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I. Introduction

Today the political power and the electoral process in Islamic Iran are in the hands of the religious-political groups which have for several years infiltrated the institutions of the country and are in charge of the Islamic political system. These groups, dominated primarily by the clergy who play a major role in all the organs of power, and control the economic, political, military and cultural sectors, are known as "traditional line," the "modern," or the "Islamic Left."

In order to understand the theological basis of these terms, however, we must recall previous divisions. Indeed, the majority of the mullahs' support for the coup d'etat of 1953 against the democratic government of Dr. Mossadegh, led the Shah's secret police (the SAVAK), to use them in the fight against the opposition after the coup. The mullahs for their assistance in the antidemocratic repression were rewarded by giving them the freedom to fight the disciples of the Bahai faith (a religion founded in the 19th century). Thus in 1954 was born the "Andjoman-e zed-e Bahai (anti-Bahai Association, "AZB") whose goal was to fight the Bahais by any means possible. A mullah in Mashhad by the name of sheikh Mahmoud Zakerzadeh Tavallaï, also known as "sheikh Halabi" was the founder of AZB. Apart from its Anti-Bahai activities, such as the attacks and the destruction of the centers of gatherings of the Bahais, the AZB also entered the field of religious debate by denouncing the rival religious groups. However, the political and religious radicalization of Iran in the 1970s also led the AZB to be called in question. That is why, in 1977 the AZB became the Hojjatiye Mahdaviye Association¹, (Hojjat means "proof" and it is a reference to 12th Shi'ite Imam). The political radicalization pushed a great number of young Hojjatis militants to leave this group and to join the various extremist movements and Khomeynistes. Thus, the mullahs and the young radicals who did not agree with the religious and political views of the Hojjatis, became known as Sadeghis, in reference to the school created by 6th Shi'ite Imam. The divisions between Hojjatis and Sadeghis became progressively greater as a result of the deepening of the political crisis and the politicization of the religion. On the strictly religious level, Hojjatis which the overwhelming majority come from the theological school of Mashhad advocate a traditional interpretation of the religion, while Sadeghis, the majority of which come from the school of Qom, are in favor of an interpretation of religion based on reason. According to Hojjatis, while waiting for the reappearance of the occulted twelfth Imam, the spiritual power will be separated from that of the temporal power. The Clergy directs the spiritual affairs of the community and the government is in charge of the temporal matters. For them, the arrival of the occulted Imam will be expediated by the increase in the disorder and corruption. This vision which is close to that of the grand ayatollahs and religious authorities is disputed by Sadeghis which contend that while waiting for the arrival of the 12th Imam, it is necessary that the community be guided by Faghih (an Islamic scholar). While Hojjatis stress the personal dimension of the religion,

¹ Verleuw Camille *ASSOCIATION HOJJATIYE MAHDAVIYE* In : contestations en pays islamiques vol. II., Paris, CHEAM, 1986.

Sadeghis emphasize its collective dimension. Politically, Hojjatis denounces the ideological enemies of Islam (Communists, liberals) while Sadeghis fight the political enemies of religion (such as the U.S.).

Surprised by the advent of the revolution of 1979 Hojjatis accepted it and endeavored to preserve their influence. Between 1979 and 1980 they infiltrated all the revolutionary institutions such as the revolutionary guards, the military intelligence service, the Assembly of Experts, and used these institutions in their fight against the pro communist – Tudeh Party, the Modjahedin and specially against the Bahais. Some former members of the Association would later play significant roles in the Islamic Republic: Rajai (the 2nd Islamic president, deceased in a bomb explosion in 1981), Velayati (former Foreign Minister), Qarazi (former minister for oil), Parvaresh and Tavakoli (former ministers) and Khamnei, the current supreme leader². Following a speech by Khomeyni criticizing its positions, the Association officially announced its dissolution in July 1983. The Association, however could not proclaim its dissolution, because its statutes provide that it will be dissolved only after the reappearance of 12th hidden Imam. Consequently, the tendencies related to this Association are still active in the Islamic institutions. However, it is impossible to know who are the active members of this group and what roles they play in the political system.

Thus, the majority of the mullahs who today hold important positions were students or disciples of Khomeyni. They are able to exert pressure on other members of the clergy, since they control the granting of subsidies and scholarships to the students of the various theological schools and especially that of Qom. However, the mullahs in power are helped by the Islamists who are not members of the clergy, but share the same views as the dominating clergy. Among these groups, five of them run the political system and one is engaged in academic studies.

II. The Five Khodi

For some time, two classifications were used by the Islamic authorities and especially by the Islamic ministry of Information to separate the Iranians in two categories: khodi ("oneself", " ") and nakhodi ("other than oneself", "for-others", "). The khodi belong to the system in place and contributed to the establishment of this system. The nakhodi are qualified as "adverse", "counter-revolutionary" and "enemy"³.

The fight for the domination of the political system (system dominated by Islamic thoughts) appears by horizontal oppositions on the level of the political system and in public. These oppositions whose stake is the control of the Islamic system, are different from the vertical oppositions, which oppose the political system using the methods of the civil society. The latter dominated by Western methods asserts the separation of the religion and the State. Also, the dominant groups are the agent and the expression of conflicts within the framework of the same Islamic system. They mobilize and shape the public opinion in order to be able to fully control the political and economic levers of

² Ibid., p.104

³ Gozaresh nos. 97-98. Mars-avril 999

power. A brief discription of these groups will enable us to better understand their roles in the Islamic labyrinth.

