

**THE POLITICAL COMMUNICATIONS
OF IRANIAN GREEN RESISTANCE MOVEMENT OF 2009:
A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

MARAL KARIMI

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ABSTRACT

In 2009 Iran witnessed the Green Movement, a popular uprising that challenged the status quo of the socio-political structures of the Islamic Republic. In this research, I attempt to develop an understanding of the conditions that contributed to the demise of the movement.

This study takes a Critical Theory approach, and the theoretical foundations of this work are the *Theory of Structuration* of Giddens and the *Theory of Communicative Action* of Habermas. The data is drawn from YouTube videos and analyzed through Critical Discourse Analysis.

This research identifies the key stakeholders of the movement and investigates whether their aspirations regarding the uprising were aligned or stood in contrast. My investigation uncovers evidence of systematic communication distortion in the public discourse of the leaders of the movement which greatly impacted demobilization and led to its failure. The results of my study also disprove the viability of the *Reform* philosophy as a pragmatic political path to democracy.

DEDICATION

اشک رازی ست
لبخند رازی ست
عشق رازی ست
اشک آن شب لبخند عشقم بود
قصه نیتم که بلوئی
نغمه نیتم که بخوانی
صدا نیتم که بشنوی
یا چیزی چنان که بشنوی
یا چیزی چنان که بدانی
ملح درد مشترکم
مرا خیر یاد کن

عشق عمومی - احمد شاملو

Tear is a secret
Laughter is a secret
Love is a secret
The tear of that night was laughter of my love
I am not a story you can tell
Not a melody you can sing
Not a voice you can hear
Or something you can see
Or you can know
I'm the common pain
Cry me out

Common love, Ahmad Shamlou

I dedicate this work to all the courageous people of Iran who cried the common pain.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CST	Critical Social Theory
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps
IRI	Islamic Republic of Iran
SDC	Systematically Distorted Communication
TCA	Theory of Communicative Action

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND MOTIVATION

1.0 Introduction

Following the presidential elections held on June 12th, 2009 in Iran, massive protests took place contesting those results declaring Mahmoud Ahmadi Nejad, the then sitting president, the winner by large margins for a second term. The two Reformist candidates, namely Mir Hossein Mousavi and Hojatol Islam Mehdi Karoubi, contested the results calling on their supporters to hold a peaceful street rally. People responded in large numbers (millions by some estimates) by holding a peaceful march of silence on June 15th, 2009 down the streets of Tehran, the capital city, and other major urban centres. While many wore or carried green artifacts, others held signs that simply read “where is my vote?” referring to the alleged election fraud. Originally, Mousavi’s camp introduced green colored artifacts and signage as their unifying color and also signaling devotion to Islam since that particular shade of green symbolizes allegiance to Shi’ite Islam.

The government, however, broke up the peaceful protests violently and Iran witnessed yet another popular uprising that was reminiscent of the Islamic revolution some 30 years earlier. Women and youth had a significant presence in the movement many of whom were arrested, harassed, tortured, shot at or killed by the government forces loyal to the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khameneyi. While the protesters were not victorious in pressuring the government to meet their demand and President Ahmadi Nejad stayed to complete his second term, they continued their efforts led by Mousavi and Karoubi, until their house arrest in February 2011. Social media was at its peak and Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube were some of the key tools used by the protesters, and their leaders alike, to communicate their stories to the rest of the world,

filling the void that was created by the expulsion of foreign journalists and independent news outlets.

My research looks at the aspirations of those involved in the movement by analyzing their political communications. I critically examine the public discourse of the primary actors of the Green Movement through social media, which was the medium of communication of choice for many, in order to develop an understanding of the movement, and the conditions that contributed to its demise which could then be applied to the greater Iranian political scene.

There is very little disagreement amongst politicians and scholars alike of the discontent felt by the Iranian public, although there is a wide spectrum of ideas about the degree to which it is felt. People of Iran, especially the youth, students, women and the middle classes, have manifested their discontent of the current state of affairs through two major events: first in the 1997 presidential election, by bypassing the government approved candidate to elect the little known cleric Mohammad Khatami and his platform of reform and dialogue which became known as the 2nd of Khordad movement; and second in the Green Movement of 2009. While there is much speculation about the driving motivations of those events, it is clear that the dominant narrative of the regime is being challenged by a rather considerable cross section of the society.

To further study the state of Iranian dissent, I have organized my research to focus on the utilization of social media, YouTube particularly, by the leaders of the Green Movement for political communications. Those communications are further analyzed in order to understand the impact of their discourse on the movement, to discern the aspiration of the protesters, and finally to understand the factors contributing to the movement faltering. In what follows, I will outline the objectives and motivations of this study as well as theoretical and methodological frameworks.

1.1 Research Question and Objectives

In this MA thesis research, I explore and seek answers to the following question: What were the impacts of the discourse of the leaders of the 2009 Iranian Green Movement? A key objective of the research is to develop an understanding of the complex nature of the political unrest that resulted in the birth of both the *2nd of Khordad* and the *Green Movement* and the reasons for its subsequent failure. The *2009 Green Movement* against the Islamic Republic of Iran was last in a series of uprisings for freedom and democracy by the Iranian people, starting with the Constitutional Revolution of 1905, the 1949-53 movement for the nationalization of the oil industry, the 1963 protests against the white revolution, as well as the 1979 movement against the Pahlavis' monarchy regime.

Studying Iran's socio-political state is important because several factors place this ancient country in a unique position to influence world affairs significantly. According to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), by the end of 2013 Iran had the 3rd largest proven crude oil, and 2nd largest proven natural gas reserves in the world (OPEC Annual Statistical Bulletin, 2015) and thus is critically important to the world economy. Additionally, Iran is of geopolitical importance for it is located in the oil producing hot bed of the Persian Gulf and has strategic control over the Strait of Hormuz through which 40% of the world's traded oil flows (Cordesman, 2007). Moreover, Iran's sheer size and its population of 79 Million (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2012) in addition to the regime's tendency to "export the revolutionary ideas"¹ make it a significant power in the region.

¹ A common phrase coined by Ayatollah Khomeini

Through examination of the Green Movement, this study aims to facilitate a greater understanding of the complex nature of political power struggles and opaque decision making process in Iran. Studying the increasing dissent in the Islamic Republic that is manifested through political uprisings, allows us to better understand the social and political complexities that rule this country and their inevitable impact in the region.

1.2 Research Question and Theoretical Framework

The news media dubbed the Iranian political uprising of 2009 “Twitter revolution” (“EDITORIAL: Iran’s Twitter Revolution,” 2009) and went on to portray the protesters as web savvy internet users who relied heavily on social media, including YouTube and Facebook, to organize and communicate during the protests. Tusa (2013) and Cross (2010) both question this assertion and I will further discuss this in chapter 2. Notwithstanding the fact remains that for the first time in the history of political uprisings, modern internet-based social media played a significant role in the political communications of a movement. This emphasis on social media in general and Twitter in particular, has prompted several studies that investigate this phenomenon in the context of the Green Movement from various angles (Tusa, 2013; Cross, 2010; Harris, 2012).

However, YouTube as a social media form has been largely overlooked by researchers of Iranian politics. By virtue of its audio-visual capabilities and its potential for viral reach, YouTube provides a much richer medium of communication, and thus presents us with a unique lens through which social interactions can be studied. The literature review that I have conducted reveals gaps in examining how YouTube was utilized by various social actors involved in the protests as a tool to communicate, organize and exchange information. Thus, I have organized this research to focus on investigating how the leaders of the movement, i.e. the Reformers, used

social media to facilitate communicating to the public their intention to change social and political structures. Further, I will examine two social structures that were the target of change, generally addressing political repression, and the structures of patriarchy, women's rights, and the economic structures in particular. Through studying the communications of the Green leaders, this project attempts to unravel communication distortions and their impact on the demise of the movement.

I will investigate how YouTube was utilized as *steering media* to further the political agenda of the protesters. Habermas (1984) indicates that steering media, such as money and power, enable the state and corporations to control the process of everyday life, thus undermining the democratic values, the public sphere and the moral and communicative interactions. Through studying the social media practices and the content generated by those actors this study aims to facilitate a greater understanding of the current political unrest in Iran, focusing on the root causes of dissent, and analyzing the viability of the Reform movement as a political alternative.

The study also contributes to the existing scholarship on political communication, social movements and political activism, which is predominantly conducted in Western and democratic settings. By applying Western concepts of social movements and political communications to a none-democratic setting, my study tests the applicability of such concepts to none-Western nations and contexts. In addition, this inquiry further illuminates the role of social media as alternative channels of communication in authoritarian regimes such as Iran where traditional media predominantly serve the interests of the ruling elite. Moreover, this project helps to illustrate how increasingly popular social media, such as YouTube, are contributing to demands for civil liberties and democratic social movements by challenging authoritarian, theocratic regimes.

In order to address the overall research problem, it is first necessary to answer the following questions:

RQ 1. Who are the key stakeholders and participants of the discourse of the Iranian Green Movement of 2009? In other words, who were the principal ‘social actors’ of the movement, and what were their political orientations and socio-economic positions?

RQ 2. What were the primary aspirations of the key stakeholders of the movement? In other words, what social structures were the principal categories of social actors attempting to alter/preserve by involving in the movement?

RQ 3. Did the above groups of actors involved in the movement have equal access to political power?

RQ 4. Were the aspirations of the key social actors involved in the Green Movement aligned with one another or stoned in contradiction?

RQ 5. If contradictory, was there any attempt in the discourse of the movement to bridge the gap? In other words, was the discourse of the leaders of the Green Movement oriented towards building mutual understanding or was it systematically distorted communication oriented to success?

My research is grounded in Critical Social Theory, more specifically, the theoretical framework for this study is informed by the *Theory of Structuration* of Anthony Giddens (1984) and the *Theory of Communicative Action* (TCA) of Jorgen Habermas (1984). Broadly speaking, Structuration is a tool for studying the interactions of social structures and the agency which is at the core of the Green Movement.

To create a wider lens for this research, I have altered the Structuration framework to study “Social Action” based on Habermas’s Theory of Communicative Action (1984). Habermas has

devoted considerable time and effort to developing the Theory of Communicative Action, which is a rigorous tool for the study of social action and public discourse.

1.3 Thesis Methodology and Data Collection

My research relies on the principles of *Critical Discourse Analysis*, grounded in critical Hermeneutics and based on the Habermasian Theory of Communicative Action and Ideal Speech Situation, operationalized by Cukier, Ngwenyama, Bauer, & Middleton (2009). Specifically, I rely on Habermas's four-part validity test, which focuses upon *comprehensibility, truth, legitimacy, and sincerity*. These elements are the foundations for our framework for a "heuristic" (Stahl, 2007) approach to identify the Green leaders' claims through empirical observations of communication in form of YouTube videos.

The CDA application was used to investigate the leaders' validity claims regarding altering structures of *signification, domination, and legitimation* for the period of January 2009 to February 2011, when the leaders were put under house arrest and their communications with supporters cut.

1.4 Findings

My research points to evidence of systematic communication distortions on the part of the leaders of the Green Movement. The evidence illustrates the contradictory and irreconcilable nature of the aspirations of the key stakeholders of the movement and links it to the failure of the uprising. This study also questions the viability of the Reform strategy in the current situation in order to achieve democracy and discusses the role of the civil society in that context.

1.5 Outline of the Chapters

The rest of this document is organized as follows:

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

This chapter will place the research in a historical context by providing a comprehensive account and analysis of events leading to the Green Movement. A detailed chronology of the Constitutional revolution, the Islamic revolution of 1979, the 2nd of Khordad events will all provide a background into the Green Movement and serve as an introduction to this study. The chapter then examines the present discourses of the Green Movement to provide a greater understanding of the phenomenon of dissent in Iran. Lastly, the chapter provides an overview of various forms of social media, particularly YouTube, and their role in political communications.

CHAPTER 3: The Theoretical Framework

Chapter three will situate the research in a sociological framework and will identify the paradigmatic assumptions to which this research belongs. In this chapter, I will detail the key concepts of the Giddens-Habermas framework of Structure-Agency, and provide an in-depth discussion of social action as it pertains to this research.

CHAPTER 4: The Research Methodology and Design

This chapter will describe and provide justification for the use of Critical Discourse Analysis as a research methodology in general and the operationalized version developed by Cukier et al. in particular. Chapter four will also offer a detailed description of the means and methods of data

collection and analysis, the software that were utilized and strategies for data coding and interpretation. Limitations and scope of study will also be reviewed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 5: Participating Actors of the Green Movement

This chapter will provide an overview of the actors participating in the Green Movement and the social structures they attempted to alter. I will provide a brief overview of both the ideological orientation and the intellectual underpinnings of the different actors that participated in that political uprising, their goals, their roles and their aspirations. This exploratory approach allows for a better understanding of the composition of the “Green Wave” and those in opposition to the movement, thus drawing a more comprehensive picture of the movement and the actors involved.

The key actors of the Green Movement can be categorized into three groups: the *Civil Society Groups*, the *Islamic Reform Front*, and the *Conservative Bloc*. While civil society groups are by definition none-government organizations, the *Reformers* and the *Conservatives* are the outward manifestation of the two ideological factions amongst Iran’s political leadership elite. Reformers represent the Islamic-Left and the conservatives the Islamic-Right, among each of which there are smaller factions. Within this chapter some of the complexities of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s (IRI) political establishment are also explained, which helps better understanding of the movement.

CHAPTER 6: Analysis of the Public Discourse

Chapter six will examine the political communications of two Reformist campaigns in the movement through YouTube videos and detail the structures that were targeted for change, and

the type of social actions that were taken to achieve that. This chapter will rely on Critical Discourse Analysis and Ideal Speech situation claims as detailed in chapter five to investigate the content generated by above actors through social media.

CHAPTER 7: A Theoretical Discussion of Research Findings

This chapter draws on the analysis of chapter 6 to outline the impact and implications of the political discourse of the Green leaders on the movement and its failure. The findings are tested against the theoretical framework for broader implications, including examining the effectiveness of the Reform Movement, and the broken conditions of the public sphere in Iran amongst other findings.

Chapter Eight: Contribution, Limitations and Future Research

In the final chapter of this study a summary of the findings are presented along with the study's contribution to the field of Iranian Studies and critical theory. Next, limitations of the study and challenges encountered while conducting my research will be discussed. Lastly, the implications and potential for future research is proposed.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 An Overview of the Chapter

In this chapter, I will provide a brief historical background to the movement to provide context for my research. Next, I will conduct a literature review of some of the major scholarship conducted to unpack the role of social media in mass movements, particularly the Green Movement of Iran. The chapter then describes *Social Media* and its various platforms, comparing this emergent technology with the traditional mass media and their role in a democratic society. Lastly, the chapter details the concept of the *Public Sphere* informed by Jürgen Habermas's extensive work on the subject. This document also examines the role of media in general and social media in particular in the public sphere in democratic societies as a benchmark for comparison to the function they assume in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

2.1 Background of the Movement

In order to understand the Green Movement we must study it at its roots in the greater historical context within which it was shaped, namely the Constitutional Revolution of 1905 and the Islamic revolution of 1979. In what follows, I will briefly chronicle those events that are key to this study, beginning with the encounters of Iran with the western world in early 1800s.

In 1812 and again in 1828, following two consecutive military defeats to Russia, the ruling Qajar dynasty (1789–1925) was forced to surrender vast territories under humiliating terms to its northern neighbor, Czarist Russia. Many scholars consider this point in the history of Iran as the onset of the encounter of Iran with the *modern* west (Kamrava, 2008). Unlike countless others before it, the defeats to Russia came to be viewed beyond the military superiority of the

opponents, highlighting the social and scientific advances of the modern world in comparison to the dark conditions of traditional Iran (Jahanbegloo, 2002). The stark contrast was not lost on the ruling elite of the Qajar, prompting them to adopt a more critical view of the state of affairs of a country plagued with poverty, backwardness and loss, impressing upon them the need to search for a solution (Behnam, 1996). The government first responded to western pressure by taking a number of ambitious initiatives to reform military, bureaucracy, and economic and education systems (Abrahamian, 1979), which were met with strong resistance from both the Qajar traditionalists of the Royal court and the Shiite Ulama (jurists) who dominated the ruling classes.

While the Qajars initiated reforms to strengthen their position, they also created a twofold problem that ultimately undermined their rule. On one hand, the same institutions that were created to implement change gave rise to a modern generation of intelligentsia, known as *monawarolfekran (the enlightened minded)*, who's aspirations: constitutionalism, secularism and nationalism, went beyond institutional reform and aimed to alter the governing body at its roots (Abrahamian, 1979). The Shiite Ulama, holding significant mass mobilizing power, were split on the issues, some siding with the intelligentsia in demanding a constitutional monarchy and establishment of a parliament, while others supported the absolute rule of the Shah and Shari'a. This contentious relationship ultimately lead to the Constitutional Revolution of 1907 in which the enlightened minded succeeded in drafting the country's first constitution aimed at curbing the Shah's absolute and arbitrary rule, establishing an independent judiciary and promoting personal liberties. The decades that followed those historic events witnessed the erosion of the constitution, once again giving rise to tyranny and oppression.

In 1979, while the *Pahlavi* dynasty ruled, the continuation of similar aspirations of justice, liberty, and independence lead the nation to yet another revolution, which resulted in the establishment of The Islamic Republic of Iran. Led largely by Ayatollah Khomeini, a cleric in exile, the revolution swept through the country with promises of democracy, equality, and freeing the nation of the tight grip of the monarchical oppression.

However, the 2nd of Khordad events and the widespread protests of June 2009, despite government's violent crackdown on protesters are a clear indication that three decades later, the revolution has failed to deliver on its promises for a large majority of Iranians. Many including the candidate Mir-Hossein Mousavi, later argued that the promises of the revolution were not fulfilled ("Iran's Mousavi Says He Will Continue Fight for Reform," 2010).

2.2 The Green Movement and Social Media

During the events of the 2009 Green Movement the news media dubbed the movement "twitter revolution" (Keller, 2010; "Iran's Twitter Revolution," 2009; Morozov, 2009; Weaver, 2010) and went on to portray the protesters as web savvy internet users who utilized this media form as the main tool for organizing the protests (Tusa, 2013). The *Washington Times* ran an editorial titled "Iran's Twitter Revolution" ("EDITORIAL: Iran's Twitter Revolution," 2009) on June 16, 2009, and, at the behest of the U.S State Department, Twitter delayed maintenance scheduled for June 15th to correspond to night time in Iran to aid the opposition (Pleming, 2009).

While this assessment of the movement may have seemed interesting in the early stages when a revolution seemed increasingly possible, a closer look casts doubt on the accuracy of this assertion. By mid-May 2009, there were only 8,654 Twitter users registered in Iran, which rose

dramatically to 19,235 by June 21, 2009² (Evans, 2009). Considering the population of Iran was estimated at 70 million at that point, these numbers are only representative of a tiny fraction of the population. Additionally, there are reasons to suspect that these numbers may have been artificially inflated by those in the Iranian Diaspora by changing their time-zone to match that of Iran when registering for a Twitter account. Moreover, the chart below (Figure 2.1) demonstrates that the majority of the Iranian Twitter users (93%) were concentrated in Tehran, the capital city, followed by 0.94% in Shiraz:

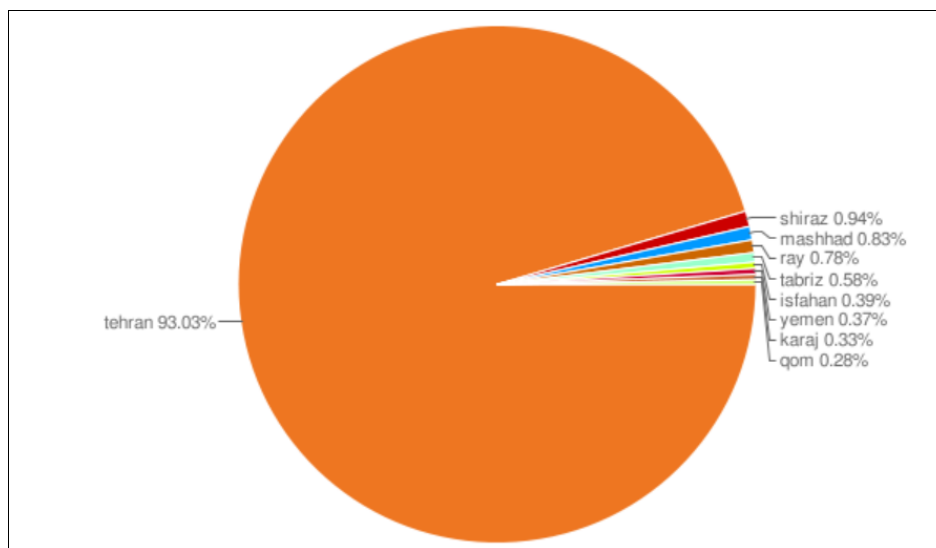


Figure 2.1 : Twitter accounts created in Iran by June 21, 2009. Source: Evans (2009)

Judging by the graph, one can conclude that the Twitter users in Iran were “few in number, urban, overwhelmingly focused in Tehran, and most likely educated. The level of education can be surmised from the amount of tweets that were in English, judging by the fact that a majority of the “buzz words” (most popular discussion words) were in English (although this does not necessarily mean that the majority of users were English speakers)” (Tusa, 2013, p.12). While Twitter was certainly

² Elections were held on June 12, 2009

utilized in the Green Movement, the above evidence makes it difficult to conclude that it was significantly beneficial to the opposition protests. It is undeniable however, that social media such as YouTube and Twitter is largely to credit for reporting to the outside world the events unfolding in Iran in 2009 in the absence of independent news media³.

Kevan Harris (2012) studied the effects of moral shock on the protesters of the Green Movement and the role of the internet on demobilization. He observes that the events of the first week of post-election protests provoked numerous displays of moral shock which in face-to-face situations proved cathartic and recharged emotional energy. Jasper (2011) defines moral shock as “when an unexpected event or piece of information raises such a sense of outrage in a person that she becomes inclined towards political action” (p.409). Individuals would hold up pictures of the dead and wounded of previous days and take pictures and videos to post on social media and show others that had not attended the rallies. Harris (2012) further argues that “this was not a postmodern exercise but a highly emotional interaction ritual that drew in participants and convinced them to convince others to join” (p.441). However, after Neda’s death all of that changed: “the mobilization effect of moral shocks, at some point, reversed to a demobilization effect on many as they went online and witnessed the spectacles of repression” (Harris, 2012, p. 444). He argues that this is by no means to suggest the violence and repression was not real but points to the demobilizing role played by the amplified impact of graphic imagery as facilitated by internet capabilities. Such powerful shocks pushed the masses that may have otherwise been willing to participate in demonstrations off the streets, forcing them to take refuge online and turning many into “internet activists”.

³ Most foreign and independent news media were banned from the country in the early days of protests.

In a study comparing the Egyptian uprising in 2011 and the Iranian Green Movement in 2009, Felix Tusa (2013) discusses the effects of social media and computer based communications on social movements. He argues that while social media has played an important role in both cases, they did not have a decisive role in the success or failure of the movements. The study reveals that, especially in the case of the Green Movement, social media were far more effective tools for framing the movement than they were for organizing it. The paper argues that while social media, particularly twitter, were used widely to organize the protests in Iran, the overreliance on those tools had negative effects. Like Harris (2012), Tusa (2013) states that the social media created an illusion that people were participating in protests, when in fact they were not physically on the ground but engaging in online activism. The paper concludes the Iranian movement failed in part due to its organization methods: relying too heavily on tools like Twitter to organize on the ground protests. He goes further to say “it was the Egyptian protesters’ focus on traditional methods of organization, rather than relying on the Internet, that was largely to thank for the success of their movement” (Tusa, 2013, p.17). Tusa (2013) and Harris (2012) both ultimately argue that the social media created a “free riding” effect in Iran, where would-be protesters felt they could counter the regime from the privacy of their homes. However, as K. Ehsani (May 28, 2012) notes “corporate technology does not create a social action. In the end people have to come out, talk, coordinate, disagree, and put their lives on the line”.

Cross (2010), on the other hand, studies the movement from a different angle: the cross section of social media use and increased world oil prices. He argues that while social media contributed to the size and intensity of the movement, which presumably, exerted political pressure on the regime, it also had a more subtle effect of increasing world oil prices. This turn of

events indirectly aided the Iranian government by raising its revenue sources. Thus, he concludes, “the effect of social media on the Green Movement was ambiguous, since it both helped and hindered its aims; that is, it increased the challenge to the regime, but also increased revenues used to defuse that very challenge” (Cross, 2010, p. 169).

The literature review that I have conducted shows little has been done in terms of scholarly work to examine how social media was used as *steering media*. Habermas (1984) indicates that steering media, such as money and power, enable the state and corporations to control the process of everyday life, thus undermining the democratic values, the public sphere and the moral and communicative interactions. The public sphere is the arena of social life where individuals gather to discuss matters of public concern (Habermas, 1991), and will be more thoroughly examined later in this chapter. My study instead focuses on investigating how YouTube, a rich medium of communication, was utilized as a steering media by the three groups of actors involved in protests, namely: civil society groups, the Islamic Reform Front and the ruling conservatives. Through YouTube videos, I will examine the socio-political structures that were targeted by the Green protesters, how the proposed *change* was approached and how the government responded. The rich audio-visual nature of YouTube video provides a suitable medium to study the nature of a variety of social actions the actors were participating in and how this social media form was utilized as an instrument to generate power, i.e. as a steering media.

It is, however, important to note that while the effect of social media, especially YouTube, is undeniable in the post presidential protests, it is also distracting. Like many revolutions and mass movements before it, the Green Movement was in part made possible by new technology. The Reformation in Europe was helped by the revolutionary invention of the printing press; the

European political upheavals of 1848 were aided largely by the invention of the telegraph, which help transmit news about the protests across the continent overnight; at home in Iran, the 1979 revolution is in no small part indebted to the invention of the cassette tape. Regardless of the remarkable effects that social media have had on the mass movements of the region, including the Green Movement, it is important to keep in mind that in none of these events does the technology illuminate the underlying causes of the movements. For, as Tusa (2013) states, a focus on technology essentially leads the investigator to ignore the role of agency, since how technology shaped an event can only be explained by examining its context, how used it, and to what end.

Next, I will discuss social media and its various platforms in detail since they are the medium through which communications that are in interest to this study are documented. This section will also discuss the advantages of social media over traditional mass media for ordinary citizens, which perhaps contribute to their widespread use during the movement.

2.3 The Social Media: An Overview

Social media is the social interaction among people in which they create, share or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks (Ahlqvist, Bäck, Halonen, & Heinonen, 2008). Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein (2010) define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (p. 61). In other words, social media is content that is created by its audience (Comm, 2010). Furthermore, social media depends on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content. Joel Comm (2010) argues that social media describes a form of publishing in which stories are

“swapped rather than published and that the exchange of content happens within a community, rather like a chat at a restaurant (p. 3).” He also argues that social media is an efficient way for publishers (i.e. users) to broadcast their content to thousands of people, encouraging them to form strong connections with the message and with others in the community (Comm, 2010). As a functional definition, Kangas, Toivonen, & Bäck (2007) refer to social media as the personal interactions of individuals as well as creating, sharing, and communicating content on virtual communities and networks facilitated by Web 2.0 technologies.

Lon Safko and David Brake (2009) define social media as “activities, practices, and behaviors among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions using conversational media” (p. 6). Built on the technological foundations of Web 2.0, social media are internet-based applications that facilitate the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Moreover, social media relies on mobile and web-based technologies to create their highly interactive platforms that allow individuals and groups to share, co-create and modify user-generated content (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). From social networking (Facebook, LinkedIn), to blogs and microblogs (Twitter, Tumblr), content communities (YouTube), forums and wikis, social media are founded on three key elements: *content*, *community* and *Web 2.0* (Ahlqvist, et. al, 2008).

Content generally refers to user generated content (UGC) which could take the form of text, video, photo or pictures, but it could also contain presence information such as tags, reviews and playlists, that people create, modify and publish on the web. The social nature of such activities implies the second concept: *communities*, where individuals are motivated to create and share content with other individuals in their communities who are also participating in this practice.

Personal communication, either direct (*Skype*) or through media objects (YouTube, Flickr), is a central goal of the social media. Advances in digital and video cameras, camera phones and broadband internet have equipped social media with the necessary tools to facilitate personal communications in recent years (Ahlqvist, et. al, 2008). Social media places a great emphasis on interpersonal communication, as the term “social” indicates. This motivation is evident in the value proposals of the different platforms as well as the enormous amount of person-to-person communication that is carried out within these services.

Social media would not have been if it weren’t for the digital and web technologies and applications that together facilitate social communication online. Those technologies are collectively termed *Web 2.0* and refer to the technical aspect of the social media. Without Web 2.0 technologies, online communication would not have been available to the extent that it is available today, especially at such an ease and low cost to the participants (Ahlqvist, et. al, 2008).

Figure 2.2 below is a graphical representation of the above concepts:

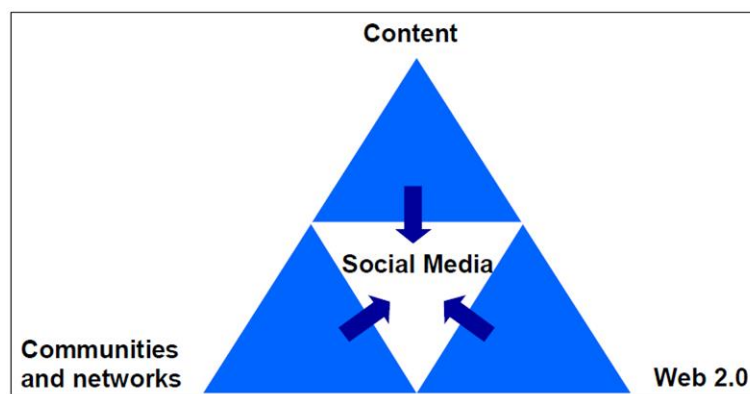


Figure 2.2: Social media triangle (Ahlqvist, et. al, 2008)

The literature review thus, reveals a common thread that runs through various definitions of social media: the common denominator appears to be a blend of web-based technologies and social interaction for the purpose of collaborative creation of content. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) classify social media into six distinct categories based on their work in the fields of *Media Richness* and *Social Processes*. In what follows, I will briefly describe each category:

Collaborative Projects: These projects are by far the most democratic form of UGC on the web. They allow multiple users to simultaneously create, edit, add and remove content on the same projects. Collaborative projects are further divided into two categories: websites that allow users to create, edit and remove text-based content such as *Wikipedia* (the online encyclopedia), and social bookmarking applications which enable groups to collect and rate online links or media content, such as the social bookmarking service *Delicious* (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Blogs: are typically considered as the social media equivalent of personal webpages and take a variety of forms from chronicles of the author's personal life, to those in which the author shares their expertise in any given content area (baking blogs, home improvement, mobile application building blogs, etc.), to a collection of all relevant information in a given area. Blogs commonly have a limited number of authors (usually only one) that are authorized to contribute to the contents of the blog, but they also enable interaction with readers through comments (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Social Networking Sites: *Social Networking Sites* are web-based applications that allow users to connect with each other through a multitude of functionalities including: creating personal profiles, inviting friends, colleagues and peers to access those profiles, and emailing and instant messaging capabilities between users. These applications enable users to create profiles that

contain photos, audio and video files. *Facebook* and *Myspace* are two of the most popular social networking sites (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Virtual Game Worlds: are defined as “platforms that replicate a three-dimensional environment in which users can appear in the form of personalized avatars and interact with each other as they would in real life” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p.64). These types of virtual worlds require their massive multitude of users to abide by a strict set of rules and codes of conduct. The authors further assert that Virtual Game Worlds owe their popularity in recent years largely to the development of game consoles such as Microsoft’s the *Xbox* and Sony’s *Play Station*. Examples of these virtual worlds are the cod-medieval *World of Warcraft*, and Sony’s creation *EverQuest*.

Virtual Social Worlds: Virtual Social Worlds are the second group of virtual worlds, although similar in concept to the Virtual Game Worlds, this second group allows its users more freedom in their behaviours, effectively enabling them to live a virtual life quite similar to their real one. The inhabitants of the Virtual Social Worlds are called “*residents*” and similar to Virtual Game Worlds, they too appear in the form of avatars interacting in a three-dimensional virtual environment mimicking real life situations such as swimming, enjoying the virtual sunshine etc. However, this second type of virtual worlds doesn’t impose any possible restrictions on the interactions of its avatars other than the basic laws of physics such as gravity. *Second Life* is an example of one of the most popular Virtual Social World applications (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Content Communities: Kaplan and Haenlein (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), observe that the main intention of content communities is to share “media content between users” (p.63). There are a variety of content communities for every type of media format such as *BookCrossing* for the exchange of text and sharing books, *Flicker* (photos), *YouTube* (videos), and even multimedia

content communities such as *SlideShare* for PowerPoint presentations. Although the content on these applications is in large part user generated, their main focus is on the sharing of the media content regardless of its creator.

The corpus of the empirical observations for this research is based on video files posted on *YouTube*, specially the video communications of the campaigns of Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karoubi. Large number of videos documenting the events of the Green Movement were taken via participants' personal mobile phones and other recording devices and uploaded onto YouTube to share with each other and with the rest of the world. In an environment where foreign journalists were expelled and the state tightly guarded the spread of information within the country and beyond, YouTube became an invaluable asset for the protestors to communicate what was taking place on the streets. The informative nature of YouTube videos along with the ease of accessibility and media richness of video data compared to texts and images, were the main reasons for selecting this application for my study. While videos make up the bulk of the empirical observations for this study, other media including websites, newspaper articles, audio files, twitter feeds etc. are also employed to assist with my research.

2.3.1 Advantages of Social Media for Ordinary Citizens

Inherent in the nature of social media are characteristics that have shifted the role ordinary citizens play in the process of creating and disseminating information. This shift in roles has provided the premise for the democratization of content (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009). In the traditional broadcast mechanism, industrial media influence the flow of information by controlling the creation and distribution of content. However, social media have provided an alternative to the traditional one-to-many model by offering citizens a many-to-many broadcast model in which

they widely participate in the creation and dissemination of information, thus exhorting enormous power over the flow of information.

Like the traditional industrial media, social media are capable of reaching both global and small local audiences (Morgan, Jones, & Hodges, 2012). For example, both a tweet and a television production may reach millions of people or they may reach few. However, social media hold some advantages over the industrial mass media that make them more appealing to the ordinary citizen. Below I will describe some of these factors based on the work of Morgan, Jones and Hodges (Morgan, Jones, & Hodges, 2012):

Accessibility: the means of production for traditional mass media are usually owned either by the government or large corporations, which makes them inaccessible to ordinary people. Social media on the other hand are widely available to the public at little or no cost.

Usability: production and dissemination of content in the context of industrial media generally requires specialized skills and training. Similar productions involving social media require modest training and often a simple reinterpretation of existing skills would suffice. Theoretically, anyone with web access could participate in the production of content in social media.

Immediacy: The nature of production in industrial media sometimes can create long time lapses between when an event occurs and when it is communicated. Social media however is often capable of instantaneous recording and reporting of information.

Permanence: Once content is created by means of industrial mass media, alterations to that content are often impossible (once a TV documentary has aired it cannot change), whereas social media content are highly adaptable to editing.

The above attributes are partly what differentiate social media from traditional mass media, making it more adaptable by citizens, especially in their quest to draw attention to social and political affairs. In the past several years social media have been central to social, political and democratic movements such as the *Occupy* movement, the Iranian *Green Movement*, the so called *Arab Spring*, and even Barack Obama's first and second presidential campaigns. Through social media the protesters in Iran were able draw attention to the events that followed the June 2009 presidential elections and became known as the Green Movement. Within hours and sometimes minutes of an incident, *Facebook*, *YouTube* and *Twitter* feeds were buzzing with detailed accounts of that incident. At some point when most foreign journalists covering the elections were forced to leave, Western industrial media's sole source of information regarding the events in Iran, were ironically those social media feeds. A phenomenon that known as: *Citizen Journalism*.

Studying the 1979 revolution reveals a common pattern of media usage by the Iranian protesters, leading one to conclude that while the medium of communication has changed in the Green Movement, the trend and the rationale remain the same. Audio cassettes played a major role in the Islamic Revolution over 30 years ago. During 1978-79, while in Paris, Ayatollah Khomeini's sermons, messages and revolutionary instructions were recorded on the cassette tapes for the consumption of the revolutionary crowd. These tapes were then phoned in to Iran, and from there Khomeini's disciples distributed copies of the tape, by playing them through the loud speakers of the mosques or transcribed and distributed them in the form of leaflets called "*Shab Nameh*" (literally: letters of the night, since they were often distributed secretly). Sreberny and Mohammadi (1994), dub the audio cassette tape "*Small Media*" for its role in the Iranian revolution

in comparison with the traditional broadcasting tools (Television, Radio, the Press) which they refer to as “*Big Media*”. The authors argue that since Big Media was in the control of an authoritarian regime, the average citizen turned to Small Media which they could easily possess and control, and we can observe that this pattern repeats itself with Green Movement.

In 2009, the radio, Television and the press, a.k.a. Big Media are still largely owned and controlled by the Islamic government, and those stations aired via satellite by the Iranian expats, although largely sympathetic to the Green Movement’s cause, too are inaccessible by the general public. To reiterate, *Accessibility* in this context refers to an individual’s access to the means of production of media not to be confused with access to the means of consumption of media. Therefore, the protesters turn once again to “Small Media”, which 30 years later is taking the form of social media. Despite the government tightly monitoring internet activities and limiting the bandwidth and at times even cutting internet service to the general public, the advances in anti-surveillance and anti-filtering technologies in recent years greatly aid the public in accessing this remaining lifeline, granting them access to social media.

CHAPTER 3: THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.0 An Overview of the Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework for my research is grounded in critical social theory and is based on the Theory of Structuration of Anthony Giddens (1984) and the Theory of Communicative Action (TCA) of Jorgen Habermas (1984). Structuration theory is a widely tested social theory based on the interactions of social structures and agency (Giddens, 1984), which are at the core of this research. Structuration is an ontological framework for the study of human social activities, that is, recurrent social activities and their transformations (Giddens, 1984). The Green Movement of 2009 witnessed the activities of a set of social actors attempting at transforming the socio-political structures of domination of the Islamic regime. Structuration theory focuses on understanding conflict, contradiction and modes of domination and forces of emancipation, all of which are key to my research.

