

Electoral Ethics in Imam Khomeini's Thought

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(Received: 3 December 2019- Accepted: 24 February 2020)

Abstract

Every society has oriented itself towards a governing method concerning the socio-cultural conditions and with the inclusion of different historical-ideological periods and has accepted it as its governmental plan. Iranian society is not an exception to this general rule. Throughout different historical stages, such as the government of Safavid, the Constitution Movement, and despotic government periods, religious democracy sovereignty has emerged as the dominant model. This method of governance is based on ideological-religious values and bases and is the place of fusion of religion and politics. As such, in both theory and practice, it has to fulfill democratic and religious values. The electoral system is the backbone of any democratic system, and concerning the three dimensions of ethics, decrees and religious beliefs aimed to cultivate the aspects of ethics and election as two detrimental poles in both sizes of the religious democratic system. To this aim, first, will elaborate on the nature and necessity of electoral ethic and review the essential components of electoral ethic in Imam's thought, through reference to his statements. These standards will be considered from the perspective of verses and traditions. Finally, we will conclude and will respond to the questions, which have posted in this article.

Keywords: Ethics, Elections, Elections Administrators, Electoral Candidates, Imam Khomeini's Thought

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Introduction

With the fall of Pahlavi authoritarian monarchy and the rise of the Islamic Republic system, the peoples' votes and views found specific significance. It was to the extent that all its organs, from top to bottom, found a position in agreement with two components of Islam and people's election.

The late great leader of the Islamic Revolution had frequently emphasized. It is to the extent that he states, "Islamic regime and Islamic republic is a regime based on the public votes and public referendum" (Khomeini, 2006, vol. 3: 514-515).

These very obligations to the people vote direct every researcher's mind towards the approaches for practicing and practical methods of these approaches.

The legal methods have never deterred the individuals from committing violations, and much electoral gamesmanship is apparently in no disagreement with any principle, paragraph, or note of the law and rule. But they are in dispute with ethic principles, so this question comes into the mind that whether or not in the thoughts of the founder of Islamic Republic, there is anything under the title of electoral ethic components to enable the administrators, candidates or voters of the election to follow him concerning his obligation to such elements?

Were his ethical thoughts influential in the law of holding elections? What is the impact of the electoral ethics spreading concerned by Imam in the stream of elections and the results of the votes? What kind of ethics is the ethic prevailing in his thoughts? Is it consequential or non-consequential?

These questions and the questions posed are all questions that will respond to this article.

In this article, reviewing the must and mustn't posed in the great leader of the Islamic Revolution's thoughts, we will investigate the components, principles, and standards which represented in his belief that need to be enforced by all people involved in the issue of election including the candidates, administrators, and voters in different stages of voting.

1. The Necessity of Electoral Ethic

Religion has three dimensions of ethics, decrees, and beliefs. What is the base and root of religion is the belief that the acceptance of orders and ethics are the outcome of faith in these very beliefs. Belief in religious democracy is granting a type of divine legitimacy to the democracy-based sovereignty. So, this specific type of freedom should base on

ideological roots and prevailing rules, i.e., enforcing it's must and mustn't resulting from the divine canon.

Ethicality and virtue prevent individuals from any violation of others' rights and convert them into sociable and benevolent individuals. This material that refers to an Islamic culture training is considered as something which leads to the reinforcement of the reproachful soul.

Taking into consideration the role and significance of election in democratic systems on one side and the necessity of adherence to the ethical values and principles in the operations resulting from the religious beliefs, on the other hand, we will learn the need for electoral ethics.

But as the Islamic Republic system has taken impacts from Imam Khomeini's political and divine thoughts, the retrieving of this necessity in his opinion indicates the detrimental role of ethics in the elections of the mentioned system.

Though the lack of practical obligation to the ethics sometimes causes a legal punishment, sometimes it is in lack of discipline, so it is not considered an electoral crime. In the second case, when it faces the public reluctance, it can be regarded as a type of punishment by public opinion.

The electoral ethic acceptable by the public opinion is a stronger deterrent than the law, and this is further evidence on the necessity of the presence of electoral ethics.

2. Electoral Principles in Imam's Thought

2.1. The First Principle

The necessity of public contribution and denial of indifference towards elections.

As human is a social being inherently, so supplying these desires and practicality of these incentives will be possible only in this very social life. For this reason, the general movement of society will be detrimental and influential on the original orientation of that society too. This issue will show a more highlighted appearance in the organizations which enjoy the governing regimes based on peoples' votes.

