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Social Movements' Emergence and Form: The Green Movement in Iran

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**SOCIAL MOVEMENTS' EMERGENCE AND FORM: THE GREEN
MOVEMENT IN IRAN**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

By

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March, 16, 2012

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY Afsaneh J Haddadian ENTITLED Social Movements' Emergence and Form: The Green Movement in Iran BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

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Theories of social movements suggest that 'objective' changes in the structure of political opportunities and their interaction with mobilizing and framing mechanisms render a system vulnerable to mass protest. By examining the variables relevant to such interaction, this study seeks to account for the emergence and form of the 2009 Green Movement in Iran. This research uses the congruence method and process traces the movement adherents' activities, mainly their use of Information Communication Technologies, and investigates the so-called opposition leaders' activities and statements. The study argues that in accounting for emergence and form of the Green Movement, we need to attribute the central role to the bottom-up framing processes that gave value and meaning to the movement's goals and strategies. Political opportunity structures only appear in terms of 'perceptual' rather than 'objective' changes in the structure of the system. Further, the research investigates implications for other authoritarian settings and, more generally, for theories of social movements.

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ACRONYMS

BBC – British Broadcasting Company

ICTs – Information Communication Technologies

ISPs – Internet Service Providers

MMS – Multimedia Messaging Service

OSU – Office of Consolidating Unity

POS – Political Opportunity Structures

RDT – Relative Deprivation Theory

SIT – Social Identity Theory

SMOs – Social Movement Organizations

SMS – Short Message Service

TCI – Telecommunications Company of Iran

UN – United Nations

VOA – Voice of America

LIST OF NON-ENGLISH TERMS

- Ashura* – A day of mourning in the Shi’at calendar
- Balatarin* – “The hottest link”; A Farsi website
- Basij* – Islamic Republic’s semi-militia
- Bonyad-e Shahid-e Enghelab-e Islami* – Islamic Republic’s Martyrdom Foundation
- Etemad-e Melli* – “National Trust”; Karoubi’s party newspaper
- Filter-shekan* – “filter-breaker”; Anti-proxy
- Gerdab* – “Vertex”; Website
- Gerdab-e Sabz* – “Green vertex”; Website
- Halghe* – “circle”; Referred to circles of individual bloggers
- Hezb-e Etemad-e Melli* – “National Trust Party”; Karoubi’s party since 2005
- Hokm-e Hokoomati* – “State rule”
- Jomhourikhahi* – “Republicanism”; Website
- Jonbesh-e Rah-e Sabz (Jaras)* – “The movement of green path”; Website
- Kahrizak* – Prison in Tehran, notorious during the protests for witness accounts of sexual abuse and torture
- Kaleme* – “Word”; A website close to Mousavi and Karoubi
- Khat-e Imam* – “Imam’s Path”; A political wing of Islamic Republic
- Majles-e Shora-e Islami* – Iran’s Islamic Assembly
- Majma-e Rohaniyoon-e Mobarez* – “Assembly of combatant clerics”
- Malakoot* – “Realm”; A Farsi blog
- Neday-e Sabz-e Azadi* – “The green voice for freedom”; Website
- Shahrvand Khabarnegar-e Sabz* – “Green citizen-journalists”; Website

Shora-e Hamahangi-e Rah-e Sabz-e Omid – “The coordinating council of the green path of hope”; The council that Mousavi and Karoubi formed before going under house-arrest

Tan-Nevesht – “Body-writings”; A Farsi blog

Vali-Asr – Name of a street in Tehran

Velayat-e Faghih – “The rule of the jurist”; Common reference to Iran’s Supreme Leader

Zan-Nevesht – “Woman-writings”; A Farsi blog

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The study of social movements has proliferated since the political turbulence of the 1960s and 1970s. This process began to develop dramatically with an increase in European and American scholars' contacts and collaborations in the field in the 1980s. Their collaboration has resulted in exposure to different perspectives that have, according to McAdam et al. (1996), undercut the theoretical provincialism characteristic of earlier work. Facing cases from different national contexts has forced scholars to adopt a more comparative perspective. More recently, the focus in the study of social movements has shifted from solely structural, mobilization, or cultural explanations to a more comparative perspective reflecting on all three dimensions having arisen from scholarly works. Though best known for their emphasis on the political opportunity structures of social movements, theorists such as Gamson (1992), Tarrow (1989), and Tilly (1978), have also acknowledged the critical catalytic effect of new ideas as a spur to collective action. McAdam's (1982) discussion of the necessity for "cognitive liberation" as a prerequisite for mobilization is an acknowledgement of the importance of ideas in the political process tradition. These framing processes undermine the legitimacy of the system or its perceived propensity to change.

McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1996) point to a consensus that most political movements and revolutions are set in motion by social changes that render the established political order more vulnerable or receptive to challenge. But these "political opportunities," drawn from rational choice theory, are but a prerequisite to action. In the

absence of sufficient organization—whether formal or informal—such opportunities are not likely to be seized. Finally mediating between the structural requirements of opportunity and organization are the emergent meanings and definitions—or frames—shared by the adherents of the burgeoning movement. The impetus to action, thus, is as much a cultural construction as it is a function of structural vulnerability. Such change in the structure of politics encourages mobilization not only through the “objective” effects they have on power relations, but by setting in motion framing processes that further undermine the legitimacy of the system. Expanding political opportunities then acquire their causal force from the interaction of those structural and perceptual changes they set in motion. A similar reciprocal dynamic defines the relationship between organization and framing processes. Framing processes clearly encourage mobilization as people seek to organize and act on their growing awareness of a system’s illegitimacy and vulnerability. At the same time, the potential for the kind of system critical framing processes is conditioned by the population’s access to various mobilizing structures. Also, framing processes are held to be both more likely and of far greater consequences under conditions of strong rather than weak organization. The absence of any real mobilizing structure would likely prevent their spread to the minimum number of people required to afford a basis for collective action.

In an effort to bring more analytical clarity to the concept, various authors sought to specify what they see as relevant dimensions of political opportunities. Among those who have offered such schema are Brockett (1991), Kriesi et al. (1992), Rutch (1996), and Tarrow (1994). McAdam synthesizes these perspectives and identifies four highly consensual dimensions of a given system’s “structure of political opportunities”

(McAdam, 1996, p.27). These are: first, the relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system; second, the stability of that broad set of alignments that typically undergird a polity; third, the presence of elite allies; and fourth, the state's capacity and propensity for repression.

Although there is a good amount of scholarly work on the impacts of these three factors on the emergence of various social movements in the European and American and former Soviet states, there is little theoretical analysis of the structure of political opportunities and their interactions with resource mobilization and framing processes in authoritarian forms of government. The focus of this study is the causal factors that can help us understand the emergence of a social movement in an authoritarian setting. One of the most recent examples of such collective action is the 2009 Green Movement¹ in Iran. Identifying the movement's emergence and form as the dependent variable, I will attempt to test various hypotheses drawn from these three major theoretical frameworks (structure of political opportunities, resource mobilization, and framing processes) to measure the impact of each on the emergence and form of the movement.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The 2009 protests over the disputed presidential election results in Iran reminded many of the revolutionary course of 1979. Due to the novelty of the phenomenon there are still few theoretical explanations for the emergence of the movement and the form it has taken thus far. Also, there is little consensus among scholars on the relevance of major social movements' theories to the Green Movement and the central role of political

¹ A significant portion of the 2009 summer protests in Iran over the disputed presidential election is contented to be the "Green Movement." In this study I will refer to 2009 mass protesters both as the Green Movement and the 2009 protests, because there seems to be no distinction to the date between the goals and aspirations of the two.

opportunities. The case presents interesting implications for the study of social movements and its most plausible theory to date; that is the interaction between political opportunity structures, resource mobilization and framing processes.

Due to the absence of theoretical explanations and the uncertainty regarding the outcome of the Green Movement, a puzzling research question arises: *under what conditions can we expect the emergence of a particular type of movement?* (e.g., grassroots reform movement, civil rights movement, or revolution). This poses a sub-question: *how do political opportunity structures, mobilizing structures and framing processes interact to create an environment for success or failure in a given movement?* McAdam argues that the important implication of the question is that the various types of movements are simply different forms of collective action rather than qualitatively different phenomena requiring distinct explanatory theories. Rather than assuming difference, we need to treat movement type as variable and seek to account for variation in type on the basis of particular combination of opportunities, mobilizing structures, and collective action frames.

To answer these questions, I will conduct in depth analysis of four variables impacting the emergence and development of the Green Movement in Iran from 2009 to mid-2010. This study will draw upon the political process model—the structure of political opportunities, mobilization structures, and framing processes—to identify what factors may have contributed to the emergence of the Green Movement and the implications of these factors on the form of the movement—bearing in mind that the Green Movement is still a developing movement and may take various forms due to a particular constellation of identified factors.

Using a single case study research design, this research will employ congruence method and process tracing to specifically explore the causal path between the dependent and independent variables identified in this study, and the implications for theory predictions in general. Three hypotheses drawn from the three theoretical frameworks and the literature on social movements in general and Iran's long history of collective actions in particular, will be tested. This work seeks to identify the relevant variables and causal mechanisms that contributed to the emergence and form of what some scholars thus far, have identified as a non-violent civil rights movement in Iran.² Also, the 1999 student protests in Iran will be considered as part of the context in what many scholars have called the "cycle of protests."

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on social movements is vast with scholars emphasizing at least one dimension of collective action. Increasingly one finds social movement scholars emphasizing the importance of three broad theoretical factors in analyzing the emergence and development of movements/revolutions. These three factors are 1-the structure of political opportunities and constraints confronting the movement, 2- the form of organization (informal and formal) available to participants, and 3-the collective process of interpretation, attribution, and social construction that mediates between opportunity and action.

In this study these dynamics are referred to by their conventional shorthand distinctions of *political opportunities*, *mobilizing structure*, and *framing processes* (McAdam et al., 1996). McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1996) are among the first to put

²Parsa draws on the non-violent aspect of the movement and argues for a "moral capital" born out of Green Movement's identities of adherents.

political structure, resource mobilization, and framing in a comparative perspective. These scholars emphasize the interacting dynamics among these factors in the emergence (timing) and form of movements. They argue in favor of the political process proponents and share the conviction that most political movements and revolutions are set in motion by social changes that render the established political order more vulnerable or receptive to challenge. In their own words “these political opportunities are but a necessary prerequisite to action. In the absence of sufficient organization—whether formal or informal—such opportunities are not likely to be seized. Finally mediating between structural requirements of opportunity and organization are the emergent meanings and definitions—or frames—shared by the adherents of the burgeoning movement” (McAdam et al., 1996, p.8). As stated earlier the focus of this study is on the emergence and the form that movements take in the initial stages of collective action, thus I will review the scholarly works on the dynamics of political process model—structure of political opportunities, Mobilization dynamics, and framing—in emergence and form of social movement.

POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE

The first modern observer to draw an explicit linkage between states and social movements was Alexis de Tocqueville (1955). He provided the first response as to why states are so central a focus of the mobilization. Drawing from the French Revolution, he argues that centralized states aggrandize themselves by weakening and co-opting the intermediate corporate bodies in civil society. The result is that the stronger the state, the weaker its encouragement of institutional participation and the greater the incentive to confrontation and violence when collective action does break out.

The term “structure of political opportunity” is first used by Peter Eisinger (1973) to help account for variations in “riot-behavior” in forty-three American cities. Eisinger found that “the incidence of protest is [...] related to the nature of a city’s political opportunity structure” which he defined as “the degree to which groups are likely to be able to gain access to power and to manipulate the political system” (1973, p.25). According to McAdam (1996, p.23) this key premise informing the work of Lipsky (1970) and Eisinger has been appropriated as the central tenet in a new “political process” model of social movements. Since then the timing and emergence is largely viewed to be dependent on the opportunities afforded to a particular movement’s adherents by the shifting institutional structure and ideological disposition of those in power. McAdam recognizes the dangers that widespread adoption of political opportunities potentially carries. As Gamson and Meyer (1996) note “the concept of political opportunity structure is in trouble, in danger of becoming a sponge that soaks up virtually every aspect of the social movement—political institutions and culture, crises of various sorts, political alliances and policy shifts, [...] used to explain too much, it may ultimately explain nothing at all” (p.275).

In an attempt to shed light on some of these problems stated by various authors³, McAdam draws upon three conceptual problems: first, “political” versus other kinds of “opportunities”; second, the dimensions that compose the “political opportunity structure”; and third, the very different dependent variables to which the concept has been applied. He argues that the kinds of structural changes and power shifts that are most defensibly conceived of as *political* opportunity should not be confused with the

³Goodwin, Jeff and Jasper, James M. *Rethinking Social Movements*, 2004: They strongly criticize the political process model, and argue that in order to be able to establish a good explanatory model for social movements the model should draw more upon the strategy and culture.

collective processes by which these changed are interpreted and farmed. He also acknowledges that while the two are closely related they are not the same; treating them as separate preserves the definitional integrity of political opportunities.

Synthesizing various authors' conceptions of relevant dimensions of "structure of political opportunity"—Brockett (1991), Kriesi et al (1992), Tarrow (1994)—McAdam offers four dimensions of political opportunity: first, the relative openness or closure of institutionalized political system; second, the stability or instability of that broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity; third, the presence or absence of elite allies; and fourth, the state's capacity or propensity for repression. McAdam acknowledges that the only nonconsensual dimension⁴ he has incorporated into the definition is the ability of the state to repress opponents. Some scholars (e.g., dellaPorta, 1995) have speculated that state repression is really more an expression of general receptivity or vulnerability of the political opportunity structure, rather than an independent dimension of the same. McAdam casts doubts that state repression is merely the result of interest groups within the polity. He draws historical references from the 1989 Chinese student movement and the 1979 revolution in Iran. Both had to some extent the same political opportunities, but in the former communist party hard-liners were able to repress the movement, whereas in 1979 the ruling elite was not able to do what the Chinese hard-liners had done. This, McAdam argues shows the merit of considering state repression as a dimension of political opportunity.

In specifying the relevant dependent variable, McAdam asserts that the concept of political opportunity has been often used to explain the emergence (timing), and the

⁴Only Brockett has considered this dimension as a structure of political opportunity (McAdam et al, 1996,p.28)

development (the outcome), as well as the form that the movements take. Seeking to understand the emergence of particular movements, the scholars of political process sought to link the initial development of insurgency to “expansion in political opportunities” beneficial to challenging groups (Costain, 1992; McAdam, 1982).

Also, as suggested earlier, movement form is another variable that owes, in part, to the nature of the opportunities that set movements in motion. McAdam (1996) asserts that “if we array movements along a continuum from the narrowest of institutionalized reform effort on the one pole to revolutions on the other, we can, I think, discern a general relationship between type of form of movement and changes in dimensions of political opportunities” (p.29). He argues that, for example, an expansion of opportunities for the opponents in the institutional or legal structure or the emergence of new allies within a previously unresponsive political system set in motion the narrowest and most institutionalized of reform movements. By narrow McAdam (1996) is referring primarily to tactics one can expect such movements to employ, “to extent that the movement has mobilized in response to specific changes in access rule, we can expect it to act primarily to exploit that new crack in the system” (p.31). According to McAdam, as we move toward the more radical or even revolutionary end of movement continuum, the other two dimension of political opportunity come increasingly into play, a significant decrease in either the will or the ability to repress and the development of significant divisions among previously stable political elites, are related to a more non-institutionalized and revolutionary forms of protest.

Finally, McAdam (1996) turns to the international context of political opportunities as a dimension that influences the movements. He cites several works done on the

international political pressures in expanding the opportunities for movements' adherents (Salama Layton, 1995; Wang, 1989; Marks and McAdam, 1993). Shifting international conditions is a variable considered important in encouraging mobilization in domestic arenas.

Zirakzadeh (1997) looks at Germany's Green, Poland's Solidarity, and Peru's Shining Path movements, in a comparative perspective. Citing works of other scholars such as McAdam (1989), Migdal (1974), Powell (1971), Smith (1991), he asserts that constitutions, national level policies, policy making processes, and inter-governmental struggles over power profoundly influence both people's decisions to participate and the strategies and tactics that a movement adopts. Also, he asserts that some social problems and political arrangements such as economic repression or intense electoral competition may generate splits among government officials and may lead factions to seek allies among groups of the non-wealthy.

Zirakzadeh (1997) argues that an alliance between a fledging movement and governing faction might occur that temporarily protects the participants from state harassment, and this may persuade more people to join the movement (p.14). Although he is analyzing what most scholars call the "new social movements" mostly akin to movements that occurred after the 1960s in Europe, his application of a political process model as a way to account for various pathways of these three movements is enlightening.

In an analysis of states and opportunities and the snow balling effects of movements on one another, Tarrow (1996) points out that movements appear at the subnational and subgroup level, they rise and fall and change their shapes rapidly during

cycles of protest, and they are profoundly influenced by trends that transcend national boundaries. According to him these three dimensions of movement dynamics: infra-national variations, cycles of protest, and transnational collective action play a vital role in shaping a movement. He asserts that in age of satellite communication, global television, and fax machines, even movements that are independent of one another have almost instant access to information about what other movements are doing. In the case of democratization movements of 1989, we saw a transnational movement which employed similar strategies and rhetoric and which the late-comers learned from their predecessors (p.53).

Also defining the structure of political opportunity, Tarrow (1996) asserts that he refers to “consistent—but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national—signals to social or political actors which either encourage or discourage them to use their internal resources to form social movements” (p.54). He makes it clear that his concept of political opportunity not only emphasizes formal structures like state institutions, but the conflict and alliance structures which provide resources and impose constraints external to the group. Unlike money or power, this kind of opportunity opens windows that even weak or disorganized challengers can take advantage of to organize against powerful opponents. Conversely, as opportunities narrow, even the strong grow weak and movements are forced to change their form of action and strategies.

MOBILIZING STRUCTURES

McCarthy (1996), in an effort to illuminate how mobilizing structural forms emerge and evolve, how they are chosen, combined, and adopted by social movement activists, and how they affect movements, asserts that *political opportunity* and *strategic*

framing are particularly important in analyzing these processes. He acknowledges that “by mobilizing structures,” he means those agreed upon ways of engaging in collective action, which include particular “tactical repertoires,” “particular social movement organizational” forms, and “modular social movement repertoires.” He also includes the range of everyday life micro-mobilization structural social locations that are not aimed primarily at movement mobilization, but where mobilization may be generated: these include family units, friendship networks, voluntary associations, work units, and elements of state structure itself (p.141).

By doing so McCarthy (1996) tries to systematically account for different movement mobilizing structural *configurations*. He notes that a comparative analysis of varying political opportunity structures and differential strategic framing approaches in the dynamics of social movements across nations and time, demand to do so. Attempting to map these structures in a society, he asserts that at the least formally organized end of the map are “families” and “networks of friends” (p.142). It is upon these most basic structures of everyday life that much local dissent is built. These structures are in line with McAdam’s widely adopted phrase, “micro-mobilization contexts” that suggest a wide variety of social sites within people’s daily rounds where informal ties between people can serve as solidarity and communication facilitating structures when and if they choose to engage into dissent together.

Tilly (1978) used the notion of “netness” to account for movement adherents by the denseness of their social relations that are created by these many institutional ties. Others have used notions such as “communities of memory” (networks of demobilized activists) (Woliver, 1993), “subcultures of dissent” (Obserschall, 1996), and “protest

infrastructure” (Gamson and Schmeidler, 1984), to account for the role of informal structures of everyday life in mobilization.

According to McCarthy, closer to the more organized end of the continuum are informal networks created primarily as mobilizing structures. Tilly (1978) recognizes other sub-groups that “can also be the building blocks during protest campaigns.” These classes of mobilizing structures are hybrids in that they are more organized, but they operate within existing organizations/institutions; “prayer groups, caucuses, study groups, sports teams, commissions,” (p.143) are examples of such groups. Social Movement Organizations (SMOs) are the more organized form of these protest blocks and serve as movements’ dedicated mobilizing structures. SMOs exhibit wide variations in institutional forms. One is the “independent local,” volunteer based group emblematic of our image of the “grassroots” group (Lofland, 1985), but many local groups are tied to national structures—some federated into coalitions, many others branches of strong national organization.

McCarthy (1996) categorizes the range of building blocks of mobilizing structures primarily by their degree of organizational formalization and centralization as well as their formal dedication to social changes goal. He argues that describing this variation in extensive and systematic detail enables us to abstract its important dimensions, in order to describe typical sub-movement, movement, movement industry, and movement family, historical and national profiles of mobilizing structure (p.144). He acknowledges that in any concrete social setting, a range of mobilizing structures are more or less available to activists as they attempt to create new movements or nurture and direct old ones. Activists must choose among their constituent elements and the choices

they make have consequences for both the intensity and shape of collective mobilization as well as in expanding or constraining the range of political outcomes it can provide.

McCarthy also discusses the interrelationship between political opportunities, framing and the mobilizing structures. He asserts that more stable elements of political opportunity are central in shaping the available range of mobilizing structure in the longer run, and more volatile elements of political opportunity are important in understanding the shorter run choices among those available structures that activists make. Also, particular mobilizing structures (such as leadership style, availability of resources, organization, networks of individuals/activists) will be more or less useful in taking advantage of a particular political opportunity.

In an attempt to consider different aspects of political opportunities, various authors have built upon the concept. Kriesi (1996) identifies a more stable element of political opportunity structures as the “general political context” which incorporates the strength of the state and its typical degree of its response to challengers. Rucht (1996) employs the idea of “context structure” which conflates natural, social, and political contexts, although he pays most attention to the political context. In doing so, he tries to link resource mobilization approaches and political opportunity to assess the impact of external opportunities on movement structures.

For the sake of clarity, Rucht specifies key categories. Social movements consist of two kinds of components: first, networks of groups and organizations prepared to mobilize for protest actions to promote or resist social change; and second, individuals who attend protest activities or contribute resources without necessarily being attached to movement groups or organizations. *Mobilization* is the process of creating movement

structure and preparing and carrying out *protest actions*, which are visible movement products addressed to actors and public outside the movement. Rucht (1996) asserts that for large scale and sustained movement activities mobilization requires *resources* such as people, money, knowledge, frames, skills, and technological tools to process and distribute information and to influence people (p.186). By *movement structure* he refers to the organizational bases and mechanisms serving to collect and use the movement's resources.

