

The Ramifications of Rouhani's Re-election

A public opinion study | July 2017



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SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL &
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Cover Image: IRNA

Introduction

On May 19, 2017, Iranians turned out in droves to re-elect President Hassan Rouhani by a 57 to 38.5 percent margin over his main rival, conservative Ebrahim Raisi. The American media declared he had won “by a landslide,” and experts have wondered aloud how he would use the stronger mandate he got during his second term. Some asserted that his victory had always been assured because all previous Iranian presidents who ran for a second term were re-elected. But, how much do we really understand about what happened during the campaign and what type of mandate Rouhani really received?

The United States has also gone through a presidential transition since the last time the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM) surveyed Iranian public opinion around the first anniversary of the July 2015 agreement between six world powers and Iran that tightened limits and increased transparency on Iran’s nuclear program in return for sanctions relief. While campaigning, then-presidential candidate Donald Trump denounced the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) as the “worst deal ever,” although he never clearly said whether he would honor U.S. obligations, abrogate the agreement, or try to undermine it if he became president.

To see how Trump’s victory might have changed Iranians’ attitudes towards the nuclear deal, the prospects for U.S.-Iran relations, and the type of leader they needed to deal effectively with President Trump, CISSM fielded a survey of the Iranian public in December 2016.

This report includes the results of that survey, and two more rounds of data collected shortly before and after Iran’s presidential election. In all of these surveys, we asked many of the trendline questions that we have been using in Iran, some since the JCPOA was signed and some starting well before then. Although public enthusiasm for the nuclear deal had been slipping prior to the election as the promised economic benefits failed to materialize, none of the other presidential candidates attacked Rouhani during the debates for negotiating a bad deal for Iran. Instead, the election results showed a strengthening public consensus in support of Rouhani’s efforts to end Iran’s isolation through diplomatic and economic engagement. We also found increased pessimism that the United States would honor its end of the bargain and decreased willingness to cooperate with the United States on other issues, even in return for more promises about sanctions relief.

The before and after election data suggest that Rouhani’s re-election was not a foregone conclusion. Economic issues, particularly unemployment, remained Iranian voters’ top concern, even after the post-election terror attacks in Tehran. Because Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, the successful mayor of Tehran, was viewed as better able to improve Iran’s economic situation than Rouhani had been to date, if Ghalibaf had stayed in the race and Raisi had dropped out, rather than the other way around, the outcome would have been much closer. As it was, Rouhani’s margin of victory over a candidate who was neither well known nor well liked was smaller than the margin for any previous presidential incumbent, and Raisi got nearly 40 percent of the vote.

Whatever mandate Rouhani has is for continuity rather than radical change. Those who voted for Rouhani and those who voted against him agreed about what his re-election meant and didn’t mean. Foreigners who want to see the JCPOA succeed and Iran engage more economically and

diplomatically with the rest of the world are in step with the Iranian people. Those who want to see dramatic changes in Iran's other security policies as a precondition for cooperation, or who believe that tightening sanctions will cause the majority of Iranians to turn against their leaders and the Islamic Republic, are out of touch with what the Iranian people really think.

Methodology

The study is based on three probability sample telephone surveys. The first was conducted in December 2016, the second in May 2017, and the third in June 2017, among a representative sample of about 1,000 Iranians. The margin of error is about +/- 3.1 percent.

The samples were RDD samples drawn from all landline telephones in Iran. The samples were stratified first by Iranian provinces and then in accordance to settlement size and type. All 31 Iranian provinces were represented in proportions similar to their actual populations, as were rural and urban areas.

When a residence was reached, an adult was randomly selected from within that household using the random table technique.

An initial attempt and three callbacks were made in an effort to complete an interview with the randomly selected respondents. The contact rate, defined as the proportion of random respondents who were reached and ultimately agreed to be interviewed relative to the number of respondents attempted, for the December 2016 poll was 71 percent, for the May 2017 poll was 75 percent, and for the June 2017 poll was 74 percent. The completion rate for the December 2016 poll was 81 percent, for the May 2017 poll was 86 percent, and for the June 2017 poll was 85 percent.

All of the interviews were conducted using computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI). All interviews were monitored in real-time by call-center supervisors.

Summary of Findings

1. Rouhani's Re-election Seen as Endorsement of His Foreign Policy and JCPOA, Not Revolutionary Change [Page 9]

There is no consensus among Iranians about what type of mandate Rouhani was given by the 57 percent of Iranians who voted to give him a second term. Fewer than 12 percent offered the same answer when asked an open-ended question. When presented with alternative interpretations, large majorities agree that Rouhani's re-election means that most Iranian people approve of his foreign policy and the nuclear deal he negotiated with the P5+1 countries. They disagree with the assertion that his re-election means most people disapprove of the ideals of the Islamic Revolution, or that they want religion to play a lesser role in policy making.

2. Approval of Nuclear Deal Increased during Presidential Campaign, Despite Disappointment with its Economic Benefit [Page 11]

After steady declines in enthusiasm for the JCPOA prior to the May 2017 presidential election, approval of the agreement rose during the election process. Two in three Iranians approve of the agreement, while about a third oppose it.

The agreement divides those who voted for Rouhani from those who did not. While eight in ten Rouhani voters approve of the deal, only four in ten of those who voted for Raisi approve of the agreement. Two years since the signing of the agreement, majorities believe that Iran has not received most of the promised benefits and that there have been no improvements in people's living conditions as a result of the nuclear deal. A plurality thinks that the agreement for Iran to purchase passenger airplanes from the United States will likely have little impact on Iran's economy. Still, there is some optimism that the deal will eventually improve people's living conditions.

3. U.S. Seen as Actively Obstructive, Contrary to Commitment under JCPOA [Page 13]

Most Iranians lack confidence that the United States will live up to its obligations under the JCPOA. They believe either that the United States is finding other ways to keep the negative effects of sanctions that were lifted under the deal, or that the United States has not even lifted the sanctions it was supposed to lift. A growing majority also believes that contrary to the terms of the agreement, the United States is trying to prevent other countries from normalizing their trade and economic relations with Iran. While a majority still express some confidence that other P5+1 countries will abide by the agreement, most say Europeans are slow in investing and trading with Iran primarily due to fear of punishment by the United States.

4. Majority Support Retaliation if U.S. Abrogates JCPOA [Page 15]

Iranians expect President Donald Trump to be more hostile toward Iran than was former President Barack Obama. Seven in ten Iranians believe it likely that Trump may decide not to abide by the terms of the nuclear agreement. Attitudes about how Iran should respond if the United States violates the JCPOA have hardened: A clear majority now thinks that instead of taking the matter to the UN, Iran should retaliate by restarting the aspects of its nuclear program it has agreed to suspend under the JCPOA, if the United States abrogates the deal. A large majority see the new sanctions that Congress is likely to impose on Iran as being against the spirit of the JCPOA, with half saying it would violate the letter of the agreement as well.

5. No Appetite for Renegotiating the Nuclear Deal with Trump [Page 17]

Large majorities say that Iran should refuse to increase the duration of the special nuclear limits it accepted under the JCPOA, or to terminate its nuclear enrichment program, even if offered more sanctions relief in return.

6. Majority Opposes a Halt to Missile Testing, Even in Return for More Sanctions Relief [Page 18]

Over three in five say that Iran should continue testing ballistic missiles despite U.S. demands for Iran to halt such tests and find the proposition that Iran reduce testing missiles in return for the lifting of more sanctions unacceptable. Two thirds reject the notion that Rouhani's re-election means most Iranians oppose testing of missiles by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

7. Greater Support for Self-Sufficiency [Page 19]

An increasing majority think Iran should strive to achieve economic self-sufficiency rather than focusing on increasing its trade with other countries. Six in ten say current changes in the world make it necessary for Iran to have a president who will stand up for Iran's rights and refuse to compromise. Majorities reject offering various steps in exchange for more sanctions relief—steps such as Iran reducing its missile testing, or recognizing Israel, or ceasing its aid to the Syrian government and Hezbollah. Rejection of these steps is significantly lower, though, among those who think the nuclear deal has improved the living condition of ordinary Iranians.

8. Economy is Seen as Bad, and Reducing Unemployment is Given the Highest Priority [Page 22]

Large majorities say Iran's economic situation is bad, and less than a quarter think the economic condition of their family has improved over the last four years. Half think that the country's economic situation is getting worse. Eight in ten say reducing unemployment should be a top priority for Rouhani in the next four years.

9. Rouhani Seen as Successful in Foreign Policy, not in Reducing Unemployment [Page 23]

Majorities see Rouhani as being successful in improving Iran's relations with other countries and getting international sanctions on Iran lifted. Majorities also see his re-election to mean that most Iranians approve of his foreign policy and the JCPOA. In fact, the nuclear agreement is regarded as Rouhani's most important accomplishment during his first four years in office. Rouhani, however, gets low marks on the unemployment situation in Iran. Six in ten say he has been unsuccessful in reducing unemployment and half say he has thus far failed to improve the economy.

10. Rouhani's Reelection was Not Certain until Ghalibaf Left the Race [Page 25]

Election polls were quite accurate in predicting the outcome of the election. Pre-election polls suggested that if Tehran mayor Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf had been Rouhani's main opponent rather than Raisi, the election results would have been much closer. After the second presidential debate, Rouhani was ahead of Ghalibaf by less than 6 percentage points, while his lead over Raisi was more than 20 points. While an overwhelming majority of Raisi supporters said that if Raisi pulled out they would vote for Ghalibaf, less than half of Ghalibaf supporters said they

would vote for Raisi if their candidate pulled out. Indeed, when Ghalibaf pulled out of the race nearly half of his supporters switched to Rouhani and helped him pass the 50 percent threshold.

11. Turnout Helps Rouhani [Page 29]

About a quarter of those who said they rarely vote in Iranian presidential elections reported that they voted in the May 2017 election, and seven in ten said they voted for Rouhani. Large majorities believe that both the Guardian Council and the Interior Ministry were fair and impartial as they fulfilled their election-related responsibilities. About five percent, however, say that they went to their voting stations but for one reason or another were not ultimately able to cast their ballots.

12. Rouhani and Zarif's Popularity Increase after Re-Election, but General Soleymani is Most Popular Political Figure [Page 30]

The Iranian Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, is the most popular politician in Iran, with President Rouhani coming in second. Although Rouhani's popularity increased somewhat during the recent election, it is still substantially lower than the first time he ran for office and after he signed the JCPOA.

13. Post-election Terrorist Attacks: ISIS Seen as Primary Culprit, but Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the United States Likely Helped [Page 32]

A large majority of Iranians thinks that ISIS conducted the June 7 attacks in Tehran. Most Iranians also think that Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the United States probably provided guidance or support to the perpetrators.

14. Strong Support for Fighting ISIS, but Not for Collaboration with U.S. [Page 33]

The June 7 attacks seem to have increased support for Iran playing a more active role in the Middle East. More than eight in ten call increasing Iran's security a top priority; seven in ten say this about fighting ISIS and increasing Iran's influence in the region. A growing majority of Iranians support their government helping groups that are fighting ISIS, although the number that favors sending troops has remained roughly constant. Two in three support Iran sending military personnel to Syria to help the Assad government against armed Syrian rebels, including ISIS. Support for Iran and the United States collaborating with one another to help Iraq's government counter ISIS is at its lowest, with an increasing majority saying they would oppose such cooperation.

