

U.S. AND IRANIAN STRATEGIC COMPETITION:

Iran's Perceptions of its Internal Developments
and their Implications for Strategic Competition
with the U.S. in the Gulf, Sept. 2010 – March
2011

By Alexander Wilner

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Anthony H. Cordesman
Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy
acordesman@gmail.com

With the assistance of Adam Seitz of the Marine Corps University, the Burke Chair has compiled a series of chronological reports that focus on Iranian perceptions of national security and assess Iran's intentions concerning competition with the US.

The latest version of these reports is entitled "U.S. and Iranian Strategic Competition: Iran's Perceptions of its Ballistic Missile Program and Competition with the US and the Gulf, Sept. 2010 – Feb. 2011," and is available on the CSIS web site at <http://csis.org/publication/us-and-iranian-strategic-competition-2>. Previous versions include "U.S. and Iranian Strategic Competition: Iranian Views of How Iran's Asymmetric Warfare Developments Affect Competition with the US and the Gulf, Sept. 2010 – Feb. 2011" (<http://csis.org/publication/us-and-iranian-strategic-competition-1>).

The Iranian government's statements and actions provide considerable insight into the country's strategic competition with the US. They help show how the regime perceives and responds to external pressure and its relationship with the international community. The regime's rhetoric regarding its "soft war" against external cultural influence and domestic liberalism as well as laws such as the proposed Supervision of Members of Parliament bill provide key insights into the changing nature of the regime and its outlook.

For example, the Fars News Agency published an article on Dec. 21, 2010 that accused the US and the UK of hatching plots for "confronting Islamic values." The article contained quotes from Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and IRGC Commander General Mohammed Ali Jafari, both of which make explicit reference to "soft war" as a method to undermine the Islamic Republic:

Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei had also on many occasions warned about the enemies' soft-war plots hatched to undermine Iran's resolve towards progress. In November 2009, he underlined the necessity for proper measures to repel enemy's soft war against Iran.

"Today, the main priority of the country is to confront (enemy's) soft warfare which is aimed at creating doubt, discord and pessimism among the masses of the people," Ayatollah Khamenei said, addressing a large and fervent congregation of Basij (volunteer) forces at the time.

Also, in July, Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Mohammad Ali Jaffari warned the Iranian youths against enemies' soft war plots, and called for further preparedness to confront soft threats against Iran and the Islamic Revolution.

"We are in a soft war with the enemies. Their (enemies') plans and hidden and clear moves in this regard are distinctive," Jaffari said.¹

The articles in this report reflect the history of political developments within the Iranian government, as well as the general outlook and priorities of the regime. They also reflect an increasingly authoritarian, hard-line set of attitudes, as well as the regime's tendency to link internal unrest to what it perceives as external ideological threats – including the US.

¹ "Commander Warns of US, British Plots for Confronting Islamic Values." Fars News Agency. 21 Dec. '10

Additionally, they help provide insight into Iran's foreign policy goals, actions abroad, and how it perceives competition with other states.

These articles reveal that the progressively more authoritarian and hard-line set of attitudes of the Iranian regime have important implications for the country's strategic competition with the US. Faced with mounting internal pressure and criticism, the regime has responded by purging moderates within the government and aggressively suppressing domestic opposition. The regime has concurrently adopted an apparent intransigence regarding its nuclear program in addition to stepping up its support for paramilitary proxies in other countries such as Afghanistan and Lebanon. In light of these developments, the Iranian regime's authoritarian response to internal dissent correlates with the country's increasingly defiant, aggressive disposition abroad.

These statements also show that three central themes have come to dominate Iran's internal politics since Sept. 2010:

- Pressure on the opposition movement and its renewed activity in the wake of protests across the region.
- Efforts on behalf of the ruling establishment to eliminate moderates and conservatives from the country's decision-making process.
- The regime's increased focus on what it deems a "soft war" against alleged influence and meddling on the part of the foreign "enemies" and internal dissenters.

Opposition Movement

It is important to understand the forces that have driven these themes. Renewed crackdowns on Iran's opposition movement indicate that the regime is no less willing to crush reformist or liberal criticism and dissent than it was in 2009 when the country was rocked by widespread popular discontent, protests, and riots that followed the disputed summer presidential elections. Following renewed Iranian unrest in the wake of the protests that have swept the Middle East, the leaders of Iran's reformist Green Movement, Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi, were placed under house arrest and later imprisoned.² As of April 4, 2011, they remain imprisoned incommunicado along with their spouses in Tehran's Heshmatiyeh prison.³

² "The Islamic Republic After 32 Years." Voice of America. 1 April, 2011
<http://www.voanews.com/policy/editorials/119099709.html>

³ "Mousavi, Karroubi in Heshmatiyeh Prison: Opposition Website." PBS Frontline: Tehran Bureau. 28 Feb. 2011
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2011/02/mousavi-karroubi-in-tehrans-mohtashamiyeh-prison-opposition-website.html#>

Both Karroubi and Mousavi were initially placed under house arrest and later imprisoned following unrest that broke out in Iran during an unauthorized gathering by opposition members to show support for protesters in Egypt and Tunisia on Feb. 14, 2011. The rally was the first major public gathering staged by the opposition since the unrest following the 2009 presidential elections, and it quickly turned into an anti-government demonstration in which protesters chanted anti-government slogans and set fires.⁴ The Fars News Agency called the protesters “hypocrites, monarchists, ruffians, and seditionists.”⁵ In reference to the unrest, PressTV, Iran’s state-owned English language news service, quoted Iran’s Prosecutor General, General Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Ejei, as stating that, “today, this movement has gone beyond sedition and turned into a counter revolutionary one.”⁶ Gholam-Hossein also claimed that the rally was staged by supporters of Karrubi and Mousavi as well as members of the Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization, a well-known terrorist group in Iran.⁷ Lastly, PressTV and other media continue to deem both Karroubi and Mousavi leaders of a “sedition movement” instead of the “opposition.”⁸ Such rhetoric and the regime’s readiness to arbitrarily imprison opposition leaders reflect the regime’s intransigent disposition toward Iran’s opposition. These responses indicate that the regime does not apply a conciliatory approach to criticism and dissent, nor does it examine popular grievances. Instead, it continues to resort to heavy-handed tactics in response to what it perceives as internal threats to its security.

New Legislation

These internal developments have had a significant impact on Iranian legislation. In late 2010, a bill was drafted in the Islamic Consultative Committee with the approval of the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei which would severely curtail the independence, relevance, and effectiveness of the Iranian parliament.⁹ The Supervision of Members of Parliament bill would allow the Guardian Council to arbitrarily conduct disciplinary action against members of parliament if they dissent against or disagree with the regime and permit the establishment of a special branch of the judiciary to process “violations” by members of parliament.¹⁰ Under the new law, penalties could include being denied three months of pay, removed from parliamentary committees, made to sign written commitments not to repeat the “charge,” and even being removed from their posts altogether.¹¹ It would also place general travel restrictions on members of parliament.¹²

⁴ Dareini, Ali Akbar. “Iran Protests: Hundreds of Thousands March, Tear Gas Fired.” The Huffington Post. 14 Feb. ’11 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/02/14/iran-protests_n_822991.html

⁵ Dareini, Ali Akbar. “Iran Protests: Hundreds of Thousands March, Tear Gas Fired.” The Huffington Post. 14 Feb. ’11 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/02/14/iran-protests_n_822991.html

⁶ “Iran To Take Tougher Action On Sedition.” PressTV. 28 Feb. ’11 <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/167543.html>

⁷ “Iran To Take Tougher Action On Sedition.” PressTV. 28 Feb. ’11 <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/167543.html>

⁸ “Iran To Take Tougher Action On Sedition.” PressTV. 28 Feb. ’11 <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/167543.html>

⁹ “Opposition slams supervision bill for Iranian MPs.” RadioZamaneh. 23 Oct. ’10

¹⁰ “Opposition slams supervision bill for Iranian MPs.” RadioZamaneh. 23 Oct. ’10

¹¹ “Karrubi Warns Iranian MPs Against Bill Designed to ‘Weaken’ Majles’ Position.” Rah-e Sabz. 23 Oct. ’10

¹² “Karrubi Warns Iranian MPs Against Bill Designed to ‘Weaken’ Majles’ Position.” Rah-e Sabz. 23 Oct. ’10

According to Article 20 of the proposed bill, "judicial investigation and the member's non-conviction will not prevent the implementation of decisions made by parliament or the committee regarding his or her violations."¹³ The ability of the parliament or a relevant committee to render punishment on any member of parliament for a "violation," regardless of his or her guilt, can be interpreted as a means of coercion to control the parliament rather than a tool to supervise its members' conduct. It must also be noted that the Guardian Council is chaired by Ahmad Jannati, a notoriously hard-line cleric who is close to Iran's "ultra-conservative" president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. As such, this law could have far-reaching effects on Iran's government in that it would degrade the independence and integrity of the Islamic Republic's only democratic institution to the end of centralizing power.

The Iranian opposition's response to the Supervision of Members of Parliament bill is revealing in showing the internal tension and turmoil that has rocked the country since mid-2009. On Oct. 23, 2010, the official news website of Iran's pro-reform Green Movement released an open letter written by one of the country's main opposition politicians, Mehdi Karroubi, in opposition to the Supervision of Members of Parliament bill. The letter presents a sharp criticism of this legislation which Karroubi claims would effectively destroy what is widely seen as Iran's only democratic institution, and become an instrument for political oppression. Karroubi stated the following in the letter:

"...supervision of parliament in a democratic and Islamic system is not only to be welcomed, but is necessary and of the greatest importance. This supervision must not become an instrument in the hands of the opponents of democracy and the people's will, and of those in power. It would in that case become devoid of significance and turn into its own contradiction. Efforts to restrict and weaken the position of parliament in the name of supervision and the protection of the public good are not of course unprecedented in this country. The opponents of the people's will have at all times sought to restrict and weaken the position of parliament and the nation's representatives and, as we have seen in our contemporary history, at times tried using Russian guns and soldiers and at other times through extensive disqualifications and electoral fraud, to turn parliament into a state-made and merely formal institutional. It was for this experience that with the victory of the Islamic Revolution there was a great deal of reflection when the constitution was being drafted and amended, in order to find a way to prevent parliament being turned into a formal and state-made institution. The Guardian Council was considered as a supervisory body, so that just as the influence of the court and state was a barrier to healthy elections in the past, this time in the Islamic Republic the parliamentary institution would be kept safe from rulers' interference. Yet, the Guardian Council, especially after the imam's demise, increased the scope of its supervision of parliamentary elections. This is so much that it effectively became a body disruptive of the constitutional order and a barrier to the people's will. Today, the popular representative must effectively be declared chosen by members of the Guardian Council before being elected by the people. They must first go through the filter of the Guardian Council members' preferences so they can stand for public election in the next stage. Thus, what should have been done with the goal of realizing the people's rights and preventing interference by the power has effectively and in time become the opposite."¹⁴

Additionally, Karroubi stated that,

"The ratification of a law in parliament whereby parliamentarians have to declare their travel plans before going and having no right to travel even without permission, and threats to their immunity by a particular committee, mean

¹³ "Karroubi Warns Iranian MPs Against Bill Designed to 'Weaken' Majles' Position." Rah-e Sabz. 23 Oct. '10

¹⁴ "Karroubi Warns Iranian MPs Against Bill Designed to 'Weaken' Majles' Position." Rah-e Sabz. 23 Oct. '10

turning the people's servants into the humble servants of power... If such a bill were ratified, we might as well mourn the demise of parliament in the Islamic Republic system."¹⁵

The introduction of such bills as well as their endorsement by Supreme Leader Khamenei signal a push for greater centralization of power and an ever-decreasing tolerance for criticism and dissent from within the government. The drafting of this bill can essentially be seen as an attempt to legitimize suppression of those who oppose or question the regime's actions, including "pragmatic" conservatives such as the Ali Larijani, the Chairman of Parliament, and Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani who was until recently the Chairman of the Assembly of Experts.¹⁶

Rafsanjani was replaced in this capacity in early March 2011 by Ayatollah Mohammad Reza Mahdavi Kani, a candidate backed by Iran's "ultra-conservative" President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.¹⁷ This development can be seen as a clear victory for Iran's increasingly hard-line establishment. A harsh critic of Iran's brutal crackdown on protesters following the presidential election of 2009, Rafsanjani represents a more moderate, pragmatic voice within the Islamic Republic in contrast to its increasingly authoritarian, heavy-handed establishment led by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

These changes to Iran's decision and law-making process reveal a power shift toward the hard-line leaders of the country's government, and again have implications for Iran's strategic competition with the US; they point to the potential monopolization of the state's institutions by Iran's hard-liners. An increasingly authoritarian regime dominated by the country's hard-liners that can suppress not only liberal, but moderate and less conservative voices within the government is more likely to take an aggressive, confrontational approach to strategic competition with the US, and less likely to make concessions regarding international concerns such as the country's nuclear program.

"Soft War"

The use of the term "soft war" is also revealing. Ever since the unrest that followed the 2009 presidential election, the regime and the Iranian press have focused their attention on an alleged "soft war" that is being waged against Iran. As used in context, the term "soft war" has variously referred to Western cultural influence and the emergence of secular or liberal Islamist elements in Iranian society. At a conference to study and oppose "soft war" at the Imam Hossein Officers and Guard Training University in Oct. 2010, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's representative to the IRGC, Hojjat ol-Eslam val-Moslemin Ali Saidi, articulated this notion as follows:

¹⁵ "Karrubi Warns Iranian MPs Against Bill Designed to 'Weaken' Majles' Position." *Rah-e Sabz*. 23 Oct. '10

¹⁶ Cowell, Alan. "Rafsanjani Loses Key Post in Iranian Religious Assembly." *The New York Times*. 8 March '11 <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/09/world/middleeast/09iran.html>

¹⁷ Cowell, Alan. "Rafsanjani Loses Key Post in Iranian Religious Assembly." *The New York Times*. 8 March '11 <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/09/world/middleeast/09iran.html>

“In every election enemies support the secular and liberal people. The appearance of impure ideas creates conditions for the soft war... One of the main problems is in Islamic government there are two different views about various issues such as government legitimacy, the vice-regent’s prerogatives, foreign policy, culture, and economy. One view is comprehensive, fundamental, and revolutionary and the other is minimalist, superficial.”¹⁸

Furthermore, he closed his speech by stating that,

“Today the enemy has joined forces with the thinkers of Liberal Islam. The sedition of 88 [2009] brought the system’s prestige into question and we saw even some of the small nations spoke for us. We had the power but the recent episode dealt a heavy blow to the system’s prestige and credibility.”¹⁹

Other government and military officials have made similar references to “soft war.” On Dec. 21, 2010, the Fars News Agency published an article that accused the US and the UK of hatching plots for “confronting Islamic values.” The article contains quotes from Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and IRGC Commander General Mohammed Ali Jafari, both of which make explicit reference to “soft war” as a method to undermine the Islamic Republic:

Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei had also on many occasions warned about the enemies' soft-war plots hatched to undermine Iran's resolve towards progress. In November 2009, he underlined the necessity for proper measures to repel enemy's soft war against Iran.

"Today, the main priority of the country is to confront (enemy's) soft warfare which is aimed at creating doubt, discord and pessimism among the masses of the people," Ayatollah Khamenei said, addressing a large and fervent congregation of Basij (volunteer) forces at the time.

Also, in July, Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Mohammad Ali Jaffari warned the Iranian youths against enemies' soft war plots, and called for further preparedness to confront soft threats against Iran and the Islamic Revolution.

"We are in a soft war with the enemies. Their (enemies') plans and hidden and clear moves in this regard are distinctive," Jaffari said.²⁰

These statements seem to equate liberal or secular movements in society with US and Western influence as it uses the term “soft war” interchangeably to refer to what it sees as both internal and external challenges to Iran’s political system. Regardless of the validity of these claims, this rhetoric indicates that the regime perceives US cultural influence as a source of domestic unrest and an ideological threat at the very least. The use of the term “war” to describe this perceived ideological battle is revealing; it reflects not only Iran’s defiant, aggressive disposition toward the US, but also its continuing intention to compete with the US on all fronts.

Conclusions

¹⁸ “Supreme Leader’s Rep. To IRGC Comments On Differences Between Clerical Groups.” Iranian Students News Agency. 27 Oct. ‘11

¹⁹ “Supreme Leader’s Rep. To IRGC Comments On Differences Between Clerical Groups.” Iranian Students News Agency. 27 Oct. ‘11

²⁰ “Commander Warns of US, British Plots for Confronting Islamic Values.” Fars News Agency. 21 Dec. ‘10

Taken together, these developments point to an increasingly obdurate, authoritarian, and hard-line government in Tehran that will likely continue its competition with the US. By enacting laws to suppress conservative and moderate voices in government as well as placing hard-liners in key government posts, the regime is containing those who would be more likely to compromise with the international community and entrenching itself against any further opposition.

Iran's efforts at secrecy make it difficult to interpret internal social and political developments with a high degree of detail. Recent domestic legislation, the regime's suppression of any and all opposition, and statements made by high-ranking officials in Iran's political and security establishment, however, make it clear that the regime is becoming more authoritarian, and less likely to adopt a conciliatory approach in its relationship with the international community. As such, Iran will in all likelihood continue to engage and compete with the US strategically for the foreseeable future.

