## Iran's Peculiar Election

# THE ROLE OF IDEOLOGY

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Iran's June 2005 presidential elections caught the world by surprise. All the reformist candidates failed in the first round, while the runoff saw pragmatic conservative ex-president Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and his platform of more social (as distinct from political) freedom lose to economic populist and Islamist hard-liner Mahmoud Ahmedinejad. Experts have scrambled to explain what the results say about Iran's voters. After opting four times for reformism since 1997, have they renounced such aspirations in favor of a shift back to oil-financed welfarism replete with Khomeini-era slogans against wealth and corruption? Has a reform movement that focused on political rather than socioeconomic issues roused a voter backlash? Or is the result a rebuke of the ruling clerical caste with its violent repressiveness and notoriously ill-gotten wealth?

Such inquiries, which are natural enough in liberal democracies where elections reflect the general will, are misguided in the case of a country where official controls, the legal banning of candidates both before and after votes, and systematic election-rigging are standard. But that does not mean that Iranian elections are unable to repay study. On the contrary, they offer an excellent window on the ideological dynamics that shape the behavior of both Iran's Islamist regime and its prodemocracy opposition as they feel their respective ways through a new international context dominated by the U.S.-led ideological and military war against terror.

To begin with, one might ask why the Islamic Republic, which founds its claim to legitimacy squarely on divine rather than popular sovereignty, even holds elections. Plainly, they cannot serve the same purpose

that they do in a democratic polity, where the people are acknowledged as the source of lawful rule. Yet paradoxical though it may seem, elections are indispensable to the Islamic Republic, which has held votes regularly throughout its history and has used every means from threats to rewards to get people to the polls.

The key question is how popular suffrage and the doctrine of divine sovereignty interact within the regime's political structure. The Islamic Republic's founders rejected elections as a primary source of legitimacy.[1] Instead, Article 59 of the Constitution reduces them to mere manifestations of "public opinion" and thus reconciles them with divine sovereignty by downgrading their significance. It is small wonder that no candidate can run, and no election result be made official, until the unelected Council of Guardians gives its approval.

Elections help the Islamic Republic shield itself against three recurrent threats. The first threat is religious. Major Shi'ite Muslim ayatollahs both within and outside of Iran continue to question the Khomeini-devised religious arguments on which the Republic rests. High-turnout elections help to make these dissenters seem marginal. The second threat is international. The regime's systematic rights abuses and repressiveness leave it open to international criticism and bad publicity. Elections provide a buffer against foreign as well as clerical criticism, and reassure foreign investors. The third threat is internal and political. The regime is the work of a disparate political coalition, and as such must cope with chronic and potentially fatal factionalism. Elections, as we shall see, help the ruling oligarchy to contain factionalism's destructive effects.

The relative salience of these threats varies with circumstances. During the 1980s, Khomeini arbitrated between the factions, and popular suffrage did not have the heft that it would acquire after he died in 1989 and his successors found themselves facing a growing international challenge to their popular legitimacy. Elections served to project the illusion of a popular regime for foreign observers, but generating high turnout was not a leading concern while Khomeini lived. After he died and was replaced as supreme leader by the far less weighty Ali Khamenei, the clerical oligarchy began turning to elections to help settle its internal conflicts. Popular suffrage within the constraints of "God's sovereignty" would allow factions of the ruling elite to hand offices back and forth among themselves in a regular and orderly fashion, while candidacies could join the list of perquisites handed out to regime "insiders."

## Voting and Change

Far from being the dupes of this electoral game, Iranian voters used the regime's need for turnout as a lever in the cause of wider opening.