Movement structure can serve other purposes beyond mobilization, such as disseminating information within the movement, forging a collective identity, or satisfying the personal interests of the movement leaders. Rucht then distinguishes three forms of movement structure: first, the *Grassroots model*, characterized by a relatively loose, informal, and decentralized structure, emphasis on unruly, radical protest politics, and a reliance on committed adherents; second, the *interest group model*, characterized by an emphasis on influencing politics and a reliance of formal organization; and third, the *party oriented model*, characterized by an emphasis on the electoral process, party politics, and, reliance on formal organization.

Further Rucht asserts that in case of structural setting of a movement, the authors in the volume edited by McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald are looking for those environmental elements that shape movements' forms or activities. More concretely, the authors are interested in those conditions external to a given movement which either restrict or facilitate the building and maintenance of movement structure devoted to conducting protest activities. What makes this context relevant to the movement is that it involves resources and conditions beyond a movement's control. The movement can

realize its potential to be strong and successful to the extent it takes this context into consideration and makes it resonant by structural attunement, strategic calculation, and clever use of leverage points. This requires an identification and “exploitation” of patterns that work in favor of the movement (e.g., dissatisfaction of the people with the established elites) and the avoidance of that which could weaken it (e.g., loss of powerful allies).

Building upon the role of mobilizing structures, Zirakzadeh (1997), emphasizes the role of leadership in mobilizing resources and asserts that a movement for and by discontent people only appears after alliances are forged between an aggrieved constituency and a group or person who has the appropriate political experience, vision, or resource to help that constituency. Emergence of a movement then requires an “issue entrepreneur” who is able to attract resources. He also treats what many scholars call Social Movement Organizations or SMOs (McAdam et al., 1996), as the “indigenous-community” approach. That is how local level social institutions, such as neighborhood clubs, union clubs, and community churches, can provide organizational building blocks, communication networks, and leadership skills for later social movements. He notes “social movements thus arise naturally out of people’s daily, local, and largely apolitical patterns of social interaction” (1997, p.14). Also regarding the political structure surrounding movements, he acknowledges that constitutions, national level policies, and policy making processes, and intergovernmental struggles over power profoundly influence both people’s decisions to participate in a movement and the strategies and tactics that a movement adopts. Zirakzadeh asserts:

according to almost all the newer generation of social movement theorists, a leader of a fledging movement cannot create and control the movement simply by

peddling exciting ideas about change or by vilifying a minority population. Before and aspiring leader can hope to be influential, a broader constellation of political circumstances and associational ties has to be in place (p.15).

FRAMING PROCESSES

Justifications for strategic choices are discussed in the context of definitions of relative opportunity and these are recurrent sources of contention within movements. Framing consensus, then, is variable between movements and typically a contentious internal process, and the definition of opportunity is often at the center of what is most contentious. This suggests that we need to focus on this process of defining opportunity and its dynamics.

McAdam (2000), with the notion of “cognitive liberation,” has identified four general types of “expanding cultural opportunities” that appear to increase the likelihood of movement activity (p.254). These four are: first, the dramatization of a glaring contradiction between a highly salient cultural value and conventional social practice. Second, “suddenly imposed grievances”, the notion is first used by Walsh (1981). This cognitive stimulus to framing processes describes those dramatic, highly publicized, and generally unexpected events (i.e. human made disasters, court decisions, official violence) that increase public awareness and opposition to previously accepted social conditions. Third, dramatization of a system’s vulnerability or illegitimacy. And fourth, the availability of what Snow and Benford (1988) term “master protest frames” within which subsequent challengers can map their own grievances and demands.

According to McAdam (2000), movements tend to cluster in time and space because they are not independent of each other. For example, he argues the rash of student movements that flourished around the globe (in Spain, France, Germany, Mexico,

Japan, Italy, and the United States) in 1968 were clearly attuned to and influenced by one another, resulting in development and diffusion of a “student left master frame” (p.258). By the same token, the success of Poland’s Solidarity in finally breaking the communist’s party monopoly on power encouraged other Eastern European dissidents to adopt prodemocracy frames in their own countries. The more general theoretical point is that successful framing efforts are almost certainly influenced by other groups to re-interpret their situations in light of the available master frame and to mobilize based on the new understandings of themselves and the world around them. Thus, the presence of such a frame constitutes yet another cultural or ideological resource that facilitates movement emergence.

Mayer Zald (1996) sketches six topics in the interplay of movements, framing, and larger society (p.261). First is the *cultural construction of repertoires of contention and frames*. Second, since framing takes place on the context of larger societal processes, she discusses *the contribution of cultural contradictions and historical events* in providing opportunities for framing. Since frames are generated by a diverse set of actors in relations to a variety of audiences inside and outside of the movement, she argues the third topic for attention is *framing as a strategic activity*. The fourth topic for Zald is *competitive processes* that represent the context in which frames are selected and come to dominate. Since frames are contested, within the movement by leaders and cadre debating alternative goals and visions for the movement, and externally by countermovement actors, bystanders, and state officials who oppose the movement. Fifth, frames are transmitted and reframed within the *mass media*. Finally, he argues we must

understand how political opportunity and mobilization intersect to shape the *outcomes* of framing competition (p.262).

Zald asserts that culture, ideology, and strategic framing are linked because they are the topics that deal with the content and processes by which meaning is attached to objects and actions. Culture, he argues, is the shared beliefs and understandings mediated by and constituted by symbols and language of a group or society. Ideology is the set of beliefs that are used to justify or challenge a given social-political order and are used to interpret the political world. Frames are the specific metaphors, symbolic representations, and cognitive cues used to render or cast behavior and events in an evaluative mode and to suggest alternative modes of action.

The issue of how social movements innovate and change has been linked to cultural analysis through the notions of repertoires of contention and cultural tool kits. Although Tilly is largely considered structuralist, his notion of “repertoires of action” (1978) recognized and gave legitimacy to the notion of innovation and learning of repertoires of contention. More recently, Ann Swidler’s idea of “culture as tool kit” gives a framework for thinking about institutional learning and the *bricolage* process by which components of the cultural stock are assembled into specific models, or exemplars, of socially defined behavior.

Focusing on the societal and media context of framing, and framing as a strategic activity, Zald (1996) clarifies that social movements exist in a larger societal context. They draw on the cultural stock for images of what is an injustice, or what is a violation of what ought to be (p.266). Contemporary framing of injustice and of political goals almost always draw upon the larger societal definitions of relationships, of rights, and of

responsibilities to highlight what is wrong with the current social order, to suggest directions for change. Similarly, movements draw on cultural stock on how to protest and how to organize, “the templates of organization include skills and technologies of communication, of fund-raising, of running an office, of recruiting members. Repertoires of contention include bombing buildings, building barricades, organizing marches, non-violent disruption, and the like”(Zald, 1996, p.267). Further, he acknowledges that social movements, their leaders, and participants are differentially situated in social structure. As such they draw upon the repertoires and frames available to and compatible with the skills, orientations, and styles of groups that make them up.

Moreover, Tilly (2009) calls attention to cultural breaks and cultural contradictions that lead to action and policy imperatives only as they are defined in an active process of cultural and movement construction. Political and mobilization opportunities are often created by cultural breaks and the surfacing of long dormant contradictions that reframe grievances and injustice and the possibility of action. Cultural contradictions occur and lead into mobilization when two or more cultural themes that are potentially contradictory are brought into active contradiction by the force of events, or when the realities of behavior are seen to be substantially different than the ideological justifications for the movement.

Discussing the role of media in framing, Tilly (2009) acknowledges that these interactions occur through various forms of media—newspapers, books, pamphlets, radio, and television. Also, movement activists may debate in coffeehouses, in meeting halls, etc., but they have to change the ideas and mobilize bystander publics, many of whom

may only know of the movement's goals and visions only slightly, or through the media controlled by the dominant system/state.

Zirakzadeh (1997) also refers to framing processes as “fashioning identities” in the study of social movements. He cites many scholars who believe that ‘culture,’ broadly understood as how we interpret social arrangements, how we see our places within these arrangements, and how we see our immediate opportunities, powers, and limitations, profoundly informs and shapes our political actions. Accordingly patterns of social and personal cognition and patterns of political action should not be treated as unrelated phenomena. He recognizes two sub-sets of identity-formation theory as “popular culture” approach and “autonomous movement-culture” approach. The former holds that rich cultural currents are being constantly developed by ordinary people in restaurants, cafes, streets, and the cyber space, where people speak about their sufferings and ways how to approach them.

As an example, African-Americans who joined the Communist Party in 1930s accepted many Leninist ideas but also held onto notions of Black Nationalism that Party leaders strongly opposed. The result was a complex process of factional conflict, ideological compromise, and cultural cross-pollination within the party. According to this approach, to understand a social movement one should pay attention to first, the specific local popular culture context; second, cultural diversity; and third, the inevitable consequent ideological conflict within the movement.

The autonomous movement approach holds that the social movement themselves are climates, environments, in which new subversive ideas are invented and nurtured. This identity formation process also questions the legitimacy of the power holders in

many ways, despite elites' efforts to influence the thinking of non-elites, the latter repeatedly question the elite's definition of reality in the daily expressions of popular culture and within organized social movements. Social movements thus should be understood as manifestations of ongoing cultural struggle between the haves and the have nots, over how to understand and whether to tolerate current inequalities. Thus movement's goals, priorities, and tactics can be identified once we see through its participants' lenses.

Anthony Oberschall (1993) in his evaluation of opportunities and framing in the Eastern Europe revolts of 1989, asserts that in analyzing movements four dimensions can be usefully distinguished: first, discontents and grievances; second, ideas and beliefs about justice and injustice, right and wrong, and more comprehensive ideologies through which discontents and issues are framed, and institutions and leaders evaluated and criticized; third, the capacity to act collectively or mobilization of a challenger; and fourth, political opportunity.

Oberschall considers lack of state legitimacy and ineffectiveness as an opportunity for opponents. Since it is ineffective, it cannot expect compliance based on expediency or interest, or only from a limited number of incumbents and privileged clients. Bereft of legitimacy, the regime must then survive on fear and the threat of force. This perceived lack of legitimacy is framed by "ideas and beliefs about right and wrong, justice and injustice, and more systematic ideologies composed of cognitive images and moral evaluations, with which people interpret and frame their discontents, evaluate their circumstances, define public issues, and demand public action" (Oberschall, 1993, p.97).

Framing and interpretation thus are social processes for articulating a variety of private beliefs and preferences into shared meanings and values for joint action.

Also, acknowledging that the suddenness of 1989 opposition movements precludes the organizational resources stressed by Zald and McCarthy (1987), Oberschall asserts block recruitment of viable communities and associations does not operate when there are no blocks to recruit. The theoretical issue is how spontaneous mass demonstrations developed and how dissidents joined them to form an opposition movement. When leaders and SMOs emerge on the back of mass demonstrations, the accent shifts from SMOs to the diffusion of a protest culture and a collective action repertoire (Tilly, 1978), from organization variables to loosely structured collective action, shared symbols and collective identity.

Finally, Elena Zdravomylsova (1996), in analyzing opportunities and framing in Russia's transitions to democracy, shows how political opportunities, expanding and shifting their locus in the course of the political cycle, encouraged different preferences in framing and corresponding symbolism of democratic social movements. She believes reciprocal the social movement's framing influenced the expansion of political opportunities. She distinguishes two types of social movement organizations in the process—radical and moderate—and argues that the disruptive tactics of radical SMOs were useful in beginning a protest cycle, but that was not efficient for action mobilization. On the other hand, she asserts that symbolic framing of reformist SMOs was appropriate to electoral mobilization at the peak of the protest cycle, and thus aided the democratic success in 1990 elections.

IRAN: THE CONTEXT: 1999 STUDENT PROTESTS

Tarrow (1996), points out that movements appear at the subnational and subgroup level, they rise and fall and change their shapes rapidly during cycles of protest, and they are profoundly influenced by trends that transcend national boundaries. In this study the 1999 student protests will be considered as the context and a part of a cycle of protest to demand civil rights and liberties prior to the emergence of the Green Movement, as students and youth are a major part of the Iranian population and a great degree of their demands correlates with those of union workers and women's rights activists. Thus some literature on the phenomenon will be reviewed here. Also the Iranian diaspora has been active during the height of the 2009 protests to disseminate information and gather international support for the demonstrators.

Many scholars discussing the 1999 student protests trace the root causes of this collective action to gain civil rights back to the early days of the 1979 revolution. The causes for this activism to gain civil rights discussed by scholars are: the age factor, a political cultural transformation, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the influence of religious intellectuals, the influence of "print-media", and the role of technologies.

The fact that two-thirds of Iran's population is now under 30 is discussed by many scholars. Mashayekhi (2001) asserts "young people, particularly in the third world, have been most sensitive and emotional about, social, political, and economic issues" (p.290). Further, Afshari and Graham (2007), point to the fact that many of the Iranians were not even born during the Revolution, and thus "the under-30 generation knows current Supreme Leader's autocracy better than his predecessor Khomeini's revolutionary zeal" (p.89).

Mashayekhi (2001) argues for a new “political subculture” of the student movement in Iran and asserts “this political cultural transformation is rooted in a myriad of social, economic, generational, political, intellectual and global developments” (301). He discusses “the failure of Islamic utopianism,” in the sense that until 1980s students themselves were among the most dedicated and ideologically connected to the Islamic Revolution’s values and ideology and thus the failures of the system in the first decade were blamed on the subversive role of “imperialism” or the “imposed war” with Iraq or so on. When the war ended, Mashayekhi argues, “a chain of eye-opening events began to disillusion this idealistic and dedicated generation of students” (p.302). Boroumand (2007), also points to events such as: the defeat in the Iran-Iraq war, the removal of Ayatollah Montazeri from his position, and a series of financial scandals and corruptions on the part of the regime’s leading officials. The result, as Afshari and Graham (2007), and Jahanbegloo (2000) assert, is the emergence of a “non-ideological” (p.136) generation. Mashayekhi calls this shift the “de-ideologization” process among revolutionary students.

Another factor contributing to this political activism against the Islamic Republic values and policies discussed by the scholars is the collapse of the Soviet Union. Both Mashayekhi and Boroumand (2007), argue that the demise of the Soviet Union and the defeat of the Marxist Left in the early years of the revolution weakened the ‘ideological and intellectual influences of Marxism and Socialism as political and economic alternative for students,’ and has weakened the veterans’ beliefs in revolutionary orthodoxy. Thus by the mid-1990s, revolutionary political Islam and socialist ideals were

losing and liberal-nationalist discourse and democratic practices were gaining momentum.

Many authors discuss the influence of religious intellectuals on the student movements. Bayat (2007), asserts that the “post-Islamism” in Iran today has had influence on three main areas: the redevelopment of the Tehran municipality and its socio-spatial rationale; the Alternative “Thought Movement” led by Soroush; and Islamic feminism. Many authors like Mashayekhi have mentioned the modernist and democratic readings of Islam by Islamic thinkers such as Soroush, Mohsen Kadivar, ziba-Kalam and others, and the enthusiasm which the students showed for these interpretations. Afshari and Graham (2007) assert that “the youth have forged a way to reconcile modernity and their changing cultural preferences with the traditionalist interpretation of Shi’ite Islam espoused by the state” (p.83).

The contribution of the press or the “print-media” as Mashayekhi puts it, is another factor influencing the student movement. Mahdi (1999) also stresses the role of these journals. With television and radio in the state’s domination, media outlets including the monthly “*Kiyan*” and Tabarzadi’s the “*Student Massage*” were tools to promote concepts such as democracy and human rights.

The role of technologies is also discussed. Afshari and Graham (2009,) argue that new technologies ease cultural change. By the same token, Mashayekhi points out that “not all the sources of the emerging democratic political subculture are domestic” (p.303). He asserts that “cultural globalization and information technology” (p.304) have its impacts on civil society, especially among the youth and students.

Finally, Mashayekhi presents a structural analysis of social movements, discussing the linkage between “the structure of political opportunities” (p.299) and movement activities. The first structural feature of the Islamic Republic benefiting the political student activism is the nature of its pluralistic factional politics. The second one is the fact that the Islamic Republic is a young system; Mashayekhi argues that many of the leading officials still had linkages to the middle and pre-revolutionary intellectual class or the Office for Consolidating Unity (OSU), Iranian student’s largest pro-reform organization, and these linkages gave the students the power of mobilization.

THE GREEN MOVEMENT

Ramin Jahanbegloo⁵ describes the Green Movement as a transitional tool for Iranian society that has led to the country's civic maturity. He argues that a “moral capital,” which guaranties consistency of the protest through varying tactics has flourished among Iranian citizens. Jahanbegloo asserts that the movement has two principle characteristics in terms of its image: first, it is a ‘truth-seeking’ movement; and second, it is ‘non-violent.’ The non-violent strategy, he argues, would be able to pave the way for future democracy in the country. The refusal to engage in “retribution in kind” in terms of violence, has called into question the legitimacy of the very essence of violence; people want to break out of the vicious cycle of violence, he asserts. He also points that the civil society is not expressing its demands in an ideological fashion, but is pursuing its goals in the shape of a civil movement, and through civil protest methods. For Jahanbegloo, the most vital condition for the movement to be successful is that it would not turn onto an ideological path and stay non-violent.

⁵ Boghrati, N. (2010, May). Jahanbegloo on the Green Movement in Iran. *Worldpress*. Retrieved from : <http://worldpress.org/Mideast/3540.cfm>

Drawn from the literature, the dynamics of political opportunity structure, resource mobilization, and strategic framing in the emergence and form 2009 Green Movement, are thus summarized in the *Political Processes Dynamics* figure below:

1.1. Political Process Dynamics Figure

Structure of political opportunity	Mobilizing structures	Strategic framing
Openness/closure of the system	Leaders	Ideologies/identities (perceived legitimacy)
Cracks among elites	Grassroots/SMOs	Information Technologies
Elite allies	Information Technologies	Informal social movement networks
The degree of repression	Informal social movement networks	
International pressure/Isolation		
State's centralization of economic power		
Failed reforms		

PROCEDURE

THE DEPENDENT VARIABLES

The Green Movement's emergence and its short-term viability and form⁶ is the dependent variable. What factors cause the timing (emergence) of a particular type of social movement in an authoritarian setting? How do political opportunity structures, mobilizing structures, and framing processes interact to create an environment for short-term viability (form) in a given movement? To answer these questions, I will conduct an

⁶Scholars such as Dabashi (2009), and Jahanbegloo (2010) consider the Green Movement a *civil rights movement*. Seeking to achieve freedom, democracy, and basic human rights.

in depth analysis on the emergence and development of the Green Movement in Iran from 2009 until mid-2010, which marked the end of the large-scale demonstrations.

Building on Zirakzadeh's (1997) definition, this study defines social movements as non-elite attempts to transform societies radically through complex mixtures of socially disruptive and non-disruptive tactics. Also borrowing from McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1996), political opportunities are defined in terms of changes in the institutional structure or informal power relations of a given national political system. The interactions of the four consensus dimensions of political opportunities identified by McAdam with other variables will be examined by this study. By mobilizing structure, this study refers to those collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action. In terms of framing processes, the aim of this study is "strategic framing," that is conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action. This study will explore the framing of the ideas about right or wrong to nourish the movement's goals as adherents weigh their options for taking action in the movement. As this study seeks to establish the interaction between political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing processes, the strategic framing sheds lights at various dimensions of this interaction.

THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

The independent variables analyzed in this study are: (1) the availability of aggravated classes (grassroots identities and informal social movement networks), (2) the use of information communication technologies, (3) Ideologies (including the perceived illegitimacy or legitimacy), and (4) the availability of a strong leadership.

There is much evidence of a non-ideological, post-charismatic, and technologically advanced social movement culture in Iran today. As many consider the current movement a “non-ideological” or “post-ideological” movement, breaking away from the communist, leftist, or Islamic ideologies of 1970s, I will look at this new identity to attempt to determine its nature and its goals and ideas of its constituencies in the strategic framing of their protests. This study will analyze the implications of such factors in terms of its short-term success and the interaction of structure, organization, and framing.

As mentioned earlier in the literature review, many factors have impacted the emergence, form, and short-term viability of the Green Movement (these factors are summarized in figure 1.1.). However, recognizing the scope of this study, there are limitations in performing sufficient analysis on all of these factors. This study will focus on four of these factors as independent variables, leaving room for the discussion of other variables in interaction with these four. The four independent variables chosen have directly impacted the movement and reflect on current trends in political and social lives of Iranians and not the structure of the Islamic Republic’s system. The interaction between the structure and the mobilizing and framing processes will then be discussed in the fourth chapter in this study.

HYPOTHESES

Identifying these variables I hypothesize that:

HYPOTHESIS 1: Political opportunity structures are constantly impacted by mobilizing structures and framing processes. In the case of the Green Movement’s emergence and

form, the central role should be given to the framing processes rather than the political opportunity structures.

To operationalize the implications for framing processes, I will investigate socio-cultural structures and identities of the grassroots with a focus on Internet users and bloggers. The historical context of Internet usage will also be examined. Framing strategic options is important in a social movement context, and this framing happens by way of conversations, discussion, deliberation, and decision-making on the part of movement adherents.

HYPOTHESIS 2: The grassroots identities and the use of information communication technologies have had a positive impact on the emergence and form of the 2009 Green Movement;

To investigate this impact, I will analyze the new uses of technology during the movement, including the many crafty ways in which citizen activists worked to circumvent the limits on social media posed by the regime.

HYPOTHESIS 3: In the absence of a strong charismatic leadership within the Green Movement, there have been limitations on the short-term success of this movement.

To determine the impact of the leadership in the Green Movement, this study will look at the so-called opposition faces, Mousavi and Karoubi, their political orientations, goals, and statements during the 2009 protests. This study will also analyze the cracks among elites, which indicate a shift in the structure of political opportunities by contracting the opposition leader's views to those of more reformist, conservative, and hardline persuasions during the protests. These individuals mainly include Iran's former reformist president, Mohammad Khatami; Iran's former president and current chairman

of the Expediency Council, Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani; Iran's current president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad; and Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei.

METHODOLOGY

Examining one social movement in Iran, in a disciplined configurative case study, this work will utilize a longitudinal study, over the course of the movement to observe changes in the variables: I use the congruence method and process tracing to begin to explain the emergence and form of the movement. The political process theory; that is the interaction of political opportunity structures, resource mobilization, and framing processes, is considered as the theoretical framework of this thesis. George and Bennett (2005) state “congruity” is an important general standard for congruence tests; that is “similarities in the relative strength and duration of hypothesized caused and observed effects” (183), in comparison with theory predictions. The dependent variable thus will be investigated both in terms of its causal relationship with the independent variables and its congruity with theory's predictions.

