



The Political Affiliations of Iranian Newspapers

A Comparative Look at the 2009 and 2013 Elections

Written by ASL19 Researchers

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with the Iran Media Program



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The Political Affiliations of Iranian Newspapers

Complexities of the Iranian Media Ecosystem

The complexities of the Iranian media ecosystem become most apparent during the election season when the heightened politicization of newspapers leads to intensified attention paid to print media. In the absence of political parties, the press serves as a valuable tool during election campaigns, supporting the legitimacy of the Islamic state or, alternatively, as a forum for political dissent and challenges to state legitimacy by opposition groups.

During the 2013 presidential election cycle, officials [summoned](#) the managing directors of Iran's publications to remind them of the "red lines" (off-limits topics) of election coverage. Newspapers were warned that any attempt to accentuate debates about the electoral process would be confronted with a heavy hand. The delineation of "red lines" allows the authorities to control media content and censor dissenting views while co-opting the platform to legitimize the elections. This heightened control of media content has not been well received by Iranian readers, lowering circulation.

Pedram Pak Ayin, director of the Department of National Press and News Agencies at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, [stated](#) that although the number of newspapers in Iran is high, the number of printed copies of all newspapers in daily circulation is less than 2 million. This number stands in stark contrast to the reformist era (1997-2005), when censorship of print media was comparatively relaxed. Journalists working during that era estimate more than 1 million copies of a single newspaper were available for readers. While an increase in [digital media](#) use remains an obvious explanation for this shift in both supply and demand for print media, it can also be attributed to increased censorship and lack of open debate about the elections in the press.

Newspapers have been effective campaign tools for candidates in past elections, such as in the 1997 presidential elections, when the contest between Ali Akbar Nategh-Nouri (endorsed by the Supreme Leader) and reformist Mohammad Khatami (a candidate who represented those marginalized after the death of Ayatollah Khomeini) found its most potent debates within newspapers. During this time, *Salam* was the only pro-Khatami newspaper, while the majority of newspapers supported Nategh-Nouri. Even newspapers that were not legally allowed to put forth direct support of a candidate (due to government funding) ignored such regulations.

Journalist and editor of *Salam*'s financial reporting Abbas Abdi [believed](#) demand for *Salam*'s readership doubled its printed copies during this timeframe, and that one issue of *Salam* was read by at least three people during the height of the election season. While conservative-leaning [Ham-](#)

[shahri newspaper](#) had a readership and distribution numbers that dwarfed *Salam's*, Abdi argued that most *Hamshahri* readers just scanned the publication for headlines and did not care for the newspaper's political leanings. On the other hand, Abdi cited surveys demonstrating that more than 50 percent of *Salam* readers thoroughly read each article, leading to a powerful impact on their political outlooks. The newspaper's influence finally caught the ire of the Ministry of Intelligence and was [closed down in 1999](#) for the crime of reporting on internal government matters.

Despite increasing censorship pressures on newspapers during the 2005 and 2009 elections coupled with declining readership, newspapers remain an important tool in politics. The nature of print media continues to evolve as shifts in the country's political factions since 2009 have rippled into the political affiliations of newspapers. Specifically, conservatives divided into three groups: pro-government conservatives, traditional conservatives, and critical-of-the-government conservatives. Even within these groups there are divisions: Pro-government conservatives supported Mahmoud Ahmadinejad during his first term as president; during Ahmadinejad's second term, the faction became divided between those who supported Ahmadinejad and his Chief of Staff, Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei (pro-Ahmadinejad and pro-Mashaei conservatives), and those who supported Ahmadinejad but not Mashaei (pro-Ahmadinejad conservatives). Support for the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei remains a commonality between conservatives, but this commonality is increasingly splintered, as demonstrated by recent conflicts between parliament, Ahmadinejad's government, and the judiciary. Newspapers that supported Ahmadinejad in 2009, such as *Resalat*, are now among the newspapers very critical of him, and the print media's political affiliations continue on the trajectory of becoming increasingly fractured. The reformists also experienced fracturing, albeit not as stark as among the conservative groups. Media outlets, such as *Arman* newspaper, are less explicit in their stance toward reformists, and are commonly referred to as organs "close to reformists." Other papers, such as *Shargh*, are more overt in their affiliations, and are treated as "reformist" in this report.

This report was compiled as an information report, rather than an analytical piece. We endeavour to highlight the shifting allegiances of print media and examine national publications with a focus on politics, economics, and society. Newspapers are divided by faction (Pro-government Conservative, Traditional Conservative, Critical-of-the-Government Conservative, Affiliated with Reformists, and Reformist), and labeled with their 2009 political affiliations, their expected affiliations for 2013, and their stance on reformists. Once the Guardian Council releases the final vetted candidates on May 24th, these newspapers will become active in supporting their preferred factions or candidates.

Pro-Government Conservative

Iran

Supported in 2009: Ahmadinejad.

