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## Political Participation, Electoral Behavior and Democracy (Looking at the Eleventh Iranian Parliamentary Elections, March 23, 2018)

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### Abstract:

Another dimension of Imam Khomeini's strategic decisions is the power of his analysis and predictions, which was confirmed in 90% of the cases studied. This component, along with the component of strategic knowledge of internal and environmental factors, acts as a complement to it; And introduces the element of time into the category of cognition and provides the power to analyze and predict future events; Which has certainly played an important role in the type of decision-making of Imam Khomeini. The present study examines the relationship between political participation and democracy with regard to the issue of electoral behavior (voting) in the Islamic Republic. Political participation is considered as one of the important aspects and indicators of political culture from the perspective of political sociological approaches; Where components such as political participation, electoral behavior, and the principles and rules of democracy are challenged. The concept of democracy here also shows to what extent political culture is based on political participation and to what extent it is based on electoral behavior; A phenomenon that is characterized by voting and attending the ballot box in terms of spontaneous and participatory interests or in terms of the efforts and competition of different parties in specific and alternate periods of time. What is the focus of our study is the study and analysis of political participation and electoral behavior during the eleventh parliamentary elections; In which, as in other election periods, there is no sign of the presence and participation of political parties or groups and currents other than the two principled and reformist currents. On this basis, the present article seeks to answer the basic question with such a premise that; "What is the relationship between political participation, electoral behavior and democratic relations or the institution of democracy in society and in the political system that governs the country?" But another question that is important in this regard is that; "To what extent does the very spirit of po-

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litical participation, especially in the form of electoral behavior, confirm and indicate the existence of a democratic political structure and a democratic system in society?" This question is especially important and decisive when it is studied in the light of an undeniable political fact, and that, given the findings and quantitative data related to the Eleventh Parliamentary elections. The level of political participation and the tangible (factual) effects of the behavior of this period were at their lowest and lowest level compared to the previous periods. Given the findings and statistical and quantitative data available on political participation, especially in the form of electoral behavior and the presence of people in polling stations and numerous polling stations across the country, it is assumed; In some periods, we seem to see some signs of competitive and quasi-democratic participation, which has sometimes given it a passionate, spontaneous and participatory form; But in the eleventh period, due to the conditions of the political, social and economic crisis and its consequences, the issue of political participation fell to its lowest level in the four decades after the revolution and began to decline.

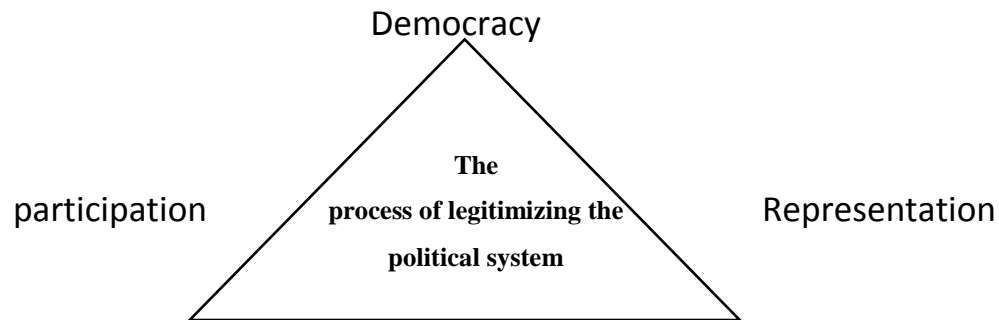
**Keywords:** Political Participation, Electoral Behavior, Democracy

### 1. Introduction

First of all, it is necessary to define and explain the concept of "political participation" so that we can analyze and explain the various aspects of the subject of the present article. In a preliminary definition and explanation, political participation can be considered based on the involvement and concern of individuals, groups, organizations; And more broadly, social strata, strata, and classes at different levels of activities and actions and affairs and relations related to processes (decision-making), (policy-making), and (Administering Public-Affairs). Thus, participation, and in particular political participation, requires the presence and involvement and active involvement (direct and indirect) in the three processes of public decision-making, public policy-making and public administration. Accordingly, the concept of political participation refers to the various mechanisms, mechanisms, tools, equipment and

amenities for the manifestation and expression and realization of public opinion in the interests of the public; Mechanisms serve the purposes and ideals associated with the social, political, economic, and cultural programs of society. Tools in the service of the general public to express and present their thoughts, views and opinions; And at the same time be able to influence in a desirable and ideal way in relation to political, economic, social, managerial decisions and policies and planning and other matters.

