

Iran: Which side are you on, continued...

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Global Research, August 01, 2009

williambowles.info 1 August 2009

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Okay, the battle on the 'left' concerning who to support in Iran appears to come down to the following:

On the one hand we appear to have those who say that the mass demonstrations are solely the result of the West's attempts to undermine and overthrow the existing regime, utilizing a 'colour revolution' similar to those used in the Ukraine and Georgia. And there can be no doubt that Western intelligence agencies are up to their necks in destabilization strategies (see below). If this is indeed true the question to ask is: Have Western agencies fomented or exploited the opposition and to what degree has it been a success as measured by the mass demonstrations and by elements of the Left supporting the demonstrations?

On the other side as it were, are those who say there is no foreign intervention, the mass movement is wholly indigenous and reflects growing opposition to the theocracy, or at the very least Western machinations are only incidental to the situation. A good example of this approach is advocated by Hamid Dabashi in his essay 'Left is wrong on Iran' where he says,

'The US Congress, prompted by AIPAC (the American Israel Political Affairs Committee), pro-war vigilantes lurking in the halls of power in Washington DC, and Israeli warlords and their propaganda machinery in the US, are all excited about the events in Iran and are doing their damndest to turn them to their advantage. The left, indeed, has reason to worry. But having principled positions on geopolitics is one thing, being blind and deaf to a massive social movement is something entirely different, as being impervious to the flagrant charlatanism of an upstart demagogue like Ahmadinejad. The sign and the task of a progressive and agile intelligence is to hold on to core principles and seek to incorporate mass social uprising into its modus operandi. My concern here is not with that retrograde strand in the North American or Western European left that is siding with Ahmadinejad and against the masses of millions of Iranians daring the draconian security apparatus of the Islamic Republic.' — 'Left is wrong on Iran'

The problem with this approach is that reduces the issues down to a one-dimensional 'for or against' analysis, for although some on the left are supporting Ahmadinejad, this is not the be all and end all of the debate. I for one, see the situation as more complex than either supporting or opposing Ahmadinejad, after all the 'official opposition' led by Musavi is exploiting the situation every bit as much as Ahmadinejad is, tapping into the discontent felt by many, especially the secular (Westernized?) strand of Iranian society. And it would be foolish let alone naive to assume that Western support for Musavi is predicated on the West's desire for democracy to break out in Iran.

Layla Anwar in her essay 'A Velvet Revolution or Lesser Shades of Black?' tells us,

'I also think that the Left in general is committing another huge mistake by not supporting the Iranian protests for change and reform. The idiotic conspiracy theories put forward by the leftists that the U.S, Saudi Arabia and even Israel are behind this unrest are ludicrous. This does not mean that the U.S would not add intensity to Iranian winds. However to argue that what is taking place in Iran is solely the work of American and British intelligence is stupid to say the least - as it willfully ignores the clear unceasing demands of the Iranian protesters.'

Idiotic conspiracy theories? What planet are you living on Layla? Anwar calls it a conspiracy, I call it US foreign policy. The problem I have with this is not that the mass demonstrations are solely the result of Western destabilization attempts but that the West have at the very least attempted to utilize them to their own advantage and I have yet to read anywhere that 'what is taking place in Iran is solely the work of American and British intelligence' being advocated by some on the left. It is surely obvious that a vast media operation swung into action weeks before the election and one that continues to this day.

Moreover, is Anwar saying that had Musavi won he would have delivered (Western?) democracy to Iran (and in any case is that what Iran needs?)? I think not. It seems to me that we have two factions of the ruling theocracy vying for control with both using the discontent felt by at the very least two sections of Iranian society. Throw in Western interference (with it's agenda) and the end result is confusion about exactly what is going on in Iran, and surely this is the objective of the West. It is naive to think that the US and its allies after demonizing Iran for the past three decades doesn't want to see a Western-allied government in power, indeed 'regime change' is their publicly stated objective. The issue for the US is, how best to achieve it?

Anwar goes on,

'And a friend remarked lately — IRNA, the official propaganda mouthpiece of the exclusive Shiite theocratic entity no longer needs to compose new propaganda pieces -it is instead relying on translations into Farsee of propaganda pieces from the leftist websites.

'Having said that, I must also agree with Malcolm Lagauche who argues, that supporting the reformists may boil down to supporting in the end - Musavi and Rafsandjani - both advisors to Khomeini and I quote from Lagauche's article entitled Another Grand Illusion (3) dated July 6-9, 2009 — "Former Prime Minister Mir Hossein Mousavi, who claims he is the rightful winner of the June 12 presidential election, was part of the group (along with his current allies former President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and former House Speaker Mehdi Karubi) that favored secret contacts with the United States and Israel to get the military supplies needed to fight the war with Iraq. Khomeini's blessing allowed Rafsanjani, Karubi and later Mousavi to proceed with secret contacts that involved emissaries from the Reagan camp and the Israeli government."