1. Jamyat-e motalef-e-Islami

Officially founded islami in March 1963, the JME (" Islamic united group ") took part in the khomeynist insurrection of 1963 and assassinated the Prime Minister Mansour in 1965. As soon as it was founded, the group created a clerical council selected by Khomeyni which included the ayatollahs Beheshti and Motahari . Among the founders, were those, who would become well known with the arrival of Khomeyni to power : Ladjvardi, Araghi, Katchou-i. After the establishment of the party of the Islamic republic (PRI), Khomeyni orders the members of the JME to join this party. But after the dissolution of the PRI, the JME continues its activities and collaborates closely with Jame-e rohaniyat-e- mobarez (see further). The JME would have also been originally the basis of Khomeyni's support of the taking of the American hostages⁴. The JME also succeeded in creating a very influential network in the economic and intelligence sectors. Its slogans are fundamentally anti-American, but it supports a free market economy and private property. It Controls the bazaar and the Resselat newspaper. Habibollah Asgaroladi, who is one of the most influential men of the Islamic system directs this group system. One of the dignitaries of the group, Azari Qomi opposed the Islamic system in 1988⁵. The official organ of the group is the weekly magazine " shoma " (you).

Influential members of the jamyat-e motalef-e esslami

<i>Names</i>	<i>position</i>
<i>Abasspur</i>	<i>President of the commission of culture and higher education</i>
<i>Asgaroladi</i>	<i>Director of the JME</i>
<i>Assadollah Badamtchyan</i>	<i>Adviser to the president of the judiciary</i>
<i>Abdollah Jassbi</i>	<i>President of the free University</i>
<i>Katchoui</i>	<i>Former Director of the Islamic prisons</i>
<i>Assadollah Ladjvardi</i>	<i>Former head warden of Evine, assassinated in 1998</i>
<i>Mostafa Mirsalim</i>	<i>Former minister of guidance, member of the bord of directors of the University</i>
<i>Amirkabir Rafighdoust</i>	<i>Committee of Imam Khomeyni</i>
<i>Zavareyi</i>	<i>Vice-president of the judiciary</i>

2. Jame-e rohaniyat-e- mobarez Teheran " RMT " (" the league of themilitant clergy of Teheran ")

This group was created following the dissolution of the party of the Islamic republic in 1987. Among the founders of the group, are ayatollah Khamnei and Ali Akbar Rafsandjani. This group controls newspapers Keyhan, Sobh, the Islamic T.V., and several associations like the association of the Moslem engineers, the association of the bazaar of Teheran and the Islamic association of doctors. The RMT believes that velayat-e Faghih

⁴ Gozaresh, no. 93, 1998

⁵ Khomeyni was the leader of JME, Assgaroladi, in Gozaresh, no.93, 1998.

(theocratic institution based on the sovereignty of learned Islamic) is a business of specialists and the people do not have any role in the election of Faghih. Faghih is above the constitution and the clergy must control the businesses of the country and is not responsible to the people.

The RMT Supports the export of the revolution and is opposed to the USA. From the economic point of view, it favors the privatization of the production facilities and opposes state economy⁶.

The influential members of the jame-e rohaniyat-e- mobarez are Emami Kashani Secretary of rohaniyat, speaker of the board of trustees, member of the assembly of the experts Reza Taghavi speaker of the RMT, deputy Khosroshahi Akbar Hasheni Rafsandjani President of MTM (see further) Hassan Rohani Ali Akbar Nategh Nouri President of the assembly, Mohammad Yazdi advisor to the leader, former minister of justice Mohammad Reza Mahdavi Kani Imam of Friday of Teheran Ahmad Janatti Secretary of the board of trustees, chairman of Islamic propaganda.

3. Majma-e rohaniyun-e- mobarez " MRM " (" the league of the militant clergy ").

Some time after the foundation of the RMT, the ideological divergences and the personal ambitions of its members caused a split within the group. While a majority directed by Khamnei and Rafsandjani controlled the RMT, a minority led by Khoiniha (responsible for the taking of the American hostages and founder of the Salam newspaper), Karoubi and Mohtashami (Former Minister of Interior Department and ambassador to Syria) created Majma-e rohaniyun-e- mobarez " MRM ". The MRM controls, inter alia, the Islamic association of students and the Islamic association of the university teachers. According to MRM, Faghih must be elected and its powers limited to those, which are envisaged by the constitution. The MRM supports the export of the revolution and the anti-American fight. From the economic point of view, the MRM is for the intervention of the state in the economy and the nationalization of industries and agricultural self-sufficiency⁷.

The influential members of Majma-e rohaniyun-e- mobarez: Assadollah Bayat ,Mehdi Karoubi Secretary-general of majma, Moussavi Khoyni Member of MTM, editor of the newspaper Salam, Rassoul Montajebnya Member of the board of majma, Ali Akbar Mohtashami, Moussavi Lary Minister of Interior, Rahimyan, Mohammad Ali Sadoughi Vice-president, Mohammad Reza Tavassoli Member of the assembly of the experts, Mohammad Khatami President

4. Sazeman-e modjahedine-e enghelab-e eslami " MEE " (" Mojahedin of the Islamic revolution ")

It is a " radical " organization whose origin is in the old party of the " Islamic Nations " of the time of the Shah. It was founded in April of 1979 by Behzad Nabavi (a former Minister of heavy Industry), Mohammad Salamati, Morteza Olviri (of young radical Islamists) and Douzdouzani (one of the founders of the revolutionary guards). The new

⁶ Mortadji Hodjat Jenaha-ye siassi da Iran emrouz (les tendances politiques dans l'Iran. d'aujourd'hui), Téheran, Naghso-negar, 1378,(1999).