Their active endorsement was vital to Rafsanjani's victory over the pro-Soviet left wing of the ruling oligarchy in the early 1990s. And the spectacular turnout of around 80 percent that voters generated in 1997 for Mohammad Khatami's platform of political freedom and the rule of law within the framework of the constitution helped to turn the pervasively Soviet style of rule that once prevailed in Iran into a bad memory. Sixteen years after Khomeini's death, life in Iran has changed dramatically for the better in some ways, and the voters deserve a large share of credit for these gains. To keep citizens coming to the polls, the rulers have had to shelve their own ideological orthodoxy and let women ignore the strictures of the Islamist dress code, for instance. While tenuous, the wider space for cultural, personal, and social freedom is real. Risk-takers have even made forays into the realm of freer expression in the media and on the Internet.

The regime benefited from the elections game too, of course. Trading superficial ideological concessions for a much-improved international image and diplomatic room to maneuver (not least on the issue of the regime's nuclear ambitions) was a good deal for the powerholders in Tehran. For a totalitarian pariah terrorist state to persuade Western journalists and diplomats to call it "democratic" is no small coup.

After a while, however, both the regime and civil society began to grow dissatisfied with the game. Khatami's prodemocratic rhetoric encouraged the more daring segments of the press—publishing more freely than ever before in the history of the Islamic Republic—to highlight citizens' discontents and the need for democratic reforms. Radical Islamist-cum-Leninist cadres who had terrorized the nation in the 1980s began reappearing in public life, but this time in order to give voice to a discourse heavily influenced by the experience of post-Soviet democratization in Eastern Europe and the former USSR.

This revolution in language rallied those in civil society who still yearned for change but whom terror and intimidation had silenced. It also gave rise to a new class of dealings between reform-Islamist insiders and secular-dissident outsiders. Insiders with permission to launch a journal would invite outsider intellectuals to write for it. Banned political parties began to reorganize despite the law. Nationalist prodemocracy dissidents such as Parvaneh Forouhar and her husband Dariush Forouhar began to meet with students eager to organize themselves independently of state-run student groups. Secular writers and intellectuals reorganized the Iranian Writers' Association, with some among them rejecting official orders to put "in the name of God" at the head of the bylaws on the grounds that religious belief should be private and lies outside the Association's mandate anyway. Reformist newspapers covered issues ranging from the death penalty, transparency in governance, and corruption to the prospect of truly free elections.

Fearing that things were getting out of hand, the regime began to

crack down. Systematic harassment of the press began in the spring of 1998. That fall, agents of the regime murdered the Forouhars and three writers, two of whom had advocated principles such as the properly private character of religious belief. A wave of public outrage forced high officials to condemn the killings. The cabinet minister whose agents had committed the crimes resigned.

But that did not end the matter. The newspaper *Salam* continued to carry investigative reports on the killings, and authorities banned it on 7 July 1999. Students in Tehran staged a peaceful sit-in to show their support for the paper and its right to publish. The police and members of the Basij militia (the regime's paramilitary enforcers) responded with unprecedented force, assaulting a Tehran University dormitory and maiming several students. The student riots that broke out on July 8 swiftly spread beyond the capital and led to a radicalization of demands. For the first time in a quarter-century, calls for regime change and secular democracy were being heard in public.

In the wake of unrest that left one student dead and several "disappeared," the top oligarchs both reformist and hard-line tacitly closed ranks against constitutional reform. Voters continued to show support for reform by turning out to back the most reform-minded candidates available in the 1999 municipal elections, the 2000 parliamentary balloting, and finally the 2001 presidential race. But while reform kept winning votes, the unelected organs of the state kept tightening the screws. When the parliament elected in 2000 signaled a desire to change the press law, the supreme leader barred any such discussion—as he could do, since no one may run for, much less serve in, the Islamic Republic's parliament without first signing a written act of submission to the leader's absolute supremacy. Mass repression of reformist newspapers rolled on as the legislature stood by helplessly. Vetoes from the Guardian Council quashed other reforms.

