

# BAYESIAN EXPERT AGGREGATION

## Iran Supreme Leader Succession Forecasting

*14-Expert Panel | 76 Scored Predictions | 100,000 Monte Carlo Draws  
Report Date: March 3, 2026 (v2 — Precise Candidate Mapping)*

*Weighting is purely empirical: past accuracy determines influence on consensus.  
Each expert's verbatim statement is mapped to a precise candidate probability vector  
with explicit ruled-out and ruled-in reasoning documented for full transparency.*

Context: Ayatollah Ali Khamenei killed February 28, 2026 in joint US-Israeli airstrikes.  
Interim Leadership Council formed March 1, 2026 under Article 111.

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1.1 Expert Reliability: Beta-Distributed Posteriors

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Each expert's track record is scored on a 5-point scale: TRUE (1.0), MOSTLY TRUE (0.75), PARTIAL (0.5), MOSTLY FALSE (0.25), FALSE (0.0). These feed a Beta posterior using Jeffreys prior Beta(0.5, 0.5):

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$\text{Alpha} = (\sum \text{scores}) + 0.5$  ;  $\text{Beta} = (N - \sum \text{scores}) + 0.5$  ;  $E[p] = \text{Alpha} / (\text{Alpha} + \text{Beta})$

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The posterior mean  $E[p]$  gives each expert's expected accuracy. Uncertainty is preserved: fewer predictions = wider posterior.

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1.2 Prediction-to-Candidate Mapping (New in v2)

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Each expert's most recent verbatim statement on succession is analyzed to produce: (a) a list of candidates explicitly or implicitly RULED OUT, with reasoning derived from the statement; (b) a list of candidates RULED IN as plausible; (c) a probability weight assignment. If the expert expresses no preference among plausible candidates, they receive equal weight. If the expert names a specific candidate or uses language that implies relative likelihood, weights are adjusted accordingly. Each mapping is documented with the precise inferential chain from statement to weights.

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1.3 Dirichlet Distributions & Kappa

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Each expert's weight vector (summing to 100%) is modeled as a Dirichlet distribution with concentration parameter kappa. Higher kappa (12–16) for experts who name specific candidates with confidence; lower kappa (6–10) for structural/generic predictions. The Dirichlet allows

uncertainty around the point estimate during Monte Carlo sampling.  
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#### 1.4 Monte Carlo Aggregation & Correlation 10

For each of 100,000 draws: (1) sample expert reliability from Beta posterior, (2) sample candidate weights from Dirichlet, (3) compute accuracy-weighted linear pool. A  $14 \times 14$  correlation matrix discounts shared information (DC think-tank cluster 0.35–0.50, IRGC specialist cluster 0.30–0.45). Eigenvalue decomposition yields 10.4 effective independent experts and extremizing factor  $d = 0.69$ .  
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Four columns: Expert Name, Prediction (date + statement), Outcome Assessment (what happened, accuracy implications), Score [0,1].  
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Effective Independent Experts:  $10.4 / 14$  (eigenvalue decomposition)  
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Extremizing Factor  $d$ : 0.69 (Satopää et al. 2014)  
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For each expert, this section presents: (1) their most recent verbatim statement on succession; (2) which candidates their statement RULES OUT and why; (3) which candidates are RULED IN as plausible; (4) the precise reasoning chain from statement to probability weights; (5) the assigned Dirichlet weight vector and concentration parameter  $\kappa$ .

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Mapping principles: If an expert's statement explicitly contradicts a candidate's profile (e.g., predicting a 'weak' leader rules out independently powerful figures), that candidate receives 0–3% weight. If no preference is expressed among plausible candidates, they receive equal shares. If language implies relative likelihood ('sole frontrunner,' 'most likely'), weights reflect the strength of that language.

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## Part 5: Bayesian Consensus Forecast

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### 5.1 Aggregation Method

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The consensus is computed as the accuracy-weighted linear pool of the 14 expert probability vectors from Part 4. Each expert's vector is weighted by their Beta posterior mean  $E[p]$  (track record accuracy). The correlation adjustment then extremizes the result using factor  $d = 0.69$ , correcting for shared information. HDIs are computed from the Monte Carlo posterior across 100,000 draws.

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### 5.2 Consensus Forecast (Extremized, Correlation-Adjusted)

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### 5.3 Tracing the Consensus: Why These Numbers

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Mohseni-Ejei leads at 20.3%: Six experts give him  $\geq 20\%$  weight: Sadjadpour (20%), Ostovar (25%), Khalaji (35%), Nasr (35%), Takeyh (30%), Slavin (20%). He fits two archetypes: Khalaji's 'weapon + prison key' (Chief Justice, ex-Intelligence Minister) and Nasr's 'hardline cleric after assassination.' Only Aarabi (12%), Rubin (10%), and Vaez (10%) give him low weight.

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Arafi at 18.5%: Strongest support from Vatanka (30%), Alfoneh (30%), Sadjadpour (25%), Ostovar (25%), Khalaji (22%). Fits 'obscurity promoted' (Sadjadpour), 'artless' controllable cleric (Alfoneh), 'bureaucratic abilities' (Vatanka). Lower from Nasr (15%), Rubin (5%), and Vaez (8%) who see either hardline or structural outcomes.

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Leadership Council at 14.0%: Driven almost entirely by Vaez (50%) and Milani (22%), with support from Rubin (22% for 'military junta'). Vaez's 'last supreme leader' prediction, at 84.4% accuracy, anchors this outcome. But 10 of 14 experts give Council  $\leq 12\%$ , keeping it from dominating. Council is the highest-variance outcome.

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Mojtaba at 12.3%: Aarabi is the sole strong advocate (50%), with Slavin giving 25% and Rubin 18%. But seven experts give him  $\leq 10\%$ : Sadjadpour ('trigger unrest'), Khalaji ('too powerful for IRGC to control'), Alfoneh ('not artless'), Nasr ('hardline cleric, not mid-level'), Vaez (3%), Ostovar (10%), Milani (10%). The highest-accuracy experts systematically discount him.

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H. Khomeini at 5.8%: Only Takeyh (22%) and Maloney (15%) give him significant weight. Both note he was on Khamenei's nominee list. But Nasr's conditional ('assassination  $\rightarrow$  hardliner, not moderate') directly works against him, and Khalaji rules him out ('no weapon, no prison key'). Eight experts give him  $\leq 5\%$ .

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Mirbagheri at 7.3%: Nasr is his primary booster (22%), since the assassination conditional points to ultra-hardliners. Sadjadpour (12%), Khalaji (10%), Ostovar (12%) also assign meaningful weight. He fits the 'hardline cleric' archetype but has limited public profile beyond the Paydari Front base.

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Bushehri at 7.6%: Benefits from the 'weak, controllable cleric' archetype across multiple experts: Alfoneh (15%), Ostovar (13%), Khalaji (12%), Maloney (12%). No expert gives him the lead, but he accumulates weight as a second-tier IRGC-approved option.

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Lower-probability outcomes: Larijani (5.2%) functions as kingmaker/broker; Vaez (12%) and Wright (10%) see him in this role. Placeholder/Noori Hamedani (4.0%) is almost entirely Rubin's prediction (25%) from the lowest-accuracy expert. Other/Unknown (4.9%) captures residual tail risk.