Expected to support in 2013:

They will likely support Ahmadinejad's endorsed candidate Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei.

Stance on reformist participation: Opposed.



Iran is owned by the Islamic Republic of Iran News Agency (IRNA) and is currently managed by Mosayeb Naeemi. *Iran* has served the present and past two administrations of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and Mohammad Khatami through an emphasis on the government's news, with very limited coverage of other factions.

During the presidency of Ahmadinejad, however, *Iran* moved beyond government support; *Iran* supports not only Ahmadinejad, but also his larger camp, including presidential hopeful Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei. In addition, *Iran* publishes harshly critical pieces about the Parliament, judiciary, and other organizations formed and run under Khamenei's supervision. This has resulted in the arrest and one-year conviction of *Iran*'s manager, Naeemi.

Iran also has an affiliated website called [Iran Network](#) which is tasked with [attacking](#) those critical of the government such as Khamenei's representative in the IRGC Ali Saeedi and the IRGC's political deputy Rasul Sanai Rad. According to Iran Network, those associated with Iran's military have attacked and criticized the government with the pretense of protecting the nation from threats from the United States. They have accused Fars, Tasnim, Daneshjoo, Nasim, Mashregh, and Borhan of using government funds to launch and run multiple news agencies in an attempt to dominate the media sector and undermine the government.

Khorshid

Supported in 2009: Ahmadinejad.

Expected to support in 2013:

They will likely support Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei, or a candidate supported and approved by Ahmadinejad.

Stance on reformist participation: Opposed.

بروای راه ره پیمایان خورشید
روزنامه اجتماعی، اقتصادی و
صاحب امتیاز: سازمان تامین اجتماع
مدیر مسئول: محمدرضا تقوی فرد
تلفن: ۸۸۵۲۴۴۵۰ - ۸۸۷۳۳۳۳۳
آدرس: تهران، خیابان شهید احمد قد
چاپ: چاپخانه دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی

Khorshid belongs to the Social Security Organization, and is one of Iran's highly funded news organizations. Saeed Mortazavi, well known for closing down multiple newspapers when he served as Tehran's prosecutor, manages this newspaper. Khorshid has [chosen](#) the Ahmadinejad group's motto, "Long live the spring," as its main headline on several occasions.

Emtiaz

Supported in 2009: Was not in publication in 2009.

Expected to support in 2013:

They will likely support a candidate from the Ahmadinejad and Mashaei faction.

Stance on reformist participation: Unknown.



The owner and editor-in-Chief of Emtiaz is Gholam Hossein Shabani, who [publicly supports Ahmadinejad](#).

Javan

Supported in 2009: Ahmadinejad.

Expected to support in 2013:

They will likely support a candidate who is endorsed by the IRGC and the Supreme Leader.

Stance on reformist participation: Opposed.



Javan is affiliated with the IRGC and is currently managed by [Mohammad Vodood Heidari](#), an official from Basij University. Javan supports Ahmadinejad, but not Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei. Javan has [written](#) that since late 2011, Ahmadinejad has generated suspicions over the validity of the election process, through outspoken criticisms of the June 2013 elections. According to Javan, this campaign to undermine the system was undertaken because Ahmadinejad remains doubtful that his candidate, Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei, will be approved by the Guardian Council. Javan has also [criticized](#) Ahmadinejad for disturbing public opinion about the election process and the organizations involved for the sake of one potential candidate, adding that “during the past 34 years, no one has ever heard Ahmadinejad raise doubts over the election process or criticize the Guardian Council for disapproving certain individuals.”

Javan managers have claimed their efforts to confront the Green Movement and suppress post-election protests in 2009 were a “Jihad and a revolutionary act.” As such, Javan’s official mandate remains to confront reformists and to collaborate with security and military organizations to suppress unrest and protests.

Vatan Emrooz

Supported in 2009: Ahmadinejad.

Expected to support in 2013:

They will likely support a candidate representing the Paydari Front.

Stance on reformist participation: Opposed.



Mehrdad Bazrpash, a former Ahmadinejad supporter (no longer in contact due to disagreements) and the head of the National Youth Organization, owns *Vatan Emrooz*. During the past few years, the newspaper has maintained close ties with the Paydari Front political party, established by a group of former Ahmadinejad cabinet ministers, including Iran's billionaire minister Sadegh Mahsouli, alongside a group of IRGC businessmen who are supported by the conservative cleric Mesbah Yazdi. So far the newspaper has remained silent about whether it will support a candidate endorsed by Ahmadinejad.

Eghtesad Pooya

Supported in 2009:

Did not take a position.

Expected to support in 2013:

They will likely support a candidate from the Ahmadinejad and Mashaei faction.

Stance on reformist participation: Opposed.



Eghtesad Pooya is a business newspaper that supports Ahmadinejad and Mashaei. *Eghtesad Pooya* began as a provincial newspaper published in Golestan province and is now published nationwide by editor-in-Chief Habibollah Gholish Lee. It is known as the “business bulletin of Ahmadinejad’s government,” providing a platform of praise for Ahmadinejad’s economic and financial policies.

