

Iran on the Eve of the Presidential Elections

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The first Islamic republic started with the victory of the revolution and ended with Khomeini's death. The second republic is the republic of the absolute *velayat-e faqih*. The third republic is the republic of reform that started with Khatami and the reform movement. The third republic ended with the last parliamentary elections. More than 2000 candidates running for parliament were rejected by the Council of Guardians. The reformist members of parliament organized a sit-in to protest their disqualification by the Council of Guardians and didn't get much support from the people. The fourth republic is starting now but the end of the third republic depends on the upcoming presidential elections. The turnout, I believe, is important to accelerate the process towards the new republic. The new republic will not be Islamic; it will be secular.

The Council of Guardians eliminated more than 1000 candidates who registered to run in the presidential elections, including Mostafa Moin, and now we have only six finalists competing for the presidency (two days later by a letter from the leader to the Council of Guardians Mr. Moin and Mohsen Mehralizadeh were added to the list and we had 8 candidates). Among the eight candidates two are clergymen.

Please reference Table 1 below on page 3.

The first column in the table represents the front supporting Khamenei. The front has about 10 to 15 percent of the voters. The 1st faction of this front is the Kayhan faction (evening paper in Tehran known for its radicalism). The 2nd faction is Haghani, a theological school in Qom. A number of post-revolutionary well-known officials graduated from Haghani. They have a lot of influence in the security forces. Haghani people mostly serve either in the security forces or in the military. The 3rd faction is the Revolutionary Guard. 126 of their former members are in parliament and they form the majority in the seventh parliament. The 4th faction is the Foundations. They are important economically.

The 5th faction is the Islamic Coalition Councils. They have about 90 seats in parliament and are not happy with the results of the 7th parliamentary election. The 6th faction is the Combatant Clerics of Tehran, and the 7th faction is the Society of Preachers of Tehran. The 8th faction is the Scholars of Elmiyeh School in Qom. These three traditional clergy associations are related to the Islamic Coalition Council. Altogether, they can get 10 to 15 percent of the votes in any elections.

If factions 5-8 continue supporting Ali Larijani, they will provide him with their vote. The situation now shows that it's important to form coalitions. (Ten days later, this faction was divided. The 5th faction supported Larijani and got only 3 percent of the votes in the first round of the election. Factions 6-8 supported Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani in the first round).

There are problems inside the military forces, because they can not agree on one candidate. The security forces will not support Rafsanjani, but they can not agree over the other candidates either. As I have pointed out, this 10-15 percent of voters who will follow Khamenei are divided

into different factions. This was not the case in the last parliamentary elections. (Later they agreed on Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and supported him).

The second column in the table represents the faction supporting Rafsanjani. Number 9 in this column is the group known as the Executive of Construction, and the majority of this group are members of Rafsanjani's family. Rafsanjani has two cards to play, but I doubt whether he can play both. First, Rafsanjani wants to tell people that if he comes to power he will solve the problem with the U.S. Second, he wants to attract the intellectuals. So far he has not succeeded in playing either of these two cards. As to the first point, the engagement policy with the U.S. was proposed by Mr. Zbigniew Brzezinski last summer in a report for the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). As for attracting the intellectuals to his camp, it is even worse than his first point, since the majority of intellectuals have announced that they will boycott the election. We must remember that Akbar Ganji, the man who wrote a book about Rafsanjani, is still in jail. As long as he is in jail, the people won't forgive Rafsanjani. People still believe Rafsanjani is the bad guy.

In the fourth column of the table, we see the opposition groups. Number 16 in that column is the University Student's Office of Consolidation. Almost all university students support a referendum for a new constitution.

Iran is a land of great contradictions and unexpected events. I believe the turnout for the election will be about 30 percent according to polls in Iran. From that turnout, 10-15 percent will be among the supporters of Ayatollah Khamenei, who could not agree on a candidate. Rafsanjani might have 7 or 8 percent from within the people who will vote. Rafsanjani is trying to attract the people who will not vote. So far, there is no sign that the majority of the Iranians eligible for voting will decide to vote. If they don't show up on Election Day, the battle will be amongst the 20 percent who will vote and I doubt that Rafsanjani will win. But if he can attract the outsiders by playing his two cards, he may win.

I think the main winner will be the opposition groups. They have to work hard to mobilize the 70-80 percent of people who back the referendum in Iran. Since last December, a majority of the opposition groups inside and outside Iran are for a referendum on the constitution under supervision of the international organizations.

Postscript: A parameter that was not present in this analysis and later happened was the cheating and a sham election. The militarists intervened in the elections and changed the results of the ballot boxes. According to some of the candidates like Mr. Mehdi Karrubi, in some cities like Birjand, the votes counted were more than the eligible voters; and in the second round of the election, the campaign offices of Mr. Rafsanjani delivered more than 400 complaints about cheating. Many people believe that the ninth presidential election was the worst election of the Islamic Republic of Iran so far.

The Front Supporting Mr. Khomeini	The Front Supporting Mr. Hashemi Rafsanjani	The 2 nd of Khordad Front (May 23 rd Front)	Other Groups
<p>1. Kayhan (a.k.a. home-grown fascists).</p> <p>2. Haghani School.</p> <p>3. The Revolutionary Guard and the Militaristic Circles.</p> <p>4. The Foundations and the institutions of the Leadership (Mostazefan Shaheed, The Imam's Circle 8 Council, etc.), the Aid Committee.</p>	<p>9. The Executive of Construction.</p>	<p>11. The Participation Front.</p> <p>12. The Mujahadeen Organization of the Islamic Revolution.</p> <p>14. The groups comprising the 2nd of Khordad Front (Solidarity Party, The Islamic Association of Teachers).</p>	<p>15. Iran Freedom Movement.</p> <p>16. University Student's Office of Consolidation.</p> <p>17. National-Religious [Melli-Mazhabi] Organizations.</p> <p>18. The Parties Comprising [supporters of the] Proclamation of 565 (The National Front, the Writers' Association).</p> <p>19. Opposition abroad (Monarchists, Republicans, The National Front, individualists, etc.).</p>
	<p>5. Islamic Coalition Councils.</p> <p>6. The Combatant Clerics of Tehran Association.</p> <p>7. The Society of Preachers of Tehran.</p> <p>8. The Scholars Elmiyeh of Qom.</p>	<p>10. The Worker's House.</p> <p>13. The Militant Clerics Society of Tehran.</p>	

Table 1