Participation, representation and democracy are the three main aspects or elements of legitimacy in contemporary political systems and the modern nation-state system; Components and elements that have gained prominence, importance, prestige and prestige, especially since the second half of the twentieth century.



Legitimacy governs the relationship between those in power and those who wield political control and control over the masses, individuals, or peoples to whom they belong. Legitimacy is not simply a matter or issue of attitudes or attitudes, but it is a matter of behavior or, more precisely, a matter of behavior; Which is related to the question of the type and degree of participation or, conversely, the degree of non-participation or indifference of the masses to which political systems encourage and encourage, or do not embrace.

On the other hand, the concept of representation is closely related to the problem of participation in the decision-making and policy-making process and the administration of public affairs. Representation is in fact a tool and a measure to prevent the presence and involvement of all members of a society in these three processes. In other words, during the representation process, the presence of a large number of individuals and citizens in this or that special institution causes the elimination of the direct participation of all members of society; In other words, there is no need for the entire population of the country to be present, supervising and acting in the mentioned processes.

A critical point to consider is that in many of the analyzes, interpretations, and interpretations that are presented today, the adequacy

and participatory nature of both are questioned. For example, it is obvious that in totalitarian systems it is easy to achieve a high level of participation; It is as if during the elections in the past, China and North Korea have witnessed and are witnessing that the type of participation in these countries is a purely symbolic one; Or during elections in liberal democracies, the participation process is reduced to a limited level of choice.

While the concept of participation often means engaging and engaging in a serious, important, and decisive role in the decision-making, policy-making, monitoring, and administration (and implementation) of public affairs itself; It is at least an opportunity not only to select decision-makers, policymakers, managers and executives; Rather, to influence and influence these three brokers, at a stage and cross-section of the three processes, during which this influence will have a significant and significant impact on the final adoption of decisions, programs, policies and their final implementation. (Ponton & Gill, 1989, pp. 262-267)

#### 1. Participatory democracy

Proponents, commentators, and theorists of participatory democracy can be found among Enlightenment philosophers and political theorists such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) and nineteenth-century philoso-

phers such as John Stuart Mill (1806-73); Or be found among contemporary writers and theorists such as Carol Pittman and B Barber. They are in favor of providing the maximum opportunities and facilities necessary for the direct participation of individuals and ordinary citizens in political decision-making and in political decision-making. (Maximum direct citizen participation in the political decision-making process).

In explaining participatory democracy, several points should be noted: first, that "participatory democracy" is in fact an alternative to the concept (Direct Democracy); Although participatory democracy also contains subtle elements of another concept that is typically contrasted with direct democracy; That is, representative democracy (or democracy based on the element of representation). Thus, representative or participatory democracy is opposed to direct democracy. Thus, representative or participatory democracy is opposed to direct democracy. In direct democracy, which was common in the city-states of ancient Greece and in small communities or congregations; All citizens involved in and related to the affairs of the city should be directly and without intermediaries or representatives involved in decision-making and in the formulation, drafting and approval of laws. This important task could not be delegated to others, nor could it be performed by others elected on behalf of the majority. Ancient Greek democracy, practiced in the city-state, was the source of inspiration for this type of democratic political system, especially the form that prevailed in Athens in the fifth century BC. (Robertson. 2002. p. 148).

In participatory democracy, it is important to note that participation does not necessarily require the exercise of decision-making power. On this basis, it is possible to demand

maximum participation or wider participation of citizens in the political system; At the same time, it accepted the rule or principle that the final decision and the duties and applications of law-making (legislation) should be made by a small body or body of elected representatives. In participatory democracy, of course, we are dealing with a series of tools, tools, mechanisms or mechanisms; Their use, in turn, can provide the necessary conditions to increase the participation of ordinary people in the process of policy-making in various political, economic, social and cultural areas of the country. Among the most important of these mechanisms and tools are issues such as extensive public inquiry, public opinion polls, or consultative referendums for advice or insights; We can also mention the points of view of the people's sympathetic opinions and recommendations, the existence of council and advisory institutions and units, and countless other similar arrangements and mechanisms. (Robertson. 2002. p. 373).

