

Iranian Public Is Not Monolithic: Iranians Divide Over Their Government But Unite on Forgoing Nuclear Weapons

May 18, 2009

By Alvin Richman, David B. Nolle and Elaine El Assal

Introduction

Findings from an early 2008 World Public Opinion (WPO) survey in Iran¹ suggest that the Iranian public is far from monolithic in how it views important political and social issues that will likely play prominent roles affecting the outcome of the upcoming 2009 national elections. These findings also have considerable relevance for U.S. policy toward Iran during a period in which the U.S. government is exploring the possibility and usefulness of greater openness in its dealings with Iran.

Using a statistical clustering technique called Latent Class Analysis, we have identified three separate opinion groups within the Iranian public on the basis of their differing degrees of support of the Iranian government on three measures contained in the WPO survey.² All three measures, discussed below, tap the theoretical construct of “regime support.” We have found that the three public groups identified by using these “regime support” measures mirror the diversity of views among Iran’s political elites.

We are able to label these groups as Conservatives, Moderates and Reformers by examining the patterns of responses to these measures in each group and by borrowing from the research on factions among Iran’s political elites.³ In WPO’s January 2008 survey, we found that Conservatives comprised 45 percent of the total (N = approx. 319), compared to 24 percent for Moderates (N = approx. 168) and 18 percent for Reformers (N = approx. 124).⁴ The remaining 13 percent fell into a non-substantive, largely “no opinion” group (N = approx. 99). Demographically, Moderates and Reformers tend to be younger, better educated, have higher incomes, and live in larger urban areas than do Conservatives.

¹ This survey is based on personal interviews with a representative sample of 710 Iranians ages 16 and older, interviewed by a local professional research organization between January 13 - February 9, 2008. Additional details on the survey are available on the World Public Opinion website.

² Latent Class Analysis (LCA) segments the sample into relatively homogeneous groups based on respondents’ answers to three questions relating to “regime support”. Additional details on our analytical approach are contained in Appendix IIA, Obtaining the Basic LCA Results.

³ The labeling for each group is based on the response distributions within each group and the logic for our labels will become evident in our subsequent analyses in the main text. Our analytical discussion is focused on these three substantively important groups. A small fourth group (approximately 13% of the sample), characterized by scattered substantive responses and disproportionately high “Don’t Know” responses, is ignored in order to concentrate on the main features of the public’s political landscape. Although many researchers have written about the major political subdivisions or factions among the Iranian elites (see, for example, the works of Shahram Chubin, Akbar Ganji, and Sanam Vakil), comparable empirical analyses of the major political orientations in representative national samples of the Iranian public seem to be in short supply. Thus, our work aims to contribute to a better understanding of this aspect of the Iranian public.

⁴ Our analytical strategy depends on examining patterns in the data rather than on constructing tests of significance using margins of error. Thus, most of the tables in Appendix I contain multiple, consistent measures of the single concept being addressed. Obtaining useful approximations of the margins of error (i.e., sampling errors) for our analyses covering each of the three substantive groups is not a simple process, requiring consideration of the multi-stage nature of the sampling design, as well as the magnitudes of the percentages and numerical size of each group being examined. Nevertheless, some very tentative indications of the possible margins of error can be derived by using computations based on a simple random sample formula and increasing the results by a factor of 1.41 to estimate the effects of the complex sampling design. Applying this admittedly arbitrary approach, the following margins of error are offered as tentative suggestions for the maximum variability at the 95 percent confidence level: 7.7% for Conservatives; 10.7% for Moderates; and 12.4% for Reformers.

The three measures of “regime support” -- The three major substantive groups within Iran’s public are separated and defined by their sharp and consistent divergence on three WPO questions relating to support of the Iranian government (“regime support”): (1) Satisfaction with the Iranian election process, (2) support for a free press versus the government’s right to censor destabilizing news, and (3) trust in Iran’s national government. (See Table 1 in Appendix I for the exact wording of each of these questions.) On all three questions, support for the regime declines sharply and progressively from the highest regime support (Conservatives) to the least regime support (Reformers). For example, nearly all Conservatives (97%) trust the Iranian national government “most of the time,” most Moderates (85%) trust it “some of the time,” and most Reformers (64%) trust it “rarely” or “never.” (See Table 1A in Appendix I)

The three groups also differ in the assessment of the process by which authorities generally are elected in Iran: Most Conservatives (83%) and Moderates (70%) are satisfied with the Iranian election process, while most Reformers (74%) are clearly dissatisfied with it. This is an example of sharp divergence of Reformers from the majority views of Conservatives and Moderates (Table 1B).