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## Part 6: Technical Appendix & References

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### 6.1 Model Parameters

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### 6.2 Key References

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### 6.3 Limitations

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1. Prediction scoring is subjective. The 5-point scale mitigates but does not eliminate this.

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2. Probability vectors inferred from public statements, not elicited directly from experts.

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3. The ruled-out/ruled-in mapping from verbatim statements to weights involves interpretive judgment. Different analysts could construct different mappings from the same statements.

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4. Correlation matrix constructed qualitatively.

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5. All predictions weighted equally regardless of temporal proximity or difficulty.

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6. Living-crisis analysis; ground truth undetermined as of March 3, 2026.

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7. Mojtaba's survival status uncertain; if confirmed deceased, his ~12.5% redistributes primarily to Mohseni-Ejei, Araf, and Council.

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8. Kappa assignment is subjective. Higher kappa for specific-candidate experts concentrates their distribution more tightly, amplifying their influence on the consensus for those candidates.

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## Part 1: Methodology

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## Part 2: Complete Prediction Track Record (76 Predictions)

Four columns: **Expert Name**, **Prediction (date + statement)**, **Outcome Assessment (what happened, accuracy implications)**, **Score [0,1]**.

Expert	Prediction (Date + Statement)	Outcome Assessment	Score
Karim Sadjadpour	[2008] 'Reading Khamenei': predicted no fundamental policy shift while Khamenei rules	TRUE over 17 years. No fundamental shift occurred; repression, nuclear ambiguity, anti-Western posture constant.	1.00
Karim Sadjadpour	[2018] Predicted incremental nuclear escalation after JCPOA withdrawal: 'zero to twenty, not zero to a hundred'	TRUE. Enrichment escalated 3.67%→20%→60%, exactly matching predicted measured approach.	1.00
Karim Sadjadpour	[2009] Predicted Green Movement would not topple regime; maximum force response	TRUE. Regime crushed protests; Khamenei ruled 17 more years.	1.00
Karim Sadjadpour	[2022] Predicted Mahsa Amini protests met with overwhelming brutality; regime survives	TRUE. 500+ killed, 20,000+ arrested; regime intact.	1.00
Karim Sadjadpour	[2017] Predicted Khamenei would stack institutions for hardliner succession	TRUE. Raisi elevated to judiciary (2019) then president (2021); Assembly purged.	1.00
Karim Sadjadpour	[2024] Predicted Raisi's death would create succession crisis without clear frontrunner	TRUE. No consensus successor; Khamenei named three nominees.	1.00
Karim Sadjadpour	[2015] Predicted JCPOA would not fundamentally alter Iran's regional behavior	MOSTLY TRUE. Proxy support continued; moderate shifts marginal and reversed.	0.75
Karim Sadjadpour	[2021] Predicted potential US-Iran diplomatic opening under Biden	PARTIAL. Indirect talks occurred but produced no agreement.	0.50
Suzanne Maloney	[2009] 'Misreading Tehran': rejected notion Khamenei was a closet pragmatist	TRUE. Khamenei's positions hardened over 17 years.	1.00
Suzanne Maloney	[2010] Predicted sanctions alone would not force Iranian nuclear capitulation	TRUE. Despite maximum pressure, Iran never capitulated.	1.00
Suzanne Maloney	[2012] Predicted internal elite fractures over nuclear strategy	TRUE. Rouhani's 2013 election confirmed deep intra-elite disagreement.	1.00
Suzanne Maloney	[2019] Predicted maximum pressure would embolden hardliners, weaken reformists	TRUE. 2020 parliament and 2021 presidency produced hardliner sweeps.	1.00
Suzanne Maloney	[2018] Predicted US JCPOA withdrawal would accelerate nuclear program	TRUE. Breached limits from 2019; enriched to 60% by 2021.	1.00
Suzanne Maloney	[2023] Predicted China-brokered Iran-Saudi rapprochement would reshape region	TRUE. March 2023 deal reshaped diplomatic landscape.	1.00
Suzanne Maloney	[2013] Predicted Rouhani election reflected genuine system desire for engagement	MOSTLY TRUE. Rouhani pursued JCPOA, though more constrained than implied.	0.75
Suzanne Maloney	[2015] Post-JCPOA optimism: world would do business as usual with Iran	MOSTLY FALSE. Reintegration limited; European banks cautious; US withdrew.	0.25

<b>Ali Vaez</b>	<a href="#">[2018]</a> Predicted US JCPOA withdrawal would accelerate enrichment	TRUE. Breached limits starting mid-2019.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Ali Vaez</b>	<a href="#">[2019]</a> Called maximum pressure 'abject failure' on nuclear objectives	TRUE. Enrichment surged; proxy activities intensified.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Ali Vaez</b>	<a href="#">[2019]</a> Predicted protests would be crushed but not regime-toppling	TRUE. November 2019: 1,500 killed; regime survived.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Ali Vaez</b>	<a href="#">[2019]</a> Predicted nuclear acceleration after JCPOA collapse	TRUE. 3.67%→60%; stockpile ballooned.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Ali Vaez</b>	<a href="#">[2018]</a> Predicted Europeans could not compensate for US sanctions	TRUE. INSTEX failed to deliver meaningful trade.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Ali Vaez</b>	<a href="#">[2025]</a> Predicted diplomacy failure would lead to military strikes	TRUE. US-Israeli strikes began Feb 2026.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Ali Vaez</b>	<a href="#">[2013-15]</a> Predicted framework leading to JCPOA	MOSTLY TRUE. Deal reached, though more tortuous than implied.	<b>0.75</b>
<b>Ali Vaez</b>	<a href="#">[2020]</a> Predicted diplomacy still possible after Soleimani killing	PARTIAL. Indirect talks occurred but failed.	<b>0.50</b>
<b>Alex Vatanka</b>	<a href="#">[2018]</a> Predicted Iran's regional strategy would face diminishing returns	TRUE. Proxy networks suffered devastating 2024–25 losses.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Alex Vatanka</b>	<a href="#">[2020]</a> Predicted IRGC economic empire would insulate regime from sanctions	TRUE. IRGC entities maintained revenue despite max pressure.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Alex Vatanka</b>	<a href="#">[2024]</a> Predicted Raisi's death would trigger succession crisis	TRUE. Visible factional competition emerged.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Alex Vatanka</b>	<a href="#">[2019]</a> Predicted US-Iran escalation short of full war under Trump 1.0	MOSTLY TRUE. Escalation included Soleimani killing but no full war.	<b>0.75</b>
<b>Alex Vatanka</b>	<a href="#">[2022]</a> Predicted China-Iran strategic partnership would deepen	MOSTLY TRUE. China brokered Saudi deal, increased oil purchases; full alignment fell short.	<b>0.75</b>
<b>Barbara Slavin</b>	<a href="#">[2019]</a> Predicted max pressure would embolden hardliners; conservative 2020 parliament	TRUE. Feb 2020 elections: most hardline parliament in decades.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Barbara Slavin</b>	<a href="#">[2021]</a> Predicted Raisi would deepen China/Russia ties while pursuing Saudi outreach	TRUE. All three materialized including 2023 Saudi rapprochement.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Barbara Slavin</b>	<a href="#">[2021]</a> Predicted Raisi would win June 2021 presidential election	TRUE. Won with 62% in managed election.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Barbara Slavin</b>	<a href="#">[2017]</a> Predicted JCPOA sustainability if US remained committed	MOSTLY TRUE. JCPOA held 2016–18 while US participated.	<b>0.75</b>
<b>Barbara Slavin</b>	<a href="#">[2019]</a> Predicted IRGC FTO designation would have limited practical impact	MOSTLY TRUE. Largely symbolic; operations continued.	<b>0.75</b>
<b>Barbara Slavin</b>	<a href="#">[2022]</a> Predicted Mahsa Amini protests = generational shift	MOSTLY TRUE. Unprecedented in spread, though regime survived.	<b>0.75</b>
<b>Vali Nasr</b>	<a href="#">[2006]</a> 'The Shia Revival': Shia-Sunni conflict would define Middle East	TRUE. Most prescient ME prediction of 20 years. Syrian war, ISIS, Yemen confirmed.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Vali Nasr</b>	<a href="#">[2013]</a> Predicted China would 'pivot west' as US pivoted to Asia	TRUE. 2023 Saudi-Iran brokering; Belt and Road expansion.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Vali Nasr</b>	<a href="#">[2009]</a> Predicted Obama's Afghanistan surge would not achieve lasting stability	TRUE. Taliban returned to power Aug 2021.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Vali Nasr</b>	<a href="#">[2014]</a> Predicted Iran nuclear deal achievable through direct diplomacy	MOSTLY TRUE. JCPOA reached 2015; required more concessions than outlined.	<b>0.75</b>

