

# The Resilience of Authoritarianism in Iran After the 2009 Election

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### **Crisis, Repression and Authoritarian Versatility: The Resilience of Authoritarianism in the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Post- 2009 Election Period**

The process of democracy seems fleeting in the Islamic Republic of Iran and studying democratic trends is never an exact science. Iran is not your usual authoritarian state[1] and unlike its Arab neighbors, it is a hybrid between competitive elections and religious autocracy. Ultimately power remains in the hands of one supreme individual who controls and oversees a group of unelected clerics and a strong security apparatus. At the same time this unelected body regularly holds an electoral process for a representative parliament that adds a dimension of uncertainty to the political process. The uncertainty in this process sees the growth of competing interests within the political system and allows the development of democratically committed opposition groups and social movements.

The Green Movement was one such opposition social movement that arose out of popular protests from late 2009 to early 2010 against the landslide victory of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The movement challenged the legitimacy of the regime and was one of the biggest social movements since 1979; however it ultimately failed. As a consequence of this challenge, the Iranian regime responded heavily and repressed the Green Movement and its leaders[2], and the results of the election were never annulled. Despite the rise of this popular social movement, authoritarianism in Iran remained resilient and the Ahmadinejad presidency would economically cripple and politically isolate Iran for years to come.[3]

This essay will examine how structural, societal and internal social factors maintain the legitimacy and durability of authoritarianism in Iran. It will argue that the combination of these factors allows the state to be flexible and adaptable when dealing with outside challenges. The ability of these factors to quell the 2009 protests demonstrates the resilience and durability of authoritarianism in the post-2009 election period. This paper will be analyzed in three parts. The first part of this essay will look at structural factors and examine the power of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in the state. Secondly, this essay will explore the social mechanisms that allow authoritarianism to continue in Iran by looking at the 'dual' social welfare policy of the Iranian state and the differences in dialogue that occurs between the regime and different social classes. Thirdly, this paper will examine the elite fragmentation in the regime during elections to illustrate the effectiveness of elite adaptability in maintaining authoritarian rule within Iran. The elections of 2009 and the subsequent rise of the Green Movement will be used as examples to demonstrate how these existing social and institutional structures have adapted to continue the regime's authoritarian existence. [4]

### **The Flexibility of Institutional control: The IRGC and the 2009 Elections**

Following the Iraq-War of 2003, there was a systematic militarization of the government, state institutions and economy in the Iranian state. The developing military threat of US presence in the region hastened the rise of the principal coercive organ of the state apparatus into the Iranian polity – the *Pasdaran* (Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps or IRGC).[5] Authority in the ruling elite of the Iranian state lies between a tenuous alliance between the conservative clergy in the Guardian Council and the IRGC.[6] The IRGC had maintained itself as an active organ of the Supreme Leader, but increased factionalization in Iranian politics allowed the IRGC and its brand of neo-

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conservatism to infiltrate more into the political system. [7] This has allowed the IRGC to have a greater role in the Iranian polity and essentially entrench itself as a function and decision maker in the Iranian authoritarian system.[8]

The IRGC gained considerable influence within the Iranian regime after the election of President Ahmadinejad in the 2005 elections and the new conservative revolution that followed. This would spell defeat to the reformist movement and the start of a new political and social discourse.[9] Ahmadinejad would oversee the parachuting of IRGC members into key political, economic and social organs of the state.[10] Ahmadinejad's cabinet would contain mainly 'middle aged, strongly ideological, second-generation revolutionaries without any political experience.'[11] A majority of the cabinet (including two clerics) would have a background in the IRGC and the military and intelligence apparatus.

Economically, the privatization of state assets in 2005 saw the consolidation of economic power in the Iranian leadership and IRGC as these organizations transferred 'relatively transparent parts of the public sector to parts of the public sector shielded from public scrutiny'[12]. By the time of the protests in 2009, you have a firmly entrenched faction representing the security apparatus that have formed themselves into a new center of elite representation within the Iranian polity. Their consolidation of power would remap the factional political landscape into a new security oligarchy and allow them greater flexibility in their dealings with the power structure.