The three groups also differ considerably in their preferences on having media freedom versus the government’s right to censor potentially destabilizing news. Conservatives favor the government’s right to censor (by a 67-17% majority); Moderates are closely divided (48% for the government’s right to censor vs. 39% for media freedom); and Reformists favor media freedom by a large 73-18 percent majority – a reversal of the preference shown by Conservatives (Table 1C).

These sharp differences in basic attitudinal orientation among the three groups may partly reflect their differences in age, education and income. Majorities of both Moderates (58%) and Reformers (55%) are between 18-29 years of age, compared to 36 percent of Conservatives who fall into this youngest age group. Also, two-thirds or more of Moderates (66%) and Reformers (71%) have completed high school, compared to half of the Conservatives. (See Table 2)

Additional issues on which these three distinct Iranian opinion groups diverge are discussed below. These include other questions relating to Iran’s domestic institutions (e.g., approval of President Ahmadinejad) and perceptions of the United States and the American people. Two cases of “partial divergence” will also be examined, in which two of the groups, Moderates and Reformers, share fairly similar views on an issue, but these views differ sharply from those of the third group, Conservatives. An example of “partial divergence” is satisfaction with Iran’s economy, in which a majority of Conservatives voice satisfaction while most Moderates and Reformers express dissatisfaction. Then a number of areas are examined in which the views of the three groups converge, including sizeable majority opposition within all groups to Iran developing nuclear weapons and predominant support within all groups to U.S.-Iranian governmental talks on a range of issues, including Iraq.

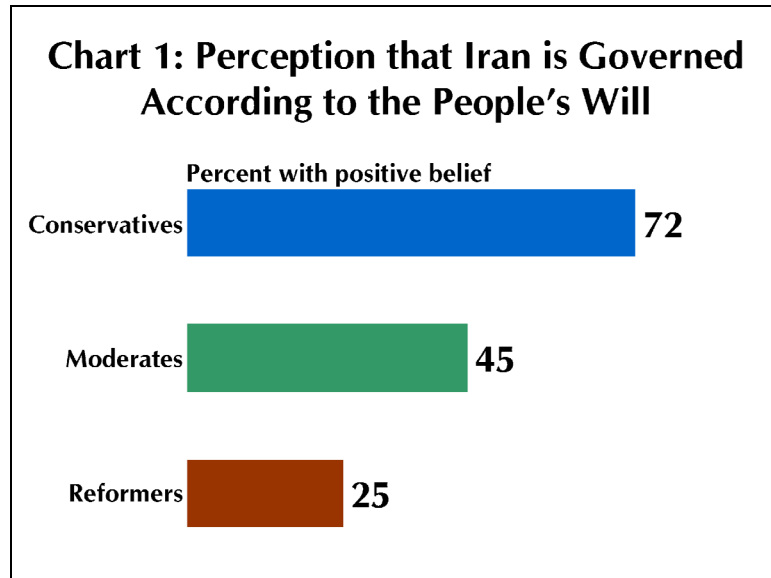
Divergent Views

Iranian President Ahmadinejad – The divergence among the three groups – Conservatives, Moderates and Reformers -- on rating Iran’s president is one of the largest in this study, approaching the differences found on the general measures of regime support discussed above. For example, 85 percent of Conservatives approved the way President Ahmadinejad was “handling his job,” compared to 60 percent of Moderates and 35 percent of Reformers. At the time of the WPO survey in early 2008 the number of Conservatives (45%) more than matched the number of Moderates and Reformers combined (42%). Thus, approval of President Ahmadinejad among the total Iranian public (66%) was heavily influenced by his very positive support among Conservatives.

The three groups diverge considerably also in gauging whether President Ahmadinejad has had a positive or negative impact on Iran’s overall security and its image abroad. In general, Iran’s president received positive ratings from about four-fifths of Conservatives, three-fifths of Moderates, and only one-third of Reformers. (Table 3A-B) These findings on public reactions to President Ahmadinejad are not surprising, because Iran’s president has been a key figure in articulating government policies. The divergence of views on Ahmadinejad among the three groups attests to the validity of the groups defined by the regime support typology presented in the introduction.

It is important to emphasize that these ratings of President Ahmadinejad were taken in early 2008 prior to the global economic crisis and the collapse of energy prices. We assume that the levels of support for the President have probably dropped substantially since then, but that the differences among the three groups have remained consistent. That is, Conservatives are most likely to support the President and Reformers are least likely to do so. The relative sizes of these opinion groups (Conservatives, Moderates and Reformers) also may vary over time and circumstances. However, our assumption is that the defining differences between these groups outlined in the introduction are likely to remain stable and to continue shaping attitudes regarding other important social and political issues in Iran.

