



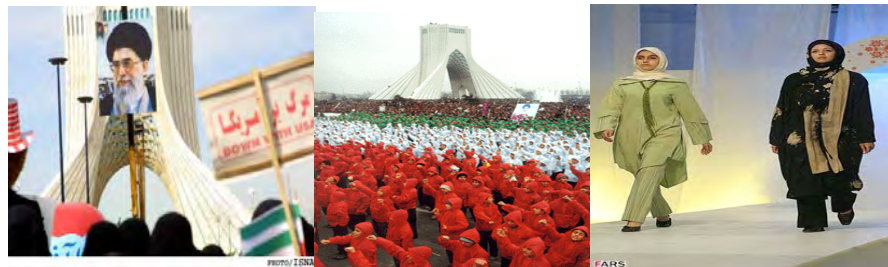
The Meir Amit Intelligence
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Spotlight on Iran

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Iran: Democrats' defeat reflects failure of U.S. policy, weakness of American administration

This week, Iranian top officials and media extensively reported on the Democratic Party's defeat in the U.S. midterm elections, taking it as a reflection of President Obama's weakness and the failure of his policy.

In an interview given to Mehr News Agency, Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki argued that, after the Democrats' defeat, the U.S. is entering a difficult time as far as domestic politics, economy, and foreign policy are concerned. It was his opinion that the election results represented a defeat for the Democrats rather than a victory for the Republicans. When President Obama entered office, Mottaki said, he offered hope for the U.S. and the rest

of the world; that hope, however, was short-lived. He proved unable to gain the trust of the American public and improve the international standing of the U.S., while the country could not surmount the challenges facing it on the international scene (Mehr, November 5).

Majles speaker Ali Larijani also addressed the U.S. election results, saying that the Democrats' failure was the result of the erroneous and double-faced policy of the American administration in the U.S. and elsewhere. At the opening of this week's Majles session, Larijani said that the erroneous policy was reflected in human rights violations by the U.S. across the globe, in crimes committed by American forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, in America's ongoing cooperation with the "Zionist regime", and in the administration's involvement in terrorist attacks across the globe (Fars, November 7).

According to the conservative daily Jomhuri-ye Eslami, the Democrats' defeat will become a turning point in political and social developments in the U.S. People did not vote for the Republicans, the daily claimed—their votes expressed the American public's anger at the Democrats. It was the daily's assessment that following the Democratic Party's defeat, it may well find itself having to choose another presidential candidate for the 2012 elections (Jomhuri-ye Eslami, November 7).

The conservative daily Resalat addressed the impact of the midterm elections on U.S. policy towards Iran, claiming that Obama repeated the mistakes made by his predecessors regarding foreign policy towards Iran. Instead of recognizing Iran's strength in the Middle East and attempting to reach a settlement with it, Obama continued the battle against it, trying to use diplomacy as part of America's continuing anti-Iranian policy. Obama was hoping to solve the regional problems and take a different approach towards Iran, but was soon forced to yield to the heavy pressure exerted on him by extremist Republican circles and the "Zionist lobby". In the next two years, the Republican majority in the Congress will likely vote for escalating the sanctions on Iran and step up pressure on the president to continue his erroneous policy towards Iran. If the U.S. president continues yielding to the pressure in the next two years, Resalat says, he will be defeated in the next presidential elections. The U.S. policy on the Middle East requires some fundamental changes, and President Obama must abandon the policy followed by the U.S. towards Iran for the past 31 years (Resalat, November 8).

The daily Keyhan focused on the weakness of the American administration. In an editorial that discussed violations of human rights in the U.S., the daily reported that, on the eve of President Obama's visit to several Asian countries, thousands of human rights activists demonstrated in New York in protest of his policy. He was met with similar protests in India

and will probably be met with such protests during his visit to Indonesia. On top of its bankrupt and sick economy, the article says, the U.S. is facing a wave of Islamic awakening and no longer enjoys prestige and elevated status among the world's nations. America has become a scarecrow that no longer frightens anyone (Keyhan, November 7).

