

Electoral Ethics in Religious Democracy

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Abstract

In the religious democracy system, the election is the area of power generation and its continual. In the electoral realm, the people fulfill the democracy by choosing the rulers, and since Islam forms the essence and framework of people's movement and life, in Islamic democracy, the executives, candidates, and supervisors of election, people, and more than others, the electoral candidates must realize the Islamic ethical principles. Politics serves morality and religion in the religious democracy. The present article evaluated some of the coordinates and requirements of electoral ethics in the religious democracy system. Using a descriptive-analytical method, this essay described some basic principles of the electoral ethics charter, which should be considered by those involved in the election process, including voters, candidates, executives, supervisors and observers, and the media.

Keywords:

Democracy, Election, Electoral Ethics, Voters.

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Introduction

Elections are the most important area of people's sovereignty in democratic systems. Through this mechanism, the right to determine the fate and how to manage the country manifest in the form of electing the elites and rulers.

Elections are the most important area of determining contact and communication between people and democratic governments. In these systems, the generation of power comes from the ballot boxes and the words and opinions of people are revealed in their type of choice. Also, the people's base of an individual, a party, a group or a ruler is determined by the participation rate of people in the elections. The relationship between ethics and election is the relation between a value mechanism and determines the goodness and badness of thoughts and ideas with the behavior of the players in the electoral field. However, speaking of this relationship in advance requires the belief in the existence of a relationship between morality and politics. What is indisputable is the fact that even in non-religious systems, the politicians struggle to show themselves and their decisions and political conduct obliged to the ethics. Therefore, there is always a tendency or pretense or practical commitment to moral values in acquiring and retaining the power although in the actual scene, less day or week can be spent without hearing some news of moral corruptions and abuse of power among the politicians around the world. However, one cannot deny the fact that even if some systems have explicitly accepted the separation of religion from politics, in the meantime, the Islamic Revolution, which was a movement contrary to the dominant and ruling trend in the bipolar world of the 1970's that was influenced by the domination of liberal and Marxist thoughts, presented a new idea and an innovative solution in governing a nation based on religious teachings. The Islamic Republic of Iran is the only system and government emerging from a revolution among the revolutions of the present era, which legalized its establishment by the votes of the Iranian people only 50 days after the victory, and since then, elections in Iran have been repeated more than thirty times. The religious democracy, which is the model presented by a political system derived from the Islamic Revolution, although does not claim that it has reached its final form, but believes to be on the path, in which, Islam forms the framework of the democracy of the Iranian people. As Islam forms the framework of this democracy, the realization of the aspects of democracy, especially the elections, is expected to be both religious and ethical to

objectify the ethics more than material and secular political systems in acquiring and using the power.

Democracy refers to the participation and political competition of a number of groups and organized interests to capture the political power and administration of a country according to the needs of the policies and barriers of each of those groups (Bashirieh, 2003: 375). However, the emphasis on the role of political groups in this definition is somewhat different from the classical definition of democracy. In ancient Greek thought, including the Aristotle's, the governments were defined and divided into monarchy, aristocracy or oligarchy, and democracy. Democracy, however, is not just a form of government, but a way of life in the modern world. The essence of this approach and style of life can be found in the originality of human equality, individualism, principality of the law, the authenticity of the people's sovereignty, and the emphasis on the natural, civil, and political rights of humans. The originality of human equality implies that the individuals, groups, and classes of people have no superiority over each other in terms of the right to rule (Bashirieh, 2003: 243). A democratic position believes that the political decisions must be taken collectively and the collective decisions must, at least indirectly, be a function of the choices of individuals that are made from the competing choices (Levin, 2001: 24).