## After the Failure of Reformist Hopes

By early 2002, with the failure of intraregime reformist efforts becoming obvious and public frustration mounting, a new conversation began to take shape. Whereas reformists had once studiously avoided mentioning the deep ideological, constitutional, and institutional obstacles to democratization, the new conversation dwelt precisely on these topics. New political rifts and coalitions began to appear. Reformists, often with roots in the Islamist old guard, began first to ponder the inherent impossibility of reconciling democracy and theocracy and then to defect from the regime altogether. Some who had been reformists hoping to work from within the system, including the Revolutionary Guardsman turned investigative journalist Akbar Ganji, made this journey of mind and heart while in prison cells.

Students and intellectuals, meanwhile, began asking publicly whether the choice to play the "inside game" of using the ballot to push reform had been a good one, given that high turnout had strengthened the regime's international position without bringing any increase in political freedom. The upshot of these growing doubts was a turn to the boycott as the best all-around means of protest available, especially given the regime's recent sensitivity to explicit denials of the its legitimacy by U.S. president George W. Bush and its consequent urge to make elections in Iran look bigger and more impressive than ever.

The municipal elections of 2003 were a victory for the boycott movement, with official turnout plummeting from 57 percent in 1999 to just 28 percent four years later (opposition sources rated it even lower at about 20 percent). In Tehran, official turnout dipped all the way down to 12 percent (8 percent according to dissident student groups) and allowed Mahmoud Ahmedinejad, a regime militant loyal to the supreme leader and linked to the Revolutionary Guards and the Basij, to win the city's mayoralty. The regime had promoted Ahmedinejad's candidacy as, in effect, its answer to the massive boycott by Tehran's voting-age population.

The voters' refusal to keep playing the regime's game upset relations between the two factions of the ruling oligarchy. If the intraregime reformists could no longer bring people to the polls, the hard-liners asked, why should the reformists be given a share of power and allowed to damage the regime's ideological integrity? The elevation of Ahmedinejad—a man who stands squarely at the nexus of radical-Islamist ideology and terrorism—to first the Tehran mayor's office and then the presidency shows what the hard-liners' think of this question.

The Guardian Council underlined this thinking before the February 2004 parliamentary elections, when it banned dozens of reformist incumbents from running again. This drew the circle of "insiders" even tighter, as the numbers of true regime loyalists shrank while reformists counted in their ranks many who had served the regime during the 1980s but then felt changes of heart. Reformist legislators protested the disqualifications but failed to attract support from students, who said that the only protest worth supporting would aim squarely at bringing Iran elections able to meet accepted international standards of freedom and fairness.[2]

With even some of the reformists in the ruling elite backing a boycott, turnout dropped from the 80 percent officially reached in 2000 to 51 percent (even by the regime's figures) four years later. Boycott supporters claimed that even the 51 percent figure was 16 percentage points too high, and none of the estimates included the protest vote of deliberately defaced ballots. The boycott left the hard-liners with a majority exceeding two-thirds of the new legislature. Reformists denounced massive vote-rigging and the involvement of the Revolutionary Guards

and the Basij—both the rigging and the activities of these armed groups would be apparent in the 2005 presidential balloting as well.

The inconsistencies in official numbers,[3] the obvious involvement of paramilitary forces in "getting out the vote," the publication in a regime-run newspaper of a report that Ahmedinejad had won the runoff even before the polls had closed, and finally the unanimity of the losing candidates in complaining about cheating all strongly suggest that the official numbers and the real numbers are quite different.

## Behind Ahmedinejad's Rise

Given the problems with all available figures, however, it will be more fruitful to explore the ideological dynamics behind the rise of Ahmedinejad and the surprising defeat of ex-president Rafsanjani. With the U.S. voicing frank criticisms and Iranian civil society leaders promoting an intensification of already serious boycotts, the regime wanted to bring as many voters as possible to the polls without compromising the Islamic Republic's ideological integrity.[4]

With the prospect of real political reform off the table, the reformist label passed almost as if by default to Mostafa Mo'in and Mehdi Karrubi, who more or less wanted to carry on much as the largely inconsequential Khatami had been doing. The former put forward a slightly more liberal and intellectualized version of the outgoing president's line, while the latter (a cleric) took a more Islamically conservative and economically populist, even demagogic tack: Karrubi promised a monthly cash subsidy to all citizens over 18 years of age, for instance.