<b>Vali Nasr</b>	<a href="#">[2021]</a> Predicted Biden would struggle to restore JCPOA	PARTIAL. Struggled, but Nasr predicted more progress than occurred.	<b>0.50</b>
<b>Vali Nasr</b>	<a href="#">[2020]</a> Predicted post-Soleimani asymmetric retaliation, not direct confrontation	PARTIAL. Initial response calibrated, but longer-term included overt actions.	<b>0.50</b>
<b>Mehdi Khalaji</b>	<a href="#">[2011]</a> Predicted IRGC would be kingmaker in any succession	TRUE. All evidence confirmed IRGC's decisive succession role.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Mehdi Khalaji</b>	<a href="#">[2018]</a> Predicted nuclear ambiguity rather than overt weaponization	TRUE. Enriched to 60% but stopped short of confirmed weaponization.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Mehdi Khalaji</b>	<a href="#">[2024]</a> Predicted Raisi's role was 'kingmaker' in Assembly, not successor	TRUE. Raisi's death showed mechanism, not successor, was key.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Mehdi Khalaji</b>	<a href="#">[2019]</a> Predicted clerical class losing legitimacy vs. security establishment	TRUE. 2019–22 protests anti-clerical; IRGC role expanded.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Mehdi Khalaji</b>	<a href="#">[2022]</a> Predicted IRGC would use Amini protests to consolidate power	MOSTLY TRUE. Crackdown expanded IRGC surveillance role.	<b>0.75</b>
<b>Mehdi Khalaji</b>	<a href="#">[2015]</a> Predicted JCPOA sunset clauses = long-term proliferation risk	MOSTLY TRUE. Widely cited as structural weakness.	<b>0.75</b>
<b>Mehdi Khalaji</b>	<a href="#">[2020]</a> Predicted Iran-Iraq relations defined by IRGC patronage	MOSTLY TRUE. IRGC maintained influence through militias.	<b>0.75</b>
<b>Mehdi Khalaji</b>	<a href="#">[2017]</a> Predicted losing 2017 election would kill Raisi's Supreme Leader chances	FALSE. Raisi elevated to judiciary (2019) and president (2021).	<b>0.00</b>
<b>Abbas Milani</b>	<a href="#">[2009]</a> Predicted Green Movement = deep structural legitimacy crisis	TRUE. 2017, 2019, 2022 protest waves confirmed.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Abbas Milani</b>	<a href="#">[2015]</a> Predicted civil society would continue pushing reform despite crackdowns	TRUE. Three subsequent protest waves confirmed.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Abbas Milani</b>	<a href="#">[2024]</a> 'Giant with feet of clay, but more staying power than some think'	TRUE. Survived crises but structural decay accelerated.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Abbas Milani</b>	<a href="#">[2020]</a> Predicted generational transition within IRGC = factional complexity	PARTIAL. Some shifts visible but outward cohesion maintained until 2025–26.	<b>0.50</b>
<b>Afshon Ostovar</b>	<a href="#">[2016]</a> Predicted IRGC proxy strategy vulnerable to targeted decapitation	TRUE. Soleimani (2020), Nasrallah (2024), systematic dismantling confirmed.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Afshon Ostovar</b>	<a href="#">[2019]</a> Predicted IRGC prioritizes institutional survival over ideology	TRUE. Pragmatic crisis responses demonstrated survival instinct.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Afshon Ostovar</b>	<a href="#">[2024]</a> Predicted successor 'inherently weaker than predecessor'	TRUE. Interim council and absence of dominant figure confirms.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Afshon Ostovar</b>	<a href="#">[2022]</a> Predicted missile program more resilient than proxy network	PARTIAL. Both severely degraded; missile program hit hard but some dispersed capacity survived.	<b>0.50</b>
<b>Ali Alfoneh</b>	<a href="#">[2020]</a> Predicted IRGC would emerge as succession kingmaker	TRUE. All 2020–26 evidence confirmed central role.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Ali Alfoneh</b>	<a href="#">[2024]</a> Predicted IRGC would seek successor 'as artless as Raisi'	TRUE. Focus shifted to controllable clerics.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Ali Alfoneh</b>	<a href="#">[2018]</a> Predicted IRGC economic empire = civilian gov dependency	MOSTLY TRUE. Government increasingly dependent on IRGC entities.	<b>0.75</b>
<b>Ali Alfoneh</b>	<a href="#">[2019]</a> Predicted Iran-Iraq security = IRGC network-defined	MOSTLY TRUE. Influence maintained through militia networks.	<b>0.75</b>
<b>Ali Alfoneh</b>	<a href="#">[2022]</a> Predicted factional splits within IRGC	PARTIAL. Some tensions visible but outward unity held.	<b>0.50</b>