Today, due to the expansion of all relations and various affairs in the modern government, supporting the need to maximize the opportunities and possibilities of participation for the presence and involvement of ordinary citizens in order to participate directly in political decision-making; It requires the decentralization of many decisions and their transfer to local communities, as well as the widespread use of tools and mechanisms such as referendums to determine policies.

## 2. Limited participation

Opposite to proponents of participatory democracy are theorists and analysts who believe in limited citizen participation; Theorists such as Joseph Schumpeter have argued for less and less citizen participation, arguing that political labor should be divided into two

main groups. In fact, Schumpeter believes in and encourages a kind of political labor division. These two groups are:

The first group consists of selected professional politicians who are responsible for making policy decisions and setting policies.

The second group are ordinary citizens whose duty and plan is to elect or not to elect politicians and their affiliated parties during the periodic elections. From the latter perspective, modern democracy is in fact the state and government of politicians and rulers and elected officials and officials, and the participation of citizens is very limited and from time to time or periodic (Bogdanor. 1991. p. 461).

Before discussing the arguments and justifications put forward in defense of participatory democracy and support for broad citizen participation; It is necessary to point out more points in explaining the aspects and dimensions of "political participation" and its implications and characteristics.

Political participation, by definition, governs and requires the scope of access and enjoyment of the citizens of a society, one of the usual democratic rights of political activity; Which are legally and according to the explicit and emphatic text stated in the constitution. And they must enjoy those rights in practice freely and without hindrance. And to cover them during political activity, especially in the form of public presence, free, democratic, healthy, free from any coercion, threats, urgency and pressure, and to realize them objectively and realistically. Theoretically, this meaning is clearly linked to the "political culture" of any society. It is in this context that political sociologists use criteria

related to political participation to explain and explain the nature of the "political culture" that governs the country; For example, whether the country's political culture is democratic, authoritarian, totalitarian, open or closed, and so on.

It should be noted that the participation rate varies depending on the criteria chosen; If our criterion is the turnout, most Western democracies seem to have very high participatory democracies; However, the United States is an exception, with a very low turnout of about 45 to 50 percent, even in the presidential election. In this country, about 70% or more of the regular voters go to the polls and cast their ballots; In Britain, however, as in most European countries, the turnout is declining. Very few are considered politically active in the sense that they belong to one political party (about 2%); Or attend marches, demonstrations, strikes, rallies, and the like (perhaps another 2%).

Another point to note about political participation is that there is no reason to attribute the concept of participation only to and apply to liberal democratic systems. The level of participation can be usefully measured in other contexts and contexts, which can reveal a great deal about the political nature of society. Therefore, it can be pointed out as a claim that; Different and variable amount of participation and participation of individuals in rallies, gatherings and party or government marches in different governments in which (Single-Party System) governs the affairs of the country; And has an active role in managing all affairs. When this participation is voluntary, it can be a sign of the legitimacy and popularness of the government. Therefore, when we look at the issue of political participation from open

and broad analytical perspectives and horizons, and examine and analyze it from different dimensions and angles; We will find that participation is clearly to some extent dependent on the overall ability and capability of the all-encompassing civil society. Certainly the analysis of the process or phenomenon of "non-participation" is far more difficult; Because, paradoxically, it can also indicate that citizens are satisfied with their living conditions; It also indicates that citizens have become indifferent to the situation and are reluctant to participate; They believe that participation is basically nothing made of participation and participation has no role in realizing things and solving problems (Robertson, 2002, p. 388).