The role of the IRGC in the 2009 elections was very prominent. Units of the *Basij* were directly involved in pro-Ahmadinejad's political campaign and organized massive rallies throughout the country.[13] They were also present at voting stations and the vote counting process adding to the opposition's claims of a fraudulent election. A systematic use of propaganda was employed in the pre and post-election period. The IRGC also identified and arrested 'cyber activists attacking and penetrating Iranian websites' and increased the scope and number of *Basij* to 'fight against foreign and subversive cultural and social influence' in the immediate post-election period.[14]

The Green movement and the protests that followed were a direct challenge to the entrenched political power that the IRGC had obtained, and the regime responded with the full force of the security apparatus. The IRGC implemented a typically harsh response, but it did not escalate the violence to total political and societal repression.[15] From the success of the actions taken in 2009, it appeared that the IRGC's monopoly and use of coercive force had become more adaptable, emboldened and unified due to their consolidation of power. This meant that the IRGC had become more 'perverse and capricious [and] they are also more reactive to multiple and shifting challenges.'[16]

Understanding the structural significance of the IRGC in maintaining authoritarian resilience is important. Ahmadinejad's tenure allowed the security apparatus to embed itself within the Iranian state to such a degree that it had a majority stake in maintaining the status quo. The Green Movement could not obtain the support of the security and military establishment since the military's interests were firmly embedded in the state and the body politic. The IRGC's alliance with conservative elements meant that it had broad-based support in continuing the presidency of Ahmadinejad. This also meant an ever-increasing reliance on the IRGC to maintain control over society and the functions of the regime.

As a consequence, the IRGC was able to contain the protests and suppress the demonstrations using the existing coercive organs of state that it controlled and its influence in the political system. The ability of the IRGC to respond to the rise of the Green Movement and opposition demonstrated the structural effectiveness of this new younger generation of political leaders in maintaining the status quo. The IRGC has had both a structural and self-interested role in the maintenance of the authoritarian character of the state, and this was demonstrated by its ability to quash effectively the protests of the Green Movement in 2009. As the IRGC entrenched their authority in the state and Iranian polity, this has given them greater autonomy to respond to societal and political pressures..

## The Welfare state: A dialogue between citizen and regime

Structural and political control is important in demonstrating the resilience of authoritarianism in the Iranian state post-2009. However, it only explains the interaction between elites and the opposition from a state vs. society perspective. This explanation fails to take into account local and social agency that affects not just the elites but also

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the broader masses. Welfare policy is another explanation for the resilience of authoritarianism. It is easy to argue that those who make up the urban and rural poor are passive in the passage of high politics. However it is in the informal sectors active political interaction with the regime combined with their reliance on state subsidies that facilitates the ability of the state to maintain its authoritarian durability. What this means is that the 'Welfare project' in Iran is not 'a hegemonic project of ideological extortion coupled with a crass political machine where public goods are narrowly targeted at the poorer strata to secure mobilization or at least, complacency'.<sup>[17]</sup> Welfare policy is instead a tool of socialization and mobilization between the regime and lower classes within the Iranian political system.

Iranian social policy consists of two separate forms of welfare that target different strata within Iranian society. The largest form of public goods is the corporatist welfare regime which includes institutions such as the Social Security Organization (SSO) and the Civil Service Retirement Organization (CSRO). These bodies oversee the beneficiaries of the Iranian middle and working classes with subsidies such as goods, medical services, and energy.<sup>[18]</sup> These organizations contribute this 'middle-class welfare' to around 27 million people. The second form of welfare is the 'Martyrs Welfare State', which consists of parallel state organizations such as the *Basij*, the *Bonyads* and most importantly the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (IKRC).<sup>[19]</sup> These parallel state institutions contribute to '6-7 million beneficiaries and dependents out of a population of 70 million'<sup>[20]</sup>. According to Kevan Harris, the duality of this welfare system allows flexibility within the regime to respond to social demands and change. However, both systems have promoted the development of social protest movements while at the same creating a patronage network for maintaining regime durability.<sup>[21]</sup>

The middle-class welfare system creates a widening gap between the subalterns of the urban and rural poor, and the middle and working classes. This middle-class welfare constitutes a massive amount of the Iranian state's budget and acts (to a degree) autonomously from the state. As a consequence, it has inevitably led to disenfranchisement in the Iranian middle classes as they seek autonomy from the political bureaucratization and dominating social policies of the state.<sup>[22]</sup> While the middle classes seek more independence from the overburdening state apparatus, the parallel welfare state plays a daily part of people's life in urban areas and rural communities.

