made clear that they did not believe the present Islamic Republic was a religiously democratic political system. While putting Iran at the initial process of institutional reform, they implicitly put it at the initial process for mobilisation and political participation as well. In this way, political reforms could become the equivalent of a modernisation process without inter-Islamic group conflicts. Indeed, as some political organizations were to be observed in the past, even under the liberal cabinet of Mehdi Bazargan, inter-Islamic group conflicts always constitute the main decay in the political system. In this respect, Ganji and Abdi were representative of an emerging group of establishment intellectuals, who increasingly rejected Political Islam in favour of a more traditional form of plural democracy, which was based not so much on theories described for the third world nor for one-man rule but was based on impersonal discourse of political development according to which societies inevitably evolve towards modernisation. Their approach fitted in much better ways to address the needs of the present political system, recent political reforms, and Iran's characteristics as a whole.

From their internal publications, it has become clear that these and other critical views received an important impetus from discussions held behind closed doors in the second half of the 1990s (Ganji, 2000). In line with the other reformers, Nouri and Tajzadeh believed that the IRI had prematurely undergone its revolutionary transformation. Indeed, this was one of the main themes of their articles in Khordad newspaper for which

Nouri had to explain in clerical court. At the same time, however, they both made clear that they believed Iran's political system under President Khatami remained the best chance for the system to modernise and regain its strength, even though the Iranian people were culturally and politically ready to be fully engaged in a democratic model of political system. More than Nouri, Tajzadeh stressed that if, in spite of the mistakes in the post-revolutionary political system, the government had simply adhered to its Republican line of political development after 1997, the damage would have remained extremely limited. Khatami's renewed emphasis on moderate political relations had opened the way to recovery. Referring to a post-revolutionary term, Tajzadeh said that the democracy behind Khatami's civil society participation policies had remained realistic. According to Tajzadeh, this was not very surprising. At the time, the entire clerical leadership only had a hazy notion of what democracy really was. This was amply shown in the 1997 presidential election campaign. Conservative's authoritarian rule revealed that the Islamic leadership themselves were not even ready yet for constructive criticism. The result was, as Nouri and Tajzadeh had put forward, that with the early 1990s economic reform, the IRI basically remained not in the initial stage of a modern system but rather in the last stage of despotic monarchy. Without saying so explicitly, they were signalling that in reality former president Rafsanjani was nothing else than a king without crown. Moreover, they suggested that the political model, which Iran had adopted after the war was extremely suited to this monarch outlook, while the Guardian Council line of supporting the new economic policy had tended to strengthen it.

By adhering strictly to the modernisation, the reformers succeeded quite convincingly in showing that Iran could have its place in the modern world (Ghabel, 2002). Therefore, either the country had to be a modern Islamic republic with a truly democratic political system and a high respect for the democratic values which go along with this model, or it had not yet become one and had just carried out some form of market economy and provided a less than perfect form of political participation. Iran could not be both modern and traditional according to the moderates' discourse. Most important of all, it could not be both democratic and authoritarian. They believed an important part of the problem lay in the sincerity of the political elite. Defining Iran's political system as a republican model while it was patently not yet one thus amounted to an admission of its crisis.

Compared to those reformers, surprisingly little discussion was published on the political discourse of the conservative elite and their establishment officials in the 1990s. This may be explained in part by differences of opinion about what kind of political system was to be held and who was to take part in devising the reformers (Ibid. p.256). On the whole, as opposed to their reformist opponents, the more conservative elite preferred to keep debates on political system confined to the members of elite circles. To some extent, however, it is a question whether their formal reasons were not in fact quite welcomed by the mainstream reformer groups. After all, the conservatives' theoretical position looked rather weak. The very

success of the political reformers contrasted sharply with the political restriction of the conservative elite. Naturally, support in the younger generations for the traditional Islamic views of the conservatives dwindled (Ibid. 257).

This is not to say that nothing at all was published, but on the surface conservative publications looked much more like detailed expositions of the official politics: there was nothing new to mention (Neikfar, 2001, p.13). Inevitably, as a result of the reformers' successes, the younger generation of mainstream intellectuals engaging in debates on tradition and modernity did begin to differ in some important respects from their successors. On the whole, they were relatively less idealistic in their political convictions and more supportive of the limited reforms through the political elite. Faced with the need to reconstruct their collapsing political system, mainstream political representatives shunned political issues and tended to concentrate on the improvement of administrative and legal efficiency (Abdi, 2002). The more ideological conservatives tried to combine their fascination for a mystic absolute rule of *vilayet-i faqih* with large-scale programmes of moral inculcation. Importantly, they somehow seemed to turn their back on those immediate questions facing state policy and political institution. As an official part of leadership, their cultural essence had been settled to their satisfaction regardless of the disturbing thought-practice of reformers' politics.

The main innovative idea of the mainstream reformers of the 1990s, however, was laid in the sphere of economic modernisation and their rejection of a mixed economy as planned by the state bureaucracies (Behdad, S. in Alizadeh, P. 2000, pp.100-144). The reason for this idea was laid in the orthodox Islamic coupling of the economic system to state sector, which was unacceptable to mainstream reformers. They precisely viewed the Islamic traditional model of economy and the modernisation of private sector as not separate from each other. Only in this way they believed the stability which was needed to carry out the state economic development possible. This ideological feature, which culminated at the end of 1980s in the former president Rafsanjani's famous theory of economic neo-liberalism, will be dealt separately. Within the context of economic modernisation, however, it is important to point out that the mainstream view of the reformers as a whole resulted in a rejection of neo-liberalist economic model. Economic modernisation was to be realised under the moderate government while remaining under the traditional model of economy.

A central assumption behind the political views of the younger generation of the Pan-Islamist mainstream (including those of Emad'aldeen Baghi) was the claim that Islamic Iran could somehow avoid a liberal model of political development, and hence, the unacceptable form of Republic that had marked modernity in the West. Predictably, they based this assumption on textual evidence from Ayatollah Khomeini himself. Conveniently, some published selected passages from Ayatollah Khomeini's speeches in which it was stated that the interest of Islamic government as a whole is clearly dependent on the decisive role of Islamic values (Goochani, 2004, p.61). After a short period of heated debates, they assumed that Iran could implement

political modernisation with a higher level of Islamic values, because it could benefit from the positive fruits of Islamic revolution and leadership. At the same time, this provided new ground for the assertion that the state line had, after all, been generally correct before Ayatollah Khomeini's death. Even policies after this time, for all their mistakes, had to be viewed against the background of the need to adapt creatively the general principles of Islamic values to Iran's concrete conditions.

Although it could be seen as a kind of modernisation, this view really presented a conceptual change in the way modernity was viewed in Iran. No longer, in fact, was modernity viewed as an outsider doctrine imposed upon Islamic societies. Instead, there were at least two kinds of possible Pan-Islamist political development. One was a moderate model of Republic practiced in the Western world; the other was an advanced Islamic-values oriented Iranian model. Without doubt this new approach was related in spirit, if not in content, to another theory of modernisation within an Islamic framework, that of former President Rafsanjani's famous neo-liberalism. At the same time, as has been mentioned above, the advocates of this approach were sure to point out that this meant the rule of jurisprudence had to be followed. It did mean, however, the institution of jurisprudence and the Republic could join forces to find a solution for the IRI's stagnated economic and political system. It implicitly set out the promise of a possible third way, between the practically unworkable institution of leadership and religiously unacceptable neo-liberalism.

This religiously neo-liberal version of modernisation was the same one as had formed the basis of the IRI line between 1989 and 1997. At the time, the nationalist-Islamic characteristic of government, which was the main theme of their arguments, was ranked behind the initial stage of this alternative, was also interpreted as Islamic model modernity (Zubaida, 1997, p.104). After all, no one less than Rafsanjani had elevated it as the main theme of his developmental model. Some critics pointed out that in the post-revolutionary internal discussion on the content of an Islamic state, the terms for the nationalist-Islamic characteristic were often associated with the liberal faction of Pan-Islamists and was an act of dissociation with the Ayatollah Khomeini's interpretation of Political Islam (Ganji, A. & Nouri, A. 2000). Nationalist-Islamic character was usually brought forward as something of a shorthand term for saying that, although Iran was an Islamic country and its culture was religiously valued, it needed a nationalist kind of ideology before it could become really modernised. Nonetheless, if Iran with nationalist-Islamic characteristics meant a confirmation of its neo-liberal model for the mainstream forces, it also meant a continuation of neo-liberal political development in the governing institutions. In fact, a glance at the past of Iran's Islamic republic with its nationalist-Islamic characteristics reveals that it was not the unequivocal traditional system that most observers believed it to be. In the eyes of many Pan-Islamists, however, this view weakened the spiritual values of a badly embattled Islamic model even further, because it relegated their Islamic ideology even further to the status of a convenient justification for an increasingly Westernised political system.

3. Secular Theories and Political Modernity

During the early 1990s, for the first time after 1982 purges, secular theories were allowed to be introduced by semi-establishment intellectuals and were widely discussed among university students and circles of intellectuals. At first, as long as these theories were discussed in an isolated environment and used as reference materials for university students, discussions about such theoretical materials were permitted. From the beginning of the decade, the youngest generations of political reformers at Tehran University and other main universities (Mash'had, Tabriz and Shiraz, for instance) were allowed to enjoy systematic debates on Western liberal theories, post-modern, and neo-Marxism secular political development. Traditional Western theories on political modernity had already received attention from the older generation in the early 1990s. At first, all topics were strictly confined to intellectual publications, which were published openly only in very small editions. From 1992 onwards, a growing group of developmental magazines such as *Farhang Tose'eh* (Developmental Culture) started to introduce these theories to a wider public (Goochani, 2004, pp.9-10). By the end of the decade, political tolerance had grown to such an extent that both new-left theories and Western liberal democracy were widely discussed in the publications of semi-establishment intellectuals. Although these theories never transpired in official discourses, they had clearly started to pose an informal challenge to the dictates of the establishment's interpretation of Iran's political modernity by 1999 (Khatami, 1999).

An important question now arises: how did it come to pass that secular theories on modernity were allowed to resurface with the officially sanctioned ideologies following the purges of 1982? A large part of the answer lies in the clerical institution's aversion to ideologically inspired university students and Pan-Islamist intellectuals. But, when these secular theories really started to be spread among a larger public, official ideological guideline had also been considerably relaxed by the second half of the 1990s. By then, Pan-Islamist intellectual Mohammad Goochani had remarked that the state institution could not decide which political views are correct in the modern society and had ordered intellectuals to engage in debate and convince those who were not of good will towards official views (Goochani, 2004, pp.9-10). He had even admitted that it come to the point where it was necessary to learn from secular views. No doubt, this remarkable development was set in motion by the upgrading of inter-establishment factional conflicts. With a significant element of economic interests and factional conflicts, Islamic state policies on development appeared a lot more like other capitalist theories on political development. Moreover, the ideological debates that have been discussed in the preceding sections certainly served to impress both the political leadership, and a growing group of intellectuals at large, of the need for a freer debate on these issues. It was only natural that the disagreements about the very nature and effect on Iran's political system of capitalist theory should therefore pave the way for other theories as well. Liberal democracy,

for one, had simply been too successful to ignore, while its theories promised to shed more light on its unexpected longevity and success. At the same time, there was a widespread demand among some Pan-Islamist intellectuals for a return to a more modern Islamic-left that was once presented in the 1970s by sociologist Ali Shariati (Hajjarian, 2001). Still, the quest for new Western theories and ideas did not stray very far away from basic ideological assumptions. In fact, as will be shown, the new theories shared many of the features of both liberal democracy and Ali Shariati's leftist version of Political Islam within the context of political modernity and development.

The reintroduction of Ali Shariati's leftist theories of political development by the lower ranks of political leadership in the universities was primarily intended to be used as a means of gaining knowledge about the political theories of modern democracy. Moreover, since political reform concentrated mainly on the Iranian theocratic state, the inclusion of Ali Shariati's theories seemed logical enough. After all, post-revolutionary Iran had known a long and successful tradition of Ali Shariati's theories. Until 1997 at least, this introduction was only carried out to serve as a reference on Islamic revolution requisites. This formed part of the official view of political establishment as an integral part of the older generation of 1979 Islamic revolutionaries. Ideologically, these materials were unacceptable to the regime's old guard, but practically they were thought to be of some use for regime's political stability. In fact, the main aim of the reformers at the SKF was merely to discuss and implement some kind of Western liberal democracy while combining Ali Shariati's theory of social justice in Islam. Authors were not allowed to sympathise openly with these views and therefore had to place them within a framework of critical commentaries. By acquiring certain knowledge of these theories, it was hoped the existing theoretical set-up could be adapted for reform in a relatively smooth way. Both in Ali Shariati's leftist tradition and from sources on Western liberal democracy theories could therefore be found and could be fitted into the general discussion of political reform. For instance, this was the case with Hajjarian's proposed theories on structural functionalism for Iran's political system, which was discussed quite early on. In the social-democrat tradition, Babak Ahmadi's new adaptation of Michael Foucault's famous interpretation of history and knowledge (Ahmadi, 1994), although rarely named explicitly, from the early days of President Khatami's office was implicitly referred to even among Pan-Islamist intellectuals through such terms as politics, philosophy, and culture (Kadeevar, 2000). This was not very surprising, since President Khatami himself had derived much of his traditional background from the Western liberal democracy theories of modernity – democracy and pluralism, civil society and the rule of law. If a return to more traditional values was to be made, Ali Shariati was a natural source to turn to first. More surprisingly, Foucault's concept of political culture was also introduced to justify the return to a distinctively Ali Shariati criticism of modernity. Even a return to Iran's intellectual past was intertwined with the present theories of Western liberal democracy.

Increasingly in the second half of the 1990s, Western and new-left theories on political modernity were no longer used as mere reference materials, but as the proposed arguments on a larger scale on the Iranian transitional stage towards a democratic model of Republic. They marked a profound ideological effect at the formal and informal level of political discourse. A good example of this trend is to be found at ministerial and later parliamentary levels, where towards the end of the decade, conservatives were pitted against reformers in an increasingly acrimonious debate. Typically, neither side was too specific about the exact contents of their proposed theories. After all, Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine were still the official ideologies and, as establishment Pan-Islamists, both knew what lay in store if that ideology and doctrine was openly attacked. From the overall debates, however, enough was clear to allow for a fairly good view of what was intended.

Among Iranian intellectuals, the reformers at the SKF formed part of a more general return to leftist tradition of Ali Shariati's theories. This was partly the result of the appallingly unjust and corrupt experiences of the post-revolutionary Iranian politics. In all likelihood, however, the renewed attention towards Ali Shariati's leftist views also received an unmistakable impulse from the change in emphasis on Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine. To many Pan-Islamist intellectuals, the need to order social relations in a just and morally desirable way was a feature of Iranian Islamic society that transcended to Political Islam ideology. Once Political Islam turned to the impersonal rule of jurisprudence and brutal merchant capitalism, both considered unjust and immoral, many instinctively reverted back in part or whole to Ali Shariati's interpretation of a revolutionary Political Islam. Mohammad Goochani provides a high-level example of a trend that today has resulted in most intellectuals' infatuation with new-left and social democracy, while others were fascinated with the ideas of the welfare-state liberal democracy and an accompanying advocate of the Western Republican model on a large scale.

Among the members of Iranian academics, one of the most vociferous exponents of the secular liberal democracy was Hoshank Amir Ahmadi. In the early years of 1995, Amir Ahmadi had seemed an unlikely candidate for such a role. From 1996 onwards, he had published several articles on plural culture, tradition and modernity in Iran. In these early years, he wrote extensively on culture, democracy and civil society. Prior to 1996, he published work on Iran's political history and elite culture as well, but devoted most of his attention to a series of debates on controversial subjects about self-censorship amongst Iranian intellectuals, their struggles against the institution of despotism, and plural culture in contemporary Iran. Amir Ahmadi felt especially attracted to reformer's view that social justice was no less important than the rule of law advocated by President Khatami. From 1996 onwards, however, Amir Ahmadi increasingly began to question political reform. Between 1996 and the presidential election of 1997, he worked closely together with Hussein Bashiriyeh in trying to find ways in which the IRI's political structure could be modernised and democratised. In the event,

Amir Ahmadi proved to be one of the most productive and talented intellectuals of the late 1990s Iran. Sadly for Amir Ahmadi, he became disillusioned from the experience. Faced with the realities and limits of political reform, he grew to believe that democracy would not work for Iran as he wished. As he put it, if the plural culture of the political system was truly developed, democracy would make sense, but this was simply not the case. Furthermore, he remarked, in the political sphere of the IRI, everything is determined by the notion of tradition, and here too, elite values are different. Since Amir Ahmadi had never been a committed Pan-Islamist, his intellectual quest in 1997 led him close to liberal democracy and new-left. By 1998 he had become a convinced reformist. In this process, no doubt, he was influenced by some of his colleagues. Apart from Hussein Bashiriyeh, who had shown moderate sympathies to liberal democracy in earlier years, Davod Her Midas Bavand, Parviz Pyran and Ali-Reza Tayeb adhered to similar views. As sympathetic political reformers, Hoshank Amir-Ahmadi and Ali-Reza Tayeb stated a year later that compared to Western elite plural culture, the Iranian elite exhibited their own specific nature and characteristics. Simply put, while agreeing about Iranian characteristics, Amir Ahmadi preferred a plural culture with Western rational characteristics rather than traditional Islamic ones. The discussion that followed in the monthly review *Farhang Tose'eh* showed that they unequivocally sided with the views of Mohammad Mokhtari, who had been murdered by the IRI secret police in 1999.

Mohammad Mokhtari's theory of culture and political culture is a critical description the way Iranian political elite have perceived tradition and modernity. He emphasised that the re-thinking of culture and political culture is a critical exercise through which one may grasp the past and the present principles which needed to be re-conceptualised (Mokhtari, 1998, p.7). Based on some new approaches to culture and development, *Farhang Tose'eh* magazine, together with members of different secular circles, organised several seminars on tradition, political culture, Iran's political reform and modernity. At these seminars Mokhtari openly identified himself as an anti-establishment intellectual. Against the opinion of a majority of those present, he expressed understanding and sympathy for universal human rights, liberal democracy and declared that the IRI political elite had excessively negated the democratic rights of its citizens. In this respect, Mokhtari posited that democratic culture presented some outstanding features in contemporary Iranian political history. At an early post-revolutionary stage, Iranian intellectuals had already developed a democratic notion of political participation and the organisational principle of delimitation of prerogatives. As the political events showed, post-revolutionary Iran had been a society in which democratic views could guide the abolition of the despotic social hierarchy, despotic institution and backward tradition. This guidance for intellectuals fitted Iran's current needs under political modernity (Ibid. pp.117-192).

Mokhtari remarked that some intellectuals agreed with and differed from the elite reading of Iranian political culture in important respects. First of all, unlike the traditional forms of social setting, they placed their views

within a framework of political progress or social development. They also supported the critics of the state line on socio-economic modernisation. Having said this, however, the political opinion behind Mokhtari's views about political reform differed from those of Pan-Islamists of all kinds. He pointed out that as a traditional society, Iran could not be said to have developed the present condition through a democratic path and conventional social setting. There was no room for the positive effects of political reforms in Mokhtari's views. Nor could the political theories of Ali Shariati's Political Islam or any other traditional doctrine be said to be applicable in his view to Iran's circumstances (Ibid. p.185).

In a series of articles published during 1996 and 1997, Mohammad Mokhtari tried to offer a more elaborate exposition of his views. First of all, Mokhtari offered a more detailed criticism of the excessive negation of democratic and plural culture. Secondly, he proceeded to outline a modern version of what he believed was Iran's history of modernity. In his article, 'The Compulsory Condition', he attacked the main thinkers of the institution of power for wrongly ascribing their undemocratic political culture to Iran's overall culture.²³ By questioning democratic rights, he maintained, they had only worsened Iran's plight, because thereby they would have to dissolve the very modern ideology of social cohesion that held modern Iran together. Consequently they would fail to shake Iran out of its politico-cultural crisis. Moreover, instead of finding peaceful and refined ways of political participation, the popular ways of traditional culture had asserted themselves. Iranian intellectuals were unable to resist their own traditionalism as a result of living under utilitarian ideology and authoritarian rule. The rulers could behave without being questioned, and they mistook many of the morally inferior definitions of liberty for their morally uplifting origins. Thus, the new notion of loyalty, which had always been the ideal, was now associated with a slavish loyalty to leaders. Similarly, the new notion of appropriateness, which amounted to a form of social justice, was confused with equality before lawlessness. This made people think that revolution was a dictatorial doctrine, whereas in reality, its distortion through traditional culture was (Mokhtari, 1998, pp.299-314). It was hard to understand Mokhtari's criticism that the basic structure of government and society in the post-revolutionary period had not undergone a very good transformation. Simply put, Mokhtari's alternative proposal was Western liberal democracy. He maintained that the institution of power through its authoritarian style of personal rule had weakened Iran's social progress, and through its repressive mobilisations, it had wreaked cultural progress. The 'unquestionable culture' (*Farhang'e bee Tchera*), Mokhtari implied, had been a total mistake. It was time to turn back to the cultural behaviour of superior democracy and pluralism.

As was to be expected, Mokhtari's ideas on democracy and modernity were not distinguished from the purity of liberty, or even of freedom. On the

23 - Mokhtari, M. 1997. '*sharayete esterare*' (Emergency Condition), in monthly paper *Farhange Toseeh* (developmental Culture), sixth year, No. 28, pp. 12-16, Tehran-Iran

contrary, it must have been rather provocative of Mokhtari to present an alternative that was first put forward by most progressive seculars in 1979 as the ideal framework for the country's democratic transition.²⁴ The fact that Mokhtari was able to write freely along these lines in 1997 also furnishes an indication of the tolerance that had crept into political reforms. This criticism was formed by a kind of alternative modernity on which Mokhtari typically based his views and assumptions, a comprehensive development in the cultural, politics, and economic aspects (Ibid. pp.9-14). The basic message was that the Iranian political elite lacked flexibility and pluralism, and that the establishment officials lacked a democratic political awareness and therefore did not undergo an extensive period of relaxation before the elite could be trusted to lead a carefully balanced form of political system. But, compared to other secular intellectuals, Mokhtari's underlying reasons were different. Unlike the religiously liberals, Mokhtari stressed what he called the cultural dimension of his view opposes the 'right-side-down' political system. What Mokhtari meant was that unlike the old ideas of the liberals, his view contains a deep-rooted cultural element. Mokhtari wanted a society where the practice of the state institution was based on modern ideas and the society based on humanism. In this way, cultural cohesion would be strengthened by democratic spirit. Unlike some Pan-Islamist reformers, Mokhtari vehemently opposed violence, repression, and cultural oppression. He explicitly claimed that a sudden change is first of all not the only way to arrive at the stage of democratic transition and, secondly, that the changes in themselves do not contain the key to modernity (Ibid. pp.9-14). It is merely the fruit of the democratic culture which would then either combine with or give way to the politics of tolerance, under which the path to change would be carried out. It would also be undesirable to engage in conflict during this period of change. The violence only served to disrupt the smooth birth of citizen consensus and thus modernisation of the country (Ibid. pp.9-14).

An important element of Mokhtari's ideas was its extreme caution in matters of political change. During 1997-98, he stressed the need for an extended period of political tolerance and warned that a violent change, as some pleaded for, would rapidly run into obstacles and political repression. Modernisation, Mokhtari insisted, consisted mainly of three elements: cultural, political and institutional. Cultural modernisation would not merely be carried out to build a comprehensive political institution, but would also attempt to convey more rights to the people. Political modernisation would lead to democratisation by the slow and gradual enlargement of political participation. Institutional modernisation would strive for improvements in the decentralisation of state bureaucracy. But, Mokhtari pointed out, whenever democratisation co-existed with modernisation, it would have to give way to tradition. Apart from these, the intellectuals would also have to engage in democratic process, which would enhance the overall cultural qualities of citizens. Much in the vein of modern theories, therefore, Mokhtari

24 - Mokhtari, M. 1997. '*farhange bechera*' (unquestionable Culture), in monthly paper '*Farhange Toseeh*' (Developmental Culture), sixth year, No. 27, pp. 9-14, Tehran-Iran

seemed convinced that the democratic political and cultural attitude of the Iranian intellectuals would make political and institutional modernisation relatively easy. Furthermore, although he was careful not to say so in print, Mokhtari was in this respect squarely opposed to any forms of Islamic model or Political Islam at present or future. True to the liberal tradition of the inherent discrepancies in cultural quality between intellectuals, Mokhtari sincerely believed many of his counterparts lacked the ability to ever partake of a sensible position (Mokhtari, 1998, pp.115-136).

In Mokhtari's views (1998) the democratic transition was turned into a specifically Iranian modernisation theory, which was based on the values of liberal democracy. It belonged to the same intellectual universe as the modernist's views shorn of their populist group content: the political modernisation of Iran was above all a question of the correct ordering of cultural relations and political indoctrination. In the meantime, a group of enlightened intellectuals would take the necessary and potentially painful measures to bring the new society safely into modernity. Under this cultural guidance of the intellectuals, society would grapple with the modern details of culture and political modernisation until an increased citizens' awareness would make them more fit at some future time to take on their own destiny (Ibid. pp.267-280).

Alongside this literally liberal view, a group of pro-Western democrats presented their own theory. Equally opposed to the ideology of Political Islam, and Iran's traditional despotism, this group believed that the best road to modernisation consisted of a rapid introduction of some form of political participation and freedom. Mohammad Mokhtari himself was the most prominent member of this group. Although the main thrust of Mokhtari's work lay outside - and to a certain extent even avoided - the domain of recent political reforms, the general modernisation setting of Iran's political culture implied that much of what Mokhtari wrote was automatically viewed within a generally assumed political model. The result of this tendency was that Mokhtari ended up presenting his ideas as part of the modernisation process (Ibid. pp.229-314).

Much in the same vein as liberal democrats, Mokhtari (1998) based his ideas on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As a result of his training as a sociologist and a poet, Mokhtari believed this declaration could be used to modernise Iran's political system as well. Like his theories on modernity, this entailed a process running from some specified traditional model towards modernity in the future, in which Iran would stand on the same level of political development as the advanced countries of the West. Against the background of these assumptions, Mokhtari formulated his own criticisms and proposals. On the subjects of culture and political culture, for instance, Mokhtari held that universal human rights approaches consisted of objective and impersonal forces which knew of no privileges (Ibid. pp.349-360). As Mokhtari remarked in discussing the failures of the elite's human rights policies, he emphasised that no one could exceed the limits of universal human rights. In Mokhtari's view, the protecting forces of human rights in

society were formed by the constant and increasingly widespread interplay between civil society and social justice (Ibid. pp.315-332).

Based on the universal human rights approach, Mokhtari came to the conclusion that although far from being a revolutionised country, Iran was still far from being a democratic political system. In his view, an overview of the main events of the past years only could serve as a list of Iran's failure to take serious steps towards modernity and democracy: the rise and the fall of few upheavals, revolts and revolutions. Every time, the elite political culture had proven to be an obstacle to progress. Under the current political system, too, the intellectuals had been consistently kept away from participation in the process of political and cultural changes. Although, the political elite promised this, it was more apparent than real. They had only been ordered around, as had always been the case. Everyone personally had realised this as a result of self-censorship. For all its revolutionary rhetoric, Iran was still an authoritarian political system (Ibid. pp.137-154).

Mokhtari's main concern then was to change Iranian elite political culture in order to take away the obstructions to a possible socio-economic and political development. In other words, the natural flow of modern culture into the Iranian elite strata was being stemmed through the needs to recognise the right of the majority of citizens. This approach held the view that as long as elite lacked a democratic culture within its own group, there would always be a natural barrier between those who rule and those predestined to obey. In this respect, this view was based on the widely held conviction that Iran could potentially be democratised, if civil society groups were to be allowed to participate in debates on the form and content of government and policies. Moreover, Mokhtari held that all members of society, leaders and followers alike, were inherently imperfect and needed to exercise rationalism to keep them on the correct track (Ibid. pp.45-92).

The main change that Mokhtari proposed to be carried out through the elite's political culture consisted of the introduction of a special brand of modernity. This was based on two important assumptions. The first was that the truth of an identity could always be found or approximated sufficiently through a new reading or re-thinking of culture. This situation offered an ideal condition for the elites to discuss tradition, because in cultural debate there are no forbidden zones. The second assumption was that such a discussion would cause them to make corrections through a former minority group that had swollen into a majority by the support of former opponents. This view of democracy, which was quite unique, was in turn strongly based on the conviction that there was an objective and unambiguous process of political and socio-economic progress underlying these discussions. Democracy was precisely necessary, because an enhanced knowledge of this process would accord society to its actual requirements. This meant that political culture had to change in such a way that society would be transformed from a closed and hierarchic structure, in which there were only weak and vertical chains of top-down command to participatory units, to a

more egalitarian, tolerant, and open organism, which accepted both internal discussion and external influences.²⁵

An important feature of Mohammad Mokhtari's theory (1998) of cultural modernity was therefore that, to a certain degree, political development had to be accompanied by corresponding and simultaneous changes in political institution. As some secular intellectuals proceeded, a more open and egalitarian society had to be able to exert its democratic prerogatives to identify and eliminate both the potential and the inevitable obstacles that were encountered on the way.²⁶ In order to achieve this, power had to be linked less to state bureaucracy and rather more to the whims of democratic elections. A democratic legal system and political procedures would have to be institutionalised - and be adhered to by all Iranian elites, including the political leadership. This change called for a deep cultural shift from a politics of ideological relations to one of procedures and institutions (Mokhtari, 1998, pp.45-92).

Importantly, much like his more liberal colleague Mokhtari, secular intellectual Hoshank Mahroyan combined a number of elements from different theories, both traditional and modern, in his own works called *Modernity and Our Crisis*.²⁷ In matters of democracy, he was clearly influenced by the structural-functionalist theories, which greatly stress the importance of interest aggregation. At the same time, Mahroyan's views reflected contemporary post-modernist views of Iranian intellectuals about the need to prevent the arising of obstacles on the road to modernity, the need to fear concentration of political power only in the hands of the elites, the need to understand traditional views about economic liberalisation, and the need for political participation of the citizens.²⁸ In short, like the views of many other Iranian intellectuals, his ideas formed an intricate amalgam of both modernity of the past and secular elements, which mutually reinforced, overlapped, and completed each other in sometimes surprising and novel ways (Mahrouyan, 2004).