Lastly, it must be noted that a budding sense of domestic insecurity may be driving the regime's recent efforts to centralize power and crush domestic opposition. Increased centralization of power and suppression of dissenting political forces are historically characteristic of increasingly unpopular and unstable regimes. It is indeed very likely that actions taken by Iran's hard-liners to quash dissent derive from a sense that their grip on power has become progressively more precarious as a result of widespread discontent with the regime. Such a situation could have ramifications for Iran's competition with the US in that the regime may aggressively posture itself abroad in an effort to seem more stable than it really is. The more unstable and unpopular the regime becomes, the more likely it is to adopt an increasingly aggressive, confrontational approach toward the US in an attempt to feign strength.

Contents

Hard-Liners Ruling Iran Gain Ally in Key Post	11
'Iran to take tougher action on sedition' *	13
Minister: Iran Arrests 2 Individuals in Connection with Recent Riots *	14
Iran to prosecute Sedition leaders *	16
Iran Divided Over Atomic Work, U.S. Intel Report Asserts	17
Iran cmdr. warns US against meddling *	20
Iran Protests: Hundreds Of Thousands March, Tear Gas Fired	21
News Analysis: Protests in Iran unlikely to bring about regime change: analysts	24
Iran marks revolution, puts pressure on opposition.....	26
Commander Cautions about Enemies' Continued Plots against Iran *	28
Commander: US Seeking New Tactics to Confront Iran *	29
Official: West-Provoked Velvet Revolt in Iran Ended by Anti-Sedition Rallies *	30
Speaker Terms 2009 Pro-Gov't Rallies "Heavy Blow to US" *	33
Commander Warns of US, British Plots for Confronting Islamic Values *	35
Iran's Supreme Power Struggle	36
Iranian Leader Suddenly Fires Top Diplomat	39
Nuclear Talks Serve Dual Purpose for Iran	41
Minister: Enemies Continuing Soft War to Overthrow Islamic Republic *	43
Iran Lawmakers Complain About Ahmadinejad	45
Assembly Pushes to Oust Iran President	47
Iran: New Basij Group Formed to Coordinate, Collaborate with Media Organizations *	51
Iranian Authorities Allocate IRGC, Basij \$350 Million To Counter 'Soft Threats' *	54
New sanctions led by U.S. are causing divisions within the Iranian leadership, Gates says	56
The Supreme Leader's Not-So-Grand Tour.....	58
Ayatollah Khamenei's latest bid to shore up his religious credentials was a miserable failure.	58
In Unusual Move, Iran's Revolutionary Guards Slam Ahmadinejad Over Comments	63
Iran Appoints New Military Chiefs in Shakeup *	66
Iranian Guards' Mouthpiece Criticizes President for 'Deviant' Remarks *	67
Supreme Leader's Rep. To IRGC Comments On Differences Between Clerical Groups *	69
The Iranian Supreme Leader's Trip to Qom.....	72
Karrubi Warns Iranian MPs Against Bill Designed To 'Weaken' Majles's Position *	73

In Qom, Iran's supreme leader Khamenei aims to cement leadership over clerics	79
Police Chief Urges Further Preparedness to Confront Enemy's Soft War *	82
Iranian Intellectuals To Lebanese People: Ahmadinezhad Does Not Deserve Your Trust *	83
Intelligence Minister Lauds Iranian Nation's Vigilance against Enemy Plots *	86

* Indicates Iranian news source

Hard-Liners Ruling Iran Gain Ally in Key Post

By [ALAN COWELL](#)

Published: March 8, 2011

PARIS — A powerful Iranian clerical body appointed a candidate backed by President [Mahmoud Ahmadinejad](#) as its new chairman on Tuesday to replace former President [Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani](#), state media reported, strengthening the hand of hard-liners seeking to silence dissent.

While the maneuver is unlikely to have a far-reaching practical effect, it will nonetheless bolster those around Mr. Ahmadinejad who have moved persistently and forcefully to quash opposition that surfaced in huge demonstrations after a disputed presidential election in 2009.

There were echoes of those protests on Tuesday in Tehran, where security officers fired tear gas canisters around Revolution Square to disperse demonstrators, Reuters reported, citing an opposition Web site, Kaleme.

Mr. Rafsanjani, a former Parliament speaker as well as a former president, was widely perceived as having tilted toward [Mir Hussein Mousavi](#), a challenger to Mr. Ahmadinejad, in the 2009 election. Within [Iran](#)'s complex and secretive elite, Mr. Rafsanjani's relationship with Mr. Ahmadinejad remains strained.

The setback for Mr. Rafsanjani came in a vote for the leadership of the Assembly of Experts, a body of religious scholars entrusted with monitoring the country's supreme leader and choosing a successor at his death, offering it potentially wide power to mold Iran's political direction.

Press TV, a satellite network, said 63 members of the 86-member assembly voted in favor of Ayatollah Mohammad Reza Mahdavi Kani, 80, to replace Mr. Rafsanjani, who was Iran's president from 1989 to 1997 and is generally perceived in the West as a pragmatic moderate.

He ran for president again in 2005 but lost to Mr. Ahmadinejad.

Mr. Rafsanjani had not competed to retain the post of assembly chairman, Press TV said, after the president's supporters lobbied for the election of Ayatollah Kani. The new chairman has a reputation as a moderate conservative with no evident sympathies for Mr. Ahmadinejad's opponents.

Mr. Rafsanjani had said he wished to “avoid division” by not running, news reports said.

Mr. Rafsanjani, 77, who had been chairman of the assembly since 2007, will stay on as a member of the body, whose role has sometimes been compared to that of the College of Cardinals in the Roman Catholic hierarchy, which chooses a new pope after the death of the incumbent.

Mr. Rafsanjani is also chairman of the powerful Expediency Council, which mediates between lawmakers and the [Guardian Council](#), which determines who may stand for election to various bodies, including the presidency.

Since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the Assembly of Experts has exercised its full powers only once, when it chose Ayatollah [Ali Khamenei](#) to succeed Ayatollah [Ruhollah Khomeini](#), the founder of the revolution, who died in 1989.

The vote on Tuesday was the latest indication that the power of Mr. Rafsanjani, one of Iran’s richest men, is slowly waning.

Several of his children have complained about what they depict as hostile acts toward them by the authorities.

A daughter, Faezeh, was briefly detained after being accused of chanting opposition slogans during a protest in Tehran last month.

Last weekend, one of his sons, Mohsen Hashemi, quit as the director of the Tehran subway project, complaining that government subsidies had been withheld. An arrest warrant was issued for another son, Mehdi, who lives in Britain, on charges of fomenting unrest after the 2009 election — an accusation he denies.

Neil MacFarquhar contributed reporting from Cairo.

'Iran to take tougher action on sedition' *

PressTV, Mon Feb 28, 2011 6:41PM

Iran's prosecutor general has warned that if necessary, tougher measures will be taken against the "domestic counter-revolutionary movement."

"Today, this movement has gone beyond sedition and turned into [a] counter-revolutionary [one]," Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Ejei said.

He was referring to the movement headed by defeated presidential candidates in Iran's 2009 election Mir-Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi, who are known as the leaders of the sedition movement for their role in the post-vote unrest.

"Our policy in dealing with the [seditious] movement will be different from now on," IRNA quoted him as saying.

"In the first step, their contacts including their associations and telephone conversations were restricted and if necessary further steps will be taken," Mohseni-Ejei told reporters on Monday.

He made the remarks after the supporters of Mousavi and Karroubi as well as some members of the terrorist Mujahedin Khalq Organization gathered in small numbers in parts of Tehran on February 14 in an attempt to cause a riot.

The violence in the Iranian capital left two people dead and several others injured.

AGB/HGH/MMN

Minister: Iran Arrests 2 Individuals in Connection with Recent Riots *

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian Intelligence Minister Heidar Moslehi announced that the country's security forces have arrested a CIA collaborator and a member of the terrorist Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO) in connection with February 14 unrests in Tehran.

2-25-2011

"The culprit was trying to escape the country, but he was arrested by the Intelligence Ministry's forces," Moslehi said on Thursday.

"So far, he has provided very good information to our security forces," Moslehi added.

On Wednesday, Moslehi had announced that the country's security forces have identified the terrorists who assassinated Sane' Zhaleh, an Iranian university student, during the February 14 unrests in Tehran.

He blamed antirevolutionary forces and the Mojahedin-e Khalq terrorist organization for the assassination, and noted, "On February 14, the MKO and antirevolutionary stream assassinated this individual (Zhaleh) whom they had identified in a premeditated plan."

Thousands of people who participated in the funeral procession of Sane' Zhaleh on February 15 demanded the government and the judiciary to take strong action against the masterminds of the recent seditious moves in the capital.

Several groups of seditionists staged riots in western Tehran on February 14. Leaders of the move had earlier alleged that they intended to hold a rally in support of the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings, but protestors did not chant any slogan in support of the Tunisians or Egyptians, and damaged buildings and properties and set up roadblocks by setting fire on garbage cans during the rush hour in the Iranian capital, instead.

Rioters opened fire at the passers-by and killed Zhaleh, a university student, and wounded 9 more. 22-year-old Mohammad Mokhtari was wounded and died later at a Tehran hospital.

Tehran's police tried to disperse the rioters, but did not reciprocate the gunfire. Police officials announced yesterday that most of those wounded in the incident are security and police troops.

According to police officials, the seditionists had hatched a plot to get the police and security forces involved in armed clashes to allege that they had been treated violently, but they failed to do so.

The seditionists comprising antirevolutionary elements from the terrorist Mojahedin-e

Khalq Organization and monarchist groups were forced to flee the scene after thousands of people overwhelmed the streets in support of the government.

Iran to prosecute Seditious leaders *

PressTV, Sat Feb 19, 2011 3:9PM

Iran's Interior Minister Mostafa Mohammad-Najjar has described Tehran riots as illegal, saying that the Ministry will deal with seditious leaders according to the law.

The supporters of the defeated candidates in the 2009 presidential elections, Mir-Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi, and the terrorist group Mujahedin Khalq Organization (MKO) gathered in small numbers in a few parts of the Iranian capital on February 14.

"The global arrogance, the Zionists and hegemonic powers have suffered blows from our Revolution, and each year they become more angry because of the presence of tens of millions of people in the 22 Bahman (February 11) rallies," Fars News Agency quoted Mohammad-Najjar as saying on Saturday.

Referring to the assassination of an Iranian student during riots, the Iranian minister said the terrorist attack against Sane Jalleh was planned by the MKO to sow religious and tribal discord among people but they failed.

The opposition claimed that it had applied for a permit to hold a public rally "in support of the people in Tunisia and Egypt," but Iranian officials refused to issue the permit and declared all such rallies illegal.

This is while the US government has again voiced support for anti-government efforts in Iran.

"My hope and expectation is that we are going to continue to see the people of Iran have the courage to be able to express their yearning for greater freedoms and a more representative government," US President Barack Obama said during a White House press conference on Tuesday.

The 'seditious movement' refers to the unrest following the 2009 presidential elections, during which despite government assurances about the transparency of the vote, riots continued in the country, especially in the capital, Tehran.

Defeated presidential candidates Mousavi and Karroubi are known as the leaders of the seditious movement.

MYA/HGH/MMN

Iran Divided Over Atomic Work, U.S. Intel Report Asserts

Thursday, Feb. 17, 2011

Iran's leadership has grown more divided on the possibility of taking additional steps that could help the nation establish a nuclear deterrent, and international economic penalties might have contributed to the impasse, the *Wall Street Journal* today quoted a new U.S. intelligence community analysis as saying (see [GSN](#), Feb. 16).



(Feb. 17) - U.S. National Intelligence Director James Clapper speaks yesterday during a hearing before the Senate intelligence committee. Iran appears capable of generating sufficient nuclear material for a weapon within "the next few years," Clapper warned (Alex Wong/Getty Images).

Iran has probably restarted nuclear weapons studies and enhanced its uranium enrichment program, but it has not necessarily undertaken a comprehensive bomb development effort, the confidential National Intelligence Estimate says. Washington and its allies have long suspected that Iran's nuclear program is aimed at producing weapons, an allegation the Middle Eastern state has consistently denied.

The intelligence report appears to reflect a belief in the United States that a number of top Iranian officials fear antigovernment sentiment might grow in response to their nation's faltering economy, a problem exacerbated by international penalties, according to the *Journal*.

"The bottom line is that the intelligence community has concluded that there's an intense debate inside the Iranian regime on the question of whether or not to move toward a nuclear bomb," said one U.S. government source. "There's a strong sense that a number of Iranian regime officials know that the sanctions are having a serious effect."

Such assertions might encourage the Obama administration to seek new means of increasing Iran's economic isolation, the newspaper said. The White House has not publicly addressed the new intelligence report.

The new assessment also signals an increasing level of certainty among Washington and its partners that international punitive measures and technical issues at Iranian atomic sites have created serious obstacles for the Persian Gulf nation's alleged nuclear warhead work, according to the *Journal*.

Officials in Washington said the report adjusts but does not contradict findings in a 2007 National Intelligence Estimate, which asserted with "high confidence" that Tehran halted the nuclear weapons program in late 2003 and stated with "moderate confidence" that the effort had not been resumed.

Iran appears capable of generating a sufficient amount of weapon-grade uranium for a bomb "in the next few years," U.S. National Intelligence Director James Clapper yesterday told the Senate intelligence committee in another analysis (Adam Entous, *Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 17).

"We continue to assess Iran is keeping the option open to develop nuclear weapons in part by developing various nuclear capabilities that better position it to produce such weapons should it choose to do so," the Associated Press quoted Clapper as saying. "We do not know, however, if Iran will eventually decide to build nuclear weapons."

Addressing the new National Intelligence Estimate, he said: "We see a disturbing confluence of events -- an Iran that is increasingly rigid, autocratic, dependent on coercion to maintain control and defiant toward the West, and an Iran that continues to advance its uranium enrichment capabilities along with what appears to be the scientific, technical and industrial capacity to produce nuclear weapons if its leaders choose to do so."

The White House indicated its Iran policy was informed "by the fact that Iran has failed to demonstrate clearly peaceful nuclear intentions."

"Iran has engaged in a constant pattern of deception on its nuclear program," White House national security spokesman Tommy Vietor said. "Iran has pursued its nuclear program in ways that only deepen the world's concerns, including by building a secret enrichment plant, enriching uranium to higher levels, and refusing to meet its international obligations" (Matthew Lee, Associated Press/[*Washington Post*](#), Feb. 16).

Several members of Congress yesterday introduced a new bill that would force firms to declare dealings with Iran that are subject to penalties in quarterly and annual statements to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, Agence France-Presse reported. The proposal would also mandate that U.S. financial institutions declare involvement in Iran by their foreign correspondent banks.

Eight firms quoted on Nasdaq Stock Market and the New York Stock Exchange are linked to entities doing business with Iran's energy industry, said Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), one sponsor of the bill (Agence France-Presse I/[*Spacedaily.com*](#), Feb. 16).

Meanwhile, Turkey indicated it would work with Iran to develop a "road map" for addressing the standoff over Tehran's atomic activities, Deutsche Presse-Agentur reported today.

"We agreed to come together to work on a new road map on nuclear energy. Turkey will continue to exert all facilitating efforts for a solution to this matter through diplomacy and dialogue," Turkey's Anatolia News Agency quoted President Abdullah Gul as saying.

Gul said senior Iranian nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili and Turkish diplomats would participate in talks on the project, but the leader did not elaborate on the plan's potential contents (Deutsche Presse-Agentur/[Earth Times](#), Feb. 17).

In Israel, footage of Iranian nuclear equipment damaged by the Stuxnet computer worm was included in a video shown during a Monday commemoration of Gabi Ashkenazi's four-year term as Israeli military chief, AFP reported. Israel and the United States are suspected of carrying out electronic strikes with the malware against Iranian atomic sites.

Israel's army "did not intend to elaborate," a military spokeswoman said.

The video shown at the event also displayed footage from the 2007 bombing of a suspected Syrian nuclear reactor, *Haaretz* reported in a Hebrew-language story (see [GSN](#), Feb. 16).

Jerusalem has not publicly said it was behind the strike, but a leaked U.S. diplomatic cable confirmed its involvement.

"On September 6, 2007, Israel destroyed the nuclear reactor built by Syria secretly, apparently with North Korea's help," says the April 2008 document by then-U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. "We have good reason to believe that the reactor was not built for peaceful purposes," she said (Agence France-Presse II/[Spacewar.com](#), Feb. 16).

Iran cmdr. warns US against meddling *

PressTV, Wed Feb 16, 2011 6:43PM

A senior Iranian commander says the US should await the consequences of its interferences in Iran's internal affairs.

“The era of the absolute power of the US and this country's intelligence and military services is over,” Brigadier General Masoud Jazayeri said on Wednesday.

Referring to the recent counter-revolutionary measures of the United States in Iran, the Iranian commander added that Washington would regret its actions.

“Influencing the interests of the US apparatuses is not difficult, and those who pursue toppling schemes against Iran, and publicly support the counter-revolutionaries and the seditionists will face the consequences of these actions.”