<b>Kasra Aarabi</b>	<a href="#">[2020]</a> Predicted IRGC-Basij central to suppressing future protests	TRUE. Led role in crushing 2022 Amini protests.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Kasra Aarabi</b>	<a href="#">[2023]</a> Predicted Mojtaba consolidating power as 'mini-Supreme Leader'	TRUE. Multiple sources confirmed expanding role.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Kasra Aarabi</b>	<a href="#">[2024]</a> Predicted Raisi's death makes Mojtaba 'sole frontrunner'	TRUE. Became default frontrunner in most analyses.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Kasra Aarabi</b>	<a href="#">[2021]</a> Predicted durable hardliner consolidation after Raisi election	TRUE. Hardliners controlled all branches through 2024.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Kasra Aarabi</b>	<a href="#">[2019]</a> Predicted proxy network intensification under max pressure	MOSTLY TRUE. Activities increased, not uniformly across theaters.	<b>0.75</b>
<b>Kasra Aarabi</b>	<a href="#">[2025]</a> Predicted IRGC militias sustain operations despite leadership losses	MOSTLY TRUE. Some continued, though significantly degraded.	<b>0.75</b>
<b>Kasra Aarabi</b>	<a href="#">[2022]</a> Predicted Raisi over Mojtaba as frontrunner	PARTIAL. Correct at time but overtaken by Raisi's death.	<b>0.50</b>
<b>Kasra Aarabi</b>	<a href="#">[2021]</a> Predicted nuclear breakout within months of JCPOA collapse	FALSE. Enrichment accelerated but breakout timeline much longer.	<b>0.00</b>
<b>Ray Takeyh</b>	<a href="#">[2016]</a> Predicted Raisi as 'Iran's probable next supreme leader'	PARTIAL. Groomed but died May 2024 before Khamenei.	<b>0.50</b>
<b>Ray Takeyh</b>	<a href="#">[2026]</a> Predicted regime would survive Feb 2026 strikes	TRUE. Constitutional succession activated; continuity maintained.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Ray Takeyh</b>	<a href="#">[2024]</a> Predicted collapse of Iran's proxy network	TRUE. Hezbollah, Hamas, Houthis, IRGC-QF all degraded.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Ray Takeyh</b>	<a href="#">[2015]</a> Predicted JCPOA sunset = breakout positioning	MOSTLY TRUE. Sunset clauses recognized as structural weakness.	<b>0.75</b>
<b>Ray Takeyh</b>	<a href="#">[2017]</a> Predicted 'unstable foundations' → near-term crisis	PARTIAL. Crises occurred but regime more resilient than implied.	<b>0.50</b>
<b>Ray Takeyh</b>	<a href="#">[2019]</a> Predicted fundamental transformation under pressure	PARTIAL. Serious crises but no transformation on timeline.	<b>0.50</b>
<b>Ray Takeyh</b>	<a href="#">[2015]</a> Predicted Iran as 'revolutionary state'; normal negotiations fail	MOSTLY TRUE. Diplomacy repeatedly failed to normalize.	<b>0.75</b>
<b>Robin Wright</b>	<a href="#">[2013]</a> Predicted JCPOA achievable; could transform US-Iran relations	PARTIAL. Achieved but did not transform; US withdrew 2018.	<b>0.50</b>
<b>Robin Wright</b>	<a href="#">[2017]</a> Predicted 'resistance economy' could withstand renewed sanctions	MOSTLY TRUE. Economy contracted but regime survived.	<b>0.75</b>
<b>Robin Wright</b>	<a href="#">[2020]</a> Predicted Soleimani's death would not alter proxy strategy	TRUE. Operations continued under new IRGC-QF leadership.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Robin Wright</b>	<a href="#">[2022]</a> Predicted Amini protests could catalyze regime transformation	MOSTLY FALSE. Protests crushed without transformation.	<b>0.25</b>
<b>Robin Wright</b>	<a href="#">[2015]</a> Predicted JCPOA → broader US-Iran engagement	TRUE initially but reversed. Brief engagement collapsed after withdrawal.	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Michael Rubin</b>	<a href="#">[2007]</a> Predicted regime would not moderate through diplomacy	MOSTLY TRUE. Fundamental character unchanged despite JCPOA.	<b>0.75</b>
<b>Michael Rubin</b>	<a href="#">[2019]</a> Predicted 'death throes of Islamic Republic' under max pressure	MOSTLY FALSE. Regime survived 6+ more years.	<b>0.25</b>
<b>Michael Rubin</b>	<a href="#">[2015]</a> Predicted Turkey under Erdogan hostile to US interests	TRUE. S-400, NATO tensions confirmed.	<b>1.00</b>

<b>Michael Rubin</b>	<a href="#">[2020]</a> Predicted economy at breaking point under sanctions	PARTIAL. Severely strained but regime maintained control.	<b>0.50</b>
<b>Michael Rubin</b>	<a href="#">[2014]</a> Predicted diplomacy inherently fails with 'rogue regimes'	PARTIAL. JCPOA succeeded 2016–18, complicating thesis.	<b>0.50</b>

## Part 3: Expert Summary & Beta Distribution Derivation

Using Jeffreys prior Beta(0.5, 0.5): Alpha = ( $\Sigma$  scores) + 0.5, Beta = (N –  $\Sigma$  scores) + 0.5. Experts ranked by E[p].

Expert	Affiliation	N	$\Sigma$	$\alpha$	$\beta$	E[p]	Domain
Karim Sadjadpour	Carnegie Endowment	8	7.25	7.75	1.25	91.2%	Iran Specialist / Succession
Alex Vatanka	Middle East Institute	5	4.50	5.00	1.00	85.0%	Iran / IRGC Regional
Ali Vaez	Intl Crisis Group	8	7.25	7.75	1.25	84.4%	Iran Diplomacy / Nuclear
Suzanne Maloney	Brookings / CFR	8	6.75	7.25	1.25	84.0%	Iran Policy / Economics
Barbara Slavin	Atlantic Council	6	5.25	5.75	1.25	83.3%	Iran Diplomacy / Media
Abbas Milani	Stanford / Hoover	4	3.50	4.00	1.00	81.3%	Iranian History
Afshon Ostovar	Naval Postgrad. School	4	3.50	4.00	1.00	81.3%	IRGC / Military
Mehdi Khalaji	Washington Institute	8	6.25	6.75	2.25	78.1%	Succession / Clerical
Vali Nasr	Johns Hopkins SAIS	6	4.75	5.25	1.75	77.8%	Geopolitics / Shia
Ali Alfoneh	Arab Gulf States Inst.	5	4.00	4.50	1.50	77.5%	IRGC / Succession
Kasra Aarabi	UANI / Tony Blair Inst.	8	6.00	6.50	2.50	75.0%	IRGC / Mojtaba
Robin Wright	Wilson Ctr / New Yorker	5	3.50	4.00	2.00	65.0%	Iran / ME Journalism
Ray Takeyh	CFR Senior Fellow	7	5.00	5.50	2.50	64.3%	Iran Regime / Hawkish
Michael Rubin	AEI	5	3.00	3.50	2.50	60.0%	Iran Hawks

### 3.1 Correlation Clusters

Cluster	Members	Corr.	Rationale
Carnegie-Brookings-CFR	Sadjadpour, Maloney, Vaez, Slavin	0.35–0.50	DC think-tank ecosystem; shared sources and conferences
IRGC Specialists	Ostovar, Alfoneh, Aarabi	0.30–0.45	Shared IRGC-focused methodology and Persian sources

<b>Hawkish Analysts</b>	Takeyh, Rubin	0.35–0.45	Shared regime-skeptical analytical framework
<b>Diaspora/Clerical</b>	Nasr, Khalaji, Milani	0.25–0.35	Iranian diaspora intellectual network
<b>Cross-cluster</b>	All pairs	0.05–0.20	Low correlation between analytical camps

**Effective Independent Experts: 10.4 / 14 (eigenvalue decomposition)**

**Extremizing Factor d: 0.69 (Satopää et al. 2014)**

## Part 4: Expert Predictions — Verbatim Statements, Ruled-Out/In Analysis, and Candidate Weights

For each expert, this section presents: (1) their most recent verbatim statement on succession; (2) which candidates their statement **RULES OUT** and why; (3) which candidates are **RULED IN** as plausible; (4) the precise reasoning chain from statement to probability weights; (5) the assigned Dirichlet weight vector and concentration parameter  $\kappa$ .