In one aspect, for instance, Mahrouyan's theory on modernity presented a totally new approach. Unlike all other theories presented during this period, Mahroyan stated explicitly that Iran's actual reform process did not solely or even primarily concern the future wealth and power of the Iranian citizen. Universal human rights, Mahroyan pointed out, shall also be an important goal of this process.²⁹ For Mahroyan, after the horrors of the

25 - See 'sansom, poushye-deh-gou-ye va poushye-deh-garaye' (Censor, talking in secrecy and secrecism) in 'Farhange Toseeh' (Developmental Culture), 1997, sixth year, No. 29-30, pp. 6-20, Tehran-Iran

26 - Molahzadeh, A., 1997. 'mardom dar djoostedjo-ye badel no' (People on Search for New Alternative), monthly review 'Farhange Toseeh' (developmental culture), No. 28, pp. 3-6, published in Iran

27 - Mahrouyan, H., 1997. 'payane metafizyek va shoreshe aqle' (End of Metaphysic and Revolt against Ration), in monthly paper 'Farhang' Toseeh' (Developmental Culture), sixth year, No. 28, pp. 34-39, Tehran-Iran

28 - Mahrouyan, H., 1997. 'mizegerdye dar-barehe djame-eye madanye dar iran' (Seminar on Civil Society in Iran), in monthly paper 'Farhange Toseeh (Developmental Culture) , sixth year, No. 31, pp. 47-59, Tehran-Iran

29 - Mahroyan, H., 1997. 'Mirza Melkom Khan va djame-ehe madanye' (Mirza Melkom Khan and Civil Society), in monthly paper 'Farhange Toseeh (Developmental Culture), sixth year, No. 29-30, pp. 31-34, Tehran-Iran

1998 University Incident and repression of students, Iranian society first of all had to regain its traditional respects for human values. In an article on humanitarianism, Mahroyan stressed the importance of the natural worth of human beings outside their social roles.³⁰

At the end of the 1990s, secular intellectuals in university circles started to put forward theories about modernity and political changes that paralleled, and through their very presence, challenged the officially propagated ideology of Political Islam. They were able to do this because the Iranian political leadership lacked the will and the internal ideological consensus to clamp down on them. Like their Pan-Islamist reformers and their mainstream counterparts, they offered different possible trajectories for the reform process towards a future of development, wealth and power. Typically, as secular theories, they did not include any element of inter-Islamic political conflicts and remained silent about Islamic leadership. At the same time, however, their differences yielded an important parallel with their Pan-Islamist counterparts as well: both Pan-Islamist and secular pro-democratic reformers insisted on universal human rights, where the more moderate, anti-authoritarian Pan-Islamist of every hue discerned a distinctive approach towards reform with nationalist characteristics. In both cases, this difference underlay a crucial point: whether democracy had to evolve simultaneously with political reforms or would have to wait for its completion. The secular theories, however, concentrated on their own explanations of liberal democracy. Mohammad Mokhtari's revived liberal democracy reintroduced political culture as the main precondition for modernisation, whereas Hoshank Mahroyan proposed his particular brand of post-modern democratisation.

The content of these varieties of secular theories showed the extent to which the arena for political reform had been enlarged between May 1997 and May 2004. By the end of the 1990s, debates began to spill over into the public sphere as well. During these years, political discussion among establishment intellectuals had grown from certain debates on the concept of democracy within the frame of Political Islam to a much wider and vaguely defined quest for a suitable theory of political, social, and economic modernisation. Although, some of the basic features of these debates remained remarkably unaltered - especially the assumptions about Republicanism and the place of *vilayet-i faqih* in the governing system - the introduction of these discussions in the relatively open circles of establishment intellectuals signalled that an important step was taken from a narrowly defined and dogmatic Political Islam and the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine to a much more flexible, vague, and eclectic modernisation with or without Islamic characteristics. Moreover, in spite of the lively public debates, the dominant Pro-Khatami approach in state institution still remained the only official view of political reform.

30 - Mahroyan, H., 1997. '*Ma va djame-ehe madanyeh*' (We and Civil Society), in monthly paper Farhange Tose'h (Developmental Culture), sixth year, No. 32, pp. 6-11, Tehran-Iran

Conclusion

In this chapter the formative influence of democratic political culture on the reform process and debates on modernisation has been shown. The presidential election, which was held in 1997, intended to restart the process of political modernisation that had begun two decades before in 1979. Almost immediately, this public requirement was ignored by the conservative institution of *vilayet-i faqih*, or was contradicted by the IRI establishment elites. President Mohammad Khatami's clear aversion against imposing ideological dogmas and the lack of ideological consensus amongst his ideological fellowmen opened an arena for debate on the content of political modernity, a debate that only grew larger as the years wore on. This was spurred on by the increasingly vague and tolerant ideological guidelines attached to the political reforms. Moreover, because until the late 1990s, most of these debates remained confined to the establishment elite and Pan-Islamist intellectuals, the authorities did not discern any serious threat until it was too late.

The debates on political reforms involved three different categories of discourse on modernity and the transition from the present governing system to a democratic Republican model. To a certain degree, these categories have been linked to consecutive generations of post-revolutionary Pan-Islamist intellectuals. At first, the oldest generation of Pan-Islamist intellectuals debated the merits of Iran's transition to the era of the post-1997 election religiously democratic government and the resulting policies. Moderates maintained that the political changes that had basically been achieved in 1998 had been successful. Radical reformers, on the contrary, complained that it was a hoax, and that Iran needed an extended period of new democratisation before it could ever talk about a complete revolutionary achievement. In the 2001 presidential election, President Khatami brokered a compromise that saved the establishment's composition by maintaining that political reform had indeed been basically successful, but at the same time deeper structural reforms and a more plural political participation were needed.

In the second stage after 1997, slightly younger Pan-Islamist reformers, such as Mohsen Kadivar and Abdullah Nouri, broke establishment policy by criticising the institution of Supreme Leader (*vilayet-i faqih*). Instead of dwelling on the future, however, they linked their discourse to Iran's precise political needs and to leadership reform. They were so successful in their advocacy for more democracy under the Islamic Republic that their mainstream counterparts felt compelled to promote an institutionalised democratic political system with nationalist characteristics, which had been totally rejected before the 1997 election. This ideologically adapted pluralism encompassed the modernisation drive of President Khatami's leadership without the democratisation that reformers had generally predicted would accompany it. In other words, mainstream Pan-Islamists of the establishment rejected the concept of universal human rights and based their views on an Islamic version of human rights based on the

teaching of moderate Islam. They adopted the view that Iran somehow would follow an Islamic version of democracy that exhibited its own unique features. In the moderates' discourse of the 2001 presidential election, democracy with national-Islamic characteristics was replaced within the context of the initial stage of political changes, which clearly suggests a new approach to the universal declaration of human rights.

At the end of the 1990s, due to a number of reasons, secular theories began to emerge among semi-establishment intellectuals. This was especially the case at the reformers organisations, which was one of the main instruments for the introduction of liberal and social democratic theories in any case. At first sight, the secular theories encompassed both liberal and social democratic views. In reality, as a closer look at them reveals, they were often complex amalgams of different elements, of which the most striking caused them to be ascribed to one or the other view. At reformers organisations, Amir Ahmadi propounded a new liberal democratic voice within the framework of President Khatami's political reforms. Similarly in some important respects to the semi-establishment intellectuals' theory of liberalism, Mokhtari's theory did more to stress the importance of elite cultural reform. On the other side, Hoshank Mahrouyan advanced a notion of social democracy that extended the methods of liberal experiment. He did this within a vaguely defined framework of overall post-modernism. Both thinkers implicitly based their theories on the need to avoid obstacles to an underlying reform process for political change. Mahrouyan and Mokhtari, however, both believed political progress depended on cultural and ideological changes in both elite circles and the society as a whole, whereas Amir Ahmadi held on to the need for an enhanced measure of political participation.

Taken as a whole, the debates on the political reform and modernity during the 1990s were based on a common sense of liberal democracy. In both its universalism and its particularity, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights formed the essential ideal to which Iran's political elite had to adhere. Over the years, the way political reform progressed and was interpreted grew increasingly diverse and open. Initially, the old and strictly delineated modernisation debates of the early 1990s were revived. Due to Supreme Leader's reticence and his entourage's lack of consensus, the old guard controls no longer functioned for a period of years. The traditional Political Islam rhetoric soon gave way to more refined democratic discussions over alternative strategies for modernity and politics. Finally, the arena for discussions was enlarged to encompass secular theories as well. Important factors behind these shifts were the increased space for a new culture, inter-Islamic factional conflicts, generational change, unsuccessful economic reforms, a growing tolerance among the political elite, and the restricted character of much of the debates on political reforms.

Importantly, moreover, tolerance for the enlargement of the arena of discussions on political reforms was confined to the concrete level of reformist discourse on leadership reform. The debates on Republicanism and modernity did have some impact on the officials' views, but from the starting

days this debate just remained a topic of the discussions among officials whom concerned the leadership reform's issue. Characteristically, the debate on the content and nature of a modernised Republic was general and vague enough to accommodate the subtle changes emphasised in political reform that were brought about after the 1997 presidential election. Such changes could be viewed as a form of moderation. On the other hand, secular theories fell beyond the pale of official debates. Beyond the narrow confines in which they were posited, they ran the risk of being banned. This serves to show that in spite of the important shifts that took place in the concrete discourse about modernity, the official model for political reform at the general and particular levels remained that of the Pan-Islamist intellectuals and establishment approaches that had been since the 1997 election.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Republican Nature of Supreme Power

During the 1990s, the republican concept of supreme power decisively influenced all political theories and debates that were utilized during the political and institutional reforms in the IRI. In these years the IRI elite and Pan-Islamist intellectuals have debated their differences that concerned essentially the nature of supreme power, which since the early 1980s arrantly have existed in a parallel way under the umbrella of an Islamic state (Kadeevar, 2000). The first attempt in this chapter is to show that in the late nineties the Pan-Islamist elite and intellectuals' concepts on the nature of supreme power in some important aspects was significantly changed from the one already in place in the political system. Secondly, although there was a consensus among elites and high-ranking officials on the importance and the recognition of the institution of jurisprudence as a part of Iran's supreme power, it seems there were deep-seated differences about the ways in which this institution's power ought to be wielded. Based on these two assumptions in the second section of this chapter there will be an explanation of why the republican model of supreme power, as opposed to tradition Iranian-Islamic models, decisively influenced the ways in which these debates were waged and how the moderate elite - push towards republicanism - facilitated the beginning of political and institutional reforms. In the third section the focus will be on the theoretical debates which helped the Pan-Islamist intellectuals and low-rank officials to change their traditional Islamic thought-practice, and finally there will be an outline on how, through these changes, the political reforms progressed.

To begin first a brief presentation of the republican mode of approach to the supreme nature of power in the Iranian political system seems promising. Because unlike the materials used in preceding chapters, for this chapter just a few official documents or theoretical materials can be provided in which the writers outline a good deal of debate on the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine that considered the Vicegerency as the conceptual foundation of the nature of supreme power in an Islamic regime. A reason for the lack of such materials is that within the culture of the Pan-Islamist elite and high-ranking officials the Vicegerency as the foundational concept of supreme nature of power was generally not an issue of contention. Without a fundamental dispute among them on this issue, in this respect, no official or semi-official materials could be produced.

There is virtually no systematic studies nor is there a great deal of criticism on the theoretical foundation of Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine on Vicegerency. The only book officially published is a two-volume study on Political Thought in Islam by Mohsen Kadivar, which shed light on the nature and place of supreme power in an Islamic political system which has included a range of Islamic thought, whether they valued Vicegerency or not (Kadivar, 1997, Vol.2). In general, Pan-Islamist elite and officials have assumed that within the actual context of an Islamic political system in Iran all approaches

to the notion of the supreme nature of power is the same as that found in Ayatollah Khomeini doctrine (Khaneky, 2002, pp.75-79). Moreover, things get more complicated in this respect that there is some disagreement as when to refer what Pan-Islamists elite and officials meant exactly by 'power' in an Islamic political system where a republican model of governing is implied as well.¹ Pan-Islamist writers, such as Emmad el-deen Baghi in 'Clergies and Power', or Hadi Khaneki in 'Power, Civil Society and Press', and Ahmad Ghabel in 'Criticism of Violent Culture', use some definition on the meaning of 'power' acquired from the secular theories, for instance, "power is like an inherently unequal relationship comprising an attempt by one to secure compliance from or enforce dependence upon others", and "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis upon which this probability rests".² Power in these views means an unequal relationship, which by definition cannot be consensual, because in their political philosophy, interests diverge (Khaniky, 2002, pp.77-8).

In a thoughtful work on culture and political culture called Exercise of Moderation, Mohammad Mokhtari has offered plausible evidence that other ways of viewing power exist in Iranian political culture (Mokhtari, 1998). Moreover, the elements of a hierarchical model of power, as described in Wilfried Buchta 'Who Rules Iran?', present evidence in such a way that it makes sense to use them for a better understanding of the distinct views of power among Pan-Islamist elite and high-ranking officials (Buchta, 2000, p.6). Mokhtari's remarks on the meaning of power not only helped to fit the evidence in a way that would make sense in Iran, but also solved at least one theoretical conflict that how to relate the liberal understanding of 'power' to the notion of 'legitimacy' in an Islamic political system (Mokhtari, 1998, pp.261-6). However, regarding the IRI moderate elite and reformer officials' views of power-related issues such as the sovereignty, legitimacy, leadership, and justice, the evidence is to be derived exclusively from the above mentioned three kinds of sources.

Next to the issue of power, in the second section some recent debates surrounding which institutional form that supreme power ought to adopt will be discussed. These are the debates that centred on the continuation of a hierarchical nature of supreme power in the IRI, which still has a kingdom in all but title. This debate fundamentally differentiates two factions of Iranian political elite. The moderates want the involvement of a larger group in top levels of organisation and decision-making, as opposed to those conservatives who subscribe to the view that there must be an absolute ruler in the position of supreme power. My understanding, however, reveals that

1 - Bashiriyeh, H., 1995. '*yeksangaraye, yekta-engare, dyeyalektik tarekhe va masaele Toseeh syeyasye dar iran*' (Equalitarianism, Unitarianism, Historical Dialectic and Issues on Political Development in Iran), pp. 2-6, in monthly paper *Farhange Toseeh* (Developmental Culture), No. 17, November-December; also see Ervand Abrahamian, 'Iran Between Two Revolution', 1982, Princeton, New Jersey

2- The first definition is from Lakes 'Power: A Radical view', London 1974 and the second definition is Max Weber 'Economy and Society', Tubingen, 1922. Both are quoted in Patrick Dunleavy and Brendan O'Leary, 'Theories of the State', 'The Politics of Liberal Democracy', 1987, p. 148, London.

the Ayatollah Khomeini doctrinal notion of Vicegerency and description of supreme nature of power as an unlimited commodity has served to outlaw all other views, specially outcast all secular groups' views, seriously limit all kinds of debates on the division of powers, cause serious organisational confusion within the IRI establishment, and restrict them to a controversy of where accumulated power could best be placed in both institution of state and clerical institutions.³

In the third section, some of the debates concerning the nature of power and reform of political institution will be reviewed. That is important because the reformers' alternative concept to the nature and place of supreme power had important consequences on the way in which Iranian elite and high-ranking officials debated matters pertaining to their political institutions. As both official discourse and literature reveals, political reform and reform of the political institution affected important power relationships within the IRI political system: alignments were made that were fundamentally different from the top-down changes before the late nineties conflict and debates on the nature and place of supreme power.

By outlining some of the major power-related issues that particularly were discussed in late 1990s some possible new insight into the political reforms' formal and informal bases will be offered. This is an attempt to highlight the groups and individuals whom in different ways rejected the domination of the establishment power-related institutions and policies. Thus, the final concern is to show that how in post-revolutionary era a culturally shared knowledge shaped the different dimensions of power in the IRI's political establishment. The identification of these dimensions is a first step towards an understanding of the distinguished subjects that engaged the reformers in a certain theoretical discussions about the nature of supreme power.

1. A Republican-Islamic mixed Nature of Supreme Power

There are very few terms in Iranian political language that are more elusive in their meaning than the term usually and confidently used to mean 'supreme power'. At the same time, the term '*vilayet-i faqih*', which means the governance of religious jurisprudence through a 'supreme leader', did not exist as a common term in Iranian political language prior to the 1979 revolution (Kadeevar, 2000). As with so many other terms, therefore, it is also a direct product of the newly Islamic political system formed around that time which soon became known through the speeches and writings of Ayatollah Khomeini. Later on, such combination as 'divine supreme power' by conservatives and 'republican supreme power' by moderates also becomes common. Until the advent of Ayatollah Khomeini, however, the term *vilayet-i faqih* as the supreme power of Iran's political institution generally remained a strange concept the use of which was strictly confined to an informed

3 - Montazeri, H.A., 2005. '*payame bemonasebate nohomin entekhabate reyasate djomhorie*' (Message on the Occasion of ninth Presidential Election), July, www.Montazeri.com

religious dignitary for the purpose of consultation on the religious affairs within the religious institution. As Wilfried Buchta emphasises, in fact to some extend:

Iran's supreme power is a legacy of the hierarchical and centralised structure of the politicised Shi'ia clergy, which has been in power in Iran since 1979.⁴

The term 'supreme power' in contemporary Iran remains an elite term, which even Pan-Islamist intellectuals and establishment officials sometimes poorly differentiate from 'political power' (Ghabel, 2002, pp.221-8). Nonetheless, the meaning and definition of 'supreme power' in the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine is quite confusing and controversial. According to most literatures associated with his fellow conservatives in an Islamic political system the nature of 'supreme power' should be place in the institution of religiously jurisprudence. Moderates reject this view and pointed out that power in Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine is defined as a consensual force concentrated in and exercised by the institution of Islamic Republic (Khomeini, 1997, Vol.5, pp.607-616 & Ghabel, 2002, p.11)).

Drawing on Max Weber's theory of power moderate Hadi Khaniky describes the IRI nature of power as patriarchal (Weber, M. in Khaniky, 2002, pp.57-62). He identifies some important differences that existed between bureaucratic and patriarchal nature of power in the IRI. He describes the patriarchal nature of power as abstract, homogeneous, constant in amount, not raising any questions on legitimacy, whereas he describes the bureaucratic nature as being concrete, having heterogeneous sources, inherently unlimited possibilities to accumulate, and moral ambiguity (Ibid. pp.57-62). Therefore, the central problem of IRI's patriarchal nature of power he describes is not the exercise of power but the accumulation of power. In other words, a very considerable portion of the traditional power in the IRI deals with the problem of concentrating and preserving the power rather than its proper uses. In the same vein, Katouzian specifies the Iranian traditional practice of power as despotic and arbitrary, with a non-existent or weak connection to the juridical structure of society, non-existent or limited social liberties, and arbitrary method of political and social control. This description also emphasises a nature that is abstract, homogenous, and constant in amount, and which does not raise any questions on legitimacy. In few existing works on the nature of supreme power, as was said above, this description is compared to the concrete nature, the heterogeneous sources, inherently unlimited possibilities to accumulate, and the moral ambiguity of power in the IRI's bureaucratic institution of power. The institution of power in the IRI, therefore, not only deals with accumulation of power but also accumulation of arbitrary power, legitimised by the monopoly of one-man rule alone (Katouzian, 1981, p.57). Although the apparent ascetic way in which the power in the IRI is accumulated, in its bureaucratic institution it differs from the traditional Islamic theory and practice, since Pan-Islamist elite and high-ranking officials in their formal and informal, national and

4 - Buchta, W., 2000. 'Who Rules Iran? (The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic)' p. 6, published by The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, US.

individual cultures share practices that are derived formally from both republican and traditional patriarchal practices, and they are in the esoteric sense both strongly power-oriented (Bashiriyeh, 1995, p.5). Thus, in the IRI, as was explained, there exists two powerful nature of power with a bureaucratic-patriarchal political system, and a strong sense of belonging within the frame of republican-Islamic community (Katouzian, 1981).

The crucial element of the nature of supreme power in the IRI is the inherent need to concentrate and accumulate both bureaucratic and traditional patriarchal power through the divine figure of one person or social group. But Wilfried Buchta in his work 'Who Rules Iran?' remark that the core of the post-revolutionary Iranian political system has always been the patriarchal ruler who personifies the unity of leadership (Buchta, 2000, pp.7,8,9). Although one should not forget that there are important differences between the two institutions that constituted the republic-Islamic political system, Hadi Khaniky has used Max Weber's model to show its striking similarities with the republican institution in the IRI (Bashiriyeh, 1995, p.5). In the political tradition of the IRI, nature of supreme power as a combined form of the effectiveness of bureaucratic might and the religious force may indeed be viewed as the motivation animating the Iranian post-revolutionary republican-Islamic universe, which is abstract, unlimited in amount, and homogeneous in its source. In his book 'Power, Law, Culture', for instance, Abbas Abdi also refers to the nature of supreme power as religious force and a substance (Abdi, 2000). Moreover, as Katouzian has shown, in the traditional Iranian political system legitimacy is always clearly more noticeable by its absence than by its presence (Katouzian, 1981, p.57).

In the Iranian political system according to Abbas Abdi, the logic of a religious power as the supreme nature of power is operative. All power that is in the hands of the rival power-holder naturally shall diminish or even be cancelled out by one's religious power. In post-revolutionary Iran, the Islamic nature of supreme power, which fought to abolish the secular nature of monarch power, was nothing more than the progressive elimination of real or perceived threats to a religiously oriented absolutist nature of supreme power. An important aspect of dual nature of supreme power in Iran is furthermore revealed when one takes a closer look at the Ayatollah Khomeini doctrinal model of sovereignty. Literally, sovereignty under this doctrinal model means both the absolute power of jurisprudence and the power of republican citizenship of the Muslim community. According to the article 2 of the IRI constitution:

The Islamic Republic is a system based on faith in: The One and only God (There is no God but Allah), His exclusive Sovereignty and Legislation and the necessity of submission to His command;

And article 56:

God Almighty has absolute sovereignty over the world and Man, and He has made Man the master of his own social destiny.⁵

This is the constitutional foundation of IRI's concept of sovereignty. But the religiously concept of God's absolute sovereignty over the world and Man

5 - See IRI constitution, Quoted in Mehdi Muslim 'Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran', 2002, p. 278, Syracuse, New York

does not convey the legal citizenship, therefore in republic-Islamic mixed model the sovereign is two particular social categories. First is the Ulama (divine representative) who lead the faithful in their journey towards salvation and the second is the state bureaucracy that provides facilities for citizens in this journey. This dualism fits to the IRI's supreme nature of power in terms of the viewpoint of republic-Islamic mixed model and as ideological reflection of the subjective and the essential course of evolution of Man towards God that is written in Article 2 of constitution. In other words, this is the ultimate objective of the clerical institution and bureaucratic institution's shared interest. The term 'Islamic Republic' therefore means literally a political regime that is organised in the direction of the interest of the clerical institution and state bureaucracy. This interpretation was echoed by IRI's constitution, when it asserted that:

No one can divest Man of this divine right or apply it in the service of interests of a particular individual or group. The Nation shall exercise this God-given right in the manner set forth in the following articles'...⁶

Under Hadi Khaniky's suggested patriarch nature of supreme power, therefore, the central problem of the political system would also be the accumulation and preservation of power in the hands of IRI's bureaucracy. In this regards and on the nature of supreme power in the IRI the conservative members of clerical institution noted in several occasions that the Islamic political regime is an absolutism model of Supreme Leader rule (Kadivar, 1997, Vol.2). It venerates Supreme Leader who impose great-unified rule. Since the central preoccupation of the state bureaucracy was the accumulation of power, its political modes were very often operated as a way to benefit its members. Crystallising the different institutional levels, from the abstract clerical to the most concrete republican bureaucracy, knowledge of management was therefore conceived as belonging to governing position. Although bureaucracy might possess much knowledge of management, ultimately as the final word of government much weight is attached to the power that Supreme Leader's institution hold. This is linked to the general feeling that ultimately power belonged to those state officials who rule others and bring final ideas with solutions. This institutional rule, as Grand Ayatollah Montazeri emphasises, requires a special managerial insight above the mere religious knowledge that one acquires through the studies of the Islamic text (*feghe'h*). The ideal in this republican-Islamic setting accordingly is that through a unique knowledge and managerial insight both the institution of jurisprudence and the state bureaucracy could ultimately solve all conflicts through their commitments to Islamic regime and transcend them as some observers claimed Ayatollah Khomeini's leadership and the bureaucracy of his time had implicitly did most prominently (Moslem, 2002).

Hence, under the republican-Islamic mixed model of supreme power, the quest for the best accumulation and preservation of power was based on the clerical-bureaucratic qualities of the IRI's ruler (Katouzian, 1981). This comes to reality when in late 1990s the IRI dualism found its paragon in moderate President Khatami who as a member of both clerical institution and

6 - Ibid.

bureaucracy promised the practice of religiously technocratic restraint. He was considered as a moderate religious ruler who works with procedural method in a technocratic apparatus through which his personal acquisitiveness, indulgence, and political ambition was viewed as administratively correct (Ganji, 1999). Thus, this mixed model of republican-Islamic supreme nature of power as the politically autocratic studios did fit into the modern republican concepts and the Iranian popular heroes (Alinejad, 1999).

Along with this type of supreme power, therefore, comes a different view about the nature of formal organisation, but not of the basic leader-followers relationship, which was viewed as the backbone of traditional Iranian social organisation. Social relations through Iranian history were ideally viewed as extensions of relations between elders and youngsters (Mokhtari, 1998). In politics, this relation took on the form of the community of nation as a single family in which the state presented itself as the elder and the citizens as the youngsters. Traditionally in Iran, the power of the ruler had been absolute, because the authoritarian assumptions behind his trustful insight had made it theoretically imperative that his instructions be followed to the latter. In the context of IRI, just as the elder had to try above all to lead his family first by moral advice and only secondarily by the means of force, the state had to offer moral guidance before resorting to legal coercion. Thus power is translated in a relation between leaders and followers, either through the ideological institution of state or by monopolised means of violence, which they are both defined as the IRI's authority. In part this authority is ideally the consequence of the follower's trust in the rights of the leader to lead.

In the late 1990s in fact, the Iranian political leaders were also aware that their religiously symbols for legitimacy grew weaker as it made its way towards the lower ranks and civil society groups. A common reason for a weakening of the IRI ruler's legitimacy could be found in the existence of factions and informal groups that deflected or opposed the policies of the Islamic state. In the institution of Islamic state, the state nature of the accepted informal groups was contrasted with the factious nature of the factions. The state has usually resorted to a mix of moral indoctrination and formal coercion to rectify the structure of leader-follower relationships. Another reason could be that there were simply too many ranks and levels or organisations. The solution to this had been to reduce the amount of organs and organisations (Alavitabar, 2003, pp.28-30). Moreover, there could be genuine disagreement about the best way to maximise the use of power within the state structure. Did political power mean that one clergy or one group of bureaucrat decided everything? If yes, which clergy or group of bureaucrat? To what extent was there room for functional autonomy and decision making down the ranks?

Two sections of this chapter address the two closely interrelated debates waged during the 1990s amongst Pan-Islamist officials and intellectual reformers against the background of the supreme nature of power that has been offered above. First the debate concerning the form that

political power had to ideally take is addressed. If according to constitution all power belonged to Allah, as Pan-Islamist reformers and secular intellectuals held, why was a Supreme Leader and not the Republic or the people effectively in command? Starting from this premise, some of the more radical reformers grew to realise that Iran was nothing less than Supreme Leader and an empire of his entourage (Hajjarian, 2003, pp.68-9). Conservative Pan-Islamists, on the other hand, defended the uncrowned Supreme Leader or one-man rule increasingly openly. In the second section, some of the debates that dealt with the best way to decentralise political power will be discussed. Some of the key issues concerning the reform of state institution and changes in the state policies will also be addressed.

2. Republic of Dualism: The Debates on Power and Supreme Power

The nature of supreme power in the IRI has formed the subject of constant debates among elite, high-ranking officials, and Pan-Islamist intellectuals since President Khatami consolidated to political power in 1997. In this respect, within the framework of political reform, President Khatami in the late 1990s called for a comprehensive and accurate understanding of Ayatollah Khomeini's doctrine of republicanism (Khatami, 2001). This was at the time when Pan-Islamist intellectuals involved in the reform process were debating practical criterion of this doctrine and implicitly concerned the nature and place of supreme power in IRI's political system. In a debate Shabestari in a collective work 'On *ijtihad*: the Effectiveness of the Islamic Jurisprudence in Today's World' reject conservative interpretation and points out:

On issues of governance and leadership the main question is how to govern in present time and avoid the negative aspects of centralisation of power? Is it democracy as a most recognisable method and as a most effective model of governance that realises justice in today's industrial and semi-industrial societies? All these in a religious view mean which political and unial regime respect human dignity the most.⁷

In the same vein Khatami in 'The Reviver of the Truth of Religion' emphasises:

Imam's [Ayatollah Khomeini] God and people are not encounter, they are together, they are in the same line and not parallel, one does not take the place of other. People sovereignty over their destination is not in contradiction with the sovereignty of God, the absolute sovereignty of God does not determine all existence and the destiny of Man...⁸

This view affirmed that the Ayatollah Khomeini view on the nature of supreme power was an integral part of a more general republican truth and an intermediation level to contemporary Political Islam. Unlike the secular reformers, Khatami was hereby free to depart from Ayatollah Khomeini's political philosophy without rejecting his doctrine, because he could always say that, under a new government and political condition, the general

7 - Shabestari, M.M., 2003. in '*darbabe idjtehad* (On *idjtehad*) on the effectiveness of the Islamic jurisprudence in today's world) p.109, edited by Edalat-Nejad, S. published by Tarh-e No, Tehran-Iran

8 - Khatami, M. 2001. '*Ehya-gare haq-qy-qate dyen*' (Reviver of the Religion' Truth), p. 173, Tehran-Iran

principles of Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine should be understood differently. In other words, Khatami's victory in convincing most elite to support reform policies and his method of thought-practice, which was based on objective criterion, confirmed his right to his own unique insight into the workings of Ayatollah Khomeini's doctrine and the post-1997 election political reality.

The background against which the late 1990s debates on the nature of supreme power took place was formed by Khatami's personal style of rule. As soon as his presidency was acknowledged, he set out to present himself as a symbol of solidarity and unity between Islam and modernity. In his first presidential interview, he claimed that by making political reforms the focus of the work of the entire state he aimed to increase the feelings of belief and to strengthen the unity of the different political groups and the entire communities of the Iranian society.⁹ Only a few months later, he again stressed the need to unite, but this time under the leadership of the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. He formulated the tasks of political reforms around the theme of unity. He emphasised that to hold to the democratic principles is to hold to the leadership of the IRI (Khatami, 2001, pp.208-210). Through political reforms, the united rule of the IRI had to be strengthened, the alliance of various groups of nation had to enlarge the unity of all informal groups, and these elements were necessary to form a systematic understanding of unity for IRI bureaucracy in accumulation of power and to build a wealthy and powerful Islamic nation (Ibid. pp.217-223). The way to achieve this unity was through a plural management of the institution of state and the affairs of various social groups (Ibid. pp.186-192). The emphasis was for protection of the belief in the authority of the state's leadership, which represented mainly the interests of the clergies and the Pan-Islamist merchants, amongst which informal groups formed an official endorsement of the supreme power to Guardian Council (GC) that represented a particular religious insight. All through the late 1990s, Khatami at different moments and occasions restated the theme of unity and stressed this need through the unification of elites and accumulation of power for bureaucracy.