Jazayeri reiterated that unlike Israel and the US, which are hegemonic powers, the Islamic Republic is against violent, terrorist and anti-popular actions.

On Tuesday, US President Barack Obama expressed hope to see more anti-government protests in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

“My hope and expectation is that we are going to continue to see the people of Iran have the courage to be able to express their yearning for greater freedoms and a more representative government,” he said.

Iran says American NGOs and organizations have provided financial support for post-election unrest in order to topple the Islamic establishment.

Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani said the United States is behind the anti-government protests, adding that Washington is angry over Iran's support for the liberation movements sweeping the Middle East.

MYA/PKH/AKM

Iran Protests: Hundreds Of Thousands March, Tear Gas Fired

AP/The Huffington Post ALI AKBAR DAREINI

First Posted: 02/14/11 02:16 PM Updated: 02/15/11 01:25 PM

TEHRAN, Iran -- Clashes between Iranian police and [hundreds of thousands](#) of protesters wracked central Tehran on Monday as security forces beat and fired tear gas at opposition supporters hoping to evoke Egypt's recent popular uprising.

The opposition called for a demonstration Monday in solidarity with Egypt's popular revolt that a few days earlier forced the president there to resign after nearly 30 years in office. The rally is the first major show of strength for Iran's cowed opposition in more than a year.

Police used tear gas against the protesters in central Tehran's Enghelab, or Revolution, square and in Imam Hossein square, as well as in other nearby main streets. Demonstrators responded by setting garbage bins on fire to protect themselves from the stinging white clouds.

Eyewitnesses said at least three protesters injured by bullets were taken to a hospital in central Tehran while dozens of others were hospitalized because of severe wounds as a result of being beaten.

"An Iranian dies but doesn't accept humiliation," demonstrators chanted. "Death to the dictator," they said, in a chant directed at hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Security forces on motorcycles could also be seen chasing protesters through the streets, according to eyewitnesses.

Story continues below

The semiofficial Fars news agency called protesters "hypocrites, monarchists, ruffians and seditionists," and ridiculed them for not chanting any slogans about Egypt as they had originally promised.

Fars, which is linked to the Revolutionary Guard, Iran's most powerful military force, said an unspecified number of protesters were arrested and handed over to police and security officials. It didn't elaborate.

Opposition website kaleme.com reported that similar rallies took place in the central city of Isfahan and Shiraz in the south. Security forces used force to disperse them as well.

Foreign media are banned from covering street protests in Iran.

Following the announcements by the opposition that they would attempt to hold a new rally in solidarity with the Egypt uprising, Iran's security forces cut phone lines and blockaded the home of an opposition leader in attempts to stop him attending the planned rally.

Police and militiamen poured onto the streets of Tehran to challenge the marches, which officials worry could turn into demonstrations against Iran's ruling system.

The security clampdown is reminiscent of the backlash that crushed a wave of massive protests after Ahmadinejad's disputed re-election in June 2009. But opposition supporters revived a tactic from the unrest, shouting "Allahu Akbar," or God is Great, from rooftops and balconies into the early hours Monday in a sign of defiance toward Iran's leadership.

The reformist website kaleme.com said police stationed several cars in front of the home of Mir Hossein Mousavi ahead of the demonstration called for Monday in central Tehran.

Mousavi and fellow opposition leader Mahdi Karroubi have been under house arrest since last week after they asked the government for permission to hold a rally on Feb. 14 in support of the uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia.

On Sunday, the opposition renewed its call to supporters to rally, and accused the government of hypocrisy by voicing support for the Egyptian and Tunisian uprisings while refusing to allow Iranian political activists to stage a peaceful demonstration.

Across central Tehran, riot police, many on motorbikes, fanned out to prevent any demonstration, witnesses said, speaking on condition of anonymity because of fears of reprisals from authorities.

The uprising in Egypt opened a rare chance for the political gambit by Iran's opposition.

Ahmadinejad claimed the Egyptians who toppled President Hosni Mubarak took inspiration from Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution, which brought down a Western-backed monarchy. Iran's opposition movement used the comments to push the government into a corner and request permission to march in support of Egypt's protesters.

Iranian officials quickly backpedaled and said no pro-Egypt rallies were allowed - bringing sharp criticism from the White House and others.

Karroubi and Mousavi have compared the unrest in Egypt and Tunisia with their own postelection protest movement. Mousavi said Iran's demonstrations were the starting point but that all the uprisings aimed at ending the "oppression of the rulers."

Turkish President Abdullah Gul, who is on a visit to Iran, urged governments in the Middle East to listen to the demands of their people.

"When leaders and heads of countries do not pay attention to the demands of their nations, the people themselves take action to achieve their demands," IRNA quoted Gul as saying Monday.

Hundreds of thousands of Iranians peacefully took to the streets in support of Mousavi after the June 2009 vote, claiming Ahmadinejad was re-elected through massive vote fraud.

A heavy government crackdown suppressed the protests. The opposition has not been able to hold a major protest since December 2009.

The opposition says more than 80 demonstrators were killed in the turmoil. The government, which puts the number of confirmed deaths at 30, accuses opposition leaders of being "stooges of the West" and of seeking to topple the ruling system through street protests.

State TV said Mousavi and Karroubi were carrying out a plot designed by Iran's enemies.

News Analysis: Protests in Iran unlikely to bring about regime change: analysts

by Adam Gonn

JERUSALEM, Feb. 16 (Xinhua) -- After almost one year and a half in hiatus, Iranian opposition forces took to streets again in the garb of the Iranian Green Movement which is named after the color its members wore when they protested against the re-election of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2009.

Analysts said it is a further step in a wave of protests that broke out in many countries in the Middle East since the overthrow of Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and the downfall of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

However, analysts said that despite the similarities of the protests in Iran, Egypt and Tunisia, there are huge differences when looking a bit closer.

AMERICAN INFLUENCE

Shmuel Bar from the Institute of Policy and Strategy in Herzliya said there are several important differences between Iran and Egypt, ranging from the type of regime to the degree of American influence.

First of all, the Egyptian military wasn't willing to use force against the demonstrations. Additionally, Egypt is an regional ally of the U.S., which has influence over the regime. Thus the military had to take into account that if it acts brutally, it's going to lose the U.S. support.

The Americans had the leverage to impose great pressure on Mubarak, since he was their ally, Bar said.

However, "the situation is absolutely different in Iran where the military is willing to use force, and it deter the protesters, which the Egyptian regime didn't have," Bar said.

The Iranian demonstrators knew that they did not have the American support, and even if they had, the Americans have no leverage over the regime.

And for the Iranian demonstrators, the issues are far more complex than just getting rid of Ahmadinejad, according to Bar.

"Even now, the Americans are only expressing very light criticism towards the regime, while at the same point in Egypt, the American were calling on Mubarak to step down," Bar said.

DIFFERENT CULTURES

Eldad Prado from the Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, told Xinhua that there are significant cultural differences between the two countries, in addition to the political ones.

In Iran, the protests began in June 2009 and went on to get pretty aggressive as a mass movement all the way until December. But they died out due the extremely harsh and cruel reaction by the government, Prado said.

"The similarities between the situations in Iran and Egypt are that these movements are led by young people informed with Western values of democracy," Prado said.

"The political culture in Egypt is different from that of Iran, " Prado said, adding that "Iran has a culture that focuses on martyrdom."

"In Iran, the slogan is 'death to the dictator,' while in Egypt, the slogans is 'the people want the regime to fall,'" Prado added.

DISSIMILAR PROTESTS

Ze'ev Maghen from the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies at Bar-Ilan University, said he believed that the numerous demonstrations across the Middle East have had an effect on reviving the Green Movement in Iran, which had been silent since the post-election demonstrations.

"In Iran, everyone is claiming the events in Tunisia and Egypt as their own," Maghen said. He said that both the government and the demonstrations have used the developments as an argument to prove their points.

The regime arguing that the demonstrations were inspired by the Islamic Revolution in 1979 while the pro-democracy movement, on the other hand, said that the revolts were sparked by a desire for freedom, he said.

While acknowledging Bar's view that the different responses of the armed forces played a role in how the protests developed, Maghen said that if Iranian protests developed to the extent it did in Egypt, most of the armies will eventually back down.

Maghen said there are also differences in how the regimes claim their legitimacy and authority in each country. "Mubarak doesn't have a religious claim, nor a democratic one."

"The Iranian leadership makes both of those claims. So it's much harder to rise up against them," Maghen added.

Iran marks revolution, puts pressure on opposition

Fri Feb 11, 2011 11:49am GMT

* Pressure mounts on moderate opposition, websites

* New Middle East to be formed soon, Ahmadinejad

* Ahmadinejad says Israel should be dismantled

By Parisa Hafezi and Mitra Amiri

TEHRAN, Feb 11 (Reuters) - Hundreds of thousands turned out on Friday to mark the 32nd anniversary of Iran's Islamic Revolution in a rally the clerical establishment billed as a chance to show solidarity with "Islamic" protesters in Egypt.

"Death to America," and "Death to Israel," shouted demonstrators, repeating the ritual chant of the revolution which toppled the U.S.-backed Shah in 1979 and swept the Shi'ite Muslim clergy to power.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad reiterated the authorities' view -- challenged by their political opponents -- that the uprisings in Tunisia and against Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak are an "Islamic awakening" similar to Iran's revolution.

Most opposition groups in Egypt, including the banned Muslim Brotherhood, have stressed the secular nature of their protests.

"Victory is imminent ... arrogant powers are close to hitting the end ... Our nation supports your choice," he told the crowd in a speech at Tehran's Azadi (Liberty) square, to chants of "Mubarak, congratulations on the Egyptians' uprising."

Ahmadinejad also predicted the fall of the "arrogant powers" and called on them to "dismantle the Zionist regime (Israel) which is the main cause of all crimes". Iran does not recognise Israel.

"Soon a new Middle East will be created ... a Middle East in which there is no place for arrogant powers," Ahmadinejad said, his speech broadcast live on state television. "You have to dismantle the Zionist regime as it has been imposed ... by you."

People in the square waved flags and carried pictures of the late leader of Iran's revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, and his successor Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

PRESSURE MOUNTS

State television said "tens of millions of people" rallied to support the revolution across the country.

A dispute over the presidential election in 2009 provoked the worst unrest in three decades in Iran itself, and also led to a deepening rift among the ruling elite.

Mass opposition protests ended in December 2009 but opposition leaders, who said the vote was rigged to secure Ahmadinejad's re-election, say the freedom movement is still alive in Iran.

Mehdi Karroubi and Mirhossein Mousavi, who lost the 2009 vote to Ahmadinejad, have asked permission to hold a rally on Monday to support the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt.

Opposition websites said Karroubi had been under house arrest and at least eight moderate activists and journalists had been detained since Wednesday. Judiciary officials were not available for comment.

Hardline authorities, trying to prevent a revival of anti-government street protests, have warned opponents against holding their rally.

Karroubi, in an interview with the New York Times conducted via internet from his home, said the rally was a test for both the government and its opponents.

Opposition leaders say the pro-democracy uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia mirror the anti-government demonstrations in Iran in 2009, not the 1979 Islamic revolution as claimed by the authorities. (Additional reporting by Reza Derakhshi, Ramin Mostafavi, Hossein Jaseb, writing by Parisa Hafezi, editing by Tim Pearce)

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Commander Cautions about Enemies' Continued Plots against Iran *

TEHRAN (FNA)- A senior commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) warned of the enemies' continued plots against the Islamic establishment in Iran.

2-1-2011

"Enemies are continuously hatching new plots and are waiting to misuse the slightest negligence we might show," Commander of the IRGC Ground Force Brigadier General Mohammad Pakpour said on Tuesday.

He underlined the need for the IRGC's rank-and-file, officers and commanders to have growing insight in confronting the cultural invasion and the soft war the arrogant powers have launched against Iran.

"The sole way to defuse these plots is maintaining defensive preparedness and promoting (the country's) scientific level and insight," Pakpour noted.

In December, Iranian Intelligence Minister Heidar Moslehi cautioned that enemies are continuing their plots against the Islamic Republic through soft war tactics and are spending billions of dollars to overthrow the Islamic establishment in Iran.

"During the last 25 years, as many as 80 institutions, foundations, associations and companies specialized in soft war against Iran have been set up with two-billion-dollar annual funds," Moslehi said at the time.

"There are numerous like-minded institutions and agencies inside and outside of Iran, whose missions are mainly focused on toppling the Islamic establishment in the country," he warned.

He pointed to the complexity of soft war against Iran, and stated, "The enemies of the Islamic Republic have always been involved in hatching long-term plans over the past 19 years as part a soft war against the Iranian nation and in doing so they have allocated more than \$17.7 billion in order to stage a coup against the sacred establishment of the Islamic Republic."

Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei had also on many occasions warned about the enemies' soft-war plots to undermine Iran's resolve towards progress. In November 2009, he underlined the necessity for proper measures to repel enemy's soft war against Iran.

"Today, the main priority of the country is to confront (enemy's) soft warfare which is aimed at creating doubt, discord and pessimism among the masses of the people," Ayatollah Khamenei said, addressing a large and fervent congregation of Basij (volunteer) forces at the time.

Commander: US Seeking New Tactics to Confront Iran *

TEHRAN (FNA)- Deputy Head of the Joint Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Brigadier General Massoud Jazayeri reiterated on Monday that the US which is pessimistic about implementing its plots against Iran is now seeking new methods to confront the country.

1-3-2011

"The US believes that Iran is a different actor and it should be confronted wisely and properly. It believes that its common tricks are not functional in the case of Iran and that the US should find new ways to confront the country," Jazayeri said.

"The US says if we cannot annihilate Iran we should put it in a cage and threaten its strategic backups," he added.

Jazayeri also warned Iranian officials to keep vigilant against the soft plots hatched by the enemies against the country, and said, "Understanding dimensions of the soft war is a serious necessity, specially for a political country like the Islamic Republic of Iran."

Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei has also repeatedly warned that enemies have hatched soft plots to misrepresent the realities in Iran, stressing that the move indicates enemies' weakness against the great Iranian nation.

"Today, misrepresenting Iran's realities is one of the main pivots of the enemy's working agenda within the framework of the soft war," Ayatollah Khamenei cautioned, addressing a large number of Basij (volunteer) forces in the holy city of Qom in October.

Also, in July, Commander of the IRGC Major General Mohammad Ali Jaffari warned the Iranian youths about enemies' soft war plots, and called for further preparedness to confront the soft threats posed to Iran and the Islamic Revolution.

"We are in a soft war with the enemies. Their (enemies') plans and hidden and clear moves in this regard are distinctive," Jaffari said at the time.

Official: West-Provoked Velvet Revolt in Iran Ended by Anti-Sedition Rallies *

TEHRAN (FNA)- A senior Iranian judiciary official on Saturday stressed that Iranian peoples' pro-Islam and pro-government rallies last year ended a sedition that sought to overthrow the Islamic ruling system through a West-designed and West-provoked velvet revolution.

1-1-2011

Lauding the massive public turnout in the pro-Islamic Revolution rallies on December 30, 2009, Deputy Judiciary Chief Mohammad Baqer Zolqadr said, "The Iranian people's December 30 rallies ended the sedition that had come to overthrow the religious system and prepare the ground for foreign control over the country through a soft and velvet revolution."

"The sedition was the result of joint efforts by foreign powers and the deviated and lost streams inside the country, but it remained futile due to the power of Islam and the vigilance shown by the Iranian nation and unique leadership of the religious guardianship (Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei)," Zolqadr added.

He said that 8 months of disrespect for Islamic and Revolutionary values which started after the 2009 presidential elections angered the Iranian revolutionary and Muslim nation and after people saw a major disrespect and insult to Imam Hossein on his martyrdom anniversary they took to the streets in a self-motivated move against the seditionists and took part in such massive rallies that were seen as a public referendum in support of the Islamic ruling system and its leadership.

Earlier this week, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei had also appreciated the vigilance shown by the Iranian people during the 2009 rallies, and said their presence foiled the plots hatched by the enemies to divide the nation and government.

"The Iranian nation similar to its sacred defense (the 8-year Iraqi imposed war against Iran 1980-1988) was present on all scenes with its industriousness, insightfulness and vigilance during the 8-month-long soft war," Ayatollah Khamenei said Wednesday, alluding to post-election unrests from June 2009 to January 2010.

He also described the massive rallies in support of the Islamic establishment on December 30, 2009 as a sign of the Iranian people's vigilance against the enemy plots hatched to create a rift among them.

Ayatollah Khamenei stressed that the arrogant powers, specially the US, have no correct understanding about the Iranian nation, and added, "The Iranian nation's enemies and those who think that they can create a rift between the people and the Islamic Republic should understand the message of the December 30 and know that the Islamic Republic belongs to the people and that people are its main guardians."

His remarks alluded to the pro-government rallies staged by millions of Iranians on December 30, 2009 after a group of opposition supporters took advantage of the highly revered religious day of Ashoura on December 27 - the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Hossein (AS), the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Shiite Muslims' third Imam - to chant slogans against top Iranian government officials.

On the same day (December 27), tens of millions of Iranians were on the streets to take part in annual massive processions across the country to mark the martyrdom anniversary of Imam Hossein (AS).