However, since the study of production and consumption of media content that takes place through the interaction of structure and agency is ultimately the goal of this study, I have decided to alter the framework to examine “Social Action”, an integral part of the theory, through TCA (1984). Media usage in the context of public sphere and of the movement, as demonstrated by both theorists, falls within the realm of social action and must be studied as such. Theory of Communicative Action in my view provides greater maneuverability and offers deeper understanding of social action, especially as it pertains to media usage, since Habermas has done extensive work on the subject. Both frameworks are essentially similar in terms of falling into the same *Humanist* paradigm (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) within the broader critical social theory and in that they both examine the interactions of human agents with social structures within the context

of the public sphere. However, I believe by combining the two frameworks, I have created a stronger, more appropriate lens through which to conduct my study.

The social interactions of the structure and agency occur in the context of *Public Sphere*, a discursive arena of social life where private individuals gather to discuss matters of public concern (Habermas, 1991). Thus, I will examine both theories against the backdrop of the Public Sphere. Jürgen Habermas has done extensive work on developing this concept and thus this inquiry will be based on his conception of the notion of Public Sphere.

The remainder of this document is organized as follows: situating the research in a sociological framework, a brief description of the various concepts of the theory of structuration, next various types of social action are discussed based on the Theory of Communicative Action, the third section will detail the concept of public sphere and its guiding principles and discusses those conditions in the context of Iran, lastly the various concepts above are particularized for this study and coded for later analysis of the data.

3.1 Situating the Research

My research broadly and primarily falls into the humanist paradigm and anchored in Critical Social Theory (CST). Traditional social theorists view themselves as observers of social conditions, and focus on describing and understanding social phenomenon. On the other hand, critical social theorists, including Habermas and Giddens, believe the researchers are not mere observers but their very presence influences and is influenced by socio-political systems (Ngwenyama & Lee, 1997). In other words, critical social scientists go beyond developing a sound explanation of a social situation and extend their responsibilities to include the critique of unjust and oppressive conditions from which the actors seek emancipation. I am interested in critically interrogating

what I believe are deep-seated, structural contradictions within the present socio-political and economic systems in Iran, instigating widespread dissent.

Additionally CST researchers are sensitive to the *lifeworlds* of the social actors they study. Lifeworlds are the taken-for-granted stocks of knowledge; the shared normative social and cultural backdrop against which individuals interact (Habermas, 1984b, p. 119-52). Meaning they observe and extract meaning from within the social context of the actors. In other words, CST is concerned with interpreting and mapping the meanings of the actions of social actors from their own perspective, therefore it recognizes that social context is imperative not only to meaning construction but also to the activities the social actors participate in (Habermas, 1979; 1984). Thus, CST considers social actors as intelligent beings who can create and enact their own meaning, and thus can be critical of it (Ngwenyama & Lee, 1997).

Critical social theory is concerned with critique of oppressive socio-political situations, hegemony and emancipatory forces from domination, thus provides the suitable theoretical grounds for this research. Additionally, Habermas, one of the main contributors to CST, has already developed a communication theory, Theory of Communicative Action.

In situating my research in a theoretical framework, I was looking for a theory that would explain the structural contradiction and communicative styles of the prominent social actors in Iran. Giddens Theory of Structuration (1984) and the Habermasian Theory of Communicative Action (1984) within the broader CST context provided this framework.

In order to situate my research, I will try to place it in the context of a well-researched sociological framework articulated by Burrell & Morgan (1979). This framework illustrates four sets of paradigmatic assumptions underlying different social theories based on opposing assumptions

about the nature of social reality (ontology) and the orientation of social systems. Figure 3.1 below represents Burrell and Morgan's "Four Paradigms of Social Research" framework that I will use to situate my research. While there are other ways of situating my research, this framework is a well-accepted (and well criticized) model used by many studies. I will now briefly outline the framework and locate my work within it.

According to Burrell and Morgan (1979) assumptions about ontology, the nature of social reality can be divided into two categories: subjective and objective. From a subjectivist point of view 'reality' is continually created by the individual and collective consciousness of the actors (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p.1). On the other hand, the objectivist assumes social reality to have a real and objective existence prior to the cognition of the actors. This realist's position defines the social world as tangible, objective and existing "out there". Therefore to a realist, "reality" exists independently from the individual (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p.1). To complete this short description of Burrell and Morgan's model, it is necessary to summarize the assumptions about the nature of society as tending to *regulation* and stability on one hand and the other tending towards *radical change*. The sociology of regulation is concerned with understanding social integration and cohesion and how the social order can be maintained in society. Alternatively the sociology of radical change is concerned with understanding conflict, contradiction, modes of domination and forces of emancipation. These two sets of assumptions influence approaches (the epistemology) that social researchers use to inquire into and obtain knowledge about the social world and social affairs.

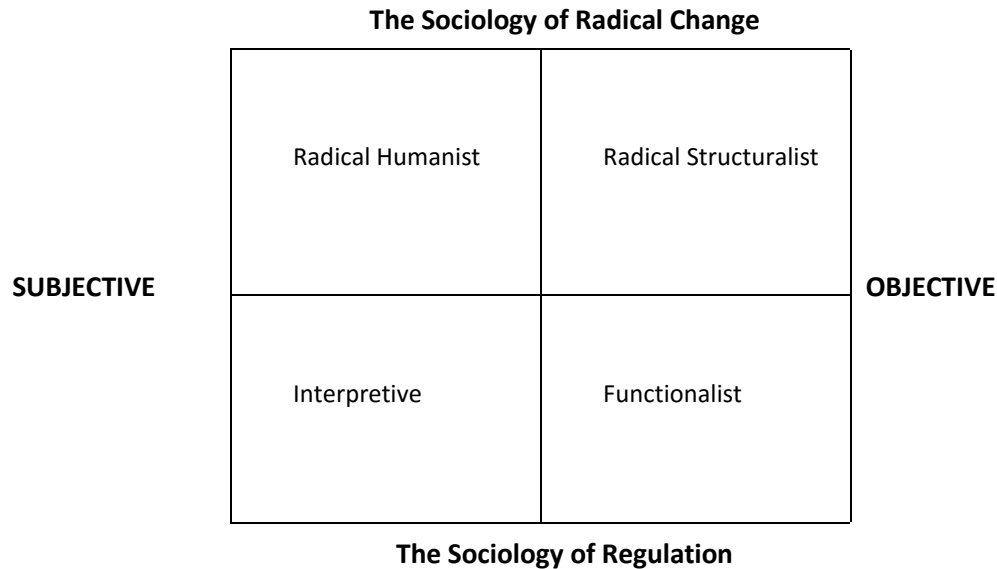


Figure.3.1: Burrell & Morgan’s four Paradigms of Social Research. Source: Burrell & Morgan (1979)

In their model, Burrell and Morgan divide assumptions of epistemology into two opposing philosophical approaches, positivism and anti-positivism (more recently they have been criticized for lacking a post-positive dimension). The positivist approach is based on the assumption that the individual understands the nature of knowledge to be real and hard. This approach considers knowledge is something to be acquired and can be transmitted in a tangible form. Anti-positivism on the other hand, considers knowledge to be “of a softer, more subjective, spiritual or even transcendental kind” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 1). This approach is based on the assumption that knowledge has to be personally experienced by the individual and as such is essentially of a unique and personal nature (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

Different ontology and epistemologies lead to different methodological approaches; Burrell and Morgan (1979) divide them into nomothetic and ideographic. In the first approach, the researcher perceives the social world to be an objective, external reality. Consequently the

research focuses on the relationships and regularities of the elements encompassing the social world. Ideographic approach on the other hand, relies on a more subjective view of the social world. As such, this approach emphasizes on understanding how the individual creates, modifies and interprets the world. This approach is based on the assumption that the nature of the social world is relative and subjective and as such unique to each individual. Thus making sense of the social world is only conceivable by getting close to the subject and studying their background and history (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

3.2 Theory of Structuration

“Structuration theory views agency and structure as a duality in which human agents draw upon understandings of interpretive schemas, norms, and power during social action, and in so doing, produce and reproduce social structure” (Ngwenayama & Lyytinen, 1992). Thus, Giddens does not give primacy to either agency or structure and treats them as an interdependent phenomenon in this theory. Structuration theory asserts that structures do not exist in any concrete sense but they are “instantiations of social actions over time intervals.” In this way, Structuration suggests a duality between structure and agency, in which social structures enable and constrain the actions of human agency. Human agents draw upon the rules and resources presented by structures to enable them in their social activities while at the same time being constrained by those structures. Let’s take the example of the traffic laws: while this structure provides rules and resources for the drivers to draw upon while operating a vehicle, they also constraint the actions of those drivers, i.e. one is not allowed to pass a red light.

In other view, social structures constitute both the medium and the outcome of social interactions. They constitute the medium because they provide the rules and resources necessary

to facilitate interactions. Social structures also constitute the outcome since they only exist through instantiation, and the rules and resources only exist as long as they are acknowledged and applied by the agency. They have no existence independent of the social practices they constitute (Lyytinen & Ngwenyama, 1992). In a university setting, rules and regulations, whether explicitly stated such as the academic code of conduct or taken for granted rules such as the rules governing student-teacher relations, form the medium. At the same time, the concept of a university is only meaningful through its instantiation, i.e. as long as students attend the institute and follow its rules for the purpose of higher learning. If one day all students, teachers and staff decide to abandon the institute, all that will be left are buildings and objects. Below, I will briefly discuss the various concepts of the theory of Structuration. Figure 3.2 is a graphical presentation of the theory, and although we are mostly focusing on *Social structures*, *Modes of Mediation*, and *Action and Interaction* (discussed below), it provides a general overview of model.

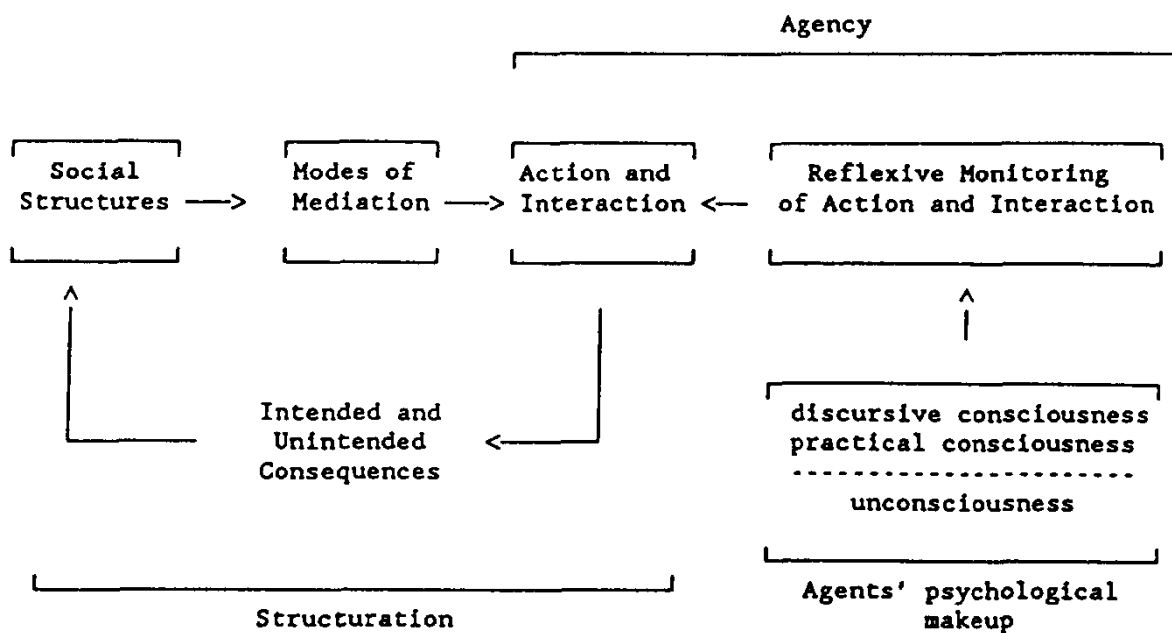


Figure 3.2: Theory of Structuration. Source: Giddens (1984)

3.2.1 The Agency

Agency is the capability of human agents to consciously act in social settings. Giddens (1984) draws a distinction between the capability and the intention to act, stating that agency is not the intention of performing an act but it implies the power to do so. A student protester in the streets of Tehran may be capable of joining the ranks of his fellow protesters setting a police car on fire but have no intention to do so for fear of retaliation or just out of principle. Giddens asserts that the concept of agency refers to what an agent 'does' regardless of intentionality. Along the same lines, actions that agency performs may have known and intentional consequences as well as unknown and unintentional ones. Nevertheless, even unintended consequences may systematically feed back into the system and contribute to the unacknowledged conditions of future acts. By way of an example, I may pour salt into my coffee thinking it is sugar and after finding out it was salt decide not to drink the coffee. When I actually intended to sweeten my coffee and drink it, salty coffee is an unintended consequence of my action, which has contributed in my further action not to drink the coffee.

3.2.2 Agency and Power

On another note, it is important to point out that agency occurs in a continuous flow of action, rather than individual yet combined series of acts. Therefore, agency can be viewed as the power that enables an individual actor to intervene in this flow and alter the events should he choose to (Giddens, 1984). As such the agents are not merely routinely following the rules presented by the social structure within which their actions fall. But they have the power, i.e. the choice, to intervene in the flow of actions, which grants them the possibility to modify or radically alter social structures (McIntosh & Scapens, 1990). Intervention is exercise of power, and "is a

necessary feature of action that, at any point of time, the agent 'could have acted otherwise' either positively in terms of attempted intervention in the process 'events in the world' or negatively in terms of forbearance" (Giddens, 1979, p. 56).

In its broader sense, power implies the ability to 'act otherwise', i.e. to intervene in the flow of action or refrain from doing so with the intent of influencing particular processes or course of events. Power entails the ability to get things done or to alter the pre-existing states of affairs or processes. As mentioned above, without the ability to exercise power, that is 'to act otherwise', the agency ceases to exist. Power in a narrower sense simply entails domination.

Nevertheless, power should not be confused with a resource. Resources are inherent in the social structures and are drawn upon in production and reproduction of social structures by knowledgeable agents. As such, although power is present in all social actions, it is not a resource, but resources constitute the media through which power is drawn and exercised.

As it was mentioned above, power is not restricted to specific types of action but all social interactions involve power. Agency, in all social relations, assumes autonomy and independence to some extent. Even at their most dependent level, subordinates have resources through which they can influence and sway the actions of their superiors. This concept Giddens calls *the dialectic of control*. Employees withholding information from their supervisors, farmers leveraging their produce to bargain a higher profit and refusing to provide manpower by way of strike are examples of this concept.

3.2.3 Rules and Resources

Rules, from the Structuration theory perspective, are generalizable procedures and schemes that human agents apply in the production and reproduction of social structures. Thus,

Giddens' (1984) definition of rules includes communication codes, linguistic rules, codes sanctioning morality, and other rules and norms governing social interaction of the agents. Rules could be articulated and explicit such as religious guidelines, and civil, constitutional and criminals laws, or exist as unarticulated implicit shared background knowledge such as semantic and grammatical rules.

Resources on the other hand are the capability to generate command over material and social objects, which in turn generates power. In their social reproduction, Giddens argues, all agents exercise power in one form or another through controlling two types of resources, namely *authoritative* and *allocative resources*: Authoritative resources stem from the capability to coordinate the activities of social actors. Allocative resources, on the other hand, are derived from the control of material artifacts such as command over objects and goods, and are derived from the dominion of humans over nature. (Giddens, 1984).

Macintosh and Scapens argue, "both types of resources facilitate the transformative capacity of human action (power in the broad sense), while at the same time providing the medium for domination (power in the narrow sense)" (Macintosh & Scapens 1990).

3.2.4 Social Structures

Giddens defines structure as "generative rules and resources that members draw upon, but also thereby, change in their production of society" (Giddens, 1979). Contrary to the functionalist perspective where structures are descriptive patterns of social interactions, in Giddens' terms structures are recursively drawn upon and instantiated through the social actions of the human agency. Giddens (1984) identifies three types of structures in social systems: *signification, domination* and *legitimation*.

It is important to note that although distinct, these dimensions are interlinked and must be studied both independently and in relation to one another. For example: while signification is structured through language, language use always mediates aspects of domination and has a normative-force. Therefore, it is useless to analyze structures of signification without grasping their connections with domination and legitimation. Social action, the second pillar of the duality, is also broken down into three dimensions of communication, power and morality, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Figure 3.3 is a graphical demonstration of this model.

STRUCTURE	↑	Signification	Domination	Legitimation
MODALITY		Interpretive scheme	Facility	Norm
INTERACTION	↓	Communication	Power	Morality

Figure 3.3 . Analytical elements of the duality of structure. Source: Giddens (1984)

Structures and social interactions of humans are recursively interlinked via three modalities. Modalities are the modes of mediation that human agents draw upon in the production and reproduction of social structures. Lyytinen & Ngwenyama (1992) define modalities as “modes of mediating interaction and structure.” Giddens identifies three such modalities: interpretive schemes, facility and norm, which will be discussed in the next section.

Each structure is associated with particular social actions mediated through a modality. I will briefly explain the relationship connecting the vertical components of the diagram.

STRUCTURES OF SIGNIFICATION:

In the context of social systems, signification structures are structures that signify meaning and understanding such as language. Interpretive schemes are the cognitive means through which actors communicate understanding and meaning in social interactions. In other words, the interpretive schemes are the shared stocks of knowledge that human agents draw upon to make sense of the actions and speech of other agents.

STRUCTURES OF LEGITIMATION:

These structures are the moral constitution of social action. Legitimation structures are mediated through shared morals, norms and values of a society, and they institutionalize the rights and obligations of social actors (Macintosh & Scapens 1994 Structuration theory in management accounting). For instance, religion is a legitimation structure on which norms and values believers draw in social interactions to determine what is moral and just and what is not. For example, taking a life is a sin in Islam, but under certain conditions it is not only justified but is demanded i.e. in case of homosexuality, apostasy or treason.

STRUCTURES OF DOMINATION:

Lastly domination structures are those of power, with the intent of exerting authority and dominion over other social actors. Patriarchy and slavery are examples of such structures. Facilities are the resources through which agents draw upon the domination structures. Giddens identifies two types of facilities (resources): allocative and authoritative. Allocative resources are those capabilities that command control over objects, goods, or material life. Authoritative resources refer to control over people.

3.2.5 Modes of Mediation

Modalities are meaning generation processes that mediate production and reproduction of similar social practices across time and space. In other words, they link social action to the patterns of social structure. Giddens (1984) notes that while the modalities facilitate reproduction of social patterns and practices, they also allow subtle changes and variations in practice that later enable changes in the very structures they were reproducing. This phenomenon is dubbed *duality of structure* by Giddens (1984), which will be further discussed below.

Social actors draw upon stocks of implicit background and explicit foreground knowledge, as well as material and none material resources, to mediate between social action and structures. Giddens (1984) defines such modalities discussed next.

INTERPRETIVE SCHEMES:

The implicit background knowledge or the interpretive schemes that humans accumulate over time from their past experiences, socializations, customs and traditions. Signification structures signify meaning and facilitate symbolic representation. These processes are made up of interpretive rules that represent shared stocks of knowledge and organizing regimes that guide social interaction. Communication, which is how actors interact with the structures of signification, imply tapping into shared interpretive rules which are the stocks of knowledge human actors use to make sense of their own and other actor's communicative action (Ngwenyama & Lyytinen, 1992).

FACILITY:

It includes explicit foreground knowledge, as well as material and none-material resources. Explicit foreground knowledge is comprised of policies, procedures, rules of action

and explicit social and political norms (the constitutions, and civil and criminal codes of a country, etc.) that guide social actors in the process of social production and reproduction. Material and none-material resources on the other hand refer to social status, political position, charisma and special skills, etc., that some actors possess which can affect an action situation. Facilities are the basis by which material and none-material resources are allocated within social settings, and are manifested through power interactions. Wielding of power by those human agents who are capable of drawing on facilities to allocate material and none-material resources, in turn use this modality to produce and reproduce structures of domination.

NORM:

Those rules (religion, moral codes, etc.), norms and standards of morality that human agents sanction their actions base upon, and in that process they produce and reproduce social structures of legitimation. Norms are shared within the society where they enable understanding as well as sanction human interaction and thus give rise to structures of legitimation within the society.

The three dimensions of structure, social action and modes of mediation are intricately interlined. Ngwenyama and Lyytinen (1992) state “while signification is structured through language, language use always mediates aspects of domination and has a normative-force. Therefore, it is useless to analyze structures of signification without grasping their connections with domination and legitimation” (p.23).

3.2.6 The Psychological Makeup of the Agent

Intervention in the ongoing flow of social life demands agents to continually monitor their actions and their consequences and respond by drawing upon the implicit stocks of *mutual*

knowledge. This concept is introduced by Giddens as the *Reflexive Monitoring of Action*, and defined as: “the purposive, or intentional, character of human behaviour, considered within the flow of activity of the agent; action is not a string of discrete acts, involving an aggregate of intentions, but a continuous process” (Giddens, 1984).

Giddens argues that although those stocks of mutual knowledge are not directly accessible to the consciousness of the agent, human agents are ‘purposive’. Meaning agents not only hold reasons for their actions they can “routinely and for the most part without fuss maintain a continuing “theoretical understanding” of the grounds of their activity” (Giddens, 1984, p.5). In other words, Agents hold reasons for their activities and if asked can discursively detail those reasons.

Associated with reflexive monitoring are two levels of consciousness: practical and discursive. Practical consciousness is what actors know about their social settings, it’s that “theoretical understanding” that was discussed above. If asked, most actors can explain ‘what they do’ in social settings, Giddens refers to this behavior as *rationalization of action*. At the practical level agents are aware of the implicit stocks of mutual knowledge they rely on to act and interpret social events but cannot express them discursively. Absence of discursive reasoning should not be confused with that of rationalization of action, since the latter doesn’t entail providing discursive reasoning for any particular conduct, or even the capability to do so. Rationalization of action implies an ‘intentionality’ in the actions of an agent Giddens describes, carried out in a taken for granted manner.

Discursive consciousness, on the other hand, is reflexive, enabling actors to utilize their linguistic skills to express their social conditions, especially those conditions surrounding their

actions. At the discursive level, agents are capable of rationalizing 'what they do', explicitly describing the intentions behind their actions. Contrary to practical consciousness, at the discursive level actors are not just aware of their activities, but they can discursively express the reasons and intentions that motivate those actions. The two levels of consciousness are driven by motivation lodged in the agent's unconscious. Although agents can generally discursively express reasons for their activities and rationalize their actions, they can not necessarily do the same for their motives (Giddens, 1984).

In Giddens' construction of the agent, the primary need for psychological and ontological security is the foundation of the unconscious. Situations that are predictable, stable over time, and ordered in space are an important means of coping with unconscious anxiety (McIntosh & Scapens, 1990). The unconscious motivation for psychological security is a significant component of the theory of Structuration. The unconscious motivation for ontological security explains, why agents routinely reproduce social terms, even those which they might clearly recognize as excessively coercive. Although there are no clear barriers between discursive and practical levels of consciousness, Giddens argues, there are boundaries centered principally on repression, between discursive consciousness and the unconscious (Giddens, 1984).

3.3 Social Action: Theory of Communicative Action

In critical social theory, *social action* refers to: action that is oriented towards others against a social backdrop (i.e. an organization, in a society etc.) (Ngwenyama & Lee, 1997). In Theory of Communicative Action, Habermas (1979; 1984; 2000) argues public speech can fall into one of two categories of *strategic action* and be oriented to success, or *communicative action* and oriented to reaching mutual understanding. He makes a clear distinction between two different categories of

speech acts by stating “types of interaction can be distinguished according to the various mechanisms...I speak either of ‘communicative action’ or of ‘strategic action’, depending upon whether the actions of different actors are coordinated by way of ‘reaching an understanding’ or ‘exerting influence’ ” (Habermas, 1992, p.70).

Action orientation refers to the basic goal or focus of the action type. Orientation is what ultimately the action type is trying to achieve. Communicative action has the potential to obtain cooperation among social actors and could lead to conflict resolution and solidarity. Moreover, Habermas (1979; 1984; 2000) also distinguishes between conditions of conscious and unconscious deception in communication, recognizing that strategic action “could lead to a range of outcomes some of which are antithetical to democratic discourse (Cukier, Ngwenyama, Bauer, & Middleton, 2009, p. 178). Dramaturgical action is another goal-oriented action type that may be present in a discourse. Habermas defines this type of action as presentation of the *self* in a stylized manner (Habermas, 1984a). Table 3.1 describes the various action types and their potential outcomes relevant to public communications:

Table 3.1 Action types and potential outcomes. Source: Adapted with some changes from Cukier et al. (2009)

SOCIAL ACTION	ACTION SUB-TYPE		ORIENTATION	POTENTIAL OUTCOME
Communicative	None		Achieving understanding	Cooperation
Dramaturgic	None		Achieving success	Influencing
Strategic	Open strategic		Achieving success	Influencing
	Concealed strategic	Conscious deception	Achieving success	Manipulation
		Unconscious deception	Achieving success	Systematically distorted communication

3.3.1 Strategic Action

Orientation to success implies social actors essentially act with the intention of achieving a desired state of affairs (Habermas, 1984). To reach those goals actors primarily engage in activities that are expected to deliver success efficiently. Habermas dubs this action type *teleological action* and describes it as *purposive-rational*, or goal oriented: behaviour directed at obtaining rational measureable objectives, i.e. achieving success. Success is measured by how closely the actor has met his goals. Actors may engage in arbitrary exercise of power and/or manipulation to attain their objective.

A form of teleological action is called strategic action. Following the rules of rational choice, strategic action focuses on influencing the behaviour of opponents (other social actors) and transforming their behaviour into conforming to the agent's preferred outcome. Actors engaged in strategic action essentially predict the behaviour of other agents directed by a goal, and hence, try to manipulate the process. Strategic action is distinguished from other types of action in two fundamental ways: 1) strategic action focuses on influencing and manipulating human behavior, 2) agents engaged in strategic action are conscious their opponents may also attempt to influence their behaviour by engaging in counter-action (Ngwenyama & Lyytinen, 1997). This trend is described by Giddens (1984) as the *dialectic of control*. Actors engaged in strategic action recognize that "all forms of dependence offer some resources whereby those who are subordinates can influence the activities of their superiors" (Giddens, 1984, p.16). While involved in strategic action, actors rely on their knowledge of the rules of the process to examine the goals that can be successfully reached and to similarly gauge their opponent's potential for counter action.

CATEGORIES OF STRATEGIC ACTION:

Strategic action may be openly admitted or covert depending on the conflict situation. In case of *open* or *manifest* strategic action, at least one of the parties openly admits to using language in a way that indicates clearly their goal to reach success or to serve their self-interests, thus *influencing* the outcome. Strategic action stems from *authoritative resources*, as per Giddens' definition, thus there is an associated claim to power. Giving an order to a subordinate is one such example where the person in the position of authority openly attempts to influence her subordinate. Strategic action could also be *concealed* or *latent*, in which case Habermas (2000), further divides this type of strategic action into two categories of *conscious deception* and *unconscious deception*. In the case of conscious deception or manipulation "at least one of the parties behaves with an orientation toward success, but leaves others to believe that all the presuppositions of communicative action are satisfied" (Habermas, 2000, p.169). Furthermore manipulation means "at least one of the participants is deceiving the other(s) regarding the non-fulfillment of the conditions of communicative action which he or she apparently accepted" (Habermas, 1982, p.264). Unconscious deception on the other hand is a more complex case of strategic action and leads to *systematically distorted communication*, which occurs when the internal organization of speech is interrupted. Systematically distorted communication occurs when "at least one of the participants is deceiving *himself or herself* regarding the fact that he or she is actually behaving strategically while he or she has only apparently adopted an attitude oriented to reaching understanding" (Thompson & Held, 1982, p.264).

While manipulation involves deception, systematically distorted communication is about self-deception. While in both cases a border is crossed and the goal is no longer mutual

understanding, manipulation involves deliberately hiding an end from one or more of the interlocutors. But in systematically distorted communication “interlocutors deceive themselves; they think they are in control of exchanges whose purpose is mutual understanding; in fact, they have ceded control” (Gross, 2010, p.338). Systematically distorted communication is a powerful tool used by systems of domination and oppression and as such are important to examine.

3.3.2 Dramaturgical Action

Dramaturgy is the “*presentation of self*” (Habermas, 1984a, p.86) in a favourable light to others, and thus falls into teleological (goal-oriented) action category (Habermas, 1984). “The concept of *dramaturgical action* refers primarily neither to the solitary actor neither to the member of a social group, but to the participants in interaction constituting a public for one another, before whom they present themselves. The actor evokes in his public a certain image, an impression of himself...” (Habermas, 1984a, p.86). In other words, social agents can monitor public access to their intentions, thoughts, and desires, a system only they have privileged access to. Thus, the agent’s action does not signify a spontaneous expression of the *self*, but a stylized presentation with a view to the audience (Bolton, 2005).

3.3.3 Communicative Action

Communicative action on the other hand, is oriented towards reaching mutual understanding where the driving factor is the force of a better argument. Habermas explains (Habermas, 1984a, p.86) “*communicative action* refers to the interaction of at least two subjects capable of speech and action who establish interpersonal relations (whether by verbal or by extra-verbal means). The actors seek to reach an understanding about the action situation and their

plans of action in order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement” (Habermas, 1984a, 86). Habermas stresses that the process of reaching mutual understanding cannot be undertaken while trying to reach an agreement about something and exerting influence on one or more participants simultaneously. Thus, mutual understanding can only be reached via the power of rational argument and cannot be imposed strategically or otherwise by one party on the other (Habermas, 2000).

Orientation to understanding implies social actors seek to communicatively coordinate and reach an agreement with other communicating actors in their world. Although seeking a mutual agreement, it is critical to understand that such actors are also in pursuit of their own goals. The key difference, however, is the actors coordinate their action plans based on a communicatively reached agreement and a common understanding of the state of affairs instead of direct power exercise or manipulation of other actors. Communicative action is oriented towards reaching common understanding amongst social actors. In this case, the desire to reach mutual understanding replaces the orientation to success. Habermas asserts that communicative action is an *individual* action concerned with reaching consensus in a *group* via *cooperation* (Habermas, 1984a, p. 85-101 and 284-288).

Mutual understanding is achieved via rational argumentation, negotiating a shared understanding of the norms, values, and objectives, and by defining shared expectations, and assumptions. Success of communicative action is highly dependent on the spirit of the cooperation under which consensus is achieved and the extent to which individual plans of action were coordinated.

Communicative action is enacted by way of language and other symbolic interactions present in communication (i.e. body language). Social actors draw upon common interpretive schemes, and a pool of shared background knowledge, assumptions and beliefs to engage to make sense of the world and reach a mutual understanding of their surroundings. Ngwenyama and Lyytinen (1997) argue that actors engaged in communicative activity presuppose a common language, media and shared interpretive schemes. Habermas further explains, while engaged in communicative activity, social actors claim validity to the four criteria of ideal discourse, namely truth, legitimacy, sincerity and comprehensibility. In other words, theoretically speaking, communicative activity takes place in the ideal discourse situation.

Although the goal of communicative action is to reach consensus and mutual understanding, Habermas doesn't deny the possibility of conflict amongst participants. When conflict arises in a situation and participants no longer agree on the truth, legitimacy, sincerity and comprehensibility of a communicated message by an actor(s), communicative action can no longer take place. Instead, he argues, in situations of conflict, social actors either resort to discursive activity to restore the conditions of understanding, or to strategic action to influence and coerce other actions to achieve success.

3.3.4 *Validity Claims and Speech Acts*

In order for human agents to understand communication, decode a discourse and interpret the meaning, they first decide on the orientation of the speaker. Habermas argues every communication among actors implies a set of four validity claims, namely the *truth*, *legitimacy* and *comprehensibility* of the utterance and the *sincerity* of the speaker. "An engaged listener (or reader) will interrogate the speech (or text) to test the implied validity claims. When any of the

validity claims are contested or found wanting, such speech (i.e. strategic communication) can be viewed as deviating from achieving mutual understanding and may be oriented towards open or concealed strategic action on the part of the speaker” (Cukier, Ngwenyama, Bauer, & Middleton, 2009, p. 178). These validity claims facilitate understanding communication but they also provide the general basis for critically examining speech, according to Cukier et al. This paper will therefore use the four-part validity claim test developed by Cukier et al., to determine the orientation of speech acts. Chapter 5 will discuss this methodology in detail.

3.4 The Public Sphere

The *public sphere* is an arena of social life where private individuals gather to hold rational discussion about matters of public concern or common interest and to influence political action through that process. It is against this backdrop that the structuration unfolds and will be studied as such in this project.

In other words it is to discuss and identify societal problems, and influence political action through debate. It is "a discursive space in which individuals and groups congregate to discuss matters of mutual interest and, where possible, to reach a common judgment" (Hauser, 1998). Public sphere encompasses a wide array of public institutions, such as the parliament, political parties, mass media (mainstream and social), lobby and special interest groups, corporations, as well as clubs and gatherings where socio-political matters are discussed. Jürgen Habermas (1996), the most influential figure on the topic, defines the public sphere as an “intersubjective shared space” governed through principles of “communicative rationality” (p.361). While autonomous from both the state and the private sphere, Public sphere mediates between the state authority and the society and as such is the cornerstone of democracy since it empowers and organizes

citizens to stand up to public authority. Therefore, a strong democratic state requires a public sphere of informal citizen deliberation that forms public opinion through rational debate and steers political systems critically (Dahlberg, 2005).

Through his work, Habermas provides a socio-political history of the inception and transformation of the public sphere in late seventeenth and early eighteenth century Europe. In this historical analysis, Habermas points out that although public sphere is considered a theoretical concept, the discursive arenas of social life such as France's salons, England's coffee houses and Germany's *Tischgesellschaften* are considered the physical manifestations of this sphere (Habermas, 1991). He also describes how after the emergence of the printing press, this arena slowly moved to the newspapers and other print media. Following that logic, one can extend that definition and draw the conclusion that with the emergence of the digital media and the internet, public sphere, although not completely but to a great extent, moved to the virtual world. It is the intention of this paper to study the public sphere and its manifestation in the virtual space and analyzing those discussions and debates that take place on the various social media platforms in the context of the Iranian Green Movement.

Although widely discussed by theorists, Jürgen Habermas's theories of the public sphere remain central to the discussion because his account is the most systematically developed critical theory of the concept to this date (Dahlberg, 2005; Dahlgren 2005; Fraser 1990). Additionally, Habermas' *Theory of Communicative Action* (TCA), the concepts of which are intertwined with those of the public sphere, is central to this paper and as such this study will adopt a Habermasian approach to the principles of the public sphere.

3.4.1 Communicative Rationality

Habermas views the role of public sphere as mediating between the society and the sphere of the public authority or the *state* via “publicity” (Habermas, 1991). Publicity refers to the “public” nature of the discourse taking place in the public sphere that shapes the “public opinion” and permits the formation of political will (Dahlgren 2005). Habermas defines “public opinion” as “the tasks of criticism and control which a public body of citizens informally and, in periodic elections, formally as well practices vis-à-vis the ruling structure organized in the form of a state” (Habermas, Lennox, & Lennox, 1974). Central to the Habermasian public sphere is the concept of *communicative rationality* which describes a rational critical discourse also referred to as argumentation, where participants’ actions are coordinated based on reaching mutual understanding rather than manipulation or domination, oriented towards achieving success. Mutual understanding is achieved via rational argumentation, negotiating a shared understanding of the norms, values, and objectives, and by defining shared expectations, and assumptions (Habermas, 1984). The result is a communicatively constituted public sphere where rationally formed public opinion can critically guide the political system. In other words, the Habermasian public sphere presupposes a form of communicative rationality: a reflexive and impartial space where arguments are critical, rational and validity claims well-reasoned (Dahlberg, 2005).

While Habermas and others often refer to *the* public sphere in a singular form, it is essential to understand the plural nature of the public sphere in that it is constituted of a shared collective of many different communicative spaces (Dahlgren, 2005). As Lincoln Dahlberg (2005) notes: “when talking of *the* public sphere, Habermas is not talking about a homogenous, specific public, but about the whole array of complex networks of multiple and overlapping publics constituted

through the critical communication of individuals, groups, associations, social movements, journalistic enterprises, and other civic institutions” (p.112). Private Citizens hence become public actors in the public sphere, exercising public reasoning and rational argumentation standing up to public authority.

3.4.2 Conditions and Principles of the Public Sphere

Habermas’s conception of the public sphere includes the two vital organs of *information* and *political debate* such as the print, broadcast and social media, as well as the institutions of political debate such as parliaments, public assemblies, literary and political clubs and other public spaces where socio-political discourse ensues (Kellner, 2000). These organs enable individual citizens and groups to critically express their opinion on all matters of general interest, shaping the public opinion and thus influencing the political process. The public sphere essentially allows the establishment of a realm of critically debated and formed public opinion that ultimately stands up to the sphere of public authority (the state, corporations, special interest groups, etc.). As previously discussed, public sphere is a realm of open debate about all matters of public interest employing the tools of discursive argumentation for the purpose of reaching consensus and mutual understanding. Inherent in this definition are the principles of freedom of press, speech, assembly and political participation, which guarantee an individual’s right to freely argue their opinion and participate in political debate and decision making without any fears or threats of reprisal and punishment. To further protect the rights and freedoms of citizens and groups from infringement by the state authority, the establishment of an independent judicial system is crucial. In most Western democracies the judiciary is mandated with mediating the claims between individuals and the state as well as between various individuals (Kellner, 2000). Media is central to a thriving public

sphere as it is the vehicle through which information is disseminated and public debate facilitated, thus it will be discussed next.