Farheekhtegan

Supported in 2009:

Ahmadinejad; partially supported Mir Hossein Mousavi

Expected to support in 2013:

They will likely support a candidate who is supported and approved by Ahmadinejad and the Paydari Front.

Stance on reformist participation: *Opposed.*



Farheekhtegan is owned by the Islamic Azad University. During Ahmadinejad's first term as president, he often criticized and attacked the former President of Islamic Azad University, Abdollah Jasbi. As a result, *Farheekhtegan* did not support Ahmadinejad during the 2009 election while they never publicly supported the other three presidential candidates. The newspaper even employed several reformist journalists who were arrested shortly after the 2009 elections for their coverage while working for the newspaper.

While Abdollah Jasbi was the university president, *Farheekhtegan* was close to Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. When Jasbi was dismissed in 2010, however, Farhad Daneshjoo, the head of the election department at the Ministry of Interior during the 2009 election, was instated as the university's new president, with the addition of a new editor-in-Chief, Hamid Reza Abedi-Khorsandi. These appointments were made with Khamenei's support.

Under Abedi-Khorsandi's management, *Farheekhtegan* has changed its political position to support the Ahmadinejad government. It is likely that *Farheekhtegan* will support a representative of the Paydari Front or a candidate approved and supported by Ahmadinejad.

[Afarinesh](#) is another newspaper affiliated with the Islamic Azad University that has undergone similar changes during the past few years.

Tamasha

Supported in 2009:

N/A (newspaper was founded in 2010).

Expected to support in 2013:

They will likely support a candidate from the Ahmadinejad and Mashaei faction.

Stance on reformist participation: Opposed.



Ertebat Baran Pooya Art and Culture Institute owns *Tamasha*, a publication launched in 2010, with Esmail Ramezani as the editor-in-Chief. *Tamasha*, which covers sports, cultural and social topics, is thought to be [affiliated](#) with the Ahmadinejad and Mashaei team.

Haft Sobh

Supported in 2009: Ahmadinejad.

Expected to support in 2013:

Not clear what their stance is.

Stance on reformist participation:

Partial Support.



Haft Sobh is a Qom-based national newspaper, owned by Ertebat Baran Pooya Art and Culture Institute and run by editor-in-Chief Ali Mazinani. Although *Haft Sobh* [supports](#) the Ahmadinejad and Mashaei faction, the paper attempts to hide this fact. In order to avoid censorship from traditional conservatives opposed to Ahmadinejad it has hired a number of [reformist journalists](#) to hide its direct support for the president.

Rah Mardom

Supported in 2009:

Not a national newspaper, dealt with local issues.

Expected to support in 2013:

They will likely support a candidate from the Ahmadinejad and Mashaei faction.

Stance on reformist participation: Unknown.



Rah Mardom is based in Kerman but distributes a limited number of copies across the country. It is affiliated with Ahmadinejad and Mashaei. Naser Ghadiri serves as editor-in-Chief.

Siasat Rooz

Supported in 2009: Ahmadinejad.

Expected to support in 2013: They will likely support a candidate representing the coalition of conservatives.

Stance on reformist participation: Opposed.

The editor-in-Chief of Siasat Rooz is Member of Parliament Ali Yousefpour, a former IRGC member and member of the Society of Devotees of the Islamic Revolution, which supported Ahmadinejad during the 2005 and 2009 elections. Siasat Rooz's editorial line indicates that it [supports](#) only Ahmadinejad and not Mashaei.

• صاحب امتیاز: علی یوسفپور • مدیر مسئول: محمد پیرعلی • سردبیر و دبیر گروه سیاسی: محمد صفری •
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Traditional Conservative

Resalat

Supported in 2009: Ahmadinejad.

Expected to support in 2013:

They will likely support a candidate representing the coalition of conservatives.

Stance on reformist participation: Opposed.



Resalat is owned by the [Resalat Foundation](#), the editor-in-Chief is Morteza Nabavi, a well-known conservative figure and also a member of the Expediency Discernment Council of the System (a position appointed directly by the Supreme Leader). Another Resalat editor is Mohammad Kazem Anbarlooyi, a member of the Islamic Coalition Party.

Resalat represents traditional conservatives such as the [Islamic Coalition Party](#), [Society of Seminary Teachers of Qom](#), Islamic Society of Engineers, and the [Society of the Islamic Associations of Tehran's Guilds and Bazaar](#). During the 2005 election, Resalat initially supported Ali Larijani, but quickly moved to support Ahmadinejad, an endorsement that continued through the 2009 election. Since 2010, the newspaper has been divided between the Supreme Leader and Ahmadinejad. They have found a middle ground in supporting the President (not for re-election, but as a politician with credibility), but not supporting his endorsement of Mashaei.