In order to establish the causal path, I will conduct in process tracing. According to George and Bennett (2005), “the process tracing method attempts to identify the intervening causal process—the causal chain and causal mechanism—between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable” (p.206). Thus the within-case study would be enough for examining the hypothesis and for theory testing. A disciplined configurative case study can contribute to theory testing “because it can impugn established theories if the theories ought to fit it but do not, and it can serve heuristic purposes by highlighting the need for new theory in neglected areas”(George and Bennett, 2005, p.75).

The case of the Green Movement in Iran presents a critical and a thorough test for the purpose of this study and may contribute to theory development. The images of thousands of protesters in 2009 reminded many of the revolutionary course of 1979. The question arises about under what conditions has it turned to, as many scholars now discuss it, a non-violent, civil rights movement? In the era of information technologies and globalization, are current theories of social movement sufficient to explain the emergence and form of this movement? According to McAdam (1996) the various types of movement are simply different forms of collective action rather than qualitatively different phenomena requiring distinct explanatory theories. The dependent variable in this study is the emergence and form that the Green Movement has taken thus far.

Using political process theory (the interaction between structure of political opportunity, resource mobilization theory, and framing processes), this study will seek to account for variations in the independent variables to determine whether or not we can establish causal mechanisms to explain the phenomenon. This thesis will analyze participation of movement adherents through process tracing with an eye on how the participants used and took advantage of the Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in organizing and framing their collective action. Also, in the third chapter, the degree to which participants appear to respond to the so called leaders' demands and the degree to which leaders are influenced by the movement's demands are going to be analyzed through process tracing.

The study will seek to examine whether we need afford the central role to the framing processes rather than the structure of political opportunities in order to account for the emergence and form of the Green Movement. Studying this case will also shed

some light on demands of Iranian people and the path towards democratization in Iran, and may contribute to theory development and possible future policy formation.

I will test the four independent variables to examine whether they can account and explain for the dependent variable. Using general process tracing to account for causal chains along with the congruence method, I will work to ensure that the within-case study suffices for examining the dependent variable. This is important because the Green Movement is a relatively new phenomenon and needs to be examined separate from older versions of social movements in order to establish its identity. The interaction between the three approaches (political opportunities structure, resource mobilization, and framing processes) will be considered constant in this study to avoid issues of spuriousness, causal priority, and causal depth in judging the strength of inferences made on the basis of congruence tests.

The data for this study will mainly be collected from statements and sources on the Internet, such as opposition websites, international news agencies, social media websites, and blogs of the opposition activists during the protests. As many of these web pages and some of the Iranian scholars and opposition activist's commentaries on the 2009 protests are in Farsi, the author's translation will be added to this research wherever these works are cited. Also, some Twitter feeds and Facebook and Youtube updates during the protests, as well as Short message Service (SMS) messages will be used to indicate the extensive use of ICTs during the collective action. The so-called leaders' statements and presidential campaign debates on state media before the elections will also be analyzed. The Islamic Republic's Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies

website⁷ will also be assessed to reveal the extent to which people are connected and use the internet and mobile phone services in Iran.

Some of the Farsi websites and blogs include: *Advarnews*, *Kaleme* (“word”), *Jonbeshe Rahe Sabz (Jaras)* (“the movement of green path”), *Jomhourikhahi* (“republicanism”), *Balatarin* (the hottest link), *Roozonline*, *BBC Persian*, *VOA Persian*, *Deutsche Welle Persian*, *Radiofarda*, the Green Movement’s of Iran Video Blog, *Tahavole Sabz* (“the green change”), *Green Correspondents*, *Shahrvand-khabarnegre Sabz* (“green citizen-journalists”), *Nedaye Sabze Azadi* (“green voice for freedom”), *Zan-Nevesht* (“woman-writings”), *Tan-Nevesht* (“body-writings”).⁸

The literature on social movements identifies interacting patterns of structures, resources and values and meanings. Having identified the most relevant factors of each of these categories to the Green Movement in this chapter, this research will conduct in depth analysis on four of the independent variables that mainly pertain to cultural and framing processes. Chapter Two will investigate the Green Movement adherents’ identities with an eye on their use of ICTs. Chapter Three explores the statements and activities of the Green Movement well-known figures during the height of the protests. In Chapter four, I will try to investigate the interaction between the structure, mobilization, and framing as these processes constantly interact. Due to the novelty of this phenomenon there is little access to archival works. The scholarly works on 1999 student protests will also be examined in order to establish a historical causal mechanism for variables examined.

⁷ <http://www.ict.gov.ir/home-en.html>

⁸ A list of all Farsi websites and blogs can be found in Appendix A.

CHAPTER II: GRASSROOTS' IDENTITIES AND USE OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

INTRODUCTION

In order to comprehensively understand a social movement we need to understand the social structures that inform its actions at both national and international levels. It is also wise to look at the protest through socio-historical lenses, in terms of ongoing changes in the economic, social, and cultural fields. If social structures and cultural frames are, as Calhoun states, inseparable, it seems that it supports a crossover between structure and agency.

Most of the decisions in life are made by using the available information. The role of the Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) thus becomes particularly important. Most of the scholarship on the role of ICTs in the organizing and framing of social movements is on open and in many cases western democracies, in which the role played by the traditional mass media (i.e., television, radio, newspapers) and the new media have both influenced the emergence and form of a particular social movement. In the case of the Green Movement and in closed authoritarian states, with limited access to the traditional media, the role of the new media and especially the Internet becomes more important. This chapter on the cultural structure of the grassroots and their informal social networks will examine the impact of the Internet in the emergence, organization, and development of the Green Movement as many journalists and individuals turned to the Internet as means to make their voices heard. This type of activity made bottom-up communication possible, which was started long before the Green Movement emerged.

With a focus on the Internet use and the Iranian Blogistan, this chapter will first establish the cultural context in which the Green Movement emerged. Second, I will process trace the ICTs use during the 2009 presidential election campaign and the Green Movement to figure out whether there are any congruities with this thesis' hypotheses on the emergence and form of the Green Movement, and in framing a collective identity among the protesters. Then, I will discuss the implications of the ICTs use for the Green Movement in particular, and social movements in general. A brief literature on how collective identities are formed in situations such as social movements where high emotions are involved is first necessary.

RELATIVE DEPRIVATION AND SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORIES

Two dominant theoretical perspectives explain the framing of a collective identity: the relative deprivation theory, and social identity theory (Zomeren, 2009). Relative deprivation theory (RDT), posits that only when individuals perceive their situation as relatively deprived will they experience anger and resentment, and seek to improve their situation. This requires at least two conditions for individuals to engage in a collective action. First, the deprivation must be perceived as group based. A second insight from RDT suggests that individuals do not simply perceive social injustice or inequality, but are often emotionally aroused by it too. This idea has paved the way for applications of group-based emotion to the study of collective action. For instance, feelings of group based anger and resentment motivate individuals' willingness to engage in collective action.

Social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel and Turner, 1979) proposes that individuals' perceptions of socio-structural characteristics influence their identification

with the group, which predicts the likelihood of their participation in collective actions. First, group members should perceive the boundary between their (low-status) group and the comparison (high-status) group to be impermeable, such that they cannot join the high-status group and improve their individual position. This is parallel with RDT's distinction between group and individual deprivation. Second, the group's low-status position should be perceived as illegitimate or undeserved. This means that people should be able to imagine alternatives to the status quo (Tajfel, 1978). Third, the inequality should be perceived as unstable, reflecting a sense of agency that the social structure can be changed. In this way, individuals' group-based perceptions of, and emotional responses to, inequality and injustice have been identified as important predictors of their willingness to engage in collective action. This aspect, as well as participation in a collective action, promote a sense of psychological empowerment among group members.

Others have argued, however, that perceptions of, and even emotions based in, relative deprivation and illegitimacy may not be enough to predict actual collective action behavior. Building on SIT, they propose that a strongly developed and politicized sense of identification with a social movement is the best predictor of such behavior (Simon and Klandermans, 2001). Some authors have taken this argument even further to contend that people primarily identify with social groups for the purpose of mobilizing for collective action and social change. Thus, another important factor motivating collective action is individuals' politicized identification with their group. Other scholars have argued that not only in-group perceptions and emotions matter, but also individuals tend to engage in cost-benefit calculation to determine whether they have the proper resources

to mobilize for collective action (McCarthy, McAdam, Zald, 1996). The implication of such theories and how the ICTs have enforced types of emotional collective identity framings will be discussed in the third part of this chapter.

THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT: BOTTOM-UP INTERNET USE AND BLOGGING

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In 1998, when the reformist candidate Mohammad Khatami was elected president with a landslide victory, Internet use was limited to those with computer engineering skills and the knowledge of a second language. Farsi content on the web was limited, and only a few governmental organizations and newspapers shared a portion of their information on the Internet. After almost eight years of Khatami's presidency the number of Internet users in 2005 surpassed 4.5 million.⁹ Almost all the governmental and non-governmental institutions and newspapers had their own websites. The news content published in the newspapers became accessible on the Internet and many governmental or non-governmental news agencies began to disseminate the latest news on the web. Individuals also began to write weblogs. University students were the originators of blogging in Iran in 2001 (Sreberny and Khiabany, 2010).

By the end of Khatami's first term presidency of four years, the reformist newspapers were banned and many closed. With Internet use becoming more widespread, reformists began to use it as a means to publish the news, debate issues, and critique the regime. Development of different news networks on the web which had the same content

⁹Telecommunications Company of Iran. (2009). [Graph illustration of ICT use during 2006-2009 in Iran.] *Iran Telecommunications Statistical Indexes- September2009*. Available from http://tci.ir/s40/p_1.aspx?lang=En

as the banned newspapers and opposition news websites based outside of Iran, caused the state to limit and control access to these websites. Later individual weblogs added to the challenge, with the state unable to control all of them. These websites and blogs surpassed the regime's control over news dissemination and began to debate and challenge the state's policies by establishing channels to make different voices heard.

This was the first time since the establishment of the Islamic Republic that a majority of grassroots and not the elites could debate, criticize, and disseminate the information on state policies and actions. In response, the regime started banning and filtering some of these websites viewed as contradictory to Islamic values (especially any deemed political). Meanwhile, the Telecommunications Company of Iran (TCI) warned Internet provider companies to obtain legal licensing. With the government having the Internet service providers' (ISPs) property rights under its control, Internet providers were obliged to prevent the spread of non-Islamic, political, and 'un-lawful parties' on the web. Thus, observing Internet content was defined as one of the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution's responsibilities, and filtering websites and un-lawful content became government's responsibility. The Supreme Council announced that it was protecting Islamic and national values by observing Internet content and banning and filtering websites. In the last months of Khatami's presidency, these acts proved to be controversial among many union organizations and individuals. But Khatami defended the supreme council's decision and declared that the council is trying to defend the national culture and values by doing so.¹⁰

¹⁰Omidvar, Kaveh. (2005, August). Internet During Eight Years of Reformist Government. *BBC News*. (translation by the author). Retrieved from : http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/story/2005/08/050810_pm-ka-internet-khatami.shtml

The case was the same for cell phone users and services such as Short Message Service (SMS) and Multi-Media Messaging Service (MMS). As mobile telephony swept across Iran, people found many intriguing uses for them. Iranians use SMS daily to send out jokes (political or not) as well as organizational and informational messages. In April 2007, Iran's telecommunication ministry announced that it would start filtering 'immoral' video and audio messages sent via mobile phones. The ministry was instructed by the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution to buy the equipment needed to prevent any misuse of MMS.¹¹ Yet in the autumn of 2008, one could travel underground, open up a Bluetooth and receive a welter of explicit adult or even political material and jokes on a mobile phone.

Censorship and control in the late Khatami presidency and Ahmadinejad's first term, drove many people, including publishers, writers, journalists, and ordinary readers to the Internet to find and to provide information, and to debate and make space for expression. The journalist union came under severe attack in June 2008 when, as part of the general incursion on civil liberties and social movement activities, the Iranian government threatened to dissolve the their association¹² and tried to remove the association's executive committee to replace them with conservative journalists. Some created web based publications or collectives of writers who behaved much like a pressroom, and yet others clustered in *halghe* (circles) of individual bloggers. Sreberny and Khiabany note that these individuals are most often unpaid, often anonymous, and self-organizing, and that these types of publications rapidly replaced the banned titles of

¹¹Iran to Filter 'Immoral' Mobile Messages. (2007, April). *Reuters*. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/technologyNews/idUSDAH83913820070428>

¹² Attacks on the Press in 2008: Iran. (2008). *Committee to Protect Journalists*. Retrieved from <http://www.cpj.org/2009/02/attacks-on-the-press-in-2008-iran.php>

formal journalism. In this dynamic, many journalists became bloggers, and other bloggers have become journalists, especially outside Iran. Many of the once active bloggers from inside Iran are now employed by Persian news services outside Iran, or write in well-known international journals.

Control produces resistance. To surpass the regime's control over the Internet (the news content and the blogs) many have turned to hacking and *filter-shekan* (anti-proxy) (Sreberny and Khiabany, 82). Many users of the Internet in Iran use these anti-proxies or literally filter-breakers to go around government control. Many individuals as well as the Persian language websites such as BBC Persian and VOA Persian, based outside of Iran are actively involved in creating new anti-proxies and sending them out to Iran. People discuss uses and different versions of these anti-proxies on different websites such as *Balatarin* (the hottest link), a website that ranks the most popular link of the day for Iranians.

By 2008 more sophisticated tools were available, produced by university graduates inside Iran. There were programs for Firefox that enabled users to circumvent the filter that blocked access to Flickr, the photo sharing website. Another extension turned Firefox itself into a proxy that bypassed censorship on popular Web 2.0 websites such as Youtube, Flickr, Myspace, and many others that were barred in Iran. Within less than one hour of the BBC World Service website being blocked in January 2006, one was offered ways into the site by people, and not all young, eager to be helpful (Sreberny and Khiabany, 2010). Such techniques have been the terrain of fairly sophisticated net users; in the summer of 2009 they were even more widely circulated and publicized, with

numerous Youtube videos and Facebook and Twitter posts explaining how to circumvent net censorship and how to become a citizen journalist.

THE SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

Hamid Dabashi (2010) argues “cyberspace has expanded the cosmopolitan worldliness of Iranian culture, further intensifying its multiple contentiousness as a guarantor of resistance to any mode of governmentality that comes its face” (p.120). But as Sreberny and Khiabany (2010) indicate, not all the sites or blogs in the blogosphere engage with politics, rather they share the view with Dabashi that even “the most mundane of issues in the Islamic Republic comes to have a gendered and political twist” (p.129). In the blogosphere, a wide range of organizations and individuals are debating the most significant and the most mundane of topics that are related to gendered relations and state policies that affect Iranian women. Central to Dabashi’s argument of the formation of this social phenomenon, for example, has been the rise of what bloggers call *tan-neveshteha* (“body-writings”), a sustained and proactive flow of prose that young women bloggers, in particular, have been writing about their own bodily (erotic) experiences. Related to these *tan-neveshteha* has been *del-neveshteha* (“heart-writings”), writing about one’s love and affection, again practiced mostly by young women.

Attempts to ‘Islamicise’ Iranian society after the 1979 revolution have been met with many obstacles. The rapid modernization of Iran, the increase in urbanization, literacy, and access to education, the connectivity as well as the inherent contradictions in the Iranian state policies, which from one side encourages women to participate in the public sphere and from the other deprives them of their many basic rights, have led to a wider participation of women in the public sphere and new forms of politics. The very

‘traditionalist’ women who were assigned to implement and safeguard the state policies in Iran (one good example of them is Mousavi’s wife, Zahra Rahnavard) have also begun to challenge the discriminatory policies of the state and conservative readings of Islam.

Dabashi believes that in the course of the Green Movement we have seen the “retrieval” of Iranian cosmopolitanism, which has been the essence of the 1979 revolution hijacked by a few Islamic fanatics who have tried to silence it for more than three decades. He takes the Iranian, Islamic, and Christian calendars that are relevant in everyday lives of Iranians as an indication of this cosmopolitanism. Pointing to the 1979 course of revolutionary events, he argues the Islamic rituals of 1978 were the most influential determinants of the success of the revolution in overthrowing the Pahlavi regime. More than 17 million people marched the streets of the capital Tehran in *Ashura* (one of the most important dates in the Shi’it and Islamic calendar) to demand the departure of the Shah. He points to the fact that in the aftermath of the Green Movement people have used the Persian New Year festivities as a tool to insist on their Iranian identity; one thing that could be seen on the weblogs of the Green Movement activists which are full of nationalist discussions. The creative combination of these planes offers opportunities to “play with and subvert the stratagems that a garrison state may wish to deploy.” Islam according to Dabashi is “integral” to this cosmopolitanism but not “definitive” of it—as it is “secularism.” He argues that the “multiple consciousness,” imbedded in this use of three calendars is the space where the creative subject could always find room for “political defiance, social maneuverability, and national identity” (p.206).

The signs of this culture, for Dabashi, are prose and poetry; the love letters of two women activists to their husbands who have been imprisoned in the aftermath of the Green Movement, expressed both as a personal affection and the demonstration of a social phenomena. And beyond poetry the signs are clear in the popular music scene with women pop singers publicly expressing their affection for a male object of desire. He argues that the defiant prose of the bloggers (young women in particular) has been chiefly responsible for this public and open expression of love. In Iran according to Dabashi (2010) “things have moved beyond the false and falsifying binary of modernity/tradition” (p.203). Against the gain of the militant Islamism he argues, the body has not become political. The love letters of wives of the imprisoned opposition figures and journalists, are an indication of a healthy retrieval of the social body that has naturally grown in the body politic of a nation, “the public fusion of the political and the erotic is the defining moment of this resurgent social body as it retrieves and defines its emancipated cosmopolitan disposition” (p.188). A culture all but destroyed by the Islamic Republic. For him, the Green Movement marks the return of such culture.

This cosmopolitanism, according to Bayat (2009), refers to both a social condition and an ethical project. The former signifies certain objective processes, such as globalization, migration, and traveling that compel people of diverse communal, national, or radical affiliations to associate, work, and live together. These processes lead to diminishing cultural homogeneity in favor of diversity, variety, and plurality of cultures, religions, and lifestyles.

Cosmopolitanism also has ethical and normative dimensions; it is a project with humanistic objectives (Bayat, 2009). In this sense, cosmopolitanism is deployed to

challenge the language of separation and antagonism, and to confront cultural superiority and ethnocentrism. It further stands opposed to communalism, where the inward-looking and close-knit ethnic or religious collectives espouse narrow, exclusive, and selfish interests. Cosmopolitanism of this sort also overrides the “multiculturalist” paradigm. Because although multiculturalism calls for equal coexistence of different cultures within a national society, it is still preoccupied with cultural boundaries and outlook that departs from a cosmopolitan world where intense interaction, mixing, and sharing tend to blur communal boundaries, generating hybrid and “impure” cultural practices.

Another example of such social phenomena, which has intensified during thirty years of the Islamic Republic’s project of ‘Islamicising’ Iran, is a politically satiric TV show on Voice of America’s (VOA) Persian channel. Hosted by two young Iranian expatriots, blending Iran’s traditional music with the western style music, and comparing Iran’s politics to the democratic states and making fun of it, it starts with these opening phrases in satire: “a TV show from the children of the revolution, who are now considered the mercenaries of the US in order to spread arrogance in our Islamic country.” Their Facebook page receives more than 30,000,000 hits every month.¹³ One of their fans on Facebook lost his life on the streets of Tehran during the recent Green Movement protests in support of uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt.

Other voices actively blogging on the blogosphere include leftists, unionists, and students. It is worth noting that more than 40 million of Iranians, about 70 percent of the population, are under the age of 30, while nearly 50 percent are under 20. The student uprising in the summer of 1999 demonstrated the importance of this young generation of

¹³Hosseini, K., Arbabi, S . (2010, May 20). Parazit 6. *VOA Persian*. Washington D.C. Available from <http://www.facebook.com/parazitparazit>

students. In analysis of 1999 student uprisings Mahdi (1999), suggests that the absence of anti-imperialism and anti-American sentiments was matched by the absence of reference to socialism, Marxism, and capitalism. However in recent years the students, at least sections of them, have been radicalized. The failure of the reform movement to achieve any key aims such as the rule of law, accountability, and more social openness, the election of Ahmadinejad and his radical rhetoric and practices, and the changing environment in the region (the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan and threat of a military attack on Iran) have produced a different kind of response. According to Mahdi the student movement in Iran cannot and should not be generalized.

The Diaspora has also been active in the blogosphere, as many second and third generations of Iranians are now living outside Iran and have children. The blogs have been a good tool of connecting these individuals to inside Iran and widening their circles of friends in social media networks.

Blogging as an activity plays powerfully on the cusp of the public-private: private matters are turned public; public affairs are translated and coded for private, known readers. Circles are built up of other bloggers, commentary upon commentary, because bloggers are amongst each others, most faithful readers and so new friendships are formed (Sreberny and Khiabany, 2010, p.160).

Sreberny and Khiabany (2010) also argue that if journalism is about articulating social and political issues, about investigation and analysis, then “the Iranian blogosphere functions as a powerful alternative, free at the point of consumption and relatively free at the point of production-if the mighty hand of the state can be avoided.” Given this background the explosion of journalism and photojournalism during the election process of June 2009 and after can be seen as no surprise. “Here was a cadre of talented, frustrated professionals and non-professionals prevented from doing their job and having

a voice. Little wonder that so many people had so much to say in 2009” (p.126). Noting this social phenomena and its diverse and vast demonstrations on the Internet, especially the social media and the blogs, Sreberny and Khiabany note there is no surprise that these individuals seeing themselves unable to change the course by casting their votes, “felt frustrated in the election of 2009 and produced such an instant social movement. It had been brewing for years” (p.129).

THE STATE CATCHING UP WITH GRASSROOTS’ INTERNET USE

The widespread use of Internet and high levels of connectivity in Iran have convinced some elements of the regime and clerics that they have to catch up with the latest technologies in order to reach out to the public. The Internet was used in 2005 election campaigns as well (Sreberny, Khiabany, 2010, p.141). With all candidates having their own websites/blogs, and many religious institutions and agencies had deemed it necessary to establish an on-line presence. The difference, however, was that the debate and the consensus framing on many informal social networks and blogs and among individuals was not to participate in the elections. The failed promises of Khatami in the eight years of his presidency and the absence of any strong candidate who would bring a change in state policies had convinced many to boycott the election in order to not give the regime the legitimacy it needed.

