The anatomy of a crisis

Perspectives on the 2009 Iranian election

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Issue 1, 2009

Created in November 2007 by students from the UK universities of Oxford, Leicester and Aberystwyth, e-International Relations (e-IR) is a hub of information and analysis on some of the key issues in international politics.

As well as editorials contributed by students, leading academics and policy-makers, the website contains essays, diverse perspectives on global news, lecture podcasts, blogs written by some of the world's top professors and the very latest jobs from academia, politics and international development.

The pieces in this collection were published on e-International Relations during June 2009.

Front page image by Hamed Saber

edited and compiled by
Stephen McGlinchey and Adam Groves

Contents

Introductory notes

Stephen McGlinchey

With the contested re-election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on June 12th 2009 and the widespread protests that followed, domestic Iranian politics once again came to the fore internationally. Not since the final days of the Shah, the Islamic revolution of 1979 and the ensuing hostage crisis, had it occupied such a prime position across the international political landscape. The possibility that the Iranian Islamic regime was faltering due to its alleged complicity in electoral rigging had immense consequences for international relations. The protests that followed thus triggered an unprecedented level of global interest, not only from the media, but from policymakers and academics.

Iran is situated in the world's most unstable geopolitical region - what Jimmy Carter's former National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, dubbed 'The Global Balkans' due to its propensity to suck external powers into its domestic politics. The importance of maintaining oil stability (pipeline politics) and, more recently, of curbing extremist terrorism are the crucial issues drawing foreign attention to the area, replacing the Cold War focus on expanding American/western influence to act as a bulwark against Soviet expansionism.

The increasingly hostile and belligerent relationship between Iran and Israel only serves to heighten the importance of Iranian domestic politics in the eyes of regional and global powers. The prospect of a nuclear armed Iran has led to high level calls - and detailed contingency planning - for possible preventive strikes by members of the Israeli right. The lack of American political will to support and/or assist in this has, for now, calmed that particular storm. Any domestic political fallout that left a power vacuum in Iran would amplify and intensify Israeli fears that some kind of intervention was necessary for its own national security.

If reports are correct that the popular tide is turning against the regime in Iran, there is a real danger that it will respond by pandering to populist fears in the country and enhancing its nuclear efforts, ramping up anti-Israeli rhetoric and aggression. What is certain is that the regime will not roll over, nor is it likely to lock itself into a series of concessions that undermine its own power (as the Shah did thirty years previously).

The articles in this collection were all written as events unfolded in June 2009. Approaching the subject from diverse perspectives, they provide a concise subject of intrigue for anyone interested Iranian domestic politics, and the importance of Iran within international relations.

The following article is a clear and concise introduction to the Iranian election crisis, and a natural opener in this collection. It collates early analysis from Iranian and international experts to provide a blow by blow account of the alleged irregularities that surfaced as a result of the election.

Iran's Contested Election

Eskandar Sadeghi

The 12th of June 2009 saw Iran's tenth presidential election get underway with Iranians turning out in record numbers. The official estimate claims that 85% of the eligible electorate participated in what Tehran University professor, Sadeq Zibakalam called "a big "no" to Ahmadinejad!" and thus the policies pursued by the hard-line president over the course of the last four years which have seen Iran's international isolation increase and inflation and unemployment soar. Two, in many respects, irreconcilable visions for Iran's future (at least at the domestic level) were presented by the two frontrunners, though it should not be forgotten that only the incumbent president out of the four presidential hopefuls, continues to maintain that the country's present course is on the right track.

What followed, however, defied what many Iran-watchers expected. By the following day the incumbent president had been declared the victor by a landslide. Many prominent commentators, including former Revolutionary Guard, Reformist journalist turned political analyst/dissident-in-exile, Mohsen Sazgara, world-renown film director and Mousavi-campaign spokesman, Mohsen Makhmalbaf, and a host of other prominent individuals contend what took place in the run-up to the announcement of the election results and shortly thereafter was nothing short of a coup d'état.

If Makhmalbaf and others are right, it would confirm a longstanding trend in which we have witnessed the growing militarization and securitization of Iranian politics, whereby the Supreme Leader, Seyyed Ali Khamenei has increasingly come to rely on the coercive arm of the Iranian state – the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and basij militia. This "sacred pact" has been established against not only the reformist wing of the political elite, but also the conservative pragmatists and "old-guard" such as former president Ayatollah Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani.

"...there were sporadic reports that opposition observers were barred from entering some voting stations... the Mousavi campaign also alleged that a number of stations in the northwest and south had run out of ballots"

At present there is no getting away from the counter-argument that much of the evidence for electoral tampering is circumstantial or due to many of the results' counter-intuitive character. The evidence that does exist (of which more and more is being leaked all the time), however, leaves us with compelling grounds to conclude that the severely limited "democratic

process" which exists within the Islamic Republic has gone awry. Prior to the election, experts and a multitude of indictors were pointing to a Mousavi win, if not in the first round, then certainly in the second in which Mousavi would be forced to run-off against the incumbent president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.
Initially there were sporadic reports that opposition observers were barred from entering some voting stations. Officials from the Mousavi campaign also alleged that a number of stations in the northwest and south had run out of ballots. There were further complaints that many voting stations did not comply with the order issued by the Interior Ministry to extend voting hours.

"In a matter of hours after polls closed, Sadeq Mahsouli, Minister of the Interior, former IRGC commander and Ahmadinejad confidante, was announcing the results. The obvious question presents itself: how were millions of paper ballots counted in mere hours after polls closed?"

The speed with which the results were announced also concerned many, especially since it patently broke with existing protocol, according to which the Interior Ministry is supposed to wait 3 days so that candidates have had the opportunity to lodge complaints with the Guardian Council. The Guardian Council then has an additional 10 days to investigate the various complaints, resolve disputes and finally verify or repudiate the result.

In a matter of hours after polls closed, Sadeq Mahsouli, Minister of the Interior, former IRGC commander and Ahmadinejad confidante, was announcing the results. The obvious question presents itself: how were millions of paper ballots counted in mere hours after polls closed? Even the manner in which votes were announced was a strange deviation from standard practice. Instead of announcing the votes province by province or city by city, the results were released in several waves. If only that was the end of the story.