Resalat is strongly opposed to reformists. The newspaper supported the suppression of the Green Movement in 2009 and supports the house arrests of Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi. It appears that Resalat is [against](#) the notion of free elections. According to Resalat writers, reformists should be stopped from participation in the election.

Kayhan

Supported in 2009: Ahmadinejad.

Expected to support in 2013:

They will likely support a conservative candidate who is approved by the Supreme Leader.

Stance on reformist participation: Opposed.



Kayhan was a pre-revolutionary media institution, reshaped into a mouthpiece for the office of the Supreme Leader during the Islamic Revolution. Hossein Shariatmadari, directly appointed by Khamenei, manages the newspaper. Shariatmadari is associated with Iran's intelligence services and is a former IRGC official. *Kayhan* is also recognized as a security organization in charge of building cases against the opposition and those critical of the regime inside the country and abroad. *Kayhan* maintains close ties with security and judiciary officials and organizations and is considered to be one of the most influential newspapers in Iran.

During the reformist era, *Kayhan* was opposed to the government; however, it supported the Ahmadinejad government until 2011, after which conflicts between Ahmadinejad and Khamenei arose over the [dismissal of Minister of Intelligence and National Security Heidar Moslehi](#). Since then, *Kayhan* has made efforts to maintain its previous editorial line of support for Ahmadinejad, in order to maintain the patterns of public endorsement displayed between 2005 and 2011. However, *Kayhan* does not support Ahmadinejad's presidential hopeful Mashaei.

During the past few months, *Kayhan* has supported current Mayor of Tehran and former hardline police chief Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, responsible for squashing the student protests of 1999 and 2005. Ghalibaf is expected to register his name for the Presidency alongside Gholam Ali Haddad-Adel and Ali Akbar Velayati (also known as the 2+1 coalition).

Jam-e Jam

Supported in 2009:

Ahmadinejad.

Expected to support in 2013:

They will likely support a candidate approved by the ruling regime, excluding Ahmadinejad and Mashaei.



Stance on reformist participation: *Opposed.*

Jam-e Jam is affiliated with Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), which has complete control over radio and television in Iran. (The head of IRIB, Ezzatollah Zarghami, is appointed by the Supreme Leader.) Bijan Moghaddam, a journalist who worked previously with *Resalat* and was the [former editor-in-Chief of Fars News Agency](#), is now the editor-in-Chief of *Jam-e Jam*. *Jam-e Jam* maintains close ties with the Society of Devotees to the Islamic Revolution, and supported Ahmadinejad in 2009. In 2013, however, *Jam-e Jam* will likely support a candidate from the ruling faction, unrelated to Ahmadinejad and Mashaei. The newspaper was opposed to Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi and supported their house arrest.

Khorasan

Supported in 2009:

They indirectly supported Ahmadinejad; however, their main political aim was to encourage participation in the elections.

Expected to support in 2013:

They will likely support a conservative candidate approved by the Society of Seminary Teachers of Qom and the Combatant Clergy Association.

Stance on reformist participation: *Neutral.*



Khorasan has been in print for about 60 years and is headquartered in Mashdad, but distributed nationwide. The newspaper was acquired by the government after the Islamic Revolution and since 2000, has worked under the supervision of the Supreme Leader's Office. A [five-member](#) board of trustees close to traditional conservatives manages the newspaper. The current director of *Khorasan* is Kourosh Shojaei Boorabad and the editor-in-Chief is Mohammad Saeed Ahadian. In 2009, *Khorasan* encouraged participation in the elections, defended the integrity of the regime, and supported the governing system of the Islamic regime. Although *Khorasan* published news about all four presidential candidates in 2009, it supported the suppressions and arrests following the election. *Khorasan* is slated to support a candidate representing the majority of traditional conservatives, who is also approved by the Society of Seminary Teachers of Qom and the Combatant Clergy Association.

Quds

Supported in 2009: Ahmadinejad.

Expected to support in 2013:

They will likely support a candidate endorsed by the Supreme Leader.

Stance on reformist participation: Neutral.



Quds is part of Astan Quds Razavi, a charity foundation in Mashhad that administers the Imam Reza Shrine. The Supreme Leader appointed the head of Astan Quds, Abbas Vaez Tabasi and the managing director is Gholamreza Ghalandarian. The newspaper is based in Mashhad but distributed nationally. Quds maintains a conservatively-oriented content and publicly supports the Supreme Leader's decisions. For the 2013 election it will support a candidate that represents a majority of the governing conservatives, excluding the Ahmadinejad faction.

Abrar

Supported in 2009:

N/A (has not supported a presidential candidate since the 1997 elections)

Expected to support in 2013:

Will not take a side.

Stance on reformist participation:

Will not take a side.



Mohammad Safizadeh, a former deputy at the Ministry of Interior throughout the 1980s and 1990s, holds the license for the Abrar publication group, which includes Abrar (news), Abrar-e Vazeshi (sports), and Abrar-e Eghtesadi (business). Abrar supported Ali Akbar Nategh-Nouri during the presidential election in 1997, but since then, the newspaper has not taken sides in the elections.