In addition to the blogging activities of the inner circle of the state closely associated with the *veleyat-e-faghih* (“the rule of the jurist”)—a reference to Iran’s supreme leader—there are many religious intellectuals who, while still committed to an Iranian state, have in recent years distanced themselves from its theological structure. Many of these were part of the reformist camp that came to force during Khatami’s two

terms as president (1997-2001 and 2001-2005). One of these figures is Mohammad Ali Abtahi, one of Iran's six vice presidents during Khatami's presidency, who launched his blog in September 2003, which became an instant hit. He announced his opening of a blog as "I am here as well!" Shortlisted for Deutsche Welle International Weblog award in 2006, his blogs consisted of daily articles and diaries, extensive archives, and articles about him in other media. He wrote commentary in Persian and English on cultural and social issues and regularly criticized any crack down on weblogs and the Internet. As one of the chief advisors to one of the election candidates and later the opposition figure, Mehdi Karoubi, Abtahi was arrested on June 2009 during the aftermath of the presidential election, appeared in a show trial, and was sentenced to six years in prison.¹⁴

SUMMER OF 2009 AND THE ELECTIONS

THE 2009 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN

A look at Blogistan in both 2005 and 2009 presidential elections makes it clear that the consensus languages among bloggers in these two presidential elections were completely different. In 2005, it was the first time that Farsi language weblogs had a chance to debate the presidential candidates and challenge other activists' opinion. In an analysis of Persian Blogistan in the weeks leading to the 2005 presidential elections, BBC Persian's website reported that from the first day of the election campaign many influential figures in Blogistan were speaking of boycotting the elections. These individuals are disappointed with Khatami's eight years of reform government that has

¹⁴Secor,L. (2009, August,31). The Iran show. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved from http://www.newyorker.com/talk/comment/2009/08/31/090831taco_talk_secor

brought no real change in the Islamic Republic's system and has not been able to fulfill its promises of a more open society and or even create jobs and control inflation.¹⁵

The reasoning of those who have decided to boycott the elections in 2005 was that the president does not have any operative authority in Iran and the other vertical institutions make it a weak authority. Others did not want to give the Islamic Republic the legitimacy it needs in the international arena by taking part in the elections. One of the most famous figures boycotting the 2005 elections was Akbar Ganji (an insider and later a political prisoner of the Islamic Republic), whose decision on not taking part in the 2005 presidential elections influenced many on Blogistan. Also, more than 550 elites and political figures boycotted the elections (even before the Guardian Council rejected the competency of many individuals to announce their candidacy) because of the monopoly of power, and the fact that they could not see any hopes of the situation getting better by participating in the elections.

There were, however, voices that were skeptical of boycotting the elections in 2005. One of the most prominent figures was Abtahi, who writes,

no analyst is hopeful of a sudden regime change in Iran, with its vast oil resources and powerful army. We have a duty in this situation to think about the youth of Iran and those who don't want to leave the country and have very fragile situation. Boycotting the elections, and the victory of one of the hardliner candidates will have a direct impact on the youth's everyday lives. They won't be able to walk in the streets the way they want, write weblogs, and not go to jail for that.¹⁶

In 2009, however, the situation was different. The state, having controlled most media and power resources, adopted a strategy to allow the opposition to organize its

¹⁶ Jami, M. (2005, January 15). Blogistan in the Days Leading to Elections. *BBC Persian*. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/story/2005/06/050614_mj-persian-wblgs-election.shtml

campaigns freely. The strategy purported to motivate people to vote in the election. For the first time since the 1979 revolution, there were heated TV debates on the State-owned TV channels between the presidential candidates.¹⁷ This was an exceptional opportunity given to the political reformists and probably the only time available to broadcast their messages in public without censorship. The reformists' pre-election campaigns drew unexpected support, as they allowed hope for change. Mass rallies supporting the opposition occurred nationwide throughout the campaign period.

During the 2009 presidential elections, the Blogistan was buzzing with invitations, writings, and hope to go out and vote to change the course that Ahmadinejad had followed during his first four years of presidency. Ahmadinejad's government policies (both domestic and international) in his first four years as president, which had further isolated Iran, had a strong impact on people's decision to go out and vote. Almost all the weblogs were trying to encourage Iranians to vote; few were arguing in favor of a boycott.

In an interview with the BBC Persian website, Dariush Malakoot, the author of the weblog *Malakoot*, notes that every blogger has a circle of friends, fans, and family who are the ones influenced indirectly by the weblogs contents. This means that the bloggers can transfer the debates and information sharing going on the blogs to their family and friends and indirectly influence them.¹⁸ Akbar Montajebi, who writes a blog with the same name, argued that one of the main characteristics of the 2009 elections is

¹⁷ (2009, May 21). Iran Releases Presidential Debate Timeline. *BBC News*. Retrieved From http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8062170.stm

¹⁸ Afshang, M. (2009, January, 9). What impacts does the blogs have on Iran's elections? *BBC Persian*. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2009/06/090609_ra_maf_election_blogs.shtml

the leading argument on the blogs that encourages everyone to take part in the elections.

In this regard one could read in the blog named *Zan-Nevesht* (“woman-writings”),

which way that I look, I can see that in the current situation I am in the margins’ of today’s society. For being a woman, and a liberal. And I don’t have any hope that this situation changes anytime soon. I will vote in the elections, so that I can claim my marginalized right, and to make my voice heard to an extent and be active.¹⁹

Also, in the debates about whether to vote or not, in the Blogistan many believed that boycotting the elections would benefit Ahmadinejad and the hardliners camp. This was coupled with the belief among the youth that if there is going to be a change in their lives, it is going to happen by participating in the elections.

There were debates between the supporters, and even the advisors and representatives of each of the four candidates in the Blogistan. Once there was a televised debate between two candidates, the wave of critiques and supports from their opponents and supporters filled the blogs. Besides, the flow of comments under each post and the controversies over one paragraph written in a blog show the public’s enthusiasm and conviction to take part in the debate.

In this intense political debate over the elections on the Internet and the virtual world, the publication of a photo showing Mousavi and his wife hand in hand in public after leaving a campaign lecture, buzzed the Blogistan and the Internet.²⁰ What was new about this photo was the merging of private space to public space—what has been controlled and almost forbidden for years in Iran’s media. It may be because of this change and difference that many believed Mousavi’s conduct in the campaign was

¹⁹ Message posted to <http://zan-nevesht.blogspot.com/>

²⁰ Ghazi, Fereshteh. (2011, April 24). Iran Opposition Couple Mousavi and Rahnavard, Under House Arrest, Display Excellent Moral. *Rooz Online*. Retrieved from <http://www.payvand.com/news/11/apr/1233.html>

thoughtful and goal oriented, in a way to invoke public enthusiasm for the elections. Even if such conduct was just a campaign gesture, its importance in the Islamic Republic cannot be refuted. The flow of comments and reaction to this picture, in the context of Islamic Republic's control over citizen's private lives, show that every non-political act can become political and cause controversy in Iran today.

State control over people's everyday lives, from sports to arts, has made the public look at everything in terms of state policies that restrict their lives. This has resulted in interpreting and relating any simple private or individual conduct to the political framework reigning on the country. In these circumstances, the conduct of the youth or even the way they dress becomes a political act, even if such goal may have never crossed a youth's mind. A simple picture of a candidate and his wife creates controversy in a way that someone wrote in a weblog: "I am extremely excited." Another blogger took it even more seriously and wrote: "this picture tells the biggest story in three decades of Iranian politics. The moment when love is formally recognized."²¹

In a demonstration of mobilizing for women rights, Mousavi's wife, Zahra Rahnavard, appeared in an election campaign video clip along with one of Iran's well known and respected actresses and a former woman minister to highlight her husband's plans for defending women's rights. The state's policies and conservative laws against women were strongly criticized in that video clip. This was also the first time after the 1979 revolution that a candidate's wife was campaigning for elections alongside her husband. The videos of Mousavi and Zahra Rahnavard visiting different cities for

²¹Vaezinejad, M. (2009, May 13). Another Look: A Candidate's Photo with his Wife. *BBC Persian*. Retrieved from: http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2009/05/090513_bd_ir88_mousavi_rahnavard.shtml

election campaign were flouting on social networking websites and Youtube, adding to the excitement of the youth to participate in the elections.

A study of Iran's blogosphere on election eve finds that Mousavi had broader support in the online blog community than Ahmadinejad.²² The study suggests that there has been an interesting contrast between Ahmadinejad's emtedadmehr.com website, whose links are very concentrated in the Conservative Politics cluster, and Mousavi's mirhussein.com webpage, whose links are from all over the map, not just the reformist politics group. The study also finds a vast number of links coming out from the poetry cluster, which rarely links to political sites. Also, Mousavi has even more links from the CyberShi'a than Ahmadinejad. The study affirms that "this online interest doesn't necessarily translate to the offline world, but it may indicate a broader level of excitement about Mousavi in the electorate, particularly among those outside his expected base of supporters, which could ultimately lead to higher voter turnout for Mousavi" (Kelly and Etling, 2009).

In an interview with the Aljazeera English during the election campaign, one of Mousavi's campaign advisors indicated the importance of Internet and social media for the campaign, as the reformists were skeptical of state media policies that they believed were mostly in favor of Ahmadinejad. For us, Saeed Shariati says, "the Internet is like the air force in a military campaign. It bombards the enemy's positions and lays the groundwork for the infantry, our volunteers, so that they can win battles on the ground."²³

²² Kelly, J., Etling, B. (2009, June 11). Mapping Iran's Blogosphere on election Eve. Posted to *Internet and Democracy Blog*. Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University. Retrieved from <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/idblog/2009/06/>

²³ Al-Jazeera English (Producer). (2009, June 09). Iranian reformists try new media to win votes. Video posted to Youtube. Archived at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVL50UiRdkc&feature=player_embedded#at=43

Many of Mousavi's election rallies were organized on Facebook, such as the 25 kilometer human chain of his support.²⁴

The use of Youtube for the campaign was also unprecedented. Many young Iranians used the video-sharing website in creative ways to get their message crossed. One video showed Iranians in Tehran and different countries around the world with banners that read "I will vote," as part of the campaign by the supporters of Mousavi and Karoubi to encourage as many people to vote.²⁵ As the journalist and blogger Hamid Tehrani notes, the Youtube videos were also used for fact checking. During the campaign Mousavi and many other activists from the reform camp accused Ahmadinejad of lying to the nation and basing state policies on superstitions. Ahmadinejad denied, during a televised debate with one of his reformist candidates that he ever claimed a "halo" surrounded him during a United Nations (UN) address in 2005. A video clip on YouTube shows that Ahmadinejad did in fact say that a light enveloped him during his address to the UN General Assembly and that the crowd stared without blinking during the entire speech,²⁶ shaming the incumbent. Candidates and their supporters also took advantage of Youtube to publish their campaign videos. Many well-known figures of Iranian film industry, including Majid Majidi, Dariush Mehrjoei, Rakhshan Bani-Etemad, and Mohsen Makhmalbaf, supported the reformists and participated in or produced video campaigns for Mousavi and Karoubi.

²⁴ (2009, June 08). 25 Km Human Chain in Tehran. Video posted to Youtube. Archived at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PP-jji4VTQQ&feature=related>

²⁵ (2009, May 31). Global Photo Shoot May 31. Video posted to Youtube. Archived at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TBw2eiNgrJs&feature=player_embedded

²⁶ (2009, May 25). Ahmadinejad [the 'Halo']. Video posted to Youtube. Archived at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M2icRlwZJqw&feature=player_embedded

THE GREEN MOVEMENT AND THE ICTS

According to Iran's Telecommunication Statistical Indexes, mobile subscriber activation had reached 32,292,513 by September 2009 and mobile subscriber penetration rates were 44% of the population. The same data indicates that national Internet users had reached 23,000,000 in 2009 compared to only 8,800,000 in 2006. A little less than half of Iran's population are using mobile phones in their day-to-day lives, nearly a quarter of them are connected to the Internet. The images and videos of their demonstrations in the aftermath of the 2009 disputed elections were brought to the world's attention through the social media and video sharing websites such as Youtube.

On Friday, June 12, 2009, enthusiastic crowds turned to the voting stations to cast their votes, many polling stations had to remain open longer than planned due to long queues. Within two hours of the polls closing the vote was announced: 62.6 percent for Ahmadinejad.²⁷ The reported vote remained constant for all subsequent areas of the country. This rapid declaration of a landslide victory for Ahmadinejad was immediately rejected by the other three candidates, including the second conservative candidate, Rezaii. The reformist camp questioned the outcome for the speed of the declaration, for the actual figures given (which remained constant), and for the lack of variation by region in Iran (Sreberny & Khiabany, 2010, p.172).

Mousavi who at least was hopeful for a second round, insisted he was the victor and appealed against the result to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader. In a letter he rejected the results: "I personally strongly protest the many obvious violations

²⁷ Johnson, A., Murphy. (2009, June 13). Iran Election Results: Ahmadinejad Declared Winner. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/06/13/iran-election-results-ahm_0_n_215169.html

and I'm warning I will not surrender to this dangerous charade,” and emphasized that, “the result will jeopardize the pillars of the Islamic republic and establish tyranny.”²⁸

Quickly the slogan of a ‘stolen election’ spread and ‘where is my vote?’ became a national outcry of many Iranians who believed that their votes were ignored. Hundreds of demonstrators wearing Mousavi's signature green color marched down Vali-Asr Avenue demanding all Iranians to support them and shouting slogans such as “Mousavi, give us our votes back,” and “the election was full of lies,” before being dispersed.²⁹ Within an hour, first video of the demonstrations emerged on Youtube and quickly was shared on social networking websites.

In an effort to avoid any calls for vote cancelation and recount, Ayatollah Khamenei, in a statement issued on state television on Saturday afternoon, congratulated Ahmadinejad on his victory and pointedly urged the other candidates to support him.³⁰ Later, in a televised address on Saturday night, Ahmadinejad called on the public to respect the results, and he denounced foreign diplomatic and journalistic criticism. “All political and propaganda machines abroad and sections inside the country have been mobilized against the nation,” he declared.³¹ However, seeing the pressure and the public anger over the result, the Supreme Leader on Monday, June 15, ruled a partial recount of the votes, that he had endorsed earlier, and appealed to the nation to remain calm.³² These efforts to calm the protests and bring back the situation to normal were not

²⁸Black, J. Kamali-Dehghan, S. (2009, June 23). Riot Erupt in Tehran Over Stolen Election. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jun/13/iran-mahmoud-ahmadinejad-riots-tehran-election>

²⁹ (2009, June 13). Protest against fake elections, Tehran, Iran. Video posted to Youtube. Archived at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nifgnonH-BU>

³⁰Worth, R. Fathi, N. (2009, June 13). Protests Flare in Tehran as Opposition Disputes Votes. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/14/world/middleeast/14iran.html>

³¹ Ibid

³²Worth, R., Fathi, N. (2009, June 15). Defiance Grows as Iran's Leader Sets Vote Review. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/16/world/middleeast/16iran.html>

effective. Defying the interim ministry's ban of any gatherings and demonstrations, people took to the streets in numbers.

Over the next few days the crowds got bigger. During the week of June 15-18 Tehran witnessed the biggest demonstrations in 30 years, as over a million people marched in the city and the demonstrations ended at nights in violent clashes between the government militia and the peaceful demonstrators, who showed their non-violent intentions in the rally of silence of June 17.³³ On June 18, Mousavi called on his supporters to rally and promised to attend the rally himself. According to a report by *The New York Times*³⁴ the silent rally was a deliberate and striking contrast to the chaos of the past few days, when riot police officers sprayed tear gas and wielded clubs to disperse scattered bands of angry and frightened young people. When the occasional shout or chant went up, the crowd quickly hushed it, and some held up signs demonstrating the word "silence." The crowds were refusing to invite any retaliation from the security forces, and called for a vote recount or annulations. Protesters were especially enraged that Ahmadinejad on Sunday dismissed them as nothing more than soccer fans who had just lost a game and as "dirt and dust." One demonstrator's Twitter message read, "Ahmadinejad called us dust, we showed him a sandstorm."³⁵

Despite a warning from the Supreme Leader during Friday's prayers of June 19, about the harsh consequences of continuing to protest,³⁶ movement adherents were

³³ (2009, June 17). Tehran, Iran 27 Khordad 88. Video posted to Youtube. Archived at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Clo_6Qp1eTk

³⁴ F. Worth, R., Fathi, N. (2009, June, 15). "Defiance Grows As Iran's Leader Sets Votes Review." *The New York Times*. Retrieved from:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/16/world/middleeast/16iran.html?pagewanted=all>

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ (2009, June 21). "# Iran Election Crisis: A Social Media Timeline." *Mashable*. Retrieved from <http://mashable.com/2009/06/21/iran-election-timeline/>

defiant. They turned out to the streets on June 20, in massive numbers. The day marks the death of Neda, whose death was captured on mobile phones, and was published hours later on Youtube and was shared through other social networking websites and buzzed the Internet. The video received incredible attention and evoked widespread sympathy throughout the world.³⁷ Barack Obama described it as heartbreaking, Oxford University established a new scholarship in her name, and a street in Rome was named Neda.³⁸ Neda soon became both a symbol of the opposition movement and the ruthless nature of the regime. On the same day a status update on Mousavi's official Facebook read "today you are the media, it is your duty to report and keep the hope alive."³⁹ Mousavi's long-form statement to the nation also was not communicated as a release to the press; rather it was posted as a note on the candidate's Facebook page.

Some have called the post-election aftermath a 'Twitter Revolution' due to the astonishing role of social networking sites.⁴⁰ During the heated moments of the turmoil, the US State Department asked Twitter to postpone its planned maintenance to allow Iranian protesters to use the service for communicative purposes.⁴¹ Google and Facebook announced that they would add a Farsi version to their websites in response to

³⁷ Erdbrink, T. (2009, June 22). Woman's slaying in protests creates an opposition icon. *Washington Post*. Retrieved From <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2009/06/22/AR2009062203041.html>

³⁸ Ferani, L. (2009, November 12). Angel of Freedom, Neda Agha Soltan: Oxford scholarship will be her most important legacy. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/6553511/Angel-of-Freedom-Neda-Agha-SoltanOxford-scholarship-will-be-her-most-important-legacy.html>

³⁹ (2009, June 20). Mousavi's Facebook Message. *Mashable*. Retrieved from <http://mashable.com/2009/06/20/moussavi-facebook/>

⁴⁰ Berman, A. (2009, June 15). Iran's Twitter revolution. *The Nation*. Retrieved from <http://www.thenation.com/blogs/notion/443634>

⁴¹ Morozov, E. (2009, June 17). Iran Election: A Twitter Revolution? *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/discussion/2009/06/17/DI200901702232.html>

widespread use during the protests.⁴² The critical role of the Internet in the protests was recognized by the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences as one of the ten most influential Internet moments of the decade.⁴³

In the days that followed and during the summer of 2009, Many Iranians on Facebook changed their avatars to a green square that included the text ‘where is my vote?’ While many non-Iranians tweaked the icon to ‘where is their vote?’ Facebook turned green. It became a space for posting video (sometime culled from Youtube), articles (culled from the international media and sometimes the Iranian press), photographs that had been sent by mobile or e-mail attachment from people in Iran. Facebook became an enormous distribution site of new and recycled material. One could watch a new post being picked up and shared almost instantly, seeing it move across Facebook.

The demonstrators framed their actions around one color, ‘green’, with a ‘stolen vote’, as the central message and language of the movement to speak out their grievances. The color green became the broadest signifier of the Movement. Green morphed from Mousavi’s campaign color during the election to the color for all opposition and reformists groups in the post election period. Karoubi’s followers and even people who did not vote but were critical of the regime’s brutality against the peaceful protests began to use the color. Green soon appeared at public events, football matches, festivals and so forth. Although Mousavi had attached religious meaning to this color at the time of the

⁴² Ahmed, M. (2009, June 20). Google and Facebook go Farsi to help Spread Iran Message. *The Times*. Retrieved from http://technology.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/tech_and_web/article6537531.ece

⁴³ (2009). The ten most influential Internet moments of the decade’ 2009. *The Webby Awards*. Retrieved from <http://www.webbyawards.com/press/topwebmomentsdecade.php>

election, by this time it was devoid of religious meaning, so seculars felt comfortable in using it to represent their cause.

In response, the state intended to cut off all means of communication among the public. Most leaders of reformist parties were arrested and demonstrations were declared illegal. Overt signs of repression included the failure of phone lines for hours after the polls closed and the blocking of the English and Persian-language websites of the BBC and Voice of America—which are regularly attacked by the Iranian authorities as ‘imperialist.’ Text messaging also failed. The regime also put up a website named *gerdab* (“vortex”) that was aimed at intimidating the protesters by putting their pictures on the website, threatening them, and asking the public to identify them.⁴⁴ In response to this, the Green Movement came up with its own such website *gerdab-e-sabz* (“the green vertex”), trying to shame the *Basij* (Islamic Republic’s semi-militia) and the security forces by publishing their names and pictures on the website.⁴⁵ Websites of both sides were under continuous cyber-attacks by ‘hacktivists’, which led to temporary disruption of the websites.⁴⁶

Protesters used their mobile phones to record the events, including police brutality, and then uploaded these images onto the Internet. Hundreds of pictures and videos quickly appeared on the Internet and the links were shared on Facebook. Despite the slow speed of home Internet connections, people were successful in uploading their videos and

⁴⁴Tehrani, H. (2009, June 27). Iranian Officials ‘Crowd Source’ Protester Identities. *Global Voices*. Retrieved from <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2009/06/27/iranian-officials-crowd-source-protester-identities-online/>

⁴⁵ See <http://rahezadi.com/2009/08/30/gerdab-sabz-list-of-basiji-criminals-please-help-identify-redistribute/>

⁴⁶Shachtman, N. (2009, June). Web attacks expand in Iran’s cyber battle (updated again). *Wired Danger Room*. Retrieved from <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2009/06/web-attacks-expand-in-irans-cyber-battle/>

photos. The latest news on the protests was therefore available online. This was the only way of getting news out of the country, as all foreign news agencies had been forced to leave by then.⁴⁷

In the beginning the protests tended to start spontaneously, however, in later weeks and months, shared strategies, a collective identity, a loose structure and leadership, and visions for the future were gradually fashioned. There was a cycle between the streets and the Internet: people planned a demonstration, discussed the slogans and strategies on the web, actualized the plans in the streets and confronted the security forces, then turned back to the Internet and published the pictures, news and videos of the incidents, discussed the outcomes and prepared for the next demonstration.

