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THE 2009 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN IRAN: FAIR OR FOUL?

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FARHAD KHOSROKHAVAR AND MARIE LADIER-FOULADI

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Abstract

Two major ideas are interwoven in this essay. The first is that fair elections under Ahmadinejad's government in Iran were highly improbable, even almost impossible. Still, the myth of fair elections was at the root of the Green Movement. Without it, the movement that shattered the legitimacy of the Islamic Regime would have been impossible. The second major idea is based on the close scrutiny of the electoral maps, not only in 2009 but also in 2005 and the years in between. The result is baffling: not only Ahmadinejad's victory was incomprehensible in light of these data but Mousavi's score was also highly unlikely because the two other candidates' votes were disproportionately minored in order to bring about a two-pronged electoral result that nothing seemed to justify, taking into account previous elections, presidential, municipal and parliamentarian.

Keywords

2009 Presidential elections, rigged elections, factional politics, theocracy, Conservatives/Reformists, Iranian electoral geography, electoral massive fraud

The major shift in the Iranian government since 2005

The Iranian presidential elections of 2009 raised hopes of peaceful change towards a less autocratic society by means of a new reformist president. The official declaration of its results caused huge manifestations mainly by younger generations, predominantly in the large cities of Iran, and in particular Tehran, that lasted on an almost daily basis for an entire week and then, sporadically, up to the anniversary day of the Islamic Republic in 19 February 2010. Vigorous repression (more than 70 people killed by *Bassij* or the Islamic militia and more than 4000 people imprisoned and tortured[1]) and the lack of effective leadership (Mir-Hossein MOUSAVI and Mehdi KARRUBI were put in quarantine and the intermediary leaders were imprisoned) put an end to the street demonstrations of the so-called Green Movement[2].

After the elections, the debate raged in Iran and in the West as to whether the elections were fair or rigged. In Iran, the overwhelming majority of those who defended the fairness of the elections were from among the circles of the conservative power holders. In the West, those who believed in the fairness of the elections mainly based their argument on the failure of their contradictors to prove their falsity through the official election results. The statistical numbers put forward by the partisans of falsehood and most of their arguments were rejected by their opponents, due to the incompleteness of the data or their disputable nature. The Iranian elections were defended by these people in the name of the "innocent unless proven guilty" principle: since one cannot mathematically prove the electoral fraud, there is no reason to contest the elections.

This essay is twofold. In the first place, we intend to show that the Ahmadinejad government's intent and purpose was, from its inception in 2005, to take control of the "republican" institutions of the Islamic Republic (the Parliament and the Office of the President). In order to achieve that goal, the government aimed to muzzle civil liberty and political freedom in the country. The 2009 Presidential elections were the last stage of a scenario that aimed at making the system foolproof to any opening in the style of the "Velvet Revolution" (*enqelab makhmaleen*)[3] based on non violent appropriation of power. Social and anthropological arguments are put forward to argue that one cannot apply the adage "fair elections unless proven the contrary" to Iran where, since Ahmadinejad's accession to power in 2005, all the countervailing instances have been marginalized or simply suppressed within the political system. The aim of the Hardliners has been to monopolize power by the suppression of the opposition, even the legal one.

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1 The National Iranian American Council stated that day that 32 people had died protesting so far (see for a non-exhaustive survey Wikipedia, Iranian Presidential Election, 2009).The green face book page gathered information on 170 people killed by the Islamic regime from June 2009 to June 2010 (see http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=124454&id=110169184077&ref=mf and created a list of 56 videos where we see people getting killed by the Islamic regime's agents : see http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=411946778874; Many people were also tortured. Testimonies of victims of rapes by the Islamic regime's agents in jail can be downloaded at: http://seculardemocracyiran.blogspot.com/2010/07/many-people-were-tortured-by-regime.html.

2 The green color was attributed to Mir-Hossein Mousavi by a mere haphazard during the electoral debates on the Iranian TV, the other candidates receiving blue, red and yellow colors. This was to facilitate their identification during the debate. Later on, the color was identified with Mousavi by his sympathizers and the entire movement was called Green Movement, first in reference to the color attributed to him in the TV debates and more and more, while the movement gathered momentum,in accordance to his putative Islamic legitimacy.

3 The notion of Velvet Revolution (*enghelab makhmalin* or *makhmali*) is used by the Iranian Hardliners, in reference to the peaceful overthrow of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia in December 1989, symbolizing the nonviolent transition from one political system to another. Reformists, according to this view, aim at peacefully overthrowing the Islamic Regime, replacing it with a democratic, pro-Western, and secular political system. Their aim is not to reform the system, but to overthrow it under the guise of reform.

The second part intends to show the high implausibility of some of the election results in 2009 in regard to former elections, particularly the 2005 presidential and the 2006 and 2008 municipal and legislative elections, according to the available statistical data. The same type of argument is put forward in regard to the highly improbable achievement of the other candidates, Mehdi KARRUBI and Mohsen REZAEE, besides Mir-Hossein MOUSAVI, in the 2009 presidential elections.

The inescapable conclusion is that the presidential elections in 2009 were unmistakably rigged in favor of Ahmadinejad.

Another major conclusion that can be drawn is about the nature of the political regime in Iran. The 2009 elections sealed the fate of the political system. Before them, many restrictions limited the citizens' freedom of choice: the elimination of those candidates by the Council of the Guardians who were not trusted by the regime, but also, intimidation or prosecution. But in spite of them, elections unmistakably represented social stakes: people took part in them in order to open up the political system, expressing their vote through the "republican" dimension of the Islamic regime, although the "theocratic" dimension greatly reduced this freedom of choice. The stakes gave birth to social movements and the parliamentary, as well as the presidential elections were more than mere political games by the elites of the regime. The 2009 Presidential elections eliminated the Reformists and made the future elections (like the parliamentary elections of March 2012) merely a factional strife, without any social stake: this time, no major issue in terms of political choice was at play and the elections became purely, exclusively factional. The relation between the grass root level in the society and the political system was thus broken for good, deeply shaking the legitimacy of the regime.

I. The twists and turns of the elections and the nature of the Iranian government

Since the election of Khatami in 1997, the theocratic branches of the Iranian State under the aegis of the Supreme Leader began to think of a system that would neutralize in the long run the "republican" tendencies of the Islamic Regime by reinforcing its autocratic dimension, under the aegis of the Rule of the Islamic Jurist (*Velayat faqih*). The view that an "Islamic Democracy" could take shape in Iran was rejected by the Hardliners of the regime who believe that Islam and Democracy are antithetical[4], and in particular by the Supreme Leader and the *Pasdaran* Army oligarchy who believe that Democracy, even in its limited form, would be the end of the Islamic Government (*Velayat Faqih*). To this autocratic view one should add the large economic assets put at the disposal of the limited ruling class without any supervisory instance. Concretely, the project meant eliminating the clout of the "republican" institutions based on popular vote, mainly the President and the Parliament by subordinating them to the theocratic power of the Islamic Governor (the Supreme Leader). Since Ahmadinejad took the reins of the executive power in 2005, Iran has deeply regressed in terms of political freedom and civil liberties: the media were censored, journalists were imprisoned (Iran has the highest per capita number of imprisoned journalists in the world[5]), critical books were forbidden (many that were allowed during the Khatami Presidency were simply put in a black list); many intellectuals were forced to leave the country (Akbar GANJI, Ramin JAHANBEGLOO, Shirin EBADI, Mohsen KADIVAR among others). The system intimidated the active members of the Iranian Diaspora visiting Iran by accusing them to be spies of the West and by incarcerating them (Ali SHAKERI, Haleh ESFANDIARI, Nazi AZIMA, Kian TAJBAKHCH, …) In this period, the reformist opposition within the parliament and NGOs were systematically stifled and in many cases reduced to silence through

[4] See Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Inside Jihadism, Understanding Jihadi Movements Worldwide*, Paradigm Publishers, The Yale Cultural Sociology Series, Boulder, London, 2009, the section Shiite Hyper-Hardliners and their Rejection of Democracy,

[5] According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (http://www.cpj.org/) in 2010, Iran, with 34 journalists behind the bars is on parity with China (but the latter has a 15 times higher population). Iran is, per capita, the first country in the world for repressing the journalists.

intimidation, repression and the use of the judicial system, under the aegis of the Supreme Leader. An entirely new policy was implemented that excluded the political and cultural elite that grew up under Khatami and was in favor of a more open political system. Ethnic repression[6] and labor crackdown reached the highest levels since Ayatollah Khomeini's death in 1988. Contrary to the Khatami period when the Supreme Leader's office, the Council of Guardians, the *Pasdaran* Army and the Revolutionary Foundations were at loggerheads with the government and the reformist parliament in matters related to the freedom of the press, with Ahmadinejad the entire State apparatus has been mobilized to repress the civil society. Many movies were censored or banned; social movements were repressed: the students movement was bridled by arrests and barring of activist students from the university or by their being jailed and tortured; women fighting for gender equality were mistreated, jailed and put under financial stress on bail.

Within the State apparatus, those institutions like the Organization (for the Coordination) of the Budget (*Sazeman Barnameh*) that impeded the government's autocracy were disbanded[7]. On top of it, many themes, like the pollution of the towns and cities, and particularly Tehran, became "security" matters and its news, subject to supervision and censorship. This tendency became by far more stringent after the 2009 Presidential elections.

The dissension between different government bodies in the Khatami era gave leeway to the people, in particular the new group of students who became the standard bearers of freedom, mostly acting under the banner of the Islamic student association, The Bureau of the Implementation of Unity *(daftar tahkim vahdat*). The students, with more than 3.5millionmembers (around 5% of the society), grew in number under the Islamic Regime: Iran's population has been multiplied by around two since the Islamic Revolution of 1979 whereas the number of students has been multiplied by more than 12[8]. The secularization of this major group and the wearing out of the Islamic utopia have been the key factors in mobilizing them for the sake an open society in Iran. The autocratic nature of the government has been reinforced by the marginalization of the Reformists and by their gradual exclusion from the political field during the Ahmadinejad period from 2005 onwards.

The 2009 presidential elections are as well the last act in a long series aiming at neutralizing the Khatami period's contestation within the framework of the Islamic theocracy, by new generations of middle and lower middle class urbanites, mainly students (they are the most formidable group opposing the government and being able to organize themselves within the university), educated women (they reject the legal inferiority imposed on them by the Islamic Theocracy), the new intellectuals and affiliated groups (a large number of urban dwellers, primarily middle class), the ethnic groups (Iranian Kurds, Arabs, Lurs, Baluchs and Turks) and more generally, the new middle classes.