These institutions (although bureaucratic in structure) allow personal communication with managers and higher authorities creating a direct connection between the regime and the sub-proletariat.<sup>[23]</sup> As Harris points out, the urban and rural poor 'interact with various state apparatus on a much more frequent basis than Iranians located in the formal professional and working classes'.<sup>[24]</sup> This allows a symbiotic connection to occur between the regime and the poor enabling the facilitation of economic and social grievances at a localized level. It also produces a discourse of 'revolution rights talk' similar to other post-revolutionary regimes but these urban and rural poor are still dependent on the state. <sup>[25]</sup> This kind of connection is also extended to health and housing systems in villages and poorer urban communities.

These networks present an interesting socialization and mobilization tool between the regime and those of the lower classes. By the incorporation of these poorer classes into the state as well as trying to reduce absolute poverty, this has allowed the regime to maintain a dialogue with these subaltern classes. This exchange allows institutional flexibility when dealing with social and popular grievances from these informal sectors of society, staving off major unrest in times of social upheaval.<sup>[26]</sup> Political decisions are often made through these informal channels, and these allegiances are based more on the patronage of the state rather than ideological affiliation.<sup>[27]</sup> It is these forms of welfare that have created the necessary elements for regime resilience during the 2009 protests.

The Green Movement in 2009 was an expansion of middle-class empowerment and frustration. The middle-classes inability to access the political and cultural capital needed for the maintenance of middle-class lifestyles during a period of authoritarianism and populist policies, did not have resonance with the sub-proletariat classes.<sup>[28]</sup> The Green Movement's inability to present a unified message and facilitate dialogue that crossed class boundaries and overcome the socialization and mobilization tools used by the regime was one reason for its failure. The ability for these lower classes to vent their frustrations through these welfare channels demonstrates the ability the regime possesses to placate and mobilize the masses when political and social upheaval (like in the post-2009 election period) occur.

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## Electoral adaptability: Elite Disunity and Elections

Authoritarianism in Iran is very different from its Arab counterparts. Its hybrid regime presents a unique combination of pluralism in its electoral process without a single significant ruling party. The Iranian state is not a homogeneous *Leviathan* but encompasses many different positions and interests from throughout the political and institutional spectrum. Electoral competition allows the regime to 'institutionalize opposition' and create a platform for the dissemination of elite factionalism. The Islamic regime allows factions and personalities to 'enter into loose coalitions, jockey for influence with the system, represent different social constituencies and offer competing interpretations of the legacy of the revolution.'<sup>[29]</sup>

Authoritarian Resilience is based on this elite fragmentation where competition between conservative and reformist factions seek to maintain the status quo or reform (not change) the current Islamic state model. However, the unpredictability of elections means that these elites factions still have to pursue electoral strategies to win power.<sup>[30]</sup> The competitive environment, however, does allow opposition social movements to 'fully capitalize on these opportunities and develop new contentious repertoires'<sup>[31]</sup> as was demonstrated in the Green Movements strategies in 2009. Moreover, it is the elites ability to react and adapt to the unpredictability of these electoral outcomes which illustrates the resilience of authoritarianism in post-2009 Iran

Elites both have social connections and patronage networks as well as representation in state institutions. Their participation in elections serves to sustain the authoritarian model of the state with the veneer of democratic pluralism. Elites still use and work within the system to promote their own political and ideological ambitions.<sup>[32]</sup> In the 2005 election, Ahmadinejad and the conservatives' success lay in its ability to use electoral strategies that the reformers had used previously. Their ability to promote policies directed at the urban poor, rural communities and religious conservatives through themes of Islamic social justice and morality proved very successful. <sup>[33]</sup> It appeared that the conservative faction had used their plentiful resources through financial dominance, patronage networks and control over institutions to win the popular vote. This illustrates a level of flexibility within the factions in the regime to adapt to the unpredictability of the electoral processes and utilize their resources to compete and win elections.

The assault by the conservative faction to undermine the legitimacy of the electoral process led to a backlash from the reformist movement in 2009. As a consequence, the Green Movements' protest arose. Threatened by a direct challenge to their authority, the regime responded with a process of heavy repression. However despite the massive social upheaval and protests caused by the Green Movement, there were no elite defections in the regime. While Mir-Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi remained defiant, many of the elite clerics remained conflicted about what to do about the protest movement.

