

# USADI Dispatch

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## USADI Commentary

### The Untold Story of a Rigged Election

In case you missed it, a well-organized political coup last week propelled an obscure radical with a wicked past as a hostage-taker, assassin, and interrogator - nicknamed "the Terminator" by colleagues for firing coup de grace shots at political prisoners - into the office of presidency. The move, backed and blessed by the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and engineered by the notorious Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), cements the dominance of the ultra-conservative faction of the ruling regime over all key levers of power in Iran.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a former commander of the IRGC, was declared the winner in last week's rigged presidential elections. The untold story of the elections, however, was the evident metamorphosis of the ideological army of the mullahs, the IRGC, into a full political-military powerhouse.

Ahmadinejad's Presidency, therefore, will have major internal and foreign policy implications. Constitutionally, office of presidency in Iran has little power or control over key domestic or foreign policy issues. These issues are all decided by the office of the Supreme Leader. It is however a different matter when the person occupying the presidential office is a crony of Khamenei and will act as an executor of the office of the Supreme Leader. As one analyst told the Time magazine after elections, "Ahmadinejad is just the tip of the iceberg. Behind him are the regime's most powerful political and military institutions."

Ahmadinejad has not wasted any time to articulate the direction of his presidency, which gives a sneak preview into the thinking of the IRGC elite. According to Iran's state news agency, IRNA, he vowed this week to spread the "new" Islamic revolution throughout the world.

He told the agency, "Thanks to the blood of the martyrs, a new Islamic revolution has arisen and the Islamic revolution of 1384 (the current Iranian year) will, God willing, cut off the roots of injustice in the world." "The wave of the Islamic revolution will soon reach the entire world," the former assassin told IRNA.

What is more, the IRGC-sponsored Lebanese Hezbollah said that the election of Ahmadinejad would "revive and rejuvenate" the goals of the Islamic Revolution. "With the victory of Ahmadinejad in Iran's presidential race, this country returned to the foundations and revolutionary objectives which Ayatollah [Ruhollah] Khomeini founded," a member of Hezbollah's political bureau was quoted by the Iran Focus as saying. With such policy pronouncements, Ahmadinejad, an obscure figure for Iranians until recently, should feel very much at home in the presidential office. He was a commander of the Guards Corps' Qods (Jerusalem) Force, tasked with "exporting the revolution to Qods (Jerusalem) through Karbala".

For all the self-congratulatory diplomatic dispatches from their embassies in Tehran to their home office, predicting an easy victory for Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and even meeting with his close aides in Tehran right before the elections, the EU's Big-3 now have to deal with a new President who is a member of the Old Guard.

The recently published photo reportedly showing Ahmadinejad holding an American hostage in November 1979, fits well with his recent tirade against the United States, vowing, "the wave of the Islamic revolution will soon reach the entire world."

Ahmadinejad's win also serves as a wake-up call that we are indeed dealing with an irreformable fundamentalist regime that has all centers of theocratic power, the judiciary, the Parliament and now the presidency under his control. The IRGC, aided by para-military Bassij force and a multitude of security and intelligence agencies, has been in full control of internal security and crackdown on dissent since 1979. In addition, through the spread and sponsorship of terrorism, covert actions to undermine regional rivals and assassination of prominent Iranian dissidents, it has made its international presence felt since 1980. Last year, Supreme Leader Khamenei, who had already placed Iran's nuclear development under the IRGC's command, praised it for "running effective intelligence and diplomatic operations" in Iraq.