In an election marked by very high turnout, either of them might well have had a serious chance of winning, and the benefit to the regime of landslide turnout would have outweighed any damage to ideological coherence flowing from another "reformist" victory in a presidential race. Karrubi's payout pledge appears to have moved some poorer voters, but at the same time it almost certainly left most of the traditionally well educated reformist constituency unable to take him seriously—or to forget the role that he had played as parliament chairman in helping the supreme leader to muzzle the reformist post-2000 legislature. Mo'in had to compete with the boycott movement (whose main audience was exasperated proreform voters) and also had nothing new to add to Khatami's failed agenda. Mo'in's failure to survive the first round was no surprise.

The second round featured the odd spectacle of Rafsanjani, a staunch foe of any political opening, eagerly touting an unprecedentedly wide social opening, especially as regarded the dress code and similar personal issues. His campaign commercials even featured young girls roller-skating with some of their hair streaming in the wind, covered only by headbands bearing the name "Hashemi" in Roman letters. The

Western (and Western-oriented) look of these advertisements was no accident. One of Rafsanjani's key pledges was to push for direct talks between Iran and the United States, which broke off their diplomatic ties decades ago.

Bringing the United States to the table and painting Iran as a modern, open, and vibrant (even if authoritarian) Islamic society was to be Rafsanjani's side of a bargain in which citizens would get less violence and harassment in daily life and more social freedom in return for making the regime look popular and legitimate in the eyes of its prospective negotiating partner. Rafsanjani's eagerness for a bargain on the U.S. front may be a sign of how keenly the regime's pragmatists sense that U.S. prodemocracy rhetoric is helping the democratic opposition within Iran, so that a cessation of such rhetoric (presumably one of the regime's goals in a negotiation) would contribute to the regime's strength.

But to have a chance, Rafsanjani needed not only the high turnout that Mo'in and Karrubi were hoping for, but also some encouragement or at least silence from Washington. In the event, Rafsanjani got none of these things. On the eve of the elections, President Bush did what no predecessor ever had by announcing publicly that the upcoming vote would not meet the minimum standards of freedom and fairness, and reiterating his support for the right of the Iranian people to enjoy liberty and a democratic government.[5]

Totalitarian regimes are arguably worried more by ideological than by military battles, for they know that international solidarity sustains the opposition's moral strength. When the highest official of the U.S. government publicly dismissed the elections as a travesty, Rafsanjani was well on his way to seeing his gambit fail even before the polls opened. With his doomed candidacy went the hope of the ruling elite's pragmatic-reformist faction that his departures from orthodoxy would be compensated by practical success at the polls.[6]

Ahmedinejad's victory represents the triumph of precisely the orthodoxy whose corners Rafsanjani was cutting. The ex-mayor's demagogic populism won over some low-income voters, but Karrubi promised them more and in more specific terms. The new president likes to sound as if he is violently opposed to the establishment, but this is a trick. His candidacy would never have been possible without the active political, military, and financial support of the most powerful, corrupt, and wealthy part of the clerical establishment, acting at the behest of the supreme leader and the Revolutionary Guards.

Ahmedinejad, it should be recalled, was an inconsequential mayor of Tehran who got elected only because boycotts had reduced the city's electorate to an Islamist rump. The most important things about him and his rise to the presidency are his ties to the Revolutionary Guards and his loyalty to Khamenei. Ahmedinejad himself avows that the people's vote can be valid only if reflects what the supreme leader wants.