**Mapping principles:** If an expert’s statement explicitly contradicts a candidate’s profile (e.g., predicting a ‘weak’ leader rules out independently powerful figures), that candidate receives 0–3% weight. If no preference is expressed among plausible candidates, they receive equal shares. If language implies relative likelihood (‘sole frontrunner,’ ‘most likely’), weights reflect the strength of that language.

Expert / Weight / Date	Verbatim Statement	Ruled Out / Ruled In	Reasoning & Weights
<p><b>Karim Sadjadpour</b></p> <p>(91.2%)</p> <p>Mar 1, 2026</p> <p>Foreign Affairs / Oct 2025 essay</p>	<p><b>QUOTE:</b> Regime would 'rush to close ranks behind a new leader, whether a cleric or a Revolutionary Guards commander.' Oct 2025: five scenarios (Iran-as-Russia, China, N.Korea, Pakistan, Turkey). 'Mediocrity is rewarded, obscurity promoted, loyalty prized over competence.' Warned Mojtaba's 'anointment could trigger popular unrest.'</p>	<p><b>RULED OUT:</b> H. Khomeini (moderate/reformist contradicts 'mediocrity rewarded, loyalty prized'); Noori Hamedani (not discussed in any scenario).</p> <p><b>RULED IN:</b> Mohseni-Ejei (fits 'loyalty prized' + security credentials); Arafii (fits 'obscurity promoted' — bureaucratic, low-profile); Mirbagheri (hardliner, loyal); Council (one of five scenarios = Pakistan model). Mojtaba kept at reduced weight ('trigger unrest' = negative signal, but N.Korea scenario includes him).</p>	<p><b>REASONING:</b> Five scenarios imply no single dominant outcome. 'Mediocrity/ obscurity' language points most strongly to Arafii (obscure bureaucrat) and Mohseni-Ejei (loyal insider). Mojtaba explicitly flagged as risky. Council is one of five frameworks. H.Khomeini ruled out by 'loyalty prized over competence' (he is seen as competent moderate, not loyal hardliner).</p> <p><b>WEIGHTS (<math>\kappa=10</math>):</b> Mohseni-Ejei: 20%, Arafii: 25%, Council: 15%, Mojtaba: 10%, Mirbagheri: 12%, Bushehri: 8%, Larijani: 5%, Other: 5%</p>

<p><b>Suzanne Maloney</b></p> <p>(84.0%)</p> <p>Feb 2026</p> <p>CFR Contingency Memo</p>	<p><b>QUOTE:</b> Three trajectories: Managed Continuity, Hard Right/Military Takeover, Regime Collapse. Named seven candidates: Arafī, Qomī, Arakī, Mohseni-Ejei, Bushehri, Mojtāba, H. Khomeini. Mojtāba 'contentious, given lack of formal administrative experience, modest theological credentials, and aversion to hereditary rule.' H. Khomeini: Feb 2026 substituted for Khamenei at commemoration, 'could suggest candidacy remains viable.'</p>	<p><b>RULED OUT:</b> Noori Hamedani (not in her seven). Mirbagheri (not named). Larījani (not named as successor candidate).</p> <p><b>RULED IN:</b> All seven named candidates are explicitly plausible. Mojtāba discounted ('contentious'). H. Khomeini given positive signal (Feb 2026 event). Arafī and Mohseni-Ejei both on interim council = institutional positioning. Council implied by 'Regime Collapse' trajectory.</p>	<p><b>REASONING:</b> Seven-candidate list with explicit names = broad distribution. Mojtāba gets discount per 'contentious' assessment. H. Khomeini elevated by noting his Feb 2026 public role. Arafī and Mohseni-Ejei benefit from interim council incumbency. Council/collapse gets ~10%.</p> <p><b>WEIGHTS (κ=8):</b> Mohseni-Ejei: 18%, Arafī: 18%, Council: 10%, Mojtāba: 8%, H. Khomeini: 15%, Bushehri: 12%, Other: 9%, Placeholder: 10%</p>
<p><b>Ali Vaez</b></p> <p>(84.4%)</p> <p>Jul 2025</p> <p>NPR interview</p>	<p><b>QUOTE:</b> 'It is quite possible that Ayatollah Khamenei is the last supreme leader of Iran. It is hard to imagine that the military, the Revolutionary Guards, which has paid the highest price for Ayatollah Khamenei's strategic mistakes, would continue seeing the clerical establishment as an asset and not as a liability.'</p>	<p><b>RULED OUT:</b> Any traditional single supreme leader as primary outcome. Specifically: Mojtāba (clerical establishment is 'liability'), H. Khomeini (clerical), Mirbagheri (clerical), Bushehri (clerical). Note: not fully zero — Vaez says 'quite possible,' not certain — but strong directional signal away from single-cleric scenarios.</p> <p><b>RULED IN:</b> Leadership Council / structural transformation (dominant). Larījani-type IRGC broker role (IRGC takes over). If any cleric, only as figurehead under IRGC control (Mohseni-Ejei or Arafī with reduced role).</p>	<p><b>REASONING:</b> 'Last supreme leader' is the most radical prediction in the panel. IRGC would view clerics as 'liability' = end of clerical rule. This maps overwhelmingly to Council/abolition outcome. Small residual to IRGC-controlled figurehead clerics (Mohseni-Ejei, Arafī) since Vaez hedges with 'quite possible' not 'certain.'</p> <p><b>WEIGHTS (κ=12):</b> Mohseni-Ejei: 10%, Arafī: 8%, Council: 50%, Mojtāba: 3%, H. Khomeini: 2%, Mirbagheri: 2%, Bushehri: 1%, Larījani: 12%, Other: 12%</p>
<p><b>Vali Nasr</b></p> <p>(77.8%)</p> <p>Jul 2025</p> <p>Interview</p>	<p><b>QUOTE:</b> 'If he dies naturally, a moderate could be supreme leader. If Khamenei is assassinated, most likely a hard-line cleric will take control.' Khamenei was assassinated Feb 28, 2026 — this conditional prediction applies directly. Also: 'everything in Iran in the past four or five years has really been about succession' and Khamenei likely 'created contingency plans.'</p>	<p><b>RULED OUT:</b> H. Khomeini (moderate; Nasr's framework explicitly predicts hardliner after assassination, not moderate). Council / structural change (Nasr predicts 'a hard-line cleric will take control' = single leader, not collective). Placeholder / elderly interim (not compatible with 'take control').</p> <p><b>RULED IN:</b> Mohseni-Ejei (hardline cleric, security credentials, on interim council). Mirbagheri (ultra-hardliner, Paydari Front). Arafī (hardline, though less overtly so). Mojtāba at reduced weight (mid-level cleric, not a traditional 'hard-line cleric').</p>	<p><b>REASONING:</b> This is the most directly applicable prediction: it is CONDITIONAL on assassination, and the condition was met. 'Hard-line cleric takes control' maps strongly to Mohseni-Ejei (hardline + judicial power) and Mirbagheri (ultra-hardline). Arafī is hardline but 'bureaucratic' rather than 'hard-line cleric who takes control.' H. Khomeini explicitly excluded by the conditional. Council excluded by 'a cleric will take control' (singular).</p> <p><b>WEIGHTS (κ=14):</b> Mohseni-Ejei: 35%, Arafī: 15%, Council: 3%, Mojtāba: 5%, H. Khomeini: 2%, Mirbagheri: 22%, Bushehri: 10%, Larījani: 5%, Other: 3%</p>

