

Presidential Elections in Iran since 1980-2010 (The Participation in elections of Azeri and Non- Azeri provinces)

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ABSTRACT

The subject of this research is to study the Presidential elections in Iran since 1980-2010.

Despite the various forms of political participation in Iran including being member and actively participating in a political party, participation in political gatherings and meetings, participation in voluntary association, labor unions and Islamic student and..., the participation in elections is usually the least costly, which will help the people to share political power and shape the political system. Public participation is an activity in which the citizens try to directly or indirectly choose the political elite. Elections can be seen as one of the most important forms of this participation and has a great impact on the society in general and every individual in particular. Free elections and fair competition are two aspects of democracy and also legitimacy of any political system (particularly transitional societies). In Iran too, the participation in elections by people, has become the commonest and most important kind of participation. Since the beginning of Islamic Revolution in Iran to the present (2011), there have been 10 presidential elections. For analysis of ratio of vote of participation of the Azeri provinces and Non-Azeri provinces in presidential elections, the SPSS software (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) is utilized.

KEYWORDS: Election; Presidential election; Azeri and Non-Azeri provinces; Iran.

INTRODUCTION

The country of Iran is expanded in a territory of about 1648195 sq/km.¹ Iran, as a result of its climate conditions and its strategic situation, all throughout history, has been the passageway of different ethnic and tribal groups of people and also it has been a place for the rise of various cultures. In this case, we can refer to the words of "René Grousset" who considers Iran to be the communication bridge between East and West. The result of these exchanges with East and West, was that peoples with different cultural characteristics and life trends gathered together in this land.²

The variety and diversity of the ethnic groups in Iran is such that using phrases like "plural ethnicities" and "multi ethnic society" to describe its demographics is an undeniable fact.³

With what is said, we can consider the most important ethnicities in Iran to be: Azerbaijanis in North West, Turkaman's in North East, Arabs in Khuzestan in South West and along with Persian Gulf shores, Lors in West and South West, Kurds in West and North West and Baluchis in South East. These ethnic groups live in Iran and the neighboring countries. In another word, these ethnic groups live on the two sides of international borders.⁴

Although there is no exact statistics available on the number of Iran's ethnic groups but one of the Iranian researchers writes that from the overall population of Iran, 51% are Fars, 24% Azarbayjanis, 7% Kurds, 3% Arabs and 15% the rest.⁵

Azerbaijan is a region in Northwest of Iran whose territory includes Eastern Azerbaijan, Western Azerbaijan, Ardebil and Zanjan. In these provinces; the accent of the majority of people is Azerbaijani Turkish.

Participation in elections- voting

Despite the various forms of political participation in the societies including membership political party, taking part in demonstrations holding strikes etc..., the participation in elections is usually the least costly, which will help the people to share political power and shape the political system.

Free elections and fair competition are two aspects of democracy and also legitimacy of any political system (particularly transitional societies).⁶

Public participation is an activity in which the citizens try to directly or indirectly choose the political elite. Elections can be seen as one of the most important forms of this participation and has a great impact on the society in general and every individual in particular. Choosing the policymakers, selecting policies and programs, ruling procedures in the society, power rotation, putting pressure on authorities, responsiveness of the ruling party and selective institutions, legitimizing the political system. Political participation boosts coalition of interests, creating social cohesion and solidarity in the society. It also helps for higher accountability of the

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citizens, reducing inequality, more emphasis by the elites on their desires, expressing opposition and dissatisfaction, and finally, decreasing stress and psychological pressures could be considered as the main outcomes the elections.⁷

In Iran too, the participation in elections by people, has become the commonest and most important kind of participation.

The Islamic Revolution made the subject of political participation more serious, the symbol of which was shown in form of participation in various elections, somehow that popular participation in affairs of government has symbolized the Islamic Revolution.⁸

People's participation in Iran

According to the Islamic Republic of Iran Constitution of 1980 (Article 6), allows people to participate in national and local levels Vis-a-Vis.