The election of Ahmadinejad in 2005 was coeval with the implementation of new political conditions that would render in the future the election of an opposition candidate impossible. The first policy was to rein in the civil society: journals and newspapers were closed down. The opposition

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6 See International Federation for Human Rights, IFHR: Repression against religious and ethnic minorities in Iran, August 2010.

7 In 1384 (2005-2006) Ahmadinejad dissolved the Sazeman Barnameh and justified his decision due to that organization's imperialist, American origins, during the Pahlavi Regime. This made the behavior pattern of that organization anti-Islamic. He attributed the loss of autonomy of the Iranian agriculture to this institution and proposed to give a new impetus to it by integrating it into an Islamic organization directly under his own leadership. Anti-Westernism has been a leitmotiv for legitimizing the most absurd decisions during Ahmadinejad's presidency. See http://www.rajanews.com/detail.asp?id=29411

8 For these changes and the demographic ones see Marie-Ladier-Fouladi *Population et politique en Iran. De la monarchie à la République islamique,* Coll. Les Cahiers de l'INED n° 150, Paris, INED / PUF, 2003.

groups leading members (like the Movement for Freedom, *Nehzat Azadi*[9], headed by Ebrahim YAZDI) were imprisoned.

Ahmadinejad's government innovated in another field as well: it systematically made use of untruthful statements in its public statements. Never before, false statistics, blasting and boastful declarations about the bright situation of the economy and the democracy in Iran were made to this extent with such cynicism by the legal authorities in the Islamic Republic. According to his government, never before inflation had been so low, employment so high[10], social justice so widespread and economic development so dynamic. Total contempt for reality and systematic falsification of the statistical data became one of the leading traits of the new government. Within it, fictitious doctorates were attributed to the elites without any restraint or disapproval[11] and plagiarism became largely tolerated[12].

In almost every respect in the public statements by government authorities calumnious declarations with inaccurate and even erroneous data have been used in order to discredit the opponents or to denounce Western conspiracy against Iran[13]. At the same time, the President publicly denied the existence of repression in the country[14].In his statements asked the "disquieting statistics" not to be divulged to the public in order not to spread the feeling of misery among people[15].

Under Ahmadinejad's presidency Iran has become one of the worst countries on human rights issues in the world against women, religious and ethnic minorities, journalists, university professors, trade union leaders, human rights defenders, and political prisoners[16]. Iran's record in condemning and putting to death prisoners is the worst in the world in terms of the rate of per capita executions[17]. Not

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9 See Iran Human Rights Voice http://www.ihrv.org/inf/?p=3583

10 According to some specialists, the rate of unemployment has never been so high during the last 21 years. See Fereidoun Khavand, http://www.radiofarda.com/articleprintview/2235693.html, 2.12.2010. Some specialists believe that the statistics of unemployment in Iran should at least be multiplied by two in order to have a realist picture of it. See Fereidoun Khavand's statements to Radio Farda in http://www.radiofarda.com/articleprintview/2203797.html, 28.10.2010.

11 Ahmadinejad's interior minister Ali KORDAN claimed to have received an honorary doctorate from the Oxford University. This claim was denied by that university and many of his university degrees were bogus. He was impeached by the Iranian parliament in November 2008. The same holds true with Kamran DANESHJOO, the Minister of Science, who claimed to have a PhD from the the Imperial College in London and from the Amirkabir University in Tehran, both of which proved false.

12 The Minister of Science Kamran Daneshjoo copied large parts of the data of another scholar's article in his scientific paper, as revealed by the scientific journal Nature. See http://blogs.nature.com/news/thegreatbeyond/2009/09/exclusive_paper_authored_by_ir.htm. Springer publisher retracts Daneshjoo's paper on September 2009. See http://blogs.physicstoday.org/newspicks/2009/09/springer-retracts-paper-by-ira.html

13 For instance, on 18th of November 2010 Mohammad Javad Larijani, the head of the human rights council in the Iranian judiciary, in his condemnation of the UN's resolution denouncing human rights' abuses by Iran declared that Neda Agha Soltan, the young woman killed by the Bassij forces in the street demonstrations of June 22, 2009 was put to death by the British secret forces MI6 in Iran. See International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, 23.06.2010, www.iranhumanrights.org/2010/06/larijani-misrepresents-hrc-session/

14 See Letter from Tehran, After the Crackdown, Talking to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad—and the opposition—about Iran today, by Jon Lee AndersonAugust 16, 2010 where he sates: "Everyone is free (in Iran)" http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/08/16/100816fa_fact_anderson#ixzz17suxorIS

15 See Reza Jamali, "bar khord jomhuri eslami ba amar janbeh ideologic darad" (the attitude of the Islamic Republic with the Statistics is ideologically motivated), see http://www.radiofarda.com/articleprintview/2200703.html

16 See the United Nations' report: *The situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, 15 .09.2010, sheet A/65/370.

17 See http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/Rapport_Iran_final.pdf

only adults, but also minors have been systematically put to death[18]. As for the freedom of the Press, Iran is one of the most repressive countries, being the 175th among 178 most repressive ones in 2010, regressing from 2009 when it was the 172th, again in regression from the years 2007 and 2008 when it was the 166th and 2006, when it was the 162nd[19].

In this context, one ought to put a simple question: how could a government that has been fighting against all the manifestations of political freedom hold fair elections by acknowledging the opposition's right in a situation where the supervising institutions were in its own hands?

Ahmadinejad government realized a threefold program during his term in office between 2005 and 2009:

- it accomplished the transformation of the Interior Ministry into a repressive institution. This ministry, once integrated into the Hardliner's policies, extended a helping hand to the other repressive organizations to curb civil society freedom. This ministry was attuned to the Judiciary and the Council of Guardians to monitor the elections according to Ahmadinejad's interests. During Khatami's Presidency (1997-2005), the Interior Ministry was on the side of the Reformists and in spite of its weakness, could provide a countervailing power against the Judiciary and the Council of the Guardians. This ended with Ahmadinejad's government in 2005.
- Through billion dollars contracts, Ahmadinejad put the economic and political clout much more than before, at the disposal of the *Pasdaran* army and made it all-powerful to repress any attempt at denouncing the hegemony of the Hardliners.
- Ahmadinejad efficiently bridled the relative autonomy of the press and the civil society movements like the Student and the Intellectuals' Movements. It put shackles on the opposition political parties and imposed on them self-censorship.

In this situation, the possibility of fair elections was a wishful thinking.

Still, the myth of possible fair elections gave birth to a powerful social movement, the Green Movement that shook the very foundations of the Islamic theocracy. The movement succeeded in delegitimizing the Islamic regime in the eyes of the overwhelming majority of the citizens and the world public opinion.

If Ahmadinejad's government was so repressive, one might put the following question: how could it allow the Green Movement to unfold by encouraging it at its outset, urging the people to flow into the street and vote for their candidates?

The answer is that the Islamic Regime made two big mistakes, in part due to its contempt for the citizens. The power holders believed that they could call the voters to demonstrate in the streets and then, once their goals achieved, the very same crowd would bow to them and leave the streets. The elections, as the legitimizing factor of the Theocratic regime became the more important as the new Obama Administration changed its attitude and challenged the Islamic Republic on its own premises, namely its capacity to be its interlocutor as the legitimate representative of the Iranian people. The first major mistake made by the regime was the televised debates between the incumbent President and his contenders. They gave the foretaste of freedom to a new generation that had given up the Islamist utopia and looked for its entry into the political arena as full-fledged citizens. The second key fault was the few weeks before the elections in which the large cities' youth experienced the effervescence of huge gatherings without the restrictions of the Islamic mores and the repressive segregation policies

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[18] See Mariam Manzuri, "bazgasht be tarikh, ravaj dobarehe'edamhaye grouhi" (return to history, the return to the group executions (in Iran), part 3, 29.09.2010 http://www.printthis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?action=cpt&title.

[19] See Reporters Without Borders 2010 report on the freedom of the media. Even by taking into account the minor variations in the number of the countries in the report, the conclusion of Iran's place as one of the worst in the world for the freedom of the media is inescapable.

imposed by the *Bassij* brigades on young men and women. What was a desire became a right, exercised during few weeks with the utmost intensity, up to the early morning every day. The mobilization was a political and cultural one and the denial, after the elections, of truth was regarded by many as a contemptuous attitude on the part of the government, even a denial of honor, within a political arena that had changed its nature for few weeks. The Green Movement, destined to support the Islamic Regime and enhance its legitimacy worldwide, became the social manifestation of the Islamic Theocracy's repressive nature.

II. The 2009 Presidential election: an autopsy

Ahmadinejad's supposedly crushing victory in the Presidential elections of June 2009 with more than 62% of the votes in the first round was seen as highly problematic by many people, among whom the sympathizers of Mir-Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karrubi, the two main reformist contenders against the incumbent president Ahmadinejad, but also the supporters of Mohsen Rezaee, the other Hardliner contender. Preliminary statistical analysis of the outcome of the vote by some specialists inferred the fraudulent nature of the elections[20]. Others pointed to the fact that Ahmadinejad benefited from the votes of his staunch followers and his victory was not fraudulent but outright, due to his popular base[21].

Thus we must sketch out all the tracks that raise questions about the validity of ballot's results and therefore the re-election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. To do that, we first present the main characteristics of the Islamic Republic's electoral procedure as well as the additional means that Ahmadinejad put at his disposal in order to increase his chances of winning the 2009 presidential election. Secondly the major points of objections raised by Ahmadinejad's Reformists contenders will be analyzed as well as the legal and political arguments of both the Guardian Council and the Interior Ministry for refuting the accusations of fraud. Finally, the electoral maps of the 2005 and the 2009 presidential ballots will be analyzed. Given that generally the electoral behavior remains relatively stable, we expect a correlation between votes and the electoral geography of four candidates of the 2009 election. The comparative analysis of the electoral maps will provide solid grounds to scrutinize the 2009 presidential election; therefore will give precious clues about the massive fraud.

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[20] See Ansari, A., Berman D. and Rintoul, T. 2009, Preliminary Analysis of the Voting Figures in Iran's 2009 Presidential Election, Chatham House and the Institute of Iranian Studies, University of St. Andrew. 21 June 2009,MENAP PP 2009/01:http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/publications/papers/view/-/id/755/; MaziarParizi, "Le miracle de l'élection présidentielle de juin 2009", in La revue Française de Science Politique, Vol. 60, N° 5, pp. 927-949 in which the author underlines between 5 and 7 million suspect votes in favor of Ahmadinejad; see also Boudewijn F. Roukema:"Benford's Law Anomalies in the 2009 Iranian Presidential Election", Submitted to the Annals of Applied Statistics, June 2009. All these approaches proceed through a statistical view of the reality, the sociological aspect being at best marginal.