Mousavi, who is an ethnic Azeri, assiduously cultivated the minority vote (approximately 49% of the Iranian electorate). We also know from previous elections that Iran's minorities are wont to vote reformist or not vote at all.[1] According to the results released by the Interior Ministry, Mousavi was beaten by Ahmadinejad in his hometown of Khamene, and the capital of Iranian Azerbaijan, Tabriz, where he had addressed massive crowds in Azeri, to great applause.

Similarly, in Loristan, from which both Mehdi Karoubi and and Mousavi's wife hail, Mousavi and Karoubi were both beaten by Ahmadinejad. Karoubi received only 3% of the votes in his hometown of Aligudarz.[2] Even the most convoluted of reasoning would have a hard time explaining away Karoubi's 44,036 votes to Ahmadinejad's 677,829 – leaving the latter with 15 times as many votes as his competitor. It should be noted that in the 2005 presidential election in which Karoubi also stood, he won six times more votes in his hometown than Ahmadinejad.[3]

More generally, the number of votes Karoubi received appears counter-intuitive and jarring given expectations preceding the election. In the 2005 presidential election, Karoubi received 5 million votes nationwide, shrinking to just over 300,000 in the 2009 contest!

Another vote-getter was the presence of Mousavi's formidable wife, the academic and public intellectual, Zahra Rahnavard, who worked tirelessly at the very forefront of his campaign in a bid to appeal to women voters.

Rahnavard and Mousavi, day-in and day-out, addressed thousands upon thousands of supporters, on the importance of women's rights, the rule of law and social justice, even going so far as to pledge the dissolution of the morality police, who stalk Iran's city streets hauling in those who dare deviate from the strict dress code envisioned by the powerful conservatives forces who occupy the many official and unofficial organs of governmental power. On the basis of anecdotal evidence, the public statements of representatives of Iran's indigenous women's rights movement, and the Iranian and foreign press, there is little doubt that both Mousavi and Karoubi had the overwhelming support of women voters.

Another anomaly which has raised several eyebrows and has since been admitted to by the Guardian Council is that the number of votes cast, exceeds the number of eligible voters in some 50 cities.[4] How are these to be explained away?

If one's confidence in the impeccability of the election result still hasn't been shaken, what was the reason behind the arrest and detention of some 110 reformist politicians, political activists and journalists who were rapidly picked up, with no word as to where they were being taken and when they would be released? These figures include Mohsen Mirdamadi of the Islamic Participation Front of Iran, Behzad Nabavi of the Party of the Islamic Mojahedin, Hamidreza Jalaeipour, spokesman of Third Wave, and even the former president's brother, Mohammad-Reza Khatami. The total arrested as of June 22nd stands at approximately 300 and continues to increase.

Moreover, in the wake of the election results announcement, a slew of Reformist websites, as well as SMS messaging via mobile, were blocked as part of a clearly orchestrated media/communication blackout. The reformists campaign headquarters were also surrounded by security forces. In the eyes of those who allege fraud, all this adds up to far more than mere "circumstantial evidence" or banal "coincidence". And it's certainly strange behavior coming from a government putatively convinced of its "popular mandate".

Professor Muhammad Sahimi, one of the most astute Iran pundits presently covering the election has argued the results declared by the Interior Ministry are themselves indicative of electoral fraud.

"American political scientist Nate Silver contends that a very similar statistical relationship is evinced by the 2008 American presidential election, which swept Obama to the Whitehouse, when analyzed in a comparable fashion"

To quote Sahimi: *"a perfect linear relation between the votes received by the President and Mir Hossein Mousavi has been maintained, and the President's vote is always half of the President's. The vertical axis (y) shows Mr. Mousavi's votes, and the horizontal (x) the President's. R^2 shows the correlation coefficient: the closer it is to 1.0, the more perfect is the fit, and it is 0.9995, as close to 1.0 as possible for any type of data."*

Moreover, *"[s]tatistically and mathematically, it is impossible to maintain such perfect linear relations between the votes of any two candidates in any election — and at all stages of vote counting. This is particularly true about Iran, a large country with a variety of ethnic groups who usually vote for a candidate who is ethnically one of their own."* [5]

Many have found this argument compelling but it should be noted that it has been criticized by American political scientist Nate Silver, who contends that a very similar statistical relationship is evinced by the 2008 American presidential election, which swept Obama to the Whitehouse, when analyzed in a comparable fashion.[6] He argues that the aforesaid statistical relationship is not the "smoking gun" it proponents claim. The jury is still out.

Nader Uskowi, another Iran-watcher, claimed that sources inside the Interior Ministry gave word to him that Mousavi was in fact the real winner of the election with some, 19,075,623 votes or 52% of the votes cast, while Ahmadinejad lagged behind with 13,387,104 or 37% of the total votes cast. Mousavi's early declaration of victory was apparently due to a tip-off by a Ministry of Interior official.[7]
Makhmalbaf has supported this claim and stated that Mousavi was even notified by the Interior Ministry of his imminent victory and told to prepare his victory speech. Obviously, much of this information is difficult to confirm and may never be "forensically" verified. We can only hope for further leaks of the sort which have been coming out of official circles.

A Case of "Northern Tehran Syndrome"?
Though there has undoubtedly been some stern criticism in the western media regarding the lack of transparency and numerous anomalies which blight this election, some journalists and pundits have put down the "unexpected" character of the Ahmadinejad win down to western observers' "northern Tehran syndrome". This criticism alleges that western journalists are guilty of restricting themselves to the most affluent areas of Iranian cities while paying scant attention to those rural and lower-income areas which go to make up Ahmadinejad's power-base. They therefore fallaciously view "northern Tehran" as representative of Iran as a whole.

While this syndrome has been present in some of the more superficial reporting, in the final analysis, such an explanation just doesn't hold water. Not only in light of the many glaring stated aberrations which have marred this election, but more importantly the fact that Iran's society is overwhelmingly urban (70%), many of whom voted for the previous reformist president, Mohammad Khatami.

Eric Hoogland, arguably the most important scholar working on the politics of Iran's rural areas has harshly criticized some journalists' rationalization of the election results by means of the uncritical refrain that "Ahmadinejad's popular-base resides in the countryside". He argues by contrast such a bald assertion flies in the face of thirty years of research and empirical evidence gathered over the last couple of years in which he gauges Ahmadinejad's support to rarely exceed 20%.[8]

Though there is little doubt that the Iran's long dissatisfied middle-class have been crucial to the depth of participation witnessed in this election and the subsequent protests broadcast to the world through all manner of electronic and telecommunications media, in stark opposition to the student-led protests of 1999 and 2003, the mass protests seen on the streets of Iran's major cities in the aftermath of the election represent a broad cross-section of the Iranian population, with everyone from students, women's rights activists, religious students, bazaaris, housewives, members of the middle-class, industrial workers, artisans and rural immigrants.

