

In the Wake of the Elections: Iranians, Watch Your Back!

by Hussein Askary

June 18—As this report is being written, the Iranian streets continued to simmer, for the sixth consecutive day, with demonstrations and counter-demonstrations, both peaceful and violent, by supporters of the “moderate reformist” Presidential candidate, Mir Hossein Mousavi, and the sitting “hardline” President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad. The dispute is related to allegations of vote rigging in the 10th Presidential elections, June 12, since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, giving the victory to Ahmedinejad.

Suspicion of vote-rigging arose when Ahmadinejad was declared the winner the night of the election, when reportedly only 20% of the votes were counted. Ahmedinejad reportedly won 69% of the vote, later adjusted to 62%, bringing him reelection to a second term. This is unprecedented in all recent elections, in which the top two candidates were always forced to hold a runoff, after no candidate had received more than 50% of the vote. It has to be stated that opinion polls before the election showed Ahmedinejad leading Mousavi, but only with a very narrow margin.

Mousavi protested the results, and later filed for a recount, and even invalidation of the election. Mehdi Karroubi, the other reform candidate, also immediately protested the election outcome, and has participated in demonstrations. After two days of delay and violent demonstrations, religious Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei instructed the Guardian Council to undertake a review of the vote. Supporters of the reformist

candidates, not the candidates themselves, both inside and outside the country, argue that a coup d'état was carried out under the direction of Khamenei, who, according to the Iranian Constitution and “Velayeti Fagih” system (invented by Ayatollah Khomeini after the 1979 Islamic Revolution), is the final and supreme arbiter of any dispute related to policy-making by the elected Presidency.

The Strategic Context

However dramatic the picture inside the country may be, it would be a fatal miscalculation to neglect the fact that the global strategic situation is affecting, and is being affected by Iran's internal conflict.

The world situation is dominated by the process of the decaying British empire and its globalized financial and monetary system. The world, and especially the region surrounding Iran, and South and Southwest Asia, has been dominated by British geopolitics for more than a century. Since the untimely death of anti-imperialist U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt in April 1945, the United States has been dragged into various geopolitical manipulations by the “dear British allies,” as a junior partner, time and again, in the region, contrary to widespread myths about “American Imperialism.”

Nonetheless, that does not exonerate those U.S. leaders who have willingly endorsed an imperial view of the world, such as George W. Bush and Dick Cheney. Iran in particular, since the 1891 Tobacco Revolt



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Former Prime Minister Mir Hossein Mousavi (inset), the leading challenger to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the Iranian elections, has disputed the official results, as his supporters and those of the other reform candidates took to the streets in protest. The British imperialists would like to trigger another “color revolution” in Iran.

(against granting Britain a monopoly over the tobacco trade in the country), has been a playground for British intelligence operations, destabilizing one ruler and installing another as it suited the Empire’s interests. The Iranians themselves know this very well, but still fall every now and then into the spider web of the British Empire, every time they look for a pragmatic ally who would help one faction against the other. The emergence of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), as one of the few foreign media sources allowed to broadcast from inside the country, in spite of Iranian government accusations in recent months that it is a spy operation, is a clear illustration of this irony. The BBC played a key role in destabilizing the Shah in 1979. (Since this article was written, on June 20-21, the Iranian leadership, notably Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and Foreign Minister Mottaki have identified the British role in destabilizing Iran. Khamenei described Britain as “the greatest evil.”—ed.)

As Lyndon LaRouche warned recently, with the breakdown crisis of not only the global casino economy, but also the physical economies of all nations,

with threatened mass unemployment, social crisis, food crisis, and most immediately dangerous, the collapse of the health-care infrastructure systems in the face of the swine flu pandemic, the British financial empire and oligarchy are launching a “chaos operation” to prevent a system of sovereign nation-states from replacing the corpse of the old British financial order.

LaRouche has stressed the collaborative role of the United States, Russia, China, and India, is key to reorganizing a new just, world economic system, that would take power over the world economy away from the British-centered private interests, and return it to sovereign nations. That would also mean the collaboration of sovereign nations to cure and stabilize the danger spots created by British geopolitics, especially in South and Southwest Asia.

In 2004, LaRouche already forecast that the Iraq War would be a long, drawn-out disaster for the invading U.S.A., a quagmire that could only be resolved by true collaboration among all the neighbors of Iraq, in a plan of economic development. LaRouche laid that out in his Spring 2004 strategic study, “The LaRouche Doctrine”

(EIR April 30, 2004). In the context of the global financial meltdown, that perspective is more urgent than ever.

