

Editor's Note

Foreign Policy and Iranian Election

Iran's presidential election of 2013 was a turning point in domestic and foreign policies of the nation. The election defied fixated notions of engineered voting and surprised a good number of people in the world of think tanks as well as those of foreign policy practice. How may one analyze the foreign policy implications of the Iranian presidential election? Taking into account that the foreign policies of all nations, including that of Iran, do not change overnight and are a combination of continuity and change, explains how they behave internationally, three distinctive qualitative changes need to be seen in the wake of Rouhani's victory in the recent election: space, personality and direction.

The foreign policy space was shaped immediately after the election. The election created a feeling globally about the maturity of the Iranian people as well of its political elites and system. The praise of the result of the election was universal with the exception of the right wing Israeli prime minister who was criticized by some of his peers for his positioning. The created space is both domestic and external. This space is conducive to positive interactions between Iran and the world. It will negate and reject those political actors, especially in the conservative and neoconservative circles in the region and the United States, whose agenda was and still is to militarize the atmosphere of the Iran-West relationship.

The personality factor is also a very significant foreign policy dimension of the election. The president-elect is by all indices well



experienced in international and foreign policy areas and issues. His long membership in the foreign and International Affairs Committee of the Iranian Parliament as well as the national Security Council makes him different from other political actors in Iranian politics. The personality factor also applies to his national security and foreign policy team. His elitist approach and knowledge of the people and processes of the Iranian foreign policy establishment need to be taken into account along with his ties with the supreme leader.

The direction of the post-election foreign policy is of cooperation with different nations based on the mutual interest. This direction was amplified in the course of the live foreign policy debate on national television among the presidential candidates, which was the most heated, complex and simultaneously clear of the three debates between the hopefuls. Rouhani clearly talked of moderation in foreign policy. The direction of moderation will be the guiding map of foreign policy.

The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic's eleventh president will be also faced with different challenges. The foreign policy of a country such as Iran with fifteen neighbors and a long list of difficult regional and global issues is not an easy job to manage. But the hope for moderation is there. Let us remain hopeful. Hope is the essence of diplomacy.

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