Another article published in Keyhan this week says that if President Obama wants to avoid defeat in the next presidential elections, he has two options: first, he must focus on solving domestic issues that are the primary cause of concern for American voters; second, he must solve the foreign policy issues facing him. Maintaining hostility towards Iran and becoming a clone of former president George Bush will do nothing for the U.S. president's political future. At any rate, the article says, the defeat of yet another of Iran's enemies is a happy occasion, and all the more so because Iran played an important part in the defeat (Keyhan, November 8).

The reformist daily Mardom Salari, however, expressed concern over the increasing power of the Republicans, claiming that there are certain differences between them and the Democrats as far as foreign policy issues are concerned. The daily claimed that Zionist right-wing parties were the happiest about the Democrats' defeat. Prime Minister Netanyahu has good friends among the Republicans in the Congress, and he might use them to exert pressure on the White House to change its policy towards Iran or even push for a military option. According to Mardom Salari, the Republicans will now force Obama to take unpredictable measures, and the White House will be influenced by the "aroma of tea" (a reference to the Tea Party) (Mardom Salari, November 9).

Iranians against Nasrallah: YouTube video angers Iranian web surfers

A video recently circulated on YouTube, showing fragments from two speeches made by Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, has angered many Iranian web surfers this week.

The video contains fragments from two speeches given by Nasrallah on two separate occasions this year. In one speech, Nasrallah discussed Iran's Muslim identity, claiming its roots were Arab rather than Persian. According to Nasrallah, there is nothing in Iran that could be called "Persian" or "Persian civilization", only Islamic civilization and the Arab religion of Prophet Muhammad. Nasrallah further claimed that the founders of the Islamic revolution were of Arab descent, the descendants of Prophet Muhammad, and that even Iran's current Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, was a Seyyed from an Arab dynasty founded by the prophet.

In his second speech, Nasrallah addressed the events that took place in Iran following the last presidential election. In that speech, Nasrallah expressed his confidence in the Khamenei-led regime's ability to successfully deal with the political crisis that broke out after the election.



It is not clear who is responsible for spreading the video or why it was released now. At any rate, it sparked an outrage among Iranian web surfers and triggered angry reactions from Iranian bloggers, mostly outside Iran.

In response to Nasrallah's remarks, one blogger said that they unfortunately reflected the reality in which the Iranian nation, Iranian culture, Iranian civilization, and Iran's resources are held hostage by foreigners (<http://greenmanifesto.wordpress.com>, November 7). Another blogger wondered whether Iranian petrodollars used by the regime to support Hezbollah were Arab as well (<http://irangreen-29.blogspot.com>, November 7). A group of Iranian exiles even started a Facebook page called "We, Iranians hate Hassan Nasrallah". The official websites of opposition leaders inside Iran avoided making any comments about the affair.

On the other hand, pro-government websites strongly condemned the criticism voiced by Iranian web surfers against Nasrallah, claiming that, having grown tired of their efforts to act against the regime this past year, "anti-revolutionary" groups were now trying to get back at Nasrallah for the warm welcome he had given President Ahmadinejad during his last visit to Lebanon. Supporters of the "green [i.e., reformist] opposition" are trying to compromise Nasrallah's image in the eyes of the Iranian people by misrepresenting his remarks, but their efforts are doomed to failure. Instead of supporting Nasrallah and the Iranian people, they support Iran's enemies, funded and supported by the Americans, said a news website affiliated with President Ahmadinejad's supporters (www.bibaknews.com, November 8).



Authorities continue crackdown on rap music: members of underground rap groups arrested in Tehran

Earlier this week, Tehran Province police chief Hossein Sajediniya reported the arrest of several young Iranians belonging to underground rap groups. He said that intelligence had made it possible for the public safety police to track down and capture the group members. He noted that the youngsters had routinely gathered in demolished and abandoned buildings to evade the police, and sometimes had even broken windows and used dark curtains to conceal their activities. The detained group members were both men and women. They used Western musical instruments, recorded their music on CDs and DVDs, produced video clips, and distributed them online and on satellite TV networks. Sajediniya also reported that alcohol had been found during the police raid on the groups' gathering spots.