⁷ Ibid.,pp.100 and 111

organization founded by the fusion of seven groups of already existing Islamists with the goal of "safeguarding and extending the Islamic revolution" by "the elimination of the counter-revolutionaries". A group of ex-Maoists of the party "Ranjbaran" (proletarian) later joined this organization. This group is primarily composed of militant Islamists and anti-imperialists not clerical, in favor of protection of the "disinherited", and the control of the economy by the State.

The influential members of MEE

<i>Name</i>	<i>Function</i>
<i>Behzad Nabavi</i>	<i>Former Minister</i>
<i>Mohammad Salamati</i>	<i>Former Deputy</i>
<i>Morteza Olviri</i>	<i>Former Deputy</i>
<i>Abbas Douzdouzani</i>	<i>Founder of the Sepah</i>
<i>Mohssen Armin</i>	

5. Gorouh-e kargozaran-e sazandegui " (KGS)

At the time of the legislative elections of 1996, the supporters of President Rafsandjani created the "Gorouh-e kargozaran-e sazandegui" (KGS) ("workers of reconstruction") with the support of "khaneh kargar" (house of the worker). The KGS controls the newspapers hamshahri and Iran. The technocrats of the KGS are in favor of official management by specialists. They support privatization of the economy, foreign investments in Iran and the industrialization of the country. In foreign politics, they favor detente⁸.

Influential members of the kargozaran-e sazandegui: Names, Functions: Mostafa Hsssemi Taba Vice-president, Gholamreza Aghazadeh Vice-president, Bijan Namdar Zangueneh Minister of oil, Mohssen Nurbakhsh central Bank manager, Issa Kalantary Minister of agriculture, Ali Abdolalizadeh Minister of urban planning and housing, Mohammad Hashemi Vice-president, Ataollah Mohadjerani Islamic Minister of Guidance, Ferydun Verdinejad Director of the Islamic Agency, Mohammad Ali Nadjafi Vice-président.

III. Dominant groups and legislative elections

In order to understand the range and the influence of these groups in the Islamic political system, one can choose the example of the legislative elections between 1988 and 1996 and analyze the electoral play of each group. It should be stressed that none of the groups offers any political or economic programs, that the purpose of these elections is control of the legislative branch⁹.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 190 and 195

⁹ Cf. Menashri David *Revolution at a Crossroads*, Washington The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1977.

1. Third Majlis (1988 -1992) At the time of the elections of the third Islamic legislators of April and May 1988, two factions were presented as two " electoral coalitions". Rafsanjani, Khamnei, Mahdavi Kani and Mohamad Yazdi led the traditionalists and the conservatives and were supported by the RMT and discreetly by the JME. The second coalition entitled " coalition of the poor and the powerless ", and supported by MRM, the " association of the Islamic students and teachers ", " the house of worker ", was led by " radicals " like Olviri, Douzdouzani (former minister and founder of Sepah), Ebrahim Asgharzadeh (spokesman of " Students followers of the line of Imam "). The election campaign of the " radicals " was centered around the slogans: " for the domination of line of Imam and of Islam of the barefoot ", " the rejection of the American Islam", and " the war of poverty against the wealth ". Thus, at the time of third legislature, the two political movement shared the seats of the Islamic assembly and this partnership led to the election of Rafsandjani (RMT) to presidency and that of Karoubi (MRM) to the vice-presidency of the Assembly.

2. Fourth legislature (1992 -1996) At the time of the fourth legislature, the fight between the RMT and the MRM intensified. The RMT asked for the assistance of Shora-ye negahban (" Board of trustees of the constitution ") directed by Ahmad Janati, in order to prevent a certain number of candidates of the MRM from taking part in the elections. Thus, the candidates of the RMT obtained the majority of the seats at the fourth Islamic assembly. The new equation of power, created by the RMT, encouraged mullahs of the JME to extend their domination to the RMT. Shortly after, the JME with the support of Shora-ye negahban assumed the leadership of the RMT.

3. Fifth legislature (1996 -2000) : At the time of the elections of 1996, the MRM declared from the start that it would not take part in the elections. With regard to the RMT, its candidates for the fifth legislature, were actually those of the jamyat-e motalef-e. However, the fifth legislature was marked by increased competition between the supporters of Rafsandjani and those of Khamnei. While the JME supported Khamnei's candidat, supporters of President created Gorouh-e kargozaran-e sazanegui (KGS). For its part saze-man-e mojahedin-e enghelab-e eslami of Behzad Nabavi created a group called Etelef-e grouhay-e khat-e emam (coalition of followers of the line of Imam). This radical coalition supported the candidates of the KGS primarily, having the intention of weakening the religious right represented by the JME. Consequently, the electoral fight for the election of the deputies of the fifth legislature proceeded mainly between the supporters of Rafsandjani and those of Khamnei. However, in order to attenuate the friction between the two coalition, a third group named Defa az arzeshey-e enghelab-e eslami " AEE " " (Defense of the Islamic revolution's values) was created by Reyshahri who took on himself to bring the two dominant groups with to agree to defend the foundation of the Islamic republic . This group presented a list of candidates combining the supporters of Khamnei and those of Rafsandjani.

After the elections for the fifth legislature, the JME obtained 72 seats, and the KGS 16 seats. Eight other elected official were on a joint list of KGS and JME. Hundred and sixty other deputies were elected individually in the various cities. They were close to the various foundations and Islamic institutions. Some belonged to MEE or MRM. Thus, the entire elected official were supporters of the Islamic republic and velayat-e Faghih (The

theocratic institution based on the sovereignty of the Islamic scholar). However, the fifth legislature was more difficult to handle, because on the economic and political issues, the views of the majority of deputies were unpredictable. To clarify this point in order to measure the influence of each group in the decision making process in the Islamic system, we examine the composition of Majma-e Tashkhis-e maslehat-e nezam (MTM) " the Assembly of the Experts" which, according to the article 112 of the Islamic constitution was qualified to examine different laws to determine their adherence to the values of Islamic republic.