1. People's participation in national election includes: **A)** election of Islamic Consultative Assembly's members (Parliament's members) once every 4 years **B)** presidential elections once every 4 years **C)** Assembly of Expert elections once every 8 years **D)** Referendum (It is clear that holding the Referendum election and shall be held whenever it is needs).
2. People's participation in local elections is through Islamic Councils of the Cities and Villages election once every 4 years.⁹

Presidential terms and the established Cabinets in Islamic Republic of Iran (1980-2010)

I. The first presidential election was held in 25/1/1980 and Abolhassan Bani Sadr was elected as the first president. He introduced Mohammad Ali Rajaei as a prime minister to the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament) in order to obtain the vote of confidence. Mohammad Ali Rajaei successfully obtained the vote of confidence from the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament) in June 17, 1980.

After 545 days of being in office, the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament) voted for Bani Sadr incompetency and therefore he was dismissed from presidential position.

Bani Sadr escaped to Paris (French) in July 29, 1980, with the help of a pilot (a pilot associated with Mohammad Reza Pahlavi Regime), and the French government granted him political asylum.

During the year 1980-1981, two presidential elections were held which was an exception in the history of elections in Iran. From June 17 until July 24, there was no president in administration, which according to Article 131 of Constitution the Country was administrated by temporary presidential Council.

II. The second presidential election in Iran was held in 23/7/1981 and Mohammad Ali Rajaei was elected by people as the second president of Iran. He introduced Mohammad Javad Bahonar as the prime minister to the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament) and he successfully obtained the vote of confidence from parliament in August 16, 1981 and arranged his Cabinet. After 2 weeks (August 30), with a blast of a bomb in prime minister office, the president (Mohammad Ali Rajaei) and prime minister (Mohammad Javad Bahonar) were martyred.

After the martyrdom of Rajaei and Bahonar, the temporary presidential Council were formed for the second time, the presidential Council introduced Mahdavi Kani as a prime minister to the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament). Mahdavi Kani and his cabinet members obtained the vote of confidence from the parliament in September 2, 1981. The main responsibility of Mahdavi Kani administration was to hold presidential election as soon as possible.

III. The third presidential election was held in 31/8/1982 and the fourth presidential election held in 15/8/1986 and Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei (who is originally Azeri) elected as the third and fourth president. For these periods Mir Hossein Mousavi (who is originally Azeri) was introduced to the parliament as the prime minister and was successful in obtaining the vote of confidence.

IV. Due to the changes in the year 1989 and demise of Ayatollah Khomeini and nomination of Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei as Supreme leader, a new season of political changes were take place in Iran. As mentioned before in 1989 the Iran Constitution was revised and in this revision the position of prime ministry was omitted and substituted by position of first vice-president.

In the fifth presidential election in 27/7/1990 and sixth presidential election in 11/6/1994 Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani was elected as the president and head of the fifth and sixth administration.

V. In the seventh presidential election in 24/5/1998 and eighth presidential election in 8/6/2002 Seyyed Mohammad Khatami was elected as the president and head of the seventh and eighth administration.

VI. In the ninth presidential election in 24/6/2006 and tenth presidential election in 12/6/2010 Mahmud Ahmadi Nejad was elected as the president and head of the ninth and tenth administration.¹⁰

It must be noted here that from the beginning of the Islamic revolution in the year 1979, till now, there have held the total of 10 presidential elections in Iran. The table 1, the presidential terms are given according to the government's term in power, the election date, the beginning of the term, and the name of the president and Cabinet name.

Table 1- the presidential terms according to the duration of governments' stay in power (1979-2011)

row	The presidential terms	The election date	The start of the presidential term	The name of the president	The duration of the governments' stay in power(days)	Cabinet name
1	The first term	25/1/1980	5/2/1980	Abolhasan Banisadr	545	Rajaee
2	The second term	23/7/1982	1/8/1982	Mohammad Ali Rajaie	68	Bahonar
3	The third term	31/8/1982	8/9/1982	Seyyed Ali Khamenei	1430	Mousavi
4	The fourth term	15/8/1986	10/9/1986	Seyyed Ali Khamenei	1430	Mousavi
5	The fifth term	27/7/1990	2/8/1990	AliAkbar Hashemi Rafsanjani	1460	Hashemi Rafsanjani
6	The sixth term	11/6/1994	2/8/1994	AliAkbar Hashemi Rafsanjani	1460	Hashemi Rafsanjani
7	The seventh term	24/5/1998	2/8/1998	Seyyed Mohammad Khatami	1460	Khatami
8	The eighth term	8/6/2002	1/8/2002	Seyyed Mohammad Khatami	1460	Khatami
9	The ninth term	24/6/2006	1/8/2006	Mahmoud Ahmadinejad	1460	Ahmadinejad
10	The tenth term	12/6/2010	2/8/2010	Mahmoud Ahmadinejad	It has started from 2/8/2010 till now.	Ahmadinejad

Due to the influence of the issue of awareness and knowledge in participation and lack of participation in election, therefore investigating the process of people's awareness growth is necessary in two periods of pre and post revolution in Iran.