A Self-Inflicted "Legitimacy Crisis"?
The massive irony of this episode is the self-inflicted wound cum "legitimacy crisis" and the growing polarization of Iranian society and even the governing elite, sparked by this episode. When the Iranian electorate chose to vote on such a massive scale, they were accepting the constitutional parameters postulated by the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is common knowledge that Iran's presidential

candidates and MPs are vetted by an unelected body, the Guardian Council and that the incumbent president by means of his powers of patronage has an asymmetrical advantage with respect to his opponents, but within such parameters it was expected that the election itself would be largely fair and transparent. When it became apparent that neither of these was the case, and the fraud perpetrated so vast, the gap between people's sense of moral/ethical propriety and the events which in fact transpired has led hundreds of thousands to vent their anger and frustration by means of (predominantly) peaceful protest.

Moreover, Grand Ayatollahs Yousef Sanei and Saafi Golpaygani are reported to have called the election results suspect. The predominantly reformist Association of Combatant Clerics and even the conservative Society of Teachers of Qom Theological Colleges have requested an immediate investigation into the allegations of electoral fraud.[9] It is undoubtedly significant that vociferous opposition to Ahmadinejad's "victory" even emanates from the Iranian bastion of religious conservatism.

Ayatollah Khomeini's one-time heir-apparent, turned dissident cleric, Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri has baulked at the results and unequivocally denounced them such that "no wise person in their right mind can believe".[10] We thus find the Islamic Republic fighting off potential "legitimacy crises" on multiple fronts – in addition to its democratic deficit it may well be facing a full-blown "religious" one – a rather ominous sign for a self-styled theocracy.
Due to the unparalleled protests taking place, the Supreme Leader, who was so swift to endorse the election results, has been vacillating between unapologetic endorsement of the president and exhorting the disaffected candidates to pursue their grievances within the bounds of the law delineated by the constitution. The more serious problem, however, with which the Leader will have to reckon in both the short and longer term is that the protestors no longer see the state as a neutral arbiter, but rather as a collaborator in the alleged fraud.

[1] New Conservative Politics and Electoral Behavior in Iran, Ali Gheissari and Kaveh-Cyrus Sanandaji, *Comporary Iran: Economy, Society, Politics*, ed. Ali Ghessari, Oxford University Press, 2009
[2] Iran's stolen election, and what comes next, Farhang Jahanpour, *openDemocracy*, 18.06.2009
[3] Ibid
[4] Guardian Council: Over 100% voted in 50 cities, *Press TV*, 21.06.2009
[5] Faulty Election Data, Muhammad Sahimi, *Tehran Bureau*, 13.06.2009
[6] Statistical Report Purporting to Show Rigged Iranian Election Is Flawed, Nate Silver, *FiveThirtyEight*, 13.06.2009
[7] The Real Votes: Mousavi at 52%, Uskowi on Iran, *Nader Uskowi*, 14.06.2009
[8] Iran's Rural Vote and Election Fraud, Eric Hoogland, *Agence Global*, 17.06.
[9] Statement by the Society of Teachers of Qom Theological Colleges in Protest of the Announced Result of the Election, *Rohanioon.com*, 14.06.2009 (Farsi)
[10] Grand Ayatollah Rejects Election Results, Muhammad Sahimi, *Tehran Bureau*, 18.06.2009

The second article in this collection assesses the impact of the news revolution through the lens of the Iranian election and its aftermath. The growth of alternative means of communication has meant repressive regimes struggle to control information flows. The so called 'Twitter Revolution' allows unedited news to be published via social networking sites nearly instantaneously. In the Iranian case, foreign journalists were either expelled or embargoed, rendering 'citizen journalism' of particular importance and value.

Losing the battle for global public opinion

Afshin Shahi

The current political crisis in Iran and the ban on foreign media has proved that modern technology is challenging the monopoly of information management by the state. Today, modern technology is acting as an alternative instrument to expose matters, which the regime prefers to hide from the outside world. Indeed, personal cameras and mobile phones have enabled everyday individual to act as correspondents within fields where media access is denied. As the censorship continues to undermine freedom of expression, the internet plays a vital role to voice the "silent majority" and mobilise the opposition.

Since the presidential election of 12 June 2009, Iran has been going through turmoil. Some people have gone as far as claiming that a coup d'état has taken place. In a climate where almost all foreign correspondents were ordered to leave or stay silent in their offices, there have been difficulties accessing reliable news. Saturday 20 June 2009 was the height of the political crisis so far . It was also the first day that I gave up on professional news agencies since they had no one in the field covering events. Instead, I relied on messages and images directly reaching me through Facebook, Twitter and You Tube. Later that afternoon, I decided to consult some of the mainstream media to see if I could get any further information and I was stunned to see even the professional news agencies themselves have been relying on the very materials I had been receiving all day.

"From the beginning of the electoral crisis, the Iranian government attempted to cut most communicational instruments in the country"

I was also astonished to see how promptly iconic images, which were recorded by ordinary people, have reached the global audience. These short videos, which often show the heavy crackdown on protesters, beating people, smashing cars and breaking windows, have galvanised millions of people throughout the world. Although, they all spur-of-the-moment and are badly filmed, they have shed a different light on the existing political dynamics in the Islamic State. Particularly, I can refer to a clip that petrified me the most. It explicitly showed a young girl who was shot in heart. She was on the floor, covered in blood and her distressed father was helplessly crying on her side. People were surrounding her; they were trying to save her. But what could they do? She passed away on front of a camera. Two hours later, these painful images reached the global media. The

clip was shown in many major news agencies and soon she became the "symbol of struggle", in many weblogs, she was called "the angle of Iran".Initially, the Western states were conservative about commenting on the political crisis in Tehran. After all, the new administration in America has been determined to stick to its new policy of engaging Iran diplomatically. Hence, they did not want to anger the Islamic Republic by criticism about their internal politics. Nevertheless, once those first hand images reached western citizens, western leaders had no option but to react to public opinion. In that light, on Saturday night, their statements went further than before and finally the American president spoke more firmly and expressed serious concerns for violation of human rights in Iran.