Hemayat

Supported in 2009: Ahmadinejad.

Expected to support in 2013: N/A

Stance on reformist participation: N/A



Hemayat is the organizational newspaper of the [State Prisons Security and Corrective Measures Organization](#), affiliated with the judiciary. The current managing director of Hemayat is Ali Shams. Hemayat is the judiciary's official media outlet and will reflect the position of judiciary officials regarding the upcoming election –typically in favor of the conservative faction. This newspaper is not particularly political in its writing, but chose to support Ahmadinejad as the conservative candidate in 2009. They are not expected to hold a position on the 2013 presidential candidates, given the large number of conservative candidates expected to participate.

Critical-of-the-Government Conservative

Hamshahri

Supported in 2009: Did not take a position.

Expected to support in 2013: They will likely support Ghalibaf or a candidate endorsed by the Supreme Leader.

Stance on reformist participation: Not entirely opposed.



The municipality of Tehran holds the license of Hamshahri; therefore, the mayor of Tehran appoints the managers of the publication and it is the most widely distributed publication in Iran. Hamshahri was launched when Gholamhossein Karbaschi was the mayor of Tehran and maintained close ties with Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. This relationship ended when Ahmadinejad became mayor of Tehran.

When Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf became mayor in 2005, the managing staff of *Hamshahri* once again changed, with a number of reformist journalists joining the newspaper. During Ghalibaf's term as mayor, the *Hamshahri* publication group greatly expanded through weekly and monthly magazines, including *Hamshahri Javan* (youth audiences), *Hamshahri Tandorosti* (health and medicine), *Hamshahri Memari* (architecture and urban planning), and *Hamshahri Tamashagar* (TV and cinema).

In 1997 and 2001 *Hamshahri* indirectly supported Khatami's candidacy, and in 2005 it publicly supported Ahmadinejad. The newspaper avoided taking positions during the 2009 election. Since 2005, due to increasing conflicts between Ahmadinejad and Ghalibaf, *Hamshahri* has continuously criticized Ahmadinejad's socioeconomic policies. *Hamshahri* has recently intensified its criticisms of Ahmadinejad, on one occasion for "[wasting over 521 billion dollars of profit from the oil industry](#)." These reports have started a new round of media battles between *Hamshahri* and various government-leaning newspapers.

Hamshahri is likely to support Ghalibaf, if he runs, or a candidate approved by him. The newspaper will not support members of the Ahmadinejad camp. *Hamshahri* has indicated that reformists must distance themselves from the views and support of the 2009 protesters if they want to have a role in the upcoming election.

Jomhuri Eslami

Supported in 2009: *Opposed Ahmadinejad.*

Expected to support in 2013:

They will likely support Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, if he runs, or a moderate candidate close to Rafsanjani.



Stance on reformist participation:

Will only support the participation of reformists with a weak candidate.

Jomhuri Eslami was launched as a newspaper for the Islamic Republic Party in 1979, with Ali Khamenei as manager until his presidency in 1981. The Islamic Republic Party also appointed Mir Hossein Mousavi as editor-in-Chief until he became Minister of Foreign Affairs, and, in 1981, Prime Minister.

Khamenei still holds the publication license for *Jomhuri Eslami*. Masih Mohajeri, an old member of the Islamic Republic Party, is the directing manager and the editor-in-Chief. Mohajeri maintains close ties with Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

The newspaper was opposed to reformists during the reformist era, and supported Rafsanjani during the 2005 elections. It has been critical of Ahmadinejad since his presidency and has published several critical pieces about the relationship between Ahmadinejad and his close adviser, Mesbah Yazdi. The newspaper has often written that the two are trying to exclude established clerics from the political scene.

Jomhuri Eslami did not publicly support a candidate during the 2009 election, but was opposed to Ahmadinejad and his second term as president. It is unlikely *Jomhuri Eslami* will support Ahmadinejad or Mashaei in 2013. This paper will likely support Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani if he is vetted; otherwise, it will support a moderate candidate or someone close to Rafsanjani.

Although *Jomhuri Eslami* is greatly committed to the Supreme Leader, it is against the interference of organizations such as the IRGC or the IRIB in the elections. This newspaper will likely only support the participation of reformists with a weak candidate, and would likely support their coalition with a moderate conservative figure.

Tehran Emrooz

Supported in 2009:

Supported Mohsen Rezaei; remained neutral toward reformists.

Expected to support in 2013:

They will likely support Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf or a conservative outside of the Ahmadinejad camp.

Stance on reformist participation:

Opposed to participation of reformists with their top candidate.



Tehran Emrooz is affiliated with the Islamic Development Organization. Simaye Mehr Hasti Art and Cultural Institute holds the newspaper's license and Majid Rafiyi is the managing director.