Next to unity, Khatami also welcomed open and public debates, but this was not the same as participation in decision-making at the highest level. Within the low-level of government ministries he tried hard to introduce a participatory work style (Ibid. pp.168-175). In other words, he favoured a greater measure of inner-state group pluralism just among the high-ranking state officials. Inner-state group pluralism revolved around two interrelated notions: Islamic leadership and the rule of law. This, however, applied only for the state apparatus, while a clear distinction was made between the Republic and the regime's Supreme Leader. Importantly too, Khatami in some occasion indirectly referred to the need for reform within the leadership institution.

In this context, the 1997 presidential election and the moderate Pan-Islamists' victory is of special importance. As Akbar Ganji has pointed out,

9 - See '*djame-ehe rohanye-une mobarez*' (the Association of Combatant Clergies) newsletter No. 14, 1999, pp. 88-91, Tehran-Iran

with this victory not only was Khatami elected as the new president of the IRI, but the reformers such as Abdullah Nouri were also appointed in the ministerial levels (Ganji, 2000). Nuri's power was considerable. He called together the reformers fronts and supervised the work of the Ministry of Home Affairs, which took care of the Cabinet's daily affairs as well. But Nuri's power was hemmed in by the standing conservatives of the parliament, the members of which could decide on his work, and by the Guardian Council. In a word, Abdullah Nouri becomes one distinctive senior leader among other leaders in a newly elected cabinet under the moderate Khatami.

Finally, there were the outward signs of Khatami's republican rule. In the beginning the Khatami's order was associated with the rule of law and seemed to be a real form of supreme republican power. Khatami seemed to share his power with his team members such as Abdullah Nouri, Mostafa Tajzadeh, Mohammad Abtahi, and others. These young leaders retained their posts after the 1997 election, in which many high-ranking mainstream and pragmatist members of the former Cabinet went into retirement, while Khatami held a pivotal swing position. But after the 2001 presidential election, Khatami was one of the few members of the reform leadership to keep his post. Although this falls within the first years of the reform process and Khatami's presidency, it is important to remember that even after Nuri had officially gone into retirement in 1999, his famous reconciliatory journey between Political Islam and liberal democracy revealed that he was still the reformers' paramount leader.

Apart from the remarkable longevity of Khatami's reforms views, there were also other important indications. From 1999 onwards, the results of the reform process started to appear (Tajzadeh, 2003, pp.9-22). Although the appearances of the moderate Republican model were saved by the publication of Khordad daily newspaper and of similar compilation of critical articles, most notably by radical reformers, Abdullah Nouri and Khatami's new political discourses were viewed as the criticism of Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine (Ganji, 2000). Moreover, in spite of unofficial prohibitions by Khatami himself to coin the political reform to his name, it seems, as the late 1990s and early 2000 progressed, an increasing amount of activities were taking place under his thoughts on such actions as institutional, administrative, and economic reforms (Tajzadeh, 2003, pp.85-87). Time and again, during the late 1990s, Khatami's formal and informal opinions, frameworks, and the like furthermore served to start, orient, and restrict political reforms. Nonetheless, the pattern of political reform has been discussed while many fundamental issues have been easily abandoned.

Against this background, the debates during the 1990s about the nature of supreme power in the IRI acquire a certain sense. On the one hand, the pragmatists and the mainstream within the elite, each in their own way, supported Khatami's claims to pre-eminence, whereas the radical reformers and conservatives on the other hand by and large opposed him. Still, the picture was not as simple as that. Among the mainstream members, for instance, support was strongly premised on Khatami's continued support for Ayatollah Khomeini's heritage. This not only implied a continued

commitment to the values of Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine, but also to a certain style of rule. On the other hand, radical reformers, at least during the first few years failed to realise that political reform would leave the clerical nature of supreme power intact. Moreover, there was also a difference between the extents of pluralism that reformers wished to introduce. Pan-Islamist reformers pleaded for solutions that were mainly restricted to inner-state group pluralism. Other reformers wanted to strengthen the role of the IRI. No establishment reformer, however radical in their views, unequivocally pleaded the cause of universal suffrage.

The debate about the nature of supreme power was, perhaps, a natural result of Ayatollah Khomeini's oppression of Iran's intellectuals and the general public. During the first few years after revolution, most establishment intellectuals had experienced considerable personal hardships. Many had lost families, relatives or friends (Baghi, 2004, p.202). A number had taken the time to think about Iran's political system and its perceived ills. Although most establishment intellectuals were instinctively loyal to the Islamic state as such, some demanded assurances that the horrors of the post-revolutionary area would not come back any time soon (Ibid. p.242). Among those assurances, the call for a more accountable supreme power was strong. In the late 1990s, among intellectuals there was widespread criticism of Ayatollah Khomeini. Mainstream intellectuals revived debates about the value of a secular legal system and initiated the debate on human rights (Ibid. p.279). Radical reformers criticised Ayatollah Khomeini's destruction of the post-revolution's democratic organisations and paved the progressive path towards construction of a new society (Mokhtari, 1998). More Pan-Islamist intellectuals decried the monarchic nature of the Islamic political system. In particular, Mohsen Kadivar used the theories of an obscure Islamic system to reveal the monarchic nature of the Ayatollah Khomeini doctrine of supreme power (Kadivar, 1997, Vol.2).

After Khatami's rise to power, some Pan-Islamist intellectuals quickly developed into the main ideological supporters of his republican's rule. At first they clearly did not approve of Khatami's use of 'the rule of law' as the sole criterion for testing republican values, and they strongly opposed any major criticism of the Ayatollah Khomeini's doctrine, but in the end they also supported the new line and functioned as Khatami's loyal followers in his administration and management of the government. Among others, Mostafa Tajzadeh viewed Khatami as Ayatollah Khomeini's successor, and as he indicated in an interview, he believed Khatami's governing model was moving toward a religiously democratic political system. Mostafa Tajzadeh's intentions transpire from his contrast between the moderate Khatamist way of understanding the political reading of the supreme power and the traditional way of contrasting. Moreover, Tajzadeh, by using a directive that came from the reformers' front, shows he is basing himself on Khatami's insight.

In his passage Tajzadeh remarked on Khatami's approach on the rule of law, the ending the state organised violence, the initiation of dialogue of civilisations, and the like, as a progressive strategic designee. In other words,

as the next possible object of excessive forms of veneration, Khatami was evidently portrayed as Ayatollah Khomeini's moderate successor. In his modesty and reasonableness, however, Khatami was pictured as a better ruler, because he rejects Ayatollah Khomeini's arbitrary style of ruling. Not everything he said was correct, but Khatami's insight had to be undoubted.

Tajzadeh's views were by no means generally shared. Already Sae'id Hajjarian had warned against the widespread and naïve traditional faith in the unique insight of the IRI's leadership and clerical institution. More to the point, he had criticised the false belief in the individual Supreme Leader. He pointed out that during the early 1980s, to oppose and prevent an American intervention had been transformed into the will to erect the absolute rule of *vilayet-i faqih*. At the time, he had criticised the use of false belief in the IRI's leaders individual and had thereby opened the door to an intellectual criticism, it was clear, the IRI's leaders backup was nobody else than Khatami himself (Khatami, 2001, p.33).

Instead of adhering to Tajzadeh's belief in the individuality of Khatami, Hajjarian proposed that Pan-Islamist intellectuals should liberate their thoughts. With so many words, Hajjarian rejected the need for a clerical insight. He criticised the idea that pluralism meant listening to the leader's opinions with a closed mind. Democracy, he emphasised, is rather to let the people speak (Hajjarian, 2003, pp.34-6). The problem with such a notion was that one generally forgot to specify whom exactly the people were to let them to speak. He added then, such people were leading moderate organs and elites, but that was a situation in which many conservative rulers would also feel comfortable. What Iran really needed he said, was a generation of thinkers, who thought independently. To this end, it was necessary to establish a modern discourse among all Pan-Islamist intellectuals, who were partly trained in post-revolution struggle for democracy and social justice. In other words, while he rejected the unique insight into reality of the supreme ruler, Hajjarian agreed on the need for a certain rational mastery of pluralism. Rather than a real democrat, therefore, Hajjarian was more of a moderate republican elitist. Similar to most reformers, he believed that democracy in Iran could only be meaningful through a democratic model within the framework of the Islamic Republic.

In this belief, Hajjarian was supported by a fairly large group of quite influential and sometimes rather senior officials, such as Abbas Abdi, Mohsen Armine, Ali-Reza Alavi-Tabaari, Reza Khatami, and Abdullah Nuri. At least until 2000, most of these high-ranking and many other state officials and establishment intellectuals had faith in Khatami's assurance that inner-state group pluralism would be enhanced. Together, these individuals formed the liberal reformist current within the organisation of political reforms, the SKF.

Next to the Pan-Islamist establishment intellectuals, who continued to place their faith in some form of Islamic moderate leadership, there was a growing group of intellectuals, who debated the IRI's claim to popular sovereignty, and more literally, rejected the clerical institution's insight. These debates were the continuation of the views preceding the drafting of the 1980 constitution. Still, even among these intellectuals, there were many

different views, ranging from secular republican to different forms of Pan-Islamist republican (Armine, 2001).

Reflecting the unpopular political reputation the IRI had acquired during the late 1980s and early 1990s, some radical intellectuals pleaded for a politically radical and powerful republican president. One of the main supporters of this idea was Mohsen Armine of the Crusaders of the Islamic Revolution (CIR). According to Armine, the IRI had had weak presidents for most of its existence, a post that had been established by a popular revolution of the Iranian people. In its early post-revolutionary assignment, Armine mentions, the President was supposed to lead an Islamic state and the revolutionised nation rather than to support an absolutist form of government. Under Khatami, a well-established democratic and powerful presidential office was necessary to balance the government's affairs with the institution of absolutism Supreme Leader. It was also necessary that Khatami use presidential wisdom in legislating, but also necessary for the citizens to have a democratic and powerful head of Republic. Armine believed that the Republic should play its plain role of sovereign and powerful actor within the Islamic regime. By applying presidential wisdom to legislation, he implied that the paramount Khatami should really hold a true leadership position in the state, rather than being partial to and dependent upon the institution of Supreme Leader. Although conservative groups also pleaded for a powerful president within the Republic, they preferred to have a president assigned by the Supreme Leader and selected by the Guardian Council rather than one directly chosen by the people. In their views, the president of the Republic would be a mere figurehead of the nation and the state.

During the debates concerning the issues of transparency in government, the sixth parliamentary election, and the new amendment to IRI constitution, a fairly large number of elites, officials and Pan-Islamist intellectuals also pleaded for a truly sovereign Republic (Dad, 2001). They openly pleaded for the Republic to truly become what it was already being assigned in the 1980's constitution: the supreme state organ (Katouzian, N. in Abdi, A. 2002, pp.18-32). According to Abbas Abdi, while the institution of jurisprudence would remain unquestioned in the IRI, this position should not be viewed as something over and above the Republic. For far too long, Abbas Abdi emphasises, the Guardian Council as an institution had been wrongly utilized in commanding and managing all aspects of life and politics in Iran. In the future, he implied, the government would have to go only through the parliament and not other channels in order to legitimise the Republic's very existence and implement its policies. Internally, views went even further than that. In parliamentary debates on the management of election, especially debate devoted to constitutional amendments, a number of prominent members of parliament pleaded for a directly elected parliament without Guardian Council patriarchal intervention (Dad, 2001). They emphasised this would give the Republic an authority that the institution of jurisprudence could not ignore.

Other reformer elites did more to hide their ambitions for a sovereign Republic. They publicly assumed that the parallel institution of jurisprudence

would become part of the overall Islamic state and could just concentrated on suggestions that would enhance its functions in joining the views of the republic in the matters of government and policies. Additionally, there were suggestions on the need to integrate the special Islamic organisations and other organs under the supervision of the Office of Leader (*Daftar-e Rahbari*) into the institution of Republic (Moslem, 2002, pp.42-3). In this way, the Republic could grow into a more powerful institution that able the regime as a whole to make its more realistic and plural decisions. Interestingly, various officials in this group advocated a democratic and transparent Republic. Beside these suggestions, there were also proposals for a parliamentary debate on separation of the functions between those institutions of Republic and the clerical domains. Obviously, this suggestion was not intended to serve to separate the organs of Republic and the institution of jurisprudence, if only because then it lacked the coherent framework to adopt or reject the Islamic state's strategic management. These proposals were clearly suggested by those officials who sought some kind of division of powers along the lines of the liberal democracy was possible. Such proposals were generally rather theoretical in form, which indicated a certain measure of caution. Among reformers, in fact, and even including some who were patently in favour of a pure representative democracy, there was an obvious disbelief, that a division of power could strengthen the Islamic state. On the other hand, the conservatives believed that the institution of jurisprudence could not be an integral part and function under the authority of the Republic. In many different ways, this view was expressed time and again in the parliament of the time. They insisted that the institution of the jurisprudence had united Islamic groups and made them strong.¹⁰ Iran is still a religiously unitary Islamic state and is not suited for representative democracy. The whole question of dividing the political authority from the institution of jurisprudence was so contrary to their Islamic perceived religion-politics wisdom, that some conservatives even voiced criticism at making the Islamic regime as part of the Khatami's political secularism.

There was one more formal view that was also closely related to earlier views about the nature of supreme power. During the late 1980s, preceding the debates about the amendments to the Islamic constitution, Mohsen Kadivar had already devoted lengthy descriptions to the monarchic nature of the Iranian Islamic political system and insisted upon the need for its abolition. Rather than just expressing a preference for one place or another for supreme power in the IRI political system, he drew attention to the importance of procedural rules.

Even before Ayatollah Khomeini's death in 1989, Kadivar had equated the institution of jurisprudence as being in reality a monarchic model (Kadivar, 1997, Vol.2). But, Kadivar had not done this quite openly. In his book on the topic, he introduces the institution of jurisprudence as supreme power, which just would change the political elite while leaving the monarchic model of one-man rule intact. He points out that the institution of

10 - See '*djameehe rohanye-une mobarez*' (the Association of Combatant Clergies) newsletter No. 14, 1999, Tehran-Iran

jurisprudence in a striking ways do resemble to our past monarch model which just has transplanted an Islamic ideology. A more concrete analysis of the Islamic political system that Kadivar presented from 1979 onwards was based on two central characteristics. First, the supreme power within an Islamic political system was considered to be indivisible. Ultimately, the prerogatives of all executive, legislative, and judicial organs were submitted to the institution of jurisprudence. This contradicted the formally supreme position of the Islamic Republic. Secondly, therefore, the power of supremacy could not be transferred to Republic, and in fact, gave rise to a long string of succession crises, which affected the regime's political stability. It offered as well a negative example of ruling to lower-ranking officials within the institution of the Islamic Republic.

Against this picture, Kadivar presents the moderate viewpoint that the Islamic system could only be established under a truly democratic model of Republic. This is a system in which the rule of law was adhered to. Echoing similar remarks by Khatami about the importance of republican institutional management, Kadivar requested attention for the republican form of the Islamic state, next to its contents or essence. The governing form of the Islamic state could neither be an Islamic monarchic model nor a secular Republic. In its essence, Kadivar emphasises, the Islamic regime should follow a republican model, and be therefore fundamentally different from a monarchic model. But, due to the overwhelming power of the institution of jurisprudence, too little attention had been paid to the actual republican form of the Islamic government. In fact, under the hegemony of Supreme Leader, it had been something of a supplementary consideration. Now, along with the process of reforms, even leading members of clerical institutions had called for political moderation and the establishment of a truly democratic Republic.¹¹

Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari in 'Reflections on A Humane Reading of Religion' posited that Iran's problem was not merely about the religiosity of government and the introduction of some inapplicable Islamic principles, but the lack of and need for public discussion on a moderate governing principles with a plural content for its Islamic political power (Shabestari, 2004, p.137). He remarks that the principle of a democratic nature of supreme power concerns the unity of deliberation and implementation in the moderate way of life, but under the religious government of the time, it had not been applied and remained as just a theoretical principle in the institution of government (Ibid. p.25). In the same sense, as long as the IRI is viewed as an antidote against despotism, it is perfectly compatible to democracy and what is needed is simply to separate the institutions of powers. The existence of a democratic system, he pursued, was determined by the presence of republican forces and the organisational shape of its government (Ibid. p.137). In a Republic, power is first of all enshrined in a constitution and laws, according to which the people chose their supreme institutions.

11 - See '*djame-eh rohanye-une mobarez'* (the Association of Combatant Clergies) newsletter No. 13 and 14, 1999, and its first manifesto of 2002, Tehran-Iran

Secondly, there is no life tenure for the highest position in the political system. In the previous two decades, however, Iran had clung on to a particular revamped version of Islamic knowledge as substance, Islamic knowledge and experiences as application, in which this knowledge had meant inapplicable traditions and ceremonies, and thus, stood for an undemocratic political model. He added a real discussion about the nature and place of supreme power is absolutely necessary to clarify these above issues.

At the end of 1997, a unique period of blooming and contending was started. Everyone had freely aired different views about the political system and governing form they thought would provide freedom and social justice. The moderate Pan-Islamists planned for a well-organised political apparatus with all their newly democratic principles to form an alternative plural government. Nominally, some posts in the government had been subjected to changes and a beginning had been made with the re-organisation of the Republic. This included the modernisation of ministries, particularly the Ministry of Home Affairs and its provincial governors, the bringing about more effective municipal councils, and, for the first time, separation of functions in the government. Still the main tasks of dealing with the institution of jurisprudence requested intervention in ideological guidance and its inter-organisational leadership (Ganji, 1999). The state was involved mainly in its usual business. But, the reformers were not satisfied since the key juridical posts were not limited to any tenure, where the rule of institution of jurisprudence was not yet abandoned. In the eyes of most reformers, the new political arrangement left the reality of patriarchal power unscathed, because it was premised under the old ideology.

The inter-state group arrangements of late 1998 largely silenced debates on the nature of supreme power. They promised something to all the different groups in order to end their public criticism; therefore, these arrangements may be called successful. But, some radicals and moderates proposed a more procedural and orderly system of republican supreme power. At the same time, in refraining from addressing the question of the nature of supreme power directly, the new government implicitly left its absolutist form and dual nature intact (Tajzadeh, 2002). In fact, as soon as a matter regarding supreme power was involved, mainly the institution of jurisprudence and the Guardian Council, no limits on their power were imposed. At the same time, however, Pan-Islamist reformers as a whole took to heart the promises of the rule of law and flourishing civil society. As realists, they knew democratic reform could not be instituted overnight, yet inner-state group pluralism promised to be a good start. Those who had wanted supreme power to be placed in the institution of Republic could also take heart from the enormous expansion of republican organs and functions.

In mid 1999, Khatami endorsed a revival approach to debates about the importance of structural reform. He complained about a slowdown in political tolerance, which he believed was a result of the lack of institutional reforms. He mentioned that his government had started structural reform immediately after the 1997 election, but because of 'obstacles' concrete steps

had not been made as far as had been hoped. For structural reform to succeed, it had to encompass political reforms as well. Using the occasion to air their views, establishment reformers started once again to discuss the nature of supreme power. If debates had been permitted just after the 1997 election, the principles of jurisprudence could have stipulated that now inner-state pluralism arrangements could be officially decided upon, but now in 2006 such debates are considered beyond the pale.

Among reformist intellectuals engaging in political reform, there was a growing awareness that the institutional rearrangements were taking place at the expense of democratisation. In the early 1990s they had certainly called for more inner-state group pluralism, but on the whole they had thought that with institutional reform democratisation would by and large follow apace (Ibid. p.14). After a while, they started to look for new ways in which alternative ideologies could be made to fit the changing realities. At the suggestion of some scholars, and in order to obtain a new ideological basis for deepening political reform, the Pan-Islamist reformers presented a hermeneutic interpretation for religious texts and various classical ideas of modern political thinkers such as Emmanuel Kant, St. Augustine, Thomas Hobbes, and Max Weber. The aim of this approach was to look seriously for ways, in which it could be possible to increase inner-state pluralism rather than just institutional rearrangement.

The moderate clergies who leaned against the conservatives' views on nature and place of supreme power continued to suggest that a contain understanding of both religion and republic in a modern context would solve the problem of regime's political system dual power (Ibid. p.149). In his book 'Critics of Official Reading of Religion', Shabestari ascribed the lack of a democratic interpretation of Islamic principles that could consolidate the conflict between the two institutions of power in the IRI. Although in the post-revolution arena the Iranian citizens had wanted to establish a religiously democratic political system, Shabestari claimed the proclivities of some officials had impeded its development. The officials' insistence on a traditional interpretation of Islamic texts had been the main cause of some deterioration (Shabestari, 2002). Still, to these Islamic principles a hermeneutic kind of approach by the high-ranking officials was necessary. Shabestari proposed a model in which a long list of principles was not necessary. He simply proposed the minorities followed the majority and the majority respect the rights of minorities (Shabestari, 2000). This model of governing differed from absolute rule of jurisprudence in a way that a limited form of Islamic inter-state pluralism was not. A culturally regenerated institution then could become the example for a plural political system. It would have to operate in a system that protects the rights of citizens and practices a participatory kind of institutionalised power.

At the same time, more radical sounds also came from Pan-Islamist intellectuals. Hashem Aqajari openly criticised the nature and place of supreme power and pointed out that when a certain clergyman becomes the Supreme Ruler, they claim he is omnipotent, an expert in all fields, capable of arbitrating everything, including matters of politics, religious, culture, and

society (Moslem, 2002). He also criticised the Supreme Leader's personal networks that centred this position. Although he does not specify what exactly, Aqajari made clear something fundamental has to change within the Islamic ideology and its present political system.

In this view, radicals and most moderate reformers by and large supported Aqajari's critiques. Again Khatami promised to focus primarily on the possible divisibility and transparency of political power (Goochani, 2004, p.112). Implying that he had looked behind the official appellations and appearances, he proposed to limit the confronting discourse and promoting moderation among the heads of the IRI institution, which in reality held political power (Ibid. p.113). After all, actual supreme power in the IRI depends not on one's official position, but on the personal recognition one has received from the particular clerical body called the Expert Council. But at the same time, the members of this clerical body are also selected by another closed body of clergies and laymen, which is called the Guardian Council. A similar procedure is applied in selecting the presidential candidates and members of parliament as well. But nonetheless, under this formally limited tenure system, there is a parallel system of life tenure.

Such practice generally took place in the IRI political system, where the powerful head of state can combine ideology and managerial power. Therefore, the institution of jurisprudence should be distinguished and not confused with a dictatorial system, which is constituted on the ambition of one-man alone, and in which the system is organised based on personal power. Again, the solution Shabestari proposed was to follow Khatami's rule of law and democratic procedures, where the unique insight of jurisprudence can implicitly be questioned. Then he concludes that a modern reading of Islamic principles would make possible for the state to make rules according to democratic universal laws within an Islamic republic (Khatami, 1999).

Once again, however, radical and moderate reformers did not succeed in attracting the high-ranking officials on the usefulness of liberal democratic principles. Thus a new - but more conservative and upholding of plural rule - reformist movement, was launched around the same time. In the 'Islam, Society, Politics', Mohsen Armine put forward the views presented by his group the Crusade of the Islamic Revolution that Iran must learn from democratic societies and their past for the changes in its social, political, and economic management (Armine, 2001). They proposed a new theory that combined the elements of both a religiously democratic government and a social model of redistribution, which came to be known as the third way. The remarkable aspect of this old social democratic theory in a new dress was that it for the first time presented a public endorsement of the IRI system as a temporal rule. Perhaps even more remarkably, in early 1998, Khatami and some officials in his cabinet were said to have expressed their liking for this kind of model, although they reportedly did not like the name: a third way (Alavitabar, 2003). What then was the precise content of this theory? In short, it was a proposal that expressed a period of transition from an Islamic governing model to a moderate political system, which unlike the model presented by Shabestari, was down-side up. The proposal indicates that

during this period of transition, Islamic authority would have to separate the functions of state from a promoter of market economy through an increasingly empowered institution of civil society. The aim of this process was to have limited control of the state in economy, legally guaranteed rights for civil society sectors, and plural politics in a multi-party political system. This appealing future, however, was still a long way off for Iran. All of this was nearly set out in a strategy drawn up by three main thinkers behind the religiously social democratic Crusaders of the Islamic Revolution (CIR), Mohsen Armine, Mohammad Salamatian, and Behzad Nabavi (Goochani, 2004, p.35).

The catch to this alternative was that there were three stages for this model of transition. The first stage explained IRI's present authority, the second was the implementation stage of transitional authority, and the third envisaged when social justice and political pluralism based on moderate Islamic values could be implemented. Democracy and pluralism were not the aims to be realised in a faraway future that could only come about through the full establishment of an economically advanced model. But rather the new democracy, with its efforts at separating institution of powers, was also clearly something from the near future. In fact, the alternative presented some convenient similarities with the post-revolution model presented by Pan-Islamist left parties in early days after the 1979 revolution. Thus the present stage of model was identified to stand for the present authority. A glance at Mohsen Armine's alternative reveals a united Iran with supreme power vested in a democratic Islamic Republic and a president as the head of state. For the second stage the new authority was to become a multi-party system ruled under a parliamentary constitutional model and a president as the head of state (Armine, 2001). For the foreseeable future, therefore, political participation was not to be delayed and republican rule was to continue. To a group of political elites who had visions of their own power in the IRI, this was a model that united the idealism of a faraway democratic and rich society with an immediate safeguarding of their interests. Later on, nonetheless, due to Khatami's political demise, several outspoken intellectuals and reformer groups ran into serious trouble, some lost their voice or were expelled from all form of state related positions. Interestingly, some semi-establishment intellectuals, who also addressed the republican nature of supreme power in a friendly way, were supported and entertained by the state officials (Abdi, 2000).

In this way, the influence of a new political culture on Iranian politics of the republican nature of supreme power may be illustrated not merely by the content of the debates among the establishment elite, but also by the consequences these debates had in public opinion and the actors involved in political reform in the years to come. In this respect, between the 1997 presidential election and the Tehran University incidents of 1998 and 1999, different views and theories were lanced that defended a republican nature of supreme power. Again groups of reformers, who supported a republican form of supreme power, were pitted against other groups of reformers, who wished to establish some form of meaningful political participation. Although

by then, there were a larger number of frankly moderate and secular views (Mahrouyan, 2004), nonetheless, the main oppositional approach to an absolute model of supreme power and a republican one remained the same.

3. The Extensions of Power in the Political System

In this section, an attempt is made to show that the same conflict of power that led to a fierce discussion between the Pan-Islamist reformers and conservatives, and amongst the reformers themselves, about the nature of supreme power, also led to a discussion about extension of power in the IRI political system, which pitted President Khatami and the reformers against the conservatives in the first place, and then even amongst reformer groups themselves. In this way, something of the meaning by Khatami's 'the rule of law' for balancing the political forces in the IRI will become clear (Ziebakalam, S. & Tajzadeh, M. 2003, pp.11-5). As in the previous sections, before the discussions are outlined, this section provides some background information and official stances that formed the framework of dominant approach around which these discussions took place.

Against the background of a steady stream of institutional reorganisation, after the 1997 presidential election, policies were set for the huge administrative reform that awaited the Islamic state. This institutional reorganisation brought discussions concerning how moderate change in ministries, provincial institutions, and the municipal councils could be implemented, discussions begun since August 1997. The reformers laid down their political line at the same time they were hammering out their economic line. This was however a step that the political institution logically foresaw (Ibid. pp.16-22). During this period, several topics were discussed: a moderate strategy for succession; political elite involvement in ideological reform; contenders' perusal of the moderate views on the rule of law and a non-violent society; an all-embracing solution for leadership reform. Other topics included how to effect reform in the administrative system which was not necessary in full agreement with constitutional laws; how to harmonise relations with international institutions; how to balance power within the state institutions; how to separate civil society's organisations from the government and political power related institutions (Alavitabar, 2003, 29-64). A message from Khatami was transmitted to the reformers' movement that these points, which had an intimate link to the Islamic revolution, had to be solved in a national reconciliatory way (Ibid. pp.29-64). It was hereby indicated, for any reform to be officially backed by the government, the institutions had to be focused on the need of the Islamic state while being adapted to the requirements of political reformers. As was put forward at the time, if the governing institutions were not reformed, the Islamic state would end up obstructing the objective aims of the Islamic revolution (Ibid. pp.29-64).

But, there were also other political rumblings, particularly by the reformist mainstream. They pointed out that if Iran's political reform was to be separated from the present institutional line, social radicalism would

likewise turn against the reforms as a whole (Ibid. pp.29-64). This was a clear indication of resistance to a wider reform. Among the previously mentioned points, therefore, moderate reformers only targeted a few issues, particularly those concerned with succession and institutional reforms. In other words, among this group of reformers, reform was premised only on the willingness of the old rulers to leave their official posts to the younger generation (Ibid. pp.22-64). Khatami himself hinted at this problem, when he said on several occasions that in solving problems related to institutional reforms, the biggest, most difficult, and most urgent problem was to find the appropriate successor.

In order to resurrect the post-revolution trust for institution of state, the reformers emphasised that it was necessary to replace a large number of the older generation of bureaucracy. This remarkable replacement was also not entirely unrelated to Khatami's personal quest for power. But, once the new members of reformer groups were all placed, they met a major dilemma. Many were too powerful to ignore and too liberal to carry out an all-embracing modest reform (Goochani, 2004, pp.136-8). Worse still, with the new generation, a bureaucratic style of command entrenched itself, which was one of the major reasons why Ayatollah Khomeini in the early 1980s had started to purge liberals in the first place (Ibid. pp.92-99). In reorganising the state institutions, therefore, Khatami found many of his allies in his quest for transition of supreme power from the institution of jurisprudence to republic ranged against him. On the other side, for various reasons most of the mainstream opponents of his republicanism supported his bid for a more procedural, competent, and fragmented Islamic government.

This was the setting of Khatami's early attempts to reform the IRI's institution of state (Nabavi, E. 2001). Among the main directives, that set out the new organisation of IRI, his works 'Reviver of the Religion and Reform of Religion', and 'Fears and Hopes', and some of his articles between 1998 and 1999 are noticeable. Significantly, Khatami wrote these books and articles to forestall attempts at stopping institutional reforms. Mostafa Tajzadeh a chief reformer, for example, was trying to slow down a campaign to oppose institutional reforms from picking up speed (Tajzadeh, 2003, pp.17-22). Nonetheless, the mainstream reformers critically referred to the former president's latter day mistakes, but also to such elements of Khatami's political culture: networks, privileges, and patriarchy.