"Apart from providing information, alternative media and new technology have been mobilising and organising people in Iran"

From the beginning of the electoral crisis, the Iranian government attempted to cut most communicational instruments in the country. "Unfriendly" news websites were filtered and for a while telephone lines were cut and text messaging services were completely dismantled. Nonetheless, people found ways to break the filters and work around restrictions. Furthermore, the state unsuccessfully attempted to prevent people receiving news from satellite channels such as the Persian BBC and Voice Of America, but as usual some people were still finding ways to receive signals from these mediums.
These news channels were relying on "citizen correspondents" inside Iran. Ordinary people were calling them, sometimes from the crowded streets while one could still hear the chaotic background noise, describing the scenes and reporting the violence. Most people throughout the country saw the images and received their news from the Persian BBC for the first time. No wonder the Iranian government has criticised Britain for "orchestrating" the riots and "interfering" in Iranian domestic politics.

Apart from providing information, alternative media and new technology have been mobilising and organising people in Iran. Although, the mainstream media in the country was under heavy censorship, people have been finding ways to communicate with and, more importantly, inform the outside world about the violation of human rights in their country. Of course many of these so-called "citizen correspondents" may not be as impartial as a professional news agency nor they are fully unbiased in the way they record and report the events. Nonetheless, in the vacuum of information where access to independent media is denied there are no other options. Without them, the world could not witness the ongoing violation of human rights in Iran. For example, the image of that teenage girl dying in her father's arms [viewer discretion advised] has become a powerful image to increase the global pressure on the Islamic state to reconsider its polices.

In this situation, one would only hope that the Iranian government would be attentive to some of these pressures, so they could maintain some legitimacy in the international community. Although the regime has proven that it has an upper hand in suppressing the unarmed protesters, it has lost the war of public opinion, inside and outside the country. This was only possible through circulation of restricted information, which only became possible with the blessing of new technology!

The following three articles are natural companions. They address the implications of Western powers openly backing the reformists and discuss the possibility of proactive foreign intervention. Reza Molavi suggests a cautious approach in response to the developments and considers the costs of proactive western support for those within Iran protesting against the regime. R.K. Ramazani agrees, urging the Obama administration not to take sides, and warning of the possible consequences in the blood of Iranian protesters. Both authors believe that change is desirable in Iran, but not by the hand of foreign meddling. Jamsheed K. Chosky by contrast, argues strongly that proactive foreign support must be directed to the protesters and their political allies – lending them legitimacy and power to help facilitate the end of the clerical regime in Iran.

Reading into Iran's Quantum of Solace

Reza Molavi

The Western-backed Shah, who grandly styled himself as the "King of Kings", was overthrown by the people power when they took to the streets to call for his removal. The Islamic Republic of Iran was born 30 years ago when every man, woman, young and old expressed their dismay in unison, in their total and utter disgust with the social, economic, and political situation under the Shah. They came from all walks of life: those from the fringes of urban areas to the rural population joined hands with the technocratic, academic, industrialists, students, women and children to shout out that the Shah must go. What they had not thought about was who should replace the one they wanted to see the back of.

Thirty years on, we are witnessing the "people power" at work, once again. People from all social strata, although mainly from the well educated middle classes, are pouring out into the streets, saying they are tired of the current sitting president due to the irregularities which it is now abundantly clear existed before, during and after the June 12th Presidential elections throughout Iran. They are united in wishing that Ahmadinejad should go. But again, as in the original uprising, they do not know what they have bargained for.

The mouthpiece for the hard line dominated Guardian Council, Abbas-Ali Kadkhodaei said that, "fortunately, in the recent presidential election we found no witness of major fraud or breach". The Ayatollah had, in his Friday Prayers speech, come out very clearly in support of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and has not only declared him the legitimate winner in the recent elections, but alluded to the fact that their philosophy and approach to governing is much closer to one another. Indirectly, the Supreme Leader is declaring that Mousavi, the main contender to Ahmadinejad's presidency, is not agreeable to his world view.

Against this backdrop in Iran, and having already seen how ruthlessly the regime's thuggish apparatus go out on their motorcycles in a tandem arrangement fully dressed in riot control gear, and plain clothes Basijis and regime die-hards equipped with clubs, chains and Kalashnikovs to suppress the peaceful marchers, there are western protagonists who wish to cheer the marchers on and challenge them to go out and endure the killing and beating. It is shocking to see the blood in the streets of Tehran and see the security forces of the Islamic Republic shooting innocent people. This deplorable human rights

fiasco will not be forgotten by the Iranians.

In a country where people have lived through a revolution, war, and the killings and demonstrations of ten years ago during Mr. Khatami's presidency, and whilst we can all remember the largest demonstrations ever seen in London against the war in Iraq in 2003 and against the nuclear weapons which were to be stationed in the UK, which were totally ineffective, there are some protagonists who feel the marchers in Iran should soldier on, even at the cost of their lives.

As deplorable as vote rigging is, and as disgusting as Mr. Ahmadinejad's policies may be, we need to be very careful how we agitate and cheer the people in Iran into confronting the autocratic regime they are faced with. No matter how much we despise the actions of the security apparatus in Iran and admire the restraint and peaceful protests in the streets of Tehran, we should be conscious of the fact that as long as the Supreme Leader has not backed down from his position, there will be further bloodshed. Change is in the air - if not now, in the foreseeable future.

"As deplorable as vote rigging is, and as disgusting as Mr. Ahmadinejad's policies may be, we need to be very careful how we agitate and cheer the people in Iran into confronting the autocratic regime they are faced with"

Lastly, it would be prudent to contemplate the fact that while we are focused on the scapegoat game the Iranian government is playing and the human rights abuses which are taking place in the streets of Iranian cities, the nuclear centrifuges are spinning at maximum speed in Natanz and that Mr. Mousavi is as much of an "establishment product" as is Mr. Ahmadinejad.

Iranians have to find their own course

R.K. Ramazani

President Obama should not take sides in the political crisis in Iran. His critics are wrong in faulting him for not siding with the demonstrators and for not standing for the American value of freedom.

Freedom, after all, is not the only core value of the American Republic. Along with liberty and the pursuit of happiness, the American Declaration of Independence also embodies the value of life.

With more than a dozen Iranian protesters already dead, Obama is trying both to protect innocent lives and advance political freedom for Iranians. He realizes that siding with the demonstrators likely would provoke even greater bloodshed.

The tension between internal freedom and external independence in Iran's history has persisted because no balance between the two has yet been struck. The current movement protesting the results of the recent presidential election tries to resolve it.