Clashes began after demonstrators started clapping and showing happiness, insulting the mourning people who were also in the streets to commemorate Imam Hossein's martyrdom anniversary.

In response to the Ashoura unrest, millions of Iranians took to the streets on Wednesday Dec. 30, 2009, demanding that rioters be brought to justice.

Later, Iran revealed that a number of western states have played a major role in stoking the unrests both after the presidential elections and on the Ashoura Day, singling out Britain and the US for meddling. Tehran also revealed strong evidence substantiating the interfering role of several foreign embassies and diplomats in stirring riots in Iran.

After the Ashoura unrests, Tehran expelled two British diplomats and arrested a number of local staffs of the British embassy in Tehran after documents and evidence substantiated London's interfering role in stirring post-election riots in Iran.

In one of the court hearing sessions, British embassy's local staff in Tehran Hossein Rassam, who was charged with spying, admitted cultivating networks of contacts in the opposition movement using a £300,000 budget.

Rassam also confessed that the local staff of the embassy had attended protests against the June's presidential election results along with two British diplomats, named in court as Tom Burn and Paul Blemey, and that he had attended meetings with the defeated

opposition leader, Mir Hossein Mousavi, alongside Burn.

Following Britain's support for the wild demonstrators who disrespected Islamic sanctities and damaged private and public amenities and properties in Tehran on December 27, 2009, members of the Iranian parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission approved the bill of a law requiring the country's Foreign Ministry to cut relations with Britain.

The British government's blatant stance and repeated remarks in support of the last year unrests inside Iran and London's espionage operations and financial and media support for the opposition groups are among the reasons mentioned in the bill for cutting ties with Britain.

Speaker Terms 2009 Pro-Gov't Rallies "Heavy Blow to US" *

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani reiterated on Tuesday that the massive rallies staged in support of the Islamic state on December 30, 2009 were a heavy blow to the US and its western allies.

12-28-2010

"The December 30 standing was a strong slap on the face of the US and certain western countries which defended the awkward and devilish anti-revolutionary measures on the Ashoura Day despite the fact that these measures were an insult to Ashoura as a religious ceremony," Larijani said at the beginning of an open session of the parliament today.

Stressing that the Iranian nation with its rallies last year gave a firm response to the anti-revolutionary and anti-religious elements who disrespected the Islamic values on Ashoura Day, he said that the rallies also foiled all the plots hatched by the US and the other aliens against the country.

"The US understood that it is faced with a clever and vigilant nation (after the December 30, 2009 rallies)," Larijani said.

Millions of Iranians staged pro-government rallies on December 30, 2009 after a group of opposition supporters took advantage of the highly revered religious day of Ashoura on December 27 - the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Hossein (AS), the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Shiite Muslims' third Imam - to chant slogans against top Iranian government officials.

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Commander Warns of US, British Plots for Confronting Islamic Values *

TEHRAN (FNA)- A senior commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) warned of the plots hatched by the US and Britain to undermine Islamic values in the Iranian society.

12-21-2010

Speaking to reporters here in Tehran on Tuesday, Lieutenant Commander of the IRGC for Publicity and Organizational Culture General Mohammad Ali Asoudi said that the West and Britain are trying to confront Islamic values through the soft war that they have waged against Iran.

He described Islam, Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and his infallible and holy family as the unshakable pillars of the Shiite school of thought, and added, "They (enemies) have reached the conclusion that they should infiltrate Muslim societies to deprive them (Muslims) of these elements (values)."

The commander further pointed to yet another plot hatched by the CIA against the Islamic Iran, and said that Agency's reports have warned the White House of the key role and major share of the Islamic Revolution and the religious authority in the Islamic Republic of Iran's power.

The reports have mentioned that the West can strike a heavy blow at the spirituality of the Islamic society by sparking sectarian strife and rift in religious mourning ceremonies.

Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei had also on many occasions warned about the enemies' soft-war plots hatched to undermine Iran's resolve towards progress. In November 2009, he underlined the necessity for proper measures to repel enemy's soft war against Iran.

"Today, the main priority of the country is to confront (enemy's) soft warfare which is aimed at creating doubt, discord and pessimism among the masses of the people," Ayatollah Khamenei said, addressing a large and fervent congregation of Basij (volunteer) forces at the time.

Also, in July, Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Mohammad Ali Jaffari warned the Iranian youths against enemies' soft war plots, and called for further preparedness to confront soft threats against Iran and the Islamic Revolution.

"We are in a soft war with the enemies. Their (enemies') plans and hidden and clear moves in this regard are distinctive," Jaffari said.

Iran's Supreme Power Struggle

By [Mehdi Khalaji](#)

Project Syndicate

December 16, 2010

Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has never been happy about the status of the Iranian presidency -- neither during his own tenure, from 1981-1989, nor during the terms of his three successors.

Tension between the president and the Supreme Leader is built into the Islamic Republic's core. The Supreme Leader has absolute authority and can veto decisions made by the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. At the same time, the president emerges from an electoral process with an agenda and ambitions of his own. During a president's second term -- which Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has now begun -- the tensions inevitably emerge into public view.

Khamenei has never been willing to tolerate a president with a large independent power base. In the past, he clipped the wings of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who had strong ties to the merchant class, and of Mohammad Khatami, a reformer whose support came from Westernized middle-class professionals. Though Ahmadinejad received the Supreme Leader's support in the face of large-scale protests against his re-election last year, Khamenei does not appear hesitant about limiting the president's power.

In fact, it appears that the massive demonstrations against Ahmadinejad delayed their confrontation, since both the Supreme Leader and the president rallied publicly to defend the legitimacy of the election. But Ahmadinejad's radical Islamist views and his support among religious, lower middle-class Iranians have not protected him from Khamenei.

For the most part, the two men have avoided head-on confrontation. Their struggle is visible, however, in their maneuvering inside other branches of government. In this arena, Ahmadinejad faces off against Ali Larijani, the speaker of the parliament, and his brother, Sadeq Larijani, who is the head of the Iranian judiciary.

The Larijani brothers have been vehement critics of the president, whom they accuse of ignoring legislation and key judicial rulings. Within the parliament, the conservative bloc is divided between supporters of Ahmadinejad and advocates of more parliamentary oversight of the president.

Recently, parliament demonstrated its opposition to Ahmadinejad's economic policies by deciding to remove the president from his traditional post as head of the General Assembly of the Central Bank. This would reduce Ahmadinejad's ability to intervene in economic policies and keep him from naming the bank's governor.

But this decision is contingent on the approval of the Guardian Council, where a group of the president's supporters have launched a counter-attack. They want the Supreme Leader to allow the president to issue warnings to both the parliament and the judiciary if he thinks they have overstepped their authority, thereby subordinating the Larijani brothers.

Until now, parliament has been an effective tool for the Supreme Leader legitimately to rein in presidential authority, and it is difficult to imagine that the Larijani brothers would have mounted such a sharp challenge to Ahmadinejad without the Supreme Leader's approval. If they carry the day, the president will lose authority over the one area where his power has been greatest: the Iranian economy.

By contrast, the president has no serious say in foreign policy, which is under the Supreme Leader's direct supervision. Khamenei is known to seek advice from various parties, but ultimately he makes decisions alone. For example, he overruled Iranian nuclear negotiators who offered a compromise during the Geneva negotiations in October 2009. He has also diminished the foreign ministry's stature by appointing a number of special envoys in key areas.

Khamenei does rely on Ahmadinejad to lead Iran's public diplomacy. The president travels widely, speaks frequently, and mobilizes political support with his anti-American and anti-Western rhetoric. But public diplomacy is not diplomacy itself. It is clear that no one in Ahmadinejad's inner circle -- certainly not the president himself -- has gained the Supreme Leader's confidence. The nuclear portfolio, for example, remains exclusively under Khamenei's control.

Within the realm of religious politics, Khamenei has made careful use of Ahmadinejad's radicalism. It is widely believed that the president would like to reduce the clergy's influence and increase the power of the Revolutionary Guards, his main source of institutional support. Thus, Khamenei can present himself as a defender of the clergy, which, given widespread doubt about his clerical credentials since he took power 21 years ago, enhances his position.

Clerics know that if Khamenei weakens, Ahmadinejad's circle can manipulate widespread anti-clerical resentment and exclude them from power. Moreover, Ahmadinejad knows that, without Khamenei's restraint, the clerics would use their political networks among conservatives like the Larijani brothers to limit the president further. The mutual hostility of Ahmadinejad and the clerical class offers the Supreme Leader the best of both worlds.

The history of the Islamic Republic indicates that the power struggle between the Supreme Leader and the president never abates. It also suggests that the Supreme Leader will prove to be stronger.

More importantly for the international community, this internal struggle keeps Iran's leaders from realistically appraising their foreign and nuclear policies. Consumed with their test of wills, they are unable to make well-informed and nuanced decisions in their dealings with outsiders.

[Mehdi Khalaji](#), who trained as a Shiite cleric in Iran, is a senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

Iranian Leader Suddenly Fires Top Diplomat

By WILLIAM YONG

Published: December 13, 2010

TEHRAN — President [Mahmoud Ahmadinejad](#) fired Iran's foreign minister on Monday, a move that caught many here by surprise and appeared to reflect a strengthening of the president's power.

Mr. Ahmadinejad said in a presidential order that he had dismissed the minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, a career diplomat who for many years has been Iran's face to the West. Mr. Mottaki was on an official visit to Senegal and did not immediately react to the news, which appeared to catch even the state-run Iranian news media by surprise.

The firing seemed to represent a victory for Mr. Ahmadinejad, who has been embroiled in a power struggle with a faction of moderate politicians centered in the Parliament and headed by the speaker, Ali Larijani. Political insiders said that after the 2005 election, Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah [Ali Khamenei](#), forced the newly elected Mr. Ahmadinejad to accept Mr. Mottaki as foreign minister, even though Mr. Mottaki had backed Mr. Larijani's presidential campaign. They said Mr. Khamenei had until now blocked the president's efforts to replace him.

Lawmakers loyal to Mr. Ahmadinejad had recently been threatening to seek Mr. Mottaki's dismissal if the [United Nations](#) approved more sanctions over [Iran's nuclear program](#). But the foreign minister was never involved in the nuclear negotiations, a factor that led some analysts to dismiss the nuclear issue as a pretext for pushing him out.

Other experts said the move signaled the rising prominence of nuclear matters in Iran's foreign policy. Mr. Ahmadinejad's choice for acting foreign minister, Ali Akbar Salehi, is the head of Iran's nuclear program and has served as ambassador to the [International Atomic Energy Agency](#). Mr. Salehi, who is fluent in English, has a doctorate from [M.I.T.](#)

With a new round of talks over Iran's nuclear program scheduled for January, and the prospect of sanctions, it was not yet evident how the new appointment would affect Iran's posture in negotiations over its nuclear program, which the West suspects is aimed at producing [nuclear weapons](#). Tehran says it is for peaceful purposes only.

It is possible that Mr. Salehi is only a fill-in. Some Iran observers speculated that Mr. Ahmadinejad might try to replace him with a permanent candidate from his inner circle.

The firing of Mr. Mottaki could also be related to the recent release of United States diplomatic cables by [WikiLeaks](#), which made clear that many of Iran's Arab neighbors remain deeply hostile to it. "Clearly, Iranian foreign policy has failed here and someone

needed to pay the price for it,” said Trita Parsi, an Iran expert and founder of the [National Iranian American Council](#) in Washington.

Last week, after multiparty talks with Iran in Geneva produced no discernible progress in halting its nuclear program, “In the wake of the Geneva talks, we and our allies are determined to maintain and even increase pressure,” Gary Samore, [President Obama](#)’s chief nuclear adviser, said Friday. “We need to send the message to Iran that sanctions will only increase if Iran avoids serious negotiations and will not be lifted until our concerns are fully addressed.”

In a letter that was issued Monday, Mr. Ahmadinejad expressed gratitude to Mr. Mottaki for his years of service as foreign minister. “Hereby, I thank you for your services as efforts during your tenure in the Foreign Ministry,” it said.

Asked about the dismissal, Secretary of State [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#), who was meeting with her Canadian and Mexican counterparts just outside Ottawa, said that she had no comment or insight about it. But she said that “whether one person or another is foreign minister is not as important as to what the policy of the Iranian government is.”

The latest round of sanctions, imposed by the Security Council in the spring, is making it increasingly difficult for Iran to conduct business around the world, and the United States and its allies said Friday that new sanctions were planned in an effort to test “Iran’s pain threshold.”

Also on Monday, the Iranian Foreign Ministry [summoned the British ambassador](#), Simon Gass, over accusations that Britain has interfered in Iran’s internal affairs, Iranian state media said and The Associated Press reported.

Mr. Gass has been critical of Iran’s human rights record and, in an article posted Thursday on the British Embassy Web site, wrote that the British government “will continue to draw attention to cases where people are deprived of their fundamental freedoms.”

Robert F. Worth contributed reporting from Beirut, Lebanon, and Ian Austen from Ottawa.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: December 17, 2010

Because of an editing error, an article on Tuesday about the dismissal of Iran’s foreign minister by the president misstated the given name of the speaker of Iran’s parliament, who heads a faction of moderate politicians engaged in a power struggle with the president. He is Ali Larijani, not Ari.

Nuclear Talks Serve Dual Purpose for Iran

Author: Ray Takeyh, Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern Studies

December 5, 2010

Los Angeles Times

After months of negotiating over venue, agenda and the size of the table, Iran and the United States are once more set to resume their dialogue. The Islamic Republic's diplomacy is a delicate balancing act between competing and contradictory objectives. The regime's regional ambitions require nuclear weapons, and yet its predicament necessitates nuclear negotiations. To manage this paradox, Iran will seek a protracted diplomatic process that may involve some modest concessions but avoids a larger nuclear settlement. Indeed, Tehran's principal motivation for participating in the talks has little to do with its nuclear file and much to do with its desire to fracture international unity, relieve financial distress and, most important, gain a free hand in suppressing its opposition "green movement."

The Islamist regime has all the attributes of a police state: midnight knocks on doors, show trials, arbitrary imprisonment and torture of political dissidents. And the level of abuse usually intensifies before important international conclaves. At ease with the notion that the global community's preoccupation with gradations of enrichment and spinning centrifuges will divert it from pressing Iran on its human rights record, the mullahs typically escalate their repression at home before dispatching their diplomats abroad.

In recent weeks, that pattern is eerily manifesting itself, as scores of civil society activists and lawyers have been arrested and university campuses are again the scene of harsh police interventions. The regime seems to perceive that nuclear diplomacy means that it can freely impose its authority on its restive constituency. For the clerical rulers, there is a clear connection between the green movement and the nuclear program: The more Iran engages the world on its nuclear infractions, the easier it is to repress its domestic opponents.

Tehran also hopes to utilize the talks to forestall the possibility of further economic sanctions. Despite its ritualistic denials, the sanctions adroitly orchestrated by the Obama administration have had a dramatic impact on Iran's already mismanaged economy. The regime hopes that by participating in talks, it can erode the will of the international community and entice its erstwhile commercial partners to reenter the Iranian market. The mullahs are counting on the Chinese and Russians to suggest that it would be ill-advised to impose additional penalties on Iran while negotiations progress. Washington and its European allies are determined to sustain pressure on Iran, but they may find it difficult to maintain a consensus should Iran appear superficially reasonable. Nevertheless, Washington must include in these talks a forceful defense of the green movement and human rights.

For Tehran, comprehensive negotiations have other potential advantages. By insisting on a broad agenda that includes important regional issues such as the stability of Iraq and Afghanistan, Iran seeks to signal to the Arab states that the United States officially acknowledges its centrality in stabilizing the Middle East. Such a negotiating platform is designed to further unease Arab rulers

and estrange the U.S. from its local allies.

All this calls into question the plausibility of a transactional relationship with Iranian leaders. An ideologically revisionist regime ruled by men who claim to know the mind of God is hardly prone to concede to international legalities. Iran's approach to its pledges is to sustain them only to the point of convenience.

The only way out of this conundrum is to alter the context of Iranian politics. The imposition of sanctions is important but by itself insufficient. Should the U.S. and its allies align their policy with the aspirations of the green movement, Washington would finally have leverage that can impress its Iranian interlocutors. Until then, American diplomats will spend frustrating days seeking a constructive path to an elusive disarmament compact.

Ray Takeyh is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Minister: Enemies Continuing Soft War to Overthrow Islamic Republic *

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian Intelligence Minister Heidar Moslehi cautioned that enemies are continuing their plots against the Islamic Republic through soft tactics and are spending billions of dollars to overthrow the Islamic establishment in Iran.

12-3-2010

"During the last 25 years, as many as 80 institutions, foundations, associations and companies specialized in soft war against Iran have been set up with two-billion-dollar annual funds," Moslehi said in Iran's holy city of Qom on Thursday.

"There are numerous like-minded institutions and agencies inside and outside of Iran, whose missions are mainly focused on toppling the Islamic establishment in the country," He warned.

He pointed to the complexity of soft war against Iran, and stated, "The enemies of the Islamic Republic have always been involved in hatching long-term plans over the past 19 years as part a soft war against the Iranian nation and in doing so they have allocated more than \$17.7 billion in order to stage a coup against the sacred establishment of the Islamic Republic."

Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei had also on many occasions warned about the enemies' soft-war plots to undermine Iran's resolve towards progress. In November 2009, he underlined the necessity for proper measures to repel enemy's soft war against Iran.

"Today, the main priority of the country is to confront (enemy's) soft warfare which is aimed at creating doubt, discord and pessimism among the masses of the people," Ayatollah Khamenei said, addressing a large and fervent congregation of Basij (volunteer) forces at the time.

Also, in July, Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Mohammad Ali Jaffari warned the Iranian youths against enemies' soft war plots, and called for further preparedness to confront soft threats against Iran and the Islamic Revolution.

"We are in a soft war with the enemies. Their (enemies') plans and hidden and clear moves in this regard are distinctive," Jaffari said.

Last year, Jaffari had stated that the IRGC was preparing infrastructures for confronting military, hard and soft threats, adding that the IRGC had entrusted the duty for confrontation against soft threats to the Basij forces.

Jaffari said that fighting enemies' soft threats is the most important task of the Basij forces.

"Today, the most important and main mission of Basij is confronting the soft threats and cultural invasion which is stealthily targeting the (Iranian) youth," Jaffari said.

The New York Times

November 23, 2010

Iran Lawmakers Complain About Ahmadinejad

By WILLIAM YONG

TEHRAN — Iranian Parliament members recently sent a letter detailing a long list of complaints against President [Mahmoud Ahmadinejad](#) to [Iran's](#) powerful [Guardian Council](#), Iranian news media have reported, marking a new phase in an effort by traditional conservatives to rein in the administration and reassert the powers of Iran's legislative body.

The letter, which could theoretically result in the president's impeachment, was rapidly disavowed by its putative supporters. Many denied having signed the document.

Nevertheless, the uprising is a sign that internal fissures that developed between the Ahmadinejad government and conservatives in Parliament during last year's wave of protests have yet to be closed.

Mr. Ahmadinejad and the conservatives [have sparred frequently](#) since he was first elected, in 2005, with his opponents resisting his cabinet appointments and, this year, fighting his efforts to reduce subsidies on food, fuel and other necessities.

During the protests last summer over the disputed election that kept Mr. Ahmadinejad in office, [Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani](#), a former president and a leading conservative, was critical of the government's heavy-handed efforts to suppress the demonstrations.

The latest confrontation came to light on Saturday, when unofficial news outlets reported that an effort had begun in Iran's Parliament to call the president to account for a number of instances in which his government stood accused of bypassing the constitutional powers of the Parliament and exercising unchecked power.

The letter to the Guardian Council was released to the news media by the Parliament's in-house news agency. It listed 14 "infringements," including foot-dragging by the administration on the implementation of a variety of laws, as well as financial irregularities.

Those included three years of unauthorized imports of gasoline and diesel worth around \$10 billion and the failure to account for up to 40 percent of Mr. Ahmadinejad's spending on his numerous visits to Iran's regions.

Subsequent news reports said that the petition had been signed by more than 40 members of Parliament, among them a number of prominent critics of the president. But on Monday, several members who had been named publicly as supporters of the plan distanced themselves from the letter, some issuing stern denials that the plan had been presented to members for their signatures.

"I did not sign this letter and know nothing about it," one of them, Elias Naderan, was quoted as saying in Jam-e-Jam, a Web site that is linked with Iran's state broadcaster, IRIB.

Another member, Hamid-Reza Fuladgar, in the same report, said, "There has been no letter to pose questions to the president, let alone have 40 M.P.'s sign it."

On Tuesday, Ali Motahari, reported to be the architect of the plan to call Mr. Ahmadinejad to account, was criticized by pro-government members of Parliament. Mr. Motahari has not commented on the letter.

Mr. Ahmadinejad's power seemed to be further consolidated on Saturday with a statement issued from a joint committee set up in August to resolve the differences between the administration and the Parliament. The statement appeared to grant the president the "right" to issue warnings to other branches of government when, in the president's opinion, they failed to act in line with the "fundamentals of the Constitution."

Although the Parliament speaker, [Ali Larijani](#), and other prominent members denied that the committee had agreed on any such statement, political experts here said the fact that it was issued was a sign that Iran's highest authorities were backing the president in his battle with the legislative branch.

Any extension of presidential powers will help Mr. Ahmadinejad to push through long-delayed reforms of Iran's vast and inefficient system of subsidies. Plans to remove price supports on gasoline were delayed once again with an announcement on Monday that the monthly 60-liter ration of gasoline per vehicle at the heavily subsidized price of 10 cents per liter will remain in place for at least another month.

Assembly Pushes to Oust Iran President

By FARNAZ FASSIHI

MIDDLE EAST NEWS

NOVEMBER 22, 2010

Wall Street Journal

Iran's parliament revealed it planned to impeach President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad but refrained under orders from Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, exposing a deepening division within the regime.

Lawmakers also launched a new petition to bring a debate on the president's impeachment, conservative newspapers reported Monday.

The reports of challenges to Mr. Ahmadinejad were intended as retorts to a powerful body of clerics that urged Mr. Khamenei to curb the parliament's authority and give greater clout to the president.

In a report released Sunday and discussed in parliament Monday, four prominent lawmakers laid out the most extensive public criticism of Mr. Ahmadinejad to date.

They accused him and his government of 14 counts of violating the law, often by acting without the approval of the legislature. Charges include illegally importing gasoline and oil, failing to provide budgetary transparency and withdrawing millions of dollars from Iran's foreign reserve fund without getting parliament's approval.

"The president and his cabinet must be held accountable in front of the parliament," the report stated. "A lack of transparency and the accumulation of legal violations by the government is harming the regime."

The moves against Mr. Ahmadinejad come as the regime faces domestic pressure over his plans to gradually eliminate subsidies for fuel, food and utilities from an economy strained by a string of international sanctions over Tehran's controversial nuclear program.

Authorities have tightened security and arrested members of the opposition to prevent riots and uprisings in response to the subsidy cuts, which economists say will drive up inflation.

In opposition to the conservative lawmakers are Iran's ultraconservatives—led by Mr. Khamenei, who has final say in all state matters—who have increasingly backed the president when he carries out policy without parliamentary approval.

Mr. Ahmadinejad hails from this ultraconservative camp, which has largely supported populist economic policies and taken a defiant stance abroad, as opposed to mainstream conservatives' more pragmatic approach.

Conservative newspapers reported on Monday that lawmakers have started a motion to collect the 74 signatures needed to openly debate impeachment. Mousa Reza Servati, the head of the parliament's budgetary committee, was quoted as saying 40 lawmakers, including Mr. Servati, have signed the motion.

A President Accused | Lawmakers' allegations against Ahmadinejad

- Withdrawing \$590 million from the Central Bank's foreign reserve fund without approval.
- Trading 76.5 million barrels of crude oil in exchange for gasoline imports in 2008 without approval.
- Illegally importing gasoline, oil and natural gas at a value of about \$9 billion since 2007.
- Failing to provide transparency in budget spending and curbing parliamentary oversight.
- Failing to provide transparency about the source of money for the president's domestic travels and about the allocation of money in Iran's provinces.
- Failing to implement or notify ministries about 31 legislative items passed by the parliament in 2010.

Iran's Islamic Consultative Assembly

The move to remove the president from office marks the first time in the history of the Islamic Republic that parliament has discussed impeachment of a president. Though the legislature is backed by the Iranian constitution, lawmakers can't drive Mr. Ahmadinejad from office without the supreme leader's agreement.

One issue on which both camps are broadly united is in supporting Iran's right to proceed with its nuclear program against the objections of the international community.

Mr. Ahmadinejad is likely to continue positioning himself on the international stage as the defiant voice of Iran's leadership as Tehran eyes a new round of nuclear talks, proposed for Dec. 5.

The conservative camp also closed ranks behind Mr. Ahmadinejad after the turbulent 2009 presidential election and its violent aftermath—setting aside differences to support the regime. But a considerable portion of highly influential members of the conservative bloc, such as speaker of the parliament Ali Larijani, appear to have begun to view Mr. Ahmadinejad as a liability.

U.S. officials on Monday said they're watching the political clashes in Tehran and believe they've fueled, in part, by sanctions imposed by Washington, the United Nations and the European Union since June. The Obama administration has hoped that these tensions could lead Tehran to return to negotiation aimed at containing its nuclear program, something, so far, it hasn't decided to do.

"There are clear rivalries within the Iranian government and multiple camps around Ahmadinejad, Larijani and others," said State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley. "Those tensions have certainly been exacerbated as Iran feels more pressure from sanctions and political isolation."

Still, because rival political forces inside Iran, particularly those concentrated around Mr. Larijani, are also supportive of Iran's nuclear work, it is unclear how much Iran's foreign policy would change if Mr. Ahmadinejad exits the scene, U.S. officials said.

On websites and blogs, the primary outlet for Iran's opposition, Iranians urged parliament not to give in to Mr. Khamenei's orders and, as one blogger wrote, "act independently for the good of the public."

On Saturday, the Guardian Council, the appointed body of ultraconservative clerics that oversees legislation and acts as a mediator between the government and the parliament, said a "mediating committee" that included council members recommended Mr. Khamenei curb the powers of the parliament.

The remarks infuriated lawmakers, who said they had made no such recommendation, leading to a heated open debate on the parliament floor on Monday.

Some of Mr. Ahmadinejad's alleged violations included withdrawing \$590 million from the Central Bank's foreign reserve fund, trading 76.5 million barrels of crude oil in exchange for importing gasoline in 2008, and illegal imports of gasoline, oil and natural gas since 2007 at a value of about \$9 billion.

Mr. Ahmadinejad has had an uneasy relationship with parliament since his election in 2006, but the differences escalated in his second term, when lawmakers refused to approve eight of his cabinet nominees.

Mr. Khamenei intervened, asking parliament members to compromise. In the end only three cabinet choices were refused. The parliament also fought Mr. Ahmadinejad for a year over his economic plan and the subsidy cuts. Mr. Ahmadinejad finally wrote a letter to Mr. Khamenei complaining that the parliament was acting as an obstacle for his administration.

—Jay Solomon contributed to this article.

Iran: New Basij Group Formed to Coordinate, Collaborate with Media Organizations *

IAP20101112397005 Tehran [Fars News Agency](#) in Persian 11 Nov 10

[Unattributed report: "It Occurred at the End of the Eighth Conference of the Basij and the Media: The Appointment of the Members of the Founding Committee for the Basij and the Media Organization"]

Fars News Agency: The members of the Founding Committee of the Basij and the Media Organization (Sazman-e Basij va Resaneh) were chosen in the presence of Commander Naqdi, the director of the Basij of the Downtrodden Organization (Sazman-e Basij-e Mostaz'afan).

The defense correspondent of *Fars News Agency* reports that in this part of the Eighth Conference of the Basij and the Media, which was held in sacred Mashhad, the chairmen of the four task forces presented reports, and after the conclusion of their reports, Commander Mohammad Reza Naqdi, summing up the material presented in this conference, asked those present as the first step to select the members of the founding committee to prepare the charter of this organization.

In continuation, in a speech referring to the professional performance of the media in the country, Commander Naqdi said: The situation must not be such that any news items regarding various organizations, including the Basij, that are sometimes not newsworthy are addressed in the media. Referring to certain issues such as the martyrdom of Martyr Goldavi in Zahedan, whose self-sacrificing action saved the lives of a number of fellow civilians and who was martyred himself, he said: Such items should be the headlines of the news of the country, and the media must avoid the issues that are not newsworthy.

Stating that unfortunately sometimes our programs become personality centric, he said: We should not think that the value of every ceremony or conference depends on the personalities present in that session; rather, the value of every gathering must be based on its outcome and the resulting gains.

He considered the Media Basij reminiscent of the revival of the Basij thinking in the country and said: For us to think that the Basij wants to take the media of the country under its supervision is wrong.

In continuation, the director of the Basij of the Downtrodden Organization, stating that some have asked why in the course of one year no practical steps have been taken in connection with the establishment of the Basij and the Media Organization, said: Last year, we also announced that the Basij was prepared to support this issue, but that the main duty was that of the media themselves, and they must take practical steps for the establishment of this organization.

Naqdi considered the function of the Basij and the Media Organization to be the coordination of and collaboration with the media, explaining the ideas of religious guardianship and Basij thinking, identifying the enemy, increasing insight, training the Basij forces, and making use of the huge Basij capacities in connection with the media and said: We must make use of this capacity for becoming more active in the media environment.

Prior to the speech of Commander Naqdi, Morteza Nabavi as the [chairman of] the Press Task Force (Kargoruh-e Matbu'at), Faraji as the chairman of the Television Task Force (Kargoruh-e Sima), Hamid Reza Moqaddamfar the chairman of the News Agencies Task Force (Kargoruh-e Khabargozariha), and Kazemzadeh the chairman of the Radio Task Force (Kargoruh-e Seda) presented reports on the meetings of their task forces and announced that the members of these task forces are unanimous in regard to the necessity of the establishment of the Basij and the Media Organization and that each one has explained the goals and the characteristics of the Media Basij from their own perspectives.

In conclusion, in addition to the chairmen of the task forces, from every task force another person was chosen as a member of the founding committee of the Basij and the Media Organization. These individuals include Bakhshizadeh from the Television Task Force, Sheykholeslam from the Radio Task Force, Eslami from the News Agencies Task Force, and Seyyed Nezamoddin Musavi from the Press Task Force; and the decision was made that the charter would be prepared with the involvement of these persons and would be put to a vote, through which they can decide on the main council of the Basij and the Media Organization.

The Eighth Conference of the Basij and the Media, which is held every year with the efforts of the Basij of the Downtrodden Organization and the participation of the media directors of the country in sacred Mashhad, completed its work this afternoon after two work sessions in the morning and afternoon.

Commander Jazayeri, the deputy commander general of the Armed Forces; Commander Naqdi, the director of the Basij of the Downtrodden Organization; Hojjat ol-Eslam Kadkhoda'i, the head of the representative office of the religious guardian in the Basij, and some of the managers of the press, the general managers of the news agencies, and the directors of the Voice and Vision Organization (Sazman-e Seda va Sima) attended this conference and in their speeches expressed their viewpoints about the activities of the media and the role of the Basij in them.

[Description of Source: Tehran Fars News Agency in Persian -- hardline pro-Ahmadinezhad news agency; headed as of December 2007 by Hamid Reza Moqaddamfar, who was formerly an IRGC cultural officer; www.fars.ir]

Iranian Authorities Allocate IRGC, Basij \$350 Million To Counter 'Soft Threats'

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IAP20101116011002 Tehran *Sharq* in Persian 10 Nov 10

[Report by the "Political Desk": "Ashura and Al-Zahra Battalions Allocated \$350 Million"]

The yearly budget that has been allocated to the Ashura and Al-Zahra battalions is \$350 million. Mohammad Motahhari, the commander of the 41 Sarallah Division of Kerman, announced yesterday that this yearly budget of \$350 million has been used by the Ashura and Al-Zahra Battalions for the required equipment and facilities.

According to Fars, he was speaking at a conference of the Basijis of 202 Ashura Battalion. Considering the evil designs of the enemies of the Islamic Republic of Iran, he termed the new movement of Basij in society to be for instilling insight among the youth and people to counter soft threats and anti-Islamic cultural onslaught. Although initially the amount of \$350 million for the budget of the Ashura and Al-Zahra Battalions seemed unbelievable, in reality considering the spread and size of the Ashura and Al Zahra Battalions and also the numerous operations that are being accomplished by these battalions during the year, this amount for one of the military wings of the Basij and IRGC [Islamic Revolution Guards Corps] with the abovementioned missions probably should not be so surprising.

The history of formation of the Ashura and Al-Zahra Battalions of the Basij and the [Islamic] Revolution Guards [Corps] dates back to early decade of the 1370s [1990s] when some unrest was created in cities like Mashhad, Qazvin, Shiraz, and Islamshahr. The preparedness of the military institutions was inevitable for dealing with the unrest. Thus, the Ashura Battalion, consisting of trained Basij forces, was deployed. Along with them, the formation of Basiji women was also organized in the form of the Al-Zahra Battalion. The spread and development of the abovementioned battalions was such that, according to Hoseyn Ta'ef, the commander of the Basij Resistance Force of the Revolution Guards, by the fall of 1387 [year beginning 21 March 2008] 13.6 million Basijis in the form of 1,905 Ashura Battalions, 446 Al-Zahra Battalions, and also the Imam Hoseyn Battalion, and Karbala and Zulfeqar Combat Groups were formed. It seems the unrest caused by gasoline rationing in early 1386 [year beginning 21 March 2007] remained ineffective because of the spread and formation of these battalions. Thus, approximately 2,500 Ashura and Al-Zahra Battalions with the aim to cooperate in countering the security threats and social

unrest were formed. They generally prepare themselves for different operations and develop their capabilities during the year.

As has been said by Mir-Ahmadi, the deputy commander of the Basij, it was decided that the antiriot battalions mentioned above, whose main mission was to counter unrest in the cities, should devote themselves throughout the year to maneuvers and demonstrations of strength in order to promote defense preparedness in countering soft threats by the enemies. Though some of the major maneuvers of the Ashura and Al-Zahra Battalions in various cities even faced criticism, they were not left unanswered by the military commanders, because they believed that adverse national security threats make the number of these maneuvers inevitable.

