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USADI Commentary

A New Beginning in Washington, an Old Menace from Tehran

As several thousands die-hard supporters of the Iranian theocracy were marking the 25th anniversary of taking 52 Americans hostage in Tehran on Wednesday, President George W. Bush was re-elected.

The Iranian state-run press decried Mr. Bush's re-election as a "victory for violence and for Zionists". "The United States is intrinsically opposed to the Islamic republic on matters such as Israel, the Middle East peace process, nuclear technology, human rights and democracy," wrote the *Siassat Rouz* daily. The paper, anticipating a more vigorous campaign by Washington in support of democracy movement in Iran, added that it expected "new hostile measures and new accusations from the United States".

A majority of Iranians, however, had a totally different view of the Tuesday elections, hoping that it would signal a new beginning marked by adopting a firm Iran policy in support of their movement for a secular democracy.

Ironically, it was the faithful 444-day-long occupation of the U.S. embassy in Tehran, which introduced America to the evil of the fundamentalist inspired terrorism. This menace plagued the world ever since and culminated in the September 11 tragedy.

The 1983 suicide bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, the 1996 bombing of Khobar Towers in Riyadh, the 1994 explosion of the Jewish community center in Argentina and hundreds of terrorist assaults on Iranian dissidents abroad were part of Khomeini's war on the free world. Referring to the 1983 Beirut bombing, Iran's former minister of the Revolutionary Guards said in the early 1990s that Tehran had provided "both the T.N.T. and the ideology" for the operation.

Years of appeasement, cloaked under the banner of constructive engagement, or the less-than adequate containment policy, contributed to the spread of Tehran-inspired terrorism as the mullahs soon realized that by continuing their rogue behavior they could gain diplomatic and strategic windfalls.

It is no wonder that even today Tehran is complaining it has not been adequately rewarded for its terrorist actions. On Wednesday, Hossein Mousavian, a top security official in Tehran said, "We showed goodwill and helped release the hostages [in Lebanon], but America reneged on its promises." Translation: we ordered our terrorist proxies, the very same ones we had directed to take American hostage, to release them but we have not been rewarded.

The absence of a coherent and firm policy toward Tehran in the past two decades explains why the mullahs embarked on running a very sophisticated clandestine nuclear weapons program in the mid-1980s. Then, warnings from nuclear proliferation experts and the Iranian opposition about Tehran's menacing nuclear intentions went unheeded, prompting the clerical regime to continue with its secret nuclear program.

Now, as the world is faced with the specter of the most active sponsor of terror going nuclear, the European Union is again prescribing incentives and compromise to resolve the nuclear standoff. It has even offered more carrots following Tehran's rejection of its initial appeasement package and is no longer calling for an "indefinite suspension of Iran's uranium enrichment."

On this side of the Atlantic, the expectation is that the re-election of President Bush would herald a marked departure from the "engagement" policy – a legacy of the Clinton administration – still lurking within our foreign policy-making circles.

Last Tuesday, majority of Americans declared their support for President Bush's vision that expansion of democracy in the Middle East, particularly in countries under totalitarian rule such as Iran, remained at the core of the war on terror and that nuclear proliferation by rogue regimes was unacceptable.

Speaking at the United Nations General Assembly in September, President Bush said, "For too long, American policy looked away while men and women were oppressed, their rights ignored and their hopes stifled. And that era is over". Now that he is re-elected, he ought to put the diplomatic and political weight of the United States behind the democracy movement in Iran that is working to unseat the ruling tyranny.

Iranians are hopeful that America would no longer "look away" when it comes to their struggle against the religious dictatorship in Iran, opting instead to stand by the people and the anti-fundamentalist democratic opposition there.

Strategically speaking, this would be the only effective "stick" available to Washington as it tries to cope with Iran's nuclear campaign. For the next four years, "democracy for Iran, security for America" should be the guiding light of our policy towards the terrorists who are running Iran.