3.4.3 Role of Media in the Public Sphere

Media assumes a central role in the political conception of the public sphere as it has the power and the tools to shape public opinion and exert social control. For Habermas the primary function of media is facilitating rational discourse and critical argumentation (Kellner, 2000). In the absence of discursive argumentation, Habermas (1991) argues, the institutions of public sphere, i.e. mass media, pose a threat to democracy, since they have the power to “select, shape and present messages and to strategically use political and social power to influence agendas and frame public issues without deliberation of citizenry” (Cukier, Ngwenyama, Bauer, & Middleton, 2009, p.177). Mass media mold public opinion, and in the absence of critical discourse citizens have become spectators of media presentation and their key role as the primary actors of the public sphere is reduced to objects of news, information and public affairs (Kellner, 2000). Habermas calls this phenomenon the “*colonization of the public sphere*” by the state, corporations and special interest groups (Habermas, 1991). To this extent, Habermas has devoted significant consideration to the critical analysis of the role of mass media in the public sphere, stating “those who work in the politically relevant sectors of the media system (i.e., reporters, columnists, editors, directors, producers, and publishers) cannot but exert power, because they select and process politically relevant content and thus intervene in both the formation of public opinions and the distribution of influential interests” (Habermas, 2006, p. 419).

Furthermore, he argues that while media is structurally independent, particular actors in the public sphere hold a powerful position when it comes to negotiating privileged access to the

media. The political elite (politicians and political parties) are by far the strongest in that they supply a large share of the media content (news and commentary). However, considering the high level of both material and organizational resources that representatives of functional systems (corporations and lobbyists) and special interest groups hold, they too enjoy privileged access to the media. Their position enables them to use professional techniques and employ corporate communication management methods to “transform social power into political muscle”, colonizing the public sphere for their market imperatives (Habermas, 2006, p. 419). As a consequence of this privileged access to mass media, the actors of civil society are placed in a weaker position compared to politicians, lobbyists and the advocates of special interest groups (Habermas, 2006).

3.4.4 Systematically Distorted Communication, Ideology and Hegemony

In this section, I will sketch a genealogy to describe the relationship between systematically distorted communication, ideology and hegemony implemented by totalitarian regimes, all taking place within the context of the public sphere. This will help us develop a more clear understanding on the impacts and implications of distorted communication in ideological regimes such as that of the Islamic Republic.

In *Knowledge and Human Interest* (Habermas, 1971, p. 274-284), Habermas describes ideology as the shared networks of belief that ground self-deception and impede improvement yet remain unexamined. The self-deception involved in this practice is rooted in the justification of inequalities in power and in economic, social and political life. Therefore, to preserve their gains, that segment of the society that benefits from such inequalities intervenes through the power of state to substitute for the legitimacy that can only result from rational and critical debate

in the public sphere. In other words, ideology can be thought of as the fake substitute for communicative rationality in the public sphere (Gross, 2006; 2010). Habermas stresses that such power manifests itself not as blatant imposition of force but as a barrier to critically interrogating and exposing ideological justifications in the public sphere:

Structural violence is not manifest as violence; instead it blocks in an unnoticed fashion those communications in which are shaped and propagated the convictions effective for legitimation. Such a hypothesis about unnoticed yet effective barriers to communication can explain the formation of ideologies; they can make plausible how convictions are formed by which the subjects deceive themselves about themselves and their situation. Illusions that are afforded the power of common convictions are what we name ideologies (Habermas 1983, 184).

Thus, structural violence gives rise to ideologies, and ideologies are justified through systematically distorted communication. Moreover, systematically distorted communication is the linguistic manifestation of a regime that dominates through real and structural violence; such regimes are dominated by an ideology (Habermas, 1983, p. 176).

At this point it is important to make a conceptual distinction between ideology and *hegemony*, a distinction that Habermas does not make (Gross, 2010). Ideology is a network of taken-for-granted convictions that remain critically unreflect upon, while hegemony is a network that consists of “the whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living; our senses and assignments of energy, or shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world” (Gross, 2010, p.341). In other words, hegemony means ideological domination, and “ideologies expressed in the form of systematically distorted communication are the visible manifestations of hegemonic regimes” (Gross, 2010, p.341).

Hegemonic regimes limit critical debate and mutual understanding by colonizing the public sphere with systematically distorted communication. While hegemonic regimes are not in and of themselves coercive, in totalitarianism however, hegemony fully identifies with the coercive state (Gross, 2010). Thus, in totalitarian regimes such as Iran, the physical and structural violence of the hegemonic state dominating through ideology, trumps the force of the better argument (i.e. communicative action), increasing the potential for the political elite to engage in distorted communication. In turn, communication distortions impede freedom of speech, and threaten the survival of the public sphere and by extension freedom of speech, which are central to this study.

3.4.5 Steering Media, Lifeworlds, and the Public Sphere

In the Habermasian critical theory, the society functions via three ‘steering mechanisms’ of *power*, *money* and *solidarity* (Between facts and norms, Habermas, 1996). The first two are enacted in *systems*, the *political system* and the *economic system* respectively, and the third operates within the *lifeworlds* of individuals. Lifeworlds are the taken-for-granted stocks of knowledge; the shared normative social and cultural backdrop against which individuals interact (Habermas, 1984b, p. 119-52). Systems are dominated by *Strategic* action which is goal-oriented and aims to deliver successful plans but lifeworlds, on the other hand, are governed by *communicative* action which is oriented towards mutual understanding and whose sole force is the power of the better argument, and collective self-understanding (Habermas, 1998, p.278-79).

Thus, Habermas creates a system-lifeworld dualism that is situated within the political public sphere, which acts as a vehicle for communication or a “switching station” (Habermas, 1998, p.409). The political public sphere is the arena where conflicts arising from social and economic disparities, inequalities and dissatisfactions are rationally, and communicatively discussed and

perhaps solved (Gross, 2006). It is this rational argumentation that Habermas considers the basis of consensus conflict resolution amongst citizens: "the communicative mastery of these conflicts constitutes the sole source of solidarity among strangers-strangers who renounce violence and, in the cooperative regulation of their common life, also concede one another the right to remain strangers" (Habermas, 1998, 308). Nevertheless, Habermas also recognizes that in the contemporary societies, the lifeworld is increasingly subject to imperatives from the two systems of polity and economy, thus now more than ever communication and social interaction play a vital role in politics and in the economy.

3.5 Particularizing the Theory to My Research

My research will use this theoretical framework to choose which social and political structures were targeted for change by the leaders of the Green Movement, Mousavi and Karoubi. To this end, I will study their communications, including campaign promises and protest messages, to understand the type of social action that was taken to achieve those goals. I will conduct a critical discourse analysis on the validity claims of those leaders regarding changing oppressive structures to determine the orientation of their action, i.e. success or mutual understanding. My analysis will look for three types of structures as defined by Giddens, namely structures of signification, domination and legitimation. The type of structures addressed in the Green Movement's communications and the orientation of social action taken, will determine the outcome and thus help us understand the Green Movement, its goals and its place in Iran's socio-political arena. Table 3.2 summarizes the concepts that guide my inquiry:

Table 3.2 *Code Table*

THEORETICAL CONCEPT	OPERATIONALIZED DEFINITION
<p>Social Structures: are the rules and resources that human agents draw upon and also change in their production of society</p>	<p>Structures of Signification: Structures that signify meaning and understanding such as effective use of language</p> <p>Structures of Domination: Structures of power, with the intent of exerting authority and dominion over other social actors</p> <p>Structures of Legitimation: Structures that reside over the moral constitution of social action</p>
<p>Social Action: action that is oriented towards others</p>	<p>Strategic Action: Goal oriented action aimed at achieving success</p> <p>Dramaturgical Action: Goal oriented action aimed at presenting one's self in a favourable light to others</p> <p>Communicative Action: Oriented towards reaching mutual understanding and</p>

CHAPTER 4: THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

4.0 An Overview of the Chapter

In order to address RQs 4 and 5 as well as the overarching research question, this investigation uses a *Critical Discourse Analysis* (CDA) method based on Habermas's universal validity claims present in the *ideal speech* situation, namely, *truth*, *legitimacy*, *comprehensibility*, and *sincerity* (Habermas, 1984). This paper relies on an operationalized approach to CDA based on the work of Cukier, Ngwenyama, Bauer, & Middleton (2009), that proposes a set of questions and speech elements for examining and revealing the potential violations from the validity claims in public discourse (Cukier et al., 2009). Considering the empirical material for this study are in the form of videos, a descriptive content analysis (Dale 1935; Berelson 1952; Baxter, Riemer et al. 1985; Perlmutter 1998; Neuendorf 2002; Krippendorff 2004) method will be applied in order to code the data for interpretation. Descriptive visual content analysis is the methodology that is used to "systematically code, characterize, observe, and quantify the representations within the population of video clips meeting set criteria" (Rutledge 2009, p. 7). An exploratory or descriptive visual content analysis of the collected videos helped identify the common themes in the videos and extract the social structures targeted for change by the actors.

I will begin this chapter by outlining the key concepts and principles of the Habermasian critical discourse analysis. Next, I will define the corpus of data, including outlining the reasons for selecting YouTube as the medium for this study. Lastly, I will discuss content analysis, data collection and coding.

4.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

As a means of analyzing discourse, critical social theorists have developed the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) methodology. This study uses CDA to examine the discourse of the two Reformist leaders in the public unrest which resulted in the Green Movement of 2009. I will specifically focus on their validity claims regarding two different yet interrelated structures of 1) patriarchy, and 2) economy. The corpus of empirical materials for the study will be drawn from the public speeches, interviews, and official campaign videos of the two candidates opposing the election results, namely Mir Hossein Mousavi and Hojatol Islam Mehdi Karoubi, before and after the June 2009 elections: the period of January 2009 to February 2011, when the movement largely lost steam, and the two leaders were under house arrest. The CDA method for this research is an operationalization Habermasian critical approach proposed by Cukier et al. (2009).

The strategy of the research will be critical interpretive focused on examining the promises of improving women's rights and economic inequality made by the two Green leaders prior to and post elections in order to reach and mobilize the electorate in order to assume the country's presidency, and implement *change*. Such an analysis provides a better understanding about what demands drove the Green Movement of 2009, and why the movement faltered. Through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), I will examine the speeches of the two Green leaders, captured on YouTube videos that imposed enormous impacts on mobilizing and organizing different factions of the Iranian society from women and youth to moderate clerics as well as a significant segments of the political establishment, under the umbrella of Islamic Reformism.

My research aims to understand how they were able to appropriate the public sphere discourse in order to appeal to such a wide spectrum of the society to the point of a mass uprising.

Specifically, I designed my project to critically interrogate the Green leaders' speeches from two perspectives: a) women's rights, b) economic inequality. Those speeches and their subsequent capture on videos that were later posted and widely shared on the social media, especially YouTube, were central and strategic to the substantial support they garnered that led to the violent protests of 2009.

Within the last three decades there has been a growing resistance to the Islamic Republic, which has led a large segment of the society to look for an alternative that corresponds to the people's demands for freedom, social justice and prosperity without the violence, cost (human and capital), and uncertainty involved in overthrowing yet another regime. One such alternative that has emerged in the late 90's is the Reform Front, which will be discussed in chapter 5. For over 15 years, the Reformers have been putting forth a message of change and arguing economic prosperity, democracy and freedom could be achieved by reforming constitutional framework and political order from within. This message was articulated again in the 2009 presidential elections and reached its heights when the people who believed in that articulation took to the streets to support those ideals.

I was especially interested in critically analyzing the speeches of the Green leaders with the aim to uncover their strategies of systematically distorted communication (in the Habermasian sense, cf. Habermas 1975, 1962, 1984). I conducted this research in an effort to find out what a critical interrogation of their discourses will uncover, and whether some of the inherent contradictions present in the Islamic Republic had found their way into the discourse of the movement. While some scholars have examined the discourse of the Green Movement, no one has taken a systematically critical-interpretative approach. In my research I will rely on the Critical

Discourse Analysis approach developed by Cukier et al. (2009), which operationalizes Habermas's four-part validity test of *comprehensibility*, *truth*, *legitimacy*, and *sincerity* of communication.

While traditional discourse analysis and interpretive approaches are rooted in traditional hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1989) CDA is rooted in the critical hermeneutics of Habermas (1967a), which is concerned with uncovering power relationships and the ways in which social structures undermine and inhibit the emancipatory interest of citizens. The goal of Habermas's critical approach is to assist citizens in emancipating themselves from ideological superstructures of society, such as patriarchy, which inhibit their full participation in creating the kind of society they want (Habermas, 1971). Within the context of the Habermasian theory of Communicative Action (Habermas, 1984), CDA is a method of critical investigation into the use of language and its implication for human beings to emancipate themselves from all forms of domination. In other words, CDA is the study of language that offers scholars with various backgrounds to adopt a social perspective in the cross-cultural study of media texts (Dellinger, 1995). It allows researchers to better understand deep structure, systematic communicative distortions and power-relations that underline communication discourse (Cukier et al., 2009).

Cukier et al. (2009) detail the fundamental principles for applying the universal pragmatics to the analysis of discourse according to the Theory of Communicative Action as follows:

The reader or hearer assumes all speech is oriented to achieving mutual understanding, but at the same time tests the validity claims present in the speech against the four principles of ideal speech. In other words, Habermas assumes that every discourse is communicative and yet redeemable if its implicit validity claims are thrown into question.

In the event any of the validity claims present in the discourse fail, the researcher must judge the intent of the discourse, which is done by interrogating the orientation and the objective of the discourse. In other words, should any of the validity claims fail, implying the discourse is no longer communicative, the analyst must then make a judgement call about the type of strategic action taken based on the objective of the discourse and the intention of the speaker. The discourse must be examined from the perspective of all four validity claims.

In other words, from Habermas' perspective while every discourse is open to critical interrogation, it is also redeemable based on the orientation of the speech (mutual understanding vs. success). Additionally, he suggests public discourse be analyzed based on the orientation and intentions of the speaker and impact and implications of the speech (Habermas, 2000), and thus draws our attention to the corpus of the argument. Therefore, in this methodology developed by Cukier et al. (2009), while the strategy to understand the argument and analyze public speech is by parsing it to the level of the sentence, the final judgement about its orientation is made based on the entire argument (Cukier et al.). Furthermore, Habermas emphasizes "It is possible, of course, for individual validity claims to be thematically emphasized... however, they are universal, that is, they must always be raised simultaneously, even when they cannot all be focalized at the same time" (Habermas, 1976, p.160).

While Habermas lays out CDA in a conceptual framework through the Theory of Communicative action (TCA), he does not offer a practical methodology to conduct empirical analysis of text and speech. My research will utilize an operationalized version of CDA developed by Cukier et al. (2009) based on TCA principles. This application will be used to investigate two main categories of claims made by the Green leaders during the 2009 protests. These categories

are the main promises that were made in regards to altering the structures of patriarchy and economy. Below, I will briefly outline the details.

4.2 Operationalizing the Method

This research is interested in investigating the speeches of the two Reformist candidates for the period of the January 2009 to February 2011 that imposed enormous impact on reaching and mobilizing different factions of the Iranian society. The theory of communicative action establishes that implied in every communication are four sets of validity claims, truth, comprehensibility, legitimacy, and sincerity that represent the context-independent and necessary conditions for critical interpretation and analysis of the discourse.

The *truth* claim is mainly concerned with misrepresentation and whether statements are factual or can be refuted. Truth claims generally deal with half-truths and omissions. The validity test for truth claims deals with biased arguments, false statements, omissions and incomplete statements against which rational counterarguments cannot be formed, which could lead to manipulation (Van Dijk, 2006). To establish the validity of truth claims, the method tests whether an utterance corresponds to the 'objective world' but argue: "this correspondence is not always directly observable and must sometimes be inferred. This requires a contextualized reading of the text and analysis of the argument (Ngwenyama & Lee, 1997), where each text is analyzed in the context of the entire discourse and general standards of rational argument (logical consistency, completeness and defensibility [cf. Toulmin *et al.*, 1978]). Contextualization allows a consolidated understanding of the specific texts (text element) within the discourse context, while the standards of logical consistency, completeness and defensibility allow for an analysis of the quality of argumentation" (Cukier *et al.* 2009, p.180).

The CDA views the *comprehensibility* claim as the syntax and symbolic representation of language by investigating into if what is said audible, legible and intelligible, and whether or not the level of detail is too burdensome for the reader and/or hearer (Stahl, 2007). Cukier, et al (2009) argue that while the other three claims refer to the pragmatics of language, comprehensibility addresses syntax and semantics as necessary preconditions for pragmatic analysis. Indicators of comprehensibility in public discourse are completeness of the symbolic representation, the presence of a shared language and the utterance's syntactical and semantic correctness" (Cukier et al., 2009, p.179). Information overload, and excessive use of a language difficult for the participants to comprehend, e.g. use of Arabic and hard to understand phrases by the clergy community, are all violations to the comprehensibility claim.

On the other hand, the *legitimacy* claim is focused on the conformity of the norms and social context embedded in the claims. In other words, legitimacy claims test the congruity between an utterance and its social context (Ngwenyama and Lee, 1997). Additionally, Habermas contends that actors can come to mutual understanding only in the context of *ideal speech* situation, which includes equal representation of all stakeholders, where everyone has an equal opportunity to participate in the dialogue. Therefore, an indicator of legitimacy in public discourse is the degree of representation of those in power and silencing of dissenting voices. Thus, it is important to examine the validity claims to determine which groups are marginalized or excluded from the discourse.

Sincerity deals with examining the consistency of the claim (i.e. what is said is what is meant) and action of the speaker. Sincerity, unlike the other 3 claims, must be inferred from the discourse of the speaker, since we cannot observe intentions directly (Habermas, 1984). Sincerity

of the speaker is put to test by examining the inconsistencies between the speaker's speech and action. Particularly, sincerity of the speaker is tested by interrogating what the speaker says, how she says it, and what she does. This methodology pays "particular attention to emotionally charged adjectives and nouns, to hyperbole, to metaphors and to jargon, which can be used to invoke powerful associations, values and larger discourses" (Cukier et al., 2009, p.181). Additionally, stylistic choices, e.g. wearing a chador, are of particular importance because they often have social and ideological implications and often signal a particular school of thought, opinion, or biases without being explicitly expressed but have an impact on the hearer (Van Dijk 1991). Table 4.1 summarizes the general approach and guiding questions for this methodology.

Cukier et al. (2009) combine qualitative along with quantitative techniques to develop a rigorous method and to remedy the common criticism of CDA's selectiveness (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). They lay out this methodology in the following four iterative steps (for detailed discussions see Cukier, Ngwenyama, Bauer, & Middleton, 2009, p.182):

- 1- Defining the corpus of data to be analyzed
- 2 - Content analysis and coding procedure
- 3 - Reading and interpreting the empirical observations
- 4 - Explaining the findings

Steps 1 and 2 will be detailed as follows, while 3 and 4 will be discussed in chapters 6 - Data Analysis and 7 - Findings respectively.

Table 4.1: *Categories and principles of the Habermasian Critical Discourse Analysis. Source: Cukier et al. (2009)*

VALIDITY CLAIM	CRITERIA FOR IDEAL COMMUNICATION	POTENTIAL DISTORTION	VALIDITY TEST	SPEECH ELEMENTS FOR EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS
Comprehensibility	What is said is audible (or legible) and intelligible.	Confusion	Is the communication sufficiently intelligible? Is the communication complete? Is the level of detail too burdensome for the reader or hearer?	Completeness of physical representation; Syntactic and semantic rules
Truth	The propositional content of what is said is factual or true.	Misrepresentation	Is evidence and reasoning provided sufficient?	Argumentation
Sincerity	The speaker is honest (or sincere) in what she says	False Assurance	Is what is said consistent with how it is said?	Connotative language; Metaphors; Jargon
Legitimacy	What the speaker says (and hence does) is right or appropriate in the light of existing norms or values.	Illegitimacy	Are competing 'logics' (e.g. Stakeholders) equally represented?	Use of 'experts' and 'authorities' Silences

4.3 Defining the Corpus of Data to be Analyzed

The corpus of data for this research comes from official campaign releases, state TV interviews, and speeches prior to and post elections for the period of January 2009 to February 2011. In what follows, I will discuss my choice of medium of communication, i.e. YouTube.

4.3.1 What is YouTube?

A Google company, “founded in February 2005, YouTube allows billions of people to discover, watch and share originally-created videos. YouTube provides a forum for people to connect, inform, and inspire others across the globe and acts as a distribution platform for original content creators and advertisers large and small” (“About YouTube,” n.d.). The YouTube –

Broadcast Yourself is also the second largest search engine in the world and one of the most popular social media platforms in the Middle East including Iran (Qualman 2012).

According to the published statistics by YouTube ("YouTube Statistics," n.d.):

1. More than 1 billion unique users visit YouTube each month
2. Over 6 billion hours of video are watched each month on YouTube—that's almost an hour for every person on Earth
3. 100 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute
4. 80% of YouTube traffic comes from outside the US
5. YouTube is localized in 61 countries and across 61 languages

The above evidence thus concludes that YouTube is equally popular amongst viewers and producers of video content. It is particularly important to note YouTube's global reach, which is evident in the fact that 80% of its content comes from outside of the United States. Majority of YouTube videos are now shot and uploaded using smartphones, in fact, Google claims that more than 40% of global YouTube views come from mobile devices ("YouTube Statistics," n.d.). Additionally, 3 hours of video are uploaded to the platform each minute via mobile devices available on "over hundreds of millions of devices" ("YouTube: The Press," n.d.). More importantly, according to the statistics, every week at least 100 million people take a social action (*like, share, comment*) on YouTube (Arif, 2014), and social action is the focus of this study.

4.3.2 YouTube as a Data Source

Bennett and Segerberg (2011) claim that "design of a social technology can greatly determine the kinds of actions that people may coordinate through it" (p. 34), a view that is shared

by many digital media communications scholars. Like the famous claim that the medium is the message (McLuhan & Fiore 1967), my choice to study the Green Movement through YouTube videos over other forms of social media was based on the objectives of this investigation to explore social media as an alternative channel of communication in this political uprising. But first, I will discuss some statistics about the penetration and popularity of internet as a new medium of political communication in Iran and worldwide.

According to the most recent reports, the number of internet users worldwide will exceed 3 billion in 2015 ("Internet Society Global Internet Report 2014: Open and Sustainable Access for All," 2014), which covers almost half the world's population of 7.3 billion, around the same time (World Bank, 2015). In 2011, 50% of the internet users had a mobile broadband connection; in 2012, video made up 50% of the internet traffic; in 2013, developing countries (including Iran) had more than 50% of the world's mobile broadband subscribers; and in 2014, smartphones comprised over 50% of all mobile phones. Thus, while internet is becoming considerably more accessible in the developing world, mobile and smartphone internet users are also on the rise, as is video traffic, all of which are directly related to this study.

Based on The Internet Society's ("Internet Society Global Internet Report 2014: Open and Sustainable Access for All," 2014) estimates Iran's Internet User Penetration at 31% and on a steady rise for the past 10 years. Interestingly, in terms of the broadband internet Affordability Index, Iran scores in the middle (73rd place out of 153 countries), higher than China, India and neighboring Afghanistan and Pakistan. The popularity of the social media in Iran began with blogging in response to increasing government pressure to restrict freedom of expression, especially of journalists.

“In light of this editorial censorship, many journalists who were willing to suffer the penalties associated with crossing the Red Line, especially the younger generation, felt marginalized and sought other mediums in which to report and share their opinions. They migrated to the Internet” (“Ctrl+Alt+Delete: Iran's Response to the Internet,” n.d.)

On the internet, blogs provided an easily accessible yet powerful means of communication for individual citizens and quickly became an important platform for the voice of dissent unable to express itself via traditional forms of media. Over the years, that trend has shifted towards other forms of social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Despite the encouraging trend of Internet Penetration and despite the popularity of mobile broadband internet, restrictive and discriminatory internet related laws from content censorship (Iran ranks number 1 in the world in terms of Limit on Content), to bandwidth limitations remain the biggest challenge in Iran (“Internet Society Global Internet Report 2014: Open and Sustainable Access for All,” 2014).

While I am aware that Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, YouTube, and various instant messaging platforms were used during the Green Movement protests as a platform to communicate the narrative of that political uprising with the rest of the world, my study focuses on YouTube videos. This decision was made, in part, because in the absence of traditional media sources, YouTube was widely used by protesters as an alternative platform of communication and dissent in the aftermath of the 2009 elections with the clampdown on domestic journalists, expulsion of independent foreign reporters and with the state media controlled ever more tightly by the ruling elite. Some scholars believe that these “emergent social media networks often achieve impressive results, from toppling corrupt regimes to putting pressure on governments to consider popular feelings” (Bennett and Segerberg, 2011, p.5). My study is situated within these perspectives of

social media and treats YouTube as a communicative tool that has proved to be popular amongst the crowd of the Green Movement. YouTube not only acted as a platform of communication for the protesters, it also allowed their narrative to be heard worldwide. Major media outlets such as CNN, BBC and Al Jazeera began to frequently televise as well as upload those videos online and thus disseminated the voice of Iranian dissent and the subsequent political uprising worldwide (Rahimi, 2011).

Another deciding factor in choosing YouTube over other forms of networked social media such as Twitter and Facebook is the platform's inherent ability to become an alternative to traditional TV media due to its rich communicative abilities: both audio-visual and textual. As discussed elsewhere, the mass media in Iran is under the direct control of the regime and is in the service of the leadership elite. Because of the significance of the mass media and their influence over the masses, the Iranian leadership has always kept direct control of the Television media (Eko, 2014). It is suffice to say that broadcast media are state owned in Iran and the head of the Radio and Television organization is directly appointed by the Supreme Leader to ensure compliance with the overall state narrative.

Strict control of the broadcast media further hindered freedom of expression, and left people with no choice but to look into other sources such as BBC Persian, Al Jazeera and Voice of America⁴, as well as internet sources for access to independent information, news and commentary. It is worth noting that all of the above broadcasting services are only available in Iran via satellite dishes which are officially banned but nevertheless widely accessible to the public.

⁴ The official external broadcast institution of the United States federal government which has a Persian broadcasting section

According to Arif (2014):

YouTube, however, bridged this gap not only for citizens to have an alternative to TV media, but also gave them an opportunity to become producers of their own narratives at the same time. It was not only protesters who benefitted from YouTube as an alternative to TV media during the political uprisings, but also traditional media organizations such as Al-Jazeera also followed YouTube to get updated information and protest-related videos shot (p. 14).

In other words, YouTube plays a counter hegemonic role in authoritarian regimes such as Iran's, where mass media are colonized by the ruling class. Therefore, in the absence of independent broadcast media, I believe studying YouTube videos will help us develop a better understanding of the 2009 political uprising in Iran.

Since this investigation involves political protests in an authoritarian regime intolerant of dissent in any shape or form, according to Rohlinger and Brown (2009) anonymity becomes an important aspect of online activism enabling the protesters to engage in political communications without fearing for their safety. Iranian authorities routinely jail, and otherwise punish online activists such as bloggers Arash Sigarchi and Hossein Derakhshan, for expressing views not sanctioned by the regime. Bennett and Segerberg (2011) argue the inherent anonymity of internet tools such as YouTube partially explain why online political activism is more popular in authoritarian regimes than in open societies:

It is easy to grasp why personalized networking is so appealing in authoritarian regimes such as Tunisia, or Egypt, where conventional political organization—particularly of the democratic reform variety—is often policed and punished. Joining online protest networks offers at least a measure of anonymity and safety in the numbers of people with mobile phones, access to Internet cafes, or friends with tech skills, often resulting in dense recombinant networks (p. 41).

Understandably, YouTube's cloak of anonymity played an important role in the political communications of the Green Movement protesters where activists continued to upload videos of the uprising under fake and anonymous profiles, thus keeping the dialogue alive while protecting their lives and their safety. This level of anonymity, however, is rather difficult to maintain on other popular social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook. This excerpt from an article in the *New Yorker* best describe web-censoring governments' frustration with YouTube:

Google has diverse presences in other Web-censoring countries. In China and Iran, where censorship is the norm, YouTube is completely blocked, but in Saudi Arabia a state agency filters pornographic and other "immoral" sites. From 2007 to 2010, YouTube was repeatedly blocked in Turkey for posting videos that "insulted Turkishness" and the country's founder, Kemal Ataturk. Eventually, a company in Germany asserted a copyright to those videos and took them down, and YouTube was unbanned. Google blocked the trailer for "Innocence of Muslims" in Indonesia, India, Jordan, Malaysia, Russia, Singapore, and Turkey after the governments of those countries requested removal of the video from YouTube. So the censorship that the site has accommodated, in various ways and to various extents, does not pose a dilemma for YouTube, per se. But it leaves possible security issues for any in-country staff, along with potential legal liabilities. Google would need exemption from country-specific laws in the window of time that exists between a potentially offensive video being uploaded and it being removed or restricted on the site. But, as Google stated in its letter to the Lahore High Court, it hasn't been offered that protection in Pakistan. (The letter says that Google requires more than just an expression of goodwill from the Lahore High Court; it needs a "legislative change" in Pakistan that insures Intermediary Liability Protection for Web forums in general)" (Sethi 2013, p.3).

Next, not only anonymity but the integrated and networked nature of YouTube also makes it an important focus in the study of social media's role in political uprisings. Arif (2014) describes YouTube's integrated and networked nature as the site's ability "to be accessed, viewed,

commented, and disseminated via Facebook and Twitter by simply having access to smartphones, computers, and the availability of an Internet connection” (p. 14). Furthermore, some scholars (Bennett and Segerberg, 2011; Arif 2014) maintain that YouTube not only serves as an empowering tool of political communication, it also allows ordinary citizens to engage in reporting activities by further disseminating the content online.

Additionally, YouTube’s global reach and broad accessibility, were important deciding factors: even in countries like Iran where the site has been banned since December 6, 2006 (Tait, 2006), citizens can download software such as V.P.N to bypass firewalls and internet filtering. Lastly, for the purpose of this investigation, YouTube proved to be an excellent source of archival data compared to other social media platforms that could be accessed and collected without raising user privacy concerns (Facebook), considerable expense (Twitter) or specialized software (Blogs).

4.4 Content Analysis and Coding Procedure

My study is of deductive nature, meaning it involves testing an empirical situation, e.g. the Green Movement, against a theory or set of theories, e.g. Structuration-TCA framework, thus validating or extending the conceptual framework (Blaikie, 2010). Content Analysis is one of the qualitative techniques suited to conducting research based on deductive reasoning (Patton, 2002). Although less common in deductive qualitative research, the content analysis approach is increasingly being used in this field (Arif (2014); Hazra (2014); Pope, Ziebland, & Mays, 2006; Duriau, Reger, & Pfarrer, 2007; Ngwenyama & Nielsen, 2003), and as such is adopted for this inquiry.

While *Content Analysis* was developed within communication studies in the 20th century, empirical inquiries into the content of communications dates back to the 16th century, when the Church was concerned about the spread of non-religious propaganda by newspapers (Krippendorff, 2004, p.3). Klaus Krippendorff (2004), a prominent scholar in the field, defines Content Analysis as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from text (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use” (p.18). Content Analysis is a reliable, multipurpose and rigorous technique that may be applied to many empirical situations (Neuendorf, 2002) from social identities associated with smartphones (Hazra, 2014), to the analysis of naturally occurring language (Markel, 1998 got this from p. 1 of Neuendorf), and from organizational culture and software process improvement (Ngwenayama & Nielsen, 2003) to video analysis of social movements (Arif, 2014). The Content Analysis approach is adaptable to “all kinds of communications—texts, images, interviews, and observational records” (Krippendorff & Bock 2009, p. 2), which is why it was selected for this inquiry.

Neuendorf (2002) argues that what distinguishes content analysis from other qualitative and interpretive message analysis, is the extent to which it attempts to meet the standards of scientific method (Bird, 1998; Klee, 1997 which includes satisfying the following criteria among others: *reliability*, *validity*, and *replicability*. Accordingly, reliability is “the extent to which a measuring procedure yields the same results on repeated trials” (Neuendorf 2002, p.12). *Validity on the other hand*, “refers to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects what humans agree on as a real meaning of a concept” (Neuendorf 2002, p.12). Finally Replicability “is a safeguard against overgeneralizing the findings of one particular research endeavor” (Neuendorf 2002, p.12).

The above criteria testify to the scholarly rigor of the empirical measure, i.e. Content Analysis, as the chosen methodology for this study.

Berelson (1952) provides one of the first and more comprehensive definitions of the Content Analysis methodology: "a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (p. 18). Holsti (1969) emphasizes that content analysis is "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (p.14). From this perspective, audiotapes, photographs and video clips and any other form of communication that can be made into text are amenable to the Content Analysis method. To that effect, Abrahamson (1983) also suggests "content analysis can be fruitfully employed to virtually examine any type of communication" (286), thus making content analysis an appropriate method of analysis for analyzing the videos included in this study. Additionally, more recently the historical definition of content analysis has been updated to include the new modes of human communication such as Information and Communication Technologies (ICT's), internet, and social media, the latter of which is the most relevant concept to this study. Earl Babbie's (2015) definition is one such example that attempts to incorporate the new modes of human communication in order to keep the approach relevant in modern times: "content analysis is the study of recorded human communications, such as books, websites, paintings and laws" (p. 323). Definitions such as Babbie's are more comprehensive and appropriate for today's research projects, encompassing the revolutionary new media of communication such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter.

This research adopts a *Descriptive* Content Analysis approach, which describes the content of and relationships among the variables in a message pool (Neuendorf, 2002, p.54). Considering

the deductive nature of this study implies adopting a descriptive/explanatory approach, this method of analysis renders appropriate. My dissertation uses the descriptive Content Analysis approach to conduct a critical discourse analysis of the Green Movement political uprising in Iran through the lens of video clips. According to Arif (2014) “Descriptive visual content analysis is not only the proper tool for finding commonalities of themes among the video clips of political protests under study, but it also provides a means of describing and contextualizing multiple angles and observations regarding these videos” (p.85).

As per my previous discussion, this inquiry is of an exploratory study of YouTube videos and thus visual content analysis is the most appropriate approach to conduct critical discourse analysis. This method is made particularly more rigorous when combined with the descriptive content analysis of the videos. In other words, the qualitative discourse and visual analysis is essential for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns and significant themes emerging from the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4.4.1 Units of Analysis

Selecting *Units of Analysis* are one of the most crucial initial decisions made by an analytical researcher (Krippendorff & Bock, 2009). Neuendorf (2002) offers a functional definition for this concept:

[A] Unit is an identifiable message or message component, (a) which serves as the basis for identifying the population and drawing a sample, (b) on which variables are measured, (c) or which serves as the basis for reporting analyses(p.71).

Carney (1971) on the other hand suggests units can be words, characters, themes, time periods, interactions, or any other result of “breaking up a ‘communication’ into bits” (p. 52). Thus, in this study, each individual YouTube video is considered a *unit*.

My dissertation proposes to explain the 2009 Iranian political uprising through the lens of Giddens-Habermas framework as described in the previous chapters. Thus, it aims at finding and discussing the empirical observations of two of the concepts of the framework: various structures targeted for change, and different types of social action etc., within the data set of videos.

4.4.2 Selection Criteria

For my research, I selected videos of official campaign releases, state television interviews, and other speeches taken in between January 2009 and February 2011. This time period is selected because the presidential campaigning, although unofficially, began around January of 2009 and continued till the June 12th election date, when the protests began. Mousavi and Karoubi, the two leaders of the Green Movement, were placed under house arrest on February 3, 2011 and banned from most communication with the outside world after they had urged their followers to organize in support of the Arab uprisings in the region. Videos were selected specifically when validity claims were made regarding changing social structures.

4.4.3 Sampling

For the purpose of this inquiry, I have used *purposive* or *judgment sampling* (Neuendorf 2002) to collect the most relevant and representative videos of the 2009 political uprising. According to Neuendorf (2002), this “type of sampling involves the researcher making a decision as to what units he or she deems appropriate to include in the sample” (p.88). Based on the guidelines provided by Neuendorf (2002), I conducted a content analysis of the Green Movement videos drawn at random from a keyword search of YouTube. I then coded the videos returned by the YouTube search engine in response to the search queries both in English and Farsi, including

keywords such as “Green Movement”, “2009 Iranian presidential elections”. The sample was collected during a period of two months in June and July of 2014, and includes videos posted as early as the fall prior to the June 12, 2009 elections to the movement’s anniversary a year later. A total of 65 videos were analyzed, and after eliminating those that were not relevant to the Green Movement, and the duplicates, the final sample size included 27 videos. Significant effort was put into developing meaningful keywords to retain more representative data, such as including terms that incorporated the key actors (Khamenei, Mousavi, Karoubi), milestones (Ashoura 1388, Silent March 1388) and slogans (“where is my vote?”, “death to dictator”).

YouTube was selected as the search engine of choice for this study for holding the largest number of videos available on the internet and also for being the platform of choice for posting videos of the movement. Next, only videos shot of the events in Iran were selected and the rest, including those of the events held by the Iranian Diaspora in support of the movement, were eliminated. This decision was made to keep the sample relevant and representative of those directly involved in the movement.

It is important to note the sample is affected by several limitations as described below:

Limitations of YouTube’s search tools: as per Google’s (YouTube’s parent company) guidelines, YouTube’s search results are limited to returning no more than 1,000 videos per query. To overcome this limitation, I ran multiple searches with my keywords using the sorting criteria available by YouTube as follows: *most relevant* (YouTube’s default), *view count*, and *ratings*. The sample of X was achieved by combining the results of these X searches (both in Farsi and English) and removing duplicates.

Availability of the Data: Despite my best efforts to access a larger collection of videos from different sources to gain a more comprehensive perspective of the movement through the lens of social media, YouTube essentially proved to be the most efficient and accessible choice. During my research, I came across a collection that the UCLA is putting together for their library comprised of largely unpublished, unedited videos of the Green Movement. However, after lengthy email and skype conversations, I was informed that the *Iranian Green Movement Collection of Ephemera* is still being processed and not yet available for public access. Being in the developing stages, the raw data had not yet been stripped of the senders information, which violated privacy rights but more importantly threatened senders' security considering majority lived in Iran. In summer 2014, the curator, Ali Jamshidi, informed me during a Skype conversation that while the collection's opening date was unknown, it was estimated to be no sooner than Fall 2015, which would have been too late for my purposes. I acknowledge, therefore, that my sample does not consist of all the videos that might be returned in response to a *Green Movement* query, neither does it contain all the relevant videos that might be available in the future on the subject.

Despite the above limitations, I feel this sample accurately reflects a collection of videos accessible to and accessed by YouTube users. The data set is quite diverse, including videos of participating actors, significant milestones, and demands. I believe this sample represents the best possible survey of videos of the Green Movement currently accessible to the public.