However, despite the belief that 35,000 antiriot battalions are sufficient to counter the street unrest, in Mehr [22 September-21 October] of the current year, IRGC Deputy Commander Salami announced the formation of 1,500 new Ashura Battalions. Approximately three weeks later, Commander Hoseyn Hamedani, IRGC commander of the Mohammad Rasulallah Unit, announced that, other than the Ashura Battalions that are active in the Greater Tehran IRGC, the formation of new Ashura Battalions has been approved.

[Description of Source: Tehran Sharq in Persian -- Reformist daily that has been subject to intermittent bans that has eroded its quality and circulation. The most recent ban, in August 2007, was lifted in September 2009 after the paper paid a heavy fine. The paper resumed publication in 2010. Launched as a weekly in 1998, it became a daily in 2003.]

New sanctions led by U.S. are causing divisions within the Iranian leadership, Gates says

By Glenn Kessler

Washington Post Staff Writer

Tuesday, November 16, 2010; 10:30 PM

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, reiterating his long-standing opposition to a military attack on [Iran](#), said Tuesday that new sanctions led by the Obama administration are causing divisions within the Iranian leadership.

Sanctions "have really bitten much harder than [Iranian leaders] anticipated," Gates told the Wall Street Journal CEO Council in Washington, citing indications that President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is in trouble with the country's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

"We even have some evidence that Khamenei now is beginning to wonder if Ahmadinejad is lying to him about the impact of the sanctions on the economy and whether he's getting the straight scoop in terms of how much trouble the economy really is in," Gates said.

Gates, who has repeatedly warned against military strikes on Tehran's nuclear facilities, said, "I personally believe they are intent on acquiring nuclear weapons, but also the information that we have is that they've been surprised by the impact of the sanctions."

Republican lawmakers in recent weeks have stepped up their rhetoric on Iran, demanding that President Obama make more direct threats to use military force against the Islamic republic. Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has also pressed the administration to be more direct.

Although by many accounts the sanctions have been unexpectedly effective, the Iranian government has not indicated that it is interested in negotiating a solution to the standoff.

Iran has repeatedly denied that it is pursuing nuclear weapons. But it has stockpiled enough low-enriched uranium that it could - in a risky dash under cover - enrich enough to weapons grade to claim nuclear-weapons capability.

Although the Obama administration has stressed its interest in negotiations, some administration officials and advisers privately said the president would not hesitate to use military force to set back Iran's nuclear program if the country appeared to be on the verge of acquiring such capability. Obama is committed to eliminating nuclear weapons eventually - and to strengthening the Non-Proliferation Treaty - and thus officials think he would act, even militarily, to prevent such a breach in the international system.

But Gates argued Tuesday that military strikes are just a "short-term solution" that would only make Iran's nuclear program "deeper and more covert."

He said they would also unify the Iranian people around an increasingly unpopular government and would "bring together a divided nation; it will make them absolutely committed to obtaining nuclear weapons."

"The only long-term solution to avoiding an Iranian nuclear-weapons capability is for the Iranians to decide it's not in their interest," Gates said. "Everything else is a short-term solution - is a two- to three-year solution."

The Pentagon chief also took aim at some of the recommendations of the co-chairmen of Obama's commission on reducing the deficit.

Although Gates is seeking to save \$100 billion over the next five years through a variety of measures, including the discontinuance of ineffective programs, he wants to apply the savings to military modernization. The commission's co-chairmen instead want to put any savings toward deficit reduction.

Gates said the proposals would be "catastrophic" to national security, resulting in little real savings while greatly harming the military.

"The truth of the matter is when it comes to the deficit, the Department of Defense is not the problem," he said. "I think in terms of the specifics they came up with, that is math, not strategy."

The Supreme Leader's Not-So-Grand Tour

Ayatollah Khamenei's latest bid to shore up his religious credentials was a miserable failure.

BY ART KELLER | NOVEMBER 2, 2010

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/11/02/the_supreme_leader_s_not_so_grand_tour

If you're skeptical of the recent coverage from Iranian government sources showing how enthusiastic crowds greeted Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, on his recent trip to Qom, one of the theological centers of Shiite Islam, you should be.

Photos and film from IRNA, Iran's state news agency, depict him meeting thousands of cheering admirers, arms waving with fervor. Last week, IRNA published a blizzard of stories running down Khamenei's meetings with religious scholars and seminary students, all intended to send the message that the leader is not only firmly in charge of his country, but also revered as its highest religious authority.

But when one takes into consideration that many of those supporters were not spontaneously assembled masses, but rather *basiji* (members of the paid militia that is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps), the waving crowds are suddenly less impressive. True, Khamenei's real mission was to secure the blessings of Qom's top ayatollahs, and he did meet some important ones: Loftollah Safi Golpayegani, Hossein Nuri Hamadani, Mohammed Hosseini Shahroudi, Naser Makarem Shirazi, and Mousa Shobeiri Zanjani.

But the most senior and influential grand ayatollahs stayed away in droves. Abdolkarim Mousavi Ardebili, Bayat Asadullah, Hossein Vahid-Khorasani, Mohammad, Muhammad Ali Gerami Qomi, Sadegh Rouhani, Yusef Sanei, and Seyed Hosseini Shirazi, among others, would not meet with Khamenei. One press account by the Tabnak website, closely associated with former Islamic Revolutionary Guard commander Mohsen Rezai, noted that Khamenei met with the children of prominent cleric and Grand Ayatollah Hossein Vahid-Khorasani, but not with the ayatollah himself, a prominent critic. The supreme leader -- a man who rose to his exalted position through political hardball, not religious scholarship --

had clearly hoped to shore up his shaky religious stature during his trip to Qom. Instead, he only showed just how isolated he has become.

The story of the Qom clerics' rejection of Khamenei, a biting irony in a theocracy, stretches back decades and is entangled in the opaque intricacies of Shiite Islam as practiced in post-revolutionary Iran.

After the 1979 revolution, Iran's constitution mandated that the supreme leader be a cleric of senior rank, a major *mujtahid*. A major mujtahid is a cleric whose collected judicial rulings in all areas of life have been popularly acclaimed as demonstrating *ijtihad*, a comprehensive expertise in interpreting Islamic law. The position of the Supreme Leader was restricted to those very few senior clerics who could be deemed a *marja*, a major mujtahid universally recognized as being highly worthy of emulation. Such marjas usually have very large and devoted personal followings; they are theological rock stars. There are no exact rules, but generally speaking, major mujtahids are usually grand ayatollahs. Below that rank is ayatollah, and below that rank is *hojjatoleslam*, a rank similar to a monsignor or minor bishop in Catholicism. Each of those ranks is usually separated by years of study, thought, and an accumulation of judicial rulings examined for theological soundness in "peer review" by the clerical establishment. Anyone designated as a mere hojjatoleslam should therefore have fallen far short of the theological horsepower and popular following required by law.

How then, did Hojjatoleslam Ali Khamenei come to be the supreme leader, and what does that have to do with his October 2010 trip to Qom?

Once upon a time, Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri was the designated successor to Supreme Leader Ruhollah Khomeini, but after criticizing the many excesses of Khomeini's regime, Montazeri was pulled from the running and eventually placed under house arrest in Qom, where he continued to lambaste the Iranian government until his death in late 2009. Not liking the field of potential successors, Khomeini had the Iranian constitution changed shortly before his death in 1989 to allow someone with a far less distinguished pedigree in Islamic jurisprudence to take the helm as supreme leader. This rejiggering of the constitution, along with the support of the powerful Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani,

helped paved the way for Khamenei's ascension. Suddenly, it was as if this "monsignor," a minor mujtahid whose only book of judicial rulings had never even been printed in Farsi, was catapulted past more learned and senior bishops, archbishops, and cardinals to become pope. Little wonder that the ayatollahs of Qom have quietly dug in their heels and resisted Khamenei's attempts to gain religious stature by associating himself with them.

Nor is this his first attempt at the ruse.

Roughly 10 years ago, Khamenei traveled to Qom and "bent the knee" by going to personally visit many senior Shiite clerics, an effort that won him no noticeable support and had little effect on his theological stature. The unstated hope of "round two" in Qom was that the senior clerical establishment would endorse Khamenei's religious authority by either personally going to see the leader at his temporary residence, or by attending his public rallies and prayer services. One account before the trip began even suggested that the purpose of the trip was to gain endorsement for the supreme leader to attain the rank of *marja-e-omoom*, the definitive source for emulation and a clerical rank that has not been filled since 1961 -- one that even Khomeini did not seek to claim.

With limited exceptions, the senior clerics stayed away, and the hoped-for validation of Khamenei's religious stature has once again failed to materialize. In an interview last week with Radio Farda, Hamburg-based Iranian dissident Hassan Shariatmadari, son of Grand Ayatollah Seyyed Kazem Shariatmadari, commented on Khamenei's dismal reception, "If they accepted his authority, he would have not spent so many days [in Qom] and exerted such pressure to force marja to meet with him."

One notable exception was the Society of Qom Seminary Teachers, a group that until the Iranian presidential elections of 2009 could have been described as solidly pro-government. A second day of meetings between society clerics and the supreme leader was inserted into the agenda at the last minute and took place on Thursday, Oct. 28, which extended Khamenei's trip one day.

Meeting with this group, though, is unlikely to bolster Khamenei's credentials. In 1995, the society named Khamenei as a possible marja, but there were one or two bobbles with that

particular nomination. Usually the death of one marja produces the nomination of a single ayatollah as a replacement. The society used the occasion to nominate *seven* replacements, Khamenei among them, and at the same time, claimed that two ayatollahs already deemed worthy of emulation should no longer be considered so. Whatever the society may have sacrificed in religious legitimacy, it was admittedly efficient for them to combine a blatant ballot-stuffing exercise with a clerical "Night of the Long Knives." After the society's nomination, Khamenei was generally accepted as an ayatollah (although he terms himself a grand ayatollah), but some top clerics still refuse to recognize him as such.

According to Rooz Online, a reformist website, the reason for Khamenei's trip extension was to convince the society to do the same favor for his hard-line son, Mojtaba Khamenei, as they did for the supreme leader in 1995: getting Mojtaba declared a marja, thus opening up an eventual path for the son to succeed his father.

In his autobiography, Montazeri wrote that Khamenei's first mention of holding the rank of ayatollah did not actually come from any Shiite religious authority, the normal path of advancement, but rather from booklets produced by the Iranian Foreign Ministry, printed in Urdu and sent to Shiite communities in Pakistan and India, who immediately questioned the nomination. Upon notifying the ministry that its attempted end run to elevate Khamenei had not worked, Montazeri was rebuked by Iranian officials and people were warned not to communicate with him. It seems, then, that Khomeini's shenanigans with the Society of Qom Seminary Teachers were hardly the first time he has tried to secure undeserved clerical rank.

Looking down the road, Khamenei's future prospects for support from Qom are only growing worse. The clerics' rejection of the supreme leader was not solely based on a thinly veiled contempt for a theological hack's efforts to wrap himself in a mantle of unearned authority. Just as important is the philosophical difference that has evolved in post-revolutionary Shiite Islam about the proper role for a cleric in political life. After witnessing decades of abuses under a government helmed by clerics, Montazeri, one of the architects of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, reversed his earlier views and stated that clerics should serve only as advisors to the temporal ruler, not as the ruler themselves. This is a view

shared by other ayatollahs, including Grand Ayatollah Dastgheib and the widely revered Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, who is Iranian by birth though now lives in Iraq.

Iran continues to show new signs of the economic strains on a daily basis; one of the latest being a ban by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on the publication of any negative statements about the planned elimination of economic subsidies that have been the bedrock of popular support for the Iranian government. Bad economic news continues to exacerbate the internal divisions brought to the forefront by the rigged 2009 presidential elections. The Green Movement is quiet -- violently suppressed but by no means finished forever.

If Khamenei was hoping to turn things around with a dramatic show of religious unity and power, then his visit to Qom was a miserable failure. Indeed, what is most notable about the trip is what did *not* happen: Neither Khamenei nor his son got any official elevation in their status; no grand religious initiative arose from the trip, and he was most definitely not greeted with open arms by most senior ayatollahs. The supreme leader won't be resting easy this week.

November 02, 2010

In Unusual Move, Iran's Revolutionary Guards Slam Ahmadinejad Over Comments

by Golnaz Esfandiari

In an unprecedented move, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) has directly blasted President Mahmud Ahmadinejad over controversial comments he made recently, including saying that parliament is not on top of the country's affairs.

Ahmadinejad was also criticized for promoting an "Iranian school of thought" instead of an Islamic one.

Ahmadinejad has in recent weeks come under fire by his hard-line allies and conservatives over his new nationalistic rhetoric. So far, the IRGC, whose power and influence has grown since Ahmadinejad came to power, had not publicly criticized the Iranian president.

The unusual attack by the IRGC, coming in one of its main publications, is seen by analysts as a warning issued to Ahmadinejad from Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, with the intention of trying to tame the Iranian president.

The IRGC monthly publication "Payam-e Enghelab" (Message of the Revolution), which is managed by Khamenei's representatives, described Ahmadinejad's statement that the government is not on top of the country's affairs as an offense to the founder of the Islamic republic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

"The essence of bringing up this issue is a clear attack to Imam Khomeini, the great leader of the Islamic Revolution, who had said 'the parliament is on top of the affairs,'" it said. "Unfortunately, this was brought up by politicians and the president himself."

Sharp Criticism

Ahmadinejad had said in a September interview with the "Iran" daily that Khomeini's comments reflected the situation at the time but that things have changed. He said at that time the prime minister was in charge of running the country, was elected through parliament, and parliament was the highest power.

"But now the executive branch has to run the country and other branches have to support it," said Ahmadinejad, who has increasingly clashed with the conservative-dominated parliament.

His comments drew sharp criticism by lawmakers who have called on him to fulfill his duties instead of undermining the parliament.

The IRGC publication accused Ahmadinejad of incorrectly interpreting and altering Khomeini's words to his own benefit which, it said, presents a negative message to Iranian society.

The publication also said that for some time, spending time on "unnecessary and marginal" issues that are damaging to the people has become the main issue for some of the country's officials. Instead, the publication says, the focus should be on "real" issues such as employment and inflation.

'Counterbalance'

Ali Alfoneh, a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and an expert on the IRGC, believes the criticism is an attempt by Khamenei to re-create a balance between political forces within the Iranian establishment.

"Supreme Leader Khamenei has systematically supported the parliament in its attempt at criticizing Ahmadinejad," Alfoneh says. "Khamenei has urged the judiciary to criticize Ahmadinejad and now we see the Revolutionary Guards criticizing Ahmadinejad."

Alfoneh told RFE/RL that the warning could be one of the ways in which Khamenei is trying to provide a "counterbalance" to Ahmadinejad in "the absence of the reformist camp."

He says Ahmadinejad has tried to carve an empire for himself and has tried to create a power base completely independent of the leader.

Turning Into 'Real Power'

In Germany, researcher Reza Khaligh, who has written extensively about the IRGC, says Khamenei is concerned about Ahmadinejad's growing power.

"Ahmadinejad has the country's government and budget under control, through which he has appealed to the lower segments of the society. Recently, by promoting an Iranian Islam and an Iranian school of thought, he's been trying to get the backing of the middle class," says Khaligh.

He added that it appears Ahmadinejad is turning into "a real power" within the structure, a

power opposing the supreme leader. "That is not acceptable to Khamenei and the Revolutionary Guards," Khaligh says.

Khaligh says Khamenei has been publicly supporting Ahmadinejad, but behind the scenes he's been trying to counter the "unruly" president and weaken his position.

The criticism by the Revolutionary Guards, Khaligh believes, could make Ahmadinejad retreat in the short run. In the long run, he believes the combatant president will push for his own agenda.

Alfoneh says Ahmadinejad's reaction to the apparent warning will depend on his calculation of the balance of power within the forces of the regime.

"If he believes that Khamenei cannot rely on other political forces other than himself, he would ignore this warning," Alfoneh says. "But if he believes that Khamenei could in reality replace him with other political forces, such as the Larijani brothers [Sadegh and Ari], then he will show greater flexibility."

For now, Alfoneh notes that the criticism was rather "discreet," as it was published in the monthly publication of the IRGC, which requires a subscription and has far few readers than the weekly "Sobh-e Sadegh," which is also available online.

Had the website Tabnak -- which is close to Ahmadinejad rival Mohsen Rezai, a former commander of the IRGC and a defeated presidential candidate -- not reposted the piece by "Payam-e Enghelab," the criticism might have gone largely unnoticed.

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http://www.rferl.org/content/Irans_Powerful_Revolutionary_Guards_Slam_Ahmadinejad_Over_Comments/2208758.html

Iran Appoints New Military Chiefs in Shakeup *

IAP20101104950049 Tehran [Fars News Agency](#) in Persian 1556 GMT 03 Nov 10

Commander [Ebrahim] Jabbari has been appointed commander of the Vali-Amr Corps!

Fars: Commander Ebrahim Jabbari was appointed head of Vali-Amr Corps as the replacement for Commander Nejat.

