



## When prevention is better than a cure: Democracy and the politics of participation in post-revolutionary Iran

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As many democracies in Europe and North America experience steady declines in voter turnout, Iran has increasingly exhibited robust levels of electoral participation. In the 2013 presidential elections, for example, nearly 75% of eligible voters in Iran cast their votes voluntarily. Moreover, despite the perseverance of a seemingly repressive and authoritarian political system, levels of civic engagement at the grassroots in Iran have intensified through the years. Why? Why do so many citizens in Iran show up at the ballot box and engage in the political process so intensely? Why do Iranians participate in what might appear to be flawed institutions, with little to no promise of impact let alone improvement? How does such participation relate to the legacy of the 1979 Revolution?

In this talk Dr. Shervin Malekzadeh draws on his research to discuss how ordinary Iranians have tried to appropriate public institutions and considers how their actions constitute evidence of a negotiated and contentious national unity based on a new “shared grammar” for consent and rule. It is the manner of their participation- the how, not the why- of citizenship both comprised and compromised by state authority that offers the best measure of political development and democratic change in Iran today. In addition to shedding light on the story of democracy in post-revolutionary Iran, Dr. Malekzadeh’s talk also invites a comparative discussion of how citizens in other parts of the world understand and engage with democracy. What can the Iranian case tell us about the future of democracy in a fragmented European Union, post-Brexit United Kingdom or the United States under Trump?



*Dr. Shervin Malekzadeh (MA, PhD) is a political scientist at the Middle East Center at the University of Pennsylvania. His research focuses on the politics of schooling, culture, and identity in post-revolutionary Iran. A regular visitor to Iran and an accidental participant in the 2009 Green Movement, Dr. Malekzadeh's articles have appeared in numerous academic journals as well as in Al Jazeera, The New York Times, The Atlantic, The Washington Post, and The Guardian.*

When: Wednesday November 30th from 6.00-8.00pm

Where: Lecture Hall University College Maastricht

A reception with snacks and drinks will follow the lecture.