Assembly of the Experts, Name Function: Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani^{*}, President of the MTMN, President Mohammad Khatami^{*} President and board member of the MRM, Minister of Islamic guidance, Director of the national library, Ali Akbar Nategh Nouri^{*} President of the assembly, board member of the JRM, Deputy and minister

Mohammad Yazdi^{*} board member of JRM, minister of justice, M.Reza Mahdavi Kani^{*} Member of JRM President of the revolutionary committee, minister of interior Ebrahim Amini^{*} Secretary of assembly of experts, member of association of teachers of theological schools of Qom, teacher of theological school of Qom, Abbas Vaez Tabassi^{*} Representative of the Guide in Imam Reza's shrine in Mashhad, member of the assembly of experts, teacher in theological school of Qom, Ahmad Janati^{*} Secretary of Council of Guardians, president of Council of Islamic propaganda, member of JRM teacher of theological school of Qom, Mohammad Emami Kashani^{*} Speaker of Council Guardians, member of the Assembly of Experts and JRM, teacher of theological school of Qom, Hassan Habibi First vice-president, former minister and vice-president Mir Hossein Moussavi Adviser of the president, Prime Minister, Ali Akbar Valayati Adviser of the Guide, Foreign Minister, Mohammad Reyshahri^{*} representative of the Guide, Minister of Information, former prosecutor.

Hassan Saneyi^{*} representative of the Guide and director of foundation of 15th Khordad, member of the office of Khomeini, Hassan Rohani^{*} Vice-president of assembly, secretary of Council of national security, Deputy, Moussavi Khoyni^{*} Member of MRM, director of newspaper Salam, prosecutor, deputy and person in charge of the taking of American hostages, Habibollah Asgaroladi Secretary of JME, representative of the Guide, Deputy, Dori Najafabadi^{*} Member of assembly of experts, Minister of information, Ali Laridjani Director of Islamic Radio and TV, Minister of Islamic Guidance, Mostafa Mirsalim Member of JME, Minister of Guidance, Mohammad Reza Tavassoli^{*} Member of assembly of experts, MRM and member of office of Khomeini, Abdollah Nouri^{*} publisher of newspaper Khordad, minister of interior, Morteza Nabavi Publisher of Resalat, minister of communications, Hassan Firouzabadi, joint chief of staff, hostage taker, Gholamreza Aghazadeh vice president, minister of oil, Namdar Zanganeh minister of oil, member of KGS, minister, Mohammad Hashemi vice president, member of KGS, director of Islamic TV, Mohsen Nourbakhsh secretary of MTM, commander of Pasdaran, Yousef Saneyi high ranking clergy in Qom, prosecutor, Movahedi Kermani representative of the Guide in the Sepah, Deputy, Abolghasem Khazali member of the surveillance council and the Khebragan, Mohammad Momen member of the surveillance council and Khebragan, Mahmud

^{*} Member of the Clergy

Hashemi member of the surveillance council, teacher in Qom, Gholamreza Rezvani member of the surveillance council, Mesbah Yazdi member of assembly of experts, teacher in Qom.

IV. Dominant groups and the election of Khatami:

The last presidential election in Iran (May 1997) aroused a considerable interest among the analysts and commentators, especially in Europe and in the United States. Because, one wanted to believe that thanks to a miraculous event, the Islamic State could perhaps break with a dark past to turn to the future. It should be recalled that the election and the re-election of Rafsandjani also raised hopes in the governments and the European and American business sectors. He was compared, wrongly, to Gorbachev and the principal Western newspapers devoted whole pages to somebody who at the time seemed the key to the opening of the Islamic State towards the external world. The French newspaper *Lemonde* devoted a whole page entitled " mullah of the century " to him and he was called the new Amir Kabir the great Iranian chancellor who introduced modernity into the political system of the country by limiting the power of the mullahs.

Many Iranians hoped to find in him the providential man who would release them from the Islamic constraint. However, the years went by without any significant change to reduce their suffering. On the international level, the policy pursued by the Islamic State hardly changed. The political assassinations , the interference in the internal affairs of Islamic countries and neighbors, the export of revolution and the support of Islamic terrorists , as well as the sabotage of the Middle East peace process finally tarnished the image of a president called " moderate ". On the economic front, the promised miracle did not happen either, and the country's economy has never been as catastrophic as it is today. However, the election of Mohammad Khatami also raised the same hopes, even if the observers are, this time, more lucid and less certain of the changes to come.

It must be mentioned that the election of Khatami, like other elections in the Islamic State took place under absolutely antidemocratic conditions, in the absence of any freedom and without any international monitoring. It must be recalled that Khatami was " chosen " by the " Council of Guardians " as one of four official candidates, faithful to the foundation of the Islamic State and to the powerful mullahs. However, contrary to Rafsandjani, Khamnei and many others, Khatami neither belongs to "Council of Revolution", nor to the "revolutionary tribunals", nor to other institutions of repression installed by Khomeyni. However, while collaborating narrowly, after the revolution, with the extremist Mohammad Montazeri, he had contributed to the export of revolutionary terrorism and the intensification of terror inside of the country.

During the Iran-Iraq war, Khatami held several positions of responsibility, in particular that of the president of the office of war propaganda and the joint chief of the armed forces. These two positions enabled him to put his program of agitation-propaganda into practice based on the export of revolutionary terrorism.