But in the field of defending "participatory democracy" and in support of the need for broad citizen participation, we are dealing with several justifications and arguments; In which three arguments or justifications are presented accurately based on certain parameters, which are:

- A. Field contexts and tools in explaining and justifying the broad participation of citizens in the defense of participatory democracy The goal and purpose of instrumental participation is to promote and disseminate the interests of the participants and to defend the interests of the participants. Whether individuals or citizens will participate will depend on benefits, benefits and costs; What they will gain through participation and how much they will have to pay for participation depends on how strong they are in achieving their goals.
- B. The second context or justification for citizen participation and support for par-

ticipatory democracy is the evolutionary and developmental context, which is sometimes called the field of education and training. According to these arguments and justifications, the participation process can expand the general moral, social and political teachings and awareness of the participants.

- C. The third rationale for supporting participation and participatory democracy is the socialist or communitarian attitude. According to this view, the issue of citizen participation and the spirit of participatory democracy can be defended in that it plays a fundamental role in the interests of society and the community and in the public good.

It is noteworthy that most of the empirical and practical research and studies that have been done on political participation confirm that the main aspect of political participation in terms of the nature and character of participation is instrumental. That is, citizens and participants primarily see the spirit of participation as a tool to expand, increase, and advance their own interests; And they hope to serve the interests of themselves and their children in the short, medium, and long term by using the tools of partnership. For a long time, it was (and still is) thought that voting behavior or electoral behavior is a pivotal and key element in political participation and plays a decisive role and function; Because this was the only form of political action in which the masses of citizens participated.

Studies have been conducted and classifications have been provided regarding the situation of the participants, their positions, attitudes, characteristics, and behaviors; Including the classification or classification of participants according to whether they voted or

did not vote; Have they participated in other forms and types of activities, especially activities related to party struggles or not?

In this regard, the participants are placed on a hierarchical pyramid according to the mentioned criteria and components; And depending on whether or not to vote and participate or not participate in other forms of participatory activities (campaigns and party and organizational propaganda), a place is considered for them in the mentioned pyramid.

The main classification is based on triple funds or triple categories according to which citizens are divided into three main groups:

- A) Incurious citizens who have no interest in political participation and activities and are mainly outside the political process and have no role or influence in it.
- B) Observer citizens who are only present at a very low and minimal level in the political process.
- C) A small group of activists and "fighters" or those who are present and active in various ways.

Therefore, it is obvious that theoretically, three possible situations for political participation can be imagined:

- A: Negative balance or what will lead to political alienation.
- B: Positive balance means the continuation of spontaneous revolutionary and participatory enthusiasm
- C: The balance that will be lethargy and normalization for not having access to citizenship rights and demanding.

In terms of citizenship, political participation gives citizens the opportunity to express their views, instills in them a sense of honor and dignity, and ultimately provides the greatest benefit to the largest number of governed. In addition, it reassures the community that there is a systematic way to change the situation; In order to put a degree of accountability and responsibility on the part of the broker who is to be selected at regular intervals, it is on the agenda.

Subsequently, a series of surveys and surveys were conducted under the auspices of Sydney Verba and N.H. Nye, who replaced this view with a multidimensional interpretation. In this survey research, participation involves and includes a number of different and varied "methods". Most prominent are voting, party struggles, advocacy activities (including working with others for the purposes of specific communities), communicating and contacting this or that representative or official about specific personal problems and issues. It should be noted that these practices have been observed and sometimes practiced in a number of different countries, but only a small number of individuals have been active in all of these different practices.

Given the scientific findings and data at various levels of political sociology and social sciences and political science, what will be worth noting; A case study of the election phenomenon of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of Iran according to the statistics provided by the Ministry of Interior and other relevant institutions in each of the eleven elections of the Islamic Consultative Assembly after the revolution.

By studying and examining them at the outset, the point is that the course of relations and the resulting participatory process are ostensibly based on principles of democratic aspects of the power structure. Interior Minis-



ter Rahmani Fazli cited the reasons for the drop in participation as coronary heart disease, while no public news of this was reported from any public forum or state media until March 2; But what is clear is that issues such as the high price of gasoline and the events of November, 2019, and the crash of a Ukrainian plane reduced the people's sympathy for going to the polls.

Ballots are in some ways one of the most important sources of popular sovereignty, and indicate citizens' support or aversion to the political system, or at least their preference for particular policies. The challenge of participation may seem purely internal at first, but it clearly has far-reaching implications. Because the challenge of participation is a potential threat to the core structures or values and fundamental norms of a system that necessitate critical decisions under time pressures and completely uncertain and unforeseen circumstances.