In his article of 18 August 1998, Khatami offered an overall blueprint for reforming the state institution, which adopted elements of earlier views of the liberals of the 1980s (Khatami, 1999). The former president by referring to bureaucracies had also complained on over-centralised power during the 1980s. The novelty of Khatami's article lay in its emphasis and its detail. It reiterated the need to separate juridical, executive and administrative institutions, indicating some bureaucratic management that needed to be corrected. It criticised the very way that many institutions at all levels of the bureaucracy played the role of political patron. Such persons, Khatami remarked, still clung on to the despotic rule model. Their unlimited and discretionary power had made them tower over their followers and act in

imperious and despotic ways. They had suppressed pluralism and operated under the monarch idea of one-man rule. In this way they had in an undemocratic way accumulated power in which the state's managerial system had often been transformed into the implementing of the rules of individuals. The result had been that the state managed too much, managed badly, even to the point of trying to manage things that could not be managed. As a result, the management of administration had fostered attitudes of extreme submissiveness, ultimate loyalty, and passivity among their subordinates. Most officials have wished to receive some orders to follow without having to think about the underlying reasons for the orders. Khatami was implying that the implementation of the policies of the government was being hampered with and distorted by unwanted centres of power somewhere in the parallel chain of command. Such a power had to become more limited and more transparent, so that it would be easier to locate and solve such problems (Khatami, 1999).

The unlimited power of institution of jurisprudence had serious repercussions for the government and operation of the institutional reform as well (Baghi, 2004). Some members of this institution engaged in favouritism, corruption and even bribery, which caused their organs to become bloated. For the lack of clearly outlined prerogatives of most clerical organisations, it was easy to create works for persons instead of the organisations. Some of their administrative structures even had extra layers and were added to the government through the Office of the Leader. This was facilitated by the secret way in which various departments of the state's organisation operated. The result was that in practice, one belonged to the given organisation would concretely follow his informal leader. At the same time, leading members widely enjoyed illegitimate life-tenure, since the particularity of the nature of power did not foresee any procedure for their succession. Not surprisingly, efficiency was extremely low. On the one hand, many organs, as Grand Ayatollah Montazeri denounced, were very good at speaking empty words and keeping up appearances. On the other hand, they were slow at their duty, tried to avoid their responsibilities, and failed to keep their word. Official requests were routinely sent round without being dealt with (Ziebakalam & Tajzadeh, 2003). Meetings followed by religious ceremonies took far too long and were inefficient. The high-ranking officials in their dealings with other governing organs, many one-sidedly stressed functional and continuously quarrelled. Leading members of Islamic councils deceived their superiors and bullied their subordinates. A tiny Pan-Islamist minority in the Ministry of Information even engaged in political assassination and bent the law. Thus, the question to reformers was how a new generation of institutional management could be selected from those individuals.

According to Khatami, even more than the former government's admittedly serious mistakes, it was this kind of institutional egoism that was the misfortune of the Islamic state (Khatami, 2001, pp.218-24). The remedies he proposed involved some traditional models of legal education and moral coercion (Ibid. pp.218-24). As he assured his audience, political reforms certainly must take place on an extremely important, stable footing

(Ibid. pp.215-238). But this was not an easy task. Deep-seated despotic habits would have to be overcome through patient legal education and disciplinary moral coercion. He made no secret of the difficulties waiting ahead. He explicitly stated that in order to eliminate the remnant influences of despotism, a form of self-education and self-transformation for the state's institutions was necessary.

Having outlined the defects of the administrative system, Khatami called for real reform within the Islamic state structures. The democratisation of the discretionary power of leadership institutions had to be ensured through a precise set of administrative regulations and responsible system. In other words, the power of leadership institution at each level had to be limited. Khatami's cabinet reiterated the need for fairer measures for involvement of officials, rewarding and punishing, retiring, resigning, and eliminating the parallel system. The widespread practice of conservatives, bureaucrats entering the system and never leaving it, and only being promoted and never demoted, had to be altered. Khatami emphasised that in the future, it ought to be that many key posts were offered to those who were competent, and titles conferred if lawful procedures are passed (Ibid. 215-38). In matters of institutional management, too, there were to be more rationally and objectively verifiable rules. In a lawful model, he replied, dependence on the whims of individuals will be successfully solved through participatory organisational means.

Still, the bottom line of Khatami's institutional reform remained steeped in the moderate Pan-Islamist premises: the interests of the Islamic state and loyalty to the clerical institution. But his novel idea was that all individual citizens were considered equal before the law. For Khatami, modernisation remained a way of strengthening the Islamic state, by unleashing the individual energies of his subjects (Ibid. pp.211-217). Although amongst others he hoped to stimulate this by asserting that the rule of law is glorious, at the same time he stressed the necessity of a moral profession counterweight by rejecting the liberal egoistic propensity to look towards modernity. The ethical superiority of Islam had to be given full play within the process of material acquisition, he stressed, if not, what difference would there be between Islam and its enemies (Ibid. pp.211-17)?

For anyone, who misunderstood Khatami's remarks, he made clear that at the time institutional reform and modernisation was explicitly intended among the rank and file only. In principle, the major decisions would still be taken by the Supreme Leader and the Guardian Council, by whom decisions would be tried out to acquire divine wisdom, and then be officially adopted by the state and applied in society (Ibid. 212-16). Contrary to popular belief, countering an inappropriate or excessive centralisation of power should not affect the centralised unity of the Islamic state but the unwanted forms of power accumulation at the levels under the ultra conservative opponents (Ibid. pp.212-16). A crucial point in the interpretation of Khatami's articles lies in his use of the term 'Supreme Leader'. As became clear in his articles, the term Supreme Leader referred to the highest position in parallel organ of the Islamic state. The Islamic system served to appoint leading clerical

members to every important branch of the regime's organs. But, apart from an overall description of the function of the regime's organs and the resulting vertical connections in the larger network, precious little had been stipulated. As a result, leading members enjoyed immense discretionary powers in deciding which and how many persons would take position in their organs and what these organs would precisely do. In fact, the leading members of a lower organ automatically became the personal subordinates of the leading members at the level above and enjoyed virtually no institutional protection. It was natural that formally a series of orders and instructions from above and reports and questions from below should ensue. Informally, a paternalistic Islamic culture existed, with one and the same administrative system presumably barking leader orders downwards, while shunning responsibilities by continually asking for instructions upwards. In such an environment, the formation of networks was a natural development that enabled organs' members to some form of security. Rationalising the administrative system in the way that Khatami wanted would have upset many formal power relations and threaten such networks.

It was this kind of reform that the Guardian Council and other senior officials wanted to dilute or even to stop. In other articles, Khatami was forced to temper the rationalising and institutional thrust of his reforms somewhat. This was made clear especially in his proposals for the selection of his cabinet ministers to a commission of moderate experts. Next to being partly non-clerical and more knowledgeable, ministers had to be more moderate. The moderate experts were to have a greater say in the state policies too. By adopting these changes, Khatami seemed to acknowledge the fact that his proposals were too ambitious (Alavitabar, 2003, pp.39-64). A rationalised administrative system needed a modernised management that Iran simply did not yet have. At least for the years that followed, overall managerial knowledge became a more important criterion than religious knowledge.

At the same time, however, under the management of Abdullah Nuri and Mostafa Tajzadeh, the government institutional networks started a gradual reorganisation. Between 1997 and the important last few months of the 1998, a series of decisions were passed that laid the foundation of a more procedural governing institution (Ziebakalam, & Tajzadeh 2003). In an attempt to start a system of individual responsibility, the Ministry of State applied some alternative methods of the evaluation of the administrative system. During the parliamentary election campaign the Ministry of State explicitly declared itself in favour of abolishment of the process of pre-selection of the candidates by the Guardian Council, which had existed since the early years of post-revolution. This was followed by a decision to establish retirement regulations for provincial officers and promulgated some stipulations concerning such regulations for those officers who had left their posts and were convalescing. Moreover, earlier in that year, it was decided to start changes first in the Ministry of State, which was clearly the easiest ministry to deal with. This separate reform proposal for the executive apparatus of the state marked an important step towards the separation of

the institution of religion and the Republic. All of these measures could not but be aimed at the replacement of mainstream and conservative members, who had been in place since the early days of the revolution, and whose defenders included such high-level officials as members of the Guardian Council and the Office of Leader.

In September of that year the government stipulated that the institution of Republic was to be the supreme power of the country, and it was under this institution that the politics, ideology, and organisational affairs were to be decided upon. The republican institution was to become the main executive organ for carrying out the overall work of political reforms, whereas post-revolutionary organisations were to be made more autonomous. It was a functional division that was mockingly called by some reformers the true *Eslahat*. Moreover, at the top of the Republic sat an advisory commission and in parliament several inspection commissions were installed. Originally, there seemed to have been plans to institute some kind of separation of powers within the regime by making both the Republic and the parliament equals to that of institution of Supreme Leader. This idea was rejected at the parliamentary session and particularly by some high-ranking officials, therefore, few reformers had to step down from their posts. As a result, there was a visible, different and certain tension between those pro-reconciliation reformers and the younger generation. It had become too clear that the advisory commission in parliament could not take the final decision to solidify Khatami's institutional reforms.

Between May 1997 and 1998, a first round of reforms was launched, which were aimed primarily at reducing a number of conservative organs and personnel within the political system. Based on the parliamentary observation published on May 1999, such a reform mainly struck those government officials who lacked the administrative knowledge to carry out the reform policies, to organise their followers, or even their own posts (Ganji & Nouri, 2000, p.111). Without clear task descriptions and prerogatives, nonetheless, many of these organisations and posts, which had been temporarily abolished in this round of reform, were soon re-established. The main problem had reportedly been that in many cases only the administrative links had been severed between reformers and governing organs without competences being handed over (Moslem, 2002). Without a change in the power relations, also a real change was rather difficult to be effective. Similar attempts in 1998 and 1999, when competences were handed over, only fared marginally better. One important change was, to some extent, the decentralisation of the provincial governing institutions.

The conservatives' successful resistance to reforms and replacement schemes lasted until September 1999, when Khatami once again succeeded in reorganising the top positions in the government. More than a year later, after the demise of Abdullah Nouri and Mostafa Tajzadeh, the remaining old generation managed to stage something of a comeback (Ziebakalam & Tajzadeh 2003). Policies to establish a fully moderate civil service were reportedly watered down. Tajzadeh was better at negotiating a clearer submission of the institution of jurisprudence to the Republic, and a reduction

of the Guardian Council's functions to that as observer and as having control of top officials' appointments. Still, for all their reformist rhetoric, the official documents published by the Ministry of State revealed that little advancement had been covered since the beginning of the moderate's reforms in the institution of political power. Calls for a clarification of competences between the higher ranks and the lower organs on one hand, and for the gradual transference of political competences to civil service organs on the other, revealed that, as Khatami had already complained in 1999, many of his 1997 proposals had not been made concrete. In fact, until the Tehran University incident, more plans, but very few actual changes took place.

At this stage the background of the differences on institutional reforms was formed by a long drawn-out power struggle between Khatami with his reformist followers, who wanted an efficient institution and the implementation of political modernisation policies, and parts of the laymen conservative bureaucracies, who tried to accommodate socio-economic restrictions within the existing power relations and political practices.

Although there had been policies on institutional reform since the late 1980s, reform only really began after the 1997 election. In fact, although there had always been a lively interest in personnel matters, there had been surprisingly little attention paid to the administrative management system before the late 1990s. The reformers stressed that before the changes could start, a certain amount of institutional knowledge had to be acquired. This process naturally took time and would last until at least 1998 before a broader, though perhaps not always functional, policy began.

During the first few years after 1997, the official approach to institutional reform and modernisation of the administrative system was concentrated mainly on ministerial organisations and processing information about the decentralisation methods (Alizadeh, 2000). In this pursuit, it was evident that the official organs in the governing institution, such as the Ministry of Economy and Finance, concentrated mainly on the methods associated with the World Bank and IMF models and the administrative systems in the transitional societies. Others, such as the Ministry of Culture and Information concentrated mainly on Iran's national Persian culture of the past. As has been mentioned before, members of reformer organisations started early on to gather, translate, and publish materials on concepts and organisational models for administrative system that had worked in the past. Almost as soon as Mohammad Abtahi became the head of Khatami's office, he made these programmes the main focus of his approach. During 1997 and 1998, publications appeared concerning the economic management, financial institutions, the ideas on liberalism, and civil society organisation. The newly created twenty-thousand Non-Governmental Organisation also engaged in similar work. New ideas on the methods for decentralisation of the administrative system also appeared. In 1998, several seminars and conferences on civil society and civil service systems were held, among which the government-sponsored conference held at Tehran University in January 1998, stands out.

There was also contact between the private organisations and the establishment organs responsible for the reforms in the administrative system (Armine, 2001). Apparently, these contacts were largely confined to the network to which the reform organisations belonged. At first the SKF and OSU, for instance, only entertained contacts with the Ministry of State and Labour. This only changed after Ali-Reza Mahjoub and Abolqasem Sarhadizadeh had become members of the work office of the government for discussing reform of the political structure, a clear indication of the near to total lack of official contacts between organisations of different reformist networks, except at leading levels. Of course there were many informal contacts between members of different organisations. As activities and publications increased, different alternatives gradually merged. But, this only took place at the end of the 1999.

The debates on reform of the administrative system were probably sparked off by the desire to rejuvenate and professionalize a pragmatist leadership structure, which, through its personal grip on the reins of intermediate power, formed an obstruction to successful political reform. As the basis for policy, Khatami's speeches provided an objective base for the reformers approach to concentrate on. As most mainstream Pan-Islamist intellectuals put forward, Iran was an old civilisation with long tradition of public administration, but due to complex reasons, it became a despotic bureaucracy (Baghi, 2004). Commonly, this was directly imputed to the double influences of Iran's despotic past and the errors of the Islamic system. They had conspired to saddle Iran with an over-centralised system that only served to obstruct the modernisation process. The reference to conservative administrators, who refused to be replaced, was evident. Still, this could not logically lead to an uncritical adoption of liberal model of public administration. These, as Khatami had made clear, had to be viewed with an Islamic attitude. This meant that, for example, the notion of an ideologically neutral administrative system was unacceptable, but the introduction of formal rules was at stake. If in the 1980s Islamic state officials had had to be both religious and expert, now as Khatami had put it they all had to possess both morals and talents. But, he had also made clear that professional knowledge was just as essential as ideological loyalty. Generally, however, this subject was not pursued any further by Pan-Islamist intellectuals since it was simply too sensitive for public discussion.

In 1997, institutional reform started on plans for a reform within the governmental administrative system. This presented a concrete step towards separating the state from the conservative agents of the institution of jurisprudence. Official documents casually explained this momentous change away by stating the obvious: with the onset of political reform, the term *Eslah'talaban* (reformers) had suddenly become too vague. It denoted all those officials of the Islamic government who were engaged in the administrative management (Nabavi, E. 2001). With the need for a functional differentiation under the moderate leadership of the government, other terms were needed to mark the newly emerging differences. Of these, mainstream reformers expressed their opposition to *Mardomsalare'garayan* (democrats),

because this term was used for a liberal version of civil servants model. Also, the term denoted Iran's pseudo-modern tradition and was therefore unwanted. Other terms apparently lost out because they denoted something else or perhaps simply did not sound pleasing. In the end, the term *khetmatgozaran* (servants) was chosen. This Iranian traditional term presumably indicated a solution between the need for modernity and Iranian-tradition roots. Importantly, this term only covered government officials in their administrative organs. All other government officials remained *Maktabi*, or ideologically orthodox. Still, not all officials and Pan-Islamist elites agreed that practice revealed that the post-revolutionary centralised model here does not completely fit the national temperament of the country. Nonetheless, in 1998, Abbas Abdi, a prominent reformer, precisely urged other reformers at the SKF to pay more attention to the administrative models used in advanced countries (Abdi, 2000).

This discussion obscured as much as it lay bare. An important bone of contention that lay behind the way in which high-ranking government officials had to be operated. To paraphrase a debate of considerable complexity, the two views that opposed each other concerned the nature of the rules by which officials had to operate. Conservatives wanted to continue the practice of relying on the traditional religious insight of the officials, to deal with each situation as it presented itself. This insight was the product of their ideological reliability, their religious qualities, and their long post-revolutionary institutional experience. There was some understanding for an increased need for professional or technocratic expertise, but in the end the religious qualities of the officials would prove to be of decisive importance. It was, therefore, important not to lay down precise limits to the functions and prerogatives of leading elite (Nabavi, E. 2001). The traditional religious relations behind the formal institutions were what counted. Against this view, the moderates wanted a modern bureaucracy that was largely based on examples from the liberal and advanced countries. Officials would be selected on professional or technical merits and function according to institutional and operational procedures. Importantly, their prerogatives and responsibilities would be carefully defined, making their behaviour more open to careful evaluations.

A related issue that was a bone of some contention between reformers and conservatives was whether the functional differentiation of the civil service was to lead to a division between politico-religious nominees and a politico-professional corps. This question dragged on between 1997 and 1999. During this period, Mostafa Tajzadeh, a senior member of Ministry of Home Affairs, was indirectly reprimanded by Minister Hojjatol-Islam Lari for favouring a politically neutral civil service (Moslem, 2002). Still, for other state ministries, Khatami shared Lari's views as well. In 1998, the Ministry of State published several articles by official reformers, who set out their reasons for dividing up the administrative system into a political and a professional service. These reformers believed that a professional administrative system was necessary to ensure the stability of the Islamic state because of the many interpretations of the content of republican nature

of power. The activities towards institutional reform at the leading administration were obvious. The entire system of appointments and promotions was said to be better organised through regulated procedures than in the hands of traditional laymen and loyal officials. Later that same year, Abdullah Nouri spelled out his proposals for reform of the political structure, the leading body that prepared the blueprint for political reform before the sixth parliamentary election. Political officials would be elected and would have to renew their mandates every so many years, whereas legally appointed state officials would stay in office. Again political stability was offered as a justification for this system. Despite vigorous opposition from an unconvinced parliamentary conservative group, Abdullah Nouri with the support of Khatami succeeded in having this feature adopted in the state policies for presenting to the sixth parliament. Shortly afterwards, Nouri was impeached and resigned from his work for the mismanagement of the Ministry of Home Affairs. In January 1998, a somehow modified plan and new office in the Ministry of State for reform of the administrative system was set up. It promptly changed the plans according to some extent to the wishes of the conservatives, and it duly scrapped this feature from the records. The acute sensitivity of the issue was underlined after the Nouri's impeachment in most of Iran's daily newspapers. The state media on the new civil service system explicitly referred to the separation of religious and professional posts as a feature of secular system, which an Islamic country could not adhere to (Ziebakalam & Tajzadeh, 2003). In short, all Islamic state officials had the duty to be ideologically sound.

Within both the republican and divine logic of power, there were extremely good operational reasons for maintaining the requirement for an ideologically sound civil service system. These were not all related to the ideological purity of the regime, but to its very coherence. After all, if reduplication of leader-follower relations formed the backbone of the Islamic state, such bonds could easily interfere or even replace the loyalty that was due to the very existence of a Vicegerency Supreme Leader model. The ideological element was ultimately intended to take precedence over and combine with procedural coercion to counter the natural tendency of this structure of divine power to fragment into factions. This was an extremely important element behind Ayatollah Khomeini's continuous calls to elite unity of discourse (*vahdate kalameh*).

Since the aboriginal ordering of social relations had been traditionally viewed as the best form of government, it is perhaps not surprising that during the late 1990s, a religiously democratic form of government was generally viewed as a reordering of political relations. Khatami himself had called for a religiously democratic government (Khatami, 2001, pp.218-224). As Khatami proposed, this could be reduced to the fostering of a different kind of relation between those who govern and those who are governed. Based on this democratic-like relation, a decentralisation of the Islamic state management could be brought in to effect, which would then maximise the effect of Ayatollah Khomeini's concept of cognition. Among other political reformers, however, this resulted in a widespread discussion on the need to

describe the ideal tasks for their Republic (Alavitabar, 2003, pp.39-64). The impulse for such an exercise may have come in part from the familiarisation of an advanced administrative system performed by the moderates. In any case, President Khatami joined his pupil Abdullah Nouri in actively promoting modernisation. From early 2000, a series of articles started to call for the unity of power, responsibility, and interests. In this view, every official with a given post ought to possess the prerogatives and the responsibility to carry out the duties of that post. Some equated this call simply with the proposed system of responsibility only for the high-ranking bureaucracy. Others, on the contrary, supported the compilation of clear republican agendas for the entire Islamic state apparatus, detailing prerogatives and responsibilities. In this way, even subordinate officials would have a way of executing their tasks efficiently. On the one hand, due to the clear tasks and limits of such an arrangement, supervision would be made considerably easier. On the other, due to the complexities involved, the entire scheme would have to wait until those rules were established. Although no actual materials have been available to prove this, it is quite likely that the discussions on a fully republican characteristic of power never materialised into official policy between 1997 and 2004. Presumably resistance to this kind of scheme was fuelled by its threat to the republican power of high-ranking officials at all levels.

In many ways, therefore, the dilemma of the matter lay in the nature of supreme power that the officials in their position or post maintained. The high-ranking officials in the institution of republic were generally said to occupy a high office, literally a position on a ridge. Such a post was dependent on a network of informal relations in which the official was a member. The tasks that came with such a position were usually called the tasks of the individual responsibility and had traditionally been left to the general discretion of that official. Already in 1998, however, Abdullah Nouri, under Khatami's supervision, started to plead the cause of legal responsibility in an institutional position (Nouri, 1999). Instead of the past practice of establishing posts for religiously oriented persons, this system promised to take on qualified religiously oriented persons for position. It would provide both an effective antidote against bloated organs and facilitate the incorporation of a professionally competent group of officials. Unlike other features of this method, therefore, this element apparently survived to appear in the administrative system regulations of the late 1990s. Even in early 2000, however, the term *khetmatgozar* had to be explained as a post that was based on the affairs it managed rather than on the person that exercised it, which indicated the unfamiliar connotations the term brought about. At the same time, it was one of the few signs that the republican nature of supreme power might be undergoing a change. Significantly, it did not appear in the institution of jurisprudence.

On the whole, the institutional reform and the reform of the administration system was more than a mere process of modernisation. It presented the gradual introduction of one logic of power at the expense of another. In the past, a belief in the ideological power relation behind the

Islamic system had served as the justification for a patriarchal administration system with a continuous replication of leader-follower model down the chain of command. As the late 1990s progressed, a more structural approach emerged which stressed the need for functional diversity and detailed efficiencies. As Khatami himself stressed, a professional, structural approach was to be carried out. But, it is important to stress that this did not mean Islamic values or principles were being discarded. Differences in management between different organs could be fitted into an Islamic principle that discovered an essential development insight a contingent reality. But professional management practices did shift the ideological criterion from religious insight to the managerial perception of reality. Imperceptibly, they changed the focus of administrative system from the fostering of religiously oriented relations to the more specialist and managerial details of the responsibility itself (Hajjarian, 2001, pp.242-62).

Originally, the basic approach of the bureaucracy to institutional management had been the practicing social responsibility. In the past it had mostly been a device to manage the state institution within the ordered framework of an Islamic work-style. This view was in effect in the former cabinets until the 1997 election as well. Accordingly, the tasks of management were, first of all, to engage state officials and unite their perceptions based on Islamic principles, to organise the main Islamic directives and policies, and to correctly handle the relations and interests between the state and the subjects. Secondly, the work-style of Islamic management had to be strengthened through concerned public opinion, which could then be incorporated into the institution building process. Thirdly, a resolute struggle had to be waged against secular thoughts and habits, thereby consolidating and developing of an Islamic thought-practice. Fourthly, through this religious thought-practice and new creativities, a complete and divine innovated system of responsibility would be established. Finally, departing from the country's realities and needs to build an Islamic society, the managerial Islamic experiences of the past would be added into a perfected system. This approach was a variation of the post-revolutionary process of cognition and formed the Pan-Islamist approach to institution building. It continued to rely on the unique religious insight of the leading elites and stressed the need to indoctrinate even the lowest officials.

More towards the moderate reformist side of the political spectrum, Pan-Islamist reformers such as Abdullah Nouri and Mostafa Tajzadeh presented new forms of institution building, which perhaps were of entirely out of touch with the political realities of the IRI. But, some cultural changes would have to take place first within the political traditions of the Islamic state. According to Tajzadeh, misconceptions about institutional reform among elites remained widespread. Many reformers believed it was a cure against all ills, whereas in fact it merely offered a means of solving some of IRI's critical problems (Tajzadeh, 2003). He pointed out that in the past leading officials had only busied themselves with daily matters and knew very little about long-term management and institution building. Moderates insisted that the beginning of reform would provide an ideal condition for a

new administration system to be implemented. Similarly, they drew attention to the widespread lack of understanding on the functions and intentions behind administrative reform. In a traditional culture that viewed administration exclusively as a coercive instrument of the state, this was hardly surprising. There was, in fact, something of a consensus among many low-ranking officials that institution building had to become less the preserve of the centre and more the affair of all persons concerned. It would have to be increasingly based not on the mere laymen experience but more on the wisdom of a professional group of officials, the management, and the state at large. Nonetheless, increasingly Pan-Islamist officials started to describe the concrete steps of institution building (Hajjarian, 2001, pp.307-328).

These moderate views fit in with those pleading formally for a better relation between the institution of republic and those under the Office of Leader. In this way, the republican line of reform would become increasingly consensual. Institutional reform in this view would above all enhance the efficiency of the system and bring about gradual changes in the political culture used in the state institution. Rather than forcing a potentially dangerous break with the past, a gradual and systematic modern method of institution building that respected the contemporary requests would be favoured. To bolster these changes, legitimisation of a modern system would gradually make the entire process of bureaucracy more rational and more predictable (Ibid. pp.307-328).

Next to the gradualist reformers, there was a group of temperamentally less patient reformers, who pleaded for a radical break with the past. The request of these reformers differed widely, but they generally wanted an end to the monopoly of power concentrated in the hands of institution of jurisprudence. The consensus was that the IRI ideology and practice did not offer the best method to modernise Iran. Such views varied from the much publicised liberal democracy agenda for the rule of law and forms of institution building based on procedural models to considerably more traditional, but equally radical views on the modernisation of values and policies based on a social-democracy model (Armene, 2001). The latter introduced a large number of new terms into Iranian political terminology, many of them barely understandable to leaders and followers alike. At the end of the 1990s, institutional reform in the IRI was an amalgam of secular ideas. With the demise of post-revolutionary Islamic theory of cognition, many reformers engaged in what Ahmad Ghabel has defined as religious intellectualism: a belief to have found the blueprint that will solve all of Iran's problems if only everyone will adhere to it (Ghabel, 2002, pp.229-240). Whatever the precise contents of these ideas, they increasingly reflected a society that is questioning the Islamic values of its authority and has demanded some form of freedom and pluralism from the institution of state.

Like the debates on the supreme nature of power, the debates on institutional reform and the administration system were strongly influenced by the way in which power was viewed in the Iranian culture. Khatami needed a maximally efficient Islamic state to carry out his programmes for political modernisation. This meant that he needed a division of the different

components of his vast religiously bureaucratic apparatus in order to reduce their political threat to his reform plan and to enhance their functional efficiency. Additionally, he needed clear and formal rules that would delimit prerogatives and responsibilities, thereby making performances more transparent and the entire system more controllable. In his attempts at enhancing efficiency, the reformers, who wanted a more accountable and safe system, supported him. Through inner-state group pluralism and procedural regulations, changes would be made possible, increased participation would become easier and economic management more efficient. Against these views, mainstream and conservative officials perhaps primarily fought for the benefits of the status quo. In a system that only knew formal rules to serve the state apparatus and lacked formal rules of individual appeal, religious networks were of decisive importance for political protection. Moreover, Iranian officials were the heirs to an Islamic ethic that stressed the need to find the divine essence of things. Rationalised procedures did not fit well into such a worldview.

Conclusion

In this chapter the attempt was made to show that there is a particular understanding of the Iranian Islamic view of power and its traditional structure that bears a number of similarities with Max Weber's theory of patriarchal system of power. According to Pan-Islamist elite views, the essence of power is divine force, like the light of belief that, accordingly, its source animates the universe. As such, power is therefore an abstract thing, of which there is an unlimited amount and which could become only legitimised through a single source. This single source in this view is omnipotent and omnipresent; therefore, its legitimised possession requires a divinely oriented vicegerent. While the power of vicegerent is unlimited in amount, to accumulate and preserve this power, the best way is the Islamic political system that revolves around this power. The need to transfer this legitimised accumulated power to the governing institution and the place where it is effectively wielded has made the discussions on the nature of power and supreme power central. The 1997 presidential election was a political reality that gave a mandate to President Khatami's views, and the following discussions also yielded support for a supremely powerful republic. In the post-election process of institutional reform Pan-Islamist reformers at first pleaded for a larger influence of inner-state group pluralism. Accordingly, the state should thereby form the basis for facilitating a religiously democratic system until a larger number of political groups were mature enough to govern the system in pluralist model. Other Pan-Islamists wanted a truly powerful Republic, through which religious liberals could also have a say. Although there was agreement for some limited democratic values, there were some influential semi-establishment intellectuals who put forward alternative for a direct democracy with a freely elected parliament and a sovereign republic during the late 1990s. In other words, they called for

abolition of parallel institutions such as the Office of Leader and the Guardian Council.

Similarly, institutional reform and the reform of the administrative system, the instrument through which political reform was transmitted to IRI institutions, were strongly influenced by the perceived need to accumulate power in the institution of a republic. Khatami clearly needed a rational and transparent institution that would implement his 'rule of law' both faithfully and competently. In his efforts, he relied heavily on moderate reformist officials and establishment intellectuals, who for a variety of reasons, particularly the survival of the regime, wanted much the same religiously democratic government to emerge. Against these two important factors in Iranian politics of the late 1990s, the majority of the rank and file, while stressing their loyalty to the institution of jurisprudence, tried hard to preserve their power and the bureaucratic way of operating.

CHAPTER SIX

Moderate Alternatives: Political System and Ideological Changes

The previous two chapters have discussed the influence of modern culture and political culture in the framework of contemporary political reform and have highlighted two debated crucial issues in the IRI: the transition towards a religiously democratic government and the republican nature of supreme power. So far, however, the realisation of these two issues in Iran's political system has remained fairly static. Truly, during the reform period between 1997 and 2004, the modern political philosophies sometimes served to modify the instruments of domination of the IRI elite culture and political culture, and the debates on modernity changed the dominant political discourse amongst reformer elite and Pan-Islamist intellectuals and also fit easily into the public opinion (Armine, 2001, p.252). Throughout the late 1990s, one could say there was little doubt that the survival of the Iranian Islamic political system and its development depended on the objectives of political reforms and the reformers achievements, and for the organisations that could have facilitated this process, the primary question was how the institution of Republic could accumulate legitimised power (Djalaei, 2003, p.66). Around the above mentioned two issues, different opinions were voiced, some of which even fell outside the pale of the main discourse on political reforms, but characteristically these opinions had been formulated in such terms that did relate to the general issues of the process of modernity in Iran. In this way, the inherent differences that were expressed by different reformist groups offered a systematic overview of the opinions that placed within a politically significant context of the different views focusing on the modernity.