[21] See Brill, E. A. 2010, Did Mahmoud Ahmadinejad Steal the 2009 Iran Election?, July 13. http://www.campaigniran.org/casmii/index.php?q=node/9757; Leveret F. and Mann Leveret H., 2010, «Who's Really Misreading Tehran?», in Foreign Policy, 14 June. http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/06/14/whos_really_misreading_tehran. Brill's view was largely inspired by the detailed report of the Council of Guardians of July the 16th, 2009 and the response of the Interior Ministry on June the 23rd 2009 that refuted the recriminations of Mousavi. Brill's reasoning is juridical and is based on the fact that Iran is a State based on a law. All our reasoning intends to show the contrary: Ahmadinejad's State in Iran, more than any other period in the Islamic Republic is a State of arbitrary domination by a small oligarchy tending to become a dictatorship.

1. The electoral procedure

A. The organizing authorities of the elections and their prerogatives

According to the electoral laws, the Guardian Council (the 99th principle of the Constitution) and the Interior Ministry are in charge of the organization and supervision of the elections. Between 1980 and 1990, this Council supervised the regularity of the vote, according to that principle. But in 1991 the Council proposed a new interpretation of the 99th principle, imposing the notion of *nezarat-e estesvabi* (the just supervising): it granted to itself the right to refuse the candidates for election if their Islamic credentials, according to the Council's view, were not adequate. In this manner, all those who belonged to a group that was "un-Islamic" to the Council's view could be eliminated without any further justification. The Council became since then a redoubtable machine for the elimination of those candidates that seemed non-trustable to the Hardliners. The Islamic Parliament, made up mainly by the conservatives, voted in favor of this view in 1995 by modifying the article 3 of the legislative elections, allowing thus the Guardian Council to exert discretionary supervision on the entire electoral process, implying the acceptance or refusal of the candidates at will. For instance, in 2004, it invalidated the candidacy of half of the incumbent members of the parliament who asked for the renewal of their election. Or, in the elections, the Council invalidates sometime hundreds of thousands of votes, mainly in the large districts like Tehran, when the results of the election do not fit its views[22].

As for the Interior Ministry, in every election it builds up a "National Bureau of Elections" *(setad entekhabat keshvar)* directed by someone designated by the Minister and under his aegis. In close cooperation between the Interior Ministry and the Guardian Council, the governors, prefects and other local authorities constitute the "executive councils"*(hey'athayeejra'ee)* that supervise the candidates' judiciary past and credentials and validate or refuse their candidacy. Two major conditions are mentioned for the acceptance of a candidate:

-*to have faith in Islam and a real engagement towards it*;

-*to have faith in the foundations of the Islamic Republic and its Constitution*.

These conditions are not objectively defined through verifiable criteria and therefore, the members of the "executive councils" decide, according to their own views and interpretations, whether the candidate fulfills those two conditions or not. The members of the executive councils closely follow the views of the Guardian Council. For instance, in the 2008 legislative elections[23], the executive councils invalidated some 3200 over 7168 candidates, mostly among the reformist candidates, many of them well known and some, incumbent MPs. The hemorrhage was so important that Hachemi Rafsanjani and Mohammad Khatami, the two previous Presidents and Mehdi Karrubi, the previous President of the Parliament asked the intervention of the Supreme Leader who succeeded in convincing the Guardian Council to approve the candidacy of 4954 candidates that is 69% of the registered candidates. The established laws are of little avail and the arbitrariness of their interpretation allows the Guardian Council to reject or accept a candidate according to the wishes of the ruling oligarchy, at the top of which is the Supreme Leader. This is one of the major features of the electoral procedure in Iran: many candidates are eliminated before reaching the voting poll, due to the clout of the Guardian Council that makes a fair election impossible. Before any vote is cast, the pre-selection of the candidates tips the balance in favor of those singled out by the oligarchy, according to the conjuncture.

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22 See Ladier-Fouladi M., 2009, *Iran Un monde de paradoxes, Nantes*, l'Atalante, coll. Comme un accordéon, 347 p.

23 See Marie-Ladier Fouladi, "La face cachée des législatives iraniennes de 2008", in La Vie des idées, July 30th 2008, http://www.laviedesidees.fr/La-face-cachee-des-legislatives.html.

As for the candidates' representatives in the polling stations, up to the year 2000, in accordance with the articles 80 to 93 of the electoral law, the Guardian Council had the prerogative to monitor all the electoral processes through the Surveillance committees from the local to the central stations. The Sixth legislature (where the majority was with the Reformists) in the year 2000 succeeded to vote for a single article stipulating that the candidates wielded the right to have their representatives in the polling stations in order to watch the electoral process and in particular, supervise the counting of the votes. According to this law the candidates had to present their representatives to the prefects and governors in the districts at least 5 days before the elections and the latter should deliver them the authorization at least 48 hours before the polling day. But their presence is not compulsory and the voting can begin even in their absence. That is why in the Statement number 22 where the electoral process is recorded there is no box for the signature of the candidates' representatives.

This procedure which existed before Ahmadinejad highlights that the Republic Islamic has never provided the necessary devices to ensure the transparency of elections. The Iranian electoral procedure is indeed particularly opaque and ambiguous and offers a wide scope to falsify the elections and rig the votes. It is up to the authorities whether use or not these "options". For instance, on the occasion of the 1997 presidential election, the balance of power between the two opposite factions were fairly tight so that Khamenei and Rafsanjani decided by interposed speeches to let the ballot boxes speak[24]. As well as in the 2000 legislative and in the 2001 presidential elections, while the Reformists who were still popular and the balance of power was in their favor, the Hardliners could not use these "options" to rig the ballots. From the 2003 municipal election, the Hardliners who could finally pull themselves together began to regain the control of the electoral procedure and use its various "options" as confirmed by the ballots held since 2004.

B. Additional means that Ahmadinejad put at his disposable

Despite this powerful lever, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad felt compelled to set up additional devices in order to control and direct at his will the ballot. After the2008 legislative elections, he replaced the Interior Minister by someone closer to him and in March 2009, he changed for the third time since 2006 the director of the National Bureau of Elections, appointing Kamran DANESHJOO, one of his closest lieutenants.

In October 2008, with the approval of the Supreme Leader, he incorporated 4000 new members into the body of the "Political guides" *(hadiyan siyasi)*[25]. From then on the body of the "political guides" comprised 12000 *Pasdaran* and *Bassijis* whose formal task was to encourage people to take part in the votes. But in reality, their task is to push people to vote for the Supreme Leader's candidate, as clearly confirmed the daily Keyhan. In its editorial of August 19, 2009, it is explained that there were "manufacturer of vote" (*ra'ysazan*) who played a key role in the election of Ahmadinejad in 2005: These *Bassijis"spontaneously rallied to travel all over the country up to the remotest villages, in order to bring to the people the message of change."*

Ahmadinejad invigorated the machinery to secure the vote of the people in his favor through the *Pasdaran* Army.

C. The electors and voter turnout

In order to be a voter in Iran, one has to be an Iranian citizen and sane. The minimal age for voting is generally 16 years, but the government decides to lower or increase it in the last minute, according to

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[24] See the Rafsadjnai's speech at Friday prayer on May 16, 1997 and Khamaeni's speech on May 21, 1997 on the eve of the close of the electoral campaign period, quoted in Ladier-Fouladi M., 2009, *Iran Un monde de paradoxes, op. cit.*

[25] A paramilitary's organization created in 2003 within the *Pasdaran* Army.

its views. For instance in the 2000 legislative poll, this age was set at 17, then in the 2005 presidential elections, 15 and in the 2008legislatives election, at 18.

In Iran, there is neither electoral roll nor voter registration card. The voters can vote wherever they like, provided they present their identity card, their identity booklet being stamped by the authorities, their forefinger being tainted with indelible ink. This allows the government to register the votes, without any possible supervision at the local or regional level (many towns registered more than 100% votes, the government alleging the voters from other regions to have cast their votes in those districts). Furthermore, the pre-printed ballots with the name of the candidates do not exist in Iran. Voters have to transcribe the names and codes corresponding to the candidate of his choice on the virgin voting paper specifically designed and printed by the Ministry of Interior on the occasion of each ballot. It goes without saying that this process leads to many errors of various kinds (names incorrect, illegible or incomplete of candidates, etc.) and, consequently, provides great opportunities for manipulation of ballots cast.

Since there is no electoral roll, the Interior Ministry's National Office of Elections has to use the population census data (every decade, the last one being 2006) in order to calculate the number of Iranian citizens of legal voting age. The turnout rate is then the ratio between the number of votes cast and the number of estimated legal voting age Iranian citizens. Up to 2005 the Interior Ministry's estimates were based on the statistics provided by the Statistical Centre of Iran. But since then, it has recourse particularly to the data provided by the Office of Registration and Records *(sazeman sabt ahval)*, whose direction is ideologically very close to the Hardliners, to make an estimate of the number of Iranian citizens of legal voting age. Now, this Office used to use its own statistics which are not published, are unverifiable and subject to manipulation. According to our estimates[26] the latter's estimates show a gap of 3 to 6 million with those of the Statistical Centre of Iran. By under-estimating the number of potential electors, the government artificially increases the turnout rate. Few examples: in the 2009 presidential elections, the Interior Ministry declared 46.2 million the number of Iranian citizens of legal voting age, while, according to our calculation, their number was 51.3 million, that is 5 million more (10% of the electorate). After the election, the Interior Ministry declared the number of votes cast being 39.3 million[27]; therefore from its perspective the turnout rate was 85%. Assuming that 39.3 million actually voted, according to our estimate, the turnout rate would be around 76%. On top of that, those 5 million "potential electors" could be used by the government in a "phantom vote", cast in the ballots in its favor, under no surveillance by independent observers.

All in all, the lack of electoral roll, the fallacious number of Iranian citizens of legal voting age, constantly changing legal voting age and the lack of serious supervision by non-governmental bodies make indeed the entire electoral system extremely suspicious. In the absence of representatives of opposing candidates at polling station, it is obvious that members of the executive councils could influence voters and particularly had their hands free to rig the votes cast at the time of counting.

2. The major flaws of the 2009 ballot

Just after the declaration of the election results, the defeated candidates Mousavi and Karrubi protested that many of their representatives were denied access to polls in order to supervise its regularity either because they were not delivered the necessary documents in time or their documents were flawed or, in spite of the regularity of their documents, under unqualified pretexts. The Guardian Council's response indeed was too short; it just repeated the statement of the Interior Ministry according to

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[26] Our estimates are based on an extrapolation of the two last Iranian censuses of 1996 and 2006 by means of the demographic growth rate between these two censuses. The Afghan immigrants, who have no right to vote, were naturally taken into account in this calculation.