15. Views of P5+1 Countries [Page 35]

Majorities regard Russia, China, and Germany—half of the P5+1—favorably, and the other half—the U.S., France and Britain—unfavorably. While six in ten believe that most P5+1 countries (but not the United States) will fulfill their obligations under the JCPOA, views toward all the Western powers that took part in the JCPOA negotiations are now less positive. Though a majority believes that Iran's relations with European countries have improved as a result of the deal, only a quarter say that about the United States. Still, far from showing implacable hostility toward the West, a majority continues to think it is possible for the Islamic world and the West to find common ground.

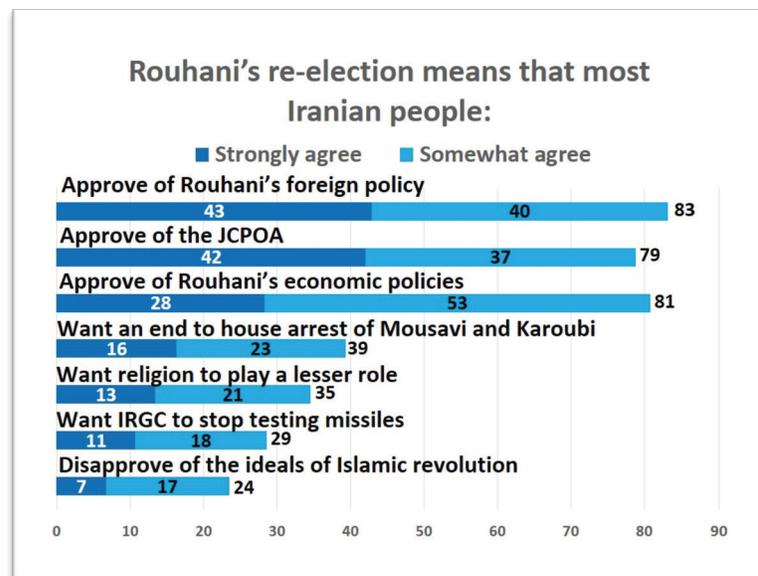
1. Rouhani’s Re-election Seen as Endorsement of His Foreign Policy and JCPOA, Not Revolutionary Change

There is no consensus among Iranians about what type of mandate Rouhani was given by the 57 percent of Iranians who voted to give him a second term. Fewer than 12 percent offered the same answer when asked an open-ended question. When presented with alternative interpretations, large majorities agree that Rouhani's re-election means that most Iranian people approve of his foreign policy and the nuclear deal he negotiated with the P5+1 countries. They disagree with the assertion that his re-election means most people disapprove of the ideals of the Islamic Revolution, or that they want religion to play a lesser role in policy making.

Hassan Rouhani’s re-election has given rise to much analysis regarding its meaning. Some have argued that Rouhani was able to win because Iranians regarded him to be more capable than his main opponent, Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi, to manage the country’s affairs and resolve its many problems. Others have argued that Rouhani’s reelection has a more profound meaning, signaling that people in Iran are demanding fundamental change in how their country is governed.

When asked about the main message and meaning of Rouhani’s reelection, less than a third agree with the notion that Rouhani’s reelection had to do with a public desire for fundamental change. Seven in ten (72%), including 76 percent of those who voted for Rouhani, disagree with the argument that Rouhani’s victory means that most Iranians disapprove of the ideals of the Islamic Revolution; less than a quarter (24%) agree with this suggestion.

Two in three (67%), including 61 percent of those who voted for Rouhani, also disagree that most Iranians voted for Rouhani because they want the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to stop testing missiles; only 27 percent agree with this analysis. Six in ten (61%), including 65 percent of those who voted for Rouhani, disagree with the notion that Rouhani won because most Iranians want religion to play a lesser role in in policy making; only a quarter (26%) agree with this analysis. Slightly over half (53%), including the same percentage of Rouhani voters, also disagree that Rouhani’s re-election has to do with a popular desire to see Green Movement leaders (namely Mehdi Karroubi and Mir Hossein Mousavi) freed from house arrest, while 39 percent agree.



There is, however, strong agreement that Rouhani's reelection should be perceived as a popular endorsement of his policies, particularly his foreign policy. Eight in ten (83%), including 65 percent of those who voted for Raisi, agree that Rouhani's victory should be seen as an endorsement of his foreign policy (43% strongly) and only 14% disagree.

A large majority (79%), including 52 percent of those who voted for Raisi, also agree that Rouhani won because most Iranians approve of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the nuclear agreement he negotiated with the P5+1 countries that was signed in July 2015. Less than a fifth (18%) disagree. Similarly, a majority (81%) also agree that Rouhani's reelection means that most people approve of Rouhani's economic policies (28% strongly, 53% somewhat), while 18 percent disagree.

In response to an open-ended question asking what they thought was "the main message and meaning" of Rouhani's reelection, about a third said it means people are satisfied with his performance (12%), have confidence in him (7%) and his promises (7%), approve of his foreign policy (6%) and the nuclear deal (4%), and admire his aptitude (1%) and his allies (1%). Also, less than a sixth said his re-election signals that people cherish the stability Rouhani has brought about (5%), desire a better future (5%), demand moderation (2%), and more civil liberties (4%). About 11 percent said Rouhani's re-election means that people want him to complete unfinished tasks, and 4 percent said it means people wanted to prevent someone like Raisi from becoming Iran's next president. Interestingly, about a quarter (26%) felt they could not identify the main message of Rouhani's re-election was.

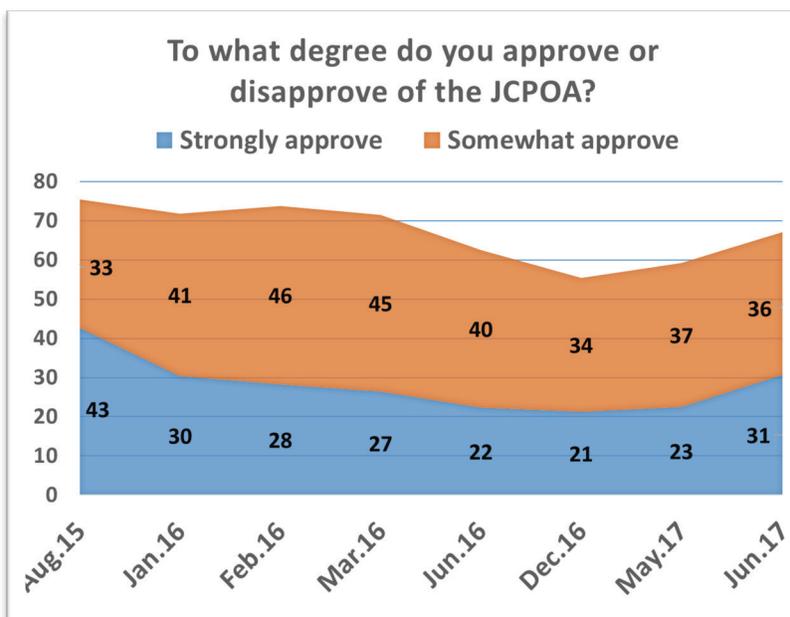
2. Approval of Nuclear Deal Increased during Presidential Campaign, Despite Disappointment with its Economic Benefit

After steady declines in enthusiasm for the JCPOA prior to the May 2017 presidential election, approval of the agreement rose during the election process. Two in three Iranians approve of the agreement, while about a third oppose it.

The agreement divides those who voted for Rouhani from those who did not. While eight in ten Rouhani voters approve of the deal, only four in ten of those who voted for Raisi approve of the agreement. Two years since the signing of the agreement, majorities believe that Iran has not received most of the promised benefits and that there have been no improvements in people's living conditions as a result of the nuclear deal. A plurality thinks that the agreement for Iran to purchase passenger airplanes from the United States will likely have little impact on Iran's economy. Still, there is some optimism that the deal will eventually improve people's living conditions.

A large majority continues to approve of the JCPOA. When the nuclear deal was reached two years ago, 43 percent approved of it strongly and another 33 percent somewhat approved—a total of 76 percent. This total dropped to as low as 55 percent by December 2016, with those approving of it strongly dropping by half to 21 percent. Yet, the presidential campaign and the fact that none of the candidates expressed opposition to the deal seems to have increased popular support for it. Today,

two in three say they approve of the JCPOA (31% strongly) and 28 percent say they disapprove of it. Disapproval of the deal is highest among those who voted for Raisi, with 54 percent of them saying they oppose the JCPOA.



Despite the high approval level of the JCPOA, Iranians continue to be disappointed with the economic benefits of the deal. Seven in ten (70%), including 61 percent of those who voted for Rouhani, said the deal has not improved the living conditions of Iranians at all. Only 4 percent said the JCPOA has improved Iranian people's living conditions a lot; 15 percent, that it has improved them somewhat; and another 7 percent said that it has improved them only a little.

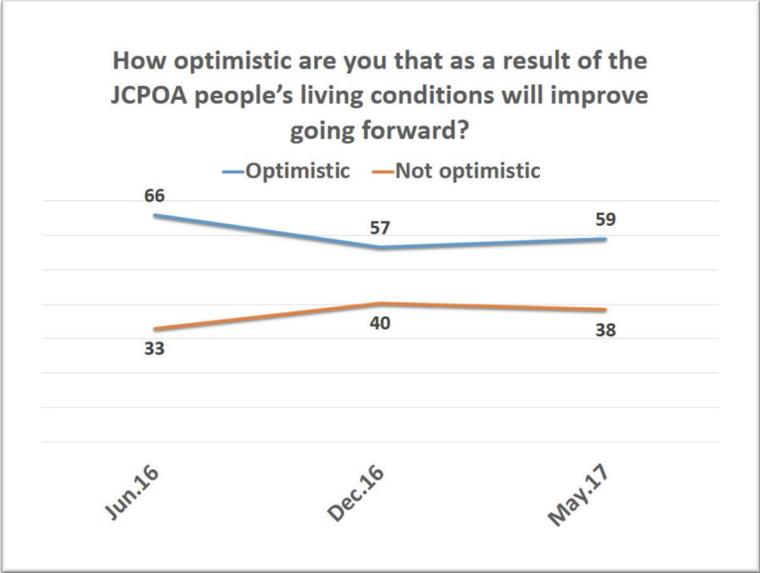
Similarly, six in ten (63%) said the agreement has not improved Iran’s economy at all, and only about a third (33%) said that Iran’s economy has experienced some improvement as a result of the deal.

When asked what has happened with the promised economic benefits, only 6 percent of Iranians said that they are improving life for average Iranians. Twenty-one percent said that they are only helping Iranians with special connections; another 15 percent thought they are going to Iran’s military and foreign allies; and 51 percent said that Iran has not received most of the promised benefits.

While Iran’s ability to purchase new passenger airplanes is often highlighted as a tangible benefit Iran has received as a result of the deal, a plurality (49%) thought the purchase is likely to have little or no positive impact on the economy. Only 12 percent said that it is likely to help Iran’s economy a lot; another 30 percent said that it will likely have some positive impact.

Despite these negative feelings about the slim economic benefits of the deal thus far, a majority remains optimistic that the nuclear deal will make people’s lives better going forward. Six in ten (59%) said they are at least somewhat optimistic that the agreement will eventually improve people’s living conditions, while 38 percent disagreed.

An overwhelming majority (91%) of Iranians think it is important for Iran to develop its nuclear program, with 79 percent saying that it is very important. Only about 5 percent said that it is not important for Iran to develop its nuclear program.