The wide geographical coverage and the amateur quality of the video footage indicated that these activities were of an unorganized nature and pointed to individual actions taken by individual people (Sohrabi-Haghighat and Mansouri, 2010). The Green Movement adopted what Ashraf calls a “hydra approach.”⁴⁸ Each individual within the Green Movement became a leader; “each individual became a “digital node,” which made the regime's attempts to squash it desperate.

The Green Movement is dependent upon websites, but it is not dependent upon any one website. During the height of the protests, activists set up a blog to advertise a protest, and when it was taken down, a new blog was put up. The Movement was also adept at bringing its online work to bear in the physical world. For example, stencils and

⁴⁷ (2009, June 16). Iran bans international journalists from covering rallies'. *CNN*. Retrieved from <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/06/16/iran.journalists.banned/index.html>

⁴⁸ Ashraf, C. (2009, Nov 24). #Iralection: The Digital Media Response to the 2009 Iranian Election. *Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University*. Retrieved from: <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/interactive/events/luncheons/2009/11/iranelection>

flyers were created online and shared throughout the Blogistan, then printed out and used during protests. Ashraf notes that during the massive crack downs on the streets and on the cyberspace “the Green Movement’s response, basically, has been to create a digital movement whose leader is itself, whose central organizing structure is viral, with ebbs and flows that adapt to the constantly changing and shifting digital and social landscape in post-election Iran.”⁴⁹

The Green Movement effectively employed the Internet to disseminate information and to recruit and mobilize people to participate in the protest. Before each rally, activists uploaded a great number of posters, video clips and songs on the Internet, in an attempt to attract large numbers of people to turn out. Activists proposed many slogans, and the main opposition figures issued statements to encourage people to come out in support. During these demonstrations, protesters captured eye-catching incidents with their mobiles, and sent them via “desktops to television screens” (Bennet, 2003). The use of ICT paved the way for many individuals to actively participate and to have their voices heard in this era of mass ‘self-communication.’ The Internet and especially the social networking websites, first, acted as the main information and organizing platform for the protesters and opposition. Second, they created a bridge between Iran and abroad. This campaign outside Iran in support of the demonstration could not have been possible with the help of many citizen journalists posting their accounts and videos of the situation on the ground on the social media.

The opposition took the regime’s repression as a key means of attracting global media attention and successfully influenced the public agenda. All this was done by mobile phones and the Internet in a “micro-to-macro crossover” (Bennet, 2003, p.161).

⁴⁹ Ibid

Diffusion of the Green Movement was accelerated incredibly by the Internet, allowing for access to Iranian networks all over the world. Pictures and videos of the regime's brutality evoked strong feelings of sympathy throughout the Iranian diaspora. Unprecedented solidarity with the protest movement emerged from Iranians abroad and several demonstrations were held in support of the Green movement in the US, Canada, some European countries, Australia and Asia.⁵⁰ Iranians abroad called upon their host governments not to recognize Ahmadinejad as Iran's president and to condemn the violation of human rights in Iran. In one case, a "green roll" was publicized in Paris. It was signed by thousands of Iranians from 167 cities around the world and stated "Ahmadinejad is not Iran's president."⁵¹ All these organizations and networks would have been inconceivable without the assistance of ICTs.

At first the protests were spontaneously formed to discredit the election, however, along the way, the contours of a collective identity appeared. During the election campaign, Mousavi's supporters used a green shadow over their profile pictures on Facebook. Sawyer (2007) argues that colors influence the 'emotional life of social movements' and help them to fashion collective identities. Furthermore, a large amount of artistic work served to promote an integrated sense of belonging amongst those involved in the Movement. An abundance of music, posters and video clips were made and published on the Internet by amateurs and was shared among circles of friends and activists. The themes were about commemoration of the martyrs and the suffering of their

⁵⁰ (2009, June 9). Worldwide demonstrations in solidarity with the election protesters in Iran. *Payvand Iran News*. Retrieved from <http://payvand.com/news/09/jun/1232.html>

⁵¹ Pender, T. (2009). Waterloo resident spearheads Green Scroll movement against Iran's Ahmadinejad. *The Record*. Retrieved from <http://news.therecord.com/article/568112>

mothers, hopes for a victory and a better future, and the regime's cruelty; all of which served to reinforce the Green Movement's collective identity (Sohrabi-Haghighat and Mansouri, 2010).

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR ICT USAGE

Laying out the historical, social, and political context on the web and process tracing the movement's adherent activities in their use of ITCs points to indications for the role of ICTs in emergence and form of social movements that challenge the state power. The importance of such tools in today's mass communication era can be categorized into four types of uses: *informational*, *conversational*, *symbolic*, and *organizational*.

The ICTs and mainly, the Internet, provide a space to access information without censorship imposed by authoritarian regimes. The Internet is a convenient way for information dissemination around the world. ICTs, by connecting activists to other adherents, the diaspora, and the main stream media, functions as the main source of information. The emotions involved in this kind of information dissemination (seeing a citizen dying on the streets) are high and contribute to gathering more adherents and sympathizers both inside and outside of a polity for a movement. The ability to use technologies to get the information and to interconnect people, rapidly and in real-time around the world, made ICTs a valuable tool for activists.

Further, Dutton (1999) reminds us that the focus of the information age should not be "information", but "access." The Internet has changed the rules by taking part in the political system. In the same vein, in examination of Iran's blogosphere three interconnected issues should be accounted for: first, a vast number of voices and ideas

that find a space to be heard; second, the space that is provided for these individuals and organizations to express their views, which can be counted as a form of a resource mobilization tool, should we count the individuals as political capitals of one country; and third, the range of topics that they introduce into the public sphere, thus surpassing the Islamic Republic's censorship of many social issues and making public previously inarticulate and un-noticed social issues, such as gender relations, or political discussions (Sreberny and Khiabany,2010). More important than being seen as a solely informational tool, the ICTs have provided a space for different and opposite points of views to be heard and engage in on-going conversations on different topics. In the case of the Green Movement, and in the absence of any formal social movement networks in the real world because of the oppression, the Internet has created such space. The conversation and debate flourished and at some points outburst both during the election campaign and the course of the Green Movement.

As a “stolen vote” created a collective identity and was politicized with relative deprivation of movement adherents in comparison with the status quo, the symbolic uses of ICTs became into play. Seeing social media websites and Youtube as their main resource under repression to discuss and enforce their collective identity, movement adherents started to frame their actions and discourse by using the ICTs. Almost all the demonstrations (such as the “silent protest”) were planned and discussed on the Internet (in social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter) and by taking advantage of the ICTs. Adherents framed the movement under one color; green, named it at first under a “stolen vote,” discussed its strategies through non-violent means, and used the social media and Youtube as the main platform for creating images, and uploading videos of the

sacrifices in the real time which arises emotions such as shock, fear, anger, and that may draw more participants into the movement.

The organizational aspect of ICTs with vast connectivity in an environment such as Iran also becomes clear by process tracing the adherents' activities. After each demonstration the next steps were discussed and images and videos of the day were uploaded. In this sense the ICTs had both their instrumental and symbolic uses. I argue that the ICTs were the main platform for Green Movement adherents to discuss, frame, and organize their strategies in the face of repression. This can prove true in authoritarian states other than the case of the Green Movement, where unlike many open societies the Internet is not one way of mass 'micro-communication'; rather it is the only way.

ICTs are one variable in emergence and form of social movements. In the case of the Green Movement their informational, conversational, symbolic, and organizational function as the main platform for framing and then organizing the movement cannot be ignored. Considering ICTs as another tool, taking up the role of radio, television, and cassette tapes during 1970s, to disseminate information and mobilize masses would be shortsighted. There are over 70,000 active bloggers in Iran today (Sreberny and Khiabany, 2010). The importance of ICTs should be assessed in terms of interconnectivity and access and space that they provide for grassroots to explore and discuss many social and political topics, bypassing the state's control. Their role needs to be analyzed in the social and cultural context of each movement and with a broader look at the space that they provide during years prior to eruption of an emotional and revolutionary social movement. In a social movement and under the state's control, this space is the platform for conversation, deliberation, and decision-making.

The fact that many Mousavi and Karoubi supporters—the young and old individuals, sometimes without any political affiliations—turned to the Internet as activists and volunteers to help the campaign, and later turned to Green Movement adherents, is in congruity with the loose structure and non-ideological aspect of the movement. Its strategies and organization are mainly discussed on the web (the social media and the blogs), between “informal social networks,” which gives everyone a voice. It is not dependent upon a central organization or website, and does not follow any specific ideology, rather it is dependent on every individual’s creativity and deliberative agency that gave the movement its momentum. On one side there were the most powerful arms of the Islamic system of government: the Supreme Leader, the military, the revolutionary guard, and the Guardian Council. On the other side was a loosely structured and diverse coalition that was grown emboldened by the day, with some clerics joining Mousavi and Karoubi. But a movement’s success or failure in achieving its goals depends on the interplay of other variables in which the political opportunity structure, resource mobilization, and framing process constantly interact. This will be discussed in chapter four.

CHAPTER III: OPPOSITION FIGURES AND THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP

INTRODUCTION

A look at Green Movement's leaders' biography and political activities reveals that they are Islamic Republic system "insiders" and can be considered as founding fathers of the regime. This explicit demonstration of the cracks among elites, which was indivisibly in place since the early days of revolution in 1979, was a result of 2009 elections and its aftermath; the Green Movement. Per my proposed methodology, I will use process tracing to reveal the role of the two main opposition figures (Mousavi and Karoubi) of the movement in emergence and form of the Green Movement. This will also help to figure out the congruities with this thesis' hypotheses.

Thus, in this chapter, first I will look at the biography and political activities of Mousavi and Karoubi since the establishment of the Islamic Republic. Second, I will examine their role in the emergence and form of the Green Movement as its so-called leaders, through process tracing and concurrence method by taking into account their activities and statements in the height of the protests. Third, drawing upon the Green Movement's leadership style and characteristics the implications for resource mobilization, framing processes and political opportunity structures will be discussed. This allows for theory testing and its expansion to other cases. An introduction to leadership in social movements is necessary.

LEADERSHIP IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Morris and Staggenborge (2004) argue that leaders are critical to social movements: they inspire commitment, mobilize resources, create and recognize opportunities, devise strategies, frame demands, and influence outcomes. They recognize a lacuna in theorizing

leadership, as the scholars have failed to fully integrate agency and structure. According to them we cannot neglect structure in expense of agency and nor can we ignore agency. Further emphasis on the leaders seems to unfairly relegate the critical masses of movement to the category of followers (Barker et.al, 2001). Thus, in analyzing the role of leadership we need to pay attestation to the political and cultural contexts of the movement. As discussed in Chapter Two, movement culture (the framing processes) and agency are in a close relationship.

There are functional roles played by the leaders at different stages of a movement development (Wilson, 1973). Gusfield (1966), as cited by Morris and Staggenborge, identifies two roles for a leader; inside of the movement as a “mobilizer,” inspiring participants, and outside of the movement as an “articulator,” linking the movement to the larger society. These roles change over time and according to movement development. Many draw on Weber’s theory of charismatic leadership, a relational approach that assigns a key role to the followers in inputting charisma to leaders. Melucci (1996) argues that the Weberian theory of charisma leads to the neglect of social relationship between leaders and followers, who are viewed as ceding to a charismatic leader and therefore lacking agency.

Others have explained both the ways in which leaders affect movement organization and how movement characteristics shape leadership. Expanding on Weber’s relational approach, Wilson (1973) distinguishes among charismatic, ideological, and pragmatic types of leaders and their associated types of movement organization. Leadership type affects centralization of decision-making, division of labor and the extent to which organization is subject to schism. Zald and Ash (Zald and Ash, 1966) point to

the ways in which organizational characteristics such as structural requirements for membership, affects the demands placed on leaders. An exclusive organization, for example, would require its leaders to focus on mobilizing tasks, while an inclusive organization would be more likely to have leaders with an articulating style.

By the same token, leaders from different types of backgrounds shape organizational structures in accordance with their previous experiences, influencing the mobilization, strategies, and outcome of the movement. Morris and Staggenborge (2004) argue that a key theoretical issue is the extent to which the characteristics and actions of leaders, as opposed to structural conditions, matter. Different types of leaders come out of different organizational structures. Political and cultural context of the movement affects leadership. Leaders operate within structures, and they both influence and are influenced by movement's organization and environment. Both structural limitations and opportunities for social movements and the ways in which leaders make a difference within structural contexts need to be examined. The movement culture is also important in analyzing leadership in a social movement.

BIOGRAPHY AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF THE TWO MAIN OPPOSITION FIGURES

A brief study of the biography of the two candidates who turned to opposition figures in the aftermath of the 2009 elections shows that they held several key posts in the Islamic Republic system. These two candidates were also opposition figures during the 1979 revolution, which overthrow the Pahlavi regime. This explicitly indicates splits among officials with leftist, rightist, and fundamentalist affiliations in the Islamic republic system that did not surface before in the formation of opposition. Most of the

reformists are now considered opposition figures and are in jail. This also can be considered as the end of reform era inside the system since it has lost its position inside the system and has turned into a form of opposition.

MIR HOSSEIN MOUSAVI

Mousavi has a master's degree in architecture and urban development from one of the most prominent universities of Tehran. He was one of the co-founders of this university's Islamic Council before the revolution. During the 1960s and early 1970s he was close to national-religious groups such as the Liberation Front. In the early 1960s he married Zahra Rahnavard, a student of sculpture at the time. She was also one of the prominent activists who fought the Shah's regime. In the years leading to Iran's revolution and with Khomeini's role as the leader of the revolutionary course becoming more prominent, Mousavi joined Khomeini's allies.

With the establishment of the Islamic Republic party in the early days after the revolution, Mousavi joined, and became its political secretary. He was also the editor in chief of a newspaper named Islamic Republic, affiliated with the party. During the 1980s he was named the foreign minister. After Rajaii and Bahonar (the time president and prime minister) were assassinated in an explosion, Khamenei became the president. His first nominee for prime minister did not get enough votes from Iran's assembly, and despite the differences between Khamenei and Mousavi in the Islamic Republic party, Khamenei declared Mousavi as the prime minister of the assembly. Many believe that this choice was a direct result of Khomeini's support for Mousavi. Mousavi was Iran's prime minister from that period until after Khomeini's death in 1989.

Differences between Khamenei, who was considered closer to the right wing of Islamic revolution, and Mousavi, who was closer to the left wing, continued in their eight years of cooperation as president and the prime minister. A split led to Mousavi's resignation after the end of Iran-Iraq war in 1988. The resignation was strongly rejected by Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic. Since almost all of Mousavi's term as prime minister was accompanied by the Iran-Iraq war, he is usually referred to as 'the prime minister of war.'

With the revision of the Iranian Constitution in 1989, the prime minister's role was eliminated. Khomeini's death meant that Mousavi and the left wing of the Islamic Republic lost their principle supporter. Meanwhile, Mousavi left his life as a politician and returned to the world of art, where he belonged before the revolution. It is worth mentioning that since then, Mousavi has held several marginal posts in the system. In 1989 he became a member of the Expediency Council, which continued until the emergence of the Green Movement. He was also a member of the Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution. Mousavi was political advisor to former president, Rafsanjani, during eight years of his presidency. During Khatami's presidency he was also his main advisor. The eight years of Khatami's presidency are known as reform era within the system, as many reformists were elected to *Majles-e Shora-e Islami* (Iran's Islamic Assembly) and occupied several key positions.

The main activities pursued by Mousavi during an almost twenty year absence from political controversy were academic and artistic. Since the mid 1970s he has been teaching in several universities and colleges in Tehran. In 1999, he was chosen as the

chair of Iran's arts academy by then president Khatami and continued his activities with that role. Several monuments in Tehran and other cities are the work of his hand.

MEHDI KAROUBI

Mehdi Karoubi, the other presidential candidate in the 2009 elections who joined Mousavi in denouncing the election results, is also a well-known figure and an Islamic Republic insider. During the revolution he was close to Ayatollah Khomeini and held several key posts since the establishment of the Islamic Republic, i.e. the presidency of *Majles* for several terms is one of these key posts. Other key posts include the presidency of *Bonyad-e Shahid Enghelab-e Islami* (Islamic Republic's Martyrdom Foundation). In 1991, during the first round of *Majles* elections after Khomeini's death, the Guardian Council with a new interpretation of law rejected the candidacy of many leftist in a party newly established by Karoubi and Khatami and those close to the wing *Khat-e Imam* ("Imam's Path"). The Islamic Republic's leftists were almost sidelined from 1991 until 1997 and the presidency of Mohammad Khatami.

In 1997 presidential elections, Karoubi along with other well-known figures of the Islamic Republic's leftists tried to convince Mousavi to declare his candidacy for the elections. It was a call that Mousavi rejected. With the election of Khatami as president in 1997 and a landslide win for reformists in *Majles* elections, Karoubi returned to power again as the president of *Majles*. During his second term as *Majles* president, he has been close to reformists and has criticized some of Islamic Republic's policies, but many criticize him for compromising freedom of the press by accepting Khamenei's *Hokm-e Hokoomati* ("State rule")⁵² to reject such reform.

⁵² In Shari'a, this is referred to as a rule by the highest rank of Islamic jurist that cannot be rejected.

By the end of sixth *Majles* with the presidency of Karoubi, differences between him and the reformists were obvious. Not only did he not participate in a sit-in by more than one hundred reformists in an attempt to protest against the Guardian Council's rejection of the candidacy of many reformists for next round of *Majles*, rather he announced his objection to the sit-in. He once again declared his candidacy for the *Majles* elections despite the fact that many reformists refused to announce any candidates for the seventh *Majles* elections, which he was not able to enter. During these years he was also involved in a financial scandal, which proved controversial within the regime.

In 2005, for the first time Mehdi Karoubi announced his candidacy for presidential elections. None of the reformist parties including the *Majma-e Rohaniyoon-e Mobarez* ("assembly of combatant clerics"), of which he was the secretary general at the time, supported his candidacy. He resigned as a member of the party. In 2005 elections he came in third after Ahmadinejad was declared president and Rafsanjani came second. He criticized the results and wrote an open letter to Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, in which he accused Khamenei's son of supporting one of the candidates. He also declared that he would resign from all of his official posts such as the supreme leader's advisor status and membership of the Expediency Council. He stated that he would establish a public party, which was inaugurated the same year under the name of *Hezb-e Etemad-e Melli* ("National Trust party") with Karoubi as its secretary general. A newspaper with the same name was also published which was associated with the reformists during Ahmadinejad's first term.⁵³

⁵³ Most of the material on opposition figures' biography and political activities is retrieved from *BBC Persian* and *Kaleme* websites. (Translation by the author).

THE GREEN MOVEMENT AND THE OPPOSITION FIGURES

In the presidential elections of 1989 and 1993, Rafsanjani was a candidate without any strong challengers and by winning the elections he served as president for eight years. However, by 1997 the politicians of the left wing of the Islamic Republic who were trying to find a candidate to fight the conservative camp asked Mousavi to announce his candidacy. He did not accept this call, and Mohammad Khatami declared his candidacy. After eight years of Khatami's presidency and a flourishing of debate on reform inside the system, the left wing, which was now known as the reformists, went after Mousavi again. He rejected a run for presidency, and Ahmadinejad was declared president. It is worth noting that there were also allegations of vote rigging in the 2005 elections, namely and the loudest ones from one of the opposition figures in the Green Movement, Mehdi Karoubi, who also ran for president in 2005. On the morning of the announcement of the election results in 2005, Karoubi rejected the results and famously declared that 'I only slept for a couple of hours at night and in the early morning the results were completely changed.' Analysis of the 2005 elections are beyond the scope of this thesis, but in the 2009 elections, Karoubi campaigners organized a page on Facebook under the title "we are awake this time."⁵⁴

When the 10th presidential race of the Islamic Republic gained momentum in 2009, many reformists again turned to Mousavi. He did not reject the call immediately and postponed his decision. Meanwhile, Karoubi had declared his candidacy months before. In fact he was among the first who declared that he would compete with Ahmadinejad in 2009 elections. Despite the fact that none of the main reformist parties,

⁵⁴*In bar Bidarim*(we are awake this time).Facebook group page. Retrieved from <http://www.facebook.com/pages/%D8%A7%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%85/195544285025>

except his own party, supported his candidacy, some of the well-known figures of these parties joined his election campaign such as Mohammad Ali Abtahi. His main campaign slogan was “change” and he declared himself a guardian of citizens’, women’s, and different ethnic minorities’ rights.

After months of negotiations among reformists, especially between Khatami and Mousavi, Mousavi declared his candidacy and Khatami gave his support to the campaign. The details of negotiations between Khatami and Mousavi are not clear, although after a few weeks the majority of reformist parties announced their support of Mousavi and despite his first statement, his second statement was closer to the reformist language. In his campaign he strongly criticized Ahmadinejad’s policies and the unlawfulness of his government’s activities.

Announcing his candidacy for the presidential race in a televised address to the nation, Mousavi declared “I am fighting in this race because I have found the current political, economic, and cultural processes worrying.”⁵⁵ In their campaigns, both Karoubi and Mousavi repeatedly targeted Ahmadinejad’s policies and announced that they were there to fight against “unlawfulness” and “lying” and that this caused them to feel “danger.” In their televised debate, Mousavi and Karoubi devoted the greatest part of their time to criticizing Ahmadinejad instead of debating their own election plans. In the debate referring to this unlawfulness and “strange powers” growing out of the

⁵⁵Karami, N. (2009, March 26). Former PM Mousavi Announces Presidential Bid. *Roozonline*. Retrieved from <http://www.roozonline.com/english/news3/newsitem/article/former-pm-mousavi-announces-presidential-bid.html>

government boundaries in the recent years, Karoubi asked Mousavi if he was ready for the difficulties and problems ahead.⁵⁶

Declaring himself a reformist, Karoubi asked Mousavi to determine whether he considered himself a reformist or a fundamentalist, Mousavi then declared that he was a reformist with a reference to the “fundamentals.”⁵⁷ By that he meant the early years of the Islamic Republic (the Imam-Khomeini era) and a return to true Islamic values free of corruption. Mousavi and Karoubi have always referred to Islamic values as their principle ideology and never rejected the notion of “rule of the jurist” (*velayat-e faghih*), referred to the Supreme Leader, in their statements and speeches both during and after the elections. Although they tried to delegitimize the Supreme Leader by writing letters to him and seeking to make him use his authority to end the violence against the civilians.