[27] It goes without saying that there is no way to check the statistics on votes cast, declared by the Interior Ministry.

which Mir-Hossein Mousavi had asked for 45692 cards for all the voting polls and was delivered only 40676, Mehdi Karrubi had obtained the 13506 cards he had asked for and Mohsen Rezaee had received the 5421 cards he had demanded, and finally Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had received the 33058 cards he had claimed. According to the Interior Ministry it had put at the candidates' disposal a website and those who did not receive their cards had not filled in the documents on time. Neither the Guardian Council nor the Interior Ministry provided an explanation concerning the erroneous cards or those issued late. Moreover, so far they have not yet provided the documents showing that all of these cards were actually submitted on time to their owners and they contained no error.

After the election, according to the Guardian Council, few hundred representatives recognized the regularity of the vote, which makes up for around 2% of them, probably many of them being Ahmadinejad's representatives[28].

Another bone of contention is the number of the ballot papers. Considering the number of potential electors around 46.2 million, the Interior Ministry had printed 58.8 million of voting papers (i.e. 12.6 million more than the total number of Iranian citizens of legal voting age), with distinct serial numbers for each of the 30 Iranian provinces. Still, the day of the ballot (on June 12th), according to the Interior Ministry, due to the shortage of the voting papers in some polling stations 2 million new ones were printed, this time without any serial number, and therefore, not traceable[29].The total number of ballots papers printed was then 60.8 million. Now, assuming that 39.3 million voters had actually voted the 58.8 million ballot papers printed before the ballot should be widely and logically sufficient. So why the Interior Ministry instead of dispatching the ballot papers, which were stored in the offices of each prefecture and sub-prefecture, decided to print on the polling day 2 million extra ballot papers and transport them to the polling station in Tehran and in other cities[30]? The question is of great importance, all the more so according to the Guardian Council, after the election some 20.7 million ballot papers remained unused and therefore were stored[31].

The day following the elections, the Supreme Leader ayatollah Khamenei publicly congratulated Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, thus placing the public before the "fait accompli", denying de facto the right to contest the results by the defeated candidates. Again, on the 19th of June, he reiterated his support for the incumbent candidate and referred to the fact that Mousavi's score was by 11 million votes behind that of Ahmadinejad, denying a possibility of a fraud of that scale. Against this background, the Guardian Council, subordinated to the Supreme Leader[32], could not decently recognize the irregularities of the elections as irremediable, in frontal opposition to the Supreme Leader. It ordered the recounting of 10% of the votes, which was opposed by the two candidates Mousavi and Karrubi who underlined, among others, the partiality of the Guardian Council whose prominent members (in particular ayatollah Jannati, its head) had taken sides in favor of Ahmadinejad before the presidential elections. On June the 29th of 2009, the Guardian Council approved the latter's election.

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28 This is in contradiction to what Mr. Brill, one of the major defenders of the regularity of the 2009 elections claims: « At local polling stations all across Iran, tens of thousands of observers selected by Mir-Houssein Mousavi personally monitored the voting all day long and closely watched the vote counting after the polls closed. Not one of Mousavi's 40676 registered observers complained that day that he had been turned away or prevented from observing any activity at his polling station »

29 Brill omits to mention this point, curiously giving his satisfaction to the Iranian government for having organized an equitable and transparent election in 2009.

30 These cities are Qom, Isfahan and some in Eastern Azarbaïjan.

31 Insofar as only the Guardian Council and the Interior Ministry have access to these documents, it is impossible to check them.

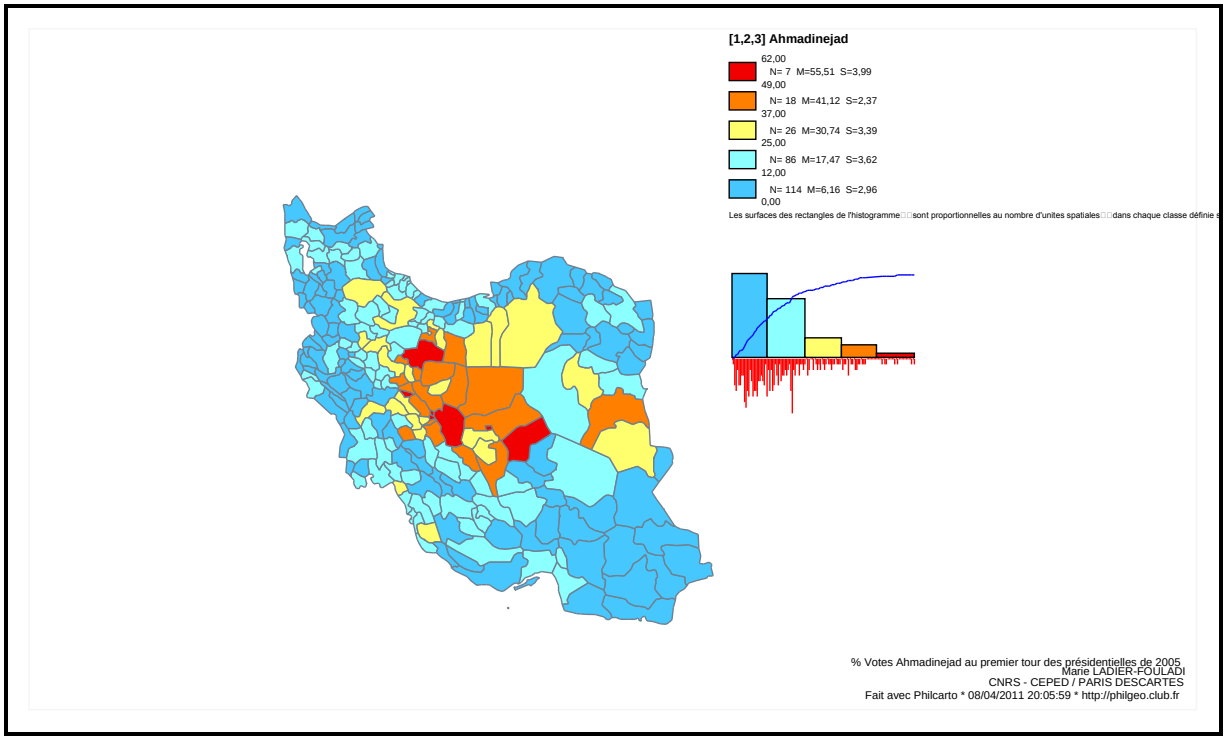
32 Out of the 12 members of the Guardian Council half are directly nominated by the Supreme Leader. The other 6 are nominated by the vote of the Parliament among those proposed by the Head of the Judiciary, himself nominated by the Supreme Leader. The Guardian Council is thus entirely subordinated to the Supreme Leader.

3. The electoral geography of the first round of the 2005 presidential elections

One can compare the 2009 election to that of 2005. Given the relatively stable patterns of voting behavior over the course of several elections, we expect some concordance between the votes and the electoral geography of candidates supported by the Hardliners and the Reformists. It is therefore important to analyze first the electoral geography of the first round of the 2005 presidential elections. One can presume irregularity and fraudulent results if the differences are of too large a magnitude between the two periods, separated only by four years. In 2005, out of more than thousand candidates, eleven were authorized by the Guardian Council to take part in the elections and seven out of them effectively participated in them. Three were Hardliners (Mahmoud AHMADINEJAD, Ali LARIJANI and Mohammad Baqer QALIBAF), two Reformists (Mehdi KARRUBI and Mostafa MOEEN), one close to Reformist (Mohsen MEHRALIZADEH) and finally one "Moderate" (Akbar HASHEMI RAFSANJANI). Except the latter, the others were taking part for the first time in the presidential elections. The minimum age for the voters was lowered to 15 and according to the Interior Ministry; the number of the number of Iranian citizens of legal voting age was 46.7 million (according to our calculation, 50 million). The participation rate to the elections was 62.8% according to the Ministry (59.3% in our estimate).

Among the Hardliner candidates Ahmadinejad obtained 20% of the votes (5.7 million) and was qualified for the second round. The votes in his favor were quite concentrated in the Centre and the East of the country (map1).

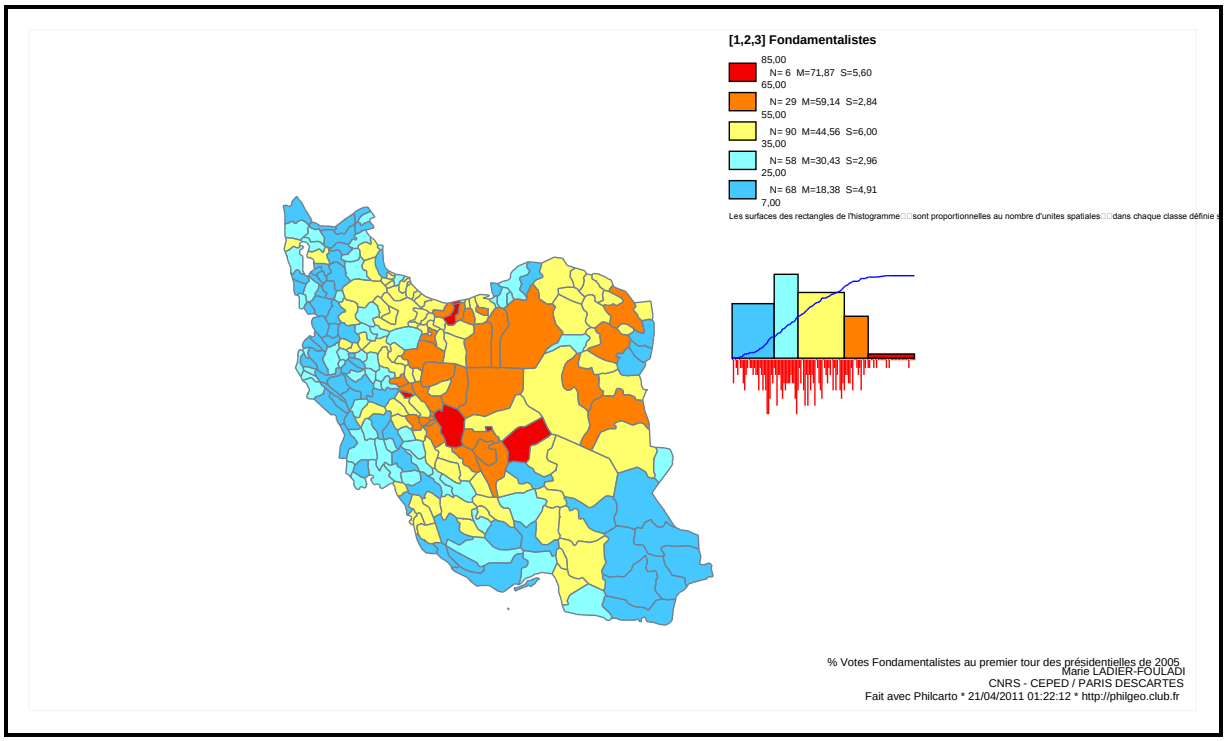
Map 1:
Percent of votes collected by M. Ahmadinejad in the first round of the 2005 presidential election



He led the way in 9 provinces, the most important one being Semnan (North) of which he is a native, Tehran (North-Centre), Markazi (Centre), Isfahan (South-Centre) and Yazd (South-Centre). He achieved a very mediocre score in the North-Western provinces where he had been vice-governor or prefect in the early 1990s. Those who had a concrete experience of his political action did not vote for him! He earned most of his votes in those regions in which the *Pasdaran* Army's activities were

paramount (these are regions where major *Pasdaran* Army garrisons are present or large economic projects are implemented by *Khatam of Anbiya* branch of that army or other revolutionary organizations)[33]**.** Since the results of the votes are by whole districts (*sharestan*), it is impossible to know the share of the votes in his favor in rural and urban zones within the same department. The two other Hardliner candidates benefited from the support of the *Pasdaran* Army in the North Eastern regions, South Centre and part of the Northern and North Western regions. The Hardliner vote (11.5 million, 40.4% of ballots cast) defines the electoral geography of those regions where the military-financial network of the *Pasdaran* Army is the determining factor for the electoral success of this faction (map2).