The president adds that a truly Islamic state by definition holds the final answers to all human needs and questions, and will lead individuals to happiness. He defends the absolute power of the leader and rejects the idea of democracy as anti-Islamic. He has an imperialistic vision in world affairs and embraces the goal of an Islamic world government. He claims that things in Iran began going awry 16 years ago, which is around the time when Khomeini died and Iranian civil society began its efforts to carve out a limited political role independent of the state.

Contrary to what many observers and regime officials contend, Ahmedinejad's victory and Rafsanjani's defeat may well indicate that the real turnout was significantly lower than the official rate. It is intriguing that neither Karrubi (who loudly cried fraud after the first round) nor Rafsanjani (who bitterly questioned the runoff result) actually went so far as to ask for a recount. Perhaps they knew that to hold another ballot count would be to risk revealing the inflation of official turnout figures.

In the wake of the 2005 elections, the bargaining game between civil society and the Islamic Republic appears to be deadlocked. As all can now see, the regime cannot meet society's demands without fundamental political transformation. Notable individuals and organizations linked to civil society noted the undemocratic character of the regime's elections, and were as one in urging a boycott. While boycott appeals—including some from prisoners of conscience such as Akbar Ganji—went out widely on the Internet, there is no way to measure the extent to which the case for boycotting the regime's false elections has reached or influenced the population at large. The boycott movement's leaders and spokespeople, therefore, must forge ahead in darkness if they are to forge ahead at all, straining to pick up what surface-level signs they can while also steering by the stars of liberal and democratic principle that writers such as Ganji have so ably charted.

As Mohsen Sazegara also notes, even the probably inflated official turnout of about 60 percent means that roughly a quarter of those who voted in 1997 (or about 11 million voting-age Iranians in a country whose total population is around 70 million) sat out the fraudulent polling of 2005. So the boycott appeal in some form may already have swayed about a seventh ore more of all those now living in Iran, and this despite a campaign of harsh official repression that accused boycott advocates of betraying national security and exacted barbaric reprisals. A particularly infamous example of savage government repression took place in the northwestern Iranian province of Kurdistan, where the boycott movement achieved broad success. On 10 July 2005, during a peaceful postelection demonstration in the town of Mahabad, security forces shot the Kurdish proboycott activist Shavaneh Qaderi and dragged him through the streets behind their vehicle while he was still alive. Photographs of his mangled corpse appeared on the Internet as unrest over his murder surged across Iranian Kurdistan, which is home

to many of Iran's estimated nine million citizens of Kurdish descent. To date, security forces have killed at least 17 people while putting down these protests.

The slaughter of Shavaneh Qaderi and other Kurdish activists starkly highlights the threats that prodemocracy activists must brave while promoting something that is perfectly legal under the Islamic Republic, which has no law to mandate voting. Failing to cast a ballot, in other words, does not even amount to civil disobedience, yet people are paying with their lives for daring to suggest electoral nonparticipation.

## Where Do Iran's Democrats Go From Here?

Despite the dangers that they face, prodemocratic elements such as the Student Office for Coordinating Unity (SOCU) are happy with how the situation has turned out. They stress the importance of rejecting any involvement in the regime's factional games. They insist that reformists who let themselves be drawn into the regime's sham electoral process were making a strategic blunder. In terms of who actually holds power, the elections change nothing: The de jure winners were already the de facto rulers anyway. But the elections, despite their falsity, do represent a certain sort of progress from the democratic point of view. This is so because they have made it harder for the rulers to deny that the shadow government and the official government are one and the same, and hence have harmed the regime's ability to hide behind doubletalk.

The elections were also helpful because they alerted the democratic opposition to the need to reach out to the less-educated and poorer strata of society. More than ever, Iran's democrats must position themselves as watchdogs for a civil society that knows it can no longer afford to compromise on the integrity of democratic demands. The opposition can do good service to the nation by subjecting the new president to relentless scrutiny and peacefully promoting the liberal-democratic agenda wherever, whenever, and however possible. [7]

To envisage the future of Iran's prodemocracy movement, one should consider how it has developed since 1989. There are examples of groups that began as organs of regime control which have now gone over to the democratic side. One of the most important of these, the SOCU, was founded in the Islamic Revolution's early days in order to spy on and terrorize students. It acted as an umbrella group for the Islamic Students' Associations springing up on campuses all over the country. Throughout the 1980s, it filled the thuggish role that that campus-based units of the Basij would fill in the succeeding decade.