This explains what placed these opposition figures at odds with the Green Movement at its beginning. The majority of those taking part in the street demonstrations were youth with no specific religious ideology. This can be inferred from their slogans during the demonstrations (and even from the way they dress); “independence, freedom, Iranian republic,”⁵⁸ instead of “Islamic Republic,” which was one of the main slogans during the 1979 revolution. They clearly denounced the Supreme Leader: “Khamenei is a murderer, thus his rule is annulled,” or clearly chanting “death to Khamenei” and “death to the dictator.” At one point they set a picture of Khamenei on fire.

⁵⁶(2009, June 7) Two reformist candidates: we announced our candidacy because we feel danger. [translation by author]. *RadiFarda*. Retrieved from http://www.radiofarda.com/content/F7_Karubi_Mousavi_Debate_Election88/1748883.html

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸Eslami, Yadollah (2009, October 29). Dis-coding the Green Movement’s Slogans. *Gozaar*. Retrieved from <http://www.gozaar.org/english/articles-en/Decoding-the-Green-Movement-s-Slogans.html>

Whether it was a strategy on the part of Mousavi and Karoubi not to reject the rule of the jurist in order to be able to continue their political activities and to frame their activities within the framework of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic, as well as gathering more supporters from diverse backgrounds to the movement, the distinction is clear between the majority of the Green Movement adherents and these two figures.

In his second statement, Mousavi declared, “we as people who believe in Islamic Republic and its Constitution, recognize *velayat-e-faghih* as one the bases of the regime, and will follow our political activities within the Constitution’s framework.”⁵⁹

Meanwhile he announced that he has asked the Guardian Council for a vote cancellation, and referring to article 27 of the same Constitution, he demanded the interior ministry to publish a permit for peaceful demonstrations across the country for people to show their objections to the election process and the results.

This has put Mousavi and Karoubi in the role of moral leaders of the Green Movement rather than a charismatic leadership with the crowd seen only as followers without any agency. They are moral leaders of the movements in terms of trying to cast it under a non-violent framework and slow down the revolutionary course that may result in violence, and to a lesser extent they are acting as pragmatic leaders in doing so. Also by referring to the Constitution and appealing to the Supreme Leader’s authority to end the violence against civilians, they further delegitimized the regime, which did not act upon its constitution. The implication of this for the Green Movement leadership will be discussed later in this chapter.

⁵⁹All Mousavi’s statements can be retrieved from the weblog: *Agha Bahman*. Available at http://bahmanagha.blogspot.com/2009/06/blog-post_172.html

In his first statement the day after the election results were announced, Mousavi called the results “astonishing”⁶⁰ and declared that people are watching the elections authority’s and the state owned media’s “jugglery” in changing the results. He continued, “I declare my harsh objection to this process and the obvious and extensive violations on the Election Day, and warn that I will not concur to this dangerous show.”⁶¹ He suggested that the authorities turn back to the rule of law and Islamic Republic’s Constitution before it was too late and warned that injustice delegitimizes a state, and called for vote cancelation. He also emphasized that in order to achieve “our” goals people need to continue their efforts and continue what they did before the elections. In his next statements, Mousavi repeatedly described himself as only one follower and comrade of the movement.

By the same token, in an open letter to the Guardian Council, Karoubi asked the council to follow its legitimate duty and declare the election results null. He asked the council to cancel the vote and prepare for a new round of elections and by doing so save the regime. He argued that there is a danger of people turning against the council. Karoubi also gave his compliments and blessing to the street demonstrators and criticized the regime for relating them to “foreign powers.”⁶² In the same letter, Karoubi argued that the high turnout was because people hoped there would be no vote rigging if they turned out in numbers, but that unfortunately there is a “mafia of power” that manipulated all the process.

⁶⁰ Translation by author

⁶¹ All Mousavi’s statements can be retrieved from the weblog: *Agha Bahman*. Available at http://bahmanagha.blogspot.com/2009/06/blog-post_172.html

⁶²(2009, June 19). Karoubi to the Guardian Council: Announce the Elections Null and Guarantee the Survival of the System (translation by author). *BBC Persian*. Retrieved from: http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2009/06/090619_op_karubi_guardian_council.shtml

After the Guardian Council formed a group to investigate the alleged irregularities by only counting 10 percent of the votes, Karoubi in a letter to the council announced he would appoint his representative to the group only if his two conditions are respected. First, the members should be independent, which two of them are not and should be replaced. In the letter he noted that “some members of this group have held some harsh partisan stances, and as a matter of fact their dependent position in the group is already clear.”⁶³ Second, if the Guardian Council decided to investigate all the irregularities reported by the defeated candidates, which go beyond counting only 10 percent of the votes.⁶⁴ In the same letter he also insisted on vote cancellation; referring to the irregularities both before the election and on the day of the elections, and irregularities in announcing the election results, he declared that “each one of these are sufficient reasons to cancel the election results.”⁶⁵ He went on to count different reasons for his request of vote cancellation such as the state’s alleged numbers for voters were greater than those eligible to vote. Referring to the Islamic Republic Constitution, he also argued that “individual competency” of the president is one of the basis of the Constitution which in his opinion was compromised by Ahmadinejad’s selection.

In the open letters that Karoubi wrote to the Islamic Republic’s officials, he repeatedly referred to the demonstrators as the “majority” of voters. He declared he did not consider the government formed after these elections “legitimate.” He clarified that both Ahmadinejad supporters and the demonstrators are part of the country, but he

⁶³(9009, June 28). Karoubi: evidences for vote cancellation are sufficient (translation by author). *BBC Persian*. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2009/06/090628_ka_ir88_karobi.shtml

⁶⁴(2009, June 27). Karoubi’s two conditions for attending the committee on the election results assessment (translation by author). *BBC Persian*. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2009/06/090627_ka_ir88_etemademeli_geramimoghadam.shtml

⁶⁵ Ibid

believed that Ahmadinejad supporters are in minority and that no one can impose their vote on others. He also proposed two different dates to be considered for each of the supporters to be able to come to the streets peacefully to determine which camp is in majority.

During the height of the protests, both Mousavi and Karoubi repeatedly asked for permission from the Guardian Council and the interior ministry for their supporters to carry out peaceful demonstrations across the country. All of those requests were rejected. Despite the fact that the authorities rejected the calls for peaceful demonstrations, Mousavi and Karoubi appeared in several street demonstrations among the crowd in the height of the protests. In one of those Mousavi addressed the crowd, promising to stand by the people until the end. His wife, Zahra Rahnavard was beside him, with a follower in her hands, symbolizing peace.⁶⁶ The requests to carry out peaceful demonstrations based on freedom of assembly, which is embedded in the Islamic Republic's constitution, further delegitimized the state by not even allowing the opposition to use the capacities and rights allocated to them under the constitution. It also helped to frame the protests in a non-violent and lawful manner, seeking to act under the constitution.

Both Mousavi and Karoubi have considered the Islamic Republics' Constitution as a framework for the opposition, emphasizing on the capacities for reform and change under the same Constitution only if the officials act upon it. Despite appearing among the protesters in the early days of demonstrations, Mousavi and Karoubi canceled the street protests scheduled for the first anniversary of the Green Movement in fear of high levels of violence planned by the regime, after not being able to get authorization from the

⁶⁶ (2009, June 15). Photos: Karubi and Mousavi Among Protesters. BBC Persian. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2009/06/090615_ba-ir88-mousavi-demo.shtml

officials. This resulted in many analysts criticizing them for exhausting the youthful energy and opportunities that are embedded in street demonstrations. In their letters and statements, both of these figures warned the crowd against engaging in violent activities with *Basiji*'s and other regime elements and asked the demonstrators to remain peaceful while insisting on their legitimate rights.

The wives of Mousavi and Karoubi played an important role in promoting women rights during the presidential campaign and encouraging people to vote. This was the first time in the history of the Islamic Republic that candidates were seen alongside their wives in public on the campaign trips, showing a more moderate face. After what followed, wives of the two (now) opposition figures gave speeches in defense of the demonstrators and appeared among the crowd in street protests. Zahra Rahnavard, Mousavi's wife, is herself a well-known faculty member and a political activist. She took part in several visits alongside Mousavi to the families of those killed or arrested during the protests. In one of her video messages she declared that she is not afraid of getting arrested or even killed, for she is one among many who are fighting for freedom.⁶⁷

Fatemeh Karoubi has also held several official posts, from being a member of the *Majles* to head of a charity organization. When their son was arrested and tortured in prison during the protests, in an open letter to the supreme leader, she recalled the Pahlavi regime by noting that she had raised her three children behind the Pahlavi prison doors waiting for their father to come back home—an ironic comparison of the Islamic Republic with the Pahlavi regime, as well as reminding the Supreme Leader of the sacrifices made by her husband during the revolution in the years preceding 1979. She

⁶⁷RasaTelevision (Producer). Zahra Rahnavard and Fatemeh Karoubi alongside their husbands. [translation by author]. Video posted on Youtube on May 31, 2011. Archived at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=juLzwU4yWfl>

then went on to declare that her family would resist injustice. Their presence and their defense of women rights gave the election campaign a momentum and encouraged many to vote for these candidates in a society where women do not have same rights as men and even often discussion of these rights has harsh consequences.

The comparison between the Pahlavi regime and the Islamic Republic in terms of establishment of tyranny is another key characteristic found in statements by Mousavi and Karoubi, which further de-legitimize the regime. In a joint statement published on the anniversary of establishment of the Islamic Republic they listed some elements of Pahlavi tyranny such as blocking all the paths toward a gradual reform of the state and the society; using propaganda; the illusion of playing a big role in the regional and world politics; and sorting out all the critiques and opposition groups,⁶⁸ and declared that the current situation of the country is nothing less than re-producing the monarchical tyranny, except it not being an inheritable style of governance. They noted that this is tyranny in the name of religion. Mousavi and Karoubi declared the Green Movement as an illustration of collective responsibility, of a new way of conversation against the threat of tyranny and warned that nothing would prevent this conversation from flourishing. A conversation while not ignoring past positive achievements, critiques past mistakes.

Cracks among elites were shown explicitly in televised debates between the candidates. Ahmadinejad, in his debate with Mousavi, accused Rafsanjani, one of the most prominent and influential figures in power plays of the state since 1979 revolution, of fraud. This resulted in reactions from supporters of both sides. These televised debates and strong criticisms of Ahmadinejad delegitimized his government. Moreover, it

⁶⁸(2011, February 2). Mousavi and Karoubi: Tyranny is established In the name of the religion. *Deutsche Welle Persian*. Retrieved from <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,6431203,00.html>

encouraged many to vote for Mousavi and Karoubi as they saw the explicit cracks among elites (the left wing, the right wing, and the fundamentalists) and explicit criticism of past policies by both of them.

In the 2009 elections and during the protests, Rafsanjani tried to calm the situation by sometimes taking the protesters' side and other times inviting people to follow the rules and stay calm. On a Friday Prayer that he hosted during the street protests, he explicitly declared his disappointment with the way the regime had handled the demonstrations and called for release of political prisoners.⁶⁹ Many Iranians attended the prayers for a chance to hear his speech and use the regime's event to protest. Rafsanjani, who was a frequent speaker for the Friday Prayers has not had a chance since then to give the sermons again at any other Friday prayers.

Karoubi was the first regime insider who revealed and publicized massive torture, murder and sexual abuse of the demonstrators in the prisons. The most notorious one was *Kahrizak* prison in Tehran. In a letter to Rafsanjani he alleged that he had evidence that people were raped in the prisons, noting that this was not a random activity but a common one. He warned if Rafsanjani did not respond to his letter in ten days he would publish the letter in his party's newspaper: *Etemad-e Melli* ("National Trust"). In an article in the newspaper he wrote "you may not believe that in Islamic Republic and under *velayat-e Faghih* young men and women are being sexually abused, but I am referring to the evidence by four of these people who have been abused in the prisons."⁷⁰ He called these incidences a "catastrophe" for the Islamic regime. In an open letter to

⁶⁹CNN(Producer). (2009, July 17). Rafsanjani: Release Prisoners.Video posted on Youtube. Archived at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h3QkTsPuB3E&feature=related>

⁷⁰Religious Intellectual. Karoubi's revelations on what happens in Islamic Republic's prisons. [translation by author]. *TolueSepid* weblog. Message posted to <http://toluesepid.blogfa.com/post-7.aspx>

Karoubi, Mousavi complemented his courage to reveal these acts and noted that these are signs of more terrible activities that we do not know yet going on in the prisons.

According to Mousavi, the regime elements were doing these acts under the pretext of defending the Islamic republic system, not knowing that the bases of a regime are the people. He also criticized the religious figures for keeping silent in face of such activities.

The activities of the two main opposition figures process traced in this chapter, and their implications to frame and to some extent organize the Green Movement, are summarized in figure 3.1. below:

Figure 3.1. Main Opposition Figures' Activities and Their Implications

Activity/ Statement	Implications and Importance
Rejecting “unlawfulness” and “lying” by Ahmadinejad government	Framing their campaign and resistance based on “truth”/ rejecting violence
Referring to Islamic values/ not rejecting <i>velayat-e faghih</i>	At odds with many movement adherents/ gathers support from more religious groups/ makes it divers/ slows down the revolutionary course
Only a “comrade” of the movement not its leaders	De-centralized/ diverse
Letters to the supreme leader and the Guardian Council	Delegitimizing their authority by showing unresponsiveness
Constitution as the movement framework	Movement’s lawfulness and peaceful goals/ rejecting violence/delegitimizing of the system by not acting upon law
Comparison between the Islamic Republic and Pahlavi monarchy	De-legitimization/ rejecting tyranny in any form and in name of religion
Zahra Rahnavard and Fatemeh Karoubi activities	Promoting women rights and participation/ rejecting discrimination and violence
Prison revelations	De-legitimization of Islamic rule, provoking emotions among crowds (i.e. anger, shock)

From the content of Mousavi and Karoubi’s statements and their activities process traced thus far, it is clear that these leaders emphasize three aspects about the Green Movement: First, a non-violent and peaceful approach in achieving its goals, which were

vote cancellation and ballot recounts in early stages of the movement and became more radical with unresponsiveness of the authorities to demonstrators' demands and massive crack downs and arrests. The leaders of the movement on the other hand have repeatedly emphasized that the Islamic Republic's Constitution is the main framework for designing the movement's tactics in achieving its goals. As the demands of the demonstrators went beyond vote cancellation and targeted top figures of the regime such as the Supreme Leader, Mousavi and Karoubi, while criticizing and condemning the authorities' actions and demanding free elections, and while repeatedly attacking tyranny, refused to target *Velyat-e-faghih* whom many see as the main obstacle to free elections and democracy.

This leads to the second aspect of the movement recognized by the Green Movement's so-called leaders: its lawfulness, considering Islamic Republic's Constitution as their framework and demanding full implementation of the law, by emphasizing the Constitution's Third Chapter which addresses the rights of people. Mousavi and Karoubi statements became more radical with unresponsiveness of the regime and harsh crackdowns on demonstrators.

Mousavi published eighteen statements from June to October 2009, during the height of Iran's election turmoil. Statement number eighteen is known as the Green Movement Charter in which he describes movement's goals, strategies, and tactics to achieve them. Emphasizing non-violent ways to achieve the movement's goals and the rule of law, his statements become more radicalized in criticizing regime's response to demonstrators. In his 5th statement he announced his disappointment with the Guardian Council in responding to complaints of vote rigging and stated "in this situation, they ask us to follow up our complaints with the Guardian Council. Now this council has proved

its dependency before, during, and after the elections. And the first rule in any judgment is the body's independence.”⁷¹

The third aspect of the movement emphasized by Mousavi and Karoubi is its decentralized, network-based, and diverse character, which makes it easy to debate movement's goals within and with its opponents outside. The revised Green Movement's Charter, which was published by the 'coordinating council of the green path of hope'⁷² and signed by both Mousavi and Karoubi reads, “the Green Movement cannot be considered as a centralized party, nor it can be regarded as disorganized body of people with no specific goals [...] the Green Movement has a coordinated and horizontal organizing force in the form of real and virtual social movement networks, is based on knowledge, conscious, and innovations of Iranian people and searches its ideals and goals such as liberty and justice in this innovating force. This ability can change the slogan “every Iranian, one campaign” to “every Iranian, one movement.”⁷³ The Charter article describes the dependence of the movement on the deliberation of Iranians who participated in the elections and its aftermath events to change the course of political activity in their country.

In the Green Movement's Charter, despite other statements of Mousavi, there is little reference to *velayat-e-faghih* and more emphasis on the basis of democracy such as demanding a return to the *rule of law* and defying the political context of movement and

⁷¹(2009, June 20). Mousavi's 5th statement to the Nation. [translation by author]. Message posted to http://bahmanagha.blogspot.com/2009/06/blog-post_326.html

⁷² The council that Mousavi and Karoubi formed in response to the regime crackdowns to continue the Green Movement's cause. The council members became publicly active after Mousavi and Karoubi's communication to the outside world became more difficult and they went under house arrest. The council publishes statements and news on the two leaders from time to time and whenever they get access to them.

⁷³Full text of the second edition of Green Movement's charter. Published by the Coordinating Council of the Green Path of Hope. Source: *Kaleme*. Retrieved from <http://www.kaleme.com/1389/12/03/klm-48610/>

the authorities' acts which is rather based on *rule by law*.⁷⁴ The movement's charter reveals one of the main strategies of the movement is achieving full implementation of law that has been given legitimacy by people's vote. It clarifies in another article that the Green Movement is aware of the fact that rule of law is not synonym to instrumental abuse of law by the rulers. The law should not be a way to repress people's rights as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The goals of the movement are also described as achieving liberty, social justice, and the right of national self-determination, which were the goals of the nation during the 1979 revolution as well. The charter clarifies that only by reinforcing civil society, public conversations and debates, education and free movement of the press, information, and the media, can the goals of the movement be achieved. It also states that although the movement's framework is the Islamic Republic's Constitution, people have the right to debate and vote to change the Constitution (or any article of it) whenever they choose to do so in a free and democratic atmosphere.

THE GREEN MOVEMENT LEADERSHIP AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

The process tracing of activities of the main opposition figures and their statements reveals the main characteristics of the Green Movement leadership and their congruity with the course of actions that each of these two have taken in the height of the protest. These four main characteristics are discussed below.

First, it is a *network-based* leadership, from the election campaign to the demonstrations it has proven to be a movement based on network of individuals and not a hieratical leadership. The political activists design strategies and if there is enough debate, then the strategy is announced by the figures of the movement (Mousavi and

Karoubi)⁷⁵ and in their absence by the coordination council. There is little evidence of a charismatic type of leadership in the Green Movement; based on one individual's decision making and a mass of followers without agency, rather moral and to some degree pragmatic types of leadership are more dominant. The main opposition figures have taken the role of movement's orators that transmit the movement's goals and aspirations both to Islamic republic officials and to movement's adherents and outside to gather support.

Second, the Green Movement leadership is *de-centralized*. On one side, the reformist groups are part of the movement, which because of three decades of cooperation and political activity are better coordinated and act within a more organized framework. But, there are secular, leftists, religious, and groups with gender, sexual, or tribal agendas, that coordinate their activities with their core movement and with others under the umbrella of the Green Movement. The Iranian civil society and its social movement networks, looking back to the experience of 1979 revolution and its shortcomings and problems, are trying to reject centralization of power in any kind.

Third, the Green Movement is a *diverse and interactive* movement. Its non-ideological character and its adherents from diverse classes of society cannot support a charismatic or ideological leadership and lean more toward a logical and pragmatic leadership style. The leadership in such a diverse movement has to interact with all of its adherents from different class, religious, and ideological backgrounds. This interaction can take advantage of different forces and resources in order for the movement to be successful.

⁷⁵Mousavi and Karoubi are under-house arrest as of February 2011.

Fourth, its leadership is based on *compromises*. The activists of the Green Movement have shown that they can build compromises on their minimum demand, despite the diversity of ideas and demands. The fact that people decided to take part in the elections despite the surveillance of the Guardian Council and despite the fact that Mousavi and Karoubi both insisted on their loyalty to the Islamic republic's system, shows that the activists can categorize and prioritize their demands and take action based on that.

Process tracing of activities and statements of Mousavi and Karoubi reveal that these two men, rather than being movement mobilizers, hold an important role in framing the movement in terms that were discussed above. From the color green, to accepting different ideologies while emphasizing on Islamic values as their own main set of belief, and denouncing violent act in the face of the regime's repression. Although, the role of the movement adherents in framing their options and naming the movement goals, discussed in chapter 2, should not be overlooked. In his statement after *Ashura*⁷⁶ 2009, Mousavi argues that people do not wait for him to publish statements and invite them to turn out to the streets and protest; rather they have the knowledge and courage to use the religious and regime occasions to protest. The fact that the protests started simultaneously and the Green Movement enjoys a network-based and decentralized leadership style is described by Abbas Milani⁷⁷ as both the movement's strength and weakness. In the short run, the lack of a strong and centralized leadership has resulted in failure of the Green Movement to achieve its main goal: a vote cancellation. Many criticize Mousavi and

⁷⁶A day of mourning for Shi'at Muslims. The Green Movements activists used the occasion to turn to the streets and protest. The day marked one of the bloodiest crack downs by the police and the militia on the demonstrators.

⁷⁷Milani, Abbas. The Iran Premier: The Green Movement. *United States Institute of Peace*. Retrieved from <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/green-movement>

Karoubi for not taking advantage of human resources and the political opportunities (cracks among elites, a relative openness before the elections) that were present during the height of the turmoil. In response they tend to argue for a non-violent and peaceful social movement, that does not repeat the mistakes of 1979 revolution, and limit the cost of political activism to its lowest against the regime's repression.

The emphasis on non-violent struggle to achieve movement's goals on one hand, and interaction between social movement networks to find innovative solutions to lower the cost of activism, on the other hand has strengthened the dialogue and deliberation among different movement adherents. In a post-religious, post-ideological, and post-class social movement, framing the movement process and compromise building between different social movement networks is a way to move the democratic discourse forward. The election campaign of Mousavi and Karoubi were able to do so during the month leading to the elections, but the known figures of the movement have come short to establish viable plans and a coordinating force to take advantage of their resources. It is true that different types of leadership emerge in different cultural and political contexts, but in a non-violent and civil struggle such as the Green Movement where the speedy revolutionary course of emotions after a while fades away, a degree of planning and coordination among movements' adherents and resource mobilization on the part of the loose leadership is required in order to sustain the movement and take advantage of a citizenry's deliberation and potential for democratization.