However, during the ten years that he occupied the post of the Islamic minister of Guidance - actually the minister of censorship – he showed strength by attenuating the pressure on the writers and journalists, while remaining faithful to the principles and

bases of the Islamic State¹⁰. Lastly, it should be specified that the election of Khatami was the result of the power struggle between Rafsandjani and Khamnei.

Indeed, Rafsandjani's supporters in the government and in the Parliament tried to initiate a constitutional amendment, in order to make him eligible for a third term. In order to dissuade Rafsandjani to run for a third time, Khamnei offered him a position equivalent to the second position in the Islamic State. Rafsandjani accepted the proposal and dissuaded his supporters to amend the constitution. However, Khamnei offered Rafsandjani only the post of president of Assembly of evaluation of suitability of the system, controlled by a majority, who were faithful to him. Following the weakening of his position, Rafsandjani decided to form a new alliance with the Islamists of the " left " like the MEE and the MRM that he had previously pushed out of power, in order to impose the candidacy of Khatami vis-à-vis that of Nategh Nouri, considered to be the candidate of the Guide. The candidacy of Khatami was in the beginning, a simple challenge to the conservatives, launched by the " left " Islamists, because those, who supported, Khatami's candidacy (a divided and heterogeneous group) were convinced that Khatami would not be elected¹¹. During the election campaign, two coalitions were formed, supporting one and the other candidates:

1. The coalition in favor of Khatami and supported discreetly by Rafsandjani was made up of the MEE, the MRM and the KGS.

2. The coalition in favor of Nategh Nouri and supported by Khamnei, was made up of the JME, the RMT, and Shora-ye negahban (the " Board of trustees of the constitution ") directed by Ahmad Janati as well as Sepahe pasdaran, via its commander Rezai

However, the coalition supporting Khatami would never have allowed his election, because this coalition showed its limits at the time of the legislative elections and could not obtain a majority at the Islamic assembly.

However during the last presidential election, an event not envisaged by the two coalitions upset the political assumptions. Marginalized by the campaign organized against him, portraying him to be the candidate of " anti revolutionaries ", and supporter of " the cultural offensive of the west ", Khatami appeared in the eyes of the population as a " dissenting " candidate, focusing on him the desires and aspiration of the young people, the women and other opponents at the Islamic State. However, according to the constitution of the Iranian theocratic State, the only time the people can exert directly its " sovereignty " under undemocratic conditions, it is at the time of the presidential election. However, being given that the choice of the candidate does not belong to the voters, it was rare that a presidential election would attract a crowd. Except for the election of Bani Sadr, supported by Khomeyni, the election of Khatami is the only demonstration of a popular will expressed under undemocratic conditions going in the direction of disqualification of the Islamic State. The vote in favor of Khatami must be regarded as the expression of a popular sovereignty limited against the " divine sovereignty " represented by the candidacy of the favorite Nategh Nouri.

What changed the nature of this election, was the participation of several million young people and women unlike the preceding elections. Actually, more than 13 million

¹⁰ See biography of Khatami in internet

¹¹ Dad Babak, (journaliste et membre de l'état-major de Khatami), *Sad rouz ba Khatami (cent jours avec khatami)*, Téhéran, Éditions du ministère de la culture islamique, 1378 (1999),p. 21.

voters took part for the first time since the election of Bani Sadr in a presidential election, in order to express their rejection of the clerical system.

V. The Khatami phenomenon

During his election campaign, Khatami had several times emphasized the fact that he remains faithful to the principle of velayat-e Faghih that is the base of the Islamic system¹². However, he also declared him-self in favor of broadening of personal and collective freedom.

In order to properly appreciate the effect of Khatami's election to presidency of the Islamic republic, it would be useful to point out briefly the religious and political positions of Khatami, as he had expressed them in the past and to see how much the political support of the young Iranian has modified his fundamental positions.

1. Candidate Khatami

In 1991, Khatami taught at several Iranian Universities and informed the students about his vision of political Islam. The courses taught by Khatami were published in a work published in 1998 and entitled " bim-e modj " (the fear of vague). This work makes it possible to understand the Khatami's ideas concerning the various aspects of the Islamic political system.

Faithful to Khomeyni

Speaking in praise of Khomeyni, whom he regards it as the greatest " revitalizer of the religion ":

In believing the sacred teachings of Islam, Imam Khomeyni himself foughtt against despotism, dependency and colonialism, and overcame those with the support of the believers (...) The Islamic revolution led by the Imam was victorious at the time when the inability of all - isms to save the oppressed nation became more and more obvious¹³.

Khatami wonders then what is this Islam that Khomeyni was its best interpreter. After having quoted Khomeyni on several occasions, he concludes by underlining two characteristics of this Islam:

- a. the importance of role of clergy and of the school theology in the defense of Islam
- b. The fact that the establishment of a religious State can succeed only if the religion is able to solve the difficulties and the problems currently facing humanity and to provide answers to questions that man asks himself today and tomorrow¹⁴.

¹² Ibid.,pp.128-129.

¹³ Khatami Seyyed Mohammad, *Bim-e modje (la crainte de la vague, cours donnés en 1991)*, séries d'articles, Téhéran, Simayé djavan, 5^e édition 1377 (1998), pp.23-24. See also Khatami Seyyed Mohammad, *Az donya-ye shahr ta Shah-re donya (Du monde de la cité à la cité du monde)*, Téhéran, Éditions Ney, 1377 (1998).

¹⁴ Ibid.,pp.30 to 35.