Perceptions of popular rule in Iran – While large majorities in each group agree that “the will of the people” should be the basis of governance in Iran (see next section on Convergent Views and Tables 4A-B), the three groups diverge considerably in their perception of the extent to which Iran is actually governed according to this principle. Seventy-two percent of Conservatives credit Iran with a positive score between 6-10 on this 10-point scale, compared to 45 percent of Moderates and 25 percent of Reformers. Most Reformers (58%) give Iran a negative score between 0-4 on this scale, compared to 28 percent of Moderates and only 6 percent of Conservatives. (See Chart 1 below and Table 4C)



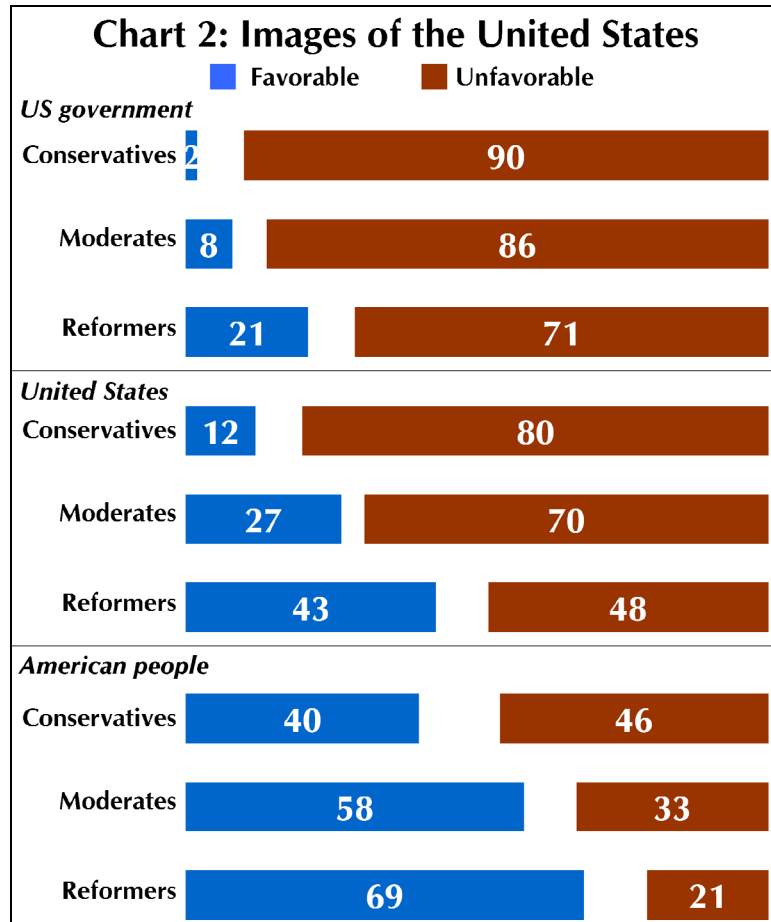
Role of Sharia in Iranian governance – Conservatives (42%) are more supportive than Moderates (30%) or Reformers (20%) of Sharia playing a larger role “in the way Iran is governed.” Conservatives are particularly distinct from the other two groups on handling citizens who stray from religious norms: a plurality of Conservatives (45%) believe the Iranian government should “punish an Iranian citizen who converts from Islam to a non-Muslim religion,” compared to two-thirds of Moderates and Reformers who oppose such punishment. (Table 5A-B)

Satisfaction with conditions at home and relations abroad – While the three groups diverge considerably in rating progress at home and abroad, all of them are more satisfied with Iran’s foreign relations and overall direction than with Iran’s economy. Consistent with the positive ratings they give President Ahmadinejad, about four-fifths of Conservatives believe things in Iran generally are going in the “right direction” and voice satisfaction with Iran’s foreign relations, compared to about three-fifths of Moderates who are positive on these two measures. In contrast, nearly three-fifths of Reformers believe Iran is heading in the “wrong direction” (57%) and are “dissatisfied” with Iran’s relations with other countries (57%). (Table 6A-B1) As noted earlier, conservatives are mainly satisfied with Iran’s economy, but most Moderates and Reformers are dissatisfied with it (Table 6B-2).