Aspirations for freedom have ebbed and flowed in Iran's modern history four times:

First, they surged briefly in the 19th century, when Iran sought independence from British political and economic domination. The popular Tobacco Protest of 1891-92 forced the Qajar monarch to cancel his grant of a 50-year tobacco concession to a British company. But at the time, Iranians were unable to fight for independence from the British Empire.

Second, the desire for domestic freedom, linked with democracy, deepened as a result of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1906-11), which gave Iran its first parliament, the Majlis. The parliament placed limits on the monarch's previously unfettered powers and hired Morgan Shuster, an American adviser, to reform Iran's financial system.

But in the end, the people's hope for freedom was dashed. Collusion by British and Russian powers forced Shuster out of the country and shut down reforms. In Shuster's words, the imperial powers "strangled" Persia.

Third, the movement for freedom widened with the Iranian nationalist uprising led by Mohammad Musaddiq (also known as Mossadegh), the first democratically elected leader in Iran's history. Musaddiq and other nationalist leaders tried to curtail the shah's unconstitutional rule and wrest control of Iran's oil industry from the British.

Obama has taken a wise stance that provides time for Iranians to decide the future direction of their country.

But the coup against the Musaddiq government, led by the CIA and backed by British intelligence, ended that effort in 1953.

Fourth, the Iranian Revolution of 1979 spoke to the political independence of Iran. It aimed to end American domination and the dictatorship of Reza Shah Pahlavi, the ruler revolutionaries called "the American shah." The credo of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the founder of the revolution, placed national independence above domestic political freedom. He denounced

Western-style democracy, instead praising “Islamic democracy.”

The revolutionaries saw freedom not only as a value of the revolution, but also as Iran’s historic goal. Subsequently, Mohammad Khatami, president from 1997 to 2005, tried to emphasize the rights of the people, but his reform efforts were blocked by religious leaders and the conservative opposition.

The current protest movement is trying to address this historical deficit of domestic freedom. Like Khatami, Hussein Moussavi, the Iranian reformist politician and presidential candidate, emphasizes the ideal of freedom through reform.

They acknowledge the revolution’s unprecedented success in empowering Iran to control its external politics, but they believe that is not enough. They aim to achieve a broader freedom by an enlightened reading of Islam and the revolution that would result in achieving democracy and freedom with justice within the framework of Islamic spirituality and morality.

Obama has taken a wise stance that provides time for Iranians to decide the future direction of their country. The crisis is Iranian. The current government is Iranian. The protest movement is Iranian. The solution must be Iranian.

Decisions Iranians should make and others should support

Jamsheed K. Choksy

Only Iranians can choose their future, but the world must encourage their efforts.

It is absolutely accurate that Iran's presidential elections began as a matter of that nation's sovereignty. So did disputes over elections results. Management of public protests in a judicious manner was Iran's internal affair as well. None warranted involvement, other than reporting, by outsiders. The citizens of Iran had engaged in a generally transparent and relatively free election campaign for their presidency-one more vigorously contested than any election that country has experienced. The Iranian government was expected by its citizens to work toward full and fair implementation of their electoral will.

Election results are challenged and protested the world over. Nothing is new in that regard. Official reactions to electoral questions make the difference between results being accepted as legitimate or rejected as illegitimate. When Iran's government failed to investigate fully and resolve fairly the alleged election discrepancies, in accordance with the nation's own constitution and law, and particularly after the regime in Tehran and Qom resorted to threats and violence against its own public, that administration lost its claim to legitimacy.

Even the Council of Guardians of the Constitution acknowledged that the number of votes collected in at least 50 Iranian cities surpassed the number of those eligible to cast ballots in those areas and that such discrepancies totaled more than 3 million. Perhaps this was the "miracle" to which Iran's supreme leader had referred earlier in proclaiming the incumbent as returning to office, and in so doing turned voters' focus from the election results toward the root of the problem which is theocratic governance of a nation state. Perhaps Ahmadinejad did win the election, but dismissing summarily the people's concerns made a mockery of the outcome.

"Election results are challenged and protested the world over. Nothing is new in that regard. Official reactions to electoral questions make the difference between results being accepted as legitimate or rejected as illegitimate"

Issues even more vital for Iran's long-term social vibrancy spring from the recent presidential election. Iran has a very long history of authoritarianism, usually in the form of monarchy. But, given the monumental transformations that human societies have experienced during the past one hundred years, the question can be asked if that tradition is still appropriate. Many Iranians have raised very publically the issue of whether autocratic governance-now reincarnated in clerical garb-is really necessary. They want justification for why religion should dictate all political, legal, and social regulations. They seek clear, rational, answers to why clerics should hold official and powerful leadership positions in their country's politics. They wish to reconsider carefully why any single individual, whether elected or appointed, secular or reli-

gious, should wield absolute authority over their nation's entire populace. Most unfortunately, Iranians questioning and protesting the status quo have been met with repression.

It is appropriate, at this juncture, for people outside Iran to voice their support most vocally for those engaged in a struggle for legitimate governance, whatever form that administration eventually may take. Nations should no longer hesitate to exert maximum diplomatic and economic pressures upon the illegitimate regime in Iran-illegitimate because it has chosen force over discourse to resolve how it came to power and holds on to authority. The time is fitting, too, given the brutality that Iranians are experiencing at the hands of their own government, to refer the matter to the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly for the strongest possible action. With the images of terror available for all to see around the globe via the Internet, it would be more difficult-although by no means unlikely-for Russia and China to veto a UN Security Council resolution against Iran's government.

Likewise the world's nations cannot be seen as consenting to work with Iran's tyrannical administration, in the hope of dissuading it from nuclear weaponization and/or terrorism, at the expense of the suffering of Iran's people. Britain and the United States have made similar mistakes on previous occasions. Every freedom-loving person will benefit if the US and British administrations engaged the Iranian people directly, while isolating further the leadership of the morally-defunct regime based at Tehran and Qom. Iran's people when free of the current fundamentalist xenophobia that regulates their lives are likely to endeavor to mitigate the world's geopolitical concerns.

The issue of women's rights has been boiling to the surface throughout modern Iranian history. Before the Islamic revolution, the secular orientation of the Shah's regime allowed women western style freedoms – however the dawn of the Islamic Regime heralded new restrictions for women, most visibly through the enforced public dress code that must be adhered to within Iran. In the following article, Elham Gheytanchi suggests that the Islamic state in Iran has failed women. The recent domestic disturbances therefore offer an opportunity for women in Iran to push for change.