Tehran Emrooz is affiliated with critical-of-the-government conservatives; it is close to Ali Larijani, Ahmad Tavakkoli and Mohsen Rezaei. It is also known as a political mouthpiece for Tehran's mayor Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, who uses *Tehran Emrooz* to discuss his political viewpoints in a comparatively more direct fashion than those presented in *Hamshahri*.

Tehran Emrooz was launched after Ahmadinejad's election in 2005. The newspaper has maintained a conservative tone and been critical of the government. It was one of the few newspapers that discussed Ahmadinejad's financial fraud cases in 2007 and 2008, culminating in the newspaper's closure in 2008, after publishing an extensive critical piece of the President entitled "Being Poor in a Prosperous Era." Publication was resumed after seven months and in 2009, *Tehran Emrooz* supported Mohsen Rezaei and remained neutral towards Karroubi and Mousavi. During the post-election unrest, however, *Tehran Emrooz* supported protest suppression.

For the 2013 elections, this newspaper will support Ghalibaf or a candidate approved and supported by him and critical-of-the-government conservatives. *Tehran Emrooz* is opposed to both Ahmadinejad and Mashaei as well as reformist participation with their top candidate.

Mellate Ma

Supported in 2009: Mohsen Rezaei.

Expected to support in 2013: They will likely support Mohsen Rezaei again or his favored candidate.

Stance on reformist participation:

Opposed to participation of reformists with their top candidate.



Mohsen Rezaei, former commander of the IRGC and general secretary of Expediency Discernment Council of the System, holds the newspaper's license. Rezaei ran as a conservative candidate in the 2009 presidential elections. *Mellate Ma* reflects Rezaei's opinion and interests and that of his close confidants. The newspaper often criticizes the economic and strategic decisions of the government, but stays away from criticizing the government's foreign policies.

Mellate Ma will [support](#) Mohsen Rezaei or his endorsed candidate in the upcoming election. Its editorial tone indicates hope that the Ahmadinejad camp will be eliminated from the ruling faction.

Maghreb

Supported in 2009: Mohsen Rezaei.

Expected to support in 2013 election: N/A

Stance on reformist participation: Inconsistent.



Mardom Foundation is the license holder of *Maghreb*, a party created in 2009 supporting Mohsen Rezaei with Mehdi Emami Naseri as the managing director. Naseri was briefly arrested in 2012 over "non-political and non-financial charges." In February 2013, Naseri and *Maghreb's* politics editor Ali Reza Aghaeirad were detained over an article criticizing the President. The newspaper is currently out of distribution due to low readership and financial difficulties.

Maghreb has attempted to present itself as a reformist newspaper, but inconsistently, as it has [pledged support](#) to Saeed Mortazavi, the former prosecutor of the Islamic Revolutionary Court and former Prosecutor General of Tehran, who was responsible for the closure of several reformist newspapers and the arrest of many reformist journalists. The newspaper had previously been [affiliated](#) with Mohsen Rezaei, but it is not presently associated with any faction.

Ghanoon

Supported in 2009: N/A

Expected to support in 2013:

They most likely oppose the Ahmadinejad faction and maintain a strong allegiance to Mostafa Pour-Mohammadi.

Stance on reformist participation: *Neutral.*



Ghanoon's license is held by Sepideh Taban Art and Culture Center with Mahnaz Mazaheri as its managing director. The first copy of *Ghanoon* was published in October 2012, about three months after the [online version](#) was launched. According to the [managers of Ghanoon](#), the newspaper is independent and committed to the constitution and religious and national values of Iranians. The newspaper's mandate states: "Journalists and staff working with this newspaper are associated with both reformist and conservative factions, and some of them might not even believe in any of the political factions, but all of them work within the legal structures of the regime."

Ghanoon criticizes the current government's socioeconomic decisions and maintains close ties and maintains close ties with Mostafa Pour-Mohammadi, formerly a contender for the presidency (he did not register). Pour-Mohammadi is well known for his role as prosecutor of the revolutionary courts during the 1988 massacre of Iranian prisoners. Under the Rafsanjani presidency he was deputy minister of intelligence, and later became interior minister during Ahmadinejad's first term. Soon after his dismissal from Ahmadinejad's cabinet, however, he became critical of the government. He is now the head of the National Inspection Organization.

Ettelaat

Supported in 2009: Mir Hossein Mousavi

Expected to support in 2013:

They will likely remain publicly neutral, but will indirectly support Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani if he runs.

Stance on reformist participation:

Unofficially supports reformists.

اطلاعات

سال هشتاد و هفتم

Owned by [Ettelaat Publication](#), this newspaper was in circulation prior to the Islamic Revolution. Mahmoud Doaei, a cleric close to Ayatollah Khomeini, took over the newspaper in 1979, acting as the managing director of *Ettelaat* and its affiliated publications.