4.4.4 Coding

I conducted the content analysis of the sample by carefully viewing each video and then coding them in Microsoft Excel (see appendix A). Each video was coded for instances of the *Social Structures* the actors aimed at changing (*Structures of Signification, Domination or Legitimation*),

based on the study's theoretical framework and the code table discussed in chapter 3. To narrow down the research and arrive at a more workable data set, I decided to select two instances of proposed change from each of the three main categories of social structures. For example, since the initial content analysis revealed economy and women's rights to be two major structures targeted for change, those two instances of Domination structures were selected for further analysis. That selection was based on the fact that both the economy and women's rights dominated the campaigns of both Reformist candidates. Once the instances of structures were decided upon, I conducted another round of content analysis, transcribed every instance of discussions, promises and allusions to the selected topics from the videos. Next, since all the communications naturally occurred in Farsi, I translated everything to English. I am fully fluent in both Farsi and English and did my best to stay true to the message. However, I acknowledge that my work is not that of a professional translator and as such may not be perfect. Each Utterance or *empirical material* was then given an identification code EM1 to EM19.

Once everything was written down in English, I conducted a critical discourse analysis on the empirical data and began coding for instances of violation from each of the four validity claims of truth, legitimacy, comprehensibility and sincerity. The analysis was done on individual utterances as well as on the entire corpus of the data as detailed by Habermas to determine the impact and implication of the speech as well as the orientation of the speaker.

CHAPTER 5: PARTICIPATING ACTORS OF THE GREEN MOVEMENT

5.0 An Overview of the Chapter

In order to address the first three research questions (RQ 1 to 3), this chapter will provide an overview of the actors participating in the Green Movement of 2009 and the social structures they attempted to alter. I will provide a brief overview of both the ideological orientation and the intellectual underpinnings of the different actors that participated in the Green movement, their goals, their roles and their aspirations. This exploratory approach allows for a better understanding of the composition of the “Green Wave” and those in opposition to the movement, thus drawing a more comprehensive picture of the movement’s power struggles (RQ 3).

The key actors of the Green Movement can be categorized into three groups: the *Civil Society Groups*, the *Islamic Reform Front*, and the *Conservative Bloc*. While civil society groups are by definition non-government organizations, the *Reformers* and the *Conservatives* are the outward manifestation of the two ideological factions amongst Iran’s political leadership elite. Reformers represent the Islamic-Left and the conservatives the Islamic-Right, among each of which there are smaller factions. However, as Buchta (2000) points out “the left- and right-wing designations used here refer respectively to the position of these factions on social and economic issues and should be seen within the Islamic context of contemporary Iran” (p. 11), which is different from the Western understanding of those designations. Lastly, while some of the organizations and groups studied below may carry a party designation in their naming convention, party politics carrying clearly defined agendas in a Western sense are not permitted in Iran.

Studying the actors of the Green Movement, pro or against, also provides us with an overview of the Iranian political system and power distribution by mapping the organizations,

foundations (*Bonyad*), institutions and affiliations of the country, leading to a better understanding of the country's complex power structure (RQ 3). Although the official opposition groups reside in the Iranian Diaspora post 1979 revolution, the Islamic *Mojahedin Khalq Organization* (MKO), and an array of Marxists groups (*Tudeh Party, The Communist Labor Party, Fadayian factions, Democratic Party of Kurdistan, Kumelah* etc.) to name a few, they had little to no role in the movement and as such will not be studied here.

5.1 Iranian Civil Society Groups

A diverse cross section of the civil society participated in the Green Movement. Women's rights groups (*One million Signatures Campaign, The Feminist School, and The Change for Equity Group*) and Human rights organizations (*Committee of Human Rights Reporters, Defenders of Human Rights Center, Human Rights Activists in Iran*) were notably active in the movement and therefore will be the focused on more. Student organizations (*Islamic Associations, Tahkim-i Vahdat Office*), professional organizations (*Lawyers Association, Iranian Writers Association*) and trade unions (*Teachers Guild, Vahed Bus Drivers Guild*) are among other prominent civil society groups that participated in the movement.

On the eve of the presidential elections in June of 2009, a number of civil society organizations formed a coalition and published a manifesto titled "*Iran's Civil Society Demands*". The coalition presented their list of minimum demands to the representatives of presidential candidates ("Demands of the Coalition of the Iranian Civil Society Groups," 2009), which included:

- Recognition of civil society as a social force
- Guarantees for freedom of association
- Respect for independence and non-interference in their internal affairs

- Review and reform of all laws and regulations which oversee the work of civil society organizations
- Guarantees for freedom of speech, press freedom and media diversity
- Recognition of the right to the free flow of information
- Capacity building and empowerment of citizens and associations
- Ratification and execution of conventions on labour laws
- Reform and review of Iran's discriminatory civil code
- Membership on the Commission on the Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- Respect for gender equality and gender justice
- Response to professional demands
- Protection of the environment (Razzaghi, 2010, p. 14).

Around the same time another significant alliance, *Convergence of Women's Movement to Convey Demands During Elections*, was formed to discuss women's rights issues, their struggles for equality and to put forward their demands to the presidential candidates ("Convergence of Women's Movement to Convey Demands During Elections," 2009). In a published statement the alliance details their demands for

- Gender equality
- Conformity to the International Women's Rights Convention's principles
- Elimination of all forms of gender discrimination
- Reform of discriminatory laws against women
- Reform of divorce and family laws which don't recognize a woman's right to divorce or to have custody of her children

The alliance included different chapters of *One Million Signature Campaign*, *Mothers for Peace*, *Feminist School*, and *The Change for Equity Group*, which are amongst the most prominent women's rights groups, amongst many others.

Clearly, there is a range of commonality amongst the above alliances that comprise of a large number of active civil society organizations. It is safe to say that these demands remained unchanged once the post-election protests erupted and women, youth and human rights groups were among the most active participants of the movement (Tahmasebi-Birgani, 2010). It is

important to keep in mind the grave restrictions faced by the progressive civil society groups, both in their mandate, and their activities, compared to other groups such as the Reformers which will be discussed next. These advocacy organizations are frequently closed down by the Islamic government, their publications banned and their members arrested, jailed or forced to flee and leave the country. *Shirin Ebadi, Shadi Sadr, Mansour Osanloo, Nasrin Sotoudeh, Mohammad Seifzadeh* and many others are amongst lawyers, journalists and activists who suffered this fate. Those who manage to survive face continues harassment, intimidation and censorship even as they tried to stay within the legal, constitutional, and informal red tapes of the Islamic republic.

Majority of the Civil Society groups participated and supported the post elections protests. By all accounts women, students and the youth were the movement's largest supporters. It is important to note that while many Greens supported the movement in hopes of a better life, change, equality and greater liberties, they may not necessarily have supported the candidates Mousavi and Karoubi. While both candidates enjoyed significant popular support, many simply joined the protests to voice their dissatisfaction of the status quo, their outrage at the violence incited on the peaceful marchers and essentially their dissent to the established regime doctrine.

The above two statements give us a general overview of what some groups within the Civil Society were looking to achieve: improvements on the rights of women, children and minorities, gender equality, fairness in labour relations, and above all the freedom of association, and expression and for their rights to be recognized, legislated and respected as a social force. These groups joined and at times participated in leading and guiding the direction of the movement to alter those oppressive social structures such as marriage, custody, and divorce laws, restricting

labour union regulations and legalized forms of harassment of their members in hopes of improving the lives of a large number of citizens.

5.2 The Reformist Faction

The *Iranian Islamic Reform Movement* is a coalition of political parties and organizations that brought forth the notion of reforming the system to embrace more freedom and democracy and to be more inclusive of all members of the society. Although rooted as far back as late 1990's following the end of war with Iraq, the movement truly came to life in May of 1997 to support the presidential candidacy of a little known cleric *Mohammad Khatami*, who later won the elections in a landslide victory collecting over 20 million votes (70%) over the conservative hardliner *Hojatol Islam Ali Akbar Nategh Noori*, former Speaker of *Majlis* (the parliament). To commemorate that historical shift in the life of the country, the movement is often also called the *2nd of Khordad Front* which refers to the date of Khatami's landslide victory in the Persian calendar. Among the key figures of the movement are Mohammad Khatami, Mir Hossein Mousavi, Abdolkarim Soroush, Hojatol Islam Mohammad Mousavi Khoeiniha, Saeed Hajjarian, Akbar Ganji, amongst others.

The Reform movement argues that the Islamic regime can be reformed from within to accommodate more "openness" democracy and freedoms, within the boundaries of Islam, essentially putting forth a different interpretation of the Shi'ite jurisprudential doctrine than that of the establishment. It believes in empowering the civil society within the boundaries of the constitution, Islam and pluralism and allowing for a more inclusive approach to political participation, engaging in dialogue with citizens as opposed to the established top down approach, and respecting their civil rights. The Reformers reading of the Shi'ite doctrine expresses no

discrepancies between Islam, civil rights, and democracy. In what follows I will briefly describe some of the chief principles upon which the religious Reformist movement stands.

5.2.1 Theoretical Foundations of the Movement

The Reform movement is the brainchild of a group of Islamic scholars who actively participated in the construction of the Islamic Republic and institutionalization of a religious state. Disillusioned by clerical authorities and their excessive interference in every aspect of life which occurred especially in the years following the war with Iraq, those same figures began deconstructing the socio-political aspects of Islam to make room for rational and democratic decision making. Some of the main theoretical influencers of the movement who later became known as the “religious intellectuals”, are Abdolkarim Soroush, Mohammad Mojtaba Shabestari, Hojatol Islam Kadivar, Hojatol Islam Yousofi Eshkevari, Hamidreza Jalaeipour, and Alireza Alavi-Tabar (Jahanbegloo, 2012). The first three names on the list however, largely dominate the Reformist political discourse for their attempts at reconciling Islam with Modernity by introducing the concept of “religious democracy”, and for disputing the doctrine of *Velayat-e Faqih* (the *Guardianship of the Jurisprudent*), which not surprisingly proved highly controversial (see for example Jahanbegloo, 2012; Adib-Moghadam, 2006; England, 2011). To facilitate a better understanding of the philosophical and theoretical foundations of the movement, I have provided a short overview of their works as follows.

ABDOLKARIM SOROUSH:

Is a religious philosopher, is credited for having coined the term “Religious Democracy”, one of the foundational premises of religious Reformism (Holtan, 2005, p. 3). Soroush states religious democracy means that the values of religion play a role in the public arena in a society

populated by religious people” (Soroush, 2003). In essence Soroush believes that democracy can take many shades and hues depending on the society’s specific characteristics, hence there is more than one type of democracy i.e. secular democracy, religious democracy and so on. Soroush asserts that embracing religion is not at conflict with democracy but religious democracy is a perfect demonstration of how democratic principles can thrive in different cultural elaborations. He maintains that democratic values are not violated when faith is embraced by the state, only when religion becomes an ideology and belief is imposed and disbelief becomes punishable by law, is democracy in danger (Soroush, 2003). Soroush, who now lives in the United States, however fails to develop a framework for the institutional schema of his proposed “religious democracy” (Esposito & Voll, eds., 2001). Most of his arguments are abstract and don’t address how in a religious democracy the issues of women’s rights, freedom of religion and expression and the rights of minorities, are dealt with.

To further argue the compatibility of Islam and democracy, Soroush maintains that while *Shari’a* (Islamic law) remains static and unchanging, the human conception and knowledge of it (*ma’refat*) evolves over time, and since humans are in a constant state of change and flux, the evolution of theology and religious knowledge are also inevitable (Kamrava, 2008). The third theoretical notion by which Soroush parts ways with the traditional conservative philosophy, is his belief in de-ideologization of religion in society. While he maintains firm belief in Islamic values and asserts they should be embraced, he also argues that we must let reason reign supreme and avoid ideologizing religion for political purposes (Kamrava, 2008).

For denying his role as one of the main architects of the “*Cultural Revolution*” of the early 1980s, and for never fully acknowledging his close affiliation to the regime he is now critical of,

Soroush proves to be the most contentious of the three (See Moosavi, 2007; Derayeh 2006; Jahanbegloo 2012; Kurzman 1999). The Cultural Revolution saw the closure of universities for three years in order to Islamicize them, which led to introducing a Shi'ite-friendly curriculum, banning many books, but above all purging, imprisonment, and execution of thousands of scholars, professors, and students for holding Western, Marxist or secular views.

MOHAMMAD MOJTAMED SHABESTARI:

Is an Islamic theologian and philosopher, similarly argues that religion by nature has limited knowledge and rules and thus is dependent upon additional sources. Mojtaba Shabestari argues that Islamic knowledge (*Quran* and *Sunnah*) and Islamic jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) are not capable of responding to the changing circumstances of our era and must be complemented with other modern sources. He asserts that for Islam to survive, we must complement Fiqh with modern science, since answers to many questions of the modern world cannot be searched in the original sources of Islam. Questions such as where the legitimate basis of a political system lie? Is capitalism an acceptable economic system? How far should governments interfere in individual lives and liberties? (Kamrava, 2008)

Mojtaba Shabestari (2000) in his book *A Critique of the Official Reading of Religion*, applies modern Hermeneutics to Shiite jurisprudence, like Soroush, argues in favour of religious compatibility (specifically Islamic) with democracy and modernity.. He suggests that divine providence has already anticipated for the separation of religious values and secular realities. He thus vigorously defends modern concepts of democracy, civil society, human rights and individualism, arguing they do not pose a conflict to religious values, and although they have not been specifically articulated in Quran and Sunnah, Islam is in no way antithetical to the most

important modern values of liberty and democracy (Kamrava, 2008). In response to the claims by a large body of Shi'ite jurists about essential and eternal values of Islam making the religion autonomous of any and all external sources, he maintains since such modern concepts as human rights are the product of human rationality and reasoning and evolve over time they could not have been provided for in Quran and Sunnah (the tradition of prophet Mohammed) yet they do not contradict the divine truth of Islam for that reason.

Mojtahed Shabestari's second but more critical theoretical notion is the concept of "free choice" maintaining that god created man free and without free choice belief is meaningless. Therefore, he asserts, when it comes to political systems, a democracy is the most conducive forms of governance to the fulfilment of religious beliefs:

The logic of belief dictates that believers be aware of social and political realities, and themselves be responsible in political matters, so that they can consciously and freely search for their beliefs. (Mojtahed Shabestari, 1998, p. 79).

Mojtahed Shabestari thus believes strongly in a religious democracy asserting, democracy is necessary for the survival of Islam and an Islamic democracy is a necessity for Iran.

HOJATOL ISLAM MOHSEN KADIVAR:

Is an Islamic theologian, cleric, and university lecturer, whose ideas stand in stark contrast to those of Ayatollah Khomeini (the founder of the Islamic Republic) regarding the Guardianship of the Jurisprudent (Velayat-e Faqih). Khomeini's *Theory of Islamic Government* details the principles of *Government by Divine Mandate (Hokoomat e Velayi)* in which Shi'ite clerics, as the mediators between God and people, rule the Muslim nations (*Ummah*). On the top of the clerical

hierarchy is the *Supreme Leader* who must be a *Mojtahed* or *Source of Imitation* (*Marja' Taghlid*) for Muslims, which means he is an authority to interpret Islamic law and make legal decisions within those confines. Ayatollah Khomeini was Iran's first Supreme Leader, a title which was later bestowed on his successor Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei. In criticism Kadivar writes:

Every member of society and every member of government is subject to the law. No one can be above it. Everyone has the same rights, yet the root of the faqih is inequality. He assumes he is above it. ... It is time for the supreme leader to be subject to the constitution too. After all, the Supreme Leader doesn't come from God! (Wright, 2008, p.296)

He refutes the premises of Khomeini's doctrine of *Absolute Guardianship of the Jurisprudent* that provides the theoretical foundations of the Islamic Republic, Kadivar proposes that such rule has led to government by appointment instead of representative governance as principles of Republicanism in the constitution imply. He deems Government by *Divine Mandate* (*Velayat e Faqih*) as unnecessary and false:

The principle of Velayat e Faqih is neither intuitively obvious, nor rationally necessary. It is neither a requirement of religion (Din) nor a necessity for denomination (Mazhab). It is neither a part of Shiite general principles (Osoul), nor a component of detailed observances (Forou') It is, by near consensus of Shiite Ulama, nothing more than a jurisprudential minor hypothesis (Subani, 2013, p.271).

In 1999 the *Special Court of Clergy* (*Dadgah-e Vizheh Rouhaniat*) sentenced him to 18 months in prison for criticizing the institution of the Supreme Leadership under the official charges of dissemination of falsehoods and disturbing the public opinion and propaganda against the Islamic state. He currently lives in the United States to avoid persecution in Iran. In 2009 elections

Kadivar supported the candidacy of Mir-Hossein Mousavi and sided with the Green Movement once the protests were suppressed. He became a key member and adviser of *Jaras (or The Green Path of Hope)*, the policy making council for the internet networks of the movement, from July 2009 to October 2011 (Kadivar, n.d.).

Together Soroush, Mojtabeh Shabestari, and Kadivar in large part formulate the theoretical underpinnings of the Reform Movement by opposing the absolutist theology of the current establishment and challenging the clerical hegemony. By utilizing indigenous forms of scholarship, such as hermeneutics, Western philosophy and sociology, together they represent the modern Iranian Islamic discourse that attempts to guard the spiritual and cultural values of Islam while attacking ideologizing theology and totalitarian Islam. They claim objective secularism and a religious democracy are a real political possibility for Iran and its only way out of the current disenchanted state. While Soroush emphasizes the evolving nature of theological knowledge, *Mojtabeh Shabestari* and *Kadivar* underline its limited and varying essence.

It is however important to remember the form of *democracy* that the Iranian religious scholars advocate implies separation of religion from government not politics. While they oppose institutionalized Islam, they are in favour of embracing religious values in the public arena. Largely considered as *Islamic political revisionist* by their secular counterparts (Nikfar, 1999; Moosavi, 2007; Ghobadzadeh, 2013) the Iranian religious intellectuals remain either silent or vague on many crucial questions. They have been repeatedly asked to no avail how their interpretation of political Islam would guarantee democratic values such as freedom of expression? The rights of Women, minorities and none-believers?

To sum up, the Reform movement is founded on a particular interpretation of Islam which argues democracy and religion can peacefully coexist. On another note, Reformists put forward such modern concepts as human rights, civil society, and individuality which Islamic teachings are largely silent on, and argue that those concepts too are not at conflict with Islam since they were developed over the course of time as the product of human reasoning. As such this movement advocates reforming current laws to accommodate the necessities of modern life within the boundaries of Islam.

The topic of Guardianship of the Jurist is however approached with much caution by the Reform front for a variety of reasons, above all for fear of persecution. Arguments such as those of *Kadivar's* and any criticism of the institution of Supreme Leadership is severely punishable by law and at the same time puts the Reform front at the risk of being accused of disloyalty to the regime and to the revolutionary ideals. Khatami, Mousavi and Karoubi and many others have always maintained their loyalty to the Supreme Leader and to the principles of Velayat e Faqih. However, over the years and specially post 2009 elections, many prominent Reformists (Abdolkarim Soroush, Ataolah Mohajerani, Akbar Ganji, Mohsen Kadivar, Mojtabeh Shabestari, Yousofi Eshkevari etc.) left the country and once at the safety of a Western democracy, most openly stated their disagreement with the principles of Guardianship of the Jurisprudent (Velayat e Faqih) which is so central to the survival of the regime.

5.2.2 Placing the Movement on a Political Spectrum

It is important to note that the Reform front is not a homogenous community. The Reform umbrella houses a large spectrum of social, political and professional affinities. Following I will describe the chief organizations under that umbrella.

MAJMA'-i- ROUHANYUN- i- MOBAREZ:

Otherwise known as the *Combatant Cleric Society*⁵ is the most powerful group within the Reform camp. It's former leader and a founding member Hojatol Islam Mehdi Karoubi, former Speaker of the House from 1989-1992, and 2000-2004, head of the powerful *Bonyad-e Shahid (Martyr's Foundation)* from 1980-1992, is also one of the contesting candidates of the 2009 presidential elections and a leading figure of the Green Movement, who is currently under house arrest for his role in the movement along with the movement's other leader, Mousavi. The organization houses a broad spectrum of opinions from radical elements in favour of "export of the revolution" and enemies of the United States such as *Hojatol Islam Mohtashami Pour*, former Minister of Intelligence from 1985-1989, to Hojatol Islam Mousavi Khoeiniha (current Secretary General of the organization) the leader of the 1979 U.S embassy take over in Tehran, to more liberal voices represented by former president Hojatol Islam Khatami (current Chairman of the organization)(Buchta, 2000). In the 2009 presidential elections however, the party backed Mir Hossein Mousavi's candidacy. Karoubi had left the organization four years earlier due to factional differences.

SAZEMAN-i- MOJAHEDIN-i- ENGHELAB-i- ISLAMI:

Also known as the *Organization of the Mojahedin of The Islamic Revolution*⁶ was originally founded in 1979 but was later dissolved, and was reactivated again in 1988. *Behzad Nabavi* is the founding member of the organization and currently *Mohammad Salamaty* serves as its Secretary General. Both men served in Mir Hossein Mousavi's cabinet during his premiership from 1981-

⁵ Not to be confused with the conservative *Militant Clergy Association* described in the next section.

⁶ Not to be confused with Sazman-i-Mojahedin-i-Khalgh (MKO) which is an opposition group in exile.

1989 as Minister of Heavy Industries and Minister of Agriculture in respectively. The organization's leadership and members are exclusively religious laypersons largely educated in technical fields (Buchta, 2000).

JEBHEH -i- MOSHAREKAT-i- ISLAMI -i- IRAN:

Also known as the *Islamic Participation Front of Iran* is an organization known for its openness to all Reform-oriented forces and is formed from a broad alliance of clerics, religious laypersons, Islamic-oriented labour forces, and religious women's activist groups (Buchta, 2000, p. 15). *Mohammad Khatami* (former President Khatami's brother), is the former and *Mohsen Mirdamadi*, former Premier of the oil-rich province of Khouzestan and a founding member of the elite *Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)*, is the current Secretary General to the organization. *Saeed Hajjarian*, chief political strategist of the Reform movement who is now paralyzed due to an assassination attempt, *Hamidreza Jalaeipour*, a religious intellectual, are amongst other prominent members of this organization. *Mosharekat* emphasizes on a more liberal reading of Islam and advocates open market economy and political liberties, and normalization of the foreign policy to pull Iran out of its isolation. This organization too endorsed Mir Hossein Mousavi's candidacy in the 2009 elections.

All three groups firmly advocates "*Khat-e Imam*" which is the political line of Khomeini, but recently have been moving away from the social and cultural hardline of that era allowing more liberal voices to gain prominence. While Mir Hossein Mousavi has never officially belonged to any of the above groups he has been an ardent supporter of the movement even after his position as the Prime Minister was abolished by a constitutional amendment in 1989.

The alliance of the diverse groups under the Reform umbrella revolves around two imperatives of *Islamism* and *preservation of the Islamic Republic regime* through reform which is evident in the faction's name. I will briefly describe the two trends below:

5.2.3 Religious Affinity

One common trend here is the religious nature of the movement bringing all these various groups together. While some members may privately believe in secularism, the movement has never openly embraced the concept. On the contrary, Reform's figureheads from its intellectuals, to its leaders such as Khatami, Hajjarian, Mousavi, and Karoubi, have always maintained their faith, and their conviction in a government grounded in Islamic philosophy. It is important to note that Reformers don't just embrace private faith, but similar to their conservative counterparts, they too believe in a political system informed by Islamic traditions being convinced that Islam is a political religion and not just spiritual. What differentiates this groups from their conservative counterparts is their particular reading of Islam and of religion in general that is somewhat more lenient and more in tune with modern times. Looking back the history of prominent members of the Reform Movement, one can observe their religious nature. Many now reside in United States, Canada, and Western Europe away from the regime's repression yet majority such as Soroush and others maintain their religious beliefs, so fear of repression of the regime cannot be a factor here.

5.2.4 Preserving the Regime

The second common trend binding the gropes under the Reform umbrella is an ardent desire to preserve the regime. The Reformers argue that should the political elite fail to implement limited reforms, the continuous dissatisfaction and defiance of certain socio-political strata will

cause an upheaval similar to that of the 1979 putting the future of the regime in danger (Kamrava, 2008). However, while the movement firmly believes in the necessity of systemic reform, the extent of those reforms are confined within the boundaries of Islam and the constitution of the Islamic Republic as advocated by the leader of the revolution Ayatollah Khomeini. In one of his last official speeches Mir Hossein Mousavi says “I have come to save the Regime” (Keyhan, 2009), or in a gathering with post-secondary students in the province of *Mazandaran* Mousavi asserts “we have the Islamic Republic regime and won't say a word more than Imam [Khomeini] has commanded us. Therefore republicanism has to be accompanied by Islamism and it hurts the country if either one of those is undermined” (“Mousavi: I don't dare ask Khatami for his help,” 2009), or Khatami's assertion that “The Islamic Republic is an achievement of our revolution and we all have to safeguard it” (“Safeguarding and strengthening the Islamic Republic is a duty for all of us,” 2014)”, or that “we are not looking to overthrow the regime and our goal is to safeguard the regime” (“Khatami: Many mistakes are made in the name of the regime,” 2010)⁷.

In other words the Reform Movement is considered by its secular opponents as the regime's “pressure safety valve” implying that this group have heard the voice of dissent and dissatisfaction amongst large classes of the society and are trying to remedy that with systemic reforms. It is imperative to keep in mind that Khatami and others are almost all regime insiders who have been crucial to the establishment of the regime and are keen on preserving it. However, contrary to their conservative counterparts, the Reformers believe further oppression of those disenchanted by the regime will only threaten the survival of the regime. Systemic reforms are this movement's remedy to restrain the dissent and discontent and guarantee the longevity of the

⁷ All translation from the original text in Farsi are the author's

Islamic Republic. By way of example, this movement does not challenge the attire and headscarf imposed on women, or has never publically acknowledged universal gender equality or the equality for religious and other minorities. Therefore it is important to remember, the movement as a whole does not advocate secularism nor overthrow of the regime. On the contrary, the Reformist discourse is a religious discourse that attempts to preserve the system by reforming the current laws and institutions of the regime to incorporate more modern concepts such as democracy, human, women and civil rights, and transparent governance. In other words, the Reformers are observing the crisis of legitimacy that the system is facing and are putting forward a viable solution to save it (Kamrava, 2008).

5.2.5 Reformers and the Green Movement

The Green Movement was largely formed in response to the disputed election results in 2009. Mousavi and Karoubi, both Reformist candidates, disputed the election results that declared Ahmadi Nejad the winner by a landslide shortly after the polls closed. They asked their supporters to join in and voice their dissatisfaction in a peaceful march of silence on June 15th (3 days after the elections), in which hundreds of thousands of people marched the streets of Tehran and other major cities. The movement was dubbed The Green Movement, by both domestic and later foreign media largely due to the green symbols carried by Mousavi supporters. Following Western branding and political campaigning strategies, Mousavi's camp had used the color green to set itself apart from the opponents. The significance of this choice of color will be discussed at length in later chapters. Prominent Reformist politicians almost entirely threw their support behind the Green Movement both before and after the elections when the protests erupted. Reformists such as *Ataollah Mohajerani*, Khatami's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, *Ali Abtahi*, Khatami's

chief of staff, *Emadedin Baghi*, Reform strategist, and other staffed or endorsed Karoubi's presidential campaign. Although a founding member of the Reform Movement and considered the *Reformists Alliance's* endorsed candidate, Mousavi had maintained his independent candidacy during the campaign but welcomed support from all factions ("Mousavi: I Have Come Independently," 2009). Despite maintaining he did not belong to any one Reformist group, Mousavi's presidential platform was closely defined based on Reformists principles. His candidacy was formally endorsed by Khatami, who withdrew at the early stages of the race in his favour ("Khatami Drops His Presidential Candidacy in Support of Mousavi," 2009), and Alireza Beheshti (The son of *Ayatollah Mohammad Beheshti*, the assassinated former head of Judiciary in 1981), *Mohammad Mahmoud Robati* and many others from his past administration as the Prime Minister formed his campaign staff. Once the election results were announced and protests erupted, many prominent members of the Reform front supported the Greens and were amongst those arrested and imprisoned.

5.3 Complexities of the Iranian Power Structure

Despite their religious affinities, and despite their devotion to the regime, the conservative bloc continuously accuses the Reformers of treason and disloyalty to the revolutionary ideals and has dubbed their brand of Islam as "American style Islamism" implying impure intentions and diluted faithfulness. Khatami's election in 1997 was considered by many a major turn in the history of the Islamic Republic (Bokharayi, 2002) and facilitated the flourishing of a post-revolutionary discourse of Reform that had begun a few years earlier. However, during Khatami's two terms as

president⁸ the movement was largely incapable of delivering its promises of transparent governance, more open political space, individual freedoms and a thriving civil society amongst other things. Suffice to say in 2005, at the end of Khatami's second term, Mahmoud Ahmadi Nejad, Tehran's little known mayor and a conservative hardliner, was elected by large margins over Reform candidates.

The Reform's failures throughout the 8 years of Khatami's presidency are largely attributed by the movement elite to structural factors within the system. While the front largely occupied the executive and legislative branches, the conservative hardliners still wielded considerable influence by controlling some of the most powerful institutions of the state. Kamrava (2008) describes some of the chief strongholds of the conservative hardliners as follows:

... the office of the Faghih (Bonyad-e Rahbari), the Judiciary, many publications and the state-controlled radio and television network (IRTV), and many of the economic foundations (Bonyads) in charge of the commanding heights of the economy (p.31).

Following is an overview of some of the structural roadblocks incorporated into the fabric of the Islamic Republic to ensure clerical conservative hardliner's supremacy and grip on power. In the next few pages I will argue that the Supreme Leadership (Velayat e faqih) and the principle of Guardianship of the Jurisprudent (Velayat e Motlagheh Faghih) are stipulated in the constitution to ensure concentration of power in the hands of the traditionalist Right. Consequently, *the Guardian Council, Assembly of Experts, Special Court of the Clergy*, the Judiciary and countless other foundations (*Bonyad*) and institutions, are the political manifestations of the structural

⁸ Iranian constitution limits presidential candidates to two terms in the office.

requirements to preserve that institution which acts as the beating heart of the *Islamic Government* envisioned by Ayatollah Khomeini, and to ensure the balance of power continues to remain with the hardliner clerics.

5.3.1 The Supreme Leader

The Supreme Leader draws its legitimacy from the principle of Velayat-e Faqih, a concept developed by Ayatollah Khomeini during his exile (from 1964 to 1979). Khomeini argued that the purpose of the Islamic state is to prepare the Ummah (Islamic nation) for the reappearance of the 12th Shi'ite Imam, Mahdi, who disappeared in 941 CE (Jones, 2011). In essence, Velayat-e Faqih means the Guardianship of the Jurisprudent or the rule of clerical authorities. Khomeini held the view that a just, and pious, religious leader “who surpasses all in knowledge” of Islamic law (a Marja' or Source of Emulation) (Khomeini, 1970) must be at the helm to ensure that decisions and policies are consistent with Shari'a. Jurists (*Faqaha*, plural form of Faqih), according to this view, are the only sources of divine legitimacy after prophet and the Imams, responsible for maintaining the Ummah in a fit condition to hasten the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (Khomeini, 1970). Khomeini became Iran's first Supreme Leader post 1979 Islamic revolution.

On June 4, 1989 Hojatol Islam Ali Khamenei succeeded Grand Ayatollah Khomeini after his death and became Iran's second Supreme Leader. The Iranian constitution required at the time that the Supreme Leader be a *Marja' Taqlid* (Source of Emulation), but since Khamenei was not, the constitution was amended to accommodate for that and to legitimize his moral and religious supremacy.

To explain the significance of this move, we have to first explore the Shi'ite hierarchical clerical ranking. The *Usuli Twelve Imam* Shi'ites, the dominant group amongst the Shi'ite Muslim, believe in *Ijtihad* which means the use of critical reasoning in deriving new rules of Fiqh from *Quran*, and *Sunnah* which are the main sources of law in Islam. A distinguishing pillar of Usuli doctrine is *Taqlid* or "imitation", i.e. adhering to the religious rulings in matters of worship and personal affairs from someone regarded as a higher religious authority during the absence of the 12th Imam, *Mahddi*. That higher authority is called a *Marja' Taqlid* (Source of Emulation) or *Marja'* for short (Momen, 1985). To reach the level of *Marja'* and be a legitimate source of religious and moral authority, a cleric's knowledge of Fiqh and Usul must have surpassed that of a *Hojatol Islam* and have been accorded the rank of *Ayatollah* or *Mujtahid*. A select few of astute Ayatollahs with expert opinions are then elevated to the rank of *Grand Ayatollah* or a *Marja'*. An absolute requirement of becoming a *Marja'* is to publish a *Resaleh*, a book in which the jurist addresses the vast majority of daily Muslim affairs from marriage to worship and taxes and so on, and is referred to by those who emulate him (*Moqalid*) (Momen, 1985). Following a deceased *Marja'* is forbidden in Usuli Shi'ite tradition. Grand Ayatollahs Khomeini, *Behbahani*, *Tabatabayi*, *Mirza Shirazi*, *Ha'eri e Yazdi*, *Bayat e Zanjani*, *Sane'i*, and *Montazeri* are amongst the past and present *Marja's* in Iran that have also had a hand in shaping Iran's political landscape. For more detailed discussion of the subject please see "*An introduction to Shi'i Islam: the history and doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism*" (Momen, 1985).

For a jurist to reach the rank and the religious authority of a Grand Ayatollah that legitimizes his *Marja'iat*, his scholarship has to be approved by other established senior *Marja's*. In Khamenei's case although the political establishment promoted him from a mid-ranking *Hojatol*

Islam to a Marja' overnight, many senior religious authorities in the seminaries rejected his legitimacy often silently but sometimes openly. Grand Ayatollahs Hossein Ali Montazeri, *Mohammad Shirazi* (not to be confused with *Mirza Shirazi*), *Hassan Tabatabayi Qomi* and *Yasoubedin Rastgar Jooybari* are amongst the Shi'ite authorities that disputed the legitimacy of Khamenei's *Marja'iyat* citing his lack of religious scholarship, including not having written a *Resaleh* (Pike, 2009). Eventually those elements within the clerical system that are not supportive of Khamenei's ultraconservative agenda were either silenced by the establishment through house arrests, public attacks and forcible defrocking (Montazeri was forced into house arrest and to remove his white turban signifying him as a cleric), or chose to be silent themselves. In understanding the role of the Supreme Leader Khamenei, Mehran Kamrava (2008) explains:

Whether elected or appointed, an overwhelming majority of the country's political figures, only wield technical, administrative power in certain well-defined areas of activity, in all of which ultimate authority rests with none other than the Leader, *Valiye Faqih* and his narrow inner circle. Even many of the policy making purviews of these politicians are limited and are subject to final approval by the Leader, especially in key areas such as the economy, foreign and national security policy and the like (Kamrava, 2008, p.32).

Since lacking the status of a Marja' as described above, thus incapable of acting as a source of *Taqlid*, Khamenei sees himself especially beholden to the conservative faction of the clerical hierarchy and acts accordingly. Kamrava (2008), Buchta (2000) and others argue that both by design and by structural path dependence, the current political system in the Islamic republic is fractured along multiple lines of authority, all of which ultimately lead to the same institution and to the person of the Supreme Leader. However despite naïve observations by some Western

powers, the Islamic Republic is not a monolithic dictatorship ruled by the totalitarian minded clergy. The complex power structures ruling Iran will be discussed in the chapter.

The Guardian Council, the Assembly of Experts, the Judiciary, and the Special Court of the Clergy are amongst the most effective instruments of silencing the non-conformists including the Reformists Movement born on the 2nd of Khordad and the Green Movement elite. I will briefly describe those institutions in an effort to offer some insight into the intricate power structure of the Islamic Republic.

5.3.2 Judiciary and the Special Court of the Clergy

It is especially important to note that while article 156 of the constitution stipulates for an “independent judiciary”, this branch of the government is under the paramount control of the Supreme Leader who directly appoints the head of judiciary, who in turn appoints the Prosecutor General and the head of the Supreme Judicial Council. According to article 162 of the constitution had of judiciary, the Prosecutor General and the head of Supreme Judicial Council, all must be “Just Mojtahids” who are appointed to serve for a period of 5-years. The Ministry of Justice, the head of whom is appointed by the President and approved by the Parliament, is only a division of the legal framework and largely acts as the administrative body of the Judicial branch of the government according to article 160. Therefore in reality, *Vali-e Faqih* (the Supreme Leader) has direct oversight on how the judicial branch of the government is run which give the Conservative Right an effective instrument to oppress those they find in opposition to their views including the Reformists.

Emadeddin Baqi (2003), a prominent Reformist thinker and a political prisoner, also argues that The Special Court of the Clergy, established by Ayatollah Khomeini in March 1987 to “protect the dignity of the clergy and the seminaries” (Kamrava, 2008, p. 31), is an especially effective

instrument in the Right's efforts to silence the none-conformist clerics on the left. While under the judiciary's umbrella, The Special Court of the Clergy is solely accountable to the Supreme Leader and functions independently from the regular judicial framework as described above. This court has prosecuted and punished a considerable number of clerics associated with the left for their sermons, writings and speeches. Figures such as Abdollah Noori, Interior Minister during Khatami's first term as President, Hassan Yousofi Eshkevari, and Mohsen Kadivar, are amongst those clerics summoned before this court and punished for their views. Sentences range from jail time, house arrest, and defrocking, to lashes, fines, and publication bans.

Grand Ayatollah Montazeri is by all accounts the most prominent dissident cleric in the history of the Islamic Republic and The Special Court of the Clergy. A close ally of Khomeini's during the revolution, he was designated to be his successor, however that all changed in 1989 once the news of the mass executions of the political prisoners post Iran-Iraq war in late summer and early autumn 1988 at Khomeini's undisputed directive surfaced. Montazeri wrote a letter to Khomeini, which was latter obtained and made public by the BBC, vehemently condemning the massacres and also criticizing Khomeini's *Fatwa* (religious decree) against *Salman Rushdie* stating: "People in the world are getting the idea that our business in Iran is just murdering people" (Wright, 2000, p. 20). That letter is said to have sealed Montazeri's political faith: Khomeini strongly condemned Montazeri's words and a few days later removed him from his position as the successor and stripped him from his title of Grand Ayatollah, his lectures and sermons were removed from state publications and all references to him were banned. Montazeri spent the next 20 years under house arrest in his home in Qom, until his death on December 19th, 2009, in the midst of the Green Movement. For his views on human rights, women's rights, and religious minority rights (such as

Baha'is), and civil rights, and for his support of the Green movements and the regular harassment and the grave punishment he took for taking a stand, Grand Ayatollah Montazeri is considered the spiritual father of the Green Movement.