According to the SKF-IIPF leadership, while changes in Iran was always subject to objective conditions, political reform in general should not be construed to mean the radical replacement of all old institutions by all newer ones. In the context of reforms, regardless of all theoretical propositions, the traditional political arrangement has to continue while the change is taking place. Political reform as a dimension of shared public opinion would lose its communicative value and social function, if an unpredicted radical and complex change were to take place. After all, it takes time for a new political setting to obtain its objectives, particularly of those dealing with tradition of despotism while establishing a new institution.¹ In this respect, with a radical change in the political system, the new political institution would be unable to communicate with some sections of socio-political groups, and consequently, social cohesion and peaceful transition would probably encounter disruption. In Iran's actual political events, for instance, radical change in the political system could have severely disrupted the social cohesion, although the

1 - See '*bayanye-yeha va mavaze djebheye mosharekate irane islami*' (Manifesto and Positions of the Islamic Iran Participatory Front) until the first convention, 2001, pp. 145-147, published in Iran

change could have been even less fundamental than expected (Ibid. pp.154-7).

This chapter, therefore, will deal with the influence of modern theories on the political discourse of reformers and politics in the IRI as a whole. In other words, this chapter will explore the extent to which intellectually based assumptions towards plural political theories during the late 1990s have influenced the way in which political thought and practices have evolved in the IRI. It will be assumed that there has indeed been an incremental evolution of democratic ideas within Iranian elite and Pan-Islamist intellectual circles. This is to say that political reforms, if and when they took place, although relative and partial, were fundamental. By relative and partial it is meant that while theoretical changes took place on the basis of an objective situation, at the same time the changes on politics amongst the elite and Pan-Islamist intellectuals' ideas was fundamental. These changes on politics probably took place as a result of perceived theories and imposed conditions. Such theoretical changes or evolutions, however, were fundamental, because they fit into an implicit psychology of the public that was largely ready for change. The political and theoretical changes that are addressed in this chapter are therefore assumed to involve a mixed discourse on republicanism and a newer version of a religiously democratic government. In other words, within overall changes, one may assume that there are objective elements of classical liberalism and social democracy that permit members of the elite and Pan-Islamist intellectual circles to somehow place their alternative views and their theoretical understanding in a familiar context known as modernity.

This chapter will mainly focus on Pan-Islamist elite and establishment intellectuals who articulated their own alternative theories of modernity, a group which includes those secular republican intellectuals engaged in recent debates on politics and the republican nature of supreme power as well. The aim is to explore how during the late 1990s new theoretical changes in their overall ideological views flourished. Based on the outcomes, one may then speculate the future trends in which pluralism and modernity in the IRI should best be understood. The discussions on theoretical debates offer a real insight to the development of the political reforms during the late 1990s as well. These alternative theories were used as the main instrument for the introduction of a religiously democratic government and expanded to far greater ideas, such as universal human rights and the separation of religion from the institution of state. By crystallising the reasons why certain alternative theories rather than others were adopted or enjoyed support, we may grasp an indication of the eventual path that political changes may take in future.

In this context change is above all a change in the alternative theories that have been presented in the reformers' political discourse. Therefore, the assumed attributes will be taken as the background against which change in the topics of politics and the nature of supreme power are placed. In the second instance, the relative, partial, and culturally limited aspects of political change will be applied to these topics. To make this come out clearly, the overall driving political views behind the idea of religiously democratic

government and the republican nature of supreme power will be contrasted with modern and post-modern theories introduced by political reformers during the same period. Viewed from the relative nature of political change, it will be conjectured that these theories will have to address some of the problems found in these two crucial topics. The partial nature of political change suggests that only the useful elements of theories - but not entire ones - will be adopted as valid points of discussion, or even officially sanctioned views. Finally, the culturally limited nature of political changes makes one ask whether the influences of modern ideas remained confined to elite and Pan-Islamist intellectual circles or whether they spread to social groups and the entire public opinion.

An important aspect to this discussion will be the challenge of finding some distinctions between different kinds of political changes. By and large, two kinds or degrees of political changes may be discerned. The first kind concerns change within the elite and establishment intellectuals' political views. The second is a change within the political system itself. This is mostly a matter of the level of analysis under which one may scrutinise the defining features of the political system in the IRI. For instance, when one assumes that the principles of oriental despotism (Katouzian, 1981) formed the defining elements of Iranian politics and its political system, which is on the way out, and that elite and Pan-Islamist intellectuals' political views and the political system in the IRI has been profoundly altered, we shall place such defining features at an altogether different level of analysis than when one asserts whether the sovereign power is a theocratic state and the power is exercised arbitrarily and absolutely by one man.

In the following, the changes will be placed more at the epistemological rather than at the sociological level. This leads us to the conclusion that although in the post-revolutionary Iran and particularly after the 1997 political reforms process, the modern cultures have fundamentally influenced the ways in which political and institutional changes have taken and are taking place, but many of the traditional features have remained remarkably unaltered. Moreover, although the alternative theories were mainly influenced by the modern and post-modern theories, at the same time the socio-political conditions forced the political reformers to deconstruct these theories. As has been suggested in previous chapters, generational changes may underlie cultural changes. Socio-economic changes too may exert a profound influence. In other words, a social shift and the growing numbers of social groups engaging in political life also have caused the political system to alter. In fact, apart from generational changes, the change in socio-economic background of some social groups has also caused the initiation of political reforms (Goochani, 2003, pp.35-40). It must be said that although the size of these social groups grew substantially, this did not have a significant effect on in the way political reforms progressed. It should be noted that at the end of the 1990s, alternative theories emerged which conformed to the requirements of the establishment. After all, the reformers main goal was to reform the IRI political system. This chapter will concentrate mainly on those alternative theories and Pan-Islamist intellectual debates that introduced the

modern and post-modern ideas amongst the emergent social activists: encounters, groups, organisations and networks.

In this chapter an overall explanation of the alternative theories expressed by the Pan-Islamist intellectuals on a religiously democratic government and political modernisation that are associated with some modern and post-modern theories will be offered. In these theories, it was assumed that the resulting political model would be analytically discerned and workable in practice. Moreover, it was assumed that this political model would be the background for rationalisation of state policies in general and pluralisation of institutions in particular. These alternative theories mainly dealt with the official ideologies in the IRI, the institution of supreme power, and the various views on the meaning and significance of a republican model of government.

The intention behind this approach is to gain an insight into the logic of alternative theories after the 1997 election and into the political discourse debated within Pan-Islamist intellectual circles. Some senior reformers, such as Mostafa Tajzadeh, believe that their alternative theories were not only debated, but have been adopted for some times as they were intended to be. Conversely, they devote less importance to the question of why some theories were popular, while others did much less well. By following the logic of the alternative theories and the reformers' political discourses, it is hoped to obtain a better understanding of the recent changes in the political opinion of the IRI elite and Pan-Islamist intellectuals, and the complexity of the political system in contemporary Iran.

Through this approach, it will be also shown that change in the culture and political culture, as a preconditioning factor, is of crucial importance for the choice of alternative theories and a political model. As has been shown in the previous two chapters, most political thought-practice of the Pan-Islamist intellectual reformers presents a coherent and well-organised psychology of its own. Some of the elements of this thought-practice are similar to those found in other modern political models, while some are different. This makes the contemporary Iranian political situation distinct. Within this tried and tested theoretical framework, political reforms will have to fit into a strongly complex paradigm assumption. This suggests two possibilities for either a relativistic or a radical change. In other words, the political condition will lead the reformers to a new knowledge not merely about the likeliness of the political changes, but also about the direction that the political system may have to take.

1. Alternative Theories and Political Models

The political reforms within the setting of the IRI only make sense when the reformers challenge somehow the dominant official ideologies. This in fact aware the reformers of the eventual ideological limit that they may pursue. For the establishment elite to speak of changes, on the other hand, inter-mingling with some elements of the official ideologies at least was an

obligation to advance their alternative discourses.² In this way, in the late 1990s, the official ideology was perceived just as an intrinsically revisable phenomenon.

There are a few reasons that explain how the importance of IRI's official ideology was indeed relatively decreased though the era of post-1997 election political reform process. These reasons were based on three factors: the successive alternative moderate ideologies, a new political model, and the alternative developmental discourses. Against the background of an Islamic political system, which the public and the political debates were firmly in its control, almost no radical break from the official ideologies among the reformers seemed to be found (Tajzadeh, 2003, pp.9-22). This may be posited for the simple reason that the continued survival of the reformers was intimately dependent on ideological monopoly and supremacy of the IRI's officials over the public life (Zubaida, S. in Bein, J. & Stork, J. 1997, p.103). An important argument that contributed to the relaxation in the publishing of alternative theories was the Pan-Islamist intellectuals' criticism that the official reading of Islamic ideology remained relatively the same over a period of more than fifteen years. In the preceding chapters, it has been shown that in the late 1990s, the reformer ideologists did indeed lay down the officially sanctioned ideological framework. This was done in spite of lively debates, which by and large remained attached to similar ideological arena, although the arena for the alternative ideologies had grown steady larger. Within the framework of these overall ideological debates, however, the reformers were expected to cater to the needs of the political reforms through ideologically sound alternatives. As expected, all reformers' theoretical alternatives nevertheless took the official ideologies into account.

In terms of political reforms, there were a number of basic assumptions behind the alternative theories that were of relevance to the kind of political model that the reformers supposedly have adhered to. As has been outlined in the introduction and illustrated over the preceding chapters of this work, the theories underlying a religiously democratic government were considered to be an appropriate reflection of the form of political system. This meant the utilized alternative theory for a religiously democratic government and the alternative approach to the nature of supreme power had to take official ideologies into consideration. Simply put, such an alternative theory must ideally cover the criticism of the entire official ideology, in which the entire political and social system in future is nourished. Such a theory had to grasp the essence of new political and social realities and be susceptible to the official ideology of the IRI. In other words, such a theory had to make concrete a new political model arising from the unacceptable discrepancy between the political and social realities and its foundational essence. Lastly, the alternative developmental discourse which presented some explicit and implicit form of ideological indication in the political sphere has justified the

2 - See '*bayanye-yeha va mavazeeh djebheye mosharekate irane islami*' (Manifesto and Positions of the Islamic Iran Participatory Front) in Mosharekat news brief, No, 15, 2004, Tehran-Iran

new motivating force behind the long-term existence of the alternative theories.

Within this general framework, problems arose as the ideologies that were derived essentially from Political Islam failed to be seen as productive, and even came about in an unsatisfactory way and were seen as defective. The new ideologies then were presented, but again, they were mostly in the same context as the official ideological solution. Since the overall Islamic worldview and the state foundational principles were not things that could be discarded at a whim, the quest was likely to follow the logic of a bipartisan solution and that meant maintaining a religiously democratic government. At first the reformers simply tried to advocate the existing theory of the 1979-81 religiously liberalism, but more purely or consequentially (Khatami, 2001). When that didn't work, they altered some minor details on the areas of perceived failure (Ibid. p.61). Such change had gone so far that it virtually ended up being discarded as one official ideology for another (Ibid. p.66). The change that took place was about modifying the general logic or the structural assumptions that underlie the formation of all kinds of so-called "democratic government" (Ibid. p.69). Within a religiously essentialist approach, a bipartisan solution was paradoxically disguised as the introduction of an entire prophetic ideology rather than presented as a democratic alteration (Ibid. pp.71-2, 119-40). It was therefore imperative to find a solution in liberal theories, which the overall make-up of that was similar to the IRI leaderships' own ideas (Ibid. pp.169-175). This could minimise the effect of those elements selected from modern theories when they are combined with the religiously essentialism of the existing official ideologies (Ibid. pp.186-194).

With this ideological interplay, one could notice the different elements of both liberal and traditional Islamic theories in the political discourse of the reformers. In the general and intermediate elements, the new theories were usually identified with some ideological problems. At these two levels, the officially sanctioned ideologies had to give a moderate reflection on the reformers' alternatives. Once a set of approaches was deemed to be problematic, to find a convincing and more satisfying approach, the reformers proposed a discussion at a new theoretical level.³ Their new theories in this sense were much more than just a collection of partial ideas, and according to Abbas Abdi, had involved the entire structures of the synthesised theories, which ultimately provided the new approaches with an entire new stage of theoretical debate (Abdi, 2000, PP.136-141). Depending on the issues concerned, again, the new stage was the interplay between the general and intermediate theoretical approaches (Ibid. pp.292-4).

The quest for an alternative solution, however, was to be placed against this background. In this way, solutions to those problems were assumed to be searched for primarily under theories of similar ideological kind. Therefore, solutions in regard to the problems of a religiously

3 - See '*bayanye-yeha va mavazeesh djebehe mosharekate irane islami*' (Manifesto and Positions of the Islamic Iran Participatory Front) until the first convention, 2001, Tehran-Iran

democratic government would be found through the theories used in early European modernity that in part possessed similar features (Hajjarian, 2001). Problems concerning the republican nature of supreme power were to be solved also through similar theories that promised to enhance democratic power. Conversely, theories that offered entirely different settings, because they disagreed with fundamental features of the religiously democratic governing model, were assumed to be discarded or rather used as typical examples of a secular model. It seems the theories that were chosen to serve as possible sources of alternative solutions were always based on a number of unvoiced assumptions. These assumptions were the same as those used in the post-revolution ideology: divine unity, divine justice, and divine salvation. But, it was by no means necessary that the intention of the reformers was to embrace these principles entirely (Khatami, 2001, pp.78-9). These three overall principles were intentionally applied into the reformers' theories. Presenting any theory in post-revolutionary Iran was always subject to a divine filter, which sometimes produced quite surprising shifts in their meaning (Ibid. pp.82-8). Thus, in the quest for alternative solutions, promising theories presenting all features that the reformers expected, would just reach its basic elements, which could be presentable through the correction of its vital aspects. That is to say, while these theories were in used as alternative solutions, the vital aspects were suggested as the elements compatible to the official ideologies (Ibid. pp.55-60).

Moreover, as a classic model of post-revolutionary political system, it was always suggested, the principle of an alternative solution has to be found through the prior quest. Having a political system associated with a religiously populist model, however, political changes could never only be based on the particular political conditions (Ibid. pp.168-175). The alternative solutions had to fit into the network of social relations or they would otherwise alter the political system (Ibid. pp.168-175). Therefore, alternative solutions were rarely confined to the immediate object of the political reforms' conditions; hence, the aspects that the reforms deemed to be originally linked to the old elements were also presented in new theories.

Based on this model, a range of possible changes in Iranian politics and political discourse were proposed. Minor changes were those that could be accommodated within Akbar Ganji's republican theory of a developmental democratic state (Ganji, 2000). Although the differences between the conservative and reformer's moderate Political Islam may be said to be considerable on certain points, the underlying logic of a religiously based Islamic Republic, restoring a new version of Islamic political system, and the rule of law under the rule of jurisprudence has remained the same. Nonetheless, some different interpretations of theories sprouting from moderate Political Islam were chosen to provide an alternative solution. Based on that, political change had to automatically fit, or was even made to fit, into the fundamental aspects of the overall religiously democratic government. This was a more particular form of political change presented by the conscious introduction of democratic elements into and all-embracing moderate Political Islam (Baghi, 2003, p.32), or by putting forward entirely

some new theories that were similar to it in their overall presentation (Hajjarian, in Abdi, 2002, pp.110-125). The important step that is taken by such introductions is that the politico-religious ideology, which represents that general level of discourse to which one can turn for further solutions, is broadened to include theories outside of the officially sanctioned IRI ideologies (Katouzian, N. in Abdi, A. 2002, p.10). Moreover, there have been those who have questioned one or more of the basic pillars behind the ideology in the IRI (Mokhtari, 1998). As this category suggested, change in the political system of the IRI is slow and limited to internal organisation, underlying much of its existing socio-political structures. Although, as previous chapters has suggested, there was certainly a fast-going generational shift in political ideas; nonetheless, in these years, the general principles underlying the thought-practice in the IRI seem to be seriously challenged.

2. Changes in Theories for an Alternative Politics

In previous chapters it was explored that the moderate reformers suggested that the main challenge on the way to achieve a modern IRI was the absence of a religiously democratic government and the establishment of a republican supreme power. Within the ideological framework of Iran's constitution and based on their perception on what they called "modernity", they started to look for alternative ways to modernise the political institutions of the IRI. As has been shown, the ideological framework was based on Islamic pillars, which via a revolution, established an Islamic Republic, an Islamic model of political power, an Islamic merchant economy and social control. With the downgrading official ideologies in the 1990s, particularly the popular abidance against the absolute rule of jurisprudence, some Pan-Islamist intellectuals abandoned IRI's rhetoric as their ideological driving force.

After the 1997 presidential election, at the very early stages of political reforms, the quest for alternative ideologies was initiated at the SKF. The main object of early interest was a new theory on a religiously democratic government. In later years, the moderate reformers introduced a fair number of modern and post-modern theories with introduction to the ideas of Max Weber, Jorgen Habermas, Martin Heidegger, to name a few of the main theorists, and a handful of comments on their writings, particularly by Babak Ahmadi, Hoshank Mahroyan, Mohammad Ghoochani and others. Among Pan-Islamist intellectuals, too, the literature on Political Islam moderate theories was introduced. The works of Ali Shariati, Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari, Abdul-Karim Soroush, and Mohsen Kadivar must have been the most exciting for Pan-Islamist intellectuals. Towards the end of the decade, Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari's theories on a religiously democratic government, as described in his works 'A Humane Reading of Religion' and 'Critics of an Official Reading of Religion' enjoyed an unmistakable popularity. These sets of theories all presented structural features that bore a great similarity to the

views on moderate theories that had been abandoned since the early 1979 revolution.

At the same time, Babak Ahmadi's publications on modern and post-modern political philosophy, particularly his work on 'Modernity and Critical Thought' and 'Dilemmas of Modernity', introduced new ideas into the political debates amongst Iranian intellectuals. Because the works of Ahmadi contained secular and anti-essentialist views, to Pan-Islamist intellectuals they were rather difficult to avoid. After all, Ahmadi addressed many of the same issues as they did, but he drew entirely different conclusions. As early as 1979, Ahmadi's criticism of both tradition and modernity had first appeared in few circles of Iranian intellectuals, but it did take some years before his works became more widely known. It then became clear that his criticism of tradition and modernity in many ways presented a frontal attack on many of the basic tenets on which Iranian political culture rested. Although one or two intellectuals, such as Jamileh Kadevar and Mohammad Goochani, could be said to display more than a passing interest in Ahmadi's works, on the whole, to the secular and semi-establishment intellectuals his works probably served as a standard example of a post-modern view that did not fit into the requirements of the IRI's political reforms.

In the following sections three proposed set of theories will be discussed against the background of the overall alternative model for a religiously democratic government. The first relatively popular work is about the religiously democratic government of Abdul-Karim Soroush, the second discusses two works on hermeneutic theory and the humane reading of religion of Mohammad Mojtabeh Shabestari, and by way of contrast, the third is an exploration of two secular works on dilemma of modernity and critical thought of Babak Ahmadi.

2.1. Abdul-Karim Soroush's Alternative Theory: A Religiously Democratic Government

In first few years of the reform movement after the 1997 presidential election, Abdul-Karim Soroush's theory of a religiously democratic government enjoyed certain popularity amongst most political reformers (Soroush, 1998). His collective articles were published under the title Moderation and Management and contain several of his long essays and speeches (Soroush, 1997). This work dealt with the Islamic concept of leadership and the interpretation of the type of government in an Islamic society, and of course, with his own theory for a religiously democratic government. Some of the articles also point to his concept on culture and political culture. Moderation and Management, however, was an intellectual publication that reached a small audience. The publication that really brought Soroush to the attention of a larger public was Sturdier than Ideology (Soroush, 1994), of which its several editions of over 5,000 copies ensured that it became a widely read book amongst all sections of society. Many of the concepts used in this work became the basic tools of the IRI's nascent political reformers. Although, perhaps, in many cases it was not the first work

in which these concepts were mentioned: the theory it offered ensured that for the first time Iranian political reformers obtained a comprehensive framework in which they could place their alternative political system.

In his theory of a religiously democratic government, Soroush offers a model to describe and forecast the concept of an Islamic but democratic government, which is a departure from the traditional point of view of Pan-Islamist intellectuals towards a modern political system (Soroush, 1994, p.273). According to this model:

A religiously democratic government is an entity that covers the entire scope of divine rights and human rights within a political system. It is made up of the democratic oriented institution with the more intangible religiously cultural elements.⁴

In regards to the structural setting of the political system he emphasises:

In the process of rationalisation of the political system the governing structure becomes more differentiated.⁵

In other words, in this theory the rationalisation of a religiously oriented government demands more pluralism and more specialised management with democratic structures and functions. Moreover, as it is noticed, the degree of autonomy of management, the degree of justice and freedom increases with rationalisation. In this model, the religious values as the principles of political culture are less easily observed and refer rather to the way in which a faith-based society engages in social development (Ibid. p.275). On the other hand, he points out:

In a religiously democratic government the political culture undergoes a process of rationalisation.⁶

The foundational elements of this political system, such as interest aggregation and political groupings, have bearing on government functions and democratic values, the composition and use of which determine its capabilities. Consequently, he stresses:

Naturally, differentiation and management within a religiously democratic government leads the society towards a modern and efficient political system.⁷

To a large extent this model is equated with an improvement in the overall capability of the system as a whole in providing material goods for the faithful. In this way the faithful will pursue their religious duties towards divine salvation. In other words, he clarifies:

The difference between a religiously democratic government and secular democratic one is the objective and not the form.⁸

As a starting point, the framework of a religiously democratic government must have presented a number of appealing features to political reformers (Baghi, 2003, p.32). Although not intended in quite the same way, it could be interpreted as an Islamic alternative theory. Much like Political Islam, it consisted of the entire scope of the political system within a faith-valued society and promises to cover the same political philosophy in

4 - See Soroush, A.K. 1994, p. 273

5 - Ibid. p. 274

6 - Ibid. p. 275

7 - Ibid. p. 278

8 - Ibid. pp. 277-278

transferring the political system from its actual dualism to modernism. The emphasis on morally-oriented management could also easily be adopted by the political elite, who above all had to reform the way in which their bureaucracy functioned. At the same time, this alternative theory must have drawn attention, because its suggestion of a comprehensive picture of a morally-oriented political development was not secular liberalism but came from the culturally Islamic model.

Moreover, Soroush's general and vague theory of contraction and expansion of religious knowledge could be interpreted as a religiously essentialist view, which accorded very well with the pre-revolution conservative Islamic institution and its colourful group practices. The elements of this theory, instead of functioning like the concepts used in modern political philosophy which were to be tested and analysed by legal and juridical means, are used as a new interpretation of the old religion for a religiously democratic government model (Soroush, 1994, pp.278-89). It was seemingly confirmed amongst conservatives that Soroush's rejection of the traditional religiosity, together with his critical approach to the rule of jurisprudence and adoption of a democratic notion on Islamic government did embrace an element of revolt against the Islamic regime as a whole (Soroush, 2000). In other words, Soroush seemed to point to a religious government that added a temporal democratic meaning to a religiously governing model. At the temporal level stood social and political perceptual knowledge, which as yet unsystematic in its organisation, and at the religious level stood divine and faith-oriented knowledge, which was ordered and purposeful (Soroush, 1995, p.355). By subjecting his notion of justice and social stability to political system, Soroush's theory could be interpreted as following a moderate Political Islamic scheme, but nonetheless, the political concepts of his theory were changed as political reforms proceeded. Secondly, the general and vague ways in which Soroush defined his theory, agreed with the Islamic religious conventions of intervening in political affairs (Ibid. p.336). This impression was certainly strengthened by the way in which his work was introduced. He emphasises that the concept of religiously democratic government can bring the focus of the public to the scope of religious faith in the religious affairs, which is now in extremely widespread ways used by the political elite (Ibid. p.357). In Soroush's theory, the term 'religiously democratic government' is used for the model of socio-political ruling. Although one may be aware of the fact that this was not used in the sense to reflect the religiously-oriented essence of political system, it did rather serve to place the entire discussion at the particular discourse of a democratic political model (Ibid. p.357).

As a democratic political theory, a religiously democratic government also fit into most of the major democratic requirements of the political reformers. Implicitly in its overall moderate approach, Soroush's theory shared with political reformers a comprehensive notion of progress in a process of political development (Armine, 2001, p.247). Although, rather unlike Khatami, he mentioned less about a theocratic form of government, on the contrary he focused on democratic politics as a means of pluralism in the

Iranian political system (Kadeevar, 2000). Moreover, in his theory he addressed the relation between politics and management in terms that must have pleased reformers who continued to feel that the IRI perhaps somehow overemphasised the state intervention in social and economic management. In other words, in Soroush's view, political modernisation can take place not as a result of the state control on the social and economic management; rather, modernity is about a change in political management (Soroush, 1997, p.361). As his remark suggests, the clerical rule conveniently blurred the effect of the inter-state group pluralism, while in most reformers' views, political management could not be only the result of an overall socio-economic development. In other words, the state's legitimacy should be an extraction of elite pluralistic consensus, rather than brought about in socio-economic changes in matters of social management. Therefore, a new model inspired by religious values and organised in a democratic model had to be established in order to develop and modernise the current political management (Ibid. p.365). Thus through the dynamism of a democratic political management determining the political changes, the choice in this view was not between the inter-state group pluralism or moderate politics, but rather determining the use of democratic management that the current ideologised governing institution should envisage.

By such a religiously democratic orientation government, Soroush's theory however presented a number of aspects that had appealing quality to intellectual circles and moderate reformers. As had been the case with Khatami's notion of 'the rule of law', he formally allocated an important role to the moderate managerial factors in politics and put these largely topside of his arguments. The entire theory nonetheless could thereby be read as a variant of Khatami's view on the inter-state group pluralism and the practice of the rule of law. His focus on moderate political management, although looking quite similar to liberal democracy, nonetheless offered enough inroads that could be used as an alternative approach to what is known as "good governance". Its vague stresses on differentiation and open political grouping also attracted the pragmatist reformers of their highlighting on the importance of inter-state groups cohesion and a framework for ideological cooperation. Through his detailed description of a religiously democratic government, Soroush opened the way to an interpretation of moderate Islamic political system that created room for a central role to the political reformers' political management.

Finally, although Soroush did not explore this explicitly and might disagree with this explanation, one could not but notice a crucial element of both ideological and political dualism. In one aspect, according to Soroush, modernisation is the result of rationalisation of Islamic politics but at the same time in other aspects, it more and more becomes its very reason (Ibid. p.366). Apart from Ayatollah Khomeini and some other high-ranking clergies, in pre-revolution Iran, the Islamic institution was mainly opposed to ideologisation of religious faith. But once the Islamic institution became the leading organisation of the IRI, its very nature becomes ideological and the functions are ideologised. Although Soroush did not mention this directly,

most reformers have realised that this theory as an alternative could work for an effective political management within the framework of the actual Islamic state (Salehpour, J. in Soroush, 1997, pp.484-496). After all, according to this theory, tradition could develop to modernity, a Unitarian political system would become diverse, and an authoritarian regime would become democratic (Soroush, 1997, p.375).

On the whole, Soroush's theory seems to offer an alternative to an Islamic government that disagreed with most of its major theological-elitist assumptions, while at the same time it agrees with its Unitarian and politico-moral dualism in the governing model, which could be an expression of the main religiously essentialist features needed to make an Islamic government work. More importantly, Soroush's alternative offered a theory that is clearly more democratic than that of Ayatollah Khomeini's Doctrine and Political Islam (Ibid. pp.377-380). Still, only some Pan-Islamist intellectuals adopted most general features of this theory. It is likely that to Pan-Islamist intellectuals the theory also presented some evident drawbacks. Importantly, it lacked a socio-economic perspective in the way that Political Islam and Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine in post-1979 revolution did. Instead of promising a future of harmony, power, and stability, Soroush's alternative seems to raise such features as democracy in the age of ideologies to the status of ultimate values. Mohammad Ghoochani pointed out that when the debate is about the limited value of an alternative theory for a revolutionised society, Soroush's theory clearly belongs to the viewpoints of the past (Goochani, 2004, p.107). Although Ghoochani himself might have raised this point in order to protect moderates from criticism that questioned their otherwise sympathetic discussion of Soroush's alternative views, they did reveal a basic defect of Soroush's theory: that it lacked the social justice dimension. In other words, Ghoochani was correcting Soroush's theory. Ghoochani nevertheless somehow ascribes this mistake to the liberal basis of Soroush's theory, which in turn rested on a moderate Islamic worldview. Nevertheless, he mentioned that the cultural domain of the IRI on politics was religiously oriented, thus, Soroush's religiously democratic government is in harmony with the elite religiosity.

Another possible criticism of Soroush's theory is closely linked to his political philosophy or worldview. Because of its basically democratic approach, the religion in the government of Soroush's theory has appeared rather formalistic to some Pan-Islamist intellectuals (Ibid. p.171). But in this theory, the Islamic politics and institutions were presented as huge organs that worked according to precise causal moderate religious values, rather than according to the kind of governing model that the Unitarian approach of the IRI's culture suggested. This, in terms of political philosophy could be imputed to a reliance on the appearances of model at the expense of attention for the deeper workings on the essence of political management.

Undoubtedly, an important feature of Soroush's theory lay in its assertion that democratisation of politics and rationalisation of management had to be processed simultaneously (Jahanbakhsh, 2004). This feature made an important distinction towards the popularisation of the theory amongst

moderate reformers. At the same time, because of the similarities this theory displayed with some aspects of liberal democracy, for instance, its insistence on the idea that the religiously democratic government and the rationalisation of its political management had to develop together smoothly, it seems there is an important confirmation of its attachment to a newer version of universal suffrage. In the end, it is probable that the opposition of most conservatives and some mainstream elite to a rapid introduction of a meaningful political management served to limit the influence of this theory within the public opinion. In some cases, nonetheless, most SKF-IIPF reformers who focused on political and institutional reforms, who were intent on explaining that the IRI had to follow its own religiously democratic way to modernity with a national characteristic and find out a new road to political stability, adopted Soroush's theory as their alternative.