Elections, which is the manifestation of the peoples' political presence and contribution and is the fulfillment field of their will in making their destinies, has a specific position and good deed in the late Imam's thought and is introduced as a national-Islamic value. It considered at the level of religious duty and an objective obligation by him.

His statements and standpoints are a vivid confirmation to this claim, where he states, and "This is a divine duty. It is a national duty. It is a humane duty. It is a duty that we should practice. All of us should participate in the elections" (Khomeini, 2006, vol. 18: 381).

Also where he recommends the people to have an active participation in the elections to remove the foreign threats and adds “when the level of your vote reduces as compared with the past -God forbid- the propagation horns in abroad and deserted defeated people of abroad will say that Iran has turned away from Islam and given back to the Islamic Republic. This propagation will be in every place, and this might loosen the pillars of this Republic ...” (Khomeini, 2006, vol. 15: 261).

2.2. The Second Principle

Confirmation or undertake qualification based on the law.

The second element of the electoral ethic components in the late Imam's thoughts is related to the elections observers who are dutiful to review the qualifications of the election candidates.

Based on Principle 99 of the Constitution, the critical duty of observing the elections and screening the qualifications of candidates by the Guardian Council. This issue has an ethical aspect because, apart from various types of interpretations about informative or approbation feature of this monitoring, is a task which in case of applying any personal taste, the members of the council will deny of membership as a just jurist; and it will make them accountable and responsible before the divine judgment.

Imam considered the correctness of elections and the qualification or confirmation of qualification only within the framework of law and regarded as the cases outside this limit as something with practical indecency.

Moreover, he has considered the protection of the Guardian Council subject to the performance of its members and states, Your words should be in such a way that everybody assumes that you are practicing within your legal limit, not one step further nor one step less and be remained in this very legitimate place, not one word in this side nor one word in that side.

Sometimes, you observe that the Islamic interest necessitates practicing the secondary decrees. Then practice it. (Khomeini, 2006, vol. 19: 43-44).

2.3. The Third Principle: Provision of Facilities and Adopting Necessary Measures to Hold Elections

In democratic regimes, holding elections enjoys a series of regulations and arrangements which have mentioned in the natural or constitutional laws.

These arrangements protect the right of voting by the individuals who participate in it and prevent the interference of responsible or non-

responsible individuals to make any change in the votes. So, the Islamic Republic Constitution in the Sixth Principle, while confirming the detrimental role of elections to acquire the formal positions in the country such as the posts of president, member of Islamic Consultative Assembly, members of councils and as likes, confirms the employment of all facilities of the state for the people public contribution in determining the political, economic, social and cultural destiny through the Third Principle. Moreover, it has shifted the monitoring over the implementation to the Guardian Council in agreement with Principle 99.

The apportionment of elections and decrees for voting and related regulations connected to the voters should describe to the people before the elections such that there would be no ambiguity in place.

The legal principles related to elections, which are represented by the Constitution or the ordinary rules, should be implemented precisely and correctly. The general and fundamental issues related to elections included in the basic laws and the regular rules forecast the detailed regulations as well. (Madani, 1997: 146).

All these issues are significant because they protect the right to determine the destiny of the individuals of the society; therefore, despite the reiteration of the elections law on these cases, the late Imam has not ignored this issue quickly and has called everybody to have the smooth performance of law in his statements:

“Attention to the elections should be such to be acceptable for people, rather than to be acceptable to a khan. We want them to be acceptable to people. The people believe that the election is logical and Islamic. The practice is yours. Law is something that is registered and determines a duty, but what is important is the position of practice. The position of practice is such that it should be in agreement with the law, and people could be satisfied with the practice. It should notice and not let the trouble makers impose any subversion” (Khomeini, 2006, vol. 18: 380).

2.4. The Fourth Principle: Maintaining the Authenticity of Votes (Lack of Imposing the Elections and Protecting Them)

One of the other electoral laws concerned by Imam Khomeini is the basic principle of the authenticity of votes. This word can have different interpretations. What has authenticity (originality) in the society is the people's vote, though this vote and view can be against the direct Islamic decrees. The other one is that the standard and scale of the performance of the government in society is the people's vote and view. That Muslim person did who are faithful to the Islamic commandments.

What is posed in authenticity respect of the vote is this very second view, which is, of course, specific of Islamic society. For example, we may refer to Imam's speech on 15 June 1979, where he states, "What kind of right does one person have to vote for a 53-million population? What kind of rights do fifty or six hundred peoples have to give a vote for a 53-million people? This right is for this purpose that you want to vote. It is your vote. The standard is the nation's vote" (Khomeini, 2006, vol. 8: 173).

