

# افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نېاشد تن من مېباد      بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مېباد  
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم      از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

[Antiwar.com](http://Antiwar.com)

## Role of US Militarism in Ahmadinejad's Rise

Posted By Muhammad Sahimi

August 14, 2009

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's widely disputed second term as Iran's president began on Wednesday August 5. Many of his compatriots – a great majority in the author's opinion – consider his second term as illegitimate. He and his supporters in the military are continuing their crackdown on the reformist leaders, common people protesting the gross violations of human rights in Iran, and other dissidents. In the latest round of the crackdown, Stalinist show trials have begun in which the arrested reformist leaders are forced to "confess" that the protests and demonstrations after the rigged presidential election of June 12 were linked to foreign powers, a bogus claim that has been disputed even by Ahmadinejad's own Minister of Intelligence.

Why is it that a man like Ahmadinejad, a religious, superstitious demagogue and tyrant, can rise to power in a country like Iran, in which the literacy age is about 85%, 70% of the population is under the age of 35, 23 million people use the internet, and there are over 100,000 bloggers? Undoubtedly, part of the reason has to do with Iran's history throughout which tyrants or at best benevolent absolute monarchs have ruled it, lack of a deeply rooted democratic tradition, and other factors. But, the United States has also played an important role in preventing Iran from moving rapidly on a democratic path.

In modern times, the Iranians' struggle for a democratic political system goes back to at least the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1908, the first of its kind in Asia. To be sure,

[Many Americans have played important roles](#) in Iran's contemporary history, from Howard Baskerville (1885-1909), Iran's "first American martyr" who, while helping the

revolutionaries defend the city of Tabriz (in northwestern Iran) against the forces of Iran's dictator of the time, Mohammad Ali Shah, was killed in 1909 in Tabriz, to Joseph Cochran (1855-1905) who was the founding father of Iran's first modern medical school, Samuel M. Jordan (1871-1952) who is sometimes referred to as the father of modern education in Iran and founded the *American College of Tehran* (later renamed the Alborz high school), and others.

The United States also played a crucial role in forcing the Soviet Union's forces evacuate Iran in 1946, after World War II had ended. In the Tehran Conference of 1943, Joseph Stalin promised Harry Truman and Winston Churchill that his forces will leave Iran after WW II ends, but he did not deliver on his promise until he was pressured by the U.S. But, since then, the history of the U.S. intervention in Iran's internal affairs has been depressing, resulting in tyranny, bloodshed, and revolution.

It all began with the CIA-sponsored coup of 1953 that overthrew Iran's democratically-elected government of Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh, and started the era of the U.S. influence in Iran. In addition to its great political influence over the Shah of Iran, the U.S. helped establish and train the SAVAK, the Shah's dreaded security services. These events ultimately led to the 1979 Revolution that overthrew the U.S.-backed regime of the Shah. For decades the U.S. would not even admit its role in the 1953 coup. When Madeleine Albright did finally acknowledge it in 2000, she explained it based on the supposed Soviet military threat to Iran.

On November 4, 1979, Islamic leftist students overran the U.S. embassy in Tehran and took 53 American diplomats and staff hostage. The event should be viewed in light of Iran's bitter experience of the 1953 CIA coup. The hostages were released on January 20, 1981. Then, in 1983, against the Algiers Agreement of January 1981 that freed the hostages, President Reagan imposed economic sanctions on Iran, most of which have remained in effect. Ever since, the U.S. goal has always been to hamper Iran's economic development and to contain it militarily, which in turn have helped the radicals and hardliners to prevent the Iranian people from advancing their country on a democratic path.

Iran's reform movement was born in the early 1990s. But, at every stage of its development, instead of being helped by the U.S. and its allies, it has been hurt by them.

On May 23, 1997, the Iranian people elected Mohammad Khatami, a moderate and progressive cleric, as their next president by a landslide. But, instead of helping Khatami by lifting at least a part of the U.S. sanctions against Iran, the Clinton administration continued to pursue its dual-containment policy, whereby both Iran and Iraq were to be contained by the U.S. military and economic might.

Even when Khatami called for a dialogue among civilizations, the U.S. did not respond favorably. The hard-liners pointed to the U.S. non-responsiveness as yet another sign that it was only interested in hampering Iran's developments, and rebuked Khatami and his supporters for wanting to resolve the differences between the two nations.