The importance of democracy today is not only as a form of government, but has increased to a level that the study of democracy is called the science of practical and institution politics and the science of the democracy system has established the identity (sameness) relation with the science of democracy policy (Bashirieh, 2003: 15). Even beyond the important role of this field of study in politics, nowadays, the theoretical issue of transition to democracy and its social contexts have turned into the most important subject in the sociology of the transition contexts to democracy (Bashirieh, 2008: 13). In addition, the transition to democracy in this minimum sense, nowadays contains all the meanings and processes described formerly in the concept and literature of political development. Consequently, we can reduce the concept of political development in its various dimensions to the concept of the transition to democracy. Such a special position for democracy can promote it in the three major fields of political science, from the establishment and practical foundations to the areas of political sociology and political development. However, there is no doubt that along with this role promotion, the plurality and variety of ideas and opinions in the field of democracy, both

in the area of methodology and in the establishment of the value will equally increase. Thus, regardless of the constant principles of democracy, the diversity in its forms and manifestations need to be accepted as a scientific fact in the field of politics. From this point of view, assuming what is recognized in some modern countries as “democracy” to be scientific, we cannot definitely accept it as important scientific principles. At the very least, based on what is happening in the scene of action and the outside world in those countries, which are considered “politically developed” in today’s literature, we can provide strong signs and solid evidence that in the field of practical politics or political development at the level of the international system, the propositions related to the theoretical political science and the political development at the national level of many developed countries cannot be generalized in the field of international politics and global political development. Moreover, in spite of globalization of some important aspects of democracy, one can say that the political development has not been much realized at the international system level. Although the existence of this gap and conflict cannot invalidate many of the indicators and standards of democracy in the dimension of the practical politics by itself, but cannot imply either that we can reduce the indices of democracy, namely, the “science of political development and the science of practical politics” necessarily and exclusively to a few countries with the attitude of liberal democracy or, in general, the secular democracies and speak of the refusal of democracy in religious communities in advance. In the appearance and formal democracy dimensions in the nature of institutions such as elections, the elite rotation, the growth of human rights indices, and the determination of political power by the people, we cannot consider the manifestation of democracy identically in all societies. But, on the other hand, new insights of the internal means and mechanisms in the religious democratic system can be achieved, which can be largely secured to the gaps and conflicts mentioned in the democratic practical scene and pursue dimensions beyond the political development in the religious societies. Such an attribute in the attitude toward politics and power in the religious democracy as well as the necessity of observing ethical principles and rules reveal themselves more clearly. That is, the acceptance of religion in the framework of democracy by the majority of citizens confirms the fact that such an acceptance even has been formerly associated with its means and formal and structural implications. Accordingly, by accepting religion as the spirit and framework of democracy, the attitude of power essentially varies

and is defined along the origin of the principle of power and sovereignty, i.e., the God. From this perspective, the sources and means of power are not merely secular and worldly regarding the source to be reduced to the personality of the ownership and organization, but, the power becomes meaningful along with and not parallel to the divine sovereignty. Exercising power, with the exception of religious restrictions and considerations, is based on religious ethics. This provides an executive guarantee that the political corruption and abuse of power, which is inevitably diminished as a social anomaly in the non-religious political systems, will be promoted to sin. This indicates that the religious democracy capacities in its desired and demanded form, and not essentially its realized and manifested external form, are abundant in order to establish a relationship with democracy. However, in this connection, some aspects of democracy in its customary and non-traditional forms are certainly limited; but these limitations are not as such to speak of the prohibition of religious democracy realization.

Theories of the relationship between ethics and politics

Different relations have been defined regarding the relationship between ethics and politics. Some have used the rational relations of contradiction, equality, absolute generality and specialty, etc. to explain this relationship and considered this relationship to be absolutely general or specific, i.e., the ethics are general, and politics are part of it since ethics affects both personal and social affairs, and politics deals only with social affairs. Regarding this relation, these two are not contradiction, equality, or relatively general and special since an optimal politics cannot be imagined without ethics (Shariatmadar, 2004: 4).

Another theory establishes a mutual, interactive, and necessary and needed relationship between politics and ethics. In this attitude, the absolute ethics and the absolute politics are linked and the ethics forms the framework of the political system structure and the intra-structure of the politics. Thus, in this view, there is an accurate interactive relationship between the ethics and politics, that is, the mutual interaction (Sadra, 2004: 22-21). The theory of separation of ethics from politics considers differences between ethical rules and policy requirements, based on which, political action can be taken based on the facts and by considering the interests and affairs. Machiavelli describes this doctrine more explicitly. In this view, engaging in politics requires to abandon some ethical principles. Another view is the theory of ethics adherence to politics, which is largely a Marxism-Leninism approach, which