Keeping the authenticity of the concerned vote can have two main symbols in the elections. It is related to the time of voting (which we interpret as lack of imposed status of votes), and the other is related to maintaining the obtained votes (which we understand as protection of votes). What is essential in the election and its correctness is the lack of imposed votes status and security of the obtained votes. Otherwise, the product of such an election will not be the people vote, but it will be the views of specific individuals with known tendencies and is to mock the democracy.

It is for this very reason that "influencing the results of the election, through threat or lure, promise of a job, paying the debts and as likes forbidden in all countries and if it occurs, then the citizens and candidates are obliged to report it to the competent authorities" (Ghazi, 2003: 322). Therefore, in Article 7 of the Law for the Elections of the Islamic Republic, elections should be direct, exposed to the public, and through a hidden vote. In Articles 18 and 19, it states that the votes which are cast through buy and sell, fraud or threat into the boxes of the election are invalid.

Determining the limit of the administrator's performance and elections observers, Imam Khomeini refers to this issue and states, "Now, you want of course monitor over this election. You need to notice that this regime is a democratic –Islamic regime. It is not a Taqut regime. You should not say a word to mean imposing the name. Suppose to do an action. People should be free as it was so in the referendum. People were free. You need to let people be free. There should be surveillance over the boxes to prevent any treason. Tables should be under the control of trustworthy people. To be honest people from the nation, therefore, there would be no talk that this or that governor, for example, interfered in this issue.

In the Islamic government, the situation is like this that in the elections, you have the right to monitor and provide the facilities as much

as the government should provide; you do not have further rights” (Khomeini, 2006, vol. 9: 121).

In another place, referring to the lack of imposing vote, he states, “We do not intend to impose anything upon our nation. Islam has not given us a right to be a dictator. We are subject to the votes of the nation. Whatever our nation votes for, we have to follow them. The main issue is not under the control of you and figures like me. It is under the control of the nation” (Khomeini, 2006, vol. 11: 34-35).

2.5. The Fifth Principle: Spreading and Giving Governance to the Noble Islam

In a description of the gentle Islam and American Islam, he states, Brave Iranian people are supposed to vote in favor of the representatives who are faithful to Islam and people and feel a responsibility towards serving them. Those who have tasted poverty and are defenders of Islam, the Islam of the suppressed, the Islam of the history downtrodden, the Islam of the struggling mystics, the Islam of pure-intended people, and being the defenders of the noble Muhammadian Islam (p.b.u.h.).

The virtue adverb is a reference to the hearts, reality of goodness, and avoids the Almighty God's wrath and to have virtuousness against what has been announced as unlawful issues by God. It is a spiritual issue related to hearts. If one is lawful and the other one an unlawful one, one is awful and the other one good, it is due to that very inward spiritual issue and heartfelt virtue rather than the action itself and the titles which extracted from the activities, such as beneficence, obedience and as likes. (Tabatabaei, 1981, vol. 14: 528).

They should discard the individuals who are advocates of capitalist Islam, the Islam of the arrogant, the Islam of painless well-to-do people, the Islam of Hypocrites, the Islam of easy-going people, the Islam of opportunists and in a word, the American Islam and introduce them to the people. (Khomeini, 2006, vol. 21: 11).

A question that comes to every reader's mind is the question about the symbols of noble Islam in the elections, i.e., from the late Imam's perspective, which fundamental indicators can found on dominating such an Islam in elections? If, in this discussion, we refer to the four fundamental indicators, but this does not mean they lack other electoral symbols from the Islamic perspective, which Imam was its propagator in today's world.

2.5.1. Observing the Islamic Directives and Rituals

Elections that are among the democratic practices and behaviors should not be void of respecting the divine rites. For this reason, referring to this

issue, Imam Khomeini states, and it is an advice from an old father to all candidates of Islamic Consultative Assembly that you should try to perform your electoral campaigns within the framework of Islamic lofty teachings and ethics and prevent from the works which conflict with the Islamic features.

It should be noted that the purpose of elections finally is to maintain Islam. When are Islamic limits not observed in propagations, how the elected candidate can be a protector of Islam? Efforts must be made to prevent any insult to anybody. If the electoral rival could find a way into the Islamic Consultative Assembly, there should not be any harm to friendship and brotherhood that there is nothing sweeter than that. (Khomeini, 2006, vol. 21: 11).