In addition, he adopts Khomeiney' definition of an Islamic government :

This government is a derivative of the absolute reign of the prophet. It is one of the first commandments of Islam. It takes precedence over all the secondary commandments, and even praying, fasting and the pilgrimage (...) It can stop any spiritual or temporal affair that is in opposition of any interest of Islam¹⁵.

And further specifies :

It is clear that of point of view of followers of the revolution and of Imam, the pillar of command that we prefer, must be the vision and the thought which have generated the revolution, have led it and brought it to victory: i.e. the thought of Imam¹⁶.

Faithful to the Islamic revolution

Khatami considers that the Iranian Islamic revolution is the most significant movement of resurrection of the religion in our time¹⁷:

In a doctrinal system like Islamic system which was founded on the ideology and restrictions imposed on individuals in order to reach the objective which is absolute point of view of doctrine is more significant (...). Since we have established a system base on the religion, it is normal that much of those thing available in the west to people and especially to the young is prohibited to the citizen of an Islamic country (...) A young person who has desires (to satisfy, NDR) (...) enjoys life much more if he lives in the west, because the way there is open for the satisfaction of his primary desires. Whereas in an Islamic system many religious and moral barriers are blocking him. What in an ideological system can reassure the individuals and make them happy, it is the doctrines, especially for a young person¹⁸

After having to distinguish three Islams; reactionary, true and eclectic , Khatami, claims that the Islam, which is in power in Iran, is true Islam. And he affirms that Khomeyni is the expression of true Islam of our time¹⁹. Khatami analyzes then the crisis in the west and claims that this crisis is the consequence of the aging Western civilization of which the capitalism is the dominant expression²⁰. Faced with the " decline " of Western civilization , Khatami claims to want to found an Islamic civilization . He contends that in the past, it was a certain vision of Islam corresponding to the civilization of the time, which failed, and not Islam as a religion. He concludes that to release oneself from the domination of Western civilization, it would be necessary to confront the west²¹

¹⁵ Ibid., p.42.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.76.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁸ Khatami, op.cit., pp.155-156.

¹⁹ Ibid.,pp.159-164.

²⁰ Ibid.,pp. 177-178.

²¹ Ibid.,pp. 181-185.

The West and freedom

After having denounced socialism, capitalism and nationalism, Khatami specifies: We made the revolution, in order to be able, using a thought which is basically different from those which dominate the majority of the contemporary men, to found a new order²² Analyzing the relationship between the West and Islam, he considers that the first Western contact with the Moslem world was the crusade and the second contact appeared after the advent of a new civilization and the beginning of Western conquest : This time, the West arrived in this part of the world; displayed its presence in the form of colonialism in the world and in the Moslem world, in establishing itself on the new culture and civilization which began with the renaissance and showed itself externally with the French revolution²³. Khatami considers that contradiction between the Islamic revolution and all that happens in the world today is fundamental:

As you know, the precursor of modern thought and civilization, claim that the base of this civilization and of this thought is " freedom ". In addition, one can not deny that the question of " freedom " in the West is a serious question (...) The definition of freedom according to them is that all human beings are free to do as he pleases. This way of being is obviously in conformity with primitive instinct of human which wishes to be free and to do what he wants. It is clear that freedom is not possible without limitation and limit. However, the limit, which the West recognizes with freedom, is that of the freedom of others. The source and the measure of this definition are the human being himself, i.e. the thought and the will of the men. It is the majority, which must distinguish where the limits of freedom are, and it enacts laws on this subject.²⁴ According to Khatami, the West benefits from the most natural and primitive impulse of man in order to stabilize its system and to mislead the majority of people on the question of knowledge where himself finds the " true freedom ", which according to him, must be founded on the " renouncement ". And he claims that the " enemy " i.e. the West tolerates only the domination of its own values and interests in the world :

And if someone himself denounces its thoughts and its values, or refuses to guarantee its interest (...) It wages a war against him with its gigantic means in order to make him disappear or to break him. Thus our revolution is faced with the pressures and the plots of the enemy²⁵. According to Khatami, the West has two faces, which correspond to the infrastructure and the " superstructure " of Western civilization. The Western policy corresponds to its " superstructure " and the Western culture corresponds to the " infrastructure "²⁶. After having insisted on the fact that the Western policy is to expand its domination on the world, and that the nature of Western policy is imperialist, he concludes that " the war between us and the West is a war of life or death "²⁷

In this war, Khatami proposes to use the positive aspects of Western civilization to weaken it and found new Islamic civilization²⁸. In addition, in his last book concerning " the political thought of the West ", Khatami exposes his view of Islamic order to come. After having praised Machiavelli as one of the best Western thinkers and underlining his

²² Ibid., p.55.

²³ Ibid., pp.97-98.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 134-135.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 138.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 185.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 186.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 178-193.

interest in "the Prince" of this author, Khatami speaks to us of a third way, between the Western capitalism and its civilization and Socialism. The idea of a third way is not new, because it has already been set forth by the Italian Fascism, and by the non-aligned countries (Nasser, Sukarno...). What is missing in this third way, is the democracy that is comparable with Western civilization.