Doaei now manages *Ettelaat* as Ayatollah Khamenei's representative. He is known as a traditional reformist cleric who supported Mir Hossein Mousavi during the 2009 election, although during the election *Ettelaat* did not publicly endorse any candidate and neutrally covered all four candidates. Following the elections, government associated media unsuccessfully requested Doaei's dismissal.

Similar to *Kayhan*, *Ettelaat* is managed by a Khamenei representative. *Ettelaat* has a higher number of copies in circulation than *Kayhan*, but it does not wield as much influence over the media and political environment of the country.

Etedal

Supported in 2009: N/A

Expected to support in 2013: N/A

Stance on reformist participation:

Against anyone who will agitate the status quo.



Reza Saberi Khorzooghi is the license holder and managing director of *Etedal* daily newspaper.

Etedal primarily covers news about clerics, marjas and religious events. *Etedal*'s [main mission](#) is to publish Khamenei statements and to represent him as a holy religious figure to Iranians. This newspaper has limited influence on Iranian politics but is unaffiliated with reformists.

Ebtekar

Supported in 2009: *Opposed to Ahmadinejad.*

Expected to support in 2013:

Unknown, though they are not supportive of the Ahmadinejad faction.

Stance on reformist participation:

Will likely support a candidate such as

Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.



Mohammad Ali Vakili is the license holder and managing director of *Ebtekar*. *Ebtekar* is critical of the government, but unrelated to reformists. During the 2009 elections, *Ebtekar* focused its coverage on the rivalry between Mousavi and Ahmadinejad. *Ebtekar* has not clarified whether it will support a particular candidate in 2013, but it is expected that its disapproving tone toward the Ahmadinejad faction will continue.

Close to Reformists

Mardomsalari

Supported in 2009:

Supported Mir Hossein Mousavi.

Expected to support in 2013:

They will likely support Mostafa Kavakebian, or Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani if they become candidates.

Stance on reformist participation: Supports.



The *Mardomsalari* party, formed during the reformist era, newspaper's license holder. Mostafa Kavakebian, leader of the party and potential 2013 presidential candidate, is the managing director. *Mardomsalari* is critical of the Ahmadinejad government, leaning toward moderate reformists and critical-of-the-government conservatives. During the 2009 election, *Mardomsalari* openly supported Mousavi and opposed the election results and the protest suppression. However, *Mardomsalari* stopped publishing news related to Mousavi and Karroubi after authorities instituted aggressive guidelines during post-election unrest. *Mardomsalari* [will support](#) Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani in the upcoming election. If Rafsanjani does not get clearance to run, they will support another reformist candidate.

Arman

Supported in 2009: *Mir Hossein Mousavi.*

Expected to support in 2013: *They will likely support Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.*

Stance on reformist participation: *Supports.*



Hooshmand Sefidi is the *Arman's* license holder and Hossein Abdollahi is the editor-in-Chief. *Arman* is closely tied to Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and its editorial line advocates for his run as president.

Arman is largely critical of Ahmadinejad's government, but refrains from publishing critical pieces about the ruling faction, the parliament, judiciary and organizations under Khamenei's supervision. However, this editorial policy exists due to current conditions of conservatism within the government and clerical classes. *Arman* considers Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani as a "[perfect candidate](#)."

Aftab Yazd

Supported in 2009: Mehdi Karroubi.

Expected to support in 2013:

Reformist candidate Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

Stance on reformist participation: Supports.



Initially a provincial newspaper published in Yazd, Aftab later became a national publication with Mojtaba Vahedi as its chief editor. Its license holder is Mansour Mozafari. The newspaper maintains ties to the [Association of Combatant Clerics](#), and is close to reformists Mehdi Karroubi, having supported Karroubi during the 2005 elections, while the majority of other reformist newspapers supported Mostafa Moein and Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. In 2009, the newspaper supported Karroubi again, even though Mousavi was the top reformist candidate.

Following the arrests of Karroubi and Mousavi during the post-election unrest, Vahedi fled the country and worked as Karroubi's consultant from abroad, resigning in 2011. *Aftab Yazd* remains critical of the government and often reports on the positions of moderate clerics in the reformist and conservative factions.

Donya-e Eqtesad

Supported in 2009: Did not take a position.

Expected to support in 2013: Will likely support Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

Stance on reformist participation: Supports.



Ali Reza Bakhtiari is the managing director of the business newspaper *Donya-e Eqtesad*. It has the largest national circulation and supports a free economy. Although it covers news with political themes from all factions, it is closely tied to the Kargozaran Sazandegi party, well known for their support of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. *Donya-e Eqtesad* did not support any particular candidate during the 2009 election, but vaguely emphasized a candidate who is “in Iran's best interests”.

Jahan-e Sanat

Supported in 2009: N/A

Expected to support in 2013:

They will likely oppose the Ahmadinejad camp.

Stance on reformist participation: Supports.