Several anti-Ahmadinejad clerics adopted a 'wait and see' policy and only committed themselves to the regime when the movement had lost significant traction.<sup>[34]</sup> Despite the indications of elite disunity, the regime remained viable and showed no signs of collapsing. The resilience of authoritarianism in the 2009 case demonstrates the adaptability of the regime and its elites ability to react and manage the uncertainty of these electoral outcomes. To maintain power, the regime sustained elite support and did not opt for total repression- a move that could have eroded the legitimacy of the regime further. <sup>[35]</sup>

This essay has demonstrated the reasons for the resilience of authoritarianism in Iran after the 2009 elections. The brand of authoritarianism that Iran advocates is not one rigid state apparatus but a combination of differing factors that compete for influence within the system. The ability of these institutions and the actors within them has allowed a greater degree of flexibility when responding to social and political pressures. The elections of 2009 are different from previous times because for the first time a genuine opposition movement had arisen outside the elite circle and tested the resilience of Iran's authoritarian model. The entrenchment of the security apparatus in the Iranian polity and economy provided a necessary structural factor that helped maintain and bolster the authoritarian tendencies of the state.

As the IRGC attempted to manipulate the elections to secure further political power in the state, they were met with opposition. However, their monopoly on violence and the conservative clergy's dependency on the entrenched

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institutional power of the IRGC meant that the regime was able to quell and proportionately quash the Green Movement without bringing further instability and alienating their position in the regime. It further demonstrated the flexibility of institutional control in Iranian society, as entrenched IRGC structural power was able to adapt to the societal and political pressures that sought to undermine its dominant position. This adaptability from a structural level demonstrates the regime's authoritarian resilience.

On a societal level, the duality of the welfare regime within Iran provides care and needs to different segments of Iranian society. The parallel organizations of the Iranian state such as the IKRC, however, supplements the subalterns of society and provide a powerful mobilizing force. This welfare system provides a socialization and mobilization tool that has direct access to the urban and rural communities. It facilitates a free-flowing dialogue between the regime and these classes, which provides an avenue for venting social and economic frustrations. Moreover, this favors the regime to implement appropriate responses to social and political grievances to stop mass discontent. While it does not promote loyalty to the regime, this dialogue facilitates a strong bond between the state and society that allows the regime easier access to mobilize these classes if necessary.

The 2009 elections and Green Movement illustrate the social divide between the middle and sub-proletariat classes. The urban and rural poor are not passive citizens to the regime but the inability of the middle classes to communicate a message that could transcend these class and societal boundaries did not occur. The regime's ability to provide this personal exchange that responds the rural poor's livelihood and social grievances allows the authoritarian tendencies of the regime to continue in the post-2009 period.

The competition between elites plays a viable part in the resilience of the regime in Iran. While both factions fight over the way that power is implemented, they mostly have grown from within the structure of the regime whether through patronage or institutions. In the case of the election of 2009, the opposition movement's lack of ability to secure patronage from elite disunity meant that many elites sided with the status quo, particularly as the movement called for serious political reforms. The ability of the conservative factions younger generation to adapt and use the electoral system to its benefit demonstrates the flexibility and resilience of the regime. Electoral struggles do however allow the development of political change in Iran. The 2009 election results and subsequent quashing of the Green Movement saw Ahmadinejad and the conservatives continue up to 2013, however, the election of President Hassan Rouhani as a candidate on the reformist platform (despite him not being a reformer) demonstrates the ebb and flow of this electoral process as it seeks to maintain the authoritarian character of the Iranian state.

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[1] Authoritarianism in the Middle East is usually defined as a 'Sultanistic' form of Authoritarianism. It defines regimes with an arbitrary and unpredictable use of power and the weakness of the limited political pluralism. The regimes of Hosni Mubarak and Bashar Al-Assad have been classified as such. More recently Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey has begun to show signs of this form of authoritarianism. For a further exploration and the consequences of the fall of these regimes see Juan J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 151-55. Francesco Cavatorta, "The Convergence of Governance: Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World and Downgrading Democracy Elsewhere?," *Middle East Critique* 19, no. 3 (2010); Derya Göçer Akder, "Theories of Revolutions and Arab Uprisings: The Lessons from the Middle East," *Ortadoğu Etütleri* 4, no. 2 (2013).