Political and social analysis of Iran and the process of people's awareness growth in Pahlavi era and in Islamic Republic of Iran

Awareness growth in Iran is connected with some factors such as; young population, growth of literacy rate and education, growth of urbanism.

This process is started from Pahlavi era and continued after the Islamic Revolution. Due to the importance of the above mentioned variables in political participation of people, the issue will be analyzed briefly in pre and post revolution eras.

A. Pahlavi Era

Among the most important factors which led to political instability and collapse of Pahlavi regime in 1979 were; Existence of absolute power stricter which hindered the political competition and participation.¹¹ Due to the weaknesses of political participation in Pahlavi regime, the Islamic Revolution took place in 1979.

Now the question is that, how the people who had not learned the political participation, participated in dissolution of Pahlavi regime? There were some factors contributed in this event, which shows the growth of people's political and social awareness in that period. These factors are as follows:

1. Young population: According to the available statistics, the population of Iran has become younger since 1950's. The populations of less than 25 years old or youths were 10.9 million in 1956. Undoubtedly the young generation of Iran was very influential in the degree of people's political participation. These young people had some demands from the government which the government was not capable and willing to satisfy their demands.
2. Growth of Education level: in this era the number of educational centers including; high schools and universities, were increased and most of students were sent by government to abroad to pursue their education. Therefore in this era the number of under-graduate and graduates were considerable which was the source of intellectual and political changes in Iran.
3. Growth of Urbanism: immigration of villages to urban areas with implementation of Land Reform, led to growth of urbanism in the last 15 years of Pahlavi ruling in Iran. Due to immigration of villages to cities and urban areas, their awareness increased and consequently, they wanted, change in their present situation and enjoying better facilities.¹²

B. Islamic Republic of Iran Era

The social-political condition of the beginning of this era is concentrates more around the following events:

Change of political structure from monarchy to Republic, commencement of Iraq-Iran war (1981), Iraq's missile attacks to some of Iranian major cities, terrorist and violent attacks of oppositions, commencement of sanctions and economic siege of Iran by United states.

Which those were too many problems and difficulties in this era, people showed a good and active political participation. For instance the second presidential election was held in a condition where, 4 of Iran's provinces (Western Azerbaijan, Kourdestan, Kermanshah, Kuozestan) were directly in war with Iraq. One of these provinces was Azeri province of western Azerbaijan.

The important issue is that by the end of Iraq-Iran war in 1988 and since the sixth presidential election, the era of people's assessment and official's accountability begins and since that, we can observe the change in people's behavior in political participation particularly in electing the candidates.

Since this period (establishment and stability of political system), people are proposing political and new demands from Iranian government. Elections in different levels, including local or national elections are the best

opportunity for people to question and per suing their demands from the officials which is connected with the growth of awareness in people.

Factors contributing to the growth of people awareness in post Revolution era:

1. Population Growth: the average annual young population growth rate in Iran was 2.8% in this era, comparing to the average annual population of the country which was 2%, this rate is considered high. The young population in Iran (under 25) increased from 10.9 million in 1956(Pahlavi era) to 35.6 million in 1991.

2. Growth of urbanism: according to statistics in 1986 the proportion of people livening in urban area to total population was 54.3% and in 1996 it was 61.3%. The proportion of villages in 1986 was 45.2% and in 1996 it decreased to 38.3%. It is estimated that the proportion of people livening in urban areas will increase from 61.3% in 1995 to 72% in 2011 and to 74% in 2021.

3. Increase in Education level and growth of literacy rate.

4. Number and Varity of mass Medias:

Increase in the number and Varity of mass Media's communication devices inside the country and abroad and accessibility to internet and satellites is increasing in this era and deepens the people's awareness.