CHAPTER IV: THE INTERACTION OF POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES, RESOURCE MOBILIZATION, AND FRAMING PROCESSES

INTRODUCTION

In accounting for the emergence and form of a social movement, political opportunity structures, mobilizing structures, and framing processes are constantly interacting. This thesis analyzes four variables that reflect more on subjective and cultural aspects of the movement, rather than the structure of the system. These independent variables are: the availability of aggravated classes; the use of information communication technologies; ideologies (in terms of perceived legitimacy or illegitimacy); and leadership. This chapter establishes the interaction between these four variables and the structure of political opportunities and resource mobilization. Here I focus on four ‘consensual dimensions’ of political opportunity structures drawn by McAdam from various authors.

This chapter first establishes the interaction between political opportunity structures, resource mobilization, and framing processes in the emergence and form of the Green Movement. I argue that we need to attribute a central role to the framing processes in accounting for timing and form of the Green Movement during the height of the protests. Political opportunity structures appear in terms of *perceptions* of openness and instability of elite alignments, and not in terms of objective changes in the structure of the political system. Political opportunity structures and mobilizing structures come second in their interaction with framing processes and are mediators. Second, this chapter builds on the implications of these findings for framing processes.

Borrowing from the literature review, McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1996) point to a conviction and a consensus that most political movements and revolutions are set in motion by social changes that render the established political order more vulnerable or receptive to challenge. But these “political opportunities,” drawn from rational choice theory, are but a necessary prerequisite to action. In the absence of sufficient organization—whether formal or informal—such opportunities are not likely to be seized. Finally mediating between the structural requirements of opportunity and organization are the emergent meanings and definitions, or frames, shared by the adherents of the burgeoning movement. The impetus to action, thus, is as much a cultural construction as it is a function of structural vulnerability. Such changes in the structure of politics encourage mobilization not only through the “objective” effects they have on power relations, but by setting in motion framing processes that further undermine the legitimacy of the system. Expanding political opportunities then derive their causal force from the interaction of those structural and perceptual changes they set in motion.

A similar reciprocal dynamic defines the relationship between organization and framing processes. Framing processes clearly encourage mobilization as people seek to organize and act on their growing awareness of system’s illegitimacy and vulnerability. At the same time, the potential for the kind of system critical framing processes is conditioned by the population’s access to various mobilizing structures. Also, framing processes are held to be both more likely and of far greater consequences under conditions of strong rather than weak organization. The absent of any real mobilizing structure would almost prevent their spread to the minimum number of people required to afford a basis for collective action.

Political opportunities in this study have been conceptualized in terms of changes in the institutional structure or informal power relations of a given national political system. By mobilizing structure, this study refers to those collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action. In terms of framing processes, the aim is “strategic framing,” that is conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action. Framing the ideas about right and wrong to nourish the movement’s goals are examined in terms of finding appropriate resources for mobilization as adherents weigh their options for taking action in the movement.

Various factors are involved in the emergence and form of a particular social movement. The scope of this study does not allow for in-depth analysis of each of these variables, nor is it possible to conduct in counterfactual analysis within a one case study to account for variations in each of the variables in their multiple and complex relationships with others. For example, more research questions will arise by systematically studying each of political opportunity variables, economy, or the organizational aspects of the movement. These questions will be discussed in Chapter Five.

THE INTERACTION: POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES, RESOURCE MOBILIZATION, AND FRAMING PROCESSES

FRAMING, ORGANIZATION AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

The Green Movement’s framing processes and organizational tactics directly impacted one another. As the adherents framed the movement goals in terms of vote cancellation and truth seeking aspirations, peaceful demonstrations were planned in

demand of reform and civil rights among the ‘informal social movement networks,’ which address the organizational dimensions of the Green Movement. These processes were brewing during the years leading to the summer of 2009 by way of everyday life micro-mobilization; structural social locations that are not aimed primarily at movement mobilization, but where mobilization may be generated: these include family units, friendship networks, voluntary associations, work units, and elements of state structure itself (McCarthy 1996, p.141). Among the main platforms for such micro-mobilization among circles of individuals (friends, family, moderate elements of the regime) during the years leading to the elections have been the Internet; the blogosphere, and the social media.

These processes were shaping up among Internet users and bloggers as one space for conversation. Attempting to map these structures in a society, McCarthy asserts that at the least formally organized end of the map are “families” and “networks of friends” (1996, p.142). It is upon these most basic structures of everyday life that much local dissent is built. These structures are in line with McAdam’s widely adopted concept of “micro-mobilization contexts” (1982) that suggests a wide variety of social sites within people’s daily rounds where informal ties between people can serve as solidarity and communication facilitating structures when and if they choose to go into dissent together.

When authoritarian regimes restrict access to ordinary forms of political participation, citizens in those regimes are often forced to improvise new forms of participation and occupy alternative spaces in order to do so. Asef Bayat (2010) refers to such actions as “quiet encroachment,” and argues that they typify the experiences of ordinary citizens across the Middle East. Quiet encroachment takes advantage of spaces

that autocratic regimes cannot control or have not fully controlled. Within these spaces, citizens establish a different public order that exists largely outside the state-dominated sphere of formal politics.

Because the activities of quiet encroachment are neither centrally organized nor state- or NGO-supported, Bayat refers to them as social “nonmovements” (59).

Nonmovements establish loose networks of familiarity and solidarity but they do not lead directly to a politics of organized protest or struggle. Instead they are the result of unorganized individual direct actions that aim at the “redistribution of social goods” and the attainment of “autonomy, both cultural and political, from the regulations, institutions, and discipline imposed by the state and modern institutions” (59).

We may view Bayat’s notion of “quiet encroachment” into spaces (actual and virtual) in authoritarian states is a way for citizens to build loose networks that can be activated and ‘turned political’ in certain circumstances. The Internet and the social media are examples of such spaces in the Middle East where ‘informal networks’ of friends and activists had been discussing and framing ideas about right or wrong that undermines the systems’ legitimacy to rule.

The role of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in recent events during the Arab Spring uprisings and earlier in the summer of 2009 in the aftermath of elections in Iran, should be analyzed not only in terms of the ‘information,’ but the ‘access’ they provide for lay citizens to engage in conversation and exchanging ideas. For example in Iran many journalists, women rights activists, communists, seculars, [...] and the diaspora turned to Internet to express their views during the years leading to 2009 uprisings, using the virtual world to bypass the state’s control in the real world. In closed

authoritarian states with few freedoms of expression, the Internet and social media are one of the main platforms for communication between circles of friends, and activists.

These loose networks of individuals and the “quiet encroachment” space the ICTs provide, translate into the real world when a majority of citizens view their conditions as relatively deprived vis-à-vis the status quo. In the case of the 2009 Green Movement in Iran, citizens used ICTs as tools to disseminate information, debating movements’ frames and strategies, and organizing around their cause. At the height of a social movement in authoritarian systems of governance, ICTs, by connecting activists to other adherents, the outside world, and the mainstream media, function as the main source of communication and information dissemination. The Green Movement’s framework, strategies and organization were mainly discussed on the web (the social media and the blogs), between ‘informal social networks,’ which provide many more people a voice. The Green Movement was not dependent upon a central organization or website, did not follow any specific ideology, rather it was dependent on every individual’s creativity and deliberative agency that gave the movement its momentum.

More important than information dissemination, the focus in considering the role of ICTs in states where citizens have limited access to formal civil society networks should be ‘access.’ The Internet has changed the rules by taking part in the political game. For example, analysis of Iran’s blogosphere during the years leading to the 2009 demonstrations reveals three interconnected issues. First, it leads us to the vast number of voices and ideas that find a space to be heard. Second, it demonstrates the importance of the free space that is provided for these individuals and organizations to express their views. And third, the range of topics that they introduce into the public sphere is being

revealed, thus surpassing the system's censorship of many social issues and making public of previously inarticulate and un-noticed social issues, such as gender relations, or political discussions. Considering ICTs as another tool, taking up the role of radio, television, and cassette tapes in the 1960s and 1970s, to disseminate information and mobilize masses undermines the bottom-up space for conversation that they provide during years prior to emergence of a social movement. The 'informal social movement networks' with diverse participants, and de-centralized and non-hierarchical organization were able to keep the Green Movement viable even after months of facing repression by the Islamic Republic.

THE POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES

The four consensual dimensions of political opportunity structures offered by McAdam (1996) are: first, the relative openness and closure of institutional political system; second, the stability of elite alignments; third, the presence of elite allies; and fourth, the state's capacity for repression. One dimension of consensual political opportunity is stability or instability of the broad set of elite alignments. The Islamic Republic of Iran has been divided between two main camps since its establishment in 1979. The leftist camp leans toward Khomeini's ideals and social justice which today constitute many reformists, and the rightists, which today constitute more hardliner elements of the regime that are closer to the supreme leader, Khamenei. Mousavi and Karoubi were both leaning toward leftist wings of the Islamic Republic during the early years of the revolution. These ideological divisions among the so-called leaders of the Green Movement and rightists, who were strongly backed by the Supreme Leader at the time of the elections, have been constant since the establishment of the Islamic Republic.

There were not any alignment shifts within the system. Mousavi and Karoubi never rejected the system's fundamental values in their statements, both before the movement's emergence and after it took momentum.

There was not much instability in terms of structural changes of elite alignments before the 2009 elections that could have impacted the emergence of the movement. Rather, the voters tried to shift the elite alignments and the power structure by voting, unlike the boycott of the elections in 2005. They framed their collective will around the goal of pushing Ahmadinejad out of presidential office. The perceived logic in the months leading to the elections was that by voting in massive numbers there would not be any possibilities of vote rigging by the regime. They hoped for a landslide victory for one of the candidates closer to the reformist camp, taking Khatami's landslide victory in previous elections as inspiration for their action.

In fact the supreme leader encouraged Iranians to go out and vote. Giving a degree of freedoms to those closer to the reform camp to campaign and gather supporters (specially the youth) was part of regime's strategies to increase the voter turnout, and by doing so to increase the legitimacy of the system. Official election results put the voter turnout around 85 percent, with 63% of the electorate voting for Ahmadinejad.⁷⁸ The regime did not estimate that the situation could get out of control after the elections. On one hand, the Islamic Republic implemented a strategy of stick and carrot; a degree of openness before the election, massive security presence on the day of elections, and repression from that moment afterward. On the part of the Green Movement adherents,

⁷⁸ Official results of Iran's Interim Ministry for the 10th presidential election. Available at: <http://moi.ir/Portal/Home/ShowPage.aspx?Object=News&CategoryID=832a711b-95fe-4505-8aa3-38f5e17309c9&LayoutID=dd8faff4-f71b-4c65-9aef-a1b6d0160be3&ID=5e30ab89-e376-434b-813f-8c22255158e1>

Appendix B shows a chart of the voter turnout and official votes gained by each candidate.

this ‘perceptual’ openness re-enforced their shared identity to change the course of the actions, aware of the Guardian Council’s control and structural closure of Islamic Republic’s institutions.

The stick and carrot strategy, the high intensity of political activities during the months leading to the elections, and strong attacks by both Mousavi and Karoubi on Ahmadinejad policies, led to the perception that the system was becoming more open to criticism. Supporters of presidential hopefuls perceived some degree of openness of the system to freedom of expression and freedom of political activities. Despite the surveillance of the Guardian Council,⁷⁹ the voters tried to employ legitimate structures of the system in their own advantage. The structural barriers to citizens’ access to institutional power had not been changed in any objective way. Rather the movement adherents decided to take advantage of minimal electoral opportunities. These opportunities were constant and similar to the previous elections held by the Islamic Republic. The difference must be sought in other factors to account for emergence and form of the Green Movement.

From the four consensual dimensions of political opportunity structures introduced by McAdam, the presence of elite allies has impacted the movement in positive ways. Mousavi and Karoubi’s speeches and activities, before and during the height of the movement, both influenced some to go out and vote, and had a positive impact in the loose organizational framing of the Green Movement. However, we need to account for the fact that both of these men were elements from within the regime and have held several key posts in the Islamic Republic. Their candidacy was perceived as an

⁷⁹ Presidential nominees are selected by the Guardian Council, which its members are appointed by Iran’s supreme leader, Khamenei.

opportunity to balance against the hardliner policies enforced by Ahmadinejad, both at the national and international level. This leads to another dimension of the Green Movement, its emphasis on non-revolutionary activities which might result in a speedy regime change. Movement adherents still tried to change the course by participating in elections, seeing capacities for reform and trying to take advantage of the minimal structural opportunities offered to them; that is façade elections.

The degree of freedom that was protected by the regime during the election campaigns was soon diminished by the military's heavy presence on the streets on the day of the elections, and by Internet and mobile telephone disruptions. The demonstrations erupted simultaneously and repression can be seen on the streets of Tehran on the very first day of the protests. Although Mousavi and Karoubi both denounced the election results, they both joined the street protests a few days after movement adherents remained in the streets. There is no official data on the number of the demonstrators, although some sources put it at hundreds of thousands and the pictures and videos shared on Youtube and other social media websites show a vast number of people taking part. The demonstrations erupted on June 13, 2009, when the results were announced one day after the elections were held. Mousavi and Karoubi showed up among the demonstrators in the streets of Tehran on June 15th. Although both men denounced the election results and vowed to not to give up on getting their votes back, there was no guarantee that they would join the street protests since they were both insiders to the Islamic Republic's system.

Discussing the interrelationship between political opportunities, framing and the mobilizing structures, McCarthy asserts that more stable elements of political opportunity

are central in shaping the available range of mobilizing structures in the longer run. And, more volatile elements of political opportunity are important in understanding the shorter run choices among those available structures that activists make. The most stable element of the political structure in the summer of 2009 in Iran was the willingness of the regime to repress the protests from the day they emerged. Despite this massive repression the movement adherents remained in the streets for several months. It is true that repression blocked and to some degree shaped how movement adherents decided not to participate in high-risk activities such as street protests after several months. But the non-violent strategies of the movement, and its loose and de-centralized structure were first framed both by the adherents and the well-known figures of the movement, and the adherents did not engage in reciprocal violence. The impact of four consensual dimensions of political opportunity structures on emergence and form of the Green Movement is summarized in figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1. The Implications for Political Opportunity Structures

Political Opportunity Structures	Implication/Impact
Openness of the institutional system	Perceived
Instability of elite alignments	Perceived
Presence of elite allies	Positive
Repression	Negative *(in terms of movement's progression)

The emergence and form of a movement is dependent upon interplay of structural, organizational, and framing variables. These variables include relative openness or closure of the institutional system; stability or instability of elite alignments; the presence or absence of elite allies; and the capacity of the system to repress; resources to

mobilizing and organization (money, human capital, organizational tools, etc.); and frames that give values and meaning to the collective action. These elements are constantly interacting, only the degree to which they impact a given movement varies. In the case of the Green Movement, framing processes were *key* both to the emergence and form of the movement. This explains for the framework to avoid violence, calls for a national referendum, demand for truth and civil rights, and de-centralized, and non-hierarchical aspects of its leadership and organization. Collective Values and meanings to shape the strategic framing of the Green Movement were dependent upon individual agency of each of the movement's adherents and were not dictated by a charismatic leader or a formal social movement organization (SMO). Rather its loose networks of individual and circles of friends and families formed a collective frame to ask 'where is my vote?'

Among the four aspects of McAdam's political opportunity structures, I argue that the presence of elite allies and perceived openness of the system had had a positive impact on the timing and form of the Green Movement. As discussed above, structural variables are not strong indicators for the timing of the movement, but they are present. In the case of the Green Movement framing processes had the central role. Structural variables and organization only mediated between these collective framing processes. They are necessary elements in order to account for success or failure of the movement, but not sufficient to explain for its timing and form.

Political opportunities have impacted the Green Movement's timing and form in terms of 'perceptual' rather than 'objective' expansions of opportunities in the structure of the system. The movement's adherents framed and organized their activities with this

perception. As McAdam notes the kinds of structural changes and power shifts that are most defensibly conceived of as political opportunity should not be confused with the collective processes by which these changes are interpreted and framed.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FRAMING PROCESSES AND MOVEMENT'S SHORT-TERM VIABILITY

THE CONTEXT

The Green Movement adherents only slightly try to frame the symbols and activities based on massive repression and unresponsiveness of the Islamic republic system to their demands. In spite of the repression, movement adherents remained peacefully in the streets for several months. The 1979 revolution is the context within which the 2009 Green Movement is framing its strategies and demands. A revolution that according to many scholars was being hijacked by a minority of Islamist groups that established an Islamic Republic state, in the course of the speedy regime change that brought down the Pahlavi Dynasty. Movement adherents did not opt for such change this time.

The 1999 student protests are another context. The moderate policies of Khatami's 'reform government' were being preferred in 2009 by the youth in comparison to Ahmadinejad's hardliner policies. The 1999 student protests cannot be considered as indications for conditions of 'failed reforms,' in discussing the structural variables. Rather as McAdam notes, movements tend to cluster in time and space because they are not independent of each other. The framing of the Green Movement was influenced by 1999 protests to re-interpret their situations in light of the available master frame (a stolen vote) and to mobilize based on the new understandings of themselves and the world

around them. Thus, the presence of such a frame constitutes yet another cultural or ideological resource that facilitates movement emergence. This aspect also reflects upon what Zald (1996) calls the contribution of cultural contradictions and historical events in providing opportunities for framing. The emphasis on Iranian identities rather than Islamic one, also reflects on what he refers to as cultural construction of repertoires of contention and frames (261).

Zald asserts that culture, ideology, and strategic framing are linked because they are the topics that deal with the content and processes by which meaning is attached to objects and actions. Culture he argues is the shared beliefs and understandings mediated by and constituted by symbols and language of a group or society. In 2009, the Green Movement tries to re-awaken the Iranian culture and identity. In this sense the color green not only refers to Islamic values, but rather more than that it presents the re-birth of the nature, spring; the Iranian new year and of that the beginning of a new political culture.⁸⁰ Movement adherents constantly tried to innovate frames and strategies that build on this culture.

“COGNITIVE LIBERATION”

McAdam (2000), with the notion of “cognitive liberation,” has identified four general types of “expanding cultural opportunities” that appear to increase the likelihood of movement activity (p.254). These four are: first, the dramatization of a glaring contradiction between a highly salient cultural value and conventional social practice. Second, “suddenly imposed grievances.” This cognitive stimulus to framing processes

⁸⁰ This aspiration to emphasize the Iranian identity over an Islamic identity (according to Dabashi (2010), Islam is part of the Iranian culture but not definitive to it), also reflects upon Ann Swidler’s (1986) idea of “culture as tool kit” which provides a framework for thinking about institutional learning and the *bricolage* process by which components of the cultural stock are assembled into specific models, or exemplars, of socially defined behavior.

describes those dramatic, highly publicized, and generally unexpected events—human made disasters, court decisions, official violence—that increase public awareness and opposition to previously accepted social conditions. Third, dramatization of a system’s vulnerability or illegitimacy, this is another “cultural” or “cognitive opportunity” that may stimulate increased framing or other forms of mobilization. Fourth, the availability of what Snow and Benford (1988) term “master protest frames” within which subsequent challengers can map their own grievances and demands. These expanding opportunities are all cultural and cognitive.

As Tilly (2009) calls attention to cultural breaks and cultural contradictions that lead to action and policy imperatives only as they are defined in an active process of cultural and movement construction. Political and mobilization opportunities are often created by cultural breaks and the surfacing of long dormant contradictions that reframe grievances and injustice and reinforce the possibility of action. Cultural contradictions occur and lead into mobilization when two or more cultural themes that are potentially contradictory are brought into active contradiction by the force of events, or when the realities of behavior are seen to be substantially different than the ideological justifications for the movement.

The cultural and cognitive “suddenly imposed grievances” can politicize individuals’ identities and give the impetus for collective action. As discussed in Chapter Two, relative deprivation and social identity theories posit that movement adherents should perceive inequality and illegitimacy of their conditions vis-a-vis the status quo in order to engage in collective action. Further, they should perceive the status quo as unstable and should be able to frame alternatives to it. The initial shock of “a stolen vote”

politicized and produced a collective identity that imagined an alternative to its deprived conditions. Adherents demanded this alternative in form of ‘vote recount’, ‘authorization for a peaceful demonstration’ and a ‘national referendum’, to be able to gather support from those who were not willing to risk in face of the repression and in order to stay within the non-violent framework of the Green Movement. Calls for a referendum came mainly from the movement’s well-known figures; the two ‘turned-to-opposition’ figures, Mousavi and Karoubi. As the Islamic Republic did not cede to demands of the protesters and the lack of legitimacy of the system glared dramatically by repressing the protests, the street slogans became more radical; chanting “death to the dictator,” or even at some points “death to the Supreme Leader.” This, however, never was articulated by the movements’ figures Mousavi and Karoubi, and nor was it agreed upon by movement adherents.

Some have criticized this aspect as lack of unity and defined goals among the demonstrators and the leaders. In contrast, I argue that the unwillingness on behalf of Mousavi and Karoubi to denounce the position of the Supreme Leader impacted the movement in two positive ways. First, Iran is a country with many believing in Islamic values. By not rejecting the role of *velayat-e faghih* (“the rule of the jurist”) and not signaling out the Islamic values, they were able to gather more people around movement’s collective identity. The reference to the color green holds also symbolic Islamic values. At the same time, they announced several times that the movement encompasses all beliefs and identities and has not framed itself under any ideological umbrella. Second, it enabled to frame the movement goals (both by so-called leaders and movement adherents) under full implementation of the Islamic Republic’s Constitution.

By doing so, they could clearly ask for authorization for peaceful demonstrations and vote recount, as well as full implementation of the law in any aspect. This would establish a clear pathway for movement adherents and their demands.

After all, the demonstrations were born out of elections. The voters had perceived a relative opportunity and openness to change the course of the actions and policies of the government by taking part in elections. Reform within the constitutional laws, in other words, must not have been out of order. Thus, taking part in elections indicates the willingness of the movement's adherents to act within the Islamic republic's Constitution as a starting point; hoping for a more moderate president that would reform the course that Ahmadinejad had been taken in his internal and external policies. 'A stolen vote' also provided a "master frame" under which groups and individuals with different ideologies could map their grievances and demands.

Demands for basic civil rights of free and fair elections indicate the non-violent aspirations of Green Movement activists. The demonstrations could have turned more violent if the movement adherents had decided to frame their strategies in respond to the state violence. In contrast, they refused to take part in any activity that could result in speedy and violent courses of interaction and perhaps change. Their demands came out an election; that is the most civil and official way of expression of rights and wrongs and choices possible within the Islamic Republic framework. The 'silent demonstration', discussed in Chapter Two, is one good example of civil ways of claiming the 'stolen vote'. Other examples include demands for a referendum, not engaging in violence in kind with the regime elements, and cancelling the demonstrations because of the high risks of violence. Discussing the movement's strategies and frames by the grassroots

mainly on the Internet (the blogosphere and social media) also indicates deliberation and agency on the part of movement adherents.