sees the history as nothing but a class struggle arena where ethics is considered a superstructure on the production method. According to this doctrine, ethics and other social manifestations unconditionally follow the politics and revolutionary practice and take their value from them. Another view is a two-layer theory, which tries to maintain ethical values and include some ethical principles in the politics. According to this view, ethics should be studied at two individual and social levels. Although these two levels share some common grounds, but what is ethical at the individual level cannot be necessarily considered ethical at the social level. In this theory, man as a person is subject to an ethical system, while the community has another moral system (Eslami, 2002: 196). Another theory is the unity of ethics and politics. According to this theory, the politics ethics is individual and the ethical politics is collective. Both ethics and politics are the branches of practical wisdom and seek to secure human salvation and happiness. In this view, the moral development of citizens is included in the politics (Eslami, 2004: 141-156).

Ethics and politics in the religious democracy system

Regarding the ratios and relationships that can be defined between ethics and politics in the system of religious rule, in general, and religious democracy in particular, we can say the religious democratic system pursues to make the scene of politics ethical, and due to the definition of religion presented in the religious democracy system that focuses on the divine and not secular ethics, one can say that moralization of political life in the religious democracy system in the light of the teachings of revelation, the political ethics of the infallibles as well as moral advices follows the realization of aspirations, goals, and the ultimate objectives of ethical life more perfectly and promotes it as a mere factor of social solidarity and preventing the society from collapse into the most important philosophy of the prophets' revelation. As the Holy Prophet, Mohammad (PBUH) says: "I was sent to perfect honorable morals" (Nahj-al Feṣāḥa, Bitā: 365). The blending of morality and politics can be also seen in Imam Ali (AS) practical politics method and ideas when they usurped the right of the caliphate from him, he kept silent to prevent the bleeding and controversy.

"I thought in my work; I saw that before become the caliphate, I have promised to obey and follow the order of the Messenger of Allah, who swore allegiance form me for another" (Nahj al-Balagha, Discourse 27). According

to Imam Ali (AS), ruling is merely an instrument for the implementation of divine laws, not the purpose and the ultimate.

“My God, you know that our war and conflict was not to gain the power and rule of the world and wealth. Instead, we wanted to bring the signs of your right and religion back to their place bring reformation and correction in your lands so that your oppressed servants will live safely and your forgotten laws and regulations will be enforced again”.

According to Imam Ali (AS), it is not permissible to achieve victory through illegitimate ways and we cannot go on the path of sin in order to succeed: “The one who was captured by sin did not win, and he who gained the victory with evil has failed” (Nahj al-Balagha).

According to Imam Ali (AS), deception and deceit in politics are disgraces. “Swear to God, Muawiyah is not cleverer than me, but resorts to ruse, deception and faajir.”

Thus, from the viewpoint of the Imam, there is no distinction between politics and ethics, and in this religion, the use of any method is not prescribed to achieve victory. Hence, one can say that religious democracy not only does not make distinction between ethics and politics in the ethical attitude, but also puts the politics, government, and the religion in the direction of strengthening the moral goodness. Sources of value and ethical virtues are not only found in the worldly and manly custom and rationalism but also in the divine teachings. Since God knows the human needs and perfections, the valuing and ethical institutions and system derived from Islam more elaborately ensure the bond between individual and social life with morality even in comparison with the ethical theory of other divine religions lacking the Sharia. From this perspective, ethics is not diminished to the individual or social dimensions; but it covers all aspects of the human life, and even the beliefs and motives and its ultimate goal is to secure the happiness and salvation of the realm of the world and the hereafter of human beings. From such a point of view, politics and government in Islam seek to moralize the realm of elections.

Elections and religious democracy

The importance of elections in religious democracy form in the perspective of the Supreme Leader, as the theorist of the religious democracy, seems to touch a level that one can say that the elections is the central slab of the religious democracy discourse, which is objectified directly or indirectly in selecting the authorities. The proof of this claim is the fact that in speaking of religious

democracy, the “election” has been introduced as the most important witness and reason for realizing this truth in Islamic Iran:

“One of the examples of the greatness of this system is the elections process. For the same reason, the enemies deny the election of the Iranian people, this clear phenomenon. They deny the democracy, such an obvious thing, which of course is chosen by the people; since they know that, this is one of the important indicators of the victory of the Iranian people (09.01.2008; Leader.ir).”