The Iranian women's rights movement and the election crisis

Elham Gheytanchi

Images of women in chador and rusari (modest Islamic dress) beaten up by security forces in the streets of Tehran and other cities in Iran have dominated the news lately. Neda's image and her brutal death in Tehran on Saturday June 20th in a street protest demanding the annulment of the results of 10th presidential election in Iran has brought women's active role in the post-election crisis into light. At the forefront of these non-violent demonstrations violently suppressed by the government-backed militias (Basij) are brave Iranian women.

The story of the Iranian women's rights movements and their demands go back to the beginning of the formation of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979. Ayatollah Khomeini called on Iranian women to rid themselves of Western influences and become 'truly' liberated by active participation in the Islamic Republic. Iranian women's liberation was only possible, according to Ayatollah Khomeini, if they wear the Islamic hejab which became mandatory in 1980. As a result, the secular women were driven to the margins. By the start of the Iran-Iraq war, it was the martyrs' wives who were the first women demanding their rights from the Islamic state that had promised them Islamic justice. These martyrs' wives wanted the state to grant them custody of their children and not allow their husbands' families to raise their children. The Islamic state had to flex the sharia laws (Islamic family law) in order to meet this challenge.

"Whereas Ahmadinejad's government had gone to extreme measures to suppress women's rights activists as agents of the West, the presidential debates raised women's expectations."

By the end of the war, women who had taken part in the job market were no longer willing to go back to their homes. Women flooded the universities in unprecedented numbers, demanded more of their share in family matters and forcefully lobbied the authorities to grant them the right to divorce in Islamic family courts that barred women to be judges. Today, 62% of all university attendees are women, rate of divorce initiated by women has accelerated and women's rights have become an issue for the president, the parliament and ultimately the supreme leader who directly controls the judiciary as well as other institutions such as national TV in Iran.

Iranian women's rights activists who have become technologically savvy launched grass-roots movements against the discriminatory laws against women in their country. One Million Signature Campaign is one example of a social movement that started in the mayhem of the previous election. The campaigners focused on gender inequalities in the constitution and through face-to-face interactions raised awareness among women. The campaign quickly spread to 16 provinces and even made the members of the conservative eighth parliament react to their demands. But Ahmadinejad was determined to eradicate demands for gender equality under the banner of national security and alleged that women's rights activists are motivated by the 'enemies of the state.' His government arrested more than 70 activists during the past four years.

But as the arrests continued to rise, so did the number of volunteers in the campaign and other women's rights initiatives. Many more women directly engaged with the authorities to lobby for women's rights. One of these efforts was the broad coalition formed one month before the presidential election to demand all four candidates to respond to women's issues. The coalition specifically demanded two things: that the Iranian state become a signatory in CEDAW (Convention of elimination of discrimination against women) and that changes be made to discriminatory articles in the constitution that lead to gender inequality (articles 19, 20, 21 and 115).

The presidential candidates did respond to women's issues. Zahra Rahnavard, Mir Hussein Mussavi's wife, released a public statement stating that Mussavi's cabinet will make Iran a signatory of CEDAW and will work hard to improve women's rights. Jamileh Kadivar, the spokeswoman for Karoubi even went further to question the taboo issue of mandatory hejab.

Whereas Ahmadinejad's government had gone to extreme measures to suppress women's rights activists as agents of the West, the presidential debates raised women's expectations. Ahmadinejad had proposed to make polygamy legal in the country where it is socially unaccepted and to lower the number of female attendees in universities through a gender quota system. The national TV which works under direct control of the supreme leader, who has shown his support for Ahmadinejad before and after the disputed election, made one program after another advocating women's proper place in an Islamic society.

So, it is not un-expected to see waves of women in chadors or rusari (headscarf) on the street to protest a fraudulent election, a coup indeed to re-elect Ahmadinejad. Iranian women know that there is much at stake for them. Four more years of Ahmadinejad will bring more morality police into the streets that harass women and more pressure on Iranian women's rights activists.

Of course, all this said, there should be no doubt that tradition and conservative religious ideas about gender relations are alive in Iran. On Thursday June 25th 2009, a group of women wrote a letter to the Iranian judiciary requesting that Shirin Ebadi be prosecuted for protesting against human's rights violation in Iran since the election. There are also Iranian women who, for no other reason but their religious beliefs, are against women's equality because they see it as a threat to Islamic values. This is precisely why many women's rights activists firmly believe that social change in Iran will be incremental, cultural and for the most part independent of political rifts.

Today, Iranian women are in the streets protesting and throwing themselves at the Basij to protect the lives of the youth, the students and all those who want their voices to be heard through a non-violent movement. The middle-aged women remind the Basij of the Islamic Re-

public's promise to women; Islamic justice that would be better than any Western ideas including feminism. Today is the day when traditional women take a stand against coercion in the name of Islam by the state. The bloody face of Neda will export the revolutionary promises for Islamic gender equity but in a completely opposite way than what was initially intended by the founders of the Islamic state.

The following article takes a measured overview of the aftermath of the Iranian elections and the domestic disturbances that followed. Bernd Kaussler's piece reflects the uncertainty that remained after the crisis, raising some of the critical questions that Iranian experts continue to grapple with.

Defending the Revolution: human rights in post-election Iran

Bernd Kaussler

As much as the presidential election and its violent aftermath will remain a reference point to most Iranians and reformist politicians of how blatantly the rule of law and their human rights were violated, so will it continue to inform the mindset and policies of what now could be best described as the ruling hardliner elite of the Islamic Republic.

By and large, as far as the rule of law and human rights are concerned, 12 June marked a watershed event in post-revolutionary Iran. In a rather blatant, or in fact, clumsily executed attempt to free themselves from partisan politics and an ever-burgeoning movement promoting democracy and human rights, the Principalist faction of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, hardliner clerics, elements within the security and military establishment and the Supreme Leader himself purportedly usurped the elections and granted themselves another term. Whilst irregularities before and during the elections point to election fraud, the Iranian government continues to blame Western governments and media for instigating the demonstrations. It is curious, yet, perfectly inline with the Iranian nomenclature's modus operandi that evidently unable to provide evidence that the elections were in fact fair and free, the government focuses on this major propaganda offensive. This is not so much diverting attention from dealing with the allegations of fraud, but in fact, legitimizing current and future human rights abuses.