2.5.2. Avoiding Destruction

In his statements about the election publicizing, Imam Khomeini gives alert to any intrusion to the limit of the believers and states, "I expect the candidates and their friends to observe the Islamic-humane ethics in the propagation for their candidates and avoid any criticism from the opponents which may cause disputes and irreverence" (Khomeini, 2006, vol. 12: 12)

In another place, referring to the perpetrator's ugliness of such actions, he considers them as people in lack of justice. He states, "Some candidates, (God forbid) might weaken or insult others. I want to notify you about it that today, this type of opposition, in particular in the side of such candidates, is catastrophic to Islam and the Islamic Republic. If supposedly, one has a dispute with another one, there is no permission to express it among the people in any condition. The dignity and reputation of a believer in Islam has a high position and defaming the believer; in particular, a learned believer is one of the capital sins and will negate justice" (Khomeini, 2006, vol. 17, 133-134).

2.5.3. Avoiding the Inspiration of Disappointment

«الأمل رحمة لأمّتي و لولا الأمل ما رضعت والدة ولدها و لا غرس غارس شجر»

Hope and desire are graces for my Ummah, and if there had been no hope and desire, no mother would have fed her children, and no farmer would have planted trees. (Majlesi, (n.d.), vol. 74: 173).

Emir of Believers, Ali (a.s.), has stated about the implicit and hidden influence of the associates

«طبعك يسرق من طبعه... و انت لاتعلم»

Your nature and soul grab specific attributes and moods from the environment and soul of your companion. It is such that you will not notice such a grab. (Ibn Abi al Hadid 1984, vol. 20: Wisdom 147).

Imam, about this, says: “Among the subversion which is made by them is to create disappointment among the nation... [this action] is made by corruptors and parasites who are working for others and do not want our nation to reach the salvation” (Khomeini 2006, vol. 10: 534-535).

If election propaganda- which is one of the most influential elements in democratic communities-, inspires despair and helplessness (instead of providing progress and a thriving state for the society and achieving its real objective – which is a well-organized elections for the election of state officials in a free vote and through an open and competitive competition for the control and supervision of people in democratic states) (Beetham and Boyle: 1997: 57-58), it will cause backwardness. It will bring about lassitude and indolence in society.

He considers the despair as one of the soldiers of the devil and states, “One of the soldiers of the devil is a disappointment. The devil creates despair in the affairs in which humans should act with hope and patience, and with these despairs, they sometimes weaken our youth in the issues in which they need to move ahead with a serious decision” (Khomeini, 2006, vol. 9: 181).

Also, rejecting these disappointing propagations, he considers the purpose of these actions as the defeat of the Islamic Republic. He states, “I do not know what sort of people they are? They pull people towards despair. Don't they know if people become disappointed, it means defeat? Or do they know it and perform it intentionally? I believe that many of them do this with an accurate calculation. These actions calculated and their origins go back to outside” (Khomeini, 2006, vol. 11: 10). For this reason, a healthy and passionate election will cause the despair of the enemies. (Khomeini, 2006, vol. 18: 437).

2.5.4. Avoiding Discord

Mentioning the necessity of the presence of different tastes in a society, Imam Khomeini instructs to prevent any disputes and its conversion into hostility and further adds, “There should be discord. The disagreement in taste, views, discussion, and debates and as likes, but the result should not be that we become two groups and enemies to each other. We should be two groups while we have discord. We should befriend each other” (Khomeini, 2006, vol. 21: 47).

2.6. The Sixth Principle: Casting Vote in Favor of the Qualified Candidates

Concerning the necessity of the candidate's acquisition by the people or introducing the eligible candidates to the voters, the late Imam has had recommendations frequently. Here as the evidence, we will refer to four cases of them which are related to different elections:

A) The experts who elected for dealing with the Constitution of I. R. of Iran should be familiar with the issues of Islam and to be experts. They should also be faithful to Islam, be trustful, and without any inclination to the left and right and to be pious. The dearly nation shifts your destiny to a person who is in your route, which is the route of Islam. (Khomeini, 2006, vol. 9: 254-255);

B) Observe the Constitution and observe the attributes of the President there and cast votes for the one who holds those attributes, and you know that person with those attributes. Give your vote to such persons. When they are in lack of those attributes, avoid giving a vote to them. It is a destiny-making day. You want to give your country control to a person who is active in the fate of your country. Do not ignore it. Go to the boxes. Get together and elect the one who deserves this position, has those attributes, and does not have a bad record and is not affiliated to the former regime. These are affairs which should be observed. (Khomeini, 2006, vol. 11: 393);

C) I hope you pay attention to those persons who are candidates for the presidential election and elect those who are more committed to Islam. Those with good and constant records. The ones who are not in favor of the east or the west. Those who are not west-stricken people. The ones who follow the decrees of Islam. Those who are in favor of nationality, sympathetic towards the nation, and nation servant, with good backgrounds. And who had not entered the realm of the former regime and have not any links with foreign? Those who come from yourselves and for yourselves. You have the option. I do not intend to assign anyone;

We have to say these very attributes of the president and the representatives whom you want to elect, and you need to elect yourselves and avoid discord. Review the record of the persons and their status in the pre-revolution era. How have been during the revolution and what have they done after the relative victory. (Khomeini, 2006, vol. 11: 484-485).