3. U.S. Seen as Actively Obstructive, Contrary to Commitment under JCPOA

Most Iranians lack confidence that the United States will live up to its obligations under the JCPOA. They believe either that the United States is finding other ways to keep the negative effects of sanctions that were lifted under the deal, or that the United States has not even lifted the sanctions it was supposed to lift. A growing majority also believes that contrary to the terms of the agreement, the United States is trying to prevent other countries from normalizing their trade and economic relations with Iran. While a majority still express some confidence that other P5+1 countries will abide by the agreement, most say Europeans are slow in investing and trading with Iran primarily due to fear of punishment by the United States.

A majority of Iranians say they are not confident that the United States will live up to its obligations under the nuclear deal. Only a quarter (24%, down from 45% in September 2015) said they are very (4%) or somewhat (19%) confident that the United States will live up to its obligations, and a large majority (72%, up from 41% in September 2015) said they are not very (26%) or not at all (46%) confident.

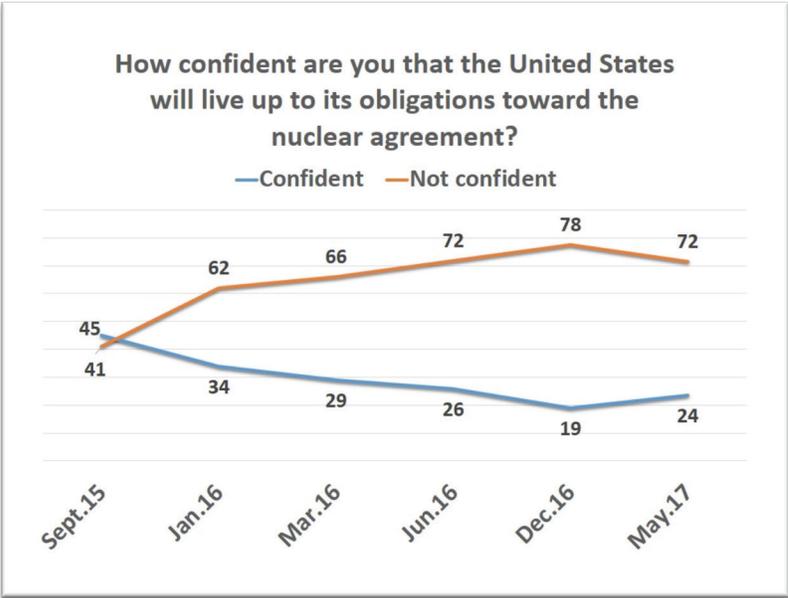
This lack of confidence appears to be rooted in the perception that contrary to the terms of the JCPOA, the United States is actively preventing other countries from normalizing their trade and economic relations with Iran.

When asked whether or not the US is allowing other countries to normalize their trade and economic relations with Iran, eight in ten (81%) said that the United States is preventing other countries from doing this. Only 11 percent (down from 19% in June 2016) thought the United States is permitting other countries to do this.

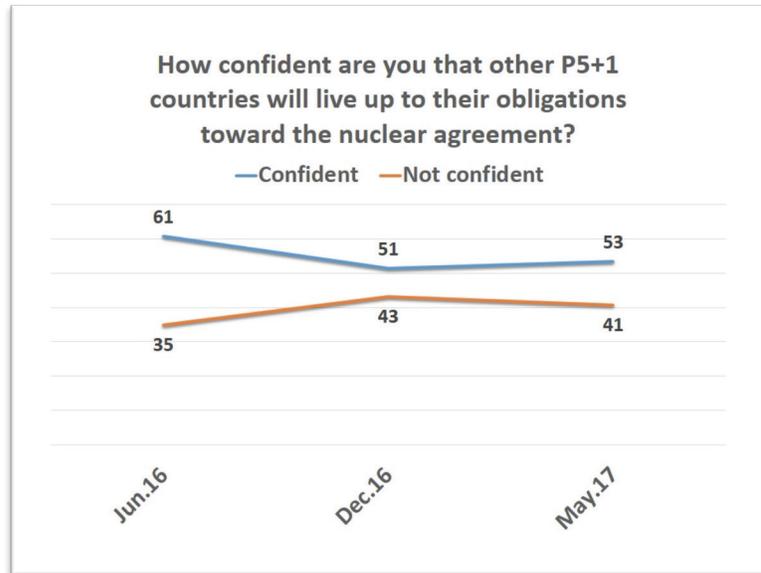
When asked more generally in December 2016 about how the United States has performed relative to the sanctions it

Article 29 of JCPOA

The EU and its Member States and the United States, consistent with their respective laws, will refrain from any policy specifically intended to directly and adversely affect the normalisation of trade and economic relations with Iran inconsistent with their commitments not to undermine the successful implementation of this JCPOA.



agreed to lift under the JCPOA, a majority (51%) said that while the United States has lifted the sanctions it agreed to lift, it is finding other ways to keep the negative effects of those sanctions in place. Another 39 percent (up from 25% in June 2016) believed that the United States has not yet lifted all the sanctions it agreed to lift. Only 3% thought that the United States has both lifted the sanctions it agreed to lift, and is refraining from doing anything that would keep in place the negative effects of those sanctions.



In contrast to views toward the United States, a diminishing majority (53% in May 2017, down from 61% in June 2016) expressed confidence that other P5+1 countries besides the United States will live up to the terms of the nuclear deal, while 41 percent said they are not very (24%) or not at all confident (17%) in this.

When asked about the pace of post-JCPOA investment and trade of European countries with Iran, less than a fifth (18%) said the Europeans are moving as rapidly as they can to engage with Iran, while a large majority (71%) felt the Europeans are moving slower than they could. Of those who said the Europeans are moving slower than they could to engage Iran, three-fourths (75%) identified fear of U.S. pressure as the cause, while 19 percent faulted Iran's own weak business environment.

4. Majority Support Retaliation if U.S. Abrogates JCPOA

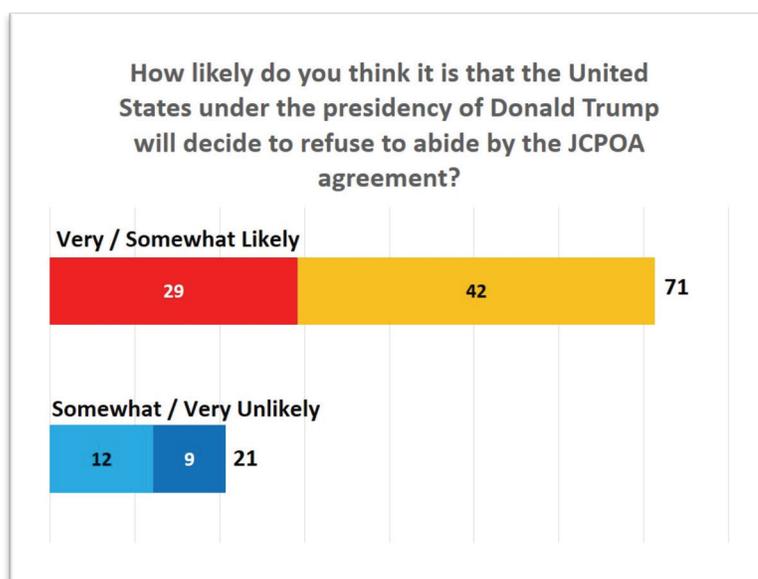
Iranians expect President Donald Trump to be more hostile toward Iran than was former President Barack Obama. Seven in ten Iranians believe it likely that Trump may decide not to abide by the terms of the nuclear agreement. Attitudes about how Iran should respond if the United States violates the JCPOA have hardened: A clear majority now thinks that instead of taking the matter to the UN, Iran should retaliate by restarting the aspects of its nuclear program it has agreed to suspend under the JCPOA, if the United States abrogates the deal. A large majority see the new sanctions that Congress is likely to impose on Iran as being against the spirit of the JCPOA, with half saying it would violate the letter of the agreement as well.

The Iranian public was braced, even before Trump’s inauguration, for U.S. policies more severe toward Iran than those of the Obama period. Iranians were asked near the end of the Obama administration (December 2016) to sum up Obama’s policies toward Iran by rating them on a 0-10 scale, from hostile (0-4) to friendly (6-10), with 5 meaning neither hostile nor friendly (5). Three in five (60%) perceived Obama’s policies as hostile, with 42 percent rating them at 0, or completely hostile. A quarter (24%) took Obama’s policies in stride as neither hostile nor friendly. Only 12 percent regarded Obama-era policies as friendly toward Iran.

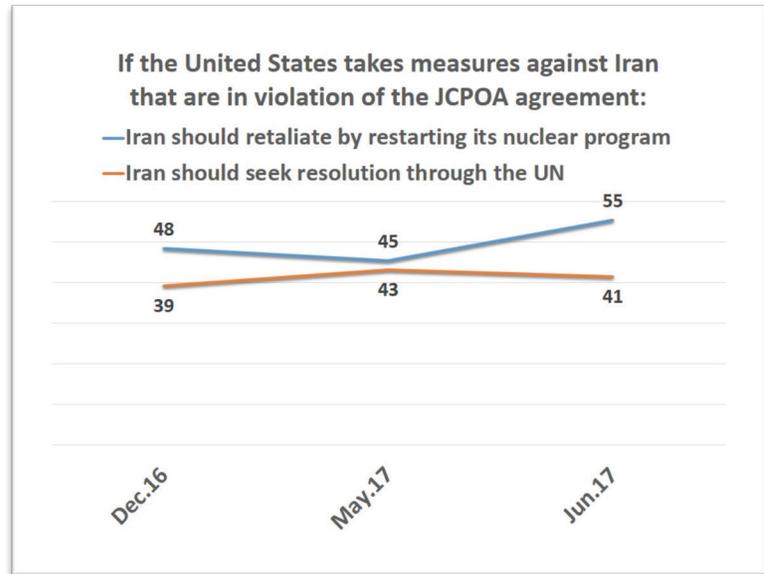
The same respondents were then asked this question about their expectations of then-president-elect Trump. A full two-thirds (68%) believed Trump’s policies toward Iran would turn out to be hostile (completely, 50%). Only 16 percent thought they would be neither hostile nor friendly, and just 3 percent expected policies that were friendly.

Iranians were also asked—still prior to Trump’s inauguration—how likely they thought it was that the new administration would “take measures against Iran that are at odds with the JCPOA agreement.” Three quarters (77%) thought this at least somewhat likely (very likely, 37%). Nearly as many (71%) thought it likely that there would be a U.S. refusal “to abide by the JCPOA” (very likely, 29%). All these attitudes preceded Trump’s arrival in office, as well as Iran’s own election process that gave President Rouhani a second term.