5.3.3 The Guardian Council and the Principle of Approbation Supervision:

The Judiciary is not the only branch of government standing in the way of the Reformers and by extension the Greens. While the Reformers managed to gain majority in the parliament and the city councils and some other elective assemblies during Khatami's presidency the hardliners managed to pacify the legislation they passed through the Guardian Council. *The Guardian Council of the Constitution (Shoray-e Negahban-e Ghanoon-e Assi)* or the Guardian Council for short, is an appointed yet powerful assembly mandated by the constitution. The council is charged with "interpreting the Constitution of Iran, supervising elections of, and approving of candidates to, the President and the Majlis, and "ensuring ... the compatibility of the legislation passed by the Islamic Consultative Assembly [i.e. Majlis] with the criteria of Islam and the Constitution". 6 of the 12 members of the assembly must be just clerics appointed by the person of Vali-e Faqi. The remaining 6 are Muslim jurists, expert in various areas of law and the constitution nominated by the head of judiciary, who is in turn appointed by the Vali-e Faqih, and elected by the Majlis (Article 91 of the constitution). As a result, the Guardian Council is typically occupied by the hardliners following the Supreme Leader's agenda.

The principle of *Approbation Supervision (Asl-e Nezarat-e Estesvabi)*, allows the Guardian Council, an appointed assembly, to basically overrule or veto any legislation passed by an elected assembly, the parliament, on the grounds that it violated Islam or the constitution.

For example when Khatami introduced what came to be known as the “Twin Bills” to the Majlis (parliament), the first bill was to expand his executive powers allowing for intervention to prevent and reverse action by judiciary that were in direct violation of the constitution. The second bill, introduced at the same time to Majlis, was aimed at curbing the Guardian Council’s powers by limiting the scope of principle of Approbation Supervision when it came to vetting and eliminating candidates. Expecting resistance from the Guardian Council Khatami famously said: “the Guardian Council can either say a bill is against Islam or the constitution. The bill I’ll present is part of the constitution and it is definitely not against Islam (Moaveni, 2002)”.

Needless to say despite Khatami’s threat of resignation, the Guardian Council rejected both bills. By tactically undermining the president and the legislative which at the time was predominantly occupied by Reformers, the conservatives successfully caused the many Reformist policy agendas to grind to a halt and blocked any kind of reform that would loosen their grip on power.

Observing the failure of the Reform movement is important because the Greens, or at least their prominent leaders, were *Reformists* planning on continuing on the path that started by Khatami’s election and became known as the *Reform Era*. However, the above structural limitations clearly demonstrate that the ruling conservative elite will not tolerate defiance to the official state doctrine and over the years they have successfully eliminated those who do through various provisions in the constitution as stated above. While eliminating the outsiders has been an agreed upon and a routine policy of this regime from the outset, while considered “insiders” by all accounts, Reformers and their ideas have also been the target of elimination through such institutions as the Special Court of Clergy, The Guardian Council, and so on, as described above.

Hamid Reza Jalaeipour, a prominent Reform thinker, says: “The principal problem that the Reform movement faces is that its opposition accepts neither its methodology nor its modes of operation. (Kamrava, 2008, p. 33)”. The Reform movement is admittedly committed to “gradualism” as a methodology for reforming the system from below, however, their opponents were not hesitant to change the rules of the game and resort to brutal tactics to maintain the status quo. Lastly, due to their position as regime insiders loyal to the principles of Islamic governance, the Reform discourse does not only put them at odds with the conservatives, it also puts them at odds with the secular discourse, and while they may be successful at gaining some sympathy from the latter, they fail to garner their support to face the full force of the former, leaving them to their own devices.

This observation leads to a couple of conclusions: one, the evidence suggests that the political system of the Islamic Republic at its core will not tolerate defiance from the mainstream conservative doctrine even if it is by the *brothers* of yesterday and *Reformers* of today. Second, violence and brutality has been a major tool to keep the opposition in line since the birth of the Islamic Republic whether on the roof of the *Refah* School, or the mass execution of political prisoners, or assassination of exiled opposition. Therefore, history suggests they are not hesitant to use those same tactics to cripple the Reformers and by extension the *greens* by the same means. Lastly, the above tactics perhaps partly explains why the *Green* movement protests were crushed swiftly and brutally.

5.4 The Conservatives

Kamrava (2008) argues that the religious Right’s emphasis since the beginning of the revolution has been on the interpretation, preservation and strengthening of those notions of

Shi'ite Fiqh that legitimize and rationalize the conservative clergy's tight hold on power. Typically, the conservative religious right avoids theoretical and doctrinal change unless political circumstances prove those changes absolutely necessary. Naturally, the religious conservatives on the Right have been reluctant to acknowledge and in responding to some of the consequences of modernity such as civil rights, globalization, pluralism etc. which are considered problematic by this faction. Despite external pressure however, it is argued (Kamrava, 2008; Buchta 2000) that there is very little chance the religious Right would change course in the near future in a way that would bring meaningful change to the Iranian political arena. The post-election events of the summer 2009 in which the government forces brutally crushed the Green Movement protests, are the most recent and tangible proof of this argument.

Although there are close connections between the traditionally conservative, high ranking Shi'ite theologians and Grand Ayatollahs, and the most powerful office, namely the *Beit-e Rahbari* (Office of the Supreme Leader), the religious Right is not a homogenous faction. Kamrava (2008) argues that while the common purpose of preserving the doctrinal and institutional legacy of Ayatollah Khomeini has led to a symbiotic relationship between the current political system and the religious conservatism, the conservative theological current includes a diverse array of doctrinal and political persuasions. Table 5.1 summarizes the various persuasions of the conservative Right based on Kamrava (2008) and Buchta (2000):

Table 5.1: Disaggregating the Right

TRADITIONALISTS		MODERNISTS	
<i>Radical Right</i>	<i>Traditionalist Clergy</i>	<i>Islamic Councils</i>	<i>Modernist Right Thinkers</i>
<i>Hey'at-e Mo'talefeh</i> , Former <i>Fadaiyan-e Islam</i> members, traditionalist Bazaaris, former and present <i>Basij</i> members, Former <i>Hojjatiyeh Society</i> , and the loosely organized <i>Hezbollah</i> groups	Politically influential conservative clerics based in Tehran, Qom, and the provinces, affiliated with the <i>Howzeh Elmiyyeh</i> , the <i>Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute</i> , the <i>Assembly of Experts</i> , and the <i>Jame'e Rouhaniyyat-e Mobarez</i> group. Includes most <i>Friday Prayer Imams</i> , and the " <i>Supreme Leader's Representatives</i> " in various organizations	Active on university campuses and among certain professional groups. They are largely formed to ensure their members conduct complies with Islam and the regime ideology.	Lay and Clerical scholars and thinkers generally supportive of the Islamic Republic system, though some calling for modifications to its <i>modus operandi</i> and certain institutional features. Including seniors clerics such as the late Grand Ayatollah Montazeri , and lay conservative thinkers such as <i>Prof. Davari Ardakani</i>

At the broadest level, the Right can be divided into the traditional-modern spectrum. Within this broad spectrum four general categories of Right can be distinguished: beginning with the extreme *Radical Right*, followed by the Conservative Traditional Clerics, Islamic Councils and the Modern Right thinkers. In terms of engaging in an intellectual discourse Kamrava (2008) observes that of the four groups only the Traditionalist Clergy and the Modern Right Thinkers engage in a meaningful production of ideology. I will detail each category further below.

5.4.1 The Traditionalist Right

By and large, the Rightist traditionalist clergy produce the doctrinal output that forms the backbone of the Islamic Republic's official ideology and discourse, which once discussed and approved internally it is then transmitted to the larger society through various organs and arms

such as the *Hezbollah* groups. Alireza Alavi-Tabar calls the political outlook of the traditional clergy on this side of the spectrum as “*Shari’at-Centric*” (Kamrava, 2008, p. 85) with Fiqh as the primary resource within which the solutions to contemporary social, political and even economic problems are uncovered. They advocate safeguarding traditional institutions of family, Bazaar, private ownership and ritualized forms of worship. Most importantly though, this group is a staunch advocates of the concept of Velayat-e Faqih. Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi is one of the most vocal and combative theologians behind the traditionalist conservative religious current (Kamrava, 2008).

HEY’AT-i- MO’TALEFEH ISLAMI:

Also known as the *Coalition of Islamic Associations*, is a religious professional association and has been led by a number of high profile clerics and lay people on the Right such as former presidents *Hashemi Rafsanjani*, and *Ahmadinejad*, and current speaker of the parliament *Ali Larijani* among others. Hey’at- e Mo’talefeh links the traditionalist ruling clerics to their single most important historical backers namely the Bazaar merchants (Buchta, 2000, p.15).

JAME’-i-ROUHANIYYAT-i-MOBAREZ:

Also known as the *Militant Clergy Association* (not to be confused with the Reformist Combatant Clergy Association) is the most influential group within the traditionalist right, which counts amongst its most senior members the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, former speaker of the house *Ali Akbar Nategh Noori*, and also *Hashemi Rafsanjani*. The Military Clergy Association’s sphere of influence goes further: the two power centres of *Shoraye Negahban* (the *Guardian Council*) and *Majles- e Khobregan* (the *Assembly of Experts* which is in charge of electing the Supreme Leader and approving constitutional amendments) are largely dominated by the

members of this group. Buchta (2000) similarly concurs that this group also has at its disposal a countrywide network of guilds, religious professional associations (such as the above Hey'at- e Mo'talefeh, and societies). Deriving their legitimacy primarily from the Islamic-theocratic components of the 1979 revolution and Khomeini's doctrine of Velayat-e Faqih, the members of this group favour a theocratic socio-political model and for them the dominance of Islam takes clear precedence over the people's collective will (Buchta, 2000).

5.4.2 The Modernist Conservatives

ISLAMIC COUNCILS (ANJOMAN - *i* - ISLAMI):

As mentioned in table 5.1, the Islamic Councils are largely active on university campuses and to a lesser extent in professional associations such as *the Engineers Association*, and the state bureaucracy. Their primary task is to ensure the compliance of the Civil Society with the regime's official doctrine including monitoring none conformist professors and students. According to Kamrava (2008), these Associations produce little or no doctrinal output and instead act more as the guardians and enforces of the official orthodoxy.

MODERNIST RIGHT:

It is important to note the distinction between the modern Right and the Reformers. The modern Right are aligned with the overall jurisprudential underpinnings of the Islamic Republic, however according to Kamrava (2008), they "advocate modifications to some of its [IR's] specific features and, if possible, criticize the conduct of its officials" (p.85). This group does not question the doctrine of Velayat-e Faqih unlike the Reform camp. *Dr. Reza Davari Ardakani*, philosophy professor at the University of Tehran, is perhaps the most notable lay conservative thinker

advocating for this group. The late Grand Ayatollah Montazeri was perhaps the most prominent spokesperson for this group.

5.4.3 Conservatives and Dissent

Clearly, the conservative actors were in absolute opposition to the Green Movement or any type of dissent in general and thus broke up the protests swiftly, brutally and effectively. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (*Sepah-i Pasdaran-i Enghelab-i Islami*) or the IRGC for short, a parallel military powerhouse charged with guarding Iran's Islamic system and founded at the onset of the revolution at the behest of Khomeini, and the *Basij* militia, a paramilitary volunteer and auxiliary force subordinate to the IRGC, are essentially the oppressive muscles of the conservatives. *Basij* and the IRGC essentially provided the boots on the ground to beat, disperse and intimidate the protesters, during the 2009 protests. Those arrested were often beaten and tortured prior to being prosecuted and sentenced by the same judicial system that as described above is basically an executive arm of the institution of the Supreme Leadership. This is essentially how the oppressive machine of the Islamic Republic responds to any type of dissent.

5.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter addresses RQ 1 to 3 necessary in order to answer my main research inquiry. In other words, in this chapter the key categories of stakeholders in the movement are identified along with their aspirations and power dynamic. While three distinct actors participated in the Green Movements, civil society groups are clearly the less influential of the three. Reformers, the main leaders of the group who triggered the events, while considered insiders and still hold considerable power and influence within the government, were essentially overpowered by the

ruling conservatives. The former wields power and asserts its hegemonic domination through various institutions and organizations the most important of all are the institution of the Supreme Leadership and the judiciary followed by smaller more targeted ones such as the Guardian Council and the Special Court of the Clergy. The increasingly powerful IRGC and the Basij militia provide the conservatives with the manpower required to break up the protests.

CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS OF THE PUBLIC DISCOURSE

6.0 An Overview of the Chapter

In this chapter I will conduct a critical analysis of the political discourse of the two Reform candidates during the 2009 elections. The focus of this research is on the proposed changes to three different structures of signification, domination, and legitimation. Studying the data reveals that the majority of the changes proposed by the two candidates fall into the prevue of the structures of domination. Thus patriarchy and economy were selected by the author for this study for their significance and their domination of the 2009 election discourse.

6.1 Structures of Domination: Patriarchy

This section focuses on the dominating structure of patriarchy and the status of women in Iran. First, a brief background on the women's movement in Iran.

Women in Iran have a long history of participating in socio-political movements. Esfandiari (1997) points out that women's movement in Iran started in the late nineteenth century and in particular during the Iranian Constitutional Revolution that took place between 1905 and 1911, where women had participated in street protests. During the 1979 revolution Iranian women also had a strong presence. Esfandiari (1997) also indicates that "the revolution created a sense of participation among men and women from all classes". In the marches that led to the revolution, women from different social backgrounds were strongly present and active agents of revolution. There were professional women without scarves and women from traditional backgrounds wearing the black veil (*Chador*) and women from lower- and middle-class families with their

children (Esfandiari, 1997) walking shoulder to shoulder with men, hoping that the revolution would bring for them improvement in their economic, social and, most importantly, legal status.

Katouzian (2009) notes that both modern and traditional women had played an active role in the revolution. While the modern and professional women (e.g., university students, nurses, doctors, journalists, lawyers, engineers and workers in public and private sectors) were more visible, towards the end of the former regime some of them began to wear light *hejab* (scarves) as a gesture of defiance against the regime. However, in the aftermath of the Islamic revolution, women were the first group to be neglected and oppressed by the new elite in power.

However, after the 1979 revolution, the new Islamic government, naturally, adapted a more conservative view of women and their legal and political status in the society. This view, informed by the Shi'ite doctrine and championed personally by Ayatollah Khomeini, promoted an image of women as mothers, wives and homemakers, both through policy and propaganda. Citing the Shari'a, discriminating laws were encoded in the very first draft of the new constitution limiting a woman's choice and activities with policies such as forced Hejab, barring women from seeking high political and judicial offices and reversed a number of initiatives taken under Mohammad Reza Shah.

In 1967 the Shah created the Ministry of Women's Affairs, and introduced the *Family Protection Laws* in 1967 and family courts in 1975 (Yeganeh, 1995). The Family Protection Act restricted polygamy, granted women equal access to divorce and legalized abortion in certain circumstances. Shari'a law has designated the age of consent for marriage for women at 9, but prior to 1967 the Iranian Civil code had amended it to 14, and finally the Family Protection Act had raised the age of marriage to 18 for women (Afshar, 1982). As one of his very first orders of

business, Ayatollah Khomeini reversed the Family Protection Act, and dissolved the family courts denouncing these measures as in direct contradiction to Qur'an's text (Khomeini, 2008) and called upon fury of god upon those implementing and administering such laws.

But perhaps no measure was as symbolic of religious persecution of women, as forcing them into veiling (*hejab*). On March 6, 1979 less than a month after the collapse of the old regime in a speech in the holy city of Qom, Ayatollah Khomeini introduced the subject of mandatory veiling:

Islamic ministries should not have a sacrilegious atmosphere. Uncovered women should not come to Islamic ministries. Women may come but they should don Islamic covering" (Khomeini, 2008, Vol.6, p.286).

Two days later in a mass demonstrations staged to celebrate the International Women's Day, women reacted widely and heavily to Khomeini's comments. Among their chants were 'Liberty and equality are our undeniable rights', ' We will fight against compulsory veil', 'Down with dictatorship', ' In the dawn of freedom, we already lack freedom', and 'Women's Day of Emancipation is neither Western, nor Eastern, it is international'.

Following further demonstrations and sit-ins the regime retreated. Prime Minister of the interim government, Mahdi Bazargan, announced that Ayatollah Khomeini's statements were misunderstood and that compulsory veiling was not on their agenda (Tabari, 1980). However, once the dust settled, a few short months later veiling for women holding government positions became mandatory. The trend continued to all segments of the society until women were no longer able to appear in public without the *hejab*. The penalty of doing so, according to the constitution of the Islamic republic of Iran, is 74 strokes of lash. The situation is best described by this slogan adopted

by Hezbollah, the club wilding Khomeini supporters, addressing women: “Ya rusari ya tusari” meaning cover on the head or a blow to the head (Katouzian, 2009, p.335). Compulsory *hejab* is in effect to date.

6.1.1 Women’s Rights Post 1979 Revolution

Despite continuous and systematic persecution, women fought back against religious oppression through education and by organizing and actively fighting for their cause and developing one of the most visible and successful campaigns of the Iranian civil society particularly since the war ended in 1988. Since the revolution, due to a variety of socio-economic factors, young Iranian women have become highly educated in Iran. In September 2012, women made up more than 60 percent of all university students (Sahraei, 2012). The war with Iraq (1980-1988) which sent many men to the fronts and left women as the primary breadwinner, limitations placed on women’s employment and most other activities outside the home, and the activities of many women’s rights groups are amongst those factors contributing to higher levels of education amongst women. It certainly seems like the regime’s male centric policies indirectly pushed women to the only venue available to them: the universities. Additionally, because of the limited number of spots available in universities, students must pass a rather difficult entrance exam called *Konkoor*, to enter university, which also indicates that these young women are getting in on their own merit and not based on any affirmative action. Higher education for women over almost four decades has naturally introduced some changes to the largely traditional fabric of the Iranian society. It is commonly understood that higher education amongst women tends to be a contributing factor in such social shifts as: larger share of the labour force, significantly higher age of marriage, fewer children and higher rates of divorce.

While higher education has paved the way for some advances for women, the institutionalized gender discrimination embedded in the policies and laws of the country continue to oppress women and hinder their cause considerably. Iranian Family Law does not recognize a woman's right to apply for divorce or to take custody of her children in most cases. Additionally, by law, polygamy and temporary marriages (*Sigheh*) are a man's religious and legal rights to which his wife cannot object, the age of consent is basically none existent and in order for a married woman to enrolled in higher education, travel outside the country or seek employment, her husband's explicit and legal consent is required . Under Shari'a law upon which the Iranian legal and punitive system is built, a woman's life, her *Diyeh (blood money)*, and her testimony are equal to half of that of a man.

To battle systematic social and institutional discrimination against women in the name of religion and convention, a number of women began to organize to work and change the system from within. Women's movement gave birth to action groups like *One Million Signatures for the Repeal of Discriminatory Laws Campaign* (or *Campaign for Equality*), and education and awareness raising groups like *Feminism School* and *Women's Cultural Centre*. Women's rights activists come from all walks of life, ordinary citizens, lawyers, journalists, authors, filmmakers, scholars and artists all moving towards the same goal: to lobby the government, the *Majlis*, and the courts for more equality and to educate and raise awareness. Shirin Ebadi (Former Judge, Lawyer, Noble Peace laureate), Mehrangiz Kar (Lawyer, Scholar, Author), Parvin Ardalan (journalist, activist), Rakhshan Bani Etemad (Filmmaker), Mahboubeh Abbasgholi Zadeh (Journalist, Activist), are amongst the long list of women's rights activists in Iran.

Unsurprisingly, the Islamic government has been systematically cracking down on the movement and taking harsh measures such as long jail terms, torture, exile, lifelong bans on public activity including practicing in their own professions, erratic arrests and physical and emotional harassment in response. The subject of women and their rights comes up in almost every presidential election, especially since 1997, and is always considered controversial but depending on the faction in power there are periods of more intense oppression and periods where activists have more room to maneuver. In the 2009 elections both Mousavi and Karoubi made women's issues included women's rights a theme to their platform. Considering Ahmadi Nejad had introduced a number of bills considered to further marginalize women and discriminate against them, women's groups threw their support heavily behind the two Reformist candidates.

Both candidates campaigned heavily on women's rights and promised to introduce change and improve on their freedoms, to facilitate wider participation of women in the society and in the labour market, and to hire more women in their administrations. Vowing to alter this social structure, naturally drew significant support from women's rights activists, ordinary citizens, students, and youth.

6.1.2 Critical Discourse Analysis: Claims About Women's Rights

In this section will apply the principles of critical discourse analysis to examine the validity claims of two Green movement leaders, Mir Hossein Mousavi and Hojatol Islam Karoubi, regarding women's rights and its political implications. To this effect, the four validity claims of *truth*, *sincerity*, *legitimacy*, and *comprehensibility* will be tested as described by Habermas (1984) and operationalized by Cukier et al. (2009).

6.1.3 Empirical Analysis of Truth Claims

Truth claims are concerned with factual accuracy, biased and incomplete statements and logical consistency (see table 6.1 summarizing validity claims of truth). Upon closer examination of the truth claims on women and issues of gender discrimination, several logical inconsistencies are revealed in the discourse of the two leaders. It appears they both treat gender discrimination as a phenomenon external to the system and not something stemming from the structural foundations of the Islamic regime:

Mousavi: There are many things that under the name of Islam and securing family values, but in reality influenced by discriminatory gender views and legal issues, have created serious hurdles for women in the society (Empirical Material [EM] 8).

This argument, and other similar ones (both EM1, EM15), however are logically inconsistent for several reasons. In actuality what creates “serious hurdles for women” are the discriminatory laws of the country that are written in accordance with the Shi’ite doctrine (fiqh) and the Shari’a. The above statement reduces the structural and systemic gender discrimination upon which the Islamic Republic’s legal and constitutional framework is founded, to a certain interpretation of Islam. A quick look at some of the articles of the Iranian penal and civil codes however refutes this argument and leaves little room for interpretation. Article 300 of the Iranian Penal Code states the value of a woman’s life is half that of a man’s, while article 102 asserts women must wear the full Islamic Hejab in public (“Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” n.d.). Moreover, men can divorce their wives at any time if they choose to, but women can only apply for divorce under certain strict conditions (“Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” n.d.). Similarly Karoubi’s account of Khomeini’s stance on women (EM15) in politics conflicts with reality. While Khomeini did not object to women running for parliament, he refused to allow them to run

for the office of the president, or to be appointed a judge (articles 115, and 162 of the constitution) ("The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran," n.d.). In fact as per Khomeini's mandate in 1979 after the revolution, all female judges were removed from the bench. Table 6.1 summarizes validity claims of *truth*:

Table 6.1: Empirical analysis of *truth* validity claims on women's rights.

CLAIMS ON CHANGING STRUCTURES	SOURCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY VALIDITY CLAIMS OF TRUTH	EVIDENCE OF DISTORTION
Unidentified woman: one of the most important topics in social justice is the issue of gender equality. Discussing that first and foremost our girls and boys must feel safe.	EM1	T1. Is this argument logically consistent?	It is unclear how gender equity and the youth feeling safe are related
Rahnavaard: why shouldn't our women be safe in our society? Why are so many women killed? Why are so many women killed under the pretence of honor? Although, honouring the codes of chastity are not harmful if they are bound by law	EM1	T2. Is this argument true or false?	"codes of chastity" and "honour" are harmful to women since they are oppressive to them
Mousavi: Considering the turn of events in the past year, women and youth have a new understanding of themselves and a have renewed sense of identity. Their worldviews and thoughts have changed. Therefore a certain pain is felt that is related to this renewal of identity. Because our governing, legal and traditional structures are incompatible with this newly born identity. We have to study this issue.	EM7	T3. Is this argument factually true?	Women and Youth's movements date much further back than the Green Movement of 2009
Mousavi: There are many things that under the name of Islam and securing family values, but in reality influenced by discriminatory gender views and legal issues, have created serious hurdles for women in the society.	EM8	T4. Is this argument logically consistent?	The hearer or reader is left to decode what "many things" and "serious hurdles" are, and how those influence come into play?
In response to a question about the <i>One Million Signature Campaign for Repeal of Discriminatory Laws Against Women</i>, and noting the Green Human Chain formed last year from Tajrish square to Railroad square as symbol of reconciliation and national unity he goes on to say: Mousavi: I consider that day a great representation of the Green Movement. In previous years we have put forth "reconciliation" as our motto, which was a good motto for our national unity which will solve and even brings forward our problems. Some benefit from not reconciling. Currently in different formats including the families of political prisoners ,	EM14	T5. Is this argument factually true?	This statement is false since women were organized under various umbrellas prior to the Green Movement already.

CLAIMS ON CHANGING STRUCTURES	SOURCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY VALIDITY CLAIMS OF TRUTH	EVIDENCE OF DISTORTION
different groups and movements have been created which didn't have the possibility to organize prior to the Green Movement. Women's movement is of those movements too.			
Mousavi: Some women used to participate in certain activities under the umbrella of the One Million Signature Campaign against discrimination, that were even criminalized maybe because they were conducting those activities apart from each other.	EM14	T6. What evidence has been provided to support these arguments?	These groups were penalized because of their demands and not because they were organized separately. No evidence is presented to the contrary
Mousavi: But due to the colorful and diverse nature of the [Green] Movement, today they are joined with the extensive Green mass movement without the presence of suspicion against this group.	EM14	T7. Is this argument true or false?	The assertion that there is no suspicion against these groups is false since the government was cracking down on them under various charges
Karoubi: I will say this bluntly here, Emam [Khomeini] was very sensitive to moves that would demotivate people from participating in the elections and would readily oppose them. At a point in time, it hasn't been forgotten, that it was said that women shouldn't participate and don't get elected into the Majlis. Emam readily said that women must participate in the elections and be able to get elected to the Majlis	EM15	T8. Is this argument logically consistent?	It is unclear who/which group suggested women should not be elected and in what context?

Furthermore there are other assertions by both candidates that are factually untrue: Mr. Mousavi repeatedly suggests that women have found a voice under the Green umbrella (EM7, EM14), and were able to organize due to the diverse and tolerant nature of the movement. However as previously discussed, women were already organized years before the Green Movement, the one million signature campaign in fact was established in 2006. It is equally untrue to claim women's rights groups enjoy some sort of a safe haven and were immune from punishment because they gathered under the Green umbrella. The Islamic regime arrested and imprisoned many women's rights activists such as Noushin Ahmadi Khorasani, Mahbubeh Abbasgholi Zadeh, and Nasrin Sotoudeh among others. Some of them such as Narges Mohammadi, Shiva Nazar Ahari, and Bahareh Hedayat are still carrying those sentences.

To sum up, when the standards of Habermas's *truth* claims are applied, there are evidence of communication distortion. Logical inconsistencies attempting at framing institutionalized discrimination embedded in the constitution and various penal and civil codes as merely the interpretation of a certain group, is one such distortion. Additionally, there are statements made that are simply inaccurate and untrue that play to the heart of the Green leaders' attitude towards the women's movement. Mousavi's repeated attempts to frame the long standing women's struggle for their rights as a movement formed under the Green umbrella is a factually incorrect assertion made for political gain.

6.1.4 Empirical Analysis of Sincerity Claims

Sincerity implies consistency between what is expressed in the communication and the underlying intent. In examining the data, I paid particular attention to the congruity between what was stated in the political communications of the Green leaders and what was assumed. In other words, did they actually mean what their message implied to the audience or not. In table 6.2 below I have summarized validity claims of *sincerity*.

One subject that consistently comes up in the movement's discourse is gender equality and discriminatory practices against women. In (EM1) for example the three women, Zahra Rahnavard (Mousavi's wife), Fatemeh Mo'tamed Aria (a well-known actor), and an unidentified woman, talk about gender discrimination and its manifestations in the society such as needing their husbands and fathers' consent for everything from staying in a hotel while traveling, to receiving medically required surgery.

Table 6.2: Empirical analysis of sincerity validity claims on women's rights.

CLAIMS ON CHANGING STRUCTURES	SOURCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY VALIDITY CLAIMS OF SINCERITY	EVIDENCE OF DISTORTION
Rahnavard: All forms of discrimination must be eliminated in the society. We are against all forms of discrimination. Discrimination disrupts human growth. Now gender discrimination is one of its forms...there has to be a new reading of the role of women. Women are saying we are present, we have expectations and we still want to take part in deciding our destiny.	EM1	S1. Is what is said consistent with how it is said?	Ms. Rahnavard states this while wearing full Islamic cover which is contradictory to the universal concept of gender discrimination
"Rahnavard, Rahnavard, stands for equality of men and women"	EM3	S2. Does this communication elicit an emotional response?	gender equity is a highly charged and coveted concept in the Iranian society
Mousavi: There are no differences between men and women when it comes to freedom and working towards achieving democracy, and everyone must march together on this path.	EM6	S3. What is missing or suppressed in the discourse?	The fact that the country's laws are discriminatory against women and limiting their freedoms. Despite that, the speaker pledges to uphold the law to its fullest extent.
Mousavi: Women's issues in our country won't be solved unless they become a national problem and there should be no segregation between men and women. The gender segregation is the root of discrimination which renders the problem unsolvable.	EM6	S4. Is what is said consistent with what is implied?	The speaker is silent on what he means by "gender segregation" and "discrimination".
Mousavi: We cannot have a free and just society unless we solve the women's problems.	EM6	S5. Is what is said consistent with what is implied?	The audience is left to decode what exactly are women's issues from Mr. Mousavi's perspective and how they need to be solved
Mousavi: The faith of the Green Movement is tied to the women's movement in the future, and I don't think the Green Movement can achieve its goals without being accompanied by women every step of the way. The opposite is true too, meaning if we fail to make political change, women's conditions won't change either.	EM10	S6. Is what is said consistent with what is implied?	What are the goals of the Green Movement regarding women?
Mousavi: The Green Movement is after justice and freedom and the execution of the law, and if we achieve those, other issues stemming from those will be solved too. The reason we are facing actions that are causing us pain, is because our conditions are not aligned with the constitution and human dignity and honour.	EM12	S7. Does the text elicit emotional an emotional response?	The language associated with adherence to the law invokes positive emotions and attributes "pain" and problems to unlawfulness

CLAIMS ON CHANGING STRUCTURES	SOURCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY VALIDITY CLAIMS OF <i>SINCERITY</i>		EVIDENCE OF DISTORTION
Karoubi: We published our third campaign promise during the month of Farvardin which was about civil rights. Civil rights bound by the constitutional framework. Regarding ladies, regarding ethnicities, regarding the various religions that exist in Iran, regarding universities, regarding prisoners that people come to get into, pointless restrictions they place on people's lives and the bitter incidents [they have caused], pointless nuances, interfering in the private lives of families which Islam has so advised [against], civil rights in general bound by the constitutional framework or those principles of the constitution that are left vague.	EM16	S8. Is the user engaging in jargon?		What are the "principles of the constitution that are left vague"?
Female Voice Over: Karoubi considers solving women's problems an important and critical plans of his government and will try to execute the 6th Majlis's passed bill to join Iran to the [UN's] Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. He has certain plans to encourage and support none-governmental women's organizations and groups, and plans to have at least one female minister in his cabinet.	EM19	S9. Is what is assumed consistent with what is implied?		Considering the speaker is fully aware of the legal and constitutional restrictions women face, and considering there already were women in the cabinet, is this appointment really going to help the women's cause?

On that video, an official campaign release, Zahra Rahnavard openly and passionately protests the gender inequality present in the society and demands change:

Rahnavard: All forms of discrimination must be eliminated in the society. We are against all forms of discrimination. Discrimination disrupts human growth. Now gender discrimination is one of its forms...there has to be a new reading of the role of women. Women are saying we are present, we have expectations and we still want to take part in deciding our destiny (EM1).

Similarly, Mousavi in (EM6) asserts: "There are no differences between men and women when it comes to freedom and working towards achieving democracy, and everyone must march together on this path." Along the same lines, Karoubi's campaign video (EM19) makes a

point of mentioning “Karoubi considers solving women's problems an important and critical plan of his government and will try to execute the 6th Majlis's passed bill to join Iran to the [UN's] Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women”.

On the surface these statements could be interpreted to imply gender equality in the Western sense of the word. However, closer examination of these claims reveals a number of contradictions in the discourse. First, despite extensive research, I was not able to find any communication by either of the leaders’ that would detail their definition of the concept of “gender equality”. This paper recognizes the United Nation’s definition of gender equity which “refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women’s and men’s rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female” (The United Nations, n.d.). As per above discussions, however, Iranian laws have a different view of gender relations, one that is in stark contrast to the UN’s. Despite claiming to equity, both candidates repeatedly pledge to uphold the law and abide by the constitution, the very same codes that institutionalize gender discrimination in the country.

Speaking of his campaign manifesto on Civil Rights, admittedly the first of its kind in the history of the regime, Karoubi lists a multitude of rights his government will address but as long as they are “bound by the constitutional framework or those principles of the constitution that are left vague” (EM16). Often when Karoubi uses the phrase *civil rights* (including the rights of women), he immediately adds the phrase “bound by the constitutional framework” (EM16, EM18). On more than one occasion Mousavi emphasizes the same adherence to the constitution and the law, for example he says “The Green Movement is after justice and

freedom and the execution of the law” (EM12) or in a campaign speech on women he says “The reason we are facing actions that are causing us pain, is because our conditions are not aligned with the constitution and human dignity and honor” (EM12).

Phrases such as “gender equity” and “eliminating discrimination” have powerful associations for the segment of the society who formed the Green movement, and thus was used by the leaders to reinforce a vague notion of equity. Such terms elicit strong emotions and garner popular support, despite the evidence that the situation has little chance to change.

Furthermore, what is missing in the discourse of the Green leaders is a concrete and practical roadmap to achieve more equality for women. Neither candidate provides any kind of detail on the actual laws they will target to amend, nor the policies would they put in place to further women’s rights. We won’t know for example if Mr. Mousavi is going to amend the law to make it easier for women to apply for divorce? Or is Mr. Karoubi going to propose to change Article 102 of the penal code and lift the mandatory *Hijab* since he alludes to its ineffectiveness when it comes to enforcing religion (EM17)? The answer is we don’t know since their discourse is distorted on the concept of gender discrimination.

Examining those statements leaves a lingering thought however. The law, and the constitution, are considered to be the sources of institutional discrimination against women in the country. It is the Iranian law that states a woman’s life is worth half of that of a man, recognizes polygamy as a man’s right, that mandates women who refuse to sexually submit to their husbands be punishable, who denies a woman equal access to divorce and even denies them permission to set foot in a stadium to watch male sporting events. Both candidates also repeatedly declare devotion to Khomeini and his school of thought. On many occasions Mousavi

goes on the record to say his goal is to take the country back to the “Golden age of Imam”. But as explained above one of Khomeini’s first orders of business was to overturn the Family Protection Act which banned polygamy, reduced the age of consent for girls to 9, and so on. It was Khomeini who mandated forced *Hijab* to which large numbers of women are protesting in many shapes and forms to this date. One cannot achieve equality by promoting submission to laws that are deeply discriminatory, and by attesting devotion to a leader who has established a regime on the notion of women as subservient to men.

To further demonstrate that women’s rights are on their agendas, both candidates go further than words and employ more visual signals. Mousavi was the first candidate in the history of the Islamic Republic to be accompanied by his wife, Zahra Rahnavard, while campaigning. Rahnavard, who holds a PhD in political science, served as the Chancellor of Alzahra University (women-only school) in Tehran from 1998 to 2006, and as a Political Adviser to the former President Mohammad Khatami. Karoubi soon followed suite with his wife Fatemeh Karoubi. Rahnavard, by far the more outspoken of the two, soon came to be viewed as a symbol of gender equality and women’s rights as is evident in this popular slogan chanted by young women in (EM3): "Rahnavard, Rahnavard, stands for equality of men and women".

Curiously both women always appear in public in full Islamic attire or *Chador* (long traditional Hijab) which emphasizes their dedication both to this religious yet oppressive concept and to the core values of the Islamic Republic. Chador has always been the cover of choice of the great majority of the clergy including Khomeini, and although currently not enforced in public, is mandatory for many government employees. Therefore while presence of these women may signal progressive attitudes towards women and their rights, by keeping the appearance of

increased social participation, in my opinion they are misleading. This is a clear case of engaging in goal-oriented *Dramaturgical* action which according to Habermas is parasitic on communicative action and thus hampers the actors' ability to reach mutual understanding (Habermas, 1984). This concept will be discussed further in the next few sections.

Yet the chador-clad presence speaks volumes to the many contradictions and conflicts present in the makeup of the Green Movement. This is not to limit a woman's choice of clothing and step on religious rights but Dramaturgy is the presentation of *self* in a favourable light to the public, it is designed to be seen by others in an attempt to improve one's self-image (Habermas, 1984). What a person, specially an individual in the position of power and influence, chooses to wear is testament to their religious and ideological beliefs, particularly in a highly ideological context of Iranian politics. Clearly the candidates seek to signal equality and respect for women's rights through the visual of having their wives present on the campaign trail. However, their presence wrapped in chador also reinforces the very beliefs and institutional values that have objectified and oppressed women and trampled over their rights for decades.

Moreover, further research reveals further contradiction in the discourse of Ms. Rahnavard regarding Hejab and a woman's choice to choose. She has written an entire book titled *Beauty of Concealment and Concealment of Beauty* (1987) in defense and justification of forced hejab. She defends forced hejab according to "just and proper religious orthodoxy", and its abolition by Reza Shah a "tragedy", and an "imperialist" plot:

As soon as this lofty and exalted flag of Islam and nobility fell down from the hands of the people, it was replaced by ignominy, dishonour, unlimited freedom, villainy, cruelty, ostentation, depravity, debauchery and loss of complete freedom and independence. May God break the hand of the Western and Eastern system of oppression that has thrown

us for the fast fifty years in the abyss of ignominy of the isolation from our exalted Islamic Self! (Rahnavard, 1987)

In an interview on June 16, 2009, in the midst of protests, she supports the mandatory veiling of Iranian women in an interview with the BBC, adding she would not change that law: "it has always been in Islam that women have the veil, and it is written in the Koran - tell Muslim women to cover themselves" ("Profile: Zahra Rahnavard," 2009). Views such as above, are in direct contrast to the spirit of the women's rights movement and to their right to choose.