“Man sorrows that some people speak in a way for political considerations – party considerations that it seems there is no democracy in this country. There is no democracy. This is unfair. For twenty-eight years, this nation has on average an election each year (02,01.2008; Leader.ir).”

“The Iranian people, with self-confidence, founded this blessed basis by themselves. They succeeded to create religious democracy with a new and unprecedented method; the religious democracy. The democracies are in a framework all over the world ... We chose Islam to be this framework because the people of Iran are Muslims. Because the people of Iran are believers. This turned to be religious democracy. Islamic democracy (02,01.2008; Leader.ir).”

However, despite the importance of elections in religious democracy, we can say that religious democracy is not limited to elections and does not appear only in the dimension of the system establishment and political institutions of the religious democratic system. In the analytical dimension, a kind of spiritual connection has occurred between the established political system and people in the religious democratic system so that the people see the executives and the ruling system as the realization of their demands, ideals, and great goals and love them, and it's a matter of people's faith (Ettelaat Newspaper, 16.08.2000). Only in such a case, a solid relationship emerges between the government and the people, in which, the Islamic system not only relies on the people's votes, but additionally, is liked by them and a source of reassurance for them. The sum of these two is the obvious feature of religious democracy so that it can be used as an effective criterion to differentiate religious democracy and democracy (Fayyaz, 2006: 3). This two-dimensionality of religious democracy has appeared in the words of the leader of the revolution as follows:

Religious democracy has two aspects; one is the role of people in government and selecting the authorities, and the other aspect is resolving the people's

problems. Accordingly, the authorities should actively pursue and address the people's problems (Islamic Republic Newspaper, December 2000).

Here, the elections show the effectiveness dimension of the democratic system as an important objective aspect of religious democracy and its dynamism dimension. In this sense, the elections in the establishment dimension and the effectiveness in the dynamism dimension objectify the religious democracy.

The election ethics of the elements and players of the elections arena in the religious democracy

If we consider the elements forming the election as electoral laws, voters and supporters of candidates, the candidates for government responsibilities, executive and supervisory agents, and the media, the electoral ethics in the democratic system can be identified in each section:

Election laws

Today, in democratic systems, the electoral law is considered the most important law after the constitution, since the mechanism for selecting elections and the implementation of democracy is achieved through this way. The issue that how much ethics is involved at the reference of making the law, the provisions of the law, and the ruling spirit, and the process of its legislation and implementation plays an important role in the election moralization. One can say a law is ethical that is drafted by an impartial reference, with mastery of the constitution and without any benefit for its legislators while health and accuracy are made in its enactment along with giving importance to keep the votes of the people as a trust associated with the freedom to choose. On the other hand, if the reference legislators pay attention to profitable aspects of the enacting law more than considering the Islamic religious interests, the principles and spirit governing the constitution, the freedom to choose, and the right of sovereignty and the right to choose and to be chosen, and pass the law in such a way that a higher number of rivals will be pulled off from the scene, an unethical law will be resulted. In the religious democracy, where power has no intrinsic authenticity and is a means for serving the people, realizing the divine values, meeting the needs of the society, and moving towards the salvation of the people's religion and world, it should not serve the goals and interests of a particular group.

Hence, in a religious democracy system, if the electoral law legislators have already voted in violation of these Islamic principles and provide the conditions for choosing the individuals who do not believe in religious

democracy, or basically believe in the democracy minus religion or theocracy minus people, they have not laid down a moral code. In addition, the principle to close all the ways for the rivals to enter the electoral arena and reducing the people's right of freedom of choice, is not acceptable especially when it is without religious and juridical considerations. However, a law that allows the participation and entering the convicted individuals with a history of opposition to the basis of religious democracy or with a history of debauchery to the election process will not be ethical either. Another point to be observed in the electoral law and the mechanism for determining the electoral constituencies is the justice in the distribution of seats and the proportion of geographical demographic indicators with the number of representatives of a constituency. Malapportionment is a term that is used for this purpose. In this case, the specific arrangements of the electoral districts can be imagined, which would discriminate against a specific spectrum of voters. In such a case, the determination of the geography of the voting is done aimed at determining the desired outcome (Taylor and Johnston, 2007: 268). However, this situation occurs more in the proportional electoral systems.