Since Iran’s election, attitudes have hardened about the prospect of the United States possibly acting in ways that violate the JCPOA. Offered two alternatives in the June poll of what to do “if the United States takes measures against Iran that are in violation of the JCPOA,” those saying “Iran should retaliate by restarting the

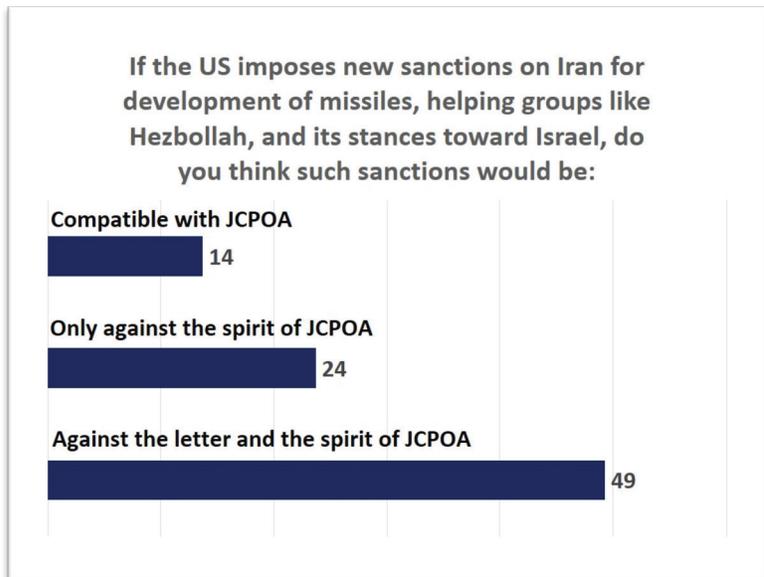


aspects of its nuclear program that it has agreed to suspend” are now a clear majority of 55 percent, while four in ten say “Iran should continue to live by the... agreement and should seek to resolve the issue by taking its complaints to the UN” (41%). Before the election in May, those saying Iran should retaliate were a plurality, not a majority. Those not choosing declined sharply from 12 percent to 3 percent after the election, while those who say they would prefer to retaliate in this scenario grew and those preferring to go before the UN remained stable.



Rouhani voters are currently divided, but may be in a process of shifting toward a sense that if the United States abrogates part of the nuclear deal, Iran could resume some foregone nuclear activities—a shift that appears to be the case for Iranians as a whole. During the campaign, among those who expected to vote for Rouhani, going to the UN was the preferred course by 48 to 39 percent. In the post-election June poll, those who reported voting for Rouhani barely preferred going to the UN, by 50 percent to 46 percent.

A large majority—seven in ten—sees the new sanctions that Congress is likely to impose on Iran as being against the spirit of the JCPOA, with half saying it would violate the letter of the agreement as well. Roughly half (49%) say the new sanctions would be against both the letter and spirit of the deal, while another 24 percent said they would be against the deal’s spirit, but not its letter. Only 14 percent saw such sanctions as compatible with the deal.



Perceptions of Sanctions Regarding Human Rights

Respondents were reminded that a number of sanctions have been imposed on Iran out of concerns for human rights in Iran. Told that “Some sanctions against Iran have been imposed because the United States and some European countries object to various Iranian government actions, saying they violate human rights,” respondents were asked how they see these sanctions’ general impact on the human rights situation in Iran. About one in ten (8%) thought “such sanctions have done more to improve human rights in Iran.” Nine in ten, though, thought these sanctions have had either no effect (52%) or “have done more to hurt the situation of human rights” (36%).

5. No Appetite for Renegotiating the Nuclear Deal with Trump

Large majorities say that Iran should refuse to increase the duration of the special nuclear limits it accepted under the JCPOA, or to terminate its nuclear enrichment program, even if offered more sanctions relief in return.

While the Trump administration has considered demanding a renegotiation of the terms of the JCPOA, there is no sign that Iranian leaders would pay a cost with their public if they refused to negotiate and held to the existing agreement.

Asked after the election how Iran should respond “if Trump threatens to re-impose U.S. sanctions...unless Iran agrees to increase the duration of the nuclear limits it has accepted,” three in five (62%) said Iran should not agree to this under any circumstances. Thirty-one percent thought Iran could negotiate this point only if it meant the U.S. would lift more of its Iran sanctions.

Another possible U.S. demand would be that Iran terminate all aspects of its nuclear enrichment program entirely, including those permitted within the JCPOA, under threat of having nuclear-related sanctions resume. Asked about this during the election campaign, seven in ten (69%) said Iran should not agree under any circumstances to terminate its enrichment program. About a quarter (23%) said Iran could do this only as part of a deal that would include the U.S. lifting more sanctions. (Both this and the prior question were first asked in December 2016 and attitudes have been very stable.)

These views are generally shared among Rouhani voters and Raisi voters. On extending the duration of the JCPOA limits, 56 percent of Rouhani voters and 72 percent of Raisi voters said Iran should not do so under any circumstances. On terminating the enrichment program (asked in May), 67 percent of those intending to vote for Rouhani and 83 percent of those intending to vote for Raisi were categorically opposed.

6. Majority Opposes a Halt to Missile Testing, Even in Return for More Sanctions Relief

Over three in five say that Iran should continue testing ballistic missiles despite U.S. demands for Iran to halt such tests and find the proposition that Iran reduce testing missiles in return for the lifting of more sanctions unacceptable. Two thirds reject the notion that Rouhani's re-election means most Iranians oppose testing of missiles by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

In the post-election poll, respondents were reminded that “during the third debate President Rouhani promised to do what he could to get all sanctions on Iran lifted.” They then heard a series of possible demands the U.S. and European countries could make in exchange for lifting remaining sanctions. For each, they were asked whether the demand was acceptable, unacceptable, or could be acceptable depending on other conditions.

Sixty-three percent found unacceptable the demand that Iran reduce its missile testing. Twenty-two percent thought it could be acceptable, depending on other conditions; but only 14 percent called it an acceptable demand.

A more detailed question framed the Iranian missile testing issue in terms of the UN Security Council and Iran, explaining:

...the United Nations Security Council has urged Iran not to undertake activities related to development of missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, because this would be against UNSC resolutions and against the spirit of the JCPOA. Over the last few years, the IRGC has tested several missiles. Citing UNSC's request, the United States and some European countries demand Iran to stop testing missiles and because of this are threatening to impose new sanctions on Iran. Iran, however, insists that none of its missiles are specifically designed to deliver nuclear weapons and has refused to stop the development and testing of its missiles.

Respondents then considered three options. Iran could continue testing, insisting the issue is non-negotiable; or it could keep testing, but offer to negotiate on ways Iran could create confidence that the missiles are not produced to carry nuclear weapons; or it could halt testing until after this confidence has been created.

A clear majority of 55 percent said Iran should continue testing and should insist the issue is not negotiable. Forty-four percent chose one of the more accommodating options, with 31 percent opting for testing while offering to negotiate on confidence-building measures and 13 percent opting for a halt to testing while confidence was established that the missiles are not produced to carry nuclear weapons.

Rouhani's re-election is not perceived by most Iranians as any kind of mandate to stop missile testing. Respondents were asked to consider—regardless of how they felt about Rouhani's re-election—what they thought of various statements about the election's meaning. Two thirds (67%) disagreed with the proposition that “Rouhani's re-election means that most Iranian people want the IRGC to stop testing missiles” (strongly disagree, 47%). Only about three in ten (29%) perceived the election's meaning in this way.

Missile Testing and Rouhani Voters

Those who voted for Rouhani were often similar to the full sample in their majority views about missile testing. In this group, 54 percent said it was unacceptable for Iran to reduce testing missiles in exchange for more sanctions relief (Raisi voters, 81%). Sixty-one percent of Rouhani voters also disagreed with the proposition that the election means Iranians want the IRGC to stop testing missiles (among Raisi voters, 81% disagreed).

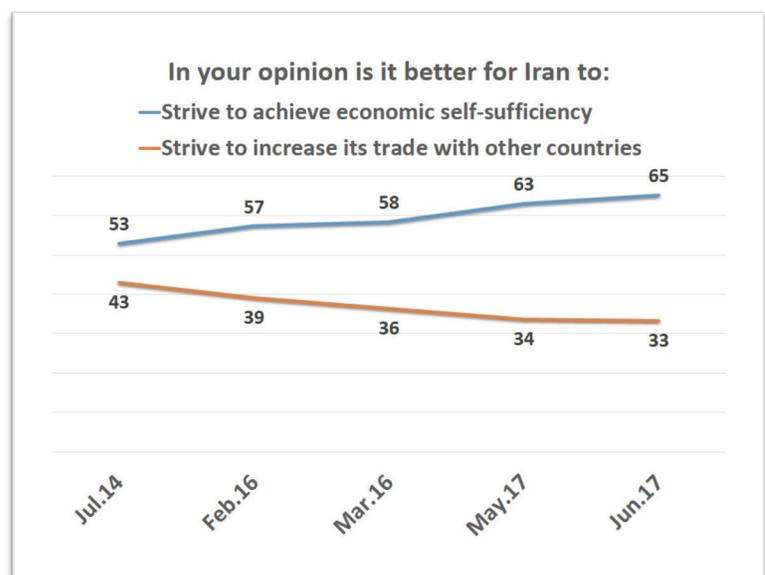
However, in the most detailed question on missile testing, Rouhani voters showed flexibility. Less than half of this group—45 percent—said the issue should be non-negotiable, while 54 percent of them were willing to take one of the more accommodating approaches offered: either to keep testing but negotiate on confidence building (40%), or to stop testing and cultivate international confidence in the non-nuclear nature of the missile program (15%). This is in strong contrast with Raisi voters, 79 percent of whom said missile testing should not be negotiable.

7. Greater Support for Self-Sufficiency

An increasing majority think Iran should strive to achieve economic self-sufficiency rather than focusing on increasing its trade with other countries. Six in ten say current changes in the world make it necessary for Iran to have a president who will stand up for Iran’s rights and refuse to compromise. Majorities reject offering various steps in exchange for more sanctions relief—steps such as Iran reducing its missile testing, or recognizing Israel, or ceasing its aid to the Syrian government and Hezbollah. Rejection of these steps is significantly lower, though, among those who think the nuclear deal has improved the living condition of ordinary Iranians.

Iran’s place in the world has long involved a tension between seeking to improve economic relations with other countries and trying to satisfy most of its economic needs domestically. As Iranians assess the results of the nuclear agreement, this tension is moving back toward choosing self-sufficiency.

Respondents were told to “assume our country could only adopt one of these policies,” and then asked whether it is better for Iran to “strive to achieve economic self-sufficiency” or to “strive to increase its trade with



other countries.” In June almost two thirds opted for self-sufficiency (65%), with only a third (33%) preferring to try to increase trade.

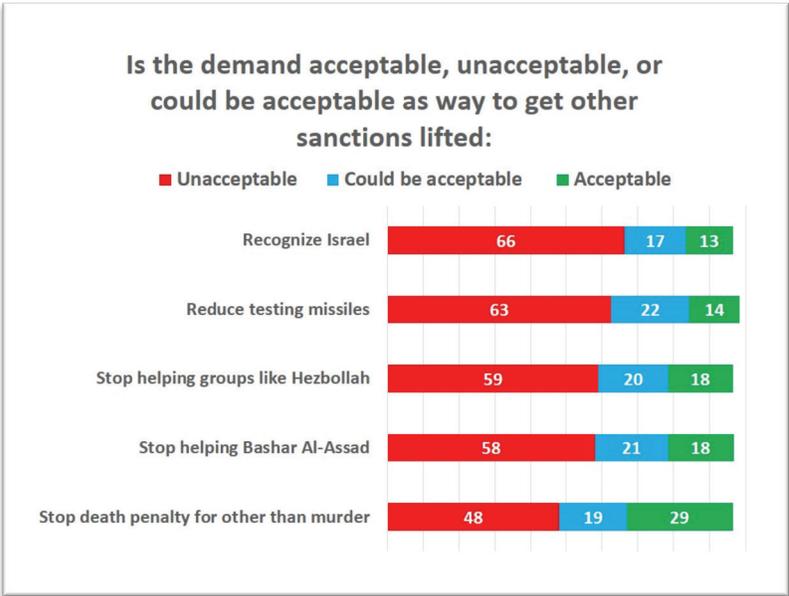
This is a 12-point change from July 2014, when a lesser 53 percent chose self-sufficiency and 43 percent chose trade. The shift has been steady since 2014, tending to return to something of a default position for Iran’s public, after a period of somewhat higher optimism for increased trade. For example, in a comparable question asked in 2006 by WorldPublicOpinion and Search for Common Ground, 66 percent then chose “becom[ing] economically self-sufficient” over “becom[ing] more integrated with the global economy.”