Reaffirming earlier accusations by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad about "foreign plots" in the country, Iran's Intelligence Minister, Gholamhoseyn Mohseni-Ezhe'i, charged Britain and the US, in a long televised interview, for "promoting a soft overthrow" in Iran. These accusations sound as preposterous as the public recantations and confessions by alleged protesters seem poorly staged and simply offensive to millions of Iranians.

Just as one was tempted to compare the mass protests in the streets in Iranian cities, the mantras shouted by the crowds and the rhetoric used by opposition leaders to the events of 1979, so is one now reminded of the immediate period after the Islamic Revolution succeeded. On a smaller scale, what we are witnessing now recalls the mass arrests and summary executions of the early revolutionary years when Khamenei and his standard-bearer purged political enemies and former allies alike from the political scene.

Unlike 1979, in 2009, there was too much at stake for the regime to make concessions or compromises on the status quo. Thirty years ago, the royal elite and bourgeoisie refused to

either die or kill excessively for the Shah, but rather followed their money trail to Europe and the United States. Today, there seemed to have been few expedient alternatives for the regime but to violently crack down against protesters and intimidate and arrest high profile figures from the opposition.

In fact, had Khamenei bowed to public pressure, it may have well eroded one of the basic pillars of the entire political system. Had the Supreme Leader allowed another round of election or in fact appointed Mousavi, he would have effectively admitted to massive election fraud.

Thus, for a regime, whose political survival relies heavily on popular acquiescence and now virtually lacks any legitimacy in the eyes of its own people and the international community alike, the raison d'état for the next four years (or even longer) is likely to be defined by political violence. Seen through the prism of human rights, the June 2009 elections represented the culmination for the struggle of rights and the rule of law on the part of reformist politicians and society at large. For hardliner elements in the clergy and government, post-election violence is meant to put an end to the human rights and democratization discourse, which had really started in 1979, but had gained tremendous momentum since Mohammad Khatami was elected president in 1997.

The brutality used in the streets serves as much as an indiscriminate purge of a bourgeoning civil-society as it is a means of deterrence to political and clerical dissenters in Tehran and Qom. As far as hardliners in government and the judiciary are concerned, by framing the demonstrations and allegations of fraud within a national security context, mass arrests are as justified as state-sponsored violence by militia groups is being carried out with impunity. Those who have been detained will either face no trial and be detained indefinitely or a stand before a revolutionary court, which will be held in secret and with no evidence being brought forward. Even more so than offences against the sacred, charges of "endangering national security in Iran" (what alleged crimes fall within this category has been subject to the judiciary's arbitrary interpretation), have always been dealt with outside parameters of universal human rights. As the regime continues to paint the demonstrations as a foreign-funded plot against the Islamic Republic, so will the human rights situation deteriorate dramatically.

Not all is lost however. When Ali Khamenei sided with Ahmadinejad and legitimized the use of force against protesters during his infamous 19 June Friday prayer sermon, his words heralded a new chapter in Iranian politics and exacerbated the already serious crisis of legitimacy. By doing so, the Supreme Leader cast off his cloak as neutral arbiter between factions and created a new demarcation line between the establishment and marginalized reformists. This move as well as the increasing political and economic clout which the Revolutionary Guards have received under Ahmadinejad's tenure has alienated a number of political and clerical heavyweights, who now, more than ever before have been sidelined from the inner sanctum of Iranian politics. Numerous senior clerics have come out and defended the protests as well as publicly criticized what they consider a dramatic shift in the system towards authoritarianism.

Lacking any substantial support from Qom, and more importantly responding to calls for rights and democracy with more human rights abuses is bound to stir up an even greater crisis. It remains to be seen how sustainable the elite's penchant for political violence will be in the long term. In the immediate future, however, Iranians will continue to pay a high price for standing up for their rights.

The final article in this collection introduces the importance of the character of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his particular personal association with Iran's nuclear ambitions. By 'winning' the contested election of 2009, and more importantly by receiving clear and consistent backing from the Supreme Leader, Ahmadinejad will presumably continue along the path towards full mastery of the nuclear cycle – something much maligned by the international community, particularly Israel. The nature of the election, and the contention following it, suggest that the previously seemingly unanimous popular support throughout Iran for Ahmadinejad's championing of the nuclear issue may now be uncertain.

The 2009 Iranian elections: a nuclear timebomb?

Stephen McGlinchey

In 2003 Iran made the final in a series of gestures toward possible normalisation in relations with America. The Regime, under the influence of the moderate President Mohammad Khatami, had come to the majority viewpoint that maintaining its course as a pariah state was not in its immediate interests. Iran had assisted America in the invasion of Afghanistan – principally by acting as a mediator in the involvement of the Northern Alliance, and had offered to assist in Iraq. Contact between America and Iran had reached a level unprecedented since before the Islamic revolution, though it was tentative and far from normalised.

Since that point in time, both Iran and America have undergone two Presidential elections. In America, President George W. Bush won a second term in late 2004, and in Iran the moderate experiment of Khatami came to an end with the ultra-conservative Mahmoud Ahmadinejad triumphing in the Presidential election of 2005. There could not have been a more polarised change in Iranian Presidential politics than the one witnessed in 2005. In 2009 a new President, Barack Obama came to power in America promising a "new beginning" with Iran.[1] For a short while it appeared that a candidate representing a more moderate position in Iranian politics, Mir-Hossein Mousavi, would triumph there – and perhaps answer Obama's call. Alas, it was not to be. One way or another, Iran will have to reconcile itself to another 4 years of Ahmadinejad and the anti-American jingo-ism he embodies – save the occurrence of a major domestic Iranian incident. There is a risk of over simplifying this issue, and it must be noted before moving forward that Obama's moves to court Iran are far from universally supported in Washington, nor is it entirely clear how open Iranian political society is to embracing the nation their revolutionary father, Imam Khomeini dubbed 'The Great Satan'.

Before the wake of the contested 2009 election, the issue of Iranian development of civilian nuclear technology had been the major issue driving international concerns regarding the Islamic State. Ahmadinejad's arrival as President represented a major problem: the overt international mistrust in Iran and its intentions had been downplayed (though certainly not forgotten) during Khatami's presidency, but would now resurge in full force due chiefly to the belligerent posture of Ahmadinejad and his government. His actions provoke opposition often by default – particularly regarding the perceived 'personality' of Iran internationally – in much

the same way as President George W Bush did of America amongst nations opposed to his Manichean foreign policy posture. The similarities between the two leaders even caused two prominent Iranian experts to dub Ahmadinejad and his supporters Iranian neoconservatives.[2] The result of this dynamic has been to reinforce stereotypical attitudes and fears over Iran's character that had somewhat abated, or were at the very least open to interpretation, during Khatami's Presidency.