THE FRAMING AND ORGANIZATIONAL PROSPECTS

Green Movement activists, however, do not all hold the same ideology. Rather, during the height of the elections they managed to organize and find common ground in continuous interpretations of movements goals, strategies, and courses of action within the movement and in interaction to the outside world. This reflects upon what Zirakzadeh (1997) calls the “popular culture,” which posits that in society rich cultural currents are being constantly developed by ordinary people in restaurants, cafes, streets, and the cyber space where people speak about their sufferings and ways how to approach them. Despite elite’s efforts to influence the thinking of non-elites, the latter repeatedly question the elite’s definition of reality in the daily expressions of popular culture and within social movements. This reflects upon truth-seeking aspect of the movement in the height of the protests and during the election campaigns, emphasized by the ‘opposition figures’, which further undermines the legitimacy of the system. The Green Movement’s survival and success, however, depends on how it forms its “autonomous culture,” which holds that the social movements themselves are climates and environments, in which new subversive ideas are invented and nurtured.

Symbolic and strategic framing of the Green Movement was useful in initial phases of the protests and for its short-term viability, but was not efficient for sustaining the action mobilization. Rucht (1996) asserts that for large scale and sustained movement activities mobilization requires *resources* such as people, money, knowledge, frames, skills, and technological tools to process and distribute information and to influence

people (p.186). By *movement structure* he refers to the organizational bases and mechanisms serving to collect and use the movement's resources.

The movement can realize its potential to be strong and successful to the extent it takes this context into consideration and makes it resonant by structural attunement, strategic calculation, and clever use of leverage points. This requires an identification and “exploitation” of patterns that work in favor of the movement and the avoidance of that which could weaken it. In the case of the Green Movement this “exploitation” did not take place. Further questions about building on de-centralization and non-hierarchical structures of the movement while strengthening the organizational structures needed to connect the social movement networks in conditions of repression require more attention for long-term viability of the movement. These questions and further questions regarding the structural variables will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

INTRODUCTION

This study investigated grassroots identities in contemporary Iran by process tracing their use of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) during the period that triggered the emergence and form of the Green Movement. The role of movement leadership was also investigated in order to determine which types of leadership styles are most relevant to the Green Movement. Current theories of social movements posit that agentic, structural, and mobilization variables continuously interact to account for emergence and form of a particular social movement. Keeping the interaction constant, this study mainly explored the agency in its interaction with other independent variables in order to determine whether or not we could delegate the central role in emergence and form of the Green Movement to the framing processes that give values to the goals and strategies of the movement. In this concluding chapter, I provide a response to the hypotheses suggested in Chapter One. Then, I discuss future implications for the study of social movements in general, and the Green Movement in particular, as well as, the research limitations.

ANALYSIS OF THE HYPOTHESES

HYPOTHESIS 1: Political opportunity structures are constantly impacted by mobilizing structures and framing processes. In the case of the Green Movement emergence and form, the central role should be given to the framing processes rather than the political opportunity structures.

Investigation of the socio-cultural structures and identities of the grassroots with a focus on Internet users and bloggers indicates that the emergence and form of the Green Movement in 2009 mainly borrows from the framing processes that shaped ideas about right or wrong and had reduced the Islamic Republic's legitimacy to the minimum level, making it susceptible for a broad-based social movement to exploit it. These framing processes that gave values and meanings to the movement adherents' goals and strategies were made possible through cognitive opportunities that had stimulus increased framing. These expanding cultural and cognitive opportunities, such as the suddenly imposed grievances, dramatization of a system's vulnerability and legitimacy, and the availability of master frames, gave the movement its impetus for action.

Among the structures of political opportunity, the presence of Mousavi and Karoubi—the elite allies—had a positive impact on emergence and form of the Green Movement. Other structural variables appear in terms of *perceptual* rather than objective opportunities. There were not any changes in regards to institutional access or openness into the structure of the system. Rather, perceptions about instability of elite alignments and open access to the system, as well as a consensus to change the course of Ahmadinejad's policies encouraged movement adherents to take advantage of minimal electoral opportunities. Framing processes are *key* to the emergence and form of the Green Movement. Political opportunity structures and mobilizing structures only mediate between these processes.

HYPOTHESIS 2: Grassroots identities and the use of Information Communication

Technologies have had a positive impact on the emergence and form of the 2009 Green Movement.

Movement adherents used ICTs to shape frames that gave values and meaning to their actions both before and after the emergence of the Green Movement. Process tracing the activities of the adherents on the Internet and the blogosphere supports hypothesis two on the positive impact of ICTs in emergence and form of the Green Movement. Within almost fifteen years of ICTs' introduction into the country, they became one of the main *conversational* platforms among different ideologies and adherents of Marxist, liberal, leftist, women rights activists, unionists, and the Iranian diaspora who were not able to operate freely in the real world. The role of ICTs and blogs in Iran today is remarkable in terms of the vast number of voices that find a platform to be heard, the space that is provided for these individuals to discuss their views freely, and the wide range of topics and discussions that they introduce into the circles of friends and family and into the public sphere.

The ICTs, and specifically the Internet, also provide a space to access *information*, surpassing the censorship imposed by Tehran. At the height of the Green Movement, ICTs, by connecting activists to other adherents, the diaspora, and the mainstream media around the world, functioned as the platform for information dissemination by the movement adherents and citizen-journalists. They were also used in *symbolic* terms, taking advantage of the social media and Youtube as the main resource under repression to discuss and enforce their collective identity.

Many of the demonstrations were planned via the Internet, and news with details for gatherings disseminated via the Internet into the off-line world. After each demonstration, the adherents used Youtube and social media to upload videos and photos from the day, and to create symbolic images about the sacrifices in the streets. These

videos and images in real-time arouse emotions—especially shock, fear, anger—which drew more participants into the movement. The *organizational* role of the ICTs also becomes clear as both the so-called leaders and movement adherents used the ICTs for organizing and planning the next steps, as well as publishing their manifestations and the Green Movement Charter on the web.

HYPOTHESIS 3: In the absence of a strong charismatic leadership within the Green Movement, there have been limitations on the short-term success of this movement.

This diverse and broad-based participation had opened possibilities of leadership to many more adherents, and had turned many social media websites and blogs into a mode for interaction. The movement was not dependent upon any one blog, nor did the adherents follow Mousavi or Karoubi's every move. The opposition figures themselves repeatedly announced that they are only one component of the movement. They appeared to be pragmatic and orator types of leaders that tried to delegitimize the Islamic Republic's repression of the Green Movement by seeking to take advantage of Iran's Constitution through non-violent means. During the height of the elections, the Green Movement enjoyed a networked-based leadership, from the election campaign to the demonstrations it has proven to be a movement based on network of individuals and not a hierarchical leadership.

The movement leadership is de-centralized. On one side are the reformist groups, which because of three decades of cooperation and political activity are better coordinated and act within a more organized framework. But, there are secularists, leftists, religious, and groups with gender, ethnic, or tribal interests, trying to coordinate their activities with their core movement and with others under the umbrella of the Green

Movement. Furthermore, the movement leadership is based on compromises. The activists of the Green Movement have shown that they can build compromises on their minimum demand, despite the diversity of ideas and demands. The fact that people decided to take part in the elections despite the surveillance of the Guardian Council and despite the fact that Mousavi and Karoubi both insisted on their loyalty to Islamic Republic's system, shows that the activists can categorize and prioritize their demands and take action based on that.⁸¹

Hypothesis Three suggests that without a charismatic leader, the movement has not been successful. The analysis of the leadership style in the Green movement indicates that there is actually a lack of charismatic leadership in the movement. This supports the first half of the hypothesis. The movement has not been successful in achieving its initial goals thus far. However, we cannot attribute its initial failure to a lack of a charismatic leader. Perhaps the findings most relevant to this study are the many ways grassroots took advantage of their identities and used ICTs as tools for information, conversation, and organization, as well as, the network-based, de-centralized, and non-hierarchical nature of the Green Movement. These are clear indications that charismatic leaders who might advocate for a specific ideology are not welcomed among the adherents. Rather, there are indications of civic agency, and a hope that the movement adherents are able to take advantage of each individual's creativity and responsibility to move the movement goals and strategies forward when and if they decide to go into mass-protest again.

⁸¹ Appendix C illustrates a chart of Iran's political system and its power relations. As shown in the chart the Guardian Council has the authority to vet and select the candidates for the president, cabinet and parliament roles. The members of the Guardian Council are directly selected by Iran's supreme leader.

THE THEORIES OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Conventional theories of social movements suggest that ‘objective’ changes in the structure of political opportunities shape framing processes that further undermine the legitimacy of a system and thus triggering the emergence and form of a social movement. The findings of this study drawn from the hypotheses, however, suggest otherwise. There were not any objective openings and changes in terms of access to the institutions of the Islamic Republic or shifts in the elite alignments in case of the Green Movement. Rather, the ‘cognitive liberation’ occurring by relative deprivation of movement adherents vis a vis the system and the social identities made and politicized by the initial shock of a ‘stolen vote’ triggered the emergence and shaped the form that the Green Movement took later on.

Perhaps the findings that contribute most to testing and development of social movement theories under authoritarian rule are the degrees of agency found among the grassroots. The adherents were not just followers of a charismatic leader; rather, they framed the movement’s goals and strategies and acted upon them. Identities of what Asef Bayat (2010) calls ‘nonmovements’ were politicized and went into mass-protest by taking advantage of their already existing informal social movement networks. Nonmovements by themselves are unlikely to become an effective force for change, however, unless “they become mobilized on a collective basis, their struggles linked to broader social movements and civil society organizations” (Bayat, 65). Yet by creating a space for individual agency and initiative, and for loose networks of visibility and solidarity, social nonmovements can both promote active citizenship in the immediate

domains of everyday life (249) and, under the right circumstances, support broad-scale efforts to reform the state.

Revisiting table 1.1: *The Political Process Dynamics Figure*, from the literature review and putting the framing processes at the center, I argue that the political opportunity structures are necessary but not sufficient variables in accounting for emergence and form of social movements under authoritarian and closed conditions (i.e. the Arab Spring).

Figure 5.1. The Political Process Dynamics Figure

Structure of political opportunity →	Strategic framing ← →	Mobilizing structures ←
Openness/closure of the system	Ideologies/identities (perceived legitimacy)	Leaders
Cracks among elites	Information Technologies	Grassroots/SMOs
Elite allies	Informal social movement networks	Information Technologies
The degree of repression		Informal social movement networks
International pressure/Isolation		
State's centralization of economic power		
Failed reforms		

Theories of social movements should move beyond the flaw of structure of political opportunities that borrow their advantage mainly from the simplicity of rational choice models. Rather the scholarship should examine closely the elements that draw upon bounded cognitive abilities of movement adherents, which construct the opportunities, goals, and strategies of a particular social movement. The framing processes and the way

the adherents try to exploit the minimal ‘perceptual’ opportunities under closed systems should be core when accounting for emergence and form of a social movement. The focus then would be on how the political opportunity structures and mobilizing mechanisms interact and are both impacted by and impact the core framing processes when identities of ordinary citizens are politicized.

PROSPECTS FOR THE GREEN MOVEMENT

The Green Movement was framed by agency of hundreds of thousands of Iranians who defined its goals and strategies in non-violent terms and under the umbrella of a “stolen vote.” The movement adherents and activists were not consumers of a charismatic figure’s words and efforts, rather were each contributors to the cause; from framing the identities to determining the movement’s strategies.

Currently (as of February 2012), both Mousavi and Karoubi are under house arrest. In their absence, the ‘coordinating council of the green path of hope’ (*Shora-e Hamahangi Rah-e Sabz-e Omid*), which its members include some of Mousavi and Karoubi’s advisors during the 2009 elections, publishes statements and invite the adherents to take part in street demonstrations in occasions such as supporting the uprisings of the Arab Spring. The ninth *Majles* elections will be held on March 2, 2012. Mohammad Khatami, the former president and ‘the father of reform’ in Iran has published three conditions to be met before the reformists would consider taking part in the elections. These conditions are: freedom of all political prisoners, holding free and fair elections, and full implementation of Iran’s Constitution.⁸² In a statement, the ‘coordinating council of the green path of hope,’ has also asked the reformists and the

⁸² Khatami’s conditions for taking part in the elections. (translation by author). (October 2010). *Radio Farda*. Retrieved from: http://www.radiofarda.com/content/f11_iran_postelection_khatami_new_statement/2261660.html

Green Movement adherents to boycott the upcoming elections since the conditions are not favorable.⁸³ Many well-known figures of the reform camp also boycotted the March 2012 *Majles* elections.

Whether the reformist camp is trying to re-generate its position as seeking reform within the established current system, or as an opposition camp is not yet clear. In both cases, these organizers and figures, alongside boycotting the elections and setting conditions for participation, should draw strategies that target ‘micro-level’ organization and framing processes among ordinary citizens. Putting the emphasis only on the machinery of a regime’s source of legitimacy-seeking would not result in a sustained social movement that may achieve its goals.

There is a difference between an organizing authority and a charismatic figure that leads a social movement’s agenda according to his in-group ideology. These organizers should take advantage of the potential for agency among Green Movement adherents to strengthen the ‘informal social movement networks’ without trying to anchor their diverse identities into an expert-type conversation that draws strategies for the ‘followers.’ They should take advantage of the Internet not just for transferring information about street demonstrations, but as a tool to foster conversation among different backgrounds and ideologies in order to name, frame and make decisions about current issues relevant to the movement, and identify resources, as well as organizing across the diversity of the movement adherents to transfer the strategies to the off-line world. Unless they do so, the movement will not achieve its potential to take advantage

⁸³ Statement of the ‘coordinating council of the green path of hope’ for Males elections. (translation by author). *Jonbesh-e Rah-e Sabz*. Retrieved from: <http://www.rahesabz.net/story/47760/>

of each individual and their digital nodes when perceptions of structural vulnerability of the system are high and thus motivations for participation arises.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

This study is based on process-tracing the movement leaders and adherents' strategies and activities by using the information available on the Internet. Due to the novelty of the movement and limitations in accessing official data, this study suffers from shortcomings in data collection. I had to gather data mainly from the Internet and Iran's official ministry graphs that sometimes lack accuracy or are outdated. Researching the ICTs, with their broad worldwide penetration and reach, risks reporting patterns and interactions on the web that might seem relevant but might not be initiated by movement adherents from inside Iran. For instance, in some cases it is hard to distinguish whether or not some Facebook or Twitter messages are posted by activists from inside Iran or by the Iranian diaspora residing outside of the country. Another limitation is the lack of access to the opposition figures. Conducting interviews with Karoubi and Mousavi would have made the conclusions of this study about the networked based, de-centralized, and non-hierarchical type of leadership and organization more clear.

This research is focused on the *emergence and form* of the Green movement after the 2009 elections in Iran. A more systematic study of variables identified in this study to examine their causal relationship with *success and failure* of the movement in achieving its goals would be an illustrative next step. The framing processes were recognized central to the timing and the form that the movement took during the height of the elections. It is interesting to examine their impact on success or failure of such broad-

based social movement and their interaction with political opportunity structures and resource mobilization. This would provide grounds both for theory testing, as well as directions for activists to build upon most relevant aspects to success of social movements.

The scope of this study also did not allow for in depth analysis of each element of the political opportunity structures in their interaction to other variables. Capacities of Iranian grassroots and the middle-class and the values and meanings that they collectively gave to Green Movement have most impacted the emergence and form of the movement. But these framing processes were constantly impacted by structural variables. The most stable element of political opportunity that took the momentum of the movement was the degree of repression. It is useful to conduct a study on organizational variables that can impact the success of a particular movement when facing a harsh degree of power and repression. As the Green Movement adherents framed their strategies around a non-violent framework, it would be of interest to investigate these strategies and structural and organizational variables that have impacted the movement failure in achieving its initial goals so far. This would identify the shortcomings as well as some new strategies to keep the momentum of the movement.

Other structural variables such as the state of the economy at the time of the movement are interesting to investigate. Are economic hardships sufficient to explain the emergence and timing of a broad-based social movement? Is an oil producing economy less susceptible to challenge by opposition activists? Or does it have more capabilities and options to repress? Does oil production create authoritarian governments that provide

services to citizens in exchange for their consent? What are the prospects for democratization in major oil-producing countries in the Middle East?

Questions about regime transitions or democratization more specifically are interesting subjects for research. As Bayat (2010) notes, as a result of the authoritarian and closed nature of most states in the Middle East, along with the inward-focused nature of existing civic organizations in the area, the best hope for democratic reform in Middle Eastern countries is not civic organizations or NGOs but the quiet encroachment of social nonmovements. The fact that the 2009 demonstrations came out of elections, and were broadly organized by loose networks of individuals among family and friends, raises questions and hope about aspirations of Iranians for equality, freedom, and self-determination and finally democratization.

The movement adherents had decided to take advantage of minimal democratic mechanisms and called for a national referendum as the legitimacy of the Islamic Republic eroded with its un-responsiveness to demands for vote cancellation. The “quiet enchantment” spaces are already created in Iran and most Middle Eastern countries; it is interesting to further investigate the relationship of the opportunities they provide for agency and deliberation among the grassroots and their impact on the path towards democratization. Questions also arise about which type of change along the social movements’ spectrum—from revolutionary to gradual nonviolent reforms—would more than others brighten the prospects for democratization or political liberalization throughout the Middle East.

The findings and analyses of this thesis provide empirical evidence for scholarship on flourishing of informal social ties among citizens facing up to

authoritarian governments (specifically in the Middle East) and their positive uses of ICTs in order to organize and disseminate information. As John Dewey puts it, the democratic process at the individual level,

consists in having a responsible share according to capacity in forming and directing the activities of the groups in which one belongs and in participating according to need in the values which the groups sustain. From the standpoint of the groups, it demands liberation of the potentialities of members of a group in harmony with the interests and goods which are common (Dewey, 1988, p.327-8).

The scholarship on social movements should pay more attention to the bottom-up framing processes that render a state's power vulnerable, rather than only structural variables that might have only slightly changed when a social movement erupts. Reducing citizens' role in these countries to voters and protesters who only support the machinery of democracy without paying attention to its civic responsibilities is misleading. The case of the Green Movement indicates that adherents are able to face up to the authoritarian rule; unite over a 'common good' and make compromises despite their differences. The 'polycentrism' surrounding the movement indicates civic agency and responsibility on the part of the adherents with several decision-making and activity nodes.

In many authoritarian states, the Internet and especially the blogosphere may be the only 'public sphere' where citizens can interact and share censored information. One focus of the scholarship should be investigating strategies that enable the activists to use the ICTs as tools to foster sustained conversation free of exclusion. In this study of civic agency facing up to authoritarian power, it is interesting to investigate the potential of ICTs to be used as tools that build upon associations of individuals for discussion,

consultation, persuasion and debate in decision-making and organizing among each of the centers of activity and the adherents of social movements.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: LIST OF FARSI WEBSITES AND BLOGS

WEBSITES

Islamic Republic's Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies website:

<http://www.ict.gov.ir/home-en.html>

The Islamic Iranian alumni organization website : <http://advarnews.biz/>

Kaleme : www.kaleme.com

Rahe Sabz : www.rahesabz.net

Jmhourikhahi : www.jomhourikhahi.com

Balatarin : www.balatarin.com

Rooz Online : www.roozonline.com

BBC Persian : www.bbcpersian.com

VOA News : <http://www.voanews.com/persian/news/>

DW- Persian : <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/0,,641,00.html>

Radio Farda : www.radiofarda.com

BLOGS

Green Revolution : <http://greenrevolutioniran.blogspot.com/>

Az Sarzamin-e past : <http://fromnederland.blogspot.com/>

Tahavol-e Sabz : <http://tahavolesabz.com/>

Green Correspondants : <http://www.greencorrespondents.com/>

Iran Green Voice : <http://irangreenvoice.com/>

APPENDIX B:
IRAN'S 2009 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION RESULTS AND VOTER TURNOUT

The information section of Iran's Interior Ministry announced the results of the 10th Presidential Elections as follows:

Total of the votes: 39165191, Turnout: close to 85 percent

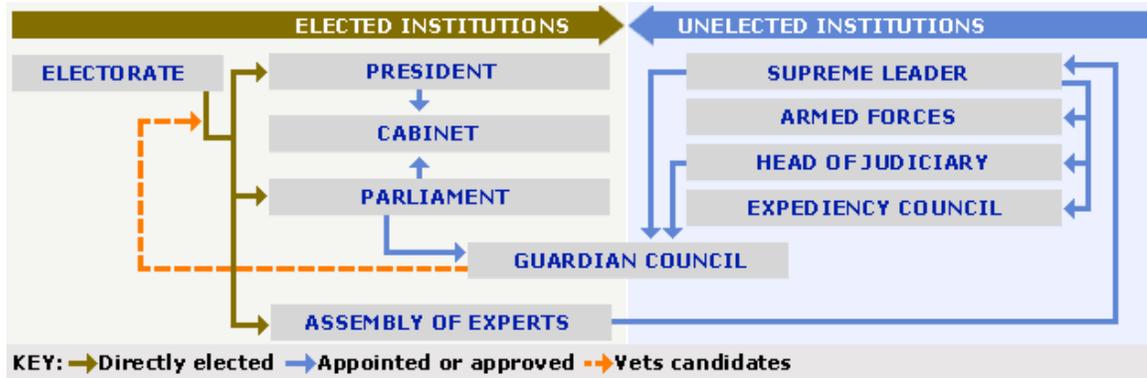
1. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad with 24527516 votes, close to 62.63 percent
2. Mir-Hossein Mousavi with 13216411 votes, close to 33.75 percent
3. Mohsen Rezaii with 678240 votes, close to 1.73 percent
4. Mehdi Karoubi with 333635 votes, close to 0.85 percent

Null votes: 409389, close to 04.1 percent of the total.

Source: Islamic Republic of Iran's official interior ministry website. Retrieved from:
<http://moi.ir/Portal/Home/ShowPage.aspx?Object=News&CategoryID=832a711b-95fe-4505-8aa3-38f5e17309c9&LayoutID=dd8faff4-f71b-4c65-9aef-a1b6d0160be3&ID=5e30ab89-e376-434b-813f-8c22255158e1>

Translation by the author.

APPENDIX C:
 CHART OF IRAN'S POWER STRUCTURE



Source: BBC World News website. Retrieved from:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/middle_east/03/iran_power/html/

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