According to the Fars correspondent, Commander Ebrahim Jabbari was head of the Ali Ibn abi-Talib Corps in Qom prior to this. This afternoon, this position was handed over to Commander Mehdi Mahdavezhad, and Commander Ebrahim Jabbari replaced Commander Nejat as head of Vali-Amr.

The introduction and farewell ceremony for the Ali Ibn abi-Talib Corps was conducted this afternoon in the presence of Chief Commander of the force Hoseyn Salami in Qom.

[Description of Source: Tehran Fars News Agency in Persian -- hardline pro-Ahmadinezhad news agency; headed as of December 2007 by Hamid Reza Moqaddamfa.

Iranian Guards' Mouthpiece Criticizes President for 'Deviant' Remarks *

IAP20101102950055 Tehran [Tabnak](#) in Persian 1110 GMT 01 Nov 10

In its Aban [October-November] issue, Payam-e Enqelab [Message of Revolution] monthly, the official organ of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps [IRGC], referred to recent remarks made by Dr Mahmud Ahmadinezhad, who had said that "the Majles is not supreme."

The monthly added: For a while now, fuelling controversy and paying attention to unnecessary affairs by some politicians has become the main issue of the country, and this trend continues to accelerate.

While the Islamic Revolution discourse led by Imam Khomeyni has caused an all-out and extensive wave among the Islamic societies, and awakened the Islamic nations, suddenly, the politicians in Iran who should logically be the main and genuine preachers of the discourse, started to talk about Iranianism instead of Islamism. They insisted on this strategic and historic mistake to the point that they elevated the Cyrus Cylinder instead of an Islamic freedom-seeking discourse while speaking about the former was not necessary at all.

The monthly added: The only outcome and consequence of the inappropriate and unnecessary issue for the country is to destroy the best opportunities for serving the Islamic ummah [nation].

If we were to adopt an expert approach towards this issue and calculate its costs and benefits, we could only add to the costs and reduce the benefits. This is because the only benefit of adopting such an approach is that it causes discord and disunity inside the front of the Islamic Revolution and it casts doubt on the basic principles. Moreover, it paves the way for the old enemies of the revolution to use this opportunity and hatch plots by some means.

Among other issues that were raised a while ago in Iran's political arena and led to a deviation in the mind of those in charge, managers, and officials was this deviant issue: "The Majles is not supreme," but the government is supreme.

Raising this issue, per se, is an open insult to the holy sanctity of Imam Khomeyni (may peace be upon him), the supreme leader of the Islamic Revolution, who had said "the Majles is supreme". Unfortunately, the issue was raised by the statesmen and the president himself. It would be an irreparable mistake to make a superficial, word-by-word, and formalistic analysis of the precious comments of the Imam of the nation and to distort them for the sake of securing the interests of a small group of people.

The least cost of such an inappropriate approach is that the day after the 10th government ends its term, every government and official will allow themselves to mold the sublime thoughts of the Imam of the nation based on their own ideas and viewpoints and interpret

them based on their interests and in line with their own benefits, not as it meant to be by the sagacious old man [the late Ayatollah Khomeyni].

For what reasons are such a false interpretation and open mistake being made? Just to create a shield against the supervision and occasional reactions by the Principle-ist Majles towards deviations of the governmental officials.

This would be a wrong method to distort or wrongly analyze the comments of the leader of the martyrs if we cannot adapt ourselves to the guidelines of the Great Khomeyni (may peace be upon him).

Moreover, the main authority that can analyze and interpret the glowing thoughts of Imam Khomeyni (may peace be upon him), is the incumbent Guardian of Jurisconsult [the supreme leader]. He is the only eligible person who can interpret the unique thoughts of the late Imam. His Eminence Ayatollah Khamene'i, the Guardian of world Muslims, has not yet interpreted the comments of the Imam. On the contrary, he has always tried to support the thoughts of that gracious man.

Adopting such an approach towards the Imam and his sublime thoughts cannot convey an appropriate message to the political society, because it can imply that apparently some people do not know the truth behind the Imam's thoughts or they are not fully aware of the manner and conduct of behavior of the dear Imam; it is as if they have forgotten how to serve the nation.

In order to sincerely serve the people, there is no need to question the comments of the prominent figures. On the contrary, one should only pay more attention to making more endeavors. Even if in an unlikely scenario the president's comments about the Imam Khomeyni's remarks were true - which they were not - what advantages would such issues bring about for the country? Will this assumption that the government is supreme, be a good reason for the government to do whatever it deems appropriate and to overlook the laws? Even if the government was supreme, it has no right to violate the laws and object the demands of the MPs, who have also the authority to sack the president.

Such issues are deviant and raising them has not any benefit for the country and people. On the contrary, it is disadvantageous for the people. This is because instead of making efforts to remove the people's problems, the officials will drown in endless and unnecessary arguments and will not be able to resolve any problem in the country.

If instead of making such misleading and controversial remarks, [the government] pays attention to main issues such as employment, production, inflation, and people's livelihood, a better and prosperous future will await the officials and managers.

[Description of Source: Tabnak in Persian -- a conservative website associated with Expediency Council Secretary and former IRGC commander Major General Mohsen Reza'i; www.tabnak.ir]

Supreme Leader's Rep. To IRGC Comments On Differences Between Clerical Groups *

IAP20101027397002 Tehran [Iranian Students News Agency](#) in Persian 27 Oct 10

Iranian Students News Agency

27 October 2010

Supreme Leader's Rep to IRGC Comments on Differences between Clerical Groups

Vice-regent's IRGC representative: In every election enemies support the secular and liberal people. The appearance of impure ideas creates conditions for the soft war.

ISNA - Tehran

Political Service

The vice-regent's IRGC representative said in every era Islam and Islamic government need symbols and interpretation. He said: Because of the existence of certainties and ambiguities even the Koran cannot be the starting point and it needs interpretation.

ISNA's political correspondent reports Hojjat ol-Eslam val-Moslemin Ali Saidi, speaking at a conference to study and oppose the soft war at the Imam Hoseyn (pbuh) Officers and Guard Training University stated the above and emphasized: Yesterday this symbol was His Holiness Ruhollah and today the symbol of righteousness and sovereignty is the exalted leader of the revolution. This is not specific to the age. It began at the time of the great occultation.

He continued: To understand the truth one must not go to other public figures unless they are practiced in ritual recitation. One must realize the axis of the system is the leader.

He emphasized the importance of explaining the indicators of pure Islam. He said: Our most important duty today is explaining pure Islam and the intellectual foundations of the Imam and the exalted leader because if we do this there will no longer be any room for impure thoughts.

The vice-regent's IRGC representative also said the actions of the prophets were based on soft power and confrontation with the power of the prophets was mostly done with software. He added: In contemporary history the Imam began the work with a software change, meaning the outlook of the people. This Islamic revolution has continued its path without disruption for 31 years and in my view the most successful monotheistic revolution and contemporary revolution is the Islamic revolution.

Saidi discussed the obstacles in the way of the revolution in the last three decades. He said: One of the main problems is in Islamic government there are two different views about various issues such as government legitimacy, the vice-regent's prerogatives, foreign policy, culture and economy. One view is comprehensive, fundamental and revolutionary and the other is minimalist, superficial and reformist.

Saidi added: These two views are evident in the differences between the ideas of the Freedom Movement and Bani Sadr and the Imam's (pbuh) thinking, the division into two parts of the Islamic Republican Party or in the differences in the thinking of the Clerics Society [majma'-e rohaniyun] and the Clerics Association [jame'eh-ye rohaniat]. This duality even existed between the ideas of the Imam and his successor. In subsequent eras we also saw the secular views of the reformists were completely different from the views of the leader and the Imam. In the recent period we see these two ways of thinking in the closest companions of the Imam who despite the fact that they took orders from the Imam have joined hands with foreigners.

He said if impure ideas appear in the field of government this creates conditions for the enemy's soft war. He said: In such circumstances the enemy gets his forces from within and you therefore see in every election in this nation the enemy supports the secular and liberal people.

If liberal Islam takes over the system will face a challenge. This group took over at one point in the revolution. The reason this did not turn into another Ashura was because the people gave the power to the Principle-ists. Some of the elites were making preparations for the emergence of liberal Islam in this nation. The reason Islam and revolution remained in place was because of the two main factors, meaning the leader and the people.

Continuing his talk the vice-regent's IRGC representative said there are also two views in the team that runs the country. He said: One view says Rajai and one view says Bani Sadr.

One view says Ahmadinezhad and the other says some other gentleman, who might have any kind of ideas.

The view of these two ideas also differs regarding the bodies that have arisen from the revolution such as the IRGC, and this is another of the areas where these two views are influential.

In conclusion Saidi said today the interests of the Liberal Islam group and the interests of America, Europe and even the reactionary Arabs have come together. He said: Today the enemy has joined forces with the thinkers of Liberal Islam. The sedition of 88 [2009] brought the system's prestige into question and we saw even some of the small nations spoke for us. We had power but the recent episode dealt a heavy blow to the system's prestige and credibility.

[Description of Source: Tehran Iranian Student News Agency (ISNA) in Persian -- Conservative news agency linked to University Jihad, a state-backed student organization generally supportive of government policy and providing conservative reporting. On 19 June 2010, University Jihad Head Dr. Hamid Reza Tayyebi appointed caretaker Ali Mottaqiyani as the director-general of ISNA for three years. URL: www.isna.ir]

The Iranian Supreme Leader's Trip to Qom

October 26, 2010 | 2238 GMT

STRATFOR

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is about to complete a nine-day visit to the Iranian religious center of Qom, his first official visit to the holy city in 10 years. Qom -- where most clerics receive their training and where the top religious leaders, the grand ayatollahs, reside -- holds special significance for Iran's clergy.

Khamenei's trip comes at a time of discontent among this clergy, who are upset by Iran's increasing economic, political and social problems and with the anti-clerical tendencies of the supporters of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Religious credentials have been one of Khamenei's weak points. His faction hopes that by enhancing his religious bona fides and mending fences with disaffected clergy, Khamenei's ability to address clerical discontent and the intense infighting within and between Iran's political factions will be enhanced. His efforts to woo the clergy are not likely to be too successful, however.

Aside from hard-line, pro-government grand ayatollahs like Makarem Shirazi, Khamenei met with Javadi Amoli, the country's best-known religious mystic, and with centrist grand ayatollah Safi Golpaygani. Conspicuously absent so far, however, have been progressive grand ayatollahs like Mousavi Ardebili and centrist grand ayatollahs like Vahid Khorasani, regarded as Iran's highest religious authority. According to STRATFOR sources, this absence means that as far as mending fences with Iran's grand ayatollahs goes, Khamenei's trip should be regarded as only moderately successful.

To increase his stature among the clergy, Khamenei's trip reportedly also aimed at setting the stage for his promotion to grand ayatollah. The supreme leader's faction has strongly pushed for this in a bid to compensate for loss of authority Khamenei suffered during the electoral unrest of 2009. Khamenei lacks the academic prerequisites for becoming a grand ayatollah, however, having not taught specialized theological classes or written on specialized theological issues. This would make naming him a grand ayatollah a controversial act among the clergy, one that could backfire. With the exception of Makarem Shirazi and one or two lesser ayatollahs, no grand ayatollahs have come forward extolling Khamenei's virtues or calling for his promotion -- meaning efforts to have him promoted have not been terribly successful.

The supreme leader's efforts to manipulate Iran's clergy ultimately could weaken the clergy and allow the military to enhance its clout in the state. Since the Iranian Revolution, Iran has had civilian control over the military in the form of the clerical establishment in Tehran, which has depended on the support of the clergy in Qom. The non-clerical political class is in no position to fill the clerical establishment's position, meaning a fractured clergy could create an opening for the military to assume greater control over the Iranian government.

Karrubi Warns Iranian MPs Against Bill Designed To 'Weaken' Majles's Position *

IAP20101023011002 *Rah-e Sabz* in Persian 23 Oct 10

[Unattributed report: "Karrubi Addressing Members of Parliament: Do Not Earn Yourselves the Disgrace of Approving This Humiliating Bill"]

Reacting to a bill being drafted in the Islamic Consultative Assembly, which if approved will allow representatives to be disqualified not just when their candidacies are being examined but also during their terms in parliament, Mehdi Karrubi has written an open letter to representatives. In it he has called the draft bill "pressure on the people's representatives to bring their opinions into line with those of the governing system" and an "alarm bell" for the only democratic institution "which has already lost much of its independence." Karrubi said the bill, drafted with the approval of the Islamic Republic's leader, constituted a "degradation" and "permanent threat" for representatives.

It should be said that in the month of Shahrivar this year, the Article 90 Committee of parliament selected a committee to create a bill to oversee the performance of parliamentarians, which is now in the final stages of being drafted. Based on this bill, the Guardian Council will not merely enact its supervision when candidacies are being examined, but also during the parliamentary term. If the representative is unsuitable during his term, his credentials will be cancelled. Mohammad Ebrahim Nekunam, the head of the Article 90 Committee, said the bill was "in line with the objectives of the system and the leadership's opinion."

According to Sahamnews, Mehdi Karrubi, a member of four parliaments, has observed in addressing members of the legislature that: "this bill, which has been conceived, designed, and guided outside parliament, allows its authors to expel dissenting or even independent representatives from parliament and in some cases present them to the tribunals when those in power are dissatisfied."

The full text of Mehdi Karrubi's letter is as follows.

In the Name of The Almighty.

Honorable members of the Islamic Consultative Assembly,

Greetings,

While appreciating your hard work, I wish you victory and success in the pursuit of your representative duties in these sensitive and delicate days. In recent days, I was given the text of a bill termed parliament's supervision over parliament, but which in reality targeted the bases of the republican system and the constitutional nature of the state. For that reason, I considered it my duty as a guardian of constitutionality, and as someone who has been a member of four parliaments and a humble servant of the people as a member of presiding boards, to inform you of the consequences and results of the possible ratification of such a bill. Before that, I need to discuss a number of points with you, after which I will refer to why I fear that with the bill's approval parliament will be like a memento of the constitutional period and the Islamic Revolution and become a rubber-stamp and ineffective institution.

First, the greatest strong point in any democratic system is in reality the existence and independence of the legislative institution, which is why our constitutionalist fathers, when transforming the despotic state into a constitutional one, worked above all to establish the parliamentary institution. Constitutionality in Iran began with the creation of the house of the people. Seven decades after the constitutional revolution, our constitution gave such importance and credibility to parliament's position that, based on some of its articles, "parliament has the duty to investigate and inquire into all the country's affairs" (Article 76). Meanwhile, from the lawmaker's perspective, it is not possible to form a government without parliament's presence (Article 88) and parliament has the right to question and interrogate the government. Our generation has not yet forgotten the attention the imam [Khomeyni] gave to the parliamentary institution from the start of his struggle against the Pahlavi despotism. This is so much so that, when in that period parliament turned into an institution in the hands of the ruler s for extensive disqualifications and fraud, the late imam warned of the death of popular rule and constitutionality. When the capitulation bill was approved with a simple stand-up vote by representatives who were not really the people's representatives, the imam cried out that it was fitting to raise "black standards above market kiosks and houses and raise black tents." The late imam was so attentive to parliament's status and position that, following the revolution, he deferred decisionmaking on important and effective affairs to parliament. Even when the constitution was being reviewed, in addition to myself and the then parliamentary speaker, he asked parliament to appoint five members of the Guardian Council. Of course, the Iranian people will never forget the imam's famous and everlasting sentence that: "parliament has the leading role in

all affairs." This was not merely some political formality, but was derived from a heartfelt belief.

Second, I might not have penned this letter to you were it not for my record of service in four parliaments and the religious sentiment I have for this firm pillar of the Islamic Republic system. But for having served the people in four parliamentary terms, I have always considered myself a supporter of the parliamentary institution. For expediency's sake, under no circumstances have I overlooked a weakening of the position of this institution; if I speak to you now, it is strictly for the danger I see lurking and the concern I have about this institution being weakened.

Third, supervision of parliament in a democratic and Islamic system is not only to be welcomed, but is necessary and of the greatest importance. This supervision must not become an instrument in the hands of the opponents of democracy and the people's will, and of those in power. It would in that case become devoid of significance and turn into its own contradiction. Efforts to restrict and weaken the position of parliament in the name of supervision and the protection of the public good are not of course unprecedented in this country. The opponents of the people's will have at all times sought to restrict and weaken the position of parliament and the nation's representatives and, as we have seen in our contemporary history, at times tried using Russian guns and soldiers and at other times through extensive disqualifications and electoral fraud, to turn parliament into a state-made and merely formal institutional. It was for this experience that with the victory of the Islamic Revolution there was a great deal of reflection when the constitution was being drafted and amended, in order to find a way to prevent parliament being turned into a formal and state-made institution. The Guardian Council was considered as a supervisory body, so that just as the influence of the court and state was a barrier to healthy elections in the past, this time in the Islamic Republic the parliamentary institution would be kept safe from rulers' interference. Yet, the Guardian Council, especially after the imam's demise, increased the scope of its supervision of parliamentary elections. This is so much that it effectively became a body disruptive of the constitutional order and a barrier to the people's will. Today, the popular representative must effectively be declared chosen by members of the Guardian Council before being elected by the people. They must first go through the filter of the Guardian Council members' preferences so they can stand for public election in the next stage. Thus, what should have been done with the goal of realizing the people's rights and preventing interference by the power has effectively and in time become the opposite.