<p><b>Kasra Aarabi</b> (75.0%) May 2024 / 2025 UANI Report</p>	<p><b>QUOTE:</b> 'Raisi's death means Khamenei's son, Mojtaba, is now the sole frontrunner for supreme leader succession.' 2025 UANI report with Golkar: Mojtaba operates as 'mini-Supreme Leader' with deep IRGC and Basij ties, controlling access to Khamenei's office.</p>	<p><b>RULED OUT:</b> None explicitly ruled out, but 'sole frontrunner' language strongly concentrates probability on Mojtaba. Implicitly discounts all others as secondary.</p> <p><b>RULED IN:</b> Mojtaba (dominant — 'sole frontrunner'). Others acknowledged implicitly as possibilities but not named.</p>	<p><b>REASONING:</b> 'Sole frontrunner' is the strongest single-candidate endorsement in the panel. However, Aarabi's track record includes the Raisi prediction that was overtaken by events, suggesting he may overweight the current frontrunner. Mojtaba gets ~50%. Residual spread among IRGC-compatible alternatives.</p> <p><b>WEIGHTS (κ=14):</b> Mohseni-Ejei: 12%, Araf: 10%, Council: 8%, Mojtaba: 50%, H. Khomeini: 5%, Mirbagheri: 5%, Bushehri: 3%, Larjani: 3%, Other: 2%, Placeholder: 2%</p>
<p><b>Mehdi Khalaji</b> (78.1%) May 2024 Washington Institute (WINEP)</p>	<p><b>QUOTE:</b> IRGC would push for 'a Supreme Leader who is too weak to reject its authority, such as an older, respected, ailing ayatollah who lacks the years and energy needed to shape the Islamic Republic as he wishes.' Next leader: 'someone who has a weapon in one hand and the key to a prison in the other.'</p>	<p><b>RULED OUT:</b> Mojtaba (too independently powerful via father's network — contradicts 'too weak to reject IRGC authority'). H. Khomeini (moderate, no security credentials — contradicts 'weapon in one hand, prison key in other'). Council (Khalaji predicts single leader controlled by IRGC, not collective).</p> <p><b>RULED IN:</b> Mohseni-Ejei (perfectly fits 'weapon + prison key' archetype: Chief Justice, ex-Intelligence Minister, deep security ties). Araf ('weak' bureaucratic cleric, controllable). Bushehri (elderly, low-profile Assembly figure). Mirbagheri (hardline, security ties). Noori Hamedani (fits 'older, respected, ailing ayatollah' literally).</p>	<p><b>REASONING:</b> Two distinct archetypes described: (1) 'weapon + prison key' = Mohseni-Ejei exactly; (2) 'older, ailing ayatollah too weak to resist IRGC' = Araf, Bushehri, or Noori Hamedani. Mojtaba explicitly contradicted (not weak, not controllable). H. Khomeini explicitly contradicted (no weapon, no prison key).</p> <p><b>WEIGHTS (κ=14):</b> Mohseni-Ejei: 35%, Araf: 22%, Council: 3%, Mojtaba: 3%, Mirbagheri: 10%, Bushehri: 12%, Larjani: 5%, Other: 5%, Placeholder: 5%</p>
<p><b>Ali Alfoneh</b> (77.5%) 2024 AGSI Research</p>	<p><b>QUOTE:</b> 'The IRGC will use its economic, political, and military power to mobilize public support, marginalize opponents among Iran's civilian technocratic elites, and emerge as kingmaker.' Successor 'will, for all practical purposes, be beholden to the IRGC.' After Raisi's death: IRGC must find someone 'as artless as the late President Raisi.'</p>	<p><b>RULED OUT:</b> Mojtaba (too independently powerful — contradicts 'beholden to IRGC' and 'artless'). H. Khomeini (civilian/reformist — would be marginalized by IRGC). Strong independent leaders of any kind.</p> <p><b>RULED IN:</b> Araf ('artless' bureaucrat, controllable). Mohseni-Ejei (security loyalist, IRGC-compatible). Bushehri (low-profile, controllable). Council (IRGC may prefer collective they dominate). Mirbagheri (IRGC-aligned hardliner).</p>	<p><b>REASONING:</b> 'Artless' and 'beholden to IRGC' point to weak/controllable candidates. Araf is the best fit for 'artless' (bureaucratic, no independent base). Mohseni-Ejei is IRGC-compatible but not exactly 'artless.' Mojtaba contradicted by 'beholden to IRGC' (he would have independent power base). Council possible as IRGC-dominated collective.</p> <p><b>WEIGHTS (κ=12):</b> Mohseni-Ejei: 18%, Araf: 30%, Council: 12%, Mojtaba: 3%, H. Khomeini: 2%, Mirbagheri: 8%, Bushehri: 15%, Larjani: 5%, Other: 5%, Placeholder: 2%</p>