2.2. Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari's Alternative Hermeneutic Theory: A Humane Reading of Religion

At the end of the 1990s, Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari's humanist political theory and hermeneutic interpretation of scripture and religious text was easily the most popular view amongst Pan-Islamist intellectuals and the moderate reformers. In early 1994, a first edition of his book, 'Hermeneutics, the Scripture and the Tradition', was published, after which a large number of articles on his theories started to appear (Shabestari, 2000). Taken alone, this was not extraordinary, since similar political theories, particularly Kadivar's Political Thought in Islam, had enjoyed brief periods of glory on an intellectual scene that craved the illuminating simplicities of successive views on an absolute government and the rule of jurisprudence. Some years later, however, Shabestari's works, such as 'Reflections on A Humane Reading of Religion', 'A Critique of the Official Reading of Religion', and 'Faith and Freedom', have been used as the basis for the first really influential Islamic moderate theory on religiously-oriented politics, which brought together both establishment and semi-establishment intellectuals since the late 1990s. Admittedly, a hermeneutic interpretation of scripture and a humane reading of religion ranked amongst the well-known contemporary works on the Islamic political thought, which most Pan-Islamist intellectuals put forward, while through these moderate works, Shabestari's ideas acquired a huge popularity.

In the monthly review of 'Developmental Culture', Shahriyar Vaghfi-Pur introduced an overview of Shabestari's hermeneutic work entitled: 'Hermeneutics is the Knowledge of Interpretation'.

When we talk about a text, we are compelled to think about other things; and that is interpretation. Interpretation has root in believe on the text sanctity.⁹

In Shabestari's view, Muslims believe that their holy books, which were inherited from their ancestors, contain all the teachings humans need in this

9 - Vaghi-Pour, S., 1997. 'hermeneutik daneshe tavil ast' (Hermeneutic is the Knowledge of Interpretation), in monthly review Farhange Toseeh (Developmental Culture) No 31, pp. 83-85, Tehran-Iran

life and for salvation after death. Accordingly, in order to get the meaning of these teachings, an interpretation of the scripture is necessary. Therefore, whatever one needs in his life, according to Muslims, exists in the world of texts, and the way to understanding how to live is through the interpretation of these texts (Ibid. p.83).

Shabestari's book begins with what is known as the fundamental questions: how we understand a text, and as its main topic, what understanding is? In this theory, understanding is a kind of cognition (Ibid. 83). While the interpretation of texts is the subject of philosophical debate, at the same time, cognition also is considered as a subject of interpretation. Because the interpretation of texts is a historical phenomenon, therefore, cognition is also a historical matter, and thus its outcome is an ongoing process (Ibid. p.83). That means to understand what one has been said in the past, we are compelled to reconstruct the past understanding in the present, which means to make that past present and to interpret what has been said. Lack of attention to differences between horizons would result in the separation of the text from its historical context, which would discredit the text by not accepting differences of perspective disregarding their meanings.

Shabestari explains that the main differences between these traditional and hermeneutic approaches are the knowledge of interpretation and the hermeneutic view of culture as a historically shaped set of symbols, concepts, and way of organising them (Ibid. p.83). He explains that understanding of a text depends upon interpretation, and this is first the pre-understanding or pre-knowledge of the interpreter (Shabestari, 2000, p.17). To understand a subject, which Shabestari puts forward as our quest, pre-knowledge is necessary. This understanding begins with questioning (Ibid. pp.17-23). In this theory, achieving a pure knowledge without pre-reflection is what the positivist emphasises. Shabestari mentions, thus, separating humans from their history, society and classes is an absurd affair.

A second aspect of this theory concerns interest and expectations, which are the leading factors of the interpreter. In Shabestari's theory, questions are asked based upon interests and expectations of the individual interpreter (Ibid. pp.23-25). In other words, from a particular way of questioning of the text would leads to a particular way of arriving at answers. This is the prerequisite expectation of the interpreter who draws the chain of questioning. The truth is, therefore, in questioning, while the selected search method becomes invisible, there is still a demand for a particular answer; thus, there is always focus on a part of the truth and an omitting of other parts. As the result, we cannot perform a complete interpretation of the religious commandments. While we interpret a text, occasionally we are misled, and the reason is that we might be misled in our pre-knowledge, in our interests, or in our expectations; thus, based on these factors, we were misled in our presentation of the questions (Ibid. pp.23-25).

The third aspect of Shabestari's theory concerns the ways we question history. Pre-understanding, interests, expectations and questions compel the interpreter to ask for an answer from the meaning of the text, 'What the text

is telling me'? In this stage, in Shabestari's view, the writer should either ask from a historical horizon or listen to the lessons obtained from history. This act includes the search for what the writer in the text explained and tried to make the readers to understand (Ibid. pp.25-28). Shabestari is sure that the text presents a meaning, but this meaning becomes transparent only when the interpreter has determined what kind of meaning the writer could previously have intended or not expressed.

One may agree with Shabestari's theory that when undertaking the task of interpretation, the interpreter has to question history or analyse the period in which the text was written. This point of his theory seems correct, even while he disagrees on relating the meaning of the text to the aims and the intention of the writer (Ibid. pp.25-28). In other words, meaning is not a sign of unity of a subject but rather a reason for its deliverance. Text has its own rules and regulations that act without reference to its writer. A writer does not have any control on relations within the knowledge or usage of what he writes. A writer is not an agent of the text. Rather, one may say the writer is dead. To interpret a text, one should not look only for the idea of the writer, but rather try to understand a text in a context with its historical situation and to also find out how the knowledge was formed in that time.

The fourth aspect of this theory is the discovery of the central meaning of the text (Ibid. pp.28-29). To interpret the text, one has to regard the text as a whole or as a system with its totality and unity, which depends on a centre. Therefore when the text as a whole is understood, then, this central meaning is discovered. Finally, the last point of this theory is the translation of the meaning of a text in the interpreter's historical horizon. A text is produced in a given time and is interpreted in another time. That means an interpreter always deals with the text that is not of its written time and was created within a different historical horizon (Ibid. pp.29-31).

Shabestari emphasises that the difference between the interpretation of an interpreter and the interpretation of the jurisprudence (Ulama) can be found in those principles used by each group while they both are agreed upon. Thus, the main analysis of the text and the judgment about its contents should be based upon those particularities that have already been discovered (Ibid. pp.46-7). Using hermeneutic principles, Shabestari identifies the Ulama's interpretation of the texts and their religious knowledge on the Islamic principles originating from preconceived ideas, wishes, interests, and particular requirements. His main criticism of the Ulama's interpretation is the neglect of hermeneutic principles due to the fact that their goal is an absolute interpretation of the Islamic world-view and their claims that their interpretation of the texts and tradition is the unique one (Shabestari, in Vaghfi-pour, 2000, p.85). While exploring the theory, he argues that the religious thought-practice of the faithful takes place in three stages:

The first one is getting acquainted with God and Prophet, the second is to understand what Prophet says, and the third is leading a way of life based upon Prophet's teaching.¹⁰

In each stage inescapable human knowledge does occur:

All methods that are used to acquaint with God are based on human knowledge. All human foundation for religious ideas is also based on human knowledge that is a historical phenomenon. Acquainting with God is therefore a historical phenomenon, it is transformable and researchable. To perceive teachings of Prophet and directing a life based on those teachings without human knowledge is impossible. The human knowledge consists of preconceived and pre-understanding; religiously oriented human being without pre-assumption is impossible. The religious knowledge which is the discovery of God's commandments through divine texts and tradition is also human knowledge therefore separating them from human pre-understanding is absurd. It should be added that human knowledge is historical setting, so it is subject to change and progress, thus it is wrong to make religious commandments as an absolute tradition.¹¹

Shabestari's concluding point is that it is not possible to establish a political order based upon the knowledge perceived from the religion texts (*Fegh'h*). He also refers to some hypothetical points and questions if the knowledge deducted from the *Fegh'h* can respond to the temporal life of the Muslims; in a different time and space, what kind of state should determine the life of society; how can the knowledge of tradition decide the ways of social life? He includes discussion of how the knowledge of *Fegh'h* can specify the model of establishment or the practice of a political order. These issues concern the social contracts and not the details about Islamic tradition (Shabestari, 2000, p.56). What we know as the Islamic political order and those political, social, and cultural organizations that are noted in the traditional texts are based upon the knowledge and the ways of life of those countries where the Muslims had conquered (Ibid. in Vaghfi-pour, 85). As it was mentioned before, the religiously proposed opinion and the exegesis of the divine on matters of theology and law is not an intellectual effort separated from other human knowledge, thus, *Fegh'h* is historical (Ibid. in Vaghfi-pour, p.85).

Shabestari wonders, 'Why shall we be critical to the religious thought?' He answers,

'As time passes by, divine thoughts petrify.' What petrification means here is, for instance, when wrong ideas, customs or traditions and interests for social classes are combined with divine thoughts, they always cover the surface of the thoughts and contaminate the origin one at the end.¹²

Now we come to a conclusion of Shabestari's arguments that was discussed above: Hermeneutic knowledge puts an end to the philosophical myth of certainty and brings an era of uncertainty. This rejects the IRI's official reading of the text and tradition, and invites political elites to dialogue and develop a common moderate language (Ibid. in Vaghfi-pour, p.85).

10 - Shabestari, M.M., 2000. '*hermeneutik, ketab va sonnat*' (Hermeneutic, the Scripture and the Tradition), fifth edition, p. 34, Tarh-e No, Tehran-Iran, quoted in Vaghfi-Pour, p. 85

11 - Ibid, quoted in Vaghfi-Pour, p. 85

12 - Ibid, quoted in Vaghfi-Pour, p. 85

The forgoing hermeneutic theory for a humane reading of religion was so popular, because first of all, as the arguments made clear, Shabestari's work formed both a criticism of the IRI's ideology and an improvement of Soroush's theory of a religiously democratic government. According to this work, Shabestari himself is one of the representative personalities of the moderate political reformers. Unlike other Pan-Islamist reformers, Shabestari's theory especially stressed the importance of a humane politics and political freedom. He believes that, with the structural changes in the present Islamic societies, democracy and participation are equally important, and that an Islamic Republic without political pluralism and citizenship rights could only lead to political decay. In his book, 'A Critique of the Official Reading of Religion', Shabestari pointed out that the main point of the reformers is not about Islam, but is about how to establish an Islamic government based on modern legal and public order. In so many words, then, it was made clear that Shabestari - unlike Soroush - based his theory solely on wishes for republican democracy while being against an imposed official religious ideology. Moreover, of the three different Pan-Islamist intellectual's currents in Iran dealing with political reforms, Shabestari represented the one that adhered mostly to a hermeneutic method. Others like him were Mohsen Kadivar and Jamileh Kadeevar, but Shabestari had been the first exponent of this current thought. Although he had first propounded his theory before the Soroush religiously democratic government and secular currents, the Pan-Islamists of Pure Islam cry of the day and temporarily pushed his theory to the background. But, Shabestari had put forward his strong points, formed his own approach, and had formed his own hermeneutic current. Importantly, he had tried hard to read a democratic interpretation of the scripture and the texts in the concrete process of humanist political development (Shabestari, 2004, p.137). In doing so, he had incorporated the good points of the other two approaches in his theory. The result was a basic theoretical framework, which ended up in a growing political moderation, that had to be balanced by an increased level of modernisation, or as he denounced, political chaos would ensue. Although Shabestari's hermeneutic and other theories could be simply applied to Islamic Iran as such, they could also serve as the basis for more general theories.

His works, which were presented to the Iranian political elite, contained a number of important elements constituting the main arguments for a democratised Political Islam theory. First of all, it was made clear that Shabestari as a Pan-Islamist reformer had been a principle participant with a unique insight into Islam and political reality of Iranian society and has a reputable solution for the IRI's crisis. At the same time, he had made a synthesis of all available prior knowledge on Islamic philosophy. Moreover, unlike the secular reformers, Shabestari had not leaned one-sidedly towards some wish for democracy, but had pointed out that political freedom and participation, in this respect, were indispensable for any kind of Islamic government in future Iran. One could even see in his works a harmonised relationship between political authority and political pluralism, the former

naturally being the more important. In any case, Shabestari's approach had been ethically principled since he had put forward ideas that went against the pseudo-modernism of liberal conservatism and methodologically comprehensive since he had made a synthesis of all the knowledge in both Islamic and democratic political fields. As a novelty in Islamic discourse on politics, Shabestari's work is certainly a successful idea. It represented a clear differentiation between traditional political order and political modernity to the ideals of Pan-Islamist intellectuals, who sought to interpret some of the more obvious weaknesses of the IRI through an institutional reform.

But Shabestari's success rested on more than just a set of criticism and differentiations. His theory on Political Islam contained most of the elements that had pleased Iranian intellectuals about Soroush in the first place and some others as well. Like Soroush, Shabestari painted an all-encompassing political picture of political reforms from traditional Islamic society to a rationalised moderate society. In his theory, he used many of the same terms that Soroush had introduced, such as humanity and faithfulness, and moderation and democracy. Like his predecessor, Shabestari also relied heavily on plural scenarios, which made hermeneutic interpretation possible. In short, Shabestari's theory too belonged to the same overall category of political theories as moderate Pan-Islamist intellectuals.

Unlike Soroush, however, Shabestari's approach was much less faith-based valued and more comprehensively essentialist and historical. He even rejected all theoretical foundation of a religiously democratic government explicitly by pointing out the difference between what Soroush suggested was over-reliance on the ideologised consequences of Political Islam in actual political events of the IRI (Ibid. 117). In this approach, moreover, he concentrated on the transition from a traditional model of political system to modernity in contemporary Islamic Iran, instead of following Soroush's focus on the democratic values of modern Islam. He thereby placed the perspective of his theory much closer to the tastes and needs of the Iranian political reformers.

On the positive side, however, Shabestari's theory had quite a lot to offer to Pan-Islamist intellectuals. The boundary through his arguments was the issue of a traditional political order. The critique lies, Shabestari advanced, not in the holding of the institution of political power, but in the establishment of a democratic political system (ibid. 153). Hence, his theory, although similar in composition, called forth a completely different setting from Soroush's earlier linkage of Islam and political modernity. For Shabestari, modernity was no longer a question of reforms in ideologised Islam, but the abolishment of the official reading of religion.

Pan-Islamist intellectuals' appreciation of Shabestari's works played an important part in strengthening his view on hermeneutic theory and political modernity. Even more than was the case with the conceptualisation of Soroush's work, it played an important role in adapting the modern ideas to political culture in the IRI. At different places in the 'Reflections on A Humane Reading of Religion', for instance, Shabestari refers to a political development that was variously adopted as religious pluralism or as Islamic democracy

(Ibid. p.157). In this way, what was put forward as political and historical in its original form was presented as political and cultural in the reformers' adaptation. Shabestari emphasises the degree of modernisation as a complex matter, thus, in a general sense depends on the strength and scope of IRI's institutions, while he mentioned:

Generally speaking the degree of strength and weakness in the IRI is determined by whether the political system is democratic or not.¹³

In Shabestari's theory, the political institutions must be fed by freedom and rationality, while in the IRI, however, the political system must not exert its ordering functions over the social groupings. Similarly, Shabestari points out that to maintain rationality is to maintain a high level of control over the state while the expansion of democracy must be accompanied by its autonomous existence from the present ideological institution (Ibid. 158). Shabestari's theory explores a political system in which pluralism is paralleled with freedom and rationalization that serve to facilitate the nation-state's harmonising of the interests of society's institutions and citizens. Shabestari, for instance, stresses the importance of a humane model of moral values in the politics, the basic lack of which had caused distrust of IRI politics. Then, a few pages later he points out that a humane reading of religion would lead the political system to rationally exercise the methods that would lead the society to socio-political modernisation. Against this background, one may assume that these remarks fit in the establishment reformers criterion, and that the reforms movement was led to an elitist political rule. Thus, these different perceptions could be described in very similar terms. Nonetheless, it forms a good example of how political assumption may help to modify a theory.

The above theory consists of few points of which a Pan-Islamist intellectual could base his reforms ideas upon. Within the overall framework of political reforms, the reformers focused not only on citizenship rights and the rationalisation of the political system, which was the pluralistic reflex of IRI intellectuals, but their discussion on human rights seemed designed to challenge them even more. Echoing separation of state from religion, Shabestari proclaimed that there is no democratic state with an official reading of religion as its underlying political ideology. This had not merely been the case for ideologised Islam, but for other ideologies as well. Therefore, whoever controlled the religion should not control the state and vice-versa. At the same time, a change in the political relations in the government means a change in the basic relations of society. Therefore, and unlike Soroush, Shabestari assigned modernity to the disengagement of religious institutions from all forms of political power. He points out that degree to which and the possibility that a modern democracy takes place in a political system is inversely proportionate to the degree of its political pluralism. Therefore, the political events that took place in the post-1997 election arena did not differ significantly from those which took place in the post-1979 revolutionary arena. In the space of a few pages, therefore,

13 - Ibid. p. 212

Shabestari's theory paralleled a number of important issues that Pan-Islamist intellectuals discussed in their debates about political reforms in the late 1990s.

By measuring the political events in contemporary Iran against those changes in medieval Europe, he suggests that there is something of a historical process in Iran's political development. But, this process was largely determined by the method that the political reformers utilized in dealing with the traditional and modern politics. Since Iran's constitution had included the modern values, as Shabestari had thought necessary, this obviously put Iran on a track that was to be respected. Furthermore, his assertion that the rationality formed both the unavoidable road to modernity and diminished the chances of a new despotism was also seemingly confirmed by IRI's own ideological failures and the resulting movement for political reforms. With so many elements in place, Shabestari's propositions for political modernisation acquired a value that earlier Pan-Islamists had probably read into their ideological scriptures.

In this respect, Shabestari's message for the Pan-Islamist reformers was not a comfortable one. Perhaps the main message of his work was that adherence to the rule of jurisprudence led to endemic political instability and unrest. The way in which he seemed to present this picture, however, also accorded well within the theoretical requirements of the IRI elite moderate political culture. In a passage that became extremely popular in the reformers' political literature, he stated that, indeed, modernity produces stability, whereas state theocracy causes instability. Reduced to the framework of Islamic politics, this remark could easily be understood as the theoretical foundation for a process of political change not only from instability to stability but also from conservative Absolutism to moderation. Again, even if Shabestari himself denied the validity of the intervention of the liberal views in the Iranian politics, one could claim he used them unwillingly. In this case, the Islamic system had clearly been subject to endemic political instability and unrest. Part of this political instability had been caused, as Shabestari himself had pointed out, by using religion as the ideology of political power. It was therefore imperative that the political system goes through this unavoidable process of separation of state and religion in order to regain its lost political stability.

Perhaps the most appealing part of Shabestari's reflections was that he pointed to the difficulties of a transitional process in a modernising society, which in an orderly way, had to open up its system to a broader political views and participation. As he had suggested elsewhere in his books, this was especially so in the case of the state institutions with their apparently modern republican forms. Again as Shabestari had observed in yet another part of the state institution, it was crucial to the process of political modernisation that pluralism and rationality be preserved. The logical conclusion to this chain of assertions was that political pluralism must be increased over time until the state reached a level of political stability that would enable its government to offer more social development, whereas political reformers require such measures to be undertaken at the present.

Shabestari's works presented a theory that fit a remarkable amount of political pluralism into the alternative model of religiously democratic government. Admittedly, in many instances it toned down or even contradicted important points on ideological criticism, it did so even with confirming some of the key points of the post-revolutionary political freedom, while at the same time his theory lent itself to a humane reading of religion. On the whole, to a Pan-Islamist intellectual who wanted to improve or who was disenchanted with the IRI, Shabestari's theory sounded correct and refreshing. Most importantly, the theoretical basis for a political reform without a simultaneous radical approach appealed to the IRI moderate political leadership. Although there could be no question of abandoning Islamic religion, Shabestari's theoretical reflection was widely appreciated among the political reformers. Nonetheless, at a time when it was widely realised that the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine could after all be slightly out of touch with actual reality, Shabestari's theory could be served as a sort of moderate Islamic alternative for the IRI's political institution.

2.3. Babak Ahmadi's Alternative Theory: Modernity and Critical Thought

Up to this point, only theories have been discussed that shared a large number of political features with IRI's political reformers. Both Soroush's and Shabestari's theories could be interpreted by Pan-Islamist intellectuals to yield a surprising amount of similarities. Not surprisingly, both theories were popular. This was first of all apparent through their influence on IRI's elite and Pan-Islamist intellectuals. As was mentioned above, Soroush's theory served as an instrument to introduce some moderate Islamic concepts to fledgling political reformers in the IRI. In the same vein Shabestari's work influenced all major Pan-Islamist intellectual currents at the end of the decade (Kadivar, 1997, pp.859-883). If there are possible indications of intellectual popularity, these two will certainly rank among them. Therefore, it has been made plausible that a moderate theory, which fit the basic requirements in the IRI, stood a good chance of being popular and influential. But, what about theories that did not fit these requirements or even opposed them? Could such theories acquire some measure of popularity among various groups of intellectuals as well, or did these requirements form some of the criteria by which the popularity of theories was culturally pre-conditioned?

In the following, we will see that the theories which did not adhere to most of the requirements of the basic assumptions stood less chance of being popular or influential among the Pan-Islamist intellectuals and the establishment reformers in the 1990s. This hypothesis is based on one specific and one general assumption. First of all, according to Mohammad Ghoochani, Pan-Islamist intellectuals specifically wanted to advise their political leaders (Ghoochani, 2002, p.54). One may therefore assume that they mainly offered ideas that would fit those of their leaders. Secondly, for ideas to be accepted among larger groups of Pan-Islamist intellectuals, they

had offered the possibility of an interpretation that fell within the cultural arena of the Iranian Islamic political system.

In such context, Babak Ahmad's view on modernity and critical thought should be discussed. In many respects the theories he presented were a direct attack on pseudo-modernism of the past and a radical disagreement with the basic tenets of political culture in the IRI. Among the well-known theories on political development, his use of post-modern theories - which clearly did not fit the basic tenets - were perhaps was the best known (Ahmadi, 1998). In this respect, Ahmadi was a rather widely known figure among the secular Iranian intellectuals. Already during the post-1997 election arena, he had been one of the first secular authors to appear on Iran's intellectual stage. Secular reformers in philosophical meetings at universities soon discussed the new theories, and his philosophical papers were subsequently selected for publication in intellectual circles (Ahmadi, 1992). In 2000, Ahmadi published a research book on the political ideas of three members of the Frankfurt School: W. Benjamin, M. Horkheimer and T.W. Adorno. A couple of his general articles appeared in the second half of the coming years, and in 2002, when he published a two-volume work on Martin Heidegger's philosophy: 'Heidegger and the Fundamental Question' and 'Heidegger and the History of Being'. During the 1990s, therefore, although not widely commented on or followed, Ahmadi nevertheless remained one of the important secular post-modern theorists known.

The Pan-Islamist intellectuals' familiarity with Ahmadi even grew towards the end of the decade. With the publication of 'Modernity and Critical Thought' in 1994 and 'The Dilemma of Modernity' in 1998, Ahmadi's ideas became directly accessible to a wider public. From one point of view, this in itself formed an indication of a surprising tolerance towards new and secular ideas on the part of the authorities in the later 1990s. From another, the very contents of the books were such an anathema to the conservatives of the established political culture that its publication could perhaps hardly have been considered a threat. To put it slightly differently, the problems the books raised were so fundamental, that they surpassed the arena within which political debates were taking place. Hence, in the short run at least, they were considered relatively harmless. Predictably, unlike Soroush and Shabestari's works, which were published in the same years, Ahmadi's work was not graced with any praise for Islamic ideologies. On the contrary, one might say, after a short period of publication of other works, it was remarked that his books contained several new viewpoints amongst which there are perhaps both willing theories and unwilling ones. His work was implicitly branded as a reference material to which one could perhaps consult, but not adhere to. It was to be subject to the critical analysis of the both tradition and modernity.

Although his work did receive some attention, Ahmadi never acquired the same popularity as Soroush or Shabestari. The one truly popular term amongst political reformers that may be traced back to his work with some certainty was 'critical thought', which applied in a meaning that was precisely the object of his post-modern theories. The respectful - yet distant - attitude

towards Ahmadi was revealed in the interpretation of his book and in other articles on political philosophy. Unlike other works, for instance, his criticism of tradition and modernity seems to be as accurate as one could hope for, given the differences between the Pan-Islamist and secular approaches. In this respect, Ahmadi's attacks on tradition and pseudo-modernity often sounded like direct attacks on some of the basic principles of the Iranian politics (Ahmadi, 1994, p.4). At the same time, Ahmadi's criticism was remarkably accurate. But this choice also made the intellectual's discourse of Ahmadi's critique different from that normally encountered by political reformers. This was a point that a theoretical approach was both assimilated and liked, as had been the case with Soroush and Shabestari, or was accurately transmitted and ran the risk of being rejected.

Because of this accurate theoretical approach, Ahmadi was therefore allowed to level a sustained attack on the very kind of logic and ideas that formed the dominant theoretical approach on political development. What seemed to strike the imagination of his readers most was his supposedly original view that the reformers' elite perception was not a reflection of pure modernity but was based on religiously pseudo-modern suppositions (Khatami, 1999). This formed the basis for his criticism on the all-encompassing religiously democratic government approach to political reform as a valid method for political modernisation. However, the political reformers and the establishment elite flexibilities were too limited to arrive at such post-modern theories (Goochani, 2002, pp.35-40). Moreover, the alternative theory of a religiously democratic government implied a selection of features that reject post-modern related views as the only valid theory. At the same time, Ahmadi's theory held that the political modernity is too complex to fit exclusively into such a tradition oriented population. Both modern and traditional ideologies and groups of individuals could however be part of an alternative political system if they are designed to manage the colourful composition of a traditional society (Ahmadi, 2001, p.4). But, Ahmadi was quick to reject the religious essentialism and Unitarianism that lay at the root of this possible religiously democratic government associated with the alternative model of the actual political reforms itself. In doing so, Ahmadi explicitly rejected both the epistemological basis of the political reformers as a reflection of reality and the methodological underpinnings of the political modernisation.

Naturally, at the thought-practice level, Ahmadi's view differed radically from Soroush's and Shabestari's views, which were based on faith-based moral values. He pointed out, for instance, that a democratic exercise of political power was dependent on the possible values a political system concentrated on the practice of pluralism (Ibid. pp.82-132). In other words, the actual cultural practice among the IRI elite and the high-ranking officials was not conducive for establishing a modern political system, but is rather limited and repressive. Therefore, he rejected the moderates' thought-practice approach and the central role it eventually may have in the process of socio-political modernisation. Crucially, Ahmadi cast doubts on the politico-moral authority of the IRI's political elite (Ibid. pp.133-180). He rejects

explicitly the IRI elite's claim that they have monopoly on the final truth. If widely accepted, Ahmadi's theoretical arguments would prove to be a secular alternative to those moderate reformers' religiously democratic government.

Thus, to sum, there is a philosophical tendency amongst the secular intellectuals that revolves around the cultural tenets of the IRI: Unitarianism, religious essentialism, and politico-moral dualism. It is perhaps not surprising that Ahmadi's theory never grew very popular. Although the crisis of confidence in Political Islam led to a search for alternative theories, so far the extent of this rejection has not undermined the model of a religiously democratic government. At the same time, it is remarkable that both Pan-Islamist and secular intellectuals never criticised Ahmadi. Beyond such feeble and politically expedient remarks that Ahmadi's theory was written in service of secular intellectuals, no attempt was undertaken anywhere to refute his views. Instead, Ahmadi's theories were largely left for what they were while other more sweeping theories were discussed, adopted or reviled, but never left to quite the same indifference.

3. Testing Alternative Theories

In the preceding sections, some of the main theories on political reforms have been discussed against the background of the reformers' requirements and the setting of the political system in the IRI. Amongst these Soroush's and Shabestari's theories were clearly popular examples. Ahmadi's theory, although obviously widely known, was much less influential. The evidence suggests that this choice was strongly conditioned by the cultural proclivities of the Pan-Islamist intellectuals and reformer elites. Both Soroush's and Shabestari's theories actually or seemingly answered to a number of basic requirements for theorising a moderate religiously democratic government in the IRI. They could be said to be to a large extent moderate worldview and somehow dualistic in politics and moral, and even could be interpreted to be religiously essentialist. Moreover, through the regularities of their linkage to religion and political modernisation, they mirrored the interests of most political reformers amongst elite and the Pan-Islamist intellectuals at the time. Conversely, Ahmadi's views presented a basic refutation of many of the cherished tenets behind the IRI's political culture. It explicitly slighted the Unitarian worldview, religious essentialism, and politico-moral dualism, and called for a form of modernity that stood in sharp contrast to the kind of Pan-Islamist reformers that was the norm in the IRI's Islamic politics.

As both the influence of Soroush on reformist political thought and Shabestari's reflection for a humane reading of religion shows, during the late 1990s the vast majority of high-ranking officials and Pan-Islamist intellectuals continued to adhere to a form of modernity based on an Islamic worldview assumptions. No modern theory that expressly rejected any of these three instruments of domination of the IRI elite culture became popular. The ones that were could be and sometimes were interpreted in such a way to include these instruments.

4. Alternative Discourse on the Republican Nature of Supreme Power

In previous chapters, an attempt was made to show that the republican theories of the supreme nature of power exerted an important influence on perceptions dealing with the political and institutional reforms in the IRI. Part of this influence was due to those theories that made political reforms possible, as was introduced in the preceding sections.

As an alternative approach to the process of political modernisation, reformers primarily focused on republican ways of exercising power in the late 1990s. To this end, a large quantity of alternative theories on nature of supreme power was introduced which opposed the patriarchal Absolutist model of religiously jurisprudence and the traditional Iranian despotism of the past. These alternative theories, while some proved more popular or more well-known than others, they all stood against the doctrine of *vilayet-i faqih*, which by content were generally known and discussed during the 1990s by the Pan-Islamist intellectuals (Kaniky, 2002). Moderate theories synthesised with Islamic ideologies and some hermeneutic interpretation was introduced for the first time in these years. As mentioned before, Soroush's religiously democratic government and Shabestari's hermeneutic theory of a humane reading of religion were probably the most known amongst others.

Although secularists played an important role in introducing modern ideas into Iranian political life, it may be clear that their main supporters were amongst semi-establishment reformers and secular intellectuals. Typically, Mohammad Mokhtari put forward an alternative view that was sympathetic to the republican secularism and that called for the separation of religion from the political power (Mokhtari, 1996). Intellectuals of all kinds also commented on these ideas. Mokhtari's views and other republicans probably provide a better indication of how the majority of reformers valued alternative ideas that dealt with the political power. In the next section Mohsen Kadivar's alternative on the republican nature of supreme power while calling for separation of the institution of religious jurisprudence from the institution of Republic will be explored. In a sense, these two issues go together because they constitute two aspects of one single alternative view. In this section, an attempt is made to show once more that IRI's cultural hegemony has exerted an important influence on the way in which the political reformers attempted to apply those moderate alternatives.