[2] This essay is not here to critique why the Green movement failed but more examine how the existing structures and social forces within the regime allow authoritarian durability in Iran post 2009. To find more information on the Green Movement please see Hamid Dabashi, *Iran, the Green Movement and the USA: The Fox and the Paradox* (London: Zed Books, 2010); Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel, eds., *The People Reloaded: The Green Movement and the Struggle for Iran's Future* (New York: Melville House, 2010); Negin Nabavi, ed. *Iran: From Theocracy to the Green Movement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Farhad Khosrokhavar, "The Green Movement," in *Navigating Contemporary Iran: Challenging Economic, Social and Political Perceptions*, ed. Eric Hooglund and Leif Stenberg (London: Routledge, 2012).

[3] Fred Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[4] The literature on the resilience of Authoritarianism is complicated because it is impossible to contribute a unified framework on what constitutes an authoritarian regime. Every regime has different social, institutional and political forces, which help the historical formation of power within the state and secure authority within the ruling elite or political party. See for more information Dan Slater and Sofia Fenner, "State Power and Staying Power: Infrastructural Mechanism and Authoritarian Durability," *Journal of International Affairs* 65, no. 1 (2011).

[5] For further information on the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps see Frederic Wehrey et al., *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corp*, ed. National Defense Research Institute (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2009); Ali Alfoneh, "The Revolutionary Guards' Role in Iranian

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Politics," *Middle East Quarterly* 15, no. 5 (2008); Stephanie Cronin, *Armies and State Building in the Modern Middle East: Politics, Nationalism and Military Reform* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2014).

[6] Ayatollah Khomeini first established the IRGC in 1979 as an armed force to defend the revolution and clergy's aims due to the distrust of the traditional Iranian military. See Ali Alfoneh, "All the Guard's Men: Iran's Silent Revolution," *World Affairs* 173, no. 3 (2010): 73.

[7] Elliot Hen-Tov and Nathan Gonzalez, "The Militarization of Post-Khomeini Iran: Praetorianism 2.0," *The Washington Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (2011): 47.

[8] An internal power struggle would occur between the new guard under Ahmadinejad's Neo-principalists and the old order under the clergy, but there would be a close alliance between Ahmadinejad and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei. However this relationship would quickly start to fray. As the power of IRGC rose, more control centralized on the position of the Supreme Leader. This has meant that Khamenei has had to rely more on the IRGC to maintain his control on power, specifically as Ahmadinejad started to question the legitimacy of the Clerics in running the country. See Babak Rahimi, "The Role of the Revolutionary Guards and Basij Militia in Iran's "Electoral Coup"," *Terrorism Monitor* 7, no. 21 (2009).

[9] Ahmadinejad was himself a former member of the IRGC controlled *Basij* forces and part of the new 'middle generation of the Islamic Revolutionaries' who grew up under the state's apparatus and revolutionary codes but were not part of the clergy. See Alfoneh, "All the Guard's Men: Iran's Silent Revolution," 77-79.

[10] An alliance between elites and the State's coercive apparatus can 'deploy violence in a controlled way, ensuring that state repression does not go beyond specified targets and limits'. Institutions are important because they 'enable and restrict the behaviour of political actors and organizations.' [10] See Slater and Fenner, "State Power and Staying Power: Infrastructural Mechanism and Authoritarian Durability," 20; Arang Keshavarzian, "Contestation without Democracy: Elite Fragmentation in Iran," in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, ed. Marsha Pripstein Posusney and Michele Penner Angrist (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), 227.

[11] Elliot Hen-Tov, "Understanding Iran's New Authoritarianism," *The Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2006): 166.

[12] Ahmadinejad's patronage to the IRGC would extend to increased influence in the oil, chemical and gas industries of Iran. By the time the 2009 elections had come around, the IRGC had not only secured its position within the Iranian polity and state but also the economy as well. Conservative estimates say that by 2009, the IRGC had control of over 70 percent of the Iranian economy 'ranging from dental and eye clinics to car factories and construction firms.' See Alfoneh, "All the Guard's Men: Iran's Silent Revolution," 76. Farhang Morady, "Who Rules Iran? The June 2009 Election and Political Turmoil," *Capital & Class* 35, no. 1 (2010): 51.