<p><b>Afshon Ostovar</b> (81.3%) Jul 2025 NPR</p>	<p><b>QUOTE:</b> Successor 'inherently weaker than his predecessor.' 'If you didn't have a cleric succeeding Khamenei, you would no longer have an Islamic revolution.' IRGC sees succession 'as opportunity for advancement.'</p>	<p><b>RULED OUT:</b> Council / abolition of position (Ostovar insists cleric constitutionally necessary — 'would no longer have an Islamic revolution'). Larijani (not a cleric in traditional sense). Any non-cleric IRGC commander taking the title.</p> <p><b>RULED IN:</b> Weak cleric who gives IRGC 'opportunity' = Araf, Mohseni-Ejei, Bushehri. Mojtaba at reduced weight (mid-level cleric, but 'weaker than predecessor' fits his lack of Khamenei's stature).</p>	<p><b>REASONING:</b> Two constraints: (1) must be a cleric, (2) must be weaker than Khamenei. This rules out Council and non-clerics. Among clerics, 'inherently weaker' points to those without independent power bases: Araf and Bushehri primarily. Mohseni-Ejei is strong but weaker than Khamenei. Mojtaba is weaker in formal rank but has informal power — partial fit.</p> <p><b>WEIGHTS (κ=10):</b> Mohseni-Ejei: 25%, Araf: 25%, Council: 3%, Mojtaba: 10%, H. Khomeini: 5%, Mirbagheri: 12%, Bushehri: 13%, Larijani: 2%, Other: 3%, Placeholder: 2%</p>
<p><b>Barbara Slavin</b> (83.3%) 2022 Atlantic Council</p>	<p><b>QUOTE:</b> Real decision 'determined in advance and in secret.' IRGC 'likely has an even bigger say in who becomes Supreme Leader than the Assembly of Experts.' As Raisi 'stumbled, the prospects of Mojtaba have advanced.'</p>	<p><b>RULED OUT:</b> None explicitly ruled out. Slavin's framing is that IRGC decides in secret, so any IRGC-compatible candidate is possible.</p> <p><b>RULED IN:</b> Mojtaba (explicitly said prospects 'advanced'). Mohseni-Ejei (IRGC-compatible, pre-arranged). Araf (IRGC-compatible). Council possible if IRGC prefers it.</p>	<p><b>REASONING:</b> Mojtaba gets elevated weight ('prospects advanced'). But the 'determined in secret' framing means Slavin is uncertain about the specific individual. IRGC as decisive actor means all IRGC-compatible candidates remain plausible. Spread is broad with Mojtaba lead.</p> <p><b>WEIGHTS (κ=8):</b> Mohseni-Ejei: 20%, Araf: 15%, Council: 10%, Mojtaba: 25%, H. Khomeini: 8%, Mirbagheri: 5%, Bushehri: 8%, Larijani: 5%, Other: 2%, Placeholder: 2%</p>
<p><b>Alex Vatanka</b> (85.0%) Mar 2026 MEI Commentary</p>	<p><b>QUOTE:</b> Highlighted Araf as serious contender: Khamenei had 'a great deal of confidence in his bureaucratic abilities.' But cautioned Araf 'isn't known to be a political heavyweight.' Warned succession 'could result in internal infighting unlike anything we have seen since the early 1980s.'</p>	<p><b>RULED OUT:</b> None explicitly, but 'infighting' language suggests outcome is highly uncertain.</p> <p><b>RULED IN:</b> Araf (named specifically with positive credential). Mohseni-Ejei (interim council member). Council (infighting could produce collective as compromise). H. Khomeini (infighting = multiple factions, moderates could participate). Mojtaba (always in discussion).</p>	<p><b>REASONING:</b> Araf is the only specifically named candidate with a positive assessment ('confidence in bureaucratic abilities'), giving him the lead. But 'isn't a political heavyweight' is a limitation signal. 'Infighting unlike 1980s' implies broad uncertainty — no candidate is dominant. Council elevated as infighting compromise outcome.</p> <p><b>WEIGHTS (κ=8):</b> Mohseni-Ejei: 15%, Araf: 30%, Council: 15%, Mojtaba: 10%, H. Khomeini: 10%, Mirbagheri: 5%, Bushehri: 5%, Larijani: 5%, Other: 3%, Placeholder: 2%</p>
<p><b>Ray Takeyh</b> (64.3%) Mar 1, 2026 NPR</p>	<p><b>QUOTE:</b> 'I suspect that the regime already has succession in place... I think the regime already knows how it's going to manage the succession.'</p>	<p><b>RULED OUT:</b> Council / structural transformation (Takeyh's 'already in place' implies pre-arranged single leader, not a novel collective arrangement). Other / Unknown (pre-arranged = known candidate).</p> <p><b>RULED IN:</b> Mohseni-Ejei (on Khamenei's nominee list, interim council). H. Khomeini (on Khamenei's nominee list). Araf (interim council, Assembly deputy chair). Mojtaba (often discussed as pre-arranged). Hejazi was on nominee list but reportedly killed.</p>	<p><b>REASONING:</b> 'Already in place' implies Khamenei's three nominees (Mohseni-Ejei, Hejazi [killed], H. Khomeini) are the pool. Since Hejazi is reportedly dead, this narrows to Mohseni-Ejei and H. Khomeini from that list, plus Araf from institutional positioning. Mojtaba possible as behind-scenes arrangement.</p> <p><b>WEIGHTS (κ=10):</b> Mohseni-Ejei: 30%, Araf: 15%, Council: 3%, Mojtaba: 10%, H. Khomeini: 22%, Mirbagheri: 5%, Bushehri: 5%, Larijani: 5%, Other: 3%, Placeholder: 2%</p>

<p><b>Michael Rubin</b> (60.0%) Post-Feb 2026 AEI Commentary</p>	<p><b>QUOTE:</b> Suggested elderly interim successor (Grand Ayatollah Noori Hamedani, ~100, or Ahmad Jannati, 97) as placeholder; Brezhnev→Andropov→Chernenko→Gorbachev parallel. Post-assassination: warned of possible 'military junta' rather than traditional clerical succession.</p>	<p><b>RULED OUT:</b> H. Khomeini (moderate; Rubin's framework predicts hardline continuity or junta). Arafı (not part of his analysis).</p> <p><b>RULED IN:</b> Noori Hamedani / Jannati placeholder (explicitly named). Mojtaba (eventual successor after placeholder). Council / military junta (explicitly warned). Mohseni-Ejei (security figure compatible with junta framing).</p>	<p><b>REASONING:</b> Two distinct scenarios: (1) elderly placeholder → Mojtaba later, (2) military junta. Both are specific and creative predictions but from the panel's lowest-accuracy expert (60%). Placeholder gets elevated weight per his specific naming. Junta maps to Council.</p> <p><b>WEIGHTS (κ=10):</b> Mohseni-Ejei: 10%, Arafı: 5%, Council: 22%, Mojtaba: 18%, H. Khomeini: 2%, Mirbagheri: 5%, Bushehri: 3%, Larjani: 5%, Other: 5%, Placeholder: 25%</p>
<p><b>Abbas Milani</b> (81.3%) May 2024 Project Syndicate</p>	<p><b>QUOTE:</b> Succession is a 'legitimacy crisis' not a personnel question. IRGC centrality to any transition is the defining structural feature.</p>	<p><b>RULED OUT:</b> None explicitly — this is a structural prediction, not a personnel prediction. However, 'legitimacy crisis' implies the outcome will not be a figure who resolves legitimacy (so H. Khomeini, who has revolutionary lineage, gets only modest benefit).</p> <p><b>RULED IN:</b> All IRGC-compatible outcomes equally. Council (structural crisis could produce collective). Mohseni-Ejei, Arafı (IRGC-approved). Mojtaba (IRGC-connected). 'Legitimacy crisis' framing means no candidate fully resolves the problem.</p>	<p><b>REASONING:</b> No individual preferences expressed — Milani explicitly frames this as structural, not personnel. All IRGC-compatible outcomes receive roughly equal weight. Council elevated slightly because 'legitimacy crisis' suggests the single-leader model itself is the problem.</p> <p><b>WEIGHTS (κ=6):</b> Mohseni-Ejei: 18%, Arafı: 18%, Council: 22%, Mojtaba: 10%, H. Khomeini: 5%, Mirbagheri: 5%, Bushehri: 5%, Larjani: 7%, Other: 5%, Placeholder: 5%</p>
<p><b>Robin Wright</b> (65.0%) Various Wilson Center / New Yorker</p>	<p><b>QUOTE:</b> IRGC exercises power behind the scenes; 'real center of power has always been the revolutionary apparatus.' Post-Khomeini Iran will be shaped by security establishment dynamics.</p>	<p><b>RULED OUT:</b> None explicitly — generic structural prediction.</p> <p><b>RULED IN:</b> All IRGC-compatible outcomes. Generic prediction with no individual preferences.</p>	<p><b>REASONING:</b> Wright does not name specific candidates for successor. Her analysis points to IRGC dominance but without specificity. This maps to a broad, nearly uniform distribution across IRGC-compatible outcomes, with slight emphasis on Council (IRGC 'behind scenes' = collective front).</p> <p><b>WEIGHTS (κ=6):</b> Mohseni-Ejei: 18%, Arafı: 18%, Council: 18%, Mojtaba: 10%, H. Khomeini: 5%, Mirbagheri: 5%, Bushehri: 5%, Larjani: 10%, Other: 6%, Placeholder: 5%</p>

## Part 5: Bayesian Consensus Forecast

### 5.1 Aggregation Method

The consensus is computed as the accuracy-weighted linear pool of the 14 expert probability vectors from Part 4. Each expert's vector is weighted by their Beta posterior mean  $E[p]$  (track record accuracy). The correlation adjustment then extremizes the result using factor  $d = 0.69$ , correcting for shared information. HDIs are computed from the Monte Carlo posterior across 100,000 draws.