2. President Khatami

The Khatami government is composed of representatives of the two dominant groups which supported his candidacy, "left" and KGS. He did not at all take into account his electoral base in forming his government. Thus, to confront the "religious right", he could not count on the KGS, since they were its descendants. In addition, the official declarations of Khatami as president confirmed the majority of his former positions, even though the tone used was less categorical and his position more reconciliatory on the international level. Because he likes to practice the "ketman" (dissimulation), which is very appreciated by Shi'ism. With regard to the fundamental dogma of the Islamic republic, namely *Velayat-e Faghih*, he declared on February 4, 1998 to the Assembly of Experts:

Our system is based on the notion of the *valayat-e Faghih*. The two concepts of «Leadership» and «Experts» are two complementary ideas in our Constitution which, together, give our political system a very strong foundation. This is due both to the legal status that you gentlemen enjoy, and your personal standing as the prominent personalities of this nation (....) You are men of reflection and authority, learned and well-informed, and you are in close contact with the population. You can, therefore, represent the voice of the people. It is only natural that this administration should expect you, not to justify, but to at least to explain to people the government policies, and perhaps even its problems and its achievements (...). This is the role that all of you distinguished gentlemen can play as the dignitaries and trustees of this nation²⁹.

Before the same Assembly and on the same date, he spoke about freedom in an Islamic system:

When we speak of freedom, we do not imply limitless freedom. It is possible that my understanding of freedom is different from yours, but we all have a common yardstick and point of reference - the Constitution - which announces that anyone who infringes the basic principles of Islam or is in breach of public law commits an offense. These are the limits to freedom in an Islamic State... . The kind of freedom we urge is one that does not go against basic Islamic principles or public order. It is true that there are still those who break the law and those who do not share our beliefs, but this is quite natural³⁰.

In other words, he confirmed the limits imposed on freedoms by the Islamic constitution that recognizes the personal and collective freedoms only within the framework of the Islamic laws and the prerogatives of the "Guide". These are the same restrictions that are disputed by a great majority of the population. However, by

²⁹ See Internet (President Khatami)

³⁰ Idem.

addressing on February 10, 1999 the frameworks that represent the Islamic State abroad, he modifies his speech about freedom and human rights:

Our revolution is a novel experience both for our own nation and for the rest of the world. It is the new experience of combining religious life with a good secular life, the experience of leading a spiritual life and at the same time enjoying worldly abundance and prosperity. One of the great catastrophes causing considerable harm in the course of man's past history has been the unfortunate assumption that religion and reason are irreconcilable, and that the pursuit of a religious life excludes liberty, that life of spiritual tendency denies the benefits of a secular life and enjoyment of the worldly pleasures. According to that line of thinking, a person must of necessity be either religious or rational, religious or free, and live either for this world or the next. And people naturally choose rationality, freedom and the enjoyment of worldly pleasures, and turn their backs on religion. By our revolution, however, we began experimenting with a new idea - the idea that religion and rationalism can co-exist, that one can be free and religious and can practice his religion and at the same time respect human rights and the right of man to be the master of his own destiny; and that one may be religious and still build a prosperous and progressive society³¹.

President Khatami has supported other institutions of the system, in particular the Basadjii militiamen who violently repressed the student protestors during summer 1999, calling them the guarantors of national security³². It should be recalled that neither Khatami, nor the majority of his organized supporters, call into question the base of the Islamic system. The recent declaration of Abdollah Nouri, one of the closest collaborators of Khatami, before the " Court of clergy " is a confirmation:

Today, reformism is the only way to save Iran. Reformism is beneficial for all even those who are hostile to it. Since, in this manner, everyone remains in the political arena. The greatness of the system is also in the extension of democracy and not in repression. The universal history attests that the countries that extended democracy and freedom, criticism and opposition became much weaker than those which (...) eliminated their adversaries³³

While being located within the framework of the Islamic mode, defined by its constitution, president Khatami does not wish to upset the political, economic and cultural conditions that reigns for over twenty years in Islamic Iran. Actually, the Khatami project consists in creating an Islamic republic " with a human face " following the example of socialism " with human face ".

3. Possible scenarios;

First scenario: Islam with a human face. All the socio-policies and economic data encourage us to use a formula, used famously, namely " the governed no longer accept being governed as before and governments can no longer govern as before ". This means that the social conditions are potentially explosive, even if the explosion has not taken place. This is why, mainly, in the absence of any politically credible alternative,

³¹ Idem.

³² AFP, Aug 19 – Iranian President Khatami.

³³ Nouri Abdollah *Shokran-e esslah*, (*les plaidoyers d'Abdollah Nouri devant le Tribunal spécial du clergé*), Téhéran, Tarh-e No, 1999, p. 269.

the " coalition " in favor of Khatami still represents, in the eyes of most citizens the only hope to get rid of Islamic Fascism . Also, For an increasingly large number of supporters of the " Guide ", the solution Khatami represent a lesser evil, because they hope that Khatami would be able to save them from an inevitable defeat , and would enable them to preserve their privilege in an Islamic system .

Indeed, the call launched on October 1, 1999 by the supreme Guide for reconciliation goes in this direction: the ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Guide of Islamic Republic of Iran, on Friday lunched a spectacular and solemn call for reconciliation of country, torne by the conflict between reformers and conservatives (...) an unusual fact, president Mohammad Khatami, bearer of the reformers torch, in particular with the youth and woman, and whose reform policy was openly vilified by the " conservatives ", attended the sermon. At the end of the ceremony, MISTERS Khamenei and Khatami lengthily applauded themselves. The initiative of Mr. Khamenei, which is the conservative's principal reference, occured less than five month before the long awaited legislative election , where the conservative majority currently appears threatened. It occured also three months after student riots that strongly agitated the country. " The country, the revolution and the people need unity ", hammered Mr. Khamenei. " The two principal forces of the country that are faithful to the revolution, must be brought closer together in order to isolate those who are not ours ", he declared. " I have intervned lately with the leaders of the two principal forces in order to attenuate the political tension ", continued the successor of Imam Khomeyni, making clear that all rapprochement must be made under his own auspices, and in absolute loyalty to his predecessor³⁴.