The electoral law in the religious democracy system should have the following characteristics:

1. The spirit and essence of the religious democracy should be seen in all its components and contents.
2. It should assume the principle of freedom to choose and to be chosen unless for the people that are excluded from inclusion in accordance with accepted standards.
3. It should use the maximum required mechanism for the health, accuracy, and security of the election.
4. It should consider the principle of impartiality in designing the conditions for nomination in the elections and electoral advertising.
5. The electoral law legislators should not be beneficiary in the election, and the electoral authorities and executive must act impartially in the election scene.
6. It should have predicted the conditions for acquiring responsibility in the religious system as much as possible.
7. It should enjoy sufficient performance bond and has not conceded its performance bond merely due to internal piety or the internal supervision of the people in the electoral process; but it should open the way for increasing

the health of the election with clear criminality of electoral violations and distortions.

8. It needs to have necessary transparency and clarity and criminalize the violations of legal, religious, and ethical principles and have specified the way of dealing with and punishing the violators.

9. Since the goal of the periodical election is to choose the most competent individuals at each stage, it should have predicted enough opportunity to the identification and recognition of the election candidates.

10. It should design the electoral mechanism in such a way that the announced winner of the election would have the necessary people's votes. Reducing the minimum votes needed to choose will undermine the popular support of the elected person.

11. The election law should be free of ambiguities and silence and must have resolved the problem of overcoming legal vacuum. A law that is not comprehensive and allows executors to make exhaustive and exaggerated interpretations provides the opportunity for the involvement of specific tastes and interests in the conduct of the elections.

12. Since the religious democracy is contrary to the rule of force, money, and dissimulation and differs from one-day democracies in the capitalist systems, the electoral law in the religious democratic system should already block the path of using the power of money in the election process. However, the overreaction in this matter can make it hard for voters to identify the candidates.

13. The electoral law must be as such that sufficient candidates would finally be present in the election area and distinguishes it from appointments.

14. The fair sharing of electoral seats in the parliamentary elections as well as providing the maximum possible exercise of the voting rights for the citizens far away from the country in the elections that the whole country is a constituency, such the Presidential elections.

Electoral ethics of the electoral candidates

In Islam, the guardianship of the society belongs to God. No man has this right to take the responsibility of managing other people's affairs. This right specifically belongs to Allah the Almighty who is the creator, the origin, aware of the interests, and the owner of humans' affairs, but also the owner of the affairs of all particles of the universe of existence. The Almighty God exercises this guardianship and sovereignty from certain ways; i.e., when the Islamic ruler is elected either based on the determination of a person – as it

was realized according to our belief about Imam Ali and Imams (AS) – or based on the criteria and regulations, when he is given the authority to govern the affairs of the people, again such a ruling and guardianship still belongs to God. The one who takes charge of this guardianship from God should fulfil and show at least a weak example and a beam or shadow of that divine guardianship. The person or the system that takes the responsibility of managing the affairs of the people must be the manifestation of divine power, justice, mercy, and wisdom. This is the distinguishing feature between the Islamic community and all other societies that are governed in other ways. The secret of Imam's infallibility in the ultimate, main, and optimal form in Islam is the absence of any possibility of violation and infringement. Where there is not infallibility and seems impossible, the religion, piety and justice should govern the people. The event of Ghadir Khumm refers to the choice of science, virtue, jihad, piety, and sacrifice in the path to God and overtaking in faith and Islam and the reliance on these in identifying and assigning the society management (Hadith of Velayat, vol. 5: 25-27).

Accepting responsibilities and taking positions in the Islamic system requires specific qualifications and conditions. Obviously, the embodiment of Islam and religion in the personality, actions, words, speeches, and the beliefs of the person who wants to take the responsibility of the fate of the society or a part of its basic affairs is considered as the first feature of electoral candidates in the religious democracy system.