This smacks of a 'lesser of two evils' approach, in other words Musavi and co are a shade better than Ahmadinejad (Anwar's 'lesser shade of black') and judging by the way the West has backed Musavi, they clearly think that Musavi is 'their man'.

I think it's vital not to forget that bringing Iran's resources and strategic location under US

control is the objective of this the latest attempt at a 'colour revolution' whether 'indigenous' or the result of outside interference, to think otherwise is as delusory as thinking that Ahmadinejad is a leftie.

'Much intelligent analysis has pointed to similarities between a strategy employed by the Mousavi camp in June 2009, and the strategy used in earlier campaigns of destabilization against U.S. targets for regime change that date back to the elections in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 2000, Georgia in 2003, and the Ukraine in 2004, to name three where it succeeded. As was the case in these three other countries, the challenger Mousavi and his aides started by declaring Mousavi the "definite winner" by very wide margins on the day of the election (Friday, June 12), long before the polls had closed and the votes were counted; one Mousavi aide even told Agence France Presse that "Mousavi has got 65% of the votes cast," a "landslide victory," AFP called it. This was followed by Mousavi's claim on the next day (Saturday, June 13) that his rightful victory and therefore the will of the Iranian people had been stolen by the incumbent President Ahmadinejad's supporters in the Ministry of the Interior, with the official result delegitimized; from here went the calls to Iranians and all democracy-loving peoples the world over to reject it.' — Iran: Riding the "Green Wave" at the Campaign for Peace and Democracy and Beyond by Edward S. Herman and David Peterson

Herman and Peterson go on to detail nature of US meddling in the internal affairs of Iran, with hundreds of millions of dollars being allocated for 'regime change' "designed to destabilize the country's religious leadership." "(Seymour M. Hersh, "The Bush Administration Steps Up Its Secret Moves against Iran," New Yorker, July 7, 2008. In the latter, Hersh makes it clear that this funding was for terrorist operations against targets inside Iran, and has employed both CIA and Joint Special Operations Command units, as well as regional terrorist groups such as the Jundallah (or Iranian People's Resistance Movement), the Mujahedin-e Khalq, and the Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan.)"

Therefore, the question to ask is: Had Mousavi and co 'won' the election would they have 'delivered' Iran to the West or is it no more than a 'tiff' between different factions of the ruling theocracy with Mousavi exploiting Western dreams of bringing Iran back into the imperialist fold? So who is using whom here?

Missing from the debate on both sides are the views of the (indigenous) Iranian left, surely the ones to consult. Isn't this the core of our dilemma as the left was not only excluded from the election but we have no means of identifying to what degree the left participated in the mass demonstrations, nor what their take is on the situation.

As I have stated before, and I'll say it again, the real challenge for the Western left is not which side, if any, to support in Iran but to focus our energies on changing the policies of our respective governments which regardless are bent on regime change in Iran by one means or another. To assume otherwise is pure self-delusion.

As Bill Blum says,

'The classic "outside agitators" can not only foment dissent through propaganda, adding to already existing dissent, but they can serve to mobilize the public to strongly demonstrate against the government. In 1953, when the CIA overthrew Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh, they paid people to agitate in front of Mossadegh's residence and elsewhere and engage in acts

of violence; some pretended to be supporters of Mossadegh while engaging in anti-religious actions. And it worked, remarkably well. Since the end of World War II, the United States has seriously intervened in some 30 elections around the world, adding a new twist this time, twittering. The State Department asked Twitter to postpone a scheduled maintenance shutdown of its service to keep information flowing from inside Iran, helping to mobilize protesters. The New York Times reported: "An article published by the Web site True/Slant highlighted some of the biggest errors on Twitter that were quickly repeated and amplified by bloggers: that three million protested in Tehran last weekend (more like a few hundred thousand); that the opposition candidate Mir Hussein Mousavi was under house arrest (he was being watched); that the president of the election monitoring committee declared the election invalid last Saturday (not so)." — Much ado about nothing?

What is depressing is that the left is having this argument in the first place! In this sense then, the arguments on the left have been an unqualified success, for the Empire that is, for they have diverted attention away from the US and its allies attempts to install a regime favourable to the West. Instead, we bicker about which side to back and find ourselves the unwitting accomplices of the Empire regardless of which side we support.

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