Only in April 2000, after the reformists had swept the elections for the Iranian parliament, did President Clinton make a minor gesture toward Iran by lifting sanctions on the imports of Iranian rugs, pistachios, and caviar. But, it was too little too late. The Clinton administration was on its way out.

Then, came the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in New York and Washington. The U.S. invaded Afghanistan in the fall of 2001. The Khatami administration provided crucial help to the U.S. in Afghanistan by opening Iran's airspace to the U.S. aircrafts, and providing crucial intelligence on the Taliban. Iran's Afghan ally, the Northern Alliance that it had supported and trained for years, was the first force that entered Kabul, Afghanistan's capital, and overthrew the Taliban. Iran also played a crucial role in the formation of Afghanistan's national unity government in December 2001.

But, the Bush administration rewarded the Khatami administration by making Iran a charter member of the "axis of evil" in February 2002, and began threatening it with military attacks. This further hurt the credibility of the Iranian reformists who were advocating a rapprochement with the U.S.

The U.S. then invaded and occupied Iraq in the spring of 2003. The Shiite groups that had spent their exile years in Iran, and had been supported, trained, and funded by it, were put in power in Iraq, and were considered allies of the U.S., but the George W. Bush administration accused Iran of meddling in Iraq, and continued to threaten it with military attacks. The threats helped Iran's hardliners to further suppress dissent in Iran.

In late April 2003 the Khatami administration presented a comprehensive proposal to the U.S., whereby it agreed to recognize Israel, help transform the Lebanese Hezbollah to a purely political group, and limit its nuclear program. Not only was the proposal spurned by the U.S., but it also admonished the Swiss ambassador to Iran for delivering the proposal to it (Switzerland represents the U.S. interests in Iran). Instead, the U.S. continued to threaten Iran militarily. Once again, Iran's reformists were sacrificed by the militarist policy of the U.S. toward Iran and the Middle East.

Almost at the same time, the confrontation between Washington and Tehran began over Iran's nuclear program. Although every report by the International Atomic Energy Agency indicated that, aside from some minor non-compliance cases, Iran had abided by its obligations towards Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and its Safeguards Agreement; the Bush administration threatened Iran with military attacks more strongly than ever.

The U.S. threats greatly helped Iran's hardliners to crackdown on the reformists. First, the press that had enjoyed relative freedom during the first few years of Khatami's presidency, was suppressed, partly because the hardliners accused it of being an agent of foreign powers. The reformists were then purged from the Iranian parliament during the 2004 elections. Then, on the eve of Iran's 2005 presidential election, George W. Bush basically said that the Iranian people should not vote, which actually provoked the conservatives and even some nationalists to vote in large numbers and help elect Ahmadinejad.

Once Ahmadinejad was elected in 2005, and began using harsh, but inconsequential, rhetoric against Israel, the U.S. ratcheted up its military threats against Iran. In a show of force, and in addition to surrounding Iran with the U.S. forces on three sides, the Bush administration dispatched two carrier battle groups to the Persian Gulf in May 2007, in order to frighten Iran. Dick Cheney used the deck of the aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis to threaten Iran, "We'll stand with others to prevent Iran from gaining nuclear weapons and dominating the region. We'll stand with our friends in opposing extremism and strategic threats."

All such threats were used by Ahmadinejad and his hard-line supporters to further suppress dissent in Iran, shut down independent and reformist newspapers and other publications, and accuse the reformist and democratic groups of being agents of the U.S. and other foreign powers. The constant pressure on the reformists and their oppression by the hardliners prevented them from organizing and confronting Ahmadinejad and his supporters more effectively.

Even after the supposedly realist Obama administration took over in January just a few months before Iran's presidential election, and the President began looking for Iran's unclenched fist, the threats against Iran did not stop, nor did their nature change. Asked if the military option was still on the table with regard to Iran, the White House spokesman Robert Gibbs said on Wednesday January 28 that, "The President hasn't changed his viewpoint that he should preserve all his options. We must use all elements of our national power to protect our interests as it relates to Iran."

Thus, decades of U.S. hostility toward Iran, and sanctions and military threats and attacks have had a net result: the efforts by the courageous people of Iran in establishing a democratic political system has been thwarted by undemocratic and even neo-fascist groups, who have used the militarist policy of the U.S. toward Iran as their excuse to suppress freedom.