Images of the United States – The three groups differ considerably in their images of the United States, as well as their views of the U.S. government and the American people. Regarding the U.S. image, most Conservatives (80%) and Moderates (70%) have an unfavorable opinion, but Reformers are closely divided (43% positive vs. 48% negative). Concerning the American people, Conservatives are closely divided (40% favorable vs. 46% unfavorable), but positive views prevail among both Moderates (58% favorable) and particularly Reformers (69% favorable). In contrast, large majorities in each opinion group in 2008 viewed the U.S. government negatively – ranging from 90 percent unfavorable among Conservatives to 71 percent unfavorable among Reformers. (Table 7A-C)

These findings reveal that for each group opinions of the American people are much more positive than those of the U.S. government, with the overall U.S. image less positive than views of the American people but more positive than opinions of the U.S. government. In fact, the sharp distinctions all groups make between the American people and the U.S. government are appreciably greater than the differences between groups

themselves on either of these two images. For example, Reformers' views of the American people (69% favorable) are eleven percentage points more positive than Moderates' views of Americans (58%). But, these views were about 50 points more favorable than how Reformers and Moderates, respectively, viewed the U.S. government in power at the time of the survey in early 2008. (Table 7B-C)



Trade with the U.S. – Despite their predominantly negative images of the United States, all three groups mainly support “having greater trade” with the U.S. A small majority of Conservatives (53%) support increased trade with the U.S., compared to nearly four-fifths of Moderates (78%) and Reformers (79% -- Table 8). The considerable difference on this issue between Conservatives on the one hand and Moderates and Reformers on the other parallels to some extent the response pattern on dissatisfaction with Iran’s economy (Table 6B-2) Two-thirds of both Moderates and Reformers are dissatisfied with Iran’s economy, compared to one-third of Conservatives, and both Moderates and Reformers are much more supportive than Conservatives of increased trade with the U.S.⁵

⁵ A cross-tabulation of the responses of the three groups combined to these two questions shows that greater trade with the U.S. is favored by 76 percent of those dissatisfied with Iran’s economy, compared to 54 percent of those satisfied with the economy. Results from this and other cross-tabulations used in this report are based on actual counts of respondents rather than on estimates of probabilities derived from our analytical model relating regime support categories to various outcomes. Consequently, unlike our model estimates in Tables 1 to 12 in Appendix I, these actual counts are subject to misclassification errors (approximately 10%) arising from trying to place respondents uniquely into one of the original groups. (See the second section of Appendix II for more details.)

Convergent Views

Desire for popular rule in Iran – On two separate questions, large majorities of 70 percent or more in each opinion group believe “the will of the people” *should be* the basis of the authority of government in Iran (Tables 4A-B). This contrasts sharply with the pattern of responses described earlier on whether Iran is actually being governed according to the people’s will: Most Conservatives (72%) believe it is, most Reformers (58%) believe it is not, while Moderates take an intermediate position (45% is vs. 28% is not – Table 4C). Thus, the perceptions of Conservatives on how Iran is being governed (72% *people’s will*) are on the whole fairly consonant with their preferences on how Iran should be governed (81% *people’s will*). However, the degree of dissonance on these measures is considerable in the case of Moderates and especially Reformers: More than half of Reformers appear to have dissonant views on Iran’s system of governance (81% believe the “will of the people” should be the basis of government in Iran, while only 25 percent perceive it is), while about two-fifths of Moderates appear to be dissonant on these issues (86% vs. 45%). (Table 4B-C)⁶

Iran’s regional role – All three groups mainly support a *cooperative arrangement* with other countries regarding the Persian Gulf region, rather than a *dominant power* position for Iran. All three groups also mainly support Iran being part of a “cooperative arrangement with some neighboring countries” regarding Iraq, rather than having a “very strong influence” over Iraq. However, both the Iraq and Persian Gulf measures show up to one third of each group seeks a very strong or dominant position for Iran. (Table 9A-B)

Nuclear weapons – The Iranian public broadly agrees that their country should develop nuclear energy, but not nuclear weapons. There is hardly any difference between Conservatives, Moderates and Reformers on this issue. Only about one-fifth in each group said they believe Iran should develop nuclear weapons after being informed that Iran’s position was to have a full fuel cycle nuclear energy program without developing nuclear weapons (Table 10A). Also, slightly more than one-fourth in each group believed Iran should oppose a U.N. proposal permitting Iran to have a full fuel cycle nuclear energy program but requiring international inspections to prevent the program being used by Iran to develop nuclear weapons (Table 10B). On both questions sizable majorities in each group expressed opposition to Iran developing nuclear weapons. When the two questions are cross-tabulated, the number of Iranians who favor Iran having nuclear weapons on both questions (Table 10A-B) is just 10 percent. Moreover, the percentage of these consistent or “strong” nuclear weapons supporters is the same for Conservatives, Moderates and Reformers – about one-tenth in each group.