One example that can be attributed to Ahmadinejad personally is the resurgence of an openly hostile position towards Israel together with overt holocaust revisionism.[3] His infamous statement that Israel should be 'wiped off the map'[4] comes immediately to mind. It should be noted that the translation of this remark is subject to contention, and his statement more accurately read that Israel should 'vanish from the pages of time'.[5] Ahmadinejad's remarks were a direct attack on the nature of the state of Israel as a racist Jewish state, situated within the Muslim world, which excludes and persecutes Iran's fellow Muslims (the Palestinians). This is a perception which endures in Iran and is embodied by Ahmadinejad and through the legacy of Khomeini who frequently made similar remarks during his reign as Supreme Leader.

On the other side of the fence, senior members of the Israeli leadership continue to quote the 'wiped off the map' mistranslation, attempting to use it to show the international community, particularly America, that Iran is up to no good and that regime change should be enforced there. There have been allegations that such a plan, including surgical nuclear strikes, was considered at the highest level in the Bush administration.[6] [7] This may seem like an extreme measure, but Israel's situation must be understood within the context of Iran's nuclear development programme. Israel feels vulnerable. It exists in what it calls a 'tough neighbourhood', surrounded by non-democratic regimes. Furthermore, its treatment of the Palestinians has incited a wave of regional discontent and opposition from its neighbours that manifests through measures as extreme as suicide and conventional terrorism right down to standard political pressure. Iran is the embodiment of Israel's fears, a potential peer competitor with an antithetical world and regional view. When the prospect of a nuclear missile is added to the mixture, the situation becomes of immediate toxicity. Israel acutely fears that Iran will attack it when it feels it has the tactical advantage unless concerted action is taken to remove the threat.[8] The personal role of Ahmadinejad, supplanted by his image and his rhetoric, only enhances that fear. The merits of this argument are hotly debated. After all, Israel has one of the most technologically advanced militaries in the world, and maintains an official policy of 'ambiguity' regarding its own nuclear arsenal – which is undoubtedly significant. Israel has by conservative accounts an advanced nuclear arsenal numbering warheads high into the double figures, if not triple figures. It is highly doubtful that Iran would be any match for Israel in a nuclear face off, and any attack would surely signal the gravest consequences for Iran. It is therefore the settled majority opinion of the international community that an Iranian attack on Israel is extremely unlikely; however the determination of Israel to see things differently remains a grave concern.

In the context of the 2009 election, the 'victory' of Ahmadinejad means two major things with regard to international politics. Firstly, it means with near certainty that Iran will continue to pursue nuclear technology and presumably (though no proof can be established) a nuclear weapons program. Though, this point is irrelevant in the practical sense as whether Iran is, or in fact is not building a bomb, its international character is not trusted at its word due in major part (at least currently) to Ahmadinejad. The suspected complicity of the Regime and the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in the alleged

electoral rigging and Khamenei's well established close relationship to Ahmadinejad will certainly not help. Secondly, by extension, Israel will continue to feel its fears are being ignored by an international community hesitant to act decisively. Israel sees this election as a confirmation that the Iranian regime, if not its people are unwilling to change their desires to endanger Israel.

The return to the office of Israeli Prime Minister by Binyamin Netanyahu is worth mentioning as a final note. Israel now has an established hard line right wing Prime Minister, and Iran has an ultra conservative populist President who has harnessed the nuclear proliferation issue and popular anti-Israeli sentiment to buttress his own power base. Netanyahu stated on the eve of his election that if America does not solve the Iranian problem quickly that Israel will have to act on its own.[9] For Israel, the Islamic Republic of Iran must not ever have the ability to build a nuclear bomb. This is an immovable reality, and when the dust settles after the contested Iranian election of 2009, it will remain the principal issue for the international community to address. What will be interesting for observers is whether Ahmadinejad is forced to alter his posture and/or his policies on nuclear proliferation. Will the popular support the project has received in Iran continue in the wake of the apparent split in the Iranian political and clerical elite over Ahmadinejad's Presidency? This may open a new avenue for international negotiators in finding a solution to the previously irreconcilable positions of Israel and Iran and the nuclear issue. Only time will tell.

[1] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/7954211.stm
[2] Anoushiravan Ehteshami & Mahjoob Zweiri, Iran and the Rise of its Neoconservatives: The Politics of Tehran's Silent Revolution, I. B.Tauris, 2007.
[3] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4529198.stm
[4] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4378948.stm
[5] http://www.antiwar.com/orig/norouzi.php?articleid=11025
[6] http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/10/08/071008fa_fact_hersh
[7] http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-plan-for-air-strikes-on-iran-backed-by-brown-395716.html
[8] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alan-dershowitz/taking-a-stand-against-ir_b_212835.html
[9] http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200903u/netanyahu

Contributors

Jamsheed K. Choksy

Professor of Iranian Studies and former Director of the Middle Eastern Studies Program at Indiana University. He also is a Member of the National Council on the Humanities, at the National Endowment for the Humanities. The views expressed here are his own and do not necessarily represent the views of Indiana University, the NCH, NEH, or U.S. government.

Elham Gheytanchi

Lecturer in sociology at Santa Monica College. She writes on women, culture and politics in Iran.

Bernd Kaussler

Lecturer in US Foreign Policy, Middle East Security and Political Islam at James Madison University in Virginia. He is also an Associate Fellow at the Institute for Iranian Studies, University of St Andrews in Scotland.

Stephen McGlinchey

PhD candidate at Cardiff University and an Editor of e-International Relations. His research interests focus around contemporary American foreign policy, particularly with regard to the Middle East.

Reza Molavi

Director of the Centre for Iranian Studies at Durham University.

R.K. Ramazani

Edward R. Stettinius professor emeritus of government and foreign affairs at the University of Virginia. He has published extensively on Iran since 1955.

Eskandar Sadeghi

Due to begin his PhD in Middle East Studies at St Antony's College, University of Oxford in October 2009.

Afshi Shahi

A doctoral candidate at the School of Government and International Affairs at Durham University.