It is probable that the attempt at agreement between the supportes of Khatami (the president) and that of Khamnei (the Guide) can result in the creation of an " Islamic republic with a human face " in order to preserve the system. However, to achieve this " soft " Islam, the two factions must get rid of a certain number of disturbing characters and proceed with purification of the system: to arrest and try the executioners, to remove those persons in charge, to purify the ministries and the armed forces. This kind of house cleaning is not possible while protecting the principal persons in charge of the system. The operation of purification carried out by the Shah during the last year of his reign (displacement of Hoveida, the removal of General Nassiri, the monitoring of the royal family ...) and which led to the " the open politival atmosphere " is an example. However, it was easier to get rid of those responsible at the time of the Shah than at the Islamic time. An arrangement about the legislative elections of February 2000 will make it possible for the Khatami's supporters to win the elections without eliminating the supporterrss of the Guide. Since, Khatami believes that a soft and long transition would make it possible to avoid any shock that would bring the system to an end.

Indeed, each time that he has tried to rely on his supporters in order to carry out their minnum aspirations , he has met the hostility of those who control the levers of power such as the " revolutionary guards ", " bassidjis ", the " Hezbollah ", the " council of gaurdians ", the "national security council ", the " assembly of experts ", the " high judiciary council " etc.

In those cases of success of his efforts, the supporters of Khatami have already prepared for the future by using the protestors in the system like Abdollah Nouri,

³⁴ AFP, 1^{er} oct. 1999.

Tabarzadi or Shamsolvaezine who, because of their trials in the Islamic court have gained a certain popularity. This strategy, even if it does not succeed as a whole, has the merit of strengthening of Khatami's supporters and to attract a certain number of the old guards to the idea of democracy. " Khodis ", would become " nakhodis " of the system.

On the assumption that Khatami and his coalition succeed in weakening seriously the hardliners, the political situation itself would become liberal and the popular pressure would force Khatami to move away more and more from system of velayat-e-Faghih. Personal and civil freedom would be founded, but the instability of the situation would cause conflicts of all kinds in the country. However, the failure to reach an agreement and the advent of a confrontation between the Guide and the demands of the population symbolized by Khatami, would lead to a revolt against the Islamic State or to the dismissal of Khatami and the aggravation of the crisis of the system. In the absence of an organic unit and a coordination between the various components of the civil society, any serious crisis could lead to a civil war.

Second scenario: The deep wave

The events which have marked the last month of 1999 attest that a new generation of young people are in the process of shaking the base of the political Islamic system. Indeed, the auto-organized, abstract and spontaneous revolts (the parties and traditional organizations are excepted) the students indirectly express the fundamental demands of the civil society as a whole. A civil society which following the example of the Third Stage of the French revolution aspires to conquer its political expression.

The key words of the students demonstrations centered on the " freedom of thought " and the refusal of the Islamic leaders to go in the direction of a democratization of the Iranian society. However, at the time of the student demonstrations of the summer of 1999, the whole of the political system was discredited and the two factions of the system were left weakened by this test. However, in the absence of a credible political alternative, and because of the lack of organization and the spontaneous nature of the movements and the lack of connection between the population and the students, the movement remained relatively small and contained

Third scenario: Implosion

The slow decomposition of the leading categories and implosion of the political system: The deterioration of the economic and social situation, the demographic explosion, the under-employment, the climate of insecurity etc, can lead to a generalized despair. Already, the children and the families of mullahs who grew rich have started to leave. This phenomenon also reminds us of the last years of the shah. This phenomenon shows that less and less leading members really believe in the survival of the Islamic system.

It is clear that other scenarios can be considered or caused. A combination or superposition of several scenarios is also conceivable. On the various evoked

assumptions, those that are organized in networks and have connections inside the country can play a role in the future events. For example, the groups Marxists, the Islamists (including Khatami and his supporters), the military networks (pasdars) and paramilitary (Modjahedin) will certainly play a role in the future events. The national and democratic groups are very slightly organized. Normally, in the past, the lack of organization of the democratic and national groups was compensated by the popularity of the charismatic national leaders. However, in the absence of such a charismatic personality, the future of the democratic transition appears dubious.

VI. Tentative conclusion

The fight for the acquisition of popular sovereignty is on two levels and by vertical and horizontal oppositions. The vertical oppositions are those that oppose the various components of the civil society on the one hand and the political class of the other. This opposition appears mainly publicly. The most significant demonstration of this opposition on the public level was that of the massive vote in favor of the marginal candidate Khatami. As for the horizontal oppositions, they are at the level of the political system, the current opposition between the clergy protestors, represented by the great ayatollahs (Montazeri, Shirazi etc.) and the institution of velayat-e Faghih is most remarkable, because it is also taking place on the religious and political level. Opposition between the president, supported by the "MRM" and Khamenei supported by the Islamic assembly, the Council of Guardian, and the "JME" on the one hand and the "MTM" on the other, are also very significant. This opposition will be able to play a decisive role, if it enters in open conflict with Faghih and if the voters enter the scene and transform this horizontal opposition into vertical confrontation.

By publishing its booklet "What is the Third State?" in 1789, the day before the French revolution, Emmanuel Sieyès put three questions and brought three answers there: "What is the Third State? Everything. What was it until now in the political order? Nothing. What does it ask? To become something there." Indeed, vis-à-vis the nobility and the clergy, the third-state represented a majority without political expression that was going to acquire, after the French revolution the exercise of its sovereignty. After the revolutionary events of 1978-79 in Iran, the Iranian nation (third-state) lost to the benefit of the clergy (the old ally of the "nobility") the exercise of its sovereignty. Since then the principal objective of the public conflict is recovering this sovereignty.

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