Map 2: Percent of votes collected by the three Hardliners in the first round of the 2005 presidential election



The Hardliners made headways in the regions where their predecessors had already got honourable scores in the 2001 presidential ballot. These are developed regions of the North East, North, Centre and part of the South, where, for instance, the percentage of extended families is generally low (Map 3) and the gap between boys and girls aged 6-14 years old in terms of schooling is almost nil or even negative to the detriment of the boys (Map 4)[34].Given the attachment of the Hardliners to the traditional Islamic values, one would have expected to find them prominent rather in those districts where traditional behavior predominates, precisely in peripheral regions. The votes cast in favor of the Hardliners do not match the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of electors in these regions.

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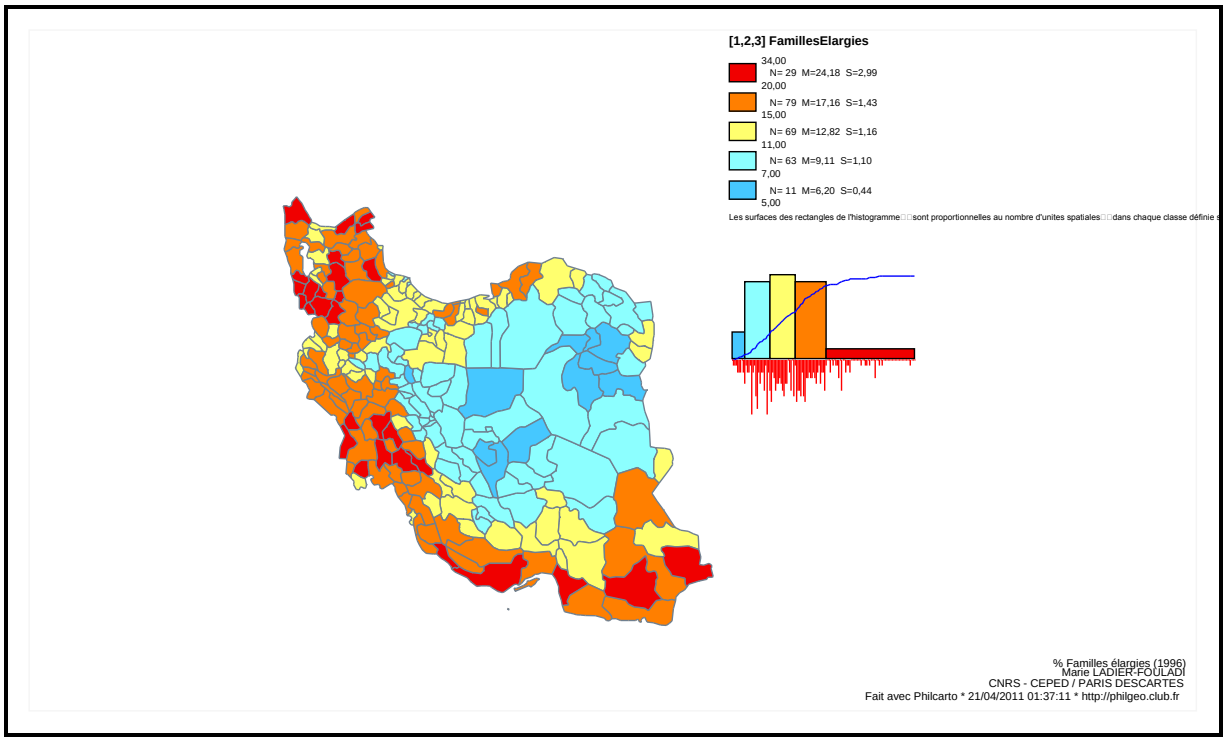
33 It should be noted that according to the Constitution the main mission of the Pasdaran Army, founded in1979, is to secure internal security, safeguard therevolutionand itsgains. Consequently they are more numerous within the country rather than on the borders, apart from the period of the Iran-Iraq war.

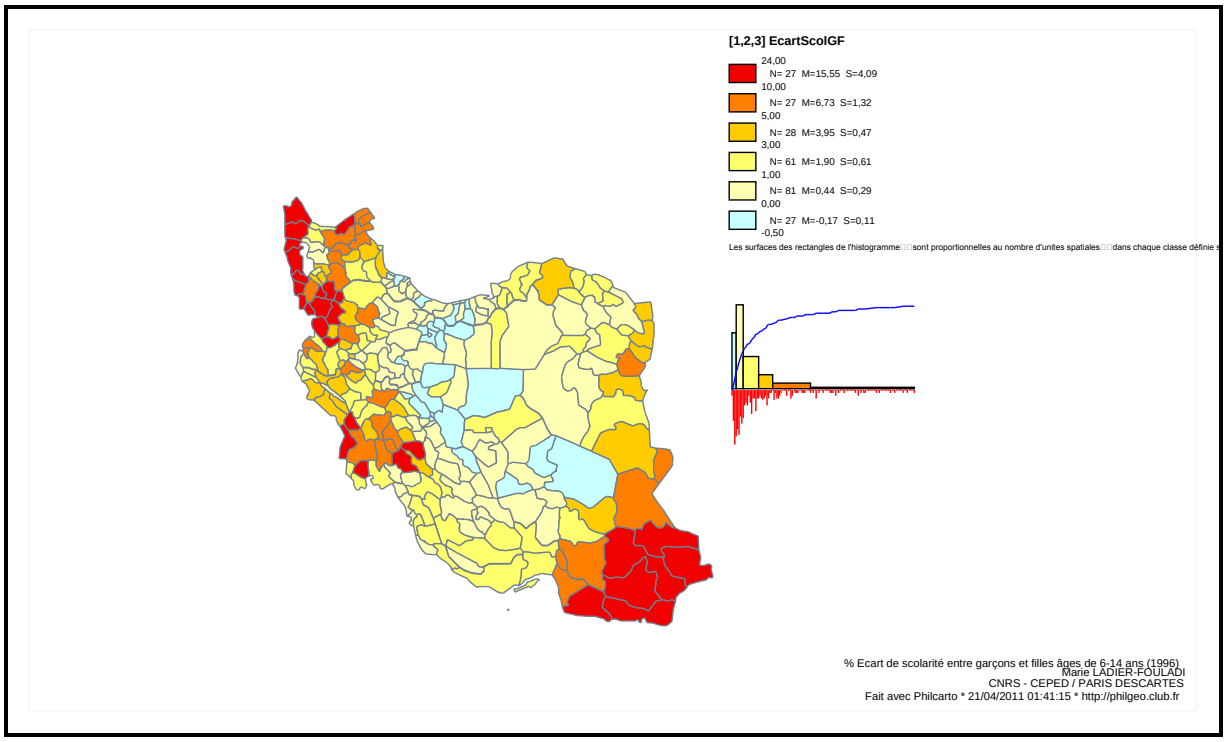
34 It is important to note that in the peripheral regions which are socio-economically less developed, live various ethnic groups. They are mostly Sunni whose languages are Turkish, Kurdish, Baluch, and Arab amongst others.

The reason is that the *Pasdaran* Army networks massively sent in these regions their members, supporters and clients to vote for their candidates, this being made possible due to the lack of electoral roll. The *Pasdaran* Army mobilized their supporters, mainly through the *Bassij* networks. The Revolutionary Foundations like Imam Khomeyni's Rescue Committee (*komiteh emdad emam Khomeini*) or Martyr's Foundation (*bonyad shahid*) who assist thousands of families and build up client ties with them pushed them to vote for the Hardliner candidates. The electoral advance of the three candidates is the result of a joint effort of the Hardliners started since late 1990s. It shows the formidable effectiveness of these networks set up by the *Pasdaran* Army in the more developed regions of the country.