It is imperative that we fully comprehend the policy ramifications of Ahmadinejad's win and articulate our long-overdue Iran policy accordingly. The proposed "wait-and-see" response by the EU will not add anything substantial to the equation. The writing is on the wall: The ruling regime is incapable of change and the policy of engagement has been dealt a serious blow and must be discontinued. Only when Iran tyrants are unseated by the Iranian people, this growing regional and global menace will be neutralized. **(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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## The Times

June 29, 2005

### Iran's human face is gone

*By Michael Gove*

THE RECENT Iranian presidential elections were a triumph for the principle of one man, one vote. And the man with the vote this time, as always, was the country's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Iran's new President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, may well be the choice of the urban poor, the anti-sleaze candidate and the favourite of the military. But ultimately, he's the winner because he's also the guy who did best with one key demographic - bearded sixtysomething clerics called Ali who enjoy wielding supreme power within theocratic republics.

Even before the first vote was cast, a thousand potential presidential candidates were barred from running by the state's Guardian Council, itself hand-picked by Ayatollah Khamenei. The two rounds of voting that Iran just held were charades, Potemkin exercises designed to give the outside world the illusion that the Islamic Republic could hold an open election and sustain the lie that its leaders enjoy popular backing.

The television pictures of voters queueing to get to the polls were taken from previous elections, the polling stations themselves were policed by fundamentalist militias, ballot papers were held in reserve to ensure the vote went the prescribed way and the figures eventually announced were manufactured in a fashion that would have brought a tear to the eye of Saddam himself.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad won the second round of the presidential election with 17,248,782 votes. In the first round he got just 5,710,354 votes. In one week he secured the support of an extra 11,500,000 people, trebling his popularity, and scooping dramatically more votes than those earned in the first round by all the "hardline" candidates put together. All while the recorded turnout actually dropped. The figures just don't add up. And that's because they're made up. No independent observers are allowed to monitor what happens in polling stations, to scrutinise ballot boxes or attend counts. That would be to let daylight in upon the magic of theologically guided democracy.

Instead, Iran's ruling fundamentalist elite makes its dispositions, plucks the appropriate figures out of the air to lend support their choice, and then European chancelleries rush to play their appointed role in this farce by welcoming the people's choice to his new office.

There is, however, one important difference between this Iranian election and previous polls. It confirms the change in strategic direction decided on by Ayatollah Khamenei and his allies in the past 18 months or so, and apparent in their conduct of the 2004 parliamentary elections. That poll was every much an exercise in chicanery as last week's election, with huge numbers of candidates excluded even from consideration and comprehensive result-rigging. But what was significant, and different, about both these elections was the Iranian regime's decision to abandon their previous policy of fundamentalism with a human face and replace it with something altogether more uncompromising...

## The Wall Street Journal (Editorial)

June 28, 2005

### Iran Unveiled

To gauge the radicalism of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iran's next president, consider that prior to Friday's run-off election Western media widely described him as a "hardliner," whereas rival candidate Ali-Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani was a "moderate."

Mr. Rafsanjani is the former president whose tenure was marked by repression at home and dozens of terrorist attacks and assassinations abroad, including the 1994 bombing of the Jewish cultural center in Buenos Aires. Yet that record seems positively benign next to Mr. Ahmadinejad's. If there's a silver lining here, it is that the West may at last see the unveiled face of the Iranian regime and begin acting accordingly.

A student radical during Ayatollah Khomeini's revolution in the late 1970s, Mr. Ahmadinejad was involved in planning the seizure of the U.S. embassy and helped organize Khomeini's Islamic Cultural Revolution, during which universities were shut down and ideologically suspect lecturers and students were arrested and shot.

In the mid-1980s, he worked as an interrogator, or worse, in Tehran's infamous Evin Prison, according to Iranian sources. Mr. Ahmadinejad then joined the Special Brigade of the Revolutionary Guards, where he was an officer in the "Jerusalem Force," which had responsibility for terrorist attacks and assassinations abroad, including against prominent Iranian dissidents.

In the late 1990s, he was one of the organizers of Ansar-i-Hezbollah, government-sponsored vigilantes assigned to break up peaceful demonstrations. In April 2003, Mr. Ahmadinejad was appointed (not elected) mayor of Tehran, where he set about organizing "Abadgaran" (Developers) groups, which seek to return Iran to sterner Khomeinist principles...