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USADI Commentary

The Second Reinvention of a Murderous Mullah

On May 5, 1989, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, then Iran's powerful Speaker of Parliament and acting Commander-in-Chief, called on Palestinians to kill Americans and other Westerners. Speaking at a Friday prayers congregation, he told the crowd, "If in retaliation for every Palestinian martyred in Palestine they kill and execute, not inside Palestine, five Americans, or Britons or Frenchmen," the Israelis "would not continue these wrongs." He continued, "It is not difficult to kill Americans or Frenchmen. It is a bit difficult to kill [Israelis]. But there are so many [Americans and Frenchmen] everywhere in the world."

It took the ever-cunning Rafsanjani just a few weeks to re-invent himself as a "moderate" establishment leader whom the West could deal with. Less than a month after his tirade, Ayatollah Khomeini, the founding father of Iran's terror-sponsoring theocracy, died. As a result of a series of power sharing arrangement between the regime's leaders, Ali Khamenei became the supreme leader and Rafsanjani positioned himself to be the next president, a post occupied by Khamenei till then.

Sixteen years later, Rafsanjani is at it again with another revolting charm offensive, which looks more and more like a rehash of his 1989 campaign, tailored mainly for his Western audience. The reoccurring fascination in the West with elections in Iran seems rather misplaced given that they are futile exercises aimed at legitimizing a rogue regime. The ruling regime consistently exploits the electoral process to generate an appearance of democracy to camouflage its tyrannical theocracy.

Rafsanjani's campaign promises today are not substantially different from those he made in 1989, however both Iran's and Rafsanjani's political positions are vastly different from what they were 16 years ago. Back then, he skillfully sold his agenda to the West as a "moderate" or "pragmatist". Rafsanjani cunningly boasted that his presidency would usher Iran into an era of achieving economic and social progress, relaxing restrictions on political freedoms, and paying attention to the issues of youth and women,. He also deceptively pledged that Iran will end its rogue behavior abroad. His two terms in office as president proved just the opposite. He was so disgraced at the end of his term that he could not even win a seat in the February 2000 parliamentary election. So despised is Rafsanjani that most of his election posters use his middle-name "Hashemi" rather than his last name "Rafsanjani."

As for Iran, the demography and political landscape have drastically changed since 1989. The country has been the scene of many uprisings nationwide. Although uprisings were brutally suppressed by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corp (IRGC) and other security forces, their recurrence and sustained objective of toppling the clerical regime, clearly show the mullahs' lack of popular legitimacy.

Never before, have the mullahs been so desperately in need of an appearance of legitimacy. Domestically, they are despised by the majority of Iranians, and internationally they are scorned for their determined campaign to acquire the A-bomb, sponsor international terrorism, and sow seeds of instability in Iraq. By all accounts, the vast majority of Iranians will boycott the election farce. Don't, however, expect the clerical regime to release the actual voter turnout. There are reports that the clerical regime has already decided that the margin will be declared to be around 55 to 65 %, regardless of the actual voter turnout.

Agence France Presse quoted a government official as saying, "For the first time in an opinion poll, 23 percent of the electorate is saying that they won't be voting. It's an important figure because ahead of the last presidential elections, just five percent of people said they wouldn't vote". And the inflated official figure of the last presidential election was just about 66 percent. The mullahs' supreme leader Khamenei recently warned Iranians that, "The enemies will use every means to discourage the electorate from taking part in the June 17 election" and that "casting a ballot is like firing a bullet into the heart" of President George W. Bush.

In March 1990, one year into his first term, , the "moderate" Rafsanjani mocked President Bush Sr. for taking a telephone call from someone posing as Rafsanjani. "America is very much in need of talking to Iran, and praise be to God, is deprived of this. Iran is so important that the biggest power in the world, the biggest bully on earth, tries to contact its officials by telephone," Rafsanjani said. The hoax set up by Rafsanjani's faction then sought to embarrass President Bush over the issue of American hostages in Lebanon. Sixteen years later, one wonders what sort of hoax Rafsanjani is working up to trick George W. Bush over the issue of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons.