Perceptions of U.S. power, threat – The extent of U.S. power in world affairs impresses all Iranians. Three-fifths or more of each group believed that *nearly all* or *most* of “what happens in the world today is controlled by the United States” (Table 11A).⁷ A majority in each group also believed U.S. bases in the Middle East pose at least “some threat” to Iran (Table 11B). However, fewer in each group believed U.S. military action against Iran’s nuclear facilities was *likely* in the next year or two. Moderates (39% U.S. military action *likely*) and Reformers (41%) were more pessimistic on this score than Conservatives (28% -- Table 11C).

⁶ Analysis of the cross-tabulation between these two measures serves to highlight the increasing dissonance as one moves from consideration of Conservatives to Moderates to Reformers. Only five percent of the Conservatives believe that “the will of the people” should be the basis of government authority but believe this is not the reality in Iran. At the same time, 25 percent of Moderates fall into this analogous category and fully 60 percent of the Reformers experience this type of dissonance.

⁷ The U.S. public in early 2008 had a much more modest perception of U.S. international influence: One-third of Americans (32%) saw the U.S. in control of *nearly all* or *most* of what was happening in the world. (WPO/Knowledge Networks nationwide internet sample of 703, taken 1/18-1/27/2008)

Negotiations with the United States – All three groups mainly supported “direct talks” with the U.S. on “issues of mutual concern,” but support among Moderates and Reformers (about two-thirds) was greater than among Conservatives (50% vs. 30% opposed -- Table 12A).⁸ At least two-thirds of each group also approved talks with the U.S. specifically to try to “stabilize the situation in Iraq” (Table 12B). As noted in the section on Iran’s regional role, all three groups are more inclined to support a regional *cooperative arrangement* regarding Iraq rather than aiming for Iranian dominance over Iraq.

Support for negotiations with the U.S. on Iraq or other issues of mutual concern is closely linked to Iranians’ opinion of the United States. For the three groups combined, for example, about three-fourths (78%) of those having a positive opinion of the United States favor talks with the U.S. on matters of mutual concern, compared to about half (54%) among those having a negative opinion of the U.S. This pattern obtains for each of the groups.

On the overarching issue of whether Muslims can expect to find *common ground* with Western cultures, about two-thirds of each Iranian group believe it is possible to find *common ground* with Western cultures, compared to about one-tenth in each group who believe *violent conflict* between the two cultures is inevitable (Table 12C).

Conclusion

Our analyses show that Iranian society is politically divided and mirrors the diversity evident among its political elites. On some issues, such as nuclear weapons development, Conservatives, Moderates and Reformers agree. However, on some other issues, such as appraisal of political and economic conditions in Iran and views of the United States, the Iranian opinion groups diverge sharply.

Four sets of findings from the survey appear to be very relevant to prospects for improving U.S. relations with Iran and avoiding a military confrontation in the future. The first three have positive implications for U.S.-Iranian relations. First, all three Iranian groups mainly favor talks with the U.S. on “issues of mutual concern.” While support for this broad measure of negotiations was less among Conservatives (50%) than among Moderates and Reformers (majorities of two-thirds), at least two-thirds in all three groups approved talks with the U.S. specifically on “stabilizing the situation in Iraq.” Moreover, most Conservatives -- like most Moderates and Reformers -- believe it is possible to find “common ground” with the West.

Second, all three Iranian groups oppose developing nuclear weapons. Only one-in-ten Iranians in each group consistently supported developing nuclear weapons on two differently-worded questions posed by WPO on this subject. In general, Iranians give much higher priority to improving Iran’s economy and developing nuclear energy than to developing nuclear weapons.

Third, all Iranian groups are more inclined to support *cooperative arrangements* with other countries regarding Iraq and the Persian Gulf generally than to seek a *dominant power* position for Iran. Nevertheless, a minority of each group (up to one-third) favor Iranian dominance over the region.

Fourth, the set of findings offering perhaps the greatest challenge to improving relations with Iran were the negative views, particularly among Moderates and Conservatives, of the United States and the U.S.

⁸ On the U.S. 2008 survey, four-fifths (82%) of Americans favored such talks.

government. As noted earlier (see “Negotiations with the United States”), negative opinions of the United States adversely affect Iranians’ interest in negotiating with the U.S. Also noted was the sharp distinction each Iranian group made between its views of the American people (51% positive on average) and its views of the United States (71% negative on average) and “the current U.S. government” in power at the time of the survey (average of 85% negative). These sharp distinctions Iranians make in their views of different aspects of the U.S. suggest that Iranians’ highly negative views of the United States and its government are not necessarily immutable.