A stable Iran (whatever the final outcome of this latest contest may be) would play a key role in this process. Contrary to British, European, and American media propaganda, Iran is not a threat to world security and peace. However, a destabilized Iran is a threat, based on the mere fact of not being able to collaborate with the U.S., Russia, China, India, Pakistan, and Turkey to stabilize the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan.

Even during Bush's final months in the White House, top U.S. military figures and Defense Secretary Robert Gates recognized Iran's role in helping to stop the drug trafficking from Afghanistan, where opium is a major source of income and weapons trade in support of the Taliban. Following the election of President Barack Obama, who committed more troops to Afghanistan, the dialogue with Iran was poised to be intensified.

Iraq, where the George Bush/Tony Blair fascist duo produced a disaster with the 2003 invasion, is another major point of potential dialogue between the U.S. and Iran. Without Iran's input, it is impossible to stabilize that war-torn country. The U.S.-Iran dialogue on Iraqi security has been formal, and established since the Bush Administration. Iran can also play a major role in the Israeli-Arab peace process, through its ties to both Syria, and Hamas in Palestine. It can contribute to easing the internal tension in Lebanon through its relationship to Hezbollah.

Of course, Ahmedinejad's reelection would continue to be a source of tension that could be used by Anglo-American/Anglo-Saudi and Israeli warmongers and geopolitical manipulators. Tensions in the Gulf will rise, especially as the Anglo-Saudis believe and vociferously propagandize that Ahmadinejad would resort to "exporting" his domestic problems by opening new fronts against his "Sunni" neighbors and the United States. The Anglo-Saudi press, such as the London-based Saudi daily, *Asharq al-Awsat*, is full of *Schadenfreude* and expectations of new confrontations between Iran and the U.S.

The British-controlled Bush-Cheney Administration failed in fomenting an all-out sectarian war in the region along the lines dividing "Shi'a axis"—Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah in Lebanon—against the U.S.-supported "Sunni axis" of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and the minor Gulf States.

Nonetheless, it is expected that continued turmoil in Iran will awaken the hawk faction that has been dor-

mant since the end of the Bush Administration. That includes the imperialists of continental Europe too, as the case of the May 26 French-U.A.E. defense agreement illustrates. The French daily *Le Figaro* reported on June 15 that secret clauses of the agreement during the inauguration of a French naval base at Abu Dhabi, state that France is committing itself to use all military means at its disposal to defend the U.A.E., were it to come under attack. "All military means" also means nuclear weapons, if necessary, stated the *Le Figaro* article. "The containment of Iran has started," claimed the article. "Since Tehran has not given a favorable response to Washington's proposals for negotiations, the major capitals are now preparing for all scenarios."

Sane voices in the international community know that it has to be taken into account that no Iranian President or political leader, no matter whether reformist or extremist, would accept ending the Iranian nuclear program. The Iranian nation, which is committed to harnessing this technology for its future development, would consider it treason if any of its leaders would make compromises about enriching nuclear fuel or building new nuclear power plants. Senior members of the U.S. Congress, including Rep. John Tierney (D-Mass.), in a speech on June 17 to the National Iranian-American Council (NIAC), and Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), in a June 18 *Washington Post* op-ed, both acknowledge this reality, and recognize that the U.S. must continue to pursue direct engagement with Iran, regardless of the election.

The Threat from Israel

Israeli leaders have been beating the drums for years that the Iranians are close to building a nuclear bomb "to wipe Israel off the map." Israeli air force fighter pilots have reportedly been training for simulated attacks on Iranian nuclear power plants and other facilities. Although it is practically impossible for Israel to launch such an attack without support from the U.S. or European bases in the region, real provocations are not to be excluded.

Ironically, President Ahmadinejad's disputed election results got the endorsement from none other than the chief of the Israeli Mossad, Meir Dagan, who told the Knesset foreign policy and defense committee on June 16 that Israel would have a harder time pursuing its hardline Iran policy if Mousavi is elected.

"Election fraud in Iran is no different than what happens in liberal states during elections," said Dagan, adding that he believes the opposition demos will fade



Many religious leaders support the reformers, but Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is moving to crush any challenge to the theocracy's control of the President and parliament. At the same time, he has pointed to the British role behind the destabilization of Iran.

away, and the election of Ahmadinejad will stand. Expressing relief at the victory of the hardline Iranian leader who the Israelis say wants to wipe Israel off the map, Dagan added, "If the reformist candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi had won, Israel would have had a more serious problem, because it would need to explain to the world the danger of the Iranian threat, since Mousavi is perceived internationally as a moderate element. . . . It is important to remember that he is the one who began Iran's nuclear program when he was prime minister."