Three in five Iranians (62%), when asked to consider “the current changes in the world, including Donald Trump becoming U.S. president,” thought that “Iran now needs a president who will mostly stand up for Iran’s rights and refuse to compromise on those rights.” A third (33%) took the other option—that the president should “mostly focus on negotiating and finding common ground with other countries.”

Between the run-up to Iran’s election and June 2017, responses to this question had an interesting evolution. Right after Trump’s election in December 2016, 57 percent thought Iran would need a president who would stand up for Iran’s rights (focus on negotiating, 34%). But this dropped to 52 percent in the midst of the election campaign, possibly because Rouhani’s core talent was seen by many to be working with countries abroad. Once Rouhani was reelected, however, the “stand up” option shot to a new high of 62 percent. This may be explained by the increasing likelihood of new U.S. sanctions being imposed on Iran, as well as by the terrorist attacks that took place in Tehran just before this survey was fielded.

In Iran’s context, part of refusing to compromise on principles is typically a reliance on religious teachings, and though there has been speculation outside Iran that this factor is losing importance, surveys do not bear this out. Asked “to what degree should our country’s policymakers take religious teachings into account when they make decisions,” 47 percent replied “a lot” and another 29 percent said “somewhat”—quite similar to repeated results from this question since July 2014.

Iranians’ refusal to make additional concessions is fully on display in a series of questions about demands that “the United States and European countries might propose for lifting the remaining sanctions on Iran.” Respondents were offered five potential demands. The least palatable was for “Iran to



recognize Israel as a legitimate country,” which 66 percent found unacceptable; 13 percent thought it acceptable and 17 percent thought it might be, depending on other conditions.

For Iran to reduce its missile testing was unacceptable to 63 percent (14% acceptable, 22% depends on conditions). To stop helping Hezbollah was unacceptable to 59 percent (18% acceptable, 20% depends on conditions); to stop helping the Syrian government get a near-identical response, unacceptable to 58 percent (18% acceptable, 21% depends on conditions). The one potential demand of some interest to Iranians was for “Iran to stop implementing the death penalty for crimes other than murder,” which less than half (48%) thought unacceptable, while 29 percent found it acceptable and 19 percent said it might be.

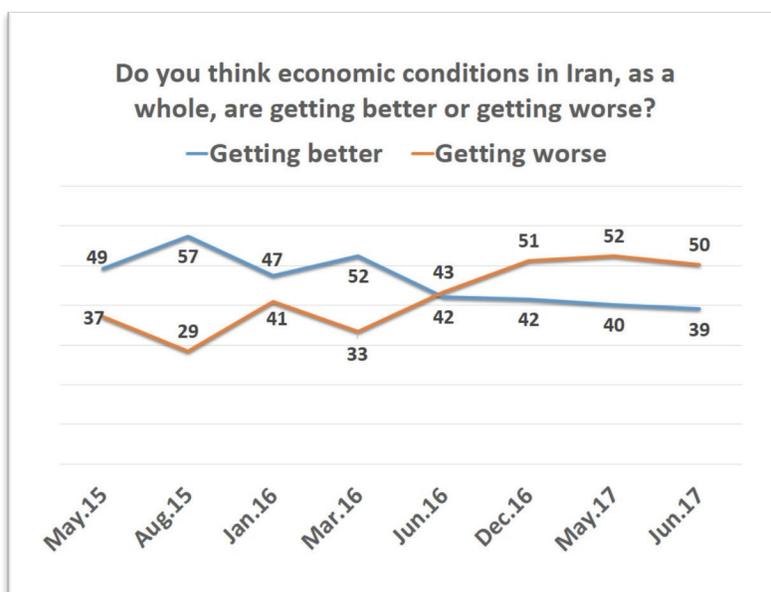
Interestingly, those who think that as a result of the JCPOA there has been at least some improvement in people’s living conditions are significantly more flexible when they consider potential demands on Iran in future negotiations. Those who perceive some tangible results in living conditions from the JCPOA are 14 points less likely than the rest of Iranians to call reducing missile testing unacceptable. They are 9 points less likely to call recognizing Israel unacceptable; 10 points less likely to call ceasing assistance to Hezbollah unacceptable; and 12 points less likely to call ceasing assistance to Syria’s government unacceptable.

8. Economy is Seen as Bad, and Reducing Unemployment is Given the Highest Priority

Large majorities say Iran’s economic situation is bad, and less than a quarter think the economic condition of their family has improved over the last four years. Half think that the country’s economic situation is getting worse. Eight in ten say reducing unemployment should be a top priority for Rouhani in the next four years.

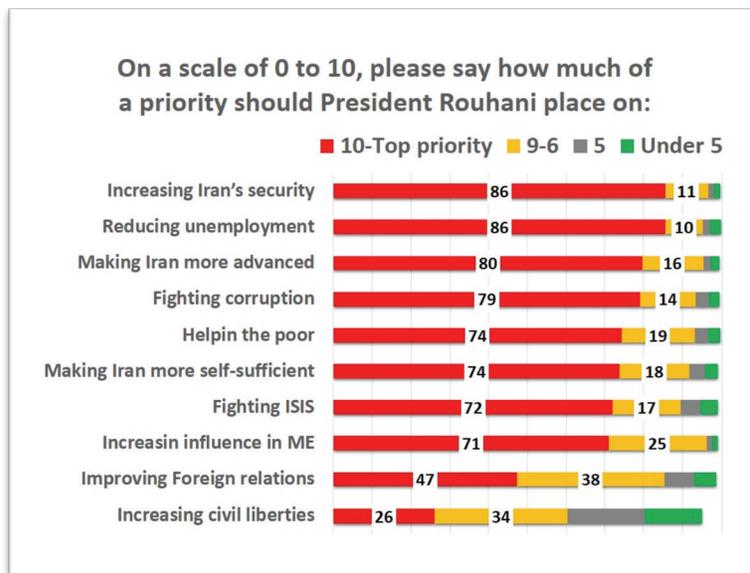
Almost two thirds (64%) describe the country’s economic situation as bad, with 34 percent calling it very bad. Only a third describe it as good, and a mere 3 percent call it very good. This is a clear contrast with two years ago, in May 2015, a time of optimism about the nuclear negotiations. At that time a modest majority (54%) described the economy as at least somewhat good.

There has been a distinct increase in pessimism about the economy. At least half have described the economy as “getting worse” since December 2016, and in June 2017, 50 percent thought so, with 39 percent saying it is “getting better.” For comparison, in August 2015, soon after the nuclear agreement was achieved, 57 percent thought the economy was getting better, and even in March 2016, 52 percent said this.



In May 2017—as the election campaign warmed up—respondents were asked to think back on the economic condition of their families over the previous four years. Seventy-seven percent said their economic condition had either worsened (41%) or stayed the same (36%) over the four-year period, while only a quarter (23%) felt they had experienced some improvement over this period.

During the election campaign, respondents were asked to say in their own words the single most important challenge the country faces that the next president should address. A large majority, 63 percent, said unemployment was the most important challenge—either of youth, or in general. (This is an unusual level of consensus for an open-ended question.) In a different question during the campaign, a virtually unanimous 96 percent called reducing unemployment very important. And after the election, the June poll asked respondents to set priorities on a 0-to-10 scale for a number of tasks facing the president. Reducing unemployment was given a high score (6 to 10) by 95 percent of respondents, with 86 percent giving it a 10.



9. Rouhani Seen as Successful in Foreign Policy but not in Reducing Unemployment

Majorities see Rouhani as being successful in improving Iran’s relations with other countries and getting international sanctions on Iran lifted. Majorities also see his re-election to mean that most Iranians approve of his foreign policy and the JCPOA. In fact, the nuclear agreement is regarded as Rouhani’s most important accomplishment during his first four years in office. Rouhani, however, gets low marks on the unemployment situation in Iran. Six in ten say he has been unsuccessful in reducing unemployment and half he has thus far failed to improve the economy.

Rouhani’s job performance gets mixed ratings. One area where he does quite well is improvements to the healthcare system, which is likely linked to the adoption of the Health Reform Plan in May 2014. Eight in ten (83%) said in May 2017 that Rouhani has been very (37%) or somewhat (46%) successful in improving Iran’s healthcare. Only 14 percent said he has been unsuccessful.

Another area where Rouhani does quite well is foreign relations and the lifting of sanctions. More than three fourths (77%) said that Rouhani has been very (26%) or somewhat (51%) successful in improving Iran’s relations with other countries, while less than a fifth (18%) disagreed. Also, about two thirds (68%) believed that Rouhani has been at least somewhat successful in reducing sanctions against Iran; only a quarter disagreed. In fact, when asked in an open-ended question what they thought Rouhani’s most important achievement in office has been, negotiating the JCPOA was the most frequently (25%) named accomplishment. These

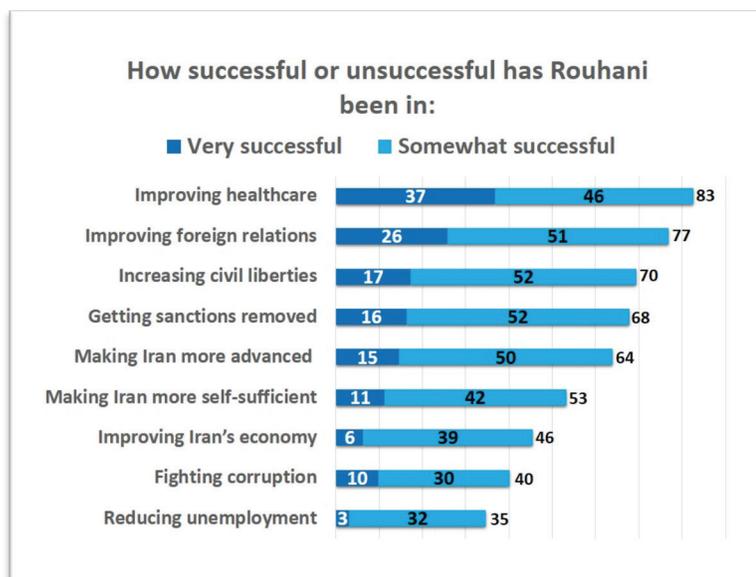
perceptions may explain why large majorities agree that Rouhani’s re-election means that most Iranians approve of his foreign policy (83%) and the nuclear deal he negotiated with the P5+1 countries (79%).

Majorities also thought that Rouhani has been successful in making Iran a more advanced (64%) and self-sufficient (53%) country. Seven in ten (70%) said Rouhani has been at least somewhat successful in increasing civil liberties in Iran, while a quarter disagreed.