Honorable members of the Islamic Consultative Assembly,

I have shared these explanations and preliminaries with you, so I may stress the position and necessity that parliament has in Iran. Now, on the basis of this position and record, I intend to discuss with you three fundamental problems existing in the bill on parliament's supervision over parliament, a bill whose immediacy already failed once to win votes when parliamentarians would not cooperate and was taken off the agenda. Then, in an unusual step, it was signed by 51 parliamentarians so it could once more be considered in the legislative chamber. This by itself shows how certain people and bodies entertain the idea under the guise of this bill to weaken this institution of 100 years and deprive it of its powers. I will now present to you the three general problems of this proposal.

First, there is the degradation of the representatives. This is the idea that representatives are pushed to the point of having dossiers compiled on them, leading to them being admonished without this being cited in their dossiers, then requiring written commitments from them of non-repetition, written observations cited in their dossier, and reductions in salary and benefits of one to three months (Article 16). How can this be matched with maintaining the dignity and position of parliament? Interestingly, following such degrading and insulting articles, the authors of the bill have proposed that: "if the representative's actions are deemed to be a criminal offense, the matter will be referred to the judiciary for consideration and a verdict" (same article). They have then instructed the judiciary to "form a particular branch to deal with the matters referred." Consider a parliament that compiles dossiers against its own members and sends the dossiers to judicial bodies so they can be formally charged. This is unprecedented, not just in the history of Iran's parliaments but in the parliamentary history in the world, not to mention being shameful. As this bill states, one can postpone a representative's speech as a punitive measure, and suspend his or her membership in the presiding board or parliamentary committees. With the implementation of this bill, how can one speak of the dignity and independence of a representative? The ratification of a law in parliament whereby parliamentarians have to declare their travel plans before going and have no right to travel even without permission, and threats to their immunity by a particular committee, mean turning the people's servants into the humble servants of power.

Second, there is the restricting of representatives in the guise of supervision. It is necessary to supervise representatives and in truth, parliament's internal regulations, the presidium, and the Article 90 Committee each and in their own way assure this

supervision. By adding items to parliament's internal procedures, one may add to the feasibility of this supervision in line with requirements and the understanding of one's time. However, the contents of the present bill show that its authors do not seek the supervision, but the limitation, of representatives. Naturally, these gentlemen are not satisfied with the approbatory and subjective supervision of the Guardian Council; they have now come up with another bill. This is so that if, after completing the Herculean task of winning his or her way into parliament, a representative insists still on saying something distasteful to those in power, he or she may be immediately and at the stroke of a pen penalized, restricted, or expelled from parliament. If such a bill were ratified, we might as well mourn the demise of parliament in the Islamic Republic system. Interestingly, it is stated in a part of the bill that: "judicial investigation and the member's non-conviction will not prevent the implementation of decisions made by parliament or the committee regarding his or her violations" (Article 20). It is perfectly clear then that the aim of the authors of the bill to supervise representatives is not to prevent possible violations, but to open a way to restrict, penalize, and expel a representative, and this on the basis of the particular preferences of, and decisions made, in particular circles.

Third, there is the representative duty. With the punitive and restrictive mechanisms included in this bill, representatives will always be under pressure in pursuing and defending the people's rights and a committee will always dangle a sword over their heads. If the bill is ratified, I fear that representatives such as the late [Ayatollah] Modarres, who were tolerated in parliament under the Pahlavi regime, will no longer be tolerated through penalties, summonses, and expulsions, and this will close the way to the last possibility of a presence in parliament by the people's representatives. An end to the immunity and freedom of a representative signifies the destruction of parliament. As stated by his eminence the Grand Ayatollah Safi-Golpayegani, "such bills will lead to the majority supervising the minority, which is entirely at odds with the philosophy behind an independent representative." Mention of cancelling a representative's credentials (Article 21), obligating executive bodies to submit documents required against a representative (Article 31), and many other instances in this law are entirely opposed to a representative's freedom of action. These indicate that there is a particular will to conquer parliament as a redoubt in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Honorable Members of Parliament,

When the imam passed away, a particular current used a similar project to the one envisaged today to weaken parliament's position in order to turn the Assembly of Experts into an institution with little impact or independence. Within a year of the imam's death, the Assembly of Experts deprived itself, at a session held in special conditions of course, of the duty of determining their own eligibility and handed this over to the Guardian Council. At that meeting of the Assembly of Experts, certain people adopted a cautious silence while others were absent. Only one person, the late Ayatollah Abai-Khorasani, spoke out in protest. The session nevertheless transferred to the Guardian Council the task of determining the eligibility of aspiring members of the Assembly of Experts. This is with the result that today the Assembly of Experts has become a body with little effect and its elections have at every round included the disqualification of many revolutionary and militant clerics.

Powers pass away and governments come and go. This is the lesson history has taught us. Do not let parliament be eliminated in a period when you bore the title of people's representatives. As a religious brother, old colleague, and guardian of constitutionality, I would ask you that, if some people are determined to destroy parliament, do not earn yourselves the disgrace of ratifying a plan that constitutes the coup de grace to the legislative body; let them implement this plan in an institution outside parliament.

Greetings,

Mehdi Karrubi

1/10/1389 [23 October 2010].

[Description of Source: Rah-e Sabz in Persian -- Official news website of the pro-reform Green Path of Freedom Movement; URL: www.rahesabz.net]

In Qom, Iran's supreme leader Khamenei aims to cement leadership over clerics

The Christian Science Monitor - CSMonitor.com

By [Scott Peterson](#), Staff writer
posted October 19, 2010 at 9:01 am EDT

Istanbul, Turkey —

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei began a high-profile visit today to Qom, Iran's holy city and the heart of Shiite learning. The trip, reported to last a week or more, is a bid to demonstrate that he remains in firm control of a religious establishment that has been shaken and divided by last year's controversial election and the violent protests that ensued.

State-run media highlighted the visit as "historic," and for days in advance showed images of clerics painting welcoming messages on cars and motorcycles, and readying stacks of posters.

Ayatollah Khamenei basked in the adulation of crowds given the day off from work and school, in welcoming scenes far removed from those of a year ago, when protesters across Iran chanted "[Death to Khamenei](#)."

"He wants to show off his legitimacy, especially [because] since the election his legitimacy and popularity were greatly damaged and for the first time in the history of the Islamic Republic we had a huge demonstration in Qom ... unprecedented, in which people shouted slogans against Khamenei," says Mehdi Khalaji, an Iran expert at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, who once trained at a seminary in Qom.

Iran's clerics divided

Iran's senior clerics were divided by the June 12, 2009, presidential vote, in which Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was anointed president for a second term amid credible charges of fraud. That result prompted hundreds of thousands – if not millions, according to some officials – of Iranians to take to the streets in protest.

The wide social and political divisions across the country were reflected among the clergy, too. While Khamenei sided with Mr. Ahmadinejad – calling his official victory a "divine assessment" – other clerics more senior than Khamenei in theological rank opposed the result, with one stating that "no one in their right mind" could accept it.

Opponents largely silenced

Tuesday's visit to Qom aimed to reaffirm Khamenei's credentials and dominance, now that the few remaining ayatollahs that publicly oppose him have been largely silenced – their homes and offices under surveillance, and websites cut off.

Much of the rest of Iran's clerical establishment – the majority, says Mr. Khalaji, whose father is an ayatollah in Qom that has been hassled by security services – have kept silent, aware that it is the government that backs them with big budgets in return for political support.

"The fact that those clerics are welcoming him [in Qom], accepting him, receiving him, that's a big thing for [Khamenei]. It shows that, 'My religious position, my leadership is approved,'" says Khalaji, who is writing a biography about Khamenei. "Some pictures, some video shots – that would be enough for him, in order to show to the religious strata of society that, 'Don't think that whatever happened last year damaged my religious credentials.' "

Khamenei: Enemy driving a wedge between clerics, public

In his speech in Qom, Khamenei stressed that two pillars of the Islamic Republic remained both its religious and its popular nature – aspects which have grown in tension since the 1979 Islamic revolution, most notably since the vote last year.

"This revolution is supported by the people, it is a popular one," said the supreme leader. "If people hadn't been present on the scene, if there had been a great gap between the people and the [ruling system, it] would not have been able to stand up to the enemy."

The "enemy" is usually code for the United States, Israel and the West, but has been increasingly applied to the internal "leaders of sedition."

Top among them are Ahmadinejad's two main election challengers, former prime minister Mir Hossein Mousavi, and former parliament speaker Mehdi Karroubi, as well as former two-time president Mohammad Khatami – all of whom have refused to accept the results.

They led what has since been called a Green Movement of popular opposition to the election results, though street protests have disappeared under the weight of the regime's repressive tactics.

The "enemy," Khamenei said on Tuesday – including "mercenaries and lackeys inside the country" – had since the 1960s targeted faith in God, and later loyalty to the Islamic regime through "promiscuity" and "fake mysticism" and "promoting different ideas."

"They make rumors to drive a wedge between the people and the [ruling system], and to dishearten the people they try to sow the seeds of hatred and sow the seeds of suspicion among the people," Khamenei said, according to a simultaneous English translation on state-run PressTV. "Whatever great achievement is done within the country, they just use it

as a tool and launch a propaganda campaign against it. If there are weaknesses, they magnify them and do not show the strong points.”

For young people, especially, Khamenei said, they wanted to “darken the bright future ahead.” All those enemies of the Islamic Republic – despite “great investments” in the effort – had failed to “separate the people from the [regime],” even during the election last year.

Khamenei brushes aside residual concerns about election

Scores and possibly hundreds were killed in the crackdown by security forces and pro-regime militants. The Islamic Republic faced one of its more severe political crises in nearly three decades.

Speaking in Qom, Khamenei publicly brushed off any residual concerns. The high election turnout of near 85 percent, he said – which many Iranian voters at the time attributed to opposition efforts to unseat Mr. Ahmadinejad at the ballot box – was a strategic show of support.

“In fact, it was a 40-million-strong referendum in favor of the Islamic establishment, and in favor of the elections; that was the reason the enemy got enraged and they wanted to provoke sedition to deal a blow to that,” Khamenei said.

“People stood up to that sedition movement,” he added. “Last year’s sedition actually vaccinated the country against microbes, which can be political or social microbes....and increased [people’s] insight.”

Some clerics skeptical of 'infallible' leader

Khamenei’s speech sought to convince clerics who might still harbor doubt about how Iran’s system of an infallible and supreme religious leader, known as velayat-e faqih, is supposed to work.

Senior clergy opposed to Khamenei’s actions are the exception to the rule, says Khalaji.

“We can say that the religious institutes in Iran, the Shiite clerical establishment, is the wealthiest, the richest and the strongest in his own history. So they love this regime. At the same time, they hate this regime,” adds Khalaji.

“Why? Because Khamenei and the rulers of the Islamic Republic are becoming less and less popular [and] the social capital of clerics is the trust of the people, so they don’t want to be associated...in a way that the unpopularity of the regime damages people’s trust.”

Police Chief Urges Further Preparedness to Confront Enemy's Soft War *

TEHRAN (FNA)- Deputy Chief of Iran's Law Enforcement Police Ahmad Reza Radan warned about enemies' soft plots against the Islamic Republic, and stressed that the country is required to enhance its preparedness for enemies' future moves.

10-10-2010

"Today, the enemy has recognized that hard warfare is not effective in the face of the Islamic Republic of Iran and it has, thus, initiated sedition and soft war (against Iran)," Radan said in Iran's central city of Isfahan on Sunday.

"Enemy's soft war threats are coming," the commander said, adding, "and more preparedness is needed to confront these threats."

Last year, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei had underlined the necessity for proper measures to repel enemy's soft war against Iran.

"Today, the main priority of the country is to confront (enemy's) soft warfare which is aimed at creating doubt, discord and pessimism among the masses of the people," Ayatollah Khamenei said, addressing a large and fervent congregation of Basij (volunteer) forces.

In July, commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari warned the Iranian youths against enemies' soft war plots, and called for further preparedness to confront soft threats against Iran and the Islamic Revolution.

"We are in a soft war with the enemies. Their (enemies') plans and hidden and clear moves in this regard are distinctive," Jafari said at the time.

Last year, Jafari had stated that the IRGC was preparing infrastructures for confronting military, hard and soft threats, adding that the IRGC had entrusted the duty for confrontation against soft threats to the Basij forces.

Jafari said that fighting enemies' soft threats is the most important task of the Basij forces.

"Today, the most important and main mission of Basij is confronting the soft threats and cultural invasion which is stealthily targeting the (Iranian) youth," Jafari said.

Iranian Intellectuals To Lebanese People: Ahmadinezhad Does Not Deserve Your Trust *

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Tehran Review
14 October 2010

Iranian Intellectuals to Lebanese People: Ahmadinezhad Does Not Deserve Your Trust

Letter to the People of Lebanon from a Group of Iranian University People, Intellectuals and Newspaper Journalists

Ahmadinezhad Does Not Want Peace and Tranquility for Lebanon and Iran

Dear People of Lebanon

Today someone has come to visit your land who has not brought tranquility, peace and welfare to Iran nor does he want peace, tranquility and welfare for Lebanon. Mahmoud Ahmadinezhad, the person who stole the 2009 election and called himself president of the republic instead of the person the people really elected, is not a representative of the people of Iran.

The people of Iran deeply respect the people of Lebanon and the people of Lebanon have granted glory and pride to the true representatives of Iranians as we saw during Mohammad Khatami's trip to Lebanon in 2003.

The Khatamis and the Mousavis are the representatives of the people of Iran. Even if Ahmadinezhad really won the vote and we recognized him as our representative, we still would not agree with his policies. However Ahmadinezhad's policies are more dangerous now than ever because he wants to cover the theft of the election, the big fraud and the betrayal of the votes of the people of Iran and the scandals and bloodshed that followed with policies that are harsher and more provocative every day.

His taking the side of a specific group in Lebanon against the other groups is both a cause of domestic tension in Lebanon and a cover for his inability and the burning of opportunities that has brought extensive sanctions against Iran and has brought it against the threat of war. By increasing tension in Lebanon and in the region he wants to cover his own domestic problems and make Lebanon a party in his dealings with America and the great powers.

Ahmadinezhad might make deceptive promises of financial help but economic conditions in Iran under his government and his government's political situation are too bad for him to be able to keep these promises. He made this trip to Lebanon just for use as a political show but he does not place the slightest value in the people of Lebanon and Iran or their destiny today and in the future.

The authors of this statement acknowledge Lebanon's rich culture and they consider the joint ties between Iran and Lebanon to be great. They think it is the duty of writers, newspaper journalists and people of the pen in both nations to defend the peace, tranquility and welfare of their people and not to remain silent in the face of imposters like Ahmadinezhad.

Let us not permit Ahmadinezhad to toy with us and you and make a plaything of our destiny.

With all respect for those who welcomed him in Beirut and south Lebanon we do not think trusting him is worthy of the people of a land that is the cradle of faith, freedom, multiplicity and variety. He has no connection to the symbols and cultural and historic aspirations of Lebanon and Iran. He is a populist showman and one ought not to play his game.

Peace and welfare can only be guarded by people who have already shown their commitment to it. Ahmadinezhad is a man of war, provocation and tension. He will not serve the people of Lebanon any more than he has served the people of Iran.

Nushabe Amiri

Mohammad Javad Akbarin

Shahrnush Parsipur

Mohammad Taj Dowlati

Nireh Tawhidi

Mehdi Hami

Fatemeh Haqiqatju

Bizhan Hekmat

Ramin Jahanbeglu

Gisu Jahangiri

Hamid Dehbashi

Ahmed Rafat

Ardevah Ruzbeh

Kazem Alamdari

Mahmoud Farjami

Ayda Qajar

Abdi Kalantari

Azadeh Kian

Mohsen Makhmalbaf

Ziba Mirhoseyni

Ali Mohtedi

Ali Akbar Mehdi

Yasser Mirdamadi

Ibrahim Nabavi

Shirin Nikui

Said Veldbigi

Nader Hashemi

Intelligence Minister Lauds Iranian Nation's Vigilance against Enemy Plots *

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian Intelligence Minister Heidar Moslehi appreciated the Iranian people for their vigilance against the plots and conspiracies hatched by the enemies against the country, and underlined the necessity for nationwide preparedness to confront the threats posed by certain states.

9-2-2010

"Everyday, thousands of phone calls, letters, emails and text messages connects the Iranian people with the Intelligence Ministry," Moslehi said, adding that "a considerable amount of the intelligence body's success was due to the vigilance and commitment of the nation."

He praised the Iranian nation for their "sense of responsibility and commitment" to the country's security and interests, saying people take action whenever they feel their national values and goals have been endangered.

Moslehi also said that Tehran is engaged in a "multifaceted and complicated" defensive war which has been imposed by the US.

"This is not a conventional military warfare, it is harder and more complicated than that," he added.

The Iranian Intelligence minister added that the conflict was not limited to "soft war," even though a large part of it is defined in the intelligence field.

Moslehi said that although the US has military and intelligence bases in most of Iran's neighboring countries, it has not been able to breach the country's security except in some border areas.