5. By increasing and spreading mass Medias, we witness an increase in the volume of commercial advertisement in these networks which is a intensifying factor of business-oriented thinking among people and consequently bring economic growth.¹³

The Participation of Azeri and Non- Azeri provinces in elections

Azerbaijan with the center to be Tabriz, throughout the history has been one of the major political, economical and cultural centers of Iran. This region has always been a guard to Iran's culture, civilization and territorial integrity and many times has stood up to fight and done sacrifices for the progress and honor of Iran. Because Azerbaijan throughout history and especially in contemporary times has played a significant role in forming Iran's history, we have decided to study the participation in elections of Azeris and Non-Azeri provinces.

In this essay, the study tries to investigate Azeris' participation in the elections in Azeri and Non-Azeri provinces.

Since the beginning of Islamic Revolution in Iran to the present (2011), there have been 10 presidential elections held in Iran since 1979. For analysis of ratio of vote of participation of the Azeri provinces and Non-Azeri provinces in election, the SPSS software (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) is utilized. The independent-samples t-test procedure compares means for two groups of cases. In the present study t-test was applied to find out the significant of difference between means between Azeri and Non-Azeri provinces. Following are the findings:

Table 2- and graph 1 presents the rate of participation of the Azeri provinces and Non-Azeri provinces in the 10 terms presidential elections:¹⁴

Azeri Provinces	Provinces	The election term and date	The percentage of participation										
			1 st term (25/1/1980)	2 nd term (23/7/1982)	3 rd term (31/8/1982)	4 th term (15/8/1986)	5 th term (27/7/1990)	6 th term (11/6/1994)	7 th term (24/5/1998)	8 th term (8/6/2002)	9 th term 1 st term (17/6/2006) 2 nd term (24/6/2006)	10 th term (12/6/2010)	
Azeri Provinces	East Azerbaijan		53.53	62.56	78.66	49.02	50.6	43.98	67.79	53.07	51.25	46.18	81.11
	West Azerbaijan		40.11	45.48	58.73	53.62	55.23	48.8	73.71	56.41	44.02	37.15	70.85
	Zanjan		73.79	81.22	89.38	62.47	60.43	54.48	93.79	68.87	65.25	61.03	92.65
	Ardebil*		-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	49.16	70.36	58	54.15	49	79.76
	Participation Average (Azeri Provinces)		55.81	63.20	75.59	55.03	55.42	49.10	76.41	59.08	53.66	48.34	81.09
	Non- Azeri provinces	Isfahan		81.27	79.69	83.5	56.24	52.44	42.06	77.55	60.84	58.26	59.60
Ilam			68.91	78.82	107.06	74.51	85.39	66.26	87.16	77.11	80.43	66.76	87.41
Boshehr			70.15	66.34	75.53	61.59	60.02	57.09	81.94	71.26	72.33	66.49	85.04
Tehran			76.53	59.65	64.4	48.2	49.5	47.26	82.04	68.06	63.48	65.20	85.50
Chahar Mahal and Bakhtiari			59.06	68.11	73.14	60.9	57.47	49.99	85.58	65.62	64.85	64.34	88.12
Southern Khorasan**			-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	78.59	71.88	86
Khorasan Razavi			66.45	68.91	74.17	55.65	51.98	51.03	83.15	75.66	70.99	63.99	92.88
North Khorasan**			-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	63.55	55.67	95.80
Khozestan			74.03	45.55	54.49	56.9	59.02	45.6	74.08	59.3	55.33	51.25	72.77
Semnan		80.12	83.26	87.37	68.59	66.96	64.55	88.48	78.04	73.48	74.22	87.81	