Rouhani, nevertheless, does poorly on some key issues. He gets the worst rating on his ability to reduce unemployment. Six in ten (63%) believed that Rouhani has been somewhat (32%) or very (31%) unsuccessful in reducing unemployment. Only about a third (35%) thought that he has been successful in this area.

Rouhani also receives relatively low marks on the economy. A plurality (50%) said he has been unsuccessful in improving Iran’s economy, while 46 percent said he has been very (6%) or somewhat (39%) successful.

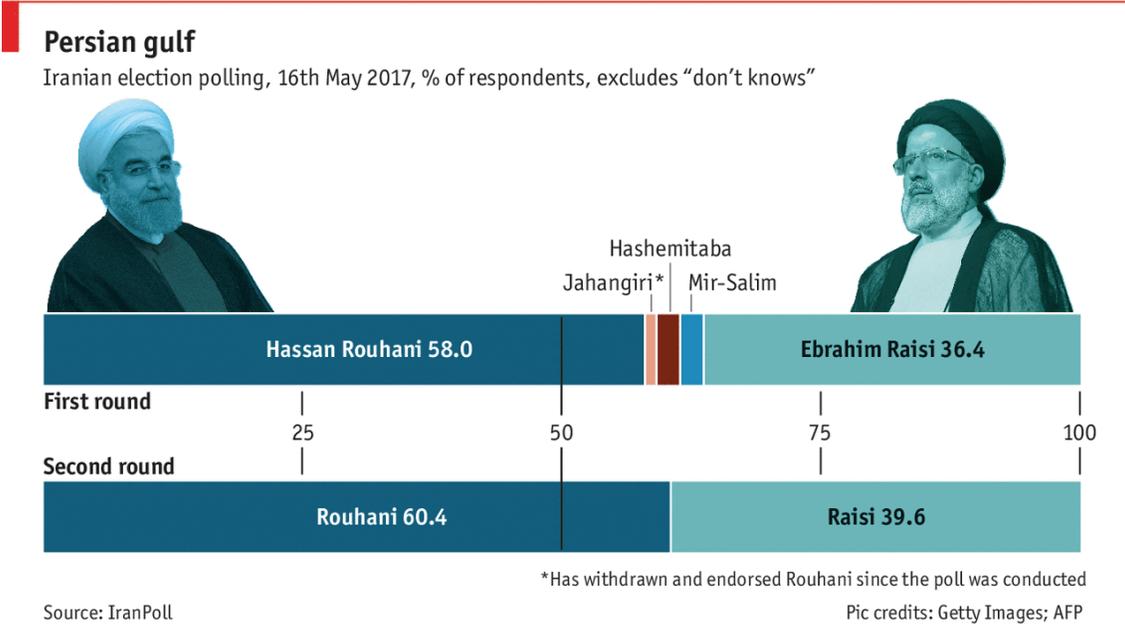
Fighting corruption is another area in which Rouhani is regarded as being ineffective. A majority (53%) said he has been somewhat (27%) or very (26%) unsuccessful in fighting corruption and four in ten thought he has been successful in this area.



10. Rouhani's Reelection was Not Certain until Ghalibaf Left the Race

Election polls were quite accurate in predicting the outcome of the election. Pre-election polls suggested that if Tehran mayor Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf had been Rouhani’s main opponent rather than Raisi, the election results would have been much closer. After the second presidential debate, Rouhani was ahead of Ghalibaf by less than 6 percentage points, while his lead over Raisi was more than 20 points. While an overwhelming majority of Raisi supporters said that if Raisi pulled out they would vote for Ghalibaf, less than half of Ghalibaf supporters said they would vote for Raisi if their candidate pulled out. Indeed, when Ghalibaf pulled out of the race nearly half of his supporters switched to Rouhani and helped him pass the 50 percent threshold.

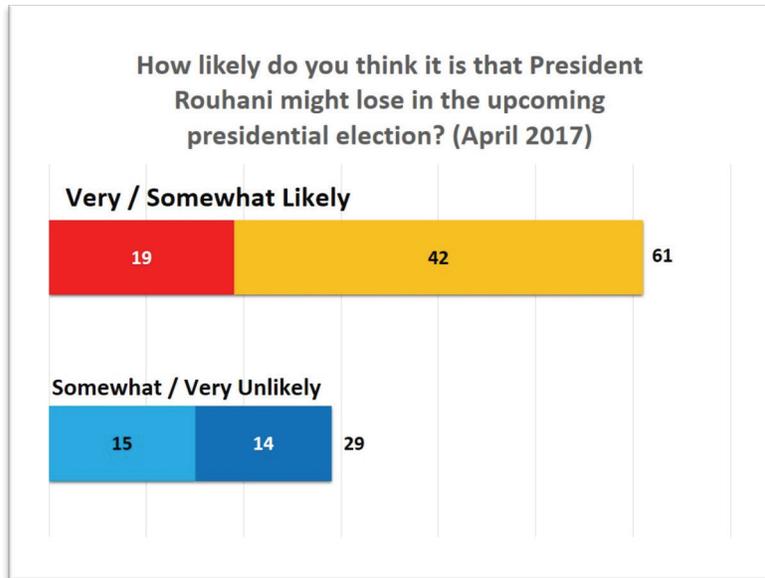
As in previous elections, election polls conducted by credible institutions were quite accurate in predicting the outcome of the election. For example, IranPoll, which is the independent Toronto-based polling organization that fielded this and many previous CISSM polls in Iran, had predicted in an interview with the *Economist*¹ that about 58 percent of the voters were going to vote for Rouhani and 36 percent for Raisi. Other credible Iranian polling institutions, such as University of Tehran Center for Public Opinion Research (UTCPOR) predicted 57 percent for Rouhani and 35 percent for Raisi, and the Iranian Student Polling Agency (ISPA) predicted that Rouhani was going to receive 56 percent of the votes. All of these predictions were less than 2 points away from the declared election results. According to official results, Rouhani obtained 57 percent and Raisi 38 percent of the cast ballots.



Economist.com

¹ <https://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2017/05/daily-chart-14>

According to the methodologically sound polls conducted before and after the election, Rouhani’s victory was not at all certain. When IranPoll asked a month before the election how likely it was that “Rouhani might lose in the upcoming presidential election,” a majority (56%) said it was likely and only a third (34%) thought such an outcome was unlikely.



Both CISSM and ISPA² polls conducted about a week before the election and prior to

Ghalibaf’s decision to leave the race showed that Rouhani’s votes were, at most, equal to the votes of his opponents combined. Data collected in May 2017—shortly before Ghalibaf left the race—suggest that if he had been Rouhani’s main opponent rather than Raisi, the election results would have been much closer. After the second presidential debate, 39 percent said they were most likely to vote for Rouhani, 23 percent supported Ghalibaf, and 20 percent favored Raisi. When asked why they planned on voting for their preferred candidate, Rouhani supporters were more likely to cite his experience and the need to let him finish his projects; Ghalibaf supporters mostly noted his economic and managerial track record; and Raisi was praised largely for being a true follower of the supreme leader and an honest person.

The polls also show that Ghalibaf was a much more formidable opponent than Raisi. Had Raisi left the race instead of Ghalibaf, the outcome of the election would have been much closer. While Ghalibaf had lower favorability ratings than Rouhani, they were always higher than Raisi’s. About a week before the election, two-thirds (65%) expressed favorable views of Rouhani, 56 percent said they had favorable views of Ghalibaf, but less than half (48%) voiced similar feelings toward Raisi. Just as noteworthy, a month before the election, close to half (46%) of Iranians did not recognize Raisi’s name or express an opinion about him, as compared to only 8 percent who could not do the same for Ghalibaf.

When asked in the pre-election survey who they would vote for if the candidates were only Rouhani and Ghalibaf, 46 percent said Rouhani and 40 percent said Ghalibaf. When asked who they would vote for if Raisi was Rouhani’s only opponent, 52 percent said Rouhani and less than a third (32%) said Raisi.

Perhaps most importantly, 78 percent of those who planned to vote for Raisi said that Ghalibaf was their second choice, while only 42 percent of those who planned to vote for Ghalibaf named

² <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/05/iran-ispa-ippo-polls-rouhani-lead-presidential-vote-2017.html>

Raisi as *their* second choice. It was for this reason that Rouhani's support jumped by more than 10 points, crossing the 50 percent threshold immediately after Ghalibaf left the race.

Ghalibaf was also a more difficult opponent for Rouhani because he was perceived to be more effective in areas that were the biggest concerns for Iranians. About a week before the election, six in ten (63%) identified unemployment as the single most important challenge that Iran currently faces, and the same proportion (63%) said Rouhani was unsuccessful in reducing unemployment. While only a quarter (26%) thought Rouhani was better able to reduce unemployment relative to other candidates, a third (33%) had that view about Ghalibaf (Raisi, 15%).

When asked which candidate they thought was most able to improve Iran's economic situation, 30 percent said Rouhani, another 30 percent named Ghalibaf, and only 15 percent named Raisi. With regards to making Iran more self-sufficient, 31 percent believed Ghalibaf was better poised to accomplish that, 29 percent thought Rouhani was more capable, and only 15 percent identified Raisi as the candidate who could better make Iran more self-sufficient.

Rouhani was perceived to be the best candidate for improving Iran's foreign relations and increasing civil liberties. In response to a question that asked which of the candidates was better able to improve Iran's relations with other countries, a majority (54%) said Rouhani, 16 percent named Ghalibaf, and 10 percent said Raisi. When asked the same question regarding increasing civil liberties, a plurality (47%) identified Rouhani, 16 percent said Ghalibaf, and 11 percent named Raisi.

The only area where more respondents said Raisi was relatively better was fighting corruption. About 30 percent said Raisi would be better able to fight corruption if he were to become president, 26 percent said Rouhani would be better, and less than a fifth (19%) thought Ghalibaf would be more effective at combating corruption.

Rouhani vs. Raisi

Data collected about a month after the election, in June 2017, suggest that post-election surveys in Iran—as in the United States—suffer from what pollsters call *post-election vote over-reporting/misreporting*. As with polls conducted after most U.S. elections, a higher percentage of Iranians reported participating in the election and voting for the winner, Rouhani, than in the actual percentage of votes in official election results.

While turnout was declared to be 72 percent by the Interior Ministry, 76 percent said they had voted in the election. Interestingly, when those who claim to have voted were asked who they voted for, 61 percent said they voted for Rouhani and 30 percent said Raisi. (Two percent either named Mirsalim, Hashemi Taba, or a candidate not on the ballot; 7 percent did not answer.) In reality, Rouhani obtained 57 percent and Raisi 38 percent of the cast ballots, according to official results.

A large majority (72%) of those who voted for Rouhani say they did so mostly because they thought he would be a good and effective president. Less than a quarter (23%) of Rouhani voters

say they voted for Rouhani out of their fear of Raisi. Among those who chose Rouhani to stop Raisi, a majority (61%) said they did so primarily because of Raisi’s “radical” views.

Among Raisi voters, a smaller majority (63%) said they voted for him mostly because they thought he would be a good president, and a third (32%) said they voted for Raisi primarily to prevent Rouhani’s re-election. Of those, a majority (55%) pointed to Rouhani’s weak economic performance, and another 26 percent spoke of Rouhani not keeping his promises as the prime reason why they wanted to prevent Rouhani’s reelection.