What is abundantly clear is that Rafsanjani will try to reinvent his image to preserve and perpetuate the clerical regime but we shouldn't expect his murderous methods to stop anytime soon. (USADI)

The US Alliance for Democratic Iran (USADI), is an independent, non-profit organization, which aims to advance a US policy on Iran that will benefit America's interests, through supporting Iranian people's aspirations for a democratic, secular, and peaceful government, free of tyranny, fundamentalism, weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism. The USADI is not affiliated with any government agencies, political groups or parties.

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Los Angeles Times

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Iran Preparing for Advanced Nuclear Work, Officials Say

ISTANBUL, Turkey - Iran has plans to install tens of thousands of advanced centrifuges at its huge underground nuclear plant near the central city of Natanz, which eventually would enable the nation to enrich uranium nearly twice as fast as anticipated, Western intelligence officials say.

The officials say there is no hard evidence that Iran is currently manufacturing the updated centrifuges and that the timetable for installation remains unknown. However, preparatory work is underway at the plant, they said in recent interviews, and the decision to rely on the superior type of centrifuge suggests Iran could manufacture fissile material for a possible weapon sooner than expected...

Stopping Iran from mastering the process of uranium enrichment is the central goal of the U.S. and EU. They have threatened to turn to the U.N. Security Council if Tehran abandons an agreement, reached with three European governments in November, to suspend enrichment activities.

The concern is that Iran, after developing sufficient enrichment capabilities, could more readily shift production from low-level enriched uranium for nuclear reactors to high levels for weapons, either secretly or after withdrawing from the nonproliferation treaty...

The complex at Natanz, about 150 miles south of Tehran, is the heart of Iran's enrichment effort. Plans call for more than 50,000 centrifuges to be installed in two vast underground halls, where they could produce large quantities of enriched uranium, the Western intelligence officials said.

Earlier this year, Iran finished covering the main plant with 25 feet of concrete and an additional layer of earth. Satellite photos show that the entrance to the underground complex and two large air shafts were concealed by what appear to be dummy buildings...

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Two Western intelligence officials and a nuclear expert, all from a government opposed to Iran's nuclear efforts, said they had developed "very solid information" about plans to manufacture and install 54,000 centrifuges at Natanz. They said up to two-thirds of them would be the advanced model, known as the P-2.

They said they were uncertain about the key issue of when Iran would build and install the machines. Tehran told the IAEA last year that it had stopped all research and development on P-2s. If Iran is building the advanced centrifuges, that would violate its agreements with the three European nations and the international agency, diplomats said.

In separate interviews, diplomats close to the IAEA said that, although it is likely Natanz will eventually house P-2s, they had no information that Iran was working on the machines...

Iran Focus

June 8, 2005

Voter discontent must not drive elections into second round

Tehran, Jun. 08 - Apathy among the populations must not be allowed to drive Iran's upcoming presidential elections into a second round a senior cleric in the holy city of Qom warned on Monday. Days before the upcoming June 17 presidential elections, a number of Iranian officials have voiced their concern about the high level of public apathy towards the elections, fearing that without a high population turnout the entire process would no longer be seen as legitimate, especially after Iran's powerful hard-line watchdog banned over 1,000 prospective candidates from standing.

If no candidate receives more than 50 percent of the ballot, it would be the first time since the 1979 revolution that a second round of elections would have to be held to choose between the two strongest candidates. Ayatollah Nasser-Makarem Shirazi, one of the highest-ranking clerics in the holy city said, "We must create excitement and interest for people to take part in the elections but while encouraging people, we must not allow for the elections to go into a second round".

"We must do something for candidates from all factions to reach some sort of unity so that there is not a split vote between them", Shirazi said. With only days to go, neither the conservative or reformist factions have been able to rally around a single candidate of their chose. Shirazi stressed that if there was widespread voter apathy and if there was a boycott of the polls then people should expect twice as much hardship as before...