On the whole, these findings indicate that all Iranian opinion groups are receptive to talks with the U.S. on specific issues of mutual concern, such as Iraq, are willing to accept constraints against Iran developing nuclear weapons, and desire increased economic ties with the U.S. in order to improve their economy. Less clear is the extent to which Iranians can be persuaded to accept a less hostile view of U.S. policy and a major, cooperative player role for Iran in the Middle East.

Appendix I: Tables⁹

Table 1. Regime Support Typology

A. “How much of the time do you think you can trust the national government in Tehran to do what is right – most of the time, some of the time, rarely or never?”

B. “In general how satisfied are you with the process by which the authorities are elected in this country – very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied?”

C. “Which view is closer to yours? Do you think:”

(1) “The government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things that it thinks will be destabilizing.”

(2) “The press should have the right to publish news and ideas without any government control.”

	<i>Conservatives</i>	<i>Moderates</i>	<i>Reformers</i>
A. Trust Iran’s national government:			
Most of the time	97%	8%	13%
Some of the time	2	85	20
Rarely or never (combined)	0	6	64
Don’t know	0	0	3
B. <u>Satisfaction with Iran’s election process:</u>			
Very satisfied	31%	8%	2%
Somewhat satisfied	52	62	9
Not satisfied	11	29	74
Don’t know	6	2	15
C. Favor media censorship/freedom in Iran			
(1) Gov’t should have right to censor	67%	48%	18%
(2) Media should be free of gov’t control	17	39	73
Don’t know	16	14	8

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of the Three Opinion Groups

	<i>Conservatives</i>	<i>Moderates</i>	<i>Reformers</i>
<u>Gender:</u> Male/Female	55%/45%	51%/49%	49%/51%
<u>Age:</u> 18-29 years	36%	58%	55%
30-59	48	37	40
60+	14	4	4
<u>Education:</u> At least some college	19%	29%	33%
Completed high school	31	37	38
Less than high school	48	33	29
<u>Income:</u> High/Medium/Low	6/22/62	15/29/47	18/29/45
<u>Community size:</u> Large urban	40%	49%	48%
Medium or small urban	26	24	28
Rural	34	27	24

⁹ As noted in the Introduction, estimated base numbers for each table in Appendix I are 319 for Conservatives, 168 for Moderates and 124 for Reformers.

Table 3. Views of Iranian President Ahmadinejad

- A. "Do you approve or disapprove of the way President Ahmadinejad is handling his job as president?"
 B. "Do you think the way President Ahmadinejad has been traveling abroad and speaking about Iran's foreign policy has made the following mostly better or mostly worse?"

(1) "The overall security of Iran"; (2) "Other countries' views of Iran"

	<i>Conservatives</i>	<i>Moderates</i>	<i>Reformers</i>
A. Approve	85%	60%	35%
Disapprove	8	27	50
Don't know	7	12	16
B1. Iran's overall security: Better	83%	57%	31%
Worse	5	19	32
No difference (volunteered), Don't know	13	24	38
B2. Iran's image abroad: Better	78%	64%	37%
Worse	6	19	35
No difference (volunteered), Don't know	16	17	27

Table 4. Governance According to the "Will of the People": Iranian Preferences, Perceptions

A. "Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statement: The will of the people *should be* the basis of the authority of government?"

B. "How much do you think this country *should be* governed according to the will of the people? Please answer on a scale of 0-10 with 0 meaning 'not at all' and 10 meaning 'completely'."

C. "How much *is* this country governed according to the will of the people. Please answer on a scale of 0-10, with 0 meaning 'not at all' and 10 meaning 'completely'."

	<i>Conservatives</i>	<i>Moderates</i>	<i>Reformers</i>
A. Preference:			
Agree strongly	44%	41%	53%
Agree somewhat	26	38	20
Disagree	10	11	8
Don't know, no answer, other	20	10	19
B. Preference regarding popular rule:			
Favor (6-10 on scale)	81%	86%	81%
Neutral (scale position of 5)	6	6	7
Oppose (0-4 on scale)	5	6	7
Don't know	8	2	4
C. Perception regarding popular rule:			
Positive (6-10 on scale)	72%	45%	25%
Neutral (scale position of 5)	17	26	16
Negative (0-4 on scale)	6	28	58
Don't know	5	1	2

Table 5. Role of Sharia in Iranian Governance

A. "In the way Iran is governed, do you think that Sharia should play a larger role, a smaller role, or about the same role as it plays today?"