11. Turnout Helps Rouhani

About a quarter of those who said they rarely vote in Iranian presidential elections reported that they voted in the May 2017 election, and seven in ten said they voted for Rouhani. Large majorities believe that both the Guardian Council and the Interior Ministry were fair and impartial as they fulfilled their election-related responsibilities. About five percent, however, say that they went to their voting stations but for one reason or another were not ultimately able to cast their ballots.

While turnout in this election was not any higher than previous elections during the last decade, data suggests that Rouhani's campaign was able to get at least a quarter (24%) of those who rarely or never vote (14% of the population) to vote in this election. While a large majority (70%) of these individuals voted for Rouhani, the votes of this segment of the population appear to have accounted for only about 2 points of Rouhani's 57 percent share of the cast ballots.

In general, large majorities of Iranians think that the Interior Ministry and the Guardian Council—the two institutions responsible for running and overseeing the election—performed their responsibilities fairly and impartially. A large majority (82%) said the Interior Ministry was very (47%) or somewhat (35%) fair and impartial as it fulfilled its election-related responsibilities. Only 13 percent said the Ministry of Interior was not impartial.

The Guardian Council, which is charged with vetting candidates and overseeing elections, was also judged to have acted fairly and impartially. When asked how fair and impartial they thought the Guardian Council was, eight in ten (82%) said the Council was very (49%) or somewhat (33%) fair and impartial and only 13 percent thought that it was not. Three in four (75%) said they were at least somewhat satisfied with the final list of candidates for president at the opening of the campaign period.

About 5 percent of voters—roughly 2.8 million people—said that while they did go to polling stations to vote, they were not ultimately successful in voting. Analysis of respondents who tried but could not ultimately vote does not show evidence of them having particularly different views or political affiliations from the rest of society.

A majority (60%) of Iranians say they have voted in almost all presidential elections Iran has held since they reached voting age, another 19 percent say they have voted in most of them, and 7 percent say they have voted in about half of them. Only 14 percent say they have voted in a few or none of the presidential elections since they became eligible.

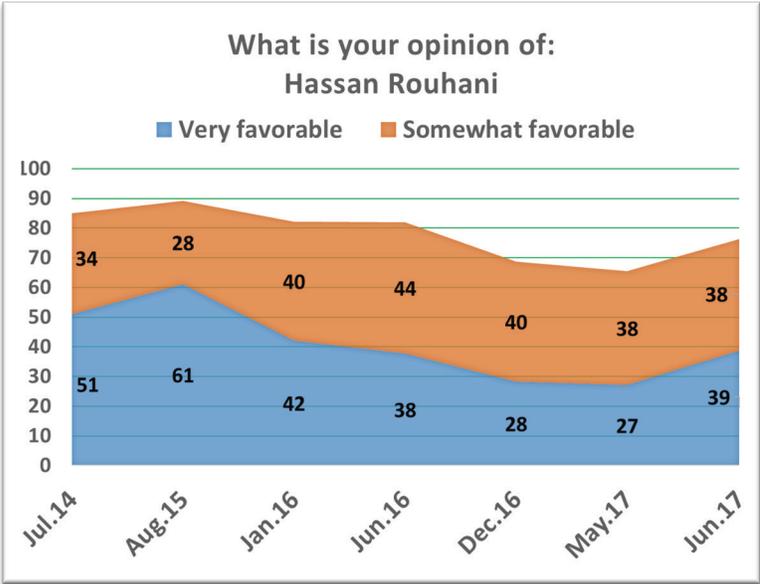
12. Rouhani and Zarif's Popularity Increase after Re-Election, but General Soleymani is Most Popular Political Figure

The Iranian Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, is the most popular politician in Iran, with President Rouhani coming in second. Although Rouhani's popularity increased somewhat during the recent election, it is still substantially lower than the first time he ran for office and after he signed the JCPOA.

General Qasem Soleymani, the military leader of Iran's operations in Syria and Iraq, is the most popular figure in Iran. Eight in ten say they have a favorable view of him. His popularity increased ten points after the terror attacks in Tehran. Two in three have favorable views of Ghalibaf, and slightly more than half view Raisi favorably. After rising while he was still a potential candidate for re-election, former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's popularity dropped to an all-time low after he defied the Supreme Leader's request that he not register to run for president again and was disqualified.

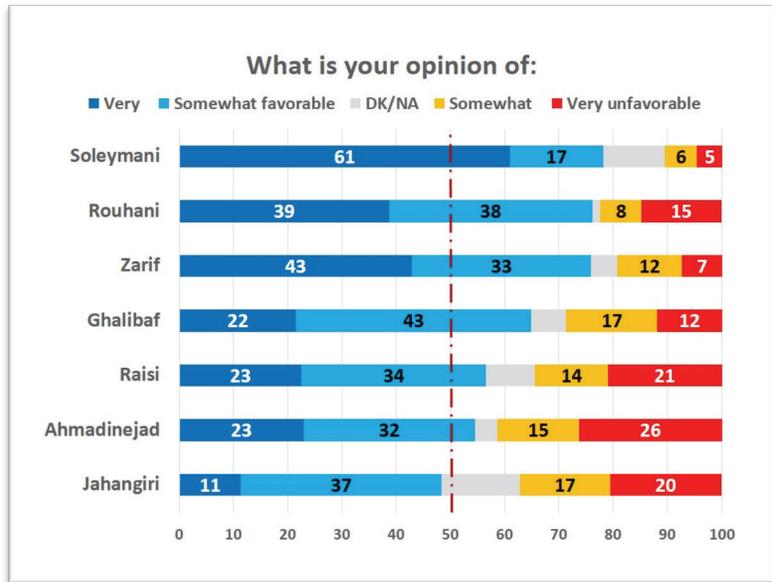
Foreign Minister Zarif continues to be the most popular politician in Iran. Three in four (76%) say they have a very (43%) or somewhat (33%) favorable opinion of Zarif, and less than a fifth (19%) express negative attitudes toward him. The number of Iranians giving him a very favorable rating, however, has dropped by 13 points since the deal was signed.

President Rouhani's popularity has increased significantly since being re-elected. In June 2017, three in four (76%) Iranians expressed very (39%) or somewhat (37%) favorable feelings toward Rouhani, and 22 percent said they have an unfavorable view of him. At one point during the campaign, Rouhani's popularity dropped to an all-time low, with 27 percent expressing very favorable and 38 percent expressing somewhat favorable feelings toward him.



Despite some slight oscillations, Ghalibaf's favorability rating has remained stable over the past three years. Two in three (65%) say they have a very (22%) or somewhat favorable (43%) view of him, while 29 percent view him negatively. Views of Raisi showed the largest degree of change. A month before the election, a plurality (46%) could not recognize his name or express an opinion about him; a majority (56%) now say they have a very (23%) or somewhat (34%) favorable attitude toward him.

The person whose favorability suffered the most in the course of the election was Ahmadinejad. He had been consistently viewed favorably by over 60 percent of Iranians since August 2015, but his rating dropped to an all-time low after he was disqualified to run as a presidential candidate by the Guardian Council. Today he is viewed favorably by 55 percent, with less than a quarter (23%) saying they have a very favorable view of him.

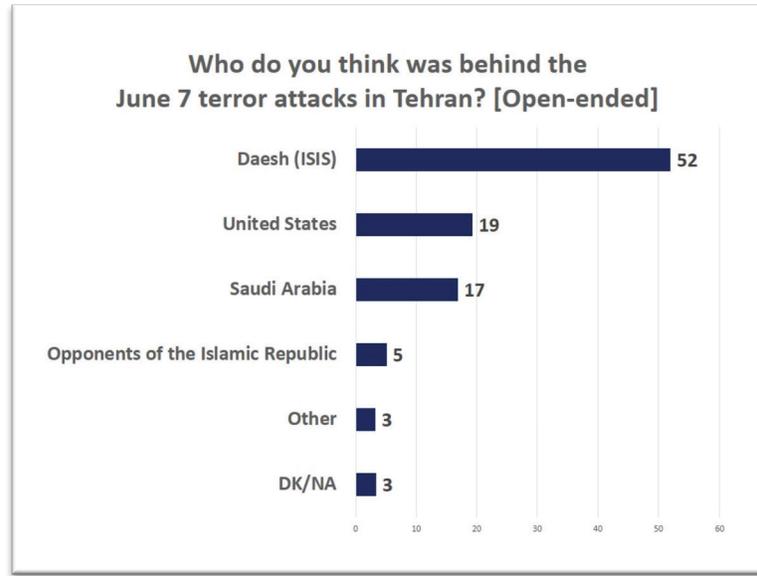


General Qasem Soleymani, who has become the face of Iran’s military operations in Syria and Iraq, continues to be the most popular figure in Iran. His popularity, which was already high, increased substantially after the terrorist attacks in Iran. He has the least negative rating among all figures evaluated. A majority (61%) expressed a *very* favorable opinion of him (up 6 points since May 2017), and another 17 percent said they have a somewhat favorable attitude toward him. Only 11 percent expressed negative attitudes toward him. Eighty percent of Raisi voters and 57 percent of Rouhani voters said they have a very favorable feeling toward Soleymani.

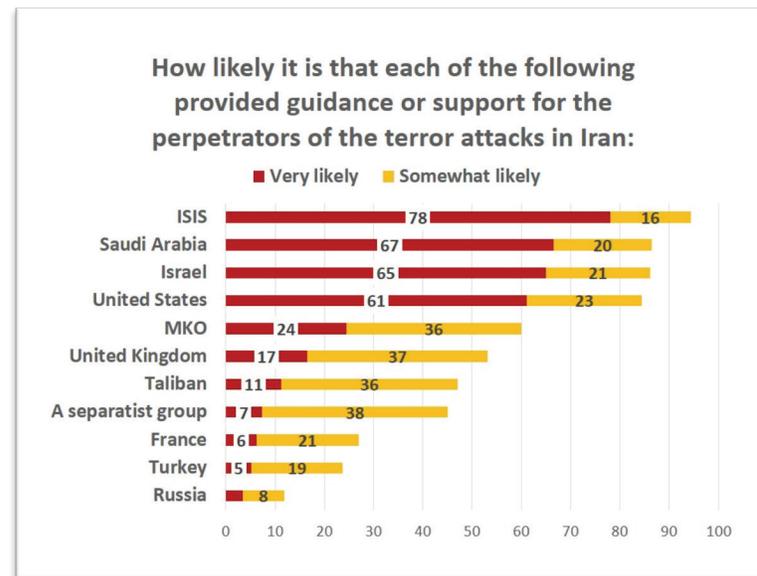
13. Post-election Terrorist Attacks: ISIS Seen as Primary Culprit, but Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the United States Likely Helped

A large majority of Iranians think that ISIS conducted the June 7 attacks in Tehran. Most Iranians also think that Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the United States probably provided guidance or support to the perpetrators.

In response to an open-ended question asking about the main perpetrator of the June 7, 2017, terrorist attacks in Tehran that left 17 civilians dead and 43 wounded, a majority (52%) named ISIS, 19 percent identified the United States, and 17 percent said Saudi Arabia was behind the attacks.



While ISIS is regarded as the primary culprit of the attacks, majorities blame Saudi Arabia, Israel, the United States, and the People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran (MKO) as well. Nearly nine in ten (87%) believed Saudi Arabia, whose Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman had vowed to take “the battle” to Iran, likely provided guidance and support to the perpetrators. Eighty-six percent also said that the government of Israel is likely to have helped the perpetrators, and the United States was named by 85 percent as a likely supporter. A majority (60%) also thought that the MKO, an organization that seeks the armed overthrow of the Islamic Republic, is likely to have helped the attackers.