Imam Khomeini (Pbuh), in his recommendation to the people about the features of the president, says:

You pay attention and choose whoever is more committed to Islam, has good records and is bound to neither the East nor the West, neither westernized nor easternized, is Muslim, follows the rules of Islam and be nationalist, be sympathetic to the nation, be a servant to the nation, whose records are good, has never joined the former regime and do not have connections with the aliens, the one who is of yourself and be for yourself (Imam Sahifah, Volume 11: 484).

It is assumed that those who want to take responsibility in the religious democracy system look at formal positions and offices as an area of service and responsibility. Obviously, using any means to achieve this goal is not legitimate. Therefore, we cannot say that as the purpose is to serve Muslims, then, we can use any way to achieve this great goal. A position that is obtained through illegitimate means is certainly usurpation, and thus, all the decisions

and exploits of the occupier of that office will be tainted. In the religious democracy, power is valued in the direction of serving and it has not inherent originality. However, it is a matter of dispute that whether electoral campaign should be made to get hold of power in the elections, and whether, essentially, it is ethical to call this arena a fight or not. Some people believe that trying to build power is not ethical even in a democratic religious system and the individuals should not want or ask themselves to take a position. Others also believe that this process is necessary for democracy and see the efforts to obtain power through legitimate means in the religious democracy system and its use in a legitimate way free of fault. Paying attention to the words of Imam Khomeini (Pbuh) reveals that he did not allow and like the queues leading to controversies in the first years of the victory of the revolution to avoid political conflicts:

As from now, do not allow the formation of fronts; a party on one side and another party on the other, and do the same things that were done in the former parliaments with the same quarrels and conflicts that were dragging themselves and the nation to the decadence (25.05.1980) Sahifah Imam, Volume 12: 346).

But in the next years, following the emergence of movements that were far from the foundation of revolution and Islamic thought, he accepted the existence of thoughts within the framework of Islam, provided that they are not divisive. Meanwhile accepting various tastes, Imam says:

We should not contaminate the purity of action and our Islamic community with the rust of resentments and disagreements and the past electoral competitions should never lead to division and separation (28.05.1988) Sahifah Imam, (vol. 21: 51).

The candidates can also express their competencies and positive points through giving lectures, advertising in newspapers, announcements, and posters; however, they legally and morally have not the right to defame and destroy the character and personality of their competitors since insulting to the believer is forbidden and not appropriate for the officials of the regime. Imam Khomeini comments on the election advertising:

No official, party, group or individual has the right to insult others who oppose their views or, God forbid, disclose something about them. I expect the candidates and their friends to observe Islamic and human morals. They should avoid any criticism of the other party that may cause disparity and desecration, which is to advance the purpose, even the Islamic ones, doing

something contrary to ethical principles is forbidden and is based on non-Islamic motives (Amini, Dec. 12, 2006).

However, the election ethics of the electoral candidates can be examined in the stages before, during, and after the elections. Naturally the election requires the voters' knowledge and recognition of the candidates. Thus, due to the constraints commonly found in the official propaganda campaigns, generally speaking, the potential candidates (legally) begin to introduce themselves indirectly to people long before by attending the assemblies, organizations, and meetings. This raises doubts that some may introduce themselves by using the public facilities and different opportunities that might be supposed to be unethical. The leader of the revolution sees these efforts as harmful:

The election issues, especially the passionate presence of the people in it, are very important in the very near period of the election; but some have rushed to start the electoral debates from now. These early electoral activities distort the minds of the main issues, engaging people in one another, and causes some defamation, which are contrary to the interests of the country (30.10.1999, [Http://www.leader. ir/](http://www.leader.ir/)).

Therefore, the ethical nature of the motives and intentions of the electoral candidates in the religious democracy system actually pursue the efforts, to serve, solving the problems of people, strengthening religion and the components of the religious system, repelling the sedition and the dangers and threats of enemies, promoting religious culture, strengthening the economy and security of the people, and, in general, strengthening the state-nation pillars and responding to the right demands of people and the voters. The second point is the proportion between the goodwill of individuals with the good conduct, behavior, diligence, and the competence of individuals. It is not like that a person merely by a personal decision-making with a sense of duty claims to become a candidate in the election arena, while the set of his characteristics, experiences, and conditions does not indicate that he would be successful and efficient in such a responsibility. It is a big mistake to believe that the field of service and responsibility in the religious democracy system is the realm of trial and error since these responsibilities are trusted by the people and the religious system. Losing better opportunities to serve the people by the incompetent occupying some posts and positions is far from the virtues of the religious system. In the electoral process, acceptance of the election results and not trying to influence the electoral process executives as