B. "Do you think that the government should or should not punish an Iranian citizen who converts from Islam to a non-Muslim religion?"

	<i>Conservatives</i>	<i>Moderates</i>	<i>Reformers</i>
A. Role of Sharia: Larger	42%	30%	20%
Same	44	48	46
Smaller	10	15	25
Don't know	5	6	9
B. Should punish	45%	23%	14%
Should not punish	39	65	66
Don't know, depends (volunteered)	15	12	19

Table 6 Satisfaction with Conditions at Home and Relations Abroad

A. "Generally speaking, do you think things in Iran today are going in the right direction, or do you think they are going in the wrong direction?"

B. "Please tell me if you are mostly satisfied or mostly dissatisfied with:"

(1) "Iran's relations with the world as a whole?"

(2) "Iran's economy?"

	<i>Conservatives</i>	<i>Moderates</i>	<i>Reformers</i>
A. Right direction	87%	57%	26%
Wrong direction	9	27	57
Don't know	4	16	17
B1. Satisfied with Iran's foreign relations	81%	60%	34%
Dissatisfied	12	35	57
Don't know	8	4	9
B2. Satisfied with Iran's economy	52%	21%	18%
Dissatisfied	32	66	69
Don't know	16	13	13

Table 7. Images of the United States

"Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of the following:" A "The United States;" B "The current U.S. government;" C "The American people"

	<i>Conservatives</i>	<i>Moderates</i>	<i>Reformers</i>
A. The United States:			
Favorable	12%	27%	43%
Unfavorable	80	70	48
Don't know	8	4	9
B. The current U.S. government:			
Favorable	2%	8%	21%

Unfavorable	90	86	71
Don't know	8	6	8
C. The American people:			
Favorable	40%	58%	69%
Unfavorable	46	33	21
Don't know	14	9	11

Table 8. Increased Trade with the United States

“Please tell me if you favor or oppose the U.S. and Iran doing each of the following:
“Having greater trade”

	<i>Conservatives</i>	<i>Moderates</i>	<i>Reformers</i>
Increase trade with U.S.:			
Favor	53%	78%	79%
Oppose	32	16	10
Don't know	15	6	12

Table 9. Iran's Regional Role

- A. “What role would you like to see Iran try to play in the Persian Gulf region?”
- (1) “For Iran to be the dominant power that exerts the most influence”
 - (2) “For Iran to be part of a cooperative arrangement in which it is one of many countries”
 - (3) “For Iran to go its own way and not try to influence other countries”
- B. “What role would you most like to see Iran try to play in Iraq?”
- (1) “For Iran to have a very strong influence over Iraq”
 - (2) “For Iran, Iraq, and some neighboring countries to be part of a cooperative arrangement with Iran having no special influence over Iraq”
 - (3) “For Iran to go its own way and not try to influence Iraq”

	<i>Conservatives</i>	<i>Moderates</i>	<i>Reformers</i>
A. Role in Persian Gulf: Dominant power	34%	26%	31%
Cooperative arrangement	49	53	40
Go own way	9	16	23
Don't know	8	5	7
B. Role in Iraq: Very strong influence	33%	20%	16%
Cooperative arrangement	44	56	42
Go own way	13	20	33
Don't know	10	5	9

Table 10. Nuclear Weapons

- A. “As you may know, Iran's position is that it should have a full fuel cycle nuclear energy program, but should not develop nuclear weapons. Do you ... “
- (1) “Approve of this policy”
 - (2) “Think Iran should not pursue a full fuel cycle nuclear energy program”
 - (3) “Think Iran should develop nuclear weapons”

B. “Suppose the U.N. Security Council were to say that it would accept Iran having a full fuel cycle nuclear program limited to the enrichment levels necessary for nuclear energy, if Iran agrees to allow the IAEA permanent and full access throughout Iran to ensure that its nuclear program is limited to energy production. Do you think Iran should or should not be willing to agree to this?”

	<i>Conservatives</i>	<i>Moderates</i>	<i>Reformers</i>
A. Iran’s position for nuclear energy, but not nuclear weapons:			
Reject nuclear weapons (responses #1 and 2)	71%	77%	71%
Develop nuclear weapons (response #3)	20	19	21
Don’t know, other	9	4	8
B. U.N. inspections to allow energy program, but not nuclear weapons:			
Favor	56%	63%	56%
Oppose	29	26	29
Don’t know	15	11	16

Table 11. Perception of U.S. Power, Threat

A. “How much of what happens in the world today would you say is controlled by the U.S. – nearly all most, some or very little?”