In summary, there are several inconsistencies present in the discourse of the Green leaders, especially on the topic of gender discrimination and its political implications. While equity and women's rights were important issues in the 2009 elections, the evidence shows that perhaps there were different interpretations of the notion were present. There is a gap in the communication of this concept, because although discriminatory practices in the society and the establishment are acknowledged, the evidence are not encouraging in terms of real change actually happening should either of the two men become president. Thus examining the sincerity of those claims, the data point to distortion in communication.

6.1.5 Empirical Analysis of Legitimacy Claims

Analysis of legitimacy in this section are centred on conformity between an utterance and the norms of its social context. Additionally, I will discuss evidence of participation and focus on examining which stakeholders are included or excluded from the discourse. Studying the data reveals further evidence of communication distortion when the legitimacy of one of the main promises of both Mousavi's and Karoubi's campaigns are examined, namely appointment of female cabinet members. Appointing women to their cabinets and including them in high political offices are one of the promises both candidates repeatedly make.

In a speech on the status of women in the society, Mousavi asserts “In my opinion women must be present in the cabinet” (EM5). In another instant he states:

Mousavi: We have a large number of female university students, who seem to face enormous problems once they want to enter the labour market. They feel discriminated against in this respect. We similarly have huge problems when it comes to domestic women. Part of the solution is women should be present in high ranking decision making (EM4).

Rahnavard also echoes the same view: A government that is ran without women executives, will definitely be a harsh one (EM1).

Karoubi similarly voices his plans “to encourage and support none-governmental women's organizations” and pledges “to have at least one female minister in his cabinet” (EM19). Table 6.3 summarizes validity claims of *legitimacy*:

Table 6.3: Empirical analysis of legitimacy validity claims on women’s rights.

CLAIMS ON CHANGING STRUCTURES	SOURCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY VALIDITY CLAIMS OF <i>LEGITIMACY</i>	EVIDENCE OF DISTORTION
Mousavi: When people's incomes shrink, when they don't have employment prospects, you can be sure these youth that see no light at the end of the tunnel, turn to drugs and foul behaviour (bad akhlaghi) and these types of crimes will spread. But when in a society clear [economic] goals are stated, and there is hope for future, which was the case during the war era despite all the hardship, I think all these foul behaviours could be drastically reduced.	EM22	L1. What is missing or suppressed in the discourse?	The speaker is reducing the multitude of factors underlying high crime rates, widespread drug addiction and moral and social issues to a single economic factor.
Mousavi: I have described this [economic conditions] as turning a society based on higher values to a commercial society. In a commercial society everything becomes utility-based and monetary-based. Cultural values turn into market values and economic values where everything has a monetary price even human values are set a monetary value. There becomes a point for example, where a person bribes a member of the parliament \$5million Tomans to buy their vote. This is a consumerist society. The current situation with this way of looking at a society and with false promises, and superstitious and such are far from the [value based] era we had been through [at the beginning of revolution].	EM24	L2. What information is suppressed or left silent?	What led to this drastic change in socio-economic conditions is left silent.
Mousavi: On one hand we export crude oil and on the other hand imported consumer goods are flooding our	EM25	L3. What information is suppressed or left silent?	The argument doesn't discuss the fact that

CLAIMS ON CHANGING STRUCTURES	SOURCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY VALIDITY CLAIMS OF <i>LEGITIMACY</i>	EVIDENCE OF DISTORTION
market at the cost of destroying our domestic production.			President Ahmadi Nejad would not have been able to accomplish this had it not been for the support of higher powerhouses (House of Leadership, IRGC, etc.)
<p>Karbaschi: (video continues from previous section, while showing Karbaschi's tears): in the position of the president, are you determined to use any tool in your disposal, even your reputation, for this purpose?</p> <p>Karoubi: I will definitely do this. First of all, I'm not a hero, first of all. Second, we have, as you know, a certain record and that I'm not dependant on fake heroism. and I will truly go into my own prevue which is working as the country's president and solving problems, and I am willing, as your honour has seen, I, to free a prisoner, when I was the Majlis Speaker, I'd make a phone call to a colleague and he'd tell me you don't have to do this yourself, tell your office to call, you don't have to tell me, people's problems, people's lives, people's dignity and authority are really important to us.</p>	EM48	L4. Are all relevant information communicated without distortion and omission?	The communication doesn't explain why the Speaker of the House should call to free a prisoner? Who is the prisoner? What about the legal avenues?
<p>Female voiceover: Are you still asking yourself why is Mehdi Karoubi running for president? Maybe you remember in the last election Mehdi Karoubi promised that if he gets elected as the president, he will set a salary of 50,000 Tomans a month for all Iranians 18 and older.</p> <p>Esma'il Gerami Moghadam: is this the continuation of your last plan, when you stated 50,000 Tomans a month will be given to all Iranians 18 and older, and ...it is also a solution for many unemployment challenges, is this a continuation of that plan and a more completed version of it? If this is the case please explain a little.</p> <p>Karoubi: This time around I think it is more comprehensive, it's better, meaning we have made it more detailed and clearer.</p> <p>Female voiceover: This plan, of course, was mocked by the other incumbents and was considered impossible. But after the elections many economists agreed with it and experts reviewed and completed it. Today this plan is completed under "assigning oil revenue shares to people", and is ready for execution.</p>	EM50	L5. Who are the experts or economists? Who is excluded?	The communication does not divulge who the expert economists approving this plan are. Additionally, the opponents of this plan don't have a voice in the discussion.
<p>Female voiceover: Karoubi has other economic plans to, including exempting small businesses from taxes and reinforcing the private sector in the fields of production, commerce and services, through tax exemption and through partnership with private and public banks.</p>	EM52	L6. Who is marginalized or excluded?	The critics of this economic plan are excluded from the debate

A content analysis of both candidates campaign videos show young men and women holding signs that read “female cabinet members”. One of Karoubi’s official campaign video

releases consists of interview style questions put to him by his campaign advisors and would cabinet members. Ms. Jamileh Kadivar⁹ is a member of that team and upon further research I realized that she was also his advisor on the status of women, all of which signal women's political participation. However, what is left silent in the discourse is considering the divisive and discriminatory nature of the Islamic Republic that disenfranchises and discriminates against many groups. The questions I pose here is what group of women can run and get elected to political office? Below I will explore the answer:

The laws governing the executive branch, require all cabinet ministers to be, among other things, religiously observant, loyal to the regime and have no police record. Therefore by default many women are excluded: the Baha'i minority, activists with a prison record, regime critics, and those who don't observe the strict religious codes such as Hijab. These women are all social actors with an interest in this particular discourse who are excluded from it. Therefore *women* in the discourse of the Green leaders doesn't mean all capable and qualified women.

Moreover, further content analysis of the videos of both candidates reveals a striking yet concealed trend: women who get an official voice on the video either as speakers, interviewers or ordinary citizens asking questions are all depicted in full and proper Islamic Hijab. However, when cameras roll to show the masses of supporters, women, and specially the youth, are dressed in more fashionable and modern styles which include loose and permissive hijab. This observation along with the above evidence of distortion, leads to the conclusion that only a select group of women who prescribe to the religious and political notions of the regime are included in this

⁹ *Jamileh Kadivar* is a Reformist and former member of the parliament. She was Karoubi's campaign advisor of women's affairs. Furthermore, she is Hojatol Islam Mohsen Kadivar's sister and Ataolah Mohajerani's, Khatami's former Minister of Guidance and Culture and who supported Karoubi's candidacy, wife.

discourse, and the rest of the interested parties, who hold different views are excluded. Those such as Bahareh Hedayat, Mahboubeh Abbas Gholi Zadeh, Shirin Ebadi and many more are excluded from political participation, despite their qualifications, interest and capabilities. Therefore when Karoubi and Mousavi speak of women's political participation, there is a silent footnote excluding many women from that activity.

Additionally, both camps only go as far as asserting women must be present in their respective cabinets, the two candidates make no other tangible promises. But since President Khatami in 1997, every government had had female advisors or ministers. President Ahmadi Nejad's cabinet was actually the first in the history of IRI to include Marzieh Vahid Dastjerdi as health minister. That same government however managed to pass one of the most oppressive amendments to the family laws that amongst other things makes polygamy even easier for men and applying for divorce even harder for women. Therefore while it is important to hire women in high political offices, their mere presence is not enough. Once again the critical details such as the above left silent, leave the door open for interpretation and maybe even wishful thinking by women who are already oppressed and in desperate need for change. They leave the door open for misleading the public and for dishonesty by alluding to what they want to hear without having the intention, capability or the executive powers to achieve it.

To summarize, holding the political discourse of the Green leaders up to the Habermasian validity claim of 'legitimacy', one can see evidence of distortion. Interested actors in the women's movement, activists, community leaders and advocates, are largely excluded and their voices suppressed. Moreover, history shows simply appointing women to cabinet or other political positions from amongst those available to them by law (as previously discussed)

is not enough in alleviating their status and eliminating discrimination as they could become mere tools in the political apparatus to reinforce and reproduce patriarchal notions.

6.1.6 Empirical Analysis of Comprehensibility Claims

While comprehensibility claims can be assessed in a variety of ways, in this section I have focused on clarity, and completeness, specifically to ensure the communication is without omissions that are important to its meaning. Since at the time of the Green movement the Majlis was in the midst of debating a bill that would ease the conditions of polygamy and temporary marriage for men even further, the topic often came up during the 2009 elections. My research depicts the topic further in table 6.4.

Table 6.4: Empirical analysis of comprehensibility validity claims on women's rights.

CLAIMS ON CHANGING STRUCTURES	SOURCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY VALIDITY CLAIMS OF COMPREHENSIBILITY	EVIDENCE OF DISTORTION
Mousavi: "I am against the polygamy bill"	EM2	C1. What is left out from this communication?	The communication omits the fact that the office of the President is very limited in terms of bills passed by the <i>Majlis & The Guardian Council</i>
Mousavi: The issue of women in our country is both extensive and multidimensional. There are certain discriminations and disenchantments, both from a legal perspective, and from the execution perspective. Also from an employment perspective. We have a large number of female university students, who seem to face enormous problems once they want to enter the labour market. They feel discriminated against in this respect. We similarly have huge problems when it comes to domestic women. Part of the solution is women should be present in high ranking decision making.	EM4	C2. Is the level of detail too burdensome for the audience?	Too many messages left for the audience to decode such as: "extensive and multidimensional", "certain discriminations and disenchantments"

CLAIMS ON CHANGING STRUCTURES	SOURCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY VALIDITY CLAIMS OF COMPREHENSIBILITY	EVIDENCE OF DISTORTION
<p><i>In response to a question about the Green Movement's strategy regarding some Friday Prayers' clerics about women's cover and eruption of earthquakes and also the resurgence of the Islamic Guidance crews:</i></p> <p>Mousavi: Certain events are happening in the society and certain decisions are being made that instead of solving problems they are after creating conflict. For example, our country is prone to earth quakes and parts of Tehran are on the quake line, which certainly is very dangerous and we have to stop it and the government is better off taking care of this, instead of mixing it to a dream or a deed like women's cover...this is diversion from truth to keep people busy with such discussions and create division. Even the purpose of Islamic Guidance crews is not really for rectifying scantily covered women, they are largely meant to create diversion in minds.</p>	EM11	C3. Is the communication sufficiently clear?	The speaker does not explain what he means by "diversion from truth". Which truth?
<p>Mousavi: They want to keep our minds busy</p>	EM13	C4. Is this utterance complete and intelligible?	Who is "they"? To what end do "they" want to keep our minds busy?
<p>Karoubi: We published our third campaign promise during the month of Farvardin which was about civil rights. Civil rights bound by the constitutional framework. Regarding ladies, regarding ethnicities, regarding the various religions that exist in Iran, regarding universities, regarding prisoners that people come to get into, pointless restrictions they place on people's lives and the bitter incidents [they have caused], pointless nuances, interfering in the private lives of families which Islam has so advised [against], civil rights in general bound by the constitutional framework or those principles of the constitution that are left vague.</p>	EM16	C5. Is this utterance complete and intelligible?	The speaker leaves the audience wanting to know what he means by "those principles of the constitution that are left vague".
<p>Jamileh Kadivar: (Note 10, say who she is): Do you think forced Hejab on women is a wise idea? Has it worked? You are a cleric after all, do you think, based on Islamic principles and religious teachings, is it right to force hejab?</p> <p>Karoubi: I think we have to do two things. One thing is to remove the aggressive way because those haven't worked and in many cases they were counterproductive.</p>	EM17	C6. Is the communication clear and without confusions?	Mr. Karoubi does not provide a clear answer to the question
<p>Jamileh Kadivar: what about polygamy?</p> <p>Karoubi: Polygamy will destroy lives in our society for certain.</p>	EM17	C7. What is left out from the communication?	The communication omits the fact that the office of the President is very limited in terms of bills passed by the <i>Majlis & The Guardian Council</i>

CLAIMS ON CHANGING STRUCTURES	SOURCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY VALIDITY CLAIMS OF COMPREHENSIBILITY	EVIDENCE OF DISTORTION
Female Voice Over: If he [Karoubi] is victorious in the presidential elections, he intends to create an organization for the defence of human rights and civil rights and intends to study and correct the behaviours of governmental and national security institutions on a regular basis.	EM18	C8. Is the communication complete?	What is the plan for correcting the behaviours of those organizations? How will conflicting interests be handled?

When asked, Mr. Karoubi openly states “Polygamy will destroy lives in our society for certain” (EM17). Similarly Mousavi asserts that he is “against the polygamy bill” (EM2). Such assertions imply to the audiences that should either man be elected president, they would amend this law. However, as discussed in chapter 3, even if the president was to introduce bills to, for instance, amend the laws sanctioning polygamy, his limited authority in face of the strong powerhouses such as the Guardian Council make it impossible to pass even with a likeminded Majlis. Therefore even if either man intended to change the laws discriminating against women once elected president, their chances would be slim to none under current circumstances. Khatami and his twin bills described in chapter 4 are perfect examples of well-intentioned and progressive bills that never saw the light of day since they were quashed by the Guardian and the Expediency Councils. However, those realities are routinely omitted from the discourse while on the campaign trail to attract support from groups and individuals sensitive to this cause and prone to vote for a likeminded candidate. Moreover, a closer look at the data reveals a pattern of using confusing and unclear language which is at times difficult for the audience to decode. Claims such as “The issue of women in our country is both extensive and multidimensional” (EM4), “There are certain discriminations and disenchantments, both from a legal perspective, and from the execution perspective” (EM4), are vague and leave room for interpretation without really revealing the

speaker's message. Further to this point, in his communications Mousavi indicates "*They want to keep our minds busy*" (EM13), he also talks about "*even the purpose of Islamic Guidance crews is not really for rectifying scantily covered women, they are largely meant to create diversion in minds.*" (EM11). The reader or hearer is however left to decode who are 'they'? What is their position and power over the matter? Why are 'they' trying to 'create diversion in minds'? 'Diversion' from what facts? And of what 'truth' is Mr. Mousavi talking about?

On the topic of clarity it is important to note that Mehdi Karoubi specially, has a convoluted and at times confusing speaking style. He often leaves his thoughts unfinished and starts another one in the middle of the first sentence (EM15, EM16, EM17), and his communications often defy syntactic and grammatical rules:

Karoubi: My first thing to do, my first manifesto, the manifesto that I published in [the month of] Bahman, my first manifesto was to revive [the centre for] planning and management, which unfortunately got dissolved (EM46).

As you can see from the above, it is often difficult to understand and follow Karoubi grammatically and semantically. He often goes off topic and leaves the questions put to him without an answer:

Jamileh Kadivar: Do you think forced Hejab on women is a wise idea? Has it worked? You are a cleric after all, do you think, based on Islamic principles and religious teachings, is it right to force hejab?

Karoubi: I think we have to do two things. One thing is to remove the aggressive way because those haven't worked and in many cases they were counterproductive (EM17).

The topic of forced Hejab has been a source of contention and defiance between Iranian women and the government since its enforcement after the revolution, and thus is of considerable importance. Additionally, considering the candidate has made a point by including this excerpt in

his official campaign communications, it is safe to assume that his intention is to convey where he stands on the topic of forced veiling. However he goes off rail, and at the end of the clip the audience is left wanting for an answer, for a clear stance. On another note, in Karoubi's campaign particularly, we notice the presence of dramaturgy again. Karoubi is a member of clergy, he holds the rank of *Hojatol Islam*, and wears the robe that signifies his status and also Shi'ite religious orientation. In other words he presents himself as *Rouhani*, or a member of clergy and who is running for political office which implies he believes in the practice of religious in the political sphere and mixing of the two. On another note, his communications imply he will address the issue of women's rights and will work to improve their status, but we the audience never know where exactly he stands on the issue. We can draw certain conclusions based on his wife's appearance and his presentation of his "self" that his definition of equity is not aligned with the benchmark we discussed above. But the confusion and the distortion occur because he appears to be advocating for women's rights and we don't know what those rights according to Karoubi are.

Evidence of communication distortion are present when the data is tested for comprehensibility validity claims. Confusing and unclear concepts, and at time convoluted and grammatically incorrect sentences hinder understanding and conveying of meaning.

6.2 Critical Discourse Analysis: Claims about the Economy

As in most elections, especially in the developing countries, economy and economic development are one of the most important points on any campaign platform. Through control of allocative resources, the economy also becomes an important structure of domination. In the following pages I will examine the validity claims of the Green leaders on economy.

6.2.1 Empirical Analysis of Truth Claims

Mir Hossein Mousavi served as the Iranian Prime Minister from 1981 until an amendment to the constitution abolished that office in July of 1989, a month after Ayatollah Khomeini's death. His premiership coincided with the 8-year Iran-Iraq war during which he gained popular acclaim for his stewardship of the economy, including implementing a ration system to distribute food supplies and other essentials. From 1989, when his position was eliminated, until 2009 when registered to run as a Reformist candidate, he was generally absent from political life for 20 years. Naturally, in his campaign he often made reference to his tenure as the "War-time Prime Minister", and his management of the economy. I will show below the validity claims of truth in table 6.5:

Table 6.5: Empirical analysis of truth validity claims on economic development.

CLAIMS ON CHANGING STRUCTURES	SOURCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY VALIDITY CLAIMS OF TRUTH	EVIDENCE OF DISTORTION
Mousavi: I have described this [economic conditions] as turning a society based on higher values to a commercial society. In a commercial society everything becomes utility-based and monetary-based. Cultural values turn into market values and economic values where everything has a monetary price even human values are set a monetary value. There becomes a point for example, where a person bribes a member of the parliament \$5million Tomans to buy their vote. This is a consumerist society. The current situation with this way of looking at a society and with false promises, and superstitious and such are far from the [value based] era we had been through [at the beginning of revolution].	EM24	T1. Is there an ideological claim that is unexamined?	The claim that the post-revolution era, while Mr. Mousavi himself was the Prime Minister, was a value-based, spiritual era, is not examined.
Mousavi: I have come to advocate for the poor (<i>mostaz'afan</i>). Those whose backs are breaking under the pressures of inflation, and flawed economic policies have targeted their dignity.	EM30	T2. What evidence has been provided to support these arguments?	No evidence is presented by the speaker that his economic policies will in fact improve the economic conditions of the poor.

What appears as a communication distortion while testing those assertions is the notion that the economy was in better shape in the 80's than it was in 2009:

Mousavi: I have described this [economic conditions] as turning a society based on higher values to a commercial society. In a commercial society everything becomes utility-based and monetary-based. Cultural values turn into market values and economic values where everything has a monetary price even human values are set a monetary value. There becomes a point for example, where a person bribes a member of the parliament \$5million Tomans to buy their vote. This is a consumerist society. the current situation with this way of looking at a society and with false promises, and superstitious and such are far from the [value based] era we had been through [at the beginning of revolution] (EM24).

The discourse of Mir Hossein Mousavi reinforces the idea that the economic hardships in the society are the result of President Ahmadi Nejad's flawed policies. His economic discourse typically compares the economic conditions of the revolutionary era, and the war¹⁰ with Iraq during the past 4 years without any reference to the years in between (EM22):

Mousavi: I have come to advocate for the poor (mostaz'afan). Those whose backs are breaking under the pressures of inflation, and flawed economic policies have targeted their dignity (EM30).

The fact of the matter is that while the economy may have suffered during Ahmadi Nejad's presidency, Hashemi Rafsanjani and Mohammad Khatami, both backing Mousavi's campaign in 2009, had each served two terms (8 years) prior to that and economic underdevelopment and unemployment had always been the number one issue on the agenda. Therefore, while it is expected for a political candidate to draw attention to his achievements and competencies (EM22, EM30), attributing the difficult economic conditions solely to Ahmadi Nejad's policies is only half true, which results in incomplete statements and eventually communicative distortions. The

¹⁰ There was a small window between the revolution and the beginning of the war with Iraq (February 1979 to September 1980)

condition of the economy in 2009 was essentially resulting from 30 years of the Islamic Republic's policies, four years of which occurred under President Ahmadi Nejad. Considering both Khatami and Rafsanjani were known to be Mousavi's political allies at the time, and the fact that questioning the system is considered crossing a red line, it is conceivable that Mr. Mousavi intentionally omitted some facts and only presented part of the truth. The data I have gathered, however, doesn't indicate much variation from truth validity claim on the part of Karoubi on this subject.

6.2.2 Empirical Analysis of Sincerity Claims

When it comes to testing sincerity validity claims, Hojatol Islam Karoubi's communications reveal several evidence of distortion, especially through statements that are typically made for no other reason than to elicit emotional responses. In table 6.6, I summarize the validity claims of *sincerity* and show also that Karoubi's speaking style is the less clear and more ambiguous of the two.

Table 6.6: Empirical analysis of sincerity validity claims on economic development.

CLAIMS ON CHANGING STRUCTURES	SOURCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY VALIDITY CLAIMS OF SINCERITY	EVIDENCE OF DISTORTION
<p>Mohammad Najafi: (questioning the candidate's stance on the following issue): ...one of the most important issues regarding higher education of the youth is the expenses of that education. Both those who study in state universities and some of them have to go away far from home to other cities and covering their expenses is difficult for those in private universities whose primary concern is covering their tuition and expenses.</p> <p>Karoubi: <i>I [emphasis intentional]</i> see how education affects people and families, and how difficult this burden is on them.</p>	EM45	S1.Does the communication elicit an emotional response?	<p>Mr. Karoubi's response implies he feels the people's pain without offering any evidence to his assertion.</p> <p>Additionally he is not responding to the question asked</p>

CLAIMS ON CHANGING STRUCTURES	GUIDING QUESTIONS TO SOURCE IDENTIFY VALIDITY CLAIMS OF SINCERITY	EVIDENCE OF DISTORTION
<p>Gholamhossein Karbaschi: And I pointed out that you know the poverty line better than us, because you frequently specially deal with the veterans and martyrs (God's Heavens be upon them). In any case when this elections and the political discussions are over, at least 12 million of our population are poor. What are you going to do for them as a cleric president? (he says this while chocking up)</p> <p>Karoubi: When Mr. Karbaschi remembers things, he unwillingly gets affected, and becomes upset. The other day too in a meeting which they came to my office and had a meeting, he got upset again. (he says all this while the camera zooms on Karbaschi's face and his tears).the answer is the same, you are sure I alone can't say, I have to think about it and sit on it first, the solution is with all the factions who want to work with me, and even those who may not work with us but they still feel for these issues. Let's sit down and think, I am ready to spend all my energy for things like this...</p> <p>Karbaschi (jumping in): I'm sure you are like that, all I want to say is, in the position of the president let's set all considerations aside. Talking about the poor and justice is easy. But feeding off of their share and not doing anything for them in the name of "we will be a world hero", saying things that end up putting more pressure on people, and not doing anything for them is not the decent thing to do.</p>	<p>EM47</p> <p>S2.Does the communication elicit an emotional response?</p>	<p>Mr. Karbaschi's tears, Karoubi's allusion to Karbaschi's emotional state imply to the audience their level of affection for the poor but the communication does not really offer a solution to the problem</p>
<p>Karbaschi: in any case our main problem is the United States. If we can't enter the international political club and if we can't solve our problems, these issues, these problems' consequences will put more pressure on the people Mr. Karoubi. When you mention "our people's dignity", our people's dignity is their stomachs should be full. Poverty is befitting our leaders but they have to strive, at any price, so people are not poor.</p>	<p>EM49</p> <p>S3.Is what is implied consistent with what is stated?</p>	<p>Mr. Karbaschi was charged and jailed for embezzlement while he was the Mayor of Tehran.</p>
<p>Female voiceover: are you still asking yourself why is Mehdi Karoubi running for president? Maybe you remember in the last election Mehdi Karoubi promised that if he gets elected as the president, he will set a salary of 50,000 Tomans a month for all Iranians 18 and older.</p> <p>Esma'il Gerami Moghadam: is this the continuation of your last plan, when you stated 50,000 Tomans a month will be given to all Iranians 18 and older, and ...it is also a solution for many unemployment challenges, is this a continuation of that plan and a more completed version of it? If this is the case please explain a little.</p> <p>Karoubi: This time around I think it is more comprehensive, it's better, meaning we have made it more detailed and clearer.</p> <p>Female voiceover: This plan, of course, was mocked by the other incumbents and was considered impossible. But after the elections many economists agreed with it and experts reviewed and completed it. Today this plan is completed under "assigning oil revenue shares to people", and is ready for execution.</p>	<p>EM50</p> <p>S4. Is the communication clear and complete?</p>	<p>The plan's comprehensiveness and advantage are open to debate</p>

Moreover, his communications and campaigns videos are also designed to appeal to the electorates' emotional side more than they are to provide factual value:

Mohammad Najafi: ...one of the most important issues regarding higher education of the youth is the expenses of that education. Both those who study in state universities and some of them have to go away far from home to other cities and covering their expenses is difficult or those in private universities whose primary concern is covering their tuition and expenses.

Karoubi: I [emphasis intentional] see how education affects people and families, and how difficult this burden is on them (EM45).

The above conversation, which is highlighted in Karoubi's official campaign release, offers very little in terms of a solution to the problem of the expenses associated with higher education. Rather, Karoubi's response, and his mannerism and body language in the video, basically give the appearance of sympathy and nothing more.

Similarly, the same campaign release highlights Karbaschi's¹¹ tears and displays of emotion when discussing the poor without actually offering a solution to their economic ordeal (EM47, EM48, EM49). Moreover, in response to Karbaschi's question: "What are you going to do for them as a cleric (rouhani) president?" (EM47), we hear:

Karoubi: When Mr. Karbaschi remembers things, he unwillingly gets affected, and becomes upset. The other day too in a meeting which they came to my office and had a meeting, he got upset again. (He says all this while the camera zooms on Karbaschi's face and his tears). The answer is the same, you are sure I alone can't say, I have to think about it and sit on it first, the solution is with all the factions who want to work with me, and even those who may not work with us but they still feel for these issues. Let's sit down and think, I am ready to spend all my energy for things like this (EM47).

¹¹ Gholam Hossein Karbaschi was the mayor of Tehran from 1989 to 1998 when he was arrested, convicted and imprisoned for fraud and embezzlement. He belongs to the Reform front and his prison ordeal was largely considered a political maneuvering by the hardliner conservatives (The New York Times, 1999).

Not only does the above argument elicit an emotional response, it is incoherent, vague, and more importantly doesn't address the question. The response is merely designed to imply to the audience that Karoubi is on the side of the poor or *Mostaz'afan*, which was also one of Ayatollah Khomeini's favourite buzz words.

Similar arguments of distortion could be made about Karoubi's highlighted "Oil Shares" plan to give everyone over the age of 18, 50,000 Tomans. The plan is described as "better" and more "complete" but the audience is not given any details or provided with any evidence to support this argument. Why is the plan better? What are some of the criticisms it received and how are they addressed? How is this plan different than Ahmadi Nejad's "*Yaraneh*" or "subsidy" plan already in place that similarly offered cash to families?

To sum up, Karoubi's communications are often convoluted and ambiguous, and focus on prompting emotional responses and appealing to emotional sentiments rather than offering evidence to support the argument. All of which point to communication distortion and evidence of insincerity.

6.2.3 Empirical Analysis of Legitimacy Claims

In criticizing the economic conditions, as previously discussed, Mousavi often targets President Ahmadi Nejad and attributes the shortcomings and the pressures felt by the people to his mismanagement. By doing this, Mousavi is essentially separating the concept of *Dowlat* (the government) from *Nezam* (the system), and avoids crossing the red tape that tolerates some criticism of the president but not the system. In reality however, Ahmadi Nejad's mismanagement is a symptom and not the cause of economic underdevelopment. Similarly, drug addiction, crime and in general "foul behavior" (EM22, EM35) have increasingly been present since before the

revolution, and although they have intensified in recent years, they are not simply the result of President Ahmadi Nejad's economic policies. In fact, Iran has long had one of the world's highest addiction problems (Navai, 2014). Furthermore Mousavi observes:

Mousavi: On one hand we export crude oil and on the other hand imported consumer goods are flooding our market at the cost of destroying our domestic production (EM25).

While that argument has merit, what is left silent in this argument is the fact that President Ahmadi Nejad is not solely responsible for this trend, especially considering the fact that the IRGC is increasingly involved in the economy, particularly imports and exports (Ilias, 2009; Wehrey et al., 2009). In light of the IRGC's increasing grip on the nation, the issue is not only far beyond Mr. Ahmadi Nejad but also far beyond the office of the president. Basic interpretive and critical understanding of argumentation tell us that when, in a society, "everything becomes utility-based and monetary-based" and when "Cultural values turn into market values and economic values where everything has a monetary price even human values are set a monetary value" (EM24), the issue goes far beyond mismanagement and ill-advised economic policies. This utilitarian and commercial view of life as per Mr. Mousavi (EM22, EM24), describes a tale of social and cultural paradigm shifts, which are out of the scope of this study, and not merely the result of the previous president's economic policies. However, one conclusion that can be drawn is the fact that criticizing the president is tolerated but discussing IRGC's economic domination is considered crossing a red tape, and thus avoided by the candidates.

Additionally, the crises, economic, drugs, crime, morality, etc., that Mir Hossein Mousavi rightly speaks of, are systemic issues far beyond the office of the president. It is the system that not only hand selects candidates such as Ahmadi Nejad, who has little experience running a

country, but also gives rise to them to the point that the Supreme Leader Khamenei asserts his utmost support for him (Ahmadian, 2013; Kamali Dehghan & Borger, 2011). Let's not forget that Ahmadi Nejad rose from the ranks of IRGC first to the mayor of Tehran and then to the country's two-term president. There are several executive and legislative layers of government that act as checks and balances to maintain the status quo of the executive branch and avoid decisions that for example damage domestic productions (EM24, EM40). But if those decisions are happening as easily as described by the candidate, then we are facing a systemic issue that encircles more authorities, institutes and levels of government than just the executive branch. Table 6.7 summarizes validity claims of *legitimacy*.

Table 6.7: Empirical analysis of legitimacy validity claims on economic development.

CLAIMS ON CHANGING STRUCTURES	SOURCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY VALIDITY CLAIMS OF LEGITIMACY	EVIDENCE OF DISTORTION
Mousavi: When people's incomes shrink, when they don't have employment prospects, you can be sure these youth that see no light at the end of the tunnel, turn to drugs and foul behaviour (bad akhlaghi) and these types of crimes will spread. But when in a society clear [economic] goals are stated, and there is hope for future, which was the case during the war era despite all the hardship, I think all these foul behaviours could be drastically reduced.	EM22	L1. What is missing or suppressed in the discourse?	The speaker is reducing the multitude of factors underlying high crime rates, widespread drug addiction and moral and social issues to a single economic factor.
Mousavi: I have described this [economic conditions] as turning a society based on higher values to a commercial society. In a commercial society everything becomes utility-based and monetary-based. Cultural values turn into market values and economic values where everything has a monetary price even human values are set a monetary value. There becomes a point for example, where a person bribes a member of the parliament \$5million Tomans to buy their vote. This is a consumerist society. The current situation with this way of looking at a society and with false promises, and superstitious and such are far from the [value based] era we had been through [at the beginning of revolution].	EM24	L2. What information is suppressed or left silent?	What led to this drastic change in socio-economic conditions is left silent.

CLAIMS ON CHANGING STRUCTURES	SOURCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY VALIDITY CLAIMS OF LEGITIMACY	EVIDENCE OF DISTORTION
Mousavi: On one hand we export crude oil and on the other hand imported consumer goods are flooding our market at the cost of destroying our domestic production.	EM25	L3. What information is suppressed or left silent?	The argument doesn't discuss the fact that President Ahmadi Nejad would not have been able to accomplish this had it not been for the support of higher powerhouses (House of Leadership, IRGC, etc.)
Karbaschi: (video continues from previous section, while showing Karbaschi's tears): in the position of the president, are you determined to use any tool in your disposal, even your reputation, for this purpose? Karoubi: I will definitely do this. First of all, I'm not a hero, first of all. Second, we have, as you know, a certain record and that I'm not dependant on fake heroism. and I will truly go into my own prevue which is working as the country's president and solving problems, and I am willing, as your honour has seen, I, to free a prisoner, when I was the Majlis Speaker, I'd make a phone call to a colleague and he'd tell me you don't have to do this yourself, tell your office to call, you don't have to tell me, people's problems, people's lives, people's dignity and authority are really important to us.	EM48	L4. Are all relevant information communicated without distortion and omission?	The communication doesn't explain why the Speaker of the House should call to free a prisoner? Who is the prisoner? What about the legal avenues?
Female voiceover: Are you still asking yourself why is Mehdi Karoubi running for president? Maybe you remember in the last election Mehdi Karoubi promised that if he gets elected as the president, he will set a salary of 50,000 Tomans a month for all Iranians 18 and older. Esma'il Gerami Moghadam: is this the continuation of your last plan, when you stated 50,000 Tomans a month will be given to all Iranians 18 and older, and ...it is also a solution for many unemployment challenges, is this a continuation of that plan and a more completed version of it? If this is the case please explain a little. Karoubi: This time around I think it is more comprehensive, it's better, meaning we have made it more detailed and clearer. Female voiceover: This plan, of course, was mocked by the other incumbents and was considered impossible. But after the elections many economists agreed with it and experts reviewed and completed it. Today this plan is completed under "assigning oil revenue shares to people", and is ready for execution.	EM50	L5. Who are the experts or economists? Who is excluded?	The communication does not divulge who the expert economists approving this plan are. Additionally, the opponents of this plan don't have a voice in the discussion.
Female voiceover: Karoubi has other economic plans to, including exempting small businesses from taxes and reinforcing the private sector in the fields of production, commerce and services, through tax exemption and through partnership with private and public banks.	EM52	L6. Who is marginalized or excluded?	The critics of this economic plan are excluded from the debate

Such corruption is evident, although not at the first glance, in the discourse of Mousavi:

Mousavi: There becomes a point for example, where a person bribes a member of the parliament \$5million Tomans to buy their vote. This is a consumerist society (EM24).

The above tells the story of a corrupt system more than it describes a lack of morals. It tells us that the Iranian parliamentary members, and perhaps other officials, are corrupt, and can be bought. Similar references could be found concealed in Karoubi's rhetoric. In response to a question by Karbaschi that asks him if he is willing to use all his powers to help the poor, Karoubi states:

Karoubi: I will definitely do this. First of all, I'm not a hero, first of all. Second, we have, as you know, a certain record and that I'm not dependent on fake heroism. And I will truly go into my own prevue which is working as the country's president and solving problems, and I am willing, as your honor has seen, I, to free a prisoner, when I was the Majlis Speaker, I'd make a phone call to a colleague and he'd tell me you don't have to do this yourself, tell your office to call... (EM48)

Why would the speaker of the house need to make a phone call in order to free a political prisoner? Why would the system's regular legal channels be bypassed by those who are meant to implement the law unless the system was corrupt and unresponsive? Finally, there is yet another concealed truth that speaks to this argument in the above sentence, and that is the manner in which the story is told. Karoubi makes reference to his phone calls to free political prisoners on several occasions in his campaign video (EM43). Considering this is an official campaign release and of public record, and considering the matter of fact manner the assertion is made by him and received by his interviewers, one is left to conclude that this is an accepted practice, a norm and not at all out of the ordinary practice of politics in the IRI.

6.2.4 Empirical Analysis of Comprehensibility Claims

When it comes to examining the comprehensibility of Mousavi's economic plans, what is missing from the conversation is an actual economic plan laid out by the candidate. Table 6.8 summarizes validity claims of *comprehensibility*.

Table 6.8: Empirical analysis of comprehensibility validity claims on economic development.