well as the attitude to the election principle as a means of doing the duty and responsibility is an appropriate view. In contrast, rejecting the election results, hostility and enmity to the organizers of elections or people because of not voting to the candidate are unethical. The realization of a goal that seem difficult even in the religious democratic systems is the acceptance of this command of the leaders of religion, the statement of an infallible as follows: If anyone get to a position and responsibility in the religious system and knows that there is someone better and more competent than him who can take that position, if he stays in his post, he has betrayed the system. Indeed, doing so seems to be difficult, which shows a far-reaching horizon for realizing Islamism and the ethics of the election. However, in reality, in the religious democracy system, positions and responsibilities are great treasures that are less sufficiently considered appropriately in the scene of action.

The election ethics of voters

In the religious democracy, the positions and responsibilities are trusts. The Lord says:

God commands you to give the trusts to the right people.

Allameh Tabataba'i in *Al-Mizan* has inferred the need to entrust all trusts to the right people from this verse (Allameh Tabataba'i, 1997: 552).

The requirement to entrust someone with the trusting things is to recognize the right ones; hence, the voting ethics in the religious democracy system requires making efforts and research to know the right people of faith for giving them the trust. However, such a recognition can be done through consultation with trusted individuals or a close question and answer process with the candidate. This task has become nowadays somehow easier with the strengthening of the media, and especially, the role of institutions and organizations that test and evaluate the individuals over a long period of time and measure the capabilities and abilities, the level of competence, integrity, and efficiency of the candidates to enter into the electoral arena. However, there's no doubt that the fittest people are not included necessarily in the lists provided by the associations to take part in the elections, and sometimes, a desired righteous will be preferred to the less acceptable more righteous one. Anyway, whatever means helping the voter to find out who is the better choice among the candidates would be efficient and useful. Another point is that, apart from selecting an optimal candidate, the principle of participating in the election scene to confirm and strengthen the religious democratic system is somehow a religious and political obligation and goes beyond an ethical

proposition. Therefore, in the Islamic democracy system, which seeks to link politics and Islam, paying attention to the indicators of political ethics is of even greater importance. Islam is seeking ethical politics and this is also important at the level of voters. The approach to the principle of elections and the necessity to participate in it as a religious duty and task poses a heavy responsibility on the people. Imam Khomeini says:

It is a task obliged to everyone in the nation, either woman or man, and those who have reached the legal age, to go to the ballot boxes to elect the president and vote. If you fail to do so, those who want to destroy this country may win. All of you, all of us, male and female, as we pray, should also determine own destiny (Sahifeh-ye Imam, Volume 15: 28).

In addition, considering the virtue and moral competencies and qualifications virtues of the candidates is of great significance. During the election campaign, the voter must monitor the behavior of the candidates and their close relatives to see that if someone who has not reached the realm of power will use legitimate means to achieve the purpose or resort to whatever means, even illegitimate. The other thing is to avoid interfering ethnic, tribal, and clan considerations in the elections. The people of trust to accept the responsibilities of the religious democratic system are those who benefit from necessary criteria to take the responsibility. However, it's natural that these people know their relatives and close ones better than others. But this affiliation alone does not mean to make it a principle in voting.

Discovering the truth and recognizing the more competent person among the candidates is not always easy in the religious democracy system. Many different people may have different abilities and competencies. But it is worth noting that the voter should not vote for a person with lower qualifications assuming that a competent and deserving person that he has found out to be qualified to take the position of office, but voting for him may be wasted because he is not well-known enough. Such a behavior does not seem to be ethical in the religious democracy system. However, when it comes to selecting among individuals with relative qualifications, it is natural to introduce a new definition of both the duty and the candidate's competency. In any case, not only the recognition of a competent nominee is an ethical and religious behavior in the election arena, but also, trying to identify a competent person is a kind of enjoining good. If participating in the elections and voting is a national and legal duty, we need to know the best one and make a positive

vote for him with research and curiosity. Putting a white or a waste vote in the box is a defeat of opportunity and does not fulfil the duty (Amini, *ibid*).