B. “How much, if at all, do you think U.S. bases in the Middle East are a threat to Iran – a major threat, some threat, a minor threat, or not at all a threat?”

C. “How likely do you think it is that the U.S. will take military action against Iran’s nuclear facilities in the next year or two – very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, or not at all likely?”

	<i>Conservatives</i>	<i>Moderates</i>	<i>Reformers</i>
A. U.S. control of world events:			
Nearly all	37%	34%	24%
Most	28	37	37
Some, Very little	25	27	33
Don’t know	10	3	6
B. Threat of U.S. Middle East bases:			
Major threat	32%	27 %	31%
Some threat	22	31	32
Minor threat, Not a threat	35	40	31
Don’t know	12	3	6
C. Likelihood of U.S. military action			
Very likely	6%	11%	14%
Somewhat likely	22	28	27
Not very likely	17	21	20
Not at all likely	44	31	26
Don’t know	10	9	12

Table 12. Negotiations with the United States

A. “Please tell me if you favor or oppose the U.S. and Iran doing each of the following.... For the governments to have direct talks on issues of mutual concern?”

B. “Do you approve or disapprove of Iran having talks with the U.S. on trying to stabilize the situation in Iraq?”

C. “Thinking about Muslim and Western cultures, do you think that violent conflict between them is inevitable, or that it is possible to find common ground?”

	<i>Conservatives</i>	<i>Moderates</i>	<i>Reformers</i>
A. Talks on issues of mutual concern:			
Favor	50%	65%	68%
Oppose	30	25	18
Don’t know	20	10	14
B. Talks on Iraq:			
Approve	68%	74%	67%
Disapprove	21	20	23
Don’t know	11	7	10
C. Muslim and Western cultures:			
Possible to find common ground	65%	69%	66%
Violent conflict inevitable	10	16	10
Don’t know	25	16	23

Appendix II: Methodology

A. Obtaining the Basic LCA Results

Our preliminary clustering solutions using LCA involved successive analyses of one through five groups using the three nominal-level variables on elections, governmental control of the media, and trust in the national government discussed in the text. After various statistical criteria regarding the adequacy of the different clustering solutions were carefully assessed, the four group solution was chosen for our final analyses. Because these four groups were statistically derived from the empirical interplay of the responses to our three questions, which always included the “Don’t Know’s” as legitimate responses, the relative sizes of the analytical groups and the response distributions within each group were jointly determined by the LCA statistical technique. The four group solution was a clearly acceptable fit between the statistical model and the data: The likelihood ratio chi-squared statistic had a value of 33.25 on 20 degrees of freedom which yielded a bootstrapped probability for the model of .1380 which did not fall below the rejection standard of .05. In addition, the index of dissimilarity between the model probabilities and the observed probabilities in a three-way tabulation of the three variables was only .055 which implied that only 5.5% of the respondents needed to be reassigned to a different response combination to get a perfect fit in theory between the model and the data. Because the model undergirding LCA takes into account the fact that respondents had varying probabilities of belonging to the different analytical groups identified in the analysis, there was no need to address the issue of misclassification errors created by trying to assign respondents uniquely to one of the analytical groups. Thus, the estimates of the response distributions in Tables 1 to 12 in Appendix I were not influenced by misclassification errors in the analytical groups. The software used to produce these analyses was Latent Gold 4.5 developed by J.K. Vermunt and J. Magidson for Statistical Innovations, Incorporated. Various chapters in Jacques A. Hagenars and Allan L. McCutcheon (editors), *Applied Latent Class Analysis*, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002 are an excellent introduction to LCA.

B. Assigning Respondents to Latent Classes for Use in Additional Crosstabular Analyses

Generating multi-way cross-tabulations within the framework of Latent Gold is a difficult process. Consequently, using Latent Gold to assign respondents to their latent classes and subsequently running multi-way tabulations within the framework of a statistical package such as SPSS is a reasonable alternative if the misclassification error in assigning respondents to their latent classes is relatively low, as it is in our case. Using only the modal posterior probabilities to assign respondents to each of the four groups yields misclassifications for approximately 10 percent of the respondents. Details on issues in assigning respondents to latent classes are described in Leo A. Goodman, “On the Assignment of Individuals to Latent Classes”, Pages 1-22 in *Sociological Methodology*, Volume 37, edited by Yu Xie. Boston, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.