Map 3: Percentage distribution of extended families in Iran (1996)



Map 4: The educational gap between boys and girls 6-14 years of age (1996)



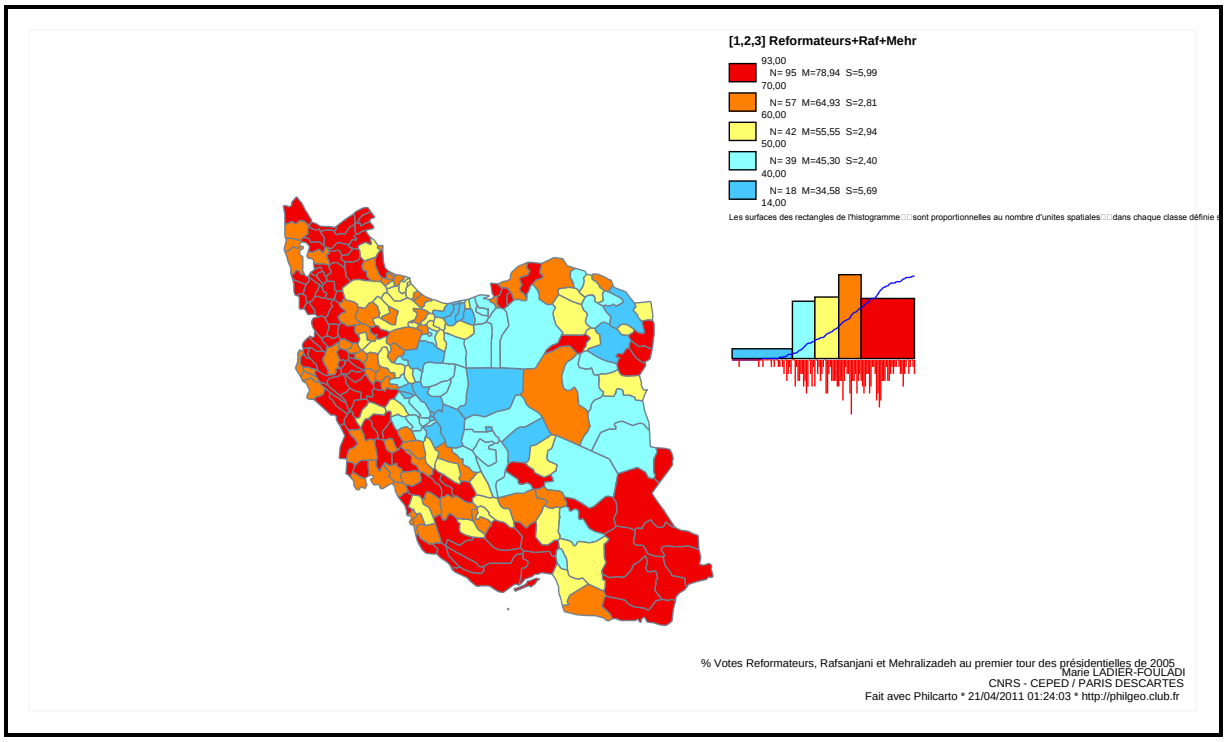
The Reformists in 2005 were also divided and did not succeed in designating a single candidate. Karrubi who had promised a financial help of 50000 *toumans* (around 50 Euros in 2005) to the citizens aged 18 or more seduced people in 11 provinces in the periphery of the country, in those territories considered less developed or poor, according to the Statistical Centre of Iran. These regions had massively voted for the Reformist candidate Khatami in 2001. With around 5 million votes (17.6% of the votes), Karrubi was in the third position. He was the only candidate to protest the votes counting. He gave up after the discreet intervention of the Supreme Leader. The two major Reformist parties supported Mostafa Moeen, the former minister of Sciences, Research and Technology in 1999. He obtained only 3.7 million votes (15.5%). The peripheral regions supported him but he lost due to the competition of Hashemi Rafsanjani and Karrubi, both considered to be close to the Reformists[35]. The other candidate Mohsen Mehralizadeh, from the Turkish speaking province of Azerbaijan, was at the top in the North Western Turkish speaking provinces. He reaped 1.2 million votes (4.5% of the total), preventing Moeen from acceding to the second round of the elections. As to Rafsanjani, with more than 6 million votes (22% of the total), he was in the lead in the first round in 2005.

Adding the votes of the Reformists and the Moderates (16.5 million, around 59% of the votes) traces an electoral geography that is quasi-similar to that of the Presidential election in 2001 (map 5) when Khatami became President. In 194 out of 252 districts (77% of them), many in the peripheral zones, between 50% and 92% of the voters had supported them. This map underscores the stability of

[35] There is often talk of "ethnic vote" in Iran, but it should be noted that the Iranian electoral system has not allowed theses people to have their own choice yet. For presidential elections, they voted overwhelmingly for candidates who were considered "out of the system", in this case the Reformists. One might think that on the occasion of the legislative or municipal elections, they can vote for candidates belonging to their own ethnic groups. Still, they are above all local candidates who belong or not to their ethnic group. It would be therefore a mistake to talk of "ethnic vote" in these circumstances.

the electoral geography of the Reformists and shows how the multiple candidacies had divided the Reformist vote in these regions.

Map 5: Percent of votes collected by the Reformists and the Moderates in the first round of the 2005 presidential election

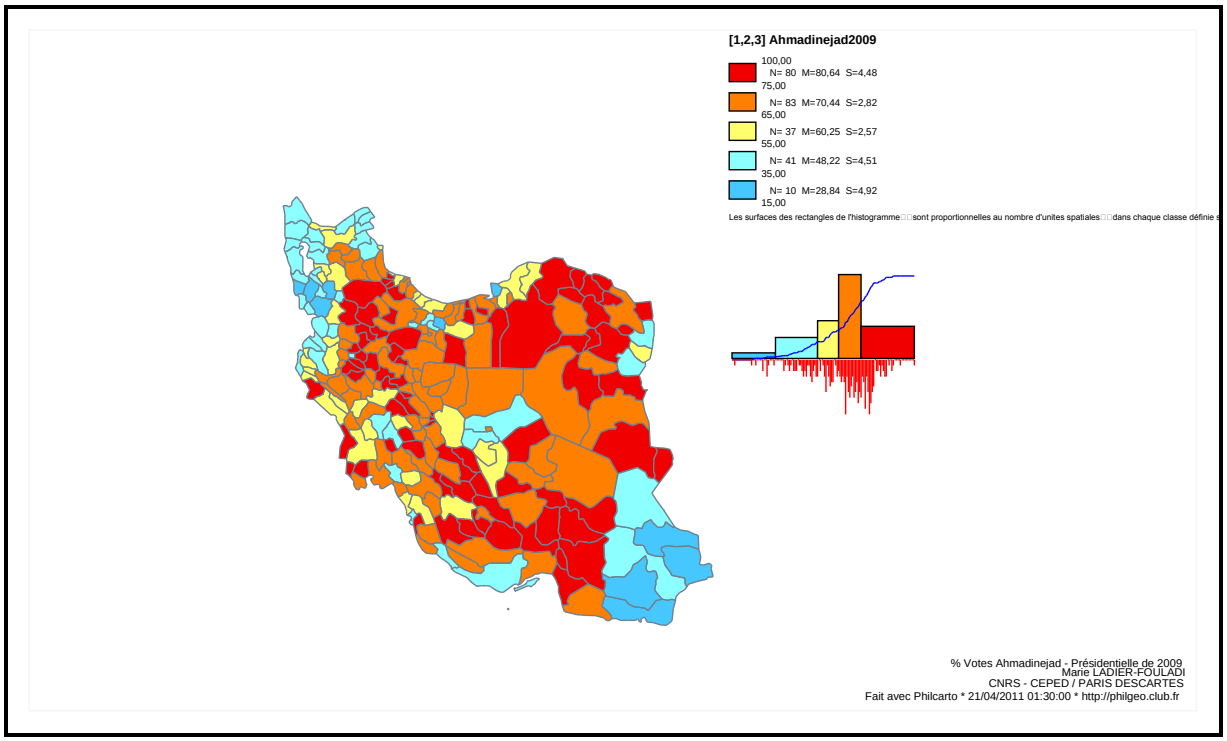


4. The 2009 presidential election: clues about the massive fraud

For the Presidential election of June 2009, the Guardian Council approved the candidacy of 4 people among 475.

Taking into account the first round of the presidential elections in 2005, one would surmise that the two Hardliner candidates Ahmadinejad and Rezaee would share those regions that had voted for the Hardliners in the first ballot of the 2005 elections. But the 2009 electoral map of Ahmadinejad exhibits another configuration (map 6). Not only did he receive Hardliners vote but also, according to the Interior Ministry data, he improved his score between 1.1 to 8 times, according to the districts.

Map 6: Percent of votes collected by M. Ahmadinejad in the 2009 presidential election

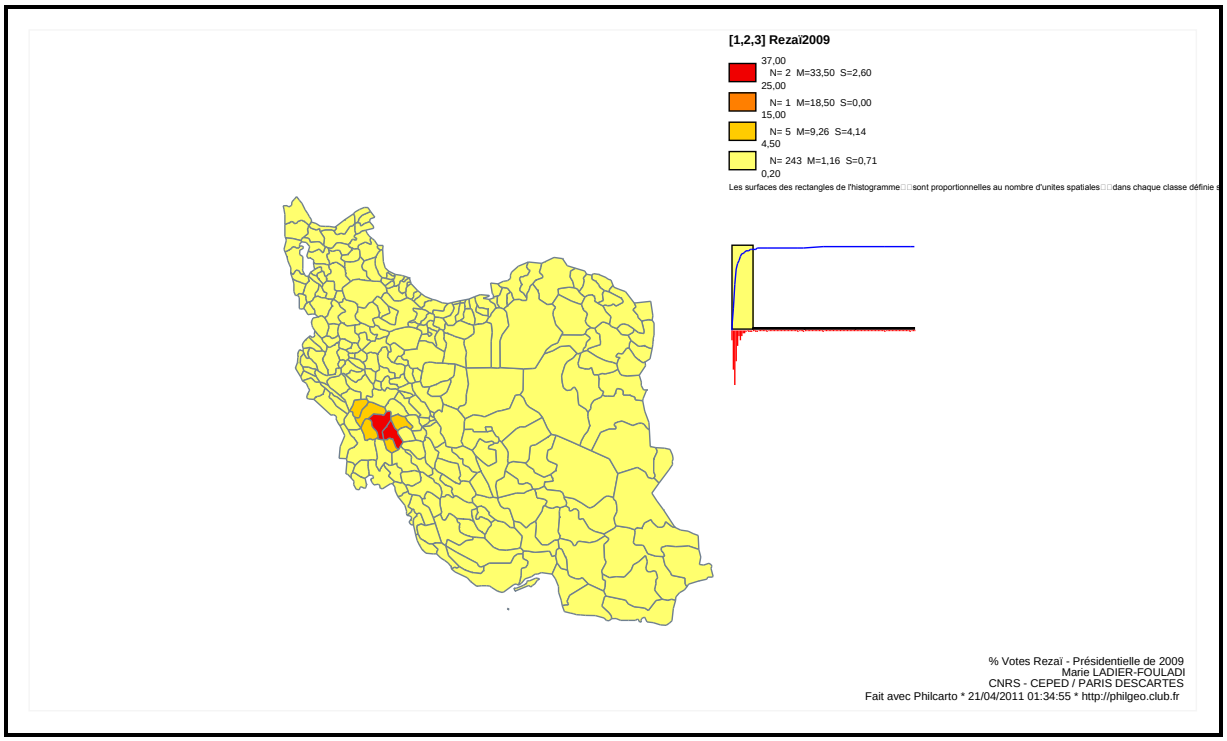


The second Hardliner candidate Rezaee, the former chief of the *Pasdaran* Army, did not even benefit from the *Pasdaran* network in these regions (map 7). He would have collected just over 650000 votes in the region of which he is a native (Southwest). Ahmadinejad's Hardliner adversaries Larijani and Qalibaf had implicitly supported Rezaee. In the first round of the 2005 elections, they had scored 5.8 million votes and at least part of them should have been transferred to Rezaee.