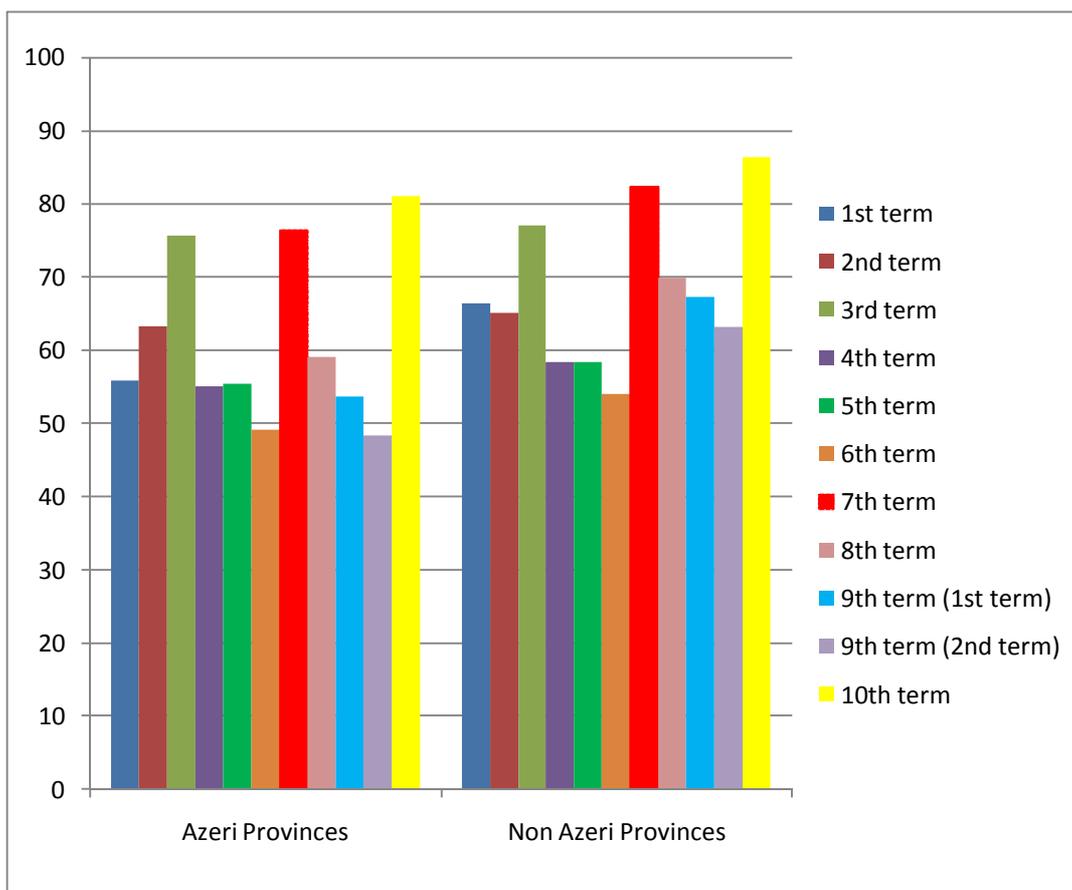
Sistan and Balochestan	34.39	29.8	47.6	31.92	38.68	42.87	65.28	70.13	74.44	63.76	75.22
Fars	73.51	71.4	87.56	55.15	54.07	55.32	80.27	68.06	61.36	58.28	88.77
Qazvin***	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	74.7	69.23	67.04	92.4
Qom***	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	88.51	76.99	77.01	77.27	91.13
Kordestan	12.83	43.72	48.46	51.57	58.68	54.96	79.04	53.45	37.37	24.96	64.71
Kerman	68.63	73.23	83.42	55.12	62.91	54.69	85.72	70.73	77.98	77.86	86.62
Kermanshah	54.37	53.99	62.21	45.94	53.2	52.57	75.15	63.6	55.38	51.20	86.19
Kohgiluyeh and Boir Ahmad	68.17	67.01	87.69	67.17	67.04	66.1	87.62	76.59	78.48	76.11	88.69
Golestan****	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	75.3	65.81	60.53	82.04
Gilan	60.63	62.68	64.41	43.62	52.41	45.07	69.48	65.12	58.40	58.52	94.11
Lorestan	72.66	80.35	116.54	69.36	62.92	64.88	106.45	65.04	67.17	60.41	85.71
Mazandaran	65.41	73.25	73.78	54.68	58.84	56.27	80.25	68.55	65.19	65.26	100
Markazi	88.4	56.53	100.49	96.1	60.71	52.36	79.62	63.92	62.09	60.63	88.75
Hormozgan	60.39	50.29	64	45.98	47.98	52.03	85.5	76.29	78.30	67.49	80.77
Hamedan	77.31	74.82	78.15	60.68	59.99	52.7	76.2	63.04	62.34	57.52	81.12
Yazd	80.98	79.99	83.14	66.42	66.1	60.21	93.4	89.16	76.02	75.49	100
Participation Average (Non- Azeri Provinces)	66.39	65.11	77.01	58.39	58.39	53.99	82.38	69.85	67.23	63.14	86.37

*The statistical about the percentage of participation brought in Eastern Azerbaijan paovince because Ardebil province has been founded in the year1993.

