



Ebrahim Raisi's Election as Next President of Iran Brings Along Foreign Policy Complications for the United States and Other Nations

The election of Ebrahim Raisi as next president of Iran has drawn concern regarding the possible foreign policy complications it will present for the United States and other nations. The hardline cleric has been sanctioned by the United States due to his lengthy record of ties to grave human rights violations, and also holds extremely conservative views and a suspicion of western nations. Raisi prevailed in an election that was seen to have eliminated any serious threats, as over 600 people attempted to get approval to run for president but were disqualified – leaving only a handful of candidates left. Of those, several dropped out of the race, further removing any potential competition to Raisi. The council that approved the candidates enabled his “victory” and the desired rightward shift of the ruling regime. Raisi is currently seen as the heir to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and offers the government a united front, allowing Khamenei to make decisions without objection and secure a tighter grip over the country.

Ebrahim Raisi has been the chief judiciary since appointed in 2019, and has had U.S. sanctions on him for human rights abuses dating back to the 1980s. He has received multiple government appointments from Supreme Leader Khamenei, which has allowed him to consolidate power within the Iranian political structure. In 1988, Raisi is alleged to have been a judiciary figure on a death committee which executed thousands of political prisoners in the country. The bodies were hidden by the council and never discovered. While there is no concrete proven connection between Raisi and the judicial body, a common belief exists that he was one of the figures involved in it. As a result, he has been sanctioned and harbored mistrust amongst the Iranian population, with approximately 3.7 million invalidated ballots presumed to have been cast in protest to him.

Analysts believe that the election of Raisi does not threaten the revival of the nuclear deal that is currently being discussed with Iran. The Iranian economy has been severely damaged by the sanctions imposed by the United States, and as such, Iran is eager to achieve relief. While both the United States and Iran are demanding more from the other side, both have an incentive to restore the agreement. Apart from the nuclear deal however, experts anticipate that Iran will be reluctant to work with western nations on other foreign policy concerns. Instead, Iran will most likely be focused on establishing closer relations with China and Russia in areas such as trade and arms sales.

Ebrahim Raisi’s election is expected to cause problems for the United States and its allies. It may embolden the Iranian regime to expand its involvement in proxy wars and its support of abusive entities abroad. Furthermore, with respect to foreign policy implications, it will be telling to observe the ways in which Iran attempts to strengthen its ties with regional forces such as Russia and China.