[13] Roozbeh Safshekan and Farzan Sabet, "The Ayatollah's Praetorians: The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the 2009 Election Crisis," *The Middle East Journal* 64, no. 4 (2010).

[14] Güneş Murat Tezcür, "Democratic Responses and Authoritarian Responses in Iran in Comparative Perspective," in *Middle East Authoritarianisms: Governance, Contestation, and Regime Resilience in Syria and Iran*, ed. Steven Heydemann and Reinoud Leenders (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 220.

[15] Between June to December 2009, around 107 individuals were killed as a result of political violence.

[16] Arzoo Osanloo, "Contesting Governance: Authority, Protest and Rights Talk in Postrepublican Iran," in *Middle East Authoritarianisms: Governance, Contestation, and Regime Resilience in Syria and Iran*, ed. Steven Heydemann and Reinoud Leenders (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 129.

[17] Kevan Harris, "A Martyr's Welfare State and Its Contradictions: Regime Resilience and Limits through the Lens of Social Policy in Iran," *ibid.*, 61.



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[18] Ibid., 62; M. Dorraj and M. Dodson, "Neo-Populism in Comparative Perspective: Iran and Venezuela," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 29, no. 1 (2009).

[19] Ervand Abrahamian, *The Iranian Mojahedin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 70.

[20] Harris, "A Martyr's Welfare State and Its Contradictions: Regime Resilience and Limits through the Lens of Social Policy in Iran," 62.

[21] "Lineages of the Iranian Welfare State: Dual Institutionalism and Social Policy in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Social Policy & Administration* 44, no. 6 (2010): 734.

[22] For more information on this regime dialogue with the middle and working classes and the rise of middle class frustration as a key to democratic social movements please see Arang Keshavarzian, "Regime Loyalty and Bazari Representation under the Islamic Republic of Iran: Dilemmas of the Society of Islamic Coalition," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41, no. 02 (2009); Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

[23] For a deeper exploration of the sub-proletariat and the informal movements in Middle Eastern society see Asef Bayat, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary Change the Middle East*, Isim Series on Contemporary Muslim Societies (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010).

[24] Harris, "A Martyr's Welfare State and Its Contradictions: Regime Resilience and Limits through the Lens of Social Policy in Iran," 72.

[25] Asef Bayat, *Street Politics: Poor People's Movements in Iran* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

[26] Harris, "A Martyr's Welfare State and Its Contradictions: Regime Resilience and Limits through the Lens of Social Policy in Iran," 78.

[27] Güneş Murat Tezcür, "Democratic Responses and Authoritarian Responses in Iran in Comparative Perspective," *ibid.*, 203.

[28] Kevan Harris, "A Martyr's Welfare State and Its Contradictions: Regime Resilience and Limits through the Lens of Social Policy in Iran," *ibid.*, 80.

[29] Güneş Murat Tezcür, "Democratic Responses and Authoritarian Responses in Iran in Comparative Perspective," *ibid.*, 203.

[30] "Democracy Promotion, Authoritarian Resiliency, and Political Unrest in Iran," *Democratization* 19, no. 1 (2012): 123; Keshavarzian, "Contestation without Democracy: Elite Fragmentation in Iran," 87.

[31] Tezcür, "Democratic Responses and Authoritarian Responses in Iran in Comparative Perspective," 201.

[32] For example, there has been a swing between competing interests since the 1997 elections where the reformists took power under Mohammad Khatami. However, this was soon replaced by popular apathy in the 2004 parliamentary election. Even when the reformist faction protested against the Guardian Council's mass disqualification of participants in the 2004 election, there was no public support for their political moves. For more information on electoral processes and authoritarianism see Valerie J. Bunce and Sharon L. Wolchik, "Defeating Dictators: Electoral Change and Stability in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes," *World Politics* 62, no. 1 (2009); Beatriz Magaloni, "The Game of Electoral Fraud and the Ousting of Authoritarian Rule," *American Journal of Political Science* 54, no. 3 (2010); Güneş Murat Tezcür, "Intra-Elite Struggles in Iranian Elections," in *Political Participation in the Middle East*, ed. Ellen Lust-Okar and Saloua Zerhouni (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008).

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[33] "Democratic Responses and Authoritarian Responses in Iran in Comparative Perspective," 216.

[34] 219

[35] 220

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