** The statistical about the percentage of participation brought in Khorasan Razavi paovince because Southern and Northern Khorasan provinces has been founded in the year 2005.

*** The statistical about the percentage of participation brought in Tehran paovince because Qazvin province has been founded in the year 1997 and Qom province has been founded in the year 1996.

**** The statistical about the percentage of participation brought in Mazandaran province because Golestan province has been founded in the year 1997.



Graph 1

Using SPSS software, the results obtained from participation of Azeri and Non-Azeri provinces in the presidential elections (10 terms) is presented in table 3.

Table 3- SPSS output – Independent sample t-test results for First term presidential election

		Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	N	Mean	t-test for Equality of Means			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)		
Participation percentage	Azari provinces	16.9554	9.7892	3	55.810	-.906	2.601	.441		
	Non-Azari provinces	16.8336	3.6734	21	66.390					
SPSS output – Independent sample t-test results for Second term presidential election										
		Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-test for Equality of Means			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
							t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	
Participation percentage	Azari provinces	17.69886	10.21844	3	63.2067		-.179	2.381	.872	
	Non-Azari provinces	14.17362	3.09294	21	65.1148					
SPSS output – Independent sample t-test results for third term presidential election										
		Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-test for Equality of Means			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
							t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	
Participation percentage	Azari provinces	15.55392	8.98006	3	75.5900		-.146	2.816	.893	
	Non-Azari provinces	17.87546	3.90075	21	77.0243					
SPSS output – Independent sample t-test results for fourth term presidential election										
		Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-test for Equality of Means			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
							t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	
Participation percentage	Azari provinces	6.83600	3.94676	3	55.0367		-.684	4.582	.527	
	Non-Azari provinces	13.23123	2.88729	21	58.3819					
SPSS output – Independent sample t-test results for fifth term presidential election										
		Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-test for Equality of Means			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
							t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	
Participation percentage	Azari provinces	3458.37796	1996.69545	3	2049.6100		.997	2.000	.424	
	Non-Azari provinces	9.28312	2.02574	21	58.3957					
SPSS output – Independent sample t-test results for sixth term presidential election										
		Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-test for Equality of Means			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
							t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	
Participation percentage	Azari provinces	4.29155	2.14578	4	49.1050		-2.515	7.558	.038	
	Non-Azari provinces	7.83272	1.70924	21	56.0057					
SPSS output – Independent sample t-test results for seventh term presidential election										
		Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-test for Equality of Means			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
							t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	
Participation percentage	Azari provinces	11.83584	5.91792	4	76.4125		-.965	3.588	.395	
	Non-Azari provinces	8.52781	1.81814	22	82.3850					
SPSS output – Independent sample t-test results for eighth term presidential election										
		Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-test for Equality of Means			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
							t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	
Participation percentage	Azari provinces	6.83762	3.41881	4	59.0875		-2.856	4.386	.041	
	Non-Azari provinces	7.72332	1.57652	24	69.8400					
SPSS output – Independent sample t-test results for ninth term(1st) presidential election										
		Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-test for Equality of Means			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
							t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	
Participation percentage	Azari provinces	8.81865	4.40932	4	53.6675		-2.702	4.260	.050	
	Non-Azari provinces	9.91193	1.94389	26	66.6877					
SPSS output – Independent sample t-test results for ninth term(2nd) presidential election										
		Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-test for Equality of Means			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
							t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	
Participation percentage	Azari provinces	9.85484	4.92742	4	48.3400		-2.758	4.193	.048	
	Non-Azari provinces	10.79764	2.11759	26	63.1319					
SPSS output – Independent sample t-test results for tenth term presidential election										
		Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-test for Equality of Means			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
							t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	
Participation percentage	Azari provinces	8.94912	4.47456	4	81.0925		-1.115	3.782	.331	
	Non-Azari provinces	8.02887	1.57459	26	86.3808					