Mohammad Reza Saadi is the license holder and managing director of *Jahan-e Sanat*. This newspaper is critical of Ahmadinejad's economic policies, and holds political, social and cultural positions that are closer to reformists. However, it did not support Mousavi and Karroubi during the 2009 election. It appears that *Jahan-e Sanat* opposes Ahmadinejad's camp and their participation in the upcoming election; however, it has not specified support for any other candidates.

Kar va Kargar

Supported in 2009: Mir Hossein Mousavi.

Expected to support in 2013: They will likely support either a reformist or a conservative candidate critical of the government.

Stance on reformist participation: Supports



The Workers' House of the Islamic Republic holds the license for *Kar va Kargar* and Esrafil Ebadati is the managing director. Iran's official labor union and the Workers' House were formed during the first years after the Islamic Revolution to prevent the formation of Marxist groups among Iranian workers. During the reformist era, this group took on a reformist identity, and did not accept the existence of independent workers' syndicates. As such, their reformist tendencies do not extend to workers rights, but rather to centralizing control over them.

The newspaper supported Khatami in the 1997 and 2001 elections, Mostafa Moein in 2005, and Mousavi in 2009. However, following the post-election unrest, they ceased their support of Mousavi, Karroubi and reformists in general. During the 2013 election, *Kar va Kargar* will likely support either the top reformist candidate, a candidate supported by Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, or a critical-of-the-government conservative. This newspaper has very low readership, and maintains inconsistent publication.

Reformists

Bahar

Supported in 2009: *Mir Hossein Mousavi.*

Expected to support in 2013:

They will likely support either a reformist or a conservative candidate critical of the government, such as Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

Stance on reformist participation: *Supports.*



The license holder and the managing director of *Bahar* is Saeed Pour-Azizi, the director of the presidential media office during the term of former President Mohammad Khatami. *Bahar* is a reformist newspaper that experienced closures in 2000, 2003 and 2010. It resumed publication in November 2012. *Bahar's* editorial board includes leading reformist activists Fereidoon Amoozadeh-Khalili, Khosro Talebzadeh, and Behrouz Geranpayeh.

Bahar is the closest newspaper to Mohammad Khatami, the reformist faction, the Mosharekat (Participation) Front, and Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution Organization Party. Activities of these factions and parties have been greatly limited by the judiciary and officials at the Ministry of Interior since 2005.

The majority of reformists, including Khatami, have discussed their conditions for participation with *Bahar*, which include widening the political space, releasing political prisoners, ending the house arrests of Mousavi and Karroubi, and providing a safe and healthy space for competition in the next election.

Etemaad

Supported in 2009:

Was divided between Mir Hossein

Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi

Expected to support in 2013:

They will likely support either a reformist

or a critical-of-the-government conservative candidate.

Stance on reformist participation: *Supports.*



Elias Hazrati, a well-known reformist figure, is the license holder and managing director of *Etemaad*. The paper was first launched in 2002, and has since been shut down twice. Hazrati supported Karroubi during the 2009 elections, but the majority of the newspaper's journalists supported Mousavi.

After the election, *Etemaad* developed a conservative editorial line to avoid suppression. During recent months, however, *Etemaad* has been covering news and discussions circulating between reformists, traditional conservatives, and critical-of-the-government conservatives in an attempt to facilitate the return of reformists to Iran's political scene.

Shargh

Supported in 2009:

They did not publicly support one candidate.

Journalists on their staff, however, openly supported Mousavi and Karroubi.

Expected to support in 2013: *Will likely*

support Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani

Stance on reformist participation: *Supports.*



Mehdi Rahmanian is the license holder and managing director of *Shargh* which closed down four times since 2002. During its first period of publication, *Shargh* had close ties with Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and his Kargozaran Sazandegi Party; however, it eventually developed a more neutral editorial line. During the 2009 election, the majority of journalists working with *Shargh* were either Mousavi or Karroubi supporters, but *Shargh* did not publicly support one particular candidate.

Shargh remains critical of the government. The erosion of relations between Ahmadinejad and Khamenei has given *Shargh* more flexibility to criticize the President and Mashaei.

Conclusion

As presented in this report, during the lead up to the 2013 election, there is a more visible divide among conservatives compared to the 2009 election. This group is divided into three camps: pro-government conservatives, with their most influential newspaper as *Iran*; traditional conservatives, maintain *Resalat* and *Jam-e Jam* as their strongest newspapers; and critical-of-the-government conservatives use *Hamshahri* as their leading publication.

On the other hand, reformist newspapers largely changed their outlook after the 2009 elections. Out of fear of closure, papers such as *Mardomsalari* de-emphasized their support for 2009 reformists such as Mousavi and Karroubi, but maintain positive associations towards candidates such as Rafsanjani. The best known and explicitly reformist newspapers are *Bahar*, *Etemaad*, and *Shargh*.

Iran's political divisions are reflected within newspapers, especially in the period leading up to presidential elections. In the absence of strong political parties, presidential candidates rely on newspapers as a platform for campaigning and to convey their message and slogans to the population and the masses.



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