Also, commenting on the Iranian elections, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak told Israeli radio that the world has to "swiftly act" to prevent Tehran from advancing its nuclear program, saying, "Iran is in the midst of a very dangerous process. Steps must be planned in advance within a time frame that isn't too long. We don't have much time." He added, "We've resolved not to take any option off the table and we expect others to do the same." Despite the Mossad chief's declaring the Iranian election to be as fair as in "liberal states," Barak reminded his listeners, "One mustn't forget we are dealing with a dictatorial regime run by ayatollahs. . . ."

Coup or Counter-Coup?

The danger of an implosion of the situation in Iran will remain high in the coming days. The level of vio-

lence among the supporters of the two sides could lead to horrible, bloody confrontations all over the country. This could open the gates wide open for foreign-supported ethnic militants in the Arab, Belochi, Azeri, and Kurdish provinces, throwing the whole country into multiple violent conflicts and chaos.

The outside world should do its best to avoid aiding in this process, whether wittingly or unwittingly, and let the Iranians resolve their differences, hopefully, peacefully. What the outside world should do is to assure the Iranian nation that the dialogue with Iran will continue and strategic and economic cooperation is on the table, instead of military attacks or sanctions.

However, the internal rift has become so wide, that some drastic changes in the form of government and institutions in Iran will become imperative no matter who wins in the end. It is from this standpoint that the talk about a "coup" is emerging. The question is not whether there will be a revolution, but whether there will be gradual changes in the state institutions and power structures to ensure the establishment of a true republic with political and civil freedoms, and a truly elected representative government.

It has to be highlighted that there is an internal conflict among factions of the same "revolutionary" establishment. Following the first demonstrations last week, 100 political leaders who have been close to reformist candidate Mousavi and his close ally, former President Seyed Mohammad Khatami, were arrested. Among the arrested were Mohammad-Reza Khatami, brother of the former President, and his wife, who is the granddaughter of Imam Khomeini, together with Mohammad Ali Abtahi, a former advisor to President Khatami. These figures were arrested at their homes and not at the demonstrations. This amounts to a coup, since these leaders are not simply new revolutionaries, but actually have been an active part of the Islamic Revolution since the days of Imam Khomeini. It has to be emphasized that many notable religious personalities, so-called "Ayatollahs," such as Ayatollah Ali Montazari and Ayatollah Nouri, support the reformist camp. So the rift goes through the entire religious establishment as well.

What is behind this escalation is not simply the Presidential elections, but a move by religious Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei to crush any discussion of constitutional reform which would deprive him and the theocracy of absolute power over both the President and Parliament. A victory of the reformist group would have

put the question of a serious republican system on the table.

Iran has been suffering under this double command for years. There are two governments in the country: One is run by the elected government and one is run by the clergy—increasingly, with its security apparatus.

This also means that enormous economic resources have to be diverted away from economic development into sustaining political and armed organizations such as the Basij militias, the Bunyad organizations, where, through financial support to the poor and the victims of the bloody Iran-Iraq War, these layers have become a paid-for support group for the clergy and whoever sides with it.

Ahmedinejad has thrown all his fanatic allegiance to Ayatollah Khamenei, and has been pursuing a populist campaign of attacking the middle class and wealthy, who, he stated in the election campaign, are the corrupt element supporting the reformist opposition, while he himself was spending state income on buying the loyalty and votes of the poor, whom he promised to lift out of poverty in past election campaigns. Their conditions have not improved, for lack of use of the oil revenues to develop infrastructure, or industrial and agricultural projects. Instead, the poor, in both the cities and the rural areas, have become a kind of cargo cult, dependent on the charity of the state and religious institutions. It is this unsustainable situation which lies under the surface of this turmoil. It is unavoidable that this system will be challenged in the coming months, whatever the outcome of the election may be.

Since the 1891 “Tobacco Revolt” against the Qajari monarchy’s attempt to submit to British imperialism, a revolt which led to the “constitutional revolt” of 1904, Iranians have resorted to mass demonstrations as legitimate expression of their grievances and aspirations. The British role in diverting these protests into bloody “revolutions” has been the problem. In the Western media, the current demonstrations are being portrayed as a copy of the “color” revolutions: the “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine, the “Purple Revolution” in Georgia, or the street riots in Thailand, which all showed that the outcome is disaster. What has happened in these cases, is that the “democratic” movement was taken over by such servants of the British empire as George Soros and the “democracy mafia” in Europe and the United States. Fair and free elections are imperative to solve this situation. Until that is achieved, watch your back!