4.1. Mohsen Kadivar's Alternative Theory: Republican Nature of Supreme Power

Among the Pan-Islamist intellectuals who have introduced alternative theories into the post-revolutionary Iranian political life, few have rivalled Kadivar's popularity. It is well known that the Pan-Islamist intellectuals and official reformers of the late 1990s were profoundly influenced by his writings (Baghi, 2001). Although as the IRI's officials they were somehow causes of alternative ideologies, the friendly way in which Kadivar's views were referred

to in their literature ensured that he remained very much in the political favour. Already during the early 1990s, his famous two volumes on 'Political Thought in Islam' were published openly and his ideas were among the very few critical views that were never fully banned (Kadivar, 1998).

The reason for the popularity of Kadivar's ideas was that not only they combined the republican concept of government within the context of a religiously democratic government, but they also included arguments calling for a strict separation of the institution of religious jurisprudence from the institution of Republic (Kadivar, 1998, pp.546-575). Moreover, since Kadivar was a moderate of impeccable credentials in the eyes of the seculars, as well, he offered an ideal means of using an alternative view to gain secular support on their criticisms of the Islamic state. In short, Kadivar offered a good instance of alternative theories that served to solve a problem through a structural similarity with the requirements of both secular and Pan-Islamist intellectuals' political culture. Most importantly, perhaps, in this respect was his assumption of a purely republican model of political power, which involved the entire network of social groups, its essence was pluralistic, and its operation was not according to the rule of absolute jurisprudence.

During the late 1990s, Kadivar's alternative ideas continued to receive more attention. A great number of articles discussing his ideas appeared during this time. More importantly, perhaps, since his views had antedated Khatami and had been mentioned in the newspapers, his name naturally figured in almost all contemporary works on Iranian politics, and his views were particularly referred to in debates revolving around the notions of republicanism, sovereignty, democracy, and the institution of jurisprudence. Time and again, Kadivar was mentioned as the Islamic moderate thinker, who had first come up with the theory of a pure republican model of supreme power in the IRI. This was probably some form of revolutionary myth. Since the IRI had styled itself as an Islamic Republic, it was only natural among Pan-Islamist intellectuals and the reformers that clergyman Kadivar should be held in such high esteem. But, there was more that accorded well with the Pan-Islamist intellectuals' political culture than just his opposition to the rule of and institution of jurisprudence.

In its main structural features, Kadivar's view of republicanism within the framework of an Islamic Republic and its attendant institutions could be interpreted in such a way as to accord surprisingly well with the overall modern notion of republican supreme power (Ibid. pp.135-138). As is present in his works, most Pan-Islamist intellectuals interpreted Kadivar's view as a political model compatible with democracy and pluralism, which is more than the mere sum of an Islamic view on political system (Ibid. pp.686-689). They perceived it rather as an instance that stands for a republican model of social contract which opposes the repressive rule of religion which its leadership disregards the citizenship rights and the contenders whom is up to revolt should obey the Republic in each aspect of the social life and politics (Ibid. pp.710-719). Thus, in his way it is generally believed that a modern political institution could be brought into existence. When this political institution receives a rational guidance, Kadivar emphasises, it becomes a

democratic form of nation-state: when it engages in guidance, it becomes the sovereign power (Ibid. pp.673-685). This sovereign power moreover ought to be assumed through those social groupings that for this purpose have been created and mobilised (Ibid. pp.686-690). From this approach, Kadivar expounded the essence of republicanism and the wielder of sovereign power (Ibid. pp.773-784). The essence of Kadivar's notion of republican supreme power was the idea that it belonged to the people rather than the clerical caste. Concretely, this meant that a republic is formed by those social groups who gave the rights of decision-making to the institution of nation-state (Ibid. pp.710-719). The republican rule is the expression of the consensus of the citizens. Republic, in this view, became the supreme and unlimited power within the overall institution of the nation-state. This supreme power was not to be limited by the intervention of jurisprudence in any way; rather it ought to be exercised in the interest of the citizens as a whole. The Supreme Leader or the Guardian Council could not veto any laws adopted by the people's parliament, which would limit the republican nature of supreme power (Ibid. pp.734-5). Being the consensus of the citizens, this power is always deemed impartial (Ibid. pp.743-756). Therefore, Kadivar opposed all notions of religious representation under which the government was to be ruled under the clerical guidance, or in the interests of the high-ranking clerical groups (Ibid. pp.177-187).

Although Kadivar's republican theory was considered to contain some minor mistakes, its general picture could certainly count on reformers' sympathy. Naturally, some mainstream and most conservative Pan-Islamists mainly disagreed with Kadivar's exclusion of the institution of jurisprudence as the sovereign representative of the IRI and his view of an impartial power and modern nation-state. In practical terms, Kadivar's representative democracy was feasible in a rationalised political system (Ibid. pp.626-629). Moreover, although this was not expressed clearly, it is more than probable that the Pan-Islamist reformers were far less suspicious of the rule of jurisprudence than Kadivar was. They often expressed that the parliament is the institution that controls the decision-making and executive bodies; therefore, parliamentary groups did not have to be as strict as Kadivar had wanted. Ideologically, Kadivar had failed to perceive the class nature of all post-revolutionary institutions, which created the structural backbone of the Islamic Republic. But, if Kadivar had been mistaken in these respects, the overall thrust of his theory could count on great sympathy from Pan-Islamist intellectuals and political reformers. His emphasis that clerical institution had spoiled the faith of the Muslim community, and that there was a need for a separation of religion from the institution of nation-state, fit into the basic republican scheme of the need to modernise Iran's semi-theocratic political system and to strive for protecting the general interest of all citizens (Ibid. pp.720-733). His alternative solution to this problem, the accumulation of all forms of power in the hands of Republic fit into the post-revolutionary prerequisite of Iranian intellectuals and political activists of the time (Ibid. pp.590-609). That was the case in his description of supreme power as transferable and power in general as divisible (Ibid. pp.648-9). Most

importantly, however, Kadivar stressed to Iranians the need that the regime has to serve the general interest of all citizens. In his views the Islamic Republic with its administration is the only executive body of the regime (Ibid. pp.548-559) and therefore his theory is based on an opposition to clerical rule by virtue of the criterion of the general interest of the republican power alone (Ibid. pp.773-783). Once the question of representation had been dealt with, it was the reform of the leadership that was also important to its popularity.

Importantly, Kadivar's theoretical assumptions were used in almost all Pan-Islamist and secular intellectuals' arguments that dealt with political power in contemporary Iranian politics. Pan-Islamist intellectuals such as Emad'aldeen Baghi and Hashem Aghajari were popular thinkers in this context (Goochani, 2002, p.37,148). Others, such as Ali-Reza Alavi-Tabaar and Hamid-Reza Djalaee-Pur had talked of democracy and human rights in the framework of a modern nation-state and republican power as well. But, if these intellectuals, who also advocated the separation of the institution of religion from the political power, could be said to adhere to the republican model of government, Kadivar was undeniably a hard-line republican. Therefore, he belongs to the category of radical reformist intellectuals with a democratic political culture.

In a collective essay dedicated to debates on civil society in contemporary Iran, Hoshank Amir-Ahmadi wrote one of the few critical articles about the civil society in contemporary Iran and emphasis that in regards to political and ideological discourse until recent years dealing with some essential subjects such as relation with the United State and Israel, religious jurisprudence, women rights, democracy, the corruption in the institution of state, problems concerning youth population, and others until recent years was impossible but these forbidden subjects once again are in the arena of debates (Amir-Ahmadi, 1996, p.85). He points out that some well-known semi-establishment elites, such as Ayatollah Montazeri, Ayatollah Ardebeli, Ayatollah Rohanie, Mohsen Kadivar, and others saw this idea as a means of ending the IRI's internal mismanagement and of reforming the political institution (Ibid. p.91). He remarks that it has to form the beginning of a democratic reform within the present Islamic regime in Iran. According to Amir-Ahmadi, these reformers presented a non-clerical model for devising a related alternative solution for the IRI crisis. It was the republican theory that Kadivar based himself on that launched his debates on democracy and human rights in Islam. Kadivar, in this respect, used it precisely to counter the concentration of power at the top of the Islamic state, since he thought that the actual regime without democracy was equal to despotism. At the same time, Kadivar had based this republican theory based on the notion of universal human rights, while his concept on pluralism had been based not on inter-state group pluralism but on citizenship rights. According to his theory, the Republic was based on a social contract established in order to limit the power of the ruler and guarantee the human rights, freedom of expression and associations for its members. In other words, from this, it was clear that Kadivar had altered the meaning of traditional Islamic

government by putting an unlimited supreme power in the hands of the Republic.

Although over the past years this was the theoretical backbone of the reformers' groups within the IRI, and was fairly successful in its political aims, some secular intellectuals like Hoshank Amir-Ahmadi suggested a more Western solution to Iran's modernisation. He presented those alternatives furnished by the European models, which were deeply committed to human rights theories (Ibid. p.95). Therefore, he emphasised, although clerical rule is real in Iran, its political system made the contest within the elite and amongst political groups a real struggle for power. It thereby ensured the fragile stability and longevity of its political system. The secular republican model almost certainly counted sympathisers among the radical reformers at the SKF, but they clearly represented a minority stance. Not only did the bulk of the literature on the subject present the matter in an entirely different light, the Pan-Islamist intellectuals' paradigm also strongly suggested that their request was misconceived. Without doubt, this stance must have been positively puzzling to those individuals who were raised in a political culture that equated political wisdom with religion. Characteristically, presented with the irrefutable reality of this theory, most political reformers tried to explain its existence within the framework of the IRI's culture.

Although Kadivar's theory was not necessarily related or part of an overall Islamic worldview, different remarks made by Pan-Islamist intellectuals and political reformers on the topic fit into Khatami's present approach on political power. A remark that was often made was that the separation of institution of religion from the Republic and the political power had been a means employed by the reformers to end conservatism intervention of clerical institution and inaugurate the influences of the moderate ideologies (Kadivar, 1998, p.631). To end the political system of an absolute jurisprudence through a separation of the religious institution from the Republic, one can successfully reform the institution of power and thereby offer an example of a rational political system. On the other hand, it has been said also once the republican groups gained political power, they were faced with the dilemma of having proclaimed a popular sovereignty without wanting the people actually to exercise power. An Islamic government, even though republican, could serve to hide successfully the real undemocratic essence of the Pan-Islamist elites' rule. By adding democracy to different organs of the Islamic state, some of which were popularly elected and others not, it is difficult to see how the united democratic rule could work behind the conflicting interest groups. The republican theory of a religiously democratic government, therefore, is not a necessary step designed to oust absolutism from the political power; rather it is to lead the people into believing that they can partake the institution of power.

Through Kadivar's republican theory of religiously government, political reformers made it clear that their belief in the need to separate the institution of religion from the political power and accumulate the political power at the apex of their Republic preceded their perception from any

version of a traditional Islamic political system. Consistently, the alternative theories and the realities that fit this view were put before those who opposed it. Even more than was the case for the Soroush theory of a religiously democratic government, it is likely that in the case of those alternative theories on political power, a moderate cultural paradigm played a central role in the determination of which theories should be pursued. The conviction of the reformers in the absolute necessity of a separation of the institution of religion from political power was so strange that other alternative theories advocating for instance a 'democratic' government without emphasising the issue of Republic were viewed as misconceptions. Rather than marking a change, discussing the ideas of Kadiivar and Soroush presented different ways of affirming a widely shared paradigm of the need to accumulate power at the apex of the Republic. In this respect, conservative opposition was much more hostile than in the case of religiously democratic government, which indicates the strength of this theory among all kinds of intellectual circles. There is no doubt that the concept of a republican supreme power will remain one of the central issues in the Iranian political debates in the future.

Conclusion

In this chapter it has been suggested that modern political philosophies in the IRI possesses a certain influence on changes in political system. Then, some aspects and ways of these change and political reforms have been explored. As has been posited at the beginning, a radical political change in the present condition is impossible. Based on existing conditions and problems, alternative theories were introduced from different disciplines to help the moderate elite in solving the problems of political democratisation and the use of republican concept of the nature of supreme power. The chances for alternative theories of being adopted were linked to the extent to which they reflected or could be made to fit into a political structure that was similar to the already existing ideologies on the subject in Iranian politics. This requirement was applied to those theories concerning political reforms and to those on institutional change. It rested on the paradigm conviction that discourses had to reflect reality as closely as possible. There could be doubts about the details of the moderate Islamic ideologies but none on the basic premises underlying it.

These basic premises included an overall logic of the political changes in the IRI and more particular aspects that resulted from the application of these general precepts to the political reforms in perspective. The divine unity and divine justice tenets of ideological domination were found or read into most alternative theories that found more than passing interest in the circles of political reformers. In case if they were not explicitly present, theories were changed to include them. Moreover, in the theories concerning the governing system, an overall moderation was required that paralleled the IRI's ideologies. Only in this way could elements from one theory be transplanted into the official ideologies. Soroush's theory of a religiously

democratic government provided the Pan-Islamist intellectuals and reformer elite with an updated version of the overall Islamic moderate political theory that was expressed through the post-revolutionary liberal theories. Similarly, Kadivar's republicanism and Shabestari's hermeneutic theory added additional insight to the political reformers approach, and their use helped as much to change the political discourse as to confirm the moderate elite that their paradigm was after all feasible and insightful.

In spite of a massive introduction of alternative moderate theories, the Iranian political establishment did not significantly alter the general framework of its political thought. As the literature on political reforms clearly reveals, even during the reforms process, some had to pass through the IRI filters, which served to condition them for adoption or rejection. The different approaches to the ideas in the cases of Soroush's and Ahmadi's work showed that either a theory was assimilated ideologically, and thereby altered in meaning, or it was presented accurately, and thereby isolated its applicability. Clearly Islamic political ideology was much more to many Iranian officials and Pan-Islamist intellectuals than a means of reforms, which formed a defining feature of the acceptability or respectability of a political theory.

Those alternative theories, as presented by the Pan-Islamist reformers in their writings, show a strong desire for modernisation and an increasingly lively debate within the possibilities and limits that political reality lay down. Obviously Political Islam and Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine continued to lose ground in the Iranian political life however some recent alternatives have so far adhered admirably to its fundamental tenets. Furthermore the cultural standpoints, that of the Unitarian worldview, religiously essentialism, and politico-moral dualism have remained intact. In this respect, precisely, those political theories could be introduced that counter these premises without being widely adopted to the enduring strength of the overall Political Islam models on these topics. Nonetheless, by introducing an alternative theory, it does not mean political system is changing, and this is not to say culture and political culture in the IRI are immutable or unchangeable either. On the contrary, as has been shown, culture and political culture in the IRI is smoothly changing. Perhaps this change is not as radical or fundamental as some observers would like to see, but it is change nonetheless. As has been the attempt to show, the ongoing modernisation and change in the IRI is not total and sudden, but partial and incremental. Moreover, there is considerable evidence to suggest that the moderate political culture underlying Iranian socio-political system performs a certain authority on the selection, interpretation, and function of alternative theories.

Summary

The Iranian experience of modernity is an exemplary and complex one, for the Iranian intellectuals and writers have described at least four distinct approaches in succession to modernisation processes. Before the 1979 revolution, they write, the Iranian political authority adopted a 'pseudo-modernist' approach wholesale, but with the triumph of Islamic forces, the advisability of the entire despotic perspective was placed in doubt and an 'Islamic Republic' replaced it completely. With the Republican-Absolutist split of the 1980s and the radicalisation of Iranian life, the Ayatollah Khomeini doctrine (the rule religious jurisprudence) became the new standard to judge the modernisation worth, and this was yardstick applied to the 'Islamic Republic' model. In more recent years, according to published literatures, with the reforms of the late 1990s Iran was turned onto yet another track, this time emphasis was on a 'religiously democratic government', incorporating some elements of universalism. Since 2009 presidential election Iran is at the dawn of another track, this time perhaps the change has tinged with democracy. In fact, from the late 1990s onwards a movement for change broke out to everyone's surprise and the Pan-Islamist moderates become the champions for their alternative governing model. So far their proposed model was challenged by struck up social movement that claims a Republican model free from all forms of divinity and religious oppression. It is still unclear how things will look in the days to come. A republican model free of oppression and obscurantism is new for Iranians, although not unprecedented or undesirable.

Dozens of extremely interesting essays, books, and articles on the concepts and practice of modernity and related socio-political ideas published in Iran during the eighties and nineties stated that the fundamental and most stable feature of Iranian history is the slow tempo of her development, with the socio-economic backwardness, primitiveness of socio-political institution and low level of political pluralism resulting from it. The political institution of this ancient country, controlled by despotic monarch and open to religious obscurantism, was condemned by the nature to a long-term backwardness. The struggle with monarch regime in fact lasted up to the end of seventies; the struggle with Islamic Absolutism continues still. The movement for social justice and freedom, the civil society associations and the mobilised grassroots movement, the basis of the whole political development, today are advanced by extensive democratic methods. In the universities students protest undemocratic institutions, in the streets of major cities women fight religious rules, and the Pan-Islamist reformers disobey unconstitutional orders. The conquest of modernity however is going wide and deep.

These literatures emphasises that for various historical reasons Iran becomes subject to the impact of advanced countries and therefore change becomes a fundamental characteristic of the country. Although in the course of time Iran assimilated the materials and intellectuals developed in those advanced societies this however did not meant that Iran could follow

them in all aspects and reproduces the political institution of their past. However the interrelationship between Iran and those advanced countries becomes crucial to an understanding of development in Iran. The impact of advanced countries on Iran was revolutionary, ultimately, this impact forced Iran to adopt new form of socio-economic management; it undermined the traditional social hierarchy; it infects and transformed the existing elites and introduced new pattern of thought and, throughout, creates comparative norms. These changes introduced new goals and aspirations, which were at variance with previous ones, and since the former have not been wholly adopted and the latter not wholly abandoned there was confusions over the goals and clash between them. The contradictions inherent in an uneven development, the growth of consciousness of backwardness and modernity, the conflicts over the goals, all these created disharmony and instability, a political situation potentially explosive. In fact, the peculiar nature and dynamics of novelty has made changes inevitable and those changes that arise from a society like Iran have the characters of an unprecedented, combined amalgam, one exhibiting both archaic and contemporary forms.

From the late twenty century onwards according to most literatures modern political culture was born in major cities in Iran which in fact was bound up with the episodic character of that whole modernisation process. In this period, they write, modernisation meant an overcoming of institutional and cultural backwardness. They maintained that, in personal level, one ought to think autonomously, free of the dictates of external authority. The new ideas prepared the next generation for alternative thoughts and building modern institutions, and in a certain sense made them to realise the universality of human rights and permanence of human development. Although compelled to follow after the Western political philosophy the new generation however did not take things in that same linear theoretical order. The advantage of historic underdeveloped Iran permits or rather compels the new elite for instance to adopt an advanced political system which already existed preciously in modern societies. In fact, in late seventies they throw away the despotic monarch governing model for a modern republic all at once, without the need to travel the political road which in the past lay between these two political systems. The post-revolution republic, although confronted with religious establishment, did not begin history all over again from the beginning. The fact that republican institution has now competing and outstripped the parallel institution of religious Absolutism was made possible by the very backwardness of the Iran's past institutional development. Naturally, the conservative anarchy in the institution of Islamic republic – as also in the heads of reformer groups – is a paying-up for the past when they played too long the role of stabiliser and pathfinder. The institutional development of historically underdeveloped Iran therefore leads necessarily to a peculiar combination which as a whole acquired complex and dual character.

The conflict of last thirty years shows that the possibility of overcoming Absolutist power, concentrated in the apex of religious

establishment, in near future was by no means absolute. Its degree was determined in the long run by the modernisation process, the intellectual capacities of the country as a whole. These literatures show in recent years Islamic regime frequently confronted the modern ideas in the process of adapting them to their own more primitive institutional ideas which the very process of assimilation acquired a self-contradictory character. In the realm of political as well as institutional modernisation, the republic was in urgent need of a comprehensive democratisation of the administrative and productive processes. It was believed this would imply a strategy for decentralisation of management and decision-making, both geographically and bureaucratically. This institutional modernisation needed certain elements of democratic ideas and practice, therefore the political pluralism – indubitable products of a higher political culture – strengthen the republic and in its turn intensify the process of reforms on politics. The birth of a modern society in Iran has nothing in common with the Islamist character of the existing elite. The conflict of interest is the most general and important aspect that reveals itself sharply and complexly in the destiny of the country. Under the pressures of new generation the Islamic regime was compelled to make changes and without this, to be taken of course in its whole material content, it was impossible to sustain any kinds of development.

The most indubitable feature of the Iranian politics after the election of 1997 was the direct interference of the civil society and the student associations in the political events. According to recent published literatures the new actors soon finding their social boundaries, creates the social networks and political clusters: association of writers, association of students, associations of lawyers, women movements, and the workers trade unions. This was in contest with previous times when the Islamic state elevated itself above all citizen and political events was determined by the regime Pan-Islamists in the line with religious Absolutist interest. In these years under the pressure of civil society the political authority recognised far greater rights for citizens and thereby this weakened those unelected undemocratic conservative institutions. The moderate government, being in need of support from the radical groups, after the presidential election of 1997 forced and regimented their growth and therefore the privileged appointed conservative organs in this period never rose to their full height, thus more isolated from politics. The moderate governing actors, whom officially empowered by the pragmatist elite, subdued the clerical conservative groups, gaining their subjection and upon this foundation they attempt to create their religiously democratic government. The moderateness of the whole process is sufficiently indicated in the fact that the new generation of civil society born at the early of 1990s, took form in the late 1990s, flowered in the early 2000s, and were mostly banned in 2005.

These well argued literatures indicate that religious establishment following after the Islamic republic plays no small role in the formation of the Islamic authority, although the main task was spiritual and repressive

roles. This establishment never rose to that commanding height which it should have attained according to the Shi'ia version of Islam, however, it seems they are satisfied with their arbitrary role, and counting this a recompense for their servitor position. The clergymen working as officials and those members of parliament enjoy authority merely as deputies of the temporal power. The high-rank clergymen are often changed along with the presidential elections. In conflicting periods their dependence on conservative groups became still more servile. Hundreds of thousands of clergymen semi-officially are in all essentials a part of the state bureaucracy, a sort of guardians-servants of the Islamic regime. In accordance with this the monopoly of the Islamic political authority in matters of repression is run by a more regular kind of laymen.

The Islamic establishment as the messianic organ of the religious absolutism has based its doctrine of political Islam upon the assumption that the Iranian state and religion are democratic through and through, whereas liberal democracy is a "satanic ideology" imposed upon Muslim subjects. The meagreness of this idea not only in regards to public opinion but also among the IRI's elite finds its most depressing expression in the absence of a real political pluralism and inter-state groups communication. The writers argue that the Islamic establishment did not succeed in separating itself from obscurantism and preserved its character of backwardness. They emphasize that this socio-religious organisation is involved in state and private commercial works as the state administrators, and as an ideological centre which its ideology is used for mass consumption, obviously, not any innovation and creativity. Even the most high rank members similar to their counterpart laymen although may not subdue by Absolutism, are involved in commercial activities, in other words the religious establishment in Iran is not just as an ideological or religious organisation. Nonetheless the ideological conflicts within this establishment brought by the moderate clergymen over various subjects created a popular consensus for a religiously democratic government on a large scale. But this could not possibly occupy the place belongs to republicans as a whole, inseparably bound up with the Iran's recent political environment.

On the topic three fundamental instruments of domination of the IRI's elite culture – Unitarianism, Essentialism, and Dualism - and some instruments of domination of the political culture – ideology, organisation, and civic virtue (practice of social responsibility) are introduced. This gives a great deal of information about the IRI's political elite in contemporary Iran. Due to recent events the IRI elite had to place their ideologies and organisations according to modern time. This new condition forced the moderate to adhere to a new political setting that comprised some internationally recognisable standards. The IRI elite culture and political culture influence the ways modernity is perceived in this arena. The three fundamental instruments of domination of the IRI elite culture and some instruments of domination of political culture help to understand much better what the recent literatures have described as the Iran's post-

revolutionary imagined community. First of all culture in this sense has been the result of the prior and informal process of social education, communication, and thought-practice. Second of all tradition and norms, inherently variable, thought-practice, as general levels of cultural elements are serve to measure the values and effects of communication in organisational and personal levels and networks.

It has been said that because Islam is viewed as a worldview that encompasses a vision and doctrine accordingly, thus, it is believed to be the truth of an objective world. The logical approach that transpires from this Unitarian view is that in order to understand the reality correctly, it is necessary to have a complete picture of Islamic worldview as a whole. Conversely this logic contrasts to the necessary comprehending of other views with an isolated, satanic, and partial nature of wrong ones. This logical chosen approach, according to what "Islamic worldview is a precondition for an understanding of the truth of an objective world", and therefore "is more than the sum of its spiritual aspects", I suggested in this paper to be called the Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine, which tried to establish a purely government of religiously jurisprudence. This seems to be an injunction to unify politico-religious knowledge and action. In other words, Unitarianism is perceived not as some abstruse spiritual concept, but as a practical chosen approach that serves as a way to solve temporal problems and to act upon in everyday life. The Unitarianism chosen approach serves to order the form of political discourse and discussions, rather than determine their outcomes and results. An example on the basis of what has been said is that if an Islamic rule puts a form on to Political Islam and proceeds to address political issues, it is more likely that Islamic rule is understood as a form of governing policy rather than as a form of religious guideline.

The second instrument of domination that derived from the IRI elite culture is Essentialism that concern the structure of reality. As most IRI elite stressed, Political Islam and Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine particularly have pointed to the essence principles of the state of affairs and functioning of the things. This view was explained through the principle of religiously essential characteristics of divine unity, according to which, all creations contain a divine essence; without having such a characteristic there will be no movement in any of this-worldly things. In this way, they present a picture of reality that encompasses two different but related aspects of things: this-worldly material appearance and other-worldly divine essence. The former is subject to change and the later is subject to numerous limitations. The change in appearance seems to be rather shallow and limited in value, whereas the change in essence is said to form a more reliable indication of a lasting human progress (salvation), which may be fitted into a general view of reality.

Dualism the third instrument of domination formed an important chosen approach of the Iranian elite culture during the post-revolutionary Islamic Iran. The effect of divine unity is portrayed as the very logic of the religious force upon both human and social reality. This concept portrayed a continuous struggle between those whose essence is religiously-altruistic

and their oppressors whose essence is rebellious, those faithful to Islamic state and those who separated governance from Islamic principles. A number of practical lessons may be derived from this idea. First, although Ayatollah Khomeini uses *Mostazafin* (oppressed) and *Mostakberin* (rebellious), Qur'anic terms to describe the different social groups, he suggests to looking at the social and economic appearance of the groups through their essence. Ayatollah Khomeini's concern was not with social or economic development, but with the politico-moral stance of groups in and out of society towards the establishment of an Islamic state, that is a transitional stage towards other-worldly salvation. No point proves this more clearly than Ayatollah Khomeini's refusal to allow for economic or social changes, which would be accordingly rebellious. Second lesson is that Ayatollah Khomeini's theory of Islamic governance, which forms a literal application of his theory of religious practice that represents the Islamic perceptual cognition, where the politico-moral of Islamic leadership (Ulama) is used as an initial guideline for mass conviction. In this way attention is focused on essence of social group and the practice of Islamic institution is highlighted as the leadership towards other-worldly salvation. This means, thirdly, that change is pictured as belonging to an Islamic worldview in which both the *Mostazafin* and the *Mostakberin* in a society depend on each other for their existence, and under certain circumstances, the faithful may transform the society towards the divine path of salvation. This kind of approach, which stands much closer to traditional Islamic worldview, is highlighted by the IRI's elite, where they remained the same in essence but changed in appearance when they turned their back on the democratic aspects of the Islamic Republic and thereby the course of 1979 revolution.

The three fundamental instruments of domination of the IRI elite culture outline a number of practical chosen approaches which in sum: Unitarianism expresses a preference for totalitarian approaches and solutions; Essentialism directs work not towards a merely human approach but towards a perceived essence of things and situations; Dualism requires both essence and appearance to reflect the groups' conflict. In the post-revolutionary arena as practical instruments of domination of the IRI elite culture these are clearly normative chosen approaches with a certain basis in Iranian despotic tradition. Therefore, in the context of political modernisation the degree to which political reformers adhered to them is an indication to which extent they adhered to the normative chosen approach of the post-revolutionary elite, or conversely, to which extent they try to introduce changes through an alternative moderate instruments of domination.

Within the context of the Iranian elite culture of the post-revolutionary arena, there was necessarily a political culture. There are a few ways through which the main elements of Iranian Islamic politics may be classified in the political culture of the IRI: ideology, politics, and organisation, or, ideology, organisation, and civic virtue. Moreover, there are the Pan-Islamist divisions of categories into radicals, moderates, and conservatives, with differences in politico-religious stance, viewpoint, and

governing model. For the purpose at hand, the classification of ideology, organisation, and civic virtue is perhaps a convenient way of covering the main aspects of Iranian politics, that means ideology outlines the aims of politics, organisation the instrument by which it is achieved, civic virtue the way in which it is achieved.

First, although the term 'ideology' used by the IRI elite refers to a cluster of politico-religious ideas and meanings, but they all are nonetheless related to a secular definition of the notion of ideology. In practice, these politico-religious ideas and meanings while sometimes interchangeable possess a broad definition of the relationship between individuals and public. The term 'ideology' in this given context also encompasses the meaning of theory and thought as well. Ideology is commonly broken down into the: divine unity, divine justice, and practice of responsibility. The term divine unity has two different meanings. In its wider sense, it is a religious name for the philosophical foundation of Political Islam. More commonly, it is the theory regarding the condition of the liberation of the faithful. It describes the necessary tendency for Muslims to develop a path to temporal freedom and divine salvation. More specifically, divine unity encompasses the history of the Muslim nation: that is to say, the history of an Islamic social cohesion. Mostly divine justice is defined as the model that describes the fairness in society's social group relations. It is a model that sets forth the principles of human development and the relations between social groups of every kind in a Muslim society. Finally, practice of responsibility is defined as the politico-religious behaviour and actions for change that concern the individuals most general principles related to society: it is said to be the basic logic behind Islamic ideology.

The second in the proposed aspects of instruments of domination of the IRI elite political culture is organisation, which is rendered by *Nahad*. *Nahad* is meant here not quite as the organisation described in social science terminology, but rather the Islamic elite organisational line. Nevertheless, *Nahad* is not the only term associated with organisation in Iranian political terminology. Other terms such as *Bonyad*, *Shora*, *Madjma*, *Daftar*, *Anjoman* and *Sazman* are also commonly encountered. Different organisations dealing with political subjects all describe organisation in such similar terms that it is quite likely they share a common model. The organisational line moreover encompasses the Islamic government's principles of organisation, building of an organisation, the elite organisational system and organisation of Islamic institution's members, as well as the control of the conditions under which the government's political line, decisions, and disciplines are implemented. Among other things, *Nahad* as the organisation of the official line holds the Islamic morality and unity. Therefore, it is a governing body or foundation, which provides the basic direction and principles concerning institutional work that has been stipulated according to the official ideology or political line under the supervision of the Islamic government or Supreme Leader. The question is then how is the organisation in the IRI perceived? In some literature on the

topic, one broad approach views the IRI's organisation primarily as rational and institutional. But one may portray contemporary Iran as the outcome of the replacement of the ethos and structure of traditional Iranian society. In an attempt to outline a possible set of instruments of domination for political organisations, it is necessary first to take both the formal and informal features into account. Formally, there is a bureaucratic structure based on vertical functional systems and a supreme leadership structure outlined at the top by a clerical list. But, the informal side of Iranian Islamic politics, which is formed by networks and especially informal groupings of shared loyalties, often decisively influences the course of events. Therefore, it is the interplay of all these factors that make up the arena of the IRI's organisation.