With the crumbling of the Soviet empire and the concurrent demise of the Iranian left, the SOCU began slowly morphing into a legal opposition group that intraregime reformists could use to help mobilize popular support and bargain for power with conservatives. The work of

mobilizing students, however, meant responding to their demands and interacting with small, independent student groups that called for serious democratic change rather than mere nibbling around the regime's edges. After going through the 1999 unrest and seeing how indifferent the regime's reformist faction was to the fate of students brutalized by the security forces, the SOCU became more defiant and began pushing consistently and vocally for a democratic agenda. The regime has been trying to recapture the organization, but prospects of a hostile takeover by apologists for the Islamic Republic happily look poor at present. While SOCU leaders still regularly risk harassment and arrest, most remain outspoken and undaunted democrats.

In 1979, principled and committed democrats were only a minority of a minority, sprinkled through the ranks of Iran's political and intellectual elite. Throughout the 1980s, the opposition to the regime was far from uniformly democratic. Most young and brave anti-Khomeini militants came from leftist or Islamo-leftist groups that had little if any truck with liberal-democratic ideas. The bulk of opposition intellectuals, however heroic, were likely to be more influenced by Marxism than by anything else. But in Iran as in other places, the fall of the Berlin Wall was the beginning of a hinge period. With the Soviet regime gone and discredited, radicals slowly began to grasp the virtues of universal human rights and liberal democracy.

The Khatami years (1997–2005) witnessed the birth of a new political culture. The failure of the intraregime reform movement forced the intelligentsia to revise its views and concede the importance of asking elemental questions regarding political philosophy, law, and the constitution. Those who once dismissed legal reasoning as so much irrelevant "superstructure" are now focusing on matters of political philosophy and constitutional change. This novel orientation heralds a new maturity that Iranian political culture lacked during the last half of the twentieth century.

## The New Emphasis on Dignity

There is a philosophical and ideological consensus emerging in Iran today that is without precedent in the country's modern history. At the heart of this consensus lies the concept of the dignity or intrinsic worth of the human person. Yesterday's confirmed enemies are learning to tolerate one another and discuss political matters. A joint appeal for a constitutional referendum draws the signatures of the late shah's son, a Marxist-Leninist militant, a human rights advocate, and a former Revolutionary Guardsman. The boycott debate was sophisticated and rich. The Internet is providing a secure forum for free speech and for contacts between Iranians and the outside world.

Akbar Ganji, the radical Islamist turned dogged investigative re-

porter and hunger-striking prisoner of conscience, has not only been among the most eloquent voices calling for the boycott but has also been a pioneer in drawing attention to the problem of ethics in politics after a long hiatus. By gambling with his own life, Ganji is trying to shake up political attitudes rooted in a totalitarian mindset, which scoffs at moral values and promotes the adage that the goal justifies the means. Ganji and the student leaders tried during the presidential elections to plead for the necessity of a consistently ethical behavior. They were for a boycott on principle, rather than as a matter of tactics. The regime that rules Iran today has emptied elections of their democratic meaning. Only by rejecting such thoroughly hollowed-out elections can the dignity of the electoral process be restored and the practice of voting be reclaimed for the cause of democracy in Iran. This more-than-tactical commitment to the boycott caused Ganji to disagree with those who said that voters who had skipped the first round should nonetheless turn out for the second round in order at least to help keep the worse alternative (Ahmedinejad) out of office.

In a 25 July 2005 open letter to Ayatollah Montazeri that Ganji smuggled out of his prison cell, he reflected on the shortcomings of the prodemocracy movement and their possible remedies.