CLAIMS ON CHANGING STRUCTURES	SOURCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY VALIDITY CLAIMS OF COMPREHENSIBILITY	EVIDENCE OF DISTORTION
Mousavi: wealth distribution is both in our religious beliefs and [my] economic policy does not mean, obviously, that we would take money from one person's pocket by force and put it in another's. Our argument is that our collective economic policies should be designed in such a way that don't cause wide economic class gaps, and the middle class prospers so we can help the poor. But when over 50% of the society collapses into the lower classes it is impossible for the government to help the poor. Which is what is happening now.	EM28	C1. Is the communication sufficiently clear?	Mr. Mousavi is not explaining his actual economic policy. i.e. how is he planning to improve the economic situation for the middle classes? The poor?
Mousavi to a roaring crowd: Iran's destiny is not poverty	EM33	C2. Is the communication complete?	The speaker remains silent on the factors contributing to the country's poverty
Mousavi: We ask, during these past years, what great mission have you accomplished considering you spent \$300 billion. 25% inflation means the downfall of social security. 25% inflation means addiction, foul behaviour. 25% inflation is like a tax the rich charge the poor. This is what the 'handout' economy (eghtesad sadagheyi) has inflicted on us.	EM35	C3: Is the level of detail too burdensome for the audience?	Too many unexplained numbers and figures can obscure meaning
Mousavi: what employment outlook do our 3 million university students have? It is easy to kick start a project, it is easy to kick start a project, [repetition is intentional] securing the outcome is difficult.	EM36	C4. Is the communication complete?	It is not clear what the speaker would do to improve the unemployment

CLAIMS ON CHANGING STRUCTURES	SOURCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY VALIDITY CLAIMS OF COMPREHENSIBILITY	EVIDENCE OF DISTORTION
<p>Mousavi: when I was in the <i>North</i>, the discussion was that while the rice produced by Iranian farmers is left in the warehouses, Pakistan and India's Basmati rice is being sold at a lower price in the <i>Rasht</i> markets. On top of that they were also discussing oranges, saying our oranges are left unpicked on the trees and imported oranges such as Egyptian and so on are in the market and this is causing our fruited farmers to go bankrupt. They were talking about tea fields, I went to a tea farm where there were both tea farmers and tea specialists and I was in those green gardens and they showed me there how the fields are shrinking and talked about the problems they were facing. They were saying while there are over 180,000 metric tons of Iranian tea are left in the warehouses...our own markets are flooded with imported tea and this has eliminated the possibility of healthy competition and growth. The same problem appeared when I went to <i>Kerman</i>. Fruit farmers there were also telling me that their oranges are left [in the warehouse] while importing orange is increasing. Then I went to the silk industry, there I said the silk industry at some point was critical to the Safavid's economy. Shah Abbas was one of the major silk merchants in the country, who would both use silk imports to Europe for political purposes and also use it to find a way to preserve Iran's interests in the face of the Ottoman's threat.</p>	EM40	C5. Is the communication sufficiently clear?	While the utterance details problems associated with economic policies, he fails to present his own policy to rectify the situation
<p>Karoubi: Our second manifesto...was about oil shares...as we can see the large and unprecedented revenues that was at the disposal of the current honourable government in the past few years, hopefully they can explained what changes have they produced for our society with this unprecedented revenue where we sold oil at \$100 and \$120 [a barrel], it's obvious how much the revenue levels were. Inflation, unemployment, the high cost of living, and recession are things that people are fully familiar with. They don't need opinion polls and central bank benchmarks, which are their rights, they see their lives and how much it has changed. Therefore the oil shares as we detailed, which we are not going to get into how we're going to deal with them.</p>	EM41	C6. Is the communication intelligible and without confusions?	the language and syntax are unclear and convoluted

CLAIMS ON CHANGING STRUCTURES	SOURCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY VALIDITY CLAIMS OF COMPREHENSIBILITY	EVIDENCE OF DISTORTION
<p>Karoubi: And another more important issue, which is very very important to me, us, the government should oversea, the government shouldn't take over, the government should not interfere in the private sector and create limitations for them so much. The government should accommodate them, the government should create security for them so they can bring their capitals in with confidence and don't continue to take them outside [the country] and don't run away. This is the first point. Second we have many Iranians...we truly have many interested many Iranians all around the world who are willing to come and invest here and develop our economy, the government earns more taxes, earns more revenues, [the government] won't be reliant oil so much, won't use up, and sell and spend its capital so much. Next partnership with the foreign economies, and foreign investment, again we attract them and bring them in. First off professionals will come in, technology will come in, management will come in, we transfer our management to them, they transform their management to us, in all of this we will fully hold our national interests, our principles.</p>	EM42	C7. Is the communication sufficiently clear and complete?	Despite the simple language, the speaker fails to offer a concrete plan that details how to accomplish for example attracting foreign investment. The hearer/reader is left to decode that message.
<p>Karoubi: ...and if I spend time, my own shortcomings, create crisis-making and dump it on this or that person, please note what hurdles are the private banks facing in our country? They have even gone to the verge of getting arrested. In a country like this that certain high ranking individuals or legitimate powerhouses have to intervene and prevent a certain bank CEO's arrest. Can investment be done in something like this? Is there security? If we want economic development, if we want high inflation to not exist, if we want sometimes we have to increase inflation we have to make it up, we have to couple it with extra revenues so we can make up for the inflation.</p>	EM43	C8. Is the communication sufficiently clear and intelligible?	The language and syntax are unclear and convoluted. Additionally in this communication, no solution is offered in only questions are posed.
<p>Karoubi: If we want everyone to be employed, we have no other way than to re-enforce the private sector and enter them into the job market. Naturally, we will oversee and we will take care, we have to do it so misuse doesn't happen, and that in itself doesn't create a new problem for us. And this is a very simple thing to do and it is regularly and frequently practiced.</p>	EM44	C9. Is this utterance complete and intelligible?	The language is convoluted, sentences are broken, and the intended message of the speaker is unclear.
<p>Morteza Alviri: if you become the president, what do you think the first thing to do, to set this train in motion to get to the higher goal so in any case we could have an economically developed country, is going to be?</p> <p>Karoubi: My first thing to do, my first manifesto, the manifesto that I published in [the month of] Bahman, my first manifesto was to revive [the centre for] planning and management, which unfortunately got dissolved.</p>	EM46	C10. Is the communication complete and intelligible?	Language is convoluted and difficult to understand. The speaker does not explain how his response is relevant to his objective of economic development

While he criticizes the difficult economic conditions and the increased poverty faced by large numbers (EM33), Mousavi fails to detail his own platform:

Mousavi: We ask, during these past years, what great mission have you accomplished considering you spent \$300 billion. 25% inflation means the downfall of social security. 25% inflation means addiction, foul behaviour. 25% inflation is like a tax the rich charge the poor. This is what the 'handout' economy (eghtesad sadagheyi) has inflicted on us (EM35).

In the above statement and others like it (EM33, EM34, EM36, EM40), Mousavi is not off base pointing to a variety of ills that have plagued the economy. However, what makes his communications unclear are, at times, the burdensome level of detail (EM35, EM40) as well as his failure to lay out his alternative plans. Karoubi's campaign, on the other hand, provides more detail than his counterpart's when it comes to proposing an economic development plan such as the "oil share plan" (EM50), strengthening the private sector (EM42, EM44, EM52) and small businesses (EM52), attracting foreign and domestic investment (EM42, EM43) and reinstating the office of planning and management (EM46).

However, as detailed in the previous section, Karoubi's conversations are often convoluted, sentences are broken and incomplete and it is often difficult to follow Karoubi grammatically and syntactically (EM43, EM44, EM46). Moreover, although Karoubi's campaign offers more details regarding their economic plans, Mousavi often times stops at criticism and drawing comparisons with the post revolution and the war era 30 years before, when he was in charge of the economy.

6.3 Structures of Signification and Legitimation

The data I have gathered shows very little sign of the two leaders attempting to address the structures of signification and legitimation. The most obvious structure of Legitimation the

data points to is the presence of the candidates' spouses in public election gatherings and Ms. Rahnavard's outspoken and active participation in her husband's campaign. As discussed in the previous section, this is the first time in the history of the regime that candidates are not only accompanied by their wives but the women are visibly active and speak in support of their respective campaigns and are celebrated by the electorate. That is a clear attempt at breaking the norms of a society in which women are largely excluded from political participation and discouraged from displaying such public expressions of opinion. Both candidates break this social and political norm, which lends a hand to legitimizing women's public and political participation and their right to decide their own destinies.

CHAPTER 7: A THEORETICAL DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

7.0 An Overview of the Findings

The empirical analysis discussed in the previous chapter illustrates the use of systematically distorted communication by the leaders of the Green Movement. In this chapter, I will offer a theoretical explanation of the impact and implications of distorted communication on the demise of the movement based on the Structuration-Communicative Action framework developed earlier in chapter 4. While my primary focus is on the impact and implications of speech in the Green Movement, applying the framework allows us to draw further inferences regarding the Reform movement, the state of civil society as well as the public sphere in Iran.

Thus, this chapter elaborates on the findings of this project and discusses their impact on the survival of the 2009 uprising as follows:

7.1 Impacts and Implications of Distorted Discourse

My analysis of the communications of Mousavi and Karoubi regarding changing the two structures of economy and patriarchy uncover frequent violation of the Habermasian validity claims of truth, sincerity, legitimacy and comprehensibility, thus revealing orientation to success rather than mutual understanding. Furthermore, it is my contention that the Green leaders engage in *systematically distorted communication* since the evidence suggests they are participating in self-deception. As the evidence in chapters 3 and 6 reveal, the interests and aspirations of the three main categories of actors in the movement often stand in contrast to each other and very little is done to bridge that gap (RQ 4 and RQ 5). The evidence indicates that those contrary aspirations were never reconcilable, especially as far as Reformers and the civil society groups

were concerned. In other words, the leaders of the movement had no intention to achieve mutual understanding when it came to matters so important to civil society groups such as women's rights. Thus, they engaged in systematically distorted communication to conceal their true intentions and generate popular support to get elected to office.

As described in chapter 4, unconscious deception or systematically distorted communication requires at least one party to engage in self-deception. The two leaders along with their wives have been under house arrest since February of 2011 and under strict supervision. Prior to that, once the protests erupted, they were publically discredited and attacked by the ruling party, and excluded from politics for refuting the official recount results. Considering all they had to lose – their freedom, and their social and political status along with the humiliation, character assassination and the threat of execution hanging over their heads –leads me to conclude that at some level they believed in what they communicated to the people, however distorted it may prove to be. Consequently, although we can never be absolutely certain of what goes on in other actors' minds, based on critical Hermeneutics, we can interpret the congruency between an actors utterances and their actions, and the actions of the two leaders of the Green Movement speak to self-deception rather than manipulation. Thus, it is my contention that based on the evidence above, the language of Mousavi and Karoubi is largely systematically distorted communication.

As outlined in chapter 4, totalitarian regimes such as the Islamic Republic of Iran, rely on an ideology, i.e. Shi'ite doctrine of Velayat e Faqih, to dominate the population. The IRI's hegemonic tendencies thus limit freedom of speech, critical debate and rational argumentation, where the only force is the power of the better argument aimed at mutual understanding not furthering the Islamic ideology of the regime. To put this in Habermasian terms, Islamic ideology

has colonized the public sphere in Iran with systematically distorted communication. Perhaps if freedom of speech was not so limited, journalists and other social actors could further publically scrutinize the validity claims of the Green leaders and point to the distortions present in their communication; and had those leaders not been concerned with crossing the multitude of red-lines protected by the regime, they could put forth arguments that would present their message in a better light. For example, it would be easier to question and receive an answer from Ms. Rahnavard regarding her attire, forced hijab and their contradictory nature to women's rights when she brings up the subject of furthering that cause.

In other words, the evidence suggests the two leaders of the Green Movement are expressing a somewhat altered version of the official regime ideology through systematically distorted communication. Additionally, the real and structural violence characteristic of the Iranian regime, including the harsh consequences hindering free critical debate, make it difficult for the citizenry, scholars and other stakeholders to investigate the validity of their claims, uncovering communication distortions and unexamined convictions (ideologies) present in their message.

However, while investigating the claims of the Green politicians proves to be challenging in the Iranian public space, social actors still examine the political communications directed at them against the four validity claims. Critical theory posits that:

1- Intelligent social actors are not mere receptacles of meaning directed at them, but they actively process, interpret and enact meaning into what they hear or read.

2- Additionally, social actors are not restricted to merely interpret the messages they receive for consistency with mutual understanding, i.e. how well one actor comes to understand what the other means. They can also be critical of the message they receive.

3- Actors accomplish this by engaging in cycles of critical reflection (Giddens, 1984; Habermas 1984; Ngwenyama & Lee 1997); that is, continually assessing one or more validity claims present in the speaker's discourse against the social context of their action.

4- Therefore the inference of the actor's reflection is not always mutual understanding and could lead to a more critical outcome in which he/she can emancipate themselves from distorted communicative acts.

In the context of the Green Movement, this means protesters in their role as engaged readers or listeners (social actors) participating in the uprising, possessed the capability to not merely achieve mutual understanding with the leaders of the movement and to comprehend the political communications directed at them.; but they were also able to assess the truthfulness, clarity, sincerity and the legitimacy of those communications over a period of time. Both Habermas (1984) and Giddens (1984) suggest knowledgeable social actors critically examine the messages directed at them against their socio-political context. We know the supporters of the movement are engaged in the discourse and knowledgeable of their socio-political context because they would not otherwise be participating in the uprising. Ngwenyama and Lee (1997) state that the social context "serves as a reference schema that enables actors to act and to interpret the actions of others" (p.152). Through the mutual stocks of knowledge (shared set of norms, laws, rules, customs and traditions), as well as material and none material resources¹², the social context affords the actors the potential and possibilities of social action.

¹² As outlined in chapter 4, Giddens (1984), describes those resources as interpretive scheme, facility and norm.

The concept of *Reflexive Monitoring of Action* (chapter 4) defined by Giddens (1984) reminds us that social actors continually monitor and critically reflect on their own actions, its consequences, the actions of others and also the domain of action within which they operate. It is due to the subconscious and continuous monitoring, and while critically reflecting on all that is happening from receiving the messages of their leaders to the consequences of protesting on the streets and facing the violence directed at them, that doubt arises and there is a breakdown in the communication. Doubt arises when actors fail to establish congruency between the messages they receive and their mutual stocks of knowledge and decide, although not always consciously, to test the validity claims. That is, through critical reflection and in a similar process to that of chapter 6, the protesters tested the communications of their leaders and detected evidence of distortion, such as half-truths, unclear language, and insincerity etc., in their discourse. At some point in the life of the movement they too, as intelligent social actors, were able to critically analyze Zahra Rahnavard's brand of women's rights or Karoubi's promises of economic prosperity and detect evidence of systematic distortion in those messages.

According to the Theory of Communicative Action (1984), breakdown in communication occurs when doubts about the validity claims implied in a social action are raised, and an actor fails to observe orientation to mutual understanding. More specifically, at some point in the movement, the protesters realized their aspirations were not aligned with those of their leaders, and what was promised was not going to be delivered.

7.1.1 A focal Point in the Movement

Research shows that one such pivotal moment during which the breakdown in communication gave rise to doubts about the movement, was Neda's shooting death on June

20th, 8 days after the elections. The below graph (figure 7.1) is adapted from a study on the causes of demobilization in the Iranian Green Movement by Kevan Harris (2012), and it demonstrates that the largest protest day of the movement was June 15th, 3 days after the elections, in which an estimated 1-3 million participated¹³.

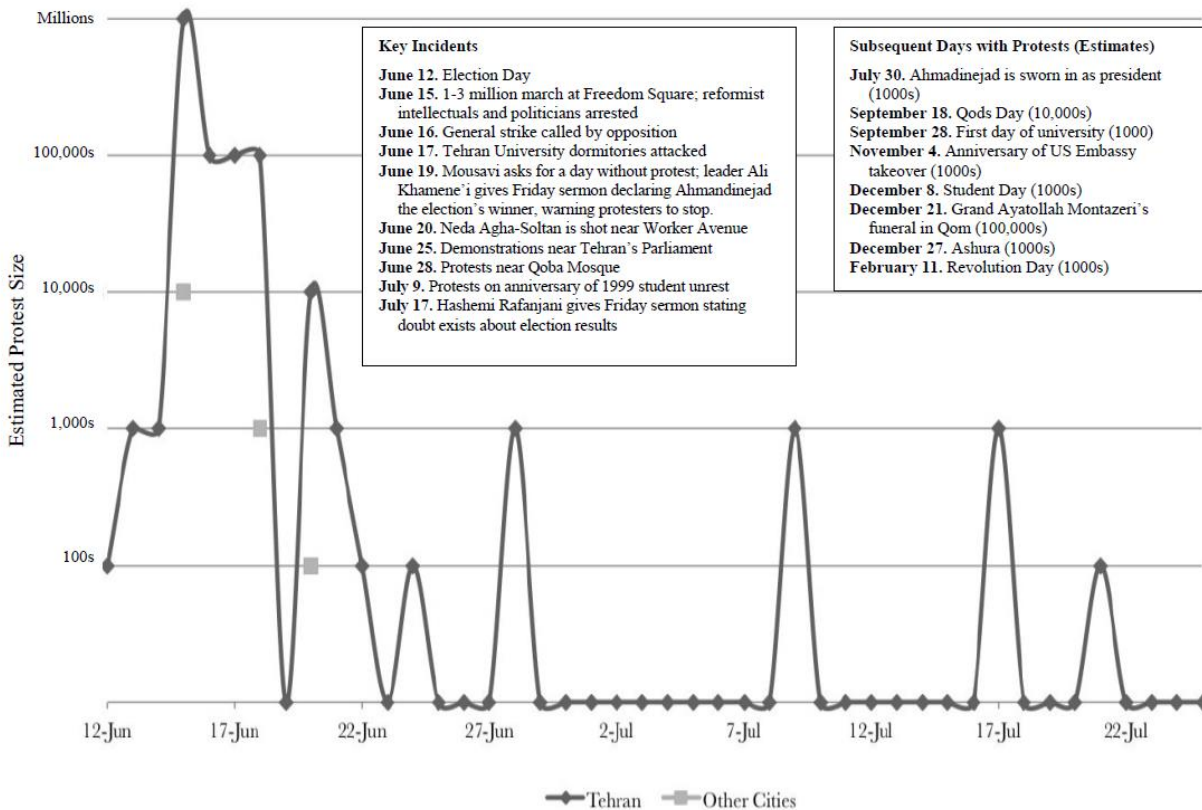


Figure 7.1: Protest participation during and after 2009 elections. Source: Harris (2012)

More significantly, the graph demonstrates that “the post-election uprising quickly spread beyond initial protest participants, peaked only a few days after the election, and then narrowed to a generally consistent size that continued to sporadically punctuate the post-election order” (Harris, 2012, p. 436). Looking closely at the graph, we can see that June 20th, the day Neda Agha

¹³ For a more detailed discussion of the data see Kevan Harris (2012): *The brokered exuberance of the middle class: An Ethnographic Analysis of Iran's 2009 Green Movement*

Soltan ¹⁴ was shot, acts as a focal point in the movement after which participation sharply declines and demobilization of the masses sets in. A focal point is a temporal context that instigates action across a crowd in the absence of direct communication because it appears as the logical choice (Schelling, 1960, page 57). Collins (Goodwin, Jasper, & Polletta, eds., 2001, p.41) adds that at this point in social movements individuals “decide” which route to take, which coalition to support: the insurgents or the status quo. The logical choice here seemed to be dispersion and consequently, demobilization of the protesters, essentially returning to the status quo. Thus, the evidence suggests Neda’s death acted as a focal point of the movement at which point protesters were forced to weigh their convictions about the movement against the consequences of continued participation, and large numbers decided against further street action.

In short, the theoretical framework suggests the supporters of the Green Movement similarly became aware of the distortions in the discourse of the movement as both Habermas (1979, 1984) and Giddens (1984) suggest all knowledgeable actors essentially do. Critical monitoring and reflection thus empowers the protesters to emancipate themselves from distorted communicative acts. Some of the practical manifestations of emancipation from distorted communication stemming from ideological discourse (chapter 4) are to withdraw one’s support of the uprising, to stop participating in the protests, and essentially, disillusionment with the cause. According to the above data, Neda’s shooting seems to have provided one such occasion where

¹⁴ Neda Agha Soltan, was a 27 year old philosophy student whom according to the Human Rights Watch (“Iran: Violent Crackdown on Protesters Widens,” 2009) was a bystander to the protests when she was shot in the chest and died at the scene. She quickly became a symbol of the movement in the face of regime’s violent crackdown since she was widely believed to have been shot by a member of Basij militia. Her shooting and consequent death were captured on video and aired internationally on CNN, FOX, BBC etc.

protesters began weighing the consequences against what they were promised and deemed the cost of participation too high. This is evident in the downward shift in public presence that takes place post June 20th. Therefore, when evidence of communication distortion surfaces, and disillusionment with the direction of the movement gradually sets in, the protesters are no longer willing to endure the harsh consequences of further participation (getting beaten, arrested, jailed, and killed) in a cause that is not aligned with their goals. Reflexive monitoring is critical in the sense that it enables the actor to “free himself not only from false or unwarranted beliefs and assumptions about the other person or her action, but also from constraints to enacting coherent meaning of the situation and taking appropriate counteraction” (Ngwenyama & Lee, 1997).

In other words, being engaged audiences, the distortions in the communication of the leaders of the movement became evident to the protesters indicating that the movement no longer embodied their aspirations. While they originally believed they were fighting for values such as democracy, women’s rights, transparent and fair elections, economic development, etc. at some point they realized they were not going to achieve what was being promised by Mousavi and Karoubi. The government was cracking down on the participants harshly by beating, arresting and even shooting them down. Many were jailed, raped and tortured while under arrest, and were barred from going to school (particularly university students) or continuing in their profession (lawyers, doctors, activists etc.). Naturally, disillusionment with the movement meant they were no longer willing to face the violence and severe consequences they had previously endured, and thus, gradually abandoned the movement and stopped participating. If the people still believed in the cause of the movement, trusting it would help them in their struggle for democracy, they would continue to fight and the Green uprising would not have faltered.

While this doesn't imply that the movement faltered solely because of demobilization, I suggest however that the systematic communication distortions of the leaders of the movement contributed to its demise considerably. Additionally, not all actors follow the same path to emancipation. Some fail to detect communicative distortions all together, while others engage in self-deception despite questioning the righteousness of what is being communicated (Habermas, 1984); and yet some become disillusioned and withdraw their support. To this date, there are those who continue to view the path offered by Mousavi and Karoubi, and the Reform Front in general, as the only viable roadmap to democracy and achieving a more open and free state. This is despite both leaders' numerous assertions that they were fighting to save the regime and uphold its values (chapter 5). Nevertheless, it is my view that the movement lost a significant share of its support once it was increasingly believed to be "more of the same old regime". Building on the above discussion, I am lead to draw two conclusions: 1) the Reform strategy currently doesn't seem like a plausible alternative, and 2) the absence of a strong civil society further feeds into the confusion created by the communication distortions of both sides. I will discuss both as follows.

7.2 The Reform Philosophy as an Alternative

The Reform philosophy as an alternative to the dominant regime ideology which has been put forth for almost two decades doesn't seem to have the ability to serve that purpose. Reformers have been trying to use the presidential elections platform since 1997 to legally present and implement their ideas within the red-lined boundaries of the regime to ultimately steer the nation towards democracy. However, presidential elections in Iran are not a true exercise of democracy where ideas are critically debated in the public sphere and subsequently the citizenry speak their choice by popular vote. As discussed previously, institutions of the Guardian Council (Shoraye

Negahban) and the Assembly of Experts (Majles e Khobregan), two unelected bodies, among others, already limit the people's choice and override democracy by vetting and hand selecting the presidential candidates to ensure their adherence and loyalty to the regime and its ideologies. Thus, in my opinion this is nothing more than a pseudo exercise of what looks like democracy, where elections are held every four years but the citizens don't truly have a vote. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, the distortions gripping the communications of Mousavi and Karoubi, make it difficult to discern their agenda and elections platform, to put it in Western terms. My analysis shows, once put to the test, most of those promises are vague at best, misleading the audience into interpretations that may not be true, without offering solid blueprints and plans. For example, although women's rights is a major election issue, there are very little solid plans and programs offered to the electorate to elaborate on how the two candidates will set about fulfilling that promise. As the Green leaders represent the hopes and aspirations of the Reform movement, their communications can be extended to those of the movement's, and it is from this I am able to draw my conclusions. Furthermore, reviewing the constitutional framework of the country (chapter 5) and past events tell us that the office of the president is not the most powerful institution in the Iranian political hierarchy. The Supreme Leader holds the ultimate power and thus dictates policy and ensures its alliance with the official regime lines.

Therefore, the systematically distorted communication of Mousavi and Karoubi, the two figureheads embodying the Reform Front's ideals, obstruct our perception and hinder the process of reaching mutual understanding. It is difficult for us, the audience, to determine where they stand on many controversial issues. In other words, what *reforms* they plan to implement to the system? E.g. is removing mandatory hejab on their agenda? Second, the structural limitations of

the Islamic Republic, at least at this point in time, don't leave much room for reform, as that would mean some of the strong powerhouses would lose their tight grip on the nation. Thus, while this author is making this observation independent of presenting an alternative, the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that the Reform Front is not a viable political alternative for the emancipation of the Iranian public. I, however, concede that the Reformers are the embodiment of the hopes and aspirations of a large segment of the Iranian society craving for change, for more freedoms and for a more open and transparent society. Nevertheless, the absence of a free and open public sphere where ideas can be freely debated has helped, over the years, to reinforce the illusion of reform in the Iranian social and political arena.

7.3 Absence of a Strong Civil Society

On another note, the absence of a strong civil society that could advocate and lead critical debate in the public sphere helps reinforce the illusion of reform in the Iranian social and political arena. Strong civic engagement help consolidate democracy by advocating for open and free debate which uncover communication distortions, contradictions and incongruences between speech and action on one hand, and mediate between the state and people on the other hand to reduce real and structural violence (Putnam, 2000). But since the Iranian political apparatus systematically restricts the activities of non-governmental organizations and discourages civic engagement beyond what is allowed in the confines of the regime ideology, the civil society has never had a chance to flourish. Ideally, with the help of the civil society members such as the *One Million Signature Campaign*, citizens could uncover discrepancies in the speech and actions of the political elite such as those under study here. However, in their absence to interrogate the communications and promises of political leaders, concepts such as gender equity and women's

rights are largely devoid of their intended meaning and merely utilized as tools of furthering an ideology, in this case the IRI's and by extension the Reformist doctrine.

Moreover, both Green leaders engage in a rhetorical strategy of repetition of particular positive opinions and campaign promises (e.g. *change*, *women's right*, *economic growth*) to embed them into the taken-for-granted lifeworlds of the masses as established facts. There is, however, very little in the data to support many of those opinions. Yet by repeating them over and over again, in the course of a few months, Mousavi and Karoubi and their respective campaign managed to establish these goals as attainable within the current regime framework. The absence of a strong civil society and free press has heightened this situation, since those largely unsubstantiated promises remain unexamined, but because they are powerful statements made in a systematically distorted discourse, they manage to colonize the lifeworlds of individuals.

It is clear the data overwhelmingly supports the argument that the structures of domination are largely targeted, which speaks volumes to the dominating nature of a totalitarian regime such as that of IRI. This argument is further evident in the fact that while economic structures dominate the election campaigns, with social justice and class differences being discussed, and candidates paying lip service to women's causes, women are largely excluded from economic debate. Social justice, and gender equality are practically meaningless if half the population is excluded from the conversation that essentially determines women's economic powers. Thus, colonizing the public consciousness with half-truths and suppressing understanding by means of distorted communication will merely hinder emancipation from an oppressive government rather than bring about the *change* so often promised by Mousavi and Karoubi and other Reformists. In other words, based on the evidence, the two leaders are essentially another

tool to broadcast the ideology of a hegemonic regime. Habermas (1991) describes this process, albeit in democratic societies, as the colonization of the public sphere by those who have privileged access to it, such as politicians. Similarly, the Reformers colonize the Iranian political arena by systematically distorting its political communications and thus obstructing the consciousness of the general public on their path to democracy. The next section will discuss the public sphere and its implications in Iran in more detail.

7.4 Public Sphere in the Iranian context

Iran's campaign for democracy is a lengthy one dating back to the Constitutional Revolution at the turn of the 20th century (Katouzian, 1998, Kamrava, 2008, Jahanbegloo, 2013), when the intellectual elite drafted the country's first constitution in an attempt to limit the state's absolute and arbitrary exercise of power, subjecting its practices to a legal framework and paving the way for a more representative government. The 1979 Islamic revolution and the 2009 Green Movement are the continuation of the same quest to establish a democratic government dominated by the rule of law and prevalence of justice. Habermas points to the public sphere as the cornerstone of a democratic society for it stands up to the state authority through open debate that forms the public opinion, thus critically steering the political establishment in a democratic direction. In the absence of a critical public sphere, democracy suffers as the political elite, special interest groups and corporations colonize that space, strategically influencing the social and political decision making without being subjected to the deliberation of the citizens and the scrutiny of critically developed public opinion (Habermas, 1991, Cukier et al. 2009).

As described in chapter 4, freedom of expression and political participation, without fear of reprisal or threats are fundamental to the concept of a free and flourishing public sphere.

Furthermore, an independent judiciary to mediate between the state and citizens at times when conflict about those rights arises is imperative to the survival of the public sphere, protecting individuals and their freedoms from state encroachment. However, it is my contention that these conditions are not satisfied in the Iranian context as is evident by the large number of journalists, civil society activists and political figures that reside in the Iranian prisons, essentially for breaking out of the state sanctioned lines of discussion. Considering that these fundamental conditions are broken, it is my belief that the public sphere, based on the definition expressed by Habermas, does not exist in the Iranian context despite the multitude of references alluding to the concept in the literature in the field of Iranian studies. Homa Katouzian (1998), in a paper titled “Problems of Democracy and the Public Sphere in Modern Iran”, states that the Iranian public sphere emerged alongside the constitutional movement towards the end of the 19th century in the form of voluntary associations and independent newspapers and journals. Graham and Khosravi (2002) state:

The public sphere in Iran has a different history to that of European states and has been under much stricter control than in the Euro-American democracies. But whatever the difficulties of expression, Iranians, like other people, discuss matters that concern them and exchange information on private occasions, in semi-private assemblies, such as religious rituals, or in public places such as coffee-houses and mosques (p.224).

However, despite providing a clear description of the Habermasian public sphere in both papers, the concept is applied to a state where severe restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly, political participation and the absence of an independent judiciary, making the comparison unconvincing.

To further study the application of the theoretical concept of public sphere in the discourse of Iranian studies, I randomly collected 64 academic papers on the subject by both Iranian and non-Iranian authors written between 2004 and 2014 (the last 10 years). I then ran the articles through *Nvivo* (a data analysis software), searching for the term “public sphere” in each paper. The results are displayed in Table 7.1:

Table 7.1: *Public Sphere in Iranian Studies Literature*

NO.	TITLE OF THE PAPER	AUTHOR(S)	FQ	CONTEXT
1	Can women act as agents of a de'mocratization of theocracy in Iran	Homa Hoodfar, Shadi Sadr	9	Iran
2	Contentious Public Religion - Two Conceptions of Islam in Revolutionary Iran - Ali Shari'ati and Abdolkarim Soroush	Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi	7	Iran
3	Democracy and Secularism in Iran - Lessons for the Arab Spring	Paola Rivetti	2	Iran
4	Diasporic Disclosures - Social Networking, Neda, and the 2009 Iranian Presidential Elections	Nima Naghibi	5	Iran
5	Discourses of Equality Rights and Islam in the One Million Signature Campaign	Catherine Sameh	2	Iran
6	Excluded Icons Locating the Femina Sacra in the Green Revolution, the Arab Spring, and the Occupy Movement	Roisin Berghaus	2	Iran
7	Good Iranian, Bad Iranian - Representations of Iran and Iranians in Time and Newsweek	Sam Fayyaz, Roozbeh Shirazi	1	Other
8	Green Women of Iran - The Role of the Women's Movement During and After Iran's Presidential Election of 2009	Victoria Tahmasebi	3	Iran
9	Hypermedia Space and Global Communication Studies Lessons From The Middle East	Marwan M. Kraidy, Sara Mourad	1	Iran
10	Information and communication technology and women empowerment in Iran	Farid Shirazi	4	Iran
11	Iranian Women's Movement A Century Long Struggle - Ali Akbar Mahdi	Ali Akbar Mahdi	6	Iran
12	Iranian Women's Struggle for Empowerment in Contemporary Iran	Mahsa Alimardani	7	Iran
13	Beyond Islam vs Feminism	Ziba Mir-Hosseini	1	References
14	NEDA and Third-Spaces	Editors: Stewart M. Hoover, Nabil Echchaibi	10	Iran
15	Persian bloggers, exile, nostalgia and diasporic nationalism	Maryam Aghavmi	1	Other
16	Political Opportunities and Strategic Choice - Comparing Feminist Campaigns in Morocco and Iran	Valentine M. Moghadam, Elham Gheytaichi	5	Other
17	Reading Habermas in Iran - political tolerance and the prospect of non-violent movement in Iran	Omid Payrow Shabani	16	Iran
18	Revolutionary cells - On the role of texts, tweets, and status updates in nonviolent revolutions	Daniel P. Ritter, Alexander H. Trechsel	1	References
19	Some Observations on Visual Representations of the 2009 Iranian Crisis	Pedram Khosronejad	2	Iran
20	The agonistic social media cyberspace in the formation of dissent and consolidation of state power in postelection Iran	Babak Rahimi	9	Iran
21	The Green Movement in Iran	Hamid Dabashi	2	Iran
22	The Green's Non-Violent Ethos The Roots of Non-Violence in the Iranian Democratic Movement	Omid Payrow Shabani	6	Iran
23	The Iranian Green Movement - Fragmented Collective Actions and Fragile Collective Identity	Arash Reisinezhad	1	Other

24	The New Intellectuals in Iran	Farhad Khosrokhavar	1	Iran
25	The Short-Term Society - A Study in the Problems of Long-Term Political and Economic Development In Iran	Homa Katouzian	1	References
26	The significance of economic history, and the fundamental features of the economic history of Iran	Homa Katouzian	1	References
27	Women, Work, and Ideology in Iran	Valentine M. Moghadam	6	Iran

The analysis reveals that 27 out of the 64 original papers, almost 42%, mention the concept.

A content analysis of each paper to place the results in context, show that 19 out of the 27 papers (70%), mention the term in the context of the Iranian society. The rest either mention the public sphere in the Western context or simply appear in the bibliography, both of which are irrelevant to our analysis and thus eliminated. It is noteworthy that while 19 out of 27 academic papers mention “public sphere”, almost none provide a theoretical description of the term. It is assumed that this arena of social life is naturally operating, as is often the case when discussing Western democracies, where the reality of public sphere is not in question. In what follows, I will argue that considering the restrictions on the freedom of expression and assembly, and absence of an independent judiciary, the concept of public sphere as defined by Habermas is not applicable in the Iranian society.

7.4.1 Broken Conditions and Principles of Public Sphere in Iran:

The state authority in Iran, despite limited provisions in the constitution, increasingly infringes on its citizens’ right to freedom of expression (including freedom of speech and press) and continues to restrict expression through various mechanisms afforded to them through legal avenues as well as classified ones. Journalists, bloggers, civil rights activists, lawyers, trade unionists, artists, women’s rights activists, minorities (ethnic and religious), LGBTQ members, and human rights advocates are frequently arrested, prosecuted, and punished, including punishment

by death, for crossing the government sanctioned red lines. United Nations' *Special Rapporteur's* Report on the situation of human rights in Iran (2014) states:

As of 14 January 2014, at least 895 “prisoners of conscience” and “political prisoners” were reportedly imprisoned. This number includes 379 political activists, 292 religious practitioners, 92 human rights defenders (including 50 ethnic rights activists), 71 civic activists, 37 journalists and netizens, and 24 student activists.

Moreover, freedom of expression assumes a secular backdrop, and the Islamic Republic of Iran, evident by its very title, is a religious state whose laws and regulations must all be aligned with Shi'ite teachings. Although republicanism implies some degree of representative government, that aspect of the Islamic Republic of Iran's constitution is guided by Shi'ite philosophies. According to article 99 of the Iranian constitution the *Guardian Council*, an appointed body consisting of six Faqihs (clerics) appointed by the Supreme leader and six Jurists appointed by the Majlis (Parliament) is empowered by the principle of *Approbation Supervision* as discussed in chapter 3. Among other things, this principle means the legislation passed through the parliament has no legal status without the approval of the *Guardian Council* who scrutinizes the bills based on adherence to Islamic law. Additionally, the Approbation Supervision empowers the *Guardian Council* to veto the legislation passed by the elected representatives of the people if they are deemed to conflict with a strict reading of Shi'ite Islam. Moreover, the religious oversight embedded in the Iranian constitution constrains the parliament, which is amongst the main institutions of the public sphere, essentially stripping it of its role in providing a platform for open debate of matters of public interest. Consequently, in an environment where any and all aspects

of an Iranian citizen's life are bound by religious red lines, freedom of speech and public use of reasoned argumentation are significantly restricted.

The Habermasian public sphere is founded on the principles of communicative rationality that demand public use of reasoned argumentation, juxtaposing that to a regime that has legislated faith and demands undisputed belief in religious principles, the logical conclusion is that the public sphere cannot survive under these conditions.

Next, I'd argue that freedoms of assembly and political participation are equally constrained. Presidential, parliamentary, and city council candidates, to name a few, are subject to approval by the Guardian Council and other monitoring bodies for adherence to Islam. However, in reality this process is an arbitrary process that gauges alignment with the dominant ideology of the regime, including allegiance to the concept of *Supreme Leadership* and the person of *Ayatollah Khamenei*. Over the years, many once influential regime insiders' candidacy for various elected positions (sometimes the very same positions they held before) have been rejected by the Guardian Council for criticizing government policies or swaying from the official line defined by the institute of the Supreme Leadership. Grand *Ayatollah Montazeri*, *Ayatollah Bayat Shirazi*, *Ayatollah Zanjani*, *Hashemi Rafsanjani*, and lately *Hojatol Islam Karoubi* and *Mir Hossein Mousavi* are some of those that were once instrumental to the regime apparatus and have now fallen out of grace with the leadership.

Peaceful assemblies and rallies are frequently and brutally broken up and participants arrested. Women, religious minorities and anyone with a record of political activism against the regime (albeit none proven in court) are barred from seeking office. Despite officially maintaining that there are no political prisoners in Iranian jails, political activists, and often their families, pay

a heavy price for their advocacy. They are routinely imprisoned, their rights to a lawyer denied, raped, tortured, forced to make false confessions and executed in secret. The violent crackdowns of peaceful protesters in 2009, and prior to that in 1999, are symbolic of how restricted political participation and freedom of assembly are in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Habermasian public sphere assumes freedom of expression, and the right to political participation and assembly:

The principles of the public sphere involved an open discussion of all issues of general concern in which discursive argumentation was employed to ascertain general interests and the public good. The public sphere thus presupposed freedoms of speech and assembly, a free press, and the right to freely participate in political debate and decision-making (Kellner, 2000, p. 262).

However, in the Iranian society these principles are routinely violated which serves as an impediment to the formation of a public sphere in its true sense. Continuous persecution of opinions, restricting political participation and aggressive suppression of citizens along with imposed religious ideology interfere with the backdrop necessary for the public sphere to materialize. Perhaps the reform philosophy would have no leg to stand on had it been presented in a country with a flourishing public sphere, which in turn would give rise to a strong civil tradition, both of which are impediments to the spread of ideologies and their linguistic manifestations in the form of politically distorted communication. It is precisely because the Iranians' access to an open public sphere where ideas could be critically debated is blocked that the illusion of reform has had a chance to flourish over the past two decades presenting itself as the alternative.