How to face such challenges is capacity building of institutional frameworks for prevention and capacity building in the areas of institution, public administration and public administration; And organizing those factors that can affect electoral behavior at the social and individual levels are; Political parties and organizations, the activities of candidates, programs and propaganda of parties and groups and individuals during elections, election laws, social movements, the level of political awareness of citizens and many other factors. But looking at the names of the

groups that have received activity licenses from the Ministry of Interior in the name of the party and the political community, we find out; That none of the organizations and communities can be considered as an active political party in the society. And only during the elections and as coalition groups with other political organizations do they enter the political arena of the country.

Such a situation is not only not beneficial for the political development of the society, but it also confuses the voters and makes the situation tenser. Organized according to the course of elections in Iran and the influence of public opinion; The need for coherent and organized activity and the creation of conditions and relations for healthy and democratic competition and the widest and most realistic presence of parties and democratic organizations and true representatives of different social strata from various political groups and organizations is felt more than ever.

As for our country, which is currently facing serious international challenges and is in a state of sanctions, and on the other hand, serious regional crises have engulfed us. Increasing participation in a real and active way strengthens the performance of diplomats and foreign policy makers. Much of foreign policy bargaining depends on domestic legitimacy, one of the tangible manifestations of which is political participation. Therefore, the government should in no way consider a negative balance in political participation as a desirable way to advance its goals.



**Table 1:**  
*Statistics of the participation of the whole country in eleven elections*

round	Number of voters	Eligible	The level of people's participation in the country
The first round	10875969	20857391	52.14
second round	15607306	24143498	64.64
Third round	16714281	27986736	59.72
Fourth round	18767042	32465558	57.81
Fifth round	24682386	34716000	71.10
Sixth round	26082157	38726431	69
Seventh round	23438030	46351032	59.57
Eighth round	22350254	43824254	51
The ninth round	30905605	48288799	64.02
Round tenth	33956651	54915225	51.83
Eleventh round	24512404	57918159	42.32

**Source: Rahmani Fazli, Interior Minister**

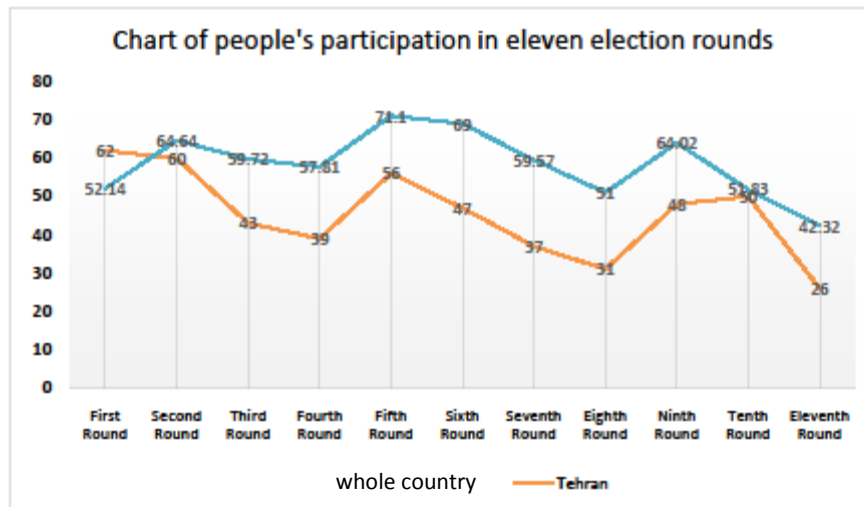
Looking at the statistics of the turnout of the people of Tehran and statistical comparison with the city of Tehran and the remarkable point is that the highest turnout has been in the first parliamentary elections; Ironically, the only period in which the average rate in Tehran was higher than the national average is related to the first period. (Table 2)

In this table, the lowest participation has been recorded in the eleventh period (42.32%), which has significantly decreased compared to previous participations. The turnout of the people of Tehran in the 11th election period (Table 2) also shows a significant decrease in the turnout of Tehran in the 11th election period (26%), which can be a warning signal for policymakers.