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 Jerusalem Post

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Iran: children and nukes

While the world is busy contemplating the appropriate response to the looming Iranian nuclear threat - be it a European grand bargain, a covert operation, or a sophisticated military assault - life in Teheran appears to be running its normal course: celebrating uranium enrichment, developing a longer-range Shihab-3 missile and, of course, promoting the rule of law.

The rule of law, make no mistake, is a major preoccupation of the Islamic Republic. For it is not only determined to implement its mullah-style justice at home but also keen to export it, along with other "achievements" of its 25 years of theocratic rule...

In mid-October, a 13-year-old schoolgirl was sentenced to death by stoning in the northwestern city of Marivan for having an incestuous relationship with her 15-year-old brother. Zhila Izadi, who had become pregnant, was convicted of committing "moral sin" and giving birth to an "unholy child." Her brother, who would have otherwise been accused of rape, was given a sentence of 150 lashes. Under mounting international pressure, the clerical regime retracted Zhila's stoning sentence a week later and announced that she would serve time in prison instead.

Last August, the regime executed Atefeh Rajabi, a 16-year-old-girl who allegedly had a "sexual relationship with an unmarried man." Rajabi, an orphan who suffered years of abuse by her relatives, was apparently raped during interrogation by the very judge who had sentenced her to death. Rajabi was hanged in public in the northern town of Neka. The presiding judge personally put the noose around her neck, saying she was being executed for her "sharp tongue."

The mullahs' love and affection for Iranian children does not end there. On October 18 the Supreme Court upheld the execution sentences of three teenage boys, the Iran Focus news site reported. The boys are being held in the Center for Reform and Education (juvenile prison) until they turn 18, when they will be executed. Last month a 16-year-old Afghan boy, Feyz Mohammad, was sentenced to death for alleged drug smuggling. Five other teenagers are also on death row. ...

These children join thousands of other schoolchildren killed when they were sent, plastic "keys to heaven" around their necks, to sweep the mine fields during the bloody Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s. The list of child victims grows to tens of thousands when one adds the thousands of teenagers executed for political reasons since 1979...

In the coming weeks the world will continue its debate over the handling of the Iranian nuclear question. Countries of goodwill may try to reason with the Iranian mullahs in an attempt to reach an agreement that would slow down Iran's nuclear program.

If the abject failure of the previous agreements with Teheran is any indication, however, this exercise will also fail. Iran's theocracy will do anything and everything to get the nukes. And when they succeed, one can easily imagine what a regime that cares so little about its own children may do to the children of the "infidel" world.

"What might save us, me and you, is that the Russians love their children too," observed the singer Sting in 1987 as he reflected on the Cold War. In Iran under mullahs, unfortunately, we may not be so lucky.

Excerpts from an article by Nir Boms, the vice president of the Center for Freedom in the Middle East, and Reza Bulorchi, the executive director of the US Alliance for Democratic Iran.

Newsweek

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'Hey World, Pay Attention to Us!'

Nov. 8 issue - Hossein Derakhshan is tired of listening to the debate over Iran's nuclear-weapons program while the world ignores oppression inside Iran. So on his blog (hoder.com) he's pleading, "Hey, world! Pay attention to us!" He is one of thousands of Iranian Internet geeks enraged by the country's latest plan to clamp down on their cyberfreedoms. The government is planning to roll out an alternative network, called Shaare'2, that it hopes will eventually close off Iran's Web users to the outside world and allow in only what the state approves.

The move is a response to rapidly expanding Internet access. More than 2 million Iranians now use the Net regularly. According to the government's figures, only 15 percent of Iranian Web sites are hosted inside the country, which means the others are beyond the reach of government censorship. Iranian authorities claim they are building Shaare'2 because they are concerned about obscenity and security, but they clearly also want to stifle dissent, which has thrived among the nation's blogging class.

Shutting down the current networks will be hard. The mullahs take hope from China, which from the beginning allowed Internet access only through a backbone of government networks. Iran plans to build Shaare'2 as a parallel network, lure users by offering them five gigabytes of storage space for a nominal fee and eventually dismantle the current networks by busting unapproved ISPs. But be warned: even China is having trouble keeping hackers in line.