More astonishing, Ahmadinejad, according to the results, would have been able to encroach on the Reformists' and Moderates' "strongholds". If so, how could one explain that up to the 2008 legislative elections the electoral behavior had remained unchanged there? The majority of their electorate had voted for the Reformist candidates or more generally, against the Hardliner candidates. The question is: what did Ahmadinejad perform between 2008 and 2009, in order to radically change the electoral trends in those regions in such a short span of time? How could he attract the votes of the Reformists and the Moderates on this scale? According to the data, in 2009 Ahmadinejad would have won in 185 districts (73% of the 252 districts) by multiplying in them his former score between 1.1 up to 6, according to the districts. More than 24 million voters would have given their votes to Ahmadinejad and he would have been at the top in 28 provinces over 30!

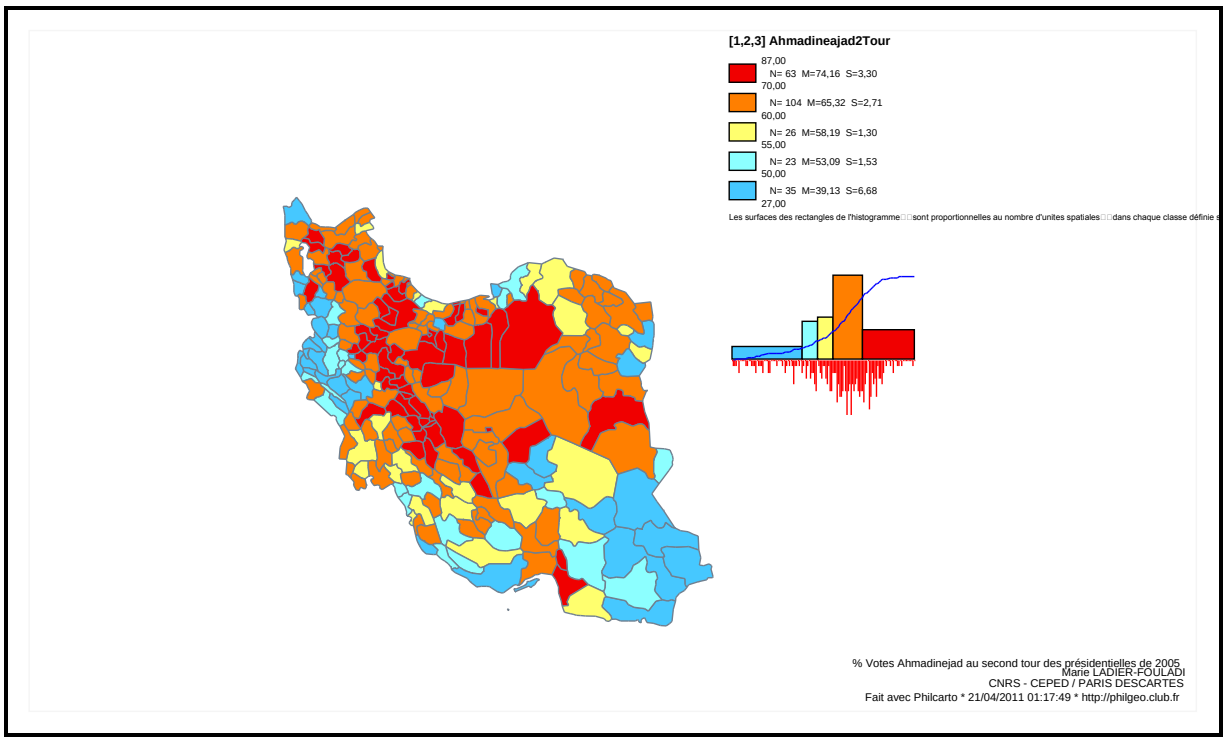
One should also mention the fact that abstention from going to the polls was one of the reasons for Ahmadinejad and more generally the Hardliners' successes up to 2008. If the participation rate between the 2005 and 2009 was similar, one could imagine the following scenario based on the results of the first round of the 2005 presidential election: Rezaee would have reaped 1.5 million votes. In this case, the number of the votes for Ahmadinejad should have been around 10 million. One can add up the 5 million votes that separate our estimate from that of the Interior Ministry and he would have acquired 15 million at most. There is still a large gap with the 24 million votes he is supposed to have collected.

Map 7: Percent of votes collected by M. Rezaee in the 2009 presidential election



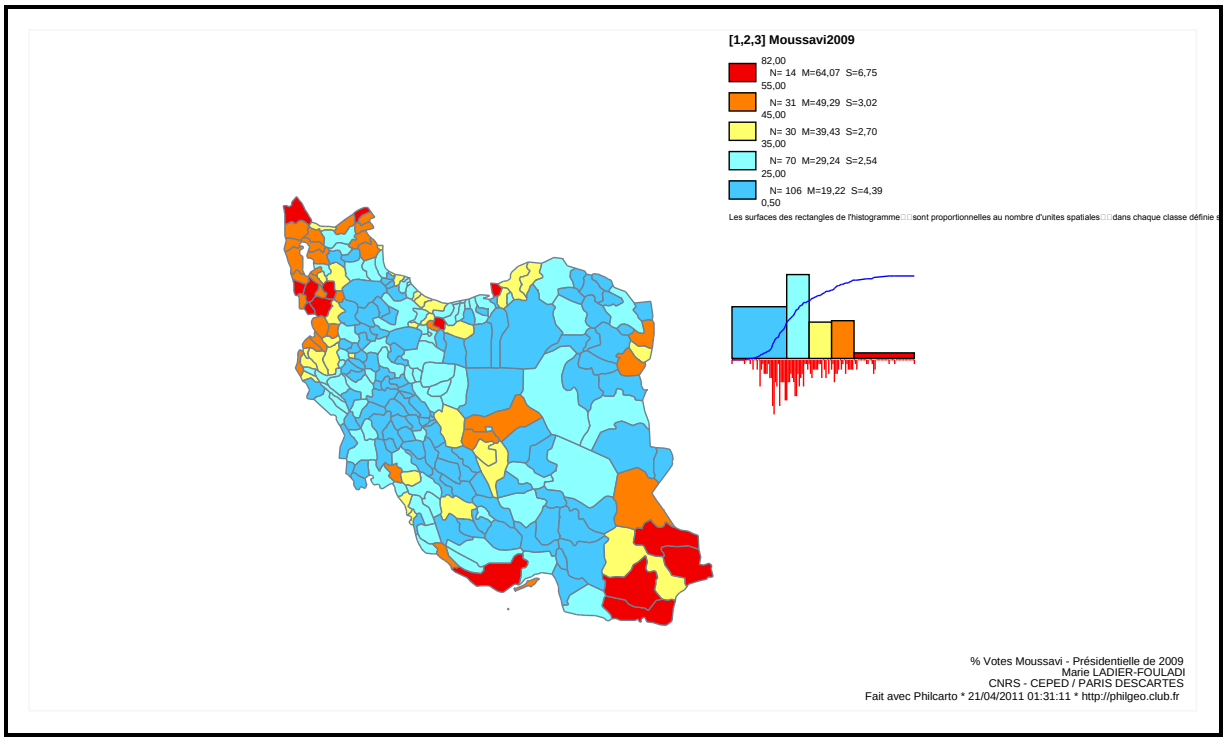
Ahmadinejad's electoral geography of 2009 is curiously close to the second round of the presidential elections of 2005 (map 8). But in 2005's second round Ahmadinejad benefited from the votes of the three Hardliner candidates of the first round and those who, in the second round intended to sanction Rafsanjani and therefore, voted for Ahmadinejad. In the 2009 presidential elections, on the contrary, the reformist electorate was mobilized and should logically have cast their votes for the Reformist candidates. The electoral geography of the Reformists should therefore have been preserved. Ahmadinejad's electoral map of 2009 contradicts this major fact and cannot be justified as such.

Map 8: Percent of votes collected by M. Ahmadinejad in the second round of the 2005 presidential election



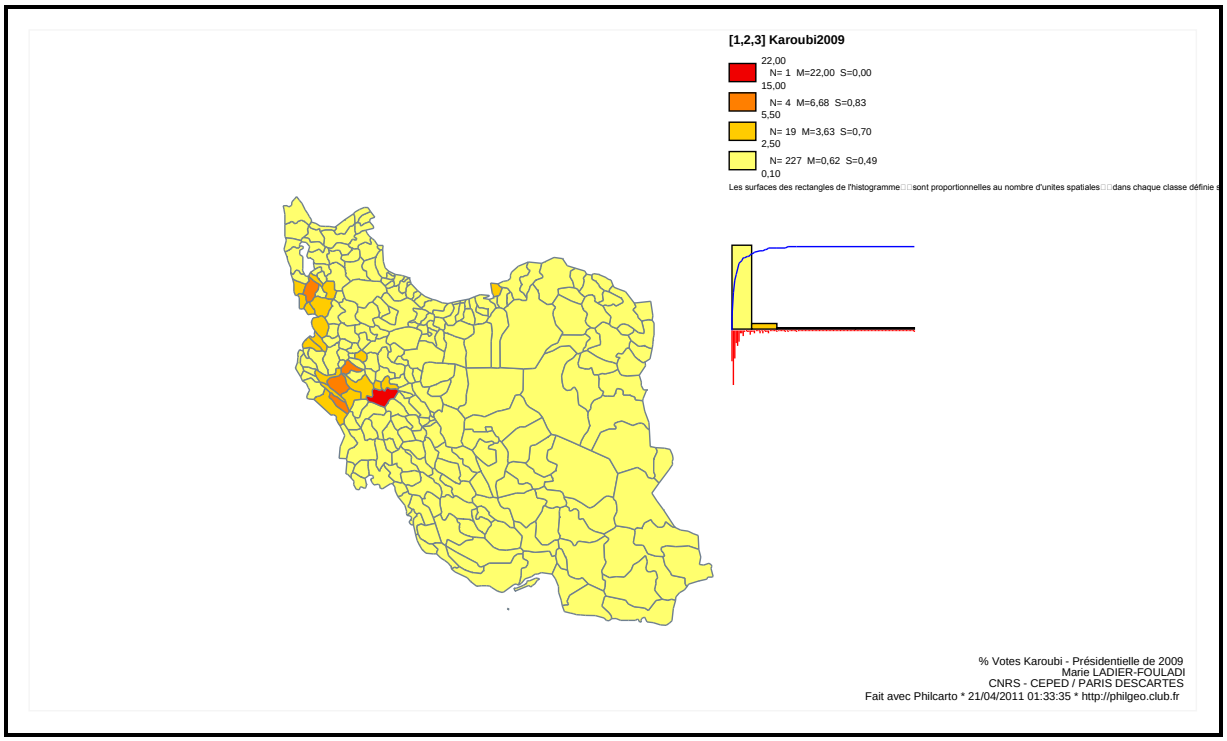
Let us analyze Mousavi's vote. Only the provinces of Western Azerbaijan and Sistan and Baluchistan seem to have escaped the "electoral conquest" of Ahmadinejad (map 9). But the latter is native to Eastern and not Western Azerbaijan. Logically, he should have won there. Being supported by Khatami and Rafsanjani, Mousavi could have expected to win the voices of the Reformists and the Moderates in those regions, where Moeen and Rafsanjani collected their votes in the first round of the 2005 elections. But in 2009, the electoral map of Mousavi is almost the reverse of that of Ahmadinejad as if one was already in the second round of voting and there were only two candidates competing with each other. Mousavi reaped 13 million votes (34% of the total) which do not take into account Karrubi and his large followers who should have had a large share in the votes, taking into account the municipal elections of 2006 and the legislative elections of 2008.