Electoral ethics of the election executives and supervisors

The behavior of election executives and supervisors depends to a large extent on the election law. The more the law has clarified the limits of the duties, responsibilities, and powers of the election executives and observers and has blocked the involvement of non-relevant agents in the election, the more likely the formation of electoral behavior of the executive and supervisory authorities of the election will be. In the stage of addressing the competency of candidates, the electoral authorities are responsible to use the most precautions and efforts to realize the characteristics and attributes imposed by the legislator with the candidates so that no right will be violated for them for volunteering. Siding of electoral candidates or being or influenced by them and fear will surely put the electorate on the verge of violations of the ethics of the election. Obviously, the election administrators must also have good repute, commitment, and practical obligation to Islamic commandments and measures and do not sacrifice their hereafter for the world of others.

In the religious democracy system, the election executive has one vote as others, but he does not interfere what is in his mind or what he writes with his duty and hold the elections without regard to the election results. Making the maximum effort to ensure the health and accuracy of the election and its security is one of the other ethical responsibilities of the electoral process executives. The process of holding elections, the order governing it and the ease and convenience and the accuracy of taking people's votes in the religious democracy system are highly valuable. Naturally, making further efforts in this regard will improve the electoral ethics. The election observers should also be vigilant to hold elections as good as possible. The electoral arena can lead to a path of power of those who have nothing to do with the religious democracy. Therefore, the election supervisors must make their best efforts so that the people's votes as bonds in their hands will not be void as much as possible since the abrogation of the correct and legitimate votes of the people will undermine the religious democracy. Monitoring the propaganda of candidates and seriousness in dealing with people who do not follow the law in this area are required by the relevant supervisors and judicial authorities.

Conclusion

In the religious democracy system, the election is the area of power generation and its continual. In the electoral realm, the people fulfill the democracy by choosing the rulers, and since Islam forms the essence and framework of people's movement and life, in Islamic democracy, the executives, candidates, and supervisors of election, people, and more than others, the electoral candidates must realize the Islamic ethical principles. Politics serves morality and religion in the religious democracy and any attempt to spend religion to keep power will hurt the religious democracy. This is a clear criterion that can be used to assess the ethical level of the motivations, intentions, and the behavior of the election campaigners, i.e., the candidates, voters, executives, and observers, and especially, the election law. All these involved agents must lead the outcome of the election toward a direction that helps to strengthen the legitimacy and efficiency of the Islamic system and promote the development of a moral culture in the society. Certainly, an election in which, unethical things are done by the influential agents and players not only does not help to consolidate religious democracy, but also will turn itself into the realm of emerging immoralities, breaking the indecency of unethical behaviors and the occurrence of many vices and sins. Hence, it is expected that all elements in the electoral field will be criticized and evaluated in different periods of time. Achieving an ethical election and modifying the rules towards the closure of electoral routes and channels of immoralities will be properly beneficial in the strengthening, consolidating, and objective realization of the religious democracy. In this regard, the media seem to have many responsibilities for strengthening the electoral ethics culture in the religious democracy system. Culture-making and production of messages on the relationship between religion and ethics in the political system of the religious democracy help to increase the sensitivity and accuracy of the society and enhance the cost of unethical behavior in the electoral arenas. By introducing great personalities and religious leaders who refused to sacrifice the truth for power, whether before or in the power, the media can provide a model for the people. The focus on electoral ethics as a clear criterion for identifying the fittest candidates in the electoral arenas should always form the pillar of the media messaging. In addition, criticizing and evaluating the electoral ethics observance at all levels of the election process in serious and explicit debates and their reflection by the media can assist the transparency and promotion of the electoral culture in the religious democracy system. However, producing

programs and scientific and research productions in the form of topics such as the relation between ethics and religious democracy, the comparison of the electoral system of religious and secular democracies appear to be effective from the ethical perspective. The serious media follow-up on instances of violations of morality and electoral law after announcing the results of the election will lead to the increased sensitivity of the society and positively affects the contributes to the desired democratic culture of religious democracy.

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