Speaking about the rap music created by the youngsters, the police chief said that they had been using inappropriate street talk that showed disregard for the law and for moral rules. He noted that those groups posed a tangible threat to Iran's young generation by spreading moral corruption and improper Western conduct, alienating young Iranians from Islamic culture, offending Iran's dignified music, encouraging inappropriate relations between men and women, negatively portraying the social situation, inciting the youngsters, and disrespecting the religion and the nation (ILNA, November 7).

Original Persian rap music has gained popularity among young Iranians in recent years. The themes of rap music include politics, society, and even sex. Several songs recorded by rap artists were approved for distribution by the Islamic Guidance Ministry; most, however, are distributed on the black market and the internet. In recent years, Iranian authorities have stepped up the fight against this type of music. For instance, the authorities closed down studios where rap music was recorded, while the internal security forces raided underground concerts featuring rap artists. Early in his tenure, Mohammad Hossein Saffar Harandi, the Islamic Guidance minister in Ahmadinejad's first government, announced that he intended to

deal with all types of music that contradicted, as he put it, the values of the Islamic republic, including rock and rap. He called on musicians in Iran to create “meaningful music”.



Iranian rappers, from the Iranian blog:
<http://www.aftabblog.com/uploads/s/ShakhShekan/78918.jpg>

First time in Iran: senior cleric talks to followers on Facebook

Last Thursday, Ayatollah Asadollah Bayat Zanjani, a top cleric affiliated with the reformist opposition, talked to web surfers in Iran and elsewhere through Facebook and Google Talk. The cleric spent over one hour and a half responding to web surfers’ questions on religious and political issues. Among other things, Bayat Zanjani addressed issues pertaining to Islamic religious law and the role of clerics in the young people’s lives. It was the first time a top Iranian cleric made use of such technology to directly contact his followers (Jaras, November 5). Bayat Zanjani’s official website said this week that the cleric’s direct contact with his followers through Facebook and Google Talk will continue in the future.

Mohsen Bayat, the top cleric’s son, wrote on his personal blog that his father had talked to web surfers from Iran, Germany, Malaysia, the U.S., and Austria. He said that many of them could not believe they were talking to his father, and that one of them had become so emotional after hearing Bayat Zanjani’s voice that he burst into tears. Mohsen Bayat wrote that it had been a special, unforgettable day that could become a turning point in the way clerics communicate with their followers and answer their concerns (www.mohsenbayat.net, November 5).

Last month, the authorities blocked Bayat Zanjani’s official website, as well as the websites of top clerics Ayatollah Yousef Sane’i and Ayatollah Ali-Mohammad Dastgheyb, also affiliated with the reformist opposition. After his website was blocked, Bayat Zanjani issued a memorandum of opinion condemning the actions taken by the authorities, saying that the current age was the “age of information” and that no one could therefore prevent information access from the public.

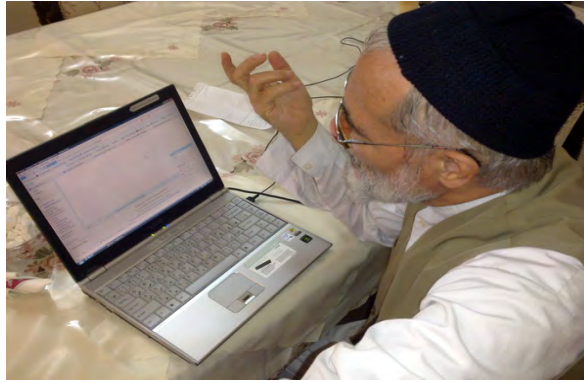


Image source: www.mohsenbayat.net, Mohsen Bayat's blog

This year, Bayat Zanjani has on several occasions strongly criticized the authorities' policy towards the reformist opposition after the last presidential election. Bayat Zanjani chose not to meet with Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei during the latter's visit to the city of Qom, which ended last week. Saham News, a website affiliated with reformist opposition leader Mehdi Karoubi, reported this week that in recent days security forces prevented Bayat Zanjani from meeting with Karoubi (Saham News, November 8).

Pictures of the week: street prostitutes in Tehran