Analysis and Conclusion

In order to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between the participation level of presidential election voters in Azeri and Non –Azeri provinces, the participation level of the two groups in 11 presidential elections (including one run-off) were compared using the independent sample t-test. Table 3 above contains the SPSS output for the eleven presidential elections. In the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, seventh and tenth presidential elections, the sig values were above the cut-off point of .05 which signified no statistically significant difference between the participation levels of voters in Azeri and Non-Azeri provinces. In the sixth, eighth, ninth as well as in the run-off election for the ninth term, the sig values were .038, .041, .050, .048 respectively which signify a statistically significant difference in the participation level of Azeri and Non-Azeri voters in the presidential elections. The smaller mean values of Azeri provinces combined with the sig values of the results show that Azeri voters' participation level was lower than that of the voters in Non-Azeri provinces. Based on the research analysis through SPSS software it is found out that there is a significant difference between electoral behavior of Azeri and Non-Azeri provinces in sixth, eighth and ninth presidential elections. Moreover comparative analysis of statistics reveal that, the ups and downs, decrease or increase of the Azeris participation in election have been in conformity with general electoral behavior of all country and the general social environment of the country. Therefore the decrease of Azeri provinces participation the sixth, eighth & ninth elections cannot be considered, affected by variable ethnicity and label this low participation as important. Because the Azeris participation in other elections (Islamic consultative Assembly or parliament, Islamic councils of cities and villages) and also tenth presidential elections shows an increase in their participation level. Therefore it is necessary to analyze the non-ethnic variables instead of emphasizing on ethnic variable as the main factor of decrease in Azeris participation in above mentioned 3 presidential elections.

According to the studies, it is found out that the main reason for Azeris electoral behavioral change in sixth, eighth and ninth presidential elections was the growth of people awareness which will be elaborated:

After the Iraq- Iran war in 1988 and since the sixth presidential election a change in electoral behavior of people can be observed in all over the country. In this election the level of Azeri provinces participation comparing to previous elections falls sharply.

The reasons of this change in electoral behavior and decrease in level of participation in the country as well as Azeri provinces include; increase in literacy and education level, growth and development of urbanism and mass media which entails public awareness in the society.

This issue, increased the mental and intellectual development as well as accountability seeking of people as well as Azeri people, in a way that, the explicit statement of people wants and performance assessment of the officials by people as well as Azeris can be mentioned as the research for this change in electoral behavior.

In fact, since this election the electoral behavior of people is changing from supportive and affirmative behavior and direct toward more conscious selection. In the other word we can conclude that there is a significant correlation between increase in education and literacy level of people and their use of mass communication Medias and their political participation. Researchers have been shown that with the increase in level of awareness there is a probability of decrease in level of political participation by means of election (especially voting). On the whole, the performance of officials can be assessed as one of the important variables which influence the electoral behavior and low participation of Azeris in this election.

It is shown that, by increasing the level of awareness, people get the opportunity to think about their present situation and in some instance, criticize the government.

As stated earlier, by overcoming the challenges regarding the stability of Islamic Republic of Iran regime, the Iranian society in the second & third decades of post Revolution, demand changes in political and social systems. Representation of such these demands could be seen in the pervasive participation of people in the seventh presidential election in 1998.

According to table 2, it is obvious that in the seventh presidential election considering the plans of winning candidate (Khatami) for enhancing the cultural situation and ethnicity demands of the people, there was a unique welcome to him in all over the country and Azeri provinces. This change of people's attitude cannot be assessed an emotional behavior, but it rooted in the level of such awareness which risen from people's social and political understanding.¹⁵

In 1997, we witnessed the highest rate of participation- more than 90% in the presidential elections but the ratio has gone down to below 50% in other elections. This shows that how the type of political behavior could help national solidarity while encountering with the ethnic groups.

After the seventh presidential election and in the eighth and ninth election, again we observed the change in electoral behavior of Azeris comparing to the previous elections specifically the seventh presidential election. The reason for this decrease in people's participation is related to aforementioned reasons (reasons related to decrease in people participation in sixth presidential election).

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