Our problem is not "lack of knowledge of democracy," but rather not being ready and willing to pay the price. Democracy needs men of action, women of courage, and resilient youth. Self-sacrifice and selflessness open the way to freedom and human rights, not just knowledge of modern culture. We should get to know modernity and modern society, and we should build a bridge between our knowledge and our actions in order to set up a democracy.

Coordinating beliefs and actions is not the only task ahead of Iranian democrats. In the wake of the presidential election a potentially strong prodemocracy movement still faces other daunting challenges. From the standpoint of organization, matters are still fluid, even confused. There is little at present that can serve as an efficient overall structure for the opposition. In the absence of such a structure, most prodemocracy and human rights advocates must count on international monitoring and publicity to help them survive repression. There are many illegal student groups and human rights organizations, but their strength is hard to weigh and repression may stunt their ability to learn and recruit. Developing a resilient network of democratic opposition groups and using this network to mobilize broader segments of society are major challenges that will require not only persistence and courage but also ingenuity. Figures such as Ganji, with his knowledge of and faith in democracy and his exemplary moral courage, could play a major role in uniting opposition forces torn apart by years of violence and distrust.
In order to succeed, Iran's democrats need to be able to protect their foot soldiers, the young activists like Shavaneh Qaderi who work for democ-

racy at the grassroots and reach out to ordinary people. While it is sadly too late to save Qaderi, the Iranian diaspora and international human rights and prodemocracy groups can do much to help his colleagues by naming and shaming his murderers and others in the regime who terrorize citizens. As of this writing in early September 2005, the official atrocities in Kurdistan had gone largely unnoticed in the world media. Silence and oblivion are the dictators' best friends. As they wage nonviolent battle against violent Islamist totalitarianism, Iran's prodemocracy advocates need and deserve international support. International human rights monitoring and visibility can help save their lives and give them more power to break through the regime's censorship and reach their potential constituency. It is not hard to imagine what could happen if these Iranians were able to stage a peaceful march—or better yet a sustained series of nonviolent demonstrations—that drew the participation of even a fraction of the 11 million eligible voters who seem to have boycotted the 2005 election. The historic impact of such events could rival in importance the fall of the Berlin Wall.

## NOTES

1. As framer Mohammad Beheshti noted on 1 September 1979: "The Islamic Republic is a doctrinal republic. . . . [and] is different from a democratic republic. We cannot allow the popular suffrage to be in command without any restrictions, as this is incompatible with the constitution and with an ideological regime." *Minutes of the Debates of the Assembly of Experts* (Tehran: Office for Cultural and Public Relations of the Islamic Assembly, 1985), 1: 376.

2. For the students' statement of 29 January 2004, visit *http://news.gooya.com.*

3. "According to official figures, Ahmedinejad go 5.7 million votes in the first round and 17.2 million in the runoff. How did he gather an additional 11.5 million votes in one week? Even if turnout remained the same across rounds, and if Ahmedinejad received all the votes that went to the other hard-line candidates in the first round (Ali Larijani and Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf) that would only give him an additional 5.8 million votes. If in fact, as the regime admits, second-round turnout was actually lower than first-round turnout, how could Ahmedinejad have almost tripled his total number of votes?" Bill Sami'i, "Iran: Do The Presidential Vote Numbers Really Add Up?" *Radio Liberty*, 30 June 2005.

4. See Khamenei's statement of 10 May 2005 at *http://news.gooya.com/president84/archive.*

5. See Bush's statement of 16 June 2005 at *www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/06/20050616.html.*

6. As Rafsanjani explained: "I knew the Americans' strategy supported low participation and high tension. I realized the current situation was favoring the Americans' goal. I thought if I came to the race, I could counter this strategy and the [electoral] participation would increase." Interview with *Jomhuri Eslami* (Tehran), 8 June 2005.

7. See SOCU's statement at http://news.gooya.com/politics/archives/032989.php.