Map 9: Percent of votes collected by M. Mousavi in the 2009 presidential election



Our conclusion is that not only Ahmadinejad's scores, but also Mousavi's seem highly improbable at this stage, largely underestimating Karrubi's votes. All in all, the authorities distorted not only Ahmadinejad's votes by blowing them out of proportion, but in order to gain credibility, they partially did so as well with Mousavi, in order to gain credence. The result was the undervaluing of the votes for Karrubi by the Reformists and for Rezaee by the Hardliner supporters. This can be visualized by looking at Karrubi's votes in 2009 (map 10). He acquired 5 million votes in the first round of the 2005 Presidential elections. At that time, his candidacy was endorsed only by the Society of the Combating Clerics (*rohaniyun mobarez*), a group of Reformist clerics. He engaged in the presidential elections of 2009 at least a year before they were held and his party, National Confidence (*etemad melli*), and his journal of the same name entered the fray very soon. He was as well supported by part of the Reformists (the so-called Radical Current) and by the most important student association, "Consolidation of the Unity" (*tahkim vahdat*). Logically, in 2009 he should have improved upon his score of 2005. But surprisingly, he did not collect more than some 300000 votes. Even in his native town, he lost. His electorate would have turned its back to him in favor of Ahmadinejad. But it is highly improbable to see electoral behavior changing so radically in few years. One should recall that the municipal elections of 2006 and the legislative elections of 2008 confirmed the permanence of those tendencies. They were adverse to the Hardliner current embodied by Ahmadinejad. Even the presidential elections cannot logically justify such a huge change of electoral behavior in such a short span of time. On top of it, the massive mobilization of the Reformist electorate should have favored in part Karrubi.

Map 10: Percent of votes collected by M. Karrubi in the 2009 presidential election



To justify the drop in the Karrubi vote in 2009 elections, some analysts refer to the postulate of "tactical vote": people thought that he was not a serious contender of Ahmadinejad and therefore, decided to directly support Mousavi[36]. One should remind that the concept of tactical vote is almost absent from the Iranian electoral votes. The elections are the unique opportunity for the Iranians to express their political opinions. During the last decades, the electorate has used the vote to express their frustrations, even their anger and more specifically, their rejection of the system in place by voting for those candidates who were "out of the system" or not supported by the high authorities of the Islamic Republic. In 2009 elections, Mousavi and Karrubi mobilized their electors, among them young people and women. Student and Feminist associations had asked for firm engagement on the part of the candidates, stating that otherwise they would not support them. The electoral promises of Karrubi seemed to attract an important part of the Reformist electorate and it was legitimate for him to reap their votes. The election results should have been a coeval distribution of the votes among Karrubi and Mousavi and should have shown a much higher score for the former. In the first round of the Presidential elections in 2005 Karrubi was at the top in 12 provinces that voted for the Reformists or the Moderates (map 11). In 10 out of these 12 provinces, Moeen or Rafsanjani held the second position after Karrubi. During the 2008 legislative elections, this tendency was preserved in those provinces in which the Guardian Council did not impose its diktat. In them one should also add up the "Independents", that is those candidates who were not supported by any political party. In those 10 provinces, the three groups (Reformists, Moderates and Independents) made up the majority of the votes (43 electoral seats). All in all they acquired 113 seats. Ahmadinejad's faction, the "United Front of the Hardliners" (*jebhey motahed osoulgarayan*) acquired all in all 72 seats, among them 20 in Tehran that were contested by the opposition candidates for unfairness. The Guardian Council, faithful to its Hardliner credentials, rejected those grievances. It is due to the voices of Larijani's and Qalibaf's

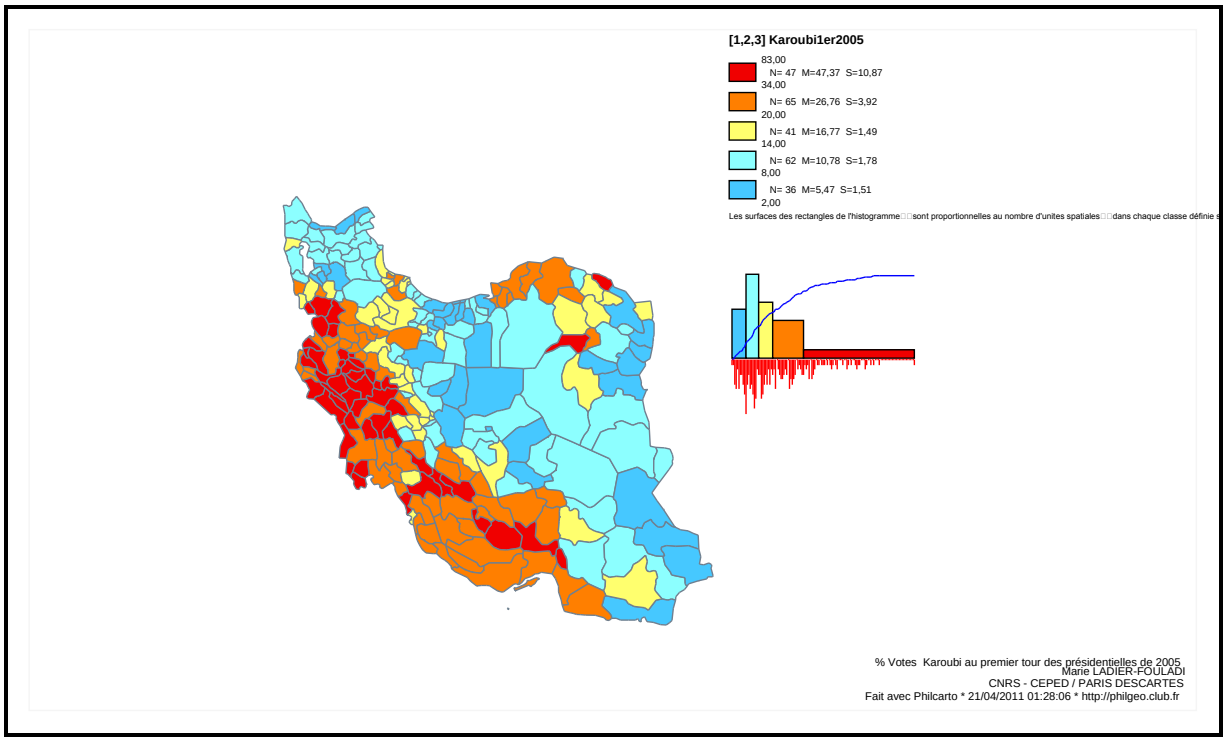
[36] See Brill E. A. 2010, *op. cit*. page 20.

faction, the "Extended Coalition of the Hardliners" (*etelafe faragire osoulgarayan*) that the Hardliner candidates obtained at the end 144 seats, that is 50% of the seats. The results of the 2008 elections were bitterly contested by the opposition.

The fragility of Ahmadinejad's electoral voters and the relative stability of the electoral tendencies up to 2008 put into question his scores in 2009. Nothing exceptional or tragic happened between these two dates; no major event changed the mindset of the electorate in order to justify such a huge shift in favor of Ahmadinejad and in part, Mousavi, to the detriment of Karrubi and Rezaee.

In summary, the analysis of the election results challenges not only the votes in favor of Ahmadinejad and Mousavi, but the entire electoral configuration, including Karrubi and Rezaee's official results. They are greatly undervalued, not only in reference to Mousavi, but also, to the two other candidates, the conservative Rezaee included.

Map 11:
Percent of votes collected by M. Karrubi in the first round of the 2005 presidential election



Conclusion

In modern Iran, besides few transitional periods, the country never witnessed free elections. This is true at least since the Pahlavi Regime up to now. Within the Islamic Regime, the arbitrary elimination of the candidates by the Guardian Council flawed the elections long before Ahmadinejad. But a major shift occurred in the Presidential elections of 2009. The marginal "democratic" sides of the elections were wiped out through systematic government intervention in different ways: the disproportion of the means put at the disposal of the incumbent President and the other candidates, the mobilization of the military and the Islamic militia and the authorities in his favor, and the biased views of the major power holding institutions in the elections (notably the Guardian Council and the Ministry of Interior as well as the Supreme Leader) whose representatives explicitly favored Ahmadinejad.

During the elections, the most representatives of the Reformist candidates could not supervise the electoral process. On the day of the elections, their Internet system was cut off and they could not communicate with their headquarters.

The electoral vote is to be contextualized within a larger framework of "lies" and "half-truths" that have become a constant feature of Ahmadinejad's presidency. The entire State apparatus has undergone change in order to centralize the government's capacity to monitor information and to suppress all means of checking by independent sources.

The Iranian elections cannot be proven wrong in a direct fashion because of the flaws in the information: no polling roll, no distinction between rural and urban zones, and no control over the so-called "ambulant polls" (around 14000). In this situation, two types of assessment show the extreme unfairness of the 2009 elections: first of all, the comparative analysis of the electoral maps of the 2009 and the first ballot of the 2005 presidential elections reveals extravagant anomalies, especially in regard to Ahmadinejad's electoral geography, which puts into question the relative stability of the electoral behavior as it was observed up to the 2008 legislative elections; second, the comparison with the other candidates results, Karrubi and Rezaee. These two types of comparisons show the flawed nature of the presidential elections of 2009 within a new political framework whose goal is to eliminate opposition and to put an end to the "republican" side of the Islamic Regime in order to achieve the autocracy of the Ruling Cleric (*velayat motlaqeh faqih*), as being the hallmark of the true Islamic Regime. In this regime, the popular vote can only subscribe to the Islamic commandments of the Supreme Leader who is supposed to be the direct representative of the Shiite Messiah, the 12th Occulted Imam. The 2009 presidential elections have been the swansong of Islamic Republic's legitimacy in the eyes of the major part of the Iranian society.

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