



# Iranian Presidential Election 2024

Professor Shahram Akbarzadeh

Tuesday 13 August 2024: 5.30pm for 6-7pm AEST - Level 13, 356 Collins Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

Following the death in a helicopter crash on 19 May of hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi, early presidential elections were called. Wildcard candidate Masoud Pezeshkian will become Iran's first reformist president in almost two decades, after he defeated hardliner Saeed Jalili in the run-off election.



The 69-year-old former heart surgeon and health minister campaigned on promises to moderate Iran's conservative outlook and improve relations with the West, but analysts remain sceptical about his ability to enact meaningful change within an establishment dominated by ultraconservatives.

When Mr Pezeshkian's name was confirmed on the ballot, even his most loyal supporters were shocked that he had made it past the Guardian Council. The powerful group of clerics and jurists which monitors candidates' religious and revolutionary credentials had barred many prominent reformists and moderates from standing in recent elections, including Mr Pezeshkian himself for the last presidential poll in 2021.

But once his candidacy was approved, Mr Pezeshkian carefully balanced promises of change with declarations of loyalty to Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who holds ultimate authority in the country.

Will Mr Pezeshkian deliver on his role as a reformist which many Iranians hope for? How will he manage Iran's struggling economy? And how will the change in leadership influence Iranian foreign policy?



**Shahram Akbarzadeh** is Convenor of the [Middle East Studies Forum](#) and Research Professor in Middle East and Central Asian Politics at Deakin University. He is the Deputy Director (International) of the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation, Deakin University. He held a prestigious ARC Future Fellowship (2013-2016) on the Role of Islam in Iran's Foreign Policy-making and recently completed a Qatar Foundation grant on Sectarianism in the Middle East. Prof Akbarzadeh has an extensive publication record and has contributed to public debate on topics such as democracy and political processes in the Middle East, regional rivalry and Islamic militancy. Prof. Akbarzadeh was the founding President of the Australian Association of Islamic and Muslim Studies (AAIMS) Inc. (2016-2019).

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