7.4.2 Struggles for Establishment of Democracy and Free Public Discourse in Iran

While I maintain that the public sphere in the Habermasian sense does not exist in Iran, my research reveals there is a strong political undercurrent in Iran attempting to create a public sphere

in the democratic sense. Post presidential elections events of the summer of 2009 speak of a strong tendency, specifically amongst women and youth, towards a realm of rational debate in which the public can openly discuss their collective concerns. The protests of June 2009 ostensibly began with a peaceful march of silence and the slogan “where is my vote?” I believe that this is the single most powerful slogan that emerged from the Iranian public psyche since the revolution, one that captures the soul of the Green Movement. On one hand, it points to the broken conditions of democratic governance (which republicanism implies, after all the country is called Islamic Republic of Iran) where there is an expectation of respect for the popular vote of the citizens, on another hand it recognizes their right to question the political authority and enter into rational and critical debate with it when those conditions are violated, which is the essence of the public sphere. The above example, although not unique, suggests that while a Habermasian public sphere has yet to form in Iran, a strong collective will amongst the youth, women, activists and the intelligentsia is working towards it.

Studying the emergence of the public sphere within Iran from another view reveals while the physical manifestation of the concept has failed to form, the virtual space has been more welcoming to the idea. Social media particularly has afforded an effective platform for those actively trying to develop the Iranian public sphere. The four major advantages of social media in the virtual world discussed in chapter 2: accessibility, usability, immediacy, and permanence, provide a better chance for the Iranian public sphere to form online when it’s manifestation in the physical world is faced with great resistance. While the Iranian authorities crush any attempts at creating an open space for critical debate and severely restrict freedoms of expression and political participation in the physical world, they have far less authority over the virtual space of which

social media is a big part. The four principles of *Accessibility*, *Usability*, *Immediacy* and *Permanence* discussed in chapter 2 contribute greatly to the development of a free and inclusive virtual public sphere which gives a voice to many who were otherwise voiceless. The multitude of blogs, *Twitter* and *Facebook* accounts, *YouTube* videos, podcasts etc. provide a wealth of information that was previously inaccessible and scattered. They essentially provide a platform for debate and the exchange of ideas by the Iranians inside and those in the Diaspora, bridging the gap that was ever widening between those groups since the revolution, a welcome phenomenon which was not possible before.

While this is not to say that online activism is risk free in Iran, the anonymity, ease and global reach that internet affords, makes for a more democratic and tolerant atmosphere for political activists. As previously discussed, Iranian authorities continue to suppress internet activism by limiting access to internet by controlling the available bandwidth, filtration and censorship of the content, and by prosecuting known bloggers. But monitoring every blog entry, every Facebook post, and every video shared, requires unlimited resources. Thus, the Iranian activism online thrives, and while the authorities might be successful at crushing attempts to form a public sphere in the physical world, it has a better chance of emerging online.

YouTube videos developed by the protesters (both within and without the country) throughout the Green Movement and beyond are of particular importance to this study, and to the struggle to form public sphere. A large number of videos were made and posted online during the Green Movement both prior to and after the disputed elections. While the majority of videos are of an informative nature, capturing the events of the movement such as demonstrations, discussions and confrontations with the security forces, a considerable number also engage in a

form of dialogue with the authorities. On June 14, 2009, two days after the disputed elections, footage of President *Ahmadi Nejad* calling those protesting the results “dust and dirt” (In Farsi: *خس و خاشاک*) caused an uproar. Within a few days [this video](#), which features a song by a young Iranian Artist *Hamed Nikpay*, lashes back at the president’s speech, lamenting him for calling the dissidents “dust and dirt”. Essentially, this video and many more like it are an attempt at engaging in a dialogue with the authorities, which goes to the heart of a free public sphere and demonstrates the Iranian struggle to create one.

CHAPTER 8: CONTRIBUTION, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

8.1 Summary of the Findings

In this study, I have presented a critical analysis of the discourse of the leaders of the Green Movement of 2009 based on empirical material collected from YouTube. My research is grounded in Critical Theory; more specifically, the theoretical framework was developed based on Giddens' Theory of Structuration and Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action. Social structures and their interactions with the agency were examined from a structuration point of view, while Habermas provided the theoretical foundations for such concepts as social action, political communications and the public sphere. Critical Discourse Analysis as conceptualized by Habermas in the TCA and operationalized by Cukier et al. (2009) provided the methodological foundations of the study. Key findings of my research include:

1. The make-up and aspirations of the movement: By identifying the key stakeholders of the movement, their aspirations and their power dynamic (RQ 1 to 3), my research essentially points to the three significant currents present in the Iranian political arena. My study then builds on those findings to reveal the uneven yet intricate power struggles of those groups, their contradictory notions of freedom and democracy, and their irreconcilable visions of human rights, including the rights of women and minorities (RQ 4). Finally, the empirical analysis illustrates that negligible effort was made by the Reformers as leaders of the movement to bridge the gap and reconcile those inherent contradictions with the civil society groups. Instead, the Reformers, and by extension the leaders of the movement, engaged in distorted communication tactics to conceal those contradictions in order to further their agenda (RQ 5).

2. Systematically Distorted Communication and its impact on the movement: The leaders' engagement in systematically distorted communication instead of committing to a dialogue that would bridge the gap of contradictory aspirations present in the movement, contributed significantly to the failure of the uprising. My research reveals the frequent presence of confusion, misrepresentation, illegitimate arguments and false assurances in the discourse of the Green Movement. The evidence suggests by using loaded language, marginalizing critics, misrepresenting the facts and spreading falsehoods, the leaders of the movement participated in the production of systemic distortions. While such communications were initially successful in mobilizing the public in large numbers, after violent regime crackdown, and specifically after Neda's shooting death, many participants eventually became disillusioned with the movement, as intelligent social actors often do. Demobilization due to intellectual cracks in the discourse of the cause then contributed significantly to the demise of the uprising as protesters withdrew their support.

3. Ineffectiveness of the Reform Philosophy: Considering the leaders of the 2009 uprising draw their intellectual backing from the broader Reform movement, which suggests reforms are not only possible within the current framework but also critical to preservation of the regime, and considering the failure of such strategy during the events of the 2009 uprising, my research testifies to the ineffectiveness of Reform. Based on the presented evidence, I contend the Reform strategy extends from systemic communication distortions stemming from the hegemonic tendencies of an ideological state, and thus is incapable of fostering emancipation and freedom. It is my contention that Reform is inherently at odds with democratic values, and thus incapable of delivering a democratic alternative.

4. Absence of a Strong Civil Society: is one of the critical factors that contributes to the survival and popularity of the Reform school of thought. In the critical vacuum created by intimidating members of the civil society into silence, the IRI has essentially allowed for the Reform ideology to evade the kind of rigorous critical examinations that would reveal its irreconcilable nature with democratic values and eliminate it as an alternative.

In other words, in the absence of a strong civil society that can critically engage political forces, communication distortions prosper and further hinder debate and rational understanding of the public.

5. Hegemonic tendencies of the Iranian regime are evident in the data gathered which revealed very little effort was made to address or alter structures other than those of domination. Structures of signification and legitimation are largely left out of the public discourse. In other words, the theory suggests that emancipation from dominating policies was the most significant concern in the 2009 elections.

6. The conditions of the public sphere in the Iranian context are broken according to Habermas's conception. But more importantly, my thesis indicates although such an arena, where the only force is that of the better argument, is absent from the Iranian political scene, there a strong will aided by the internet and web technologies, struggling to establish a sphere of critical debate. More importantly, the study reveals while the Iranian government limits freedom of speech by such measures as disrupting the internet and telecommunication lines, prosecuting journalists, activists and other critics, censoring and banning critical publications, and imposing such punishments as banning individuals from post-secondary education, they also impose physical restrictions in order to dominate the public sphere. While media, including digital

media, are one of the most vital institutions of the public sphere and thus are amongst the first to be restricted, totalitarian regimes also suppress freedom of speech by limiting access to physical space. In other words, the IRI attacks the public sphere by violently cracking down on protests gathered on streets, by arresting and jailing protesters and ceasing their passports to prevent them from leaving the country, and also by placing the leaders of the movement under house arrest. The saloons, cafes and other gathering places of 19th century Europe, as well as the ability to physically participate in those spaces were as vital to the development of the public sphere as the media, and totalitarian regimes like IRI suppress both in order to restrict this critical arena.

Finally, the evidence clearly illustrates that the Iranian government is not the only actor that breaks the conditions necessary for a thriving public sphere. By engaging in systematically distorted communication, the leaders of the movement, and thus the Reformers by extension, are also participating in colonizing this arena. Although, some of the Reformers, including the leaders of the Green Movement, who are currently under house arrest are themselves victims of this policy, they too participate, although covertly, in attacking the integrity of the public sphere.

8.2 Research Contribution

My thesis contributes specifically to the field of Iranian studies, by answering the research question: what were the impact and implications of the discourse of the leaders of the Green Movement of 2009 on the demise of the uprising? Iran is a country that has been on a quest for freedom, democracy and the rule of law for the past 150 years. This trend has manifested in various popular uprisings such as the Constitutional Revolution at the turn of the 20th century, the

oil nationalization movement by Dr. Mosadeq and the subsequent British-American Coup, the Islamic revolution of 1979, Khatami's election in 1997 and, finally, the Green Movement of 2009. All of those movements have one common denominator: they all look for an alternative path to a democratic state.

A finding central to my study illustrates the systematic distorted language of the Reformers in order to conceal this ideology's irreconcilable nature with democratic values. With this realization, a key contribution of my research is the elimination of this strategy that has been presented over the past 2 decades as a democratic alternative to the conservative doctrine of the regime. Although further research is necessary in order to study possible alternatives to the current regime, my research eliminates the Reformers as a viable path to democracy.

This study facilitates a better understanding of the genesis of the revolt, and the conditions that both gave rise to the movement and aided its failure, thus informing deeper insight into the evolving nature of this long road over the decades. Furthermore, by painting a picture of the diverse spectrum of actors impacting Iran's democratic aspirations, my research assists in revealing the dominating forces hindering this path, essentially aiding in fostering emancipation. In other words, by revealing the distorted language of the Reform Front and its ideological and oppressive tendencies, my research assists those involved in the struggle to emancipate themselves from deep seated and hegemonic conditions of their environment.

Moreover, by studying the impact of political communication and distorted language, my project also contributes to the study of mass political movements, particularly to the wave of uprisings in the Arab countries in the region, the so called Arab Spring that followed the Green Movement.

This thesis extends the reach of both theories of Structuration and Communicative Action by combining them together to study social movements. As such, this study also contributes to the field of critical theory by extending its application in this particular way, which provides a stronger, more rigorous framework of studying social action, multidimensional addressing structures, social action and discourse analysis.

8.3 Limitations and Challenges

In this section I will discuss some of the challenges and limitations I faced as a researcher while conducting this study.

8.3.1 Data collection

I had originally set out to collect data from various sources such as Twitter, Facebook, and micro blogs to depict a more comprehensive picture of the discourse of the movement. However, collecting those data 5 years after the fact proved to be quite challenging. I spent a significant part of summer 2014 trying to collect data from various sources, in order to present a larger more representative discourse surrounding the movement. In the end, after multiple attempts, I had to limit my dataset to YouTube. Twitter only sells historical data at a significant cost (I was quoted upward of \$15,000), Facebook doesn't make their data available due to privacy restrictions, and combing through blogs required specialized software which was not at my disposal.

Furthermore, although I have been closely observing the events of the 2009 uprising since their inception, due to my status as an expat living abroad, I was not able to personally observe the shaping up of the movement. Therefore, to conduct my study I was limited to collecting fragments of the conversation that shaped the movement through the medium of the internet, via

YouTube videos, Twitter feeds, blog and Facebook posts and the news. In other words, I had to use secondary data rather than primary data collected from the field by direct participant observation, or through interviews with protesters and some of their leaders. Thus, my conclusions are based on the best medium of communication that was available to me under the circumstances. It is however, safe to assume had I, as a researcher, had access to all the above sources of data, my research would present a richer understanding of the phenomenon.

Despite these limitations, YouTube proved to be a sound choice due to its popularity, wide reach and its rich audio-visual nature.

8.3.2 *Limitation of the Theory of Communicative Action*

In the TCA, Habermas (1984) defines the ideal conditions of public communication to which societies should aspire in order to emancipate themselves from communication distortions hindering democracy. To that end, he describes the *ideal speech situation*, and ideal conditions of the public sphere (Habermas, 1991), including the principle of *communicative rationality* (chapter 4), which implies freedom of speech to engage in debate and form rational argumentation. Essentially, the public sphere is an arena where social actors can speak truth to power without fear of reprisal or punishment. In that sense, some Western democratic countries are closer to those fundamental conditions of a thriving public sphere, and yet others are further away. As previously discussed, the IRI, for example, places severe restrictions on freedom of speech, thus making discourse analysis difficult in that context.

More specifically, the Habermasian conception of public sphere assumes freedom of speech, but since such freedom is scarce in Iran, analyzing the political communications of the movement proved to be more challenging. In other words, we will never know if the leaders of the

movement, actually believed in forced veiling and tried to misrepresent their views to gain more support or if they didn't believe in that concept but couldn't express it for fear of reprisal. To overcome such challenges, I often had to go beyond just the videos, and consult other sources: newspaper articles, books they authored, posts on their blogs or public Facebook pages, and other available sources to be able to make a judgement call regarding the validity claims.

8.3.3 Convictions of a Researcher

My objective as the researcher conducting this study was to analyze and interpret discourse based on a set of rules – in this case, the rules of ideal speech situation. Critical theory makes its position clear that science is not value free (Ngwenyama, 1991), and thus researchers make value judgements which means the interpreters values, beliefs as well as biases and unexamined convictions influence their research. Therefore, as the interpreter of the data, I had to keep my own biases and deep convictions in check to curb their influences on the final product.

Although I was born in Iran, I have spent most of my life and have been primarily educated in Western democracies. Additionally, I was raised in a politically opinionated family, which had an enormous impact on my upbringing, my beliefs and value system. Thus, it is safe to assume that my understanding of such concepts as gender equality, democracy and human rights may not necessarily be shared by my counterparts who live in Iran and had different exposures. Thus, early on in my research endeavour I was reminded of the influence I exerted over the study for my role was not merely that of an observer, but as the interpreter I was continually making value judgements based on my own beliefs and experiences. To overcome that challenge, I tried to maintain a level of self-awareness of my own biases, and engaged in

frequent reflection and critical examination of my convictions, many of which have been with me as long as I can remember.

8.4 Future Research

The natural next steps that follow this study, which posits that Reform is not a viable path to democracy in Iran, is to investigate an alternative that would deliver that objective. Further research into this question could potentially point to other more progressive possibilities for Iran's democratic aspirations. Additional research is required to systematically investigate the following questions: If not the Reformers, are there other forces capable of facilitating democracy? What are the essential characteristics of one such alternative in terms of political power, intellectual orientation and practical measures? Are there forces in the Iranian civil society that can contribute in a significant way to a democratic movement? What would be the impact of international forces, especially Western democracies, on this movement in terms of their policies towards Iran? Lastly, examining some of the less subtle ways through which the citizenry, the intellectuals and activists depict resistance to oppression and marginalization and their impacts and implication for democracy and human rights in Iran.

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APPENDIX A: VIDEO TRANSCRIPTIONS

Empirical Observations: <u>Women's Rights</u>	File Name	Time Stamp
<p>The footage begins with the meeting of Zahra Rahnavard, Fatemeh Mo'tamed Arya and an unidentified woman:</p> <p>Rahnavard: "A government that is ran without women executives, will definitely be a harsh one. Women's presence in executive positions makes the society healthier, more equal, more balanced. It creates a more passionate and loving society.</p> <p>Unidentified woman: one of the most important topics in social justice is the issue of gender equality. Discussing that first and foremost our girls and boys must feel safe.</p> <p>Rahnavard: "All forms of discrimination must be eliminated in the society. We are against all forms of discrimination. Discrimination disrupts human growth. Now gender discrimination is one of its forms...there has to be a new reading of the role of women. Women are saying we are present, we have expectations and we still want to take part in deciding our destiny.</p> <p>Mo'tamed Arya: If I want to travel to a different city I can't check into a hotel. Either my father, husband or brother has to accompany me.</p> <p>Rahnavard: worse than that, if you need surgery you are not considered to be in charge of your body. A man has to authorize the surgery as if saying: are you dying, no, wait till a man allows you to solve your problem.</p> <p>Unidentified woman: Sadly there is no security for a woman who has lost her male protector.</p> <p>Rahnavard: why shouldn't our women be safe in our society? Why are so many women killed? Why are so many women killed under the pretence of honor. Although, honouring the codes of chastity are not harmful if they are bound by law.</p>	<p>Mir Hossein Mousavi Second Campaign Video - 2</p>	<p>0:37</p>
<p>In a speech to university students</p> <p>Mousavi: "I am against the polygamy bill"</p> <p>He says this to a loud uproar of the crowd. While we hear the above words the footage that is shown in the background is him holding a piece of paper on which is listed: gender-based admission policies (<i>sahmieh bandi e jensiaty</i>), and women's rights amongst other things.</p>	<p>Mir Hossein Mousavi Campaign Video - Mehrjouyi</p>	<p>2:00</p>
<p>Young girls and boys chanting together:</p> <p>"Rahnavard, Rahnavard, stands for equality of men and women"</p>	<p>Mir Hossein Mousavi Campaign Video - Mehrjouyi</p>	<p>4:30</p>

Empirical Observations: <u>Women's Rights</u>	File Name	Time Stamp
<p>The video starts by Mousavi praising his wife's scholarly achievements and then he moves on to talk about women:</p> <p>Mousavi: The issue of women in our country is both extensive and multidimensional. There are certain discriminations and disenchantments, both from a legal perspective, and from the execution perspective. Also from an employment perspective. We have a large number of female university students, who seem to face enormous problems once they want to enter the labour market. They feel discriminated against in this respect. We similarly have huge problems when it comes to domestic women. Part of the solution is women should be present in high ranking decision making.</p>	Mousavi on Women	0:33
<p>Mousavi: " In my opinion women must be present in the cabinet"</p>	Mousavi on Women	2:06
<p>Rahnavard & Mousavi meet with Women's rights activists on the prophet's daughter Fatemeh's birthday. The voice over quotes Mousavi as follows.</p> <p>Mousavi: There are no differences between men and women when it comes to freedom and working towards achieving democracy, and everyone must march together on this path.</p> <p>Mousavi: I believe women play a critical role in the Green Movement. Women's movement is a part of the Green Movement. The future of the Green Movement is intertwined with all the democratic and justice-seeking movements including the women's movement.</p> <p>Mousavi: Women's issues in our country won't be solved unless they become a national problem and there should be no segregation between men and women. The gender segregation is the root of discrimination which renders the problem unsolvable. We cannot have a free and just society unless we solve the women's problems.</p>	Mousavi about Women on Hazrat e Fatemeh's Birthday	1:55
<p>Mousavi: Considering the turn of events in the past year, women and youth have a new understanding of themselves and a have renewed sense of identity. Their worldviews and thoughts have changed. Therefore a certain pain is felt that is related to this renewal of identity. Because our governing, legal and traditional structures are incompatible with this newly born identity. We have to study this issue.</p>	Mousavi about Women on Hazrat e Fatemeh's Birthday	2:55
<p>Mousavi: There are many things that under the name of Islam and securing family values, but in reality influenced by discriminatory gender views and legal issues, have created serious hurdles for women in the society.</p>	Mousavi about Women on Hazrat e Fatemeh's Birthday	3:15
<p>Mousavi: The concerns of Iranian women are the concerns of both men and women...Men and women's happiness are intertwined and we can only solve them by seeing them as one.</p>	Mousavi about Women on Hazrat e	

Empirical Observations: <u>Women's Rights</u>	File Name	Time Stamp
	Fatemeh's Birthday	
Mousavi: The faith of the Green Movement is tied to the women's movement in the future, and I don't think the Green Movement can achieve its goals without being accompanied by women every step of the way. The opposite is true too, meaning if we fail to make political change, women's conditions won't change either.	Mousavi about Women on Hazrat e Fatemeh's Birthday	4:27
<p>In response to a question about the Green Movement's strategy regarding some Friday Prayers' clerics about women's cover and eruption of earthquakes and also the resurgence of the Islamic Guidance crews:</p> <p>Mousavi: Certain events are happening in the society and certain decisions are being made that instead of solving problems they are after creating conflict. For example, our country is prone to earth quakes and parts of Tehran are on the quake line, which certainly is very dangerous and we have to stop it and the government is better off taking care of this, instead of mixing it to a dream or a deed like women's cover...this is diversion from truth that wants to keep people busy with such discussions and create division. Even the purpose of Islamic Guidance crews is not really for rectifying scantily covered women, they are largely meant to create diversion in minds.</p>	Mousavi about Women on Hazrat e Fatemeh's Birthday	4:45
Mousavi: The Green Movement is after justice and freedom and the execution of the law, and if we achieve those, other issues stemming from those will be solved too. The reason we are facing actions that are causing us pain, is because our conditions are not aligned with the constitution and human dignity and honour.	Mousavi about Women on Hazrat e Fatemeh's Birthday	5:35
Mousavi: They want to keep our minds busy.	Mousavi about Women on Hazrat e Fatemeh's Birthday	5:40

Empirical Observations: <u>Women's Rights</u>	File Name	Time Stamp
<p>In response to a question about the <i>One Million Signature Campaign for Repeal of Discriminatory Laws Against Women</i>, and noting the <i>Green Human Chain</i> formed last year from Tajrish square to Railroad square as symbol of reconciliation and national unity he goes on to say:</p> <p>Mousavi: I consider that day a great representation of the Green Movement. In previous years we have put forth "reconciliation" as our motto, which was a good motto for our national unity which will solve and even brings forward our problems. Some benefit from not reconciling. Currently in different formats including the families of political prisoners, different groups and movements have been created which didn't have the possibility to organize prior to the Green Movement. Women's movement is of those movements too. Some women used to participate in certain activities under the umbrella of the One Million Signature Campaign against discrimination, that were even criminalized maybe because they were conducting those activities apart from each other. But due to the colorful and diverse nature of the [Green] Movement, today they are joined with the extensive Green mass movement without the presence of suspicion against this group.</p>	Mousavi about Women on Hazrat e Fatemeh's Birthday	5:45
<p>Karoubi: I will say this bluntly here, Emam [Khomeini] was very sensitive to moves that would demotivate people from participating in the elections and would readily oppose them. At a point in time, it hasn't been forgotten, that it was said that women shouldn't participate and don't get elected into the Majlis. Emam readily said that women must participate in the elections and be able to get elected to the Majlis</p>	Mehdi Karoubi's First Televised Speech - Part 1 - May 25 2009	4:58
<p>Karoubi: We published our third campaign promise during the month of Farvardin which was about civil rights. Civil rights bound by the constitutional framework. Regarding ladies, regarding ethnicities, regarding the various religions that exist in Iran, regarding universities, regarding prisoners that people come to get into, pointless restrictions they place on people's lives and the bitter incidents [they have caused], pointless nuances, interfering in the private lives of families which Islam has so advised [against], civil rights in general bound by the constitutional framework or those principles of the constitution that are left vague.</p>	Mehdi Karoubi's First Televised Speech - Part 2 - May 25 2009	7:20
<p>All questions are directed at Karoubi.</p> <p>Jamileh Kadivar: Do you think forced <i>Hejab</i> on women is a wise idea? Has it worked? You are a cleric after all, do you think, based on Islamic principles and religious teachings, is it right to force hejab?</p> <p>Karoubi: I think we have to do two things. One thing is to remove the aggressive way because those haven't worked and in many cases they were counterproductive.</p> <p>Jamileh Kadivar: what about polygamy?</p> <p>Karoubi: Polygamy will destroy lives in our society for certain.</p>	Mehdi Karoubi Campaign Video - 1	5:16

Empirical Observations: <u>Women's Rights</u>	File Name	Time Stamp
Female Voice Over: If he [Karoubi] is victorious in the presidential elections, he intends to create an organization for the defence of human rights and civil rights and intends to study and correct the behaviours of governmental and national security institutions on a regular basis.	Mehdi Karoubi Campaign Video - 1	2:16
Female Voice Over: Karoubi considers solving women's problems an important and critical plans of his government and will try to execute the 6th Majlis's passed bill to join Iran to the [UN's] Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. He has certain plans to encourage and support none-governmental women's organizations and groups, and plans to have at least one female minister in his cabinet.	Mehdi Karoubi Campaign Video - 1	4:45

Empirical Observations: <u>Economy</u>	File Name	Time Stamp
Unidentified woman in chador: we were looking to return to an era where I can at least say class separation was minimal.	Mir Hossein Mousavi Campaign Video - 1	0:55
The clip shows a man on a bike with his child. He comes up the bus which carries Mousavi to complain of his employment and economic issues	Mir Hossein Mousavi Campaign Video - 1	5:00
Mousavi: When people's incomes shrink, when they don't have employment prospects, you can be sure these youth that see no light at the end of the tunnel, turn to drugs and foul behaviour (bad akhlaghi) and these types of crimes will spread. But when in a society clear [economic] goals are stated, and there is hope for future, which was the case during the war era despite all the hardship, I think all these foul behaviours could be drastically reduced.	Mir Hossein Mousavi Campaign Video - 1	6:25
The woman talking about how no job prospects and economic hardship have turned her son to drugs	Mir Hossein Mousavi Campaign Video - 1	7:35
Mousavi: I have described this [economic conditions] as turning a society based on higher values to a commercial society. In a commercial society everything becomes utility-based and monetary-based. Cultural values turn into market values and economic values where everything has a monetary price even human values are set a monetary value. There becomes a point for example, where a person bribes a member of the parliament \$5million Tomans to buy their vote. This is a consumerist society. The current situation with this way of looking at a society and with false promises, and superstitious and such are far from the [value based] era we had been through [at the beginning of revolution].	Mir Hossein Mousavi Campaign Video - 1	8:15
Unidentified woman: Excuse me Mr. Mousavi but for years we have been asking [the government] to solve the problem of unemployment. Employment should be for our own city first and then other cities. Not only this didn't happen, they brought in the Chinese. They fired thousands from domestic companies and brought in the Chinese [workers instead].	Mir Hossein Mousavi Campaign Video - 2	2:15
Mousavi: On one hand we export crude oil and on the other hand imported consumer goods are flooding our market at the cost of destroying our domestic production.	Mir Hossein Mousavi Campaign Video - 2	5:31
A scene in the northern provinces discussing how the tea industry is being destroyed because of excessive imports		6:40

Empirical Observations: <u>Economy</u>	File Name	Time Stamp
Mousavi: wealth distribution is both in our religious beliefs and [my] economic policy does not mean, obviously, that we would take money from one person's pocket by force and put it in another's. Our argument is that our collective economic policies should be designed in such a way that don't cause wide economic class gaps, and the middle class prospers so we can help the poor. But when over 50% of the society collapses into the lower classes it is impossible for the government to help the poor. Which is what is happening now.	Mir Hossein Mousavi Campaign Video - 2	7:08
<p>Unidentified young man #1: we have so many resources in this country, oil, gas, mining industry, what happened to those incomes? What happened to the \$260 million that was mostly Khatami's and Rafsanajani's governments' oil income?</p> <p>Unidentified young man #2: we have so many charity donation boxes (sandgh sadaghat), why does the government gives people handouts (sadagheh)? We don't want a handout, we want jobs.</p> <p>Unidentified young woman: The country's projects have been left incomplete because Iran has been sanctioned against. My father works on oil, gas and mixed cycle projects, and because of 4 mere screws, because Mr. Ahmadi Nejad doesn't want to build relations with others [countries], all the projects are sanctioned against. Why?</p>	Mir Hossein Mousavi Campaign Video - Mehrjouyi	4:08
Mousavi: I have come to advocate for the poor (<i>mostaz'afan</i>). Those who's backs are breaking under the pressures of inflation, and flawed economic policies have targeted their dignity.	Mir Hossein Mousavi Second Campaign Video - 1	1:40
Image reading: where are \$270 billion oil incomes?	Mir Hossein Mousavi Second Campaign Video - 1	4:49
Mousavi to a roaring crowd while he wears a green scarf: Iran's destiny is not poverty,	Mir Hossein Mousavi Second Campaign Video - 1	5:04
Mousavi (same speech as above): weakness in the national economy means humiliation in the world.	Mir Hossein Mousavi Second Campaign Video - 1	5:30
Mousavi: we are occupying our thoughts with rows outside [the country], mostly for domestic consumption, and have overlooked our vital interests in the region.	Mir Hossein Mousavi Second Campaign Video - 1	5:34
Mousavi: We ask, during these past years, what great mission have you accomplished considering you spent \$300 billion. 25% inflation means the downfall of social security. 25% inflation means addiction, foul behaviour. 25% inflation is like a tax the rich charge the poor. This is what the 'handout' economy (eghtesad sadagheyi) has inflicted on us.	Mir Hossein Mousavi Second Campaign Video - 1	5:42

Empirical Observations: <u>Economy</u>	File Name	Time Stamp
Mousavi: if old age pension must rightly increase, why on the election night? If teachers' back pays must be paid, why on the election night?	Mir Hossein Mousavi Second Campaign Video - 1	6:19
Mousavi: what employment outlook do our 3 million university students have? It is easy to kick start a project, it is easy to kick start a project, [repetition is intentional] securing the outcome is difficult.	Mir Hossein Mousavi Second Campaign Video - 1	7:25
Mousavi: Any policy that diminishes our national identity and our Iranian dignity and eminence is in the wrong.	Mir Hossein Mousavi Second Campaign Video - 1	7:54
Mousavi: Our people gave many martyrs because they believed in their future, they believed in the system's righteous directions.	Mir Hossein Mousavi Second Campaign Video - 1	8:33
Mousavi: we have come to investigate the lost billions.	Mir Hossein Mousavi Second Campaign Video - 2	4:50
Mousavi: Even if one <i>Ryal</i> is given to the people by the government, that is the people's right not a present to them.	Mir Hossein Mousavi Second Campaign Video - 2	4:53
Mousavi: when I was in the <i>North</i> , the discussion was that while the rice produced by Iranian farmers is left in the wear houses, Pakistan and India's Basmati rice is being sold at a lower price in the <i>Rasht</i> markets. On top of that they were also discussing oranges, saying our oranges are left unpicked on the trees and imported oranges such as Egyptian and so on are in the market and this is causing our fruit farmers to go bankrupt. They were talking about tea fields, I went to a tea farm where there were both tea farmers and tea specialists and I was in those green gardens and they showed me there how the fields are shrinking and talked about the problems they were facing. They were saying while there are over 180,000 metric tons of Iranian tea are left in the warehouses...our own markets are flooded with imported tea and this has eliminated the possibility of healthy competition and growth. The same problem appeared when I went to <i>Kerman</i> . Fruit farmers there were also telling me that their oranges are left [in the warehouse] while importing orange is increasing. Then I went to the silk industry, there I said the silk industry at some point was critical to the Safavid's economy. Shah Abbas was one of the major silk merchants in the country, who would both use silk imports to Europe for political purposes and also use it to find a way to preserve Iran's interests in the face of the Ottoman's threat.	Mir Hossein Mousavi Second Campaign Video - 2	7:25

Empirical Observations: <u>Economy</u>	File Name	Time Stamp
<p>Karoubi: Our second manifesto...was about oil shares...as we can see the large and unprecedented revenues that was at the disposal of the current honourable government in the past few years, hopefully they can explained what changes have they produced for our society with this unprecedented revenue where we sold oil at \$100 and \$120 [a barrel], it's obvious how much the revenue levels were. Inflation, unemployment, the high cost of living, and recession are things that people are fully familiar with. They don't need opinion polls and central bank benchmarks, which are their rights, they see their lives and how much it has changed. Therefore the oil shares as we detailed, which we are not going to get into how we're going to deal with them.</p>	<p>Mehdi Karoubi's First Televised Speech - Part 2 - May 25 2009</p>	<p>5:50</p>
<p>Karoubi: And another more important issue which is very very important to me, us, the government should oversea, the government shouldn't take over, the government should not interfere in the private sector and create limitations for them so much. The government should accommodate them, the government should create security for them so they can bring their capitals in with confidence and don't continue to take them outside [the country] and don't run away. This is the first point. Second we have many Iranians...we truly have many interested many Iranians all around the world who are willing to come and invest here and develop our economy, the government earns more taxes, earns more revenues, [the government] won't be reliant oil so much, won't use up, and sell and spend its capital so much. Next partnership with the foreign economies, and foreign investment, again we attract them and bring them in. First off professionals will come in, technology will come in, management will come in, we transfer our management to them, they transform their management to us, in all of this we will fully hold our national interests, our principles.</p>	<p>Mehdi Karoubi's First Televised Speech - Part 3 - May 25 2009</p>	<p>0:03</p>
<p>Karoubi: ...and if I spend time, my own shortcomings, create crisis-making and dump it on this or that person, please note what hurdles are the private banks facing in our country? They have even gone to the verge of getting arrested. In a country like this that certain high ranking individuals or legitimate powerhouses have to intervene and prevent a certain bank CEO's arrest. Can investment be done in something like this? Is there security? if we want economic development, if we want high inflation to not exist, if we want sometimes we have to increase inflation we have to make it up, we have to couple it with extra revenues so we can make up for the inflation.</p>	<p>Mehdi Karoubi's First Televised Speech - Part 3 - May 25 2009</p>	<p>4:45</p>

Empirical Observations: <u>Economy</u>	File Name	Time Stamp
<p>Karoubi: If we want everyone to be employed, we have no other way than to re-inforce the private sector and enter them into the job market. Naturally, we will oversee and we will take care, we have to do it so misuse doesn't happen, and that in itself doesn't create a new problem for us. And this is a very simple thing to do and it is regularly and frequently practiced.</p>	Mehdi Karoubi's First Televised Speech - Part 3 - May 25 2009	5:40
<p>Mohammad Najafi (questioning the candidate's stance on the following issue): ...one of the most important issues regarding higher education of the youth is the expenses of that education. Both those who study in state universities and some of them have to go away far from home to other cities and covering their expenses is difficult [for their families] or those in private universities whose primary concern is covering their tuition and expenses.</p> <p>Karoubi: / see how education affects people and families, and how difficult this burden is on them</p>	Mehdi Karoubi Campaign Video - 1	5:54
<p>Morteza Alviri: if you become the president, what do you think the first thing to do, to set this train in motion to get to the higher goal so in any case we could have an economically developed country, is going to be?</p> <p>Karoubi: My first thing to do, my first manifesto, the manifesto that I published in [the month of] Bahman, my first manifesto was to revive the [centre] for planning and management, which unfortunately got dissolved.</p>	Mehdi Karoubi Campaign Video - 1	6:35
<p>Gholamhossein Karbaschi: And I pointed out that you know the poverty line better than us, because you frequently specially deal with the veterans and martyrs (God's Heavens be upon them). In any case when this elections and the political discussions are over, at least 12 million of our population are poor. What are you going to do for them as a cleric president? (he says this while chocking up)</p> <p>Karoubi: When Mr. Karbaschi remembers things, he unwillingly gets affected, and becomes upset. The other day too in a meeting which they came to my office and had a meeting, he got upset again. (he says all this while the camera zooms on Karbaschi's face and his tears).the answer is the same, you are sure I alone can't say, I have to think about it and sit on it first, the solution is with all the factions who want to work with me, and even those who may not work with us but they still feel for these issues. Let's sit down and think, I am ready to spend all my energy for things like this...</p> <p>Karbaschi (jumping in): I'm sure you are like that, all I want to say is, in the position of the president let's set all considerations aside. Talking about the poor and justice is easy. But feeding off of their</p>	Mehdi Karoubi Campaign Video - 1	7:50

Empirical Observations: <u>Economy</u>	File Name	Time Stamp
share and not doing anything for them in the name of "we will be a world hero", saying things that end up putting more pressure on people, and not doing anything for them is not the decent thing to do.		
<p>Karbaschi (video continues from previous section, while showing Karbaschi's tears): in the position of the president, are you determined to use any tool in your disposal, even your reputation, for this purpose?</p> <p>Karoubi: I will definitely do this. First of all, I'm not a hero, first of all. Second, we have, as you know, a certain record and that I'm not dependant on fake heroism. and I will truly go into my own purview which is working as the country's president and solving problems, and I am willing, as your honour has seen, I, to free a prisoner, when I was the Majlis Speaker, I'd make a phone call to a colleague and he'd tell me you don't have to do this yourself, tell your office to call, you don't have to tell me, people's problems, people's lives, people's dignity and authority are really important to us</p>	Mehdi Karoubi Campaign Video - 2	0:01
<p>Karbaschi: in any case our main problem is the United States. If we can't enter the international political club and if we can't solve our problems, these issues, these problems' consequences will put more pressure on the people Mr. Karoubi. When you mention "our people's dignity", our people's dignity is their stomachs should be full. Poverty is befitting our leaders but they have to strive, at any price, so people are not poor.</p>	Mehdi Karoubi Campaign Video - 2	3:50
<p>Female voiceover: are you still asking yourself why is Mehdi Karoubi running for president? Maybe you remember in the last election Mehdi Karoubi promised that if he gets elected as the president, he will set a salary of 50,000 Tomans a month for all Iranians 18 and older.</p> <p>Esma'il Gerami Moghadam: is this the continuation of your last plan, when you stated 50,000 Tomans a month will be given to all Iranians 18 and older, and ...it is also a solution for many unemployment challenges, is this a continuation of that plan and a more completed version of it? If this is the case please explain a little.</p> <p>Karoubi: This time around I think it is more comprehensive, it's better, meaning we have made it more detailed and more clear.</p> <p>Female voiceover: This plan, of course, was mocked by the other incumbents and was considered impossible. But after the elections many economists agreed with it and experts reviewed and</p>	Mehdi Karoubi Campaign Video - 2	5:22

Empirical Observations: <u>Economy</u>	File Name	Time Stamp
completed it. Today this plan is completed under "assigning oil revenue shares to people", and is ready for execution.		
Female voiceover: Karoubi has other economic plans to, including exempting small businesses from taxes and reinforcing the private sector in the fields of production, commerce and services, through tax exemption and through partnership with private and public banks	Mehdi Karoubi Campaign Video - 2	7:01