The third instrument of domination of the IRI's political culture is the civic virtue, or in other words, practising social responsibility. In post-revolution Iran this term referred to a revolutionary socio-political attitude or behaviour that through which individuals could express or manifest their acts of solidarity in their communities. This term in Political Islam incites that people in their social relations do good things. The civic virtue or practising social responsibility is therefore viewed as the result of the rightful attitude and the behaviour of Muslims, and the unity of Islamic thought and action.

In order to discuss Iran's modernisation process in recent years this research introduces the ideologies behind the 1997 political reform and highlights three key questions: the reason why political reform was started; how the establishment and others conceived it; and what its position was among the other reforms that dealt with politics. These were all intimately connected with the specific way in which Iranian Islamic elite deals with ideological matters. There are four basic reasons why political reform was started, first a wide dissatisfaction with the Political Islam ideology; second, it had been discovered that conservative interpretation of Political Islam was far from flawless; third, almost two decades of experiencing international isolation and internal economic crisis suggested that the time for following the conservative version of Islamic socio-economic policies had passed; and finally fourth, the technological revolution of the secular countries and increasing demand for modern technology. Still, an important element behind this reform was the change in leadership after Ayatollah Khomeini's death in 1989. Political reform emerged from the competing economic policy packages of former President Rafsanjani, and was subsequently fitted into the new Islamic state structure, through which the moderate President Khatami sought to implement his political reform plans.

It was unclear at first what exactly political reform was going to be. Therefore, moderates responsible for the running process of political reform formulated successive ideological guidelines through which they rather unsuccessfully tried to keep working in political modernity within increasingly large arenas of politics and ideological requirements. The initial requirement of the rule of law soon gave way to the larger arena of

decentralisation, which by 1998 had become an arena for democratisation. Within these guidelines, establishment officials and reformer intellectuals throughout the late 1990s debated the different views they espoused of politics and political modernity. In the literature on political reform, however, a far more charismatic version of modernity as an elaboration of ideology was set forth. Within the overall arena of reform on politics, the political reform was the reform of state institutions, of the relatively moderate elite, and Pan-Islamist intellectuals of the establishment. As such, together with the more radical Pan-Islamist of the Republic, a political group was formed within the Iranian establishment that favoured more direct involvement of the people and an introduction of pluralism in the political life of the country. During these political events, those supporting institutional reform joined the radical and moderate reformers professing a third-way road of Republicanism, with a touch of critical thought on the governance of jurisprudence. Although at the early stages the precise contents of political reform was rather vague, Islamic political culture served as a pre-determined arena that worked against political reform as soon as the political leadership discovered the radical implications of the reforms.

A discussion of the organisations behind the political reform is the next aspect that relates us to the political events and process of changes in contemporary Iran. Until the 1997 presidential election in post-revolutionary Iran, the Association of Combatant Clergies and the university association of the Office of Strengthening of Unity played an important and spectacular role in political life of IRI as particularly did other reformist organisations. For most of the 1980s and the early 1990s because of the strong presence of conservative groups and paramilitary militia forces the moderate ideas and moderate groups played a marginal role in universities. For many years at most universities very few intellectual circles existed that could mobilise students in order to have an effective protest movement. Instead, most students chose to become a member of Islamic associations under the OSU. When at last the pressure of state officials was relaxed with the 1997 presidential election the political climate had changed in such a way that the Islamic associations in many universities combined political reform message with their newly emerged moderate leadership. The result of this combination and flexible attitude of the elites was that the emerged political reformers and student associations successfully mobilised a democratic movement at the end of the 1990s in a way that the Second Khordad Front as the main organisation of reform did not. In the meantime, however, students succeeded in setting up both activities and debates on the political system that helped to enlighten both entirely new and old generations of political reformers.

In matters of ideas, the evidence presented suggests that political reform at the universities strongly paralleled the more cautious presentation of the SKF manifestos. Political reform was clearly presented to students as an elaboration force for political system and as a practical instrument of change. The political reformers adopted Islamic political

thought as their basic approach to Islamic social justice, and the rule of law placed student discourse within the tradition of political pluralism. This ideologically impeccable basis was meant as the encouraging framework limit, within which students could acquire their ideological needs by the virtue of which, they will be able to appreciate the moderate ideas of their particular interpretation from a proper Islamic standpoint. At the same time, it was assumed that the moderate leadership promised some official positions to student leaders so that they could pursue a successful career in the Islamic state bureaucracy. In this part it was shown that the IRI's political culture possessed influence on the way in which the organisational aspects of political reforms were organised. Most importantly, it has been shown that reformers organisations shared with the rest of the Islamic state the typical dual structures of personal networks and formal grouping.

By taking Mostafa Tajzadeh and Abdullah Nouri's cases as examples, it was shown that such informal relations, such as ties of networks and informal groups, often play a central role in Iranian politics. Under the present organisation of state, there is a constant struggle for supremacy between the different factions of the IRI elites. This struggle is especially acute when it concerns the positions in the highest organisation of Republic or parallel governing posts. As it has become apparent, by the balancing and contending roles of moderate elites and student leaders, there may have been an element of purposeful mixing around of persons from different categories to keep the reform organisation in service of the state and society as a whole. In other words, political loyalties and organisational deference often do not overlap in Iranian politics. Furthermore, when there is discord and conflict about the strategies in pro-reforms organisations, for instance, ideas such as holding a meeting for consensus to settle the matters is hardly applicable. Strategies, therefore, are decided as a matter of consent rather than through organisational agreements.

The personal networks may also be partly discerned in the social background of the SKF, the Islamic Iran Participatory Front, the Crusaders of Islamic Revolution, and the OSU associations. The most apparent socio-cultural difference within the reform movement and organisation existed between the generations. In view of the pervading effects of the past twenty-five years on all Iranians, this is hardly a remarkable result. Moreover, the mix of social backgrounds found amongst the two categories of reformers is understandable once one realises that political modernisation was supposedly set up by the establishment moderate elites. The formal organisation of political reform, both the SKF organisations and the OSU associations, obeyed the state's overall policy of a formal organisational approach. Within the reforms' organisational possibilities, however, it is clear that political grouping was not based on ideological differences. Popular support for reform contrasted sharply with the continued personal struggle at high levels in the political system. It was shown that there was a superior importance placed by the Guardian Council on its theocratic will to obstruct the considerable will of reformers in staying in line with the state bureaucracy. While conservatives discovered the

dangers of political reform and while the bureaucracy was patiently removed into submission, a typical compromise emerged in the Republic institutional sphere. After a number of experimenting and organising years, the political reform of the late 1990s became increasingly a jumping-off point for economic modernisation, the strategy that the pragmatists had established in late 1980s in the first place.

In next part the formative influence of democratic political culture on the reform process and debates on modernisation is highlighted. The presidential election, which was held in 1997, intended to restart the process of political modernisation that had begun two decades before in 1979. Almost immediately, this public requirement was ignored by the conservative institution of *vilayet-i faqih*, or was contradicted by the IRI establishment elites. President Mohammad Khatami's clear aversion against imposing ideological dogmas and the lack of ideological consensus amongst his ideological fellowmen opened an arena for debate on the content of political modernity, a debate that only grew larger as the years wore on. This was spurred on by the increasingly vague and tolerant ideological guidelines attached to the political reforms. Moreover, because until the late 1990s, most of these debates remained confined to the establishment elite and Pan-Islamist intellectuals, the authorities did not discern any serious threat until it was too late.

The debates on political reforms involved three different categories of discourse on modernity and the transition from the present governing system to a democratic Republican model. To a certain degree, these categories have been linked to consecutive generations of post-revolutionary Pan-Islamist intellectuals. At first, the oldest generation of Pan-Islamist intellectuals debated the merits of Iran's transition to the era of the post-1997 election religiously democratic government and the resulting policies. Moderates maintained that the political changes that had basically been achieved in 1998 had been successful. Radical reformers, on the contrary, complained that it was a hoax, and that Iran needed an extended period of new democratisation before it could ever talk about a complete revolutionary achievement. In the 2001 presidential election, President Khatami brokered a compromise that saved the establishment's composition by maintaining that political reform had indeed been basically successful, but at the same time deeper structural reforms and a more plural political participation were needed.

In the second stage after 1997, slightly younger Pan-Islamist reformers, such as Mohsen Kadivar and Abdullah Nouri, broke establishment policy by criticising the institution of Supreme Leader. Instead of dwelling on the future, however, they linked their discourse to Iran's precise political needs and to leadership reform. They were so successful in their advocacy for more democracy under the Islamic Republic that their mainstream counterparts felt compelled to promote an institutionalised democratic political system with nationalist characteristics, which had been totally rejected before the 1997 election. This ideologically adapted pluralism encompassed the modernisation drive of President

Khatami's leadership without the democratisation that reformers had generally predicted would accompany it. In other words, mainstream Pan-Islamists of the establishment rejected the concept of universal human rights and based their views on an Islamic version of human rights based on the teaching of moderate Islam. They adopted the view that Iran somehow would follow an Islamic version of democracy that exhibited its own unique features. In the moderates' discourse of the 2001 presidential election, democracy with national characteristics was replaced within the context of the initial stage of political changes, which clearly suggests a new approach to the modernisation as a whole.

At the end of the 1990s, due to a number of reasons, secular theories began to emerge among semi-establishment intellectuals. This was especially the case at the reformers organisations for the introduction of liberal and social democratic theories in any case. At first sight, the secular theories encompassed both liberal and social democratic views. In reality, as a closer look at them reveals, they were often complex and had different elements, of which the most striking caused them to be ascribed to one or the other IRI elite view. At reformers organisations, Amir Ahmadi propounded a new liberal democratic voice within the framework of President Khatami's political reforms. Similarly in some important respects to the semi-establishment intellectuals' theory of liberalism, Mokhtari's theory did more to stress the importance of elite cultural reform. On the other side, Hoshank Mahrouyan advanced a notion of social democracy that extended the methods of liberal experiment. He did this within a vaguely defined framework of overall post-modernism. Both thinkers implicitly based their theories on the need to avoid obstacles to an underlying reform process for political change. Mahrouyan and Mokhtari, however, both believed political progress depended on cultural and ideological changes in both elite circles and the society as a whole, whereas Amir Ahmadi held on to the need for an enhanced measure of political participation.

Taken as a whole, the debates on the political reform and modernity during the 1990s were based on a common sense of liberal democracy. In both its universalism and its particularity, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights formed the essential ideal to which Iran's political elite had to adhere. Over the years, the way political reform progressed and was interpreted grew increasingly diverse and open. Initially, the old and strictly delineated modernisation debates of the early 1990s were revived. Due to Supreme Leader's reticence and his entourage's lack of consensus, the old guard controls no longer functioned for a period of years. The traditional Political Islam rhetoric soon gave way to more refined democratic discussions over alternative strategies for modernity and politics. Finally, the arena for discussions was enlarged to encompass secular theories as well. Important factors behind these shifts were the increased space for a new cultural setting, inter-factional conflicts, generational change, unsuccessful economic reforms, a growing tolerance among the moderate political elite, and the restricted character of much of the debates on reforms on politics.

Importantly, moreover, tolerance for the enlargement of the arena of discussions on political reforms was confined to the concrete level of reformist discourse on institutional reform. The debates on Republicanism and modernity did have some impact on the officials' views, but from the starting days this debate just remained a topic of the discussions among officials whom concerned the institutional reform's issue. Characteristically, the debate on the content and nature of a modernised Republic was general and vague enough to accommodate the subtle changes emphasised in political reform that were brought about after the 1997 presidential election. Such changes could be viewed as a form of moderation. On the other hand, secular theories fell beyond the pale of official debates. Beyond the narrow confines in which they were posited, they ran the risk of being banned. This serves to show that in spite of the important shifts that took place in the concrete discourse about modernity, the official model for political reform at the general and particular levels remained that of the Pan-Islamist intellectuals and establishment approaches that had been since the 1997 election.

Next part highlights that there is a particular understanding of the Iranian Islamic view of power and its traditional structure that bears a number of similarities with Max Weber's theory of patriarchal system of power. According to Pan-Islamist elite views, the essence of power is divine force, like the light of belief that, accordingly, its source animates the universe. As such, power is therefore an abstract thing, of which there is an unlimited amount which could become only legitimised through a single source. This single source in this view is omnipotent and omnipresent; therefore, its legitimised possession requires a divinely oriented vicegerent. While the power of vicegerent is unlimited in amount, to accumulate and preserve this power, the best way accordingly is the Islamic political system that revolves around this power. The need to transfer this legitimised accumulated power to the governing institution and the place where it is effectively wielded has made the discussions on the nature of power and supreme power central. The 1997 presidential election was a political reality that gave a mandate to President Khatami's views, and the following discussions also yielded support for a supremely powerful republic. In the post-election process of institutional reform Pan-Islamist reformers at first pleaded for a larger influence of inner-state group pluralism. Accordingly, the state should thereby form the basis for facilitating a religiously democratic system until a larger number of political groups were mature enough to govern the system in pluralist model. Other Pan-Islamists wanted a truly powerful Republic, through which religious liberals could also have a say. Although there was agreement for some limited democratic values, there were some influential semi-establishment intellectuals who put forward alternative for a direct democracy with a freely elected parliament and a sovereign republic during the late 1990s. In other words, they called for abolition of parallel institutions such as the Office of Leader and the Guardian Council.

Similarly, institutional reform and the reform of the administrative system, the instrument through which political reform was transmitted to IRI institutions, were strongly influenced by the perceived need to accumulate power in the institution of a republic. Khatami clearly needed a rational and transparent institution that would implement his 'rule of law' both faithfully and competently. In his efforts, he relied heavily on moderate reformist officials and establishment intellectuals, who for a variety of reasons, particularly the survival of the regime, wanted much the same religiously democratic government to emerge. Against these two important factors in Iranian politics of the late 1990s, the majority of the rank and file, while stressing their loyalty to the institution of jurisprudence, tried hard to preserve their power and the bureaucratic way of operating.

The last part suggested that modern political philosophy in the IRI possesses a certain influence on changes in political system. As has been posited at the beginning, a radical political change in the present condition is impossible. Based on existing conditions and problems, alternative theories were introduced from different disciplines to help the moderate elite in solving the problems of political democratisation and the use of republican concept of the nature of supreme power. The chances for alternative theories of being adopted were linked to the extent to which they reflected or could be made to fit into a political structure that was similar to the existing ideologies on the subject in Iranian politics. This requirement was applied to those theories concerning political reforms and to those on institutional change. It rested on the paradigm conviction that discourses had to reflect reality as closely as possible. There could be doubts about the details of the moderate Islamic ideologies but none on the basic premises underlying it.

These basic premises included an overall logic of the political changes in the IRI and more particular aspects that resulted from the application of these general precepts to the political reforms in perspective. The human rights and social justice tenets of ideological domination were found or read into most alternative theories that found more than passing interest in the circles of political reformers. In case if they were not explicitly present, theories were changed to include them. Moreover, in the theories concerning the governing system, an overall moderation was required that paralleled the IRI's ideologies. Only in this way could elements from one theory be transplanted into the official ideologies. Soroush's theory of a religiously democratic government provided the Pan-Islamist intellectuals and reformer elite with an updated version of the overall Islamic moderate political theory that was expressed through the post-revolutionary liberal theories. Similarly, Kadivar's republicanism and Shabestari's hermeneutic theory added additional insight to the political reformers approach, and their use helped as much to change the political discourse as to confirm the moderate elite that their paradigm was after all feasible and insightful.

In spite of a massive introduction of alternative moderate theories, the Iranian political establishment did not significantly alter the general

framework of its political thought. As the literature on political reforms clearly reveals, even during the reforms process, some had to pass through the IRI filters, which served to condition them for adoption or rejection. The different approaches to the ideas in the cases of Soroush's and Ahmadi's work showed that either a theory was assimilated ideologically, and thereby altered in meaning, or it was presented accurately, and thereby isolated its applicability. Clearly Islamic political ideology was much more to many Iranian officials and Pan-Islamist intellectuals than a means of reforms, which formed a defining feature of the acceptability or respectability of a political theory.

Those alternative theories, as presented by the Pan-Islamist reformers in their writings, show a strong desire for modernisation and an increasingly lively debate within the possibilities and limits that political reality lay down. Obviously Political Islam and Ayatollah Khomeini Doctrine continued to lose ground in the Iranian political life however some recent alternatives have so far adhered to its fundamental religious tenets. Furthermore the cultural standpoints, that of the Unitarian worldview, essentialism, and dualism have remained intact. In this respect, precisely, those political theories could be introduced that counter these premises without being widely adopted to the enduring strength of the overall republican model on these topics. Nonetheless, by introducing an alternative theory, it does not mean culture and political culture are changing, and this is not to say culture and political culture in the IRI are immutable or unchangeable either. On the contrary, as has been shown, culture and political culture in the IRI is smoothly changing. Perhaps this change is not as radical or fundamental as some observers would like to see, but it is change nonetheless. As has been the attempt to show, the ongoing modernisation and change in the IRI is not total and sudden, but partial and incremental. Moreover, there is considerable evidence to suggest that the moderate political culture underlying Iranian socio-political system performs a certain authority on the selection, interpretation, and function of alternative theories.

Postscript

The Causes and Consequences of the 2009 Post-Election Political Events in Iran

Whether there was an intervention before and/or widespread fraud during the tenth presidential election or whether it was a free and fair election, the political events which occurred after the announcement of the election results have changed both the pre-election political condition and the organisational setting in the Islamic Republic of Iran. A return to the pre-election period for the Iranian political authority is surely no longer possible. The consequences of this crisis in coming months will eventually lead to acceleration of reform in the institution of leadership.

From the early days of revolution onwards the political authority in Iran has claimed, in theory and practice, that power and the political power in this Islamic regime has a divine source. The governing elite as the results are "Allah's representative on Earth" who should control and execute the power. The political authority advocates that in order to expand the divine version of power the objective of the Islamic government in Iran is to abolish this-worldly nature of power. Conversely, thousands of writers and observers in last thirty years have highlighted the fact that the power in the Islamic Republic was nothing more than the rule of various Pan-Islamist groups from high-ranking members of the clerical establishment, high-ranking members of military and paramilitary groups, bureaucrats and technocrat groups. In other words, while the claim to have a divine root remained to be proven, in the public opinion the Islamic government was no more than the rule of wealthy Pan-Islamist groups and individual elites. The post-election street protest was the brilliant public initial to confront the Islamic elite and exhibit the reality that they are a government of those who had neither a theoretical nor a practical chastity and who are obliged to recognize the 'this-worldly' social events, and finally be infected by the change and modernization. The despotic nature of conservative political elite however had brutally contrasted the political reform and changes.

The brutal response to street protestors in recent political events consequently effaces the Islamic republic divine image that has built its regime upon in the public eyes and ended the illusion of legitimacy that has built upon its divinely oriented power and political power. For the Iranian society recent events was the highlight of the fact that the Islamic regime's religious make-up and divine dressing of the last thirty years was nothing more than a protective shield and that the Iranian political authority is a this-worldly political phenomenon with particular despotic structure of power and nothing else. In other words, it become obvious to every individuals that what has happened in the post-election period was related clearly to the last thirty years methods of Islamic governing model and at the same time reflects the struggles of oppositional groups for reform in the structure of power and political power. The protesters show this is the same power as described in modern philosophical concepts and political

sciences, as a this-worldly phenomenon implemented by this-worldly human beings and distinct from divinity.

To understand the post-election political setting and the governing organisation in Iran we shall first review the intervention of political groups in recent events and highlight the process of 'submission, replacement, and neutralisation' of the executive and juridical branches of the government in last four years. To trace the above process an explanation about the political equation between the two camps of the reformers and conservatives, the process of leadership reform that started in 1997, the changes in the concept and practice of power and political power, the political relationship in the IRI among inter-state groups, and the perspective on the modernisation in coming years, are necessary.

Since the presidential election in 1997 and the Tehran universities incident in 1999, the debate on the reform of the leadership has been on-going. The reform on politics during these years in the IRI showed that in the case of a political crisis, two organs of the government (the Guardian Council and the juridical branch) - amongst other institutions - will suffer the most negative consequences. Since the political reform in 1997 began, these two organs, under the guidance of the Supreme Leader, have had the critical role of creating the political and juridical impasses on the path for change and modernisation. On the other hand, during these years (1997-2005) other organs, such as those under the Executive branch and Parliament (especially during the sixth parliament), and the Expediency Council, played an important role in the political events and institutional changes. Since 2005 and the conservatives' victory in the presidential election, this situation partly changed track and fluctuated, but the main process remained untouched. In other words the method for introducing the power and the juridical impositions and customs did not fundamentally change, although the political authority of the time reduced the effectiveness of some of the governing organs and sub-organs, or just dissolved them. For instance, organs such as the central bank were weakened with the frequent changes of the head of management. The governmental higher council and organisation of budget and planning was dissolved with the order of the new president. But at the same time the state policy of interventionism helped to limit the social pressure on the Guardian Council and the Supreme Leader. Then the popular criticism against juridical power was reduced; nevertheless, the sharpest criticism was concentrated and directed towards political authority.

After the tenth presidential election in June 2009 a new phase in the process of transformation in the IRI began, particularly in the juridical institution. First, the elected conservative political authority during its first four years of power (2005-2009), with the repressive policies of its executive power, had embraced and produced public distrust. This widely-held opinion lead to action once the government was accused of fraud, and as a result, the regime as a whole lost credibility or any legitimate power in regaining the public trust. Second, the institution of religious Jurisprudence also lost its legitimacy after the Supreme Leader's speech during prayers

on the first Friday after the election, and was in the eyes of the public “demoted” from a legitimate leadership institution to being only a conservative political faction. Moreover, the Supreme Leader’s call for the removal of newly appointed vice-president Rahim Mashaie (who has publicly called the Israelis friends of the Iranians) was another fatal stroke for the organ of the leadership. Third, the Guardian Council lost its credibility amongst the conservatives when two reformers were allowed to become official candidates standing for presidential election and call for fundamental changes. On the other hand, Guardian Council lost its credibility amongst the reformers when it recognised the result of the election. Moreover, in the eyes of the public, Guardian Council was no longer seen as a non-partisan governing organ, rather as a political group belonging to a conservative faction because it had stood for and supported that conservative faction. Fourth, adding to this, both the juridical power and the state monopolised media totally lost their credibility and became isolated in the public opinion because of their support of the conservative political authority during the street protests and especially because of their support of the reformers’ political trials and accusations of a “velvet coup”. Fifth, the police forces, the Islamic guard corps, and the paramilitary militia, all by killing the protesters and using violent and excessive forces, were accused of criminal behaviour; moreover, once the police hooliganism in the streets of Tehran were broadcast internationally, their credibility was extremely damaged. But next to these process and events was another parallel process through which three key controlling organs of the regime lost their credibility to a large extent. These three important organs are the Expediency Council, the Assembly of Experts and the Parliament.

First, as time passed, and as the political crisis expanded to reach other state institutions, Abdullah Nouri (former minister of Home Affairs under the president Khatami) proposed that the Expediency Council pronounce the final result of the election.¹⁴ But the Speaker of State stipulated that the government was not willing to give such an important decision to the Expediency Council.¹⁵ This position and the previous accusation of the Head of State against the head of the Expediency Council and the position of the Supreme Leader to remain silent, all together shows that this canonical organ of the regime had lost its political importance and was excluded from all decision making. Second, at the same time after the election and at the start of the political conflict, several elites and political groups directly or indirectly requested from the Assembly of the Experts to review the competence of the Supreme Leader. With regards to the balance of power and the conservatism of the members of the Assembly of Experts, this request was rejected and the Assembly of Experts, despite its important role and constitutional position, became a speculative and

¹⁴ - BBC Persian Internet News, “*peshnahade Abdullah Nouri: parvandehe entegabat ra be majma befrestid*” (Abdullah Nouri Proposal: (Sent the Election File to Expediency Council)), 23.06.2009

¹⁵ - BBC Persian Internet News, “*mokhalefate Eleham ba ferestadane parvandehe entekhabat be majma tashkhes maslehat*”, (Elham’s Disagreement to sent election File to Expediency Council), 24.06.2009

powerless organ. Third, among all political and governmental organs recited in the constitution, it was only the Parliament which remained intact. This was due to the recognition of its role and places in the IRI, and due to the cleverness of Ali Larijani the Speaker of House. The Parliament from the early days of the post-election conflict has intervened and assigned a parliamentary group to investigate police brutality and the torture and assassination in prisons during this period. The members of parliament mostly publicly criticised the political authority when the new president introduced his cabinet and ministers. This critical behaviour continued until the session in which there was a vote of confidence held, after which they mostly reacted harshly. Some observers suggested that a few of the candidates will be able to receive necessary support. However, although the Parliament best resisted the process of submissiveness, nonetheless, it was finally obliged to support 18 of the 21 candidates and reject three, two of whom were women.¹⁶ In this given situation, safeguarding its juridical position and political legitimacy was the only choice the Parliament has left to negate all responsibilities and make the public understand that it was obliged to approve the proposed candidates. A member of the conservative faction mentioned in his speech that the Parliament, similar to other governing organs in the IRI, was no longer capable of protecting its constitutional position and became an instrument for implementing the Supreme Leader's orders.

As stated earlier in this report, this paper does not evaluate the reformers' accusation of fraud or the conservatives' claim of fairness in the presidential election. Rather, the objective is to understand the submissiveness process that the political and juridical organs of the IRI in the post-election period have undergone. As stated above, the most important organs and the governing institutions of the IRI either lost legitimacy or were submitted to various military or paramilitary organs over a short period of time. As a result, most juridical or political channels in the government have somehow been blocked and all of the involved constitutional organs that confronted the post-election crisis have been broken apart. In other words, the most influential governing organs have either lost popularity or become outcast very quickly. The effect of this situation has had a serious impact not only on other governing organs but also on non-governmental organisations as well. Among these, for instance, are the religious establishment and the founding personalities of the IRI, who have also not been immune to oppression and accusations.

The importance of the presence of millions of protesters in the streets of major cities all over Iran should not be underestimated. Their qualitative demands for changes and quantitative numbers representing various sectors of society were new to the thirty-year-old Islamic Republic rule in contemporary Iran. At the same time referring to popular protest and demonstration as the only instrument for bringing about change in the IRI

¹⁶- BBC Persian Internet News, "*majles be se vazir peyshnehadi Ahmadinejad raye etemad nadad*" (Parliament Voted No-confidence for three Ahmadinejad's Proposed Head of Ministry's Candidates), 03.09.2009

is not promising. Rather, in addition to the effects of the post-election protests, the internal power struggle that demolished and excluded some of the governing institutions is an important factor. Therefore, the next question will be how the process of change in the political organs and the juridical structure has taken place and as a result, what are the future consequences?

To answer this question, we shall first examine how the change in the juridical structure has come about. From the later years of the ex-president Khatami's second term, the process of restoration of the political organs become transparent in three respects.

The first was the process of structural submission: a process in which all juridical capacity of the appointed organs was used to increasingly control elected organs like the Parliament and other organs of the executive branch. In this process and in the course of time, these organs become a subset of the military hierarchy and their constitutive foundation and *raison d'être* was contested. This process took place particularly in other half-elected and half appointed organs such as the Guardian Council, and the juridical structure. According to some sources, the peak of this process in post-election weeks was the control of state radio and television to the extent that the text for Friday's clerical prayer speech was also written by members of the high-ranking military hierarchy.

The second was the process of replacement: control of the elected organs with the help of the right-wing individuals and allied political groups and the removal and replacement of individuals in these organs. In a tactical and temporary alliance with the right-wing elite, conservative members of the parliament and the executive branch, high-ranking members of the military or the neutral and obedient individuals took over the elected organs. In the early days after the election, the right-wing individuals received their share of power and wealth; however, once the competing reformer groups were totally eliminated, they lost their share.

The third process was the neutralisation of some governing organs and juridical structures, which based on the constitution, the clergymen groups were assigned to control. These organs, through the process of submission and then replacement, gradually were neutralised. For instance, amongst others, the Expediency Council and the Assembly of the Experts are the most important.

In this way the IRI political authority's organisations and juridical institution have changed in recent years. This transformation took place through a political alliance of the military and paramilitary factions, conservative clerical groups and the traditional right-wing groups. The opposition movement during and after the presidential election, among other things was against this process as well and millions of protesters occupied the streets of the major cities to show this opposition. The gathering of the social groups against the conservative government took a confrontational form, and as a result, the above process of transformation has totally changed into another, new track, which one might say has brought a fundamental decline and destructive process in the IRI. On the

one hand, the appointed organs such as the Guardian Council, the juridical branch, and the Supreme Leader have come under a sharp criticism and destructive protest. On the other hand, the political authority was no longer willing to use the organs which were previously neutralised, such as the Expediency Council and the Assembly of Experts, to intervene and share their power to solve the problems in hand. In fact the destructive pressure of the political crisis and the protesters were directed against the Supreme Leader and other appointed organs under his control. Moreover, in this critical situation when the parliament was trying through the expedience of Ali Larijani and some other right-wing members to help monitor and control the crisis and to play a more important role, they were prevented from doing so by the Supreme Leader. The Supreme Leader's policy of prevention possibly came about due to consultation with and advice of the high-ranking military experts. Because the military and paramilitary groups desire to safeguard their interests and positions in the political authority, they oppose all forms of political solutions to this conflict. In fact, there is evidence showing that the interference of the military and paramilitary has ensured the position of the security and vigilance groups in the domain of politics and civilian spheres, and has accelerated the isolation or elimination of the civilian elite and political activists through the process of leadership reform. The office of leadership after the election tried to solve all contradictions and ideological differences through the military action, imprisonment and elimination of the opposition. Nonetheless, the ideological conflicts and interests inherent in the Islamic Republic political system have in this period intensified the process of leadership reform. In this way after the political elimination of the mainstream factions of reformers from political life, it seems with the continuation of the presence of the military in the domain of politics, the total destruction of the elected organs, and the acceleration of the process of the leadership reform in coming months the question to radical factions of reformers is if they will recognize this new political order or will decide to move radically towards regime change.

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