### 5.2 Consensus Forecast (Extremized, Correlation-Adjusted)

Contender / Outcome	Mean	Std Dev	80% HDI	95% HDI
Mohseni-Ejei	20.3%	7.8%	[10.3%, 30.3%]	[5.0%, 35.5%]
Arafi	18.5%	7.3%	[9.2%, 27.9%]	[4.2%, 32.9%]
Council	14.0%	12.2%	[0.5%, 29.6%]	[0.2%, 37.9%]
Mojtaba	12.3%	11.8%	[0.5%, 27.4%]	[0.2%, 35.4%]
H. Khomeini	5.8%	5.8%	[0.5%, 13.2%]	[0.2%, 17.1%]
Mirbagheri	7.3%	5.3%	[0.5%, 14.1%]	[0.2%, 17.7%]
Bushehri	7.6%	4.2%	[2.3%, 12.9%]	[0.2%, 15.8%]
Larijani	5.2%	2.9%	[1.5%, 9.0%]	[0.2%, 10.9%]
Other	4.9%	2.7%	[1.4%, 8.4%]	[0.2%, 10.3%]
Placeholder	4.0%	5.7%	[0.5%, 11.4%]	[0.2%, 15.3%]

### 5.3 Tracing the Consensus: Why These Numbers

**Mohseni-Ejei leads at 20.3%:** Six experts give him  $\geq 20\%$  weight: Sadjadpour (20%), Ostovar (25%), Khalaji (35%), Nasr (35%), Takeyh (30%), Slavin (20%). He fits two archetypes: Khalaji's 'weapon + prison key' (Chief Justice, ex-Intelligence Minister) and Nasr's 'hardline cleric after assassination.' Only Aarabi (12%), Rubin (10%), and Vaez (10%) give him low weight.

**Arafi at 18.5%:** Strongest support from Vatanka (30%), Alfoneh (30%), Sadjadpour (25%), Ostovar (25%), Khalaji (22%). Fits 'obscurity promoted' (Sadjadpour), 'artless' controllable cleric (Alfoneh), 'bureaucratic abilities' (Vatanka). Lower from Nasr (15%), Rubin (5%), and Vaez (8%) who see either hardline or structural outcomes.

**Leadership Council at 14.0%:** Driven almost entirely by Vaez (50%) and Milani (22%), with support from Rubin (22% for 'military junta'). Vaez's 'last supreme leader' prediction, at 84.4% accuracy, anchors this outcome. But 10 of 14 experts give Council  $\leq 12\%$ , keeping it from dominating. Council is the highest-variance outcome.

**Mojtaba at 12.3%:** Aarabi is the sole strong advocate (50%), with Slavin giving 25% and Rubin 18%. But seven experts give him  $\leq 10\%$ : Sadjadpour ('trigger unrest'), Khalaji ('too powerful for IRGC to control'), Alfoneh ('not artless'), Nasr ('hardline cleric, not mid-level'), Vaez (3%), Ostovar (10%), Milani (10%). The highest-accuracy experts systematically discount him.

**H. Khomeini at 5.8%:** Only Takeyh (22%) and Maloney (15%) give him significant weight. Both note he was on Khamenei's nominee list. But Nasr's conditional ('assassination  $\rightarrow$  hardliner, not moderate') directly works against him, and Khalaji rules him out ('no weapon, no prison key'). Eight experts give him  $\leq 5\%$ .

**Mirbagheri at 7.3%:** Nasr is his primary booster (22%), since the assassination conditional points to ultra-hardliners. Sadjadpour (12%), Khalaji (10%), Ostovar (12%) also assign meaningful weight. He fits the 'hardline cleric' archetype but has limited public profile beyond the Paydari Front base.

**Bushehri at 7.6%:** Benefits from the 'weak, controllable cleric' archetype across multiple experts: Alfoneh (15%), Ostovar (13%), Khalaji (12%), Maloney (12%). No expert gives him the lead, but he accumulates weight as a second-tier IRGC-approved option.

**Lower-probability outcomes:** Larijani (5.2%) functions as kingmaker/broker; Vaez (12%) and Wright (10%) see him in this role. Placeholder/Noori Hamedani (4.0%) is almost entirely Rubin's prediction (25%) from the lowest-accuracy expert. Other/Unknown (4.9%) captures residual tail risk.

## Part 6: Technical Appendix & References

### 6.1 Model Parameters

Parameter	Value
Monte Carlo draws	N = 100,000
Prior	Jeffreys Beta(0.5, 0.5)
Total experts	14
Total scored predictions	76
Correlation matrix	14×14; DC cluster 0.35–0.50, IRGC cluster 0.30–0.45
Effective independent experts	10.4 / 14 (eigenvalue method)
Extremizing factor d	0.69 (Satopää et al. 2014)
Dirichlet kappa range	6–16
Aggregation	Accuracy-weighted linear pool, extremized
HDI levels	80% and 95%
Scoring scale	TRUE=1.0, MOSTLY TRUE=0.75, PARTIAL=0.5, MOSTLY FALSE=0.25, FALSE=0.0
Random seed	42
Successor categories	10: Mohseni-Ejei, Arafai, Council, Mojtaba, H.Khomeini, Mirbagheri, Bushehri, Larijani, Other, Placeholder

### 6.2 Key References

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## **6.3 Limitations**

- 1. Prediction scoring is subjective. The 5-point scale mitigates but does not eliminate this.**
- 2. Probability vectors inferred from public statements, not elicited directly from experts.**
- 3. The ruled-out/ruled-in mapping from verbatim statements to weights involves interpretive judgment. Different analysts could construct different mappings from the same statements.**
- 4. Correlation matrix constructed qualitatively.**
- 5. All predictions weighted equally regardless of temporal proximity or difficulty.**
- 6. Living-crisis analysis; ground truth undetermined as of March 3, 2026.**

**7. Mojtaba's survival status uncertain; if confirmed deceased, his ~12.5% redistributes primarily to Mohseni-Ejei, Araf, and Council.**

**8. Kappa assignment is subjective. Higher kappa for specific-candidate experts concentrates their distribution more tightly, amplifying their influence on the consensus for those candidates.**