When asked to describe, in their own words, the motive of the perpetrators, people gave a variety of responses, including a third (34%) saying the attack was meant to create chaos and instability, a fifth (20%) saying it was meant to instill fear in the population, and a tenth (9%) saying the main motive was to weaken Iran.

14. Strong Support for Fighting ISIS, but Not for Collaboration with U.S.

The June 7 attacks seem to have increased support for Iran playing a more active role in the Middle East. More than eight in ten call increasing Iran’s security a top priority; seven in ten say this about fighting ISIS and increasing Iran’s influence in the region. A growing majority of Iranians support their government helping groups that are fighting ISIS, although the number that favors sending troops has remained roughly constant. Two in three support Iran sending military personnel to Syria to help the Assad government against armed Syrian rebels, including ISIS. Support for Iran and the United States collaborating with one another to help Iraq’s government counter ISIS is at its lowest, with an increasing majority saying they would oppose such cooperation.

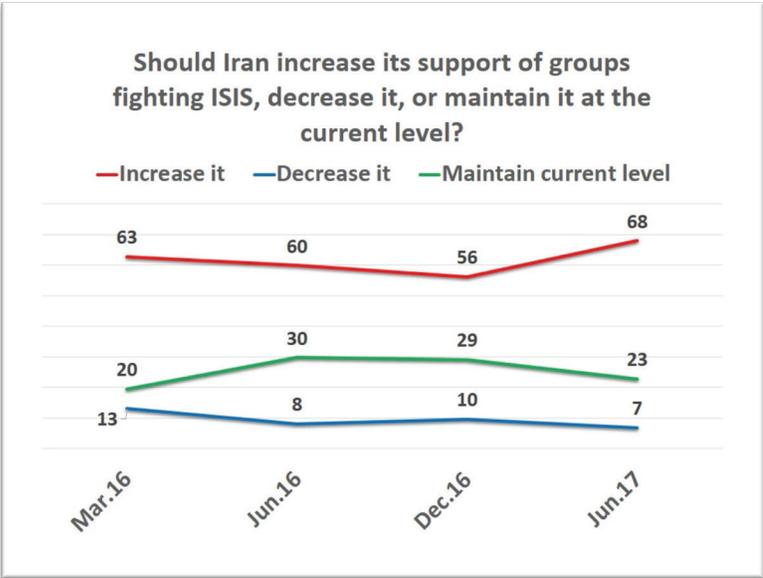
The number of Iranians who think Iran should play a more active role in the fight against ISIS has increased. More than two in three (68%, up 12 points since December 2016) said Iran should increase its support for groups fighting ISIS. Only 7 percent said it should decrease its support, and about a quarter (23%) said the current level of support should be maintained.

Respondents were asked:

Some say that Iran should send military personnel to Syria to help the government of Bashar Assad in its fight against armed Syrian rebels, including ISIS, so that these rebels would not be able to threaten Iran’s interests and security. Others argue that Iran should not send military personnel to Syria because this would increase Iran’s enemies and make Iran more vulnerable. Which of these views is closer to your opinion?

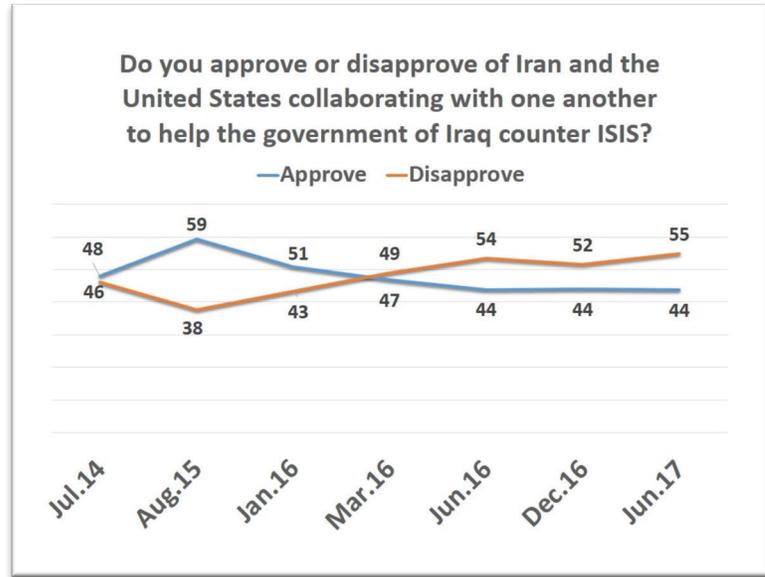
In response, 65 percent said Iran should send military personnel to Syria, while 31 percent were opposed. These numbers have remained roughly the same since this question was asked in January 2016.

Increasing Iran’s security, fighting ISIS, and increasing Iran’s influence in the Middle East are all top priorities for large majorities of Iranians. When asked how much of a priority President Rouhani should place on increasing Iran’s security, 86 percent gave it a 10 (on a scale of 0 to 10), identifying it as a top priority. When the same question was asked about fighting ISIS, seven in ten (72%) gave it a score of 10. Likewise, 71 percent thought increasing Iran’s influence in the Middle East should be a top priority for Rouhani in the next four years.



These views may help to explain the increasing popularity of General Qasem Soleymani in Iran, particularly after the terrorist attacks in Tehran.

Despite high levels of support for fighting ISIS, a growing majority (55%) said they would strongly (36%) or somewhat (19%) disapprove of Iran and the United States collaborating in their efforts against ISIS in Iraq. This is in sharp contrast with attitudes toward such security collaborations after the nuclear deal was achieved. In August 2015, six in ten (59%) approved of such cooperation between Iran and the United States.



Interestingly, those who think that the JCPOA has produced at least some improvement in people's living conditions are significantly more likely to support collaborating with the United States against ISIS. A majority (61%) of those who see some improvements as a result of the JCPOA approve of such collaborations between Iran and the United States, while only 37 percent of those who say living conditions have not improved since the JCPOA are supportive.

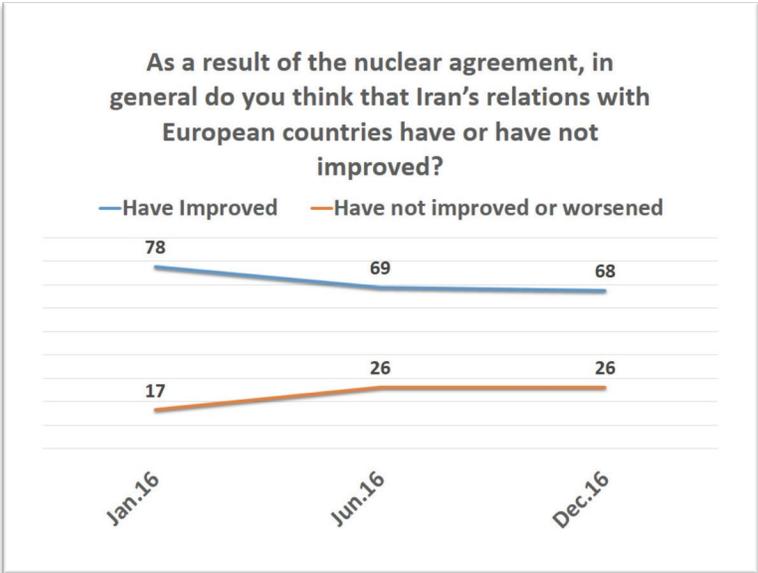
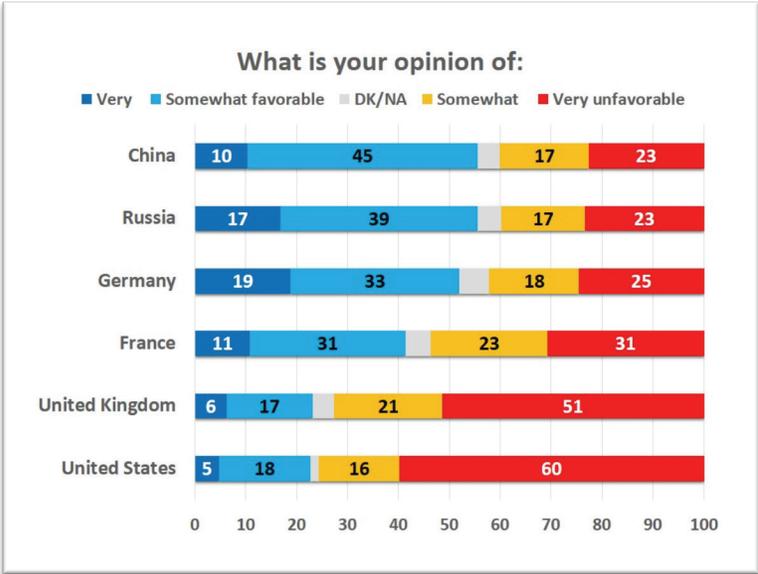
15. Views of P5+1 Countries

Majorities regard Russia, China, and Germany—half of the P5+1—favorably, and the other half—the U.S., France and Britain—unfavorably. While six in ten believe that most P5+1 countries (but not the United States) will fulfill their obligations under the JCPOA, views toward all the Western powers that took part in the JCPOA negotiations are now less positive. Though a majority believes that Iran’s relations with European countries have improved as a result of the deal, only a quarter say that about the United States. Still, far from showing implacable hostility toward the West, a majority continues to think it is possible for the Islamic world and the West to find common ground.

The two non-Western P5+1 countries—Russia and China—are viewed favorably by majorities of Iranians. A majority (56%, up from 45% in August 2015) views China favorably, while 40 percent views it unfavorably. Russia is also viewed favorably by a majority (56%), while 40 percent view it unfavorably.

The United States continues to be viewed negatively by a large majority of Iranians. Seven in ten (76%, up from 67% in August 2015) have an unfavorable opinion of the United States (60%, very), and less than a quarter (23%) have positive views. Asked about whether or not they thought Iran’s relations with the United States have improved since the JCPOA, a majority (57%) say they have not, and another 10 percent say they have gotten worse. Only a quarter (26%) think the relations have improved.

Views toward other Western countries, with the exception of Germany, are negative as well. A majority (54%) has unfavorable views of France, while 41 percent have favorable views. A large majority (73%) continues to have an unfavorable opinion



of the United Kingdom; less than a quarter (23%) have positive feelings. Among the Western countries that were evaluated, Germany does best, with 52 percent having a favorable opinion and 42 percent having an unfavorable opinion.

In contrast to how relations with the United States are evaluated, two in three (68%) thought Iran's relations with European countries have improved as a result of the nuclear agreement, and only a quarter (26%) thought that it either has not improved (22%) or has worsened (4%).

Despite their generally negative attitudes toward Western countries, a clear majority of Iranians say it is possible for Islam to find common ground with the West. Respondents were offered a choice between two positions about the relations between Islamic civilization and Western civilization:

- Islamic and Western religious and social traditions are incompatible with each other and conflict between the two is inevitable; or
- Most people in the West and the Islamic world have similar needs and wants, so it is possible to find common ground for peaceful coexistence.

When asked which position was closer to their own, 61 percent chose the second position, that it is possible to find common ground. Less than a third (29%) chose the position that conflict is inevitable. Responses to this question have been largely stable over the last decade.

