

MEMMO

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Iranian Election Likely to Bring More of the Same

Today, Iranians go to the polls to elect a president. Unfortunately, Iran's voters will not have the opportunity to change their country's extremist policies. The election features two major candidates: the pragmatic hardliner and incumbent President Hassan Rouhani, and the ideological hardliner and mid-level cleric Ebrahim Raisi. Regardless of who wins, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei will remain in firm control.

Iran is not a democracy.

- Iran has a theocratic government controlled by a clerical supreme leader. The Iranian parliament (Majlis) has only limited power.
- Today's presidential elections will not be free or fair. Although some 1,600 candidates registered for the race, the regime permitted only six to run.
- Transparency, freedom of the press, and freedom of association are absent in Iran. The Iranian Interior Ministry controls the entire election process from start to finish and provides no insight into its workings. There is no independent election monitoring and no legal way to dispute results.

The election won't change Iran's extreme course.

- The Iranian elections have been framed as a contest between moderates and hardliners, but such distinctions have little meaning in terms of Iran's behavior. The candidates are each hardliners who support the fundamental framework of the regime, and their viewpoints differ only on how best to preserve the regime.
- Regardless of election results, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei will retain control over the country's important decisions. The constitution explicitly gives the Supreme Leader near-exclusive control over foreign policy, internal security and defense.
- All of the candidates in this election support Iran's hegemonic ambitions in the region and are likely to continue Iran's dangerous behavior and destabilizing activities.

Iran's dangerous behavior has worsened under President Rouhani.

- Iran has conducted at least fifteen ballistic missile tests in defiance of U.N. Security Council Resolution 2231's call on Iran to desist from such tests.
 - Iranian support has increased for the brutal Assad regime in Syria, the terrorist group Hezbollah in Lebanon, Shiite militias in Iraq, Houthi rebels in Yemen and terrorists in Gaza.
 - Iran's brutal repression of its own people continues unabated. Executions of political prisoners has spiked and repression of women, minorities and journalists has worsened.
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