D) Election is a standard for you. You should see whether you want to make the best selection for yourselves or Islam? If it is for yourselves, that would be satanic. You just select the best one for Muslims. No matter from which group they are from, from the party or non-party. The party is not a guarantee that a person corrupted, and being a hundred percent member of the party is not also a reason for competency. Being a Muslim and have a reputation for that is the best for the Muslim. Being clever and aware of the interests and corruption of the country. If you

select the most qualified person, you will do an Islamic action, and this will be a standard for yourselves to detect that the election is for Islam or your interests. (Khomeini, 2006, vol. 18: 196-197).

2.7. The Seventh Principle: Confrontation with Plots

The enemies of Islam and movement, outside and inside, have started their poisonous propagations. They pretend that people are indifferent in this election and tend to laxity and indolence. They want to blame you that you have turned your back to the Islamic Republic. I expect you, the combating nation, to dissociate the palavers by your public contribution. We have informed that around the university, which is the venue for Friday prayers rituals – a group has attended to disrupt participation in the elections. The state is dutiful to prevent them, and people are obedient to disregard their propagations. Dear Muslim nations, protect Islam and the Islamic country and rush towards the polling boxes. (Khomeini, 2006, vol. 9: 259).

2.8. The Eighth Principle: Respect to the Principle of the Election

Considering the significance of the policy of the vote, the late Imam through frequent statements has reminded the necessity of respect to it. Some of these cases presented in the below lines:

A) Assume that something is in disagreement with the votes of such a person. Assume they are modernists. Well, when people have given votes for them, this should be ignored. People cast their votes, and now they are representatives and posed their materials. They proved it. Now, we should leave it to the votes of the people themselves and to whatever the people have voted. (Khomeini, 2006, vol. 11: 102);

B) As I have briefed, election fulfilled in tranquility. When someone has defeated in the polls, those who intended to serve and now they have lost their access to the parliament, and they should not criticize the nation continuously. When you have defeated, you should not say that all governments of Iran have made a mistake. How is that a Muslim country does such a vital job with tranquility, and then they are termed as traitors? A nation cannot be a traitor. Persons should keep Islamic rituals. As soon as an individual wants to become a delegate, and assume that he/she is my friend and wants to become a representative, or is from my group and wants to become a representative and nation does not vote for that, they should not take the pens and write against the elections, to attack the election.

If they have any complaints, well, their charges can be dealt with them. Making hullabaloo brings about nothing but adding fuels to the situation in which the way will open for the traitors. You may not reflect

in the outside world that Iran is a country whose elections faced such and such issue. Do not repeat this wrong word. For the sake of God, be aware that a Consultative Assembly, which is the Islamic Consultative Assembly and wants to serve Iran and should have power, that is the only center that all forces should be subject to that.

Disagree with the election and distort it is against Islam. If there is any complaint, then the officials who are assumed to accept the charges will do it. But making hullabaloo, crying and inappropriate critiques, these are against the commandments of Islam (Khomeini, 2006, vol. 12: 198-199).

In the Islamic ethical system, keeping an eye on the final standard, we intend to provide grounds for the human's salvation and pure perfection by presenting moral instructions and codes of practice at the level of social professions and life and also with the inclusion of material progress to improve human's life. (Ameli, 2002).

Conclusion

Imam's electoral principles are:

The mentioned principles in his statements have abundance repetitions, and this very repetition confirms their significance and primary status. The tone of Imam's utterance in all cases is teaching, and this indoctrinate statues to signify the ethicality of recommendations rather than being legal

The lack of legal obligation in some cases and the possibility of presence of rather legal justifications in many of them, despite the unethical understanding of the public opinion towards many performances and also considering this point that the proving the criminality in such cases is very difficult, is an apparent reason on the ethicality of the recommendations along with attempts to create good attributes and didactic-like training of all stratum of the society by the great leader of the Islamic Revolution.

A number of the mentioned principles directed at the administrators and observers of the elections. In this regard, we can say that though a series of legal punishments follow their violations, what Imam intends to create and convert it into a general trend, is the professional ethics of the election administrators rather than a legal obligation. All mentioned principles well documented with religious sources.

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