**Table 2:**  
*Statistics of the participation of Tehran Population in eleven elections*

Round	Number of voters	Participation rate in Tehran
The first round	2134434	62
second round	2308319	60
Third round	1745587	43
Fourth round	1701299	39
Fifth round	2444415	56
Sixth round	2204847	47
Seventh round	1971557	37
Eighth round	1740941	31
The ninth round	2335124	48
Round tenth	3246991	50
Eleventh round	2539763	26

**Source: Rahmani Fazli, Interior Minister**



### Conclusion

In this article, an attempt was made to take a consequential and pathological approach based on empirical studies based on objective and measurable data and quantitative and qualitative data and findings on the status of political participation in the Islamic Republic; To be considered with comparison and comparison with more courses and emphasis on the level of active participation. Objective and documented findings in this study were shown by turning to the research problem; The issue of electoral participation in the origins of the Islamic Republic of Iran is not in a favorable situation. And to solve the challenge of political participation, the best and most appropriate solution is to create institutional contexts or participatory institutional arrangements. In such a way as to lead to the expansion of the system of distribution of power and authority. And lead to the development of the government's extractive and legal capabilities, the creation of additional and new institutions and the formation of voluntary parties, organizations and associa-

tions, the legitimacy of the political participation demands of other social and political groups by the ruling elites.

Institutionalization of political participation also includes the establishment of new electoral rules and institutions, the establishment of new party organizations and interest groups, and the freedom of the press; Or, to put it more bluntly, the agreement of the ruling elites, the ruling elites, the opposition elites and the participants in politics on the legitimacy of institutional procedures, such as whether or not there are consensus parties or a broad consensus. Creating a sense of efficiency among voters, providing an atmosphere of participation to ethnicities, religions and races, marginalized and even to some extent intellectuals; In this way, decentralization can be eliminated. Increase the powers of the Islamic Consultative Assembly as far as they can be effective; And creating participatory platforms can lead to a huge flood of participants or the idea of participating. And that can turn challenges and threats into opportunities; And participants with re-

wards in addition to the economic benefit of the expected benefit of an individual vote, given the very small role that only one vote plays in the election as a whole; Faced with feeling emotionally satisfied and showing his support for the political system and declaring his party, organizational or political preferences.

A high turnout is considered to indicate a desirable level of political interest and activism, a sense of effectiveness, and civic commitment in a society. In contrast, low voting rates can be a sign of alienation or political indifference. Moreover, low voter turnout is considered by commentators to be at least a sign of political disillusionment, if not political dissatisfaction. Declining power of government mobilization and the ability to send people to areas of political support and participation in political processes by resorting to motives such as loyalty and adherence to the values of the revolution, avoiding a return to the pre-revolutionary era; Resolving internal problems in which the lack of management of "inefficient managers" in all cultural, political, social and economic sectors, the effects of which were clearly and objectively evident in the events of January 2017 and November 2019; And the elimination of external threats that show another face of the collapse of the revolutionary era, the normalization of the situation and finally the crisis of participation, will not be tolerated and in fact will not be far from the mind.

With an approach to sociological theories, we can find the relationship between the political conditions prevailing in society and the behavior or action of citizens in non-participation and with an approach to economic theories; Economic factors such as: Unemployment (factory workers, young college-educated job seekers) Expensive (sudden rise in gasoline prices) unprecedented inflation in basic goods, home appliances, housing, cars, etc. and economic corruption in administrative and judicial networks can be; It illuminates the behavior or act of political disobedience and the tendency for non-political participation among citizens, individuals, groups, strata, classes and social classes. And with the impact on political theories, the lack of a healthy, active and dynamic civil society, the lack of democratic freedoms, the lack of democratic institutions and relations, the lack of political parties and interest groups; It is revealed by factors such as the crisis of legitimacy and uneven development. One of the ways in which the system supports and preserves itself is through political socialization. Therefore, any political system that seeks its survival must develop supportive expectations among its members, and in the process of political socialization, the basis for the stability of political culture and the structure of society over time is determined. In the tables and graphs presented in this research, an attempt was made to evaluate the level of political participation during the eleven terms of the Islamic Consultative Assembly after the revolution.

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